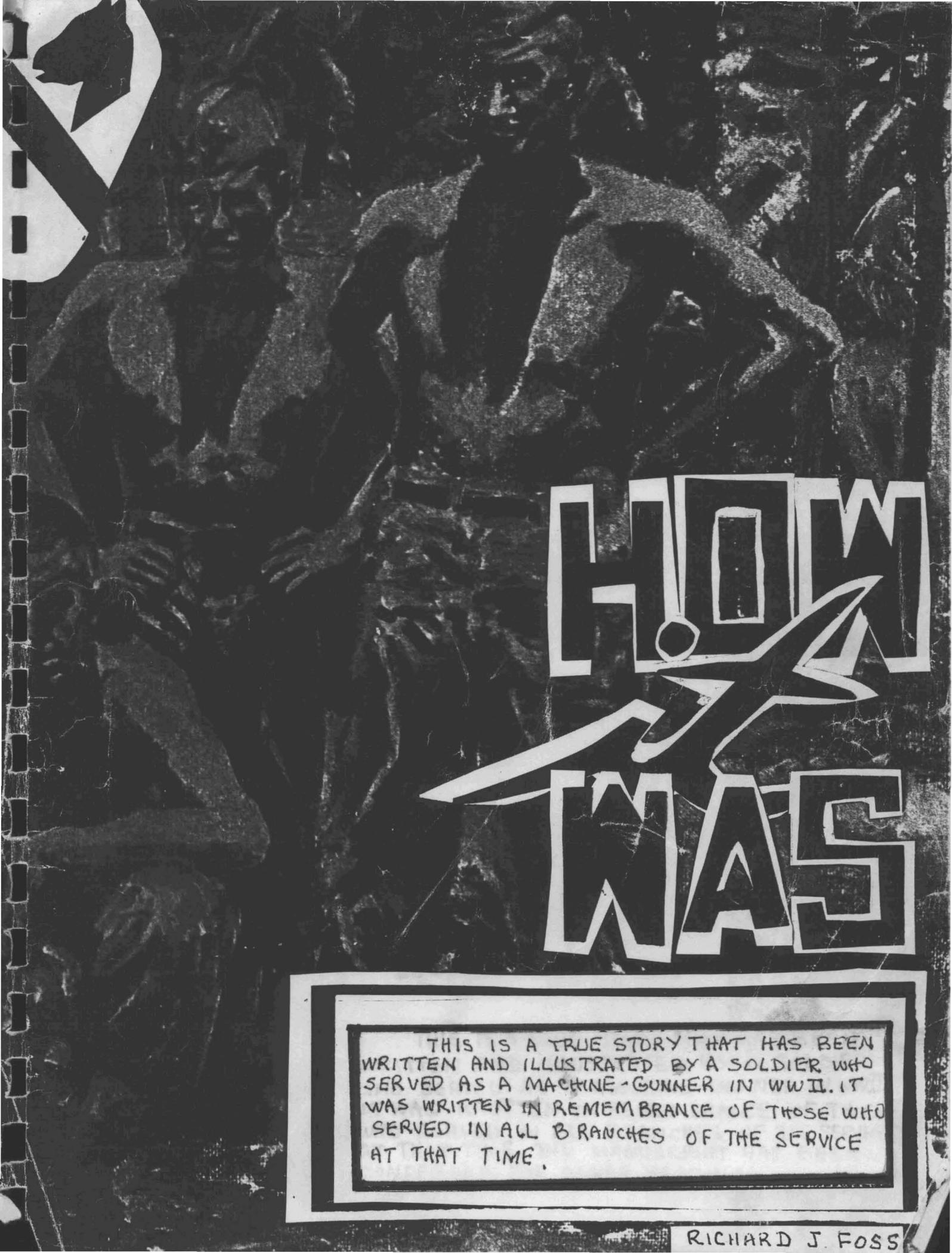


HOW IT WAS



HOW WAS

THIS IS A TRUE STORY THAT HAS BEEN WRITTEN AND ILLUSTRATED BY A SOLDIER WHO SERVED AS A MACHINE-GUNNER IN WWII. IT WAS WRITTEN IN REMEMBRANCE OF THOSE WHO SERVED IN ALL BRANCHES OF THE SERVICE AT THAT TIME.

RICHARD J. FOSS

IOWA BOY



A 'sleeper' of a book

I've just finished one of the most touching, wonderful books I've ever read.

It is a man's story of his 24 months as a private-first-class in a machine gun squad in some of World War II's fiercest combat in the Pacific Theater. I've read at least a half dozen of what are regarded as the classics about the war. I'd honestly rank this with them.

The descriptions of the fierce fighting are so honest, humble and personal that fear and death march off the pages. The 160 illustrations, drawn by the author, are magnificent in simplicity and color.

The 347-page book is "How It Was." I know, you've never heard of it.

The author is Dick Foss. You've probably never heard of him, either. Foss, 65, of West Des Moines, is as unpretentious and unassuming as a guy can get. He retired two years ago after teaching social studies for 35 years to slower-learning students in the Des Moines schools.

The book's publisher is the same Dick Foss. The way he published it is a story in itself.

Handwritten

He didn't pay some company to do it, which is probably what you're thinking. He actually did it himself.

Using much of the first two years of his retirement, he hand-wrote his story, 40 carefully printed lines per page, on standard size sheets of typewriter paper, leaving room in the text for his 160 drawings, which he first did in black and white.

He made three copies of his original on an office copier — he only wanted the four. Then he sat down with color pencils and gave splendid tones to each of his illustrations. Think of it: He colored 160 pictures in each of four books — a total of 640 of them!

He put his story in loose-leaf binders which he covered with black and white reproductions of a terrific oil painting he did of his seven-member machine-gun squad.

As an overlay on that cover, Foss attached a small disclaimer, also hand-printed, saying, "This is a true story taken from the diary of a W.W. II soldier. It has been amateurishly rewritten and illustrated so it can be presented to the children and grandchildren of the author."

He still has his war diary, which is really a stack of notes he wrote to himself during combat and then stuffed in his bag. Those notes are tattered, mildewed and smelly, but they and his sharp memory provided him all the resources he needed for his book.

Foss gave one copy of the book to daughter JoEllyn Fuller, 39, another to son Mark Foss, 30, another to a nephew, and kept the original for himself and his wife, Marjorie.

That's all the distribution he intended. But he showed his copy to one of his former bosses, Carol Brown, supervisor of social studies for the Des Moines schools. "I read it, and I was taken not only by the story he tells, but also by the way he hand-printed and illustrated it," Brown said. "I think it's so much more personal and effective this way than if it had been typed and published in traditional book form. I thought so much of it I had 10 copies made and will have them placed in each of the Des Moines high school libraries as a resource on the war for teachers and students."

It deserves more

She believes, as I do, that if some established book publisher doesn't buy Foss' book and publish it — in the same form he did — then the reading public will really miss something.

Such thoughts astonish Foss. "The only reason I did this is that I thought it would be good for my children and their children to have something when I'm gone that tells what the war was really like, based on what I went through," he said. "I hand-printed the story and drew my own pictures because I wanted it to be more personal for them. I didn't dream that anybody else would ever be interested in it."

"Now that a few other people have seen it, I feel funny because my grammar and spelling aren't so great, even though I was a teacher for 35 years. Remember, I taught slower learners all that time and there wasn't a big need to improve my grammar. I suppose the story really does come off as having the language a 20-year-old soldier would use in writing kind of a rough letter."

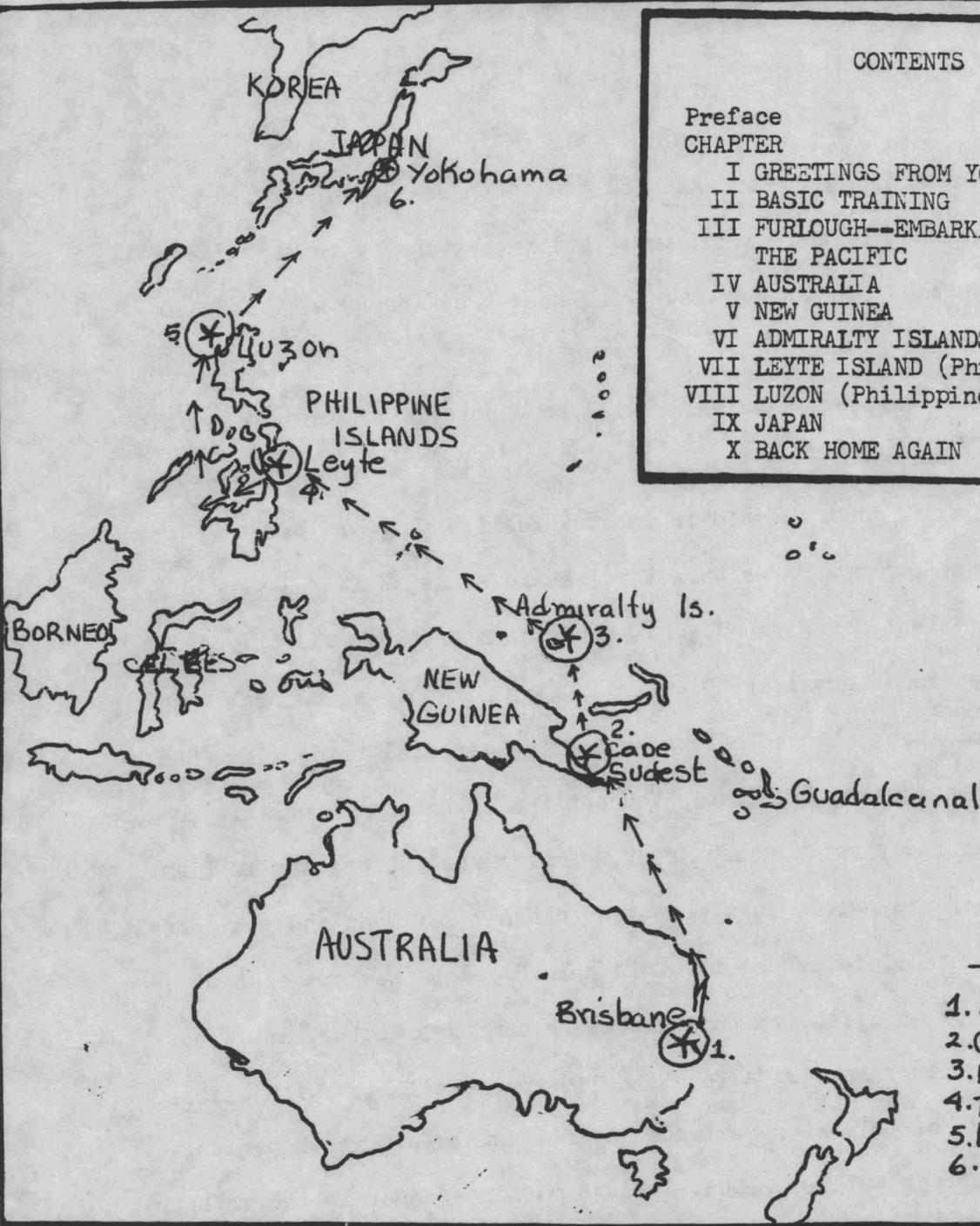
That, said Brown, is a big part of the book's charm.

So are his feeling-filled portrayals of his buddies; his vivid accounts of the killing, which he saw so much of and somberly took part in, and the traces of his homespun humor. His mother asked if he was scared. The soldier's answer: "Only when I'm asleep or awake."

— Chuck Offenburger

HOW IT WAS

SOUTH WEST PACIFIC AREA



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7th Cavalry Moves

1. Brisbane, Australia
2. Cape Sudest, N.G.
3. Los Negros, Admiralty Islands
4. Tacloban, Leyte Is.
5. Lingayen, Luzon Is.
6. Yokohama, Japan

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Richard J. Foss

PREFACE

Thank you senior citizens for what you did in the early 1940s. Your devotion to your country and your determination to stand up to the disastrous experience that our country faced in those "dark days" will long be remembered.

The book I have written, I am sure, will be enjoyable reading to you. This story took place during the "prime years" of your life. No doubt you will relate to every thing that is said in it. You realize that you had an edge on citizens who faced other wars we were involved in since WW I. You were offsprings of the "Great depression". That depression prepared all of you for WW II. Hard times were normal at that time. Doing without was no problem. You did little to hold back the war effort concerning material things. You had a saying that went something like this, "You can't miss having things if you never had them in the first place." Seems to me you had strong family ties. It appears most of you people knew what the "golden rule" ment and you understood the importance of following it. This helped you to be more content toward your outlook on life. Common sense was a common practice, also. You appeared to take things in stride. You handled your challenges with class.

The time span of this story extended over a twenty-six month period..... from May, 1943 through October, 1945. I was a machine-gunner in the infantry.

During those months I kept notes, partly in detail, following each campaign I was in. They were kept in my barracks bag far behind enemy lines while I was fighting. It is not difficult to remember every incident you were involved in during combat. Twenty-two of the twenty-six months I was in the service was spent in a combat zone in the South west Pacific area fighting the Japanese.

This is not a story about an heroic soldier who did everything under the sun to get this war over. This story concentrates on the everyday happenings of a simple, down to-earth, common foot soldier who was drafted into the service and is now a senior citizen himself. This is an attempt to tell an honest account, if the truth was known, of a soldier who most likely represents some 95% of the American servicemen who served in WW II. Among other things, this foot soldier, written about in this book, was brainwashed in basic training into following orders as best he could, he complained about the food and the fighting conditions that existed continuously, this soldier was homesick from day one, this G.I. was scared 98% of the time he was in the service..... 100% of the time when he was in combat, he disliked officers and some of his non-coms with a passion, this man developed a brother like relationship with close buddies...he was likely to break down if one of them got killed, some-way he came up with additional courage, from out of nowhere, when it was needed....He caught almost every sickness and rash that was available in the area in which he fought. Army life was bearable but his main objective was to, "Get this damn thing over with" Upper most in his mind was his belief in what he was fighting for. He had a slight fear of killing another human. That was in spite of the fact he was told again and again, "You must kill or get killed". Most of these foot soldiers were very, very concerned about doing something stupid that might get a buddy wounded or killed.

I feel that WW II is of great concern to many young people. I cannot tell you exactly why but I tested them in my Social Studies classrooms and they were very interested. They appeared to show interest in the history of the war. This book does bring out a lot of historical incidents and facts. Things like meeting up with American Prisoners in Luzon while driving toward the city of Manila in the Philippines. They had just been rescued. (I read about these men in my history book in high school in 1941). I saw a news reel that was being shown in a classroom where World history was being taught. The film showed General Mac Arthur giving a "peace" speech in Japan. I was in that film. I was standing guard as he left the platform after giving the speech. My platoon escorted him to this occasion. This incident was put into the social science book I used in class. I suppose the short stories I wrote about entertainers like Bob Hope, John Wayne Judy Garland and Dinah Shore and sport figures like heavyweight champ Joe Louis and "Sugar" Ray Robinson would be considered as "historical" events, also.

The characterizations shown here were not intended to be of specific individuals or groups. The illustrations were meant to show how or why an event happened and its relationship to the whole story. I attempted to tell and show each incident exactly as it appeared to be to me.

So..... grandparents, senior citizens who lived through this period that I have written about and you younger citizens who still have a feel for what took place during those "dark days" of the 1940s....and.... because it is the 50th anniversary of WW II, I would like to dedicate my book to you .

CHAPTER I

"GREETINGS FROM YOUR PRESIDENT"

In 1941 I was still in high school. I was aware that a world conflict was going on. The daily news was not good. Hitler was going crazy in Europe. In the Pacific Japan was telling everyone they intended to be heard from. In the back of my mind I felt sure this tension would 'blow over' before I would ever get involved. I must have been dreaming.

Things did not get better. Many, many of my close friends were going off to various branches of the service. When I graduated from high school I was told by my draft board that I would be temporarily exempt from active service because I was my mom's sole support. Each day the problems of the world grew by leaps and bounds. One Sunday, in early December, I stopped in the neighborhood drug store to have a bottle of coco-cola after playing in a basketball game at the Community Center. It was here that I learned from a report on the radio that Japan had attacked our Pacific fleet that was stationed in Pearl Harbour, Hawaii. The Japanese did a great deal of damage. Many American lives were lost. This incident shocked me into reality. I now realized that I was going to become a person involved. I didn't know when but I knew it was near. I had just turned 18 years of age.

Gradually, over the next two years, almost all of my close friends entered the service. Here I was twenty years old and still exempt. then it happened! I opened the mail one morning and there it was. A long white envelope that was addressed to me, personally. Upon opening the envelope a business like letter popped out. At the top of this paper I see "GREETINGS FROM YOUR PRESIDENT....YOU HAVE BEEN SELECTED BY YOUR FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS TO SERVE YOUR COUNTRY." Before you are inducted into the armed services you must be ap-

proved by the Selective Service Board. This letter notified me of the time and place where the approval was to take place.

A few days later, as I headed down town to meet with the board, I felt a little apprehensive. I feared the unknown. On the one hand, I hoped they would reject me. On the other hand, if I was rejected I might be considered a 'draft-dogger', or worse yet, a '4F'. To most people at that time a 'draft-dodger' was thought of as mentally unfit and a '4F' as physically unfit. Both of these classifications were looked upon with contempt.

I hated to leave the comfortable surroundings at home. Most of all I hated to leave mom. How would she provide for herself? Deep down I wanted to serve my country. My wish was granted. The Selective Service Board took one look at me and told me I would be reporting to the Induction Center at Camp Dodge, Iowa very shortly.

A lot of things go through one's mind on the day the draft board says you will report for your physical. You picture yourself going off to war and coming home minus a leg, arm, or maybe an eye - if at all. You wonder if you will have the courage to adapt to whatever the service life has in store for you. Will you be able to take orders? What, exactly will the food and quarters be like? Will you get home sick? The top question is.... will you really be capable of killing another human if the occasion comes up? It really does not matter what you think. If you are physically fit you must go into the service. It really is a scary, empty feeling to be told that you will report for active duty.

A few days after I was informed I would be inducted I received a second formal letter from the draft board. It told me to catch a train to Camp Dodge from downtown Des Moines at the ungodly hour of 6:45 A.M. I did as I was told. The train arrived at Camp Dodge about 9:00 A. M. There were a large number of

inductees. We were lined up alphabetically. Each of us was assigned to a clerk. The clerk questioned us about our age, occupations that we had held, and the amount of education we had. After this question period ended we were marched off to eat. This was my first exposure to the army term for meal time. The word they used was "chow". If "chow" was as good at every camp as it was at this camp I cannot see why anyone would complain. I have a feeling the meals at the reception centers were better, maybe not.

Following our meal, we were all escorted, by a soldier stationed at Camp Dodge, to a large room. We were ordered to remove all of our clothing. There were Doctors everywhere. Every part of your body was examined. Some parts were examined twice. We were asked more questions. The doctors punched, pinched, tapped and dug. Before long I was standing before my last doctor. He shook my hand, congratulated me and told me I was A-1. I really did not know if I should say, "thank you" or maybe try to deck him. The doctor was an officer. What I had been told about officers up to this point I decided it was smarter to say....., "thank you". I even added, "Sir".

I now had the satisfaction of knowing I was not a complete physical wreck. I will say that was the most complete physical examination I have ever had in my life. I did discover that I was not 100% when I applied for the para-troop outfits. I was ordered to jump from a height of some ten feet. To my total surprise my knee caved in. X-rays showed up some cartilage damage. I was qualified to join the Army, Navy or the Marines as long as I did not get in- to the para-troops.

Following the examinations we were divided into groups of 50-100. Each group was led into separate rooms. We all raised our right hand and repeated the oath which was led by a Second Lieutenant. I had no idea a soldier had to take an oath. Following this ceremony we all returned back to trains

we had arrived on earlier in the day.

A week later I arrived at Camp Dodge and was escorted to my new temporary home. We had another exam. When the Doctor said, "A-1" again, I knew there was no getting out.

Private Richard J. Foss, followed by a serial number eight digets long.... sounds like a convict....If they added a nickname like "Rocky" I would have felt like one. The haircut and the oversize uniform does not help. When we entered the clothing room to get our TAILOR -MADE uniforms some strange happenings took place. They weigh you and they measure you. They ask you your exact sizes. They proceed to throw any thing , every size possible at you. It is kind of comical. You are handed a large cloth bag called a barracks bag. For each garment you are asked to give your correct size. I asked for size 32 shorts. I get a size 34. I ask for a 36 undershirt. I get a 34. Just for kicks I asked for a 34-15 shirt. The guy behind the counter gave me a 33-15. I was afraid to ask for an 11D shoe for fear they would give me a size 34. The shoes they did give to me were big. I was glad because my feet later flattened into them.

As I was dressing I kept looking at the sign above the mirror. It said, of all things, "You are now looking at the best dressed soldier in the world. " I am sure they meant that. I felt like I looked like something the cat dragged in. After stuffing our cloths into our barracks bag we were marched off to the barracks that we were to share with some 55 fellow recruits.



The first day in Camp Dodge we did very little but carry out a few orders from the barracks non-coms. At night it seemed all everyone wanted to do was talk about where we would each go for basic training. I learned the blunt reality of Private vs Non-com right away. About the time you closed your eyes each night and felt yourself drop off into dream land you would hear this soft, sweet, soothing.....sounding voice from afar say, "ALL RIGHT, HIT THE DECK SOLDIER.... AND DAMNED FAST." At first I thought it was just a very horrible night mare. When I hear this voice speaking I would dream that I had gotten dressed, I had made my bed and.....suddenly this big chunk of ice in the shape of a hand reached under the warm covers, grabbed my shoulder and almost shook me till my teeth fell out. At the same instant that same voice that spoke earlier said, loud enough to wake the dead, "WHATS THE MATTER SOLDIER-YOU HARD OF HEARING?" The second order sounded more like a death threat when he shouted, "GET THE HELL OUT SIDE... ON THE DOUBLE." The first time I was awoken like this I realized that I was now in the army.

Detail assignments were done after morning chow. At noon we ate. After the noon "chow" we went back to our assigned detail. At around 3:30 P.M. we returned to the barracks to prepare for a ceremony called retreat. He explained the purpose of this formation. It takes place in each military camp where American soldiers are stationed. It is done, if the Sergeant told me correctly, to honor all servicemen who gave their lives for our country. It was at this first "retreat" that we new recruits learned what "sun-tans" were, how to dress up a line to prepare for commands, what is really meant by the commands "Attention", "At Ease" and "Parade Rest".

Each and every day more and more new men arrived. Also, each and every day more and more men were leaving for various basic training camps. On the morning of the fourth day I spent at Camp Dodge I was told to get ready to leave.

At 4:00 P.M. I was ordered to fall out in formation with my full barracks bag. I was taken to the train depot after early chow. It was 5:00 P.M. before we left the Camp Dodge train station. Because I was told to wear my winter O.D. uniform I felt I was heading to a cold weather area. This also could have suggested that I could end up in Europe. The train took us to Des Moines. We did not arrive in Des Moines until 9:00 P.M. No one in the group, on the train, knew where we were heading. The train had a two hour wait. I got permission to leave the train for those two hours. I got on a city bus and visited my mom. She was hard to awake but I finally got her up. This was going to be my last chance to see her for awhile and I did not want to miss the opportunity. I explained to her that I only had a short time to visit. We talked as I ate all of the cookies in the house and drank the last drop of milk in the ice box. I finally told her that since there was nothing else left to eat or drink that it was probably time to leave. I kissed her, reminded her how much I loved her and told her I would write as soon as I found out where I was going to be. This is the first time in my life I had ever left home knowing I might be gone for a long time. It left an empty feeling inside of me.

I got back to the train in plenty of time. I reported to the officer who was in charge. As we boarded the train we were assigned to sleeping berths. For some reason, the minute I stepped on that train I felt a change come over me. I knew from here on out I was going to have to take things one day at a time until this war crisis got over. Soon after the train moved the conductor told us we were heading west. While we were on this train we were treated like important people. We ate in the dinner. We had a porter to wait on us if we so desired. The passengers in the cars surrounding us were mostly military personal. I had never been on a Pullman car before. The sights from the window

were out of this world. The scenery was beautiful. I saw things that I had read about in school. I was really fascinated by it all. The first sight of a snow covered mountain is enough to take your breath away. I was traveling in a fashion I could not have been able to afford if I was required to pay.

In the service, I soon discovered, rumors were always going around. The rumors in this car had us being sent from the state of Washington down to Texas and on to Colorado for our basic training. After three days on the train our group leader found out that we were going to go to someplace in California. Ah.... sunny California... swimming in the ocean...all of those glamorous movie stars. It would be beautiful. How wrong I was. I did not get even a glimpse of the ocean for 16 weeks. I was only there for 17 weeks. As for the sunshine.... I got my belly full of that. Marching with full field pack for even a short period of time was murder. It was punishing when we were ordered to double time the last two miles of a hike with gas masks covering our face. The longer force march over eight to fifteen miles was I am sure you get the point. As a consolation, I did get to see a few movie stars.

Our train arrived at Los Angeles, California after three days and nights travel. We pulled in about 6:00 P.M. The group I was in was transferred to a slower day coach train. I ate supper on the train and proceeded to my assigned seat on the train. I sat down next to a sailor who was returning to his base after taking shore leave. I asked him if he was aware of any army camps along this route we were taking. He said the only one that he had seen was a place called Roberts. I asked him what he knew about this Camp Roberts. All he could tell me was that it was very big and it was located in a part of California that was really hot most of the year around. The conductor came by and pulled down the window shades in the car we were in after it got dark



out side. I asked the sailor why he did that. He explained that the track that this train was moving upon was located near the Pacific Ocean. He said that lights from a train can be seen from a great distance out in the ocean. He told me it had been rumored that Japanese 'subs' were recently sighted along

this coast. The railroad was not going to take any chances. I experienced a feeling about the closeness of war that I had never felt in Des Moines, Iowa.

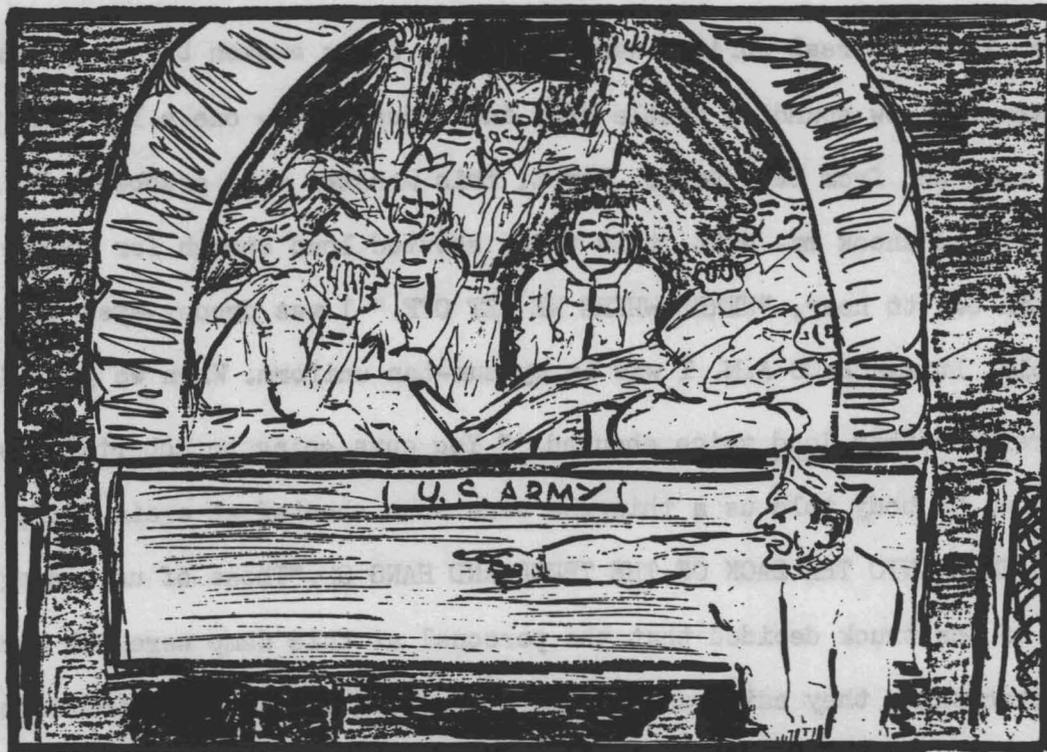
As I was dozing off I thought of another experience regarding war and the people involved in war that happened earlier while we were on the Pullman train. The Pullman train, as I mentioned earlier, had a dinner car on it. On the way to the dinner car, from the Pullman car I was riding in, it was necessary to pass through another Pullman car. This car was occupied by Army men who had just returned from Europe. They were Military Police. I was told by the conductor that they just returned from Italy and they were escorting a number of German prisoners to a prison camp somewhere in California. They got on this train in New York. This car they were in must have been the area that they came to to take their break after pulling guard on the German prisoners. The conductor told me the prisoners were holed up in some cars near the end

of the train. All of the Military soldiers in that car seemed very nervous. They appeared flighty and very irrational. They all wore sun-tan uniforms. The uniforms looked like they had not been cleaned for a long time. They each carried a loaded weapon. Every time we passed through their car to go to a meal they seemed to be yelling and arguing- ready to fight. It was scary to walk through their car. One evening, just before dark, two of them did get into a fight. One M.P. knocked the head of another M.P. through a train window. At the next train stop an Army ambulance was waiting to take the injured M.P. to a hospital. I do not know when or where these M.P. soldiers got off of the train we were on but was sure glad they left.

After I had fallen off to sleep and was in another world that seemed much, much nicer than the real world I was living in, I was awoken by one of those soft spoken, mellow sounding gentle army individuals----- one a lot like the loveable sergeant from Camp Dodge. First, this monster vice grabbed hold of my shoulder and shook me. Next, this thing shouted loud enough for anyone in whole train car to hear, "HERES WHERE WE GET OFF." I was droopy-eyed and a little cold. It was 2:00 A.M. I was in my sun-tan uniform. When we got off of the train another loud voice shouted, " You guys going to Roberts?" How did we know. No body told us a thing. We were soon shouted at again. "O.K, GET YOUR REAR ENDS INTO THE BACK OF THE TRUCK AND HANG ON." Those of us riding in the back of the truck decided that the personal at this camp were all hard of hearing. Everything they said was done in a shouting manner. The ride to camp was horrible. We were all cold, sleepy, hungry, over 2,000 miles from home riding in the back of a truck with an insane driver at the wheel....not knowing what our future might bring(if in fact, we had a future). When the driver slowed down we all looked out the back of the truck to see what looked like a prison area. There were high wire fences around. There were two story

yellow buildings lined up in rows.

After the trucks stopped the shouting began again. The tender voice of a smiling Sergeant yelled, "GET THE HELL OUT OF THAT TRUCK AND GET OVER TO THE GOD DAMN ORDERLY ROOM.". It was pitch dark. I, for one, could not see the orderly room even if I knew what the, "God damn", thing looked like. As it turned out, an orderly room is where you pick up your gear and things like bedding. The non-com in charge of the orderly room was not jumping with joy to see us at 3:00 A.M. in the morning. In between yawns and stretches and a few choice profane comments, he issued us our cots and blankets. As soon as I got mine I went to my assigned barracks, flopped down on a cot and fell into an exhausted sleep. Tomorrow had to be a better day.



CHAPTER II

BASIC TRAINING

So this is where I will be doing my basic training. It was the middle of the night when I arrived here and I was too tired and cold to care much about how things looked. When I finally woke, I discovered the barracks were similar to those at Camp Dodge. They were larger, however. The barracks had a shower and restroom area at one end of the building, on the lower level. A small room for non-coms was located on both levels. One room was on the second floor at the top of the steps and above the rest room area. The other non-com quarters was located on the opposite end of the building downstairs. I suppose there was a reason for this but I never figured out why. The barracks at Camp Roberts held at least twice the men that the barracks held in Camp Dodge.

When I got fully awake that first day at this new camp I realized that about one half of the men I left Des Moines with, were not around. It seems on the train trip they got assigned to other camps. Because of the long train trip we were allowed to "sleep in". About 10:00 A.M. I got hungry. I found the closest mess hall to the barracks I was assigned to and asked about breakfast. The cook looked at me a little wild-eyed and said, "Your ~~are~~ new around here, right?" I told him I was. He just laughed and told me to come back at noon. Being a guy who does not like to waste valuable "sack time", I returned to my assigned barracks to resume my beauty sleep. However, I did wake up before noon.

While I was waiting in line for chow, I struck up a conversation with one of the day time clerks from the orderly room. I asked him questions about

Camp Roberts. He told me this was one of the largest Infantry Basic Training areas in the United States. It could be the biggest. He also told me I could count on a complete dose of tough, hard-nosed training before I left this place. This camp was noted for that. Before I left him he pointed out places that I showed an interest in. After lunch I "cased" the camp. First, I found the closest places to get food. Other than the mess hall, that turned out to be the post exchange and the Service Club. Next, I looked for recreational areas where I could get into a basketball game or at least I could shoot baskets in my spare time. The recreational areas were all over the camp.

The barracks where I was assigned when I first arrived was only to be a temporary assignment. I was only going to stay there until they completed an interview. After they reviewed my background and education and made some decisions I was to get a permanent placement-- at least for the next 17 weeks. They intend to place you in a situation in which you would be best suited. Does the army make mistakes---you might ask.? You be the judge. When they got done checking me out they decided I should be placed in, get this, the INTELLIGENCE and Reconnaissance (I and R) Regiment. Someone, somewhere along the line had to be fooled. Me, in the Intelligence and Reconnaissance. It really sounded more academic and high class than it really was. The main purpose behind this outfit is to detect and collect all possible information related to enemy tactics, field maneuvers, troop movements, weapons and things of that nature and make use of that information against the enemy. It could not have possibly been overly complicated or else they would have not chosen me to become a part of that Regiment. I was going to be placed in one of two phases of the I and R. It depended upon which they needed most. I was either going to be trained as a scout whose job it would be to go out and find informa-

tion or I was going to learn how information that was brought back by a scout was going to be best used against the enemy. Sound interesting? I thought so.

I was assigned to Company "A" of the 87th Battalian. Not one guy in that barracks came from Iowa. I was home sick already. It seemed hard to make any friends. Almost every state in the United States was represented in that one building. It was strange to me to hear a southern "drawl" and the eastern "youse-guys". I did finally make some close friends. I became a close friend to a guy from Missouri. I guess the reason we hit it off so good was because we had a lot of similar characteristics. Neither of us were good at close order drill. It was the same on the rifle range. We both had more than our share of K.P. for messing up.

The number one man in our barracks was Platoon Sergeant Skinner. What a guy he was. He was number one in many ways. He really stuck by the men in the barracks. When he gave an order you followed. He ruled that place. He was only about five feet tall. It really was funny to watch him give hell to a

big six foot private for some dumb move he had made. We nick-named him "Skin". He was well respected. No one talked back to him. Skinner had his quarters down stairs. Up stairs were two non-coms. They watched over the men on the second floor. Both men were Cor-



porals. The most memorable non-com, other than "Skin", was Corporal Keith. Corporal Keith was from Brooklyn, New York. He really enjoyed the authority that the two strips on the sleeve of his shirt premitted him to throw out. It seemed he just waited for the opportunity to show that he was boss. We gave the Corporal his chance early in our stay at Camp Roberts to make use of that authority. One night, about five minutes after "lights out", we were all in our bunks talking and singing like we generally did. Corporal Keith came out of his room, which was at the opposite end of where I was bunked down and shouted, "All right youse guys, pipe down." As he started back in to his room someone in a bunk near me blared out, "Blow it out your butt." Now, even I knew better than to say something like that to a man of such authority as Corporal Keith. I was not the one who spoke out. He flipped the lights back on. He demanded to know who said that. Of course, no one knew. Everyone ducked under the covers and pretended to be asleep. To say that Corporal Keith was very upset would be putting it mildly. Needless to say it got very quiet.

At 2:00 A.M. the lights up stairs came on. There stood our buddy, Corporal Keith. He was fully clothed. He was shouting orders as loud and as fast as they would come out of his mouth. Things like, "Hit the deck", and "Get a move on". He ordered all of us to get completely dressed, lay out all of our gear and he had us fall out in our full field packs. The pack held a helmet liner, steel helmet, and all equipment that has been issued for use in the field. He kept shouting "MOVE" between each order. I was expecting him to tell us to fold up the cot and mattress and carry them also. It appeared that our honorable Corporal was mad. We fell out in the dark, in ranks. We double timed over to the parade grounds. He marched us for over two hours. We were dismissed and sent back to our bunks. You could hear a pin drop from the time

he dismissed us until we got back in the sack. Two hours later we had to get up and start another day. Corporal Keith got his revenge. He was voted the top non-com jerk by all the enlisted men on the second floor of our platoon, Company "A" of the 87th Battalian. The Corporal eventually cooled down and turned out to be a half way sensible human. The other non-coms we had to work with gave us few problems.

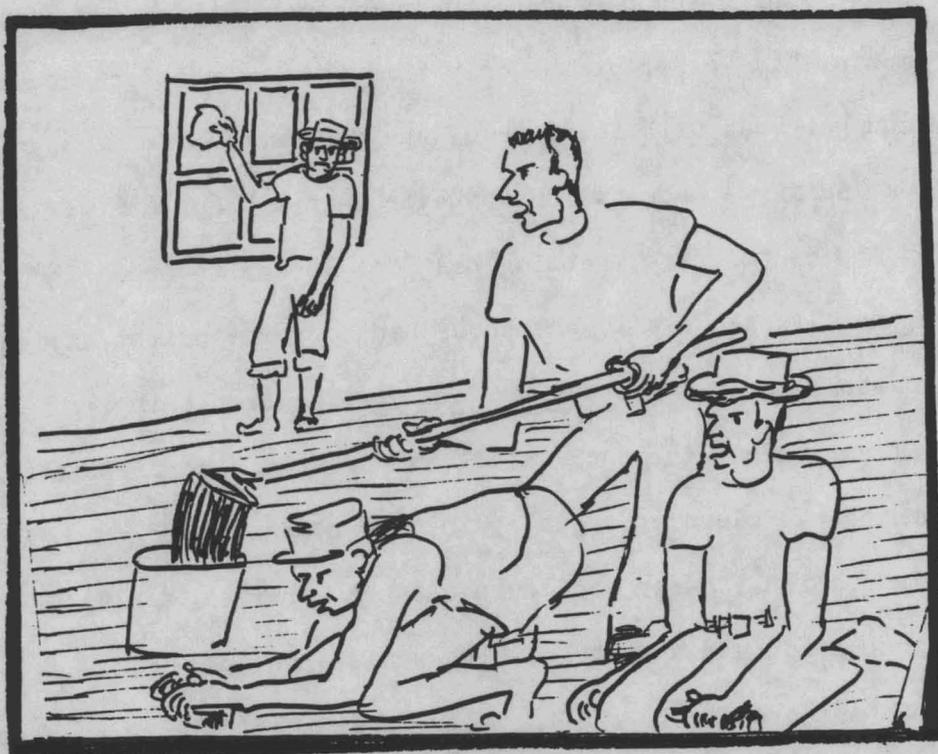
The routine here was much more serious, intense and demanding than it was at Camp Dodge. Our main objective is to learn I and R. A large part of our routine is directed at physical fitness. Unless you are assigned a special detail, like guard duty or K.P., your day in camp started in the manner that is written below. (when you see a photo copy, such as the one shown below on this page, of comments, that are written in cursive lettering and the comments look like they were written fifty years ago it, is only because they

Our routine went some thing like this, if we weren't on K.P. ~~on~~ guard, or any other kind of detail, up at 6, reveille, ^{in your sleep} breakfast, back to the barracks, a quick sweeping & dry mopping job, sit around till about 7:30, then another formation, with ^{rifles} marched over to the parade grounds close order, drill ^{2 hour} 10 minutes, ~~break~~ break, stacked ^{rifles} equipment, ^{collected} ~~collected~~ for an hour, back to the barrack, ~~put~~ put on packs & helmets, and marched off to one of our areas, which was usually about

were written fifty years ago. They are parts of the original notes from which this story was written.)

When we did get to the areas that we marched to each day, to do work on a project or problem we were going to work on, we dropped out full field packs and got busy. We not only worked on I and R. out at these sites, we worked on anything and everything that taught us to be cautious when we went into combat. Many times when we returned from these sites we were ordered to double time the last two miles into camp. Most of the time we wore out gas mask the last mile. In that 90-100 degrees heat our masks filled with sweat. After we got back to camp, showered and fell out for "retreat" it was not unusual for 3-6 men to pass out in the ranks. I never figured out what all of this "running with the gas mask" deal was all about. It must have been part of our physical fitness training.

Besides learning sessions in the field we did various other activities to get ourselves prepared for what may come later. We attended movies about topics a soldier has to consider. They showed a few movies on the effects of venereal diseases, how different poison gases harm you and what your chances are to survive if you follow certain precautions the army recommended. We witnessed a few movies that propagandized the enemy. Near the camp were areas that we were given instruction on hand to hand combat. Another place we went through creeping and crawling exercises under live machine gun fire. While I was at Camp Roberts one poor guy raised up and got shot in the rear. You name it - we did it. We not only had to learn everything about our own gun, we were shown how to use many other type of weapons. I had one weapon that gave me trouble. It was the HEAVY WATER COOLED MACHINE GUN. This is the weapon I was assigned to operate later in combat. I eventually mastered this weapon and became first gunner in the machine gun squad I was a member of.



Every Saturday morning we had barracks inspection. The Friday night before was spent cleaning the place from top to bottom. Everyone in the barracks helped. This chore required deep cleaning with soap, water and brushes. Everything had to be spotless on Saturday morning. The inspection was done by a Captain. He inspected the floors, window, latrines, personal clothing of each man and even the bunk each man slept in. The last thing the Captain inspected was your personal weapon. After all the men in each barracks, as well as the barracks itself, had been inspected they were rated. One barracks was awarded a large "E" that was placed on the side of the barracks. This "E" award was simply a piece of plywood about two feet square.

Cleaning the barracks for this inspection each week was a lot of work. We worked in groups. One group moved bunks, another carried water and the third group scrubbed. Two men cleaned windows. The water had to be carried in pails from the downstairs latrine. Each week we switched groups so that no one was omitted from doing the scrubbing. G.I soap will clean anything. All of the

time we worked cleaning the barracks, the radio was playing our favorite "big band" music. This was about the only time in camp that you could be out of uniform and get away with it. Some of the garb worn by the cleaning detail did look funny. We made it fun instead of work. Each man was responsible for changing his own bedding, getting his foot locker in order and hanging his clothing neatly. Above all, the shoes had to shine bright enough that you could see yourself in them--- that was a must. The last thing you did on Friday night before you hit the sack was clean your gun. The first thing you did Saturday morning was clean your gun again. You cleaned your gun again just before gun inspection. I swear you could clean the barrel a million times before gun inspection and a spec of dirt would show up.

"Clean the barracks night" was the only night that "lights out" was at 11:00 P.M. instead of 9:00 P.M. After the floor had been cleaned, no one was allowed to wear shoes. You put your shoes on outside on Saturday morning when you went out for reveille and breakfast. When you returned you took your shoes off before you entered the building. This little rule got me into a bit of trouble. On one of the Friday nights, right after we finished our part of the clean up, I was sitting on the top stairs of the back porch in the light provided by the barracks, shining my shoes. It was dark. Someone started up the stairs heading toward the door with his boots on. I yelled, "Hey Mac, remove your shoes before you go in there...who the hell do you think you are... we just scrubbed the floor." The person I spoke to stopped. As he leaned over to remove his shoes, I caught a glimpse of two bars glistening from the light that shined from the door. After he removed his shoes he entered our barracks holding his shoes. He came out a few minutes later, sat down, put his shoes back on and walked away. I froze from the moment I realized it was our Captain. Someone must have said something to "Skin". He came-busting.

out the barracks door, he sat down next to me and said, "Foss, you idiot, do you know who that was that you just gave orders to?" I told him, " I didn't at the time but I do now." Sergeant Skinner told me I was damn lucky to get away with what I had done. Actually, I had a lot of respect for the Captain. I was sure I was in serious trouble but nothing ever came of it. The Captain must have been a Private at one time himself. Possibly, he made a mistake he was not proud of, either.

In a way, I believe all of us in the barracks looked forward to Saturday morning inspection because after inspection was over those who received week end passes got to leave camp. On Saturday we all dressed in our cleanest sun-tan uniforms, had breakfast and went back to the barracks to make a final check of our personal possessions. This is a time we spent doing or re-doing anything we felt needed to be done one last time before inspection.

At 9:00 A.M. we stood by ready for inspection from the commanding officer. We could hear him as he climbed the stairs. He was always followed by a long string of First and Second Lieutenants. Sergeant Skinner was close by. As soon as the Captain's foot hit the top step Skinner would shout, "Attention". The Captain would hesitate a minute and Skinner would say, "Parade Rest". As the Captain moved in front of us we each would snap to attention. He insisted we look him straight in the eyes. If he asked you a question you gave him a direct answer... followed by, "Sir". I will have to admit that the first time he stepped in front of me for this reason I came a slight fraction of a second from bursting into a nervous smile which would have been followed by an uncontrollable fit of laughter. Following the inspection of each man in the barracks the Captain and his staff leave the barracks. You know the inspection is going good when Sergeant Skinner gives the O.K. sign behind his back, after the Captain and his staff leave, in front of the Sergeant. If the in-

spection goes bad many men lose their week-end passes. In the 17 weeks I was there I never heard of a man in our barracks who lost a pass for this reason. I will admit the inspection does cause a little tension. After the barracks inspection was over and Skinner gave us the O.K. sign some of the guys would yell, mess up their bunk, throw personal belongings at each other and many other dumb things. I think they were letting it be known that it was a relief to have that part of the inspection over with.

The part I dreaded most was when they lined us up in formation and had gun inspection. I had cleaned the stock of my gun at least five times and run a ram rod through the barrel no less than eight times just minutes before we were ordered to fall out for rifle inspection. The entire platoon would be called to attention followed by the order, "Right shoulder.... Arms". When the Captain stepped in front of you you were expected to do an automatic "Inspection Arms" movement. From this position, the officer would grab the rifle from you like he was going to hit you over the head with it. (If an officer was inspecting your rifle and you did not especially care for that one particular officer you could make a fast move that could cause him slight embarrassment. As he makes his move to take your gun from you--- you can push the rifle downward swiftly with both thumbs and make him either fumble for the gun or miss it entirely. Most officers hated it when you did this. Of course if you did do this with success your life in camp wasn't worth a plug five cent piece. After the officer takes the rifle from you he would inspect the stock, body and butt of the rifle. The last thing he did before returning your rifle was to look down the barrel for that one lone speck of dust. It seemed he always found the speck he was looking for in my gun. Ol "Skin" got to become an expert at talking the Captain out of putting me on detail for this mishap. Skinner used excuses that I never knew existed. (One Saturday

the Captain could not find a speck of dirt in the barrel of my gun....my gun was spotless. The Captain looked at Skinner---Skinner looked at the Captain and asked him what the problem was. The Captain said, " There must be some mistake, Sergeant. THIS MAN'S GUN IS CLEAN."He said the last part loud enough for the whole platoon to hear. It broke up Sergeant Skinner and the platoon.) At the completion of this inspection we were dismissed. This was the signal for those who had passes to leave camp

Passes were good until Monday morning when it was time to fall out for reveille, I believe. Most of the guys on week-end passes came in late on Sunday night so they could get a little rest before the new week started. Passes were issued 16 of the 17 weeks I was there. The whole camp had to stay in camp a week because of some special alert.

Each one of us was assigned at least one guard duty task during our time at Roberts. I was assigned one time. My assignment was to guard...off and on ... for a twenty four hour period, the Camp Roberts water tower. When you pull twenty four hour guard duty you spend two hours guarding a certain area and four hours off duty until you have completed a twenty four hour period. The water tower at Camp Roberts was located at the top of a hill in a very, very remote area of the camp grounds. At night it was pitch dark. You had trouble seeing your hand in front of your face. While you are on guard, during war time and protecting government property, you are in complete charge. Anyone who comes near the area you are guarding must be challenged and stopped. You have the right and legal authority to open fire on any one who fails to stop when you order them to do so. Seldom do you have a problem. You must not fire at anyone who does not stop until you have given the intruder three chances to halt. I was only challenged by my Officer of the day and the Sergeant of the guard as I was being relieved. Along with guard duty you are expected.

to learn the Ten Commands that go along with Army guard duty. Actually, you are suppose to have memorized them. I did not do that. I did, however, memorize guard command number one. If any pficer asked me to repeat any of the ten commands... I always recited number one. It got me by. I shall never forget it. It goes, "I Shall walk my post in a military manner... Keeping always on the alert....observing everything that takes place within sight or hearing."



The one and only time I did pull guard at this water tower turned out to be a rather embarassing situation for me. My second two hour guard period took place during the darkest part of the night. When I returned to the guard house the Corporal of the Guard asked if I had seen or heard anything while on guard. I told them I had only seen the Sergeant of the guard when he brought my relief. It was at this point that I was told, "If you had been on guard duty in enemy territory you would have been a dead duck." It seems a sharp American Reconnaissance unit was practicing moves to see how efficient they were to infiltrate. They used this water tower as their objective. I was the one guarding it. Supposedly, they had some way marked U R DEAD , in chalk, on the back of my shirt while I was walking around the water tower. I swear I hear nothing. I did not see a thing that whole two hour period. To this day I do not know if this message was put on my back as they said, or not. I did sleep for a short time before I went on guard duty that night but I was wide awake when I went on duty. If this was

not a joke on me and this Reconnaissance squad did mark U R DEAD they did a supper job. I will say, "I'm glad they were on our side. This Reconnaissance unit was made up of American Indians. This embarrassing situation did do one positive thing for me. It made me doubly alert when I was doing any type of guard duty overseas and in combat.

K.P., or, kitchen police, was used many times as a punishment for goofing up. In basic training it was a detail that noone liked but everyone was expected to do. However, everyone, for some reason or another did not get to do K.P. At Camp Roberts if your name appeared on the bulletin board under K.P. you were to place a white towel on your foot locker the night before you went on duty so the cook would know who to wake up. He came around at 4:00 A.M. If the cook woke up the wrong man their was usually a big commotion and for someone there was hell to pay. After the cook woke you up, you got dressed and headed for the mess hall... usually in a daze. You ate your breakfast. After you ate you set up the tables for the troops. When they arrived you served them until all of them were fed. After they finished you cleared the tables. Next, you washed dishes, by hand and all of the large pots and pans and put them away. You did this routine for each meal. Between meals you peeled potatoes, onions and cut up vegetables and fruits. You smashed empty cans. You carried garbage out to the trash cans or to the sump. If you were not doing these things you were helping prepare food for the next meal. If you were not doing



anything else you were washing the windows of the mess hall, mopping the floors, sweeping or policing up the area. K.P. was a lot of work. To most guys it was a big pain in the butt. Sometimes I felt there was no justice in this mans army. The night I was selected to my forth trip on K.P. I learned that one man on out floor had yet to serve his first time.

Most men in the barracks went to San Francisco or Los Angles on week-end pass trips. I had a good chance a couple of times to go, with expenses paid, but I did not do it. I did go to a small town about 14 miles from camp called Paso Robles. The first time I went because I was curious. I had no money to spend so I went with a few buddies. We took the free bus into town and visited the local U.S.O. for free coffee. We did not stay long. The second time I went to this town I went with a close friend who insisted he pay my way. I had a great time. I felt guilty that he paid for everything until he convinced me that was the most fun he had since he came to this camp.

To me the most miserable place in camp was the firing range. I really dreaded going on this site. For some reason when I got all strapped up like I was told to do in preparation to fire the rifle I could not relax and fire. Actually, I was really tense. Every man in our barracks earned the higher marksmanship awards the first or second time around. I was still struggling the third time around. Even my buddy from Kansas was not as bad as me. Could this possibly be why I ended up in a water-cooled machine gun squad?

By the time all of us in the barracks spent eight weeks in basic training we got to know one another very well. The training got more bearable. Time seemed to pass more quickly. To me it was amazing how men of such different backgrounds, talents, abilities and skills were able to work and live together in one big enclosed building. It got to be like a big family. Men who were unfriendly somehow turned that disposition around to friendly. The person-

alities of the men varied widely. There were men from the East like Tom Ainia. He never seemed to get upset about anything. He had the sence of humor of a talented comic in a night club. He was quick tempered. He was a "gold-brick". A great athlete.. It was a little hard to get use to his dialect. He either liked you or did not like you. If he liked you anything he had that you wanted was yours. Most of the guys from the east seemed to be "loners" to me unless they buddied up to another easterner. These guys were hardest for me to make friends with.

Out here in the west, just a short distance from Camp Roberts, lived what I call a typical westerner. His name was Wade Bissell. Wade did not trust most people in the barracks. He many times got upset over little or nothing. He appeared to have money. If he did not have money he put on that he did. He enjoyed making others look dumb. I would say Wade got into more arguments than anyone else in the building. As a result of his attitude, the men in the barracks taunted him. On week-ends he had been out drinking, they would short sheet his bed or hang his bed out the window after "lights out". Catch him in the right mood and you found a very thoughtful, caring man. I do not know how many times he offered to give me money. so I would go into town and relax. His G.I. haircut made him appear as a Roman Monk.

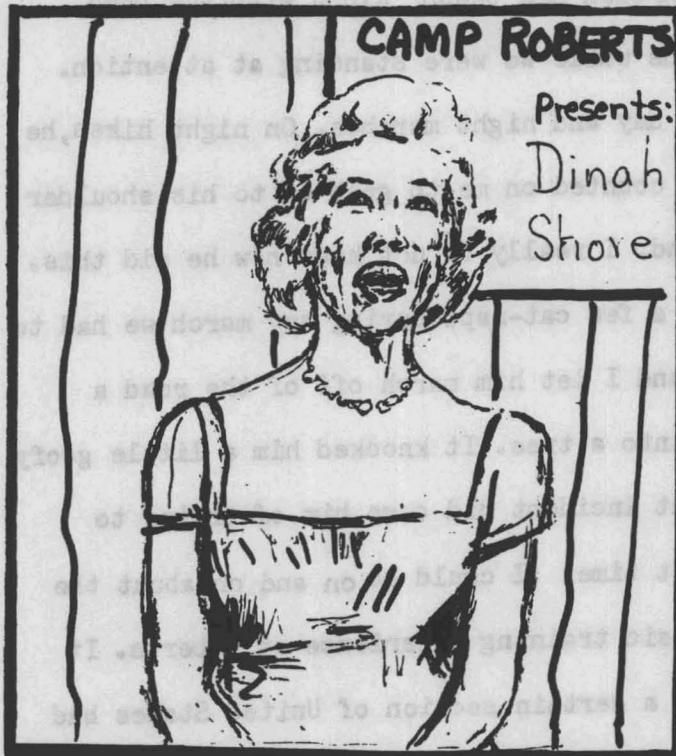
The men I became friends to from the North and Mid-West appeared to vary the most. A number of them carried around in their voice , in their walk or just from their plain appearance that "big hick" look. You big farmer from I-O-WAY, or, " How's the corn doing back home .", was one of the things I heard after I was introduced as being from Iowa. The men in the barracks from states other than the Mid-West and North reminded us, " You can always tell a guy from the Central and North States but you can't tell them much." One of my favorite friends that I felt was very close to the normal subject that

represents Central and North United States was a favorite to all in the barracks and a courteous, polite, even tempered and thoughtful human being. His name was Bud Judd. He was the kind of guy you would like your sister to marry. He came from Nebraska. Bud and I chummed around a lot. After the war I went to his home town and met his family. We wrote a song together. He wrote the lyrics. He was proud of it. He tried to get the song published. Because I was from the Central States of the United States I felt more secure being around men who had been raised there. We had more in common.

If you needed someone around you just because they were fun to be with it had to be someone from the South. Without a doubt these guys lived a charmed life. First of all they got your attention and gained your confidence by simply speaking. Out of their mouths came "homey" things like, "Ya all come back.... hear", after you paid them a visit. You never knew if they were talking to you personally or a whole bunch of people with that "Ya all" jazz. These men claimed that you have never lived until you have tasted "hawg jaws and black-eyed peas." I have tasted both of them. They are awful. Most of the men I was in the service with who came from the south had a good sense of humor. They appeared to make the most out of any given "live" situation. I also found out later, in combat, they made good soldiers. My most pleasant and fun filled experience at Camp Roberts took place with a true southerner from the state of Arkansas. It was with a man named Willis Bond. We kidded Willis a lot. Most of the kidding was done so we could listen to him talk. We nicknamed him appropriately, "rebel". His favorite expression, after giving us all his disappointed look was, "A rebel never has a chance in a barracks full of damn yankees." Willis stood next to me in every formation. He did a perfect imitation of our Captain as the Captain shouted, "BA--TIAL--IAN", just before we were called to attention. The crack in the Captains voice was mimicked by

Willis to perfection. He whistled through his teeth along with the band when they played on special occasions while we were standing at attention. This guy marched in front of me on day and night marches. On night hikes, he many times slept while marching. He counted on me to grab on to his shoulder if he started to move off of the road. I really do not know how he did this. He claimed that he was able to take a few cat-naps during any march we had to take. One night I was not thinking and I let him march off of the road a very short distance. Willis walked into a tree. It knocked him a little goofy and he really got upset with me. That incident did cure him of trying to sleep while marching during the night time. I could go on and on about the type of men that were found in my basic training experience at Roberts. It is untrue to say that all men from a certain section of United States had exact characteristics. It is safe to say that many of them had similar characteristics. I am pleased to have had the opportunity to take basic training with Americans who cared about the future of our country. I learned a lot from them about the part of America they came from and the type of people they are. I did learn one real fact. If you stick any of them with a pin you will hear them say "ouch" no matter what section of this country they come from. They are all human and they all have feelings.

Here I am in the state of California. I have been here all of this time and have yet to see a movie star. I did get to see two shows put on by movie celebrities but not until basic training had almost ended. One show featured Judy Garland. The stage was down in a valley. The soldiers sat on the side of a big hill. The crowd was huge. When Judy performed the G.I.s went "nuts" over her. She was only going to sing three songs and leave. She ended up doing all of 14 songs. The second show I got to see just before training ended was filled with stars. There was George Raft, Donald O'Conner, Peggy Ryan and a



singing group called the 'Golden Gate Quartet. Later in the show, a singer named Ray Eberly, who was a favorite and Dinah Shore's my favorite, showed up to sing for us. Eberly did a great job. Dinah was even better. She asked for requests. All the servicemen in the audience spoke at once. She yelled into the microphone, "AT EASE, FELLOWS." When that did not quiet them, she shouted louder, "ALL RIGHT, KNOCK IT OFF." All of

the soldiers seemed to really like her. She sang many of her well known songs. Dinah was on stage over a half hour. She received a standing ovation when she went off stage. Both shows were terrific.

The last two weeks of basic training brought with it the big test. We were to go on a ten day bivouac. This is an army exercise done at the end of the training period. The purpose is to show all who have been making this effort to become a combat soldier, what it is like living under combat conditions—minus actual fighting and shelling. I felt it was a way to show all of us what it is like to live off of the land. For the next few days we put into practice what we had learned the past 15 weeks less a barracks to live in, and a mess hall to eat in. We carried out our I and R tactics. We made use of the various things we had learned day by day on our marches to the different sites in camp. Each night we dug a fox hole. We were limited to one canteen of water for each day. We marched, marched and marched some more. The non-

coms and the officers we had trained with over these past weeks set up combat problems for us to solve.

Since I had never done anything like this before I felt it was ten days of pure misery. It did give us a slight taste of what combat could be like but it really felt more like a long camping trip. I felt like I had not taken a bath for two months. On the next to the last day of the bivouac we had mail-call, much like it would be done in combat overseas. It really was a good feeling to get mail after spending days out in the wilderness. I thought at that time-- if it is a good feeling to get mail here--- what must it mean to get mail from home out in the field some thousands and thousands of miles from home.

The afternoon of that day, we found a nice open spot of soft grass and the enlisted men challenged the non-coms to a friendly game of football. Those dummies accepted. After we got started the officers wanted in the game. God, it felt good to throw a block on the Captain. It felt good to tackle a non-com hard enough to make his teeth rattle. Corporal Keith did not play. He had a head ache-- darn it. The First Sergeant did not even go out on bivouac. We all took it easy on "Skinner". We tore them up..... well, not really..... We did beat them 12-6. The officers and non-coms took everything in good spirit.

The night before we returned to camp to wind up the bivouac we slept on a side of a road. We were awoken at 2:00 A.M. to start a forced march of 20 miles. We were all sleepy. I had to wake up Willis at least six times. After marching in darkness for some 15 miles, the commander admitted he was lost. When we finally did reach Camp Roberts it was late morning. Instead of going 20 miles we marched 26 miles. It took us nine hours. Most of the march was done at double time. The breaks every hour or so were not your normal 10

minute breaks. They were more like three minutes. The last break, before we started to do a lot of double time, they did give us a ten minute break. I took off my shoes. I found two half dollar size blisters on each foot. We still had eight miles to go. When we finally reached camp the blisters had increased to three on each foot. My bunk looked mighty good. It was a good lesson for us before we headed to "only



God knows where." We were informed as soon as we reached camp that passes to town were available to all who wanted them following lunch. This is the time I went to town and my buddy from Missouri paid for everything for me.

The last week of basic training left us with little to do. We spent time cleaning up our personal equipment before returning it to the supply room. We all chipped in and gave the barracks a last once over. One night there was a barracks banquet. Sort of a graduation dinner affair. It was held in Paso Robles. I did not go. I could not see having someone pay for me again. It was a little embarrassing. I took off for the Service Club about an hour before the bus arrived to take everyone to Paso Robles. When the guys upstairs got back from the dinner they were a little loose from drinking beer. When some of them came upstairs they dumped my bed over with me in it. They also threw cold water on me.

About two days before basic was officially over word was passed around that some of us would be getting "delay in route" furloughs. We were told to write or wire home for furlough money. I was sure it would be a waste of time in my case. The trip home and back would cost \$60. I wanted to see mom

but we didn't have money for foolishness like that. \$60 was a lot of money in those days. I called mom and told her about the expense of the trip. She did not even hesitate when she said yes. She wired me \$60. The men who were not getting furloughs were also not heading overseas. They were heading to places like Officers Training school or the United States Air Force.

While we were packing and saying our good-byes our platoon officer came into the barracks. (When an officer steps into a room or appears when all of the enlisted men are busy and one man spots that officer, he yells so all can hear, "ATTENTION". The enlisted men in the room drop what they are doing and stand at attention until the officer gives the command.; "AT EASE". All during basic training days I kept doing this.... when no officer was around. After awhile I was completely ignored. This time it was for real. When the officer entered the room and I yelled, "ATTENTION", not a sole moved a muscle but me. The officer caught my eye, winked and shouted, "YOU HEARD THE PRIVATE"... They all looked up from what they were doing with their mouths open and in a daze and jumped to attention. After the Officer left the room every guy in the room threw what he could get his hands on at me.... I really enjoyed that one.

Those of us who were going to meet the train and head for home, were issued a sack lunch. We lined up out in the troop street. As the truck took us to the train depot we took one last look at Camp Roberts. Basic was over. It was now time to get down to the real thing. Years and years later I visited Camp Roberts with my family. It did not seem anything at all like it did back in the year 1943.

CHAPTER III

FURLOUGH--EMBARKATION--ON
TO THE PACIFIC

The train station that was nearest Camp Roberts was a place called San Miguel. We boarded the train there and moved on to San Francisco. We placed our heavy barracks bags on the overhead luggage rack. My bag fell and hit me on the head during that short trip. I saw stars for a moment. At San Francisco I ate lunch. After lunch I boarded another train that took me on a direct line to good old DES MOINES, IOWA. It was a fun experience for me traveling on my own. There were canteens set up at many train stations all along the way. In Omaha there was a three hour delay. I spent the time in a great Servicemans Club they had set up on the second floor of the depot. I almost missed my train to Des Moines. I was told that the only way I could get on the train was if I was willing to stand up all of the way. It did appear kind of strange to me that all of the people on the train who had seats were the civilians.

It was 4:30 A.M. when I arrived in Des Moines. I called mom and I took a cab home. It sure felt good to see that old basement apartment again. Mom and I talked about everything under the sun while we ate breakfast. I told her all I knew about the life of a soldier. My bed felt so good that I almost slept the day away. My mom worked as a cleaning lady in the hotel that my sister and her husband managed. I went down and took her to lunch. Later that day Mom and I went out to my sisters house for a nice dinner,

My seven days on furlough was spent mostly working out at the local Y.M.C. A. The evenings were spent going to movies with a buddy or at a relatives

home where it seemed that all we did was talk and eat. I did manage to get to a couple of my old high school football games. The last day at home I slept late. My train was not going to leave until 2:00 A.M. So I went to one last movie with my good buddy and I came home and spent the rest of the evening with mom. About 12:30 A.M. I packed my barracks bag, called a cab, kissed my mom, I told her it was no use to worry because things would work out the way they are suppose to work out... God would see to it, and I left. She did not cry. I sure hated to leave.

I had time for a cup of coffee at the train station. As I watched the city disappear out the train window I learned the true meaning of loneliness. I realized it was going to be a long time before I would return. I also gave some thought to the fact that I may never return to this town. I had orders to report to the train station at San Francisco, California. I was dreading this trip because of the negative thoughts that kept filling my head concerning the "unknown" that I knew I was faced with. Part of the trip back west was exciting. When I was not worrying about the future and concentrated on the sights I picked up many attractions I missed on my way to Des Moines. I was met as I got off of the train by Army personnel. They took others who arrived at the same time that I did to a ferry boat down at the sea shore. The ferry boat passed under the Golden Gate Bridge. Off in the distance you could see Alcatraz Prison. We were picked up by Army trucks at the dock. They took us to Fort Ord, California. We arrived at Fort Ord at 9:30 P.M. My furlough ended at mid-night.

The barracks I was assigned to was only about half full when I arrived. The camp was next to the ocean so it was a bit chilly. I picked up my sleep equipment at the orderly room, took a shower and went to bed. Many of my Camp Roberts buddies started to arrive the next day. While we were at Fort Ord we



did a few details around the barracks, some close order drill and a little night training. Most of the time we loafed, ate, played outdoor basketball and just waited. We were all interviewed again. We were all issued jungle gear and part of our combat equipment.

The Service Club here was the best I had seen. There was a large indoor gym. It had a nice library, a beautiful area in which to write letters. It had a bar, cafe and lots of recreation space.

Joe Louis (who was WORLD'S HEAVYWEIGHT Champ of the world) came to Fort Ord and put on an exhibition for the service men. Along with him was "Sugar" Ray Robinson and Jake La Motta. It was a thrill for me to see this group of fighters. I had read so much about



them in the papers. Joe Louis was a hard, hard hitter. He had a dead pan expression I had never seen on any fighter before. He spared three rounds with the Fort Ord heavyweight champ. The Fort Ord Champ accidentally hit Louis hard and squarely on the jaw. The expression on Louis changed. He jabbed that man from Fort Ord so fast that the Fort Ord man did not know what happened. Louis must have hit that poor guy 15 times in about 4-5 seconds. The Fort Ord boxer was quick to raise his hands and back off. "Sugar" Ray was so fast I do not see how anyone could have beaten him.

Things were going along fine until the morning we had a "show-down" inspection. This is where we lay everything we own out flat on the ground on top of your poncho. The officer in charge checks to see that you have everything needed before you leave for overseas. During that week we had three more inspections and we were given more equipment.

We got up early the next Sunday Morning. After we ate we gave the barracks a good cleaning, packed our barracks bags and lined up in ranks in the troop street. After one final equipment inspection we marched, barracks bags on our shoulders, to the Fort Ord train depot. There were a lot of men leaving Fort Ord that day. The long train was packed with G.I.s. We rode all afternoon on the train. You could feel the excitement in the train. The longer we rode the louder the talking became. About 5:00 P.M. we entered San Francisco. We all thought we were heading straight to the docks to board a ship for overseas. All of us were wrong. We went pass the dock and ended up at another camp. We got off the train, threw our barracks bags into a hugh semi-trailor and waited for orders.

When you enter a camp just before you leave for overseas it is for certain you will be faced with another exam. Along with this exam will come shots for protection against overseas diseases. We had not eaten since morning. Did

we eat first or did we have a complete physical examination from head to toe first? Need I answer that? We finally ate supper around 9:00 P.M. It was at the mess hall that I discovered the name of the camp we just arrived in. This was Camp Stoneman, California. This was the largest embarkation camp on the west coast. From this camp you go overseas.

We stayed here only long enough to get a good look at it. The barracks were built like those at Roberts and Ord. The difference was they were painted dark brown. It rained hard almost everyday we were here. Put the two together....Dark brown barracks along with the gloom of rain plus the fact you know that you are leaving your home country and it all adds up to a load of miserable, blue feelings. Besides the fact that the barracks were painted brown there was no grass to be seen anywhere. The bare ground turned into mud up to your ankles. It was not really a happy place to be.

There were 160 men crammed into barracks that was built to hold half that many men. Maybe not that many in all of the barracks. They were very crowded. There was one movie theatre on the grounds. It was filled early every night. There was one very small town close by. It was so small no one bothered to go there.

Camp Stoneman had the largest mess hall I have ever seen. The chow line, I know, was always one half to a whole block long for each meal. The interior of the mess hall was comparable to a large sized basketball field house at that time. The number of meals served in a day had to be in the hundreds and hundreds. I do know that supper was finished a few minutes before "lights out." A cook told me they used over 100 K.Ps per day. Believe it or not--- this is the only place I did not pull K.P. We did very little at Camp Stoneman because we were on 24 hour alert to go overseas at all times. We did have a few days training on how to load onto a barge from a ship. We had explained to us

the conduct that was expected of us while on board the Navy ships.

We were only stationed at Camp Stoneman one week before we were ordered to pack up and march off to the docks of San Francisco. All the way to San Francisco we sailed on a ferry boat called the "OLD ARMY QUEEN". Here we boarded a ship that was an APA ship called the "SEA SNIPE". This was the first ship I had ever been on. The quarters that the men I was assigned to board with, ended up being some of the worse places you could possibly be on the ship. We were located at the very, very back, (aft) down in C-Deck.



C-deck is the bottom deck. My bunk was six inches from the floor. I could not get any lower in the ship. The huge propeller of the ship was less than three feet from my bunk. Every time the propeller made a complete turn, there was the sound of metal touching metal. What ever this noise was it was shattering to the nerves. The area was packed with G.I.s. There was little space and little fresh air. Our equipment and barracks bags took up all available space. We had to wear bulky life jackets at all times. Outside of these few inconveniences we knew this trip was going to be beautiful.

As soon as we were assigned to our quarters, found places to hang our bags and equipment we got out of that "hell hole" for some fresh air. I forgot to say the temperature in our compartment was about the same as it was out on

the hottest spot in Camp Roberts at high noon. The sweat rolled. B-Deck, above us, was where the toilets and showers for the soldiers were located. Near the center of the ship, on B-Deck, was the ship mess hall (galley). Above B-Deck was the main deck. I have no idea where the navy personnel had their quarters. I think they used the same mess hall that we used only at different times. They probably ate different rations than we did. I think the Navy men who ran this ship were Merchant Marines.

Before we boarded the ship we were told that we were going to sail early the next morning. This gave us a chance to "case" the ship before we left. There was a PX on board but it was only going to be open to G. I. troops one hour per day. Your chance at getting to the PX was about as good as a snowflake surviving in hell. They did have a movie that night in the mess hall. I was more concerned at giving good old U.S.A. one more long last look, myself. In fact, I had a nervous and upset stomach just thinking about leaving. I sat and stared at the water in the bay most of the night. Part of the time I watched lights of cars, off in the distance, as they crossed over the Golden Gate Bridge. I am sure I said a few prayers. It was another one of my "lonely" phases. I'm sure I was just feeling sorry for myself. After I got a little sleepy I went down into the "hole", stripped to my shorts and finally fell asleep. Before I dozed off I gave considerable thought to the fact that I was heading for a difficult situation and I was heading for this difficult situation under "trying" conditions. I had to decide what I was going to do. I got stubborn and made up my mind right there at that instant. The decision was, I would do what ever was needed of me. I would do my very, very best. I would do it without backing off one inch.

I came up on top deck just as our boat sailed out of the bay. As I waited in the line for breakfast I watched San Francisco fade out of sight. From

this point on we ate from mess kits. The food served to the Army was cooked next door to the mess hall. This made B-Deck a few degrees warmer. As the soldiers moved in line the smell of oat meal, spam and coffee spread through out the deck. This heat, the smell of food and the rocking movement of the large liberty ship did funny things to the stomach. I believe this feeling is referred to as sea-sickness. A few of the men waiting in line for their meal seemed to show signs of this illness. Many of them did not make it to breakfast. As you approached the mess hall you could see, hear and especially smell the signs of sickness. It was really not an appetizing sight for those who had not eaten, to witness. I did not get sick for some reason. After I ate I hurried up on the main deck hoping I might see land once more before we left it. It had long faded away.

About 3-4 hours out at sea every one on board appeared a little "under the weather". Later, when the bigger waves started moving the ship around I got a little dizzy. I soon got over it. I never felt this way again on any ship I was on throughout the war. One of the officers at Camp Stoneman, who was rude, mouthy and unnecessarily insulting on many occasions, was standing near the rail of the ship. A soldier that I had made friends with at Fort Ord and I noticed he was turning a little "green" from the ships up and down movement. We both ran to the rail, next to this officer. We pretended to vomit. This officer watched both of us and proceeded to "heave" a good five minutes. What we did might be called "poetic justice". My friend and I both felt it was just plain "getting even" for all of the crap our Private and P.F.C. friends took from this officer.

For three days we had a dirigible stay with us. It was watching for enemy "subs". Sometime during that third day I went to my quarters to get a booklet that I had in my barracks bag. I was witness to a sight that was really very

serious on the one hand----- and very comical on the other hand. To get down to C-deck you naturally have to pass by B-deck. A large part of B-deck near the steps that lead down to C-deck was made up of a compartment of toilets and showers. There, in this G.I. latrine sat 16 toilet stools lined up in perfect military order. As I passed by the door to this compartment I looked in to see eight soldiers sitting on every other stool. Each of them were throwing up in the stool to their left. They were relieving themselves of the dreaded sea sickness. The sight was funny. The seriousness of the illness was far from being funny. It took a good week for most of the soldiers to get over the dizzy feeling caused by the moving of the ship under foot. Some of the men never got over it.

We were issued a meal ticket. The soldiers ate twice a day. With only the one mess hall, the line going to meals extended clear across the ship. When a person was used to three meals a day, two meals a day was just not enough. A number of guys complained. The ship Captain gave in. In between our two meals we were given a sandwich and some fruit. It seemed that all we did was wait in line to eat. Many times you would hear guys standing in line say, "What you in line for.... breakfast or supper? At a certain time of the day the PX opened up for the G.I. to use. If you had the money and you were lucky enough to make it to the window before it closed, you could buy candy, cookies and one cup of coco-cola. I had no problem with this. I ran out of money the first and only time I went to this PX.

There was really not much to do aboard ship. You could read, sleep, get in line early for meals, volunteer for light details or help the Navy crew pull guard duty. It did get a little boring on board ship. One of the fun things I did get to do was a daily exercise program provided by the para-troopers who were quartered in another part of the ship. They really put it to those of us

who were dumb enough to volunteer for this program. One day I had to do 20 extra push-ups for failing to do an exercise in the exact manner. It was fun as long as they allowed us to participate. The numbers in the program got too big. It was stopped.

A chaplain on board the ship felt we were getting restless. He organized an amature boxing tournament. The Chaplain was the referee. This went over big. It lasted four days. A bunch of us talked my little Mexican buddy, Adolphus Gonzalez into entering. He had fought in the "Golden Gloves" before the war. He won his first three fights by knockouts. He got sick on some greasy food and the navy doctor would not let him fight the championship bout. We have no doubt he would have won. There was one show per week. It was shown in the

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The Chaplain found out we were getting restless so got a boxing tournament started, which went over very big, and ~~the~~ elimination tournament, and it lasted 4 afternoons. My little buddy got in it, won 3 fights by knock out, got sick the night of the 3rd fight, and the navy doctor wouldnt allow him to fight again, there was also one show a week, in our hole. There was a radio, with a couple of loud speakers on deck, and we heard news from SF, and for a little while each afternoon they ^{evening before dark} played string records, which was well appreciated.

mess hall. During certain times of the day the ship radio was played on the main deck. One guy won \$500.00 shooting craps. I did not know how to gamble at that time. Most of our time on board the "Sea Snipe" was spent watching the waves and talking. The only things I saw move in the ocean were two airplanes and two ships. All of them were so far off we could not make out what kind they were. No one could light a match on the main deck after..(18 bells) ...or 6:00 P.M. If you slept on the main deck during the night you had to stay out of the path of crew members. If you fell overboard during the night you would be left to drown because they can not stop for any reason. We could take showers but only in sea water. This was like taking a shower in grease. It was cool and refreshing while the water was running on you but the minute you turned off the shower you felt sticky. It did not clean me. Fresh water was on one hour per day. You could not take showers at that time. We all understood the ship rules. This did not mean we had to like them.

About half way to our destination, we crossed an imaginary line in the ocean. This line, I was told, marks the spot on earth where each new calendar day begins. The date just east of this line is one day. West of this line is a day later. This imaginary line is called the International Date Line. For some reason when a ship passes over this imaginary line, the Captain of the ship is aware when this happens, there is cause for celebration and from what took place I believe there was cause for some tomfoolery, also. If any passenger has not entered this area in the sea before, during their lifetime, they were to be initiated as the ship was passing through. The men in the Navy swore this celebration is done to honor the God who controlled all of the water on the entire earth. This God they speak of is the God of the Sea in Roman Mythology. His name was NEPTUNE. I believed all of this until I had seen what was done to Army personnel..... nothing was done to Navy personnel.....

I do not believe this is done to honor any God. I think it is a put-on by the Navy to nail every army man on board ship. I really did not understand what was going on but it did help break up the monotony of the trip. The fun of the entire initiation came when the Navy men shaved half of the head of our top officers. This was followed by pies in the faces after the head shaving. One major had one boot removed, cut into pieces and thrown overboard. Many army personnel were ~~knocked~~ around by strong water hoses after getting parts of their bodies painted with either dye or iodine. Most of this was done to non-coms and officers but we Privates were also included. All they did to me was cut off one of the legs of my trousers, douse me with whip cream and knock me down a few times with the water hose. Everyone seemed to enjoy this little initiation in honor to the "Sea Gods".

After 17 days on board this APA ship, word came over the speaker we were going to arrive the following day at our destination. Next morning we saw land and we prepared to ^{dis-}embark. We cleaned our quarters but did not dock until the next day. That, I learned, was a thing with the Army. It is called "Hurry up and wait". Next morning we put on sun-tans made a final check to see that we left nothing and we disembarked. I could not resist returning to that "hell hole" to say good bye after spending all of those days in misery. Our ship was greeted by a high ranking Australian Officer and a large crowd of people from Brisbane. We unloaded in alphabetical order. It was a strange feeling to come down the gang plank and touch your feet on foreign soil.

CHAPTER IV

AUSTRALIA



As soon as we unloaded from the ship, we were told that we were in the port of Brisbane, Australia. We already knew that. The crew told us that 15 days ago. The trucks that loaded our gear was different. The steering wheel was on the wrong side. They drove on the wrong side of the

road. We loaded into the back of some of these trucks. As we traveled down the road we saw old homes built up on stilts. The roads were narrow. To me, most of the scenery appeared to be the 1920s of our country. The people seemed friendly. Many of them called us "Yanks" as we passed by.

The truck we was riding in pulled into a place that looked a lot like the Iowa State Fairgrounds during the off season. There seemed to be a lot of empty buildings around. We entered a gate and passed by a grandstand. In front of the grandstand was a one mile race track. At the far end of the track was another gate. When the gate was open there was a road that led into rows and rows of Army tents. These tents housed all incoming and out going

The thing that annoyed me was the steering wheel in the truck was on the wrong side, and we were also driving on the wrong side of the road, but I later found out that's the way they do it in Australia.

American troops that arrived in and left this area. It was noon when we got there. We found out tents, dropped our bags and went to chow. It sure felt good to be walking on dry land again. At lunch I learned this place was called Camp Ascot. The camp was named after the race track. This track was one of the largest race tracks in Australia at one time. The mess hall was out doors and the tables and chairs sat on a cement floor. A large canvas covered the kitchen and eating space. The large canvas bag that held drinking water was called a "lister bag". The food was good. That day we were served their favorite meal. It was meat and potatoes and gravy. Their national drink was tea. (tie) It was strong enough to knock a cow out. Their coffee looked and tasted like thick black mud. Most of the time I was in this country I drank water.

After lunch we went back to our tents, unpacked and washed up the clothing we had gotten dirty on board ship. We had the rest of the day off so I went across the troop street and talked with some soldiers who had recently returned from combat in New Guinea. They were from the 32nd Infantry. They were head-

back to the United States in the ships we had arrived in. All of the men across the troop street from us were those who had malaria, were badly injured or they had turned overage for fighting. We talked with a few of them about combat. They gave us a few suggestions that proved helpful in combat. I noticed each man I talked to had a yellow tint to his skin. They told me it was from taking atebtrin tablets. These are little yellow tablets taken each day to fight off malaria. I



thought they were putting me on. They were not putting me on I found out a few months later.

That afternoon we looked for the PX. It was located under the grandstand we had driven by earlier. I borrowed a few bucks so I could experiment. I wanted some candy. We cashed our American dollars for Australian money. It turned out to be a mess. We had a hell of a time trying to figure out how to buy something. After it was explained to us what each paper bill in their money equaled in American money it helped but it was not as easy as it might sound. Each pound note bill equaled \$3.60 in our money at that time. A half pound note equaled \$1.80. The problem started with trying to make sense with the value of the coins. There was a FLORIN. A florin was worth 32¢. There was a SHILLING. It was worth 16¢ American money. The SIX PENCE amounted to 8¢ in our money. There was still THREE PENCE which amounted to 4¢ and a PENNY that equaled 1½¢ of our money. I think there was a ONE HALF PENNY but no one explained that to me so I never paid attention to it. It took a while to know

That afternoon we looked up the PX, and cashed our American money for Australia money. What a mess that Australian money we had a hell of a time figuring it out, we figured we were getting jipped, we didn't know. In their money, they use pound notes, silver pieces are ³²⁺florin, ¹⁶⁺shilling, ⁸⁺6 pence, ⁴⁺3 pence, ^{1 1/2+}penny, if you bought some for ^{1 1/2+}\$1.20 American money.

that three FLORIN, one SHILLING and a SIX PENCE was going to mean that \$1.20 of American money was coming out of your pocket. We not only had to figure what we were spending in American money we had to learn what they called the items we were asking for. I just wanted some candy. It took three clerks and the store manager to discover what I wanted. I had to know that what I was asking for was "sweets". This Australian money exchange idea was a whole new ball game for most of us.

The grandstands at Ascot were used for many other things than as a PX. Out in front of the grandstands they held boxing matches and movies. We stayed at Camp Ascot for seven days. We did few details. We did no training and we had no inspections. We worked with Australian civilians in shops, factories and on farms. They had a great shortage of manual labor. Most of the able men and women were in the service. There were many young men working along side of us. One good sized young man I worked next to in a factory looked big enough and old enough to be in the service. I said to him, "Aren't you old enough to be

in the service? If looks could kill I would have been dead. He said, "Listen, mite, if I was ighteen I'd join the bloody army.....I'm only fifteen and alf" It was fun to hear Australians talk. It was probably fun for them to listen to me as well. This young man I spoke to weighed about 220 pounds. I wondered why. After working with them a few days I got my answer. After eating breakfast they had a "tie and biscuit" break at mid morning. After a hardy lunch they had an afternoon "tie and biscuit" break. They ate a good supper. That is five meals a day. No wonder they were stout.

The days at this camp were interesting. They would have been more interesting if my turn would have come up for a pass. The officer in charge of the camp gave passes to all of the men in each of the tents we occupied. As luck would have it, the night before the tent I was in, was to go on pass, we moved out. I really wanted to go into town, see the sights and listen to the people talk. I did fill some of my curiosity by getting the paper boy who went through camp each day to stop and talk to me. He explained some of the more common Australian expressions to me. "Piper" was paper. "Stike and eggs" was steak and eggs. These were easy. But, for the word train they used "tram". A "wireless" was a radio. He told me when the Australian dislikes someone they was "bloody" or "blooming." The Japs were often referred to as "bloody" by Australian soldiers. My little friend asked for "smokes" because he said, "The Aussie cigarettes were awful" He was a good teacher.

On the last day at this camp as we packed our bags it began to rain, It rained hard off and on for the next three days. We marched over in front of the grandstands. As we set down our barracks bags I noticed a few high rank officers standing on a platform. Placed in front of the platform, about 30-40 feet apart, were four large printed numbers. Each number was placed on big white card board. The card board was stapled to a wooden stake. The four



numbers were 5-7-8 and 12. As our names were called off, we were told to line up behind an assigned number. When my number was called off I was told to stand behind the number 7. I did not realize it at the time but they were placing me in the regiment I was assigned to. There are four regiments in a division. I did not know what division I was in but I did know I was in the 7th regiment of that division.

After every name was called, trucks pulled up and loaded one regiment at a time and drove off. There were a lot of trucks in that convoy. As the convoy of trucks pulled into a camp area some trucks up ahead peeled off. They seemed to disappear.



As our truck came over a slight incline, I was able to see a big yellow and black sign. It was the size of a large billboard sign. The large printing said THE FIRST CAVALRY DIVISION. The sign had an enlarged painted insignia on it. The insignia was a yellow patch with a heavy line crossing through it. Above the slanted line and to the right was the head of a horse in black. The word CAVALRY startled me. I understood cavalry to mean horses. Horses and me just don't hit it off. Me riding a horse has got to be a big joke. We unloaded from the truck. Almost before we hit the ground we were greeted by two generals. They verified the fact that we were now members of the First CAVALRY Division. They said that we were proud members of the 7th Cavalry Regiment of the First Cavalry Division. In the short speech they gave to us they informed us how good we new recruits looked to them and that we will be the best combat division in the Pacific before this war is over. My heart sunk a little when one of the Generals told us we would be heading into a combat zone within two days. The second General backed up the words of the first General who spoke by telling us we would be getting additional jungle gear the next day. The next day we received jungle boots, steel helmet, mosquito netting, a bolo knife and some live ammunition,

The name of this camp was Camp Stratpine. When my mind cleared a little after the Generals gave their little speech, I remembered some history I had learned in my childhood days. The 7th Cavalry was the Regiment General Custer commanded. If my memory does not fail me....I believe the Indians wiped out this Regiment at a place called "Little Big Horn." The battle was known as "Custers Last Stand". I have a feeling we will have this history repeated to us more than once by those we fight along side of. Actually, we got ribbed very little.

Camp Stratpine appeared to be a 'ghost' camp. There were only tent frames still standing. Both nights I spent at this camp were miserable. It was a

wooded area. The mosquitoes were thick. I had welts all over my body. We slept in hammocks in the rain. The hammocks must have forgotten how to keep water out of them. I slept in a rain puddle both nights. We ate K-rations both days. Everywhere we walked it was mud up to our ankles. There was no place to take shelter from the heavy rains. We sat and soaked. I only knew two men in the whole Regiment. Because we were new recruits I did feel we were resented.

On Sunday, just as the two Generals had said, we got up early and packed. We put our heavy, heavy bags on our shoulders, got into trucks and took off in the hard rain. It was pouring down rain as we passed through the outskirts of Brisbane and as we passed back near Camp Ascot. When the trucks stopped at the dock we got out, picked up our two-ton barracks bags and proceeded up this plank to this old, old ship. The full bag was so heavy I had a problem walking up the gang plank. I almost fell off. When I reached "A" deck I was pooped. While I was waiting to be told where my quarters were to be I managed to get a look at the name of this ship. It was called the "James D. Dooley." From the appearance of this ship it was for sure we were heading

When it rained at meal times, your soap + coffee lasted ten times as long. On this ship we bought our hammocks up on A deck, tied them between 2 poles, and slept comfortably. We also took showers in fresh water when it rained, and it only rained about 63 times a day.

into combat.

From the outward appearance of this ship I swear it had to be a WW I reject. If not, it had to be one our country was, no doubt, thinking of sending to the junk heap. The mess hall, latrines and showers were all located on top deck. We were served and we ate all of our meals on the top deck, rain or shine. During heavy rains our meals lasted longer. Our sleeping quarters on the deck below had no bunks. We were each issued a 4x8 foot piece of plywood. We slept on this plywood and we were expected to keep all of our gear on it, also. We were only allowed to roam around on "A" deck and "B" deck. Below us, which was C-deck, was where they stored supplies and ammunition that was being taken to the area we were heading for.

During any storm when the waves were high this boat creaked and shook. One stormy night I was expecting to have to go overboard. It was a scary trip. I asked one of the crew why a ship this old and this slow would be used by the navy. He looked at me seriously and said, "Hey, we are in a dangerous combat zone....there are Jap subs all over this area.... what do you expect? This was real confronting to know. I noticed there were no navy combat escort ships escorting us, either.

Again, we could take salt water showers only. It got a bit hairy to go to the latrine at night when it rained. It got down right frightening to go on "A" deck for any reason in a storm. When the ship did finally stop we were in New Guinea. Yes, the same New Guinea I had read in the newspaper about back home in Des Moines, Iowa just a few months ago. It was a total surprise to me that the JAMES D. DOOLEY made it here. I was sure it was going to fall to pieces in one of the storms we went through and sink into the ocean. I wonder if it made it back to Australia.

We were all ordered to pack our gear and get it together in preparation for leaving the ship. All of this time I was concerned about this word in the

division title. The word CAVALRY. What did it mean? It had to be a mistake. My brother was in the CAVALTY during peace time. I can remember how their uniform looked. To me, they were ridiculous. I could not picture myself as being in the Cavalry.

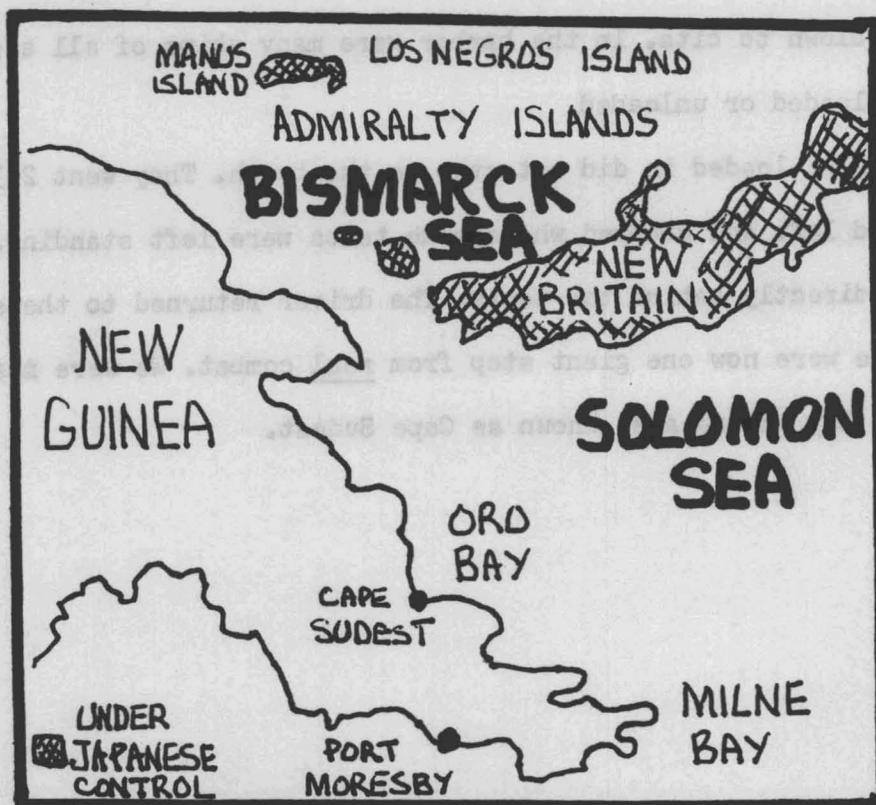
In the early afternoon amphibious vehicles came along side of our ship. these vehicles were built like a small tank that is open at the top. Instead of treads they have rubber tired wheels under them. They move both on land and water. They were called "ducks". This was my first ride in an amphibious vehicle. It was not my last, however. As we approached land my first inpression of New Guinea was, "It looked combat as hell". It definately was not combat or we would not have arrived as we did. As we approached the beach I could make out a high, rugged built look-out tower. The entire beach appeared to be covered with thick jungle. As we came closer I could see many of the trees were blown to bits. In the harbor were many ships of all sizes. They were being loaded or unloaded.

The ducks we loaded in did not stop on the beach. They went 2-3 miles in land, turned left and stopped where some tents were left standing. The heavy jungle was directly behind the tents. The driver returned to the ship to get more men. We were now one giant step from real combat. We were near a place called Oral Bay and an area known as Cape Sudest.

NEW GUINEA

The map below is a map of New Guinea as it might have appeared in the late months of 1943 and the early months of 1944. The north west part of New Guinea, plus islands immediately north and east, were occupied by the enemy.

New Guinea is about the size of Texas and Louisiana combined. It has many high rugged mountains. The biggest being the Stanly Mountain Range. In rains up to 180 inches in many sections of the island each year. A large number of American G.I. soldiers can attest to the fact that the island is capable of giving off many forms of tropical diseases. Chief among them were malaria, dysentery and jungle rot.



CHAPTER V

NEW GUINEA

* ARRIVED EARLY, 1944.

As we were riding down the rough road in the 'ducks' I got a first hand view of what jungle really looked like. It was much like I expected. I had pictured in my mind the shorter thick brush and the smaller trees, fronted by tall shrubbery, high grass and very tall coconut trees that all blended together. It was easy to see how snipers could hide themselves in the trees. The area we pulled into looked messy. I had a feeling we were going to go to work cleaning it up.

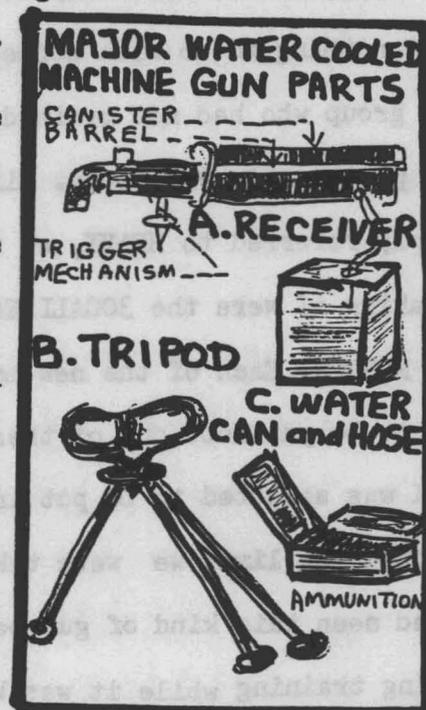
As soon as all of the men arrived from the ship we had a group meeting. We were informed that we were not only in the First Cavalry Division, 7th Regiment but we are now members of "H" troop. We would now be called troopers instead of soldiers. One of the high rank officers finally said to all of the new men we are only Cavalry in name. We are an Infantry Division. We have nothing to do with horses. Boy, what a relief that was. Those of us in the group who had not trained in Australia were going to be placed in one of the platoons in "H" troop. First an officer explained what the "H" ment. It simply referred to HEAVY, as in heavy weapons. The two heavy weapons he was speaking of were the 30 CALIBER WATER-COOLED MACHINE GUN and the 81 MILLIMETER MORTAR. Each of the new men that joined this outfit in Australia was going to be put into one of these heavy weapon squads and later into a platoon.

I was selected to be put into a Heavy Machine gun squad. After the squad reached the limit we were taken to a tent to get acquainted with the weapon. I had seen this kind of gun before. I fired it one time. I crawled under it during training while it was being fired over my head. Other than that I knew

very little about it. It did not take long to learn about this powerful weapon. When I was asked to pick the entire gun up I discovered why it was called a "heavy" machine gun. When I fired the gun for the first time I could feel the power. It fired many, many rounds in seconds. It took very little time to learn where, when and how to set up the gun for action. We all had to learn to take the gun apart and put it back together, in pitch dark and in less than 60 seconds. We were taught to fire this weapon in short bursts. Rapid fire could cause it to jam. We practiced and practiced what to do when the gun failed to operate properly. There were special tools we had to use when that happened. I felt there were two disadvantages to this gun. It was easy to give away your position. Every fifth bullet was a "red" tracer. It was too heavy to move from place to place with ease. However, the advantages far exceeded the disadvantages.

The diagram to the right and below shows the three major parts of the 30 caliber water-cooled machine gun. The RECEIVER is that part of the gun that feeds the shells into the trigger mechanism. The trigger mechanism places the cartridge in position for it to be fired through the gun barrel and it also forces the shell through the barrel. In front of the trigger mechanism and connected to it is the gun barrel. The gun barrel is surrounded by a metal cannister. This cannister holds water. The water is there for the purpose of keeping the barrel cool. If the barrel gets too hot it will cause the gun to jam up.

The TRIPOD of the gun is what holds the receiver in place. "Tri" means three. The tripod had three legs on which the receiver can be placed and maneuver around.



The water can holds the water that is pressurized into the cannister that surrounds the barrel. The water gets from the heavy metal water can to the cannister by way of a rubber tube. Keeping the barrel of the machine gun from heating up so it can continue to fire rapidly is an objective of this gun. The water surrounding the barrel helps keep the barrel cool....That is the reason this weapon is called a "water-cooled" machine gun.

This machine gun is truly a "machine" gun. It fires 250 rounds in a matter of a few seconds. Ammunition is carried for this gun by the box. Each box contains 250 rounds. Each metal box when filled with ammunition weighs 20 pounds.

It takes three men to carry the three main parts of this heavy machine gun and put it into action. The other five men in a machine gun squad all carry cans of ammunition. Each man in the squad knows how to operate the gun. The first, second and third gunners are selected by the squad sergeant. I ended up, at the beginning, being third gunner. When the gun is taken into combat the tripod is carried by the first gunner. The receiver is handled by the second gunner. The third gunner takes care of the water can, hose and the bag with repair tools in it plus at least one can of ammo. Each of the other men carry from two to three boxes of ammunition. In real heavy combat the third gunner carries an extra barrel. The tripod weighs 53 pounds. The receiver weighs 51 pounds. At times a first or second gunner



is weighed down with 100-120 extra pounds. When you are crossing rivers, climbing mountains or running on to a beach for cover you sometimes feel like you might not make it. Where to set up the gun each night in combat is decided upon by the squad sergeant.

The first night in New Guinea I really did not sleep well. I kept thinking New Guinea is jungle. In the jungle there are wild animals, snakes and creepy, deadly bugs. I do not know how it happened but I did manage to fall asleep. I was awoken by singing birds. The sun was shining. I had my first real field meal. It was spam. I hate spam. After breakfast I met my squad sergeant, Steve. I was assigned to second squad, second platoon. Four squads made a platoon. In each platoon we had at least one Staff sergeant and one Tech sergeant. The platoon was headed by a Lieutenant. Each squad was made up of a mixture of new recruits and troopers with more training.

Close friendships seemed difficult to come by in New Guinea, No one was assigned to my troop that I got acquainted with on board ship. Most of the men in the troop were already in Australia when I arrived. The only men who seemed to want to talk were Sergeants. After everyone was moved around from machine gun to mortar sections to determine where they best seemed to fit we finally stayed put. I stayed with Sergeant Stevens. He went by "Steve". He was from Texas. He was a career soldier. He spoke very little. He was very hard-nose but he stuck by his men. He was very unemotional. Anything that was "army regulation" he favored. He was a good combat soldier but very unfriendly. I went through two big campaigns and many smaller invasions with this man.

There were only two others I got to know on a half-way friendly basis in New Guinea. Both of them were Sergeants, also. Sergeant Rowe was one of the neatest men I ever got to know in the service. I got to meet him when my

platoon officer told me to spend a few days in the same tent with he and six other new soldiers so he could brush us up on the machine gun. When I first approached him I took a long look and said to myself, " My god, what have I got here?" He had a handle-bar mustache, a sour look on a long face and he appeared to be old enough to be my dad. His first spoken words to me were, as I watched him tighten up loose tent ropes, "What's the matter...you got a broken arm, or something?" I got busy and helped him. The mustache thing was done to win a bet. He was 35 years of age. That was old enough to earn the nickname "pop". He was a lumber jack in California before the war. He had patience sticking out of his ears. If you needed something he would try to get it for you. He turned out to be a trusted friend to me. He was a very good combat soldier.

The third person I got acquainted with at this time was Sergeant Claussen. He was Tech Sergeant. He came from the state of Kansas. He was a farmer before the war. He was older than Rowe. He was very thoughtful and caring. He was also very patient with new men. He was a good combat man. Both of these men, Rowe and Claussen , got hit by pieces of a Jap mortar shell the first morning of the first campaign we got into.

It was many weeks before any privates or P.F.Cs came around to be what you would call a friend. The friends I made were made after time spent in combat.

We did not do much in New Guinea the first week or so but go down to the beach and load or unload ships. We had classes each day on the "gun". The troop Captain called us all into the mess hall one morning and wanted to know if we were ready to clean up this " pig pen" of a camp. He said, "We are going to do it even if you are not ready." He had draw up plans for a screened in kitchen, a supply room, dinning area both for enlisted men and



officers, with picnic type tables. We were going to have a roofed latrine, shower, day room, barber shop, and a mail room,. Our individual tents were going to have in it, a table, gun rack and a place to put our helmets. The helmet holder would serve as wash basins. Above our bunks, made of bamboo, would be built shelves. The floor of our tent would be covered by white sand.

The wood with which to do all of this construction was less than 100 yards away. The coconut trees in the jungle were large and strong. We got busy sawing, chooping and hauling. Some men dug. Some men built and many men carried.

We dug two wells. One near the kitchen and one out away for the shower. The water for the shower was pumped into 55 gallon empty gasoline cans that set upon a frame seven feet high. One man was assigned each day to keep the cans full before and during "shower time". It was almost like home. The latrine was built like farm "outhouses" only on a larger scale. Lime was used

to hold down the smell. The latrine and shower was far, far away from the screened in kitchen area. Building this camp was similar to building a small town back in the wild west days.

After the camp was built, we went back to routine chores of loading and unloading ships down at the beach. We still attended classes, did guard duty and my favorite sport, K.P. There were never any dishes to wash if you were put on K.P. Each man washed, rinsed and dried his own dishes. This whole mess kit was made of simple pieces of equipment. All of the parts of the kit were made of sturdy aluminum. The diagram below shows the parts of a soldiers kit and how it is generally used.

A. This is a solid plate. It is some $1\frac{1}{2}$ -2 inches deep. The widest point of the oblong shaped plate is about 6 inches and the longest point is around 8 inches. The plate does provide a handle if desired.

B. If more than one food is served there is an additional plate that clams into the plate described above. This container allows for food to be separated. In combat this part of the mess kit is seldom used.



C. These are traditional eating utensils. They also are made of strong aluminum.

D. This is probably the most used item in the kit. The handle of this cup, when not in use, clamps around the bottom of the cup. This cup is shaped to hold the water canteen. The water canteen and the cup under the canteen are attached to the canvas belt worn around the waist of a sol-

dier by a canvas canteen carrier.

It was on K.P. that I received my "Battle scar" wound. I tried to remove a stove pipe that heats water from which mess kits are cleaned. The pipe did not want to be removed. I now have some original soot from New Guinea under my skin above my right eye. I was presented a home made "purple heart" made of purple dye and a K-ration can. I wanted to bring that honored award home but it got lost in the shuffle of barracks bags some way.

K.P. duty , in a combat zone, while you are waiting to go into combat is a lot harder, during the hours that you work, than it is in a mess hall back in the states because you do not have running water, sinks and close by sewage systems. You have to haul clean water and dirty water long distances. It takes longer to clean up after wards. Keep in mind, I am speaking of K.P. here in a combat zone. In combat there are very few times a kitchen can be brought up to the front. When the troop kitchen did get to the front lines the K.P. was done by the cooks.

Within two days after our camp in New Guinea had been finished we had lights in our camp. How.... might you ask can you have lights in your tent in the middle of the jungle? I asked that same question. My answer came as soon as I asked. This outfit brought a generator they bought in Australia with them. It cost us each three dollars in order to get it working. Each tent had two lights.

The night entertainment in New Guinea was not overly exciting. You could write letters, listen to records on the record player in our day room, read, sleep or take in a movie that was showing some place on the island near by. All of the different military units shared their movies or any entertainment that came their way. We hitch-hiked from trucks, ducks and any form of transportation that was going the way we were heading. Most drivers wel-

Our night entertainment usually consisted of a show, writing letters, listening to the records in the day room, or just reading and sleeping. Later on, they started having boxing matches, about 10 miles away, every Sat night. We also had a softball team, we didnt win very many games but we had a lot of fun. We went swimming down at the beach often, but I had heat rash so bad, I didnt enjoy it very much.

comed riders. There were still Jap stragglers around. We were not allowed to travel alone and we had to carry our personal weapons. We learned there were amateur boxing matches one night a week in Oral Bay. It was about ten miles away. Our Captain usually got a jeep for us when we went there. We had a softball team. We challenged other troops to football games. We went to the beach to swim. It was good for our heat rash. One day when a few of us went to the beach we were pleasantly surprised. There, swimming in the nude was a young and beautiful native girl about 18 years old. Also.... there was a dad sitting under a near by coconut tree watching. Across his lap sat a rusty old shot gun. We did all watch wide-eyed for a spell. Dad was smiling.

We were sent out on a three day bivouac to test the jungle. We carried the machine gun, we ate K-Rations and we survived on one canteen of water per a day. The second night of this bivouac I had a scare. Just before dark I was stretched out in a hammock before I climbed into the fox hole I had dug. I looked up to see some movement in the brush. Before I could make a move out of that hammock, this good sized wild bore came charging at me. He was really



moving. I was paralyzed with fear. When it charged I straightened out in the hammock as straight as I could as it ran under me. Thank god that bore had short legs. If that animal could have reached me with those sharp teeth and that pointed horn I would have been mince meat. One of the guys in the squad fired his weapon and the bore left.

I did observe some things of this bivouac I could have gone without knowing. I discovered it was difficult to dig a fox hole. Either you hit water six inches down or the ground is so hard that you need a 100 pound jackhammer to even dent it. The second thing I found out is how bad river and stream water taste with purification tablets in it. It is almost like taking a big swallow of iodine.

After the bivouac we went back to classes, loading and unloading ships and brushing up on a few combat techniques. We spent two ten day sessions just loading and unloading at a special supply depot up the beach aways. It was like a "Community" depot. Each nearby military unit took turns working there. It was a temporary camp right next to the beach. It was called the "SEA VIEW

HOTEL." Above the entrance of this camp was a hand painted large sign of a sexy looking girl. Printed below the picture it said, "1000 rooms and 1 bath". At this camp we did nothing but load and unload ships. We worked six hours straight. After our six hours we were off till the next day. At night we all got together and took in a movie. One time I was assigned to this detail my trip was cut short because our outfit was put on alert.

Another time in New Guinea my squad and I were sent to a place called Buna. I read about the battle that took place in a Look magazine about a year or so earlier while I was back home. We were sent here to unload mail. It was an Australian camp. We only spent one day there. There was much damage there at the time that had been caused by the battle that took place between American and Australian against Japanese planes. The ground forces of both sides left many craters. Parts of Jap equipment was still sitting near by. The Aussie guard told us not to mess around because there were still booby-traps that had not gone off. This camp was near the ocean and it was



our job to remove mail from Australia for the Aussies. The ship was anchored out in the bay about two miles. When we moved out to the ship they dropped a hugh net that held many bags of mail. A rope tied us to the ship. After we loaded the barge with mail we took the mail to shore and loaded it into military trucks. After a few trips out to the ship in the harbor with the barge bouncing up and down, due to the waves, we all got a little upset stomachs. It was kind of nice to get a full load of mail and spend time on shore unloading. We got use to the job after awhile. We did get to talk to a few Aussies as they loaded up in small navy boats. They had just recently invaded the island of New Britain. They invited us to go along with them. New Britain was just a short distance north and east of Buna.

The truck did not arrive at the time they told us they would. We ate Aussie rations of bread, fish and hash. The "tie" still tasted awful. When our truck arrived to pick us up it was raining and dark. The roads in that part of the island were very poor. We had a 30 mile trip back to our camp. I fell asleep. It was a new experience and one I remembered for a long time because it was my first look at what damage a battle can do to an area in just a few short days. Besides, it was good to unload something that could make some one happy instead of cause them to be blown to bits. The Aussies thanked us for doing a good job. It was neat to get back at camp and have a good cup of American coffee. We all had the following day off. After this chore we did little but wait and watch. We kept an eye on the "GUINEA GOLD". This was an island newspaper put out by amateur G. I. news enthusiast. If one copy got out each week it was rare. However, what ever was written in this paper usually was true. It's latest news said that the 5th Cavalry, our sister Regiment, was going to make a beach head on a small island just north of where we were stationed. It was suppose to be a rumor.

The rumor was not a rumor at all. It turned out to be the real thing. The 5th Cavalry was our "sister" Regiment. This means if they get into trouble that the 7th Cavalry is to be the first Regiment to come to their assistance. The name of the islands that the 5th was suppose to invade was a small group of islands called the Admiralty Islands. At first the "Guinea Gold" newspaper said it was nothing to get alarmed over because it was a low key invasion. The first scouting report said the 5th met little resistance. The article said the 5th Cavalry was dug in some 200 yards in-land and they had taken over an air strip. A short time later we got a news report that the first bit of news was wrong. The scouting report miscalculated the number of enemy on the island. The Japanese had tricked the scouting parties who flew over the island by not allowing anyone to be seen during daylight hours. We all had a strong feeling we were going to be heading into combat soon.

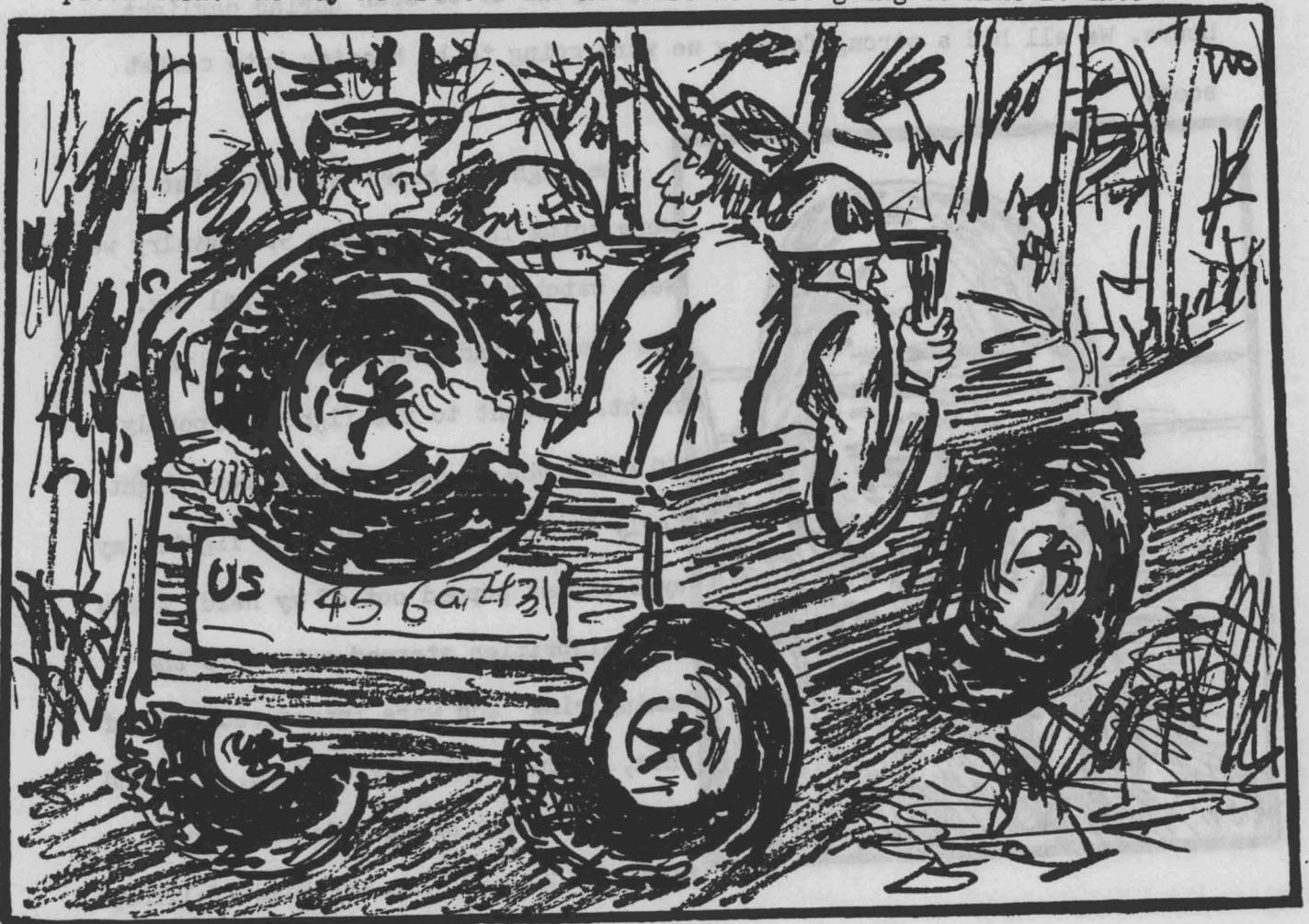


The night we heard the news that we were going in to help the 5th Cavalry we were watching the fights at Oral Bay. The Captain had gotten us a jeep that night. We went to the fights purposely to watch one of our troop members fight. Early in the evening, between fights, my eyes almost popped out of my head. A few top celebrities stepped out onto the boxing ring and were introduced, One of them, in full military uniform, was JOHN WAYNE. Standing along side of him was PAULETTE GODDARD. She was beautiful. They

both said a few words and wished us luck.

We never got a chance to see our buddy fight. First, the fights were held up by rain. Following this the celebrities appeared. Next, over the loud speaker came the announcement for all 7th Cavalry men to report back to their camp. We all knew this was it. It broke up the fight program. After a few seconds of silence all hell broke loose. Every Calvayman at the fights jumped up the instant the announcement was made and ran for the jeeps and trucks that brought them. Men from other units shouted words of encouragement to us as we moved out.

This was a memorable night, to say the least. The driver of our jeep was really fired up. The road was a little slick from the early rain and it was pitch dark. The way he drove I was not sure we were going to make it into



combat. All the way back to camp I had mixed feelings about myself. I was very excited yet I was afraid. Would I lose my nerve? What is it like to have to kill someone? What is it really like to get shot at or shelled? I felt proud that I had made it this far and now I was actually going into combat and defend my country. The last thing I thought of before we reached camp was.....I wanted badly to do what I had trained to do the best it could be done. If I did goof up I did not want another American human to die for my mistake. My entire life passed before me on that 10 mile ride back to the camp.

Back at camp everyone was excited. Everyone was concerned about how the 5th Cavalry was doing. The last we heard the 5th was not doing good. We packed our barracks bags and stacked them in a pile. We would not see them again until the campaign was over. This is how I kept this story. Each time we headed into a new campaign I put what I had written into the bag. I would not be able to write of the next campaign until it was all over and my barracks bag was returned to me. All I had to do in order to write about each campaign was live through it.

Trucks came into the troop streets all night bringing combat supplies, gear, ammo and rations. While we were packing and tearing down tents, before our lights were disconnected, I wrote my mom a long letter. I sent her all of the money I had and I tried to tell her I may never get to see her again(I am sure the censors cut that part out.) I thanked her for being my mom. I told her she was my favorite girl friend and no matter what happened I would always love her.

I tried to get some sleep because I knew I would need it later. That was impossible. It was either, do this, do that, pick up this piece of equipment, here is some coffee or it was someone who just wanted to talk. They were to

nervous to sleep. We were suppose to leave for the beach at 2:30 A.M. That was moved up to 4:30 P.M. We got to the beach about day brake. The date was March 3rd, 1944. As we reached the beach a light rain began to fall. There was a band playing behind two generals standing there. I could not believe what I was seeing. Here we are in New Guinea getting prepared to board some ships to go into combat and a band is standing there playing. To top it off it is only 5:30 A.M. I thought to myself....This outfit is nuts!

We knew we were heading for the Admiralty Islands. What we did not know was how we were going to get there. Out in the bay were a few destroyers. We thought they were going to be our escorts. Wrong...They were preparing for us to come aboard so they could take us to the Admiralty Islands. This was going to be a real experience--- riding in a destroyer.



We loaded barges on the beach in the rain as we waited our turn to move out and board a destroyer. The rain increased. The pouring rain and the very strong winds that came up made the trip to the destroyer a very wet one. By the time we got to the destroyer we were all sopped. With the barge and the ship bobbing up and down it made the task of loading our equipment, gear and even ourselves into the destroyer difficult.

The crew was very hospitable. They gave us their bunks to sleep in. We were offered ice cream. They tried to help get our minds off what we were going to face the next day. This destroyer had taken a load of 5th Cavalry men to the Admiralties earlier. They told us when they shelled the island there was little resistance. We knew better. We did mingle with the crew and talk about our home states, our loved ones and the war.

The food they served was excellent but I could not eat. It seemed we were almost flying in comparison to the ships we had been on earlier. My buddy, Earl Nolte, and I sat and talked for a long time. He told me he had fallen asleep earlier and had a dream about me. He dreamed that I got wounded on the invasion. As it turned out he got wounded by an automatic weapon on the



the second morning. He was hit a number of times.

The name of the destroyer was the "Stevenson". The route taken to the objective had to be direct. It took between 20-22 hours to get there. We arrived at a point in Los Negros Island of the Admiralties called Hyane Harbor at approximately 8:30 A.M. on March 4th. We were eating in their mess hall when a loud thundering blast went off. Our destroyer was shelling the beach with their three inch guns. After the ship shelled the beach for some half hour we were ordered to get our gear and equipment together and prepare to board a loading barge that pulled up along side of the destroyer. It started to rain shortly before the shelling took place. As we were getting into the barges it started to pour. The crew members told us it was the rainy season in these parts. The heavy rain and the strong winds again caused many problems for us as we unloaded from ship to barge. As I was waiting my turn with full water can, hose, repair tools, plus my equipment and extra ammo, I watched what was taking place on the beach. The wind and waves caused both the barge and the destroyer to bounce up and down excessively. You had to time your step from the ship to the barge. If you missed your step you either fell between the ship and the barge or went head first with all of your gear into the barge. Just as I made my step from the ship to the barge the ship gunners let go with a volley of rounds from their three inch guns. This volley caused the destroyer to recoil away from the barge. I missed my step. I grabbed the side of the barge by my elbows and held on. Here I was hanging between a bouncing barge and destroyer in very choppy waters, by my elbows, with all of this equipment and gear on my back including a big full water can. Had the ship and barge come together I would have been crushed. If I let go I would have fallen into the water and drowned plus my machine gun squad would have been missing parts for the weapon we had all worked so hard to



master for this occasion. I was frantically trying to pull myself up over the edge of the barge before the ship and barge came together. Just an instant before I felt my heart stop I felt this big wise reach under my shoulder. It lifted me in the air and it put me gently into the barge. With all of the weight hanging on my body it had to be someone with super human strength who could do such a thing. Without looking I knew it was "Whitebear". This man was strong. Anyone who can pick up another man and throw that man one half way across a squad tent is strong. I saw "Whitebear" do this trick once. It was "Whitebear". This man was a full -blooded American Indian. He weighed 260 pounds. He should have been called "Strong as a Bull" instead of "Whitebear". I glanced over to nod my head in appreciation. He rescued me by straddling the barge and the destroyer. He could have fallen himself. All he said to me, Whitebear spoke very little, was, "Foss, you dumb ass." Thank god for White bear. He was my hero. They don't call me graceful for

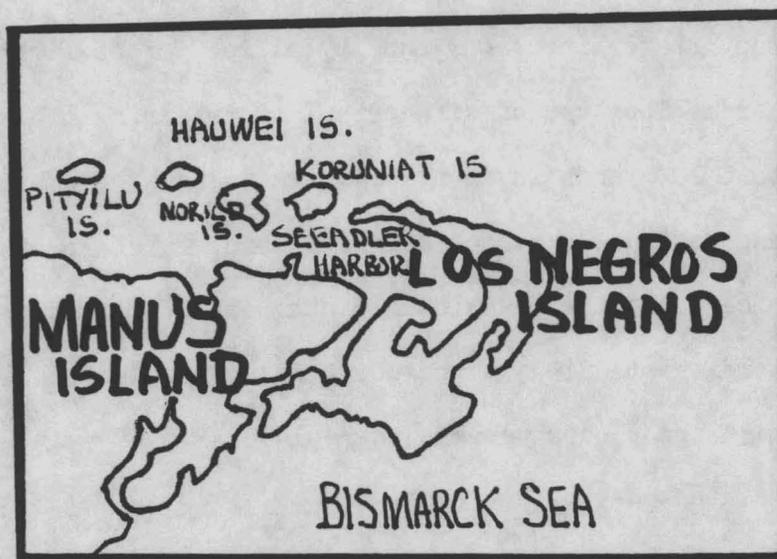
nothing.

When we got into the barge we were packed like sardines. It felt like hours before we hit the beach. About 100 yards out from the beach I peeked. It was still pouring rain but I could make out many shattered trees and a number of shell holes. When the barge got to the beach, the driver let the ramp down. We all came out ready to blast everything in sight. There was an American soldier standing there. He held up one hand and motioned to us that we should hold our fire. When we got over to where he was standing he seemed very cool and collected. He smiled and said, "There is nothing to worry about here..... the Japs are over 200 yards away." We are now in combat.



Thank you for this book. It was a great help. I don't want to say anything more.

ADMIRALTY ISLANDS



The Admiralty Islands are a small group of islands about 350 miles north of the area in New Guinea where the First Cavalry was camped. The two main islands in the Admiralty group are Manus Island and Los Negros Island. Other smaller islands in the group that played a part in the campaign were the islands of Koruniat, Norild, Pityilu and Hauwei.

This group of islands were considered an important step in the move to invade the Philippine Islands. An air base was captured and made useful to our 5th Air Force from this invasion on Los Negros. A second air base was built on Manus Island at a later date. My regiment, the 7th Cavalry, came on Los Negros on March 4th, 1944. We relieved the 5th Cavalry for a short time and later we moved on to other parts of the islands.

CHAPTER VI

ADMIRALTY ISLANDS

I am sure the main objective of the 5th Cavalry was to take the island and secure the air base. Air strips were top priority because they were needed for air support for invasions made by allied forces fighting on islands further north. The type of air strip I am referring to is like the one standing about 100 yards in front of where we saw the American soldier who was directing us as we approached this island. This air base had been taken and lost once since the invasion had started. At this time it was in our hands. ^{(*) MADE USEFUL ON MARCH 6th} The soldier standing at the point we approached the island pointed the direction of the troops we were to replace. It started and stopped raining five times that day before noon.

As our squad approached the air strip, heading for the front lines, we were surprised to see men driving bull dozers and heavy tractors. Most of them appeared to be older men. They were driving with one hand and held a weapon in the other. The initial shelling left large craters in the run-way. They were smoothing out the craters so they could lay steel mesh. Once in a while you would see a driver stop, take aim with his weapon and fire at a Jap sniper. It took a lot of guts for these guys to be doing what they were doing. They were See bees. A few hundred yards away short range American bombers and Navy fighter planes were bombing Japs. The vibrations caused by this bombing was very noticeable to us. It had to be a nightmare to the Jap soldiers being bombed. We took cover while some officers made some decisions and



talked to some See bees.

We did not arrive at the fox hole to replace the 5th Cavalry machine gun squad until about 2:30 P.M. When they recognized what we were there for all of their faces lit up. They all wanted to talk at once. One man had but one round of ammunition for his rifle. We talked a few minutes before they started back to the beach for a rest. We asked where most of the Japs were concentrated. They all pointed to the same place. We were warned to keep your eyes and ears open wide from dark until dawn. One soldier said to be sure to look in trees behind you before you get out of your hole in the morning. The first gunner said, "fire in short bursts only." Another trooper warned us, "Do not raise your head during the night... if you do..... you could be shot by your own men. As they packed up and left they each wished us good luck.

I imagined the front lines to be more like it would be in the movies. In the movies you would see big shell holes. bombs falling, officers shouting orders and men diving for cover all over the place. I expected to see medics

carrying wounded men on stretchers and explosions and gun fire everywhere. It was not like that at all..... at least not just yet. That came later.

If mud had anything to do to make conditions appear like combat, this was really combat. Directly in front of the foxhole we were in was a road called Porlaka road. It was not really a road. It was more like a wide mud path. In some places you sunk in up to your knees. Across this road was thick jungle. This jungle in front of us had been ripped apart by the shelling of our Navy guns out in the bay. Many, many dead Japs were visable across this road. About 25 feet to the front of our fox hole and slightly to the left was a 10 foot high reventment. At the base of this reventment was piled hundreds and hundreds of dead Japs. These Japs were killed the two nights before we got there by a Sergeant with a light machine gun and an enlisted man with a B. A. R., I was told. The Sergeant and enlisted man were dug in at the top of this reventment. They were fed ammunition by men on the perimeter. Across the mud road and to the right, maybe 50 yards, was where most of the fighting must have taken place. There had to be over 3,500 dead Japs in that area. They were piled one on top of another as if they had charged a row at a time. I counted in some places dead Japs piled six high. I later learned there were many instances of mass suicide by the Japs on this island in the beginning. I learned later it was traditionally an honor for the Jap soldier to die in this manner. We were told that these attacks were led by the shout of "Banzai" I was told by an American-Japanese that it was a battle cry that implied they were willing to die for their emperor. I did not face one of these suicide charges till later in combat.

The scouting report, on the number of Japs on this island said there was just a handful. What I saw that first day of combat told me there were a lot more than just a handful. It is a wonder the 5th was not totally wiped out.



* MARCH 5, 1944

The first night in combat has to be something a man remembers for the rest of his life. I was sent back to the beach to locate some more ammo for our gun a little before dark. After I returned I spent the rest of the daylight hours sitting in my fox hole trying to picture objects as they might appear in the dark. Later I found out it got so pitch dark I could not see anything anyway. As I got into my fox hole for the night I took one more last good look around. As luck would have it , it started to rain harder. Every thing looked foggy, mucky and very depressing. My stomach was doing flip-flops. If anyone had sneaked up behind me and said, "Boo", I am sure I would have fainted dead away. I was scared. I tried to recall all of the advice I was given by the men we relieved earlier in the day.

In the fox hole to my right was "Steve", my squad Sergeant. He was with the first and second gunner. I did my third gunner chore earlier of hooking up the water can to the receiver and placing the tools for repair in case the gun jammed. I also brought along an extra barrel and placed it near the trail leg of the machine gun. The men in the hole to my left were not part of our squad. I shared my hole with a guy from New York. His name was Joe Piscatello. I hate to mention this because this guy was a great guy but his nickname was "Pissy". Our foxhole was big enough to sit in. It was difficult to see well behind us but we made a peek hole so we could see a little. The floor of our hole was lined with silk from a parachute that had dropped some rations or medical supplies. It was red, anyway. My fox hole partner told me he was scared, too. We both promised we would try to stay awake all night. He did not keep his word. It stopped raining about one hour after dark. That is when the firing started up and down the line.

Through the night I fired 30 rounds. Joe fired 90 rounds before he fell asleep. I was worried about a stump out in front of us until I heard the snap of a grenade handle and an explosion about where I thought the stump was supposed to be. Sometime during the night there was a very loud explosion just inches short of our fox hole. The explosion threw dirt and shrapnel onto the logs Joe and I had placed over the fox hole before dark. It must have been a Jap mortar aiming at our machine gun. I noticed the men in the fox hole to my left put up booby traps in front of their holes. It was string that was attached to grenades set about six inches off of the ground. The grenades did go off during the night. There must have been someone out in front crawling around. Finally, FINALLY daylight arrived. Was I glad. We did not get out of our fox hole right away. We both took a good look around first. A soldier two holes down got shot in the head by a sniper about daybreak. I learned a lot that first night that stuck with me the rest of my com-

bat days.

In the morning you would have thought that that mud road was 5th Avenue by the number of soldiers out there all yelling back and forth. A jeep came by loaded with ammunition. While everyone else was eating breakfast I took a quick look around. There were a few new dead Japs around in front of our perimeter. I took another look at the big pile of dead Japs. I was overcome with the smell and the maggots crawling over their bodies. They looked like wax dummies that you would see in a museum. Once you witness this sight you never forget it. This was only my first time. I would go through this many more times.

Many of the things I was taught in basic training about combat were true. We overfired our gun and received mortar fire as we were told would happen. We saw things that were not there as 90 rounds by Joe and 30 rounds by me will attest to. We were told they would infiltrate and pick us off from the rear, which was true. In basic training we were told that if we wanted to get rest at night we would have to share guard duty. Joe and I did not do this the first night but we did after that. Another good point brought out in basic training was to stay down in your hole once it gets dark. Basic did not show us how awful the sights and smells could be. I also did not learn the heart break of losing a close buddy.

Earl Nolte, my close friend, came up from his mortar position to the front lines to see me on the second morning. He wanted to know how I made out after he had told me about his dream on board the destroyer. I pointed out the pile of dead Japs. He told me he was glad his dream did not come true. After Earl left, our squad Sergeant gave the order to pack up the gun and get ready to move out. No sooner had we broken down the gun than all hell broke loose. Over by the area where the Japs had pulled their "Banzai" attack they came .

out of an opening in the jungle. At this same instant a few motars started dropping. We were told to get the gun set up again. It was broad daylight. You could see they were coming into the opening in the jungle toward the road in front of us. My platoon Sergeant and Tech Sergeaht both stood there and watched. They both stood in the open to the right of my fox hole. I told them to get down. They did not even attempt to move for cover. I kneeled down in my hole to get my poncho out of my pack because it started to rain. Just as I did that a hugh explosion went off next to my hole, next to the Sergeants. It almost buried me in mud, dirt and loose sharpnel. I was not touched but Sergeant Claussen got hit by sharpnel in two places. He was bleeding badly. Sergeant Rowe, standing one foot from Claussen was not hit. He did turn a deep pale color, however. One of the men standing in the fox hole to my left got hit by small bits of sharpnel. Both men were taken



back to an aid station. Sergeant Rowe told me to take Sergeant Claussens pack to him. I looked all over for the aid station. I finally found a large crater that was covered with logs. That was the aid station. Sergeant Claussen was not hurt real bad. He told me to tell Sergeant Rowe that he was in charge of the platoon now. As I started back up to the front I met a war correspondent who had an interesting story to tell. It seems one of the 5th Calvary officers wanted to impress his men that there were no Japs on this Island. He put up a hammock between two trees to try to prove his point. His men warned him not to do it. During the night while the officer was sleeping his men hear..... "NO...NO ...BOYS....IT'S ME...MAJOR!!".....Next morning they found him cut up into bits. I read this same story, almost word for word how it was told there in a collection of "Yank" magazine re-prints I found in my local library. I often wonder if the man who wrote that article was the war correspondent who told me that story in person.





Just before I got back to my gun after returning Claussens pack to him. I was stopped by a friend who told me that my friend Earl Nolte had been wounded. I hurried back to the temporary hospital. I found my buddy in a lot of pain. He had been hit in the groin and upper body area. He was shot by some kind of automatic weapon. I looked into the cave arrangement he was laying in and waved. He was hurting too much to talk. He gave me a weak wave. I was really down in the dumps for a while after this happened. I felt sure he would get well because he was very strong. The system our medics had of getting a wounded man to a hospital was remarkable. When a soldier is seriously hurt they take him by piper cub, to an island near by, that we have taken and has on it a good hospital. Others are moved by "Duck" or "Alligator" amphibious vehicles out to a well equipped hospital ship. The medic watching over Earl said he would be taken by ship back to New Guinea and placed in a nice large General hospital. I really missed that big dumb Minnesota Swed.

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We ~~took~~ ^{took} off for ~~the~~ ^{a path} ~~end~~ at the end of the air strip, and while doing it we passed an Australian Newsmen, taking pictures, he got a picture of ~~as~~ ^{some} of our squad ~~after~~ later, after we returned from ~~com~~ ^{combat}, I seen my picture in the "Yank" magazine, a service mens magazine, telling all about that battle. When we hit

When I finally returned to the front lines, the skirmish that was going on when I had left to take Sergeant Claussens pack to him had ended. As we were getting packed up to move out we saw the squad we had replaced from the 5th returning. We spoke words of encouragement as we passed each other.

As we passed by the air strip the See-bees were still at it with their bull dozers. I am sure the hard rain coming down did not make the job they were doing any easier. A few snipers were still taking pot shots. I watched two G.I.s as they took off into the jungle after a Jap sniper. There were shots. The two G.I.s came out of the jungle. The sniper did not. We stood at the far end of the air strip in our ponchos getting soaked as we watched B-26s and C-54s drop rations, equipment and medical supplies.

After what seemed like a long wait, we slogged along in the heavy, thick mud a short distance toward a muddy road at the end of the air strip. As we



plowed along I looked up to see something that surprised me. There, standing on a wooden crate with a news reel camera was a man taking pictures. He was taking a picture of my squad as we were coming up this muddy, muddy path. I had no idea who he was or what nationality he was until he responded to my question. I asked him, "What in hell are you doing in a place like this." His answer was, "What the el you bloody think I'm doing, bloke.....Taking pictures of you damn Yanks"..... who else but Australian. About a month after this campaign ended this picture of our squad appeared in an issue of "Yank" magazine. I sent the picture home. It was ^{I have it,} accidentally thrown away. We did not move far before the officers decided it was getting to late to move on. We had to scrounge around for a place to dig in for the night.

After scouts had taken a look up around a bend in the road and near the beach they found a number of Japs heading toward us. We dug in. The place we were ordered to dig in was the area that the 5th Cavalry had met the first charge of the Japs two nights earlier. There were dead Japs all over the place. The Japs had made a landing across the road next to the beach. There

were many dead Japs floating on the beach and in the sand. The dead Japs on or near the beach, who made that invasion, were not just ordinary Jap soldiers. They were Imperial Marines. Their size and insignas told us that. All of them were six feet tall or bigger. They were the "cream of the crop" in Japan. There were the Japanese soldiers who would never surrender under any conditions. These Admiralties must have been high on the priority list. They sent some of their very best. The 5th Calvary was not impressed. They killed them all. Next to a regular sized Jap an Imperial Marine looked like a giant.

As we looked for a place to dig our gun in the smell was almost more than one could stand. Holding your nose did not help. The spot we were going to dig into for the night had to be important to the Japs. They had lost one battle to the 5th Canalry and now a large number of them were heading our direction to try and take this spot again. The 5th did their job now it is our turn. The large number of Japs heading down the road toward us must have stopped. We were ready but little happened. The first and second gunner did



find a place to dig the gun in. It was placed in a position so it could cross fire with another gun to cover the mud road we were going to head up next morning. The rest of us could not find ground near the gun that was soft enough to dig in. Steve told us to roll some coconut logs over near the gun and lay down behind them. I was not crazy about his suggestion but it was now getting late and we had to do something. The logs were high enough to protect us if we did not raise up at all. We were positioned about 2-3 feet away from two dead Japs that smelled to high heaven. It was an uncomfortable night behind those logs. We had to lay on our backs or our stomach all night.

After we got into position for the night behind the logs one of the guys in my squad found a Jap rifle and some ammo. Just for fun, he said, "I want to see how this gun works." Our riflemen were very sensitive to the enemy gun fire. Next thing we knew we were being fired at by our own men. My fox hole buddy stopped. It rained all night. The Japs threw mortars and artillery without stopping. The two guys I buddied with were snorers. By morning I was about frozen. What a night.

One of the real weird stories shared by my squad happened this second.





night in combat. Jim Gallagher, one of the men in our squad, was a loaner. He was very quiet. He did his job well. He found a good soft spot to dig in and dug a good deep hole. Deep enough to sit up in. No one else chose to dig with him so he stayed in the hole he dug, alone. During the night, after his eyes had adjusted to the dark, he watched as a Jap soldier crawled into his hole, across from where he was sitting. The Jap had a bottle in his hand. The Jap made no effort to kill Jim. The Jap held out the bottle to Jim. All of this time the Jap was doing all of this Jim had a 45 automatic aimed at the head of this Jap soldier. He pulled the trigger. Jim stayed in that hole all night with that dead Jap. In the morning Jim came over to tell us his story. Of course we all laughed and made fun of what he told us. I had a

feeling he was telling the truth because he could not stop shaking as he was talking. We all went over to check out his story. Everything he said was true. The Jap was a bloody mess. Next to the Jap was a bottle of Saki. As far as I know Jim never chose to stay in a fox hole, alone, again the rest of the war.

In the morning, after we gulped down a cup of coffee. (It is hard to get a small fire going in a heavy rain). We were ready to move out but we were told it would be awhile. Some of the men went souvenir hunting. They did not have to go far. I did not go. War souvenirs did not appeal to me. A few men did return with interesting items. There was a rare knife of many uses, a leather case that held Japanese rations. One bit of rations tasted like carmal corn. Another ration tasted like a combination of rice and fish....ICK! Other than these two souvenirs I was not impressed.

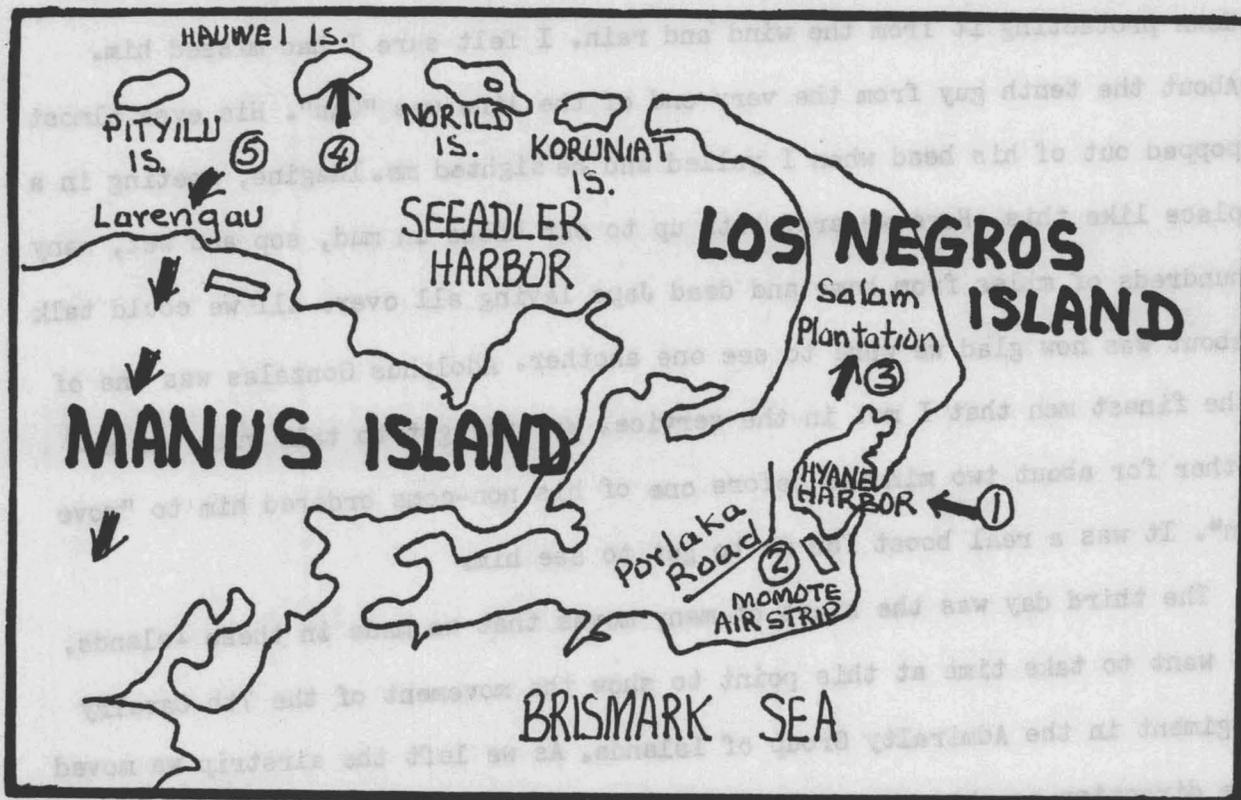
During the night one of our men stuck his head up to stretch. Half of his head was blown away. Two other men in the same fox hole had to stay with him in that hole all night. This was another lesson to all of us. You must keep your head down once you climb into your hole for the night.

A jeep came by with fresh water. We filled our canteens before we started sloshing through sticky, heavy mud again. When the order came to move out we did move but only about the distance of a football field. We stopped again. It seems a whole new Regiment of the First Cavalry had just arrived on the island. It was the 12th Caval^{ry} Regiment. This is the Regiment my little buddy, who was the boxer, was from. Adolphus was a neat guy. If you have ever seen Lee Travino, the classic golfer, you would know what Adolphus Gonzalas looked like. The 12th just arrived from New Guinea. We were held up in order for them to catch up with us and pass by us. It took a long time. They passed by in single file. I watched as every man passed by. I was hoping to see my

friend. It was still raining very hard. Each man that came by had his head down protecting it from the wind and rain. I felt sure I had missed him. About the tenth guy from the very end of the line was "Gus". His eyes almost popped out of his head when I yelled and he sighted me. Imagine, meeting in a place like this. Here we are, both up to our knees in mud, sop and wet, many hundreds of miles from home and dead Japs laying all over. All we could talk about was how glad we were to see one another. Adolphus Gonzalas was one of the finest men that I met in the service. We only got to talk with one another for about two minutes before one of his non-coms ordered him to "move on". It was a real boost for me to get to see him.

The third day was the start of many moves that we made in these Islands. I want to take time at this point to show the movement of the 7th Cavalry Regiment in the Admiralty Group of Islands. As we left the airstrip we moved the direction as shown by the arrow numbered 3. We will end up in the next few days at the North end of an area called Salami Plantation located in Los





Negros Island. The spot marked number ① was where we made the landing two days before. The spot numbered ② was where we spent our first night in combar. That was that mud road where so many dead Japs were piled up. The number ④ spot on the map is where we made a one day invasion. This is also the place we set up camp after the campaign ended. Shortly after we took Hauwei our Regiment took barges back to spot number ⑤ in Manus Island. This was at a place called Lorengau. Here we went into the mountains for the remainder of the campaign. ^{MANUS WAS 50 MILES LONG} When we returned from the mountains we crossed over and back to Hauwei Island. We stayed here until we took off for the next campaign.

The march we took the third morning toward the North end of Los Negros Island ③ was the kind they warned us about in basic training. It was what the Army was talking about when they said, "Forced march". Because of the cons-

tant rain and thick sticky mud it was very difficult to move one foot in front of the other. A jeep was stopped completely. Now, that's sticky. The only thing that kept me going was my stubborn streak. We went about five miles that day. It felt like twenty-five. The farther north we went the more dead Japs we ran into. Most of them had just been recently killed. Probably by members of the 12th Cavalry. We took two breaks. On one of the breaks I noticed a Jap truck with the United States FORD insignia on it. I saw a Jap who must have been riding a motorcycle. He got a direct hit. Part of his body was plastered on the bike. The other part of the bike was some twenty yards away.

The second break we came to a Japanese water pump that was in working order. At that point I was so tired and wet I could barely move. I was pooped. It was getting dark. Our squad sergeant told us to dig in for the night. We were also told that the 12th Cavalry was going to be on guard on the perimeter for the night. That meant we could get a rest. We were all so worn out we just pulled our poncho over our head and went to sleep in the mud.

In the morning it was still raining as I got out of my shallow hole. I looked over at my little buddy "mouse". He is only five feet tall. I called his name to wake him and at that instant I heard a "gurgle" sound from him. He had been asleep on his back. As he turned toward me, water rushed into his mouth. His hole was that full of water. I thought he was going to drown. I took him by the arm and yanked him out of his hole. He did swallow some



muddy water. He was O.K. after he had done a mouthful of swearing. We called this little guy "Mouse" because when he smiles he wrinkles up his nose and he takes on the expression of a little mouse. From what I knew at this point about this soldier I knew he could out drink and out cuss any two men in the troop. He was a good guy to have around. The harder it got in combat the tougher and more determined he got. We became close friends. We lit a small fire and had a cup of coffee. I never did figure where that dry match to start that fire came from. While we drank our coffee we decided that all we had done is circle around behind where the Japs had been the night before.

We stayed at the north end of Salami Plantation for a couple of days or so. During that time they dropped a few mortars on us to let us know they knew we were there. We did have a chance to build good fox holes and we did get a little rest.

The second night we were at this location, as I got ready to bed down, after I had pulled guard, I thought I heard a voice in the jungle shout out, "Don't shoot". At that same instant I saw four strangely dressed men come out of an opening in the jungle. All four of them had their hands in the air. The one leading carried a pole with a white shirt tied to it. Just as one soldier yelled, "hold your fire", another soldier turned, saw the four people and fired. The first two were shot. The last two turned and ran back into the jungle. The two that were shot died. They were not Japanese. We were not sure of their nationality. We guessed that they came from someplace like India or maybe Pakistan. If so, what were they doing here? An officer in charge told us if this happened again to let them surrender. No one came out that night. It had stopped raining but it started up again during the night. When it rains hard and the wind blows it gets hard to hear at night. While I was on guard later in the night I heard a cry for help again. Next morning we were awoken



by someone yelling, "Heads up". That usually ment that a plane was dropping food, supplies or gear by parachute. This time it was a cargo plane dropping rations. At the exact moment the plane dropped rations a big commotion was taking place over where people came out of the jungle clearing early last night. This time it was a large group of people that came stringing out. They were led by two men who attempted to come out the night before. Those two in front were frantically weaving white cloths. This time no one shot at them. One G.I. with a tommy gun turned around and faced them. They all hit the ground at once. The officer in charge asked a few of our men to cover him. He spoke to the leader of the group. We all listened as he told the officer his story in broken english. He said they were [★] ~~Hindus~~ [★] ~~from India~~ ^{69 SINGAPORE} ~~from India~~. They had been

prisoners of the Japs on this Island for two years. The man talking called them "Nippanese" instead of Japs. He said when they discovered the island was being invaded they felt sure it was the Americans doing it. He told us they ran away from their enemy and have been hiding for two days. They have been waiting for an opportunity to surrender to us. They felt now was the proper time. There were both men and women in the group. Most of the men carried a bottle of wax that kept their beards neat and stiff. The women carried all of their belongings in one large bundle that they balanced on top of their head. Altogether there were 65 in the group. After the officer in command talked to them he let them pass. They were all overjoyed. Most of them cried. It made me feel good just to see this and how it turned out. We shared the rations that were dropped by plane. We handed each of them a K-ration. I am sure they were thankful but I doubt any of them knew what to do with the ration. Their diet is so different..... K-rations do not have fish and rice in them. The weaker members in the group were carried "piggy-back" by the stronger members. One man was totally blind. This was done to him by the Japs.

④ 69 SIKHS

After all of the ~~Kirah~~ had rested, they volunteered to go to work unloading some L.S.T. boats that had just arrived. This was the last I saw of them. They were singing as they worked. They seemed excited and happy. I heard later they were taken back to New Guinea. From there they were shipped back to their homes.

The morning of the third day at Los Negros we were told that we would be making a landing on the north coast of Manus Island. We did make a landing from barges but we met no resistance. Either the reconnaissance report was poorly done or the Japs moved out before we got there. Actually all this amounted to was a few days of rest. I did not point this out on the map

purposely, for that reason. I did get to visit a few of the mortar platoon friends I had made in New Guinea. One of the nights we spent on Manus almost caused a fatality. We were each still very jittery because of being in combat even though at this time, on this night, we were not being shelled or shot at. I had just finished my two hours on guard in this squad fox hole we had set up. I awoke Jack Dudley, my relief. He seemed a little groggy and appeared a slight bit blurry-eyed. I stayed awake awhile to make sure he was awake.. I moved in the dark to get something out of my pack. Jack saw my shadow and mistook me for a Jap crawling into the fox hole.... He whipped his M-1 around, cocked the trigger and held the point of his gun to my head as he said, "WHO IS IT'." Lucky for me my squad sergeant sleeps with one eye open. The sergeant was laying between Jack and I. The Sergeant raised up, pushed Jack's gun up into the air and said to Jack, " Settle down, Dudley, it's only Foss." That was close. Jack was so embarrassed. I was almost paralyzed with fear. Jack did this same thing three times to me during the days we were in the same squad. Actually, I was glad when Jack was transferred to another squad.

After the third day on Manus Island our short break was ended. The following morning we were packing our gear to head for a small island just a short distance away called Hauwei Island. After we took this island we were told it was going to be used as a base to fire artillery throughout the entire group of islands. We got this idea from the Japs. That is what they used this island for. We left our well built fox holes and got into assault barges. I did not realize how warm the day was until we stood in those hot barges, with the sun beating down on us, waiting orders to attack. We were not allowed to head for the beach until the island was strafed and bombed by three Australian fighter planes. From the time we got into the barges until the time we charg-



ed onto the island we stood in the sun, inside of that hot box of a barge for three hours. About the minute that I ran on the island I found what I had gotten myself into. I was hoping I was back on that hot, hot barge. On board the barge was a Marine officer. I have no idea what he was doing there. He said to me, for no reason at all, " I could use a few marines like the soldiers I met in this First Cavalry Division.."

As the barge stepped and as we moved on to the beach, a rifleman was shot in the back of the head. The gunner of the barge had his hand on the trigger of his 50 caliber machine gun that was attached to the side of the barge. An enemy bullet glanced off of the barge, near him, as the ramp of the barge came down. The gunner accidently fired. The gun was but 6-7 feet behind the sol-

dier who was hit. He didn't know what hit him. I hear later that the navy gunner who fired the 50 caliber machine gun went into shock after he had discovered what he had done.

We only got about 50-75 yards on to the beach before we ran into a lot of trouble. We could see the men on the beach in front of us were being held up. They were looking for cover or were already behind cover of some kind. Directly behind, where we ducked for cover, a rifleman and his buddy flopped down. One of them was carrying a 60 millimeter mortar tube. The other guy was talking into a field phone asking for directions as to where he should set up the mortar. The man with the phone soon became the main target of a sniper that could not be seen. The problem was the sniper was missing the rifleman with the phone in his hand and coming very, very close to me. Within seconds I felt both for my ear and nose. I was sure I was hit. Another burst from the sniper had me looking at my hand. He was coming too close for comfort. I was told by a guy who had been shot earlier that it does not hurt badly when you get shot till the air hits the wound. Since I saw no blood and I felt no pain I knew I was not hit. What a relief it is to know you have not been hit when bullets come so close.

The two men with the phone and mortar tube moved out. We took a few steps to one side and got pinned down. Someone up front yelled for a heavy machine gun. We yelled back that we were on our way. Those around us covered us as we made a run in the direction of the officer shouting. As we moved ahead many G.I.s were getting hit left and right. At least three times, as we moved up, we were all warned to stay low and stay clear of an area the Japs had set up what was called a "cross fire lane". This lane is where two machine guns cover a wide area of land by criss crossing their line of fire. It is almost certain death to get caught in one of these lanes. You seldom know when you

are near a lane where they are cross firing unless you are near good rifle men. They are aware of it at all times. Our machine gun squad used cross fire tactics all of the time. This was one of the few times we got caught in one.

Our squad sergeant held us up at a small fallen hut and gathered us close enough together as he pointed to the officer giving the orders. We all moved over toward him and got prepared to set up the gun as he shouted to us, "Get that god damn gun over here." As we got to the sight where we were to set up our gun I saw a sight that caused my stomach to flip. I came close to throwing up right on the spot.

There in front of me were four G.I.s partically dragging, partically carrying a poncho which held the remains of a human. There was so much blood in the poncho and this thing in the poncho was cut up so badly you could hardly make out that it was a human being. The remains in the poncho was the first gunner of the machine gun we were called up to replace. They had taken a direct hit



from a Jap 90 millimeter mortars. He was the first one carried out. The rest of the men died too. They were laying under ponchos waiting to be hauled away. Some one up there was looking over us because just as we finished getting the gun set up and ready to take it where the officer wanted it placed, the officer looked at us and said, "Who the hell are you ? What troop are you attached to? Our sergeant told him. The officer looked at us in a disgusting manner and told us to get the hell out of here. He screamed, " Your not attached to 'B' Troop---Get out of here---Get out---LEAVE!" I thought he was nuts. We were all stunned. What has being attached to Troop "B" got to do with anything? If you need the gun now....you need the gun, NOW! The officer looked at us wild-eyed and shouted, "I said, get the hell out of here, NOW!" We all looked at each other, picked up the gun and left. Orders are orders. ...WE GOT THE HELL OUT OF THERE!.....NOW!

Again, we kept low and moved fast as we headed toward the rifle troops we were attached to. In the process, we had to cross that "machine gun cross fire lane" the Japs had set up . Five of our men were laying dead in, or near, the lane. One of them was one of the few close friends I had made on the ship we came overseas on from San Francisco. I was told later that he was hit when he ran back to help one of his buddies who was shot. There were a few attempts by mortars and artillery to knock out the two machine guns but they did not succeed. It took a few irritated riflemen who decided they, "had enough of that crap," to get the job done. The riflemen with experience are worth their weight in gold, up on the front lines.

We finally found "G" Troop before dark and we dug in for the night next to them. There was so much activity that day I was sure the night was going to be wild as well. It was calm. We had only occasional sniper fire. In the morning I almost got it again. I was sipping my coffee. Two bullets came close

enough to cause me to throw hot coffee all over the front of myself. One of the "G" Troop riflemen near-by saw what happened. He spotted the sniper right away. He told me to take cover and proceeded to pick the sniper off from a high coconut tree.

The island was about one mile in length. It was about one half a mile wide. We were going to fan out and move to the other end of the island. We were not going to move forward until "Sloppy Joe" arrived. Sloppy Joe was a light tank. While we were waiting for the tank a funny thing happened. There was a Mexican soldier in "G" Troop called "Boogie". He got this name because of his love for music at that time called "Boogie-Woogie". He had a great sense of humor. He also had a lot of guts. It seems there was a chicken that was running loose in front of the front lines. "Boogie" took off running after it. He must have run 50-75 yards out into the front lines after that chicken. As he ran after the chicken he talked to it in "pretend" Japanese language. He finally caught the chicken. He could easily have gotten shot by a sniper. After he caught the chicken he tied it to a tree. He immediately introduced



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That morning someone spied a chicken ^{at first} running around in front of the lines, and a crazy guy from the troop we was attached to, run out in front of the lines, and chased the chicken all over, he finally caught him, brought him back to the hole, and tied him up to a tree. He later tried to sell it to the officers for 10 pounds, and couldn't, so he ate it himself. He sure looked funny chasing a Jap chicken around in front of the lines.

his chicken as Colonel Kirk. That was our Regimental Commanders name. (I understand the Colonel was not too pleased.) Boogie could care less. Boogie tried to sell this Japanese chicken to anyone for ten pounds in Australian money. He got no takers. After we finished taking the island he ate it himself. It looked funny watching an American soldier of Mexican descent chasing a chicken while speaking to the chicken in make believe Japanese language. I think it broke the tension for a few minutes we all felt from the battle of the day before. It also put most of the men who witnessed what Boogie did into a good frame of mind for the day.

About 8:30 we heard the sound of a noisy motor behind us. On the side of this good sized monster was printed in large letters, "SLOPPY JOE". This small tank served it's purpose well. As it passed us riflemen followed it. A few of the riflemen climbed on the back of it. About 100 yards to the right and in front of where we were dug in was a huge pill box. This Japanese bunker

was really fortified. It was built of steel and thick layers of concrete. The big gun on the front of the tank, I believe it was a 75 millimeter, was fired point blank at the bunker and it did not even budge it. The tank fired the large gun two more times without success. The tank held while the riflemen took over. The riflemen approached the bunker very slowly. One soldier went up to an opening while others covered him. The one soldier who moved up lobbed a hand gernade into a bunker opening. He threw a second hand gernade inside. As he threw the second gernade inside, other riflemen moved over by what looked like the door to the bunker, On a given signal at least five men charged through that door. They killed everything inside of that bunker including some rodents. It did not take long.

After this bunker was destroyed the tank plus the riflemen finished off the rest of the island in short order. Not one Jap offered to surrender. They all chose to die. Our squad advanced behind the riflemen expecting to be called on to set up our gun for back up fire but we were not needed. The riflemen and "Sloppy Joe" did one heck of a job.

After the island was taken I walked through to survey the damage. I saw a number of G.I.s standing over near the outside of the hugh bunker. There were eight dead Japs piled up near the entrance. Some soldiers were pulling a ninth dead Jap at the end of a long rope. One of the Japs had his face blown off, another had lost a leg, another had lost both hands. The others looked to me, again, like wax dummies. One of them had been an officer. He had on a saber belt. The saber was gone. It was in the hands of an American Major who was standing near by.

I took a walk through the bunker. It had look-out holes on all sides. I saw six openings that I imagined were stations for six machine guns. The inside of the bunker was divided into three sections. In two smaller sections it appeared that they stored food and ammunition. In the food storage room



was where I saw two large dead rats. Most of the food was bags of rice. It have a strong odor of fish. In the food storage room were pans, pots and the eating utensils they use. I would say the largest room was the room they slept in. There were straw mats and a few blankets stacked around. I did not see any signs of a sewage system or facilities for a rest room. The whole inside of the bunker, what was left of it, seemed to be crudely built.

I did see one dead American soldier behind a tree. He was laying in high grass. The medics must have missed him. I reported what I saw to my platoon officer and they picked the dead American soldier up. The next sight bothered me a great deal when I first saw it. There were ^{three} ~~six~~ dead Japs in a machine gun nest. They were all dead. What bothered me was their age. None of them appeared to be over 13 years of age. They were dressed in regular Jap uniforms.

One boy had on an Imperial Marine cap. (This boy, no doubt, was an admirer.) He was only about four feet tall. True Imperial Marines had to be six feet tall or larger. Another boy had a small stuffed doll attached to his belt. The sight of the doll made me think of "fads" young American kids went through back home. I realize they were there to kill Americans. If we did not see them first and killed them they would have killed us. The way things went yesterday I am sure this nest of machine gunners got their share of our guys before they died. I just wish this war incident did not have to take place.

After the island had been taken we were told we would return to our previous fox holes and spend the night. We felt there were no Japs left on this island so all of us went swimming. The water near the beach was the clearest water I had ever seen. The swim was relaxing. I thought back to the happenings of the two past days and gave thanks for being alive. If either of the snipers who had me in their sights were a little more accurate I would have either been short an ear, hand or a head.

We took this island so that our artillery could use it. They came on the island early in the morning. We left the island in the boats they arrived in. We ended up at point 3 on the map. ^{* back} We did not stay. We packed our gear and we took off again. We went to Manus Island. We landed at a place called Lorengau. (5) In the two days spent taking Hauwei Island all kinds of things happened. A lot of supply ships arrived. Roads were starting to be built. A temporary hospital sprung up and a Red Cross tent could be seen. Our small "water bags" arrived with a change of clothing. What a good feeling it is to have a change of clothing. It is almost as good as getting a piece of hot garlic bread with peanut butter on it. We got another night of rest without having to pull guard. We had to share that night with about a million mosquitoes. Next morn-

ing we had a hot meal brought to us by a mess hall. We had hot cakes, oatmeal and coffee. It tasted good. It was the first time I ever remember saying I liked oatmeal. I must be losing my taste buds in my old age. They waited until we got done eating before they told us what was up next. It seems that the 8th Cavalry needed help in the mountains. We did not catch up to the 8th for a couple of days. They had a head start on up. The first night spent on this move to catch up with them I had another close call. This time it was not a bullet it was a coral snake. Coral snakes were usually found near the beach. This sucker was halfway up the mountains. While I was digging in, this little devil crawled into my foxhole. It was a fast mover. I killed it with my shovel. I was told if this little guy would have bitten me I would have lived only a few minutes. The mosquitoes on Manus were very vicious. They are big, too.

When we caught up with the 8th Cavalry we followed them for five or six days. We moved from dawn to dark each day. We traveled over hills, hills and more hills. Seems every night we dug in it was at the top of a high, high hill. Besides hills we were faced with mud, mud and more mud. What causes mud? Rain causes mud. So what did we do those 5-6 days we climbed up and slid down muddy hills in the rain. What did we see day after day besides the rain, mud and jungle? We saw many dead Japs that our riflemen killed up in front of us. One of the bad things about being wet, from either rain or sweat, is that if the sun does come out and you dry up you somehow acquire a rash and sores on your legs that are called jungle rot. I was told you only get jungle rot on your legs if you do not wear your leggins. I wore my leggins faithfully and got jungle rot. When the sun came out you got hot fast. The rash caused by this heat is enough to drive you nuts.

Many things did happen those days we followed the 8th Cavalry. One night



we dug in fox hole to fox hole. There was almost no space between us. If the Jap artillery would have known they would have had a field day. One of those mornings it was my turn to take the water canteens to a stream and fill them with water. I filled the water canteens of all the men in the squad but I walked away and left my gun leaning against a tree. Leaving your personal weapon ANYPLACE...for...ANY REASON is a cardinal sin for a soldier. When I got back we moved out so I could not go back and get it. A friend found an extra rifle ,leaning next to a tree that same morning and gave it to me. The rifle my friend found was not my rifle. When my squad Sergeant found out what I had done you could hear him in JAPAN. I could not say anything back to him. I had it coming.

On another day while working with the 8th Cavalry, we stopped for a short break near a stream. We were high in the mountains. The water looked very cool and refreshing. A few of us scooped up a canteen cup of water from the stream and put in one of our purification pills. We decided to mix in some K-ration lemonade and sugar. We sat and drank our refreshing lemonade on the break and it really tasted good. After the break ended we moved up the stream some 15 feet or so to see something that turned the stomachs of those of us who had the cool refreshing drink using the stream water. Stretched across the stream were four dead Japs. They had been laying in the stream, maggots and all, for a number of days. The smell was awful. The stream we drank from flowed right over their bodies. For some reason I lost my appetite for lemonade.

The final few days we followed the 8th Cavalry the hills seemed to get steeper and steeper. The only thing that kept me going was my old reliable "stubborn streak" and the fun I got from listening to "mouse" rant and rave when it was his turn to carry the tripod or the receiver. We walked clear across Manus Island. This mission with the 8th Cavalry was called "mopping up Jap stragglers". We were given a rest.

While we were sitting part way up in the mountains looking out into the Bismark Sea enjoying some coffee one of the sergeants brought up a small group of clean dressed, clean looking, fresh new recruits. They had come directly from the "states". They appeared naturally nervous, scared and a bit leery of those in the squad. We tried to make them feel as comfortable as we could. We each introduced ourselves and attempted to answer any questions they asked. We refreshed their knowledge concerning the weapon they would have to master. It took some time before they began to trust us. The first one to "break the ice" was a young guy from Minnesota. His name was Fritz Fastner. He had a little experience in R.O.T.C. in college. He knew a little of what to expect in combat. Before long he was as "goofy" as the rest of us who had been in combat.

One of the guys in our squad found a pair of rusty old sheers near where we were resting. They were about a foot long. The guy who found them wanted to know if anyone wanted a hair cut. I was the first volunteer. He almost cut me bald. The hair cut felt good



until the hot sun hit it.

We were warned to dig in. There were still many Japs roaming around. We were resting but we were also waiting for our next orders. About 30-40 yards up a path from where we had dug in was a Jap pill box that had been knocked out. They must have left in a hurry because we found ammunition, cloths, food, writing paper, ink and some Jap army items. I wrote a letter to mom using the paper I found in that bunker. I told her where I got the paper. She probably did not get the letter that I had written. I mentioned "Jap bunker" in it. Censors were very strict about what was written in our letters in combat areas.

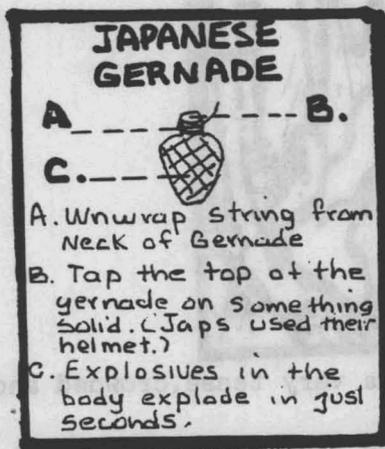
One night while we were at this resting place we got word that we were on alert for an attack. We were told that a concentration of Japs were going to attack us from the rear. If that was the case they could be coming down the path that leads to the knocked out bunker. The foxhole that was dug for the first three gunners was just the right size. Shortly after dark our artillery set up a barrage. As soon as the shells hit the ground here comes a G.I., in the dark, from behind us. He jumped into our fox hole. It was Dudley. About five seconds later another one of our men dove into the fox hole. It was Fritz Fastner, our new recruit. Fritz wanted to know why his fox hole buddy left him and ran for the fox hole that held the machine gun. Jack explained that he was scared by the artillery barrage. Would you believe it--- we now have five men crammed into a fox hole that should hold three men. Neither Jack nor Fritz should have raised their head let alone jump up, run over and land in our hole. They are both lucky they were not shot. That's not all. Very shortly after Fritz got into our fox hole we saw something move on the path. It moved a second time. We gave the machine gun a short burst. We heard what sounded like a groan. Jack was sure it was a Jap scout looking for us. Nothing happened the rest of the night. We each took turns pulling guard and listening.



It was a very tense, crowded and needless -to- say, miserable night. In the morning, we went out to see our dead Jap. Instead of a

dead Jap soldier we found a Manus Island goat. We had to take the poor thing out and bury it. Fritz was given a lecture about leaving his fox hole after dark by Steve. Fritz never did that again. I cannot say the same for Jack.

The Japs we were expecting did not show. It was a false alarm. We spent that day goofing off. My squad sergeant found a little excitement and he got me involved, also. Steve was one of the most inquisitive humans I have ever met. What he did this day... "Just Because"... was hard to believe. Steve walked up to the bunker I wrote of earlier and returned with a big black leather case. I asked him what was in the case. He said, "You'll see". As he opened the bag I could see it was hand gernades. They were not our hand gernades. They were Japanese gernades. I asked Steve what he was going to do with them. He said, "What the hell do you think I'm gonna do.... I'm gonna see how they work". I asked, "For God's sake, why?" His answer, "Just because". I moved over behind a tree for safety, I was sure he was going to blow his brains out. I watched. After a period of trial and error and, I am sure, pure Irish luck, Steve figured it out. He called me over and showed me the secret. We started



popping the caps and throwing the Jap grenades down in a valley. The diagram above titled "Japanese Grenade" explains how these grenades worked. The sergeant and I threw about three dozen of them. We made a lot of noise. The officers inside the perimeter thought we were having a battle with Japs. A First Lewie was sent over to investigate. He wanted to know what all of the noise was about. When we told him and showed him he asked if he could throw a few himself. After awhile he stopped and said, "I was sent up here to see what was going on and end it." He ended up by saying, "It was fun, wasn't it?" That ended Steve's little Japanese grenade experience. I am glad I found how they worked just in case I needed to make use of them some day.

One morning I sat on an opening in the mountains and watched across the bay as some Australian fighter planes dropped pamphlets. I assume they were peace pamphlets. The following morning, in the same general area, I watched Australian planes drop bombs. To me, whatever happened those two mornings did not make a lick of sense. It looked to me that the Australians were not sure what they wanted the enemy to do.

Each day we all felt we would go someplace to fight again. Each day the men in charge changed the orders. I was not anxious to return to combat because I was really coming on with something. I'm sure it was dysentery.

I was weak and listless. For the next five days all I did was eat, rest and throw-up. At the bottom of the hill ~~we were on~~ was a stream. I took a bath each day. I swam in the ocean, which was a short distance from the stream. One day I went to a Red Cross tent that sprung up near by and had a canteen cup of coco-cola. The last two days before we left this resting area we had hot meals brought up to the base of the mountain. Each day my stomach got more upset. I was throwing-up and I had the runs. Both of these things add to one being weak. I dreaded it when they told me we were going to move out the next day. We were going to go on a two week combat patrol. Our mission was that of "mop-up." We were to hunt out all Japs left in a given area and remove them. The night before we left on this trip to hunt for Jap stragglers I really got sick. Sad thing about it was, whatever I had stayed with me until almost the end of my combat days. I was now first gunner. The first day out I had difficulty even picking up the tripod. I threw-up until there was nothing left to come up. I had to stop and go to the bathroom many, many times that day. My squad realized my problem and let me carry the light stuff for a few days. There is no turning back once you get out into the mountains. If you are wounded they will haul you through hell and high water to get you to a hospital. If you are ill it's just plain, "shut up and keep moving." I was forced to turn my "Stubborn Streak" into my "Bull-headed... to hell with it, Streak" in order to keep going.

With one exception it got so that every time we went into a combat situation it started to rain. This trip was no different. This made footing bad from day one. We carried extra rations in our pack because getting food to us, where we were heading, was going to be hard to do. We were only suppose to cover a total of 33 miles. We covered a lot more than that. We carried the machine gun plus three extra boxes of ammunition. We faced the same muddy and

rain conditions we had faced when we crossed Manus Island, after we left the area of Lorengau. The mud in these hills were such that going up hill we took two steps forward and slipped back one. Down hill you took one step and slid down three. Sometimes you went clear to the bottom. Moving in the mud was such fun. My "jungle rot" got worse. I flat forgot to put my leggins on one day while we were taking a break in a native village. I walked around in high jungle grass. "Bingo", now it was many big spots on my ankles. They spread up both legs. Very uncomfortable. So, outside of having heat rash, jungle rot, dysentery and no appetite I felt like a million bucks. We had a problem, our first day out, of finding water. This problem of finding water to drink ended when we arrived at our first village stop.

The first night we stopped on our hunt for Jap stragglers was at a small native village. We were met by a group of natives. Their leader was called "Ronny". Ronny was an Australian who had worked with natives in this area during peace time. He knew the territory well. He knew these natives well. When we were stopped here we were told that this small group ^{of} natives had volunteered to carry rations for us as we searched for Japs. It felt strange to be around these men. They could not speak to us. We could not speak to them. Ronny did all of that for us. We did try to communicate with them by using hand motions and drawing stick pictures in the ground. This whole experience eventually turned out to be a very pleasant event.

Ronny's right hand man was called "number one boy". He was built somewhere between a world heavyweight boxer and a 270 pound tackle on a professional football team. I do know one thing about him. When he gave an order to any of the natives they jumped. The natives we were going to escort looked like any natives you might see in a Geographic magazine. They each wore a skirt with shorts underneath. Their skin appeared very black rather than dark brown. They



did not wear shoes. The hair style of each native seemed different. They were all very strong. They appeared to be very sensitive to the feelings of every one around them, including the G.I.s. I later learned they were all very high on religion. They were friendly , helpful and caring. At times they seemed very stubborn. I do not feel I am doing them justice by my description. They were different than anyone I had been around or dealt with before.

From the second morning on, after we teamed up with these natives we moved along quite rapidly. We had a few skirmishes with Jap stragglers while out with them but nothing big happened. One thing I was thankful for was the way the natives could find water. The afternoon we arrived at the second village, on our mission, it was the day before Easter. I was not aware of it but an

army chaplin was with us the first few days. He came along in order to provide for us a small Easter Service. At 8:00 A.M. we held the service. It was nice. Following the service we packed up, gathered up the natives and were on our way. Later that day I slipped in the mud and dropped the barrel of the machine gun into the mud .I cleaned it out before anyone discovered what I had done. Thank god we did not need the gun with it half filled with that googy stuff.



We visited another small native hut on Easter day. The next day we camped at our forth village. This was considered our command post. From this point we patrolled every direction. This is where I got initiated to good old "jungle rot". One day coming back from a partol one of my buddies spotted something bright red over in some bushes. It turned out to be a "1000 stitch" Japanese flag. This flag has no meaning to me other than it was a Japanese flag. It was a flag that many Jap soldiers worn inside of their helmet. No one in the squad knew why it was important. It must have meant something to a See-bee. My friend sold it to a See-bee months later for 55 pounds, Australian money. That was equal to near \$180.00 American money.

One of the nights at this command post village I really got sick. I threw-

up 13 times during the night. The next day we had an eight mile patrol. It was my turn. My close buddy Fritz volunteered to take my place. Our Company commander would not allow him to do it. Fritz almost got court-martialed over this incident. He threatened the officer who refused to let him take my place. He told the officer that if I fail to return from the patrol for some reason he was going to kill him. I noticed the officer was waiting at the path that afternoon when our patrol returned. I also noticed he gave a sigh of relief when he saw me. I'm pleased Fritz did not get into serious trouble because of me.

The day patrols that we went on did not show serious signs of Jap activity. We found numbers of dead Japs but very few live Japs. The natives who lived in this village told the Australian, Ronny, that the Japs had moved out of the area. These natives feared the Japs so we believed them. Some of the men on this mission were assigned to stay at this command post. The rest of us were ordered on a long patrol in the direction of the sea shore. It was both a mop-up patrol and we were informed that we might possibly meet up with "F" Troop of the 7th Cavalry. If we did meet "F" Troop, out there in the area we were patrolling, they would be in need of rations. This meant the native group we had been escorting would go with us to haul the rations.

This trip, with these natives is an experience I will never forget. The first thing I learned about them was their mannerisms. I also learned each one had a mind of their own. Other words, they would leave when they are darn good and ready. About the time our patience was ready to run out they were ready. I actually believe they were testing us. I think they were trying to see how far they could go before we got mad. They were use to this mountain environment and the rain that goes with it. We moved each day from 8:30 until 5:30 P.M. We took exactly one hour for lunch break. It was almost like clockwork. We learned they all were very frightened of dead Japs. Whenever they

saw a dead Jap along the path they ran by as fast as they could move.

Each day with these natives was different. Soon all of us became friends. Soon we let one another know our likes and dislikes. They loved the sugar in our K-rations. They also liked the biscuits, lemonade and some of the canned goods, too. We gave them these things. We liked the meat and milk of the coconuts. One of them could climb a tree, knock down a ripe coconut, hush it and present it to you ready to eat before a G.I. could even look up in a tree and determine if there was a coconut in the tree that was ripe. I tried to husk a coconut. After about thirty minutes I gave up. The natives also liked our cigarettes and they had faith that the iodine in our first aid kits would cure any wound.

There was one native in the group named "Jakey". He could sing all of the words ,in english, to "MY Wild Irish Rose". He had spent some time with some Marines on another Island earlier in the war. I harmonized with him when he sang "My Wild Irish Rose" the second time that he sang it and his eyes almost popped out of his head. He had a smile from ear to ear. We hit it off real well. Before we left each other "Jakey" had learned almost all of the words to "I've Been Working on The Railroad".

Most all of the natives could do wonders with coconut leaves. They cut the leaves into strips. They wove the strips into mats. One of our men got wounded on patrol. It was pouring down rain. Within minutes they built a rain proof shelter for the wounded soldier. I was impressed.

The day before we contacted "F" Troop, we met some slight resistance. After it ended we came upon two Japs in a path up ahead of us. We saw them squatting down over a third Jap that appeared to be dead. One of our men shot both of the live Japs. I hesitate to write this but this is what I think I saw. I saw the end of a cannibalistic act. The buttocks of the Jap who was laying on

the ground as we approached them had been cut out of his body. One of the Jap soldiers who had been squatting over the dead Jap, laying in the path, had what looked like part of his buttocks stuck into the end of a bayonet. At least that is what it looked like to me. We all saw this at once. What made me believe I saw what I have written here is what one of my squad members said, "Do you think he was fixing to cook that and eat it?" It was a horrible sight.

The trip through the mountains from the command post, until we met "F" Troop, was easy. We ran into Japs three times. In each case they appeared to be running away from us. After we made contact with "F" Troop we gave them the rations they needed and started back to our command post. Ronny, the Aussie leader of the natives, told us that since his men were not going to be carrying rations they could carry our equipment. He asked that they carry only unloaded weapons. We were only three days from the command post. Each of us were given one native to carry our personal gear. Two natives took turns



carrying the tripod and receiver. Our selected helpers wove us mats to sleep on. They found villages where we slept in dry huts each night. They built fires for us, dried our clothing. They even made our coffee each morning. They treated us like we were someone special. They appeared to enjoy doing it. Fritz had "Number One" boy as his helper. My helper was my good buddy, "Jakey".

These natives must have known about our Christian God. One of our men in the squad brought out his little bible that was in his pocket. He told his helper what it was. The bible had gotten wet. This trooper, Craig, should not have confided in the native who was selected as his helper because his helper stayed up all night. He dried Craigs bible, one page at a time. When Craig did doze off his helper kept waking him to tell him there were no Japs around. Craig got little or no rest that night. Craigs bible made quit an impression on his helper. We all think that the native who was Craigs helper thought he was a priest or a minister.

We made it back to the command post as we had planned. When we arrived there were a few wounded men from our troop. They must have had some contact with the enemy while we were gone. There were not only a few wounded but there were some men who were ill. There are so many ways to get sick in these village areas it is not even funny. I was still ill from whatever I had before I left on this patrol. I lost a lot of weight. All I could keep down was coffee. I must have been improving. I was only throwing up 4-5 times a day at this time.

* ON MAR 28th

We were told that our original mission, which was to mop-up the Jap stragglers, was over. We were taken to a river near the village that led to the ocean. An "Alligator" was to come and take us to a village along the north coast of Manus. From here we would be taken to our new rest camp on the is-

land of Hauwei. The Division artillery was going to move off of the island and we were going to move onto the island.

The same natives that we escorted on the patrol was going to direct us to the river. They volunteered to carry the wounded on stretchers over steep hills, across streams and through the thick jungle. This is back-breaking work. They did an excellent job. They dropped one man and they apologized the whole two days it took to get to our destination. At least Ronny said they were trying to tell us they were sorry. The second morning we stopped and picked up one of our high ranking officers on the way to the river we were heading for. When the natives were told to carry the gear of the high rank officers the natives protested.... until the "number one boy" voiced his opinion. The natives were our friends. Army rank did not mean a thing to them. When we reached the river where we were going to leave our native friends you could feel a hint of sadness. The short friendship was coming to an end.



Just before we boarded the "Alligator" to head down the river we tried to tell them good-bye. A few of them stared and tried to smile. There was a handshake or two. I got a slight hug from "Jakey". Actually, it was a little emotional. Before we left we gave the natives what ever they wanted, like old picks, little shovels, extra bits of clothing and all the extra rations we had left. I messed up. I intended to give "Jakey" my little bible but it slipped my mind. Being with these natives had been good for all of us. The people of the western world could learn a lot about what is really important in life from these, simple, down to earth, natives. They had so little---- they give so much of themselves.

When we loaded into the boat that took us to the village along the ocean our combat days for this campaign were over. When we reached the village we learned we would need to wait our turn for a "duck" to haul us to Hauwei Island. I decided to move around the village and take a look since it might be awhile before we took off. I witnessed a few strange sights. The most comical thing I saw was two natives playing cards with a deck of cards that had to be at least ten years old. I tried, but I could not figure what they were doing. What ever game they were playing the one native won every hand. If the guy who won turned up low cards he won. If he turned up high cards he won. It made no difference what he turned up in his hand, he won. They were really having fun. I think part of the fun was due to the stakes they were playing for. They were playing for "betle nuts". Betel nuts are nuts that look like buckeyes but there is a red intoxicating juice inside of them. I'm not sure the native who was losing all the time even cared.

The tiny children in this village were very shy but they would beg for a cigarette. I saw one boy, not much older than three, smoking. As I looked around it seemed like all of the work was being done by the women. They were

doing all of the heavy garden work and all of the hauling and it looked like they were even doing some building on their huts. Most of the women worked while carrying babies strapped to their backs. The men were giving orders and directions to the women. No one seemed to object. Everyone appeared happy with the role they were playing.

The young women, up to about 20 years of age, ran around only half dressed. The eyes of the younger men did not miss a thing when they walked by. The number of wives a native man had was shown by the number of color bands he had on his upper arm. The most bands I saw, in the short time I was there, was four. I think the idea was...the more wives you were able to support the more important you were thought to be. Their huts were built high up off of the ground. I did not see any signs of a sewage system in the village.

First Cavalry men of the 7th Regiment had been arriving from patrols from out in the near-by mountains all day. We were all waiting our turn to be sent to Hauwei Island. This island was visible from where we were now sitting. As we waited we looked across the bay and discussed how great it would be as a place for us to recuperate from what we had just been through.



When it came our turn to load our gear and equipment we were more than ready. As we approached the island I suddenly had a strange feeling. We unloaded at the exact spot where we had made the invasion on Hauwei, earlier. I had a flashback. It was on this invasion that I had three very close calls with a sniper just minutes after coming off of the barge. At the time we took this island it was pure jungle. Now, it had a rough road through part of the island. This island was only one mile long and one-half mile wide. It was eventually going to hold men of the 7th and 8th Regiment plus 2nd Squadron Headquarters.

Our regiment was assigned the far one-third of the island from where we got off of the barge. The See-bees had already been at work clearing out swamp and jungle to make a place for us to build our camp. The regiment had been assigned an area. Each troop had not been assigned a spot in the area, assigned to the regiment, yet. At this time we were on our own. There were no Japs around. For the time being the war was over.

The let down following such a prolonged period of great tension does funny things to a person. It does funny things even to a young person. I was feeling the losses of the many close friends I had made. I was relieved that I had made it through my first campaign. At the moment I really wanted to talk to a loved one from home about what I had gone through. I almost felt like I wanted to break down for a few minutes. I didn't but I was told later by one experienced in this field that it probably would have been better on me if I would have. I am not sure any one



who had not had a combat experience would understand what I was saying.

The first few days we slept either under a pup tent or on the ground, in the open. From force of habit I dug a shallow fox hole before I stretched out. As I was laying there trying to get to sleep I felt a big thump on my chest. A large rat ran over me. I made a mistake of sleeping near the troop mess tent. There were rats all over the place. In spite of the rats close by it felt good to lay down and not worry about snipers and shells falling. I was still sick from dysentery. I finally dozed off. I felt a drop of rain so I got up and moved over under the mess hall tent. I felt around for a box or two to lay down on. Instead I found an army cot not being used. I went to sleep immediately. In the morning I could see and hear the rats at work on our rations.

The rats in this supply tent must have been Japanese trained. They were ugly and big like the Jap Imperial Marines. They were also mean and suicidal. They only come out in packs and at nighttime.

The next few days while the See-bees were cleaning up a place for us to start building our camp we got target practice with our automatic 45s. There were hundreds and hundreds of rats on Hauwei island. Many, many of them were



gathered at an area near the beach. We got rid of a lot of them. We did, however, after waking each morning, see rat tracks on the sand floor of our tents.

The first few weeks we spent at Hauwei was devoted to working with the See-bees, building a camp. After they leveled an area off for us to use we were ordered by the Captain to repeat everything we had done in building the camp in New Guinea. We were all assigned to details both night and day. We built the officers quarters before we did our quarters. Our troop was allowed a space 200 yards long by 40 yards wide. The street ran up the middle. Tents were placed evenly on each side of the street. Until squad tents arrived we slept in pup tents.

About the time our squad tents arrived our smelly barracks bags showed up. It was a relief to have a change of clothing. After the tents went up and the cots arrived we were still doing details both night and day. The job I cared the very least about was the one I was assigned to do for days and days. I got to shovel sand into trucks from the beach, out of the trucks onto the tent floors and even in front of the tents. I hate to shovel. Poles arrived from Manus Island that were used to hold up the mosquito nets inside of our tents. The upright poles held shelves for our clothing and any personal belongings. We did not need the mosquito nets for mosquitoes but we did need the nets to keep out mice and small rats while we slept. We folded the nets under the blanket we slept on. The inside of each tent was done just like had been done in New Guinea, as ordered.

After we built our tents we constructed an eight holer with a roof. We built a movie booth and a small stage. The movie booth was rain proof. Most of our entertainment came from the large stage found in the Squadron area Headquarters. They invited USO entertainment that we got to see. There was a big



Red Cross tent in the Squadron area, also. You could get coffee almost any time of the day or night there.

On Hauwei there were THREE parade grounds. Each regiment had a parade grounds and the Squadron had one. This Division had to be parade happy. They seemed to have marching parades at the drop of the hat. We had at least one parade every three weeks. Most infantry divisions would probably have one every six months, maybe. The parade grounds served as softball diamonds, too. We did have a fair softball team. I played short-stop. It gave me a chance to meet a lot of men from all over the United States. The softball games I played in on Hauwei were the "highlight" of my stay on that island. Each troop had a volleyball court. The regiment built a basketball court. I cannot complain about the sports program they had set up. When the 12th Cavalry boxing team was invited over to box against our team I got a chance to spend some time with my little mexican buddy, "Gus". He beat the hell out of our man. We all

had to pull a lot of guard. There was K.P. to do. We were given many opportunities to rest.

We had two churches on the island. One was a Protestant and one was a Catholic church. They were both built by the natives from Manus Island. A few of the workers were the natives we escorted up in the mountains, earlier. There were services every Sunday. During the week the churches were used for orination speeches. We had a good sized dispensary on the island. For serious sicknesses or injuries a soldier was sent to the General Hospital over on Manus Island. There were female nurses on Manus. Many guys on our island tried every thing imaginable to get into the hospital over on Manus.

The water was furnished by wells. We had two of them. Having sufficient water brought on a few problems for us. We were required to not only wash our clothing weekly but we boiled them and scrubbed them. We had to haul the water a great distance. The weekly inspections of clothing soon turned into daily inspections. In fact, this access to water brought us back to the way it was in basic training. We now were having formations three times daily. We were doing close order drill on the parade grounds daily. We were taking classes on things like first aid, combat techniques, patrol procedures and machine-gun usage. At revellie we fell out in clean cloths and shaven. At retreat it was clean sun-tans, shined shoes and clean personal weapon. We got to be spit and polish.....What it really got to be was a big "pain" in the rear. It all began because one officer insisted we clean all of our clothing weekly.

Money on the island meant very little unless you were a big time gambler and was sending money that you won home. Almost everything that you needed or wanted was given to you. There were a few things you could buy at the PX but you did not really need them. I sent everything I had to mom until she insis-



ted I keep a little for spending on personal items. We had our pay raised one time while I was in combat. About the only place you could spend money was at the PX. Once in a blue moon they had soft candy, cookies or coco-cola but they were sold within a few hours. Every once in awhile they sold coco-cola and everyone got some. It cost 32¢ a canteen cup. For a short time they had four beers issued each week. Each can cost 10¢. I exchanged my beer for a friends coco-cola.

During the months we spent resting on Hauwei our Division Headquarters was having each of the four regiments send squads of men into parts of Manus island on patrol. Just selected squads, from each regiment, were being ordered to do this. Guess which troop was asked to select a squad in the 7th? You guessed it. It was "H" troop. Now, guess which squad, of all of the squads that could be picked in "H" troop, was selected? You guessed it right, again. It was the squad I was in. How lucky can you get. We were told that we were sent to look for stray Japs. I think it was done as a reminder to everyone in the regiment that there was still a war going on. My other thought was that we

were going to leave this beautiful rest camp and soon return to combat and they chose to break it into us gently.

We arrived in Manus by barge in full field gear. We patrolled the area we were assigned to patrol for the two day period. We saw no sign of Japs, dead or alive. We returned to the point that we were to be picked up and were informed by a messenger that we would be picked up a day late. Fortunately, we met some of the See-bees that we had fought along next to, the first day at Momote air strip, on Los Negros Island. One of the See-bees recognized one of the men in our squad. I think they were from the same state and both of them had remembered that from a conversation they had that first day we came on the invasion. These See-bees were the same bunch who helped clean up Hauwei. They told us they would be pleased if we would stay the one night with them. We were treated to a non-stop movie, a steak dinner, cots that had mattresses and we had fresh eggs, honest to god fresh milk and bacon with fresh orange juice for breakfast. They insisted we eat all that we wanted of anything



U During our stay on these islands we have had 2 shows put on my movie and radio stars, one by some girl (was she cute) a new star coming up, and she came to our little island, and sang, for some of the guys, it was the first white woman they had seen for months.

The other show was put on by Bob Hope & his cast, on another small island, and it took us a half a day to get there. He was really good, the guys went crazy over him, in his cast was Herby Calona, Francis Sandford,

and everything. I had to pinch myself to make sure I was not dreaming. I damn near made myself sick. We sat on their porch, high in the mountains, that looked over Seadler Harbor and talked the next morning until we could see a barge coming from the direction of Hauwei Island. When we tried to thank them they just laughed. They told us they had already been thanked by seeing what we have done in combat earlier in the campaign. Those men really made our day for us. They lifted the moral of the whole squad about 200 per-cent.

It was nice to get back to Hauwei after spending two days in the hills of Manus Island on bivouac doing nothing. In a way it was not nice to get back to the strict military routine that had been building up just before we took off on the patrol over on Manus.



When we returned to the island we were given a nice surprise. That night there was a program at the Squadron area. The main attraction was a beautiful woman singer. Most of the guys just stared and drooled. She was good. A few days later we got even a bigger surprise. We were entertained by none other than the one and only BOB HOPE and his crew. This was a great performance. Everyone who wanted to see the show had to sign up for it. He performed at either Pityilu, Norild or Koruniat island. We were not told. So many guys went to see him from all of the Admiralty Islands and from the Navy ships in the bay that while his program was on all of these sources were left short handed. Bob Hope said he hoped the Japs did not know we were all on this one island. It took a half a day to get to where he performed. We had to pack a lunch.

When we arrived there was a huge crowd waiting. Some eager telephone men were hanging from coconut trees so they could get a better look at him. The

stage was temporary and plain. The back part of the stage was a dressing room that was covered by a squad tent. Included in the show was Jerry Kalona, Francis Langford and a young dancer who was not a star. She was well built and was an excellent dancer. She jitterbugged with one guy at a time until she had danced with about ten guys. One of the men she danced with was "Boogie". I told of him earlier. He is the one who caught the chicken and named it after our regimental commander. Every one went nuts over her. Bob began his program by throwing a shovel on stage from the audience. He said, "I don't know about you guys but I ain't taking any chances if there is an air attack." There was an air raid on Manus the night he arrived. He climbed on stage and was well greeted. As he did so a General came walking down between men toward a seat. Hope pointed at him and said "Hey mac, who the hell do you think you are coming to the show late." The officer was embarrassed but he laughed. He no sooner started his joke routine and he broke into a smile followed by a good laugh. He asked some G.I.s to come up on the stage. They were carrying a poncho with a sign painted on it that said, "To hell with bully beef..... We still have HOPE!"

Francis Langford sang a couple of songs. Jerry Kalona sang one of his long winded songs and played his famous slide trombone. Lanny Ross, aboard a ship in the bay at the time, had come into the island to sing a couple of songs with Francis Langford. Lanny Ross was a well known entertainer at that time. All in all it was a great show that I will remember all of my life. When it came to entertaining troops in World War II I really do not feel any celebrity could compare with Bob Hope. The show lasted well over two hours. We just made it back to Hauwei by dark. This was one of my favorite days in the service.

All we did the last few weeks before we left Hauwei Island was to carry

out the "spit and polish" like orders that had been planned by some ranking officer. Each day we had reveille, we cleaned our tents, policed the area, ate breakfast and had an inspection. Following inspection we did some close order drill and attended classes. In the afternoon we washed our clothing, got put on a detail, involved ourselves in some form of physical activity like softball, volleyball or swimming at the beach until time to get ready for retreat. After supper we had ATEBRIN call. Atebrin was a pill that we took that helped fight off malaria. It really did make your skin turn a sick yellow color. I did get a slight dose of malaria in the Philippines. In the evening we did as we wanted until "lights out." We were all subject to K.P., guard duty or some special duty, of course.

Speaking of details reminds me of one of my most disliked officers. The day this man arrived on Hauwei my problems started. When I first saw him I thought to myself, "Now there is a ninety-day wonder if ever there was one." That was a mistake on my part. The first letter of his last name began with a "J". His name was not Lieutenant Joke but I feel the name fits so when I do refer to this officer in my story I will call him Lieutenant Joke. Later on, in the end of the fighting in the Philippines, I might well call him Lieutenant HERO. He probably saved my life by insisting I go to the hospital. Up until that time this man was on me like a "leech". The first altercation we had was caused by him falling out for retreat with his leggins on backwards. I was standing at attention behind him. Between the command of "attention" and "present arms" I said softly to no one in particular, "That dumb ass has his leggins on backwards." He heard me. I was restricted to my tent after supper for one week.

The second time we got into it, it cost me seven days K.P. He was teaching a class on the proper way to set up the machine gun. I came up to where the

class was in process and asked politely if I might stand in the back of the class instead of sitting down on the ground. I had been shoveling sand all night and my back hurt. He glared at me and told me to sit down. I made the mistake of mumbling something unprintable to myself and I sat down. He next said something to me in the presence of my friends that I felt a good officer would not say. He had a right to say what he said but not at that time and in that place. He told me if I did not straighten up he would put me on K.P. I was embarrassed at this comment and said to him, "Go ahead, sir." He pointed toward the First Sergeants tent and told me to report to the First Sergeant. At this point things got funny. I told the Sergeant that I was told by Joke to report for K.P. The sergeant looked at me kinda strange and said, "What are you talking about?" He informed me that he could not just put me on K.P. without a reason. The sergeant told me to go back and ask Joke why. When I interrupted his class to tell him the sergeant wanted to know the reason I was put on K.P., Joke almost fell apart. Joke went over and talked to the First sergeant. I was put on K.P. Funny thing was my automatic turn for K.P. was to start the following day. Add the seven days that we do when we take our turn in the troop rotation to the seven days the officer gave me and I ended up doing fourteen straight days.

When I cornered the Captain and asked why I was given the seven days by Joke, he said, it was for MENTAL INSUBORDINATION. I thought someone was joking. No one was joking. Mental insubordination, I was told, means that you look at someone like you would like to smack him but you do not do it. Hell, I looked at Joke that way from day one. I thought it was only me that did not care for this man. I was wrong. He was not cared for by any of the men in the platoon if verbal expressions about him mean anything. The First sergeant had a hard time believing the reason Joke gave for putting me on K.P. I made so

much noise at 4:30 A.M., while doing my K.P. across the street from the tents where the officers slept, that they never let me finish my 14 days. I was released after four days of K.P.

The third time we had a run in was over three white hairs under my nose. When the order came out to shave before reveille I had a problem. I had not shaved before and I did not want to start until it was necessary. I knew when I started I would have to keep it up. Shaving in combat is difficult to do. I was hoping they would say I did not need to shave in that first inspection. Actually, there was nothing there to shave, anyway. Joke did not agree with me. The first morning we were told to be shaved I did not shave. During inspection Joke almost stepped on me as he moved up to inspect my face. He said, "You didn't shave this morning, did you trooper?" I swear that I do not know why I answered as I did but out of my mouth came, "Shit sir, I've never shaved." Joke did not think that was funny. As I thought about what I said later, I did not think it was funny. It just came out. That one cost me a week of cleaning all of the machine guns and mortars in the troop each day for a week.

I felt ashamed later about how I felt about Lieutenant Joke. He probably was a good officer. He did prove himself in combat. He was never liked by the men in the troop. In spite of the fact that he made life uncomfortable for me most of the time he was my platoon officer, I did try to make him feel accepted later. I even prayed that he would change so we could all work together well in combat. He had not seen combat yet. He never really showed a feeling of friendship toward anyone including his fellow officers. I felt sorry for him.

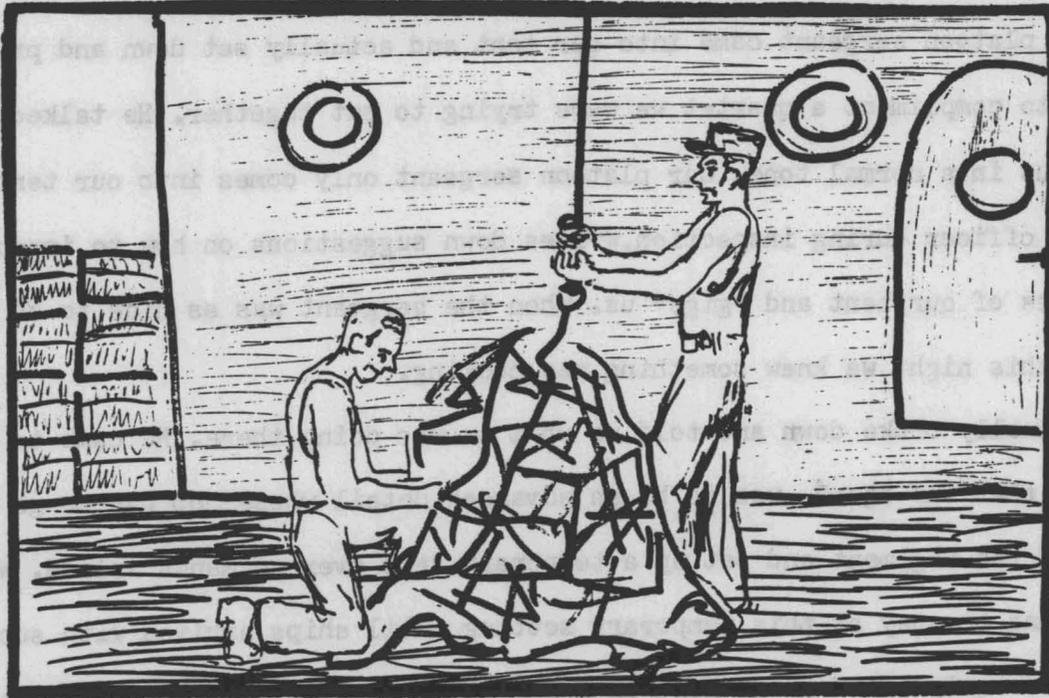
All of the men in the platoon had a feeling something big was coming up soon. For one thing our softball team was doing very well and for another

thing the officers and non-coms were getting to be almost human. For example, our platoon sergeant came into our tent and actually sat down and proceeded to compliment a quartet we were trying to put together. He talked to all of us in a normal tone. Our platoon sergeant only comes into our tent with an officer during inspection, writes down suggestions on how to improve the looks of our tent and "gigs" us. When the sergeant was as nice to us as he was this night we knew something was cooking.

He finally broke down and told us what he was doing there. He came to let us know that our squad was to be an advanced detail whose job was to go ahead of the regiment and set up a temporary camp over on Manus Island. We were going to stay at this temporary setting until ships arrived with supplies and equipment for our next invasion. The invasion was going to take place soon.

As our squad pulled away from Hauwei Island for a final time I thought of the many good and sad memories I had the short time I spent there. I made a number of friends. The days playing softball were great. The night my friend from the 12th Cavalry came over to box against our regiment and visit with me, the jazz band who came over and played for us, the night Fritz, Earl and I drank some Australian "rot gut" and I got sick after I got to acting silly. The saddest thing I remembered was the ^{Three} ~~six~~ dead Japanese children piled in a fox hole behind a machine gun. *When we invaded this island*

I was sure we were heading for combat soon because as we arrived at Manus it began to RAIN hard. We had all those months of beautiful weather while we sat on Hauwei Island. The mention of combat brings on rain. The area that we picked *(we had no other choice,)* was a sea of mud. We dropped off squad tents every 10-15 feet and returned to set them up. We camped in pup tents and ate



K-rations. When the rest of the troop arrived we really got the "raspberries" for the area that was selected for the temporary camp area. They swore I picked out the spot-----"only a dumb farmer from Iowa would select a pig pen of a place like this to camp in." Most of the time the outfit spent time loading supplies and equipment from shore into the APA ship we would later leave in.

It poured every day we were on Manus loading supplies on board ship. The mud got deeper and deeper. We did get to see some outdoor movies but we had to sit in the rain while we watched. Our squad was put on board the APA ship so we could take shifts loading the ship during the night. That wasn't all bad. We got to eat Navy chow for a few days.

The regiment spent about three days on a refresher course concerning how to unload gear and equipment down a rope ladder into waiting barges. We sailed out of the bay about three days after we loaded on to the APA ships. No one told us where we were heading. We were all sure it was going to be some place in the Philippine Islands.

CHAPTER VII

LEYTE ISLAND

I failed to write in my ^{notes} ~~diary~~ the name of the A.P.A. ship on which we sailed from the Admiralty Islands. I do know we were not assigned to the bottom deck, three feet from the ship rudder, as had been done on board the transport that took us from the United States to Australia.....thank God. This ship did not seem overly crowded with G.I.s. However, the space you are allowed is limited. One of the reasons one felt "pressed in" was because of the "bulky" life jacket we were all required to have either on our body or in arms length at all times. After each man in the squad found a place to hang his full field pack, helmet, personal weapon, canteen, belt etc, there was little room left for bodies.



This ship was headed for combat and it was loaded with ammunition and explosives. AROUND OCT 1944
I know this for sure. I was on detail to load it, thanks to Lieutenant Joke. If for some reason this ship was hit by a land mine, or, a "sub" shell, the explosives stored in the lower decks would blow this ship sky high.

Life on board this ship was very similar to what took place on board the ship we sailed on from the "states". The food was

not all that great but you could eat it. They gave us three meals a day. The shower set up was the same. You could take as many showers as you wanted so long as they were taken in salt water. Fresh water was limited. Time dragged on board this ship. You found yourself thinking and talking a great deal more about the seriousness of the coming mission. At least that was the case with me. We were informed of our destination a short time after the ship left the Admiralty Islands. We were all sure we were going to end up invading some beach in the Philippines. They told us it was going to be Leyte Island. None of the men in our squad knew much about Leyte Island. One guy in another squad said he thought it was located in the middle of the whole chain of Philippine Islands. He was close to being right. The information that was told to us from reconnaissance reports was short, simple and as we discovered later, inaccurate. A booklet on the Philippines was passed among us to read.

I felt that it read like an outdated travel agency advertisement. Things like, "enjoy the beauty of the island at sunset" and "visit with the friendly, spanish speaking mountain villagers", just did not appear to me what we were searching for. I will admit I was impressed with some of the "travel agent" impressions of the Island. The climate sounded great. The description of the Filipino female was not bad. The soft gentle breezes from the ocean sounded ideal. The beautiful tropical scenery of the island as described in the pamphlet sounded convincing. The pamphlet lied. The people did speak Spanish which made it hard for us to communicate with them. However, many of them did speak english. Those beautiful mountains they spoke of, when you are carrying tons of equipment are anything but appealing. On occasion you could find a tropical breeze. Most of the time it was plain hot. If the sun was not beating down the rain was. It did not turn out to be a paradise. We found out what we needed to know only after we landed. Some of the people resented us.



Most of the Filipino people wanted to be liberated from Jap rule. We had all heard a lot about the surrender at both Corregidor and Bataan. None of us on board ship were "real pleased" about what we had been told the Japs had done to those Americans. We had been told the story about General Douglas Mac Arthur being forced to leave Leyte Island. We were also aware that our Commander wanted those islands back in American hands badly. We had been told a great deal about how Japan had taken the Philippines and ruled with an iron hand. We watched films in basic training that emphasized the cruel treatment they used on those they conquered. We may not have had all of the combat in-

formation we desired to make the invasion but we were all filled with a lot of incentive to get a foothold in the Philippines and soundly whip the enemy.

On board ship, a few days before the invasion, the commanding officer showed us a blown up map of Leyte Island and its relationship to the rest of the islands in the group. Leyte Island was almost in the center of the group of islands just like one G.I. had said. It was really a little south of center in the group. Our Captain told us we had three objectives to overcome in making this invasion. Two of the objectives our platoon was to carry out were to be done on day one. The third objective would be done on day two. I

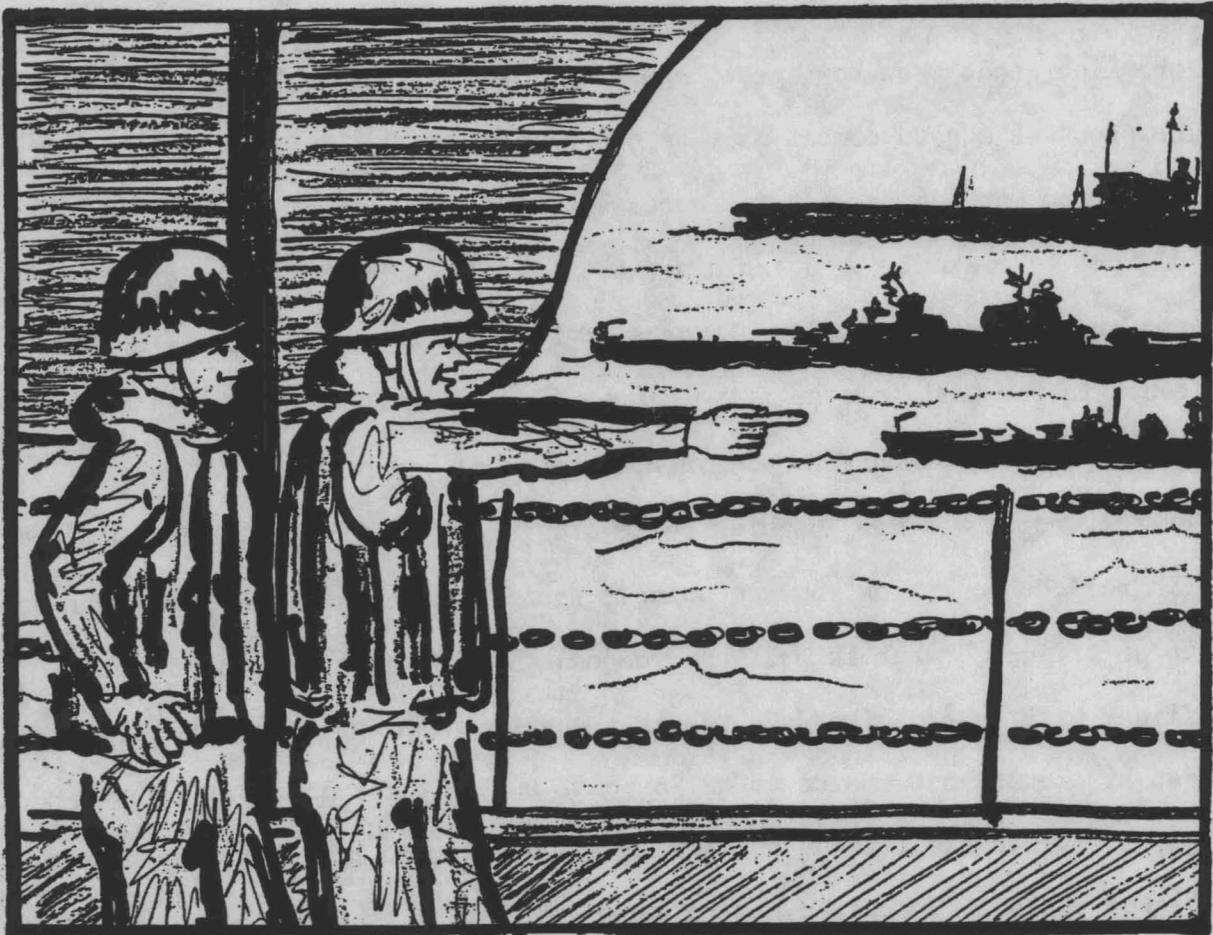
noticed the commander did not say we will do objective two if one was completed and objective three if two was/is successful. He talked about all three objectives as if there was no doubt in his mind that all of the intended objectives would be successful. Objective one was to hit the beach and quickly join "G" Troop and "F" Troop to give machine gun and mortar back-up support after the beach head had been established. The second objective was to move inland and secure a small air strip. After the air strip was taken we were to all meet at a road behind the air strip near a bridge. All three Troops were to meet here . The number of casualties were to be counted at this point. From here we were to proceed toward our third objective which was the capital city of the Island, Tacloben. How and when we were to attack Tacloben would depend upon how many casualties we had. On board ship this whole plan sounded very, very simple. It was anything but simple.

We did carry out the three objectives, as planned. The biggest problem came before we got to objective one. The officer who did the explaining neglected to tell us there would be large numbers of enemy waiting for us on the beach with powerful automatic weapons waiting eagerly to blow our brains out. We knew this was going to be a problem but they seldom tell you this at the briefing. Most important of all, our commander was not aware that the barge we landed on the beach in was going to be driven by a sea man who was a first class bone-head.

Our Troop commander explained our objectives to us for the invasion about three different times during the trip. Now, all we had to do was wait. As our ship sailed toward Leyte we had to perform a number of drills that we had done before on past trips. We had fire drills. We were shown how to load and fire navy 50 caliber machine guns. We also had to do various details. We kept the kitchen clean, policed up our quarters and kept the latrines spotless. We

attended refresher courses on combat technique. We rested, but we also worried a lot about what was ahead. I wrote mom a few letters that would not be delivered until after the invasion. I again reminded her how great a parent I felt she had been. I told her I hoped I would not do anything in this war that would disgrace her or our family. It was difficult to write home this time. You have no idea what fate has in store for you at a time like this.

The second day at sea on this voyage we awoke to a very impressive and gratifying sight. When we came up on top deck from our sleeping quarters, we observed that we had been joined by hundreds of American ships. We could make out destroyers, cruisers, additional A.P.A. ships and off in the distance two huge air craft carriers. Each day the air craft carriers sent out



patrol planes. The speaker system on the ship announced that we had thirteen battle ships in the convoy.

A few days before the invasion my good buddy Lieutenant Joke was at it again. This time his sights were not only directed at me, he was doing his best to irritate the whole squad. For the life of me I did not understand his motive. He was having our squad appear on top deck, out in the open, in rank formation for inspection. Not one other squad on board did what he did. We tried to reason out what he was doing. It made no sense to any of us. He might have been showing his superiors his skill in carrying our close order drills. Maybe he was bored. Possibly he was trying to impress upon us his right to discipline us. Whatever he did appeared to be in poor taste because one of the officers of another Troop asked me what he was doing. I could not give a reason. We took a ribbing from the other G.I.s on board ship. Little did the Lieutenant know how upset he was making one of my squad buddies, Ron Butler. Ron was a good combat man. He cared nothing for spit and polish. He was concerned with doing what was necessary to get this damn war over with. Ron did not take kindly to unexplained actions that were issued by either a non-com or officer, especially officers. Butler had reacted to these kind of incidents in the past in a negative manner. He earned the name "Butt" because of his past actions. He always got the short end of the deal when he did re-act. Once again Ron let his feelings be known when he asked Joke "just what in hell do you think you are doing?" When you are a private you do not say to an officer, "what in hell are you doing?" For sure, you do not ask an officer with an ego like Joke has, that question. The Lieutenant told Ron to keep his mouth shut and do as he is told. Butler did neither of these two things. He turned his fatigue hat around and unbuttoned his shirt. When Joke approached Butler and ordered him to straighten up he told Lieutenant Joke,

loud enough for everyone observing the incident on A-deck, "Sir, why don't you blow it out your a--?" What Butler said shocked everyone in formation and most of the G.I.s who were observing. (Actually, I loved it.) Joke repeated, "Butler, straighten your cap and button up your shirt." Butler just smiled. Joke sent an orderly to get the ship Captain. The Captain approached Butler after Joke had a word with him. The Captain nicely requested Ron to do as he was told by Joke. Ron responded, "Sir, no disrespect to you is intended. I am sorry but I refuse to do as you request." "Butt" was put in the ship brig until the morning of the invasion. He was released the morning of the invasion in time to gather his gear and equipment so he he could go over the side of the ship into a waiting barge. Before Butler did go over the side he walked over to Joke and said to him, "Joke, don't push me in combat or I promise you will not live to tell about it." Lieutenant Joke said, "Is that a threat?" Butler answered, "Yes it is." Nothing happened until the third night in combat. That night I made the mistake of digging in between the Lieutenant and Butler. Early in the night with no Jap threat around, I heard the pop of a hand gernade to my left where Butler was dug in. I ducked down deep into my fox hole. The hand gernade exploded in front of the fox hole to my right where Joke was dug in. No one was hurt but Lieutenant Joke was anxious to know where that gernade came from. In a way.... Butler was my hero. I did not really approve of the gernade throwing incident, however. Nothing more came of this Butler-Joke fued. Butler ended up in a hospital later from wounds received in combat, I believe.

The day of October 20th, 1944 was probably the most memorable day I spent in WW II. It was the day we invaded Leyte Island. It started about 8:00 A.M. I was eating breakfast in the ship gallery. I had just had my fill of oat meal, dehydrated eggs and I was sipping on a cup of god-awful army coffee

I felt the entire ship vibrate slightly. I hurried up to the main deck to see what had happened. The sight I witnessed was almost overwhelming to me. To the left of where I was standing on board the A.P.A. ship, about one-half mile away were ~~thirteen~~ ^{* three} United States Navy Battleships ^{plus 4 CRUISERS + 4 destroyers}. They were about 2-3 miles from shore. They each faced the beach as they formed a spread out quarter of a circle. In rotation, they fired their large guns toward the point on the island where soon we would be heading to make the invasion. One ship would fire a volley of shells. The instant they stopped the next ship in line fired. After all ~~thirteen~~ ^{* three} the cruisers and destroyers fired ships fired, one after the other, they started again. Out of the gun barrel came streaks of fire. The noise was so loud it caused our ship to move. You had to cover your ears. The explosions on the beach caused tons of damage. This shelling went on for an hour or so. ^{* three} The ~~thirteen~~ ^{and 4 CRUISERS PLUS 14 DESTROYERS} battleships ^{and 4 CRUISERS PLUS 14 DESTROYERS} ended up their shelling of the beach by firing, at random, just before the first wave hit the beach. For someone from Iowa, who has never seen such a sight this was exciting to watch.

Just before the battleships ceased firing I watched as the first wave headed toward the beach. About one-half mile to a mile behind the first wave ^{* one of 11 rocket ships} were rocket launcher ships. They almost filled the sky with rockets. The thunder sound that they made was much like you would witness when lightning strikes, multiplied many, many times. About five minutes before the first wave of soldiers arrive at the beach both the battleships and rocket launchers stopped firing.

As the first wave approached the beach it was the signal for us to get our gear and equipment together and prepare to go over the side of the ship and down into the waiting barges that was soon to take us to the beach. We had practiced this chore four days before leaving the Admiralty Islands. Loading into a barge from a rope ladder that is some thirty feet below would be hard



enough itself considering all of the heavy gear you had on your person. Added to the difficulty of this task was the fact that the barge you were trying to enter was bobbing up and down all of this time. When you reached the barge your timing had to be just right or you fell down and your gear went flying. We got all of our equipment into the barge without mishap. The odds of doing this is about the same as the odds would be of throwing a seven at the dice table five times in a row, in Reno.

As the barge began to fill up with men and gear I became aware bullets were coming at us from many directions. As we pulled away from the transport my heart began to pound hard. Loud explosions, one after another, were felt near by. Bullets appeared to be bouncing all over the barge. The bullets and the explosions were coming from Jap fighter planes. They were strafing us and dropping their bombs near by. (I really was not aware we were being strafed and bombed at the time it was happening. I was so engrossed on getting my equipment into the barge I hardly noticed. Had I noticed I might have

panicked and done something stupid.) The barge I was in was one of many who were loading and getting ready to head for a "rendezvous" area in San Pedro Bay in Leyte Gulf, so that we could assemble the third wave.

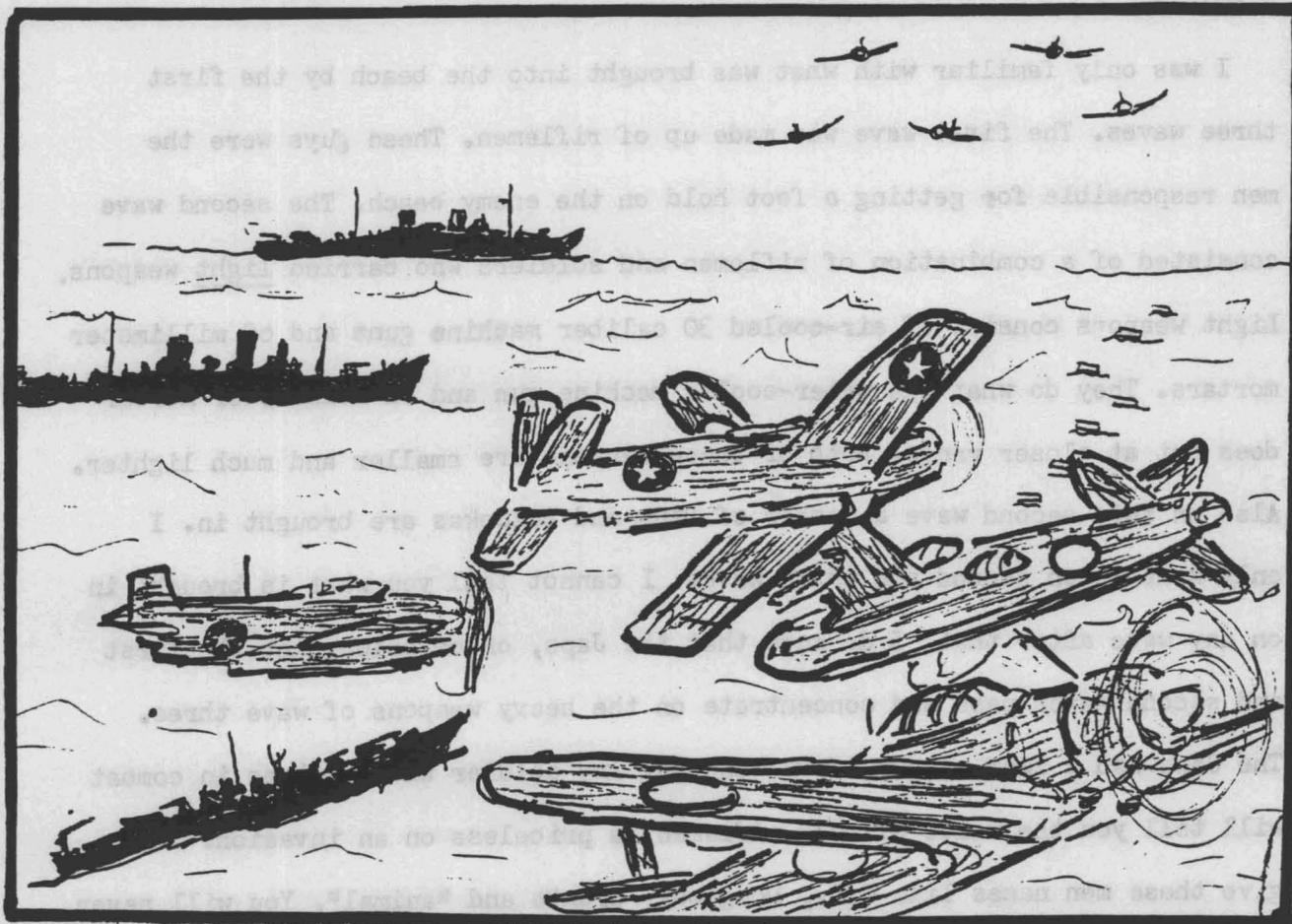
All of the men in the third wave carry weapons called "heavy weapons". This means we either bring in 30 caliber water-cooled machine guns or 81 millimeter mortars. The use of this machine gun has been explained earlier. The dictionary describes a mortar weapon as a muzzle-loading cannon having a tube, short, in relation to its caliber, and is used to throw projectiles with low muzzle velocities at high angles. I quote from the dictionary because I really do not know how to explain the way a mortar works. I can tell you from experience that I am glad when the mortar observer calls back to the mortar squad for help in knocking out a convoy of enemy trucks coming toward us, or, when a number of Japs spring a sneak attack. They drop many shells very quickly and accurately on the target. In the front lines all you hear is the sound of shells being dropped down a tube followed by an explosion in front of your position. If the shells fall close enough in front of you it is possible to hear them as they are coming down. What happens in between I can not tell you.

By the time the barge I was on had reached the rendezvous point in the harbor, the first wave had reached the beach. The second wave, at that point, had reached a point somewhere about half way between the beach and the ships we had just disembarked from. A wave is simply a term given to describe a large number of attacking troops sweeping in a common direction. In this case the troops are moving in barges. The direction is from ships anchored in the bay toward a designated spot on a beach. The line of barges, side by side, with gaps between resemble a "wave" of water as it heads toward the beach. Thus, the attacking troops sweeping toward the beach are being referred to as

a "wave".

I was only familiar with what was brought into the beach by the first three waves. The first wave was made up of riflemen. These guys were the men responsible for getting a foot hold on the enemy beach. The second wave consisted of a combination of riflemen and soldiers who carried light weapons. Light weapons consist of air-cooled 30 caliber machine guns and 60 millimeter mortars. They do what the water-cooled machine gun and 81 millimeter mortar does but at closer range. Both of these weapons are smaller and much lighter. Also on this second wave a number of BARs and Bazookas are brought in. I only went in on second and third waves. I cannot tell you what is brought in on any wave after that. I do know that the Japs, on occasion, let the first and second waves pass and concentrate on the heavy weapons of wave three. The Japs had a fear of our heavy weapons. Any soldier who has been in combat will tell you the value of good riflemen is priceless on an invasion. They give these men names like G.I., Doughboy, Grunts and "animal". You will never know the true meaning of bravery in a war until you have been put into a position where you watch a riflemen in action during one day of combat.

Riding in the barge from the ship to the rendezvous point in the harbor and waiting for the other barges to join us plus the trip from the rendezvous point to the beach was the most frightening experience I have ever gone through in my life. At the rendezvous point in the harbor the barges kept moving in a large circle until all of the barges that were heading for the beach arrived. All of the time we were waiting for the barges to arrive Jap planes were flying overhead bombing and strafing. Some of the planes flew so low you could see the faces of the pilots. It was scary, yet it was exciting. The ack-ack guns on the near by American ships kept the Jap planes on the defensive. I saw two Jap planes go down while waiting for the barges to assem.



ble. When a zero dove down to straf us we hugged the floor of the barge. The Jap pilots were tricky. They would dive between two American ships . If the gunners on both ships were not alert they would be firing at each other instead of at the Jap plane.

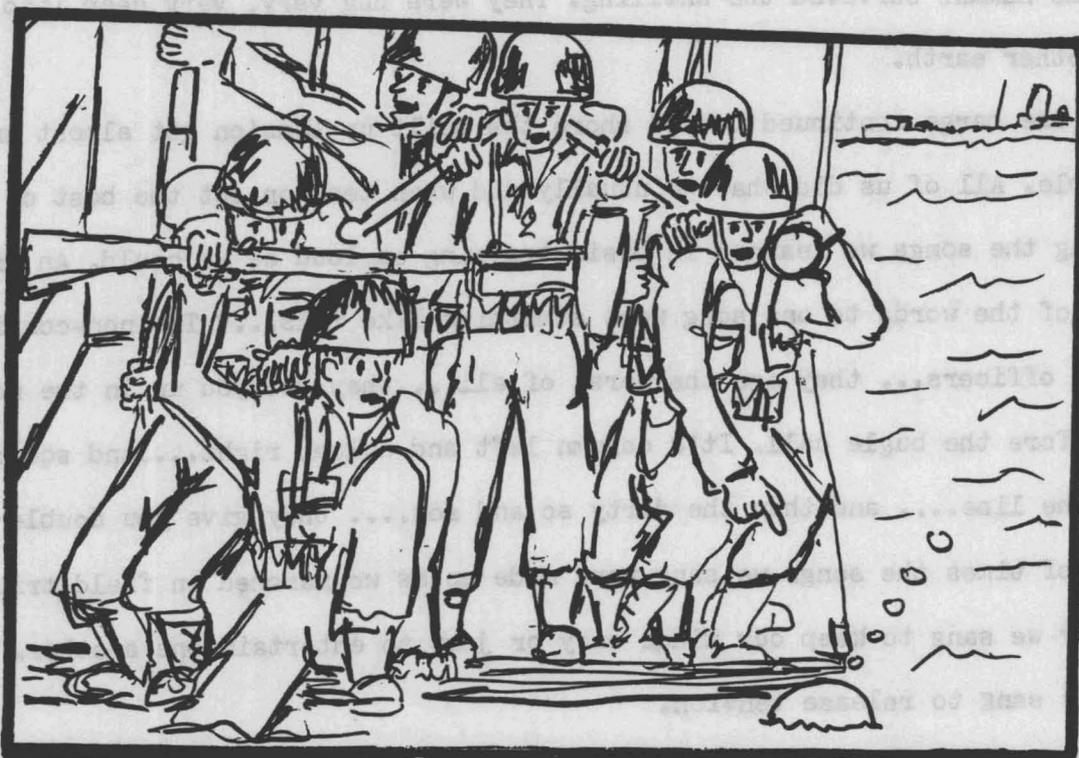
I was in a position in the barge that I could see the beach. I could see that the second wave was over half way to the beach. That meant we would peel off soon and head for land. In some fifteen or twenty minutes we would be charging off of the barge for the beach. I checked my watch about two hundred yards from the beach. My watch said 9:50 A.M. Before I got a clear vision of the beach I remember looking at a blur of sand and jungle and wondering how anything human could possibly be alive after the beating that shore took from thirteen battle ships and hundreds and hundreds of rockets. I soon discovered

how the humans survived the shelling. They were dug very, very deep into old mother earth.

As the barge continued toward shore the built up tension got almost unbearable. All of us did what we usually did when tension got the best of us. We sang the songs we learned in basic training as loud as we could. An example of the words to one song went something like this..." The non-commissioned officers... they are the worst of all....they get you up in the morning before the bugle call. It's column left and column right....and squads upon the line.... and than the dirty so and sos.... they give you double time. A lot of times the songs we sang were made up as we marched on field trips. Usually we sang to keep our minds busy or just to entertain one another. This time we sang to release tension.

Just a few minutes before we hit the beach, you could hear a pin drop. It was at this time that one of my quiet,well mannered, polite buddies, Johnny Baxter, looked over at me, put his hand on my shoulder and said, " Dick, I am going to get it this time. I know it. I am not afraid. Please go to Chicago and see my mom. Tell her what happens today. Promise me you will do this for me." I was speechless. I really did not know what to say. After a minute I said, "Johnny, nothing bad is going to happen to you. If it does I promise to do what you asked of me." I was mistaken. Something did happen.

A few yards from the beach sniper bullets began to hit the barge from all angles. From my vantage point I could no longer see the navy man who was guiding the barge. All I could see was his hand over the middle of the steering wheel. The driver must have panicked. When the barge struck coral and the barge hesitated for a fraction of a second, the driver turned down the engine and yelled hysterically, "GET OUT!.. GET OUT!... QUICK!...HURRY! As he was shouting he let down the ramp of the barge and exposed us to the Jap



snipers on the beach. Lo and behold _____ we were sitting ducks. The slight hesitation of the barge when it struck coral, along with the fear and confusion caused by sniper bullets that ricocheted into and around the barge led our driver to believe we had touched land. After he had let down the ramp he had to realize we had not touched land. He must have lost all control of his senses. He did not try to raise the ramp. He did not start the engine and try to move us out of there. He seemed helpless. Thank god the snipers were not good shots.

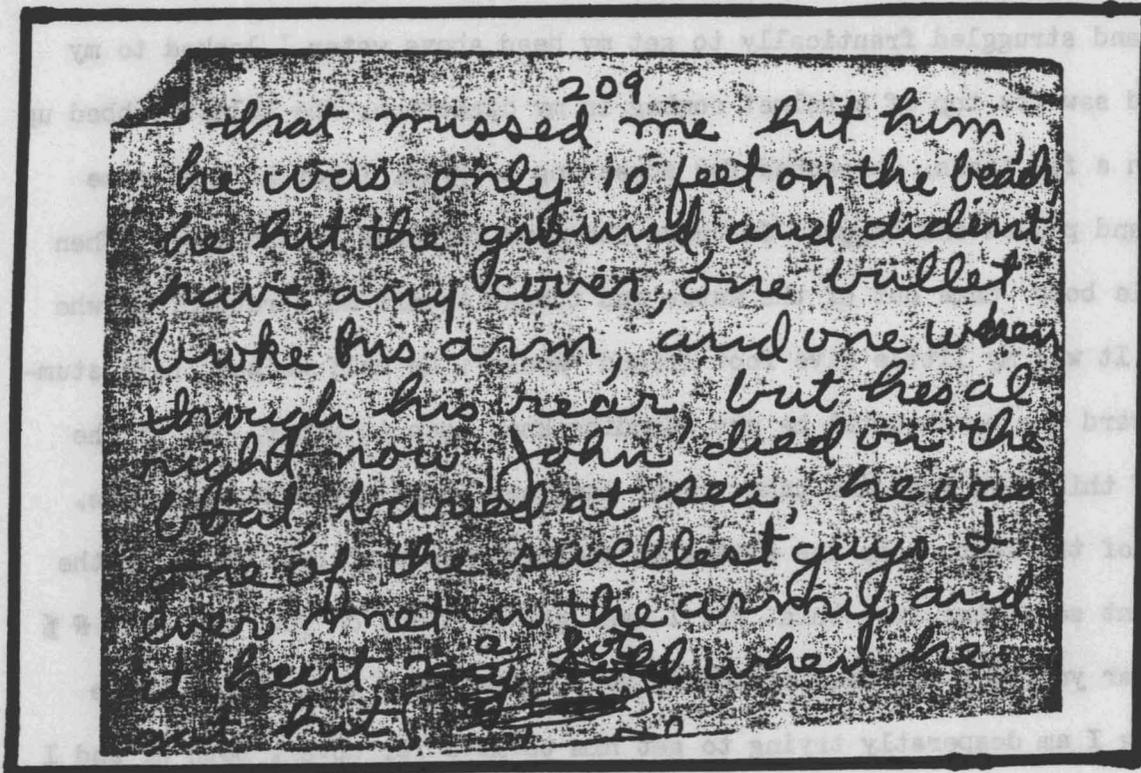
The barge with the ramp down was sitting from seventy-five to one hundred feet out in the water. This puts the water, if we jump in, about a foot over our heads. We had but one choice. We had to step off of the barge and hope we would not drown. We had to try to get to the beach with the gear and equipment we brought with us because others were depending upon us for the fire power we could give them. At this point my mind went blank. The choice that I

feared the most was made for me. I was second in line to leave the barge. The first man in line was my good buddy Sergeant Rowe. As he stepped off of the barge his body disappeared. All I could see was the top of his helmet. I did notice a few bubbles. I do recall saying to noone in general, "My God, that poor SOB is going to drown." About that time I felt a slight push in the middle of my back from the man behind me. My choice was made at that time. When Rowe and I made it to the beach the rest followed. All I have to say is we all either made some outstanding moves while in water over our heads, we lived a charmed life or someone up there was watching over us. I do not understand how any of us survived that ordeal. Earlier in my life I had read that you become physically and mentally strong and you are able to reach far beyond your limited capabilities when the level of fear reaches its highest point. After this incident I became a believer of that statement.

Even in tense moments I discovered there were comical actions that were taking place. As I moved slowly from the barge to the beach and after I had fought and struggled frantically to get my head above water I looked to my left and saw the top of a helmet coming in my direction. The helmet bobbed up and down a few times. I reached for something to grab. I got hold of some straps and pulled and tugged. Out came the head followed by shoulders. When the whole body came out of the water and turned toward me I recognized who it was. It was my little five foot friend "Mouse". He half walked, half stumbled toward the beach until he was standing knee deep in water. Out of the mouth of this five foot man came vulger language I had never heard before. The end of the lecture he was giving to the Navy man that brought us to the beach went something like this. "If I ever get my hands on you, you # & f P \$,I'll tear your \$ X # @ head off. Mind you, while Mouse is standing there screaming I am desperatly trying to get him to move for cover, Both he and I

were being shot at by Jap snipers from the beach. I literally drug Mouse to the beach and threw him behind a fallen coconut tree. About a week later he and I talked about this incident and had a good laugh.

On this beach head, this day, a lot of our men got wounded and killed. A number of bodies were floating near the beach. After I threw Mouse behind a tree I spotted a shattered tree and fell down behind it. Just as I fell to the ground, I glanced over to look to see how Johnny Baxter was doing. I wish I had not done that. I was just in time to see blood shoot from his stomach. After he fell to the ground, blood squirted out of his buttocks like water coming out of a water faucet. The bullet that hit him went through his body. He looked over at me and said very weakly, "help me." I yelled for a medic. Usually there were none around. This time, thank god, one was close. Johnny lost a lot of blood in a hurry. I watched as he was carried toward an "alligator" vehicle. As he passed by me, he was as white as a sheet. He motioned me over to him and said, "Foss, don't forget to go see my mom." I promised I





would. I did not want to believe what was happening. How did Johnny know he was going to get shot. The sad part about this whole story is he should not have been in on this invasion in the first place. He joined the army because his brothers were in the service and he felt that he needed to be in the fight also. He was only seventeen years old. He talked his mom and dad into letting him join. He had been awarded two purple hearts and he was not even considered to be an adult yet. Some how this all seems unfair.

One of our squad members killed the sniper who shot Johnny. After we moved along the beach a short distance we all got pinned down by a sniper firing an automatic weapon. Just as we hit the ground someone to the rear of me shouted, "Foss, I have bad news...Earl got shot again." I was shocked. How could that be? He just recovered from being shot three time in the last campaign. As we got up to move he was right behind me. Actually, we were talking about where the shots were coming from. I often wonder if the bullets that hit Earl were aimed at me. Someone drug him to a place of cover. He was hit



four times. After the sniper who caused so much damage was taken care of I went back to see how Earl was doing. I spotted him as he was being lifted in to an "alligator" that was heading for the hospital ship. He said to me, "Keep your head down... I'm counting on seeing you after this thing is over." I was not sure he would live through that day, let alone until the war ended. He was bleeding badly. Both Johnny and Earl, two of my most trusted friends were shot within minutes. Both of them had been wounded in The Admiralty Islands.

A short time after Earl was hauled away the "alligator" driver who had taken Johnny out to the hospital ship looked me up and informed me that John had died. I sat for a few moments in a state of shock. I was sitting behind a coconut tree right next to the shoreline. I must have been in a daze for a time because when I looked up I found my outfit was about twenty-five or thirty yards away. I saw the last of the squad disappear into the jungle. I picked up the receiver of the machine gun and started after them. I took

about one step from behind that tree and all hell broke loose. Another sniper had me in his sights. He was firing an automatic. At least five bullets were pumped into the tree I was standing behind in a matter of a split second. I panicked for a minute. I yelled for help. No one heard me. All I had with me for protection was the receiver of the machine gun and no machine gun ammunition and a 45 automatic. It was wet with sea water. The accurate range for an expert with a 45 was no greater than thirty yards. I was far, far from being an expert with a 45 automatic. I sat and smoked about a half a pack of cigarettes while I watched and planned. I decided to dismantle the machine gun so it could not be used by the enemy, and make a run for it to the edge of the jungle. All of the time I was running toward the jungle I would rapid fire my 45 in the direction of the sniper. If I made it to my squad I would ask them to return in force to get the receiver. If I did not make it to where my squad was..... I was saying a prayer all of the time I was planning. I was really asking for courage to carry through with my plan. I was not one of your big hero, John Wayne types, that's for certain.

At the second I gained the courage to make the planned run toward the opening in the jungle, a strange, strange thing happened. Someone came walking down the beach.. He appeared from nowhere. As this man approached me a sudden calm came over me. He walked right up to me. He looked American. He spoke English. He was not dressed in an American uniform. The funny thing is he did not ask me if I was in trouble. He simply



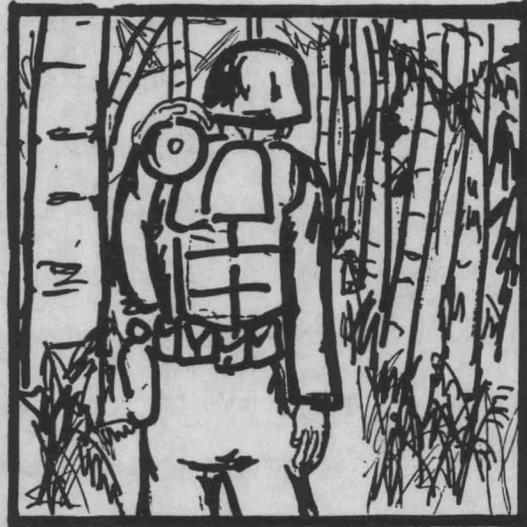
put his hand on my shoulder and gently set me back down behind the tree. He said, "It's all right son, don't worry." I told him not to stand out in the open like that because there was a sniper firing an automatic. I pointed in the direction that the sniper was firing from. This man walked out in the open away from the tree. He fired a few bursts from the weapon he was carrying. He came back to where I was sitting and said, "It's all right, you can leave now, it's over." I turned around and picked up my pack that I had placed on the ground. I looked over to thank this wonderful person. He had disappeared. He was nowhere in sight. This whole series of events seemed very, very unusual. As a matter of fact it was weird. Everything turned so quickly in my favor. It all seemed like a dream. I am writing this incident as I remember how it happened. The end of this dramatic situation goes like this. My rescuer closely resembled someone I have only seen pictures of who died 20 years earlier. It had to be that the man who rescued me was just a figment of my imagination that was brought on by the shocked condition I was in. The man who got me out of that mess had to be one of those fantastic



riflemen doing his everyday front line job.

Before I left from behind the tree I waved my arm out in the open to see if I could draw fire from the sniper, again. Nothing happened. I headed for the path into the jungle to find my outfit. As I walked along the path I realized I was alone. In the distance I could hear small arms fire. All of the time I was walking alone on this path my mind kept warning me to be on the alert. The seasoned soldiers we met in

Australia made it clear, "Never go off by yourself in Jap territory cause if you are overtaken by a group of the enemy they will do anything from staking you to the ground to cutting your head off with a savor. When they stake you to the ground they usually throw gasoline on you and set you on fire. That walk of 15-20 minutes on the path ,while searching for my outfit, seemed more like 15-20 hours. My big



worries were partially over when I recognized the sound of American weapons ahead. If only they did not mistake me for a Jap. It was my outfit and one of my squad members did see me, thank god. Being alone in this situation was much like walking alone in a cemetery at midnight when you were 7-8 years old. Any second you felt something was going to jump out and grab you.

When I did catch up with my squad I was greeted with, "Where the hell have you been?" My first gunner did see me back on the beach but he had no idea I was in any trouble. Later, when he was aware I had not caught up he became concerned. My squad Sergeant followed up, "Where the hell have you been?" with, "What good are you when you are not here with the receiver when we need it?" I did not answer him. In fact I told no one about what happened on the beach until after the war. I felt no one would believe me, any way.

When Joe Piscatello saw me he walked up to me, held my face between his hands, looked me square in the eye and said, "Youse don't know how glad I am to see you alive. I thought they got you. I saw you spralled against a coconut tree on the beach when we started down the path into the jungle. You did not move for a long time so I thought you had been shot." It had been a

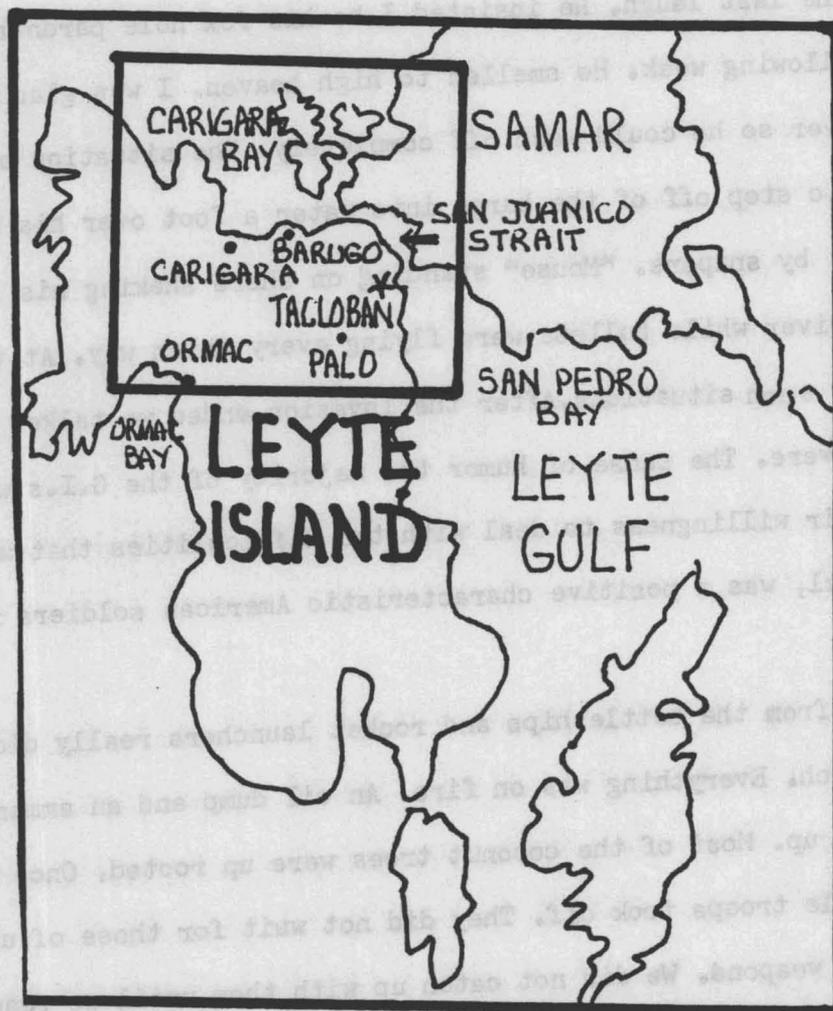
long day already and it was only about noon.

Sometimes in combat things get so tense and so much out of context that you can do little but laugh at what is taking place. Most of this laughter is nervousness but it is caused because it touches your "funny bone". One such act occurred when I was, in all seriousness, trying to direct a close friend away from trouble by using hand directions. I got worried for this friend as I watched him run onto the beach. I was standing behind a tree watching as he headed into the line of fire of a Jap sniper. I yelled at my friend, pointed toward the sniper and motioned with my hands for him to hit the ground. He understood my signals and hit the ground before he was fired upon. Keep in mind this guy I was trying to help was a best friend. He fell to the ground. His body and receiver of the machine gun he was carrying went out of sight. In a few seconds he raised up and began wiping himself off frantically. He yelled over at me very disquietedly, "Damn you Foss, that was a Jap latrine I just went head first into." I was speechless and totally embarrassed. Right there, in the heat of battle, we both laughed out loud. My



friend had the last laugh. He insisted I be his fox hole pardner for at least the following week. He smelled to high heaven. I was glad when we crossed a river so he could wash off completely. The situation of Sergeant Rowe having to step off of the barge into water a foot over his head while being shot at by snipers. "Mouse" standing on shore shaking his fist at the Navy barge driver while bullets were flying every which way. At the time we made light of such situations. After the invasion ended we talked about how serious they were. The sense of humor the majority of the G.I.s were blessed with plus their willingness to deal with the difficulties that war actions provide, I feel, was a positive characteristic American soldiers had that the enemy lacked.

The shells from the battleships and rocket launchers really did a complete job on the beach. Everything was on fire. An oil dump and an ammunition dump had been blown up. Most of the coconut trees were up rooted. Once we got moving our rifle troops took off. They did not wait for those of us who were carrying heavy weapons. We did not catch up with them until we reached the first objective. We were with the rifle troops but a few minutes and they took off again. We all gathered at the second objective which was the bridge at the road. It helped slow down the rifle troops when they found a case of Jap saki. I sat down near the bridge and talked to one of the riflemen. He told me about how his platoon got pinned down by a lone Jap in a good sized bunker. As soon as this Jap fired all the ammunition from his machine gun he came out of the bunker with his hands up to surrender. Every man in his squad fired at that Jap at once. The rifleman said he was a mess. The rifleman called the Jap a Nip. That was the first time I had hear a Jap called a Nip. One of the riflemen found a monkey near the bridge. He kept it for two weeks until it got frightened and ran back into the jungle.



In the Leyte Island campaign troops of the 7th Cavalry landed near a small village called San Jose in an area known as the Palo area. The landing on the beach happened around 10:00 A. M. on the morning of October 20th, 1944. Our Regiment had to cross many swamps which made it difficult to move the heavy equipment we carried on our bodies. Our first objective that day was a small air strip. We took it with no problem. Our second objective that day was to gain control of a road and bridge west of San Jose. We also took this objective with little resistance. Our Regiment gathered at this bridge and headed toward our first assigned objective for the second day which was the capital city of Leyte, Tacloban. Tacloban was north and a little east of the bridge.

We are now on our way toward Tacloban. About a mile down the road from the bridge where we had gathered was a deserted Jap garrison. The officers slowed down a bit so we could take a look. From the smell of the place their main diet consisted of fish and rice. The rice was in large burlap bags. Their sleeping quarters were huts made of bamboo and leaves from coconut trees. They slept on the ground on mattresses stuffed with either grass or straw. That was all the time we were allowed to look.

About 5:00 P.M. that day there was a commotion up in front of the column. A large number of Filipino civilians came out of their bomb shelters to shout greetings, shake hands and give a few hugs. We stopped for a short time and gave them some of our candy and cigarettes. It was here that I saw the cutest little girl who was about three years old. She was standing next to her mom. She kept shyly staring at me. I knelt down and offered her a chocolate bar. She backed away from me until her mom spoke to her. Her little eyes were sunk in and her tummy was swollen. I had to force the candy on her. She did manage a forced smile after I gave her a light hug. Her body had all of the symptoms of starvation. It was a sad sight to see. We were ordered to move on. As we left the Filipinos who had come out to greet us were seen returning to their bomb shelters.

It was getting dark as we moved down the road. It was time to dig in. We could eat but no fires to heat coffee. Our machine gun ended up being placed in a swamp. There were a million mosquitoes. They were mean little devils. A few of us dug in a little



deep. We had to sit in water all night. Welcome to Leyte Island. It was a miserable, miserable night. I don't think I slept a wink all night. I was pleased when daylight arrived. We packed up, ate a cold meal and moved on down the road.

As we progressed down the road we met some slight resistance. We came upon a pile of Jap signal equipment. We finally came to a spot where the exchange of small arms fire became heavy. One bullet whizzed by close to my ear. (I must have big ears. This is the third time since I had been in combat that I felt I was losing an ear.) After this skirmish ended we were approached by a small group of young Filipino men. They claimed to be Philippine patrons. Our officers gave them a few 30 caliber shells. They claimed that they had killed 9 Japs that day. I questioned giving them 30 caliber shells. These shells fit only our weapons. I wondered where they got the guns they were using.

Word was passed back that our scouts came across some 80-100 Japs dug in ahead and waiting for us. I saw things happen in the next 30-45 minutes that I will never forget. The acts of bravery and determination that I witnessed were things I had only read about and seen in movies before. I was about to watch American and Japanese riflemen go at it in hand to hand combat. The actual hand to hand combat lasted but 10-15 minutes. The preparation for the battle took longer. The setting for this fight was a coconut plantation next to a dirt road. The plantation was some six or eight rows of trees wide. It extended as far as the eye could see. Past the coconut grove, was a clearing about 30-35 yards wide. Our men assembled in small groups under cover of the coconut grove. The Japs were dug in a short distance into the coconut plantation. Between the two enemies, eager to do battle, was that small clearing. The holes that the Japs were dug into were like deep trenches. Before our men



in the two rifle troops were given the word to attack they had to give us our orders as to where we were to place our machine guns for back-up support. This was done by the Captain of "G"troop. His name was simply Captain "Blacky". This man, without a doubt, was one of the coolest men under fire in the entire United States Army. He told us exactly what he expected of us. Our machine gun was placed under the coconut grove so that we would be able to cross fire with another machine gun down the line about 50 yards away. The cross fire was to cover the open space between the coconut grove and the coconut plantation. We were only to fire into the battle area if we were given a signal to do so. The signal was to be given by either of two men wearing a red cloth around their upper arm or by the Captain, himself. He pointed out the two men with the red cloth on their upper arm. The Captain told us to follow his instructions in detail. He said, " If either of those

men.
 I told you, would signal, got hit, please use your good judgement. If no one gives a signal, or, I do not yell for you to fire please hold tight. Do not touch the trigger of that machine gun until it becomes necessary. I do not want anyone hurt by some nervous gunner behind this machine gun. I am sorry to say enough men will get hurt and killed without any outside help. Please do exactly as I say." As he walked away, he stopped and looked around at us and spoke again. He said, "If we are not able to whip them and the Japs come charging across that opening you are on your own." With that he gave us a "thumbs up" sign and wished us good luck.

We watched from behind our loaded guns while the rifle troops made final preparations. They talked softly as they attached their bayonets to the end of their rifles. The man in charge... the one who gave us our instructions said to his men..." O.K., are we ready?" Captain Blacky got up and said, "Follow me." His men followed him across the opening toward the Japs who were waiting in their fox holes and they went about doing the job they know best. Most of our riflemen yelled as they charged across the opening into the mass of Japs. They jumped into the fox holes and fought hand to hand like men possessed. I did not get to see a lot of the fighting because I had my eyes glued on one of the riflemen with the red rag around his arm. Another gunner was watching the other man with a red rag around his arm. We were all listening for the sound of Blackies voice. I did hear sounds that I had never heard before. It was a combination of metal clashing, men yelling, groans, muffed shots and a few screams. Part of the time it was silent. We did see some Japs retreat to the back of the plantation. Neither of the men we were told to keep an eye on motioned to us or signaled. The captain did not yell for help. We had our eyes on them every second. We did not fire one round. Usually when a battle or skirmish ends the commanding officer shouts some thing like, "cease fire." In this case "Blacky" did not shout anything. We

knew it was all over. This is one of the greatest displays of pure bravery that I had witnessed in my life time. I hurt inside for those men who died in that battle. I was completely drained. I was shaking for at least an hour after it ended and all I did was sit, watch, listen and wait it out.

Following the hand-to-hand skirmish came the hard part. A number of our men were killed. Some were badly wounded. Believe it or not a few of the riflemen did not even get a scratch. Some weapon carriers came up, went into the coconut grove where the fighting had taken place, and hauled the wounded back to a temporary hospital that had been set up a short time earlier. The dead men were to be removed the next day and taken by mule pack to a holding place until they could be buried in a military cemetery that was to be built after the island had been secured.

Those few minutes of hand -to- hand battle that I witnessed told me a lot about myself. I felt fortunate that I was a machine gunner and not a rifleman. I am not sure I could handle doing what I watched those courageous men do. I felt honored just to be there with such outstanding soldiers.

When Captain "Blacky" talked to our machine gun squad before the battle he was almost busting with confidence and pride. You could feel that he had no doubt that he and his men would succeed in this mission. This man was given almost every bravery award that could be given to a combat soldier. I had heard him, on occasion, up in the front lines talk on a field telephone to a high rank officer in the rear. Instead of the high rank officer giving orders to "Blacky" he was giving orders to them. His men backed him 100%. Our country was fortunate to have ^{such} such a leader as this man. Unfortunately, later in the war, "Blacky" contracted malaria while we were up in the mountains and died before they could get him to a hospital.

After a short break that day we moved closer toward Tacloban. Late that



afternoon I discovered first evidence, in this area, that Germany was allied with Japan. I came upon a dead Jap officer who had a German automatic hand pistol in his leather holster. I could have had the gun if I wanted it. It would have been worth a lot of money today. About 5:00 P.M. we came to a high hill which was just short of our next objective, Tacloban. The enemy knew we were there. About the time we reached the top and got ourselves dug in, a number of Jap mortars poured in. They did a lot of damage. The blast of one shell almost completely covered me with dirt, it landed so close. We all dug deeper. For some reason I was so exhausted I slept through a light rain ^{and} an all night shelling, after I had pulled my early guard duty. I awoke in the morning for my second shot at guard duty in the fox hole to the attack of the Leyte island mosquitoes*. It had to be a planned charge. There were so many

of them. I spoke of mosquitoes earlier in terms of thousands. I now speak of them in terms of millions. I have never seen so many of these pests gather in one place. They were so thick on this hill I was forced to dig out my mosquito bar net that goes over my helmet and hangs over my face down to my chest. I never had to do that before. I could not cover my hands so I had to keep them in my pockets. By daylight, I had welts on top of welts caused by mosquito bites. We moved off of this hill in the morning as soon as Lieutenant Joke got permission to do so. I am surprised he did not keep us up there for spite. As soon as we came down off of the hill the mosquitoes left us. We must have been invading their territory or something.

When we got to the base of this hill we were in the outskirts of Tacloban. ^(*) OCT, 21
We had not eaten a hot meal since we hit the beach. Lieutenant Joke said "no" when we asked to start a fire for coffee that morning. He said we could not risk giving our position away. He must have forgotten about the shelling we took on the hill the night before. The Japs knew we were there. We were not expected to enter the city until the Navy had sent some fighter planes into the city where they would bomb and straf. The planes not only did their job but the hugh navy ships out in the harbor sent in a number of rounds of their own. Since the Japs were being kept busy by the Navy we convinced our great superior Lieutentent Joke to let us get a small fire started so we could brew up some coffee. Our mouths dropped when he said we could. Coffee was about all I could hold in my stomach, anyway. The amoebic dysentary was now really getting to me.

We did not have to go through the middle of the city of Tacloban as was the original plan. We now were ordered to move along the out skirts of town. We were to search for Japs in the hills that surrounded the city. Actually, after the Navy got done shelling the Jap soldiers moved out of the area. By



the middle of the afternoon we had finished our job to the satisfaction of the honorable Joke. As we headed toward the center of town to a pre-designated meeting spot I recall passing a school for young children of either the elementary or junior high age. Some of the student were holding American flags and singing in broken english, "God bless America". At least I think they were singing "God bless America". I cannot begin to imagine how very frightened these young people had to be in their bomb shelters while the shelling and bombing was going on by the Navy earlier that day.

It was a strange feeling to have a welcome of this sort from young foreign children. Being the way that I am I did wonder if this same group of children sang "God Bless Japan" the day Japanese troops entered this city. That had to be about the time Japs were putting American prisoners through hell in Bataan and Corregidor ^{in Luzon.} We will never know.

After the American troops fought through Tacloban and it was fairly secure, American Cargo planes flew over the city and dropped pamphlets and

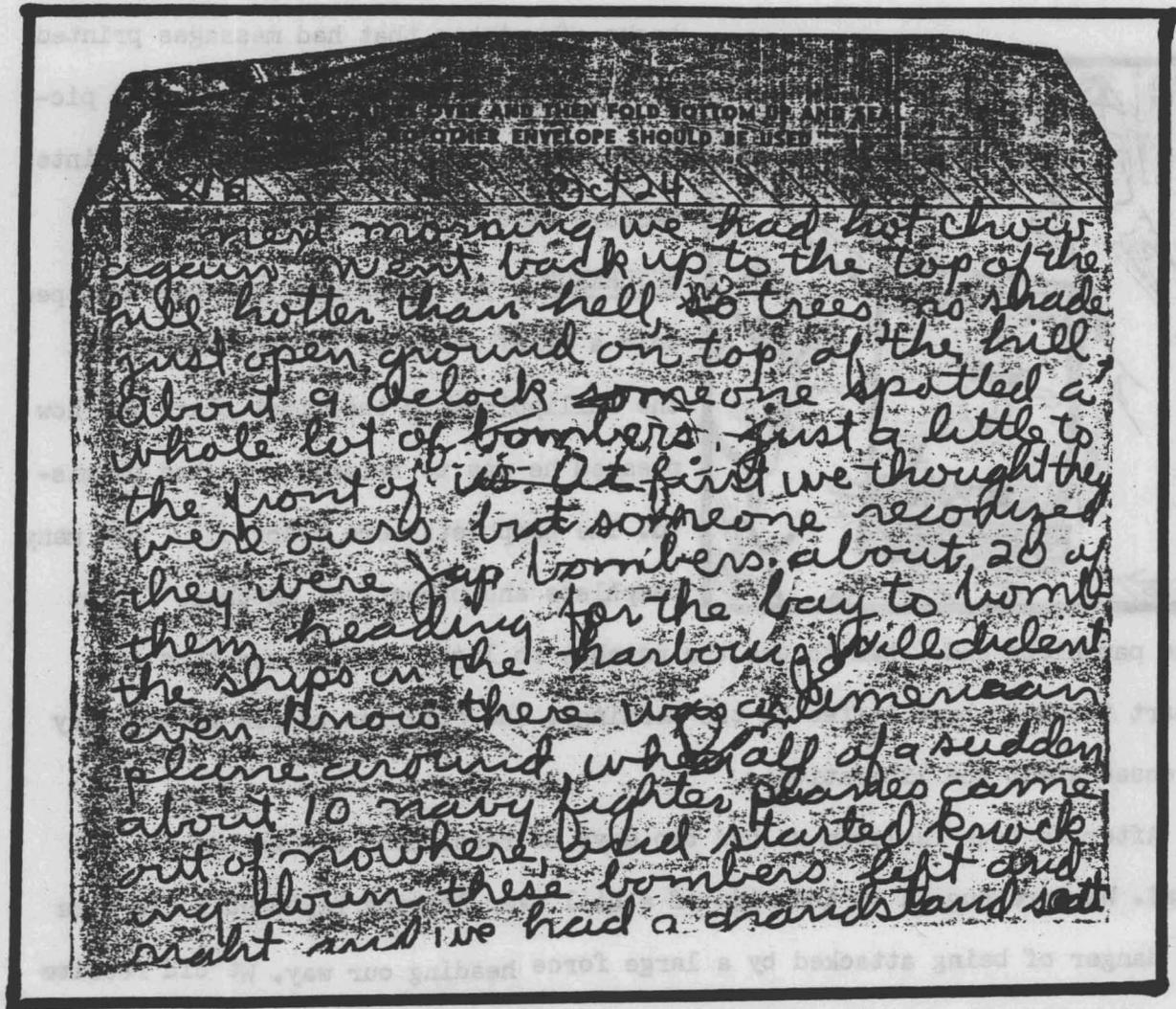


books of matches that had messages printed on them. On each book of matches was a picture of General MacArthur. The main printed message said of the General, "I HAVE RETURNED". The pamphlets that were dropped told a brief story as to why he had left the Philippines in the first place and how pleased he was to return as he had promised. The pamphlets were colorful. I had many pamphlets and packets of matches. I lost

the pamphlets and I had to use the matches to light up my cigarettes and start fires to brew coffee in the mornings. The Filipino people seemed very pleased about the liberation.

After we took Tacloban we had two days of rest. Each day we had one hot meal. We were dug in on the side of a hill over looking Leyte Gulf. We were in danger of being attacked by a large force heading our way. We did receive occasional small arms fire but nothing big happened. At night we watched the ack-ack guns from the many ships in the bay open up on Jap planes coming in to bomb our ships. Both nights the sky was filled with red tracers from our anti-air craft guns. A tracer bullet or shell is the fifth shell to pass out of a barrel. That means four shells come out of a barrel before the tracer is discharged. Tracers help you keep on target at night. With all of the shells being fired by all of the anti-air craft guns from the many, many ships anchored in that bay it seemed impossible for even one Jap plane to get in and do damage. Some way, a few navy ships got hit.

About 9:00 A.M. the second morning, one of the guys in our squad noticed a formation of enemy planes off in the distance. They were heading for the



Bay. They were flying low. They flew directly over us. The formation was made
 up of Jap bombers. We counted twenty of them. The next 15-20 minutes were
 filled with excitement for all of us on the hill. About the time the Jap for-
 mation was flying over our heads we could see American fighter planes taking
 off from one of the air craft carriers out in the bay. The carrier was far
 out in the bay and the planes coming off of the carrier looked like small
 fast moving specks. In a matter of seconds, our planes were right on top of
 the Jap bombers. We had grandstand seats for the air battle. It was a real
 sight. Our fighter planes were knocking down the Jap bombers left and right.
 Our whole squad went nuts yelling, jumping up and down and clapping as each



Jap bomber went down. I watched one Jap bomber, with an American fighter plane on it's tail, catch fire, nose up than it tailed off into the bay. It just missed an American transport ship. I counted twelve bombers go down. Our fighter planes finished off ninteen of the twenty Jap bombers. Most of the bombers did not make it to the bay. The twentieth bomber turned and tried to return to it's base. As it retreated it flew directly over head. We fired at it with our water-cooled machine gun. The rear gunner fired back at us. One of our men got hurt. One of our fighter planes was on the tail of that last bomber as it flew off into the distance. Not all of the battle was fun to watch. One of our Navy fighters was hit, it caught fire and peeled off into the jungle. There was dead silence when that happened. One of our catholic squad members did the cross sign over his chest at that time. Another Navy plane caught fire. We thought we saw the piolet bail out. Our Navy pilots

seemed to have done an excellent job of trailing the enemy planes and shooting them down. I had no idea how fast a fighter plane moves, how quick they can change position and how accurate our pilots were on the trigger.

We got to see a lot of air fights those first few days of combat on the island of Leyte. We hear on a signal corp radio down the road that our Navy had shot down a total of 50 enemy air craft. We got to see them shoot down nineteen of them.

The officers decided we would stay at the position another day. The signal corp man came by in his jeep and we all got to hear from state side how the war, taking place right in front of us, was going. We also got to hear a delayed broad cast of a pro football game from San Francisco.

The next day we were told that we would be moving a good distance away. We only moved a few kilometers. We met some Jap resistance so we were forced to dig into a swampy area of high grass that was closer to the beach. The temperature that day was in the 100s. We were under a coconut grove. I think we were in direct line of flight of the Jap planes as they made their way into the bay to attack our ships in the bay. They flew right over this coconut grove night and day. I'll wager to say those pilots did not even know that we were there. I say this because there were mountains behind the coconut grove to protect their planes from radar. I noticed a lot of Jap planes came over our head when the sun was shining from behind where we were dug in. They kept the sun to their back as much as possible because it makes it hard for them to be seen. Another reason I felt we were in their approach pattern was the amount of flake and sharpnel that fell on us. Some Jap planes flew so low over the coconut grove you could see the pilot. It was no problem at all to look up through the tops of the coconut trees and see the big red "rising sun" symbol on the wing of their plane. We all sweated out the possibility

that an Ack-Ack gunner would make a direct hit on a Jap plane as it made an approach and was directly above where we were dug in.

The next fourteen days we moved up and down the coast in this same general area we had been in. The Japs must have been re-grouping or moving their strengths to other locations. All we did for these fourteen days was eat, sleep, fight mosquitoes and the heat, try to keep dry, pull guard and wait for further orders. We moved our perimeter three times. One night Jap bombers hit one of the gasoline dumps on the beach and lit up the whole shore area for miles around. At one of the places we dug in things got a little hairy for us. The Japs missed their target on the beach and dropped their load of bombs on us. It was a very noisy night. The loudest sound was my heart pounding.

At one of the three places we stayed during that two week period, my squad was dug in near the signal corp radio operator, again. He had a power-

Oct 26 - Nov 10

During the 14 days there we did very little but eat, sleep, keep clean, a few details, and a 3 day patrol, they moved us around 3 times during our stay. We seen a lot of dog fights and watched the japs bomb the shore they get a big gas dump on fire one night we heard news every night, both from the states & Japan. Walter Ruse spoke every night.

ful short wave radio. His radio picked up news all over the world including Japan. We got to listen to the news each day. You have never heard news until you have heard the one and only TOKYO ROSE. The radio operator tuned her in at least once a day. Her english was very good. Some might say she sounded quit sexy. I understand she was taught in the United States. She later moved to Japan. I read where she volunteered for this broadcasting job. In return for her efforts she was to be paid a very good salary. Her broadcasts were directed personally to American G.I.s. She made it a point to try to get the American soldier upset. She said things like, "What do you imagine the MFs and draft dodgers are doing with your girlfriend or maybe your wife tonight?"....."Maybe it would be better if you did not think about that.. Let's listen to a Glen Miller record instead, O.K?" In any broadcast Tokyo Rose never failed to mention how bad the Americans were doing in the war. and how great the Imperial forces were doing. There were occasions where she was very accurate with parts of her information. One night that caught my total ~~attention~~ attention was the night of October 19th, 1944. This was the night before we ~~made~~ ^{made} the invasion on Leyte Island. She announced the time and the exact location of the invasion. She told us there were going to be four divisions. She named the four divisions. All of this was classified information. My eyes almost popped out of my head when she said, "you cowboys from the First Cav are in for big trouble. I had a hard time believing what I was hearing. She ended up with..." "You'll be sorry." She said the Japanese Navy is going to come right in behind you and wipe you out. She did not finish the story.

Actually, everything she announced that night was true. The Jap navy was right behind us as we landed. Their purpose was to wipe us out after we had made our landing. What she failed to tell us was.... A second large American fleet came in behind the Japanese fleet and destroyed the bulk of the Jap

Navy. Was it possible that our Navy was listening to the ever popular TOYKO ROSE?

In between her attempts to break down the morale of the American G.I., Toyko Rose played the latest popular music around. She played records of all of the big name bands, top recording stars and small singing groups. Many of her songs were love ballads. The kind she describe, "Where you hold your loved one close." We heard all the late sport scores of the national baseball, football and basketball games. She did make a few soldiers think about their home but for most of her listeners she simply provided some darn good music that they would not have had a chance to hear had she not been available with her broadcast. At the end of the war she was taken into custody. I believe she was tried as a spy. I do not recall what her punishment was. This woman was as big a part of World War II in the Pacific as any invasion that was made in Asia.

During this two week wait for our combat assignment, we went out on a "so-called" patrol. I say, "so-called" because it ended up being a flop. The patrol as originally scheduled did not materialize. The officer ended up "biting his lip". The thing I did not like about it most was.... I had to give up a clean, dry double bunk that a buddy and I spent an entire day building so we would not have to sleep in the rain and mud. We built that sucker of bamboo and lined it with dry grass. My bronco busting buddy, Ralph Burrows, who helped me build this accommodation and I, only got to sleep in it one night. All we got from the two dummies who took over our master piece was. "Gee guys, this is really nice. Thanks a lot."

On the first day of this patrol we were suppose to be searching for a big concentration of Japs so we could report back where they were located. We saw no Japs and we found no resistance. Early that evening we came upon a

A Filipino came up
 & told us there was 200 Japs back
 in the mountains near his farm
 & we ^{our patrol} was suppose to go in the next
 morning, instead, they called up
 more men, and we took off for
 these Japs. over 2 of the biggest long-
 est mountains in the Philippines
 over hills swamps cross rivers
 through thick jungle, and through
 mud up to our chest. came to this
 Filipino farm and killed exactly
 one Jap, while he brought his
 family safely out, boy was our
 officer in charge mad, it was
 almost dark, when we pulled
 away from this farm, we really
 traveled going back

Filipino farmer. This man convinced our officer that there were over 200
 Japs assembled in the mountains near his farm. The officer was determined
 that this was the group we were looking for. The farmer gave us directions.
 The officer called back for some more men and a machine gun. On the next
 morning we started our journey. We crossed two of the highest mountains in
 Leyte. At the base of each mountain was two wide, swift rivers to cross. The
 water was neck high in the middle of each river. We stomped through swamp,
 and jungle so heavy we had to cut our way through. Finally...., finally when
 we got to the farm house....how many Japs did we find? Two hundred? One
 hundred? fifty? twenty? ten? We found one Jap. That Jap was shot by the man

leading the patrol. What this farmer really wanted to do was get his family to safety. Wow, was the officer in charge ever upset. When we arrived at the farm it was almost dark. The officer told us we were going back to the area we started from now and we were not going to stay the night and leave early the next morning. It was much too far to travel in the daylight hours we had left. I figured he was just letting off steam. I was sure when he got to the top of the first mountain he would tell us to stop, dig in and rest until morning. I was wrong on both counts. When we crossed the first river on the return trip it was getting so dark you could barely see the man in front of you. By the time we reached the second mountain it was total darkness. We pulled one of the most stupid military stunts ever done when we started down the mountain. We emptied our K-ration boxes into our pack, tore the wax covered cartons apart and....get this... we set the wax torn cartons afire with matches and used them to guide us down the mountain. There we were, in a combat area, carrying torches to light our way down a pitch dark mountain side. Some places there were steep drop offs. Many places in the path had only 2-3 feet clearance. To make things worse, a light rain fell. Our torches kept going out. After we crossed the second neck high river we still had over a mile to go through the jungle. We made it but it was a miracle that we did. I had to pinch myself to see if I was still alive. We arrived shortly after 11:00 P.M.

If the enemy could have seen us coming down that mountain holding lighted torches we would not have to worry about shooting them. They would have died from laughter watching the stupid thing we were doing. This maneuver was against all principals of military combat. This officer should have been court-marshalled for what he did. He had to be a 90 day wonder. I thought only Lieutenant Joke did dumb things like that.



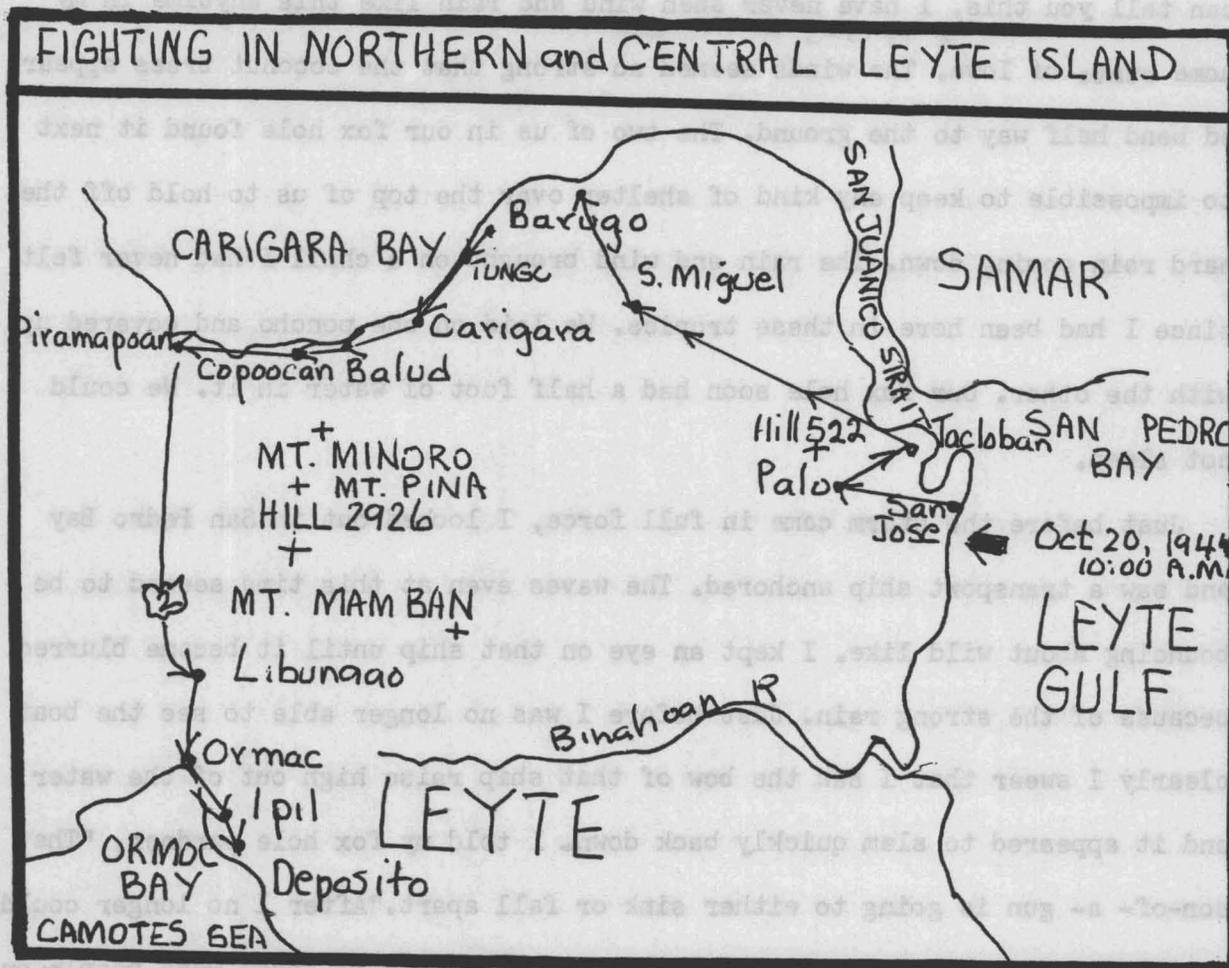
After I spent a few minutes getting rid of my frustrations, I ate some of the K-rations that I had dumped in my pack. I rolled up in my poncho and went to sleep in the mud. I was beat. My last thoughts before I went to sleep were about the night mare I had just gone through. I could not believe we made it back to this camp. I thanked God once more for his help. We were all very put out with a Filipino farmer. The men on patrol were upset with a stubborn, unthinking United States Cavalry officer, too.

Next morning we sat around in a rain waiting for orders to move out to where the rest of our regiment was camped a few miles away. The place they were located was along the beach south of Tacloban. The rain came down hard as we began our march and it was pouring when we got to our destination. When we arrived at our destination the rest of the regiment were gone. They had gone to a village up north called Barugo. A radioman told us to stay in the spot we were now in because a huge, heavy tropical storm was heading our way. This storm was so strong that it easily could have been a hurricane. I

can tell you this, I have never seen wind and rain like this anytime in my home state of Iowa. ^{* It was A TYPHOON} The winds seemed so strong that the coconut trees appeared bend half way to the ground. The two of us in our fox hole found it next to impossible to keep any kind of shelter over the top of us to hold off the hard rain coming down. The rain and wind brought on a chill I had never felt since I had been here in these tropics. We laid on one poncho and covered up with the other. Our fox hole soon had a half foot of water in it. We could not sleep.

Just before the storm came in full force, I looked out in San Pedro Bay and saw a transport ship anchored. The waves even at this time seemed to be bouncing about wild like. I kept an eye on that ship until it became blurred because of the strong rain. Just before I was no longer able to see the boat clearly I swear that I saw the bow of that ship raise high out of the water and it appeared to slam quickly back down. I told my fox hole pardner, "That son-of-a-gun is going to either sink or fall apart." After I no longer could see the transport out in the bay I remember wondering if there were people on board. If there were people how could they keep from being thrown around inside.* My questions were answered later when I accidently ran into a soldier who had a friend on board that ship. He told me his buddy told him they were tossed around until they discovered a solution. Everyone tied themselves to stationary parts of the ship with whatever they could find. They just sweated it out. It was a night mare. This soldier I met said his buddy told him that all of the guys on board prayed a lot while the storm was going on.

The storm did not let up until about 3:00 A.M. the next morning. By that time my fox hole pardner and I were both soaked and half frozen. About 4:00 A.M. someone in another fox hole close by got a fire started just behind us. This small fire soon became a pon-fire Soon everyone gathered at the fire to



This map shows the villages and towns that we entered and fought in in the central and north part of the island of Leyte. Most of these towns and village areas we spent little time fighting in. We did spend a number of days in the town of Carigara. We were waiting for a Jap invasion from Carigara Bay that did not come off. After we left Carigara we passed three small villages as we headed into the mountains. We had many rough fighting days in the mountains. We reached the town of Ormac along the coast of Ormac Bay as we came out of the mountains. We only stayed there one day. The final days of combat on the island of Leyte took place in the villages of Ipil and Deposito which were located but a few miles south of Ormac.

warm up and brew a cup of coffee. A hot cup of coffee seems to do wonders. This day was November ~~15th~~^{* 9th}. Shortly after we finished our coffee we were all surprised to see some army trucks appear. Some of us loaded into the trucks. Some of us loaded into barges that had been left behind. I was in a truck. We were headed for Barugo. Barugo was about 30 miles away. It was a village that had recently been taken by the 8th Regiment of our Division. We had to pass through Tacloban to get there. We took Tacloban on the second day of the invasion. Tacloban had changed a lot. The civilians were less friendly. A lot of temporary shelters had been added by our Army and Navy. We got stuck in mud no less than ten times before we reached our destination. The men who had gone by barge ran into a problem with the Japs. In Barugo we spent our first night inside of a rat infested warehouse.

Next day, the guys arrived that came on the barge. We had our first "mail call". It's a great feeling to come back from "out of the dead" and return to the living with news from home. There is no way to explain the feeling one gets from finding mail waiting for you from home.



Next day we moved to a smaller village called Tungo. Tungo was located near a river that ran into the Carigara Bay. It was about eight miles from Barugo. It was a hot ,sweltering day when we arrived at Tungo so one of my buddies and I decided to take a bath in the river. We hesitated taking the bath after seeing a couple of Filipino woman doing their wash just a short distance away. Since you never known when the opportunity to take a bath will come up again we decided to go ahead and bath. As we both stripped and walked into the river the two woman stopped what they were doing, pointed at us and giggled. I think they were laughing at our light skin. They could have been laughing at something else. We quickly got into water over our waist.

The way these native woman did their wash was a story in it self. It was quit a chore. It took most of the day. Their wash day went something like this. They picked a spot out in the water near a large rock that raised out of the water. After dipping and soaking a garment in the water they slammed it against the rock again=and again until they felt they had beaten out the dirt in the piece of clothing. They did this little act with each individual article of clothing. After the beating session they wrung each garment by hand and brought it to shore where they placed the garment on bushes to dry. They stayed by the clothing until every article of clothing was dry. Can you imagine American woman doing their wash in that way? I was told that you could get anything from a Filipino woman for a bar of soap. They knew what soap was used for...They just could not get it.

After we took that refreshing bath we sat and talked until dark. At this place we took turns pulling guard so we could get some sleep. Under normal conditions at night time,in a fox hole,in combat,you sit quietly, in pitch dark. You watch and listen. You dare not entertain yourself by humming or by

singing very softly. In critical situations you cannot even stretch of move around in the hole a lot. You sometimes have to force yourself to keep awake, especially if you had a long tiring day. I kept awake by nibbling on K-ration crackers, better known as "Dog biscuits!" I hated them but they did help keep me awake.

The K-rations that were issued to us did have their place in combat. They were light to carry. They were highly concentrated and they were nutritional. The only thing was they lacked variety. Most of the soldiers would say that they probably lacked taste. Having the same meals day in and day out can cause you to lose interest in eating even if you are very, very hungry. Each breakfast ration was the same as was the dinner and supper rations. For breakfast it was a small can of dehydrated eggs and bacon, four biscuits, a small date candy bar, four cigarettes, a packet of instant coffee to make one cup of coffee with, a small container that held sugar and some powered cream. You did not get what I just listed for you one day for breakfast and a different



number of items the next day. You got the same items in the breakfast ration container every day. When I got to Luzon Island in the Philippines I was put into a situation where I was in combat for 90 straight days. I had the same exact breakfast ration for 87 of those 90 days. For three of those days we had another type of ration called 10-1 rations. The biscuits in any K-ration is about as tasty as eating the paper this story is being written on. Lunch consisted of a small can of highly concentrated cheese, four biscuits, four cigarettes, a small container of lemonade powder, (which seemed always to melt into a hard lump) sugar and a candy bar. The evening meal consisted of a small can of hash, four biscuits a small container of bullion and a chocolate candy bar. I may have accidently placed an item in the wrong meal but I am sure you get the idea. In an effort to get a little variety we mixed items around. Eggs and bacon mixed with the cheese was good. Hash and cheese was O.K. Eggs and bacon mixed with cheese and hash did not taste good to me. I really felt our government got "ripped off" when they contracted for those "dog biscuits". I complained about the rations but I know our government was trying and they did care. We still ate 100 times better than the enemy. I am not sure I could survive more than one day on the small fish and rice rations I witnessed that they ate. Most of the time they had to scrounge around for anything they could find.

On the the morning of November 14th I woke up sick. I had a good dose of the "G.I.s". It was not just the plain old ordinary "G.I.s". It was the start of a sickness called amoebic dysentery. At the time I was told by our regiment doctor, "don't worry.. it will go away soon." The dictionary explains amoebic dysentery as an acute intestinal amebiasis caused by an amoeba and marked by dysentery griping pain and erosion of the intestinal wall. I asked a medical nurse what that meant. He said it is the "runs". It is caused by

a very tiny bug that gets into you stomach. This bug plays hell with the food that is taken into your stomach. When I say, "It plays hell with the food that enters your stomach, I mean it causes one of two reactions. You either vomit, or it causes a bowel movement... an instant bowl movement!" I asked how I could have gotten this bug. He told me it was possible to get it a number of ways but the most common way to get it was from drinking water that I did not first purify with a tablet. I was sure that I did that each time I dipped my canteen into a stream. As I thought back...I failed to put a purification tablet in my canteen one time. It was on the top of the mountains back in the Admiralty Islands. The stream was at the very top of the mountain. The water looked clear and clean. I did not put in a purification tablet because I was fed up with the iodine taste caused by the tablet. That was a dumb thing to do on my part. I really paid for that mistake. I felt this sickness coming on. It had now arrived. That is all I needed to make combat completely miserable. From this day on through the rest of the campaign I was very weak. I could not keep anything down but coffee. What the hell....I was young. The morning I felt so bad I ate my breakfast ration slow. I chewed each bit. When I got done I immediately threw up. I was told to eat cheese because it helps clog you up. Wrong...I could not keep that down, either. Next day some of the guys in my squad got ahold of some potatoes and chickens from a farmer near by. They cooked both of them well. I ate them. I threw up. If I don't quit writing about this subject I'm going to get sick.

Since I was not feeling well I pulled extra guard on the gun early in the evening so all of the guys in our squad could go back away and get some hot chow that was brought up to us. One night as I was alone waiting for them to return, I had an unexpected surprise. A lone Jap zero came out of nowhere and dived down toward me as I sat behind the machine gun. As he came over the



trees from across the river he strafed the area around me. I saw him just before he made his dive and I fired at him. His bullets came close but did not cause any damage. I came close but I did not hit the zero. I could tell I came close because of the tracers. The whole thing was over almost before it started. I thought that since he received fire from me that he might circle and come back. I was ready for him but he did not return. He must have been returning from some mission, looked down and saw me alone and decided to see if he could get rid of me in one swipe. All of the guys who had gone for chow came running back after they heard the zero dive down to see if I had been shot. They said they heard both of us exchange fire. I caught hell from my squad sergeant for firing the gun for this reason.

Earlier in the day a group of new replacements arrived. One of the new men was assigned to our squad. His name was Jim Watkins. He was from Georgia. He was a very friendly young man and seemed strong as a bull. Jim was very, very frightened being up in the front lines. I tried to comfort him by telling him

it was a good sign to be scared. It keeps you alert. He asked me if I got scared. I told him, "Only when I am awake or sleeping."

The next three days we rested. I was feeling better. I was only throwing up about 2-3 times a day. We got to write a few letters home that were going to get mailed in a couple of days. It rained a lot those few days. We slopped around in mud a lot

On November 19th I took a turn pulling guard on a bridge up the road a few miles. We took a sloppy, muddy trip by weapons carrier to this bridge. We were M.P.s and we had arm bands to prove it. There were eight men assigned to the post. We each pulled guard on one side of the bridge or the other during the daylight hours for two hour shifts. At night the guard was doubled on each end of the bridge. The reason this guard was decided upon was due to some enemy resistance up the road from this bridge. A Jap machine gun had fired on some of our American trucks who had been hauling supplies. The commander of this area got a little panicky. We had no trouble while I was there. Most of the time we just kept traffic moving. This was a change of pace to what we had been doing. During the time I was off duty on this guard detail I tried my hand at cutting bamboo the way the natives do it... with a bolo knife. I came back to our camp with a big gash in my finger.

The next day we packed up and we returned to the costal village of Barugo again. We set up our machine gun on the beach near the home of a Filipino fisherman. A doctor and a schoolmaster came over and introduced themselves to us. They both spoke excellent english. They offered us a tasty sweet bar that was a Philippine speciality. It tasted to me like carmal corn. We were offered tuba, which is a Philippine beer, which we turned down. When they left they both thanked us for what we were doing. They asked us to visit them after the war ended. The doctor said he hoped we could get on with defeating

the Japanese soon so they could get on with the plan for their independence. This was the best we had been treated by the natives in all of the time I had been there.

We only stayed at Barugo one day. We were now on our way to another coast village called Carigara which was located along Carigara Bay. We were moving farther west in Leyte. While waiting for trucks to arrive one of my close buddies, Fritz Fastner and I, walked around the village of Barago. We came upon a Filipino playing a guitar. Fritz and I sat down near him and tried to strike up a conversation with him. We did manage, through gestures and motions, get him to play his guitar and sing one of his native songs. He had a good voice. In turn we sang a couple of English songs. He was very pleased. The three of us really enjoyed our little sing-a-long. When a large group gathered we broke it up. Our trucks arrived. We loaded up with our gun and equipment and drove off.

Carigara seemed to be a place where all of the troops of the Regiment came together again. That meant we were soon going to head where trouble could be found. When we arrived there was a Regimental mess hall located in the middle of the town. We unloaded from the trucks and ate. After we ate a jeep hauled our squad and gun about a mile up the beach, on the outskirts of town.

We dug in a squad fox hole right on the beach, out in the open. I had just fallen asleep following my two hours on guard when I heard heavy ack-ack fire close by. I awoke to see three Jap zeros flying low right over our fox hole. As I took a second look, still half asleep, I saw one of the zeros was on fire. It peeled off into Carigara Bay and crashed. A second one followed in just a few seconds. The third Jap zero was also on fire. It fell off to the other side of the village, into a ball of fire. In a short time all of us were ordered to go into town, by twos, to do some kind of clean-up detail. It



seems someone neglected to clean up that mess hall in town after using it and we were blamed for it. I was willing to bet Lieutenant Joke volunteered our squad for the detail. After we did clean up the mess hall and police the area we all got an unexpected surprise. It so happened this was Thanksgiving Day. Some turkey, bread, butter and a small piece of punkin pie was dropped in crates by parachute. We sat down next to some G.I. who was dug in near the mess hall and ate. God, that tasted good. Normally, in combat, holidays are just another day. This was really a special occasion.

Following the surprise Thanksgiving dinner our squad was put into a jeep and driven to a point on the beach at least a mile and a half from town. It was the farthest guard post along the beach from town, We would be the

first to see any enemy coming down the road heading for Carigara. Our fox hole was placed near an artillery observer. He had a telephone where he could not only talk to his artillery crew but he was also connected to the town headquarters. Our machine gun was dug in again, out in the open, right on the beach, between the shore and a road some forty feet behind us. Behind the road about fifteen yards was a bamboo shack. During the day, when we were not on guard duty, we could rest and keep cool in the shade of the shack. We not only guarded the beach but we were assigned to check and see that all natives who used the road into town did not carry weapons or explosives with them. On one occasion we found another guitar player heading toward town. He could play American jazz and good boogie-woogie. We also ran into a young Filipino woman whose husband was in the Philippine army in Luzon. She told us of some horrible stories about the Japanese when they invaded Luzon. She had been told these stories by natives who had escaped from Luzon.

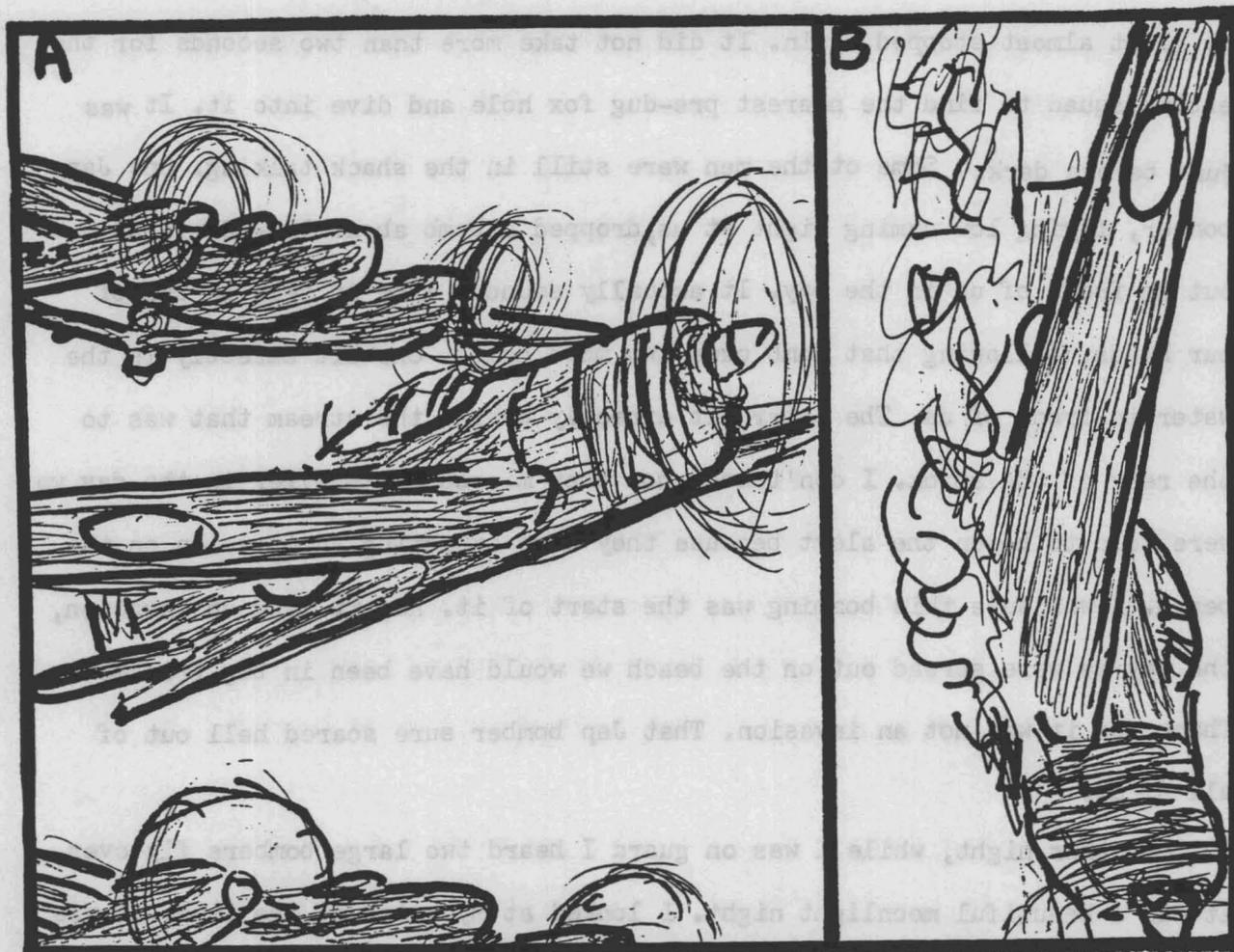
Our being able to rest in the shade of the shack that sit behind us was great. It was a blessing to my dysentary problem. We not only rested we were able to take a bath in a stream each day that ran past the shack. Filipino woman volunteered to wash our cloths. We gave them soap and unwanted rations each time. We even had two little boys run errands for us. For those few days we were living like royalty. All we had to do is pull guard two hours out of every eight during the day and two hours out of six during the night. We had to report any unusual happenings concerning natives entering town and keep our eyes glued to the water in front of us and on the road that passed by us for any enemy activity.

We were at Carigara for nine days. A lot of interesting things happened during that time. There was at least one air raid each night. Usually more. The Jap air force knew we were there. Early one night while I was on guard,

my heart almost stopped again. It did not take more than two seconds for the entire squad to find the nearest pre-dug fox hole and dive into it. It was just before dark. Some of the men were still in the shack talking. One Jap bomber, flying low coming right at us, dropped a bomb about 150-200 yards out in front of us in the bay. It actually sounded like it fell on top of our heads. Following that bomb came two more bombs. One lit directly in the water in front of us. The other lit directly behind the stream that was to the rear of the shack. I don't know how they missed us. Earlier in the day we were told to be on the alert because they were expecting an invasion on the beach. I was sure this bombing was the start of it. Had it been an invasion, the way we were spread out on the beach we would have been in big trouble. Thank god it was not an invasion. That Jap bomber sure scared hell out of all of us.

One other night, while I was on guard I heard two large bombers fly over. It was a beautiful moonlight night. I looked at my watch at the time. It was almost midnight. The first time they flew by they were flying high. I watched as they circled and came in lower. When they did this our anti-air-craft opened up on them. One of the two bombers dropped a flare over near where our big artillery fired from. They circled that area once and dropped a large load of bombs. For the life of me I did not see how those planes can get through the barrage our ack-ack guns throw at them. After they dropped their bombs they turned around and headed the direction they came from. I thought the whole thing was amazing.

On a third occasion I was sitting in the machine gun fox hole more or less sunning myself. I was laying on my back, hands behind my head, looking directly above the hole. I did see some movement. I did not even have to move my head. Two Jap zeros came out of thin clouds. For no apparent reason, I thought



it looked like one of the zeros was on fire. The plane nosed into the bay. I thought I saw the pilot bail out . The reason I am unsure is because an instant later a second Jap zero came out of those same clouds. Right on the tail of the second zero was two American P-38s. One P-38 was behind and below that second zero. The other P-38 was behind and above the zero. When the zero moved down that lower P-38 fired a burst. When it went up the P-38 above gave it a burst from his machine gun. That zero was doomed. I would say it took all of eight seconds for those two P-38s to shoot down both Jap zeros. I bet I did not blink my eyes over five times from the time that dog fight started until it ended.

On the morning of December 3rd some army outfit came down the road, they

stopped in the area where our gun was dug in and started to erect squad tents and unload supplies and equipment. I asked one of the non-coms what they were doing. He said they were moving in and we were going to move out. He did not know how I hated to hear him say that. Our, "King for nine days" mission, has ended..What a disappointment. In a few minutes our squad sergeant pulled up and told us all to, "pack up"...we are leaving this place. We returned to town and slept in the mess hall area. We did have a mail call. The next day our squad was marched up the beach a short distance where we stayed for two days. Here we spent time loading supplies and ammunition from trucks into barges. This had to mean we were heading back into combat. We were given a day off from loading and unloading so Fritz and I roamed around Carigara searching for something to do. Fritz Fastner found a party going on. Some young Filipinos were having a pig roast. That pork was very tasty. There were attempts at dancing. Fritz tried desperately to explain and demonstrate American ballroom dancing to the young girls, without success. He kept stepping on their bare feet. We did have fun.

December 9th turned out to be a dreaded day. This is the day we headed back into the mountains. We were told that we would be hunting for the enemy. Before we were to hunt for Japs in the mountains we were first going to make some trip to help another Regiment in our Division. They were in some kind of trouble. Our squad loaded on to "ducks" that carried us only as far as the area near where the big artillery was located. We camped near that artillery outfit that night. Wow, what a miserable night. The artillery fired rounds about every fifteen minutes all night long. It was impossible trying to sleep with an earth shaking explosion going off every few moments. I'll bet these men in this artillery outfit have trouble sleeping when it is quiet. As I think back this was the area the two large Jap bombers dropped their bombs.

Dec 10
 left this town by foot in deep
 slushy mud walk till noon before
 we even came to the Artillery across
 rivers, swamps & little ridges.
 We came to a Filipino camp, they
 had been hauling rations, we
 passed the camp, & seen a big
 pile of dead pigs than we start
 ed climbing, about 2 o'clock
 we ran into some of the

On December 10th we started into the mountains. I knew we were going into combat... IT STARTED TO RAIN. It rained and rained. We crossed rivers, thick swamps and went through heavy jungle. We kept going up, up up. If this was just a side trip to help a Regiment in trouble what was the real assignment going to be like. Come to think about it they never mentioned the Regiment we were to be helping. I came to the conclusion that they were just breaking us back into combat gently by telling us that we were heading to help one of our Regiments. We came to a high point in the mountains where there was a camp of Philippine army soldiers. It was some kind of supply depot. Filipino men brought supplies and equipment to this camp. Philippine Army men took the supplies from this camp up to us while we were fighting in the mountains. I did something here I had never ever done before in my life. I took a pair of army boots sitting outside of a supply tent. I also stole a gallon can of peanut butter. The boots were so new they had not even been issued to anyone in asia ,as yet. The reason I took them was to protect my ankles from the jungle rot I was getting covered with. The flap across the front of the boot



was something I felt I really needed. The pair lying there were my exact size. Fritz told me if I did not take them he would take them for me. I really did feel guilty. We were issued these boots, legally, later. As for the peanut butter, that was a different story. If you ask my family they will tell you I would kill for peanut butter. I would not steal gold, silver or anything of great, great value (Except army boots)..... but... if there is peanut butter around I lose control. I really took the peanut butter so I could down the dog biscuits better while I nibble on them during my time on guard at night. However, I really do like peanut butter. My excuse for stealing it was very weak as you can see.

We really started to climb about 2:00 P.M. that day. We passed some of our

American troops from another Division on the way up to the front. They were the troops we were to relieve. They tried to intimidate us by telling us how bad it was up there. They seemed cocky. We knew it was their very first combat. We paid no attention to them. We had been there before.

For the first time in combat I saw a sight that made a big impression on me. It was a long line of donkeys carrying dead Americans on their backs. These dead Americans were returning from the area we were heading toward. They were being carried back to a point at the bottom of the hill where they would eventually be taken to a formal military cemetery. I did not realize at that moment that those men hanging over the back of each donkey, were our true American heroes. It hit me later. They had to be. They gave everything.



They gave their lives.

We seemed to keep climbing and climbing this same stupid hill. It was a typical tropical mountain. It was wet, muddy and very slippery. You take one step up and slide back three. We reached ^{NEAR} the top at dark. I don't think I could have taken another step without falling flat on my face. I drank all of the water from my canteen , so I had no water that night. I could not eat my dog biscuits with the peanut butter I took. If I did my mouth might stick together. We had to place the gun near trees with big roots so we could not dig in. To top it off it poured. We caught enough water in one of our ponchos to have a cup of dirty watered coffee in the morning. For some reason on this night, when I did doze off, I dreamed about cool, cool water. Water with plenty of ice chunks in it.

The whole story about the climb up this mountain was rain, mud, slippery, slide, cuss, fall, cuss, get up, fall down, cuss, cuss, cuss. This is the way it went all of the next day. I thought we were near the top of this monster. Hell, we still had another day of climbing straight up before we reached the top. The hard part about this climbing is the weight you carry. There were times I would have gladly dropped that 51 extra pounds over the side of a cliff we passed by.

When our officers told us we were at the top we were still many feet short. This hill was called either Mount Minoro or Mount Pina. Ahead of us was a hill that was identified only by it's elevation. I believe it was called hill 2900 . We stayed at this mountain called Minoro or Pina for seven days. Up on the hill in front of us were the Japs. They were dug in deep. They were making some kind of strong stand. They completely fortified the top of this mountain with machine guns and mortars. Their large artillery, on the other side of this mountain fired rounds almost twenty-four hours a

Yes,
 day. They were dug in deep. They intended we advance no farther.

This hill was holding up the war effort in Leyte. The soldiers we passed a few days back at the bottom of this hill had tried to take this hill for 12 straight days. The result was those dead soldiers that were being hauled on the donkeys we saw earlier. This was going to be one hell of a chore the way I looked at it. The Army was going to need the very best they could find. They laid the job on "G" troop and "F" troop of the 7th Cavalry. In my opinion these two troops were the best. I am not talking about the troop I was in. We were just there for back-up fire power. I'm talking about down-to-earth, hard fighting, "Tell us what you want done and we will do it" riflemen. These guys were outstanding. If you cannot explain to them how it can be done, tell them what it is that you need done. After you do that---- back off and let them figure a way to do it. I promise you---- they will get it done. They eventually carried out what I promised they could do.

After the two rifle troops moved up to confront the Japs on the hill up ahead those of us in "H" troop had our duties and responsibilities changed. We set up a perimeter. Inside of our perimeter was a temporary and very crude hospital. Those of us in "H" troop carried supplies, water and ammo from our point up to the riflemen. The supplies we carried to them came from the Philippine Army personal who brought the supplies from the supply depot we passed at the base of the mountain to where we were dug in. We took water to the rifle troops from a stream that ran between our camp and where they were fighting the Japs.

Each day we took ammunition, water and supplies to the riflemen. On the trip back we carried wounded. Those wounded, that the medics mended, were carried down to a better hospital at the base of the mountain by the Filipino

soldiers. The conditions under which the medics worked, in the hospital inside of our perimeter, were unbelievable. The mending jobs they did were miraculous.

One of the men in my squad was Spanish. His name did not sound Spanish. He did look Spanish. His name was Ed Freeman. Many of the riflemen up fighting the Japs were Mexican. They were his close friends. He was my first gunner at this time. He had more "guts" in his little finger than most guys had in their whole body. He was a friend to me. This man received three medals for bravery. Last I heard he threw them all away. He told me, "All I want to do is get this war over so I can get home and see my wife and kid."

Ed and I was sitting in the fox hole about one hour before dark one night. We had just returned from taking a trip up to the riflemen on top of the hill. Out of a clear blue sky he said, "Will you see how many water canteens you can round up?" I asked him why. He said, "Just do as I ask. Tell them I will return them, full, in the morning, first thing." I had no idea what he had in mind. I was able to get 15 canteens. He asked if I objected to taking his turn on guard until he returned. When I asked him what he was planning to do he quietly said, "Those men on top of the hill told me they have to have more water. They cannot leave their holes to get water. They are my buddies. They need help. I am going to the stream, fill up these 15 canteens and take water to them." I asked him when he planned to do this. He said, "Now". He said he was counting on me to keep my mouth shut. He told me not to worry. He could make it up and back in the dark. All he wanted from me was to keep alert for stray Japs and pull his guard for him. He picked up the empty canteens, waved at me and took off. It was just barely dark when he walked away. It was pitch dark and a couple of hours later when he returned ^{DOWN} up the path.



I was really worried about Ed. He could have gotten shot by either the Japs or his own men. I was glad when he crawled into the hole carrying 15 canteens filled with water. He said, "will you see that each guy gets his canteen back?" I told him I would take care of it. I asked him how things went. He said, "Fine". When I spoke again he did not answer. He was sound asleep. I kept my promise. I did not tell anyone. After the campaign ended Ed was awarded one more medal. It seems that one of the Mexican friends that he took water to told his commanding officer about what Ed did. If there every was a thing like a true hero I think Ed would fit that description.

In order to move across Leyte Island, flush out the enemy and complete the original mission of taking the island, it was absolutely essential that the Japs in the next hill be removed. For three days our heavy atrillery pounded,

our excellent mortar platoon pounded, and the two best rifle troops in the Army charged. Patrols came back with information that there were many, many machine guns. Every approach to the hill was double covered. It was now time for the riflemen to make decisions. They did just that....seems there were a few of the Mexican and Spanish-Americans, among those in the front line fox holes, who had a few ideas about how to take this hill. A few of them volunteered to infiltrate into the Jap lines during the night and locate where the machine guns were that was holding everything up. Their plan was to use only knives and a limited number of hand grenades. If, for any reason they needed to speak or yell, heaven forbid, they would speak in Spanish. They said, "that alone would confuse the hell out of the Japs?" The volunteers wore tennis shoes, stocking caps and cloths that were dark in color. They explained to our commander that they intended to locate the approximate ^{not exact} areas of all, or, most of the Jap guns. They decided not to try and kill any Japs unless it was absolutely necessary. I understand these men decided among themselves who the volunteers were going to be.

The men who were chosen spent from dark to just about daylight crawling and moving around that hill which was infested with Japs. They worked in groups of two, three and four. They looked for land marks that helped tell where the guns were located. When they returned, and everyone of them did get back, they showed the mortar and artillery observers approximate locations of where the Jap machine guns were located. After the Mortars and Artillery got done shelling the places that the Mexicans pointed out, our rifle troops were able to take the hill. Those volunteers found 12 of 25 machine gun nests and four Jap mortars. I do not know all of the details of how this mission was done but I do know that the group responsible were a bunch of ^{MOSTLY} brave Mexican-Spanish Americans. The men who volunteered were all friends of Ed Freeman. I

asked Ed for the details. He said, "they worked it out themselves---noone was hurt---- who cares how it was done. We took the hill, didn't we?" By noon the following day after the volunteers did their job, the nightmare hill that was in front of us was now behind us.

After the Leyte campaign ended, our whole Regiment received an award called a ^{PRESIDENT CITATION} ~~Congressional Award~~. It is a tiny silver cluster that attaches to the campaign ribbons that a soldier pins above the pocket on your dress uniform. I even got one. That award should have been reserved for ^{"G" TROOP PLUS} a few very brave men of Mexican-Spanish-American origin. Some of the stories told by these men the night of this mission is priceless. Ed Freeman invited me over to one of their get to-gethers. I may have missed some of what they were saying because when they get excited they break into spanish and I do not speak spanish. I listened in as two men of one of the volunteer groups was talking. They were telling the group that just before daylight, as they were about to return to our area after spending the night in among the Japs, they spotted this Jap machine gun nest. The gun was sitting in a fox hole. The foxhole was next to the ridge of a hill. As the three of them approached the Jap gun they heard some rustling noises inside of a hole dug in to the ridge. One of the Mexicans had two hand gernades. One of the other Mexican soldiers pulled the pins. The one holding the gernades tossed both of the gernades into the small cave. There was a lot of Japanese jabber as the gernades went off inside of the cave. The part I thought was comical was when the American soldier told about the Jap soldier crawling out of the cave on his hands and knees. One of the Mexican soldiers located either a near-by shovel or pick that was laying on the ground. He straddled the hole the Jap crawled out of and hit him as hard as he could on the head. The third Mexican soldier, standing there, finished the Jap with a knife. They said there were others in

the cave that died from the gernade explosion. As they ran from the scene they were fired upon. I asked if it bothered them that they might attract other Japs by the noise they made with the hand gernades. The one speaking said, "Yes, a little bit, maybe. We were just having some fun."

After the hill was taken our troop stayed back and pulled guard so the medics could doctor the men wounded in the charge up the hill. The doctors of this temporary hospital had one small place that they lit up to do their cutting and sewing. It was inside of a large hole made by a Jap artillery shell. It was reinforced with coconut logs and packed dirt. The entry in and out of this hole was a set of doors about five feet apart which was covered by ponchos. You did not go out the second opening until you first closed the first opening. They kept strong lamps lighted at all times. They seemed to be operating 24 hours a day. The operating table, it seemed to me, was two heavy wooden crate boxes that were leveled off with a stretcher between. As soon as men were mended well enough to leave this hole they were taken to another crude field hospital to recover. When they were strong enough they were taken down the hill by the Philippine soldiers who brought us our many supplies, to a better prepared hospital .

You could tell the doctors with us were almost drained. They hardly slept at all. I accidently bumped into one of the surgical doctors and talked to him about the war and his job. He seemed very up tight. He wanted to save every life...regardless of how torn up it was. He was upset because he lacked equipment that was much to heavy to bring up the hill. I tried to convince him that he could not blame himself. He told me if he ever got out of that place he would never complain about anything again. When I had to excuse myself because I had to go and thrown up he asked what was the matter. I told him. He told me that what I had could kill me living under the conditions I

was facing. He wanted to know what kind of a commander I served under. He appeared to be a sensitive caring person. We wished each other luck as we parted. I never saw him again.

There was an artillery observer with us who had also been with the division we relieved. He was concerned about a problem the men in that outfit had. He hoped we would not have the same problem. It seems one of the men behind a machine gun fell asleep while he was suppose to be on guard. A Jap crawled into his hole, cut the throats of the gunners, turned the machine gun on all of us and wounded a number of American soldiers. By the time our men discovered it was a Jap firing he had done his damage. The riflemen had a hell of a time getting the Jap stopped. We assured him that we had not made that mistake to this point and we sure didn't intend to start now.

One of the nights we pulled guard with the medics, waiting for wounded to be carried down to the hospital at the base of the mountain, I was talking with one of my fox hole buddies about something that faced us night after night and caused us a little concern. I asked him if he noticed the lone Jap plane that flew over us each night we were in combat. I had heard him before in the Admiralty Islands. My pardner said, "Oh, you mean piss-call charlie"? My buddy said the pilot of this plane was given this name because of the time he flew over us. It was usually about the time men in the fox holes relieved each other from guard duty. One of the first things a guy did after the next guy came on guard was to urinate before he went to sleep. They gave this Jap pilot an appropriate name.

Another subject in this same line, asked by young and old alike was, "Just what do you do when you have to go to the toilet and cannot leave your fox hole?" My answer is, "The steel helmet serves many purposes. To protect your head from sharpnel and bullets is only two of them."



~~After the third night~~ ^{AFTER} we left the medics. They felt they could handle the few wounded men and get them down to the better prepared hospital at the base of the mountain. The rifle troops that our heavy weapons were attached to had a three day head start on us. We had some catching up to do. After we had used the rations and supplies that were issued to us the morning we left this area we no longer had to rely on having supplies and equipment hauled to us in these mountains by foot. For the rest of the trip across the island we were going to have everything we needed dropped to us from planes. The only problem we faced now concerning food and supplies was getting hit in the head by a flying crate coming down in a parachute. Before we caught on how to catch the loaded parachutes one of our men did get hit in the head. It just knocked him silly for a few minutes. We had a few problems when the parachutes we were wanting to catch caught a strong wind and floated over into enemy territory.

Our next destination was a village on the central west coast of Leyte that was called Ormac. It was on the coast of Ormac Bay. It did not take us long



to catch up with the rifle troops we were attached to. They got slowed up a few times by enemy resistance. Six days after the mountain battle the whole Regiment reached Ormac road which led to the village of Ormac. Just as we arrived at this road, which was located in the valley below us we could see another regiment from our division arrive. They also had been fighting Japs. Before we moved down to the road we were surprised by a small group of light Japanese tanks coming down the road. About the instant we recognized them our artillery was firing upon them. Our artillery made short work of them. These were the first enemy tanks I remember seeing. After Ormac was taken we set up pup tents on a small hill over looking the road. We all thought we would get a rest. We did not get a rest. We got a hot meal that night. The place we dug in was near high grass which invited a million mosquitoes again. Maybe we did not sleep well because it was Christmas Eve and we were all excited about Old ST. Nick coming. We were hoping he would bring us a message that the war had ended. No, I think we did not sleep well because of the many pesky mosquitoes.

Next morning we woke up bright and early to, "Pack up, we're leaving." We did not move out in full force. Some of the men in the 7th stayed back because of minor injuries. I did not qualify because all I had was jungle rot, heat rash and dysentary. I also had a serious disease called, "My Platoon officer said there was nothing wrong with me." I was getting use to throwing up, anyway. One thing for sure. I was not carrying around as much weight as I had been carrying around a month ago.

We no sooner got out of sight of Ormac road when one of our attached riflemen killed two snipers. Our squad sergeant informed us we were on the trail of 200 Japs. Here we go, again.

The next day, December 26th, was the birthday of my fox hole buddy, Fritz Fastner. At least he told me it was. Quit by accident the air force dropped us 10-1 rations. Printed on the crate was "Merry Christmas". 10-1 rations were a treat. I told Fritz I ordered these rations just for his birthday. We ate good that night. We were trying to push the Japs we were chasing into a trap. We succeeded. Behind them was the Bay. Directly to their left and right was thick jungle. In front of them was the 7th Cavalry. We were dug in ready to battle. Our only problem was we were not at full strength. The Japs we were chasing were not at full strength either or they would not have retreated as they did. They do not retreat unless they are desperate. They will, many times, let you think they are being chased and pull you into their trap. They made no "stands" They put up little resistance. They just kept moving back. We caught up with them on New Years Eve . A New Years Eve I shall never forget.

We approached a small village along Ormac bay. I did not put the name of the village in my notes. ^{★ I'M SURE IT WAS CALLED VILLABA.} I was very, very ill at that time. We were deciding where we were going to place the machine guns when I chanced to see and smell



a sad, sick sight. There next to a coconut tree was a dead American soldier. His head was cut off. His shoes had been removed. He must have been there days and days in the hot tropical sun. His dog tags were near by. One of our officers picked up the dog tags so he could turn them into the missing persons department. Evidentially, this soldier was an I and R scout. He probably came into ~~this~~ area weeks ago under the cover of darkness looking for Jap troop movements or enemy gun placements. When the Japs capture a lone man in this manner they usually removed their heads.

We were not sure the Filipinos in the near-by village we had just pulled into were all that crazy about us being there. Otherwise, they might have made an effort to bury the dead soldier we found near the tree. Maybe I was overly upset about this soldier being tortured. The Japs we had been chasing, we were told by scouts, were gathered in a clearing just south of this small village we had just entered. I should say those who were left after our mortar platoon got done throwing in a big barrage their way. After we dug in on the outskirts of the village word was passed around that our barges were coming in to take us out of there. We walk miles and miles chasing a band of

Japs. We get them backed up to the bay. They are hemmed in by thick jungle. We know they will not surrender. We are all dug in to do battle and we get orders that say we are going to leave by barge. That did not make sense to me. That night all the Japs did was send in infiltrators to take pot shots at us. A hectic night. All I did that night was get sicker and more and more dizzy. I could not sleep. I was sure the few Japs left would charge us. They didn't.

By early the next morning I was hoping the barges would come to the shore and pick us up. I had such cramps in my stomach and I was so out of it I did not care what was happening. My squad sergeant told me to go over and lay under a bamboo shack close-by to see if I could get a little rest shortly before day break. I was alone. I did not have to pull guard. We had two machine guns set up to cross fire on the only road that led into the village.



I felt myself doze off.---- I heard a bugle. This was followed by people who were yelling and screaming. I thought I was dreaming. Wrong--I was not dreaming at all. It was a "BANZAI" attack. ^{(*) December 31.} Our two machine guns were pounding away. Our mortars were dropping many shells and fast. I could not see anything. I could just listen. I panicked and hugged the ground. I do not have any idea how long this charge lasted. It seemed like hours. I am sure it was over in minutes. If you are successful it ends in a very short time. It takes guts to stay with it. If you can do it you "got um". I knew that that night our guys... "got um". After the shooting, shelling and shouting ended it was a weird calm. I stayed alone under that bamboo shack the rest of that night wondering what I would see the following morning.

Next morning I was surprised to see just how many dead Japs there were. I counted ~~over 150~~. They were scattered all over the road. One of the gunners told me that he was sure some of the wounded had been drug away during the night. Most of the enemy did not have guns. They carried bayonets, knives and various size clubs. A "banzai" charge must have some purpose or reasoning behind it. I just don't understand what it was.

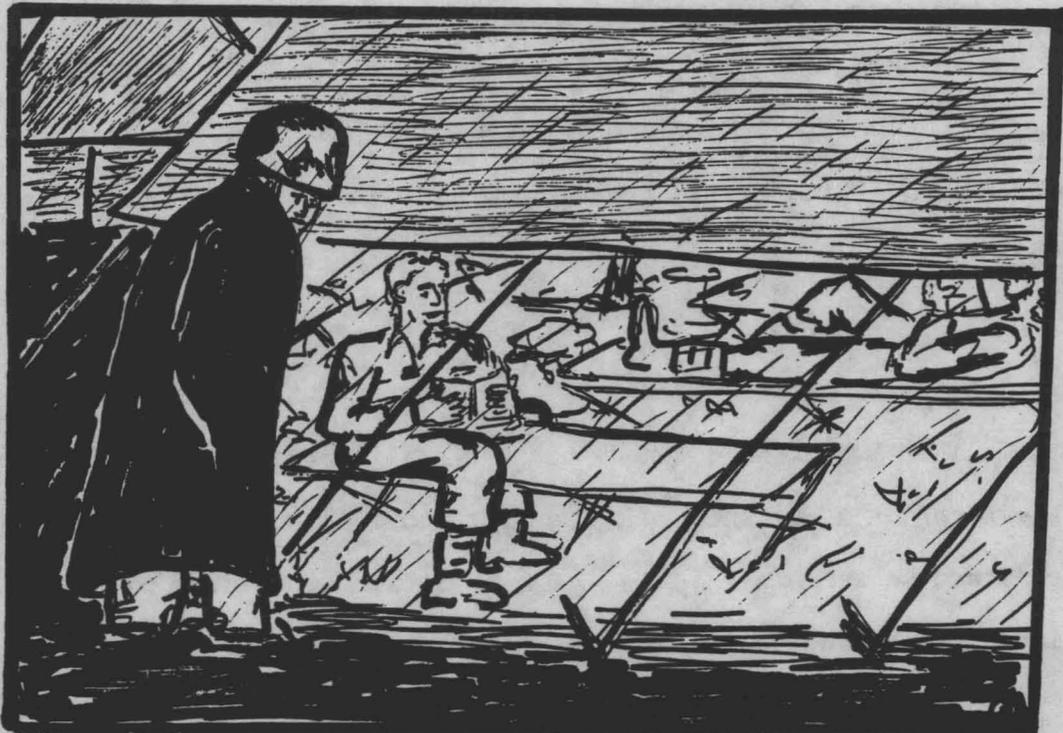
In the ~~morning~~, later, the barges arrived. The barges were not only ordered to take the troops but they took any and all Filipinos in the village who wanted to leave. It seems each Filipino carried enough bundles for six people. Those barges were loaded to the top. We followed the coast to a village a safe distance away. Again I did not get the name of the village. I was still too sick to care. At this village we left the Filipinos and loaded into "ducks" that took us to a point where trucks picked us up and took us to a rest camp area. What a great sound---REST AREA. ^(*) It was near a village called Tunya.

When we arrived at this rest camp it was dark. I fell asleep in the truck. When we arrived I did not have any idea where we were. Again, I was sick and

I did not really care. I was more concerned in just finding a place to lay down and die. It appeared to be way, way out in the wilderness. In the muddy, muddy wilderness. When we arrived we felt our way around and talked to voices in the dark. The tents were squad size. There were cots in them. Later in the night the supply sargeant brought around candles. About the time I was ready to fall asleep I heard two very beautiful words, "Mail call". I picked up some 30 letters from home. I was so ozzy I could not sleep so I stayed up and read letters by candle light. It was raining outside.

The following morning I was put on detail. When I returned my spirits were lifted by six large Christmas boxes sitting on my cot. I had enough toilet articles, hard candy, gum and reading material to last a month. Included in the packages were olives, pop corn and----- a large can of PEANUT BUTTER. This was Christmas and New Years all rolled up into one.

The next 16 days were spent resting. For me it was a period used in trying to get over that blasted dysentery. I was hoping they would let me go to the



hospital and let an expert look at me. No luck. The Regimental doctor did not seem to think it was special. Unless you are physically injured you do not go to the hospital. Illness means little. I kept getting pills. The doctor did give me some liquid that was suppose to clog me up. It did not work. The only thing that helped was the 16 days of being out of combat. We did not work hard at rebuilding the camp. We build a few necessary things like a mess hall, sump area and covered latrines. It actally felt like no one wanted to spend a lot of time and energy building because we were going to move out soon, anyway.

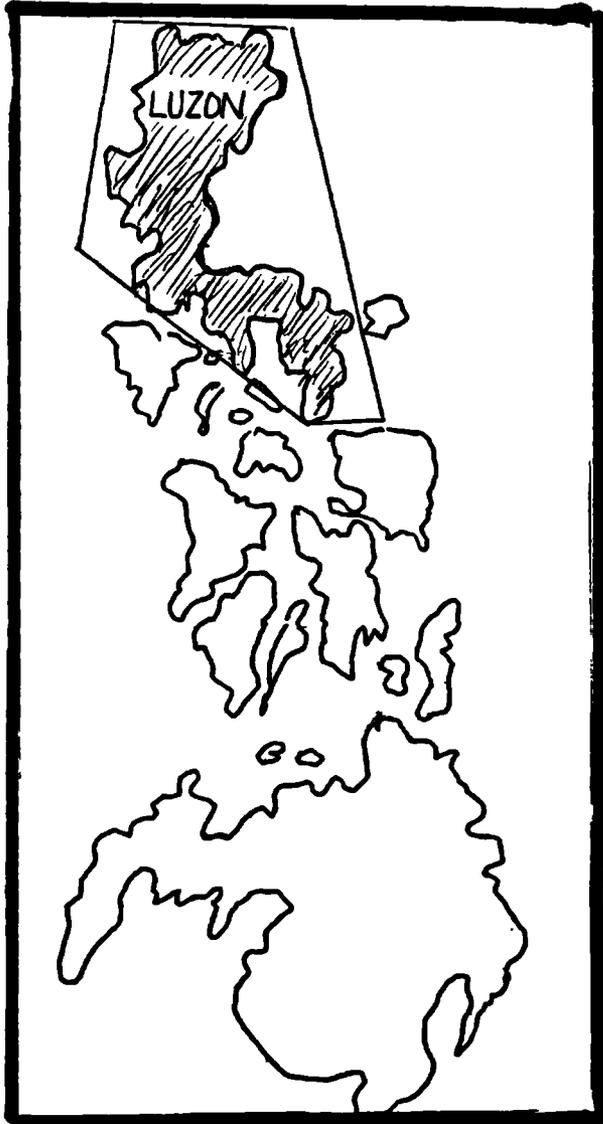
We did do a little re-organization of our squads. It seemed to me they were attempting to even up machine gun squads with a balance of new men and men experienced in combat. I was placed into another squad and made first gunner. My new squad leader was an experience man in combat. I liked him. I did not, however, get away from Lieutenant Joke. I tried everything-----believe me. The change broke up Fritz and I. Fritz was asked to be a squad leader. He turned it down. He said, " My dad was a private in World War I and that is good enough for me ". Later on, during our next campaign, one of the squad sergeants got killed and Fritz changed his mind. We were all very pleased with that move. Fritz deserved it. I tried to get into his squad. They would not permit it.

On Janurary 9th, 1945 American troops invaded Luzon Island of the Philippines. The First Cavalry did not make the invasion that was made at Lingayen Gulf in Luzon. We entered Luzon as re-inforcement troops. We did not go to Luzon on A.P.A ships. We went in L.S.T. boats. There were no escort craft and we were in deep enemy waters. It was somewhat uncomfortable traveling on this landing craft.

CHAPTER VIII

LUZON

Most of the soldiers on board the LST heading for Luzon did little but rest, eat and worry a lot about the coming invasion. As soon as we got aboard we were told where we were going. This time a few guys did know where Luzon was in relation to the other islands in the Philippine group. This was a very



short trip, thank god. We knew it was not going to be an "all out invasion" such as it was on Leyte. At least, not until we got off the ship and moved in on the island a little ways. This entire convoy seemed to be made up of men, supplies and equipment to "build." It moved fast. The ships that usually escort us were busy elsewhere.

The men on board appeared calm, quiet and very serious. Maybe this just goes with being in combat for a long period of time. There was very little to do to pass the time. No movies were shown because there was a lack of space. If it was not for two guys who bunked in my compartment (They

volunteered for special guard duty--- same as I did) this trip would have been very dead. These two men were mortarmen in the same troop I was in. We all came overseas together. They both had a great sence of humor. They had many good jokes stored up in their minds. Most of the jokes were directed toward non-coms and officers, especially officers. They both commented about how slow all of us who carried 45 automatics were to release our pistol from our holsters and suggested we do something about it before we got back into combat again. They invented a game called "DRAW". This game was played each night after chow. Each day on the trip there was a "Champ" choosen among us. The overall champ was the man who won the most daily championships. It is amazing what we went through to fight boredom.

The purpose of this game was to beat your opponet to the draw. The game was on when two men squared off from some 15-20 feet apart. The command, "ready" was followed by a handkerchief being dropped from a top bunk. The man who dropped the handkerchief was the deciding factor as to who won. Each contestant got one chance to draw each night. They were all timed. The winner was announced before "lights out." It got to be funny how many guys were seen practicing during the day. Did this silly game ever pay off you might ask? As a matter of fact it did. The man who was declared the ship "Champ" was successful in gunning down a Jap coming around a building that he met face to face. Our champ whipped out his gun from his holster so fast and pumped three shots into that Jap so rapidly that the Jap did not know what happened. This shooting incident was witnessed by one of the other contestants who was with our champ. My good buddy who was declared champ was Ed Freeman. The hardest part about becoming champ was the speech he had to make telling how he became so good. The speech had to last three minutes.

My two friends in my compartment also thought up "Amateur night". Each

person who entered was required to stand in the middle of the compartment and tell a joke, sing a song, tell a story, do an imitation or recite a poem. You were introduced and you did your thing. I got a quartet together and we won hands down, according to the judges. However we were shoved down to forth place because we had four guys in our act. I was glad those two characters I came overseas with ended up in my compartment.

There were a few air raids and a "Sub" alert that scared the hell out of all of us. They had drills every once in awhile to keep our adrenalin pumping. During all alerts on this ship it was a mad house. The entire ship was made up of compartments that were closed off. When an alert was sounded you were locked into your compartment if you did not get out and up on "A" deck in time. The locks on each compartment reminded me of the lock on a vault in a bank. If you did get locked in it got stuffy.

The job I volunteered for helped relieve some boring hours. It was an easy job. I guarded the sailors "mess hall". On board ship it was called the galley. Occasionally, a sailor brought me an orange or apple. This was something



we did not get a lot of in our chow line. My main job was to see that only navy personal went into the galley.

One night the alarm went of for a "sub" alert and a crew member came down and locked the compartment door. I was awake at the time. I looked at my watch. Generally such an alert was over in no more than 15 minutes. If it lasted more than 20 minutes you were probably facing a "sub" attack. Facing a "sub" attack was serious business. When I next looked at my watch 25 minutes had passed and still no sound of someone coming to unlock the compartment door. I begin to feel myself get panacky. I also began to wonder what happens now. If this ship is hit and sinks does the locked door help to keep the compartment from flooding? Do I sink down to the bottom? Does the air stop in the compartment? At the 30 minute point I really got concerned. I had felt no jolt or sudden unusual movement. I was in the process of asking god to help me brave it out when I heard the door being opened. A voice said from outside, " If anyone is awake in there I'm sorry about the delay."

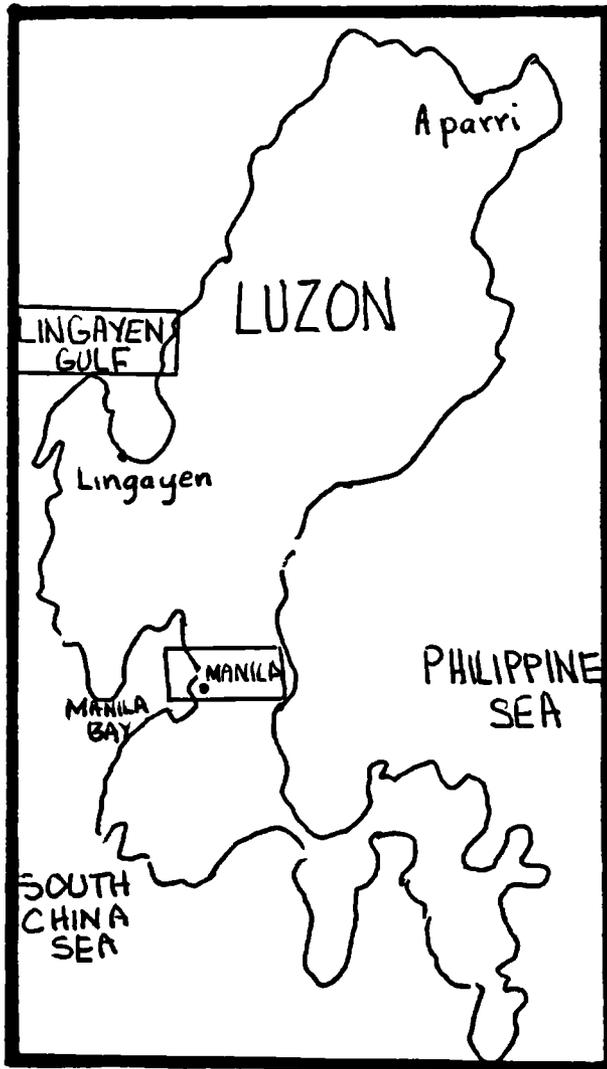


No one else was awake. I did not answer. Only God and I knew the fear I felt that night. If that had happened during the day, time that crew member might have ended up with a broken nose or a black eye. That experience was scary to me.

About halfway to our destination we were told that we passed an island in the Philippines called Mindanao. Guessing, I would say this convoy headed south from Leyte Gulf around the tip of the island into the Sulu Sea than North to the China Sea. Lingayen Gulf was located near the central-west part of Luzon. We could see planes taking off and landing on Mindanao. As I can remember we were not far from the coast at anytime during the daylight hours. With no escorts around I wore my life jacket 24 hours a day.

Our ship landed on January 28th, 1945^{at} We did not make an invasion such as was done in Leyte Gulf. The invasion was made by other divisions stationed in Asia. We slept on deck the night we landed in Luzon. From board the ship we could watch trucks come in and load up with supplies from large stock piles on the beach. It was a busy place. This battle in Luzon was going to be a different type of fight for us. It was going to be much, much more mobile. There were roads almost up to the front lines. There was at least one road that was a major road that was concrete. Off in the distance from where we sit you could see our big artillery firing. Our troops had moved inland a considerable distance by the time we had arrived. The main fear we had as we sat on board the LST that night was an air raid by the Japs. That did not happen.

The next morning, early, we left the ship. Before we did leave we were put into detail groups and ordered to unload some supplies and equipment from the LST. We piled up what we unloaded on the beach. We sat around until early afternoon. I was still sick so I did not eat the apple pie that was offered



LUZON

The 7th Cavalry arrived at Lingayen Gulf at plus 18 days after the invasion. The first divisions to land there were the 40th, 37th and the 43rd divisions. The place our forces landed was a surprise to the Japs because of its swamps and the heavy jungle. Luzon is the chief island in the group of Philippine islands.

Some 20 miles into enemy lines a number of American prisoners who had been in Japanese prisons since the early days of the war were rescued by the 6th Ranger Battalion. As we

headed toward the city of Manila we got to meet some of the prisoners who had been released from prison camps.



to us by the ship crew. Some army trucks arrived and we piled into them. About ten miles away we reached an artillery dump. Lieutenant Joke was asked to select some men to unload some trucks in the convoy carrying artillery shells. Guess who was the first one selected for the detail? After we unloaded the truck we rode another 20 miles through villages and towns that had been totally destroyed. Shortly before we stopped for the night we did it--- we came upon a concrete road. It was the first paved road I remember seeing since we were in Australia. We were all very nervous and we sang a lot and we all talked incessantly. Rumors were flying.

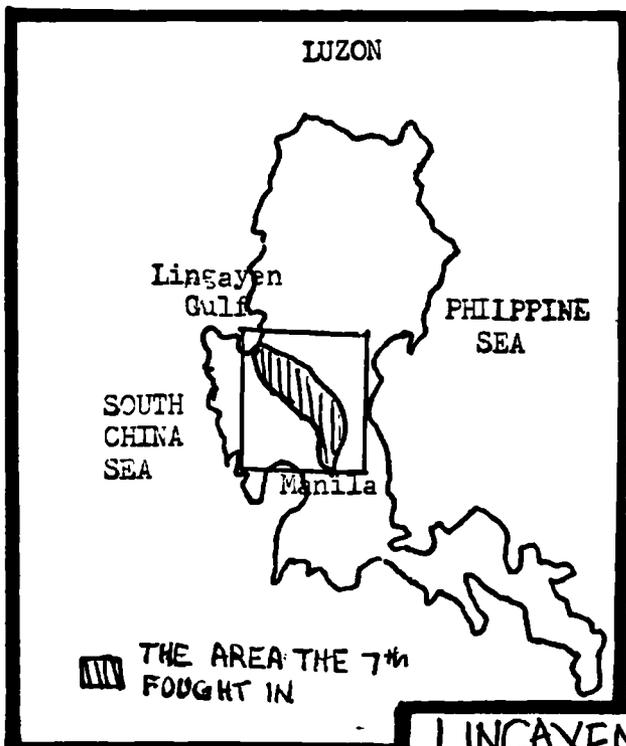
When we did stop for any reason it was near a rice patty. Either that area was loaded with rice patties or our commander knew something we didn't know.

We had a kitchen truck travel right with us. That never happened in places like the Admiralty Islands. It rarely happened in Leyte. The first night we stopped there was a stream near by and we took a bath. We had time to clean our guns. I was not tired at all. The truck carried our machine gun and all of our gear. This was the most unusual combat day I had spent in the war. It was nice while it lasted.

The first night in Luzon I pulled guard. I was on two hours and off four. Again it was a different deal. I roamed around a large area. No one was dug in. My job was to watch for Jap stragglers. Everyone was suppose to be quiet and rest. A few men in one part of the area I guarded found a partly filled bottle of saki. They passed it around and caused a few problems. They settled down in a short time after I talked to them. On late guard I did hear a machine gun open up over in another regiment area. One of their guards mistook two G.I.s in their troop for Jap stragglers for some reason. He shot both of them. My last guard ended about 2:00 A.M.

Next morning we got up at 6:00 A.M. Would you believe we waited around in the sun nine hours before trucks arrived. After they arrived and we loaded into them we only moved a short distance to a village called Guimba. At 2:00 A.M. we were awoken by officers warning us that we had to get moving because we were about to be attacked. We were told that the 8th Regiment, a short distance behind us, had been ambushed by a large force of Japs. It turned out to be a false alarm, thank god. What a sensation that is---you are half awake---people all around you are shouting instructions--- it is pitch dark. You don't know whether to crap or go blind. We did respond quickly. We were ready. I'm just glad it was a false alarm.

On Feburary 3rd, the 7th Cavalry and the 8th Cavalry joined forces. We did



LUZON

The 7th Cavalry Regiment landed with the First Cavalry Division at Lingayen Gulf in Luzon on January 27th, 1945. We got off of the LST ships at a place called MABILAO area. We gathered at the village of URDANETA. From there we moved to a village called GUIMBA.

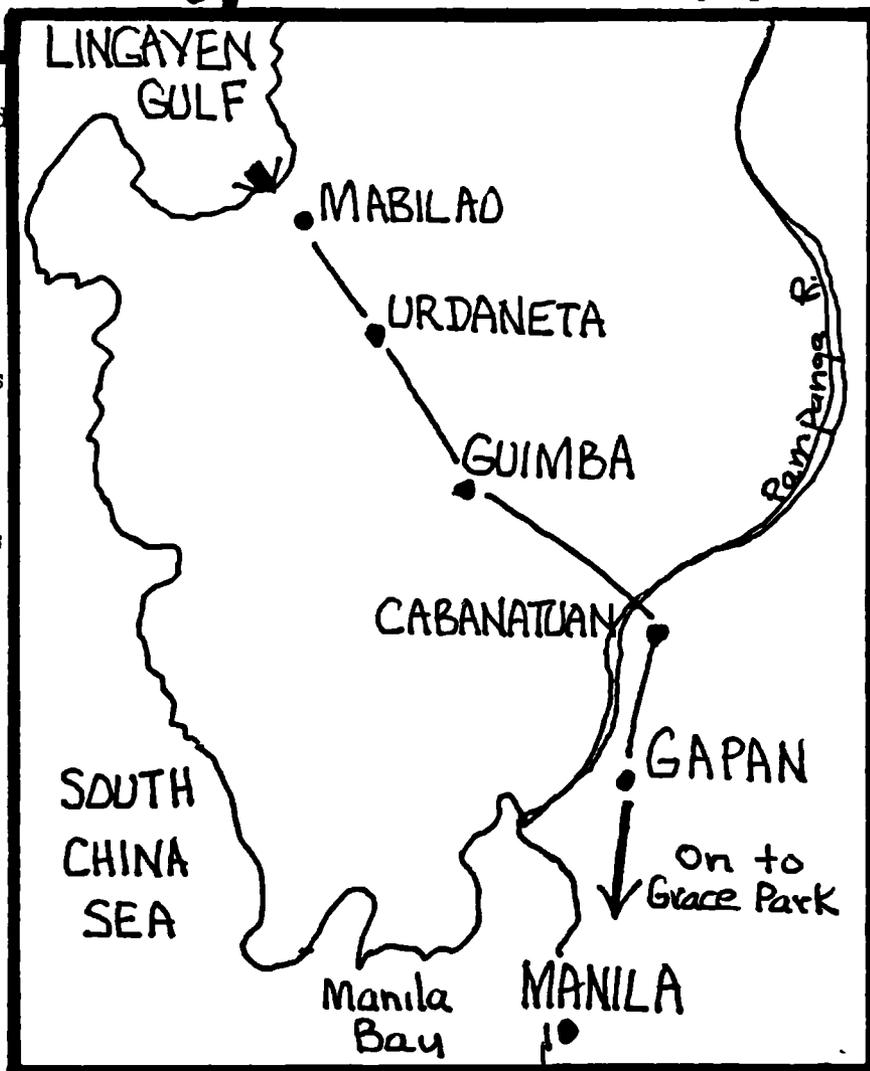
At GUIMBA we met a number of American prisoners who had just been rescued from a near-by Japanese prison camp called PANGATTIAN.

From GUIMBA the 7th Cavalry crossed the PAMPANGA River into a village called CABANATUAN. After helping to

take CABANATUAN we moved on to GAPAN.

Our Regiment kept moving south toward the city of Manila. We did not enter the city of Manila. We were ordered to stop at the outskirts in a place called GRACE PARK.

It was at GRACE PARK we watched as Manila was destroyed by retreating Jap soldiers.



whatever we did---as one unit. Both regiments stayed at Guimba for three days. Some filipinos gathered some straw and brought it to each squad member. We pulled guard and waited for orders. The second day at this village brought to me one of the great thrills that I felt in this war. I heard a big commotion on the road up ahead. I walked up to see what was happening. It was a small convoy of army trucks. Out of those trucks came some very ragged looking older men. They were pale. The bones of their body were sticking out. They looked like, "death warmed over." They were happy. Very, very happy. They were a few of the men who survived the Japanese prisons ^{in 1941-42.} They were on their way to the beach we had recently come from. The convoy stopped so we could exchange greetings. I am not sure how they got to Guimba. They



shook hands with us.They hugged us.They cried, laughed and shouted. You could feel what they had been through by looking into their eyes. It was a once in a life time historical experience to me. I read about these guys in my school history books. They were top news in our local newspaper in 1941. Here I see some of them in person, alive.

I had a rare experience related to this particular meeting with these prisoners on this road. One of them did not get out of a truck. He was unable to. He had a disease called "elephantiasis" which causes your legs to swell to large sizes. This gentleman was sitting in a wheelbarrow. We talked for a while. I welcomed him back to the human world.He wished me luck. We shook hands.----- Lets move now to about a year later. I was home in down town Des Moines, Iowa. I had just finished playing basketball at the Y.M.C. A. I was in the lobby cooling off drinking a soda. I was waiting for a friend when I struck up this conversation with this old gentleman. I noticed he had very large swollen legs. I told him about the incident in Luzon. His eyes almost popped out of his head. This man told me he was in Luzon, also. When he asked the approximate date I met this man and I told him he could not believe what I was saying. THIS MAN WAS THE GUY SITTING IN THE WHEELBARROW,IN THE TRUCK,IN THE VILLAGE OF GUIMBA. He almost broke my hand shaking it. We talked for about two hours. He offered to buy me a drink. He thanked me a number of times. I told him three times I was not in on him being rescued. He did not live in Des Moines he was just passing through. It really is a small world...

The officers of both the 7th and 8th regiments got together and decided to form what was called ,*The flying squadron*. The squadron was picked from men of the 8th Regiment. It seems that Manila was being destroyed by the retreating Japs. This upset General Douglas MacArthur very much. He wanted something done about it. There were three divisions racing toward Manila. He requested

someone get there in a hurry and stop the destruction. The first Cavalry took the General's challenge. This is why---- the, "Flying ~~squadron~~^{*column}". This meant the 7th had to go back to being foot soldiers. The 8th Cavalry took all of the 7th Cavalry trucks. MacArthur was pleased with the idea. The race to Manila was won by this flying squadron. A lot of men were lost in doing it that way.

From the day the 8th Cavalry took all of our trucks we were in thick combat. The movement was by foot and we moved slow. I did not realize how hot it got in the Philippines until that first day we moved on foot. Many men got sick from the heat. A number passed out. Many of the small towns that we passed, going toward Manila, the Filipinos stood along the side of the road and waved and cheered. I was embarrassed. We had just arrived a few days ago. However, we made up for that being embarrassed bit, a short time later. We averaged about 11-12 miles a day.

After a few days the officers put their heads together and decided, we in the 7th, were moving too slow. Some mobile units were brought up for us. There were no trucks available so we were provided with "alligators". Alligators were vehicles that moved on both land and water. They ran on tracks. We moved from town to town, stopped, got out, knocked out our resistance and moved on. We were held up in the village of CABANATUAN. The Japs made a stand here.

Another town we stopped at, not because the Japs made a stand, but because it had a brewery in it. I think they drained the brewery dry. It was a little "hairly" pulling guard that night. There were a lot of loose and relaxed men in many of the fox holes. Nothing serious happened so nothing was hurt. I wrote down the name GAPAN as the name of the town. We did not stay in town. we dug in next to a RICE PATTY.

We really moved along in those alligators. We moved both night and day. On

About 10 o'clock next morning we pulled out again, and rode all day, covering a lot of distance, ending up in another rice paddy, on the outskirts of ~~Japan~~

the night of February 8th, as we moved along we were hit on the sides of the alligator by bits of flack. Many, many bullets ricocheted off of the walls as we moved through the dark. We moved a good distance that night. I felt we were nearing the major city of Luzon. If I had been driving one of these vehicles at the speed they were driving we would have had the alligator wrapped around a tree. They were very good drivers. ^(S) THE "COLUMN" ARRIVED FEBRUARY 1st. WE ARRIVED ABOUT FEBRUARY 8th

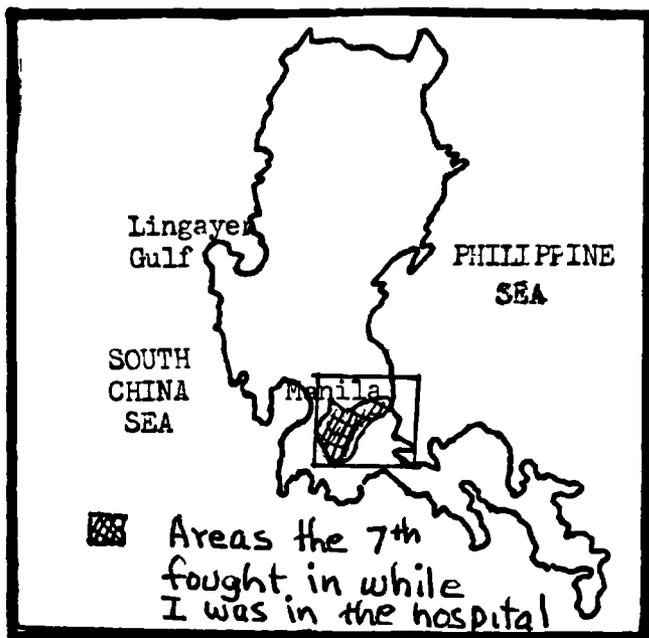
The next stop was Manila. Actually, it was the outskirts of that city. We set upon a hill overlooking Manila. We watched from a distance as Manila burned. The American troops chasing the Japs, at least one of the outfits, was our 8th Cavalry. We could tell which way the enemy was moving by the next fire and hugh puff of smoke that went up. The Japs caused all of the damage they possibly could. They blew up every usable item they could get their hands on. If they did not blow it up they set fire to it. They destroyed churches, hospitals and public buildings. If they found nothing else to do they filled toilet stools with sand. They did all of this damage in spite of a radio warning to them that was issued by General Douglas MacArthur. He warned them them we would destroy Tokyo if they burned and destroyed Manila. Manila was kind of a "pet" of MacArthur. I can personally testify that he



kept his word. When I entered Tokyo seven months later as an occupation soldier that city was all but flattened to the ground.

From our vision point we could see rockets being thrown at our troops. As the rocket is fired it sets off sparks at the launching pad. The sparks resemble sparklers used by children on the 4th of July. When the rocket lands it lets off a great, great explosion. The vibration shakes the earth for at least 100 yards in all directions. I speak from experience. I also found out their rockets let off a weird noise as it moves overhead. It makes the sound of an old fashioned choo-choo train. Their rockets did a lot of damage. As we stood there watching we sweated out that they might fire their rockets at us. This did not happen.

We were not ordered into the city on Manila to fight. We were put back into the "alligators" and driven east of Manila. Word came around that we were heading for an assignment even tougher than fighting in Manila. I could



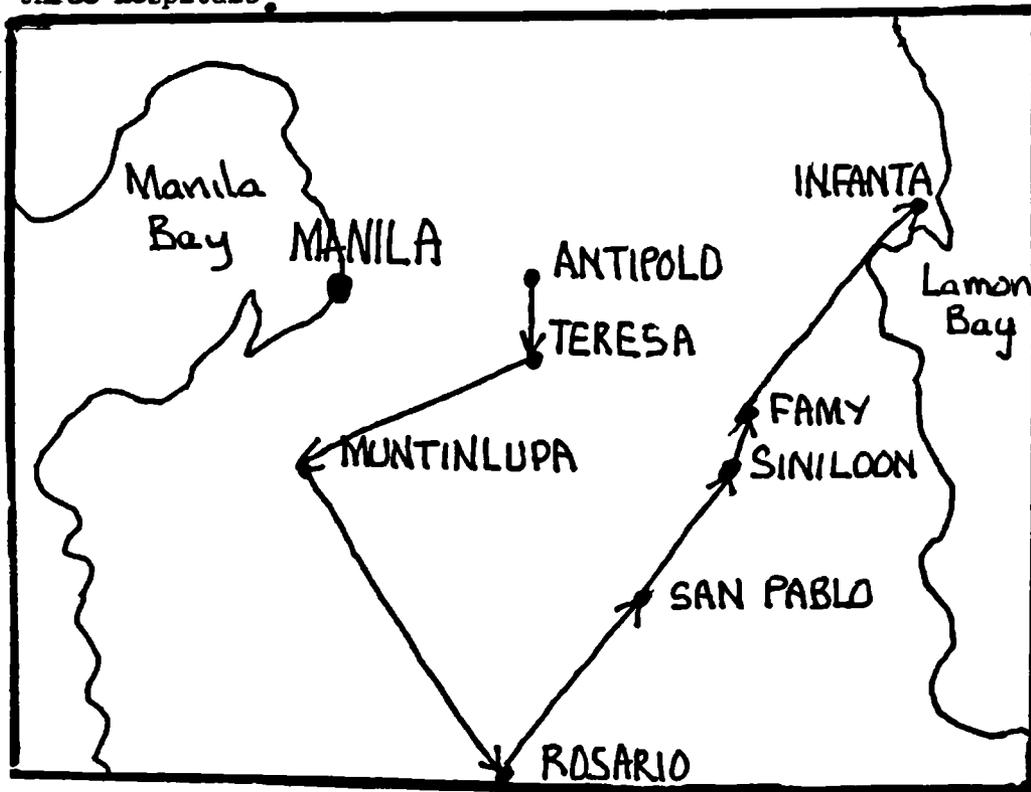
LUZON

When the 7th Cavalry arrived at the outskirts of Manila they were immediately ordered to take the SAN JUAN Reservoir. After spending eight days at the reservoir we were ordered to take positions on a road block on the Antipolo-Teresa road.

The 7th moved toward the heavily guarded town of ANTIPOLO. I did not make it to that town. I was taken to the First Medical hospital. Later, I entered the 227th General hospital in Manila. I spent most of two months in the 133 General hospital in Leyte.

The day after I went to the hospital the 43rd Division came in to relieve the First Cavalry. The 43rd took ANTIPOLO. The First went south and took the town of TERESA. From TERESA they moved down to MONTINCUPA and on to ROSARIO. Following the battle in ROSARIO they moved north to SAN PABLO up to SINILOON and close by FAMY. As far as I know my Regiment did their last days of combat in Luzon in the area of a town called INFANTA.

No one told me where I was when I returned to combat after my days spent in the three hospitals.



not imagine anything being worse than going into Manila and fighting a bunch of wild, crazy Japs who were bent on destroying everything in sight. What do I know? I soon found out there was an assignment as bad. We packed up to head for the large water works ^{(*) NAVALICHES DAM} that supplied the city of Manila with its drinking water. We were sent there to push out the Jap forces who were in control and hold the water works until further orders. That sounded simple. It turned out to be the most difficult task that we had been assigned up to this point in the war. I think the Jap soldiers assigned to this public utility water works were all recently released from the Japanese Imperial "NUT HOUSE". From the things they did while we were there I would also say they had to come from the violent insane wards. Our squad spent eight hair-rising, frightening nights at this place. Each night was like a night mare.

The name I wrote in my notes for this water works sounded like ~~MANILA~~ ^(*) but ~~IT WAS NAVALICHES DAM.~~
 From the point outside of Manila, where we watched Manila burn, to this CRAZY HOUSE it took five hours time in the alligators, to get there. We passed a number of, what seemed like, suburbs. I say this because every so many miles we could hear Filipinos shouting from inside of the walls of the alligator. The sides of the alligator was such that we could not see out unless we pulled ourselves up to peek over. Some people threw flowers in side of the vehicle. The excitement caused by the people we passed told me they were anxious to get liberated. The thing I remember most about that trip to the water works was that it was hot, hot, hot in that alligator.

^{(*) THIS NAVALICHES WATER WORKS}
 We arrived at ~~MANILA~~ around 6:00 P.M. You could just feel the enemy was near. There was a road that led up to the entrance of the water works. I heard a Jap machine gun being fired in the distance. The alligators all stopped at one time. We all got out and dove for a near-by ditch. Our squad was fired upon first. Again, I felt for an ear. That is the ^{forth} ~~third~~



time I was shot at and thought I was hit on the ear. Our machine gun squad was told to stay low until some riflemen took a look around. A few minutes later we made a run for the main entrance to the water works. By the time we got inside it was starting to turn dark. Many of the riflemen took off into the hills behind the water works chasing Japs.

While we were waiting for the riflemen to return so we could set up our perimeter I was involved in an enexplainable experience. I have no idea why I reacted like I did. Two of my squad members were laying down with their heads on their pack,talking. I was standing, leaning against one of the alligators,smoking a cigarette. For some unknown reason I heard, off in the distance, a mortar shell drop down the tube of a 90 millimeter mortar.That sound caused me to hysterically scream at my two buddies laying on their packs. I yelled, "GET OUT OF THERE...QUICK!" They jumped up and the three of us,in a split second, dove under the front of the alligator. As we hit the ground, under the alligator,a terrible explosion went off near-by. We crawled

from under the alligator. The explosion occurred right where my two buddies had placed their heads on their packs. Their packs were torn to tiny bits. They both looked at me in a puzzled manner. One of them said, "Why did you tell us to get out of there?" The other guy was pale and said nothing. I could not tell them why I did what I did. The pale, speechless one, said, after he quit shaking, "I don't know what to say." I told them both, "I don't know what to say either so why don't we just say nothing." I do not know the answer for this incident. It just happened.

The riflemen chasing Japs in the near-by hills finally returned. We set up our perimeter. It faced toward the front entrance to the water works. We only had one squadron plus the men in the alligators. We did not arrive at this site early enough to dig in deep. As things got a little wild later I dug in deeper and deeper. There were two men to each fox hole so we could spread out farther. It was two hours on guard and two hours rest. About 4:00 a.m. a number of Jap 90 millimeter mortars came in close. One of the alligators was parked close to my hole. The first mortar shell lit about 25 feet to the left of our hole. The second shell lit about the same distance to the right of our hole. Usually, when a shell lands to the right and another to the left they know exactly where you are located. They are firing for effect and for range. The third shell is likely to fall on top of your head. After the second shell lit, my fox hole buddy and I both slid over under the alligator. The third shell hit within three feet of the gun. It did no damage to the gun but that third shell would no doubt have seriously hurt or possibly killed one of us. We did not leave from under the alligator until we felt the shelling was over. We were lucky that one of us was awake and alert to the fact that they were zeroing in on us. What a relief to have that shelling end. That was close.

Next morning was February 14th. At home this was Valentines Day. It was time to write my best girl and tell her how much I miss her and love her. I was in no position to send a valentine. I told mom in a dream....or....., a day dream that I had about her. What did my idiot buddies do this day? They went looking for military souvenirs. One guy came back with an arm load. He had a one thousand stitch Jap flag, officer savor and some binoculars. When Fritz came back he was excited. He had killed one Jap. He was more fired up about what Ed Freeman did. Fritz was witness to a unique situation. He was able to watch the soldier who was declared the, "WORLD'S CHAMP-LEATHER HOLSTER AUTOMATIC DRAWER"... on board ship coming to Luzon, without hesitation, gun down a Jap with his 45. It was almost comical the way it happened.



Fritz and Ed were talking as they walked around the corner of a building inside the water works. Coming from the opposite direction was a Jap soldier. Fritz said, "Before that Jap could even think Ed whipped out his 45 from his holster and fired three times. We would all have been proud of Ed." Fritz also observed the look of surprise on the face of the enemy soldier. It was mostly an expression of fear, he said.

Each of the souvenir hunters who made contact with a Jap said they appeared surprised that we were around. They did not appear surprised the night we came into this place. They almost blew the heads off of two of my close buddies with their mortars and they almost did me and my gun in at 4:00 A.M. this morning. I had a feeling we were going to see and hear a lot from the Japs around this place. All I got for expressing my feeling was, "Foss, you worry too much."

This ~~BUSA~~ water works was operated by Filipinos. They knew how to oper-

Now this water works had houses inside where the Filip employees worked and for the first 4 or 5 nights they were allowed to stay in these houses at their own risk, as long as a light was not showing after dark. The first night the rest of Regt came in & we extended our perimeter.

ate it...that was for sure. It appeared to me that the Filipinos were working both sides of the fence. We did not realize this until later. We had doubts when the workers in the water works asked permission to remain in their homes located inside of the water works grounds. Our commander granted them the permission to do so. That was a big mistake.

Early the second night there the rest of our regiment arrived. Our perimeter was extended. Ed Freeman and I had to move the machine gun to a new location just minutes before dark. We were put next to the main entrance of the site. It was impossible to dig in. We rounded up some bags of dirt and piled them in front of us. Across the road to our left was an Anti-Tank gun and crew. This tank gun was brought up in case we were attacked by tanks. It fired 37 millimeter shells. I was afraid they might not have had any experience up in the front. The next morning after daylight one of their crew came over and talked to us. They asked us not to fire our gun unnecessarily because it might give away their position. By saying that we felt they had been in combat before.

The road that led into the water works area was about one city block away from the road that went past the front of the site. Between our gun and that road, a block away, were many coconut trees, high bushes and high grass. In the horizon behind these trees, bushes and high grass you could still see parts of Manila burning. When the wind blew, these trees, bushes and grass played tricks on your eyes. You thought you were seeing things that were not there.....or were they? The second night at this place was not bad. The Japs dropped a few mortars just to let us know that they knew we were there.

The third night was a different story. When it was my turn to pull guard Ed fell ^{ff} into a sound sleep. I let him sleep a while longer than usual. I

I was eating dog biscuits from K-rations with peanut butter. I just about swallowed my heart. Three rockets landed in succession...Boom!....Boom!.... Boom! The vibration from each one was like a minor earthquake. The third Jap rocket I heard coming. The first two landed before I knew what happened. The sound of the rocket alone is enough to scare hell out of anyone. I never wanted to hear those sounds again. I did. Ed, my foxhole pardner jumped about a foot in the air from a sound sleep, rubbed his eyes and said, "For god sake...What happened:" After I told him he said, " I thought the world came to an end." Following the rockets came many, many mortars. Artillery shells dropped in between. I did some sweating and a lot of praying that night. This shelling did a lot of damage to our troops and our weapons. A strange thing happened during this barrage. After it ended we all noted that not one Filipino home, inside of the water works, was hit by enemy fire..... yet these homes were but a short distance from our perimeter.

The following day we suggested to our officers that we check each of the homes of the Filipino workers. They did. They found six two-way radios, lanterns and a number of flashlights. All of this equipment was suppose to have been checked into us. One of our riflemen kept insisting that he saw a light signal during the night. No one believed him. After the riflemen talked it over they volunteered to take all of the Filipino workers out and kill them. The officer in charge would not allow that. He simply ordered the Filipinos removed from their homes until the Japs were defeated and than they would be permitted to return. Can you imagine what would have happened to those Filipino workers if they pulled that stunt on the Japs. After the workers left and we moved our perimeter holes around, the accuracy of the Jap shells dropped considerably. I questioned what we were doing at this water works site after that incident.

What happened beginning the forth night gave a strong indication to all of us just how important this water facility was to the Japanese. The tactics they used to infiltrate were "insane". One Jap that was killed trying to enter our primeter had enough explosives strapped to the front of his body to blow up a large building. The pack of explosives had an electrical charged wire extending downm each arm to the palm of each hand. To set off the explosive all he had to do was touch his hands together. One would naturally ask, "wouldn't this gadget also blow the soldier to bits?" The answer is, "Yes". I do not know how many times this tactic was attempted in the next few days but I do know it was attempted once, just a few feet away from where I was dug in. It's lucky it failed. A good friend of mine was laying on his back. He was in his fox hole trying to catch a little sleep. It was very dark but his eyes had adjusted to the dark because he had just finished doing two hours on guard. He had his M-1 right next to him. He kept it cocked ready to fire at all times. He looked up to see someone moving toward



him. It was a Jap. The Jap was high stepping to prevent making any noise. My little buddy waited until the Jap was about to step on him and he raised his M-1 and fired at him. The Jap never knew what hit him. He fell over backwards next to my friends fox hole.

The following morning, my friend who shot the Jap had everything explained to him about the wires, explosives and the electrical charges. After he realized what had happened he immediately walked away and "threw up". He told me he had the shakes for three days.

We had to be on constant alert. The Japs tried everything to get inside of our lines. Their attempts were always made at the darkest time in the night. I'm not sure just what they were attempting to do other than destroy the American soldier. I felt they were trying to get to the water supply source and blow it up. From past observations I have witnessed I found that if they cannot control a situation no one else is going to control it either. They will destroy it first. Things got a bit nerve racking.

The anti tank gun across the road from our gun almost blasted one of our own ambulances filled with wounded. It was really the ambulance drivers fault. The tank gun crew challenged the ambulance driver and at the same time we could hear them put a shell in the chamber. It was dark enough that it was difficult to see clearly. By rights the Anti-tank crew should have fired first and talked later. In combat, anything that moves at night runs a big chance of being fired upon. It's good the ambulance stopped the second it was challenged. As the tank crew was deciding what to do a rifleman down the line offered some help. He said one of his personal friends was an ambulance driver. The rifleman asked if he could ask a question or two of the driver. The tank crew agreed. The rifleman asked if any of them knew Jack Smiley. A voice said, "Know him...I am him." The rifleman said, "That's the dumb shit."

The rifleman proceeded to give Smiley hell. "Did you leave your brains some- place---- who the hell do you think you are coming in after dark? You looking to get you ass blown off?" Finally Smiley spoke. He said, "we couldn't help it--- we got hung up. This was the closest place to get to. Cut the bullshit and let us in. Rob, come on out and see for yourself. I ain't gonna let you come out here if things ain't right." Rob went out to where the ambulance was parked. We could all hear the two argue. Rob yelled back, " It's O.K.... let the dumb butts in." The tank crew let them pass. That ambulance missed being blown up by the luck of the irish. We were fortunate that there were no Japs in the area while all of this was going on. The driver told our commander he had wounded who could die if he could not get help. He felt he had to take the chance. The whole thing could have been a Jap trick---- It wasn't, but you never know. They had been trying everything else.

Another night while I was on guard and Ed was asleep I had another scare. For some reason I was extra restless. The moving grass, bushes and swaying trees in front of me with occasional light from fires still burning in the city of Manila did not help. My eyes kept playing tricks on me. I was a bit tense because earlier in the night we had a few nortars come in close and a couple of rockets "choo-chooed" over our heads on their way to targets. There was also a lot of personal weapons being fired that night. To top it all off everyone around that day seemed edgy and irritable. I realize combat can make you feel that way. So far it had held off.

I was sure I saw something move. I was certain that I saw something move. I had had this feeling before a few times .Each time it was a false alarm. This time I was right. It would run, flop down, wait a minute and flop down again. I sat and watched. If it was just one Jap I could not fire the machine

gun and give away our position. I would have to use my personal weapon. I had trouble hitting a bull in the rear, five yards away, firing the 45. Tonight has to be different. I looked at my watch. It was 1:00 A. M. It had been an hour since I first saw the moving object. If what I saw was a Jap he sure has a lot of patience. Just about the time I decide that what I thought I saw was my imagination I saw a shadow of a man and I heard steps taken on the concrete road between the Anti-tank gun and our machine gun placement.



I also heard the tank crew jabbering. They fired their personal weapons. There was more than one Jap out there. A machine gun was fired at our fox hole but way over our heads. I'm sure they were guessing where we were. After their gun fired it got quit again. Ed went back to sleep.

Just as I was getting ready to awake Ed to relieve me I heard a grunt sound in front of me about five feet. The figure that made the sound stopped and waited. It made no move. I was really scared. I wanted to wake Ed but I was afraid he might make a sound that would give us away. Before we bed down for the night in our foxhole, either Ed or I place our 45 automatic in a spot next to the trail leg of the machine gun. We leave it cocked and ready. I picked up the gun and emptied it in the direction of the figure. I heard a

thud sound followed by a long groan. I really had seen something. In the morning, no more than six feet away was a dead Jap soldier. The hole in his neck could only have been put there by a round from a 45 that was shot at close range. Believe it or not this was the first Jap that I knew for sure I had killed. There had to be others but I could not prove I was the one who was responsible. I felt sorry for this Asian man. In his pocket was a picture of an Asian woman and two lovely looking children. I realized, as no doubt he did, it was either he or I---the slogan in basic went something like, "KILL...or...BE KILLED."

The Anti-tank crew, across the road, had a busy night, also. They helped stop the Jap machine gun. They wounded one Jap some 30-40 yards out in front of them. In the morning one of the riflemen went out to finish off the Jap who was wounded. He told us, "You know what that little sucker said to me when I placed my rifle to his head"....he looked up at me and yelled something that sounded like "Banzai". "He cussed me out in English. War is really, really cruel."

Over to the right of our foxhole, down the perimeter, two riflemen had a little business. They shot and killed two Japs. One of them was trying to get off a round from a knee mortar. The other was helping. The two riflemen also destroyed a second light machine gun squad and killed a Jap with explosives strapped to his body. It turned out to be quite a night. Incidentally, a knee mortar is a small mortar that is usually handled by two men. One man can fire it alone, if necessary. The weapon fires small shells a short distance. The explosion of the shell sends many small pieces of shrapnel into anything close by. The tube is held against something solid, by hand. This weapon caused many casualties.

I have written only of a very few incidents that occurred at this site.

The days were not bad but every night one thing after another happened. The final night there one of their rockets found the range. It hit one of our weapon carriers loaded with mortar shells. There were mortar shells going off all night long. About the minute you thought it was over another shell would explode and set more shells off. I was scared from the minute we got there until we left. We had to pull guard 24 hours a day for fear they would pull something "crazy".

⊗ FEBRUARY 20th
 On the ninth day an outfit came in to relieve us. I was sure if I got away from this place things would improve. The day was February ~~20th~~ * 20th. Things did not improve. As we moved out I noticed "G" troop was joining us. I knew if this troop was along side of us we were heading into more trouble. They were always sent to the most difficult spots. We were sent to a village located on a road that led to Manila . The road through the village led from a supply depot that headed ^{* SOUTH} to Manila. We were going to set up a road block. This road block was a few miles in front of what was considered to be the front lines. Our job was going to be that of stopping supplies to be shipped to the Jap forces fighting in Manila. from reaching their destination.

Our machine gun squad , along with an anti-tank gun across the road from us was the main force to block the road at one end of the village. The other road block team on the other end of town consisted of a crew from a 50 caliber machine gun squad and an Anti-tank gun and squad. From one road block station to the other was about 6-8 city blocks. As you followed the road from one road block to the other you found that it curved about in the middle. At the point in the road where it curved we had 81 millimeter mortars set up. the end of the road where I was placed was the point where empty trucks, returning from Manila, passed. Guessing, I would say that Manila was 20-30 miles

away from our road block.

We pulled into this village around noon. On each side of the road behind where our machine gun was placed and behind the Anti-tank gun were a few of our riflemen. They were dug into the ditches along the side of the road. In with the anti-tank crew was an artillery observer. Each day a piper cub plane that observed for the artillery flew during the daylight hours. Nothing much happened that first day. Before we left this spot a lot happened.

The very next night, after it got dark, while I was resting before it was my turn to pull guard, I thought I hear voices and someone walking down the road in front of us. Ed was on guard at the time. He not only heard what I heard but he had the gun trained on them. It turned out to be a Filipino woman and a small boy. While I kept the gun on them he went out and talked to them. The boy was 8. The woman was his mother. She wanted to know if she and her boy could stay inside of our lines until morning. Her boy was very ill. She also told Ed that a group of some 70 Philippine patriots would be heading down this road sometime tonight. She wanted to know if they would be permitted to stay inside our lines for the night. Things seemed to be getting a little bit hairy. I advised Ed to have the artillery observer call back to our commander and ask for his advice. The commander told the observer not to let anyone inside our lines until he came up to our gun position and checked things out. I kept a close eye on both the boy and his mother in our fox hole all of this time.

In the next five minutes, three things happened almost simultaneously. None of the things that happened were good. First, a mob of men came down the road in front of us...just like the woman said. The two men in front were both carrying flags. One of the flags was a Philippine flag. The other flag was an American flag. When Ed shouted, "HALT" they all stopped in their tracks.



They were about 40-50 feet in front of our gun. It was pitch dark. Just as Ed halted this group of men the commander pulled up in a jeep, ^{behind us} in that pitch dark. He got out of the jeep, ordered Ed to come over to his jeep and told Ed to go back out and tell them, "We should shoot all of you for moving in here at this time of night but if you are quiet and do not move around you may sleep outside of our perimeter until day light. At that time you may pass through our lines." The leader told Ed they had been fighting the Japs in Manila and they were exhausted and needed rest. They were heading for their home villages. This could have been a trick. It wasn't. Ed had a lot of nerve to go out in the dark and speak to those people.

The commander of the Filipino troops gave his troops an order. They moved off to the side of the road. Ed just got back to our foxhole when the third

thing occurred. Some one from across the road in the Anti-tank placement, shouted, "JAP TRUCK!". On the road, behind us came a speeding truck. It must have broken through the road block at the other end of the village. The truck had no lights on. It missed the jeep that the commander had been sitting in by just inches. Japs in the back of the truck were tossing hand gernades from the truck but no one was hurt by them. Ed grabbed our machine gun and took a couple of swipes at the truck as it hurried away. He had to hit them. They were right on top of us. When Ed fired at the truck he was also firing into some of the Filipinos who had not cleared the road. I don't believe any of the patriots were injured but I am sure they broke all records getting off of that road when Ed started firing our gun.

The commanding officer who came up to check things out was more than upset with us. He claimed that if we had shot all of those Filipinos in the first place that Jap truck would have not gotten past us. I felt it would have been difficult to fire upon an American flag for any reason. Ed was mad. He told me if that SOB wanted to kill off those Filipinos why didn't he order an artillery barrage. If he really wanted them dead so badly he could have come up and used



our gun himself. After everything returned to normal that night, Ed took the woman and the boy over to a hut a few feet back of our gun and just off of the road. He did not return for a couple of hours. I am not sure there wasn't a little "hanky-panky" going on with Ed and this gal. Early the next morning, the woman, her child and all of the patriots were all gone.

As we lit up a fire to have our morning cup of dirty watered coffee we heard some small arms fire over near the other road block. Later in the morning we learned why. One of their Anti-tank members sighted a lone Jap riding a bike down the road without a care in the world. The man who shot him said the Jap was whistling and seemed to be day dreaming and appeared to act like there was not one soul within a hundred miles. We all wondered why in the world a soldier would be riding a bike in such a place.

In the village between the road blocks were some Filipino "guerrilla" soldiers who had, for some reason, latched on to our out fit. These men were very hard-nosed. They hated Japs with a passion. They had a camp in the town. They sent out patrols daily to capture Japs and bring them back so they could be interrogated. Many of them they shot. I was told they disliked the Japs because of what they did to their woman and because they stole their food and valuables,

The second night on the road block nothing much happened. They threw a few mortars at us. They tried to come in the back door of the village and attack the road blocks from the rear. The guerrillas in the town stopped that. Nothing much was happening. We all kind of sat back and relaxed a bit. That was a real stupid move. At the height of our short term relaxing period, we were awoken to combat reality by the sound of the 50 caliber machine gun firing at the other road block. The heavy fire of the machine gun was followed by a few rounds of 37 anti-tank shells. Next came 81 millimeter mortar shells landing.

We later found out there were four heavily loaded Jap ammo trucks trying to break through the road block. ^{Earlier - our} The observation plane saw them. The artillery observer told the mortar squads and that is "all she wrote". They made a direct hit on the first truck in the convoy. It caught fire which stopped the other trucks which allowed our mortar squads to zero in on the rest of the trucks. The anti-tank guns and the machine gun helped finish off the last three trucks. The drivers of the trucks seemed to vanish. Shells of all sizes and shapes were going off the rest of the day and half of the night.

Day four was slow. We had no enemy resistance during the day. The quiet was nice. I took a nap. This all changed about 1:00 A.M. I was on guard. Ed was resting, again. Three big shells lit about 25-30 yards in front of our fox hole. I thought it was our artillery firing for range. I yelled over at the artillery observer. I told him to call back and tell them to increase their range. It was way to close. As he was making his call another shell lit right in front of our gun emplacement. The vibration shocked both Ed and I and covered us with dirt. Neither of us got hit by sharpnel. I yelled louder at the artillery observer, "TELL THOSE DUMMIES TO EASE UP." The observer yelled back to me, "IT'S NOT OUR GUNS. THEY HAVN'T FIRED A ROUND FOR OVER TWO HOURS." That is not what I wanted to hear. I hugged the floor of the fox hole waiting for the next shell to land on top of my head. The wait seemed forever. They must have decided that they had hit their target. The shelling ended. They shelled us again about dawn. If they had continued shelling the night before they would have wiped' us out. Another lucky break. Again, that was scary.

I just got my nerves settled from the near miss by the Jap artillery when I heard the 50 caliber machine gun open up on the other end of town. This time the machine gun, anti tank gun and mortars were firing at the same time.

They all used up many, many rounds. Fireworks filled the sky. It had to be another Jap convoy that was maybe longer than the first one. I was afraid this time they would bring a number of soldiers with the convoy. The only soldiers were the drivers. There were ³⁶ ~~27~~ trucks piled up on that road. This time the machine gun and Anti-tank gun stopped the first four trucks dead in their tracks. After the first four trucks were hit, caught fire and blocked the road the rest was easy for the mortars. Our mortarmen finished off ^{all} ~~28~~ ³⁶ trucks by dropping shells right on top of each truck. I tell you these guys could hit a target the size of a dime if they were given a minute to set up. They were good. I am glad they were on our side. I was sure we were going to have a number of truck driver snipers around----we didn't. Two attempts made to break through our road blocks....They were batting zero.

The small hut behind our gun placement and just off of the road was used a lot by all of us working the road block. It provided shade for us in the day time when we were not pulling guard. It had a small porch on it's second floor. The porch set up high enough that it allowed you to see down the road about three-fourths of a mile or so. On the fifth day of this road block chore I was sitting on the porch talking to the artillery observer. I asked if I may use his binouclars for a minute. I thought I saw something moving down the road a bit. I did. It was a Jap soldier. He was patiently sneaking up on us. He was well camouflaged. He almost looked like the Jap soldier you would see in the movies. He had grass and small twigs tied to his helmet. Some small branches hung from his body. He looked very intent. He would move a few steps and hit the ground, raise up, look around and move a few more steps and do the same thing all over. I remember wishing I had a camera and could take pictures of that Jap soldier and his deliberate moves. Such a film would make

I seen a black object
 moving up the road between
 the gully, it kept coming
 closer, then I seen it was
 a camouflaged Jap, so I
 told everyone, & they cleared
 the road, making the town
 look deserted, the Jap kept
 coming till he got about
 150 yds away, everyone
 had their guns aimed on
 him, & one guy on the 37
 couldn't hold off any
 longer & let 2 shots from
 a M1 go. it killed him.

a great training film for trainees to see in basic training. I told all of
 the men on the road block about what I saw. They all watched him, also. When
 this Jap reached personal weapon range, we all reached for our weapons and we
 got ready. The signal to open fire was when he reached a pole that was stick-
 ing up next to the road about 50 yards away. One of the Anti-tank gun crew
 men had just arrived in the front lines a few days ago. He had never had a
 chance to fire at an enemy soldier before. He could not hold back. He fired,
 and hit the Jap 25 yards on the other side of the pole. The Jap dropped. This
 young man in the tank crew was both excited and embarrassed at the same time.

He was excited because he had now shot his first Jap soldier. He was embarrassed because he could not contain himself. We all gave him a bad time about being "trigger happy". Later that day when I borrowed the observers binoculars again I saw three Japs, dressed almost in the same way using the same tactics. All of them were coming down the same side of the road. The piper cub plane that observes for the artillery was out flying around. The artillery observer called back to headquarters and had ~~they~~ ^{them} tell the piper cub pilot about the three Japs. We all watched as the piper cub plane dove down and fired his personal weapon at them. I think he even dropped a couple of hand grenades on them. The pilot and his plane appeared to have little effect on them. The three Japs kept coming toward us. The piper cub pilot called in and said he was giving up on the three Japs. The observer called our commander. He, in turn, contacted the Filipino guerrilla band in town. In a matter of minutes they arrived for instructions. The leader said, "We take care". They not only killed the three Jap soldiers we pointed out to them they found two additional Japs and killed them.

The Japanese soldier usually had a great fear of the piper cub. They were aware that if they got the attention of the pilot he could bring in artillery on them in seconds. This small innocent looking plane was one of the most deadly weapons we had. The plane was not powerful. It was what the plane was able to do after it made an observation that brought on great destruction.

* FEB RAR 25

On the fifth day at this road block about 6:00 P.M. we were joined by men from the same division that came up to relieve us at the water works. They were disappointed to be taking our place. They thought they were going to be given a rest. We pulled double duty guard that night. We had Jap mortars and artillery coming in one after the other...all night. The next morning this outfit took our position and we moved on. We now moved toward the battle

that put me in the hospital.

The road we moved onto was one that led toward Manila. At this time I was in a fog. I was feeling lousy and I really did not care much where we were or where we were going. Guessing, I would say at that time we were straight east and a little south of Manila less than thirty miles. I was certain of one thing. The area in which we were heading was crawling with Japs. They had just destroyed a village that afternoon that we entered that night. The Filipinos of that village were scared to death.

I had to begin my special diet again of coffee and cigarettes because I could not hold anything down. My sergeant told me to tell Lieutenant Joke how ill I was. There was no point. Joke knew it for months.

Nothing happened that first night on the road but I just knew we were in for one hell of a night the following night. I could see, after dark, from my fox hole, flashes of light. They appeared to come from where we had come from. Ahead, in the direction we were heading I could see flashes of light coming from that direction. They looked like signals to me. I called over to the artillery observer, who had a field telephone and pointed out what I thought were signals being given by the enemy. The observer said, "I think you are right." Nothing was done about it. The next night was one of the worst nights of artillery shelling we had thrown at us in months. I am almost positive it was caused by the light signals passed back and forth the night before. Their artillery and mortars were landing right on top of us.

The next day we moved the slowest we have ever moved. We were in the mountains and on winding roads. Around each bend was a new challenge of a machine gun, bunker or a number of dug in Japs. I later read where this was the area the Japs were making a final stand on the island of Luzon. A lot of our men got killed and wounded in the few days of fighting in this region. We had a

tion of air, artillery and mortar support as we moved.

We did not move far that day. We entered another village. It was given a nick name. It was called "Little Tokyo". The Filipino citizens in this village were anything but friendly compared to the treatment we had received from villagers up to this point on the island of Luzon. Most of them appeared to ignore us. They also appeared to clear away from where we dug in, earlier that day, than villagers in other towns did. It almost felt that they were aware something big was going to happen soon and they wanted no part of it. We were told by people in the village to watch out because there were some Filipinos in the village who were sympathetic to the Japanese cause. I did not believe them, like a dummie. Later I realized they were telling us the truth. After we got the gun set up we discovered none of us had been issued our rations for the day. I do not know how our commander did it but he got us hot chow. What the chow consisted of was steak, bread and cold water. There was no butter for the bread. There was no salt for the steak. It was delicious. Who ever thought we would be sitting in the middle of a tense combat situation eating a steak sandwich. It stayed in my stomach for over two hours.

To my great surprise nothing happened that night. I was sure all hell was about to break loose. I was fooled, thank god. The Japs had all of the chances in the world to almost wipe us out. The ground was too hard to dig in the gun. We had to sit on level hard ground. We had 10-1 rations dropped to us by plane early that morning. Before we left this village that morning we were again warned about Filipinos who were sympathetic to the Japanese in the next town. We were told that there were more of them and they were much more likely to cause us concern. Again, I was not listening with both ears. They were

probably trying to tell me that the light signals I saw two nights before were for real and was not just my imagination. The trouble I expected in this ~~village~~ ^{place}, we nicknamed, "Little Toykio" , had just moved ^{on} to the next town that we entered. The shelling we lived through was so devastating that it is a pure miracle any one was alive to tell about it. The name I wrote down in my notes for this town was TAYTAY. I found TAYTAY on a map to be just east of Manila. The large Jap force was about one day ahead of us. They had moved their troops early that morning on the day we arrived. Along the way they left many, many stragglers to hold things up.

This town of TAYTAY was located on a high spot. The Regiment Headquarters was placed, they discovered later, near the most dangerous spot in the town. The headquarters was in the church. Inside of the church was a 200 pound unexploded bomb that was dropped by one of our planes. We had to set up our gun just outside of that church. To top it off we had to set up the



machine gun on top of broken up concrete. We actually pushed and pulled big chunks up this concrete around us. This was not the best protection but it had to do. I had a "gut" feeling for the last two days that something dreadful was going to happen soon. We knew the area was infested with Japs. We had been told by many civilians in the last two villages that a number of Filipinos had sided with the enemy. Here we are sitting next to a building with a 200 pound unexploded bomb in it, within the sights of a large number of Japs waiting to blow us to bits and I am so weak I can hardly move. My insides were churning. To top it off I was sure that I was going to cause all of those around me embarrassment if I had to go to the bathroom when they threw in a heavy barrage. To me it was going to be a disaster. I had no doubt they were going to shell hell out of us. I also had no doubt that I could hold back if the urge came to go to the bathroom. We did get shelled later. I did have to go to the bathroom. I could not get out of the fox hole I was in while we were being shelled. Yes, it did turn out to be an embarrassing disaster for me. I was kidded about what happened that night after we all got back to a rest camp months later.

Early that night, after we got our machine gun set up as best we could, I was called over to the church along with another guy from my squad to watch over a Jap straggler until they could get to him and interrogate him. The man who was sent with me began teasing and pestering the prisoner. He made the Jap tear up his money. He was teaching him to say nasty things about his country and Tojo. That was not bad. When he attempted to get this prisoner to drink mosquito repellent I felt he was going to far. We had a few words.

Another guy was sent over to help me guard this Jap. He and I had been at Camp Roberts, California together. We had a good time talking about basic

training and the better times we were going to have after the war ended.

This guy was one of the neatest men I met in the army. Just before he came

into the service he had a try out with the ^{MAJOR LEAGUE} Phillies. He played a few games

with the Philadelphia team in 1943. They told him his chances were above

average that he would make it in the big leagues following the war. He said,

" Foss, if I do make it through this nightmare and you do come and visit.....

you will always have the best reserve seat in the house...on me." He said,

" There is a lot of ifs and buts before that happens. Lets pray it will come

true." Two days later he got a leg blown off. He lived....,it might have been

better, as far as he was concerned, if he had died. My eyes fill with tears

ever time I think of him. He was tops.

That night, before dark we had both mail call and the best field rations they served at that time, 10-1 rations. All I could think about when they served this good chow was the "last supper". The last meal of a condemned man. What I had feared for the last few days was about to take place. We retired to our cement walled fox holes and prepared for our beating. Again, just as it got dark we noticed flashes of light. This time the light flashes were not in the distance. They were noticably close by. Shortly after the light flashed the dreaded shelling began. Two big shells sailed over our head. They both landed a good distance away. I remember being told by one of the "vets" that we spoke to in Australia, "don't worry about any shell you can hear going over your head..... the time to worry is when you hear them coming down." As more flashes appeared from the near-by mountains the sound of shells going over our heads got shorter and shorter. Soon, all we heard was the SWISH sound that is hear just before they hit and explode. IT WAS NOW TIME TO WORRY. Those big shells were landing all around us...and very, very

close. We were all sitting on top of crushed concrete, wishing we were dug in the earth....DEEP! I cannot describe the real sound of large artillery shells landing close unless you can imagine the sound of two garbage can lids being banged together, multiplied by 100 times. The ground shakes and trembles all around. The dirt and shrapnel make many noises as they hit the solid surfaces that gives off "hail on a tin roof" sounds. The loose dirt, rocks and whatever is blown up, because of the explosion, almost covers you and your fox hole up. We were not dug in. The concrete chunks took the blunt of the flying materials.

To say you are scared is putting it mild. The feeling is more like paralyzed fear. Shock is a better descriptive word. A couple of their shells hit the church which was almost right next to our fox hole. All we needed was one of their artillery shells to hit the 200 pound bomb inside of the church and set it off.

A large wooden shack directly to our left got hit and caught fire. That fire lit up everything for at least a half a block. A number of men were wounded and some were killed. It seemed like the barrage was never going to end. I do not know about the others but I shook like a leaf during the whole thing. I was told later that I kept repeating over and over, "I knew this was going to happen...I just knew it." During the barrage I threw up three times. When the embarrassing disaster happened I used my steel helmet. I went without a steel helmet for most of the shelling. As soon as there was a break in the barrage one of the guys in my squad brought me another helmet from a dead G. I. I threw my helmet outside of our concrete fox hole until the shelling ended. Later I threw it into some bushes. This had to be my worse night in combat.

The shelling by the Japs did not end until we got the attention of an

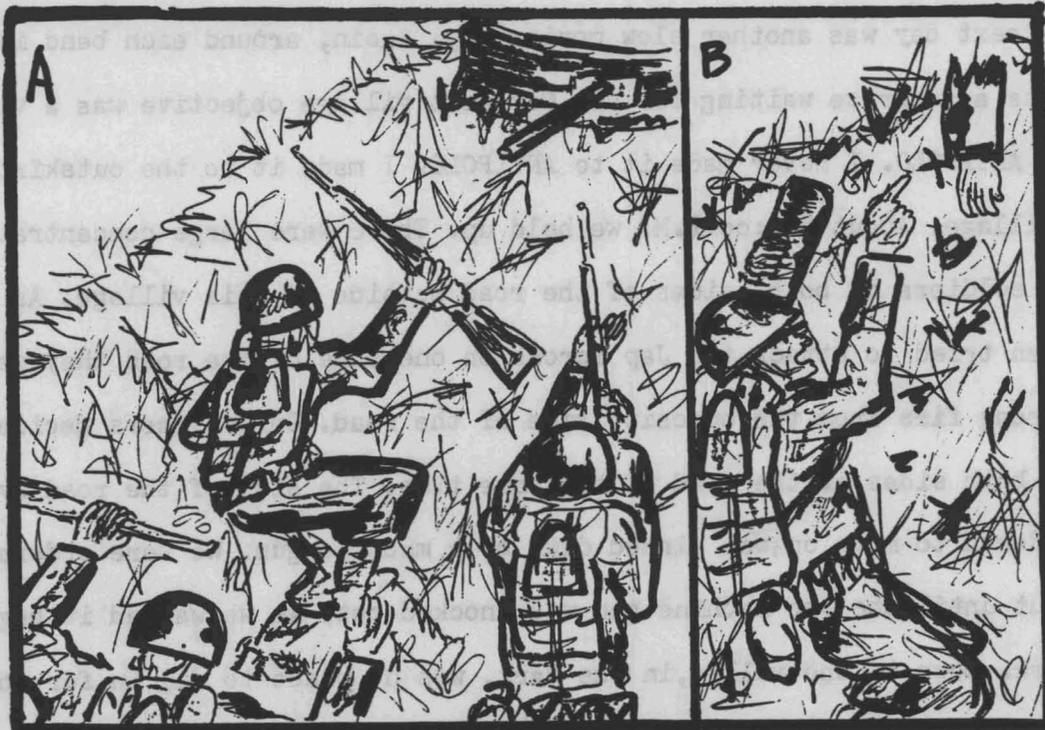
artillery observer. This time he listened. We pointed out the flashes which were still lighting up the mountain. He called into his headquarters and gave our artillery some kind of reading. he also caught the final flashes from the artillery that was being fired at us. Our big artillery covered the area from where the flash light signals were coming and also since the shells quit coming in we figured our artillery found the range of the large Jap artillery guns that had caused us so much trouble. WHAT A RELIEF! If only that artillery observer had paid attention when the flashlight signals were spotted the night before. On top of sweating out the shelling we also expected a big infantry charge from the Japs. The best time to charge in with an infantry attack is immediately following a barrage, The troops getting shelled are in a daze...we sure were...your nerves are worn thin and your reactions lack sharpness. It was pitch dark. That is the time the Japs usually attack. We waited...waited and waited. Their expected charge did not come. I was not disappointed.

The next day was another slow moving day. Again, around each bend in the road was a surprise waiting for us. Our next village objective was a village called ANTIPOLLO. I never made it to ANTIPOLLO. I made it to the outskirts of this village. About 5-6:00 P.M. we held up. There were large concentrations of Jap soldiers on both sides of the road outside of this village. As our riflemen tried to attack the Jap forces on one side of the road they would get strong fire from the opposite side of the road. Our officers decided to attack both sides of the road at the same time. The side of the road my squad was ordered to move on, ^{got us} was pinned down by a machine gun. We were ordered to stay put until the Jap machine gun was knocked out. As we waited it began to get dark. Down in the valley, in the dark, was no place to dig in for the night. The riflemen did knock out a Jap machine gun near the base of the _.

ridge directly in front of us. Word was passed to make a run for it to the top of the ridge. We followed our rifle troops up the ridge. About 40 yards from the top was another Jap machine gun. We got pinned down again. Bullets from this machine gun nest were spraying all over the place.

As we lay there waiting to get orders as to what we should do, three men, who were strangers to our outfit, came hurriedly crawling up behind us. One of them asked, "where in the hell is that wood pecker?" We all pointed dead ahead. One of them said, "Just give us a few minutes." They all three took off toward the machine gun nest. We all fired toward the Jap gun until they got close. They were a demolition squad. The three rushed the gun. It looked like they threw explosives into an opening in the machine gun nest. When the explosives went off, Bob Testa, a good buddy of mine from New York and I saw part of a human arm fly over our heads. It still had cloth around it. It was all in one piece. It landed about 10 feet away.

After the machine gun was knocked out we made a run for it to the top of



ridge. Just as we reached the top a B.A.R. man and the point rifleman were killed by Jap snipers. Our officers were shouting orders left and right. The most noticeable order was, "DIG IN...FAST!" The mortars, artillery and rockets were sure to arrive shortly. As we dug in (in the dark) snipers were taking pot shots. We were digging with hands, helmets, knives and anything else near that was handy. My fox hole buddy and I had one pick between us. We made it do.

My new fox hole buddy, since we changed squads around, back in Leyte, was Benny Kalondra. He was from Brooklyn, New York. Usually he was a very funny guy. He looked a lot like Jerry Kalona, the comic who performed with Bob Hope. Tonight, Benny was not funny. Benny was in a trance. A trance called combat fear. He was to be my one and only fox hole partner for this night. The hell of it was I was more frightened than he was. Somehow I felt I was not going to let him know that.

It was a relief to get dug into ground deep enough so your body was below the surface of the ground. The Japs knew we were there. The worse part of the coming night was what the moon was doing. The clouds were moving fast. The moon kept popping in and out of the clouds. When the ^{moon} clouds went behind these clouds you could not see your hand in front of your face. With no clouds to hide the moon it was possible to see a short distance fairly well. As we reached the top of the ridge my sergeant moved the squad to the other side of the ridge near the top. He wanted us to guard a path he had observed. Where we dug in our foxhole was partly hidden by bushes and high grass. We were not sitting completely in the open. We had good vision when the moon did appear from behind the clouds. Benny kept saying to me, "If the clouds keep moving and covers the moon how we gonna see anything moving out there?" I told him we will have to play it by ear." I then said to myself, "and hope for the



best.* Benny was a great guy. He was one of my trusted army buddies. I knew how up tight he got in combat from past campaigns. That scared me. You never knew how he was going to react when a situation got tense. If the machine gun was going to be fired that night I knew it was going to have to be done by me.

As soon as it got quiet we could hear Japs jabbering down in the valley in front of us. About 11:00 P.M. the talking got louder. Some Jap soldiers were climbing the hill in front of us. Our gun was the point gun on the ridge. This ment our fox hole stuck out further on the ridge than all of the other fox holes in the perimeter. We were more or less alone. Next thing we knew two Jap soldiers about 10 feet away and five feet apart were standing in

front of our gun. At first I could not see them. I could only hear them because the moon went behind the clouds. I held my breath until the moon did come out. They were both still standing there. One of the Jap soldiers moved toward me, stopped, turned around and said something to the other Jap. This caused the second soldier to raise up and answer. I hesitated about firing the machine gun for a second. I felt there were others around and I was going to have to use it a lot, later, so I fired while they were both in my gun sight. They both fell. The instant they both fell to the ground a very, very unbelievable thing happened. My machine gun jammed. Of all times for a thing like this to happen...it had to happen at this time. A cartlidge got stuck in the chamber of the barrel. I could hear Jap voices on the hill. I felt sure they were going to charge my gun any second. For the first time in the war, that I really should have panicked, I did not panic. Before you can insert another shell into the barrel you must first remove the shell that is stuck there. The tool that is used to do this little chore was in a bag that was some 20-25 feet away. The third gunner forgot to give it to me before dark. I did the only thing I could do to get the gun in shooting order, again. I reached in with my thumb and forefinger, got a hold of the end of the cartlidge and worked it loose. The space to work your fingers in was about three inches wide and two inches long. I will admit I did not accomplish this feat alone. I was speaking to god all of the time. I explained to him that if it was G.K. with him I would like to live longer. If he was willing....I was ready to try and do something worthwhile with my life. I told god it might be a little difficult for me to stay alive unless I get this gun back in firing order. About the time I ended this prayer the cartlidge fell to the ground. The gun was now working again.

I kept trying to find something to do in my life that was worthwhile and

could prove helpful to others as I had promised him for getting me out of this terrible mess. I did become a teacher. That was the last thing in the world I ever thought I would be. That could not be what I did to repay my debt to him because teaching was the most rewarding thing that ever happened to me in my life. I don't believe I have done that something worth while yet. I am sure when the time comes God will let me know. Incidentally, the story I just told you about pulling a cartlidge from the barrel of a water-cooled machine gun is not suppose to happen according to a Major who had been through two wars. He said, "It is unhumanly impossible to remove a cartlidge from a machine gun if the shell becomes stuck in the barrel. Any one who claims he has done that is a damn lier."

During this bit of action when both of the Japs popped up in front of the machine gun and the gun failed to fire, I had an additional problem. My good buddy Benny went into shock. It is no wonder. While I was fixing the gun . . . Benny started talking loud at first. He began to cry a little. Next he started to sing. Just as I got the gun into working order he began yelling something about the "Dodgers", his home town baseball team. The last straw was when he fired his carbine rifle in the air. I had to do something to quite him. I only had an automatic 45 as a personal weapon. I took his carbine from him and hit him on the jaw with the butt of the gun. I looked at him as I did it. He was smiling at the time. It knocked him out. Later when this whole thing ended I told him what I did and why I did it. He had a hard time believing that he caused any problem. He did mention that his jaw was very tender. I told him I was sorry. He told me he was glad I did what I did. That did make me feel better. When Benny came to he seemed O.K. I did stay awake the rest of the night. During the time that Benny was out cold the Japs in the valley threw many knee mortars at us. Our mortars and artillery blasted



the hill in front of us and the valley below. The mortars and artillery came very close to us. We told the artillery observer to move the artillery out a ways. After Benny snapped out of what was troubling him the night turned quiet. In the morning Benny seemed fine. It was a stressful, nerve-racking night. However, the following day turned out to be worse. The following night turned into a giant nightmare when the rockets came swishing overhead.

Living through that night gave me confidence that God was listening. The new day began badly. The first thing at day break, I heard someone yell, "Get out of your hole slow....look around well.... the place is crawling with em." EM, ment Jap snipers. I raised up slow and cautiously. As I sat on the edge of my fox hole and looked to my left I was in time to see a soldier I knew



in "G" troop stand up. He was looking through his field glasses at something down the road we climbed up the hill from the day before. I heard one single shot fired. He dropped his field glasses. Blood gushed out of his leg, above his knee. It was a Jap 25 caliber bullet that hit him. The first casualty of the day and it just barely turned light. The other G.I.s having observed this shooting were now more careful getting out of their holes. We could not build a fire for coffee.

You could see the rockets as they left their launching pad from the next hill over. You could not miss the balls of fire as the rockets were being fired. For this reason we expected out artillery to blow them out of existence. The artillery observer told us why this was impossible. The rockets were not being fired from a stationary position. Had that been the case our artillery would have knocked them out in a matter of minutes. The Japs were firing the rockets from the back of a huge platform that was built on the back of a giant semi-truck. They fired one or two rockets and moved their truck. When the piper cub was flying during the day they did not fire at all. The rockets were fired a lot at night time. Fortunately for us, the ridge we dug in on was so narrow that the rockets they fired went over us and lit in

valley behind us. If just one of those babies would have landed on that ridge the whole ridge could have been leveled.

Later, this same morning two heart breaking things happened that crushed me. I could do nothing about either incident. The gunners saw the riflemen go on the hunt up on the ridge for snipers. We all thought when they returned that they had cleared them out. We were wrong. Three of us sat on the edge of a fox hole and tried



to relax, smoke a cigarette and talk. Next to me was my close friend Fritz . Next to Fritz was a young southern soldier who had only joined us a short time ago. His name was Johnny Hughes. He was one of those guys from the south that we north boys loved to hear talk. I kept him talking just so I could listen to him. He was well liked by everyone who knew him. He was assigned to the squad of Fritz. He and Fritz became close friends. We all no sooner sat down and lit up when there was a horrible "THUD" sound. I looked over at Johnny and blood was streaming down his face. Johnny had been hit in the head between the eyes. He died very quickly. Before he did die he gave his watch to Fritz. It was a watch Johnnies mom gave him when he came into the service. Johnny was ¹⁷~~19~~ years old. What a great loss. I went back to my fox hole and broke down. He was a super human being.

Later that morning, my fox hole buddy from the previous night, Benny, was moved back to his original squad. The pardner I had had for a long time, Ed Freeman, moved back with me. I had been through so many combat experiences

with him he almost felt a part of me. Ed never seemed to get "shook up" about anything. He had combat savvy. We worked well together. Ed was the man who won so many medals. As we sat in the fox hole and talked that morning I got the shock of my life. Ed looked me square in the eye and said, "Foss, I have gone through as much shelling as I feel my boby can take!" He continued, "I spoke to the regimental doctor about it. I told the commander how I felt. They both said they can do nothing about it. I am getting shaky. My head is spinning around most of the time up here. If I do not get away from here for awhile I honestly believe I will go nuts." Ed reminded me that I should have been placed in the hospital months ago. He was very upset that nothing helpful had been done for me. He said, "How many times have all of us in this squad told the commander, doctor, platoon leader and our squad sergeant about you throwing up and going off into the bushes time after time. That's not normal. You can die with dysentary." Finally, he said, "They are not going to do to me what they have been doing to you. I am getting out of here."

I ~~tried hard~~ to discourage Ed. I told him if he leaves he will be considered as A.W.O.L. A.W.O.L. in combat can be punishable by a long prison term. I told him he could be shot for this act. Ed thanked me for trying to help him and caring about him, but he said, "I have just got to get out of here." He asked if I had any money. I had 20 pesos. I pleaded with him to think it over at least one more night. We shook hands. He said to me, "If anyone asks where I am tell them I went to find drinking water." With that he waved and headed down the path we were assigned to guard.

The end of this story goes something like this. Earlier I had said that Ed was Spanish. He easily passed as Filipino. He spoke their language. Some way he made it back where the fighting had stopped without being caught by any of our forces. I did not see Ed until months later. It was after the war had

ended and just before we were sent into Japan as occupation troops. He showed up at a village near a rest camp where we were training in Luzon. One night in this camp a Filipino came into our tent. He asked me if I was Dick Foss. I told him I was. He asked to speak to me in private. He told me Ed Freeman wants to speak to me. The Filipino told me he would not talk to anyone but me. The Filipino told me where Ed would be in the village and left.

I told the Captain I knew where Ed was. I asked the Captain if he would trust me to bring in Ed. The Captain agreed to my request. At that time I did not drive. He had a driver take me into the village and let me off. I walked to where Ed said he would be. Ed came out from behind a village shack. He and I walked back to where the driver let me off. We got into the jeep and we drove back to the camp. On the trip back to camp Ed told me he was now O.K. He no longer was afraid. Before those motars, artillery and rockets got to him he was one of the bravest men I have ever known. We walked into the Captain's quarters. Ed and the officer saluted each other. Ed thanked me. The Captain thanked me and that was it....for now. Ed was put in a single tent under 24 hour guard. Those of us who knew him got to visit him a few times.

The next day the Captain called me into his tent and explained to me that one of two things would probably happen to Ed. He would either serve time in Federal Prison or he would be shot to death. He also said that because Ed had an excellent combat record before he went A.W.O.L. and because he turned himself in he more and likely would be sent to a Federal prison. He was sent to Fort Leavenworth. I do not know for how long. I wrote a letter to him. I did not receive an answer.

That day on the ridge near ANTIPOLLO when Ed went A.W.O.L. and Johnny got shot between the eyes my world caved in on me. It was like family leaving you when you needed them the most. Later that morning on the ridge we were told

that the 8th Cavalry was going to relieve us. We were going to pull out and head for ANTIPOLO. We laid around waiting for the 8th to arrive. We heard 91 millimeter shells dropping down tubes in the short distance. Once you hear a mortar shell go down a Jap 91 millimeter tube you never forget the sound. About 3-5 seconds after you hear the pop you best dive for cover or hug the ground with all your might. We each dove into our foxholes. The first 5-6 shells lit anywhere from 5-20 feet away. They were zeroing in on our gun. The explosions were so close I lost my hearing for an instant. I looked up to see my troop commander at the back of the ridge motioning to me to leave the gun and run back to the cover he was under. I told him, "I can't just leave the gun." He insisted. Shells lit closer. I am sure I panicked, I covered my head with my arms and ran back toward the Captain. I was in a daze. When I got back to where the Captain was I turned around and headed back toward the gun. I had forgotten to remove a main spring that prevents the gun from firing. The Captain grabbed my arm and ordered me to stay put. I was afraid the Japs were going to rush up over the ridge and use my gun against us. Just as he grabbed my arm I heard our gun being fired. I came close to heart failure.

^{MY} ^{who was awarded a silver star for bravery,}
 The Captain had been watching my machine gun. He said to me, "Relax, your gun is being fired by Stagman." Stagman was a machine gunner from another machine gun squad in our platoon. As he was running for cover he spotted a Jap mortar squad who was causing us problems. He yelled over to me, "Foss, It's a good thing you did not remove the main spring on your gun. I would never had the chance to wipe out that mortar squad. This is the first time I ever remember making a mistake in combat where it paid off."

When I did return to my machine gun, Jap mortar shells dropped on me the



third time that morning. I left my gun once more. This time I took the spring. This time I crawled back to the cover on the ridge. It felt like shells were landing right on top of my head. As I looked up from my crawling position I saw a foot hanging by a thread to what was left of an ankle. As I crawled further I could see the foot belonged to my favorite non-com. It was First Sergeant Ault. He was not only best liked by me. He was liked by all of

the men in the regiment. I knew I was going to miss him. This whole day had to be the most miserable day in the Luzon campaign. The day was not even one half over. ^X HERE IS WHERE OUR COMMANDING OFFICER MAJOR GENERAL MUDGE WAS KILLED.

Our artillery could not get the Jap mortars zeroed in and stopped until about 1:00 P.M. About this time the 8th showed up. I replaced the spring in my gun. My squad leader gathered us together and we moved down the back of the ridge toward the road to await further orders. As we stood there waiting for our officers to tell us what to do Lieutenant Joke walked up to me and dumb-founded me by saying, "Foss, I believe you have had enough." I could not believe what I was hearing. I was really stunned. This man speaking to me is the same person who made an extra special effort to make army life as miserable for me as he could. He ended up by telling me, "You are going to the hospital...now!" I told him I do not want any favors from him. I also told him that he was the biggest ass I had ever met. "The only thing I respected about you in the least was the uniform you wore!" That was my final comment.

I waited for him to tell me that I was going to be court-marshalled the first chance he had. He did not say anything. I told him I have gone this far with the stomach disorder and I could make it to the end of the campaign. I must have been a little goofy saying these things. Here ,this man was giving me a way out of this "hell hole" and I stand here telling an officer with the authority to release me that I was all right when I was not. I shout- at the officer, "I am the only first gunner left. They need me." Joke



said, "No... you are going to the hospital." With that, two guys grabbed me from behind and literally threw me into the back of an ambulance that had some how appeared behind me. They locked the door from the outside. When I returned to the front lines, months later, I was informed, "Ol Betsy", my machine gun, had received a direct hit the day I left. It killed the new machine gunner. It put the gun out of commission. I carried that gun through months and months of combat. It served us well. I leave it one day and it gets destroyed. Some things do not make sense. I think "Ol Betsy" deserves a citation of some kind.

The day I was sent from the front lines to the hospital I began to feel lost and useless. That day was March 10, 1945. As the ambulance pulled away I developed a fear that something more was wrong with me than dysentery. All



Joke said to me was, "I had had enough." What does that mean? Am I in this ambulance, going to a hospital for mental problems or physical problems? The way I acted this morning when those Jap mortar shells fell on us, someone might have the idea I am losing my mental capabilities. I feel O. K. I'm just a little tired.

I kept thinking about Hughes, Freeman and Ault. There had to be others up there that I fought along side of that were as bad off as I was. I wondered how come they

had to stay up there and continue fighting.

It was a long ride back to the rear. Our first stop was at a temporary hospital. It was called the First Medical Hospital. Here is where they brought freshly wounded soldiers. It was their job to try and keep them alive until they were strong enough to be moved to a better equipped hospital. As the ambulance I was in made it's stop, to pick up some wounded who were going back to another hospital, I was allowed to get out and walk around a bit. I walked over to a shack and peeked in. I wish I had not peeked in. The shack was a make-shift operating room. Stretched out on an operating table was a good buddy of mine from the mortar platoon in my troop. His name was Ron Hill. Ron had been hit by a good sized piece of an artillery shell. His intestines were laying beside him. They were in the middle of operating. The doctors were trying to remove shrapnel and sew him up. As I left I said a shallow, "good-bye" to my friend. I know he did not hear me. I was told by a

I had a live grenade in my pocket, so I handed ^{the driver} to him & he almost fainted. I was dirty, muddy, & smelled awful cause I hadn't had a chance to take a bath for about a week & a half. So after I got all checked in my bunk, clean towel, & clean pajamas I went down & took a bath. Boy did that feel good, put on clean socks, & layed down.

soldier who drives ambulances back and forth between the First Medical hospital and the next hospital stop we made, that Ron did not make it. I think it was because there was a shortage of his kind of blood available.

I got back into the ambulance with a number of wounded stretcher cases. These guys were in real pain. Most of them were knocked out with some kind of pain killer. I felt a little embarrassed being there in that ambulance. We arrived at a place called the 29th Evacuation Hospital. This was a much better equipped medical center. Some of the patients here were getting ready to move to even bigger and better hospitals. A few of the men here would soon be shipped to hospital boats and be sent back to the "states". A few men were on their way back to combat. I was told only that this hospital was located somewhere north of Manila.

When I stepped out of the ambulance, I had a hand grenade in my pocket. I kept this grenade in my upper shirt pocket all of the time I was in combat.

After I saw what happened to one of my squad buddies, who had been captured alone, on patrol, I felt carrying a hand grenade was a necessary evil. My squad member buddy was over powered, staked to the ground and set afire. They threw gasoline on him and lit a match. That was sick. I carried this grenade with the idea of pulling the pin should I ever end up in a similar situation. I am not positive I could have gone through with it. I very seriously considered it. Anyway, when I arrived with the grenade, one of the male nurses asked if it was a live grenade. I suggested we pull the pin and see. He turned pail. He almost fainted.

I really had a bad odor when I came into this hospital. One of the other nurses said, "my god, what is that awful smell." I had to admit it was me. I had not changed or washed my clothing for weeks and weeks. I had had only "walk through....river baths" I had a bad case of dysentary all of these many months. My clothing and shoes were so dirty that they issued me all new ones. They burned everything. They had to de-louse me and give me a very short G.I. hair cut.

I checked in and was assigned a bunk. They gave me soap and pointed me in the direction of the shower. I stayed in the shower until my skin almost shriveled up. It really felt great. When I came out of the shower, put on my clean pajamas and went nighty-night I fell asleep almost as soon as my head hit the pillow. The staff let me sleep. I slept all day and into the night. I awoke to food that was fresh. I ate everything set in front of me.....at least twice over. What a disappointment. My stomach would not take it. They had a movie that night. I had not seen a movie for ages. With the shower, the clean clothing and the fine food..... I had to pinch myself to see if I was in a dream.

That night, following the movie, I went back to the tent and laid down in

my nice comfortable bed, after first talking a nurse into getting me a cup of delicious brewed hot coffee. I had trouble sleeping. I did not have to fear that the night might bring mortars, artillery or rocket bombing. I did toss and turn. All I had to do was close my eyes and go to sleep. My guess was, I was feeling guilty being here in this hospital. After all of the activity in the hospital stopped for the night and the patients settled down to rest it got real quiet. Off in the distance I could hear our artillery being fired. My thoughts turned to the men in my squad and platoon.

I was concerned what the professional staff was going to tell me about my condition. They did not tell me what was wrong right away. They did not try to explain until they had time to review all facts. I was visited by a doctor the second day at this hospital. He asked some general questions about early sicknesses. He wanted to know what my job really was in this war. He asked what I thought my problem was. I told him it was dysentary and a dose of creeping crud.....better known as "jungle rot". He ran a few tests on me. Next day he visited again. This time he said, "According to your medical records--- when you arrived overseas your weight was 187 pounds. Now you weigh 142. Is that right." I told him I have not had occasion to weigh myself lately but I was sure I had lost considerable weight cause nothing will stay in my stomach long. I went on to explain that for the last two months in combat I have survived on coffee and cigarettes. He appeared to get upset. When I told him when I felt I first contacted dysentary he wanted to know why I was not sent to the hospital. I told him I tried but no one would listen. He called my commanding officers every name in the book. He felt that I should never had been ordered to fight in either Leyte or Luzon in the condition I was in.

This doctor told me I was not going to return to combat until this

dysentery was over. That statement did not hurt my feelings. He started me on a thick white medication. It was spoon fed to me every few hours. It was suppose to help clog up my insides. The Doc said I could eat all of the cheese I wanted.

I asked him later if I seemed to be mentally O.K. He said at this very moment I really was not up to par. He said, "Remember, you have been under a tremendous amount of tension due to nightly shelling and lack of sleep. You have been shot at, rained on and loaded down with over 50 additional pounds every where you went the last few months. The common name for this condition is "Battle fatigue". It happens to most front line soldiers. If you are asking me if you are mentally ill I will tell you no. If you rest and do as I tell you do do you will get over both this dysentary and this battle fatigue before you know it. It might be sooner than you want. If you are cured before this war ends you might be asked to return to the front and do it all over again. That is all I wanted to hear. It was no problem for me to follow the doctors instructions. Getting better was just a matter of time.

I was given every opportunity in the world to rest in that hospital. We read, wrote letters home and took short daily walks. We watched a movie each night. It really got kind of boring. This hospital was close enough to the front that you could hear artillery being fired. On occasion a stray Jap sniper got into the grounds. That only happened once. I only spent a short time at this 29th Evacuation Hospital.

On the morning of March 13th I awoke to be told that I was going to another hospital. A hospital that was bigger and better. I made it a point to thank the staff. I shook hands and said my good-byes to the nurses and the few friends I had made. We loaded into trucks. The trip took about 2-3 hours.

When the trucks stopped we were parked in front of a large three story building that was rough cemented. The building was shaped in a large U. Each line of the "U" seemed a block long. The color of the building was a bright yellow. The building had been partly destroyed by the Japs as they retreated. No one told me but I knew we were in the city of Manila or at least near the city. I watched this building earlier, from the outskirts of Manila, as it was being damaged by the Japs. The 8th Cavalry was one of the American forces chasing them. Little did I realize I would be spending time in this hospital at a later date. Some of the building was still unable to be used. I was told by one of the medical staff that this building was one of the largest hospitals in Asia. The name of this hospital was the 227th General Hospital. I was told that any hospital whose name started with "General" was a well equipped place. This hospital appeared to be out of combat "sound" range.

The truck took us to the entrance door. We checked in and were issued our hospital gear. They had a number of female nurses. The head nurse in the ward I was assigned to was a beauty. She probably was really not all that great... because it had been ages since I had seen an American girl...to me...she was a knockout. She had a good sense of humor and a great personality. How else could you call a First Lieutenant "blondie" and get away with it unless she had a good sense of humor.

At night time after every thing quieted down you could hear artillery off in the distance. I was afraid of that. Many nights I could not sleep when I could hear the shelling. I soon got accustomed to it. After a while I was able to feel myself getting better. I was less and less tense. The food I was eating stayed down.

I found no one in this ward who was a member of the First Cavalry. All of the men in this ward seemed very serious and down in the dumps. Most of them had reason to feel that way. I finally got a chance to strike up a friendship. The guy in the next bunk to me was talking to his doctor. I listened in. The doctor asked him what Division he was in. This guy told him he was in the 37th division. The doctor said to this guy, "They call you, Jimmy, right?" The soldier in the bunk next to me answered, "Yes, among other things." I am sure this Jimmy did not realize I was listening. When no one was around I looked over at this neighbor and said, "So your in that second place Division, the 37th, huh, Jimmy?" He stared over at me and said, "How did you know I was in the 37th....and...how come you know my name?" I held my hand over my forehead and said, "Siam...Siam knows all." He followed up with, "What do you mean second place Division. The 37th is the best outfit in the Pacific.(The race to Manila requested by General Mac Arthur was a close one between the 37th Division and the First Cavalry. The First Cavalry won by a nose.) I reminded him that his 37th Division was beaten by my First Cavalry Division. There was a slight pause. He pointed his finger at me and said...."Oh no---your not one of those fancy pants, big yellow patched cowboys from the First Cavalry are you?" I realized he had a sense of humor when he called for a nurse to bring him something he could throw-up in.

I had a feeling Jimmy and I were going to hit it off as friends. We did. He and I tried to do things to cheer up the patients in our ward. We offered our services to any that could not move around freely. We sang and got a few of them to sing along. I drew their pictures. We helped the nurse all we could. Jimmy and I did help brighten up the ward a little.

One day a new nurse came into our ward. She was a nurses helper. She

would chat with the guys, give them medicines and even give some of the patients a back rub. When I got to talk to her I found out she was from Sioux City, Iowa. Her boyfriend was in the 5th Cavalry. She and I became friends. She gave me a back rub every day with out asking. Jimmy could not get her to rub his back. She told him he was a big tease and a nuisance and she refused to touch him.

Jimmy and I argued a lot in a friendly way. He had a lot of "guts". He did things I would not do. At least two nights a week he left the hospital and took off for Manila. He always waited until after dark. I believe he went to town to get drunk. He might have had a girl there. When he went to town he returned just before day break. As far as I know he never got caught. If he had of been picked up he would have gotten court marshalled. Jimmy was good hearted and thoughtful to the patients in the hospital. He and I did K.P. until they asked us to stop because we made so much noise singing as we worked. One of this guys favorite songs was "That soldier boy of mine". He loved the words to that song. It reminded him of how his girl, back home, treated him. There had to be something wrong with this man. He asked me to sing this song at least three times a day. He actually listened. The friendship with Jimmy made time pass by fast in the hospital.

The doctor in this hospital was as good as the doctors I had in the other two hospitals I was in. He said I was still not ready to return to the front.



This doctor checked out the "jungle rot" on my legs and told me it was going to be cured. He also took X-rays of my back. He told me he could not find any thing bad. He felt it was the strain of carrying that heavy machine gun for so long. He felt I would be O.K. after I had my full rest. He told me he would check out my back again before I left the hospital for good.

After about 20 days in this 227th General Hospital I actually did feel better. When the doctor came around at that time to check on how we were doing I felt I had to tell him I was about ready to return to combat. The doctor smiled and said I was not ready yet. I was surprised but pleased.

Next morning the doctor came in early to see me. He was excited as he told me, "I have made arrangements for you to sail for Hawaii, tomorrow." I could hardly sleep. I had always wanted to go to Hawaii. The doctor sent in an aid next morning to tell me some bad news. The doctor was too embarassed to tell me, himself. It seems one of our American Navy ships was blasted badly in Manila harbor sometime during the night. A large number of sailors got killed and wounded by the raid. The ship that the doctor told me I was going on to Hawaii was still going to Hawaii but it was going to be filled with wounded sailors instead of hospitalized soldiers. The doctor did come in later and tell me the whole story. He apologized about five times in the few minutes I talked to him. I thanked him and told him I will never forget him for what he tried to do for me. He did the next best thing he could do for me. He put me on a cargo plane to Leyte



Island in the Philippines.

Next day was March 30th. A number of us loaded into a big truck. We rode to an airport in or near Manila. This was going to be a very new experience for me. I had never been in an airplane before. I was excited, to say the least. It was a B-46. B-46 planes dropped rations and ammunition for us up in the mountains many times. There was a female nurse on the plane to care for the seriously injured. She was a well dressed and neat looking middle aged woman. She stood by me and powered her nose just before we took off. I told her she was the first gal I had watched do that for a long time. She winked and smiled. The seats were along the side of the plane. We had to be strapped down in our seats. It was a funny sensation to leave the ground. I thought the ride was a little bumpy. At one time, during the ride, it felt like the plane dropped quickly.....something like the first long dip of a roller coaster. The nurse told us not to worry. It was only an "air pocket." It was a relief when we landed at an airstrip on the out skirts of Tacloben. Our regiment ^{had been} ~~was~~ in on the fight in Tacloben. The minute we landed there were a line of ambulances waiting. They looked organized and ready.

The ambulances were driven by black American soldiers. They drove us to the 133 General hospital. What a joint this was. Their beds had mattresses and springs. The floors were wooden. The nurses and doctors were very professional. This place was as good as any hospital in the United states. The doctor who interviewed me was really sharp. He really impressed me with his manner. I was assigned my army hospital gear and assigned a ward. They started to work on me the second I sat down on the edge of the bed. I had a thermometer in my mouth, someone was taking my pulse and they had medicine on a table next to my bed....right now. They were either very efficient or they were eager to get you well fast so they could get you returned sooner to combat.

The nervous intensity and pain in my stomach was leaving me. It seems that someone was constantly sticking a needle in me and checking upon me. There was no doubt they had intentions in getting you well.

At times I thought they were trying to kill me with kindness. All I did was eat, sleep, read, go to movies and rest. The most physical thing I did each day was walk over to the hospital P.X and buy a cup of coco-cola. The second most physical thing I had to do was walk over to the mess hall and eat a fabulous meal, three times daily. If I wanted, I could have my meals brought to me in the ward. My nerves rested. There was no combat sounds to upset them. I really did not realize what combat had done to me until I had it explained to me by the doctor who was about to release me and send me on my way back to combat. I gained back almost all of the weight I had lost....how could I not gain weight the way I was fed. My "jungle rot" disappeared. My back was O.K. This hospital had a good positive atmosphere. The men in the ward, who were patients, all seemed great. The care I was given in the 133rd General Hospital could not have been better. I was about to leave this place. Someone else needed this space more than I.

There was a period when I was hospitalized that I felt uncomfortable. It had nothing to do with the treatment I received by the staff in any of the hospitals I was in. It was a personal thing between another soldier and I in the ward of the hospital on Leyte. A lot of afternoons and early evenings he and I talked. We discussed many topics. I felt we were both honest, sincere and, at times, emotional about our personal convictions. I felt we stayed friends throughout the entire ordeal. This soldier was from the south. He was a black man. He stepped on a mine and lost one leg. He lost this leg while he was serving his country. I had no idea the stress and fear he felt inside. He was trying to relay that message to me. I am afraid, at first, I was not .

listening. I did finally hear what he was saying. We talked about the advantages and disadvantages of being black or being white. We both agreed there were more advantages to being white over being black. He told me something that stayed with me for a long time. He said, "When I left my home in the south to enter the service I was considered a 'second class' citizen. When I return home, minus one leg that I lost while serving my country, I will still be considered a 'second class' citizen."

Each day we talked I realized he was bitter toward our society. I also realized he understood where a part of the problem lay. He had a pet peeve. More than one time he pointed out that there was a lack of commitment on the part of his people toward education. He admitted that those black people who took advantage of educational opportunities that were available appeared to be moving upward in our society. His peeve was that not enough of them were getting involved. He told me when he gets home after this war he is going to college and learn a profession that will allow him to help his race. You could tell that he meant what he said. He had the intelligence to back up his statement. I asked him how he was going to do what he said he wanted to do if he felt he was going to be nothing but a "second class" citizen. He told me, "I'm not going to let anything get in my way. I will do it."

Of course he and I never solved the problem....but.... he did open a door for me because of this relationship. After the war I became a junior high teacher and later a high school teacher. Little did this man realize the impact he left on me. I thought about what we had talked about a lot of times. I taught both black and white children in the "rough" parts of town. I literally "jammed" education down the throats of all students who resisted me. When they tried to tell me, "I can't"----I simply said, "I don't want to hear that...Yes you can." I waited patiently until they did. I was a little hard

on some students. I really tried to treat all students with the same emphasis. Because of my black soldier friend I gave an extra gentle push to any and all black students who resisted learning. Every opportunity I got during the 35 years I was a classroom teacher I told a black student who felt hurt and rejected the story about my good black soldier friend. His influence was felt many a time by potential drop-outs. We were both going to write to one another following the war. One thing led to another. Time zipped by. Neither of us wrote. I often wondered if he kept his word about getting a position in a profession that allowed him to help his people. I would bet he did.

April 12th, 1945 was a sad day, world over. It was the day that President Franklin Delano Roosevelt died. The Filipinos took it hard. Most of them wore black for days after. He had been President throughout the war up to this point. I felt he was a good man. I was impressed with the man who took his place, Harry Truman.

The next thing I knew I was saying good-bye to all of the staff members and patients. I got into another army truck and headed for the beach near Tacloben. I boarded an L.S.T. I thought I was heading back to Luzon and combat. We only moved to some camp on Leyte. The trip was short. The place we landed was called a convalescent hospital. It was located along the beach. A convalescent hospital, I learned, was where you go to get



your stamina back after resting in a hospital for so long. As we approached the headquarters, I could feel there was a lot of activity going on. This was something I needed. I had been anything but physically active for weeks on end. The program explained to me was to my liking. Each day they offered volleyball, softball, and outdoor basketball. I liked them all. All of these sports were played under rules



and regulations that were organized. We could take a swim in the ocean every day. There was a movie each night. We had a Red Cross where we could get free coffee and a cup of coco-cola each day. No one was required to pull guard or do any details around the camp. While I was there I got to see a funny man who was a hollywood star. He is the comic who was teased about having such a big, big mouth. I had seen him in movies years ago. He was Joe E. Brown.

I met a great group of soldiers while at this camp. They were all from the 11th Air born Division. They practically double timed every where they went. They were fun to be around. Some of the combat stories they told were priceless. The best story was about how they missed the island of Corregidor after the wind changed on them. By the time they were picked up in barges the battle they all wanted to be a part of was over. One of these para-troopers hung in a tree by his parachute for four hours while a search party hunted for him. Some Japs walked right under him and did not see him. They wanted

me to seriously consider going back to their outfit with them instead of returning to the First Cavalry. They made the time in that Convalescent hospital fly.

From this Convalescent camp I was taken by jeep, along with three other men, to another camp called a Casual camp. The purpose of these kind of camps were to house men either heading toward the front lines after they had been in the hospital...or... house them until transportation can be found to take them to a hospital. These camps were always located near a port or at least near a bay. At this camp you were issued a cot under a squad tent. They gave you three meals a day and you just sit there until a boat arrives that is heading the direction you are heading. Sometimes the delay is a day. Other times it could be weeks. If you left the camp you were required to sign out and sign in.

On May 12th my transportation arrived. I was given all new combat gear. I boarded a "duck" that took me out to an A.P.A. boat in the bay. This boat was heading to Luzon. I was not alone. There were eight other men with me. I was assigned to guard the mess hall for the whole trip. My quarters were on "A" deck. I did not have to wait in line for chow. All guards ate first. I did nothing on board this ship but eat, sleep, pull guard and over work my pent up imagination worrying and wondering about how combat would effect me after being away for so long. The trip did not last long. It took eight days to get to Manila. After we docked we were put into trucks and taken through Manila.

I stayed one night at another Casual camp. I was issued more combat gear and ammunition. From this camp a truck took us as far as it could. An "alligator" took us 3-4 miles into some mountains. From there we walked the rest of the way.

At this time my outfit, the 7th Cavalry, was located in the lower mountains



in the southern part of Luzon. I do not know where it was exactly. It was good to see all of the men I had spent so much time with in combat. To me, they all looked so worn out and beat. Most of the guys I originally went into the first campaign with were now gone. I had to make many new friends. The first night, would you believe it, it rained hard. What a welcome. Everything seemed to fall into place. I slept well when I finished pulling my guard. The first Jap mortars that lit startled me a little. I soon got

use to it. I felt everything was going to be C.K. I really decided everything was back to normal when Lieutenant Joke passed by my fox hole the second morning and said, "Oh....you back?" My new fox hole pardner snored. He was a very nervous young man. He was no Ed Freeman or Fritz Fastner..that's for sure. However, we did become friends very soon.

They wasted no time breaking me in ,again. My second day back I was sent out on patrol. We no sooner got away from the perimeter and we had to cross a river that was neck high in the middle. I lost my footing and came close to dropping the tri-pod of the machine gun. After we crossed the river, about a half mile down the bank we entered a coconut grove. We just about ran into a Jap ambush. Our point man sensed trouble as we were about to enter the grove

and we held up. I had mentioned this soldier before. His name was White Bear. He was full blooded Indian. He had been point man many times. He claims that he could smell the enemy when they were anywhere near. When he was on the point he never spoke. He simply pointed. Whenever White Bear stopped while on patrol.....everyone down the line stopped. If he stepped over to take cover behind a coconut tree....everyone down the line took cover. When he pointed up in a tree there was a Jap in that tree. When White Bear had a Jap in his M-1 sights that Jap could count on being hit.

On this day White Bear stepped behind a tree and motioned which sniper he was going to take and pointed out snipers to the first four men in the patrol behind him. On a given signal by White Bear they all fired. The results were five dead Japs. This man was not one you wanted fighting against you. Also,



when White Bear got drunk it was best if you did not speak to him. I once saw him pick up a good size man, hold him above his head and toss him part way across a squad tent after he had had a few drinks. He did this because this soldier had slapped White Bears little five foot buddy. This little guy was the only man in our outfit who could talk to White Bear. I did not realize this five foot soldier was White Bears buddy until I heard him speak to ^{white bear} ~~the~~ man, "Now, big man, you sit your butt down and shut up

until Willie says you can talk." I waited for White Bear to tear this little guys arm off and slap him across the face with it. Instead, White Bear sat down, pouted and shut up. It was at this point that I realized you do not cross....I repeat....you do not cross little Willie in any way. I only spoke to White Bear when I had to. If I spoke to Willie it was always in a friendly and complimentary manner. If you recall, White Bear saved me from being crushed to death or from drowning the day we invaded the Admiralty Islands. White Bear was my Hero.

After White Bear saved the day for us, again, (I say, again, only because he had done it numbers of times before) the rest of that day went well until early evening. We met a little resistance late in the afternoon on the patrol. The worse thing that happened to me was the bee hive I walked into about 50 yards from the perimeter. I walked through some brush. The bees did not take kindly to me invading their home. The stings were painful. There was nothing around available to cure bee stings So what is new? Another miserable night in combat.

On the third day back a patrol was sent out. I was not included on this patrol. It was beginning to get dark as they returned. It was dark enough that each member on the patrol was asked to identify himself as they came in. The Sergeant of the patrol said they ran into some Japs about a mile back. One of the men in the patrol got lost someway. They think he got hurt. They looked for him and waited for him to show up as long as they could. It was getting dark so the Sergeant felt they better get back.

After dark the excitement ended. We were ordered into our fox holes for the night. Out of the night came a voice that we all heard. It came from the direction the patrol had returned from earlier. The voice said, "Can anyone hear me?---- I'm hurt--- can someone help me?" One of my close buddies in the

next fox hole named Stagman said, "Denny, is that you?" There was a weak, "Yes, Stagman, it's me." You know Denny, before I can come out to get you I have to make sure. I want you to answer this question. Denny it has to be right. Denny, when our troop softball team needs a good pitcher to go into one of our games to face a tough situation...who do we call on?" With out hesitation Denny said, "Ortega, who else?" That is what Stagman wanted to hear. Denny was a softball nut and backed our team 101% when we played in camp during rest periods between campaigns. Everyone down the line who knew Denny laughed when Denny gave his answer. Stagman yelled at all of the guys in the perimeter to hold their fire. ^{Stag man} He stood up and headed toward the voice that was speaking. We could hear the two talking. Denny said, "I got shot in in the shoulder." Stagman told Denny to hold on tight cause we are going in. Stagman picked Denny up and returned him to the perimeter carrying him piggy-back style. A medic crawled over to Stagman's hole and tended to Denny. I felt what Stagman did was an act that took "guts!" Later, when someone suggested Stagman be turned in for a medal Stagman got a little mad. He said, "Don't be so stupid. That is my buddy you are talking about. He could have died." I got a big kick out of this whole incident because Stagman and I both played on the troop softball team and we knew how much Denny enjoyed watching the game.

After returning from my long stay in the various hospitals I expected the war and combat to go on for ever. Combat ended one month after I joined my outfit in central Luzon, along the east coast. The Japs in this area obviously



had had enough. I feel our Division commander was informed that the "all out" effort was no longer needed. About the middle of June in 1945 it seemed that general combat conditions ceased to exist. Patrols were sent out and when large numbers of the enemy were spotted they proceeded with combat techniques as was done before. We were going to be relieved. For us, combat, on the island of Luzon, was over. We wasted no time getting out of there. We got out of those mountains and did not look back. We arrived at a river some 5-6 miles away where "ducks" were waiting for us. At the end of the river trip we were met with army trucks. We were told that we were heading for a REST CAMP. What beautiful words... REST CAMP.

I had a feeling they were telling us that the country of Japan was nearing the end of the trail. I just knew that if there was going to be an invasion of the Japanese mainline that the First Cavalry was going to be right in there someplace. To make a beachhead in Japan would be suicide. I was hoping for some kind of miracle.

I have no idea where the camp site we arrived at was located. Guessing, I would say it was south and west of where we came out of the mountains. ^{(*) A place near LUCENA,} I felt we were not far from Manila. We were never told where we were. This was probably done for security reasons. When we arrived at this camp site there were tents set up for every camp occasion. I understand this was all done by Filipino labor. After we unpacked and rested a few days we started to improve the camp. Our honorable "Mr. CLEAN", commander, insisted we do things neat and in a military manner. We cleaned up the area to perfection. I did not believe we needed a parade grounds. I found out why later. This place got to be like basic training. The "parade grounds" was where we did close order drills and daily exercises. We had to "sir" all officers. There were a zillion inspections a week. Our clothing was cleaned daily. We fell our for reveille

and retreat. The food we were served went from average to very good. The out door movies were almost recent releases. If you went to the P.X you could actually buy things you really wanted and not wait in a long line. We had one day off a week besides Sunday unless we pulled guard or K.P. There was no place to go. With all of these new changes I honestly thought our commander had "flipped".

This "regular army" routine was really getting to most of us, especially me. One night I went into the small village that was near by with two men from the kitchen for some supplies. The two guys I went with bought me some drinks and I came back to camp plowed. I was sitting in the front row of the out door movie where the movie screen was huge and I could not make out who the well known actors in the film ^{were.} Later, I went over to lay down in my bunk. The bunk kept spinning around and around. I threw up a few times. This getting drunk by a man who was recovering from a mean, mean dose of dysentary was not a brilliant move to make. The man I went to town with told me I wanted to drink to each man I was with in combat that died. I only made it to four before I could drink no more. Next morning when I fell out for reveille I was a mess. Sergeant Claussen told Fritz to get me out of there before Joke saw me. This whole thing turned out to be a good lesson to me. I was feeling very sorry for myself when I went into town. It was a selfish, foolish thing for me to do. I never did that again.

We started a regular army training program that was meant to get us in good physical shape. Every morning we were wakened at 4:00 A.M. We did at least a 5 mile march which ended in doing double time. We attended gas mask classes. We had training films each day. We did close order drills and calisthenics no less than twice a day. This whole thing was getting serious. The entire regiment was loaded up into trucks and hauled to a beach somewhere in Luzon. We



We loaded into anchored A.P.A. ships. For ten days we made practice landings. We did the exact thing each day. Each day we loaded from the ships to the barges. We made the landing and went through three dry run objective procedures which took us 3-4 miles inland. We returned to the beach. Loaded back into the barge. We return to the ships in the bay, climbed up the rope ladders to the ship and return to our quarters. We knew this chore in our sleep. It was ten crowded and boring days. We had to make up things to do so we could break up the boredom. They had a movie each night that we watched in shifts. That was it.

A number of us did a foolish thing while trying to pass the time. After supper one night we decided to take a swim. We dropped a rope down the side of the ship, took off our cloths and dove off the side of the ship into the water. We would swim around a little and climb up the roap and climb back on board. This all stopped when the ship Captain came out a cabin door in time to see one soldier dive over board. We had no idea why he was so up set. We had been doing this activity for about an hour. All of us were standing on deck in the nude. He glared at us. He looked at the guys swimming below. He was almost speechless. I thought he was going to have a heart attack. He composed himself long enough to tell the men swimming in the water to get up on deck...NOW! When he got all of us together he wanted us to check and see if anyone was missing. No one was missing. In a cool, calm voice he said, "How long have you men been diving over board and swimming like this?" We figured about an hour. He said, " All of you live a charmed life. You are

very lucky...very lucky... this entire harbor is infested....I mean crowded with sharks." Now that was scary. I dove over the side of that ship no less than five times myself. I was in the water close to half an hour, at least. Needless to say. we removed this activity from our recreational fun time "What shall we do....to break up the boredom...agenda."

We were all sure that one day soon this ship we were now on was going to head for Japan. The ship had a radio we could all listen to. The last few nights the news sounded encouraging. On the final day of our dry-run practice landings we were briefed on our three objectives again. The first objective was a road about two miles inland. We were to take this road and hold it until reinforcements arrived. When they arrived we were to move on to the second objective which was a town. The third objective was a pretend air strip. On this day when we got to our first objective, which was the road, we noticed an American jeep coming down the road. This was not part of the invasion plan. We thought maybe something had changed when we realized the man standing up in the jeep

was a general. The general motioned for all of us to gather around the jeep. He said, "What is the most important thing you would want to hear if you had a choice?" One soldier said, "Sir, if you are speaking to me, I would want to hear that the war was over and Japan has surrendered."



The general smiled and said, "That is what just happened." There was a moment of pure silence. One G.I. said, "Did I hear you right.....You ain't putting us on, are you?" The general said, "No....It's over." Every one went slightly crazy for a few moments. We did not return to the ship. We met trucks at the beach and returned to camp. I was so excited I could not sleep that night. I must have thanked god a hundred times on the trip back to camp.

We stayed at this camp in Luzon waiting for the United States and Japan to work out the surrender plans. We were going to Japan. Thank god it was as an occupation soldier and not as a combat soldier. I was called into the Captain's tent. The Captain and I had been together over two years. I felt he was a good commander. He was fair and he would listen if you had a complaint. A few times I did not agree with him but I always followed orders the best I could. On this day he said something I was not prepared to hear. He said, "Foss, you are now a Corporal." He was dead serious. I asked him if he was trying to be funny. I said, "Sir you know I could not give orders. No one would take me seriously. I take orders. I do not give orders. Captain, you have the wrong man. You probably feel you owe me some kind of promotion because of what we have been through together. You owe me nothing. I'm sorry sir, I would never be a non-com for any reason." When I said this the veins stuck out in his neck and his face almost busted. "I can have you court-martialed, you know." I told him "You can do as you please. I am not refusing your order out of disrespect. I am just not the right man."

The day arrived when we loaded into A.P.A. ships in a harbor near Manila. This was the trip we were all looking for. Japan had accepted the surrender terms. It was sometime around August 14th, 1945.

CHAPTER IX

JAPAN

The convoy of ships going to Japan seemed very small in numbers. I do not recall seeing more than 3-4 troop ships and possibly 4-5 ^{small} Navy escort ships. I, for one, was a little leery. I reasoned we would be leaving this bay of Manila with a large impressive army and a large number of navy ships of all sizes and shapes. Our leaders had other plans. My buddies and I got to wondering if we were being used as some kind of guinea pigs to test the sincerity of Japans agreement to surrender. The trip itself appeared to be like those we had taken when we were making an invasion. It was different in that it could possibly be the final trip of this sort we would all have to take.

⊗ WE Left August 25th

And it was a small
convoy going to Japan same
old thing, sleep in holes, eat
good chow, & go crazy doing
nothing all day, we were
told that we were going
into Yokohama, we saw
tans, shoes shined, guns
loaded. We anchored in
Tokyo Bay & got a look
at Japan, & we dident

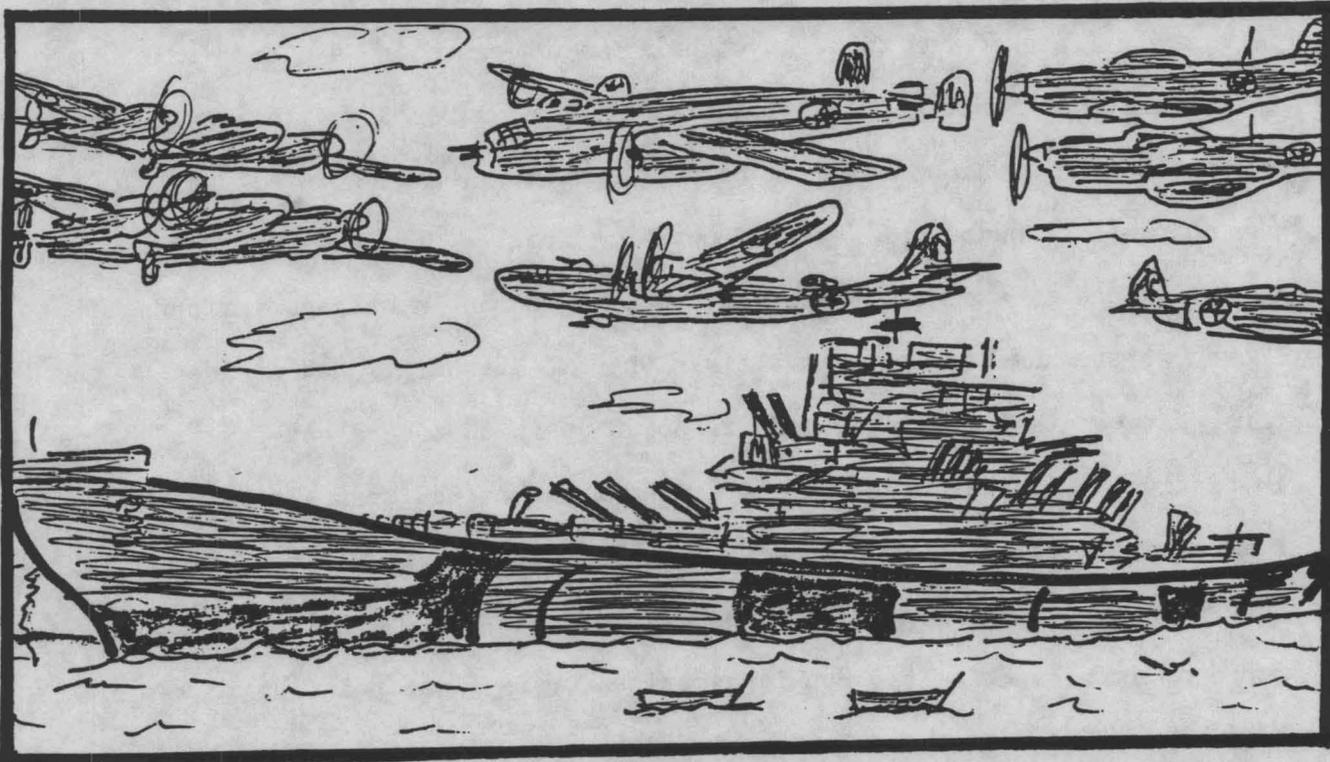
The quarters were crowded. The food was average. We still did all of the same routine duties and chores we did on every other ship we had been on. There was a lot of talk and many rumors going around. Most of the rumors were about going home to the 'states'. It was even fun just to say "home" and "states". We talked a lot among ourselves about how the Japanese civilians were going to react when we stepped upon their homeland. We were all promised that the leader of Japan would assure us safety. One false move by any of us could have ended it for all of us. We all had to believe that would not happen.

We were not given a lot of detailed information about what to do and how to act after we disembarked. We were told to try and ignore the civilians and especially the Japanese servicemen. We were told that we would be O.K. if we kept from making "eye to eye" contact. We were reminded a number of times that they had a strength of millions. We had the strength of one Division. We were also reminded that an uprising would result in a disaster not only for us as individuals but for our country as well. The final word we got was "Please.....use good old common sense." We had to carry our personal weapons with the barrel pointing down. We were never to take any quick move with a gun in our hand at any time. All of these instructions were understandable...but... after you have faced a Jap combat soldier for over two years and have witnessed what they are capable of doing and after you have sit through a few suicide attacks performed by them , one really does wonder. I watched as a Jap soldier, for no reason I could see, release the detonator of a hand grenade, tap the detonator on his helmet, lift the helmet, place the grenade on his head and place the helmet on top of the grenade. ~~Before~~ the top of his head blew off....he smiled. That is not a human act. What is to say that the civilians will not do the same thing. We could get blamed for it. I did not

trust the Japanese civilian to do as their leader had instructed them to do. After I once got on land and saw how they reacted to us I felt a little better. Heading into the beach was similar to making an invasion. You had no idea what was going to happen. I was tense.

Shortly after day light on the day we arrived in the bay^{Sept 2nd, 1945} I saw something that really impressed me. Over head was an air force you would not believe. I had no idea we had an air force this large in the Pacific. I was reminded that what I was looking at was only part of the total American air force. I am sure they flew in formations over the bay for at least two hours. It was quit a sight. Our fleet was not quit as noticeable. There were still mines that had yet to be cleared out of the bay. Seeing all of that air power had to impress the Japanese of that city. My confidence went up 200%.

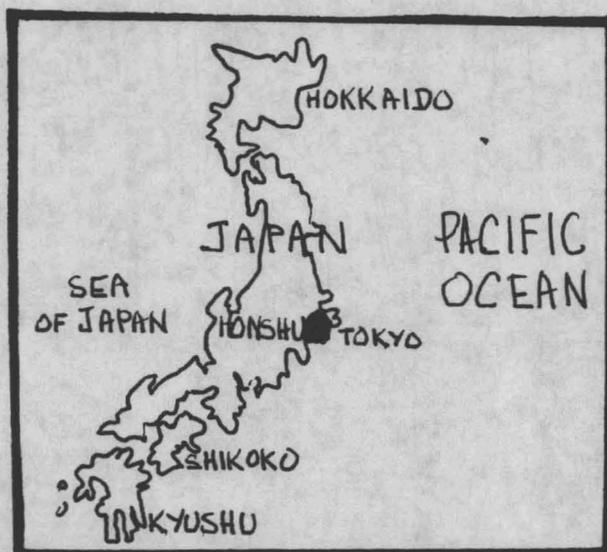
We had been ordered earlier in the morning on board ship to shine our shoes. We oiled our helmets to make them gleam. Our uniform was clean sun-tans. Our personal weapons were spotless. It was a special day. The only thing



missing was a boat load of guys who were in hospitals and cemeteries that deserved to share this moment. The heavy water-cooled machine gun was left behind on this day. It really felt strange climbing over the side of a ship, down the rope ladder into a waiting barge without being loaded down with all the weight we usually carried in this situation. No one was firing ack-ack guns. No planes were strafing. No battleships firing away. What really felt funny was doing all of this while dressed in sun-tans (clean sun-tans), polished shoes and shining helmets. Everything seemed unreal.

There had to be other APA ships in the bay but the only ones I was aware of were those disembarking First Cavalry soldiers. When we reached the dock it seemed we were the only division of soldiers in the landing. If this is true it was an honor to me. I was the third man off of the first barge.

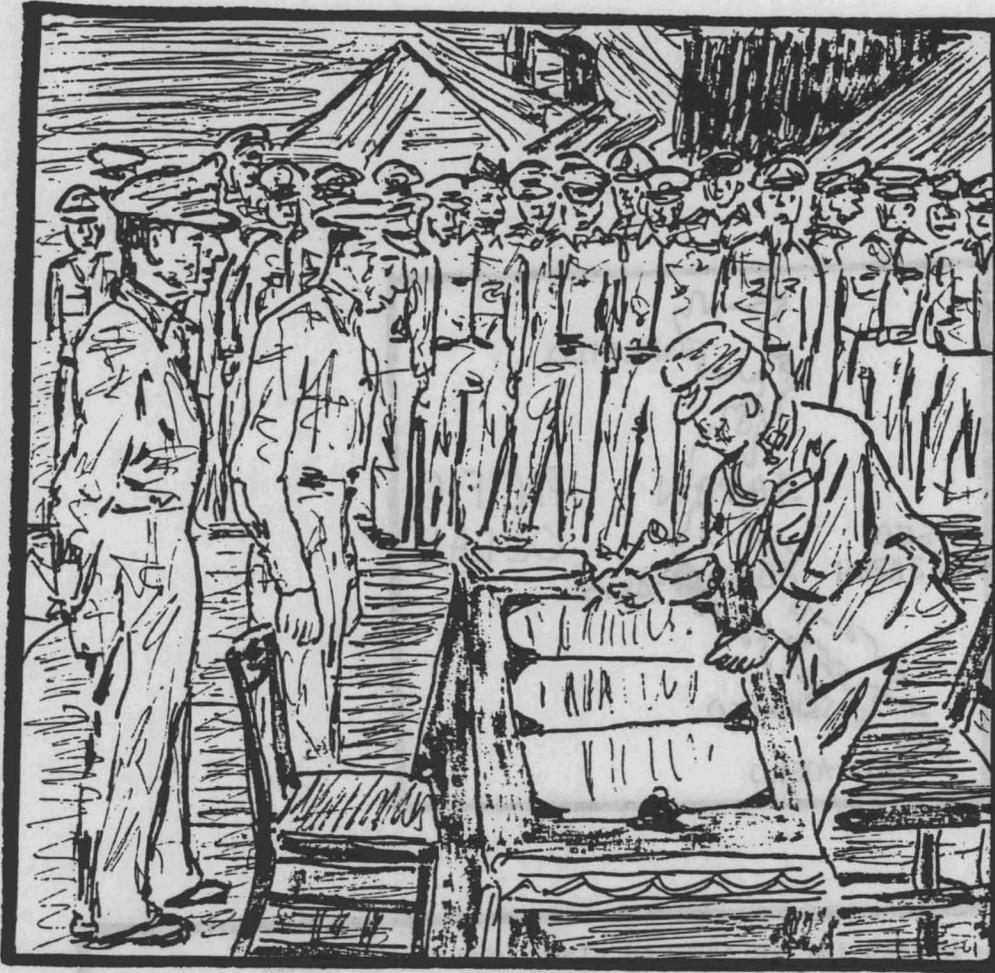
We passed a few partially sunk Jap ships and a number of Jap ships that were afloat that were being repaired by Japanese ship workers. As we passed them they gleared at us. If looks could kill we would all have been dead by the time we reached the dock. About half way to the dock we passed this big battle ship. At first all I noticed was a large number of sailors on deck dressed in their white uniforms. Below the sailors, ^{who were} hanging on all parts of the ship, ~~were~~ ^{stood} a number of Navy officers. In front of the officers was a table. On one side of the table was a couple of men in strange uniforms. I looked at the name of the ship. It was the USS Missouri. I had no idea at the time what was taking place but I did point up at that deck and say to no one in particular, in our barge, "Look at the brass on tha boat. There must be something big going on up there." Later, I discovered it was the signing of the surrender terms. None of the men on board the barge even looked up. They were not impressed. The top ranking American brass I was pointing to was General Douglas MacArthur. The ranking Japanese officer was General Yoshira



We were headed for ARIAKE WAN along with three other fighting units near the tip of KYUSHU ISLAND in JAPAN if an invasion was going to be made by American forces. We were to proceed north up the island of KYUSHU, cross into the island of SHIKOKO and into the west part of the island of HONSHU.

September 2nd, 1945 changed all of that. The formal surrender by the Japanese that took place aboard the USS Missouri in Yokohama, Japan turned us into occupation soldiers in place of combat soldiers. General Yamashita and Vice Admiral Okochi signed the treaty.

We landed in the harbor that day. The barge I was on, as we headed for the beach, passed right by the USS Missouri while the treaty signing was taking place. My squad was in the first barge that landed. It was an exciting day...to say the least



Umeza. The day was September 2nd, 1945. Forty years later I had the honor of boarding this same ship as it lay docked in a port in the state of Washington. There was a compartment open to the public. On display was a num-

ber of photos taken the day of the surrender. All pictures that were taken were shot from high points on the ship. Two of the ^{WWII} photos showed barges passing in the background. On one of the barges a soldier in the barge was pointing toward "A" deck. I cannot say for sure but I honestly believe that if that photo was enlarged, it would show that the soldier, pointing toward "A" deck, was me. That was a proud day for all of us. It was a turning point in the history of our country. I felt good about being a part of it.

When we got off of the barge we walked up one of the main streets in the city. The first look was depressing. The entire area, as far as you could see, had been destroyed. Every building of any size had been flattened to the ground. All that seemed to be standing were crude looking lean-to shacks. We

were haulted at a warehouse on the main drag. As we were marching up the street I tried not to look at the civilians lining the walks. It was almost impossible not to sneak a peek. Only a few glared. Most of them ignored us. Whenever we passed one of their religious temples I noticed the soldier who was on guard did an about face. He bowed his head. This appeared a matter of pride to me. At the warehouse where we took our break I looked around at people on the streets. It seemed to me that the majority of the civilians were taking things in stride, On occasion someone even gave a slight wave.No one made any scene. I have no idea what we would have done if they had. I am thankful nothing happened. One odd thing did happen. As least I felt it was strange. Across the street from this ware house was an old Japanese couple. They were standing on the corner watching us. I looked over at them. They were tending a pot. It appeared they were cooking something, The second time I looked their direction the old man walked part way across the street. pointed at me, than to the pot and motioned for me and the guy I was talking to to come over.We were told not to accept anything . I had to shake my head...no.The old man smiled,bowed and returned to where the steaming pot was located. I took what the old man did as a friendly gesture to come and join he and the old lady.

As we sat eating lunch(K-rations) the new First Sergeant approached me. *It was*
 Sept 2nd, 1945.

He was not new to me. He was new to his job. It was Staff Sergeant Claussen. He had just been promoted. He and I had been through this combat bit from the first day. He was an excellent non-com. He took me by the arm and said, " Let's go someplace and talk." As we got off alone he looked at me seriously and said, " How come you turned down a promotion to be Corporal? You are one of the few men left alive in this out fit. You have no bad marks against you. You almost lost your mind from battle fatigue. You were close to dying from



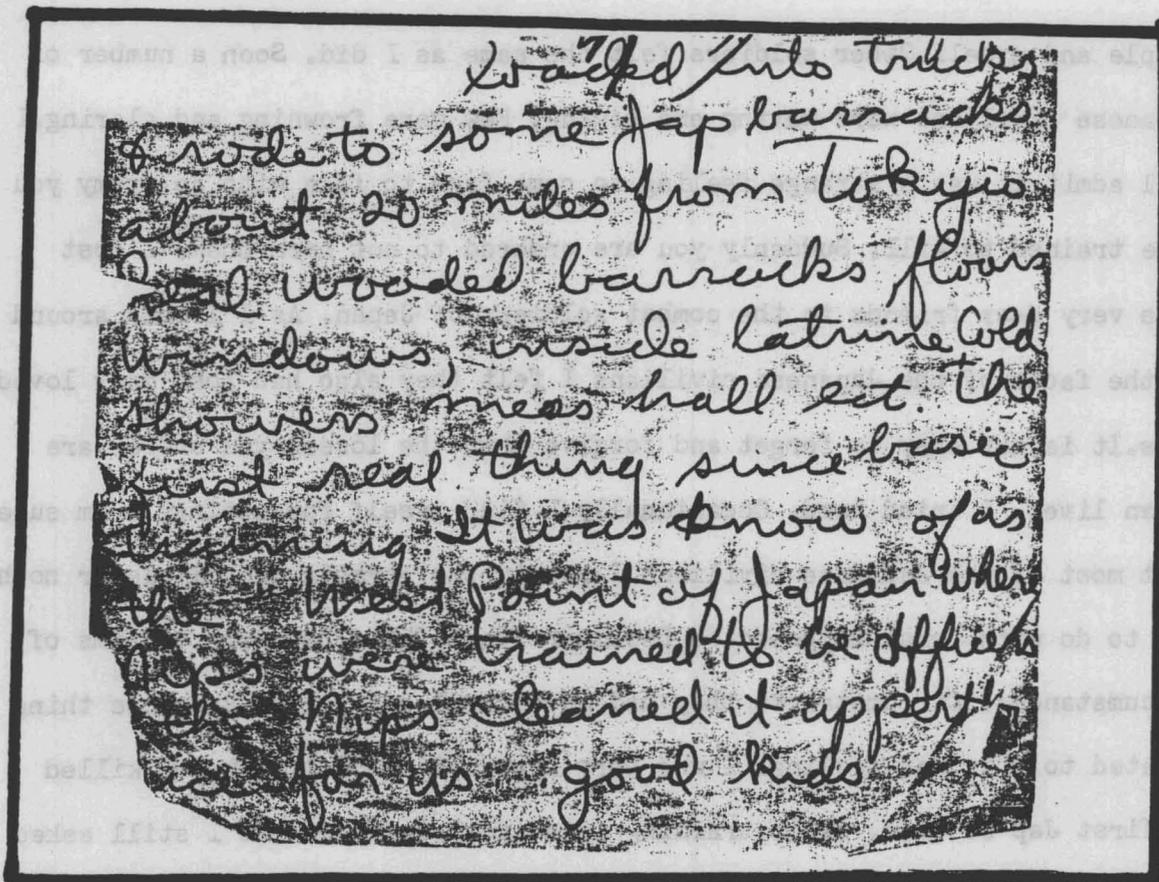
that damn dysentery. Your help to new replacements did not go unnoticed. What's with you anyway? I heard you did not want to be a non-com because you were afraid you might have to order someone to do something that could cause injury or even death. Is that right? How many times in the pass two years have I ordered you to do dangerous tasks. I need people around I can trust and depend upon. If I cannot

trust and depend upon you, after all we went through together, I can't trust anyone." He did not let me get a word in edgewise. When I did speak I told him, "I had no idea you cared one way or another. I am not in this army to make a career of it. It is no big deal. Give the stripes to someone who is planning to stay in." Claussen said, "The Captain does not want anyone else." After I got done talking to the Sergeant I was a Corporal. I really did not want to be a Corporal. I did not feel like I was a Corporal. The two strips I would soon sew on my shirt sleeves were going to classify me as a Corporal. How could I turn down a man I thought as much of as I did Claussen,

We spent the night at this warehouse. Our Regiment was up bright and early the second morning of occupation duty. I looked across the street to see the old couple wave and bow as our truck pulled away. I think the serious officer on board our ship who insisted we not make "eye to eye" contact with the enemy would have "flipped" had he witnessed what took place between the old

couple and myself. Other soldiers felt the same as I did. Soon a number of Japanese civilians were waving and bowing. Few were frowning and glaring. I will admit it was a strange feeling to come face to face with an enemy you were trained to kill. Suddenly you are ordered to not harm them. I lost some very dear friends to the combat soldiers of Japan. As I looked around in the faces of the Japanese civilians I felt they also had lost many loved ones. It is not easy to forget and forgive when the losses you suffer are human lives. I tried hard. Occasionally I find myself forgetting. I am sure that most of the Japanese civilians I saw in the streets had little or nothing to do with what happened on December 7th, 1941. They were victims of circumstances. Circumstances they had no control over. I do know one thing related to this war feeling. I was very upset with myself after I killed my first Jap soldier. Basic training tried to prepare me but I still asked God to forgive me for taking a human life. At that time I was convinced that I was to kill or be killed and I was doing the right thing if I did the killing. I was very concerned for my country. If the United States had not defeated Japan and their Imperialistic system of government we would lose our democracy. I strongly believe in the basic principles of democracy. I would rather not live than live under the Imperialistic form of government. The feeling I have is not based so much on what I have read about Imperialism as it is because of what I witnessed and heard from the natives of the lands I fought in. I will be one of the first to admit that our government had many faults. I will also say there is not another system in the world that can even touch it for what it has to offer to those who trust it and desire to live under the constitutional guide lines it provides.

The trucks took us about 20 miles through a lot of rubble and destruction. We stopped at some military constructed barracks that sat on the outskirts of



of town. As we got closer it resembled our own barracks....from the outside, anyway. The interior was a lot different. The sleeping quarters for their non-coms and enlisted men were all on the second floor. A hallway ran the length of the barracks both upstairs and down. The officers quarters, the mess hall, the bath-pool and some kind of all-purpose room were all down stairs. I understood the bath-pool to be a community project.

It was interesting for me to see how the private soldier lived. They slept on the floor. Some of them had a mattress which was a cotton bag filled with straw. There was one light in the center of the room. There was no place to hang clothing. The walls were bare. I only got to check out the second floor because that is where I was assigned. Downstairs, where our officers stayed, it might have been a different story.

After we stayed at these barracks we discovered this place was a special training site of the Japanese. An interpreter relayed to us that this camp was

built for the use of the Japanese Imperial Marines. These soldiers were the most highly honored soldier in Japan. We fought against them in the Admiralty Islands. They were all six feet tall, or taller. The interpreter also told us many of Japan's top notch officers were trained here. It did appear to be clean and well equipped. The last soldiers to use it sure left it in good order for us.

Most of us slept on the floor. A few guys had straw mattresses that had been left there. The Japs had cut off the electricity. We had our old trusty generator that had been with us since the New Guinea days....so we had lights.

Two unexpected things happened the first night and second day we stayed at this place. After dark we heard shots in the building. They rick-a-shayed on the second floor. They came from outside of the building. This did make it a little challenging and even a bit nerve-racking to walk in the halls and go to the toilet. The shooting happened twice during the night. We never did find the source.

The following morning we found ourselves eating breakfast outdoors in back of the barracks. Seems our cooks could not figure out how to use the Japanese stoves and ovens. As we were sitting there eating a Jap man, dressed





only in a cloth that was wrapped around his waist, came charging around the corner of the barracks swinging a large sharp piece of metal. He was jabbering and yelling loudly. He startled everyone. He was swinging this metal as he came upon one of our riflemen who was eating. The rifleman calmly set his mess kit on the ground, removed his M-1 from his shoulder, stepped back, waited until the right second and non-chalantly cold-cocked the Jap on the jaw with the butt of his rifle. The blow from the rifleman's M-1 knocked the Jap goofy. It did not knock him out. The Jap regained his senses and charged a second soldier who did the same thing. A crowd gathered. The Jap was staggering around. He was still swinging his metal. One of our officers came over as the Jap was floored for the third time. The officer pulled out his 45, motioned everyone to back away, held the gun to the head of the Jap and pulled the trigger. No one had any idea why this incident even happened. There were not supposed to be any Japs around the barracks at all. He must have been the one who fired the shots the night before, also. He must not have been told the war was over. It could be he wanted to die. I think this Jap was

buried that morning.

While we did not spend a lot of time at this site we did add things to the barracks that we wanted and we got rid of things that were Japanese. We got into a rotation for K.P. and guard duty. We were given a lot of time to rest. We did not have equipment to play softball or we would have. We did do close order drill each day. There were many rumors around that General Mac Arthur was going to give an important speech at the American Embassy in Tokyo. There was also talk that he wanted to be escorted to that speech by a platoon of G.I.s from a Regiment in the First Cavalry. We were all hoping that platoon would not be us. This talk we heard turned into action. The General was going to give a speech. He was looking for a platoon to escort him. Rules were set. Regiment officers were fired up. They all wanted the platoon that was to be selected to come from their own troops in their own Regiment. The pressure was on. The rules were set up as to how one platoon in the First Cavalry was going to be selected. Each troop entered one platoon to compete in a close order drill contest. We were chosen from "H" troop. I was not worried because I was sure we were about as bad at close order drill as a platoon could be. The officers who judged picked us. I could not believe we were the best in the Regiment. I was still not worried. We could never beat the platoons selected in each of the other Regiments of our Division. We did. We all decided that the other platoons in all of the other Regiments sure did a sick job of doing close order drill. There was no way we should have been picked to be this escort but we were. **The date was September 10, 1945*

The speech he made at the American Embassy turned out to be world famous. I read it in a school history book years later. It was a "peace" speech. This escort was called an "honor guard". It was spit and polish....all the way. We did not march into the embassy as we first suspected...we entered in army



trucks that were newly painted. We were given exact instructions as to how we would dress and how we must act for the entire ordeal. The convoy of some three or four trucks first drove to the General's quarters, picked him up in his five star jeep and we headed to the embassy. As we pulled into the grounds of the embassy we were called to attention into a sitting position. Imagine sitting at attention.

The American Embassy surroundings were beautifully decorated with flowers and shrubs. As we entered the circle drive I remember saying to no one in particular, "How come this place was not blasted to bits by our air force?" The building and grounds were undamaged. When the truck stopped we were given an, "at ease" command. We got off of the truck and was quickly given

spots for guard duty. I was assigned a place near a doorway that led up some steps to a terrace and platform from which the General was going to make his speech. General Mac Arthur and his staff passed by me going toward the platform. I saluted each of them. They each returned the salute.

From the spot I was assigned the vision was poor to see the General give the speech. I had no problem hearing him. The speech was short and to the point. This speech was a top news item of the day all over the world. The number of news media people from every country in the world is what told me it had to be important. There were correspondents from over 60 countries, including Communists Russia and China. We were told by our commander that as long as none of the news media people bothered or interfered with the proceeding, we were not to bother them. They were all very cooperative. We had no problems.

While General Mac Arthur was giving his speech all of us on guard were given an, "at ease" order. This allowed us to relax. We could light up smokes. We still had to be on the alert and we could not leave our post but we did not have to continue standing at attention. We almost got caught because of



this order. The speech had ended. I did not expect the General and his staff to return so soon. I looked up the stairs behind me in time to see feet coming down the stairs. I got nervous and forgot to yell, "attention", like I was supposed to do, I did manage to yell, "Jiggers". At this command all of the guards standing, "at ease",



snapped to attention as they flipped their cigarettes aside. As the first member of General Mac Arthurs staff stepped our the door we were all standing at attention. I believe I hear a slight sigh of relief from my commander who was standing close by but was not paying attention to what was taking place, either. We all gave the General another salute along with his staff. Our Regimental commander gave General Mac Arthur a hand salute. I was surprised to see the hand salute Mac Arthur gave back. I would say he missed his forehead by 10-12 inches. It was not a "snap" salute at all. It was nothing at all like we had been taught to do. I had failed to pay attention to the salute he gave me and the others because he was not directly in front of me. I was told later, after I commended on how the General saluted, that the reason he did salute so poorly was because he had a pain in his elbow similar to "painter's elbow" as a result of having to salute so much. He was no spring chicken at that time. As he saluted my Regimental commander he was standing directly in front of me. He said, "This is the happiest day of my life."

After the General finished speaking to our commander he returned to his jeep. He was greeted by a large number of news people. They all started asking him questions at the same time. This took time so we were relieved from

our guard posts and permitted to mingle with the news media. There were a number of news paper reporters from cities in the United States. There did not appear to be one from any city in Iowa. I was not personally interviewed as was a few of my close buddies who lived in Kansas City and Minneapolis. The one from Kansas City was chosen to raise the flag over the embassy before the speech was given by the General. Our flag had been removed and burned before we arrived in Japan. The news man from Kansas City took a picture of my friend standing near the flag before he raised it. My buddies mom sent him the picture and complete story, later. It made the front page.

Although I was not interviewed and written up in the Des Moines paper, I did accidently end up in the "news". When General Mac Arthur and his staff passed by me on the way to give his speech and when he returned pass me after he gave the speech he was on the "news camera", I was standing at the doorway at attention, in the background. When he talked to my commanding officer he was standing three feet away from me. Again, I was in the background. I was not aware at that time that a camera was taking pictures. I was standing at attention and I had a job to do. I did not realize I was in the "news reels" until I got a letter from mom and she told me. She said, "I know where you are...you are in Toyko. I saw you in the 'news' at the theater. We had been so busy and everything was hush-hush, I could not write her and tell her where I was. She was very proud of me. Actually, she said nothing about the great accomplishments of General Mac Arthur. As a matter of fact, according to her Mac Arthur was the one standing in the background. Mom's are like that.

The end of this story about being a part of this honor guard that escorted General Mac Arthur into Toyko in 1945 goes like this. When I became a teacher the subject I taught was Social Studies. I taught on an elementary and on a

secondary level. This all came back to haunt me. One day, during my planning period, I was walking down the hall toward the office. I hear a familiar voice speaking from one of the classrooms. It was a voice on a film some teacher was showing. in a ninth grade world history class. They were studying Japan. The teacher of the class was a good friend named David Miller. I walked over to his open door, stuck my head in and excused myself. I asked Mr. Miller if he would mind stopping the film. He did as I asked. I said to him, "Would you please back the film up until I tell you to begin again." Again, he did as I asked. He ran the film until I told him to stop it. When he stopped the film it showed General Mac Arthur. In the background was a soldier dressed in a WW II uniform. A student in the front of the room looked at me in the doorway, took a quick look at the screen and said, "Mr. Foss, is that soldier standing behind General Mac Arthur you....when you were young?" It was me. It was that news reel my mom had seen in the movie house many years earlier.

The students in the class and Mr. Miller almost "flipped" Mr Miller showed it over and over that day. I am sure the students were surprised. I tried to get that news clip every since I saw it. I was not able to do so. I wanted my children and grandchildren to see it. It had a special meaning to me. The rest of my planning period was shot that day. I spent the rest of Mr. Millers class time answering questions about that historic day. I didn't mind at all.

After the speech was over that day we escorted General Mac Arthur back to his quarters. I thought sure we would go back to camp. I was wrong. The new Corporal....Corporal Foss was the first non-com to lead a squad that pulled guard at this Embassy following the end of the war. My squad and I stayed. the rest of the guys returned to camp. We pulled guard three days. This is



something I am glad I only had to do this one time. Pulling guard was more formal than what we did when we escorted Mac Arthur into the embassy. When we marched....we marched in cadence. No one was to be out of step. You were not allowed to say a word once you were posted on guard. No one was permitted pass you without complete identification. The squad I was assigned did great. I screwed up. I was stopped one of those three days while changing guard. An unknown General driving by in a jeep, he was a Brigador General, called me over to his jeep and proceeded to chew me out for some 10 embarrassing minutes while my my squad stood at attention. It seems I had the strap on my helmet unbuckled. He wanted to know who the hell I thought I was that I could walk around looking like this.....and a Corporal at that.I stood at attention and said nothing but what he wanted to hear. I am sure he meant well. As he left I gave him a snappy salute. Under my breath I told him what a jerk I thought he was. I wonder what he would have thought of me and how I was dressed and how I smelled a few months ago in combat. If he was offended by what he saw

this day....he would have had a heart attack back then.

After this guard ordeal we returned to camp. Things slowed down a lot. The war was over. We did not have our hearts into it. We were not regular army. We just seemed to be bidding our time. We faked everything but guard duty. The reason we did a good job at guard duty was because we still had doubts about any Japs that were around. We all wanted to live so we could get home. Many new recruits were arriving daily. Many of them had only been in the service a short time. Every once in awhile one of them pulled a dumb stunt..... not intentional. The classic one came one night during personal gun inspection just before we march off to our assigned posts.

Most of the enlisted men on guard carry rifles and before you break ranks to leave for your post each gun is inspected by the officer of the day. When the gun is inspected at this time no one is to have a shell in the chamber of their gun for any reason at all. Your gun is inspected after the officer of the day moves smartly in front of you, slaps your gun from you after you have presented him the weapon. Before the officer does snap the gun from you you look down and in one move push back the bolt of your rifle, glance down to see that a cartridge is not moved into the barrel of your gun ready to be discharged. You return to the position of attention. This is just a routine move. A soldier always inspects his own gun before the guards fall in ranks. The officer of the day is suppose to check out your rifle to make sure it is in top shape to be fired. He not only looks in the chamber. He looks down the barrel and he even pulls the trigger. You do not----I repeat---you do not place a clip of shells in your gun to be fired until after the inspection has ended and you have reached your post. In the "states" we never used live ammunition.

If an officer of the day is day-dreaming he is likely to get the shock of



his life. This day...that is what happened. The officer of the day inspected the gun of this brand new, very nervous recruit, pulled the trigger, after making the inspection and the gun went off. When that gun fired you could hear a pin drop. The eyes of the officer of the day almost popped out of his head. The new recruit was speechless. His face turned white. The face of the officer of the day turned red. Fortunately, no one got hurt. However, the new soldier did get court-marshalled. Because no one was hurt he was only confined to his quarters for an indefinite period of time. As far as I know nothing happened to the officer. I am sure that officer was chewed out by his superiors. I would like to say that this stunt, pulled off by the officer of the day, was done by my rival, Lieutenant Joke. It really sounds like something he might do. It was not him.

We were moved out of these barracks and moved to the opposite end of the city of Tokyo. Again, as we passed through the city I felt pity for those who had died and those who still lived there. There was no way I could describe

what I witnessed other than... it was mass destruction. The Tokyo I got to see in person was nothing at all what I saw in my classroom history books.

Our new camp site was an old abandoned commercial air strip. We were to stay in squad tents. At this time of the year it was beginning to get cold. At night we like to froze. For over two years we had been in sweltering heat. Shortly after we arrived at this new site we were assigned guard duty in the city of Tokyo. Our division shared this duty. It was more M.P. duty than guard duty. We traveled by fours in a jeep. We were on duty four hours at a time and off duty eight hours until we had completed a 24 hour period. We had few problems. We worked with the Tokyo police. We used a bit of sign language, drawing pictures in the dirt and a whole lot of pointing. I did learn where you could get all of the Saki you wanted at a very cheap price. The police showed us where all of the houses of prostitution were located. I think that is all the police felt we were interested in. Tokyo was a very large city. We patrolled but a small part of it. There was really not much to see. Everything of importance was destroyed.



We did all of the routine jobs expected of us. This included K.P., guard duty and taking turns doing chores to clean up the camp. We did manage to get in a little touch football. You could get an eight hour pass into town if you wanted. They did not allow you in town alone. Most of the days were boring, boring, boring. One day when I was on a digging detail, which was something I hated with a passion, I was approached by a real tiny, old Japanese lady. She had to be at least 90 years old. She was dressed in the Japanese traditional attire. She really did not approach me the first day I saw her. She stood off to one side and "eyed me". For some reason I felt she was picking me out of the group of G.I.s who were digging. The second day I looked up from what I was doing I noticed her staring at me. The third day she stepped up to me, touched my arm and motioned for me to follow her. The other guys I was working with had taken a break at the time. I followed her off to one side. She could not speak English. I could not speak Japanese. From the gestures she made it was obvious she was asking for food. I could see in her eyes and her frail little skinny body that she was starving. I really wanted to help her.

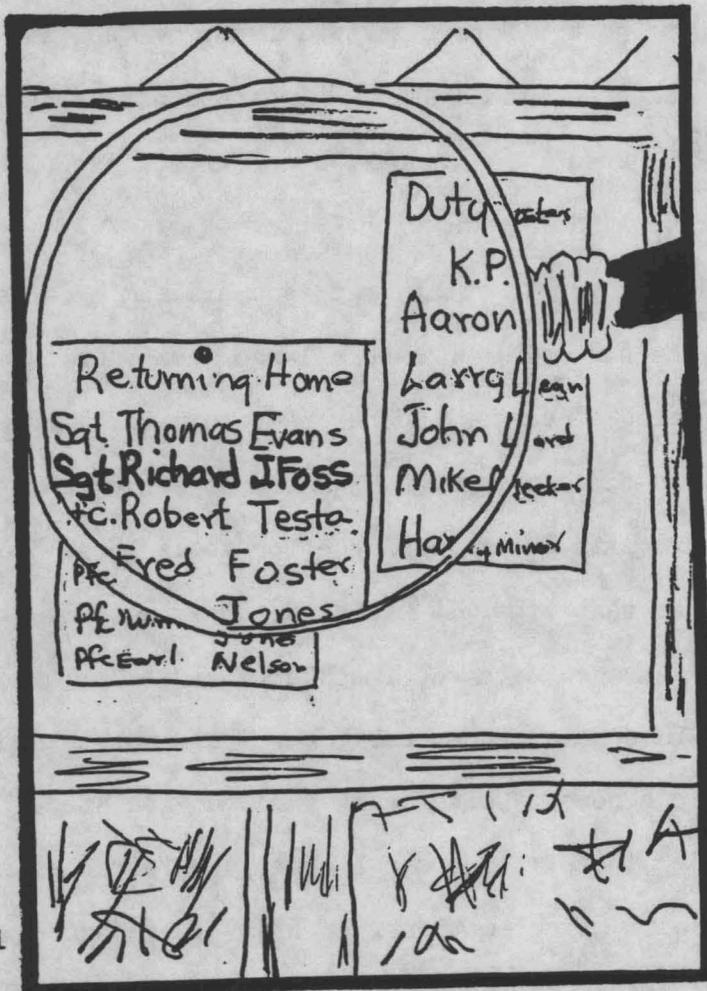


At that time I had no idea how I was going to help that old woman. We were told a million times not to ask for food to give to civilians. I did not give her any hope. She left. In the meantime I made plans to help this lady. I had to do it in a legal way or I was going to be in trouble. The plan was not great, mind you, but it would help her some. I knew no one cared for the hard tasteless "dog biscuit" from the C-rations we ate, on occasion. There were a pile of them in a box that G.I.s threw them into that were soon going to be dumped into the garbage. I took the box of biscuits in the mess hall before they threw them out. I had a partly filled can of peanut butter in my barracks bag that I had talked the cooks out of back in Luzon. I made use of the peanut butter from this can on those C-ration biscuits at night when I got hungry. When that old lady showed up on the fourth day I had a package for her. It consisted of some stale C-ration biscuits that nobody wanted and a half a can of peanut butter that had been laying around for at least two months that I am sure no one would miss. The next day she returned again. I went to my tent during a break in my work and brought her the package. I used every motion with my hands that I could that would tell her I could not give to her anymore food but she was welcome to what I did give her. As she walked away she had tears in her eyes. I was hoping she would not return. She did return the next day. This time she did not want anything from me. The old lady wanted to give me something. Again, during a break she pulled me off to the side, alone. From under her sleeve she pulled out a beautiful, ancient antique appearing object. It was handed to me... handle first. The object was a hari-kari knife. She wanted me to have it. Both sides were covered with what looked like real diamonds. There were two pearls on each side of the handle. The ridge of the handle, that divides the handle into two parts, looked like it was gold. I could have been imagining what I was looking at. I am not

sure. I could not take it. That hari-kari knife looked to important for me to have. It belonged to her family. I shook my head.....no. I placed the knife in her sleeve. I turned her around and pointed in the direction she came from. I gave her a gentle push. I waved at her. As she left she bowed, walked a short distance waved and bowed again. I never saw her again. I hope no one took advantage of her.

Hours became days. Days became weeks. In front of the tent where the First Sergeant had his quarters was a bulletin board. It was a very important board. On it appeared the names of the rotation roster. If your name appeared here it was because you have accumulated enough points based on months of service and combat time that qualifies you for discharge. I stepped out one day on my way to eat. I checked the bulletin board and found that I had reached the

magic number. Under the "Rotation roster was a Sergeant RICHARD FOSS. I was taken back by the the Sergeant bit. I asked the Captain if that was me. He assured me it was. He added, "You are not going to give me static about that, are you?" I told him, "No". He told me this promotion was a token promotion. He told me he wanted me to arrive home with rank so my girlfriend would be impressed. When I told him I did not have a girlfriend, he said, "Foss, just shut up and get the hell home." My troop commander was a great leader



I was so excited about going home I could not sleep for two nights. Most of the night that I spent before I left was used talking to buddies. I felt I might never see them again. I wanted them to know how much their friendships meant. All of them seemed like family. I was very concerned about what was going to happen to My special Spanish friend, Ed Freeman. He knew he was going to be sent to prison after he returned to the states. Ed was married and had a small baby. I never once witnessed Ed do anything criminal. He and I spent some terrible nights together in combat. I did not feel right what they were doing to him. I cornered the Captain and talked to him. I asked him to re-consider Ed's case. I told the Captain again all of the great things Ed had done as a combat soldier. The Captain told me he realized how I felt but it was out of his hands. I will never forget Ed. All Ed said to me just before I left him was, " I am glad I got to know you." After we shook hands he said, " Please don't worry about me. I will be all right." I hated to say good-bye to Fritz, also. The nights I did not spend in combat with Ed I spent with Fritz.

I got to visit Fritz and his family a few times after the war. Fritz said he was going to have a large family if he made it through this war. Fritz died of cancer. Ed never wrote me from prison. I have no idea what happened to him. Another guy I hated to leave was my little buddy "Mouse". Mouse did stop in Des Moines once for about three hours. He was still in the service at that time. It was hard to say good-bye to many, many of these men. I reminded each one I spoke to and shook hands with, why I considered them to be special to my survival. I did not intend to shake hands with my number one hero, "White bear" , but he insisted. He even smiled at me and waved.

There is one man I spent considerable time with in combat that left me with mixed emotions. In a way I was sad to leave him. In another way I was pleased to leave him. That was Lieutenant Joke. This man had a poor outlook

on life. He appeared to gloat when he made someone miserable. That "someone" was not always me. He showed no sense of humor. He appeared to search for ways to embarrass others. He loved authority. He treated all enlisted men like scum. I honestly tried to overlook his shortcomings and make him feel good about himself. Every attempt to improve our relationship failed....so..... I ignored him unless he gave me a direct order. He did not like that kind of treatment either. He appeared to be the most unhappy, miserable human being in "H" troop. I often said a prayer for him hoping he would change. Yet,----- this man saved my life by insisting I go to the hospital at the right time. The first doctor I came in contact with at the hospital told me it was very lucky for me that I entered the hospital when I did. I disliked this man. I am grateful for his act of thoughtfulness.

Men like Johnny Baxter, First Sergeant Ault, Johnny Hughes and Captain Blacky, to name just a few, will remain in my memory for ever. They all died in action. One other man I must recognize was probably my closest friend. I did not mention him much in my book because he spent so little time with me. He was shot within 20 hours of the first campaign and shot again within two hours on the second landing. He spent most of his time recovering from being wounded. It seems he was shot some eight times. We had great times together on the islands during rest periods when he was not in the hospital trying to get well. I see him on occasion. He was a successful business man in the city of Minneapolis. He is now retired. His name is Earl Nolte.

The morning the army trucks came to pick us up to go down to the dock I was just about numb with excitement. It was great to be going home. When we got on board ship I started asking those around me where this ship was heading. I knew where it was going. I just wanted to hear them tell me.

There must be something about me and being assigned a bunk on board ship,



I was again given a bunk, second from the bottom on the lower deck. It was crowded as before. Full barracks bags hung every where. There must have been a storm close by. We were going up and down while we pitched from side to side at the same time. Things kept falling to the floor. The weather was windy and stormy most of the days that we traveled on this trip. We could not get on deck and do any kind of exercise or get fresh air. Very few men got sick because all of them had been in bad weather on ships, in the sea, before. We had two meals a day. We took turns doing K.P. The trip was boring. What really saved all of us was the fact that we were heading for good old United States.

There was only one guy on that ship who had been in my outfit. He was from my Regiment and was even in my Troop. He was a machine gunner in the first platoon. We had fought along side one another a number of times. His name was Bob Testa. We came over on the same ship to Australia from San Francisco together. We did not take basic training at the same camp. We spent some time on the trip talking about some of the experiences we shared. One of the experiences I wrote about, earlier, just before I went to the hospital. This was the soldier who saw an arm fly over head after a demolition squad blew up a Jap machine gun nest. In fact, we each saw the arm at the same instant. Both of our platoons were moving up a hill at the same time. The arm landed right

by us. It was an experience neither of us will ever forget. Bob was heading for his home which was in Mount Vernon, New York.

Testa reminded me of a funny incident that I felt had to be told in this book before I finished it. Shortly after we arrived in Japan as occupation soldiers our troop was assigned to pull guard on the Pacific Headquarters which was once the original home of Tojo. It was known as the Imperial Palace. General Mac Arthur and his staff operated from this Palace. It was a good sized area. Before we pulled 24 hour guard here we were informed that all rules we were told to enforce would be followed. In no way could they be altered. The main rule was that no one would be allowed to enter or leave any gate to this Imperial Palace without a pass that showed a picture of the person carrying the pass plus their signature. The pass had to have the signature and photo of Douglas Mac Arthur, also. That seemed to be a clear, simple and easy rule to follow. There were a lot of people who entered and left that area. Most of them were important and of high rank.

We were taken to these grounds for guard duty by truck. We pulled four hours on, eight hours off. After every four hours we were picked up and returned to our camp. During the early morning tour of guard duty nothing was happening at my post. However, down the road at the next post I noticed a big crowd gather. There were also a number of jeeps. It sounded like people were shouting at one another. It was far enough away to the next post that I could not make out the problem. There did seem to be a problem. I did not discover what had happened until the truck came by to pick us up to return us to camp. It seems that one of our men got stubborn and insisted upon doing this guard job like he was ordered to do. The commotion was over a very high rank officer who wanted into the grounds. This high rank officer did not have a proper pass. This guard went so far as to click back the bolt of his M-1 and he threaten to shoot if that officer insisted he was going to enter his gate.

Other high rank officers insisted the guard allow this man to pass. The F. F.C. stuck to his guns. GENERAL DOUGLAS Mac ARTHUR was forced to go get his picture taken, have it pasted on his pass and signed one more time. After he did that the guard let him pass. The other guard at the gate backed up the whole story. On the way back to camp in the truck the guard that would not let Mac Arthur pass had second thoughts. He was concerned that he might have "screwed up" and get the rest of us in trouble. Usually when one man is reprimanded for doing something that might be considered questionable the rest of the guards doing that same job are in trouble. On the other hand if a guard does a good deed those who served with him are rewarded as well as the guard who did the good deed. All the way back to camp we wondered what the verdict was going to be.

The minute we hit camp we were greeted by our Regimental Commander. He motioned us over to where he was standing and said, "The General was impressed with the guard detail tonight. You'll see what I mean tomorrow. Dismissed!" We all sat around drinking coffee before we hit the sack. We could not decide what our Regimental commander meant by, "You will see what I mean in the morning."

Next morning on the bulletin board was the answer. A short letter was sent to our troop Captain. It said something to the effect that he was pleased with the performance of the guard at gate number four. He was proud of the way the orders were carried out. He wrote his signature at the bottom of the commemoration. Our Captain seemed to be gloating all day. Personally, I think we all lucked out. It does say a great deal about MacArthur. It could have gone the other way and made life miserable for all of us.

When Bob Testa told me his home was in New York I told him I had a brother in White Plains. Bob asked me for my brother's address. He gave my brother a call. He invited my brother over to his home for a nice dinner. They became

very good friends. Better yet, when my mom went to New York to visit my brother, Testa called my mom and invited her over to his house. Mom got to meet Testas whole family. My mom was more than pleased with the whole thing. Later, when I went to New York I visited Testa and his family. Bob Testa was a nice, caring and thoughtful person.

The closer our ship got to the "states" the more nervous I got. I cannot describe the thrill I felt when I first saw the Golden Gate bridge. Sailing under that bridge was even a greater feeling. One of the first things that entered my mind was that night, many, many months ago when I sat on an A.P.A. ship in the harbor called the "Sea Snipe" waiting to sail to Australia and soon into combat. If anyone would have told me I would live to see this harbor again I would not have believed they. HERE I AM....the bridge... the long line of ware houses and the many American ships. It just smells better here. I really had to make sure so I asked once more , " This is San Francisco of the United States of America, isn't it?" The answer was, "Yes..Yes, for the hundredth time...Yes." What a great feeling it was to be home.



CHAPTER X

BACK HOME AGAIN

Coming home from a war is easy. Explaining what it feels like to come home from war, after fighting in it as a combat soldier, is extremely difficult. When you sit down and attempt to reason out your chances of making it through a war as a combat soldier you know what the answer is going to be. There are so many, many ways to die. If you are clumsy, awkward and prone to making thoughtless mistakes your chances of not making it through is almost doubled. That old expression, "slim and none" fits well here. Now, when you walk out of this kind of situation and you are 100% alive you can only give credit to one of two things. You are blessed with an over abundance of luck...or...someone up there was watching over you. I chose to believe that it was the latter.

As our ship was heading into San Francisco from Japan, I realized the nightmare I had been living was finally over. Arriving home after being in strange places with different kinds of people, eating foods you really do not care that much about, being shot at, ordered around, sleeping in holes in the ground and being sick to your stomach, to name just a few of the discomforts of war is comparable to being lifted up out of a deep, foul smelling dungeon into a sunshine day that is filled with mild breezes. All around you is the scent of many, many flowers. I wanted to shout. I could not shout because I had a grape fruit size lump in my throat. However, when I did regain my composure I did say loud enough to be heard in the city of San Francisco, "Have you ever seen anything so neat?" If I failed to make myself clear I was trying to say, "It was a wonderful feeling to be back home."

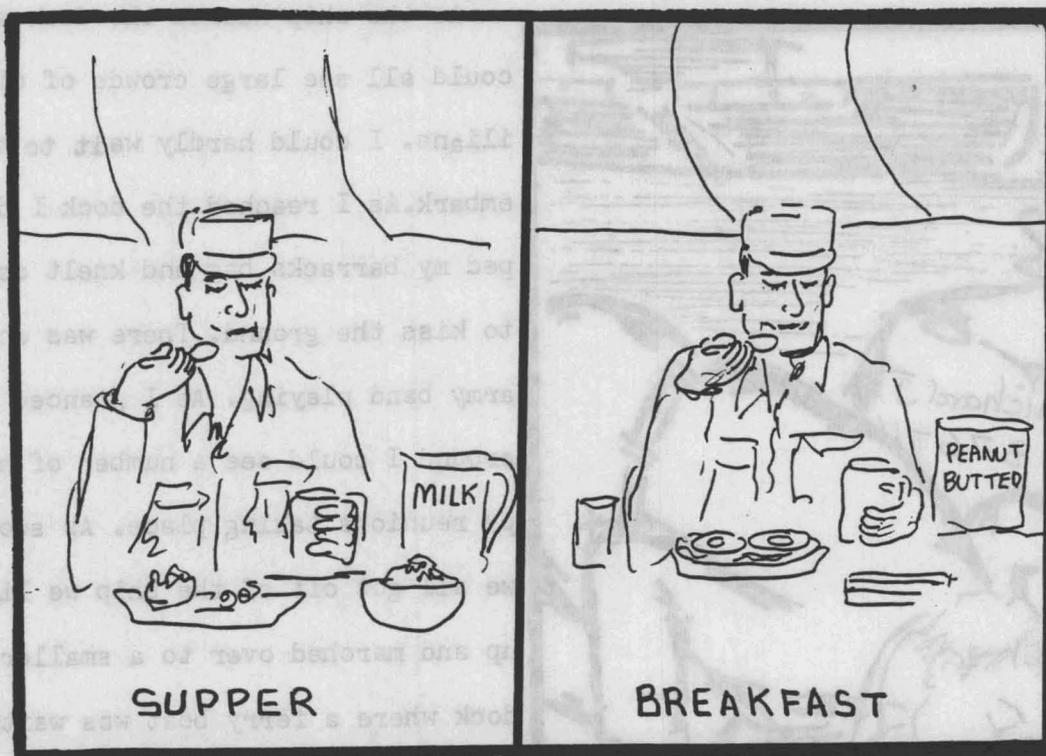


As the ship neared the dock we could all see large crowds of civilians. I could hardly wait to disembark. As I reached the dock I dropped my barracks bag and knelt down to kiss the ground. There was an army band playing. As I glanced around I could see a number of happy reunions taking place. As soon as we all got off of the ship we lined up and marched over to a smaller dock where a ferry boat was waiting. We loaded on to this ferry boat and headed to Camp Stoneman. This camp was the last camp I stayed at before

I left for overseas. This was the camp that was so dreary looking. The barracks were painted brown, there was not a blade of grass. It rained daily.

The ferry boat trip to Camp Stoneman this time was much, much more fun than the last trip I made. We were served sandwiches, soda pop and other refreshments. When we arrived at Stoneman the sun was shining. The camp still had the natural dreary look. There were no flowers or no grass. This time it did not appear so lonesome and miserable. We were heading home.

At Camp Stoneman we were assigned our barracks. We dropped our bags and we headed for the mess hall. We were late for supper. It had already been served. When the cooks learned that we had just arrived from overseas they stayed to serve us. You would not believe the food. We were served chow that



we had not seen for over two years. The word "chow hound" came back to mind. On top of the list of foods being served was "steak". Do you have any idea how good a steak tastes when you wanted one and have not been able to have one for a long time. (I did have a steak sandwich in Luzon but I had a bad dose of dysentary at the time and it did not stay down.) The steak here at Camp Stoneman was out of this world. The cooks told us we could eat more steak if we so desired. I so desired-----I ate three. I do not recall how many glasses of cold fresh milk I drank. I quit counting after four. All of the vegetables were fresh. They served, of all things, vanilla ice cream for dessert. It was topped with chocolate syrup. They had to know this was something I had dreamed of no less than 4,000 times while on guard while sitting in my fox hole in the dark....waiting and watching. I only ate three heaping dishes of ice cream covered with chocolate. I was full. This meal I just finished was my perfect choice of a meal.

Next morning-----same thing. I returned for fresh orange juice five times. I walked away from breakfast with two high California oranges in my pockets, besides. The toast had real butter on it. I asked for peanut butter. They brought out a whole gallon of it. I was so full of real butter and peanut butter along with my fresh orange juice that.....I was only able to down eight fresh eggs. Every thing tasted great. The cooks told us we were welcomed to eat what we wanted but please don't eat so much that we might make ourselves sick. We did finally settle down to natural eating habits. I still drank three orange juices every day. The cooks treated us royally. You know, even the water tasted delicious.

While I was at Stoneman, I took three hot showers a day. Some days I took more. In Japan there was little hot water. Abcard ship the water was limited.



What a great feeling it was to soap yourself and let the hot water soak in. It was nice to shave each day under a light while looking into a large mirror. You really do not miss these things until you have to go without them. It was even nice to have a stool, toilet paper and a system to flush away bad odors. I must say it was nice to be back in organized civilization again.

I think they burned everything we brought from overseas. We were issued new complete uniforms. We checked in all of our gear and all

our equipment.

I did get to play some outdoor basketball. I got into some good games and I got to play with some outstanding ball handlers and met some very good shooters. I found out how many skills and moves I lost over the past two years. It was fun. We did not spend a lot of time at Stoneman. We did not have to pull guard or K.P. We did not get assigned to clean up details. All of this was done by their permanent staff. We were called into the Administrative buildings a few times for various types of interviews. Most of the questions I was asked were about my health. They wanted to know about the back problem, jungle rot, dysentery and that "battle fatigue" thing. I told them everything they wanted to know.

From Camp Stoneman I was moved to a camp closer to my home town. I was put on a train and sent to Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. When we arrived there it had just started to turn cold. Those of us at this camp that had been in the Pacific noticed the cold. We were all trying to adjust to the weather. The camp was crowded. Where did they assign us our quarters? We were assigned to outdoor tents. I like to froze. Each night I threw my two blankets and all of

was shipped to Ft Leavenworth
 Kansas - Had to sleep in tents in
 cold weather - I just wanted to get
 discharge
 I was discharged. - They asked if I
 cared to re-enlist, again. I thought
 they were joking. - They were serious
 HOME NEVER NEVER Looked so good
 to me

the clothing I had in my barracks bag on top of myself. Besides, I slept in my clothing. I was still cold. We had to stay in these outdoor tents because it was crowded. Men were being discharged left and right at this time. We were moved to warm indoor barracks a few days later. At this camp we were put on our own a lot. They didn't hassle us. I was able to go over to the service club and listen to records. I could have gone to town but I did not have money or a friend to go with. One night I attended a U.S.O. dance. I still moved around like " a hog



on ice. We had to be in our barracks by 10:00 P.M. unless we were on a pass. They did little here at this camp. We were checked out once or twice in an office in the Administrative building. The time went fast here but not fast enough.

The final camp I was sent to was just a short distance away. The name of this camp was Camp Crowder. It was in Missouri. It was here that I received my discharge. I was given one last physical. They checked everything. We turned in all of the clothing that we owned but the bare essentials. I was asked daily at this camp if I cared to join the regular army. I had the benefits explained to me in detail. Some of the benefits sounded good. I said no. I was handed a commercial train ticket from Camp Crowder to good old Des

Moines, Iowa. The trip was not long. I was approached by many well meaning people. Some offered me drinks. Two different people asked to buy a meal on the train for me. I could not understand all of these kind gestures. It could have been the ribbons I had displayed on my jacket. They must have mistaken me for some kind of war hero or something.

Our train was held up somewhere along the way cause we did not arrive in Moines until around 5:00 A.M. The train depot I arrived at does not exist today. Mom still had a cleaning job at a hotel downtown, run by my brother-in-law Bill Brown and my sister, Kate. I called this hotel and they contacted my mom. God... it was good to hear her voice. She told me to get home right now. When I saw mom it startled me a little. Her gray hair had turned to a complete white. She was O.K. She just looked older. It is no wonder that her hair turned white. She had three sons in the war plus a job to worry about. She fretted over my brother Don who was in the Marines. He was still some where in the Pacific with the First Marines when I got home. She worried about Bud, who was a combat engineer somewhere in India, plus me. I was the baby in the family.

After breakfast I sat down and talked with this psychologist, my mom. I say she was a psychologist because of how she worked me over by asking me at least 10,000 questions. She wanted to know every detail about the things that happened to me while I was away in the war. I could never lie to her. I did not hold back. I told her every thing she wanted to know. She wanted to know if I got shot at. Did I have to kill anyone? Was I shelled? Did they feed me well? Did they take care of me when I was sick? The questions went on and on. She asked if I was really scared. I gave her the same answer I gave the new recruit who wanted that questioned answered while in combat. I told her, " I

was only afraid when I was awake or asleep."She didn't think that was very funny. Actually, I thought about telling her about the Lieutenant who gave me a bad time. I didn't. It is lucky for him. If she got on his case he would probably not realized what hit him.

It was not until later that it dawned on me just why my mom wanted me to explain all of this "war" stuff to her, in detail. My mom was very bright. I honestly believe she was pulling some psychology on me. If I told her everything....I held nothing back...I might get it out of my system and it would not haunt me at a later date. Actually, it did work out that way. I have been able to talk about those horrible war experiences and it does not bother me at all. I have only had one bad dream related to the war but it faded away. That dream was about running from a barge toward the beach into deep water. I could only move very, very slowly. I was being shot at by someone who was firing an automatic weapon. I wonder if mom pulled this, "asking 10,000 questions", on my brother Don and my brother Bud. I never asked them. They are both deceased. I will never know.

The war part of my story has ended. There are, however, a couple of things related to the war that should be told before the story is concluded. Following WW II, soldiers were afforded a chance to attend college or enter into some type of career oriented opportunity at the governments expense, if they so desired. The soldier was given tuition, books and a small living income to tide him over. This was called the G.I. Bill of Rights. Since they damn near had to burn down dear old North High in Des Moines in order to get me out, I really had no desire to apply. Instead, I returned to the job I held before I went into the service. I worked in a Men's Clothing Store for a gentleman named Mr. Leslie Shaw. Mr Shaw talked me into applying for the G.I. Bill. He insisted I take a government sponsored aptitude test. I almost went into

shock when I was tested out 98.8% through this aptitude test, to be, of all things, a TEACHER. I warned them that a mistake had taken place. I was tested again. It was the same score. Mr. Shaw insisted I go to college. He even made arrangements for me to work at different hours so I could still make enough to help care for mom. This man was like a dad to me. I did go into teaching. I ended up teaching in the Des Moines Independent School District. I taught with success (Slow, poor readers and non-talented children. I fit in well with them because I was a non-talented teacher) for thirty-five years. These were thirty-five happy years for me. I owe my chance to get a formal education to the fact that I served in the war. I am grateful to Mr. Shaw for insisting I finish college. I must tell this final army related story. It involves Mr. Shaw.

When I returned home from the war he was one of the first persons I visited. He wanted me to attend a dinner with he and his wife at their exclusive private club. I really did not want to go. I was sure I would do some real stupid thing that might cause embarrassment to Mr. Shaw and his wife. He said, "Nonsense, your going." I was in uniform. I had only been home for two days. He told me he wanted to show me off. I showed off, all right. I shocked a whole table when I asked in the



typical gutter army style language, after waiting patiently, "Will someone please pass down the God damn salt?" The loud talking at the table came to a halt. You could hear a pin drop. My face was red. I wanted to crawl under the table and somehow disappear. With a straight face, Mr. Shaw, who definitely was a well mannered and respected gentleman said, "You heard our guest, pass down the God damn salt." It broke up the whole place. This was one of Mr. Shaw's favorite stories. Mr. Shaw passed away a few years ago. There just had to be a place in heaven for this man.

Two years after I returned home from the war I met and married Marjorie Jean Otis. That was one of the best things that ever happened to me in my life. We both felt we had known each other all of our lives a week after we first met. I was so sure she was going to marry me I did not even ask her. I made arrangements with the church on May 25th, 1947. I told her and we got married. She has always been an inspiration and a strong supporter. If it had not been for her organizational powers we would have nothing. She has all of the wonderful qualities a man desires in a wife. I consider myself a lucky man to have found her and married her. We have two wonderful children Jody, my oldest, and Mark. My daughter Jody has one son Aaron. Mark has three children Kinzie Jo, Jason Richard and Shelby Lyn.

I wrote this book so my children and grandchildren would have something personal from their dad and grandfather. I was proud to be able to play a small part in this period of our country's history. I hope my children and my grandchildren feel the same.

Sincerely,

and with much love to my
entire family
Richard J. Foss



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