As a result of Madsen's interpretations of science and the park mandate, the NPS in 1936 adopted new fish stocking guidelines to protect native cutthroat trout. The policy stipulated that where native and nonnatives coexisted, only natives would be propagated; that where natives only existed, only natives would remain; and that the further distribution of exotic species in the park was generally prohibited.[25] Two exceptions remained: Managers used stocking as a management tool to reintroduce native species and to maintain fish populations in waters incapable of sustaining a viable population through natural spawning. Despite the adoption of this policy, however, not until 1953 was the actual practice of culling eggs ended and stocking phased out in 1957.[26]

By the 1950s trout Shangri-La had lost the prosaic qualities that characterized it in 1896. After the end of World War II, Yellowstone managers faced the same problems they had upon the arrival of the automobile in the park: visitation boomed, fish populations busted, and catch limits went to five and then three. Culturalists scrambled and started planting catchable-size fish, a deed symptomatic of a fishery's total failure.[27] Fishing in Yellowstone, aside from aesthetic qualities, stunk.

Yellowstone's officials now faced a complex world where people, expectations, NPS mandate, and fish were inseparable components in the management of a supposedly wild remnant of America's once-vast wilderness. Traditions that had stood for over seventy years could no longer sustain both anglers' demand and great quantities of trout. It now became incumbent on managers to change the people rather than the fish, and the change involved a new philosophy of fishing for the sake of fishing rather than for meat.

Catch-and-release fishing was not instantly popular among Yellowstone's—hence America's—anglers when the "Fishing for Fun" program began in the 1960s. In the long run, however, park anglers had little to say about it. The resource was ailing, and managers had no other alternatives: slot limits, restricted catches, law enforcement, and closures only went so far. While early forms of catch-and-release regulation—all voluntary—caused rumblings and even abstinence from anglers used to a "put-and-take" mentality, fish numbers climbed. Changing anglers' ethics to willfully releasing fish took longer, but eventually they did.[28]

The fishing experience in Yellowstone is in many ways the history of the American relationship with natural resources. Americans formulated ideas about Yellowstone, influenced by those who experienced its grandeur before them and, in turn, influencing those who succeeded them. This experience, as seen in terms of fishing, was not static. It changed over time as American culture changed, proving that anglers and their sport have been—and still are—flexible in meeting challenges. This lesson from our fishing heritage is perhaps the one anglers most need to understand, for it contains solutions to future challenges.

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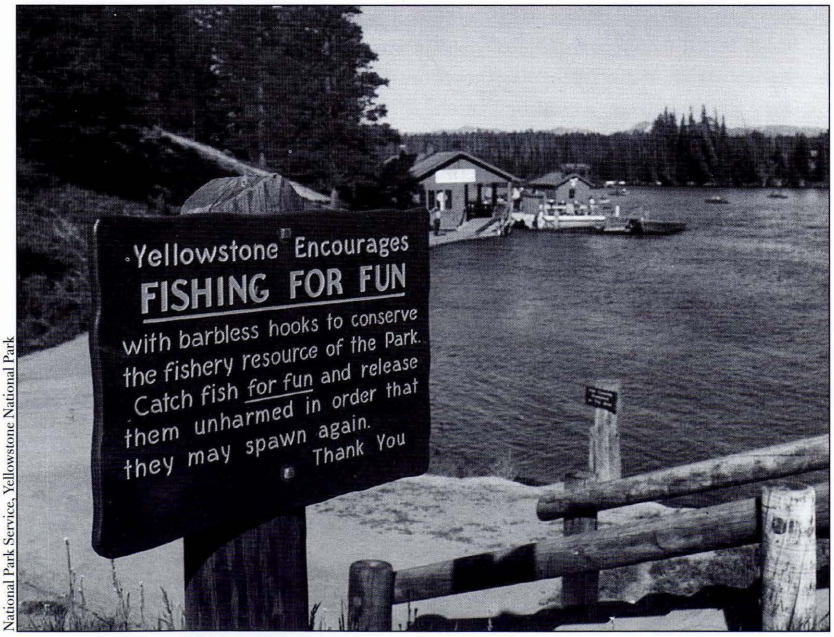
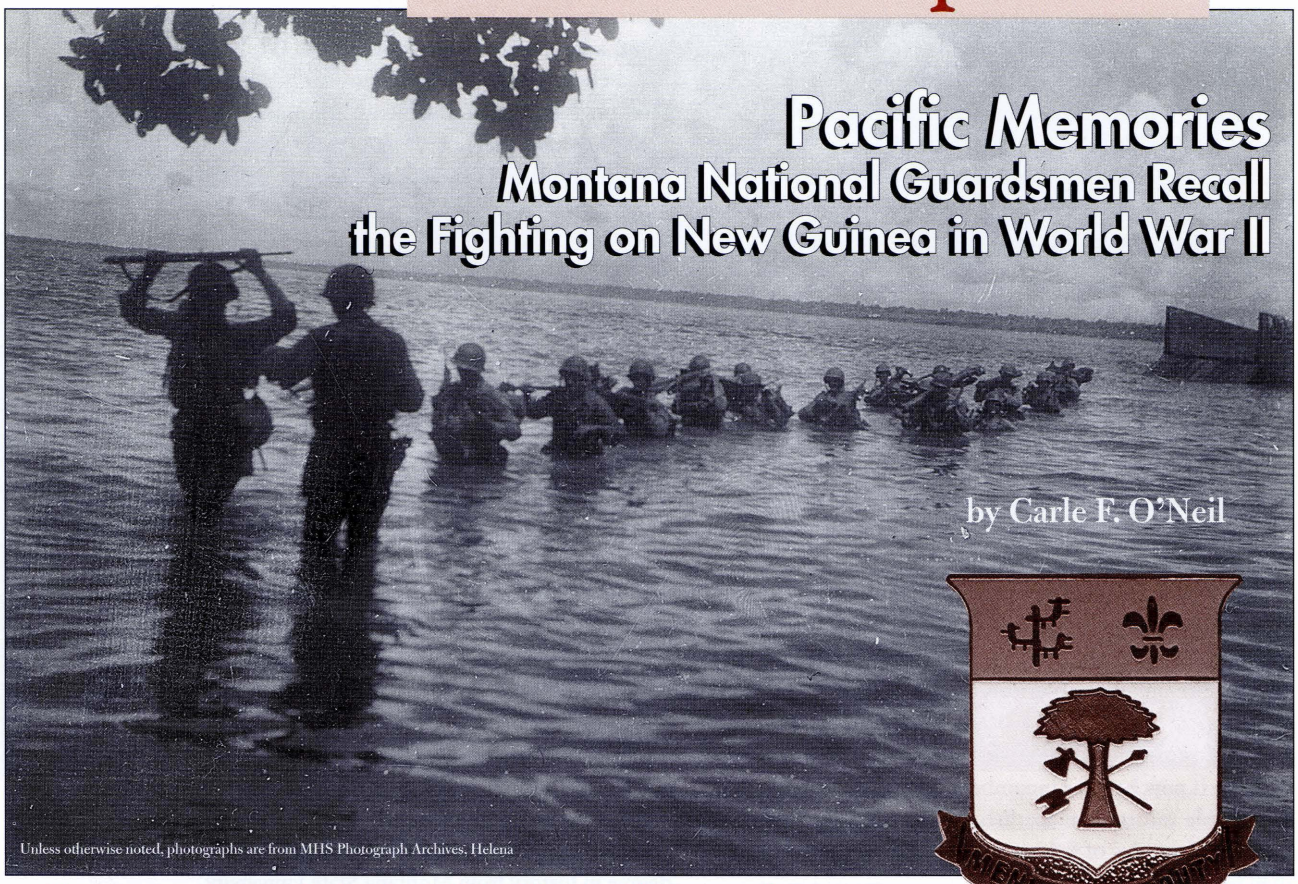


National Park Service, Yellowstone National Park

Despite the best efforts to sustain park fisheries through stocking, by 1950 fish culturalists were forced to plant catchable-size fish, a deed symptomatic of a fishery's total failure. In response, Yellowstone Park pioneered catch-and-release fishing with its Fishing for Fun program in the early 1960s. Although the voluntary program—described at left on a Fishing Bridge sign—was not instantly popular, eventually anglers came to enjoy the sport as much as the meat.

Pacific Memories

Montana National Guardsmen Recall the Fighting on New Guinea in World War II



by Carle F. O'Neil

Unless otherwise noted, photographs are from MHS Photograph Archives, Helena

"It never occurred to me at the time that the National Guard could be sent out of the country to fight overseas," recalled Kalispell Company F Guardsman Leslie D. Slyter. But in 1942 the Montana National Guard shipped out to the Pacific theater. Officially part of the 163rd Regiment of the United States Army's 41st Infantry Division, Montana soldiers fought in World War II wearing a regimental emblem with the motto, "Men Do Your Duty." Above, members of the 163rd wade ashore at Wakde Island off the northern shore of New Guinea in 1943.

The Montana National Guard, officially designated the 163rd Regiment of the 41st Infantry Division by the United States Army, arrived in New Guinea in December 1942 and soon became engaged in some of the most awful warfare of World War II.

Fighting in the jungles of the Southwest Pacific was not what the young men had imagined when they enlisted in the "Guard" in the 1930s. At that time, the nation was bogged in a deep economic depression, times were tough, and National Guard recruiters presented an attractive offer when even a five-cent root beer could be hard to come by for a teenager on a date: sign up; drill once a week; learn to shoot; attend summer camp; take pride in military discipline, in honor, in the flag and commitment to duty; *and* receive pay of twenty-one dollars a month. Kalispell Company F Guardsman Leslie D. Slyter, who enlisted at age sixteen from his hometown, later recalled: "It never occurred to me at the time that the National Guard could be sent out of the country to fight overseas."[1] While it was true that Hitler's Nazis were at war in Europe, the United States, led by such prominent figures as Montana senator Burton K. Wheeler, who vehemently espoused isolationism, had once again declared its desire to avoid entanglement in Europe's never-ending conflicts.

Then, in September 1940 the Montana National Guard, composed of 102 officers and 1,477 enlisted men, received sobering orders to report to Fort Lewis, Washington, for a full year of training, which a presidential order later extended by three months. Before training concluded in December 1941, the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor, and the Montana National



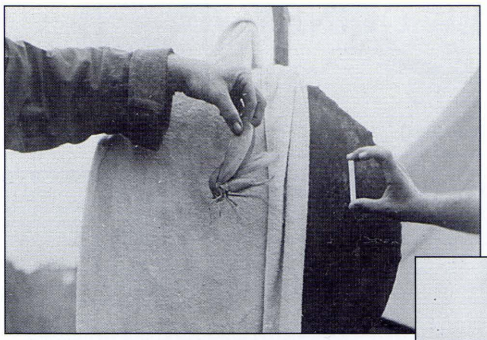
Guard soon had the opportunity to put their motto—"Men Do Your Duty"—to work. After four months of providing coastal defense, the 41st Division (nicknamed "Sunset" because of its composition of men from five northwestern states) was on its way to Australia aboard the luxury liner *Queen Elizabeth*, recently converted into a troop ship and poorly provisioned.

Buoyed by their Hawaiian success, the Japanese had slashed their way through the Philippines—taking Bataan and Corregidor in 1942—and then captured other Pacific lands all the way to New Guinea. New Guinea, the second largest island in the world with a land mass twice that of the state of Montana (some 320,000 square miles), lay 1,500 miles southeast of the Philippines.[2] Its interior was covered by dense jungle, and the convoluted Owen Stanley Mountains, like a dragon's spine, divided the island into two plains that sloped down to the sea. Port Moresby on the island's southern coast was only 340 sea miles from Australia. If captured, the port would likely provide a staging ground for a Japanese invasion of Australia and New Zealand.

To meet this threat, the United States, in cooperation with Australian troops, set about retaking New Guinea, as well as the Solomons and other islands, as the first steps in a return to the Philippines and ultimately an intended invasion of Japan. Significant in this strategy were the men of the 163rd Regiment led by Colonel Jens Doe. After nine more months of special training, they arrived in Port Moresby at Christmastime 1942 as part of the 163rd Combat Team. Their assignment from General Douglas A. MacArthur, commander-in-chief of the Southwest Pacific area, was to bolster the weary Aussies, the 32nd Division (a National Guard unit from Wisconsin and Michigan), and other American support troops who had been slowly pushed southwest across the dense coastal plain into the Owen Stanley Mountains, only thirty miles from Port Moresby.

1. Leslie D. Slyter, interview by author, Kalispell, Montana, September 8, 1999, tape recording in the collection of the author.

2. In 1828 the Dutch formally claimed the western half of New Guinea, and in 1885 Germany annexed the northern coast and Britain the southern coast of the island's eastern half. The British lands became known as the Territory of Papua after Britain transferred its claim to newly independent Australia in 1906. The German lands, which came to be known as the territory of North-East New Guinea, were governed by Australia after World War I. Following the end of World War II, Australia granted home rule, and in 1975 Papua New Guinea became an independent nation. The western half of the island, now known as Irian Jaya, was slated to become independent after the era of the Dutch East Indies colonies ended in 1949, but was instead annexed by Indonesia.



Conditions in New Guinea tested soldiers' endurance. They suffered battle stress, strange insects (left), illness, heat, humidity, and inadequate food, medicine, and weapons, but their regard for one another, and the aid of their medics, sustained them. Medical Corps Captain M. D. Holcomb (detailed below, right) poses in April 1944 with his medical supplies carried in a .50 machine gun ammunition box. Holcomb was awarded the Montana Legion of Merit after the Sanananda-Buna Campaign in 1943.





Few, if any, Montana boys had known that such a place as New Guinea existed, but after being there, even for a short while, they could never forget it. Airlifted over the Owen Stanley Mountains to the Dobodura landing strip, an airstrip in the kunai grass on the torrid Sanananda-Buna plain, the guardsmen found themselves instantly thrust into wretched jungle fighting. The daytime temperature was often 95 degrees, the average humidity 85 percent. The line of vision through the dense, dripping jungle ranged from five to fifty yards. Insects filled the oppressive air. Necessary supplies of food, medicine, ammunition, and various weapons of war—tanks, flame throwers, bazookas—were inadequate or nonexistent. (To the ire of General MacArthur, the Joint Chiefs of Staff had determined that the European theater received first priority for supplies.)

What the human body could endure was tested to the limit. Sergeant Leslie D. Slyter recalled the misery of daily life: "People can't live in conditions that were there. Everything that lit on you you picked at and it made you sick. Everything you touched cut you. Everything you drank gave you dysentery. Men groaned at night because they could not control their bowels, and the very worst of all was malnutrition. . . . Fear was present all of the time, but you couldn't show it, particularly if you were in charge of others."[3]

Of the initial days in battle, Sergeant Ed Hula of Columbia Falls, who had joined Company F in a spirit of patriotism and adventure, remembered: "At first it seemed good to be going to war with longtime friends. But I soon wished that I were in an outfit of strangers. It was terribly hard . . . to see close friends struck down in action. . . . Ken Felix [of Kalispell] was killed in ambush not far from my position. I . . . remember my shock at the loss of so young a man. . . . And after an engagement you go and pick up your dead. You see, the Japanese were starving and there could be cannibalism."

Recalling conditions, Slyter explained: "Basic training doesn't train you [to witness death]. You learn to march well, to salute sharply, but first seeing a guy dead or wounded—you can't train for that. That was when the flag came down for me." Under such conditions, the military ideals of patriotism and duty no longer served as motivating factors in the field. As Stephen Ambrose has observed, GIs fought because they had to; what held them together was not patriotism but cohesion—regard for one another.[4]

Out of the Sanananda-Buna campaign, completed January 22, 1943, three Montanans were awarded the Distinguished Service Cross, one received the Legion of Merit award, and thirty-four were awarded Silver

3. Slyter interview.

4. Ed Hula, interview by author, Columbia Falls, Montana, September 20, 1999, tape recording in the collection of the author; Slyter interview; Stephen Ambrose, *Citizen Soldiers: The U.S. Army from Normandy Beaches to the Bulge to the Surrender of Germany, June 7, 1944–May 7, 1945* (New York, 1997), 478.

5. Andy Mills, interview by author, Kalispell, Montana, September 13, 1999, tape recording in the collection of the author.

6. Walter Krueger, *From Down Under to Nippon: The Story of the Sixth Army in World War II* (Washington, D.C., 1953), 234.



Sites captured from the Japanese provided staging areas for an invasion of the Philippines and air bases to help control oceanic passages between New Guinea and the Solomon Islands. The soldiers at right, in a rare respite from the fighting, gathered to enjoy an Artie Shaw performance.



Stars. The 163rd Regiment captured unprecedented amounts of Japanese equipment in what was acclaimed as the first major Japanese defeat of the war. Eighty-five hundred Australian and American men were killed or wounded and an untold number stricken with disease.

For the average soldier, though, these strategic gains seemed almost inconsequential when compared to the daily torments of physical stress and disease. Private Andy Mills of Company F remembered: "You might not get your boots off for a week and when you did the skin come with 'em. And the malaria took the guys—the company was down to twenty or thirty at one time from a hundred and fifty." Andy had a serious bout of malaria and was hospitalized off and on for several months. But he was lucky on the score of dysentery, which plagued the troops. His dysentery lasted just a few days, a mild case compared to men who would find themselves unable to function after months of suffering. At the time he and three others were in an outpost foxhole on a coastal point where a river ran into the ocean. "When I was hit with the need to let loose I shed my clothes, went for a swim in the ocean. I returned through the fresh water of the river and got back into my sack feeling better. . . . Yeah, and lucky not to have been sighted by a sniper!"[5]

With Sanananda-Buna plain secured, the effort to capture the Japanese-held coastal points of Finschhafen, Aitape, Hollandia, Toem and the islands of Wakde and Biak intensified. They were stepping stones to the Philippines and rendered air bases to help control the oceanic passage between New Guinea and the Solomon Islands.

This phase of the campaign permitted brief, intermittent intervals in rest camps, but respite from the fighting was rare. General Walter Krueger wrote at war's end that "the absence of leave areas where officers and men could relax from the dangers and hardships they had endured . . . for many months . . . presented . . . a serious problem. . . . The only diversion the troops had consisted of movies and occasional entertainments put on by USO entertainers."[6] One of those entertainers was the beloved comedian Joe E. Brown who would go anywhere to perform for allied service personnel. His wide grin and funny antics belied a deep sadness at the loss of one of his sons in the war.

A major success, and an important turning point, was achieved with the occupation of the island of Biak on August 24, 1944. Of that island General Robert L. Eichelberger said he could not believe that the terrain of any other Pacific island could be tougher. There, the Japanese had virtually abandoned 10,000 troops, who holed up in caves and jungle with orders to fight to the last man. Of the Biak fighting, by-now General Doe wrote that the 41st Division had come through with a shining record:



Especially revered by the 163rd Regiment were members of the medical corps, including the Third Battalion medics pictured at left on Biak in October 1944. The locals also earned Americans' respect for their skill in gently bearing the wounded through the region's rough, muddy terrain. Throughout New Guinea even corduroy roads (below) flooded, making passage difficult.



Courtesy Montana Chapter, 163rd Infantry, 41st Division, Helena Office

"The infantry soldier was the one who met in hand-to-hand combat the crack troops of the Japanese, threw him from his positions, destroyed him, and gave us our victory."[7] Though praising the infantry, General Doe did not by any means overlook the contributions of the support services—the supply, ordnance, medical, quartermaster, signals corp, and engineering personnel. All in all, it took about twelve people in these various specialties to serve each infantryman. Stellar among these were the members of the medical corps. Said Doe of the medics: "Their devotion to duty in caring for our wounded is worth every bit of praise we can bestow. *The medical personnel of the Division have received more decorations in proportion to their numbers than any other branch.*"[8]

Being a medic did not appeal to everyone. Many young men, in a misplaced sense of bravado (a sentiment that combat would quickly change), thought that being a medic was not sufficiently "macho." Really brave men served in the infantry, they argued, while those afraid of combat, sometimes "conscientious objectors," signed on as medical corpsmen to avoid danger. In theory, personnel treating the wounded received protection under the terms of the diplomatic convention held at Geneva, Switzerland, in 1864. Medical personnel in the field were required to wear an arm band with a red cross on it designating that they were to be spared from enemy fire because of their humanitarian status and restriction from carrying weapons. Medics quickly learned in the Southwest Pacific, however, that these conventions were meaningless. Japanese snipers used the arm band as a target, forcing American medics to carry rifles to protect themselves and their patients. Wherever infantrymen went, the medics accompanied them, ready to perform first aid services on the front lines under all conditions. Of the medics, Leslie Slyter remembered: "We didn't have enough medics . . . but the ones we had

7. Jens A. Doe, General Orders No. 65, quoted in William F. McCartney, *The Jungleers: A History of the 41st Infantry Division* (Nashville, Tenn., 1988), 184.

8. Ibid. Italics added.

9. Slyter interview.

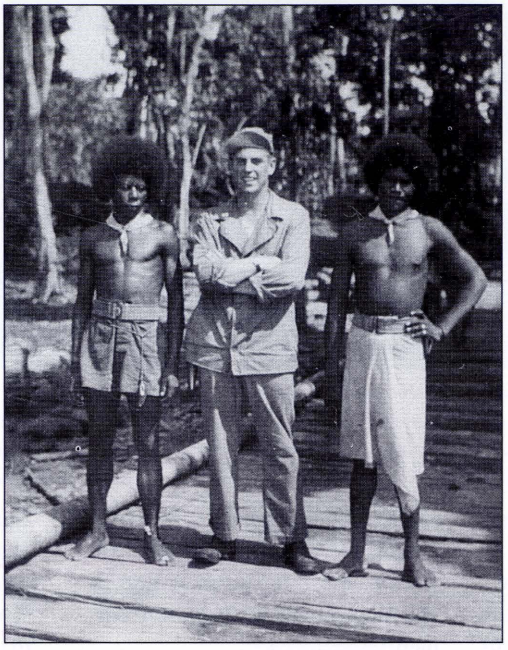
10. Kenneth Clothier, interview by author, Kalispell, Montana, October 28, 1999, tape recording in the collection of the author.

were all very, very good. They were all called 'doc'."[9]

Kenneth Clothier of Kalispell had wanted to enlist in Company F when he heard rumors in early September 1940 that a call-up for training was imminent. Finding it full, he signed on with the Whitefish Medical Detachment of the 163rd Infantry Regiment, intending to transfer to the infantry when the opportunity arose. In time, however, he found that he liked the training and the purpose of the medics. Clothier recalled the initial landing at Dobodura, where the 163rd Combat Team unloaded, got their stuff, and started hiking into the jungle. From there, "she was fightin' all the time. You dug a foxhole and about six inches down she filled with water. You dug deeper and got more water. Anything that moved after dark was fair game. Had to go to the bathroom you did her right there. If you got out to go some place, you was a dead duck."[10]

Normally a medic was assigned to each platoon and accompanied its men on whatever action they pursued. The first casualty Clothier saw was a young man from Chicago: "It was just like somebody had took an axe and cut a big piece of pie right out of his shoulder. The arm was just hanging by a piece of skin. In the aid station we patched him up as good as we could then evacuated him to regimental hospital which was not too far away. There the arm was removed." Sometime later Clothier learned that in civilian life the man had been a pianist. What, he wondered, would the fellow do now?[11]

New Guinea was populated by many tribes of indigenous people. They were often fierce looking, wearing bones in their noses and other adornments novel to Americans. The women were usually bare breasted and most everyone had frizzy hair, earning them the sobriquet "fuzzy-wuzzies." Most of them were inclined to be friendly with the Allied troops, in part because they had been abused by the Japanese. Often they spoke English, having been taught by missionaries, but they really earned the Americans' respect when they proved exceptionally helpful in bearing litters.



The indigenous people of New Guinea were inclined to be friendly with Allied troops. Above, two islanders pose with Captain Satran in 1943. In addition to transporting wounded soldiers, native islanders unloaded ships, carried supplies, and built roads.

Clothier said: "They were really great. Moved gently on bare feet—as gently as riding on an air bus—over rough, muddy terrain with consideration for their American and Australian patients. They were not always as careful with the few Japanese captives." He made friends with some of them and in later years often wished that he could go back to visit.[12]

Despite the grave risks the medics took for the wounded, they were not always particularly inclined to be sentimental about their patients, especially if they were putting other soldiers at risk. Ken Clothier, for instance, recalled a night when "there was a sort of loonie in our outfit who started yelling and carrying on. I backhanded him a good one and he shut up. His noise could have attracted a Jap infiltrator."

On another night when action was heavy, Clothier heard calls for a medic. Responding, he found a fatally injured American who had accidentally been shot by a soldier from his own platoon. Everyone was upset; the man's comrades could not accept the accident and insisted that medic Clothier treat him—in effect, bring him back to life. There was nothing Clothier could do but drag the man's body from the immediate area and leave it until daylight.[13]

Such "friendly fire" killings were always deeply disturbing. Mortars in particular seemed indiscriminate in inflicting casualties. Sergeant T3 Ralph "Sully" Taylor of the Whitefish Medical Detachment recalled an incident on the island of Biak: "A mortar blast killed our own guys. The shell didn't go where it was supposed to, not to where it was pointed. It hit an M Company tent and killed four and wounded seven. Dr. Kotner and I worked most of the night patching together broken limbs, stopping bleeding and getting guys back to the area hospital. Mortars could be bad news."[14]

The duties of Technical Sergeant Roy Duff in the Whitefish Medical Detachment, where he was "top kick," the top noncommissioned officer, were primarily administrative, involving lots of record keeping and

11. Ibid.

12. Ibid.
13. Ibid.

14. Memoir of Ralph "Sully" Taylor, former Whitefish resident living in Puyallup, Washington, provided in a December 2001 letter to the author.



Courtesy Montana Chapter, 163rd Infantry, 41st Division, Helena Office

Fighting side-by-side with Australians troops, the 41st Infantry became known as the Jungleers. They lived in camps like this one in the Sanananda area that might be dry when pitched, but flooded by several inches of rainfall overnight. "We set up an aid station dug out of the swamp and surrounded by sandbags," remembered Technical Sergeant Roy Duff of the Whitefish Medical Detachment about landing at Dobodura.

paper shuffling in the headquarters compound, which was somewhat removed from the line of battle. But he remembers that upon landing at Dobodura the detachment walked to its first battle assignment near the active Fiske perimeter. "Christ, do I remember it. There was bullets whizzing all around and loud noises of gunfire; some of the worst noises came from bullets hitting the big leaves of jungle growth. Sounded like an explosion. . . . We set up an aid station dug out of the swamp and surrounded by sandbags. Pete Johnson of Whitefish took charge of the treatment of some of the first casualties brought in."[15] In his diary for Friday, January 8, 1943, Duff wrote: "Came up front & helped wounded during attack, my first attack. sure was hell. I sure hugged old mother earth in my slit trench. Treated several casualties, some badly wounded. . . . Saw where Yankees and Aussies bayoneted all Jap patients in Jap hospital. Lots of shooting snipers getting few of our men."[16]

The Japanese hospital mentioned by Duff was the scene of unexpected action led by Major Walter R. Rankin of Bozeman, Montana. While leading a force through jungle terrain in an effort to join Aussie troops, he and his men entered an area littered with dead Japanese and came upon a disheveled Japanese field hospital. Intending to spare the facility out of humanitarian regard, Rankin found himself and his men under attack from able-bodied Japanese who had concealed themselves as patients, even lying next to rotting corpses. Rankin gave orders to spare no one. Tokyo Rose, the infamous Japanese broadcaster, called the Yank force the "Butchers of Sanananda" and warned that they would never leave New Guinea. Journalists and fellow fighting men of the 163rd dubbed them "Rankin's Racers." After more than fifty years, recollections of the horrific sights, smells, and action remain wrenching for those who were there.

A general problem for all was that for long periods the food was sparse and not much good. When the oatmeal was wormy, for example, what you did was put some of it in a canteen cup, cover it with water, and let the worms float to the top. Those you skimmed off. Repeat the process two or three times then cook it, don't look too closely, and eat it down.[17]

Experienced combatants expressed sorrow for the fledgling recruits, generally draftees, brought in to fill vacan-

15. Roy Duff, interview by author, Whitefish, Montana, February 16, 2000, tape recording in the collection of the author.

16. Roy Duff, handwritten, unpublished March 19, 1942–November 6, 1945 diary, entry for January 8, 1943, generously loaned to the author by Roy Duff. Diary keeping and photography were generally forbidden by the military lest they provide intelligence information if they fell into enemy hands, but on the "Q.T." not everyone complied.

17. Clothier interview.
18. Ibid.
19. Duff diary, February 16, 1945.

cies. "They just got off the boat and came in. . . . They'd line 'em up and give 'em a talking to and tell 'em, 'Just forget everything you learned in the States about fighting. Each one of you guys'll be with a guy that knows what the hell is going on. Pay attention to him and you might live till morning. If you don't you won't.'"[18]

With the capture of Biak in late July 1944, New Guinea was finally rid of Japanese encroachment, and Biak provided a landing strip for the next thrust into the Philippines. Relatively early in the Philippine campaign, on October 21, 1944, General MacArthur was able to fulfill his oft-quoted "I shall return" pledge when he waded ashore at Leyte Gulf. Thereafter the 41st Division, including the 163rd Regiment, participated in a number of amphibious landings and the capture of many important posts—Zamboanga, Jolo, Palawan, Mindoro, Davao, and others—actions that continued well into summer 1945.

While the fighting could be heavy at times, in general the conditions were not as fearsome as those of New Guinea. As the Japanese were pushed from their strongholds, there was more time for recreation, including baseball games, basketball, and parties. In the Philippines, the work of medics necessarily expanded to addressing not only battle casualties but the ills of the civilian populations and military and civilian prisoners liberated from the Japanese, who needed extended care for disease, mistreatment, and malnutrition.

Medics also found that venereal disease increased alarmingly as the troops moved closer to Philippine urban centers. Roy Duff, by now promoted to lieutenant, and Dr. Goldfein, a local woman doctor for whom he had great respect, were responsible for surveying civilian needs and inspecting the many brothels and devising appropriate responses. They also saw to the inoculation of hundreds of civilians against cholera, even venturing into the hills under armed guard to vaccinate guerilla defensive forces. The condition of newly released prisoners was deeply disturbing. Duff's diary entry for February 16, 1945, reflects in part the bitterness many veterans felt toward the Japanese: "5 nurses were brought in from Luzon [Philippines] today after being prisoners since '42. 2 pregnant—1 had a Jap kid and other two with venereal disease. These little dinks should have to pay someday."[19]

Meanwhile, planning was underway for the most daunting challenge of all: the invasion of Japan itself. The 41st Division, including men of the 163rd Regiment, did finally arrive in Japan in October 1945, landing

The Philippine city of Zamboanga, torn by American bombs in 1945 (below), was one of many important posts captured by the 41st Division in their northward advance following the taking of Biak, New Guinea, in late July 1944.





Hundreds of thousands of Americans served in the armed forces in World War II, but it was in the wilds of New Guinea that Montanans who had joined the Montana National Guard faced the grim realities of battle. Major Art Lowe (right) surveys the strafed buildings and trees of Aitape, New Guinea, in 1944. Below, a jeep bogs down on the main road between Dobodura and Oro Bay in May 1945.



near Hiroshima as a security force some weeks after the atomic bombing of that city. The regiment was no longer "Montanan," perhaps no more so than 20 percent, for it had been altered by numerous replacements and transfers. As part of the 41st Division, the regiment was officially disbanded on December 31, 1945.

Meanwhile, thousands of Montanans, men and women, had been serving—doing their duty—in various other service branches at sea and around the world. Many of them, too, were lost and many more were wounded in mind and body. The number of Montanans killed is believed to be about 2,500; the exact number remains unknown. The Montana Historical Society has listed the names of 1,553 known to have died.[20]

If the advent of war and the undreamed-of shipment into a world of violent action had come as a shock for Montana Guardsmen, the end of hostilities and the mustering out of service paradoxically brought its own set of traumas, perhaps more subtle, but nevertheless profound. Individuals handled it in various ways.

Some soldiers, to escape the memories of the fighting, vigorously sought out merriment and other diversions. When heading home to Whitefish by train from Fort Douglas, Utah, Ken Clothier and his buddy Bob Pearson from Kalispell had to change trains in Butte, where they had a three-hour layover. What better than to visit a few bars? There they were treated as heroes, lavished with free drinks, and the three-hour layover extended into three days. Clothier spent much of the following year "partying."[21]

When Leslie Slyter first returned to his mother's living room, there was much laughter at his expense as he caught sight of a prominently displayed photo of himself flanked by three bare-breasted, wild-haired Native women. He had mailed it long before with an inscription that said, "They are looking better all the time!"[22]

But homecoming was not all laughs. Joyous to be "out," the question became, What now? The welcome return to civilian status was a time of confusion for many. Certainly, the state and federal governments recognized the need to help returning soldiers. In 1944 Congress had enacted the unprecedented Servicemen's Readjustment Act, popularly know as the GI Bill, that enabled millions of returning soldiers to buy homes at low interest rates and to prepare for civilian careers through fully paid education. The Montana legislature passed an act in 1949 to provide a cash bonus to the Montana men and women who had served.

Sadly, the transition from the horrors of New Guinea to life back in Kalispell or another Montana community proved to be a difficult adjustment for many returning soldiers. Some had been away for as long as five years. There were small sons and daughters yet unmet. Relationships, maintained as well as possible by correspondence through the outstanding

20. Gary Glynn, *Montana's Home Front during World War II* (Missoula, Mont., 1994), 206.

21. Clothier interview.
22. Slyter interview.
23. Hula interview.

24. Bill De Vall, interview by author, Whitefish, Montana, May 26, 2000, tape recording in the collection of the author.

military mail service and "V-mail" (no postage stamp needed, just write "FREE" in the upper right-hand corner of the envelope), had to be renewed, reconciled, readjusted. Patience, sometimes in short supply, was required.

Thinking of his homecoming, Ed Hula nervously chuckled: "I nearly killed my wife a couple of times in my sleep. I was still fighting the war in my dreams." More disconcerting was the relationship between the father and the three-year-old son whom he had never seen. As a sergeant, Hula was accustomed to giving orders and having them obeyed. Direct orders to a three-year-old did not go over very well, and the mother had to patiently endure the conflicts.[23]

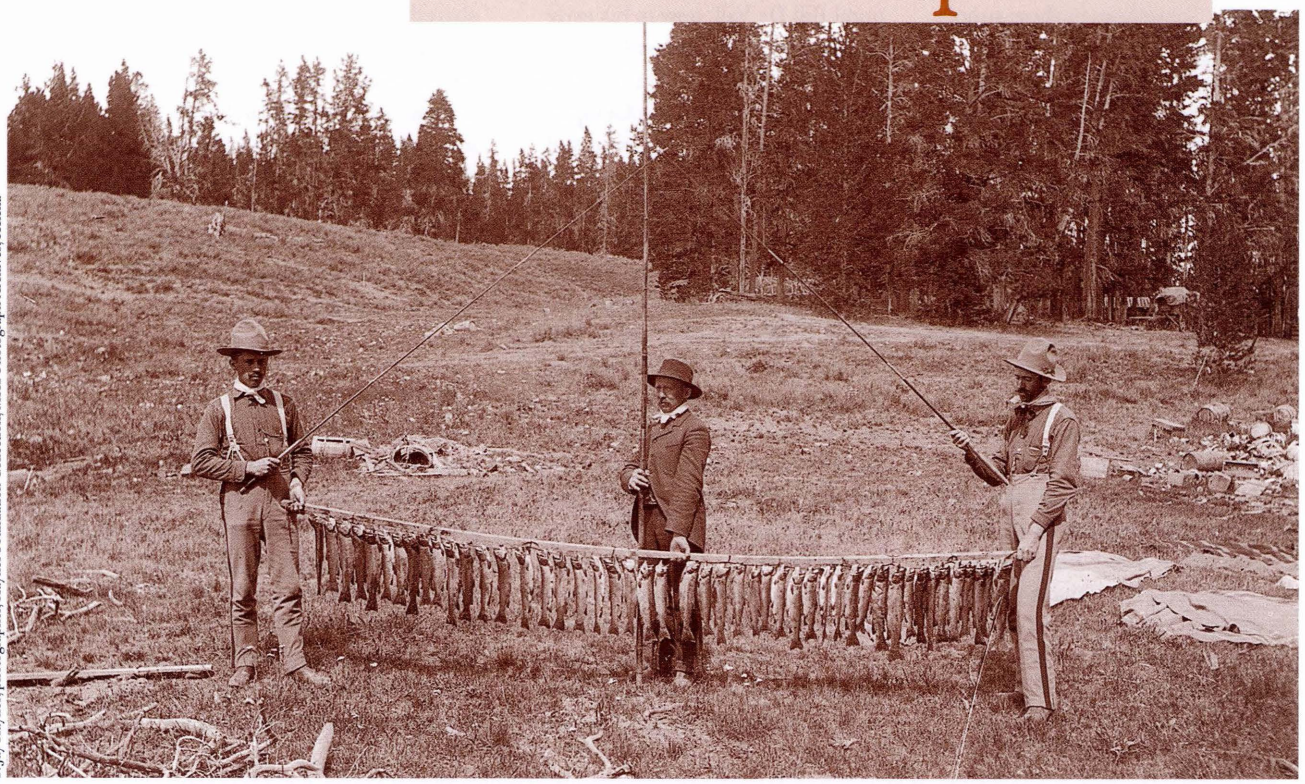
A few vets turned to alcohol and drank up their bonuses in a few short months. Some, like Hula, struggled with recurrent dreams of terror; there were lingering effects from disease, especially malaria; and there had been permanent injuries—loss of limbs, paraplegia, and "battle fatigue," later known as "post-traumatic stress syndrome." For some it took ten years or more to feel "normal," "settled in," and purposeful. One soldier from Whitefish, Corporal Bill De Vall, now in his early eighties, still struggles with the sensitivities of conscience. On Biak he and six other men of Cannon Company were ordered to lay concealed and stop any Japanese attempt to reach a desperately needed cache of rice. Just at dusk, thirty-seven of them appeared, making their way slowly down a steep trail. "We killed five and the rest fled out of sight." There was intermittent fire back and forth throughout the night. In the morning the GIs searched the casualties for maps or other information that might be useful. De Vall found a silk Japanese flag that he kept. "This flag . . . is something I . . . [could not forget.] . . . I have carried this burden for too long. In recent years I have felt an urgency to find some family of this soldier so I can put this memory to rest—to return this flag and say I am sorry. . . . I would like the families of these men to know that . . . [we gave] these men a decent burial. . . . We did the best we could."[24]

Not all of DeVall's compatriots shared his depth of feeling, but his struggle of conscience over his foe's fate illustrates the ordinary human decency of a young man forced into extraordinary and brutal circumstances. His confession is a soul-stabbing indictment of the extent of war's evils—as if the shadows of loneliness, fear, pain, illness, hunger, and death were not enough.

CARLE F. O'NEIL is a second-generation resident of Kalispell, Montana, and a one-time schoolmate of many of the members of National Guard Company F. He served in the Pacific as a member of the United States Navy during World War II. He has published several studies of Flathead Valley history and a book of short stories based on his career as a correctional institution administrator.

Soldiers lived in close, uncomfortable quarters in New Guinea, and even when they returned home, leaving the stifling tent camps behind, many suffered difficult adjustments to civilian life. Some veterans of the 163rd Regiment continue, more than sixty years later, to struggle with the horrors of the war.





F. Jay Haynes, photographer, Haynes Foundation Collection, MHS Photograph Archives, Helena

Many military personnel, including Crook's troops in 1876, took advantage of fishing opportunities when stationed in the West. Above, Minnesota National Guardsmen show off their catch from "an hour's fishing in Yellowstone Lake" in 1893.

While Custer Was Making His Last Stand

George Crook's 1876 War on Trout in the Bighorn Country

by Ken Owens

AFICIONADOS of the northern plains Indian wars are familiar with General George Crook's role in the army's 1876 summer campaign against the Sioux and Northern Cheyenne hostiles gathered around Sitting Bull. Less familiar is the story of life in Crook's camp, including the diversions that occupied the troops during idle hours. As we learn from the account of Captain John G. Bourke, Crook's adjutant, fishing for native cutthroat trout of the Bighorn country was a primary entertainment, and from Bourke's carefully recorded observations, we can glimpse the nature of early fly-fishing in this part of the West. Using both artificial flies and live bait, nearly the entire command indulged in a fishing binge, forming a rough, mixed-rank democracy of anglers while they caught thousands of fish to supplement their dreary army rations.

Crook's column was one of three independent, loosely coordinated units the army sent into the field that eventful summer. Their mission was to search out, strike, and destroy the last armed Indian resistance to the takeover of the gold-rich Black Hills and adjacent buffalo ranges, a campaign carefully planned by the Grant administration the previous December. In early June, Colonel John Gibbon led the "Montana Column" eastward from Fort Ellis near Bozeman. General Alfred Terry traveled due west from Fort Abraham Lincoln in Dakota Territory with a force that included Custer and his Seventh Cavalry troopers. Crook, meanwhile,

JUNGLEER

"TO PERPETUATE FRIENDSHIPS FORMED IN COMBAT"

Vol. XLII No. 1 February 1991

In a Military Manner

by Don Dixon

If ever there were two people that could be described as poles apart, it was George and I. I was 21 at the time, full of vinegar and all that good stuff. Three months had passed since I'd completed my apprenticeship in painting and paper hanging. I was third generation at the trade, loved it, and was looking forward to a lifetime pursuing it, honing my skills, and ready at the first cue to expound on any of the finer points — about which I knew little, but hoped some day to be an authority.

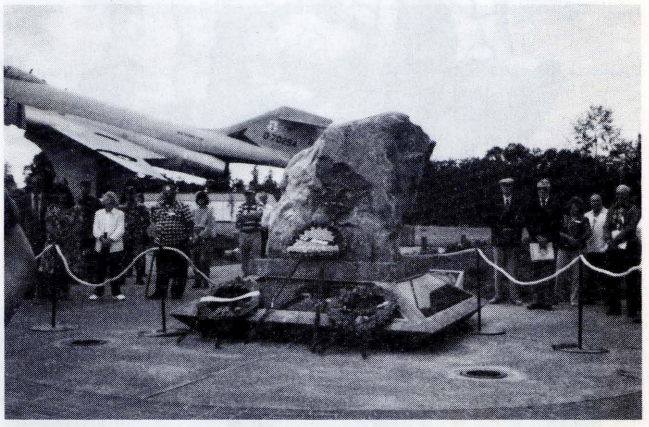
All that life and its importance had to take a back seat. I was called up with the first contingent of National Guard called into service by F.D.R. on Sept. 16, 1940.

We were shipped to Camp Murray, the back pasture of Ft. Lewis, Washington. In late summer we were to establish a camp and quarters that served us through a cold, wet winter in a bleak, undeveloped and overgrown section of the post. The draft program was in its infancy. New accommodations were being prepared. America was gearing for an inevitable war.

I was a line sergeant. I'd earned that rank in the Montana National Guard and until someone with better credentials came on the scene, I was a sergeant in the U.S. Army.

A few weeks after induction, some of the noncoms who had kept their noses clean and weathered the first few stormy challenges, were singled out and offered the opportunity to go to Ft. Benning, Georgia, to attend Officers Candidate School. For some reason, God knows why, I was selected for this dubious honor.

I reported, in my best military manner, to the Regimental C.O. at the designated time. This was my initial encounter with George. He was every inch a Regimental C.O. To George, a career as a commissioned officer in the army was, beyond doubt, the ultimate future that a budding N.C.O. could hope for. I was, I informed him, reluctantly serving the one year that had been designated by Congress, to prepare our youth for the event of war. George expounded on the opportunity I had been selected to take advantage of. I countered with my intention of fulfilling my obligation, then pursuing my chosen profession after the completion of one year of intensive training. I also mentioned my strong feelings to be "just one of the guys" and hoped he could accept my views that a commission, elevating as it was, would sever my true relationship with the "lowly" infantryman. All of this scored no points for me, but he had to accept it.



Display of wreaths at entrance to Camp Murray, Washington, celebrating the 50th Anniversary of the 41st Division's call-up to federal service, September 16, 1940. See page 4 for more photos taken at Camp Murray and the Portland Convention.

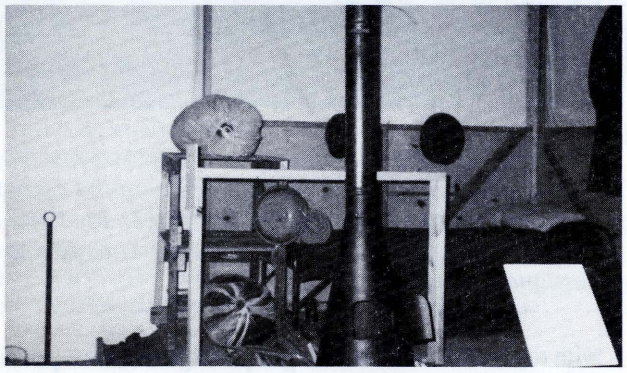
The spring of 1941 in the Northwest had to be the most beautiful ever, despite its seasonal rain. Winter in a tent city, with temperatures dropping to near zero, sharpened everyone's sense of appreciation. Our new barracks area was nearing completion. The first draftees were being assigned.

I was approached one day by our Company Commander; he had known me since I was a kid. He informed me that George had been assigned a small residence adjacent to Regimental Headquarters. He was very proud of his new quarters, however, being an individual of superior taste, he wanted something a little above what the garden variety Regimental C.O. had. As my Company Commander had seen me grow up in my trade, respected my ability, and could use a few brownie points with the C.O., he recommended me as

(continued on page 5)



"NOW—YOU APPEAR TO BE A STRONG YOUNG MAN"



Above: Sibley stove and cot as interior of Pyramidal Tent from Camp Murray. The 41st lived in these quarters during the winter of 1940-41. This display was featured at the museum at Camp Withycomb.

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Sec. Lester "Don" Culp, 5795 S. W. Elm Ave., Beaverton, OR 97005. Meets at Milwaukie Elks Lodge 3rd Wed. of each month at 11:30 a.m.

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President: John D. Linderman
Sec. George D. Moore, 4100 Pilgrim Rd., Plymouth Meeting, PA 19462. Regional meetings.

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President:
Sec. Jack Fleming, 80 Albert St., Rockhampton, Queensland, Australia.

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To correspond with any of the Assoc. officers, their addresses are as follows:

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43rd Annual Convention — 1991
41st Infantry Division Association • Great Lakes Chapter
Ramada Inn, Mackinaw, MI — Sept. 18-22, 1991

— Get your reservation in early —

ADVANCE REGISTRATION REQUEST

Mail to:
Francis Willingham
Convention Chairman
51925 Eleven Mile Rd.
So. Lyon, MI 48178

Name _____ Wife's Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

( ) Air arrival

Chapter _____ Card No. _____ Organization _____

Who to notify in case of emergency _____ Phone _____

ALL TOURS MUST BE BOOKED 1 MONTH IN ADVANCE

	Per Person	Number Attending	
Registration Fee for Chapter Members only			$5.00

Editor's Note: I have not received any information as to the tours and activities.
I also have not received any information as to costs of activities.
I do hope to have that for you in the May issue.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

GENERAL MEETING, Fri., Sept. 20, 1991, 10 a.m.
BOARD OF GOVERNORS MEETING, Sat., Sept. 21, 1991, 10 a.m.

Total _____
Deposit Required $25.00
Balance Due _____

HOTEL RESERVATION FORM

Mail directly to the hotel:
Ramada Inn
450 S. Nicolet
Mackinaw City, MI 49701 Phone (616) 436-5535

Name _____

Address _____

City and State _____

Phone _____ Zip _____

Arrival Date _____ at _____ m.
(check-in time after 3 p.m.)

Departure Date _____ at _____ m.
(check-out time 11 a.m.)

Accommodation prior to this time cannot be assured. For reservations please call (616) 436-5535. Ask for Reservations Dept.

FOR RESERVATIONS PLEASE CLIP AND MAIL THIS FORM DIRECTLY TO THE HOTEL OR CALL HOTEL DIRECTLY AT ABOVE NUMBER.

Number of Rooms and Type of Accommodations

_____ Double $42.50/night
_____ Single $42.50/night

Prices apply 3 days prior and 3 days after convention. Major credit cards accepted.

Reservation request must be received 21 days prior to arrival, deadline 8/22/91. Reservation will be held until 6 p.m. unless accompanied by a deposit or an accepted credit card number and signature. Please hold my reservation for (check one):

_____ 6 p.m. arrival
_____ Assured by my _____ credit card
(Major credit card on first night deposit)
Credit Card # _____
Expiration Date _____

FOR GUARANTEED RESERVATIONS ONLY

I understand that I am liable for one night's room and tax which will be deducted from my deposit, or billed through my credit card in the event that I do not arrive or cancel on the arrival date indicated. (Note: reservations will be accepted at above rates prior to 8/22/91 or until allotted rooms held for your event are filled, whichever comes first.)

Signed _____ Date _____

Anniversary, Convention Celebration in Pictures



Above: Harry Anderson, 41st QM at Seattle Chapter enjoys waterfalls while on Mt. Hood tour at convention.

















Clockwise from top center: National Secretary Nick Russo lays wreath in commemoration of 50th Anniversary. *Top right:* Scottish band passing in review, Camp Withycomb, Oregon, celebrating 50th Anniversary of federalizing of National Guard, August 16, 1940. *Middle right:* Members of Seattle Chapter marching behind band at Camp Murray on the occasion of the 50th Anniversary. *Lower right:* Conventioneers enjoying Grand Party (above) and Hospitality Room (below) at convention. *Lower middle:* National Guard troops passing in review for Association President Lou Reuter. *Lower left:* Colors passing in review at Camp Withycomb. *Center:* The 41st Plaque, donated by the Association, prominently displayed at the front gate of Camp Murray.

FROM THE SECRETARY

It's that time of year for dues. If your card shows 1990 or earlier, please send in your check to your chapter secretary for 1991. Thank you so much!

The forty-second convention is now a part of the history of the Association. It is now time to be thinking of the forty-third. This is being held in Mackinaw City, Michigan, Sept. 18-22, 1991. The host chapter is Great Lakes and the convention is headed by National President Francis Willingham. Come prepared to have a wonderful time as the Great Lakes Chapter is going all out with many activities. It has been quite awhile since one of our conventions has been held in the middle part of our country. All of you Mid-Westerners and Easterners should take advantage of the location. I hope that I will see many of you at this reunion.

After eight years of constant use, the Association's computer created some problems. The "B" drive went kaput! It was decided that instead of just replacing the drive, that the unit would be upgraded to a hard disk. I am now in the process of transferring all programs to the new disk. I ask all you secretaries to be patient as I have gotten behind because of this extra work.

To all of you 41st'ers, a very happy New Year!

—Nick Russo

In a Military Manner

(continued from page 1)

a solution to both their problems.

I reported to George's quarters the following evening to survey the situation and make my recommendations. George was in his shorts and had half a face full of shaving cream. He outlined his ideas. Apparently he was impressed with what I had to offer, so he gave me a free hand to dress it up as I saw fit. Now we were talking business.

The next couple of weeks I saw little or nothing of George. I went to town on the weekend and picked up the brushes and materials I needed. I enameled the kitchen and bathroom, added a touch of color, masculine to sure, to the bedroom and living room. Generally speaking, I made it somewhat more liveable than the G.I. type treatment it had received on the government contract. George loved it and, as I learned on the grapevine, was very proud to show it off.

As I had given my time and expertise and given up several weekend passes to the cause, I felt I was entitled to more than a "thank you" — perhaps some monetary compensation. Granted, I was in the army. I had, however, against my wishes, forfeited a job at $1.25 per hour in civilian life (a fair amount in those days). I reasoned a fair consideration, say 50 cents an hours should be acceptable to all concerned. I wrote out a bill for materials and supplies at cost and added 50 cents an hour for labor. I enclosed cash sales slips for all I had spent and delivered it to Regimental Hdqrs. clearly marked "personal" for George.

Days added up to weeks. Almost a month passed with no reply. I was toying with the idea of sending a past due notice when a runner came to my barracks and presented me with an envelope, for which I signed. It contained a check for full payment. I was really quite relieved, as the thought had crossed my mind that I may not have acted in a prudent military manner.

A full year, give or take a week, passed. We were at war. The intensive training we'd experienced conditioned us for what was in store. We were preparing to embark for God only knew where. Rumors inspired rumors. In all the hustle and bustle and shuffling of personnel, Company "C" was assigned a new Company Commander, Capt. "Scratchy" Hill, formerly with Reg. H.Q. Word reached our barracks during the noon hour that the new C.O. had arrived. Approximately 30 minutes later I received an order to report to the orderly room. For what I hadn't the vaguest idea. I reported immediately and was told that the Captain wanted to see me. Upon entering his office I threw him a highball, "Sgt. Dixon reported as directed," I said, and waited for God knows what.

"At ease, Sgt.," he said, then just sat and stared at me. "I just wanted," he continued, "to meet the S.O.B. that had guts enough to send the Ol' Man a bill for labor. He's after your ass, Dixon, and your stripes. You and I are going to see he don't get 'em. Incidentally, did he ever pay you?"

I assured him I'd been paid, but refrained from telling him that the check had been signed by Mrs. George.

Several more months passed. Amid uncountable rumors and confusing, often rescinded orders, we packed and crated. We received new issues of various types of equipment, all of which only added to the confusion and rumor mills. My vast experience in the paint field landed me the opportunity to practice my skills stencilling our identifying markings on all of our crates and equipment.

Eventually, we arrived in San Francisco and were placed on alert at a camp in the middle of the city. Limited involvement in anything more than light training and very limited passes granted only added to our confusion.

After about a week of much to do about nothing, the orders came through and we were really put to work. The three rifle companies, each with a platoon attached from the weapons company of our 1st Battalion, were assigned an eight-hour shift of guard duty on a wharf where the Queen Elizabeth, the world's largest ship, was docked and re-outfitted into a troop ship. From an hour before she docked until half an hour before she sailed, we were responsible for her security.

(continued on page 9)

Chapter NEWS

■ Great Lakes Chapter

Our fourth annual chapter reunion to be held in Botkins, Ohio, hosted by Emerson and Jan Koenig (I-186) was more than a success. Forty-two cobbers plus their wives and guests, 12 for their first time in Botkins, enjoyed the small town atmosphere on August 18 and 19. A special feature was the Senior Citizens Band of Lima, Ohio, with their old-time patriotic renditions. Three Aussie war brides present were Golda Berner of Indianapolis, Indiana, Barbara Calwell of Springfield, Illinois, and Jan Koenig, our hostess.

Because of the Koenigs we have several new members from Ohio now in our chapter. Three new B-186 men this year are Robert Newhart, Fred McGee, and Leo Moskala. McGee has furnished us with an old roster of B-186 men. Other new chapter members are Robert F. Dakin (Med-162), Chester Mischley (G-162), Karllos E. Hulko (K-186), Jewell Gaddy (F-163), Earl Smedley (I-162), and Max Zimmerman (G-163). Also we corresponded with and referred Harvey Fuchs to the Midwest Chapter. Harvey was in DHQ.

Deaths we are sorry to have to report include four sent to Emerson Koenig. Richard B. Caldwell (HQ Div Arty) died May 14, 1989, in Burghill, Ohio. Charles Eric Davidson of Willoughby, Ohio, date of death unknown, is now deceased. Fidelus L. Noe (Sv-186) of Swanton, Ohio, died way back in 1959. John Vadas of Warren, Ohio, died Dec. 11, 1987. Other deaths recently are Stanley J. Depowski (Med-162), Dearborn Heights, Michigan, on July 14, 1990, and Gerald F. Ihme, Warren, Michigan (K-162) on Oct. 8, 1990.

At least 22 of our cobbers, and most wives, were in attendance at the Portland Reunion on Sept. 12-16. Our WWI buddy, John Kuzara (M-163), now about 91, drove alone from Oxford, Michigan, to the Oregon reunion and was honored at the Saturday night banquet as the oldest paid member of our Division Association. Francis Willingham (F-163) of South Lyon, Michigan, was elected as our new National President but was unable to attend most of the convention. Upon arrival in Portland he learned of the death of his mother-in-law and returned immediately by auto to Michigan. Our condolences to Francis and Rose Mary.

Our meeting and fall dinner on Nov. 4 was an important one. We elected our chapter officers for the coming year, arranged our special 1991 Reunion planning meetings, and finalized activities to host the National Reunion in September in Mackinaw City, Michigan, at the Ramada Inn. The correct dates of the National Convention are Sept. 17-22, 1991.

News of members includes Allson F. Buchanan (D-186) who has moved from Southfield, Michigan to Port St. Lucie, Florida. Waldo A. Gilbert has moved but is still in Rushsylvania, Ohio (F-186). Matt A. Kinnunen (CO of K-186) from Chassell, Michigan, has recently married and introduced his wife to us at the Portland reunion. Matt is the donor of the Jap flag signed by all the 186 officers before Biak. Alan E. Rock (HQ-186) has moved but still in Akron, Ohio. A letter to Stevan Berdynski (186) has been returned undeliverable from Toledo, Ohio, as has one to C. C. Estep from Lucasville, Ohio, one to John Jerdonek (A-163) from Willoughby, Ohio, Earl R. Marr (B-186) from Martins Ferry, Ohio, and William O. Martin (C-186) from Toledo. Anyone know the whereabouts of these men?

— Chester F. Clark

■ Potomac Chapter

Gettysburg meeting was attended by 24 people: Charles and Emma Bauer; Paul and Dottie Blauser; Al and Lorraine Levanduski; John and Letha Linderman; George and Claire Moore, daughter Diane and granddaughter Elizabeth; Bill and Phyllis Murray; George and Helen Papadoplos; Leo Poremski; Stanley Opszentkoski; Anthony and Phylora Shipula; Mike and Theresa Vagenos; Chester and Velma Young. Sunday morning Mike Vagenos' daughter and son-in-law, granddaughter and grandson came to tour the area. A good time was had by all.

Condolences to John J. Fahey who lost his wife in June after 45 years of marriage. Also to George Kraemer who lost his wife in September after 43 years of marriage. *Jungleer* donations from Dave Camack, Jerome Soper, Ed Debelek. Thank you. Edna Morrow now living with daughter Susan in Decatur, Georgia.

Next meeting Feb. 16, 1991, President's weekend at Ocean City, Maryland. The annual picnic is scheduled for Saturday, June 1 at Chester and Velma Young's home in Petersburg, Virginia.

Help Needed. Edward Debelek, 576 Center Hill Rd., Pittsburgh, PA 15239 is trying to obtain maps of the area around the Lascon Plantation located northwest of Davao on Mindanao. Any leads or help would be greatly appreciated. Hargis could not help. Can you? Inquiry from Billy T. Skeen. Trying to find a John Ronko, 163 "C" Co. 3rd Platoon. He believes John manually drug him out of a fire fight on Jolo Island where Billy was shot. Can anyone help him? I sent him addresses of four "C" Co. men in Potomac Chapter. No record of John Ronco in Potomac Chapter. Phone call from Mike Moran, Hq 3 163 of Temple Hills, Maryland. He was attending a bowling banquet and one of his tablemates was William Shirhart of Clinton, Maryland who was in C, D-163. Will try

and get him to join.

As time goes by a secretary has many requests for information and addresses. I do what I can but never hear of results. Following story makes one feel good. John Busha met Ed Lasecki at the V.A. Hospital in Philadelphia last year. Ed had on his 41st Div. vest and they started talking. Ed sent me his name and address. I printed it in a Potomac newsletter. Around Memorial Day, John was in the hospital in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, for gall bladder. He got word from a corporal and another fellow from around Detroit, Michigan where John was inducted.

"The Corporal was on the front line with me when I got out and was told to go back and get the corporal out when a Jap sniper hit me. They wondered how I got to be in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania."

So you can see how meeting Ed Lasecki has brought a few Jungleers together again. Your Bar Man, John Busha. Ed Lasecki died August 9, 1990.

— George Moore

Potomac Chapter Gettysburg Meeting Nov. 2, 1990



Front row, left to right: Charles Bauer, Stanley Opszentkoski, Leo Poremski, Mike Vagenos. Second row: George Moore, John Linderman, Paul Blauser, Anthony Shipula, Al Levandusky. Standing: Chester Young, George Papadoplos, Bill Murray.



Front row, left to right: Claire Moore, Velma Young, Letha Linderman, Theresa Vagenos. Back row: Phyllis Murray, Lorraine Levandusky, Dottie Blauser, Phylora Shipula, Helen Papadoplos, Emma Bauer.

■ Portland Chapter

Convention notes. Elsewhere in this newsletter you will find a letter from Portland Chapter President Nick Wheeler which is a report on the convention. Here are a few observations which may not find their place in Nick's report. Harold Stopyra reports that at the unit dinner for HQ-218, the hat was passed for contributions toward the costs of their meeting. They ended up with a surplus of $100 which was donated to the Chapter postage fund. Thanks, guys.

Norm Ross (H-162) told that his father posted the first guard at Arlington National Cemetery. If I can read my notes right, Norm was commissioned and assigned to the 32nd Division.

There were two Carl Gustafsons. One has passed on and the other is alive and well in Aloha, Oregon. He was in HQ-186 and he and I are in the same VFW Post.

Fourteen men of the Association went to the dedication of the Gunner Larson Armory in St. Helens on Sept. 16, the day the convention ended.

Charles Crary sent a copy of General Orders Headquarters 162nd Inf., APO 41, dated Aug. 2, 1945, citing units and individuals entitled to wear the Distinguished Unit Badge. This covered organic and attached units, 1st Battalion, 162nd Infantry. Crary was with B-162 as a private at the time of the orders.

George F. Erbe, who lives at 2 Crooked Lane, Naples, FL 33962, wrote after seeing the notice of our convention. What George wants to know is, does anyone remember the 10th Portable Surgical Hospital? It was attached to 3rd Battalion of 162 in New Guinea in 1943 for the Nassau Bay-Salamaua campaigns. If any of you remember, drop George a line. He said in his letter that he would be unable to attend but really wanted to hear about his unit, and sent his best regards to all.

John Panek was admitted to the VA Hospital in Portland as of Sept. 26. John was with SVC-B-C 218. Drop him a line and wish him speedy recovery.

Message to the Membership from Nick Wheeler. I want to express my feelings of gratitude and appreciation to those members of our Chapter who contributed their time and all-out efforts for our convention program.

Our 50th Anniversary Celebration pre-planning group met on Oct. 6, 1987, in its first organizing effort. the Oregon Military Department joined our effort Feb. 15, 1989. With hours and hours of meetings, making decisions to ensure success, planning our logistical moves in a complete team effort with capable volunteers we have given our Association a convention package that will be long remembered.

We are deeply indebted to Betty and Donald Culp for their most efficient and capable handling of the overwhelming pre-registration response and the accounting of funds. Hours and hours were donated by them to our cause even

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Chapter News

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before the convention began. Due to the loss of our Secretary because of illness they teamed together to handle the productive and efficient work crew. Having been involved in this effort in the past I can appreciate their deep involvement.

To Bud Lewis, the real work horse, and his wife Janet, who arranged the flower display for our table settings. They worked with dedication. We could never have assembled the gift packs with favors without his contacts with the business community. As the convention chairman his actions were superb and it was a remarkable achievement.

To Ken and Edith Sloan who let us use their home to store and assemble our favors we are deeply indebted. To the assembly crew who donated a full work day in a monumental effort of packing supplies and to Ken Sloan for his experience and help with his transportation crew. To Captain Newsom who gave much of his time and efforts in assisting with our logistics and supply problems.

To Sgt. David Funk of public relations for a wonderful tireless supporting effort. To Kent Freeman and his hours of attention to detail in setting up our printed program, which contains our induction roster.

To the registration and work crew. Some 18 people were involved including the wives of the Guard officers. What a fine effort. I commend Lawrence Grissom, Arnold Thom and the Griffiths who volunteered to serve in working additional shifts and for availing themselves in emergency situations.

To the ladies who organized one of the best ladies luncheon programs ever scheduled in a convention effort. To all of our wives, who were supportive of all our activities, especially to my wife Barbara for being my right hand and her hours of hard work.

To the golf committee, Sherman and Esther Pierce and Howard Bottemiller who organized a classic event. You made us proud.

To the hospitality room crews organized by Tiny and Ella Bates. It was a real effort of organization and supply. For his entire group who volunteered for more than double duty we are most appreciative.

To Harold Stopyra for his long hours spent on the banquet seating, to Bob Miller for his hours of support at the gift table and for procuring and handling of the handicap vehicle. To Bill Procasco for his counsel, advice and input into our fine memorial program. To Bill Johnson for his efforts at the airport greeting and assisting our arrivals over a three-day period.

The military people assigned to us were not only very efficient and courteous, they set a lasting impression of the fine caliber of our youth now serving in the Oregon Guard. the Chaplain James McDonald, the color guard detail who performed brilliantly, the Bagpipers and the entire 41st Separate Brigade of Infantry who performed for us. What a wonderful display. To Gordon Waite who was most helpful and the rest of General Rees's staff we are most grateful for their loyal assistance and support.

To Dick Miller, our master of ceremonies, who did a very commendable job. He helped make our day. And a special thanks to General Raymond Rees for his most loyal support and for serving as our honored guest speaker.

I have been honored and I am proud to have been in a position to coordinate this fine Chapter effort. To all of those who helped in the events at the Red Lion, I thank all of you. It was a wonderful effort and has strengthened our growing Portland Chapter. —*Nick Wheeler*

More thanks. Seems like we have given up a lot of space here to saying "Thank You," but as in the case of any large undertaking there are a lot of people to thank. Some of those we don't want to overlook are those who sent memorabilia for display at the convention. I will probably miss someone but I sure hope not, and I may get some wrong but here goes.

Ralph Connell (Sv-162) for his letter dated March 5, 1943, which included a story of his trip overseas on the Santa Paula. If Ralph says okay I will send copies to those who would like it. He also sent a good copy of a picture of Service Company at Ft. Lewis in 1941, copies also available. Send a small donation to cover costs.

Convention winner. The grand prize for this year's raffle which was held during the Saturday night dinner banquet was won by Emil "Skinny" Sorenson's wife (Svc-205) from Ellensburg, Washington. The prize consisted of six beautiful bolo knives that had been brought home from the Philippines. Five were donated by William Baldwin (Svc-186) and one was donated by Arnold Thom (Hq-162) who was leading a unit of the 32nd Division. They were presented with handmade sheaths in a beautiful red velvet background wall display. The knife display was professionally created and donated to us by Terry Bottemiller who is the son of Howard (A-205) of West Linn.

We all remember the beautiful painting that was the grand prize at Kalispell. It was a picture of the 1889-1989 Montana Centennial which was the theme of that convention. It is hard to believe that is was also won by the wife of Emil "Skinny" Sorenson.

Odds and ends. Kenneth Cusick would like to hear from anyone who came to tell him about his brother, Ed Cusick. He thinks that Ed was a Medic in 186, was commissioned and then sent to either 162 or 163. Kenneth can be reached at 2300 Durant Ave., Berkeley, CA 94704. Al Grauerholz (M-Sv 162) came to the convention and introduced himself to me and I never saw him again. He is a member of Mid-South Chapter, and was looking for an old buddy? Daryl Morrow and wanted to meet an L. Freeman who did some sketches that he did that Morrow has or had. I screwed up and did not respond to the Growler but will in the near future.

The Growler has a history of the 162 that should be published some time this year. The book's name will be

"Salamaua Soldiers: American Soldiers Under Australian Generals."

There are some additional souvenir cups available from Portland Chapter at $6 each including postage. There are also program booklets available at $2 each, including postage. Send requests and checks to Kent Freeman. Checks should be made to Portland Chapter, 41st Division Association.

— Kent Freeman

In a Military Manner

(continued from page 5)

The French ship, Normandie, had just been sunk for the second time in N.Y. Harbor. That such a fate did not befall the "Queen E" was the concern of a great number of security people from the top U.S. officials right down to our units. With three gangplanks, our three rifle platoons rotated on daily shifts.

As platoon sergeant of the second platoon, my command post was right at whichever gangplank we were assigned that day. Not a lunch box, case of nails, sling of lumber, or anything else going aboard that vessel went unchecked. Security at the entrance to the wharf was equally as strict, and passes to go aboard were checked and double checked. The screening was intense. Our orders were that absolutely nobody was to go aboard without proper identification and an authorized pass.

The transition from one of the world's most exotic passenger ships to a troop ship took one week. Luxury furnishings, etc., were brought ashore and carted away to be put in storage. These were replaced by literally thousands of bunk beds and mess tables. Latrine and shower accommodations were plumbed in, and God knows what all. The work was performed by civilian labor, all of whom had to be checked aboard each shift.

Although the sailing time was "Top Secret," we all knew as the week progressed, to within a few hours of when she was to embark. When the afternoon of embarkation arrived, I was, with my platoon spotted throughout that portion of the ship, assigned to the main gangplank. We were informed she was to sail at 5 p.m. Excitement filled the air. Dignitaries from the Cunard Steamship Line, government officials, U.S. and British, hustled and bustled about. Military officers I'd only heard about approached, had their passes checked dutifully and proceeded with their missions. My post was right at the end of that gangplank. I'm sure it was no less than 200 yards from the entrance to the wharf through the long aisle, both sides of which were lined with trucks, pallets stacked high with supplies, equipment and I don't know what all. The center aisle, approximately 40 ft. wide was a bustle of traffic and pedestrians, moving as if on conveyor belts between the ship and the street outside.

At about 2:30 p.m., halfway from the main gate, I could see another encounter approaching, a party of five, two of them lovely ladies, bedecked in their garden party finery, both the epitome of what the social photographers from the local press would be tuning in on. The other three were higher ranking officers, two of whom I'd never seen before. The other, all spit and polish, his most amiable air, and for all the world feeling no pain and the perfect host, George. With all his military bearing and authoritative manner, he approached my post, returned my salute, and presented his pass. "These are my guests, Sgt.," he said.

"Yes, Sir," I replied. "Do they have passes?"

George's face began to flush. "These are my guests, Sgt. They have come to see me off. I will assume full responsibility."

I had my instructions: "If the King of England, escorted by Churchill and F.D.R. comes up here without passes, don't let 'em aboard."

"Sorry, Colonel," I shot back. "If they go back to the main gate and are issued passes, I'll be glad to admit them aboard, but as you know, my orders are firm."

George was boiling. "Sergeant!" he began, then controlling whatever it was that had sent his complexion livid, he stopped. For an eternity of at least 10 seconds we both contemplated the situation. "Who is the Officer of the Guard?" he asked.

"Lt. Laum," I replied, inwardly elated that there might be a solution of sorts to this confrontation.

"I want to speak to him!" he snapped.

Fortunately, our command post was behind a row of pallets, approximately 60 feet away, and right outside a large room with toilet facilities we had been assigned for breaks.

I could see Lt. Laum trying to appear inconspicuous, yet hoping against hope that things would adjust themselves. Abruptly, he straightened his cap, readjusted his pistol belt and advanced briskly.

"What is the difficulty, Sergeant?" he asked, then he wheeled, and with an air of surprise, saluted and said, "Oh, Good Afternoon, Colonel."

"Get this...!...ah...Can you relieve the sergeant of his duties, Lieutenant?" he asked.

"Why, yessir, Colonel," came the reply, and seeing his entire military career rising or falling in the balance, he assumed command of the entire situation.

"I'll take your post, Sergeant. Go have a cigarette and report back in 10 minutes."

"Thy will be done." Forgive me, Lord, but prayers were answered before said. Three of us survived unscathed for the present.

I've never heard why, but while we were at sea the order came down — that's the direction all of them come from — maybe it was due to a sudden rise in blood pressure, but George was relieved of command.

Our new C.O. met us as we docked in Australia, and I heard George took the first military flight back to the U.S.A.

MAIL CALL

Hello, Nick:

The 50th anniversary of the 41st Division has come and gone but it will never be forgotten by myself and I'm sure a lot of others. Your Portland Chapter did such a wonderful and remarkable job with the hotel arrangements and entertainment, and the day spent at the Guard Armory and grounds were heart rendering. I'm sure that during the parade and the 21-gun salute, many of us shed a few tears in silence in remembering those of our comrades who made the ultimate sacrifice so far away from home so many years ago. Even as I write this letter I feel the tears on my cheeks remembering our fellow comrades.

Through your efforts I was able to locate and join at the convention six of the "Old Guts" that were in our Company 186 Hq. Co. 1st Bn. The last time we saw one another was at Biak Island in November of 1944. Over the past year or so you sent me their addresses and I was able to get us all together in Portland. I just had to write and tell you how much your efforts were appreciated. The fellows I am speaking of are Carl Gustafson, Ed Ragnone, Darrell Morrow, ? Siebert, Mike Maczarich, Hyman Berman and Al Hoffmeister.

Thanks again,
Tony Kuehnle
2322 S. E. 6th Ave.
Cape Coral, FL 33990-2505

Dear Nick:

Along about the middle of September I came up with your name, so I called. Since you were unavailable, I was fortunate in having the opportunity to talk with your wife, Charlene. She was of marvelous assistance and provided me with lots of good information.

Charlene suggested that I write a note for inclusion in the next issue of the *Jungleer* in which I ask for information about my old outfit — Headquarters Company, 3rd Battalion, 162 Infantry Regiment. But, I think I'll put that off for the time being since I am writing to Hargis Westerfield in hopes that he can fill in a few blanks.

I'm including a small check to cover the cost of a belt buckle and to make a contribution to the *Jungleer*. I am really looking forward to receiving future issues. Oh, yes, I am also sending a check to Richard Schumann for dues to the Association.

Best regards,
C. H. McCormack
8607 East Via Del Sereno
Scottsdale, AZ 85258

Dear Nick:

H Company 162nd Inf. held its annual reunion at the National Convention in Portland this year. We had a great time and in the future we hope to hold our annual reunions in conjunction with the National Conventions.

The unit had their company dinner at the Matterhorn in Portland. Enclosed picture of those attending:



Seated left to right: Joe Proeller, Al Cieslak, Ken McLain, Don Goodwin, Charley Jachim. Standing left to right: Tom Lynch, Earl Norgard, Mike McCarty, Norman Ross, Ken Pinnon, John Markert, Ken Yost.



Ladies, seated left to right: Betty Ross, Elenor McCarty, Iva Yost, Kitty Jachim. Standing left to right: Mary Ann Markert, Mrs. Ken McLain, Frances Norgard, Jeannie Krambs, Mary Alice Goodwin.

Not at the dinner but also making the reunion were George Burg, Bob Schwartz, Zoeth Skinner and Harold Ellingson.

Ken and Iva Yost and Earl and Frances Norgard really showed us a great time. After the convention a few of us spent some days with the Yosts in Terrebone, Oregon.

We are looking forward to next year in Mackinaw City, Michigan.

Charley Jachim (Co H 162 Inf.)
1511 E. Orchard Beach Lane
Rice Lake, WI 54868

Dear Nick:

I am sorry that I forgot to sign and put my unit on the letter with my donation, so this time, I included it in my return address. I was in a hurry to get it in the mailbox before the mailman came to pick up the mail which is why I hate to do things in a hurry because I forget some important things. Enclosed are Xerox copies of articles that appeared in the Clackamas County Review that a cousin of mine who knew about the reunion sent to me. I thought you might be interested in how the newspapers outside of Portland covered the reunion.

As ever,
Earl Legge
5220 176th St. W. 40
Lynnwood, WA 98037

Hi there:

Just a note along with these three clippings. We are losing our former buddies everyday now. But we should be grateful for these added years that we have had after what we all went through.

Saw Sgt. Lavener Walker of H 163rd Inf. at a class reunion in July. Showing some age on him now. I hear Dr. Jenkins who is in Houston, Texas is not in too good of shape. I'll have to go down and cheer him up soon. (He's from 186 3rd Bn Medics.)

I didn't make it to Portland for the convention. The accommodations were a little high for this cobber. A feller could take in two conventions in Montana for what it would cost in the big cities. This subject should be of concern to the next time and place committee.

Closing for now,
Clarence "Doc" Clement
220 E. 7th
Hardin, MT 59034

Thanks, Nick for the Q.M. list (received yesterday). If I can make it to the reunion next year, I will try to get them all to come with a mail-out.

Enclosed is some information for the *Jungleer* or you might want to send them on to Westerfield.

Sincerely,
Joe Smith
5516 Green Oak Dr.
Los Angeles, CA 90068

Editor's note: The following was sent in by Joe Smith.

Japs Brand 41st Division "Butchers"

Col. Fred Roecker of Walla Walla, just back from more than two years in the Southwest Pacific, expressed the belief Tuesday that the monicker "the 41st Division Butchers" will stick to the old Pacific Northwest based unit "as long as the Division remains in existence."

"The Japs gave them the name," said the erstwhile division quartermaster, "and the men are proud of it because it shows that the enemy recognizes their ability as fighting men."

The 41st Infantry Division originally was composed of Pacific Northwest National Guardsmen and the former *Walla Walla Union Bulletin* circulation manager paid high tribute for its achievements in some of the most bitter fighting of the Pacific theater, in the face of seemingly insurmountable supply problems.

The division was commanded in prewar years by Maj. General George A. White, who died two weeks before the Pearl Harbor attack, and Roecker commented:

"I remember General White often said he wished the division would get a distinctive name. I hope he knows that they've earned one — and a good one."

He said he felt that the 41st, commanded by Maj. Gen. Horace H. Fuller, deserved the greatest credit for the final conquest of New Guinea. Roecker himself wears the badge of a presidential citation for a special 41st task force which landed on New Guinea in December, 1942.

"It was really pretty rugged in those days," he said in an interview, "because we didn't have the new, modern equipment which the troops out there have now.

"The only landing barges we had were some we had captured from the Japs and repaired. You might say that we had to go in wearing rubber boots. The troops that followed us could wear carpet slippers after the 41st had cleaned up. The supply problem was pretty tough."

As quartermaster, he faced many problems which aren't "in the book — you just had to improvise the best way you could with what you had."

As an example, he described how gasoline had to be supplied by hauling it around the New Guinea Coast in trawlers and dumping the drums into the water for natives to "swim ashore."

By contrast, he said, "Now they can take big tankers right up to a dock and pump the gas ashore."

In the first New Guinea campaign, it was necessary to handle supplies 14 times to move them 12 miles, and "even after we had corduroy roads it took jeeps six hours to make the 12 miles. I was using 70 jeeps, but the most I could move was eight tons in 24 hours."

In the early New Guinea campaigning, he explained, the Japanese often would dig in beside a trail and attack from the rear after a column passed.

"That was really nasty fighting," he remarked, "but the Japs aren't fighting as hard now as they did at first. Lots of them are plenty glad to surrender. I even heard of one Jap lieutenant who surrendered to an American soldier who was armed with nothing but a club — and the Jap had both a saber and a revolver. But the Tiger division of Jap marines at Salamaua was something else again. All big men, they were really tough.

Roecker said he was relieved as division quartermaster

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Mail Call

(continued from page 11)

March 21 and assigned to headquarters of the base section. His wife and youngest child, Joan Mary, 14, greeted the colonel here. A son, Capt. Frederick C. Roecker, Jr., 1942 West Point graduate, now is serving in Europe.

Dear Nick:

Just a note to send you $20 dues for the Association. I see by my membership card that I am paid up to Dec. 31, 1990.

Joan and I were back in Oregon in June and July this year, but could not stretch our visit to September and attend the convention. I attended the International Rotary Convention in Portland in June. We drove from Portland to Los Angeles in July and stopped off on the way to see all the sights and visit friends and relatives.

Have had a few visitors from the states. Those from the 41st were Andy Hammer, Condon, Montana; Leo Boyce, Baker, Oregon; Dick Rutledge, Caldwell, Idaho; and several from other places and other units. It is always good to see someone from back home.

Don't think we will be getting back to Oregon for another visit until 1993 for my Salem High School 55th class reunion.

I have been corresponding with Bill Heath in Boise, Idaho, and he said he attended the first day at the 41st convention, but could not stay any longer, due to having to attend the reunion of the 148th FA. He did say if I wrote to you, you may have an extra copy of the reunion program that you could send me. He said it was a very good program. If you have an extra copy, I would appreciate your sending me one.

I am still keeping busy with my research on U.S. forces in Australia during World War II. One thing you may be able to help me with: I need a list of all the units attached to the 41st during the time they were in Australia, Engineers, QM, Med., etc. Add the regiments also.

How time flies — it's been 20 years since the 41ster's visit down here in 1970.

Will keep in touch, 8708785
Bill Bentson
15 Kapunda St., Toowong
Brisbane, Queensland
Australia 4066

Dear Friends All:

This is a letter I'm reluctant to write. I feel as if I'm letting you down. I must though let you know. Effective immediately I am resigning from the following offices in the various organizations.

Great Lakes Chapter of the 41st Inf. Div. Assn. — As Corresponding Secretary for Michigan, Ohio, and eastern Indiana for the past more than 11 years, I now ask someone else to take over.

Howell Area Archives — As a member of this committee for more than a decade, and actively participating weekly for a couple of years as chairman, I now put these activities in the capable hands of our vice chairman, Duane Zemper.

Livingston County Historical Society — Currently as Corresponding Secretary I now resign this position, and from activities on the board. As long as I am able, I wish to continue my historical column in the Fowlerville paper, and to fulfill talks to organizations and school children already committed.

Livingston County Coin Club — I wish to resign as Treasurer at the first election of officers, a position I accepted as interim when officers were needed.

Michigan State Numismatic Society — As a state board member for I believe 16 years, in this fall's election I was on the ball enough not to run again so this is already resolved.

In having physical tests earlier this fall I learned I have cancer. Then a bone scan revealed bone cancer which has spread. And now each 28 days, under a specialist's care, I have a $400 tiny pellet shot into the fatty part of my tummy. Actually I feel quite well. Whether this all will be controllable, curable, or whether I'll have only a few weeks, a few months, or even years, we do not know. I do know no one can take away the nearly 73 years I've had — wonderful years — especially working with such folks as all of you. It is my wish now to get all records and materials of these organizations into your proper hands so Yvonne will not have to do this. Also maybe I can dispose of all of my trading stock and even personal collections without leaving this for Yvonne to do.

Most gratefully and sincerely yours,
Chester Clark
3367 Jewell Rd.
Howell, Michigan

Hi, Nick:

It was a great convention. In your article you said you could use some pictures. This one I am sending was from the Grand Party. *Front row, left to right: Truman Slotte, Marvin Irby and Matt Kinnunen. Back row: Ted Merydith and Herman Zier. The wives were on the other side of the table. All from Co. L 186 Inf.*

Keep up the good work,
T. Merydith
980 Prescott Ln. Rd.
Springfield, OR 97477



Getting Personal

Dear Mr. Willingham,

Thank you for taking the time and effort to send me a copy of the *Jungleer* with a report of Paul's death. I appreciate it very much. Best wishes to you and your family.

Sincerely,
Mrs. Paul Kappen

Nick Russo:

Hargis Westerfield suggested I write to you regarding a question I have that has been bothering me for several years.

At the 1984 Reunion in Portland I purchased a placemat with a map to "Follow the Jungleers in World War II." Subsequently, I've seen the same map reproduced in McCartney's book "The Jungleers" (both inside the front and back cover), and again this year at the Portland 50th Anniversary Reunion with a duplicate of this map on the back of a pamphlet handout entitled "41st Separate Infantry Brigade Change of Command Program."

I contend that there is an error on this map regarding the route of the Santa Paula and the Uruguay out of New York, via the Panama Canal, with stops at Bora Bora, Auckland, New Zealand, and ending up in Melbourne. The map shows "Convoy splits — part to Auckland, part to Brisbane" — this is what I believe to be an error unless we had a ghost ship with us! I was on the Uruguay, although I was Exec of AT Co. at the time, and A.T. was on the Santa Paula — this through an omission by the regimental adj. by leaving five of us, who had been at Ft. Benning, and rejoining the outfit at Ft. Dix, off the boarding manifest of the Santa Paula.

Both of these ships left New York together, travelled together all of the way to Melbourne and docked the same day. From aboard the Uruguay I watched the Santa Paula all of the way across the Pacific and do not recall ever seeing another troop ship and have never talked to anyone making this "detour" through Brisbane.

Can you clarify this? Further, if I am correct, and this is an error, any further use of this map should be discontinued, or corrected.

Regards,
Harlan Kness (H - A.T. - Cannon - 162nd)
2516 E. 27th St.
Vancouver, WA 98661

Dear Nick:

Received the dues cards — thank you very much. Also in this letter is a check for $6.50 for the hat. Again, I want to thank you.

I hope my luck runs better than this year's. On Aug. 23, they operated on my left knee which kept filling up with fluid. Sept. 14, I was back in the hospital with a gall bladder operation. I spent 11 days in the hospital. Now I am recuperating at home and hope to go to Michigan in 1991 if the good Lord is willing.

Sincerely yours,
F.A. Ashman, Jr.
24 Emerson Pl.
Melrose, MA 02176

GENEROUS 41ST'ERS

Patrick W. Campbell
James C. Haley (Hq-163)
John W. Kornichuk (641 TD)
C. H. McCormack (Hq-3-162)
Arthur B. Keller
Philip J. Koltke (41st Sig)
James G. Bilodeaux (Hq-1-146, A-641, 98 CML)
John J. Di Cosmo
Walter E. Larson
Alan R. Morse (Hq-218)
Stanley Hertenstein (G-162)
C. J. Hamilton (MP)
Julius P. Orlando (G-162, CN-162)
Willard Pendelton (B-116 Eng)
Douglas A. Olson (L-163)
Don E. Duvall (Hq-1-163)
Goar L. Kosing (G-163)
Frank W. Hollister (MD-162)
William A. Minner (E-186)
William A. McLaughlin (C-162)
Ben E. Kuhn (41 RCN)
Frank Kraska (H-186)
Martin Chlapecka (L-163)
Byrne J. Barrett (Sv-163)
Andrew McDermaid (F, B-218)

The Division History, No. 207

E Co.162 Inf. (Salamaua, Hollandia, Biak): BARman Floyd West's War

by Sgt. Floyd West with Dr. Hargis Westerfield, Division Historian

E Co 162 Inf's BARman Floyd West never forgot that morning when a Jap Zero pilot flew close overhead and did not slay him. On that morning of 1943, West was in a convoy of LCVs (Landing Crafts, Vehicles) which was chugging up the Guinea Shore to seize Morobe before the Salamaua Operation.

On that sunny New Guinea morning, West's LCV was helplessly lashed to an immobilized LCV. That evening before in the other LCV, an unaware Yank had lighted his last cigarette and chucked the empty foil pack into the sea. The LCV sump pump had sucked up the foil and plugged itself. Because water leaked under the closed ramp, that pump was needed to draw water from the LCV floor.

The 30-man cargo had to bail the LCV with their helmets. The coxswain had to halt the LCV until the pump was unplugged. While the rest of the LCV convoy drove onto Morobe, the mobile LCV with West in it was lashed to the crippled LCV to help hold up the crippled craft.

We did not dare to beach the two barges on that unknown Guinea Shore under dark mountains. Any straggling Japs, whether or not they had a MG, could murder us all at once. We lashed our two anchors together and let them drag below until they hooked into the shallows at a safe distance offshore.

All night the barges banged and bumped together in the waves. Men like West became seasick from the endless bouncing. Even if the men in West's barge kept dry and tried to sleep, it was a hard night.

Men in the immobile barge took turns to bail with their helmets all night from the water seeping under the ramp. One man had a flashlight to help start the complicated repairs, but not until morning could they actually work the pump.

Early next morning, out of the west from the direction of Morobe, a Jap Zero flew low less than 100 yards above the helpless LCVs. That Jap Zero flew low less than 100 yards above us. West looked up to see two more Zeros flying at 10,000 feet.

The lowest Zero was low enough for us to see the sunglasses on the pilot's nose, and his white silk scarf with the red ball of the Jap insignia on his forehead. But the pilot did not strafe us dead in our barges. He flew by and waved his wings, like saying, "You're lucky, boys!"

In BARman West's belt was a clip of .30 shells with tracers — MG shells which he could fire in his BAR. But he had sense enough not to fire on the plane. But the Lt. in the other barge shot at the Zero with his .45. Luckily he must have missed, for the pilot seemed unaware of the shot.

West shouted, "Stop that shooting! Look up!" The Lt. looked up and quickly sheathed his pistol. West still rejoices at our luck. If the Lt. had brought down three Zeros on our barges, we 60 men and four crewmen would have been just a temporary bloody spot in the ocean. But maybe the Zeros ignored us because they saved gas and ammo to strike richer targets farther west.

Soon the sump pump was repaired. We chugged on to Morobe and arrived at noon. Five minutes after West landed, he was seasick no longer.

At Morobe, 162 Inf had another notable encounter with a Nippo plane. Every night, "Washing Machine Charley" flew over, awoke us, and drove us into slit trenches. But a Black Widow Spider — a radar night fighter — called on Charlie. One night we hard gunfire and saw a flaming red ball. Washing Machine Charlie was forever silent.

West bitterly remembers one death at Morobe. One day, some 163 Inf men were swimming in the darkened brackish water near the river mouth. We had a guard for sharks. Suddenly, soundlessly, a man disappeared under the dark water. He had stood just 10 feet from three buddies. A crocodile must have dragged him down to cold, black, agonized death.

By 4 Apr., 162 Inf was mostly based at Morobe, except for detachments back down the coast to Gona, to mop up Jap stragglers. A short way up Morobe River, PT crews had a base to refit their little boats to harass and sink Jap barges. Our 162 Inf's main task, however, was preparation for Salamaua.

But not until some nine months later did E Co 162 Inf go into battle for our Division. We were not in 162's beachhead at Nassua Bay, but we reinforced our 3/Bn whom strong Jap forces had held from capturing Roosevelt Ridge — 3,000 feet of jungle mountain running in from Tambu Bay. On 27 July, 3 162 positioned for our fight to storm Roosevelt Ridge, and on 28 July BARman West was in the attack force. Having outshot the whole 2/Bn, West was assigned the heavy BAR which he could never permanently exchange for an M-1.

His climb to combat on the ridge-crest was heartbreaking. He had to literally crawl up a 60-degree slope hand to hand to hand from one brush clump to another. His BAR weighed 22 pounds, and 22 steel clips weighed almost as much. He wore a 40-pound combat pack with at least four grenades in it.

In the area where "E" fought, the slope was less than 20

degrees, with visibility into the jungle less than 100 feet. As his BAR opened up, he worried about hitting F 162 men in the jungle who might have already taken the ground before him. Yet he had to spray the leafy tangle to cover E Co men, and hope not to hit any Yanks.

Here he expended all of his BAR clips against unseen Japs, and called for more. No BAR clips came, and he refilled his clips with MG cartridges. Every fourth was a tracer. These tracers may have caused him his painful wound.

West continued his fight for Roosevelt Ridge. Again he sprayed the jungle — his gun now so hot that he lightly burned his left hand on the barrel.

West went great now in the magic of combat when a man's own life seems not to matter. He could not hear any other fire over the blasts of his BAR, and his MG bullets seemed to have halted Jap fire completely. West never stopped to think that even if he couldn't see where his tracers were hitting — that the Japs could see where they were coming from.

Then two Jap bullets found West. One really played havoc. The BAR was shot out of his right hand. A bullet hit his partly loaded BAR clip and blew it up while it was only partly fired.

The explosion smashed the knuckle above his right first finger. It stripped 90 percent of the flesh from the other side of the middle finger. Only a couple of strips of the clip remained in the BAR breach. His hand was permanently blackened from powder burns. Small fragments of cartridge casings and clips — dozens of slivers — dug into his right hand and shoulder and chest still to be removed by doctors years later.

He also had a hole the size of a half-dollar in his right cheek. The Medic — West remembers his name as Williams — said, "You're sure lucky. It missed your jugular vein by less than an inch."

Most important first aid that Medic Williams gave West was for the middle finger with its 90 percent of the skin loose and dangling. Probably Williams wrapped the loose skin back with a bandage over a tongue depressant. "I can save that skin for you," he said. "Don't let anybody unwrap it." Despite the offensive odor, West kept the bandage on and saved 90 percent of the skin with but a little scar tissue. He still has a sharp pain when he touches hard surfaces, but the finger has served him well over 40 years.

Leaving Roosevelt Ridge forever on his first day there, West noticed one wounded man with a chunk quarter-size on his bare rear. A mortar fragment had hit that part of his body which a training Sgt had told West is hardest to keep down.

Wounded West found his descent down Roosevelt Ridge easier than the climb, even if he now had just one good hand to grasp the roots of the almost sheer slope. He descended mostly on the seat of his pants.

On that 28 July 1943, he left Tambu Bay by PT boat. He lay forward on the bouncing deck, which bounced like all PT boats even in calm water. After a week in Dobodura Hospital, he was flown over the Owen Stanley Mountains first to Port Moresby, and then to Townsville, Australia.

Again hospitalized at Townsville, West had his purple heart pinned on his pajamas by Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt. Behind among the beds strode two generals, one wearing three stars. As a civilian years later, West still needed out-patient treatment from a doctor. Three times, he had to have sharp quarter-inch squares of brass from the exploded clip extracted from deep in his right hand.

Rejoining E 162 regrouped at Rockhampton after Salamaua, West got a six-day Melbourne leave — all the leave he ever had in four years of military service.

Landing on 22 Apr. 1944 with 162 Inf at Hollandia, West again saw action — this time with a bazooka. At 0750, E 162 led our 2/Bn from the west shore of Jautefa Bay to cut the track from Pim Village on the coast to Hollandia.

Across a narrow mangrove beach covered with Jap supplies, we entered a wide mangrove swamp, not shown on the sand table we had seen earlier. We had to walk on slippery mangrove roots above the mud — hardly 100 yards in an hour. West fell on his bazooka and bent it on a root. But with others' help, he managed to straighten it out between two trees.

Above us on the Pim-Hollandia Track, we saw a Jap HMG firing down the track from a shelf 10 feet above it. Cliffs behind and over the shelf protected the gun-crew. The crew never saw E 162, for they had never expected us to come in from the swamp upon their flank. We were well concealed on a slope 50 feet below.

West loaded a bazooka round and killed the HMG. This was the major act of his war at Hollandia.

When E 162 landed on Biak, West had regained his BAR to use it well. On 27 May 1944, shortly after 0900 hours, West with "E" landed dry at Boxnek Jetty and scouted towards Parai Defile. "E" was securing the inland flank of 3/Bn pushing westward down the beach towards Mokmer Strip.

After patrolling about 500 yards to his left along the ridge above the jetty, West still saw only white cliffs ahead. Then he was recalled. For so far, marching 3/Bn had seen no Japs and thought that they needed no protection.

While falling back, West suddenly heard a noise and rose up to look over a bush. A Jap was up also and preparing to shoot West with an automatic weapon. This Jap "BAR" had a long curved top cartridge clip, unlike West's BAR with the clip under the gun.

Instantly West fired first — squeezed his trigger to loose six shots a second. First bullet hit the Jap near the left shoulder. Other bullets then cut a strip across his body to the right ear. West felt hot blood on his own hands and face. He had beheaded the Jap, and the wind had blown the blood on West.

Slipping around the bush, West saw four Japs including the beheaded man lying with their backs up, like playing possum. The living three lay face down in a six-foot pocket

(continued on page 20)

JUNGLEER

"TO PERPETUATE FRIENDSHIPS FORMED IN COMBAT"

Vol. XLIII No. 3 August 1992

"ROCKY"

Fifty years later



In June 1942, some 14,000 men of the 41st Infantry Division prepared to move to Northern Queensland, specifically, Rockhampton. This was for further training and to get acclimated to the hot humid weather of New Guinea. Who can forget the trains we traveled on and the necessity of loading and unloading because of the changes of track gauge at the Victoria-New South Wales border and the New South Wales-Queensland border.

What a problem we created for a small city that was just barely larger in population than the division. We strained the goodness and the largess of this wonderful area to keep us entertained, quench our tremendous thirst and satisfy our enormous hunger. Dear old Rocky met the challenge. In fact, it outdid itself. The men of this division would always remember the area of Rockhampton-Yeppoon-Emu Park and the Shires.

In late 1942, elements of the Division left Rocky for New Guinea. In 1943 the Japanese were stopped in Papua, New Guinea, by the 41st, the 7th and 9th Australian Divisions and the 32nd U.S. Division, eliminating the danger of a Japanese invasion of Australia. The Division returned to Rocky in 1943. The Jungleers were greeted as its family. The welcoming could not have been any greater than this type of homecoming back home. Friendships were renewed, love affairs led to the altar of marriage for many of our men with the beautiful Australian girls. The 542nd Engineers built a chapel for the 41st Division. It was named Saint Christopher's Chapel. There were Protestant, Catholic, Jewish and non-denominational services held in this chapel for the 41sters. The Division again resumed its training, concentrating on beachhead landings.

In early 1944, the 41sters left Rockhampton and Australia for the last time. Up through New Guinea and on to the Philippines. The war ended in 1945. The Division was then assigned to Hiroshima and Nagasaki for Occupation Duty. In December 1945, the entire Division was shipped home to the U.S. Throughout all these experiences, the Jungleers never forgot Rockhampton-Yeppoon-Emu Park and its wonderful citizens. A vow was made that someday the 41sters would revisit their "cobbers" of Rockhampton.

The first group in the 41st Association returned in 1970 with 70 men and their wives. Rocky was once again the gracious host. In 1984, a group of 162 men and wives visited all of Eastern Australia and New Zealand, with the last stop in Rockhampton. This was the 40th Anniversary of the Division leaving Australia for the last time in World War II. This was a tremendous reunion with our cobbers. Again Rockhampton shone as the brightest star of hospitality. It was not the last time that the magic of Australia called the Jungleers back.

Alex Friedt of the 163rd Infantry called to say that many of the men who had served in that regiment wanted to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Division's first arrival in Rockhampton. A letter was sent out, inviting all members of

(continued on page 5)

Above photo: Tea Time at Saint Christopher's Chapel, Rockhampton, Northern Queensland, Australia.

MHS
MC 244
Folder 1-9
Hargis Westerfield Collection
162nd Infantry Regmt - Biak I.

AT 162 INF
COUNTS
BIAK
2 ITMS BOAN QA

"Westralia"
619 W. Jones Creek Rd.
Grants Pass, OR 97526

Dec. 26, 1979

Hargis Westerfield
414 W. 25th Street
Kearney, Nebraska

Dear Hargis:

Received your letter of November 25th. including the Journal Extracts(Zambo,Central Mindanao) Casualty List. Sorry for the delay; I've been reaching back in my memories for answers to your questions; am still quite hazy on some events, but I will do my best.

On our assault on Biak, May 27, Mine Platoon -162-was atached to 3rd Battalion-162, and we landed in the area of Bosnek. One battalion of 186 had gone in ahead of us to secure the beach head. 3rd Btn mission was to drive west to Mokmer airdrome. It's rifle companies led the march. There was a usable dirt road going west, and the one thing I have always remembered about that was the stream of human excrement in the dust of the road. I guess that when the Navy started their bombardment of the beach, the sick Japanese were evacuated from the hospital and marched along that road before our landing. Looked like they defecated as they walked-it was like following a herd of cows that had scours.

On our march to Mokmer we were carrying our mine detecting equipment, but were never called forward to use it. To my knowledge there were no mines encountered on Biak. Our old WW11 mine detectors were similar to the treasure hunting type one sees advertised today, except they were much more bulky. The sweep disc was about 12 inches in diameter, with a five foot handle; had quite a heavy back pack with batteries,etc. They would detect anything that would conduct electricity. They gave off an audio tone through ear-phones as well as a dial reading on a guage on the handle. We had quite a lot of training practice with them , but never used them under combat conditions. I don't know if 163 or 186 mine platoons were ever used as such.

Our drive to Mokmer was held up for sometime while the lead companies were trying to get through the Parai Defile. After the resistance was broken we went through the defile and took up positions for the night about a mile beyond the defile. We had a quiet night. One Jap recon. patrol came through our positions and one of them was killed. By the next morning we all thought the Biak campaign was going to be a "piece of cake."

May 28th we continued our advance down the road toward Mokmer. After-perhaps-a half mile, the road went up a steep pitch over a coral bench. It looked like the Japs had recently been doing some bull-dozer work on it. Up to this point we had the high coral ridge on one side and the ocean on the other; now the area became more open-the ridges were still there-but farther away, giving us the feeling of having more room to manouver in. It was a good feeling to have more open ground, but our good feelings were short lived because we hadn't advanced more than a couple of hundred yards further when we began to receive very heavy machine gun and artillery fire. It was immediately apparent that we were in serious trouble, because there was very little cover, just a minimum of low growing scrub.

We knew their observation of us was good because they were lobbing artillery shells right in the middle of concentrations of our men.

About all we could do to protect ourselves was disperse and take whatever cover could be found. Word was passed that a Jap. force had cut us off back in the Mokmer village area. The bombardment went on for-perhaps-two hours. Some of the bursts had a very different sound to that of the normal mortar and howitzer bursts. I supposed that they were using anti-aircraft guns and firing them at us point blank from the coral ridges above the road. This did not help the situation much. The feeling among us was one of panic, because communication lines had been cut, and we couldn't group up to receive reliable orders from our commanders. Word was passed that one of the battalion officers had said,"Every man for himself." Whether this was true or not it only added to our sense of despair.

Fortunately Col. Haney,162 Regiment commander was with us and could see that our position was untenable and gave the order to withdraw. We had four Sherman tanks and they led the retreat column. The narrow beach under the cliff by the ocean, gave good cover, so the wounded and equipment was lowered down and evacuated by LVT.

Colonel Haney was in one of the tanks as we began the retreat, & nearing the blockade set up by the enemy we could hear the familiar R-I-P/R-I-P of the Jap machine guns. The tanks went through with their guns blazing at the coral cliffs, but their fire had no apparent effect on the Jap M.G's. We foot soldiers ran the fire lanes a few at a time As I was waiting for a chance to make my run through, a Jap sniper found me in his sights. When his first bullet zipped by me I dived behind a downed log. The bullets were coming in so close that I could see smoke or steam coming out of the log where they penetrated it close to my face. I think he must have been using dum-dums, as the crack of the bullets impact was so loud I had no chance of picking up the muzzle blast from which I could have detected his position. I did a craw-dad over a little coral ledge and headed through the Jap M.G. fire lanes. I ran until I came to Foley who was down with a bullet through the thigh. He was being attended by a couple of G.I's. We moved him to safer ground where the medics could take care of him.

After breaking through the blockade everything was quiet again and we established defences for the night. That night and the following early morning was uneventful. Then about 800-900 hours a strong force of several hundred Jap foot soldiers and-perhaps-ten-twelve tanks began attacking from the area of Mokmer Drome. Mine Platoon was positioned near the road so we saw our Sherman tanks rumble out to meet the enemy. They made contact about 100 yards past our position. They caught the Jap tanks(in single file)on a steep pitch of the road that climbed down the coral bench. The terrain was such that only one of our tanks at a time was able to get into firing position. When the firing started the projectiles from the Jap tanks whizzed just over our position. The Japs were armed with 37mm's and they couldn't even put a dent in our tough skinned Shermans. However, one did get a projectile wedged in the gun turret of one of our tanks, locking it in position, and rendering it useless. I think it was "Murder Inc." He wheeled out so that the next tank in line could take over.

When the U.S tanks started firing they used armor piercing shells, which are normally used against tanks. But they punched neat little holes and went right on through the flimsy Japanese tanks, and didn't give the necessary "kill" effect necessary to our success. The crews of the Shermans switched to high explosive personnel shells. They quickly proved to be the very thing for this situation. They pierced the first wall and exploded inside. One hit-one dead tank. The gunner of the first U.S. tank very alertly, knocked out the rear tank in the Japanese column and those in front of it were trapped and became clay pidgeons for our tank gunners. I know of five Jap tank kills in that battle. There may have been more, but I am sure of five.

Fortunately for Mine Platoon, the Jap tank assault was unsuccessful, otherwise the tanks and troops would have come right through our position. As it was when they lost their tank escort they tried a flanking movement and other units of 3rd Battalion took the brunt of their attack. U.S. losses were heavy, but Jap losses were much heavier.

It was during this battle that the Navy, trying to give us support, put a six inch shell into our perimeter. Claude Johnson was one of our men wounded as a result of this effort to help. I heard that the Navy's own fire control officer was killed by that shell.

About this time it was apparently decided that the result of trying to hold this ground would be too costly- with the Japs holding securely to the high ground above us, so 3rd Btn. retreated to the Mandon area, and Mine Platoon rejoined A.T. Company, and went immediately into the Ibdi ridges which your 41st Division History #81, and my first letter covers pretty completely.

While the 3rd Battalion was fighting the Mokmer-Parai Battle, Cannon Comapny, A.T. 162, was holding ground on the beach corridor. I don't know just where; probably somewhere between Ibdi and Parai Defile. Anyway their position was charged by 100+ Jap combat team-yelling like Banshees. Cannon Company, must have had a pretty good position, because they killed the Jap force right down to the last man. Whoever told me this story, (and I can't remember who) said that the last man came in all alone, still trying to over-run the position, just as steady as the first men leading the attack....kept on coming right up until he was killed. I am sure this would make a good storyif you could get a first-hand account of it. You might try Sydney Hermansen. He is active in the Northern California Chapter, and I know he was in Cannon Company.

(Another man who may be able to give a different aspect of the Ibdi Ridges Battles, is Blaine Kessler. He called me from W.Verginia just before Christmas and we got so excited talking about those times that I forgot to get his address. But he gets the Jungleer,so they would have his address. Could be another good contact for you.)

I think the reason Anti-Tank Company isn't mentioned in the Zambo Journal Extracts after March 17, is that we were put into security for Regimental H.Q. I can't speak for all of Anti-Tank units, but I know Mine Platoon had the mission of holding strategic ground around, and leading to, Regimental. I guess the thinking was to stop enemy forces that might try to come in and occupy ground behind our front line. There were many renegade bands of Japs at that time, and our front wasn't all that air-tight.

As I looked over the Zambo Casulaty List I saw the name of S/Sgt. Joe Gunia,LWA-29-Mar-4 and it brought to mind the happening.

All during Zambo, and there after I was Platoon Sgt. of Mine Platoon. I had always taken the responsibility for booby-trapping the outside of our perimeter for night time security, but I would usually have one or two men help me so they could become accustomed to the procedure. In the beginning booby-trapping was simply tying a grenade to a tree or a stump and attaching a trip wire to the pin. It was a good warning device but it's three second fuse left a lot to be desired as a kill weapon.

Bu the time we got to Zambo we had instantaneous detonators. These devices were threaded and would replace the fuse detonators in a grenade, or screw into other types of personnel mines.

On this particular evening we were on a ridge in the Zambo area. I can't remem which one, or where. I was in so many positions and with so many different gro of men, my memory fails me. It tends to roll into one conglomerate. Anyway it was a spooky place; dark heavy rain forest. Our perimeter was to cover a much used trail that ran down the ridge. I had Joe Gunia helping me set the booby traps that evening. We were setting grenades with instantaneous detonators abo fifty feet in front of our perimeters of fox holes. We had one personnel mine. It was a block of cast iron about six inches by six inches by ten inches full o T.N.T.; we called it "big bertha". I always put it in the most threatened spot because it was the only sure kill device we had.

This time I put it up on a bank five or six feet from the trail about waist hig Instantaneous fuse and trip across the trail. I still remember Joe and I commenting as we set it out that anyone that hit that trip wire would be evaporated.

It was dusk when we finished the circuit and got back to our foxhole. Word came over the field phone alerting us to the fact that a combat patrol was stil out, and might use the trail, so we were to go out and disarm our booby traps. I told Joe to disarm "big bertha" and I would get the ones at the lower end of the trail. No sooner than I had made the trail safe for passing than a thunderous boom rock the ridge and echoed up and down the valley. "Damn! Joe is dead!" was my first thought. I knew it was "big bertha" and I knew Joe had hit the trip wire. Reluctantly I started up the trail berating myself for not having reversed the disarming procedure. I was in no hurry. I could see no need to hurry. I really wanted to postpone what I was going to find for as long as possible. By the time I got through the perimeter I met two Mine Platc men escorting Joe back in. He did hit the trip wire that exploded the mine. He appeared somewhat disoriented from the concussion but soon recovered. His only wound was a small piece of shrapnel in his little finger. I just couldn' believe it! I wouldn't have put a mans' chances at a million to one or maybe ten million to one.....you name your own odds.

When I was drafted into the army in 1942 two brothers and myself had a honey bee operation in California. While I was overseas the bee business did quite for my brothers due to the shortage of sugar. They became interested in, and bought an unstocked cattle ranch in eastern Oregon. When I returned home in October of 1945 I found that my brothers were caught between ranching in Orego and running bees in California, so we decided to move the bees to Oregon. Too late we found the winters were too cold and the seasons too short for a succes honey bee operation. We stocked the ranch during the Truman administration an selling the stock during the Eisenhower administration, the financial facts d pan out. We tried dairying, growing our own wheat and oats and clover hay, wh worked out better but the profit was insufficient for three families, so my el brother, and I (the youngest, left the operation to seek employment elsewhere. some logging,and in 1955 we came over the mountains to Southern Oregon. After couple of years odd-jobbing and digging in, I found a job with the Josephine (Road Department, in the Engineering department, surveying, and have worked the since then.

My wife, Lette, is an Australian girl. I met her on my first leave in Melbou We applied for permission to marry when I was back in Australia after the fi Guinea campaign, but by the time permission was granted I was back island hop It was April,1947 before she finally made it to the States, and we were marri

We call our home here in Grants Pass, "Westralia" because Lette likens it to Australia in the West. We try to grow things that are reminders of her childhood bush, parks & gardens. We have even found one variety of eucalyptus that is hardy here. We have 12 acres ; most of it dry land in the summer, but we keep about 2 acres verdant. We both love to garden, and truly enjoy our pets, 4 little dogs and a cat, and lately two goats and a sheep. (The latter for Lette). I raise about ½ acre garden-full of produce, growing most of our essentials, including potatoes and dry beans. We do a lot of home canning and freezing and this year started drying some food-stuff as well. We supply not only ourselves, but our three daughters and their families, as well as numerous friends and work-mates. This is a very sharing part of the nation.

Well Hargis, I will close for this time, hoping that this has answered some of your questions, and with sincere wishes for a Happy New Year,

Sincerely,

p.s. Hargis, I see as I glance back over your list of questions that you asked about our house. It is a large, rambling hand crafted old farmhouse, that we have been remodeling for ten years. There was a large old barn on the South acreage at the Eastern Oregon ranch that Lette and I had planned to convert to a house when things got better. Well, things never did get better, and as already stated we had to leave, but! we always remembered that marvelous old barn with it's hand adzed beams, and square nails and wooden pegs and dove tailed joints etc, and thats what we have tried to include in the home here. We love it, our girls and grand children love it, and animals, both domestic and wild flourish here. It is not a grand, or palatial house, but a warm and sturdy home, with many rooms and beds, and places in it that could yet mean more rooms and beds. Lette has a thing about being able to pull our loved ones and those in need close in a time of trouble, and so turns every corner or closet or shelf into another place to sleep. The whole family tease her about this. We heat with wood and do a lot of cooking on the Frontier heater; there's always beans, or soup, or stew going on the back of the heater top. That's the way Lette remembers her grandparents farm on the island of Tasmania, where she and her sister were raised.

We grow our own broom corn for home broom making...hearth brooms with turned handles are a specialty for gifts. Lette has made our own soap for several years now. Our desire is to be as independent as possible, and if we can grow it, or make it, then we do not buy it. Not necessarily because be cannot afford it (although that is fast becoming a fact to be considered also) but because we like to know how, and enjoy the satisfaction of knowing we can do it ourselves. There are still many things we want to do, and we hope we will live long enough to do them all. We both read a great deal, and have an extensive library, heavy on the historical, archealogical, geological, anthropological, with a minor in biographical and good fiction. My favorite people are John Burrows, English Naturalist; John Muir, and Richard Leaky. Lette's are Thomas Jefferson Eleanor Roosevelt, Brigham Young. I could ramble on for hours, but this should give you a pretty good picture of us and our life-style. Tell us about you when you write. You must be a rather exceptional person to devote so much time and effort to the 41st Division.

1 NORMAN MATHEWS MHS Hargis Waterfield collection MC244 163rd Infantry Regt
611 TALWATHA DRIVE 1-16
PRESCOTT, ARIZONA
86307

INSTALLMENT NO. I June 28, 1982

163 ASP
2/BN HQ

AMMUNITION AND PIONEER PLATOON

By Tec/Sgt Norman F. Mathews

(Notes and recollections about the history and activities of the A&P Platoon - Hq Company - 2nd BN - 163 Inf. Regiment, 41st Infantry Division.)

The platoon was comprised of a Platoon Leader, Platoon Sergeant, three Squad Sergeants, three Squad Corporals, and six privates in each squad for a total of 25 enlisted men and one commissioned officer.

The following men made up most of the original platoon through the Sanananda, Biak, and/or Southern Philippine campaigns:

Lt. Harlan Milder (K/A Zamboanga)
Tec/Sgt. "Tex" Scourbrough
Sgt. "Tiny" Sironen
Sgt. Everett Klumdby
Sgt. Glen Picard
Corp. Laurie Sarella (later Sgt.)
Corp. Laddie Holy (later Sgt.)

PFC Frenchy Bourgon (I/A)
PFC Norman Mathews (later Tec/Sgt.)
PFC Richard Miller
PFC Tony Makjavich
PFC Julie Feld (later Sgt.)
PFC Francis Riggs (later Tec/Sgt.)
PFC Julius Lentz (WIA)
PFC William Crocker (later Sgt.)
PFC Phil Gassmen
PFC Joseph Paradeso (K/A - Zamboanga)
PFC Charles Manuel (later Sgt.)
PFC Gordon Wilson

READ in Helena

PFC William Finally (later Sgt.)
PFC Melvin Kenney
PFC Eugene McDowell (later Sgt.)
PFC Harold Marienhoff (later Sgt.)
PFC Ernest Crook

Platoon Duties and Responsibilities:

1. To maintain battalion ammunition depot and disperse same where needed.
2. To construct and maintain battalion headquarter buildings (including officers quarters).
3. To construct bridges, foot or vehicle, or other structures where needed for the advancement of the battalion.
4. To destory (demolition) any fortifications or buildings siezed by U.S. forces that might be of value to the enemy.
5. Maintain battalion flame throwers and assist in their use where needed.
6. Assist in the defense of the battalion perimeter, place and recover all perimeter defensive mines and booby traps.
7. Assist in the removal of any obstructions, mines, or other physical objects hindering the advance of the battalion.
8. Participate in combat and reconnaissance patrols when needed, assist in the removal of wounded personnel.

FIRST ACTION - AITAPE - APRIL 22, 1944

Like many of the new replacements that joined the Regiment in Rockhampton, I was to see my first action in the Aitape campaign. The pre-dawn naval and air bombardment, over the side and down the landing nets into the landing barges, the gut-fear feeling as the craft sped toward the beach and the unknown beyond. The plunge into the sea when the ramp went down, and the eternal run to reach the comparative safety of the beach.

Sounds of scattered firing ahead, all to soon the frightening sight and

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shock of a dead soldier, be it friend or foe. Confusion among the troops, as scouts are unable to locate given landmarks leading to the airstrip, and the realization that the landing has been made at the wrong place.

Finally day's end and the advance is halted for the night. A cold K or C ration dinner, foxholes dug, and men crouched in the dark, damp earth. Apprehensive of the silence, yet startled by any slight sound. This was the war we were to encounter for the next day, week, month, year.

TOEM - WAKDE

Second Battalion - 163 Infantry was dug in along the west bank of Tementol Creek, as the battle for Wakde Island raged off shore. Headquarters Company was assigned a section of the perimeter to defend facing thick jungle to the south. Knowing that strong Jap forces were in the area, and having received some Jap mortor fire, A&P Platoon dug in deep and continued to fortify its positions daily.

Early in the fight for Wakde, the order came for A&P Platoon to make ready our four flame throwers for use on Wakde. Japs hiding in caves on the east end of the island were difficult to route out, and flame throwers seemed to be the answer. Quickly A&P men pitched in, the weapons and fuel were made ready, and four operators were assigned, myself included. Then moments before the barge was ready to leave for Wakde, word was received that the operators were not needed, and to send the flame throwers only. Thus we were spared a dangerous assignment on a hard fought battleground.

While 2nd Battalion held the Tementol Creek perimeter, Jap patrols were continually probing at the perimeter defenses, and attempting to cross the mouth of Tementol Creek where it spilled into the sea. Usually these patrols were spotted in time, and either turned back or annihilated.

But one dark night, a small patrol consisting of one officer and seven

4

enlisted men, did manage to cross the river undetected, and occupied a position to the rear of the battalion defenses. When this trouble spot was detected the following day, the rifle companies were busy with patrols east of the Tementol, so the order came out to Headquarters Company for a combat patrol. Lt. Milder received the call and assembled the A&P Platoon immediately. As we had no automatic weapons, BAR man Barnes was sent to us from G Company to reinforce the patrol.

Not knowing the exact position of the enemy forces, the patrol moved out cautiously led by Milder, Scourbrough and Barnes. After traveling a distance toward the ocean, the patrol entered a relatively open area, when the air was split with Jap automatic and rifle fire. BAR man Barnes fell instantly killed by a bullet to the head, while the rest of the patrol was pinned to the ground.

The Japanese force was firing from a partially destroyed fortification, and opened fire on the patrol as the first four or five men entered the clearing. Had they waited until the entire patrol was exposed, there is no doubt many more Americans would have been killed or wounded.

Lt. Milder immediately ordered return fire, but no clear objectives could be seen in the area where the Japs were concealed. He then ordered the three or four men nearest to him to make a dash for a depression near the beach, about 25 yards distant.

Leading the way, Milder was quickly followed by Sgt. Scourbrough, and Privates Mathews and McDowell. Rolling into the protection of the shell hole, we found it already occupied by two dead Japs, possibly killed the night before. After resting for a few moments, Milder spotted a large log stranded in the surf, almost directly in front of the Jap position. Again leading the way, he made a mad dash for the safety of the log, followed closely by the other three.

Huddled behind the log, Milder asked if anyone had been hit, no one had. Then very carefully he raised his head to survey the situation, when blam a Jap bullet smacked through the top of his helmet. Finding that no damage had been done to his person, Milder then ordered intense rifle fire be directed against the Jap position.

After several minutes of firing from both ends of the log, we noticed that the return fire had begun to slacken. A check revealed that we had two grenades in our possession. One was passed to each Mathews and Scourbrough at opposite ends of the log. In unison the two grenades appeared to land right on target, whereupon Milder sprang up, carbine firing and rushed forward. He was quickly followed by the rest of us, guns blazing.

Against such determined opposition, four Japs broke to run, two being gunned down immediately. A quick look into the fortification revealed four additional dead Japs. Then a mad dash was made after the two escaping Japs who were soon found hiding in a bamboo thicket and quickly dispatched.

Thus ended a brief, but intense fire fight by men of the A&P Platoon, resulting in the clearing of a Jap infiltration position, at a loss of one American soldier dead.

(NOTE: Bronze Star Medals were authorized for this action to Milder, Scourbrough, Mathews and McDowell by General Orders 13, Headquarters 163 Infantry, dated 29 August 1944, which also awarded the Combat Infantry Badge. In a special letter from the Department of the Army dated 7 May 1959, my decoration with Oak Leaf Cluster was presented to me. I do not know if the other men involved ever received their decorations, as I have had no contact with either Scourbrough or McDowell since the war.)

Sometime after the Tementol action, a suspected Jap Headquarters site was located inland about four or five miles from our perimeter on Tementol Creek. This may have come about through Lt's Milder and Leslie air

reconnaisance. A&P Platoon was ordered to form a combination combat and reconnaisance patrol, with order to find and destory, if possible, the suspected site.

Leaving the perimeter early one morning, (we hoped to accomplish our mission and return before nightfall) the patrol moved out at a fast pace led by Lt. Milder and Sgt. Scourbrough. Following a network of trails, which showed much use by Japanese troops, we traveled several miles without incident, when we came to a rather large clearing extending on both sides of the trail. As we advanced cautiously, we soon began to see huts and buildings scattered throughout the area. At any moment we expected to receive enemy fire, but encountered no opposition. The Japs had moved out.

After making a quick reconnaisance of the site, we were convinced that this was the Jap Headquarters that we sought. Some rather elaborate structures had been constructed, quite obviously for officer use, as well as several barracks buildings for enlisted men. That the installation had been hastily and recently abandoned, was evidenced by the amount of personal and military effects scattered about.

Not wasting any time to souvenir hunt, Milder ordered all buildings torched, and as much equipment destroyed as possible. As the smoke billowed skyward, the patrol prepared to move out. We were becoming concerned now that the smoke might attract the attention of any Jap patrols still in the general area.

The return march was uneventful until we were well away from the head-quarters site. Then as the patrol descended a series of switchbacks in the trail, a scout reported some activity ahead. As we looked downward, we could see that a sizeable Jap carrying party was stopped along the trail below us, enjoying a noontime meal. Constant chatter drifted upward, with no scouts or guards in evidence. Slowly we eased into position above them,

and on signal opened fire.

Just prior to this patrol, the A&P Platoon had been encouraged to turn in our Garand rifles, and be re-equipped with MI carbines. Not only did we find these weapons to be ineffective in stopping the enemy, but when fired at a rapid pace, bolt handles had a tendency to fly off. Most had been made by the Westinghouse Company. Our net kill here was a mere two Japs, although evidence showed that several more had been wounded.

After the shooting had stopped, we found large stores of rice and other foodstuffs, as well as medical supplies. After destroying as much of the food as possible, we gathered up the medical equipment and continued our march homeward. Clearly the Jap had been on their way to the Headquarters site, not knowing that it had been abandoned and destoryed. Upon arrival back at the Tementol perimeter, mission accomplished, most members of the patrol, demanded and got their trusty Garand rifles back from the supply dump.

POSTMARKED 6 AUG. 1982

INSTALLMENT NO. 2

AMMUNITION AND PIONEER PLATOON

By Tec/Sgt Norman F. Mathews

611 TALAVANA DR.
PRESCOTT, ARIZ.
86301

BIAK ISLAND

On June 12, 1944, 2nd. Battalion-163 Infantry (commanded by Major Robert Irving) landed at Bosnek Jetty on Biak Island. While companies E,F,G and H fanned out to assigned objectives, Battalion Headquarters set up a beach perimeter on the Coastal Road. Although the landing was observed by Japanese forces in the cliffs above, enemy opposition was light, except for three Jap Zeros which came in low over Bosnek ridge. Concentrating mainly on the American shipping in the harbor, we had grandstand seats of the action, and cheered loudly when anti-aircraft fire sent the Zeros smoking into the sea.

As quick as ships were unloaded, A & P Platoon began to establish the Battalion ammunition dump. Although all Line Companies had been supplied with two days ammunition on loading, heavy fighting would require a quick replacement. A fresh water source existed close to the Battalion perimeter, which had to be guarded and made available where needed.

Soon solid resistence meet the 2nd. Battalion forces, and the call came in for additional, ammo, grenades, mortor shells, rations and water. A & P Platoon filled orders quickly, where posible, supplies were delivered by truck down the Coastal Track. For men dug in high on the Coral ridges, delivery was more difficult, and often meant backpacking up perpendicular cliffs, through dense foliage and along almost non-existing trails. Quite often, several hauls a day had to be made to the front lines, and it was not unusual for the carrying parties to be fired on by friend and foe alike. A & P men often times voluntered to carry wounded personnel back to the Battalion Aid Station. Many of the return trips were made after dark, and getting back through Battalion defensive positions was often a tricky and dangerous mission.

The Jap 75 MM Canon hid in a limstone cave above the Battalion perimeter, began to pound the beach daily. Soon nicknamed "five o'clock Charley", the gun would often open up, just about the time "chow" was being served. One such shell hit in the section of the perimeter occupied by the Anti-tank Platoon. Severly wounded was Eino Johnson, with Parrish, Beaver, Moran and McMahan receiving lighter wounds.

Corporal Reyborn, Anti-tank Platoon, requested permission to try and

RAYBORN

silence the Jap Canon, with the platoon's three 37MM guns. The approximate location of the cave was known, and the following day when the Japs opened fire, Reyborn and his crew were ready. A salvo of [redacted] high explosive shells were fired into the Jap position, and the gun was silenced forever.

As the battle for Ibdi Pocket raged, requests for resupply of the Line Companies began to exceed the capacity of Headquarters Company to produce. The call went out for additional manpower, and soon a platoon of colored soldiers from Port Battalion arrived to lend a hand. Thses men did excellent service in portaging supplies to the front lines, but were not keen on lingering around once the supplies were delivered.

In addition to the routine supplies, requests came in for flame throwers, bazookas and demolition explosives. Assistance was requested in the use of the explosives, and although A & P men did gallent service in trying to assist in the neautralization of the many caves in the 2nd. Battalion Sector, our efforts were of limited success.

Finally the futility of reducing Ibdi Pocket by small arms, rocket and mortor fire was realized by higher echelon. The Line Companies were ordered to pull back, while heavy artilary pounded the Jap defenses around the clock. Air Force assistance was also requested, and B25 bombers eventually pulverized the Ibdi Pocket with 1000 pount bombs.

With Ibdi Pocket neautralized, 2nd. Battalion was ordered to Korim Bay for patrolling purposes, and further cutting of Jap escape routes to the sea. Battalion Headquarters was established on the beach with adequate perimeter defenses. Patrols were soon operating out in all directions for periods of one to several days.

One such patrol reported the need for a small bridge at a stream crossing on one of the trails. A & P Platoon was ordered to do the job. After falling a number of large trees, logs were floated into place at the desired crossing, and a bridge was constructed capable of handling jeep travel if desired. Patrolling continued almost daily past the bridge site, with occasional Jap soldiers encountered.

It was a cold, wet morning, when Privates Miller and Mathews were ordered to accompany a Rifle Company patrol. We were instructed to carry anti-personnel mines and demolition charges, as well as our rifles and ammunition. After several miles of hiking the patrol scouts reported a Jap gun enplacement at the top of a long slope, commanding a clear view of the trail for several hundred yards. While the remainder of the patrol remained hidden, one squad of riflemen silently approached the gun position from two sides. So far no Japs had been detected. Thinking the emplacement abandoned, one rifleman peeked

over the edge, and was startled to find four Jap soldiers huddled under a piece of canvas out of the rain. A heavy 50 Caliber machine gun, still encased in a waterproof canvas, poked its ugly snout straight down the trail allignment. The Jap soldiers must have been more amazed then the Americans, when they looked upward into the barrels of several Garand rifles. Hands reached skyward and the war was over for them.

Not wanting to move the prisoners along with the patrol, and not wanting to turn back yet, the patrol leader assigned Miller and I, to stay at the gun emplacement, as guards, until the patrol returned. We were two, nervious, wide-awake soldiers for the next several hours until the patrol returned. The Lieutenant then ordered several anti-personnel mines be placed across the trail near the gun emplacement. One Jap soldier, a Sergeant, voluntered to carry the 50 caliber back to Battalion Headquarters. For some unknown reason the gun became theproperty of the A & P Platoon, and was placed ~~over~~ on our perimeter defense. The Japs were placed in a make-shift barbed wire enclosure, and guarded for several days by A & P men until a Navy barge came for them.

Along about this time, it was decided that a trail block should be established at the stream crossing where we had previously constructed the bridge. It was also decided that A & P Platoon should have the honor of manning the position. A number of Japs had perviously been killed at this site, and when the platoon arrived there, the stench of rotting bodies saturated the air. As the platoon dug a defensive line, some effort was made to bury ~~that~~ the Japs that had died there. Anti-personnel mines were place along the trail, and were quite effective in stopping several Jap straglers. Most were in a near starvation condition, living on birds, roots, etc. After one week of duty here, Lt. Milder requested that the trail block be terminated. Request was granted, and the entire platoon was gratefull to be back at the beach, for a bath, some decent chow, and a good night sleep.

As the battle for Biak came slowly to an end, 2nd. Battalion moved to the interior of the island, and established a tent camp which was to be our home for the next several months. A & P Platoon was kept busy erecting semi-permanent structures in the Headquarters area, and assisting in the blasting of latrine and garbage holes in the coral rock throughout the entire Battalion area. Men of the platoon were also sent off on detached service to Chemical Warefare Companies, to learn about the detection and disarming of Japanese land and anti-personnel mines. These weapons were expected to be used

extensively by the enemy in the upcoming Philippine campaign.

About the time that the camp construction was completed and the troops were on half-day training schedules, I had the misfortune to be felled with a ruptured appendix. As I wondered late at night throught the Battalion Medical quarters seeking help, I had the good fortune to bump into Major Mark D. Holcomb, Reginental Surgeon. After a quick medical examination, he ordered me into surgery. Although the operation was a success, the consequential infection had me laid up for the next two months at Biak's General Field Hospital.

51 results found. sorted by date.

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Author	Woodward, C. Vann (Comer Vann), 1908-1999.
Title	**The battle for Leyte gulf**
Pub Info	New York, The Macmillan company, 1947

LOCATION	CALL #	STATUS
Odegaard Stacks	D773 .W6 1947	AVAILABLE
Suzzallo/Allen Stacks	940.543 W871b	AVAILABLE

Description	xii, 244 p. illus. 22 cm
Note	At head of title: By C. Vann Woodward "First printing."
LC SUBJECTS	**World War,** 1939-1945 -- Philippines **World War,** 1939-1945 -- Naval operations, American
LCCN	47001226
OCLC #	491856
Grsn	00513735

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Author	Astor, Gerald, 1926-
Title	**Crisis in the Pacific : the battles for the Philippine Islands by the men who fought them / Gerald Astor**
Pub Info	New York : D.I. Fine Books, 1996

LOCATION	CALL #	STATUS
Suzzallo/Allen Stacks	D767.4 .A845 1996	AVAILABLE

Description	xiii, 478 p. : ill., maps ; 25 cm
Bibliography	Includes bibliographical references (p. 462-464) and index
LC SUBJECTS	World War, 1939-1945 -- Campaigns -- Philippines World War, 1939-1945 -- Philippines World War, 1939-1945 -- Pacific Area World War, 1939-1945 -- Personal narratives, American Oral history
LCCN	95050032
ISBN	1556114842
OCLC #	33817940

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defending the hills!

By two o'clock we heard the news and we loaded on trucks to take over our mission of guarding the approaches to Davao City. And by evening we found our battalion split into pieces with no semblance of a unit left. For K Company took over a dozen road blocks; I Company took over Flat Top Hill from B Company of the 19th Infantry; AT and Bn Hqs took over Hill 120 along the Davao River; and we in L Company found ourselves relieving A Company of the 19th Infantry on Dry Gulch Hill. To get to our hill we passed over a dozen good roads, past two airdromes, to the Davao River where we had to be ferried across. The Japs had blown up all the bridges two days before !! After a confusing maneouver we found ourselves loaded on trucks on the opposite side. Through the city we went viewing the typical ruins of all wartime cities. Though it was much larger and at one time far more modern, it now is in shattering ruins, no different from Jolo or Zamboanga. And after a nine mile trip we found ourselves turning off the main drag north of Davao, into Dry Gulch Hill, where our morale hit rock bottom. Dry Gulch Hill is about three hundred feet high, absolutely blasted to pieces with only whell holes and barren tree snags for a setting. The sun beat down miserably hot and the stench of the forty dead Japs buried here made matters no better. And if this is a preview of what the 24th Division plans to do with our little battalion we all can see we're going to have rough days ahead. It's times like these you appreciate your own Division and own Regiment giving you orders, especially in our case. But so be

it, and here we sit on a bewildered hill, Japs on three sides of us, protecting the approaches to Davao! Our nearest friendly troops are I Company of our batallion setting also on a bare knob 1800 yards west of us! How long we remain here remains to be seen, but we do know that we will begin those extra special "aggressive patrols" tomorrow. It was no wonder A Company was so glad to see us arrive on the spot to relieve them! Though the holes and positions they handed over to us were filled with red mud, it was a consolation not to have to dig in. For chow tonight they handed us ten in one rations that we munched on uncooked. Without any ammunition for mortars, machine guns, no hand grenades, no communication equipment, we took over the worst mess I've seen yet. And with such a set up and with Japs on three sides we're definitely in for a "good night's rest!" One can well imagine how our morale is about now, and what feelings we hold for the 24th Division!!

RED MUD

Lt. Arnold rejoined us today as Co. C.O., but he was a little lost with the situation - especially since this was his first experience with a Rifle Company. That too added confusion to the already well mixed mess. McGee is Exec and Steege and I are hanging about carrying out confused orders.

AROUND STEEGE

I best close this day before I disclose my complete exasperation and try to calm myself before another day. Here's hoping it's at least a peaceful night and the Nips stay away with such a predicament. I'd like to forget this first day at Davao!

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Wednesday, May 16th

After sweating out a day of reorganization of ammunition, supplies, and the like, we now are taking on the color of a combat unit - the way we should have arrived here in the first place instead of having all our fighting equipment crated! The heat and odor here on Dry Gulch are still no better and it's an ordeal just to carry on in such conditions.

PATROL

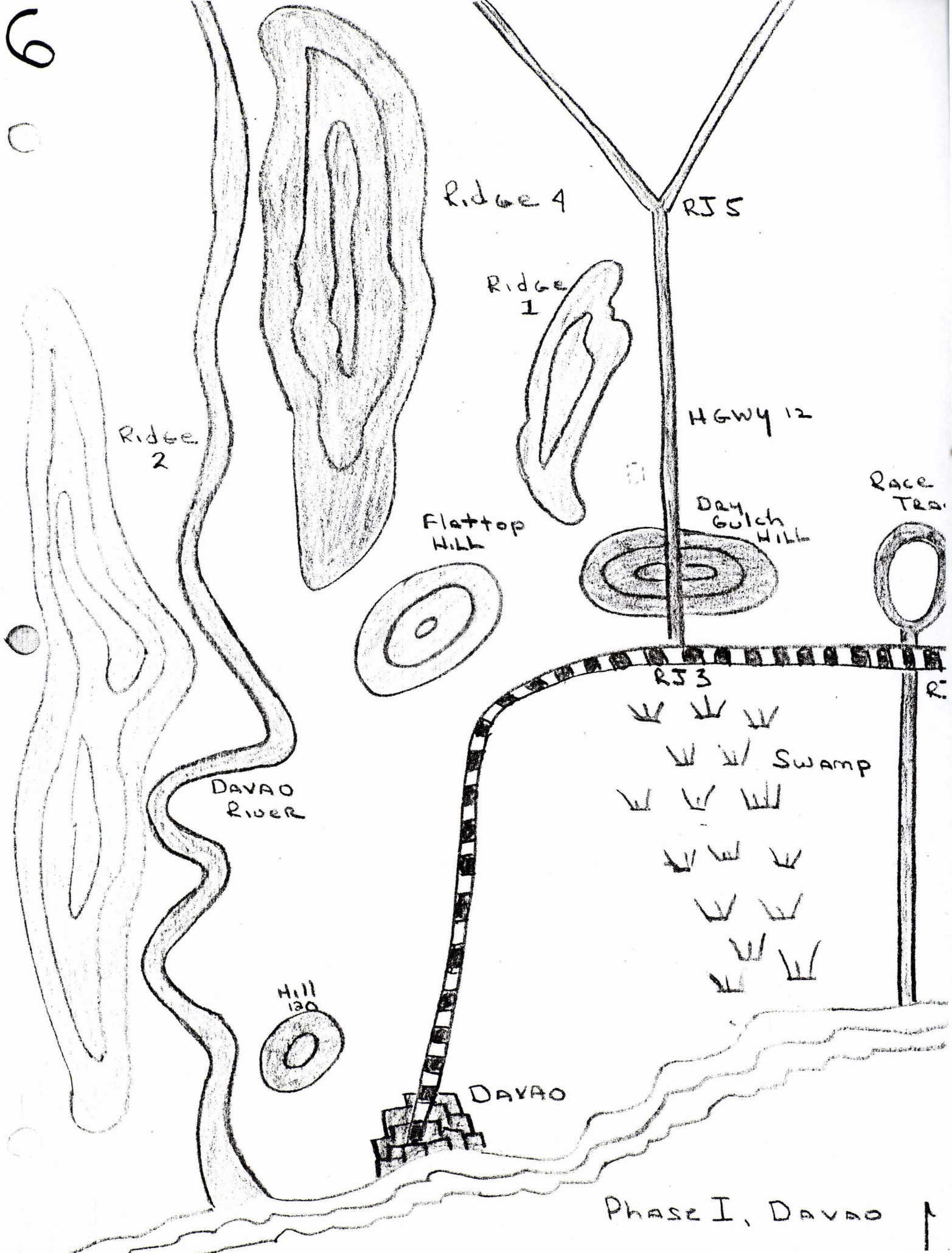
Tactically the night was quiet for us (luckily!) and our "aggressive patrols" bagan at 7:30 a.m. It was the 3rd Platoon's mission and about all that was discovered was the lay of the ground in a radius of 500 yards about us. Towards evening though trouble popped up at one of the outposts where a Jap machine gun opened. Our mortar barrage quieted things for a while but Jap knee mortar fell in on us shortly later and we called on a large scale artillery barrage that did the trick. It certainly took us no time at all to find that we have Nips nearby about 200 yards north on highway 12. About sunset I Company also had trouble as Jap heavy artillery fell in their perimeter injuring three lads. So it is - nothing but combat again and still no aspect of a rest in store for us.

MG

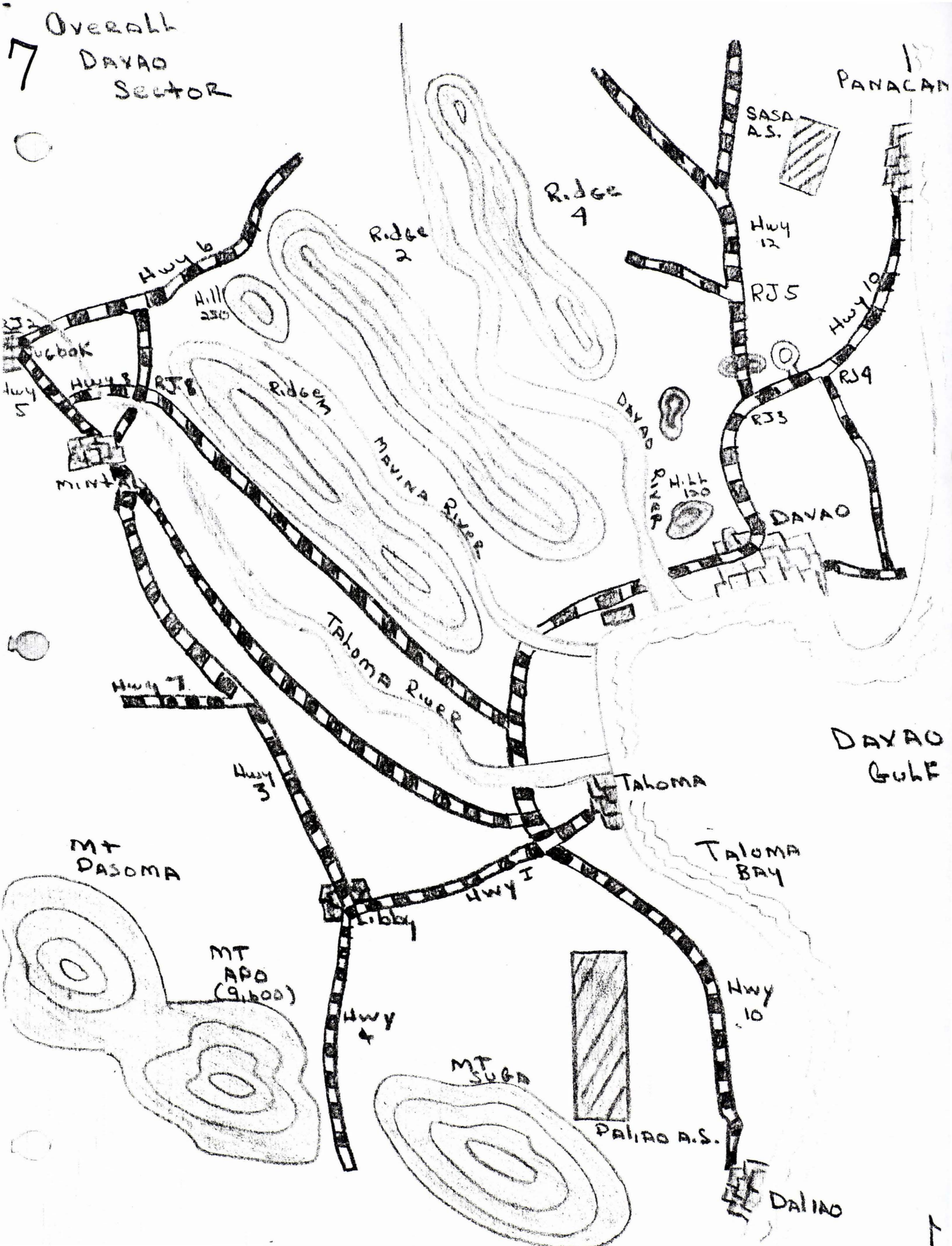
The overall picture of this sector, the second most important in the Philippine Islands shows the 24th Division fighting along the coast; the 31st pushing toward the coast and to the north, about 40 miles inland; the 40th Division up above Panacan trying to join the 31st and 40th. At present our little battalion is attached to the 19th Infantry who attacks north on highway 10 to Panacan tomorrow and Sasa

ATCHD 19 INF.

ATCHD 19 INF.



Phase I, Davao


7
Overall
Dayao
Sector
Panacan
SASA
A.S.
Ridge
4
Ridge
2
Hwy
12
Hwy 6
Hill
230
RJ5
Hwy 10
Tugbok
Hwy 5
Hwy 8
RJ8
Ridge
3
RJ4
RJ3
Davao
River
Hill
150
Davao
Mintal
Mawna River
Taloma River
Hwy 7
Davao
Gulf
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Bay
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4
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Sugba
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10
Daliao A.S.
Daliao

Airdrome. South of the Davao River, the 34th Infantry is pushing on Ridge 2 and 3; and the 21st Infantry, last of the 24th Division Regiments is attacking west on highway 2 toward Mintal. The 186 and 162 units of our Division are holding ground south of Daliao.

[redacted]

Thursday, May 17th (Happy Birthday to McGee)

Though last night was quiet again it's been a fairly active day. The 1st Platoon took the patrol today at a radius of 1000 yards around us. Though they met no trouble they found themselves within 50 yards of a lot of chattering Japs at RJ5, pulled back and bumped into a lot of dead Nips about 500 yards north of us. They returned shortly after noon with little more to relate here. Meanwhile I Company withstood and held ground against a Jap attack in mid afternoon who attempted to "bonzai" their position.

The bridge across the Davao River was finally completed this morning allowing all our bn. equipment to come across. Bn. HQS. moved into a fine building in town; our kitchens also set up in town; and due to a piece of luck a few from each company can be relieved and go to town for a day of rest and

Rockets

cleaning up. The latter began today, so I had a chance to get to Davao myself this afternoon. I did little but survey ruins of many beautiful buildings; I also took a gander at some of the markets, shops, and barber shops that are beginning to flourish again. Many natives were roaming the streets, dressed and acting quite civilly compared to other places I've been. Men dressed in white with straw hats; women in flowery dresses with lipstick and rouge. And yet there was lacking the air of friendliness we found in Leyte, Jolo and Zamboanga; and it was obvious too how Davao is known as "Little Tokyo" with its pro-Jap feeling. I ate chow at the kitchen where others who were off for the day were congregated talking of the dry shave the barbers gave; the tuba they found; [redacted]. I shave, showered, and in clean clothes I returned to Dry Gulch where it took only a few minutes to find myself back in the groove again.

Natives

It was just after I got back on the hill trouble brewed again. I've heard and read a lot of the Jap rockets but not until this evening had I seen or experienced them. The first one came from behind a ridge about 1800 yards northwest of us, and against the gray clouds, the rocket was clearly visible with its stream of red flame and black smoke. You can follow the entire path of the rocket with your eyes for its flight is that slow. The first one came gliding at us and at first you can't figure out whether you should dive for your

Rockets

ROCKETS

hole and hope or wait till its nearly ready to land and run the opposite direction. Most of us chose our hole and as the first one lit about 200 yards beyond us, it shook us and set the brush afire. That terrifying and helpless feeling came over us all as three more came at us, each one coming closer until the last lit only fifty yards away, rocking our entire hill. Mixed in were Nip mortar rounds that felt and sounded like a mere pebble and worried us little compared to the damn rockets. The rocket itself is like a piece of dynamite packed in a container about three feet long and a foot and a half diameter. It has fins that fall during its flight after it leaves the runway where it is fired electrically.

Things are quiet again this evening but believe me we're all in a sweat over this rocket business wondering if they'll continue to fire them and if so if they'll come any closer. There's little else to say here, except my change in duties. Arnold is now at the hospital so McGee is C.O. making me the Exec. And with Steege ill, Mac and I who were shavetails only a month ago are having our hands full running the company. It's rather rough with only two officers present for duty, but things are settling down within the company in a day or two all should be smooth.

STEEGE
MC GEE

I'm about ready to crawl in my hole again for a peaceful night, I hope. My hole these days is a former Jap bomb shelter with palm logs overhead, a rather secure spot. The only trouble is the rats keep you awake all night running all over the place squeaking and rustling. Last night I awoke and found

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one sitting on my knee! But enough rambling for this day.

Friday, May 18th

Nothing new on the hill - the common fact of Japs around was further proved today by the second platoon's patrol. They too scouted the Race Track and RJ5 and found little but rice bowls, Jap boots, and other equipment. It wasn't till they were on their way in they really contacted Japs. It seems that one of our lead scouts bumped into a Jap outpost from the rear; one Jap turned around and thinking it was his relief started chatting to our scout. It was a minute before the dawning came; there was an exchange of shots and then our patrol made its way in, leaving both the Japs and our patrol amazed!

A few more of the boys got to sight see Davao today but other than that most of us stood another day of nervous tension and a hot sun, with nothing but barren and discolored ground to look at. The 19th Infantry meanwhile launched its full scale attack northeast along highway 10 and there were streams of men, tanks, and vehicles passing down the road to our rear. Though they moved okay, Panacan, their objective is a good way off.

Meanwhile we've begun to wonder how long our stay on Dry Gulch will be; where we'll go from here and for why. All in all, why can't we be laying on our a--- with our 1st and 2nd Bn. at Jolo or Zamboanga!!

12

SITUATION

Saturday, May 19th

Day No. 5 at Davao and on Dry Gulch, both a pain, but regardless of our feeling, the 3rd platoon took off on patrol again and routinely speaking they ran into Japs with a machine gun and other late traces of Jap activity. Bn. has now "confirmed" that "we must be right" on our reporting of Japs in the area! It seems that 19th Inf. has issued an intelligence bulletin stating how there are 200 Japs at RJ 5, dug in, in tunnels; they have heavy mortars, machine guns, knee mortars, rockets, and light artillery. We could have told them that four days ago! It was nothing startling or new to us as we continued to sweat out the rest of the day with a few more Jap knee mortars bouncing near us.

[redacted]

Sunday, May 20th

Tonight the seene and setting have changed for this day after a quick switch in plans finds us about ready to park down

14

LEFT DAVAO

CONCRETE BED

assembled there ready to enjoy the opportunity. I quickly found myself a bed on the concrete floor and believe me it looked almost like a feather bed after these past twenty days or more. Though we had to have a guard tonight, it would be easy and much lighter on the men too.

ATCHD 21 INF.

So it is again - what a difference a day made, and with tomorrow there'll be more changes for we will then be attached to the 21st Inf. and we move to the Libby Air Strip for the first move. ATCHD 21.

CHURCH

There were church services tonight after we all arrived here and the strangeness and the beauty were once again here as the boys sang hymns there on the driveway to this old garage and with the sun setting again in a heavy bank of clouds, it looks like rain tonight, but with a roof overhead it can only lull me into some relaxing dreams!

Monday, May 21st

Nine times out of ten its true. We either land up high on some old hill or way down low in the damndest wilderness. What we thought sounded like a good deal of moving to an air strip turned out to be a nightmare for we now sit in a briary, swampy cocoanut grove filled with Jap trenches now covered by thicket.

PHASE II

At any rate it was early this morning we started on our way as Phase II of the Davao sector is going into swing for us. On trucks we went through town on highway 10, passed over the new Davao River bridge, past Matina Air Drome, over the Matina and Taloma Rivers, turned west on highway 1 and 3 till

SITUATION 15

we arrived at our destination about 800 yards west of Libby Willage on highway 3. The usual war town earth and trees were on all sides of us as we came.

And after an afternoon of digging in and cleaning out briars here we sit awaiting our next move. The 21st Infantry who we are now supporting have two battalions of Mintal and one at RJ2 and for the past three days, have been trying to establish a bridgehead across the Taloma River but so far have made no progress. The overall picture is for the 21st to drive to the highground at Hill 250 and at the same time the 34th to drive up Ridges 2 and 3 for the same objective and in that way corner about 4,000 Japs. What part our Bn. plays in the picture remains to be seen. There's no further news as far as we're concerned.

The cigarette and mail situations are becoming worse as each day goes by - [redacted]. The only consolation is this campaign cannot last forever but in the meantime I rather guess we will be suffering.

Mt. Apo and others are now at our sides, beautiful with their snow caps and picturesque slopes, ugly with the thought of someday climbing and fighting for them. Other than that the scenery is uual, cocoanut and bananathickets mixed with briar bushes and cogan grass. And though its hard to picture beauty these day, it's there if only there were moments to relax and enjoy them. For now the mosquitoes are taking over where the flies left off which without fail means it's nearly time to

GUERILLAS

crawl in. But full moon is approaching and somehow I've learned to keep track of that and look forward to moonlit nights for I always feel a little more at ease with moonlight about, plus it makes a nice setting to remember and reminisce.

MOON

Tuesday, May 22nd GUERILLAS

After a hectic night of the guerillas fighting their way just 800 yards from us, we awoke, crawled from our holes, wondering how many Japs they killed, for they had us pinned down most of the night. But as usual the answer was zero.

There was little of interest that happened during the day, though for a while we were all wondering how long it would take for the 21st C.O. to say "3rd Bn. you'll spearhead our attack!" In the end what happened was a surprise, for I Company was given the mission of guarding the artillery and the hospital - what most of us dream will happen to dear old L Company, but never see the reality. The rest of our Bn. still sits in tack here at Libby except for one platoon of K Company who are out on a road guard. The 21st meanwhile has finally gotten across the Toloma River and have a bridge-head of four platoons, which was good news for us. And that's about all the tactical news.

Most of us spent the day reading, writing, and chewing the fat, with card games taking shape for the first time in over a month. G.I. talk these days deals primarily with the cigarette and mail shortage. And though its critical, its humorous to see the boys smoking cigarettes on tooth picks or rolling grass.

17 TO MINTAL JAPS

But the major topic for bull sessions is the possible curtailment of "rotation" and the development of the point system for discharges. Since I'm far from eligibel for either I mostly listen downhearted and discouraged - to think I still have 22 to 25 months over here regardless of either set up. But naturally I sympathize with the 30 to 40 overseas months days, for they surely should be given a break.

My knack for descriptions is definitely lacking with such a sad situation confronting our lost battalion and I'm afraid for reading material these notations are rapidly becoming boring, so best I close with immediate hopes for a change in the weather (which is miserably hot then rainy); an issue of cigarettes; some mail; back to garrison life; or more than all that, a going home trip!

Wednesday, May 23rd

What started out to be a peaceful settled day here in our Libby bivuoac turned out to be another of those hectic last minute moves. For we spent all day quite comfortably and peacefully till 4 o'clock when an abrupt order came through from the 21st Hdqs. that our company would move to Mintal for the night. So here at another sundown we sit in a delapidated and rubbled village where we form a guard for the 21st Infantry Hdqs., also situated here in Mintal! But only overnight and that tomorrow we move across the Taloma River.

While we dug in tonight Jap mortar and artillery in heavy barrages fell all about us but fortunately there were no

18

JAPS IN FILTRATE BLEW BRIDGE!

casualties. The front line is just ahead of us now and that's not hard to tell with so much firing going on on all sides.

But once again it's as quiet an eventide as can be expected and its now with anxiety and restlessness for the coming days that I end this one, our 8th at Davao.

Thursday, May 24th

Any day of movement is always a day of excitement and it certainly began early this day, for at 12:30 a.m. last night the fireworks began. It began when our nightly perimeter about the 21st Inf. Hqs. suddenly came to life. It started in the part our company occuppied when a barrage of grenades were thrown loose at what we soon learned were a group of Japs trying to infiltrate into our perimeter and knock out our mortar positions. Thus the rest of the night passed; fire then a grenade, till by morning our nerves were nearly at an end. Dawn found things quiet again - the Japs had failed, and neither they nor we had casualties. Just a gentle scrap!!

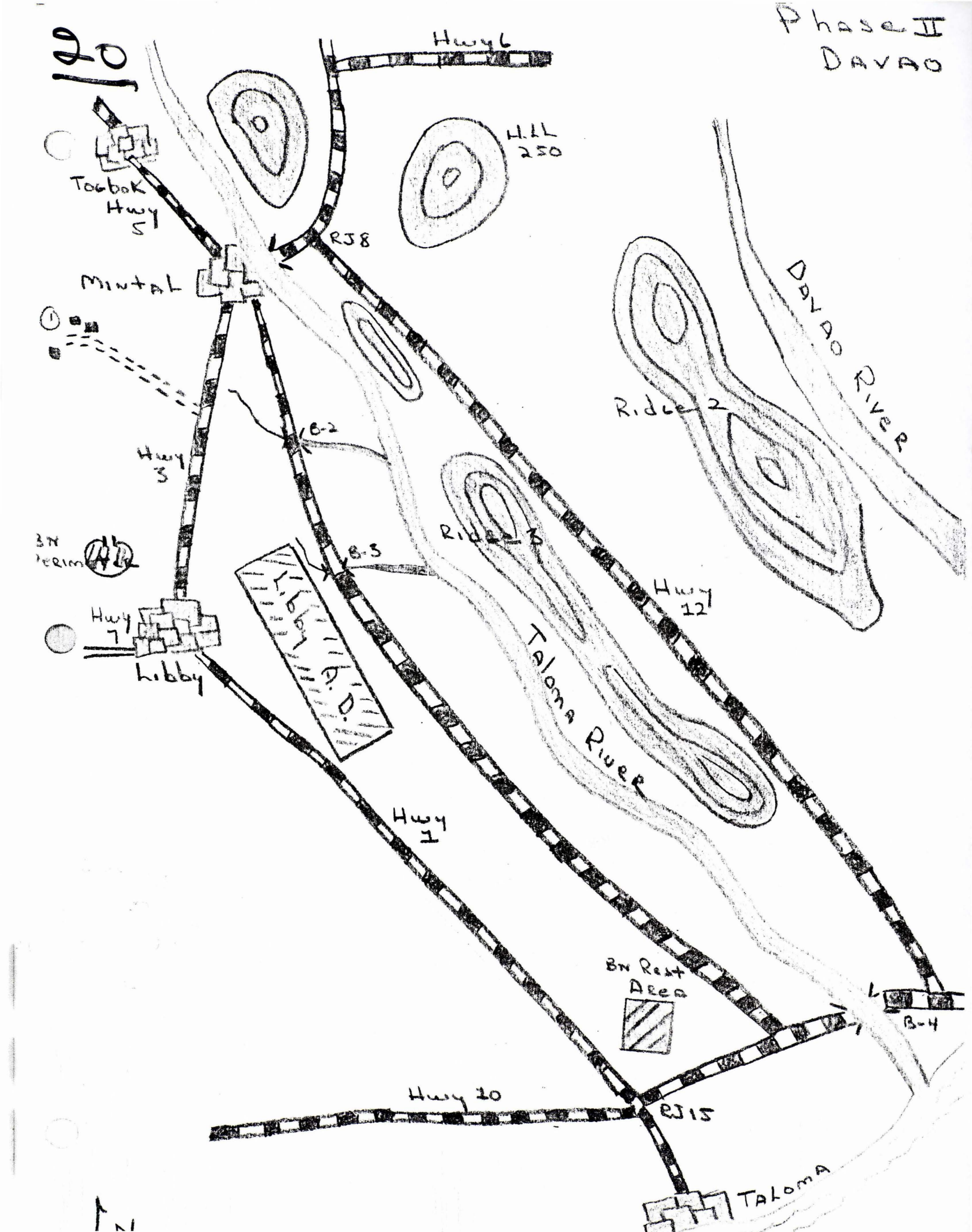
BRIDGE Blown

Early morning found us in a maze of confusion trying to get things organized for our move across the Taloma River to hill 280. But another startling item faced us. It seems that also during the night five Japs infiltrated through our lines and as a suicide squad they hugged the supports of Bridge I just outside Mintal and with huge charges blew up the vital bridge - the only supply and communications route to two battalions fighting near RJ 7/ My first view of the bridge was somewhat of a surprise - for it was so narrow and could

have been so easily protected. Now it lay broken in two and all around it and the bottom of the river were arms, legs, and bodies of the dead Japs who succeeded in their mission, altho quite fatally.

With the bridge out until late afternoon our company was forced to make a "wet crossing" so with bag and baggage we waded the river in water chest high. By noon our whole company had crossed and we found ourselves on top of a very barren hill, badly battered from warfare. It was here only a day or two ago our forces had succeeded in taking and losing the hill several times before it was decided we held the hill and not the Japs. Consequently it had been a bloody battle-ground and it was evident from the number of dead Japs laying around. The odor was bad, very bad, but of course the sight of mutilated bodies or parts of bodies covered with maggets and blood is far worse. The whole redgeline along the river had been one of the main Jap strong points and was cluttered with pillboxes and trenches overlooking the river where dough-boys had to make their bridgehead. Now it's merely a scene of desolation and cluttered ruins with only barren shell holes, rubbish, and tree snags over the area. When we arrived on the hill that was what faced us and with a burning sun beating down adding to the stench it was obvious what we were in for.

A word of Mintal - the small village we were in last night and which now sits across the river in back of us. In old days it was merely another native village built at an important highway crossing. But when the Japs came they made


Phase II
DAVAO
Hwy 6
HILL 250
Tagbak
Hwy 5
RJ8
Mintal
DAVAO RIVER
Ridge 2
B-2
Hwy 3
Ridge 3
B-3
BN Perim
Hwy 12
Hwy 7
Libby
Libby B.D.
TALOMA RIVER
Hwy 1
BN Rest Area
B-4
Hwy 20
RJ15
Taloma

21 RENDEZVOUS HILL 250

it a center of things and consequently built warehouses, power plants, many office buildings, and even distilleries. Now those things lay in ruins and with tin, pipes, furniture, and machinery laying all over the place, mostly destroyed. Especially along the river banks were there piles of debris along with a good many huge caves filled with the usual Japanese junk. Several knocked out Jap tanks were in the area as well as remains of huge concrete pillboxes, some of them which held fifty Japs during the fight here. And from where we sit on 280 we can look back and see those things, remnants of Mintal with only a few buildings standing, several small monuments that rise from the palm and banana groves.

Tactically speaking we learned that E Company of the 21st was now sitting on hill 240; that A Company of the 21st at RJ 8; the Guerillas spread about the newly built bridge (B-1), and we found ourselves sitting on 280 tied in with A Company. Most of the fighting is being done near RJ 7 where the 1st and 3rd Batallions of the 21st are; at Toghok where the 21st's 2nd Bn. is; and the 34th Infantry pushing north along highway 12 about halfway up Ridge 3. The objective of both Regiments is to meet at and take hill 250. In the meantime we are to sit here half protected by forward troops and yet with the wellknown "exposed flanks" and many "bare spots" between us. By evening we found ourselves settled down for another night, dug in, and peaceful, with only stray sniper and a couple of machine gun bursts to excite us during the day. But more nerve racking at present is the confusion of so

much artillery fire which comes whizzing and whistling over our heads continually, and though it's late evening looks like it will continue all night long. And though it's mostly our artillery there is return Jap too that has us on edge and in our holes frequently. Thus this day, another strange one, with not too much to look forward to - and by now most of us wish we were heading back to Jolo or Zambo into garrison for a while at least; but those are only wishful thinkings, which reminds me of the amount I must do before I fall asleep tonight.

Friday, May 25th

Today nothing of great importance happened for we mostly sat on hill 280 and shared bull sessions with the A Company lads.

Last night however was practically a sleepless one for soon after we all had crawled in our holes, Jap artillery began falling near our area. Artillery barrages are a terrible thing to sweat out, for always you can hear the report of the gun going off miles away; then soon comes the few moments of listening for the whistle of the falling sheel, which has you squirming and hoping; finally the burst of the shell, perhaps 25, 50 or 100 yards away; then the process is repeated until eventually your nerves are nearly at an end and you feel deeply sick in your stomach. It's hard to believe how the Japs can stand our pounding for our barrages are so much heavier and far oftener. But in any case that barrage lasted only ten minutes or so with none of the shells coming closer then 75

or a 100 yards - fortunately, and no one was hurt. Naturally most of us lay awake all night awaiting the next barrage which never came - fortunately.

But last night's barrage lead us to believe that the Japs had their big guns "zeroed" in on either the bridge or the road junction here, scene of a good deal of traffic (RJ 8). A large tree, nearly 200 feet high, stood here on the hill this morning but it was such a fine land mark we decided that the Japs could be using it for a firing sight. So this evening that fine tree is now down, blown away by seven attempts with dynamite and we all feel a little relieved if nothing else.

Other than that there was little doing in our little community of A, E and our Company, except for the all day firing the guerillas did at the bridge. What a trigger happy bunch they are - firing at birds, fish, or anything. In the end all they accomplish is a good case of the jitters for our troops. A Company sent out a small patrol south on highway 12 and ran into Japs about 600 yards out. An exchange of fire there had us pinned down for a while, but that's getting to be a common occurance. All day the continual popping and whistling of artillery continued overhead and gradually I Suppose we're getting used to it!!

For a view up here on 280, its similar to others, and yet different. Once again we have a beautiful river flowing by beneath us and all day we can hear the rushing noise of the rapids flowing over huge rocks. We can see the small village of Tagbok, which lies on a broad flat valley, covered with

24 MTNS.

MTNS

patches of fields, bananas, and cocoanuts, and beyond that rise the mountains - the huge ones I've mentioned before, extremely high with their snow caps visible frequently. Most of the time though a mass of fleecy clouds hide their peaks even though the sky for miles around is clear blue. All that lies behind us and to the west and in front of us the terrain is monotonous, nearly level with us and covered with underbrush and thicket. I, myself, often find muself starring at the mountains, watching theevening sun sink behind them making a beautiful silhoulette or the moonrise that lights up the peacks and slopes so majestically. It's strange how such beauty strikes me compared to days a year ago when luxuries and beauties were everywhere and I had too little an appreciation for them then.

This evening A Company was suddenly ordered to pull out and move up to RJ 7 so with a few adieus we bid them good luck and pulled our perimeter in so that we now sit by ourselves at RJ 8, so once again too, I'm sleeping in a different hole for the fourth straight night.

DIFF. HOLE!

I wonder now if mail will ever come through. [redacted]

Saturday, May 26th

Little occured today on 280. The day was merely hot and dull and though continual fire existed on all fronts about us, it affected us little. We did send out one patrol down highway 12 to contact the 34th Infantry coming closer to us each day now. The results were misleading for our patrol ran into Japs instead and was forced to return. Later on however we received word that the 34th too had run into Japs along the highway towards us.

One bit of excitement happened this evening however when our outposts changed reliefs. During the change a Jap machine gun opened up from across the river and though its fire was high over our perimeter it had us jumping in our holes unexpectedly. It was only a few moments till our mortars were "zeroed" in however and we had the Nips squirming as we watched several of them crawling away. They bothered us no further so we called it quits with our mortar fire.

It's again evening and there's still no hope or sight of a bright future for us. I Company of our Bn. is having a nice go of things back in the rear guarding the artillery and hospital on Libby Air Strip(also eating fresh meat!!) K Company too is getting a break guarding bridges back on highway 10, with part of its company "protecting" our Bn. perimeter. So another day bringing the two week point at Davao nearer.

Sunday, May 27th

Only a bit of news this day. Actually the first item happened last night but the sorrowful news didn't reach us till

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JUNCTION

BN AMMO BLOWN UP

this morning. It seems our Bn. ammunition truck after dropping off a late supply of ammunition here on our hill last night ran into trouble on its return trip to the Bn. perimeter. About halfway between Libby and Mintal the truck was blown up by a group of Japs who lay in wait with a bongalore torpedo.. It damaged the truck badly, but it made its way into our Bn. perimeter area. Worse than tho, one lad of ours was killed and another very seriously injuried. Such tragedies are sad and hard to understand especially when they occur several miles behind our front lines.

The 34th succeeded in getting a patrol through to us today which made news locally. It meant of course our forces were joined and lines strengthened. Meanwhile the 21st Inf's 1st and 3rd Bn. cleared RJ 7 and are now 1000 yards east on highway 6 and approaching the objective, hill 250.

This evening too our outposts had another bit of excitement when they fired on five stray Japs who came barging up the river toward our position. They were completely surprised by our fire and were helplessly pinned down on the river bank far below us. They crawled away, but we got one, and soon after our fire, a grenade went off in the grass which lead us to believe that another committed Hari Kari.

E Company meanwhile received orders that they would move out tomorrow for Togbok and we in turn would occuppy their positions on hill 220. Further complications arose tonight when the guerillas were pulled off of guarding the bridge - our orders of course were to send troops there to replace the

guerillas. Our measley little company is dwindling to small units compared to the three companies that occuppied these areas a few days ago.

Old man mountain is still with us though and my constant view of the mountains and their capes of clouds never tires. Full moon is rapidly approaching again, my favorite monthtime, for there's always that certain comfort when the moon is above you lighting up the countryside when you lay back in your hole thinking yourself to sleep.

Monday, May 28th

E Company moved early this morning and our 1st platoon by 9 o'clock was situated in their positions on hill 220. Our bridge guard of 12 men is also still in effect. The remainder of our company spent the day routinely on hill 280 at RJ 8. Many of the boys started foxhole poker games which lasted all day. Little else happened except that our Bn. wire truck narrowly escaped a bangalore torpedo along the same road and at about the same spot the Nips hit our ammunition truck. The results of this lead to orders that K Company must now thoroughly patrol highway 3 between Mintal and Libby all day.

A general reorganization is about to take place it seems for this evening we learned that we would be relieved of all our positions tomorrow by the 34th Infantry. The 21st Infantry in turn will be reorganizing for a push northwest of Togbok back on the other side of the river. What our future is is unknown at the present. In a broader vein, the 31st and

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PULL BACK

Americale Divisions fighting many miles inland from here have joined forces and are now about to push toward the coast and join up with the 24th Division to which we are at present attached.

All in all this has been a blue day with lonely hours for me and I'm afriad I'm a bit lonesome for the things of home again, not an uncommon occurrance I guess. Everything from loved ones to ice cream cones to winter snows has passed through my mind this quiet evening and I'm thoroughly ready to call it a day and wish myself sweet dreams.

Tuesday, May 29th

The so called "glorious" day has arrived as we are now happily back in the peaceful and quiet grove of our Bn. perimeter area where we once again can sleep nights and eat at our kitchens normally, though we still have our perimeter holes to man.

Early this a.m. troops of the 34th came marching over the bridge from Mintal some to relieve troops of the 21st up at RJ 7, others to relieve us. AT Company was the "lucky" company who relieved us and by a coincidence AT Company had an OCS buddy of mine assigned. It was a gladdening picture for I also ran into other OCS buddies as other troops passed by. (All of my OCS classmates are with the 34th Inf. except for six of us.)

But phase two of our Davao activities is now nearing a close as we sit peacefully here, unattached to the 21st Infantry

any longer. We are of course doubtful and dumb of our future operations, but hopes of Zambo and Jolo are with us again ever strong. But let things come what well for tonight my nerves are relaxed and I have contentment in heart and soul - a good state of mind to end this day (and still no mail!)

Wednesday, May 30th(Memorial Day)

All day we sat in our Bn. perimeter area near Libby village with little to do but write letters and chat and if you have a few pesoes, play a little poker.

Startling news for the G.I. bull sessions came through today - excellent food for many hours of G.I. controversy. "The Point System" in all its glory was handed down to us. Briefly its this. You acquire points for the period of September 16, 1940 to May 12, 1945 for the following items:

1.) each month in the army = 1 point each
2.) each month overseas = 1 point each
3.) each child(up to 3) = 12 points each
4.) each combat award or star = 5 points each

The "critical score" needed for discharge is not announced but for European troops it is 85. And since all points cease as of May 12th I have little hope of anything with my measley 40 points. In fact I'd say it means nothing to me, but to many of the old timers it does, and rightfully so. Of course "Rotation" ceases with the effect of this new plan. The main problem for me I guess is to begin looking for some plan that does affect me and could get me home before the war's end[redacted]

A bit of news happened in a military sense this afternoon

NO MAIL NO MAIL

when two artillery boys from the 24th Division were out "souvenir hunting" in enemy territory unknowingly. As it happened they ran into Japs way out a beat up trail off highway 3 at a place marked (1) on my Phase II map. One was killed instantly the other lad fled in terror, but worse than all that several more lads cowardly took off in the jeep awaiting the helpless G.I.'s. What eventually happened was normal. Our 1st platoon with Steege in charge made their way up the spooky trail and retrieved the dead G.I. who was found stripped of his clothes and belongings by then. Unusual item of interest was the huge clock found in one of the nearby huts keeping accurate time! The patrol ran into no trouble and returned weary and sweaty.

Meantime too our company has been assigned to bridge guards, one a twelve man guard, the other eight men. The birdges are small and relatively safe from any trouble. The first guard is on Bridge 2; the other at Bridge 3; both on highway 2 leading north to Mintal from highway 10.

There's no more to add at this time but my increased desire for just one little letter. Surely this can't last much longer. But I should be satisfied with another chance to rest well tonight, especially since there's rumor of moving back to a rest area with tents, cots, and all those "fine" things!!

Thursday, May 31st

A pleasant surprise took place this day as what were rumors turned into realities. At eight this morning we

30 RJ 15

received word of going back into a rest area. At nine o'clock we were loaded on trucks heading to areas in the rear - an unusual sensation heading in that direction!!

It seemed a long ride back but in the end it was a mere five mile jaunt to where we turned off the main drag, climbed a steep little knob - unloaded and began the ever tiring, building a campsite. For some reason I had taken on a bad case of dysentary that left me with an ill feeling and I struggled the day with my legs wobbling. After bull-dozers had leveled the ground, men had cut underbrush and put up our tents - the area took shape and once again it was a cool, cleared off cocoanut grove by evening and the G.I. maneouvers had changed the scenery from good to bad. Our kitchens too are up, though they sit at the base of the hill - a steep climb up and down and during rains a very obvious slippery one. Our location is at RJ 15 on the map about seven miles from Davao and about three miles from the coast - but from our hilltop the blue of the Pacific is clearly visible over the green of the palms stretching toward the sea below us. To our rear there are several small streams for bathing and nearby in a thick growth of trees must be hundreds of monkeys for we can hear them chattering all day. Mosquitoes are bad, a great deal worse than any place we've been here at Davao, but with our occupation perhaps they'll flee (or multiply!!) But above all that rises the thought of our "luxuries" again - cost, dry ground, a decent place to eat, and the like, though we must go without lights at night and

OVER

must maintain an outpost both day and night. And with K Company still guarding bridges, our company furnishing guards for several more we have none too many men who can take advantage of the softer life.

Tactically speaking, we know little of our future - where we go from here or when. It could be most anything from garrison in Zamboanga to frontline fighting here at Davao. But at the moment I'd just as soon forget the possibilities and make the most of this life today, which really could be okay. As I write tonight it's twilight time again, many of the boys are jotting their first lines home, others are in card games, and there's a group over by the battalion radio, listening to music for the first time in a long while. And here I sit, deeply contented and relaxed, on my cot, wishing and longing as I write that I could be spending these moments with my loved ones beyond the Blue Horizon and to the East, and wondering too just how many more days I'll be jotting these daily excerpts.

Friday, June 1st

I feel better today but my dysentary is still adding weak spells. McGee, Pussy and Moore and I busied the morning away building an officers Mess - we had found some Jap china-ware nearby which brought on the sudden urge. When we went for the dishes that were in a thatched hut we found an old Filippino with a very young son. He was busy at work tearing down remnants of another hut close by. We chatted with him

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14 LETTERS

and though he could speak little English, but did tell of how he despised the Japs. "Me kill Jap - wrapped in sin - killed my wife - no more home" were his words mixed in with a few of his own private ones. We left him perched high on the frame of his new home weaving on his roof of plams. His, sat dazed and bewildered on the bamboo steps.

By noon though our "glorious" little mess outfit was completed with a table made from the wall of a house, benches from odd lumber. Even a dish rack that we also found with the chinaware. We had dinner, and though it was "bully beef" and dehydrated potatoes, it did taste a little better with the surroundings.

I managed to get off a few letters finally after directing the bulldozer all over the area this afternnon - a wonderful machine, for it can level the ground, build a road, dig a sump or latrine, and many other practical things that would take man hours to do.

But the real joy of the day was mail call with its fourteen letters for me. It took me a long time to read them reread them and absorb every little detail.

Other than improving our camp the outfit did little today and thought less of the future which still remains untold. But let it be so for I'm enjoying these brief days - a chance to rest, relax, keep clean, write, read, and sleep. Not

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PHASE II ENDS

exactly the things in line for a soldier I'd say!!!

So another day with the boys ettling down for another night, the strains of "My Heart Tells Me" from the radio, and the sun sinking beyond the hills. So ends Phase II of Davao and also another book!

Chapter VI

I Davao on Mindanao (Phase III)

June 2nd, 1945 to

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COMMITTED TO ACTION

Sunday, June 2nd

Today was the last two all over again here in our rest area with only a couple items to add here.

After passing a lazy morning writing letters, a little bridge, and a couple bull sessions, I went out this afternoon to make some changes on our two bridge guards our company is maintaining. In a jeep I took off to the bridges, located on the road to Mintal. It was a rather routine duty and I returned in the early evening where another batch of grand mail was awaiting me. That once again gave the day new life, and new thoughts of "home".

MAIL

MAIL

I need that new life too, for this evening came the discouraging news that our battalion would be committed to action on a drive to meet the 31st Division, some 35 miles away. The actual date of our commitment is not known but will be within a few days. Needless to say all of us lost almost all our morale and relaxation - now comes the time of "sweating it out", or in other words worry and concern over the future. Our brief rest ended tonight for we'll no longer be able to relax and already the boys have become restless and discouraged especially since our battalion was never slated to be in the attacking echelons during this operation. But we're a lost battalion and have little to say being separated from our Division. It will soon be three ~~straight~~ STRAIGHT months of combat for us - the maximum usually, but this looks like a much longer tour.

So though our cots are here, the radio is playing, and the

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MEMORIAL DAY

is sinking again - we're very definitely not the same group of men that we were last night. Best I close this discolored day.

Sunday, June 3rd

A quiet Sunday with little to comment on. At ten this morning I attended church services - also dedicated to Memorial Day. It was a comforting hour and yet an also sorrowful one - as they read off the names of the lads who were killed in action during this past year with the Bn. There were names I didn't know but there were names I did know too, names of guys who only a few months back were under my command a very wonderful group of men. I've mentioned them before but let me add them once more - Doc Newmark, Kenny Dahlstrom, Stan Shilladay, Dick Cronin - they brought a huge lump to my throat as I heard their names and how tragic it appears, although there's someone else who knows best and He honors them as we, I know.

Word came too that tomorrow is the day we move out and into action - not exactly happy word. And many of us contemplated what could be in store now? We're to be attached to the 34th Inf.(part of the 24th Div) as part of the attack. Just where it begins and ends is still a question.

With all too many lonely thoughts of home and that future happiness I keep living and looking for, I'll close this day and tonight I must surely pray for that so necessary strength and guidance an ordinary fella needs in these trying days.

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WITH 34 REGT. < 34

[redacted]

Monday, June 4th 114 + 3

Today began Phase III of our activities on Davao. It took no time at all for the picture to change from quiet and peace to swift and moving. It was nearly ten o'clock when trucks arrived to carry us to our coming area of operations. Some 114 men plus Arnold and McGee and I loaded, moved out and soon were passing through Mintal, the little spot we maneuvered in during Phase II. The ride was monatonous, dusty, and hot the scenery was the usual partially devasted and partially unexplored land of thick undergrowth known as "apocca", a tree that looks like a banana tree, but bears hemp instead. ABACA On highway 2 we left Mintal, crossed the Taloma River and soon pulled into Ula, a very recent gain of the 34th Infantry, who ULA we are now attached to. The ride was extremely spooky and quickly brought to mind combat conditions again. At Ula we unloaded and prepared to take a walk to where we would relieve "L" Company of the 34th. The 3rd Bn. of the 34th had its headwuarters in Ula, with the attacking companies not too far away. Our route lead us down a small trail, dingy and dark with apacca, (Rd-2) until we found ourselves in the midst of a company perimeter, located on RD-1 (a) only a few yards west of the Taloma. There were only smiling faces to greet us - ours were glum! Within a few minutes the physical relief was completed. I had taken Wood's platoon down to the river where one of the 34th's platoon was also

< 34

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awaiting relief. We were there only a few minutes before the fireworks opened up - for as our relief outpost up on the river bank took its position the Japs opened up with machine gun and rifle fire some 50 to 75 yards away. With a burst of our return fire of Tommy Gun and B.A.R. things were quiet again, but the first of our casualties with a leg hit was brought over the bank. Thus it was, five minutes after we arrived to take over, we suffered our first casualty!

L Company, 34th, took off and I bid farewell to Miller and Stewart, two of my OCS classmates after we had had a brief reunion chat.

Afternoon found us busy digging in and at the same time dodging Jap mortar shells that kept falling intermittently all the while. We had two men slightly wounded. What a wonderful beginning and as yet we haven't even begun to try and gain ground. Needless to say our morale was at a new low. Our little Bn. now an attacking echelon with one of the 34th's, doing non-credit work for the 24th Division.

I Company and K Company were across the Taloma from us on highway 1 about 200 yards short of the 100 ft. bridge(b-1) As yet no one had been able to get to the bridge for K Company had one killed and two wounded in a first try for a K Company patrol.

BRIDGE

Orders for the morrow reveal that we will attack along Roads 1 and 2 and attempt to hit the main highway (1) and join K Company. A big order under the circumstances and one that

needs much thought with the night.

At twilight we were in our holes still sweating out Jap knee mortar and wondering all the while what the future held and how many days of this must we endure.

Tuesday, June 5th

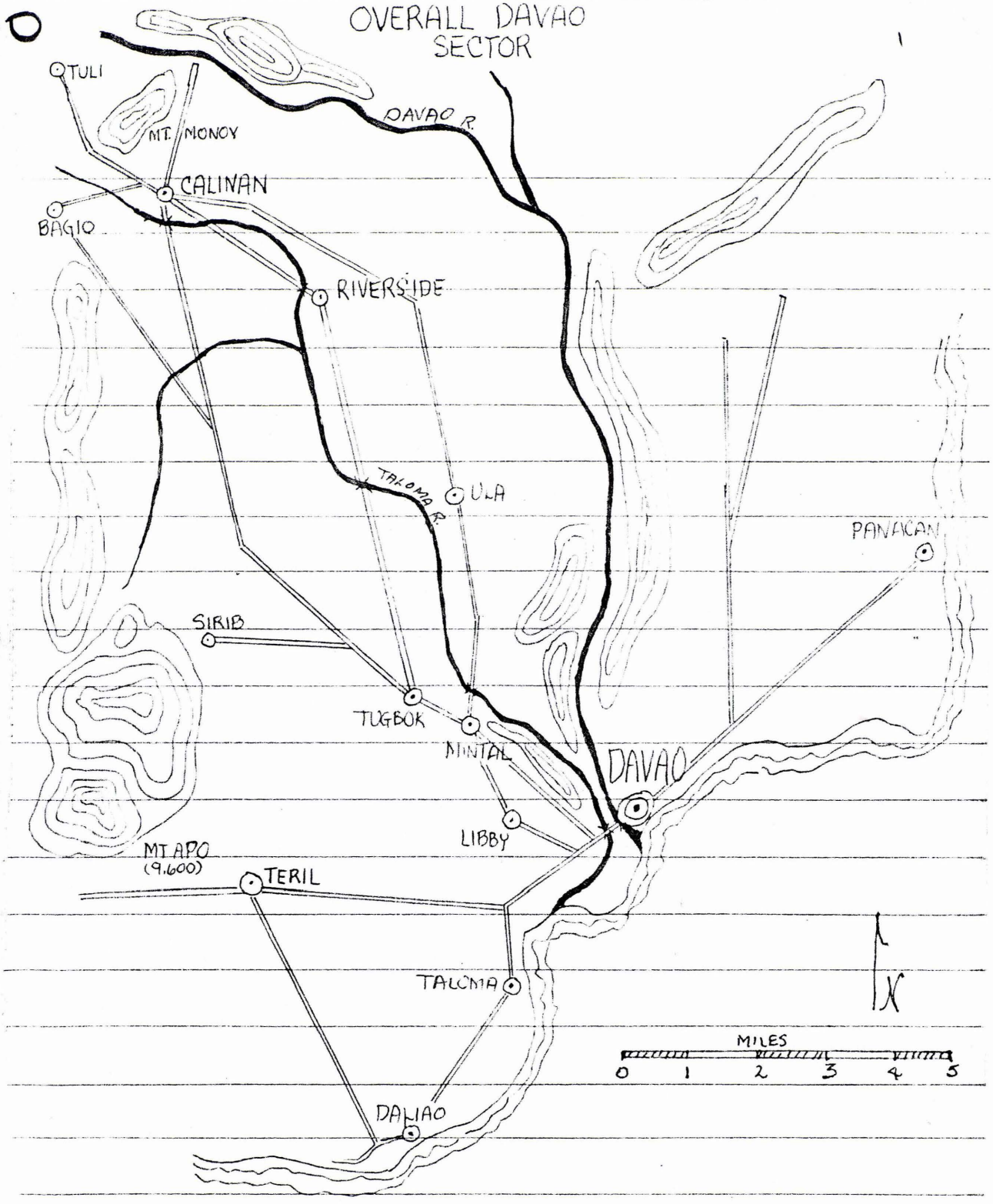
With packs and K-rations the 2nd Platoon under ~~Finley~~ started up Road 1 on a patrol to prepare for our attack. This was early in the morning and they had barely reached the junction of Roads 1 and 2 when they were fired on by several machine guns, and after being pinned down a while they returned giving us the sad news - fortunately they had no casualties. But now I know that that was just the beginning of a day of turmoil.

Soon after I started out with both the 2nd platoon under Finley and the 3rd platoon under Wood, plus 3 tanks. We were to push through to highway 1 regardless! Somehow you can sense trouble and Japs. You feel uneasy, that all attempts will be futile and that certain ones of you are soon to be casualties - and that's just as I felt starting out - though I couldn't let the men know that.

After a still artillery and mortar barrage we jumped off heading down Road 2 with the tanks. We had only gone a few hundred yards when the usual happened - the Japs cut loose with everything. Fortunately there were ditches on either side of the little road, we were in them, of course in no time at all. Japs bursts would let loose for several minutes, then during the lulls we attempted to keep moving, crawling

40

OVERALL DAVAO SECTOR



if necessary in the little ditches. The lead tank with Finley's platoon was only ten or fifteen yards from the thick abacca that the road ran into, for up until this time we had been forced to come through open fields, completely exposed.

The Japs of course were dug in securely and unseen in the edge of the thick abacca. It was when the lead tank neared the thickets edge that a huge explosion occured, drowning out the Jap automatic fire that had us pinned to the ditches!? I knew too soon that the tank had hit a mine there was nothing left to do but pull back and try to reorganize, for men now were injuried and possibly killed, with an exposed tank now immobile.

After leaving a guard about the tank, the remainder pulled back with the wounded till we were under cover from the Jap fire, though our guard still remained, hugging the ditches about the tank. There were eight men wounded, several tankmen shaken up badly from concussion and one tankman was killed, still in the tank that had to be retrieved. Finley was badly burned and his clothes were completely blown off by the mine.

After a brief discussion and planning we began our attempt to get the damaged tank and our helpless guard back. The plan was for the two other tanks to advnace with the remainder of our men and one pull up on either side of the beat up tank, offer covering fire as a bulldozer would come up behind, hook the tank on, and pull it back to safety. It was hardly a

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plausible and safe plan, but there was no other alternative. A half hour later the plan was in effect - an hour later the whole affair was a successful undertaking - no one had been wounded in the maneuver and temporarily we were a relieved group of men, when tanks and men were all safely under cover. This brought events to 2 o'clock to a close but found then that the day was still far from done.

It was decided then I would take all three rifle platoons, plus three more tanks and try it again - this time making a vast flanking movement!!

It was discouraging, but once again we started out; this time crossing Road-2 and making for the apacca some six or 700 yards beyond where the Nips had previously opened up from. We made steady progress and soon found ourselves deep in a dark thicket, hacking and hunting trails for the tanks. There was a mojor of the tank corps in the lead tank He was the "know-it-all" type and swore he knew what he was doing. An hour and a half past of this aimless and blind maneouvering, when we hit on a small path (later I learned was P-1 on the map) - it was dark, swampy, with overhanging bursh that hid even the sky. Confined to the path we strung ourselves in a column of tanks and men (the major's idea() Endlessly it seemed we wound in and into the apacca and it was getting late - the men were weary, jumpy, and we had to dig in for the night yet too. But the major was determined, "knew what he was doing" till finally the inevitable happened. The lead tank with the 1st Platoon was opened up on by Nips

42

KIA TANK/MAJOR

dug in on the junction of the path with an unexpected road (P-1 and Rd.-3). There were five men leading the tanks - Wilson and McBath and White, among them (My old reliable scouts) - It had to happen though. McBath was hit in his try for cover - the others made it. But Mac was hit, and several times now, lying on the path up ahead of the tank. It was sometime before we could get to him, retrieve him. He had only a breath of life when we placed him on the tank for the ride back - but within a few minutes he died and we were so helpless. Furious at all this unexcused maneouvering I told the major this was enough, there was much to be done it was already after five. With Japs still all around poking shots here and there, the tanks finally got turned around on the crammed road space and we headed back on the same route.

Forty-five minutes later we rejoined the company near Road-2 - discouraged and I was bitter as I listened to the major offer excuses for his "ideas" and his smiling "good luck tomorrow".

NIGHT!

We wasted no time at all in digging in in a cornfield where Roads 1 and 2 meet. I Company meanwhile had taken over our old perimeter we had last night. It rained miserably hard as we dug in, attempted to eat. The men were wholly downhearted for already word was down that L Company would try again tomorrow. We were wondering then if there were any other companies in the in the Bn. for I and K Companies had done nothing except for several patrols of K Company that met bad luck at the 100 ft. bridge.

I thought as I crawled in my water filled hole if maybe tomorrow couldn't be a better day, for I too was discouraged no end with these past two days and the thought that tomorrow I woudl once again be leading the company again. Only prayers can give you comfort from that kind of thought and that's how I closed this unlucky day.

Wednesday, June 6th

After yesterday's unlucky episode we crawled out this morning preparing to break thru the Nip lines again. Breakfast was snappy and though most of the men had a solemn look, they were ready for our jump off by seven thirty.

Today I had the attacking echelon again and by this time I was beginning to feel the brunt of it, but at eight o'clock away we went, the third platoon leading with three tanks. We wasted no time blasting and firing all we had . We made our way as far as I had gotten with the 2nd Platoon yesterday down Road 2. We passed that point and headed into the deep abacca. Numberous pillboxes were in smoke as we made our way; dead Japs, scarred and smouldered, were in the ditches on either sides of us and the odor was sickening. Once we passed one of our own Jeeps that we blasted with 75's. The jeep had carelessly been driven into enemy land and it had been ambushed, one G.I. lay not too far away, showing signs of decay, he was undoubtedly a casualty in the jeep.

We drove on and on and though it seemed miles, it was actually only 600 yards when we stopped to reorganize for our final push to the main road so near, yet so far away.

We kept the artillery falling just in front of us as we moved along. It gave us the necessary confidence and over abandoned Jap trenches and foxholes filled with the usual Jap junk we made it to the main road, the Riverside-Calinan Highway(hwy-1). When we came onto the road we could look back down and about a mile away could see the K Company men on the road. Up ahead on the road was nothing but crater holes and on either side dense abacca for miles and miles. We came onto the road at RJ-4 and around noon we pushed back down the road towards the 100 foot Bridge (B-1), clearing pillboxes and blowing up Jap vehicles and trench systems. Our mission was accomplished as we reached the river where the bridge as usual had been destroyed.

By one o'clock the entire battalion was on road and our company was sprawled in the ditches on both sides, tired, proud and momentarily happy. We all were exhausted and nothing could have moved us - and nothing did as we munched on K-rations and watched I Company pass through us to push on up the road toward Riverside.

By four o'clock we were digging in at RJ-4, I Company meanwhile pushed ahead about 600 yards and was digging in too after encountering the Japs who now have their defenses some 800 to 1000 yards straight up the road from us. Another line that will probably be costly to break through.

But for tonight, we're sitting 600 yards behind I Company and feel a little more at ease. Surely we'll be able to take it easy after our four days of bearing the brunt for the

battalion. No news to confirm that right now though.

It's raining like hell again and my hole is half filled, so best I close and begin bailing before another rain fills it completely.

Thursday, June 7th

Although most of our company remained stationary, there was enough going on all around us that about all we could do was sweat it out!

I Company moved out early in the attack with tanks but after pushing up Highway 1 only a few hundred yards, they were stopped cold in the vicinity of RJ 15. They got no further for the day and though we hammered the Nips with mortars and artillery, we too suffered casualties. Several casualties of ours were the result of our own mortar shells as our lines are so close to the Japs.

Joe Buckovick, K Company, tried taking his platoon up on the right of I Company, but got up as far as CR-1 after pushing up Road 3 to where we ran into an ambush. His platoon was split to high heavens in the abacca and for hours several of his wounded men were cut off by Jap fire. By evening he was reorganized but was understrength as a result of casualties.

The third maneouver was Brownie's patrol out of our company. He took the first platoon and went up Road 3 early this morning, cut across to RJ 3 where he joined G Company of the 34th Infantry on the Ula Road. He had no trouble, but the way was definitely a "spooky" one.

46 HAMILTON - NEW PLAN

Meanwhile K Company passed through us shortly after noon in column up the road. They moved up to behind I Company where the new Bn. C.P. is now located. Just as K Company was on the move through us, a short mortar caused one nervous K Company boy to set off his rifle. He shot himself in the foot and was treated by our aid man.

HAMILTON

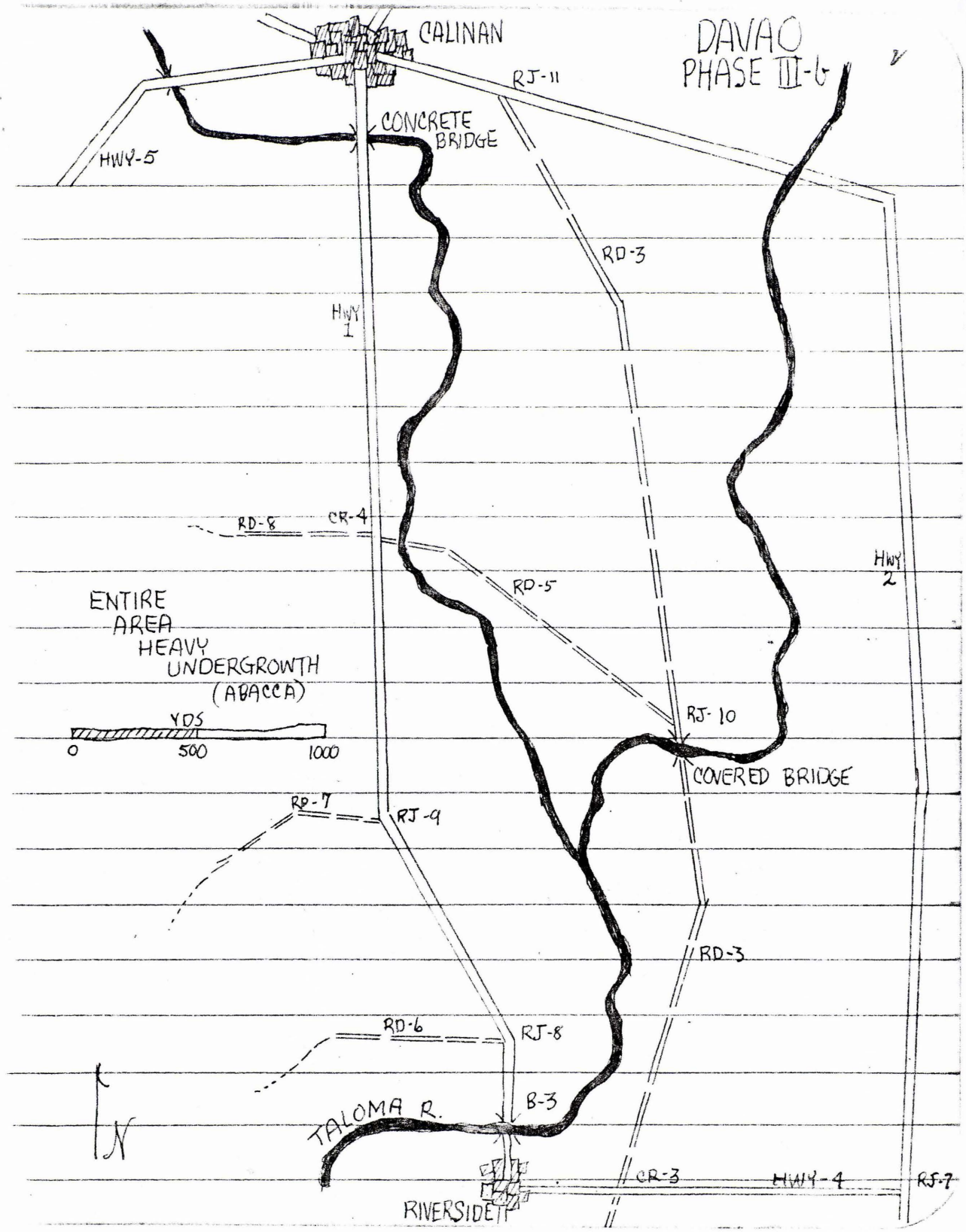
A shift in command also took place today as our present Bn. C.O. left on rotation - replaced by a firey, red headed, houng Maj. Hamilton, full of gum and ambition. He's much too fresh for us weary lads but he's not a bad sort.

At present we stand far too far in the rear to feel comfortable for it can only mean we're next to move into the attacking echelon. And though our new operation in the Riverside area is relatively young all of us are becoming weary and exhausted. The hot chow tasted good thid evening, even though mess kits were half filled with the falling rain. My "hole" these nights is a half caved Jap trench, enforced by palm logs overhead. [redacted] Oh well tomorrow is another day and bound to be a busy one.

Friday, June 8th

Today the veil lifted as our New Bn. C.O. issued his first real order, trying out something new. All morning I and K Company batted their heads against a stonewall getting no where (RJ 15) (CR I) By noon a new plan was in operation quite naturally we (L Co) were involved. We packed our few

47


CALINAN
DAVAO
PHASE III-6
RJ-11
CONCRETE
BRIDGE
HWY-5
RD-3
HWY
1
RD-8
CR-4
HWY
2
RD-5
ENTIRE
AREA
HEAVY
UNDERGROWTH
(ABACCA)
YDS
0
500
1000
RJ-10
COVERED BRIDGE
RD-7
RJ-9
RD-3
RD-6
RJ-8
N
TALOMA R.
B-3
CR-3
HWY-4
RJ-7
RIVERSIDE

48 NEW

belongings in a hurry - marched up Highway 1 as far as the Bn. C.P. (area F) and from there our drive to Riverside took a new twist.

Smack through the abacca our entire company went almost as dark as night, cutting a trail, quiet as possible. Our maneouver was to be a secret move down on the river bank, move up the river a 1000 yards, and then cut back to High way 1; thus cutting off the Japs holding up I and K Companies from the Nips rear. But between here and there is a long hard grind and we knew it as we left the highway and headed through the brush to the river's edge. We stood an excellent chance of being cut off ourselves!!!

By this evening we had made it to the river silently except for two shots that killed two Japs. Over vines, up and down the steep river banks we went in column, a column nearly two hundred yards long, but we were quiet and most of the time we even feared breathing. There were plenty of marks that showed us Nips were plentiful in the area. Rags, rice, uniforms and equipment were all through the brush and that distinct Jap odor was all along the river bank. But we made 500 yards of our flanking movement and in an extremely tight perimeter (area C) we dug in for the night. It's hard hearing for the roar of the river going by and yet it also conceals and drowns the noise we make. We're perched high up on the riverbank in thick brush tonight and how strange it is to hear all the fighting going on "behind" us - we're even out in front of our own artillery, there's little wonder that most

F1647

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of us are a bit on the "jumpy" side. If we make it tomorrow we'll be heroes and will have fooled the Nips! Let's hope we do.

Saturday, June 9th

At daybreak we were all up and ready with a hefty K Ration under our belts! We moved out again before seven using the same technique as we did yesterday - one long column creeping up the riverbank, the swish of the river drowning our noise. We moved along okay but it was slow and tedious crossing rock and swamps, slashing vines and all that. Many times we had to stop, take a drink from the river and catch a breath. And all the while our own artillery in support of I and K Companies, now well behind us falling all around sending shrapnel knee high through our company. All we could do was dive for the nearest rock, hole, or tree then move out after each barrage. Mixed in were the cracks of machine gun and rifle bullets overhead that came whistling from the fight I and K Companies were having and getting nowhere fast.

Around ten o'clock we had moved to within 300 yards of our destination and the Jap odor and tracks were becoming more and more recent. Once we ran into six young Jap civilians cuddled on a wood platform, camouflaged, and built on the river's edge. [redacted]. The youngsters, none of which were over six or eight, huddled near a pale glowing gas lamp and stared at us in fright as our column moved by them, then

leaving them behind. There were more clothes, more platforms, more blood and even human waste as we moved on.

At one o'clock our leading scouts reached the bridge where a small road (highway 3) off highway 1 crosses the river - we had made it quickly. One platoon occupied the bridge(B-2) another platoon made it to the junction of highway 1 (RJ 6) and set up there and the rest of us quickly occupied the area in between (D). Our area was low and swampy and we were exhausted, thirsty, but worst of all, sitting 1200 yards out in front of our own troops with plenty of Japs in between and up ahead.

Some of the boys found a small 6" stream flowing through our swampy area - we drank it, but Lord knows I wouldn't dream of it most any other time. We had still one K Ration apiece and our base load of ammunition to hold out on till the rest of the Bn. could come up to us. Our communications are only wire, (it could be cut by the Nips at will!) and radio of which the batteries are over half gone now. All in all we were all feeling mighty low in spite of "mission accomplished" - until the good word came through that the Bn. would follow up our same route tomorrow and join us - what a treat they have in store! Wood has the third platoon out on the Highway 1 road junction (RJ 6) and as I write the first signs of trouble and our position being discovered are taking place. Wood has just been shooting up ammunition at the rate of a dime a dozen at Japs ahead of and behind his position. And from his reports, around forty Nips are busy digging in furiously as our mortars are already pounding

51

on them.

So another spooky day and most of us have lost another five pounds!! But no ones hurt yet so I can't say we can complain too much, but this is the beginning of what looks like a night of activity and no sleep.

Sunday, June 10th

This has been a long hard strenuous day - a day we hadn't anticipated when we creeped out of our water filled holes this morning. At dawn Woody reported in from his position the results of the nights fireworks that began shortly after dark and continued throughout the night and had us all on edge. Woody counted five Nips dead down the road a piece. The beauties of the G.I. night perimeter are really a comfort during nights like last night.

Just shortly after sunrise, word came from the rear that the Bn. was moving up around the path we came over yesterday. Meanwhile I Company was left behind where they were three days to keep driving on the pocket of Japs that have done a nice job of holding up our advance. Nevertheless we were awfully glad to hear "reinforcements" were on their way, especially after last night's activity and our wire being cut.

Most of the morning we sat in our holes anxiously keeping track of the Bn's progress to our position. By eleven o'clock the head of the column arrived and we all felt the weight on our minds lift - but only for a very short time, for within thirty minutes, puffing Red Dog Hamilton, issued the order

52 Corn!

that L Company would shove on to Riverside - some 1400 yards further down Highway 1. We could hardly believe the word! I Company was battling 1200 yards behind us and units on our right and left were each over 1000 yards lagging - and now we're to push another 1400 yards before dark, L Company at that. Our morale hit a new low, for L Company had been leading this advance continuously and men can take so much of this strenuous tension.

But at 1200 (noon) Brownie started out with the first platoon as an advance patrol. Meanwhile the rest of the Company stocked up on ammunition, more K-Rations, etc. By two o'clock we got word that Brownie, using similar tactics of silent creeping up the river bank, had progressed around 500 yards. With that our company - myself leading moved out to overtake Brownie and together move on to Riverside, if we could, by evening.

3/PLN

Within a half hour we had climbed up and down bluffs covered with jungle thicket and retraced Brownie's steps and joined him. We stopped and hashed over plans to continue and within another fifteen minutes we pushed on. I had the 3rd platoon at the head with me. It was slow going, extremely spooky and several times we were stopped by natural barriers and we'd have to go back aways, start out again, each time wondering if the Nips had discovered us yet, for our column made a helpless target. So it went for several hours, then suddenly we broke out of the thicket and into the first corn field I'd seen in the Philippines. But crouched in the

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cornfield we could look several miles up ahead. Instead of jungles the terrain suddenly changed to open fields with gradual sloping hills. It allowed us excellent observation (but also for the Japs!) The rest of our advance would have to be partially exposed, a distance of about 800 yards into town proper. From the corn field I could see some of the battered houses and also a tall Jap observation tower, still standing and useable. Squad by squad we crossed the corn-field and crept over the river bank crest and down into the river where we moved on up to within 300 yards of town, where we bumped into freshly dug spider holes and trench systems that seemed to circle the town. There were numerous papers and documents in the holes, untouched by last night's rain. It was definitely a spooky situation though neither the Japs nor us dared make a noise, if there were any Nips! In any case we held up and made our plans for entering the town, it was getting late as well. Soon George Fox and squad moved out, scouted the first buildings still clinging to the cover of the river - our company moved on up on his signal - then Hawko covered more buildings with his squad. Rice, ice boxes, sewing machines, broken bottles, and a general mess were everywhere till finally our company was waiting within 150 yards of the main crossroads (CRJ-16). We could see it clearly with its several bunkers, blown up bridge. And just across the river our vision was clamped again as the jungle thicket began again more dense then ever. The Japs in there could observe us at will and still be unseen. Harley Lemons

and his squad made the last jump to the road junction without opposition and within a few more minutes all L Company was digging furiously to prepare for the Nips before dark. Once again we made our mission without casualty, with luck we had outfoxed the Nips again, though we once again were sitting at a vital corssroads way out in front - we wonder again - who's got who surrounded?

In any case as darkness came on, our holes were dug, deep too, and we were in our "comfortable" perimeter set for the Japs, forgetting all concern over food or water. Once again we're set for a sleepless night and all of us are on the alert. Just as this day ended, just across the river from us we spotted five Japs walking innocently toward us. We fired, killed two, but three are away and probably will have the news of our location to their commander soon. Too dark to write more.

Monday, June 11th

Last night I came down with extremely high fever and nausea and was almost totally out of it with a fever of 104 degrees. For these reasons I can only make my notes in brief today as I am going to be pulled out and sent back to be hospitalized for what looks to be like malaria and dysentery. Today we layed at Riverside and due to stepped up action, part of our battalion came up for re-inforcements using part of K company. Meanwhile I company continues to push H crossing with tanks towards us. Also during last night it was wild for a time as what looked to be a platoon of Japs attacked our

perimeter. We countered with artillery, mortar, machine guns, and rifle fire. At dawn we found as many as 10 Japs within six feet of our perimeter - too close for comfort. Then during the morning hours one of those lousy Jap artillery bombs landed in our perimeter, killing two of our fine fellows and wounding 13. Wood and Mayfield were the ones killed. It was not long after this the medics pulled me to the rear for treatment - because of the high fever I remember little after being evacuated - it was my understanding that the rest of this day finally became quiet at Riverside.

NOTE:

For the following 3 1/2 weeks I was under close care of the medics and finally pulled through the malaria and dysentery seize. They also found a bad case of jaundice. Fortunately my recovery in that 3 1/2 weeks was successful with no ill effects. This ends my accounts of Davao operations. I also learned that L company and our battalion was pulled out of action at Davao a few days after my illness and the battalion was sent back to Zamboanga in the rest area.

ORIGINAL PLN LEFT
NEW CONTACT

FIRST PLATOON ROSTER

PLATOON HEADQUARTERS

1542-9	SCHACHT, WILLIAM F.	2ND LT	O-1327887	PLATOON LEADER
651-PL	BROMHILL, THOMAS E.	T/SGT	39312407	PLATOON SERGEANT
651-PG	MORSE, LE ROY M.	S/SGT	37011236	PLATOON GUIDE
675	MANNA, PETER J.	PFC	31367849	PLATOON RUNNER
675	ROYBAL, JOSE L.	PFC	38583337	PLATOON RUNNER
	NEUMARK, MANDELL	PFC	37603351	MEDIC

FIRST SQUAD

653	DAHLSTROM, KENNETH M.	S/SGT	36301147	SQUAD LEADER
653	DIXON, SYLVEN W.	SGT	38431632	ASST SQUAD LEADER
746	NICHOLS, FORREST H.	PFC	37540618	BAR MAN
745	3 ~~ROMANENGHI, STEPHEN~~	PFC	36691872	RIFLEMAN
745	WILSON, BUCKEY R.	PFC	20945896	TOMMY GUNNER
745	? 3 ~~STROLOVITZ, ALEXANDER~~	PFC	32992741	RIFLEMAN
745	? TRAMEL, TRUETT O.	PVT	38688884	RIFLEMAN
745	ROGERS, MARION B.	PFC	35873374	RIFLEMAN
745	JOHNSON, DAVID C.	PVT	39622383	RIFLEMAN
	? McBATH			
	? BEACH			
	McBRYANT			

SECOND SQUAD

653	STAFFORD, EUGENE R.	S/SGT	36049159	SQUAD LEADER
653	BERSON, ROGER J.	SGT	20936032	ASST SQUAD LEADER
746	? SHILLIDAY, STANLEY H.	PFC	35916670	BAR MAN
745	? LEMONS, HARLEY A.	PFC	38023662	RIFLEMAN
745	CRONIN, RICHARD B.	PVT	36982557	RIFLEMAN
745	WHITE, ROBERT H.	PVT	33520898	RIFLEMAN
745	DEIMONICO, ARTHUR J.	PVT	36983000	TOMMY GUNNER
745	HURLBERT, VICTOR W.	PVT	36469798	RIFLEMAN
745	JACKSON, PAUL H.	PVT	15333038	BAZOOKA MAN
	? BLAKEMORE			

THIRD SQUAD

653	DOSTAL, WILLIAM	SGT	36301378	SQUAD LEADER
653	MILLER, RAYMOND E.	PFC	33723124	ASST SQUAD LEADER
746	PHILLIPS, CARL E.	PFC	38378089	BAR MAN
745	/ ~~McBRYANT, WILLIS H.~~	PVT	34784969	RIFLEMAN
745	? MC CARREN, ROGER E.	PFC	33733677	RIFLEMAN
745	? MC CULLOUGH, HAL B.	PVT	37538258	TOMMY GUNNER
745	? RICHTER, LOUIS O.	PFC	32934486	RIFLEMAN
745	? JONES, ROY H.	PVT	39593949	RIFLEMAN
745	NICKSAN, JOE JR.	PVT	39593423	~~RIFLEMAN~~ BAZOOKA
	ROMENENGHI			
	STROULIVITZ			

PRESENT _____

ABSENT _____

TOTAL _____

9 NOT DUE

163 162 156 OTHER 9 AREA
HHIII HH IIII B 641 710 (III)
26 PIKE

I L Co 162 INF CAPT WM SCHMIDT
NORTH FROM DAVAO

Monday, May 14th

At dawn we passed Zamboanga heading northeast still - we didn't stop, but it was strange passing into Zamboanga harbor in peace; the last time we moved in on our beachhead. And all day we sailed peacefully toward Davao where we will arrive at sunrise tomorrow. Though it was miserably warm all day it was still pleasant to be away from foxholes and bullets, relax and enjoy the normal things of life on the sea. Our convoy is small with only twleve ships; there seems to be no worry over our trip tho with only the landing and trip to Davao to worry of, for the Japs seem to be harassing the shoreline with artillery and big naval gun fire. Our mission at Davao is still unknown, so I'll omit all possible guesses here.

During the day, Jack Arnold, new Company C.O. took ill with a fever of 104° and as a result was transferred over to the Doc's ship in a fancy naval maneouver. As for myself I passed my day with Mabel, my monk, who has now settled down and gets the greatest delight out of combing my hair for fleas! Other than those brief items, there's little to add besides of course my many thought of home which are far too vast and numerous to list here. In addition my tales in these books are confined to realities rather than dreams, so best I close and make ready for tonight and tomorrow, which will undoubtedly mean a new phase of my experiences. Davao of course is a large scale operation with many possibilities in store.

Tuesday, May 15th

Another D-day is now nearly finished, but our landing of course was administrative, though as we landed at sunrise, big guns were blasting away only a mile or so inland. As we sailed in Taloma Gulf another view of the Philippines was before us. There were the usual costal plains with palms and fields, but the two outstanding things were the numerous number of houses and villages on the hillsides, confirming the Davao sector being the second to Manila, and the other item of change was the mountains, Jolo, Leyte, Zamboanga, New Guinea, and all the other places I've been had none to compare to these. All of them were extremely rocky and rugged with beautiful caps of Snow. I was nearly amazed to see snow in the Philippines but I was more concerned over whether we'd be fighting on them before long - a rough ordeal to look forward to.

But our ships glided on the beach with no trouble and for the rest of the morning we layed on the beach area unloading all our equipment all the while anxiously awaiting the mission we'd be assigned. We knew only that we would be a division reserve for the 24th Division now in full scale fighting for miles around.

By noon we had gathered enough dope to know that this Davao sector for over eighty miles around is far from liberated as the papers and news had led us to believe, with the front lines running eighty miles down the coastline and only a mile to two miles inland; the Japs of course once again

MHS
MC244
Folder 1-8

Hargus Westerfield
162nd Infantry Reg 3
Comm & Pioneer Platoon — Norm Matthews remnica

would share his small hideout with us. We never started our return trip, until we had talked with the officer or noncom in charge. Often times they desired to send a man back with us, relay a message or make some other request.

On this particular incident, when the fog had settled down, I looked about, and my Block men had pulled stakes, and were headed back. I had to run after them, get hold of a noncom, and demand that he hold his men up, until we were cleared to leave by the Company Commander.

When we left the Battalion Perimeter, we were always given the password for the day. Usually a word containg one or more letters P. If we came in after dark, we usually began to shout the password, while still several hundred yards distant. But there were always it seemed some new-beliers in the perimeter, who held us up with many more questions, kept looking down their rifle barrels at us, etc. Then occasionally some character would decide to fire a couple of shots over our heads for no good reason. I am sure you have experienced the same thing while on perimeter defense. Orders were always for that inside the perimeter not to fire at night. Yet invariably someone would violate this order and fire away toward the outer defense line.

MHS
MC 244
Hargis Waterfield Collection
folder 1/5

use for Ben

THE 116TH ENGINEERS IN THE SALAMAUA CAMPAIGN

by

Kenneth J. Deacon

The Allied victory in the Buna-Sanananda-Gona area (January 1943) ended the Papuan Campaign and opened the way for an offensive up the New Guinea coast. Despite their setback in Papua, the Japanese still held advantageous positions from which they might block the projected offensive. Reinforcing the Lae-Salamaua area, the Japanese tightened their hold on the Vitiaz Straits, gateway to Northeast New Guinea. Toward the end of January a Japanese force from Salamaua attacked the advanced Allied airdrome at Wau. After a see-saw battle, the Australians repelled the enemy and then counter-attacked. Gradually they forced the Japanese back to a line of fortifications which extended from Mubo eastward to Nassau Bay.

Pursuant to General MacArthur's strategic plan, the 3d Australian Division and the Jungleers were assigned the mission of seizing and occupying Salamaua, the main Japanese outpost guarding Huon Peninsula, 25 miles to the north. The Australians would continue to advance along inland trails through the jungle. A task force from the 41st Division would land at Nassau Bay, establish a base, and join up with the Australians. Depending entirely upon air drop and carrier parties for

logistical support, the Australians had no easy time conducting sustained military operations against an enemy 6,000 or more strong. But once a base was established at Nassau Bay, it would be possible to transport supplies most of the way by water.

General Fuller, commanding the Jungleers, assigned the mission of landing at Nassau Bay to MacKechnie Force (named after its commander, Colonel Archibald R. MacKechnie, Inf.) which included the 1st Battalion of the 162d Infantry, elements of the 532d Engineer Boat and Shore Regiment, and Company A, 116th Engineer Combat Battalion (less 1 platoon), commanded by Captain Milan M. Casper. The force would stage at Morobe (which the Jungleers had seized in April), located about 56 miles southeast of Salamaua.

Because of shallow, uncharted waters, the amphibious force would move in Engineer landing craft, which, being small, would not make easy targets for hostile aircraft. Loading on 30 boats furnished by the 2d Engineer Special Brigade, 2 captured barges, and 3 Navy PT boats as escorts, MacKechnie Force departed from Mageri Point (just north of Morobe) at dusk of June 29. A raging storm imperilled the flotilla, and visibility became so poor that one PT boat lost the convoy and another led the first wave of boats almost to Salamaua before turning back. Meanwhile an Australian platoon with signal lamps reached the landing beach. Having followed circuitous paths through swamp and jungle to evade the enemy, it had taken the Australians two

days to negotiate an air distance of only eight miles.

MacKechnie Force reached Nassau Bay about midnight, June 29-30. Save for the blinker lights, the shore was completely blacked out, and overpowering waves generated by the storm cast the small boats far up onto the beach. Only one of 21 which landed was able to get back to sea. The pounding surf soon flooded the rest with sand and water. The third wave of boats, bearing an infantry company and a platoon of combat engineers, was not landed lest these craft should also broach and leave the task force utterly stranded. This wave came in on July 2 after the storm had subsided.

While no one had perished, the 740 men at Nassau Bay were in an unenviable predicament. Their radios were out of order, and some of their weapons, ammunition, and rations were lost or damaged. Their boats were wrecked beyond repair. They expected the Japanese to attack at any time and realized that the Australians were too far back in the jungle to give any direct and immediate assistance.

Throughout the night the amphibian engineers performed extensive salvage operations while the divisional engineers opened tracks across the beach, over which they dragged supplies on a sled built from local timber. This being done, all engineer troops volunteered the next morning to help defend the beachhead.

Company C, 162d Infantry, patrolled south to the Tabali River without contacting the enemy. Company A of the same

regiment and the Australian platoon moved northward toward the Bitoi. Permitting forward elements to advance, the Japanese from concealed positions opened fire on their rear. It soon became evident that there were more Japanese than expected in this sector. When the Australians ran out of ammunition, the combat and amphibian engineers were sent in to bolster the defense.

Toward nightfall two infantry platoons were shifted to the north from the quiet southern flank, leaving only one to defend the Tabali River line. Shortly after this happened several hundred Japanese, who had been lying low, crossed the river and attacked in force. Greatly outnumbered, the infantry platoon fell back to prepared positions on the beachhead proper. Combat and amphibian engineers were rushed from the north end of the beach to meet the attack.

Although small in scope, the attack on the beachhead was vicious and sustained. Whenever possible the Americans fired from foxholes and trenches as the Japanese combined Banzai charges with deceptive tactics. A catskinner and mechanic from the 116th Engineers doubled as a machine gun team with considerable success. Several Japanese reached the broached boats. Not all of the machine guns had been dismounted from these craft, and the enemy began to rake the American flank with fire from these weapons. The Jungleers dealt effectively with this menace and thereupon removed all guns and ammunition. At various times throughout the night the Japanese infiltrated

the lines but were dispatched in hand to hand fighting with trench knives, bayonets, and rifle butts. At daybreak the Japanese force withdrew into the jungle. In their baptism of fire the combat engineers suffered losses of 1 man killed and 2 wounded; the amphibs, 7 killed and 12 wounded. Colonel MacKechnie later congratulated the engineers for their courageous defense of the beachhead. He stated that all other reserves had been committed to repel simultaneous attacks from the north and that not a man could be spared to help defend their sector.

On July 2 the 3d wave of MacKechnie Force landed at Nassau Bay. With the beachhead secured, the combat engineers who had been serving as infantry turned their efforts to building a road across the beach to the south arm of the Bitoi. That day infantrymen moved up the Bitoi River valley to link up with the Australians in the Mubo area. As there was no road, the Jungleers had to carry equipment, rations, weapons, and ammunition over a footpath which led through swamps and jungle and which crossed and recrossed the river. By July 4 the force penetrated 6½ miles inland to the junction of the Bitoi and Buyawim Rivers.

The Japanese offered stout resistance from Bitoi Ridge, a terrain feature to the north which from a height of 2,800 feet overlooks the Bitoi River, the Mubo-Komiatum-Salamaua track, and merges with Mt. Tambu on the north. So that artillery might be brought within range of Bitoi Ridge and other strongpoints, combat engineers and artillerymen built a pioneer road to the

river junction. They had little mechanical equipment and their work with beset by difficulties caused by rainy weather and rough terrain. The engineers erected timber bridges and laid corduroy corduroy through stretches of swamp. By July 7 construction had progressed sufficiently for Battery C, 218th Field Artillery Battalion, to move within range of Bitoi Ridge. The construction of this and similar roads were of great tactical importance and also saved time and effort in moving supplies forward. In the words of Colonel MacKechnie, "without the excellent work of the Engineers, this would have been a virtual impossibility."

The fighting and the terrain became progressively rougher, but within a week the Allies captured Green Hill, Lababia Ridge, Bitoi Ridge, and Mubo. To consolidate their hold on these positions, Company A, 116th Engineers, was assigned the task of moving 75mm howitzers to the summit of Green Hill. This involved a distance of eight miles and the crossing of Lababia Ridge. With the assistance of artillerymen, the engineers disassembled the guns in order to manhandle them across terrain which a places reached heights of 3,000 feet. Some loads could not be reduced below 267 pounds. These had to be hoisted by ropes over extremely unbroken ground.

The men who performed this operation had to travel as lightly as possible. Each man carried only a rifle, a cartridge belt, a canteen of water, and "C" rations. It was known that no

water would be available on Lababia Ridge, so a group of natives was detailed to bring up water in 5-gallon cans. By evening of the first day the engineers manhandled the guns to the top of the ridge and set up defensive positions. The weather was hot and muggy and the carriers did not arrive. As an expedient the jungle-wise engineers cut Loya vines from which they drained enough water to quench their thirst. Thus tided over, they moved the howitzers to the top of Green Hill and then returned to the beachhead to prepare for operations at Tambu Bay.

In mid-July Coane Force (another tactical organization of the 162d Infantry) established a forward beachhead for unloading supplies at Tambu Bay, which lies midway between Nassau Bay and Salamaua. Commanded by Brig. Gen. Ralph W. Coane, this force included the 2d and 3d Battalions of the 162d Infantry, Company A, 116th Engineers, and 2 companies of the 542d Engineer Boat and Shore Regiment.

At Tambu Bay the Japanese offered tenacious resistance, particularly from Roosevelt Ridge which directly overlooked the beach. They had dug underground tunnels which connected mutually supporting emplacements and which provided shelter from artillery and mortars.

Company A, 116th Engineers, constructed an extensive network of roads and trails throughout the area, linking the beachhead with Mt. Tambu, to the southwest, and Dot Inlet, to the north. They carved more than a half mile of track up the sides of

Roosevelt Ridge. At places the terrain was so rough that until trails were cut it had taken six hours to move supplies barely a mile. Throughout this work the engineers were constantly harassed by small enemy infiltrations behind the front line positions. Ten men from the company volunteered to assist the infantry in destroying hostile fortifications on Roosevelt Ridge with demolitions. Each man carried a charge in his hand and another in his pack. A charge consisted of 8 pounds of TNT laced with primacord, to which was attached a cap and a grenade that served as a detonator. The whole thing would explode in just 5 seconds after the pin was pulled, and was a powerful inducement for fast footwork. Although exposure to machine gun and rifle fire compounded the danger of this business, the demolitionists succeeded in blowing up seven occupied positions.

Coane Force captured most of Roosevelt Ridge on August 14. Five days later Australian troops and the 1st Battalion, 162d Infantry, occupied Mt. Tambu. Continuing its support missions, Company A, 116th Engineers, built a landing strip from which cub aircraft could direct artillery fire on Salamaua. During the first week of September the Allies stepped up their drive as the Australian 7th and 9th Divisions made airborne and amphibious assaults near Nadzab and Lae. By that time the enemy's entire front had collapsed. On September 11 the Australians and the Junglsers forded the broad Francisco River and entered Salamaua unopposed. Seventy-three days of combat

had elapsed since the initial assault at Nassau Bay. While awaiting their return to Australia for a well deserved rest, the 116th Engineers constructed a 550-foot bridge across the Francisco and put in roads and water points for troops in the Salamaua area.

MHS MC244 Hargis Warfield Collection
41 MP 41st Div military police
PLN

Mr. Lewis E. Clark
355 Durham Street
Eugene, Oregon 97404

24 April 1981

Dear Hargis,

I'll answer the questions listed by numbers.

I was a corporal on Biak, and then sergeant, just before leaving for the P. I., I became a Master Sergeant in the Oregon National Guard long after the war; 1st Sgt., then MSGT, the rank received prior to my first retirement.: Then in 1973 I requested to be taken from the retirement list and rejoined the Guard from which I retired for the second time on 3 June 1977.

The "old woman" Sgt Churchill and I brought down from the mountains was an American Missionary who had been safely hidden by the natives of Zambo for three years. We were ordered by Col. Sweeney to pass through the friendly forces front line and with a Philippine Scout proceed through the Japanese lines, and bring her to safety. The General's Staff were fearful that as the Japanese retreated they would successfully capture her after a three-year chase. The trip was more scarey than being seriously dangerous. We were selected because of our extensive combat infantryman training prior to 1942. The first thing she said after getting her down from the mountain was "Thank God, can I send a wire to my daughter in California?" She was dropped off at division headquarters and flown to Leyte and then home.--the next day.

Salamauan-Dobadura--Buna-Gona, Tambu Bay sort of went together. The first elements of MP's were operating between Dobodura-Ora Bay and being with front line troops we were subjected to air raids and infrequent ground fire. As all troops moved closer do Buna-Gona-Tampu Bay ground fire was more frequent; fortunately we came through unscathed. Artillary fire and HMG fire were bothersome but more up at the front. We alternated duty at the front lines--collecting POWS (very few) collecting Japanese material for identification, escorting conveys, etc, guarding check points.

BIAK

I went ashore on the first wave on a LCVP operated by the Coast Guard, and as stated in the Subject Letter from PW to the CG I was the seniorMP Non-Com on board. After landing I helped organize the group of about 48 people into some sort of order, helping the man named Fred ---------, and MP who's appendix burst--made a litter out of strong poles and extra jackets, kept strict radio silence, and traveled through swamp water and undergrowth for hours until we met the advanced scouts of 162--some of the men were trained under me while in the training cadre at Ft. Lewis. Major Wendall was so mad at first, but after he got the story all down why we were off the hook. In the Zambo landing I was one of 13 MP's that came ashore in the first wave. I was a volunteer that came in with the assault forces and beach party--advanced group.

BIAK

Martinsen was injured on Biak when his jeep hit a large land mine which flipped it over and landing on top of his lower back which was serious damaged. He was immediately evacuated to a hospital ship and that was the last time I saw him until the '79 reunion in Sea-Tac, but I had written to him a number of times through the years. Now he is gone, but his lovely wife lives in Seattle with her family.

Hollandia was a cake walk compared to other operations like Attape and Wadke, Biak, Zambo,. When we landed there food was still on plates as the Japanese evacuated from the beach area almost the time we were landing. When Major Wendall and the other MP's returned from the small island near Hollandia they rowed the barge back-also used poles. Five of us hid under the tanks that first night. We had eight POWS that were in a big bomb crater and were eliminated by fire. I was wounded during the fire by having a piece of metalcut across the top of my left arm and shoulder and in the left thigh. no big deal.

HOLLANDIA

The 162 Recon brought in the Nippo officer--He was the only POW captured there--Mindora

HOLLANDIA

BIAK

While on Mindora we were getting ready for the Palawaan invasion as well as the Zambo affair. Back to Biak for a moment. I stole 4 cases of Japenese red wine which I buried in the wet sand and my buddy and I had a bottle every night along with warm bread we received from the nearby bakery for a bottle of sake. Mindora was a bore. We had air alerts or actual bombings almost daily the first month of so on Biak. Our Ack-Ack and fighter coverage kept them away most of the time. Still they would sneak in along the beach and strafe or drop bombs not very accuate. Our big worry were the caves and the hundreds of Japenese inside them that came out and harressed us. When my old 3rd Bn of the 162 was ordered up the cliffs of Biak on a frontal attack only 11 men of L Company walked out without a wound. The MP's also tried to keep other troops from entering the caves that faced the beach, but still they tried and some were wouned or killed.

BALINESE

* The Balinese girls were probably diseased but they were off-limits--McAnther's personal orders. They damped behind a series of tent flies hooked together so that all personnel was kept out except Amerinan Nurses, a Doctor, and good handlers--none at night. We had a six-man patrol on duty at all times and excorted then down to the river where they took their daily bath--as they walked into the water their sarong gradually was slipped off and they swam and bathed and then as they started to get out of the water, they re-robed. They were very pretty, but badly treated and the last day we were there they boarded planes and were also taken back to Leyte.

I have a number of lists of the former MP's, but none are official--all told my tally amounts to about 67. While on all our operations in combat we excorted POW's back to division or army headquarters.--one in particular was a full Colonel in Japanese Air Intelligence that I escorted directly to MrArthur's Headquarters and his Senior G-2. I gave him a bottle of that lovely red wine for a box of Dutch Master Cigars and how P. W. loved them when I got back to Biak. Another time I took two Sgts. back (very early in the Biak operation) to advanced G-2 headwuarters located on Hollandia via Sh Hollandia/// I also flew from Hollandia to Sydney to pick up four AWOL people--one from 218, 1 from 116th Medics and 2 from 163.

It is too bad that the Army Censors kept my Diary that I kept from the time we were located in Rockhampton through Sananada to Lea, New Guinea, with the promise that I would get it back. I had a complete list of MP personnel, our daily work, POW list items about food, my work with the natives between Oro Bay and Dobodura, and many interesting stories about our "Gang". I also had one started in Mindoro through Jolo;Tawie Tawie (spelling) It was pilfirred from my bag one night and that was the end of that. Without notes it is hard to go back so far in one's memory and try to re-build accounts of one's actions during that conflict.

When we landed in Zambo I was a sergeant and in gettingashore was a task in itself sue to the action of the ocean and the mountain guns pounding aeay at us. These guns were located high up on the cliffs and proved difficult to knock out. Once ashore Sgt. Tjader and I were directing our MP's as to their duties while we were helping the wounded, moving trucks that were left with engines running so that other vehicles could get up off the beach. We moved 11 in a row that were full of ammo. The beach party radio jeep received a direct hit killing all the staff of the commo group with this jeep. If blood or pieces of bodies were found in the trucks drivers refused to get back in them so Tjader and I were kept busy, plus trying to drag wounded behind some protective devices. Thiskept up for 13 hours. It was during this hectic time that I was wounded across my left calf, right ankle and right thigh, plus a slash across my lower left shoulder--back side. Oh! yes. On Hollandia when I went to remove my fatigue jacket, most of it feel away as burnt clothe and Cptl Flint told me that my back was blistered from the intense heat from the fire. The soot plus blood was all over my back and I wasn't even aware of it until he told me.

Like you I am in good health and have treasured all the Jungleer stories by you. If all goes as planned will be in San Jose. As ever,

Lee

4425 N 78 APTS
SCOTTSDALE
AZ 85251 41MPs

Hargis Westerfield
414 W. 25th. St.
Kearney,Neb. 68847

April 29 1981

Dear Hargis;

The followimg is a recall of what my experiences were after joining the 41st. Div. M.P.'s.All this took place more than 35 years ago so the recall isn't what it should be but I will do my best. I am elated that you did ask as the 41st. holds a special place in my heart.
I am not sure about dates but when I mention certain places,I know that you will be able to xxxxxxxx relate the time.

I joined the 41st. while they were at Dobadura.I was interviewed by Major Wendell and two of the sergeants.If my recall is right, the sergeants were Weeks,Churchill and possibly Jack Schuldt. One of those names could be wrong but like I said,the recall is not to good now.I am just ~~xxxx~~ 5'7" tall and Major Wendell wanted to know how I had come out in the past in any fights that I might have had.I told him that I had a big nose but that it had never been broken.(By the way,I had transferred out of the 36th. M.P.Co.)After that interview,I was in.As far as Wars go, getting into the 41st. Div. was fantastic for me.Th M.P. Co. had a great bunch of guys and it xxxxxx was like a fraternity although very business like.
I made seven beach-heads with the 41st. M.P, Co. which were as follows.Aitape,Wakde,Salamau,Biak,Mindoro,Mindanao,Leyte and I believe there was one other but I just can't recall.
Soldiering with the 41st. guys was a pleasure.They were great. We made the landings and we did our jobs. The landings that I have included are just those that I was on. I know that there were many other M.P. cadres that went to many othere places also.
Our treatment of Jap prisoners was as I reacll very good.I do remember envying them when ever they were fed. We would get the regular grub and they would get rice and fish with gravy.Damn if my mouth didn't water.To this day, I like Japanese food.
I can remember seeing one prisoner being interpeted by Sgt. Churchill.This old boy got so scared of Church that he started biting the end of his xxxxxxx tongue off.I never did find out whether the tongue came off or not.
There are instances from every one of the landings,but do any of the boys remember how tough ~~Aitape~~ was when 5 P.M. came around and the Japs would infiltrate.Never failed.I saw fire fights that li lit up the skies for hundreds of yards.They got around the M.A.S.H. units and also captured our quad fifties and turned them on us. At daylight,the perimeter was full of Nips right at the strung tin cans.I'll tell you, our infantry boys were something else.
At one of the fire fights,I can remember being in a fox-hole when one of our guys wanted to get my attention. He was in a foxhole next to mine. He threw a clump of dirt at me and I thought it was a grenade. I browned my pants and flew out of that hole and didn't know whether I wanted to shoot at the Nips or the guy that threw the dirt.

I feel that with all the incoming shells and the other stuff that goes with landings, I believe Aitape was the most nerve wracking. With the infiltration, air raids and our guys getting stuck in the stomach going to the chow line, by some Nip jumping out of a tree, I feel that was the jackpot. At Aitape, I left to go back to the rear lines. We flew some Jap prisoners back and to get back to the Company, I hitched a ride on a squadron of P.T. Boats.

I've got to mention Biak. That was the place. We had a Jap beer dump at that place. A chit was needed for any officer to take any Beer out. Naturally the M.P.'s were doing the guarding. I guess the statute of limitations is over by now so I can tell the story. Do you guys remember the beach at Biak. Just in back of us a few hundred yards were the Mts. and the Caves. Well, that's where most of the infantry were doing their thing. Hargis, I had those old infantry boys parading back to the beach like a bunch of cavalry getting beer to take back to their lines and buddies. You would have thought it was a Safari in Africa the way those guys were hiking back to their foxholes with cases of beer on their backs. You know, I've always been a little proud of that circumstance.
I was walking guard one middle of that night there when I saw a 10 pound can of spam lying in the road. I knew damn well that none of our guys would try to take "spam" so I knew there were a bunch of Japs around ~~xxx~~ that were hungry. Never did ~~xxx~~ spot any though. At Biak there, we had a big shell hole hole there that was ringed with wire that we used as a P.O.W. prison. I can remember one night gua guarding them. We were using Tommy guns at that time for guard duty. I started to get a little tired and shifted my sitting position. The Tommy gun came down hard on the dirt and the damn thing went off with a short burst of about 3 rounds. Brother, I had to dig the biggest damn ~~xxxxxxx~~ latrine hole that those guys ever saw with the compliments of Major Wendell, bless him.
I can remember standing guard over hundreds of loaves of bread. They were loaded with boll weevils but still everybody wanted some. That was at Oro Bay if my memory serves me right. Orders were orders so guarding we had to do. There were hundreds of Aussie soldiers there who wanted the bread but I had to say no. We were getting ready to leave on those large L.S.T.'s and it looked like I had to go on the same L.S.T. as the Aussies were on. They saw me starting to come aboard and started yelling, "Come on Yank". I took off like a Flea on a dead dog and told Major Wendell about this. I told him that if I had to go on that ship I was going to be thrown overboard for sur sure. He relented and so I am able to write these experiences to you today.
Say Hargis, I didn't know there was booze found at Zambo. Could have used some. By the way, At Zambo, we were living in tents atop of the city Jail House. We could see the fire fights from miles away that our infantry boys were involved in. There was a small town called Tetuan a couple of miles from Zambo. One day me and another of the boys were walking and sightseeing and we saw some women making sandals out of Abaca, (Coconut Hemp). We liked them, (the Shoes) and we made a deal with the M. We bought up the used parachute silk and we became their partners. ~~xx~~

We were selling so darn many shoes and I was depositing so much money in soldiers savings that one of our Lieutenants called me in and wanted to know whether I was selling shoes or booze.
I banked that money as I was waiting to go back to Australia on R and R so that I could get married.
I met a terrific Aussie gal that I am still married too with a great Son and two Grandchildren. I married Joan Hamilton, from Longreach, Qsld....
I guess that the memories I have of the association with the 41st. are some of the dearest to me.
I can even remember sharing some bagels with Major Wendell while we were in the Jungle.

Well, I am rambling on because as I write certain things come to mind.
I want you to excuse the errors in the typing. I am a salesman and not a stenographer. I am also sure that you will edit this so some of the xxxxx events, I hope will be put in order, by you fellows.

Hargis, if at all possible, can you let me have Paul Wendells where-abouts. It would be nice to drop him a line. I am glad to know he is still around. I always look at taps in the Jungleer and it always saddens me to see our guys going by attrition.
I belong to the Southwest Chapter but I don't attend too many meetings as I travel for a living. I rep for a Calif. Co. and sell beads to the Craft Industry and to the trading posts and Reservations.
By the way, Dick Schumann who I believe was in signal is in Scottsdale also. xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx He does my income tax every year. We were talking about San Jose this year but its a bad time for me to go. That's when we do our xmas business. I will try though.
Well Hargis, I hope the info I gave you has helped. If there is anything else I can do for you, please ask. I will try my best. In the event that any of this goes in the Jungleer xxx and if my name is used, I would appreciate the information about my wife going in also. She is still with me but has been quite ill.
My best regards to all the guys.

xxxxxxxxxx Respectfully,

Don Robinson
4425 N. 78th. St. Apt. 131 B
Scottsdale, Az. 85251

Don Robinson

I can also remember while we were at Salamau. Bill Olds and I went for a hike one day. We walked for miles until we came to a River(Francisco) We took our clothes offand forded and still walked. In those days we were young and foolish with plenty of nerve.
We came across Jap camps that still had food on the table and was stil warm. We took the rifles and headed back to our camp. We made it o.k. but now that I think back, I wonder how many Japs were behind in the jungle watching us.

I would like to say that soldiering with the M.P. Platoon was great. They were all good soldiers and when we did our duty whether in town or the jungles, we did our duty properly.
Paul Wendell was one hell of a C.O.
After getting back to the states, I saw Paul wendell at his home a couple of times and If I remember correctly he was at my sisters house for dinner. After that we all drift apart I guess.

MHS
MC244
Hargis Wakefield Collection
162nd Infantry Regt Intelgce & Reconnce Platoon
John W. Willis reminisce

John W Willis
1441 South Paso Real
Space 255
Rowland Heights
California 91748

June 14,1980

Dear Hargis

I will attempt to give you some of information that you asked me to send to you.

I was with I company 162 and joined the I & R at Morobe New Guinea.I did not see much of platoon as was sent up coast with two other I & R Men and a Australian to watch a beach in a area of native village to watch for a possible Japaneese landing. We were recalled in a couple of weeks to go on a landing below Roosevelt ridge. The I & R were in a Japaneese barge and we got lost in severe storm from rest of landing party who were in LCV & LCM and because of heavy surf and waves 10 feet high they were all demolished. Sgt Sullivan swam ashore do get orders and were told to wait for waves to go down befor landing . 9 I & R men were posted on three islands in area ahead of time to guide landing party with lanterns and did not return to platoon for some time.

I went on a lot of patrols in Roosevelt ridge - Salamaua area not that I was extra brave but because I was one of few in platoon who did not come down with malaria.Iwent on a thre day patrol with Lt Folsom ,Cpl Cornie and native guide Tapiola. We found the supply trail from Salamaua to Roosevelt Ridge and after that was blocked, Salamaua was taken by our forces. This article was in Jungleer and LT.Folsom recieved a Legion of Merit for this patrol.

I also went on a sea patrol in a landing craft with Col Roosevelt from the beach behind Roosevelt Ridge to Salamaua. As we went around the ridge we wer fired at by Japaneese on the beach we all hit the deck but the Colonel and I told him to get down or he would get hit. He told me I am a old man have lived a full live and I want to see what is going on.

At the time of the Hollandia landing we begin having men going home on the point system. We were also offered a seven day furlough to Australia. No one would take furlough because they all wanted to go home.I took a seven day one to Melbourne . On way back I came down with Malaria was hospitalized at Brisbane and then sent to Malaria camp in Rockhampton and it was over three months before I returned to unit and fighting was practically over on Biak except for scattered small starving units.

A short time after I got to Biak,Sgt Sullivan was picked for rotation home.I was called in to Colonels tent and he said I have chosen for you to be the New I & R platoon Sgt. I told him I was not too interested and several men outranked me. He said I know you are a card player (I had won a $1000 dollars in poker game the previous night) but the army never hired you to play cards and as of now you are running platoon with or without rank. He was a great believer in the unit and expanded it from 28 men and officier to 52 men. We had not recieved a replacement for Lt.Folsom at that time. I am sending you a copy of that 52 man roster.

The line companys went into traing but the I & R ran patrols allmost every day trying to keep Japaneese from getting food and water so they would surender,I will relate on a few of these.

We went around one side of Biak in a amphibious truvk 4 men and colored engineer for a driver. I Told him toanchor a ¼ mile off shore and we would be back in acouple of days. He said I will anchor and swim ashore and go with you I will not stay alone and he did real good on patrol and wanted to join outfit. We run into 4 Japs the first day and they were heating water called out for them to surrender but they reached for their weapons and had to shootthem. We returned to beach area the next day where their was a cement floored church and a under ground river came out of hill by church. We captured four Japaneese in area and was a Major who had made his privates draw to see which one would be eaten and we found the soldier hanging in native hut . Iquestioned him and he said who are you to judge me have you ever been starving. He said I went to collegein England before the war and I am as intelligent as any of you and you do not know what you will do if you are dying of starvation. I fed them and made them wash out the church which had been used as a bathroom by the Japaneese.

There was a Lake inland in this area and later we led G Co. 162 to block off this area and as it was 4 hr walk for I & R patrol but allmost 7 hours for company with their heavy weapons. About half way wehit a native hut area and we 4 I & R killed 4 japs before G company caught up with us. I got 11 wristwatches off one jap a longiene my dad wore for 10 years. The G company Capt. a new man said the next time you run into the enemy do not shoot but wait for us as I want to give my new men experience. Well a couple hours later my head scout told me some japs were heading our way down trail and called Capt. and his men up to front of column but his front scout got buck fever and Zito had to shoot the lead man then all of guns opened up and G company took care of situation. The captain wanted some of us to transfer to his company but I told him there was no chance as Ihme, Zito and Neerman were all expierienced I & R men.

Another patrol was to a native garden We had 7 I & R , 2 army CIC Men who had been asking to go on patrol, andwe were followed at a distance by bunch of natives who were not used as scouts they were not a good bunch of people. After we had taken a area they would pick up every thing we left behind canteens and cooking ware especiaaly. On this patrol Zito and I got 7 sabers and lot of flags . We killed 7 Japs and captured 7 who were mostly Korean laborers.

The airforce sent a colonel to our area to ask to recover the body of a ace pilot who had crashed in jungle when his fighter did not come out of dive. It was a 2 day patrol with no water availabel I took 12 men and 8 of them just over from states also a work detail to carry out body. I told new men that they would have to be very sparing with water as it was a long 7 mile trip throough jungle and we had to cut our way. They said that could run 20 miles and just keep out of their way. Well they ran out of water the first day and we had to share ours to get them back to camp. They said you are walking fool I told them I had been down in this climate for 18 months and was use to it. We could not find the plane in heavy jungle till we got assistance from a airforce piper cub. The plane made a hole 15 deep in coral and the pilots body a hole three feet deep as his parachute did not have time to open. We had to kill 4 japs who had made a shelter out of parachute. Even though we poured formaldehyde over body the carriers could not stand the smell so decided to come back a week later as it does not take long in jungle. When we came back the bones were so brittle from the fall that all we were able to salvage was one thigh bone.

A couple of amusing things about the I & R on Biak
There was no coffee for awhile on the Island and we had become aquainted with P T squadron when they were attached to 162 for rations and I even got to ride on one for a day. Corp Zito took a bunch of Jap rifles and rode back 300 miles with P T on one of their supply trips and traded for 200 pounds of coffee and we had full colonels coming by at night to get a cup of coffee.One night Col.Rossevelt came in with a box of cigars and did not get out with many left. We also traded some rifles to liberty ship for sheets and the interpreter did Japaneese writing and the draftsman the red sun and we were selling these to marines who were on ships in harbor for $25 per flag it worked good until we got greedy and did not give ink time to dry.
When we left Biak we went to Island of Mindora in Philiphines where we-XXXXXXXXXX Where we trained on motorized recon with 40 div recon Company and alone. we had seven Jeeps , divided into qroups of three.each group had their radio channel and plt.Sgt had 2 radios in his jeep and could tald with either group or regimental S 2. each jeep had a mounted Bar and 50 cal.Machine gun. We went on one combat patrol on this island ,It was reported that some Japaneese had come down in Philippine XXXXXXX village and raped a girl and stole some food.We rode in jeeps as far as they would go to some mountains then took a foot patrol but found nothing.

As the time xxxxxxxxx Approached for the XXXXX Zamboanga landing I was picked for rotation home but was told before I could leave would half to go to Zamboanga and help unload LST that I would be assigned to . Our landing craft was closeston the beach to Japaneese Artillery WE had 300 tons of aviation gas and 300 tons of 155 artillery shells. we no more got gas unloaded until incoming shells it hit and set it afire. and as we were unloading shells we got direct hits on ramp killing 162 men who were picked to go home.In fact the first shell there were 5 of us on ramp and I was only one that did not get hit. I got so disgusted because ensign would not move his craft out of artillery range we were only ones getting hit that when we were unloaded i Caught a Jeep and rode up to 162 headquarters and spent day and night with I & R and next morning returned to ship and started hom.e.

I am sending you some pictures to look at put want them returned when you get through looking at them.

We have went to Quite a few reunions . Los angeles,San Francisco Yellowstone,Detroit, and Portland. Now that I am retired and gas is high we can not afford to go as much as we did in past. I saw Neerman for first time in 30 years and the first thing he said was you know $100 I owed you well the statue of limitations have run out you can kiss it good by I sure laughed at his joke.He had cancer of thraot and I see where he passed away last year in jungler.We also visited with him in Portland. My original compaby I 162 has a reunion every 5 years in Bend Oregon and we plan to attend if possible labor day week end. In 1975 we had around 60 former I company attend the reuion.

I was Public works superintendent for City of HUntington Park California and retired in July 1976.I had 31 years with city. I had a secretary to write my letters.I dug out my sons old portable and you will have to excuse the mistakes as it has been years and my fingers xxxxxx just wont allways hit right keys so I misspelled some words. I sure dreaded writing this letter but my wife told me to get on the.Ball.

Sincerely Yours
41st Buddy
John W Willis (Casey

FOR PHILIPPINES BIAK BEFORE LEAVING
I WILL X ORIGINAL
ROSTER
NOT MARK OLD PATROL
MEN LEFT

I & R

Platoon Headquarters

X	Sgt Willis, John W	Pltn Sgt
X	T/4 Sayka, Harry M	Radio Operators
X	T/5 Russell Raymond R	" "
X	T/5 Suchy, Franklin W	" "
X	PFC Tracy, Oliver R, Jr	" "
X	Pvt Ling, Harvey R Jr	" "
X	T/5 Porter, Loyd C	Draftsman
X	T/5 Zeccardi, Carmine	Topographer
X	PFC Rittenhouse, Albert	Driver
	PFC Bauer, Charles H	"
	PFC Eason, Lawrence E	"
	PFC Tompkins, Charles E	"

1st Section

X Sgt Bednarik, Adolph, Section Sgt

X	Cpl Moorman, Arnold C.	1st Sqd Ldr	Sgt Addis, James A.	2nd Sqd Ldr	
	PFC Berry, William H, Jr	Asst " "	Cpl Lopez, Miviano C	Asst " "	
	Pvt Wallace, Robert E	S & O	PFC England, William A	S & O	
	PFC Prince, Benjamin A	"	PFC Sanger, Earl H	"	
	PFC Schoenbeck, Herman G.	"	PFC Zawrotny, Frank E	"	
	PFC Ortega, Frank F.	"	PFC Bell, J B	"	
	PFC Campbell, Charles A	"	PFC Adkins, Everett	"	
	PFC Oddo, Anthony	"	Pvt Thomas, Lawrence A	"	
	PFC Sullivan, Eugene F	"	Pvt Brumfield, Exale	"	
	PFC Walters, Robert G	"	PFC Wadsworth, Henry D		

2nd Section

X Sgt Ihme, Gerald, F, Section Sgt

	Sgt Waterman, Glenn F	3rd Sqd Ldr	Sgt Wicklin, Marvin	4th Sqd Ldr	
	PFC Duncan, Warren	Asst " "	PFC Tippett, George P.	Asst Sqd Ldr	
	PFC Lore , Robert O	S & O	PFC Watson, George R.	S & O	
	PFC Bragg, Jess, Jr	"	PFC Wexler, Simon	"	
	PFC Crnkovic, Thomas C	"	PFC Wrenn, Edward D.	"	
	PFC Griffin, Joseph H.	"	PFC Robinson, Walter A.	"	
	PFC Lare, Murray, W.	"	PFC Ward, Glenn L.	"	
	PFC Perdine, Julio R.	"	PFC Somerton, Malvern D.	"	
	PFC Bengel, Harry G.	"	PFC Hughes, Junior J.	"	
			Pvt Autry, Dayton	"	

MHS
MC 244
1-13

Hargis Westerfield Collection
162nd Infantry Regiment — Parai(?) conflict
unknown soldier

"Westralia"
January 27, 1980

Dr. Hargis Westerfield
414 W. 25th. Street
Kearney, Nebraskas 68847

Dear Hargis,

Received, and am answering your letter of January 1st. So glad I could furnish some usable information for your history.

Concerning the Japanese tank and infantry attack on the 3rd Bn. 162 at Parai. I wish I could give you some real first-hand information, but Mine Pn's position and the way the battle developed make that impossible. I was dug in down on the beach corridor and the Jap attack came down a coral bench a 100 yards or so north of my position. The bench was rather a low one-20ft or so, but all I could see was an occasional silhouette of a Jap on the skyline. I was concentrating more to my front (west) because it was from that direction that I expected a Jap charge.....but it didn't.

After the Jap tanks were knocked out, or turned back, I could hear Jap officers shouting orders, and soon after that the fighting on the bench started. The first charge came with fixed-bayonets, but 3rd Bn's rifle companies were dug in and well defended; they put withering fire on the enemy, inflicting heavy losses. The attack soon slowed down to sniping and squad charges. It seemed to be strictly an infantry-rifle-bayonet action. I don't think they were armed with m.g's or mortars. Obviously, when their attack was planned they were depending heavily on their tanks, so didn't bring along any cumbersome equipment. It didn't appear to be a real determined effort on their part after the loss of their tanks, and when they were unable to break 3rd Bn's defences they withdrew.

It was by no means a "to the last man" effort such as became associated with a lot of the later encounters. I think this can best be explained when one considers that this was only the third day of the Biak operation, and they had already been successful in repeling us from the Kokmer Drome area. I have always felt quite sure that the Jap commanders had high hopes of driving us back into the sea, so were unwilling-at that stage of the game- to sacrifice too many men in this first skirmishing. This, of course is my own personal conclusion-not based on fact or figures- but I hope it is fairly accurate.

My response to the Japanese report stating that their tanks had us all running-in-retreat is: "Bunk!!!!!****". If there had been any running or retreat from enemy tanks that morning, I would have seen them. It just didn't happen.

Although I wasn't near any more of the Jap tank encounters, I have talked to other 162nd men who were. In one instance I was told of two Jap tanks being repeled with B.A.R's and M.I's. At no time did I ever hear of Jap tanks throwing our men into wild panic. The only action that I can think of that might be described as a running retreat was the 3rd Bn's withdrawal from the Kokmer Drome area. That was an escape from an indefensible position. Although seemingly disorganized, we could, and would, have fought Nip ground forces, if there had been any put into action against us.

The Yank fighting philosophy -as you well know- was quite different to that of the Japanese. No Yank was ever thrilled by the idea of dying for his country-(preferring to live for it) although we all knew it could happen at any time. Dying is all too often the result of fighting for ones country, but should never be the goal. Again, my own feelings- but shared - I am sure by all Yanks , as well as soldiers of other enlightened nations.

My memories of Hollandia are rather sparse. I can't recall any A.T.162 contact with enemy ground forces, in that area of combat. I know we moved around a lot to hold vital positions, but no fighting. We must have been used to secure ground taken by other units. Hollandia was our first offensive on returning to New Guinea after our rest and regrouping in Australia following Salamaua campaign. I can remember what a thrill it was to see troop ships, battle wagons, cruisers, destroyers, etc., spread out across the sea, as far as the eye could see. And then again, when the Navy laid down their bombardment, and wave after wave of B17 and B24 bombers laid their eggs on the beach. It seemed impossible that the very land itself could withstand such an assault, let alone the soldiers of the enemy. We had never seen anything like it befor; one could actually see the concussion waves (similar to heat waves) rising from the ground. All our previous beach-head landings had been a matter of leap-frogging up the beaches in a dozen or so Higgins boats and L.C.M's.

We landed at White Beach 1 and marched straight to Pancake Hill, where we were held in reserve. Just at dusk a single Jap bomber (Washing Machine Charlie) flew over White Beach- which was covered with the total supplies needed for our campaign-dropping his load right in the middle of it. Almost immediately, flames were leaping 100ft into the air, from the burning gasoline dump. The flames soon spread to ammunitions and other supplies.....We were, perhaps, a ½ mile from the closest part of the beach, but even at that safe distance it was a fearful sight..artillery and mortar shells were bursting. Flares and rockets were shooting hundreds of feet into the air. Some of the spent rockets and flares fell on Pancake Hill, but none of them exploded. The end result of this was the loss of almost all of our supplies for the campaign, food, ammunition, and clothing. Since the expedition was dispatched with more than adequate supplies, there was no machinery set up to get more supplies to us. Fortunately for us the Hollandia campaign wasn't all that difficult, so the heavy loss of supplies wasn't as serious as it might have been under tougher conditions.

We were on half rations most of the time and we utilized all the Jap clothing that we could obtain, (we did have a little problem with the fit though). I wore a pair of Nip pajamas for several weeks during that period. They proved to be far more comfortable, and more suitable for tropical wear than my G.I. fatigues. I could wash them out knowing that they would be dry again in a few minutes.

After the hostilities were all over A.T. Co. bivouced on the beach just south of the town of Hollandia. Three or four of my buddies and I decided to try to break the monotony of our "C" rations diet with some fresh fish. (Dewey Keys, and Blaine Kessler, were with me, but I can't seem to remember the others.) We secured an old row-boat, and a dozen grenades and headed for a little island about a mile off the beach, determmined to get some good food for the company kitchen. We placed our grenades into several very nice schools of fish and after much swimming and diving to retrieve the stunned fish, we had a couple of hundred pounds to take back to camp, and decided it was time to head for the shore.

As we approached the beach we knew something was wrong; there were men on the beach waving shirts , and yelling at us to come in. We did-as fast as we could. It turned out that while we were fishing, A.T. Co. had received orders to move to a new location. Our tent mates had most of our things packed and had already struck our tent, so we were able to load onto some of the last trucks, (minus our boat-load of fish) and leave

with the rest of the company for our new location.

We had no sooner reached our destination when I was told to report to the tent of Lt. Harbaugh, (our company commander) and to bring my fishing buddies with me. I was S/Sgt. at the time and the only ranked man in the group of fishermen. We received a gentlemen-like dressing down, and after placing the other three men on K.P, beginning the next day, he dismissed them. After they left the tent, he looked at me and said, "Steve, I don't know what to do with you." I told him that I didn't know what type of punishment he had in his mind, but unless he forbade it, I was going to go on K.P.the others, which I did. Nothing further was said about the incident, except that later on in the campaign he told me he often wished we had been able to utilize the fish we had brought back that day.

Our introduction to the Mindanao was at Perang, May 4th. Our duty that day was mopping up as the 24 Div. had made the initial assault, and had scattered the enemy. We set up base camps and patroled the Cotabato area. The Japs there were broken up into small groups and were always on the move. Although we had several brief skirmishes, I can recall no A.T. Co. casualties.

I went out on patrol with Lt. Katz and we were ambushed by about 40-50 Japs near Dilap. I was up ahead with the scouts and the officers (there was one other Lt., I can't remember who for sure, possibly Lt. Bean) were with the main body of troops further back. Anyway, I took it upon myself to call for men from the rear to provide fire power, so the lead scouts could withdraw. We fought our way out of that, withdrawing under heavy mortar fire (probably knee mortars), killing some of them. We were armed with only M. 1's and carbines, and suffered no casualties in our ranks. We went back the next day equipped for a fire fight, but the enemy had moved on.

Near the end of May 1st Bn., with A.T. Co attached were in a truck convoy, headed north over the Sayre Highway. Maramag was our destination. We hadn't covered many miles before the road became a quagmire. We unloaded, cut brush, chained the trucks together, for added traction, and when one became hopelessly mired, used cats to pull them out. Progress became impossible, so we set up a base camp with defensive perimeters right there. We were situated in a shallow basin type postion. A.T. Co., perimeter was near a river, but I don't recall it's name, although-from the Journal extracts you sent to me- it must have been the Pitogo or the Maasin. I know of no contacts with the enemy on that excursion, although it was thought large groups were escaping through that area.

There was talk of destroying all our equipment and walking out of there, but the monsoon rains subsided and the mud firmed up sufficiently so that we could back track and get all our vehicles and equipment out after all.

We ended up in the Davao area. After a couple of uneventful weeks we went back to Zamboanga ; we were there when the Japanese surrender was announced. From there, we old-timers were sent Stateside for discharge, and the newer members went on up to Japan.

Hargis, I enjoyed your remarks about your trip up to New Guinea, aboard the old "westralia", really relating to the poker players. I too, have seen them playing, often in the most rediculous circumstances. Again, I hope you will be able to glean some information of use to you and your work. Lette and I both send regards-she does all my typing.

best wishes,

Steve

MHS Hargis Whitefield etc. 2

About Murphy-24 March 1945- It was just after noon meal that K Co. started to advance. I was second scout that day, with 212 men in a rifle co., 210 men behind me. Moving along, slowly and using care, just all at once I saw the first scout's rifle out of the corner of my eye come to his shoulder. Testerman (Hillbillie) as we called him. Both armed with M-Is. He fired twice and I fired once before hitting the ground. Several grenades were thrown. Murphy had the BAR. We were right on top of a Jap mch. gun nest with 5 Japs which we killed, all of them. Just after that with 3 men in a hole bedded down for the night, 2 sleeping, 1 sitting guard with M-I. It was raining and so dark you couldn't hardly see your hand in front of your face, while on guard I heard a thud noise. 3 Jap grenades came in the hole. I threw them out, 2 out of 3 went off just after letting go of them.

The next morning just outside of our hole was a 6' 6" Jap Imperial Marine (dead) armed with a spear. I did a lot of firing with the BAR. I had 10 magazines (200 rounds) and two assistants each had 4 magazines and usually I carried a bandoe (250 rounds) on top of that. Most of the time I fired in the day time only but this one night we had a Banzi attack. I fired so much that the next morning I hadto have a new barrel from ordinance. We didn't have any casualties but don't remember when it was, but some time while still at Zamboanga.
16 March 1945, K Co. had tried to go up Mt. Copisan. We were part way up when James L. Cram was killed. After that we retreated for the night. The next morning we made it to the top without any trouble. While there I remember we could see at least one other outfit in the distance. (A Co.)

18 March 1945- Stonecypher was killed during the night, while sitting guard in his hole. He was hit with a rifle slug in the neck. 25 March 1945- Brown-I remember seeing him after he was dead, but can't recall any details outside of when we were advancing he was killed.
June or July-You don't show it: Capt. Robert C. Watson, 1st sgt. Wyatt B. Watts.
Like I say, the jeep driver with the Capt in front seat, Sgt. in rear hit a landmine killing both the Capt. and Sgt, and the driver wasn't hurt. The Capt. was replaced witha 1st Lt. James Luftkin from either L or M Co. as CO. Check with your writers of L & M Co. and see if they can remember any details.
Something else, I still have the original order Hdo. 162 Inf. APO 41-effective 16 March 1945
I Award of the Combat Infantry Badge
II Award of the Good Conduct Medal
III Award of the Oak Leaf Cluster
751 men awarded CIB with 56 men from K Co. Including myself. Award of the Oak Leaf Cluster 12 March 1945.

One of your company rosters should show a Manuel G. Gordea wounded in action. This list doesn't tell which company, but lists his mother's address; 3203 E. Washington St. Stockton, Calif.
Offhand I don't know anybody that could help you. I have thought about it, checked records and newspaper clippings for several days and I hope I have helped you with this information and will be available if you need more information.
Had a nice memorial day services. Went to Dr. office for check up Tuesday. Continued arthritis medicine for another year (Motrin 600-3 a day). Am trying to go through local service officer and VA in Cincinnati for tests in the near future for Atomic radiation.

As ever,

Bob



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At a ceremony in the Central Highlands of eastern New Guinea, the men wear elaborate feathered headdresses.

NEW GUINEA, gin′ē, an island in the southwest Pacific Ocean between the equator and Australia. Shaped like a huge bird, it stretches about 1,500 miles (2,400 km) from northwest to southeast and has a maximum width of more than 450 miles (720 km). Its area of about 306,000 square miles (792,500 sq km) makes it the world's second-largest island, after Greenland. Surrounding bays and gulfs merge into the Ceram Sea on the west, the Bismarck and Solomon seas on the east, and the Coral and Arafura seas on the south.

Portuguese navigators were the first Europeans to discover the island, during the early 16th century. The Spanish explorer Yñigo Ortiz de Retes named it New Guinea in 1545 after the Guinea coast of West Africa. In 1828 the Netherlands added the western half of the island to the Dutch East Indies. In 1884, Britain annexed the southeastern portion and Germany assumed control of the northeast.

British New Guinea was transferred to Australian administration in 1906 and renamed Papua. At the end of World War I former German New Guinea became a League of Nations mandate under Australia. After World War II, although the League mandate became a United Nations trusteeship, the entire eastern half of the island was administered by Australia as Papua–New Guinea until it achieved independence as the nation of Papua New Guinea in 1975.

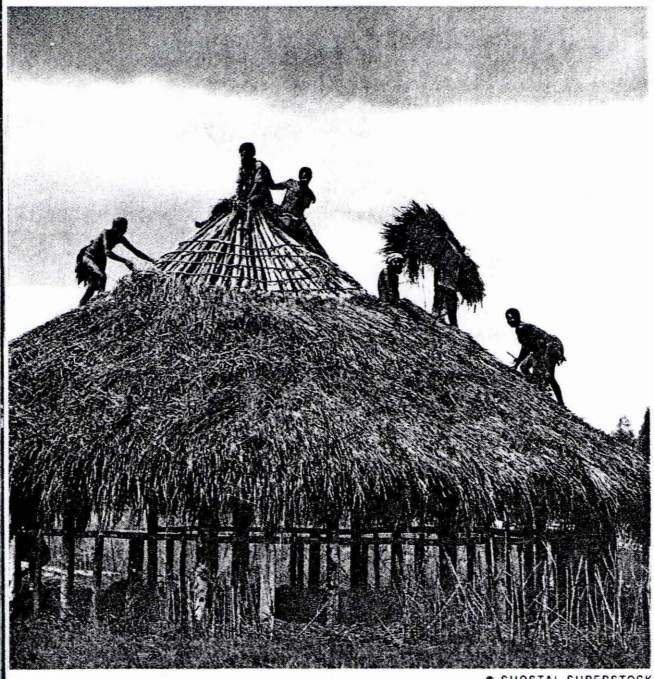
Dutch New Guinea, or West Irian, was placed under Indonesian control in 1963, and following an affirmative vote by West Irianese councils in 1969 it was proclaimed an Indonesian province. The name was changed to Irian Jaya in 1973.

Relief, Drainage, and Climate. The outstanding feature of New Guinea's relief is a highland backbone that extends from the Doberai (formerly Vogelkop, or "Bird's Head") Peninsula in the west through a series of parallel ranges that narrow to the eastern tail-end of the island. Rugged terrain, interrupted in places by upland basins, plateaus, and lakes, dominates the island interior. The principal range in Irian Jaya is the Maoke, which has peaks rising above 15,000 feet (4,572 meters). Puncak Jaya, formerly Mt. Carstensz, has an elevation of 16,503 feet (5,030 meters) and a permanent snowcap. In Papua New Guinea the cordillera reaches from the broad complex of the Central Highlands to the Owen Stanley Range. The highest peaks exceed 14,000 feet (4,267 meters). A belt of recently active volcanoes that lies parallel to the northeast coast continues through the adjacent island of New Britain.

The most extensive lowlands are floodplains and deltas of major rivers and, in southern Irian Jaya, one of the world's largest swampy regions. Numerous offshore coral reefs and islands are scattered along the coastal approaches.

The drainage patterns of New Guinea reflect the continental character of the island. Runoff from frequent heavy rains has dissected the highlands while feeding several major rivers and many smaller streams. The principal rivers of the northern watershed are the Mamberamo in Irian Jaya and the Sepik and Ramu in Papua New Guinea. On the southern watershed the Pulau, Mapi, Digul, and Bian meander across the vast swamps of Irian Jaya, while the Fly, Kikori, and Purari flow into the Gulf of Papua.

Lying almost entirely within 10 degrees of the equator, New Guinea has a tropical rainforest climate that is modified by elevation in the mountainous interior and by seasonal changes in the direction of winds. The prevailing flow of air is from the southeast from May to October when the southeast trades are strongest, but that



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Villagers complete the thatched roof of a house built on piles in the interior of eastern New Guinea.

season is generally the drier one because the trades move parallel to the coasts. From December to early April a northwest monsoon influences the weather, bringing heavier rainfall to most of the island. Port Moresby on the Gulf of Papua has less than 50 inches (1,250 mm) a year with minimums in July and August, but Kikori, across the gulf to the northwest in the direct path of the trades, receives more than 200 inches (5,000 mm) with maximums during the trade-wind season. Annual rainfall in Irian Jaya averages 100 inches (2,500 mm) at most stations and is more evenly distributed through the year. Rainfall also varies from year to year, apparently in harmony with fluctuations of monsoon intensity between Asia and Australia.

Except in the drier coastal areas from Port Moresby eastward, rainfall occurs on 100 or more days a year, most of it coming with thunderstorms. Tropical cyclones rarely visit New Guinea, their usual paths being farther to the south, but marginal effects occasionally reach the coasts. Precipitation is in the form of snow at the highest elevations in the interior, where clouds obscure the mountains most of the year.

The greatest differences in temperature result from elevation. Nights are cold in the highlands throughout the year. In the lowlands mean monthly temperatures vary little from an annual average of about 80°F (27°C). Sea breezes ameliorate oppressive daytime heat along the coasts.

Vegetation and Wildlife. Most of New Guinea is covered by tropical forest containing species that are related to those of Asia and Australia. As in other tropical lands that reach to high elevations, there is a vertical zonation of floral types. Mangrove swamps, pandanus, coconuts, nipa, and sago palms grow on or near many parts of the coast. Dense rain forest with many kinds of hardwoods and climbing vines occupies a zone up to about 3,000 feet (900 meters). Indigenous pines, beeches, and oaks prevail in a belt between the rain forest and the lower margin of a mossy forest at about 5,000 feet (1,500 meters). The mossy forest, consisting mainly of beeches with dangling strands of moss and coats of lichen, extends to the upper limit of trees at 10,500 feet (3,200 meters). Above the tree line are alpine forms, including tree ferns and stunted conifers, that continue upward among interspersed grasses to the small areas of permanent snow on the highest peaks.

The practice of shifting (slash-and-burn) agriculture has reduced forest cover along intermediate slopes and in some highland basins. Areas of kunai (spear grass) and "tik-tik" (wild sugarcane) have expanded into former forested lands that were burned or cleared for agriculture. On drier parts of the island or where rainfall is concentrated in the monsoon season there is usually a savannalike vegetation with scattered trees and coarse grasses.

The wildlife of New Guinea is closely akin to that of Australia. The many types of marsupials include wallabies, tree kangaroos, bandicoots, phalangers, and pouched mice. The echidna, or spiny anteater, is an egg-laying monotreme related to the echidnas and the platypus of Australia. There are also fruit bats, known as flying foxes, and rats. The dugong (manatee) and dolphins are marine mammals that frequent coastal waters.

Birds are by far the most abundant species of wildlife on land. Among more than 600 that have been classified are the flightless cassowary, birds of paradise, parrots, bower birds, and pigeons. Reptiles include pythons, many poisonous snakes, the giant monitor and other lizards, and tortoises. Crocodiles are found in lowland streams and many estuaries. Frogs of many kinds make up the majority of amphibians. Fish species numbering about 1,400 in the rivers and coastal waters include commercially valuable tuna and barramundi.

New Guinea is noted for its abundant variety of colorful butterflies and moths. The island also has malarial mosquitoes and ticks that carry typhus.

Natural Resources. The tropical soils of New Guinea are subject to leaching by heavy rains and are easily eroded when exposed by forest removal and cultivation. They nevertheless have been agriculturally productive for thousands of years. The best soils are found along river floodplains and in the highland basins, although productivity declines after a few years unless plots are shifted or fertilizer is applied. The swampy lowlands, especially in southern Irian Jaya, have a limited potential because of drainage problems, and they usually have few native inhabitants except where sago palms are available for food. Terracing, shifting cultivation, and even occasional irrigation were moderately successful adjustments to soil deficiencies in the past, but deforestation, weed invasions (mainly grasses), and leaching have led to native population pressures on the land.

Only a small fraction of New Guinea is potentially arable land. The preferred areas are along the narrow coastal plains and in valleys at intermediate levels, where improved husbandry could expand commercial plantation agriculture.

The mountain forests of New Guinea's interior contain valuable softwoods such as kauri, hoop pines, and podocarps that are suitable for timber.

Most, however, are diffi
ging expensive. The be
forest are scattered amo
and copal (a resin used
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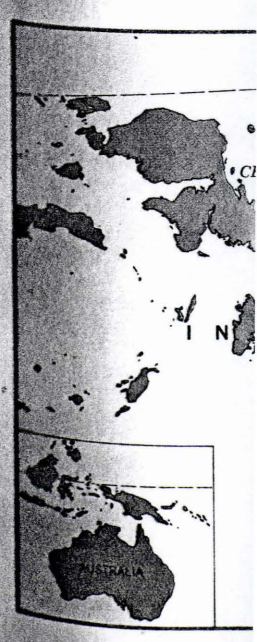


Most, however, are difficult to reach, making logging expensive. The best hardwoods of the rain forest are scattered among other species. Rattan and copal (a resin used in varnishes) are minor products of the rain forest.

Abundant fish and shellfish of the rivers and coastal waters are important sources of food for the natives. In addition to offshore fisheries, pearl shell, sponges, and sea cucumbers (bêche-de-mer) are marine resources of commercial value.

The mineral resources of the island have not been well explored, although the geological character of the rugged highlands suggests the occurrence of metallic ores. Rich goldfields have been mined in the upper tributaries of the Markham River in the northeast. There are known deposits of copper, silver, manganese, and minor metals. A leading copper center is at Ok Tedi in the Star Mountains of western Papua New Guinea. Nickel occurs on Gag Island off far western Irian Jaya.

Oil exploration, mainly near the coasts, led to production on the Doberai Peninsula of Irian Jaya after the mid-20th century. Natural gas has been found in both the Sepik and Fly-Kikori basins of Papua New Guinea. The island's lakes and rivers offer prospects for a substantial development of hydroelectric power resources.

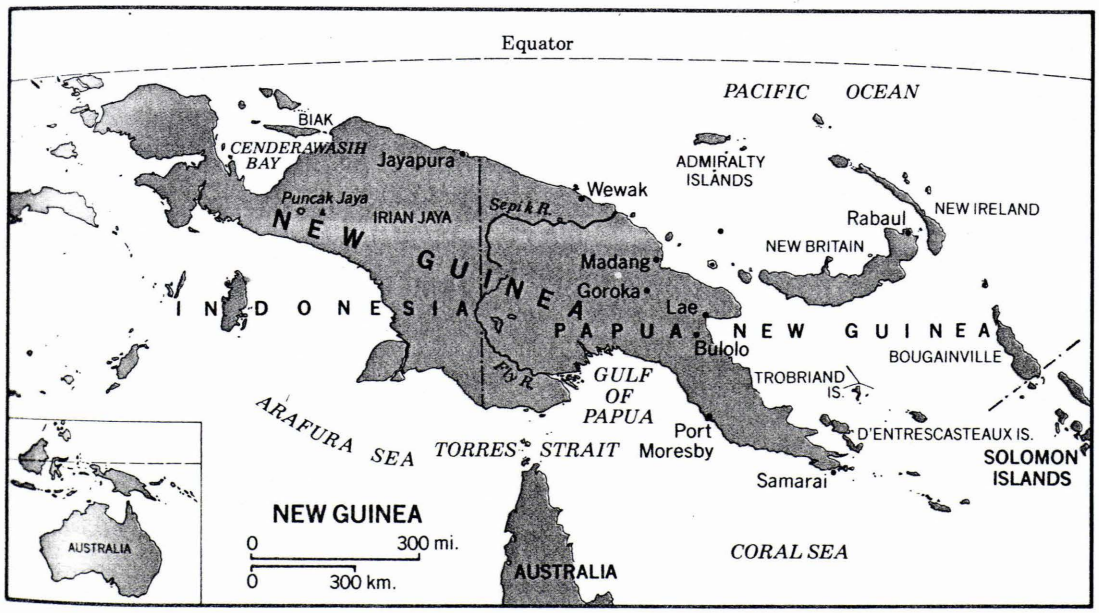
The People. More than two thirds of New Guinea's people live in Papua New Guinea. Indigenous population patterns are densest in the interior, where, because of the terrain, settlements are often dispersed among upland valleys and plateaus. Only a small proportion of the natives inhabit the lowlands, although increasing numbers have migrated to coastal villages and towns for employment. With few exceptions the swampy lands and broad river deltas are uninhabited. Europeans, Indonesians, and other foreign expatriates are concentrated at plantation, trade, and administrative centers along the coasts or at mining settlements in the interior.

Three demographic groups make up the majority of the native population. The Papuans of the southeast are dark skinned, woolly haired, and of medium stature. Negritoid people of small stature inhabit the central and western interior. Tall, frizzy haired Melanesians live mainly on the coasts and outlying islands. In spite of these differences, New Guinea is commonly regarded as a part of the Melanesian culture region.

The linguistic diversity of New Guinea's people is probably greater than that of any area of comparable size in the world. Isolated groups of natives often speak a language not understood by others in a nearby valley. The more than 700 spoken languages in Papua New Guinea and 250 in Irian Jaya fall into two main categories. Melanesian dialects prevail on the coasts and offshore islands, whereas most other languages are broadly classified as Papuan. The official language of government in Papua New Guinea is English, although a Pidgin English is widely used for communication among ethnic groups and in commerce. In Irian Jaya the principal lingua franca is Malay, but the government encourages the use of Indonesian as a universal language.

Because the native peoples have been isolated from outside social and technological influences, until recently they retained many of the elements of a Stone Age culture. The main traditional economy is subsistence agriculture. Shifting cultivation, involving rotation of fields rather than crops, is common in the interior uplands, where steel axes and hoes have gradually replaced digging sticks and stone tools for tending garden plots. Vegetables and starchy roots are the principal crops; some villagers raise pigs and poultry. On coastal lowlands coconuts and sago starch are food sources. Fish and shellfish supplement the diets of coast dwellers, whereas birds and small animals are hunted in the uplands. A limited trade by natives is based on such items as seashells, bird feathers, wood carvings, food, and copra made by drying coconut meat. Government policies and the introduction of modern technology continue to bring about inevitable cultural changes.

HOWARD J. CRITCHFIELD
Western Washington University



COMPANY C

Station: Bozeman

	Inducted	Losses	Net
Officers	4	0	4
Enlisted Men	101	12	89

	Name	Serial Number	Home Town
	CAPTAIN		
1.	Henderson, Maurice E.	0-242833	Bozeman
	FIRST SERGEANT		
1.	Hicks, Walter V.	20,929,162	Bozeman
	SERGEANTS		
1.	Criswell, Raymond L.*	20,929,163	Bozeman
2.	Daems, Otto L.	20,929,164	Bozeman
3.	Dixon, Donald P.	20,929,165	Bozeman
4.	Funk, Alfred C.*	20,929,166	Bozeman
5.	Hill, Paul	20,929,167	Bozeman
6.	Lowe, Edwin E.*	20,929,168	Bozeman
7.	McQuary, Richard M.	20,929,169	Bozeman
8.	Ross, Harry D.	20,929,170	Bozeman
	CORPORALS		
1.	Dixon, Robert A.	20,929,171	Bozeman
2.	Drum, John J.	20,929,172	Miles City
3.	Gray, Frank M. Jr.	20,929,173	Bozeman
4.	Poynter, Harold E.	20,929,174	Bozeman
5.	Story, Nelson IV	20,929,175	Bozeman
6.	Whitney, Lyle G.	20,929,176	Bozeman
7.	Woodland, Frank J.	20,929,177	Bozeman
8.	Yost, James A.*	20,929,178	Belgrade
	FIRST CLASS PRIVATES		
1.	Carter, Kenneth L.	20,929,179	Butte
2.	Danzer, Wallace H.	20,929,184	Denton
3.	Dent, Junior S.	20,929,180	Bozeman
4.	Dye, Robert F.	20,929,181	Bozeman
5.	Gunter, Jack C.	20,929,182	Bozeman
6.	Grooters, Bert*	20,929,183	Bozeman
7.	Johnson, William H.	20,929,185	Bozeman
8.	Kindig, Lewis W.*	20,929,186	Gallatin Gateway
9.	Lewis, Frank D.	20,929,187	Bozeman
10.	Lewis, Jack B.	20,929,188	Bozeman
11.	Peplinski, John P.	20,929,189	Beech, N. D.
12.	Sunderland, Marvin E.	20,929,190	Bozeman
13.	Treat, Virgil	20,929,191	Bozeman
14.	Yadon, Kenneth L.	20,929,192	Bozeman
15.	Yost, Harold W.	20,929,193	Bozeman

COMPANY C—(Continued)

PRIVATES

1.	Altman, Merlin J.	20,929,234	Bozeman
2.	Ballard, Fred L.	20,929,194	Bozeman
3.	Barnes, Glen L.	20,929,195	Bozeman
4.	Barnes, William D.	20,929,196	Craig
5.	Brown, Everett W.	20,929,197	Bozeman
6.	Burrell, Lester W.	20,929,198	Logan
7.	Callantine, William T.	20,929,224	Three Forks
8.	Cattrell, Charles P.	20,929,199	Bozeman
9.	Chamberlain, Maurice G.	20,929,200	Stockton, Kansas
10.	Cles, Leslie P.	20,929,201	Powell, Wyoming
11.	Cloninger, Wilson F.	20,929,202	Gallatin Gateway
12.	Cloyd, Jasper L.	20,929,203	Belgrade
13.	Corkins, Jack P.	20,929,204	Bozeman
14.	Davison, Donald N.	20,929,205	Bozeman
15.	Davison, Stanley C.	20,929,206	Highwood
16.	Duncan, Floyd L.	20,929,207	Belgrade
17.	Freeman, Alfred F.	20,929,208	Bozeman
18.	Haglund, Phillip G.	20,929,209	Watkins
19.	Hamilton, Melvin A.	20,929,210	Belgrade
20.	Hanson, Gale D.	20,929,211	Bozeman
21.	Jenkins, Josephus	20,929,212	Bozeman
22.	Johnson, Albert E.*	20,929,213	Conrad
23.	Johnson, Robert E.	20,929,214	Bozeman
24.	Jones, Earl C.	20,929,215	Bozeman
25.	Keyes, Robert A.	20,929,216	Bozeman
26.	Krein, Frederick	20,929,217	Jamestown, N. D.
27.	Kuhn, John L.	20,929,218	Watkins
28.	Kundert, Frank T.	20,929,219	Bozeman
29.	Lawrence, Ivan O.	20,929,220	Bozeman
30.	Lillegard, Glenn A.	20,929,221	Stanford
31.	Lindgren, Carl R.	20,929,222	Bozeman
32.	Logan, Lee F.	20,929,223	Bozeman
33.	Lowe, Gerald R.	20,929,267	Bozeman
34.	Markuson, Marvin A.*	20,929,225	Thompson Falls
35.	Martin, Omer L.	20,929,226	Bozeman
36.	McGaugh, Mayo C.	20,929,227	Manhattan
37.	McHenry, Melvin C.	20,929,228	Lone Pine
38.	Meagher, Gordon F.	20,929,229	Bozeman
39.	Mikalson, Robert L.*	20,929,230	Eureka
40.	Mikelson, Roy G.	20,929,231	Eureka
41.	Miller, Clarence A.	20,929,232	Menard
42.	Mohl, John L.	20,929,233	Bozeman
43.	Mosher, Joseph	20,929,236	Twin Bridges
44.	Neft, Robert F.	20,929,237	Clasoil
45.	Nevin, John W.	20,929,238	Bozeman
46.	Nelson, Emil L.	20,929,239	Watkins
47.	Nelson, Harvey H.*	20,929,240	Bozeman

COMPANY C—(Continued)

48. Nichols, Herbert E. .....20,929,241.....Bozeman
49. Pattison, William J. .....20,929,244.....Bozeman
50. Ping, Marion L. .....20,929,242.....Bozeman
51. Richardson, William H. .....20,929,245.....Bozeman
52. Ringer, Paul T. .....20,929,246.....Ringling
53. Robbins, Kimball K. .....20,929,247.....Denton
54. Rogney, Roger W. .....20,929,248.....Bozeman
55. Russell, Rowland E. M. .....20,929,249.....Manhattan
56. Rutledge, Loranzo D. .....20,929,235.....Bozeman
57. Sandsness, Paul M. .....20,929,250.....Bozeman
58. Sandsness, Lloyd L. .....20,929,243.....Bozeman
59. Scanlan, William H. .....20,929,251.....Three Forks
60. Sponsler, Ivor W.* .....20,929,252.....Bozeman
61. Spring, Wilbur P.* .....20,929,253.....Belgrade
62. Swanson, Leslie .....20,929,266.....Bozeman
63. Tooley, Creath A. .....20,929,254.....Miles City
64. Townsend, Lloyd A. .....20,929,255.....Bozeman
65. Weyand, William M. .....20,929,256.....Bozeman
66. Wheat, Charles L. .....20,929,257.....Bozeman
67. Wilcox, Joe C. .....20,929,258.....Stevensville
68. Wilson, James F. .....20,929,259.....Saco
69. Zimmerman, Walter M. .....20,929,260.....Manhattan

*LOSSES

1. Criswell, Raymond L. .....20,929,163.....Bozeman
   Hon. Disch 9-19-40 Physical Disability

2. Funk, Alfred C. .....20,929,166.....Bozeman
   Hon. Disch 9-19-40 Physical Disability

3. Lowe, Edwin E. .....20,929,168.....Bozeman
   Hon. Disch 9-19-40 Physical Disability

4. Yost, James A. .....20,929,178.....Belgrade
   Hon. Disch. 10-25-40 Dependency

5. Grooters, Bert .....20,929,183.....Bozeman
   Hon. Disch 9-19-40 Physical Disability

6. Kindig, Lewis W. .....20,929,186.....Gallatin Gateway
   Hon. Disch 9-19-40 Physical Disability

7. Johnson, Albert E. .....20,929,213.....Conrad
   Hon. Disch 9-19-40 Physical Disability

8. Markuson, Marvin A. .....20,929,225.....Thompson Falls
   Hon. Disch 9-19-40 Physical Disability

9. Mikalson, Robert L. .....20,929,230.....Eureka
   Hon. Disch 9-19-40 Physical Disability

Dec. 27 – arrived at Pt. Moresby aboard the Dutch ships "KRAMER" Several ships were laying on their sides in the harbor. Entrucked and rode about 10 miles to our bivouac area. Passed "7 Mile" airdrome and many wrecked fortresses & fighters on way to bivouac area. Set up prythidal tents and cots and dug slit trenches. Occupied slit trenches that nite (with 2 inches of mud in bottom), as we underwent our first air raid. Twice during the night we had to crawl into our beds. HANENKRATZER made new record for getting out of bed and into his slit trench. The first alert he got into the trench without any clothes. The second time he took his clothes to the slit trench and put them on there.

Dec. 28 – Started getting issued some much needed clothing and equipment. another air raid. lots of rumors flying—

Dec. 29 – SEEGER and the boys worked unloading boats and goffled a case of Pabst Cocktail and other fruit – quite a relief after the ships mess and the type "C" ration we were issued after hitting Moresby & came down with a sort of a flu and was sick for two days. Had a hike in A.M. and lots of the boys fell out – heat was terrible

Dec 30 – Got final issue of clothing and equipment. Were informed that we would leave in the morning. Stored our "A" bags – CAPT VAN DUYN gave company a talk. Told us that this would probably be the last time we were all together and what a fine company we had – made us all feel good. Met Walter Buckland at Moresby. He was with us through the whole campaign. (MED'S) BOBBY DICK, MYSELF

Dec. 31 – Entrucked at 4:30 AM and rode to airport. and about 2/3 of the 3rd Platoon were put into a Douglas Transport (DC3) and over the "Owen Stanley" we went. There wasn't a single gun on the plane but our own weapons. Don't know what we'd have done if we had been attacked. Could only see 3 parachutes in the plane – I couldn't decide (in case a plane got after us) whether to grab a parachute and drift lazily down or to give the chutes to 3 of the men (like a Sgt should) and take the faster way down – After a 40 min. ride we landed on a muddy strip and was told that Kokoda was about 2 miles "that" way. We took off. We expected to find quite a village – natives, etc., but all it was, was a few palm trees in a clearing and a few N.I.'s laying around. At Kokoda we joined part of "C" Co and Major HAWK (The Bird) led us up the trail. The pace was too fast in the terrific heat and some of the boys fell out – fell down – and every which way – We arrived at "Angs" and set to work making up our beds – with limbs, leaves, vines, etc. Mine was very artistic –

(Next Page)

Dec 31 (cont'd) we spent New years eve listening to the Aussie artillery pound away at the Jap positions. Sounded more like the 4th of July — Rained most of the night.

Jan 1-43 — left our bivouac area about 4:00 A.M. and took off up the trail. Trail was muddy and slippery. Part of it was built by Engineers out of poles. Very hard to walk on. Finally — about the time everyone was ready to drop we came to the Giruwa River and waded across it. Water almost to our arm pits and about 200 yds across. About noon, near Soputa, we stopped for dinner. I had hardly finished my Veg. Beef Stew and crackers when they called for all Squad Leaders. I, being one, was told that the Squad Leaders and part of the officers were going to the front and observe — we rode about 2 miles by Jeep and stopped at "Guinea Gyle" where some Aussies were having tea — we also had tea. we were told here that we would have to leave the road and continue on up the trail to the right. Realizing that it was going to be a long and fast walk, I flew to my pack and started throwing away some of my surplus equipment (mosquito Bar, blanket, gun oil, etc) In my excitement I threw away about half of my ammunition! (when we left Johnny Mohl got left behind & never got up where we were until next day). We started off at a fast clip (Christ knows how far) we came to a place called moore's outport (Part of our 3rd Platoon later occupied this position) At moore's we were given Aussie helmets (so the Jap snipers wouldn't know we were Americans, or fresh troops) we proceeded on up to "Kano" perimeter (later named Fisk), on the way we passed within 30 yds of a Jap machine gun nest (we were told about it later) At Kano the Aussies explained the situation — we were completely surrounded by Japs except for the trail we came up on. (we sort of looked at each other and managed a worthless grin) At dusk we could see smoke from Jap fires (cooking) about 50 yds from us the Aussies were very unconcerned about it but they were used to it. They knew that the Japs were on the defensive and not on the offensive. we weren't too sure about that and spent a restless night.

Jan 2 — Australians explained the situation to us the best they could & tried to pass on to us some helpful suggestions. Most of the information they gave us was incorrect, especially about the Japs not having many machine guns. They had all they needed, most of them american guns — Lt. Fisk went out with some Aussies in the early morning and killed his first Jap. also the companies first Jap.

Jan 3 — 5 The rest of the Company came up, led by LT. RHODES. (4)
I took my squad (Clevinger, Seeger, Raymond, Hornickel, Siemienkiewicz, Robles, Sarnowski, SWIEC, Randolph, Barbor and Burrell) across to James Perimeter along with the rest of the 3rd platoon, the 4th Platoon, Part of the 2nd Platoon and a section of Co "D" (a perimeter is a position set up to give all around protection, with the men in slit trenches, facing out, forming a circle. A Perimeter is generally not over 50 yds across.) Kano and James perimeters (later named Fisk and McGee) were connected by a trench, hip deep with mud, with Fisk on one side and McGee on the other side of the Sopurta-Sanananda trail. We had the men get in the slit trenches with the Aussies and here they heard the shocking news that after nearly 2 yrs in the army (almost 3 for me) that at last they were face to face with the enemy — actual enemy and not flags as used on maneuvers — Some of the boys were somewhat chagrined — some tickled to death. We were a sorry looking bunch when the Aussies finally all left, leaving us holding the well known sack.

We had to stand a 24 hr guard or watch. It was organized so that the men worked in groups of 3, all around the perimeter with one man out of every 3 on guard. One man out of 3 would stand 1 hr and then wake up the next man, and then sleep for 2 hrs until time for his next guard, if that was possible.

We were given 3 or 4 grenades per man each nite in addition to our rifles. If you heard a branch break on the outside of the perimeter, just pull the pin and toss the grenade. That first night would have made the 4th of July in Chicago sound like a ladies-aid meeting. I'll bet the Japs thought that the whole U.S. Army was attacking. The boys were sort of trigger happy — we arranged it so that after dark no one was to leave his slit trench — no matter how urgent. Anyone outside of a slit trench was to be shot as a Jap. (you can imagine some of the gruesome happenings as a result of this). our steel helmets were often put to other uses than protecting our heads. Later, due to a shortage of cooking utensils we even used our helmets to cook stew in (Any time an aussie cooked anything, instead of cooking, he "boiled up").

Every morning we sent out a ration and ammunition carrying party, taking about 60 men out of our perimeter which left the perimeter very short handed in case of a Jap attack. The same trail was used to get our rations as we came up on. The trail was knee deep with mud and water and overhanging vines made going very slow. Jap snipers and afore mentioned M.G. nest made the trip very nerve wracking.

We also put out, 2 men out of each squad on outpost during the daylite hours. This was the toughest job of all, lying motionless all day.

MHS SC 1854 Stan Davison diary (more ed. to be copied)

Jan 6 — Don Dixon, Hughie Holmes and Art Kassing went on reconaissance Patrol and ran into Jap M. G. nest. Holmes was killed (body was never recovered) and Don Dixon shot thru the leg and foot. Dixon was very broken up about it. (5)

about this time we uncovered some Jap Cordite, explosive used in their A. A. guns. We used it to cook with. you've heard the expression "now we're cooking with gas"! we coined a new one — "Cooking with dynamite."

Jan 7 - A Jap patrol came up to edge of perimeter and shot RICHTER thru the head as he was sitting with his back to the outside of the Perimeter. He died instantly. KUNDERT was wounded thru the back. This could have been avoided had the men been on the alert as they were supposed to be.

we were sending out a few recon patrols —

LT. McGEE and SGT JENKINS were making life unbearable by their constant yelling and cussing at the men, trying to keep them in their holes. The men figured that it was their own life they were risking if they got up. They knew that McGee and Jenkins were sure as hell taking care of their lives, if staying in a hole could do it. Rainb all night. MALLIZZIO was wounded while carrying KUNDERT out. (Mallizzio died on Jan. 28, in australia)

Jan 8 — Slit trenches all full of water in morning. Everyone wet and miserable. B. DIXON, YADON and myself took out a 60 man ration and ammunition party. While we were still at Bn we heard that "C" Co was attacking. We started back and the man in front of me got shot thru leg. Before we got organized the rest of the party ahead of us went on ahead. CAIN, the medic, fixed up the wounded mans leg and we carried him back to Bn medics. with only Dixon and myself left out of the ration party we decided it was impossible to go on up the trail during the fracas I fell down in the knee deep mud and jammed my Tommy Gun into the mud Clear to the breech. We went back to "17" Co and I cleaned my gun out the best I could and then headed back with a platoon of A Co who were sent up to carry out the "C" Co casualties. We arrived about the time the battle was over and heard the results. An Aussie artillery shell had fell short during the barrage preceding the "C" Co attack on a strong Jap perimeter, and landed in the middle of "Fisk" Perimeter, killing RALEY and JONES outright and wounding Ferris, Callentine, Harrison, McJones and Sherman (Sherman died in Hosp. on Jan. 11). The attack then started. [redacted] the artillery and the attack were not coordinated right and what was supposed to be a rolling barrage landed among our foremost men, killing McLEMORE and MEEK and wounding STEVENS and GILLASPY (arm amputated later).

Jan 8 (cont'd) — During the attack which followed, Sgt Fisk was killed. (Standing up, throwing hand grenades) and [illegible] Nelson, Wheat, Martin, Cornish, Strand and Roy Smith were wounded. The Jap position was impossible to take from the direction in which the attack started due to a large moat in front of the Jap positions, and "C" Co fell back to Moore's outpost, where we met them. Colonel Lindstrom then ordered another attack in the same identical direction. Captain Van Duyn refused to lead his men into certain death and made it stick. The colonel lost considerable face, at least with us. "C" is thanked Christ that they had a man like Van Duyn for Co commander. [illegible] During the attack Mold and four of his men narrowly missed being mowed down by a Jap M.G. They went ahead and ran into an American perimeter which they mistook for a Jap perimeter. They shot into it several times and the wild S/Sgt attached to "C" Co, threw in a hand grenade, blowing a mosquito bar sky high. They then realized it was an American position and went on in, apologizing for their mistake. Luckily no one was hurt. It was part of the 2nd Bn. The companies morale had sunk from Zero to sub-Zero.

Jan. 9–12 — usual ration parties. Grub is unbearable. Mc Vee & Jenkins rationing crackers & milk (powdered) and corned willie. Cooks had to ask Jenkins permission before giving a man a cup of tea — Everyone hating Mc Vee and Jenkins whole heartedly. Rained almost steady. Slit trenches and whole area under water, but men had to lay in it. Dry cigarettes and matches scarce. Only points of high ground above water. Received our first mail and set in slit trench clear to arm pits to read it (7 letters) made me feel better. Everyones morale went up — one man even smiled.

Jan. 12 cont'd — Mc Gee sent me out on patrol, on order from the Captain. Took BURRELL AND NOWLIN with me. went out on (7) 320° azimuth and observed Jap trail for two hrs. No activity by Japs. went back and Mc Gee told me to report to Capt. Reported to Capt. & told him what we had done. Capt. dressed me down for doing the wrong thing. We were supposed to follow down the Jap trail and observe on Jap perimeter. Mc Gee was at fault, having given me the wrong dope, but I took the bawling out without saying anything. The Capt then said that I would have to go back out, as the Col. had to have accurate information on Jap. positions, pending an attack. He said that I could either go out that afternoon or wait until before daylight in the morning & chose to go out next morning (I was lucky to have a choice).

Just before dusk the 3rd platoon was called out to ambush a 30 man Jap patrol. We went out and laid for them but it got dark and we did not see hide nor hair of them.

Jan. 13 — Got up at 0400 hrs, woke NOWLIN and a major from Reg. intelligence who was to accompany Howlin and I on the patrol and ate some Hash and Herring (cold) and took off at 320° again. (I had told RANDOLPH the night before that I was going out thru his position on patrol about 0430, knowing that he was to be on guard in his area at that time. He was asleep. I didn't take time to chew his tail for being asleep as time was precious but woke him up, rather roughly. I cussed him out next day for it) We made our way thru the thick jungle, crossing the Jap trail and going on about 200 yds before turning to the right (I had decided it better to circle around behind the Jap perimeter than to follow down the trail) We proceeded on 4 different azimuths of 340°; 355°; 10° and finally 140° to bring us around in a half circle behind the Japs. about this time we were getting set to do a little observing, (it was daylight by this time), a lone Jap came wandering out toward us. We went down where we were. We didn't have time to take good cover. He had a knife and was digging around in the tree roots (we had noticed Japs digging roots before. We decided that they must be using them for food) He circled around opposite Howlin then opposite Bonk (the men from Right), hacking away all the while. Finally he circled up right in front of me. I was lying on my right side with my Tommy gun covering him. When he was about 4 feet of me he stopped and peered into the brush and I looked him right in the eye! He was wearing glasses about 1/4 inches thick and had a long black beard. His clothing was very filthy, and he smelled rather rank (we could always tell when a Jap was near our perimeter by their smell. They have a very distinct smell — all of their own. It finally got so that we could smell them all the time, we were in such close contact with them).

Jan 13 (cont'd) – I jumped up, covering him with my Tommy gun. He fell back, raising his hands, looking kinda dazed. I was sorta dazed myself, not knowing what to do with him, as we were too close to the Jap perimeter to fire, giving away our position. I motioned with my left hand for him to come toward us. (I had finally decided to try to cold cock him with a left hook, drag him back in the brush and dispose of him by silent means). He started forward with his hands raised. At this point, Bonk, who was lying in the undergrowth, got back fever and jumped up and pointed his M1 at the Jap. Bonk's face was a pasty grey, his eyes were sticking out of his head an inch and his M1 was shaking like a leaf. The Jap must have thought he was done for. He jumped back, screaming, "no, no," and fell flat on his back. He then jumped up and scrambled thru the brush toward his position, falling several times. I stopped Bonk from firing on him. Bonk then turned and crashed thru the brush like a wild man in the opposite direction the Jap had taken. Hourlin and I finally got him stopped and we held a fast consultation on what course we should take. We knew we had to get out of there fast. We could either go due N.W. and hit Yona, go due W. and hit the 2nd Bn or try to find our way back thru the Japs. We were completely lost (we lost our azimuth when Bonk bolted). We decided on the latter course. We circled back around to the right, trying to retrace our steps but it was impossible. We were soon in the middle of a knee deep swamp, with vines and undergrowth making progress next to impossible (one kind of vine, in particular, would hook to your clothes and rip them off you unless you stopped and took the barbs out the same way they went in). The mosquitos were around us in swarms. We wandered around from about 0900 hrs to about 1230 hrs dodging Jap huts and dugouts which were scattered thru the swamp. The snipers were picking away at us but we kept pretty well under cover. About 1230 we came to a partial clearing. Skirting it we saw several Jap tents and Japs sitting around. We then came to a bunch of Jap trails, all running parallel (toward Samanda Pt.) with communication wires on them. We had crossed three of these when we heard Japs talking around us. We took cover

(8)

9 Jan. 13 (Cont'd) — Luckily the cover was fairly good. We had no sooner got settled than a 30 man Jap patrol, well armed, passed within 5 ft. of us. We thought our time had come—Bonk and I laid flat on our backs from 1300 hrs until 2030 hrs (after dark) without moving. (We all had dysentery, but Bonk couldn't control his and had several accidents during the course of the afternoon) we thought his continual moving about would surely give us away. All we could do was lay there and pray that no Jap would come digging around after roots. We heard them talking and laughing and walking all around us, all afternoon long. About 1400 hrs our own artillery opened up on the Jap position we were in and one hunk of shrapnel about the size of my fist buried itself in the ground about 3 inches from Howlie's side. We didn't have any idea where we were, in respect to the location of our own perimeter. We tried to determine the direction of our perimeter by our mortars, but they were silent. Finally we heard Johnny Mohl's aussie grenade rifle go off several times (it had a sharp, easily identified crack). It was sure a welcome sound. We shot an azimuth on it and figured that it laid at 180° or magnetic south. About dusk we saw a Jap sniper come out of a tree about 30 feet from us. He must have been looking to the front when we came in or he'd have seen us. At 2030 hrs it was fairly dark so we decided to have a go at getting the hell out of there. (Bonk had kept wanting to make a break for it all thru the afternoon but we talked him out of it, knowing that would be the end of all of us. I, being the ranking man present could have ordered him to stay, but at times like that, rank doesn't mean much). At 2030 we crept out, as quietly as possible (Bonk sounded like a bull in a china closet) and headed south following along the bank of a stream. We could hear Japs talking to the right and left of us and they must have heard us, but I guess they thought we were Japs, heading up to raise a little hell with the Americans. Anyway we got thru, and out into the clearing where our perimeter was located. We finally made out what we thought was our perimeter by a bent over tree. Our next problem was to get in without getting our butts shot off by our own men.

10 Jan 13 (cont'd) we didn't know the pass word for that night as we had been out all day. We got down low and I hollered out "yates" (we figured he'd be on guard at that time) He'd answered us, "who's there?" I answered, "Block Bart & Patrol" He passed around the information that we were coming in and we went in - fast. I was never so glad in my life to see some one I knew. Howlin and I bolted a can of herring and smoked our first cigarette in 26 hours. Everyone had given up on ever getting back, hours before. I think they were about as glad to see us as we were to see them. I called the Captain up on the phone and told him we were in. He thanked god, right there on the phone, that we were back and told me I could report in the morning. McGee never even turned over in his hole when Jenkins told him we were in (I was even glad to see Jenkin's black, ugly face and almost felt a brotherly love for him).

I have often heard some of my fellow soldiers remark that they prayed, when the lead got to flying fast or when they were in a tight spot. I don't believe that I'm an atheist (sp) but I never once thought of god during that trying afternoon. I guess I was too busy trying to figure what I was going to do in case the Japs discovered us.

Jan. 14 — Rested most of the day. A lone Jap came wandering out of the trees onto the S-S road and came down toward our perimeter. We thought he was coming in to surrender (an aussie whizz-bang had dropped a bunch of leaflets and american propaganda into the Jap positions the day before, telling the Japs that they could not win, etc. They also dropped papers to the Japs that they could present to us as a surrender pass) This Jap came up quite close and then decided to go back. I changed his plans with a slug through his middle back chest. McGee and I had words concerning my marksmanship (McGee was looking at the Jap thru field glasses and the Jap wasn't over 50 yds away).

About 2100 hrs that evening the Captain called me on the phone and told me that as much as he hated to use me again, I'd have to take a 15 man patrol out next morning about 0400 and make a reconnaissance of the area to the left and rear of the Jap trail as the company might have to move out in there and set up a perimeter in that position.

Everything was arranged that night as to who was to go and eating before we left. Each man was issued a can of Corned Willie.

Jan 14 (cont'd) During the night some time I was out by my hole pee'ing on a piece of high grass (most of the [illegible] began to [illegible] with a splash in a [illegible] it to be a hand grenade, I went down flat, with my hands hanging around my knees. [illegible] back to my hole. It must have been about 4 or 5 [illegible] I decided that [illegible] my clothes would [illegible] a water hole, [illegible] retired, hoping for the best, and [illegible] that the guy who [illegible] inverted commas had died a horrible death.

Jan 15 — Got up at 0400 hrs, bolted our C-in-C rations and took off on an azimuth of 310° with 15 men, including myself. (Had a hard time getting Wilcox up) went out to a point about 200 yds past the Jap trail. Designated an assembly point and sent out 4 three-man patrols — Yadon, Stapleton and Perry on an azimuth of 350°, Wilcox, Twisky and Locke at 340°, Sanderson, O.Smith and Strong at 330° and Carter, Missouri and Mann at 320°. Seeger, Rummel and I myself took up positions to observe and wait for the patrols to come back. The four patrols went out about 250 yds and returned. No Japs were seen. We then assembled and headed back. On the way back we got too far to the left (the men in the rear kept hissing we were going too far to the right) we got down among the Japs again, saw a couple of dead Japs and finally came face to face with two of them, near a Jap outpost. They went down. We decided not to fire and took off to the edge of the clearing. The men in the rear kept yelling to hurry up, that there were Japs behind us. We crawled the full length of the clearing (about 150 yds) and finally arrived at our perimeter at 1100 hrs. (we had to be in by 1200 hrs as an attack was supposed to start then). Our perimeter was nearly deserted as 60 men were on ration party and part of the second platoon were escorting A Co in an attack. Staub and Teque were killed and URNIKIS and BASKIN wounded during that attack. That afternoon we heard that "I" Co was supposed to relieve us. They relieved us all right but we pushed out a hundred yds at 310° and dug in and set up a new perimeter. My squad got a lucky break that nite as one section of D Co got mixed up and dug in the wrong place, right in front of my squad and they had to stand our guard that night.

12. Jan 15 (cont'd) — Mother went out with fever earlier in the day, the Boone's put [illegible] 12

[illegible]

Jan. 16 — The whole company was roused out about 0600 hrs and the Squad leaders called up. We were to attack along the Jap trail and into the strong Jap position I had reconnoitered on my former patrols. "C" Co was to be the spearhead of the Bn attack, I was the main of the hour as I knew the area in which the Japs were. I went into conference with Van Huyn and Capt. Showman the Bn. executive officer. We were issued one days rations — a bar of chocolate and a can of corned willie per man. The barrage started at 0850, (artillery, mortars and machine guns). It was the heaviest barrage I had ever heard and proud to be the most effective. We attacked down the trail at 0900 hrs with my squad in the lead, with Seeger and Rummel out as scouts. The rest of the 3rd followed, then the 2nd, then the 1st, with the weapons bringing up the rear as usual. At the first bit of resistance the company was to fan out to the left and form a skirmish line. The barrage had been so effective that the Japs had evacuated their foremost position and fallen back into a stronger one. Craters six ft deep were blown in the ground by the artillery. Seeger, Rummel and I came onto a Jap lying on the ground, obviously dead. Rummel remarked that he had never seen a dead man with his eyes closed. The Jap was playing possum. Apparently he had been too sick to fall back with the rest of the Japs. His pants had been blown off by the barrage. I didn't think we should fire so I called to Jenkins that he was alive. I guess Jenkins just passed it up anyhow. Mohl gave him a burst with his tommy gun and the Captain shot him thru the head. We proceeded on and came to the same swamp I had been lost in. The Bn Commander then came up and decided to establish a Bn perimeter and hold there for the day. "C" Co was sent out to establish a perimeter and protect the Bn's North flank. We headed NW for about ½ mile. The Capt. then decided to go out on patrol to find a good location for a perimeter, taking me and Seeger, Rummel, Robles, Sarnowski and Swiec. We couldn't find a good area and kept going and finally got lost. We stumbled across a strange trail with U.S. Communication wire on it. We couldn't figure it out. We thought the Japs might be using our wire. We took cover and Seeger went up the trail to the right to try to find out what the score was. About 5 minutes after he left a bunch of Japs came out on the trail to the left. We opened up on them and got two. The rest of them took off and we went up the trail to the right and took cover to await Seeger's return. In the meantime they cut the wire, so when some one came to repair them we could tell whose wires they were. Seeger came back with information that they were 3rd Bn's wires. The 2nd Bn was coming in on the left of us. So we repaired the wires and took off —

Jan 16 - (Cont'd) we walked for hours and finally found our Bn perimeter (our anti-tank guns were firing at Jap pill boxes) The Company came back down to the Bn. perimeter for the night. I was never so tired out in my life. I couldn't go another step. Dye was wounded in knee by Jap sniper. (14)

Jan. 17 — Jenkins went out with fever. The Company strength was down to about 115. We hit New Guinea with 179 enlisted men and 6 officers. Fever had taken a heavy toll, along with the dead and the wounded. Jenkins was moving around faster when he went out, than I had ever seen a sick man move. Siemienkiewicz, Sarnowski and Barbor out of my squad and about 8 more from the rest of the company went out that day with fever. Wounded aussies were coming thru from up around Sanananda Pt. where they were having a go at the Japs. The 3rd Platoon was out defending a tall tree which was used for observation.

Jan. 18 — Seeger and I came down with fever. I had a temperature of 104. More men going out with fever. Seeger and I decided to try and stick it out as long as we could.

Kuhn was made 1st Sgt., Hoehl S/Sgt, in charge of 3rd Platoon, Meagher S/Sgt. in charge of 1st Platoon, Corkins S/Sgt. (working in Nelson's job as communication Sgt), B. Dixon S/Sgt in charge of 2nd Platoon. Yates was made Sgt in Charge of Hall's squad. Seeger and Burrell made Cpls. Seeger went to Yates squad. 3rd Platoon was sent out to reinforce "K" co but came back before dark.

I spent an awful night with fever. Rained most of night.

Jan. 19 — Seeger's and my temperature remained around 104°, but we hung on. Company moved back down trail about 250 yds and took up new position. Seeger and I barely made it.

Barrage started about 1700 hrs and co "C" attacked just before dusk amidst rain and mud. Seeger and I and several more were too sick to go. Wounded soon started coming in. Robles, Rowlin, Perry, Toefair, Bob Dixon, Tylick, Hanenkrat, Hall, Hunter, Busse and Praznowski were wounded. Freitas and Don Smith were killed. Most of the wounded had to lay in the mud all night too Fair and Dixon were in bad shape. Dixon was shot in the back. (later reported that bullet that hit Dixon hit his ammunition belt and shattered and that they took 6 or 8 pieces of it out of him through the process of several operations) The heat from our ketchen gas burner was the only thing that saved Dixon's life that nite. Hunter thought he was badly hit & did a lot of moaning around. I would manage to crawl over now and then to see who was coming in next. I had chills during the night. Rummel and Hoehl went wild and took 6 Jap pill boxes, using hand grenades. Guns would'nt function

15 Jan 20 — attack continued. Wounded were Nance, Whitney (both died on way to hospital) Levy (reported to have shot 22 Japs that morning and was wounded 4 times), Slosar and M. Nelson. Most of the Japs were mopped up by this time (15)

In the afternoon Seeger and I and 7 more men went out and carried Freitas and Smith bodies in and turned them over to the Chaplain. Later I took a detail out to count the number of Jap dead. (Seeger and I were weaker than cats) 200 Jap bodies were counted. A few escaped and were killed off by numerous patrols. Seeger got his Jap pistol and I got my Jap boots that day. All the boys were after souvineirs. We were probing around a Jap hospital tent looking for bodies and anything else we could find when the Chief came running up to me and informed me that there was a live Jap in the tent. Cloninger and Burrell were going thru a Jap pack and someone yelled that there was a live Jap. They barely glanced up and said "is there?" and moved over about 4 ft and kept on digging for souvineirs. Seeger pumped a few slugs thru the Jap. The Jap was already wounded. The Japs body had'nt stopped twitching before Seeger reached in and grabbed his pistol off of him, fearing that some one would beat him to it. The Jap had a hand grenade lying by him with the pin barely hanging in it. Cloninger slipped the pin back in — very cautiously.

Hohenbrat promoted to cpl.

DUTRA, acting cpl. Chewed Schneeklothe tail something terrible for trying to stuff a detail off onto St. Mary. I really got a kick out of that.

Mohl went out with fever, leaving me in charge of platoon. He came back several days later. The platoon strength was now about 15, all told out of an original 40.

I was made S/Sgt. St. Rhodes evacuated with fever.

Jan. 21 — Chaplain conducted services for the dead and held regular services. I believe every man in the company attended church. They had all become firm "believers".

3rd Platoon and part of the fourth went out on outpost Perimeter near the road. The Japs still had scattered positions across the road. The 2nd and 3rd Bns mopped that area up during 21st and 22nd. Several stray Japs were shot at by our guards. The whole Bn, minus "C" Co pulled out to Huggins, about mile down road. "C" Co stayed behind to mop up area. We got all the good digs, first in and last out.

Jan 22 — wrote some letters home (first opportunity I had). Thought the folks might be worried as the Chief had written from Moresby telling his folks that we were in New Guinea. Still out on outpost Perimeter

Jan 23-25 — General mopping up and patrol work — Grub was still as bad as ever. Cooke doing a dam good job, especially CHUMBLEY, who was sick with fever part of the time. My shoes gave out, so I took to wearing my Jap boots. Wore them about a week and then decided to save them for souvinirs. They came in very handy in the water and mud except when the water caked over the tops of them. Chief transferred to the 3rd platoon.

Jan. 26 — Hiked down to Huggins and joined the rest of the Bn. Most of the men, including myself so played out and sick we could hardly make it. After that memorial hike a new gait was introduced, the "New Hiuma Shuffle". Someone said that when they got back to the States they were going to invent a new dance called the "Jungle Jump." Capt. Van Huyn evacuated with fever. Everyone took to see him go.

Jan 27 - Feb. 1 - Position our Co. was put into held no three and the heat was unbearable, making the fever worse than ever. Grub worse than ever. Lots of men going to hospital. Co strength around 75, including officers. It saturn our Co. Commander Rest of Bn. moved to Sopute leaving "C" Co behind again. Co "C" moved across road to huts which the 12th portable had evacuated. Much cooler in huts. Fever hit me again and I had it bad for about a week in a row. Had it off and on until about Feb. 10. About this time my kidneys went bad on me and I had to get up about 4 times a night. I averaged getting up 4 times a night from Jan 28 to March 1, and now, as I'm writing this (March 11) I only have to get up twice a night.

Going on patrols to evacuated former positions to keep the stray Japs from occupying them. Stray Japs killed occasionly. "Nigger" Sanford caught one with pants down and shot him. Murray wounded one near the ammo dumps one night and the next morning they followed the Japs trail and found him with his head blown off. Seeing that he was bad hit he had taken his own life. Several such cases were reported.

Feb. 2 — Rummel took a casual morning stroll and came marching a Jap back he had captured. Jap claimed he was a Korean. He said he didn't fight, that the Japs had brought Koreans with them to do the work. (Building roads and positions) (Most of the Japs talked some English, some were educated at University of Southern California Quite a few women's clothes were found through the Sepuka-Sakunda area. Aussies claimed that the Japs had their women with them. I found a garment resembling a brassiere.) The prisoner was taken to the Reg. Stockade where the rest of the Jap prisoners were kept.

Feb 2 (cont'd) went back to old positions and buried dead Japs. Most gruesome work I've done. Some were sorta ripe (my appetite went bad)

Feb. 3-4 Still at Huggins and still patrolling. A Correspondent from "Yank" magazine sloppie at our area and took stories of Mohl's and Rummel's heroic hand grenade episode and the story of my patrols. I was sicker than a dog that day and the correspondent didn't get much satisfaction from me. In fact I didn't even give him my name. I guess CARTER did though. Air Corps men came through trying to trade canned fruit for souvenirs. Some of our boys got hostile, so they got out of there.

Feb. 5 — Hiked from Huggins to Sopuita (about 4 miles), another gruelling hike. When we got to Sopuita we took a bath in the Girawiria, the first good bath since leaving Australia (Dec 22). Also got a lot of mail including Xmas packages — the Boys sure went for that American cake, candy etc. A wolf would have slunk off in shame after watching some of them attack that fruit cake.

Feb. 6 — Grub improved somewhat — found out that most of the promotion did not go through. Company had been filling non-com vacancies as non-coms were evacuated. Order came down that a non-com had to be evacuated to Australia before his position could be filled. I was still a Buck Sgt.

We built up huts to sleep in, off the ground out of the water with an elevated pup tent over the top. Had to cut brush out and fix up our area. The 3rd Platoon are were the pride of the company. Had to start saluting officers again. (no saluting was done during action. no one called an officer or non-com by their rank — we call Capt. Van Duyn, "Jack" or "Van", etc.)

Feb 18 — Kuhn evacuated with yellow jaundice (later went to Australia) Mohl was made acting 1st Sgt, Meagher in charge of 1st platoon, Nikolson in charge of 2nd Platoon, me in charge of 3rd Platoon and Wentworth in charge of weapons. Yates held his Sergeantcy, Seeger, Rummel and Burrell held their Corporal ships. 3rd Platoon now down to 12 men. Company strength hovered around 70 men. Japs back and forth to hospital. Received information that I had been awarded the Silver Star —

March 3-8 — Large Jap fleet sunk off coast of N.G. by our air force. We were sure glad they didn't get to land.

March 11 — Japs bombers and fighters got thru and raised hell at Morobe and Dobodura and also with our air strips at Poppendetta. (Somebody in the air corps must have slipped up).

Chief made Corporal — also Bowyer.

Lots of rumors about leaving New Guinea, going to Oro Bay, etc.

The whole 41st Division is now in New Guinea.

March 13 — Finished writing up back history of campaign. Will now keep it as it progresses —

17

18 March 16- Left Soputa for Oro Bay. Entrucked and rode thru Kobodura and down to a boat landing on (18) River. Bought coconuts from the natives using cigarettes as a medium of exchange. Got on the river boats (30 men per boat) and cruised smoothly down the river. The boats had powerful out board motors on them and we made good time. It was the most beautiful ride I have ever taken. Thick vines and jungle growth overhanging the stream, beautiful birds flapping around and crocodiles or 'gators lazing about. The ride took about an hour and one half. We got off the boats at the beach and again entrucked (Negro Quartermaster drivers with six wheelers) and rode along the beach to Oro Bay. The whole beach, for the full six miles we rode, was studded with Palm trees. It would be a wonderful place for a resort in peace time. Oro Bay was a jumbled mess of ships and barges, ferrying cargo to shore, trucks and other vehicles flying around and masses of men unloading ships. We went thru Oro Bay and started climbing the ridge of hills behind the bay, the foothills of the Owen-Stanleys. We rode for about 4 miles, circling up the ridges and finally detrucked and walked about 2 miles, mostly up hill. It was sure a tough walk with full packs. Our Bn. area was down in a valley, on a side hill completely covered by trees. Here we met our casuals who had gone to Moresby with Malaria. They came to Oro Bay from Moresby, by boat, around Milne Bay. Sgt Jenkins was among the casuals. ~~Most of the more trusted [illegible] scatter-rack~~.

Our first work was to build floors for our pyramided tents using logs. It was quite a job as we had to clear brush and fall logs on sidehills, but when the platforms and floors had been laid and the tents erected, it sure made a good home. It was the best area "C" co ever had. We (3rd Platoon) built one house right across the creek which ran down the valley (commonly referred to as the Skunk Hollow Residence)! I would have given my 4 months Pay for a camera.

March 20 — Jenkins went to Sopute to see Capt. Benson about transfering into this outfit as he was informed he was going to become a Private in "C" Co. I don't know exactly what come of this visit with Benson but he finally decided to stay with C Co. He was assigned to my Platoon and became a member of Cpl Seeger's squad. I got along with him O.K., even though I didn't exactly admire the man.

March 21-27 — The Japs kept up a steady bombing of Oro Bay, sinking a ships and burning gasoline and oil every now and then. we finally got our three 3rd Platoon tents up and moved into. My promotion to S/Sgt finally went thru. Perkins was transferred from the 2nd Platoon to the Third, where he became my platoon guide.

we were issued a set of suntans and we started standing retreat formations again. Every thing was getting back toward Garrison life. It was a good sign that we might get out of New Guinea some day. Garrison life in the Jungle was rather disgusting. The men were pretty well fed up with it before it started.

The food had improved a lot and our kitchen force rustled around and gaffld enough stuff so that we had pie and Cake occasionally.

Boy, it was sure great to get up in the morning and take a bath in the creek. Cold but refreshing. The large rocks in the stream bed created pools deep enough to completely submerge in. We used the rocks to wash our clothes on

March 28 — The Japs gave Oro Bay its worst bombing in its history, sinking three ships, blowing up gas dumps and blowing hell out the piers — that the engineers had built out to accomodate large ships. Lots of valuable cargo was lost on the sunk ships, among it, a bunch of engines for torpedo boats which the Navy had been waiting for for three months. The bombing kept us up most of the night. The boys were getting bomb happy again

The next day everyone was trying to salvage stuff off of the ships (which hadn't quite gone down yet).

March 28 (cont'd) — some of the boys salvaged some liquor and proceeded to get intoxicated. one guy had 2 chickens hobbled in his tent which he got off of one boat. He was fattening them up for the kill. The natives sure did like the looks of those chickens. They'd look at them and grin and try to trade the guy out of them. one guy told the natives that the chickens were American Eagles.

When the boats went down, the Javanese crew came ashore carrying bottles of beer and whiskey, drunker than hell. It was rumored around that there was a whole pile of cases of beer in the holds of the sunken ships. Some of the boys were thinking of getting some diving suits up from Australia to salvage it. Of course I wasn't interested.

Lt. Dahlstrom took command of C Co. Lt Rhodes came back from Moresby & became Co Exec. Lt Sattley took over the 1st Platoon.

March 30 — Chumbley and I went on a hunting expedition to Oro Bay — when we left Sopeita I had given my Jap boots and Aussie shirt to Chumbley to carry with the kitchen supplies. During the course of the trip from Sopeita to our mountain home, the trailor carrying the kitchen supplies got lost, my boots and shirt (which I prized next to my life) along with it. The loss almost unbalanced my mental system. I was in a frenzy. We didn't find the trailor but we ran into a canteen, where we bought some cookies and candy, also some rations for pie. we had quite a time hooking rides. The trip was very interesting as we looked over the boats and piers that the Japs had blown up. one ship was sitting close to shore in the harbor with just the smoke stack and rigging above water. The engineers and cannon company guys were so bomb happy that they spent so much time looking in the air for Jap Dive bombers that they didn't get much done.

The report came in that our air force had shot down 2 Dive bombers, 11 Zeros and four or five possibly damaged bombers and seven or eight probably damaged Zeros during the Jap bombing of March 28th.

Robbins, D. Smith and J. DEASON arrived from Moresby and Wilcox came back from the 1st Evacuation Hospital.

March 31 - a hot rumor just came in that we were leaving the 15th of April for Australia.

April 1-1943 — Started standing retreat today. Everyone cried and moaned about it. They'll have us shining our shoes next.

At retreat, Mohl made an announcement that a Jap landing Party had landed down at the beach and we were to move out immediately to contact them. He went on, covering the uniform and equipment we were to take. About that time Jack Ray came from the orderly room, screaming, "Hold on." He handed Mohl a legal looking paper and Mohl said, "April Fool." Everyone looked dumbfounded and awfully relieved.

April 3 - working, unloading boats at Oro Bay. Unloaded Dutch steamer, "Van Spilbergen." The boys goffled lots of edibles. Had an air alert but the Japs never came.

April 5 - Joe E. Brown arrived in our area and put on a show — what a pan. Went to Docks again. Unloaded Dutch ship "Jenson." Another air raid alert. Japs never got here.

April 9 - Shadrack arrived back from R.S.O. where he had been working since Jan 1. Shad is now Squad Leader of the 3rd Squad, 3rd Platoon.

April 10 - Unloaded Dutch ship "Maetsuycker", the same ship that we rode on from Sydney to Melbourne, thru the Tasmanian Straits, on our way to Australia. It brought back old memories of sea sickness to some of the boys. One year ago today we landed in Melbourne aboard the "Maetsuycker."

April 11 - Big Jap airraid. Japs made two direct hits on a big Chinese freighter laying in the harbor, but it has not sunk yet. Our ack-ack knocked down 2 Jap dive bombers and a small sub-chaser, a corvette, knocked down two Jap planes. The official report of the raid hasn't come in yet. The "Green Hornet" a small U.S. freighter was also damaged during the raid.

April 12 - worked at Docks. Had air alert about noon but the Japs were intercepted before they got here.

April 13 – 24 – on dock detail almost every day. The boys are getting rather mutinous and having lots of arguments with the officers in charge of the docks (22)

were informed thru channels that we were to go back to Australia soon. Lots of rumors floating around.

April 25 – Put in my application for Officer Candidate School

April 26 at last, the pay off – we started standing Reveille Boems come back from Australia.

Some one mysteriously goofed off a few bursts with a Tommy Gun. The C.O. rather pointedly hinted that some one in the 3rd Platoon and in my tent was responsible. Of course I didn't know anything about it. Sgt Perkins was seen cleaning his Tommy Gun that afternoon.

April 27 – The boys in the bottom tent (Skunk Hollow Residence) didn't wake up in time to stand Reveille. The C.O. chewed on my butt, unsuccessfully. Four months in New Guinea today.

April 28 – 1st Sgt Kuhn, Gatter, Kinnichsen and H. Smith come back to the Company from Port Moresby. Mohl is now Platoon Sgt of weapons platoon.

May 3 – Chief went to Hospital with Malaria & yellow jaundice

We are now thru with details at the docks and we go into a training schedule today, including hikes. The boys are about ready to blow their tops.

Several reports have come in that the 32nd Division * (now back in Australia from New Guinea) are really blowing their tops. The General gave them a speech and they threw rocks at him. Officers can't do a thing with them. An M.P. told us that 1000 men of the 32nd were A.W.O.L. in Australia.

If things don't change soon they're liable to have the same trouble with this outfit when we get back to civilization. The main topics of conversation are now women and drink instead of food.

may 4 – 10 more basic training including night marches and Problems.

may 11 – WAMSLEY come back from australia.
may 12 – Pay day at last – received 4 months pay.
may 13 – HAVENKRAT came back from Australia
may 14 – Big Jap air raid on Oro Bay. Really saw a good dog fight. Several Jap bombers went down in flames. Official report was – 16 Jap planes shot down and 5 american planes shot down, but we didn't loose a single pilot. One Jap pilot jumped out when his plane caught on fire. Either he didn't have a parachute or it wouldn't open for he landed awful hard in the bay. Several Jap pilots were rescued from their planes after hitting the water. I was interviewed for officers candidate school.
may 16 – Saw picture show, "The family next door" with Hugh Herbert.
may 17 – Sgt Daems was assigned to 3rd platoon as a squad leader. The whole 3rd Platoon shined their shoes for retreat. The rest of the Co, especially Sandy, sure blew their tops. Even the officers frowned, but you can't stop a man from shining his shoes, even in the army. Had air raid during night.
may 18 – Got picture from Imogene today. The Captain inspected our area and found numerous cans, old clothes and trash. Gave me quite a lecture. Worked in afternoon burning trash & cleaning area.
The chief is still in the hospital. He sent up 50 pounds by carter today for me to send home for him. Medal and 16 men from the Co went on S.D. unloading boats at Oro Bay. Saiz, Siemenkiewicz, Sivicz & Jegeler went from 3rd Platoon.

May 22 – Nelson arrived back from Australia with lurid accounts of his sexual life in Brisbane.
Chief came back from Hospital again.
May 27 – Started practicing for Silver Star Ceremony, parading included.
May 30 – Had picture show "East Side of Heaven" after a herculean struggle. First it rained & we had to take cover. Then we had an air raid and we had to disperse. Then the rains came-again & we took cover. The pay off came when the shelter half construction over the projector collapsed, knocking the projector down. The show ended – for us into the mire.
Had Memorial Day Services & dedicated our out door chapel. The Roll of the dead was read.

→ June 2 – Was awarded the Silver Star today. Also Nelson & a few more from the Bn. Battalion formation. We posed with the General (individually) and the Cameras clicked. The General had his picture taken with me. (I consented after a heated argument.) At last the folks back in the States get a break (if the films get there.) The Regimental band arrived a few days ago to play for the ceremony and will be here, playing, for ten days.

June 4 – Wild rumors of a move. Some of the boys even had us back in the States. The C.O finally told us we were moving to Sanananda pt. to take up a beach defence position – the rest of the Bn. going to Killerton Pt. (Sub-Zero morale)
I feel like wrecking our new tents. Just completed our new floors and shelves, mess gear & magazine racks and have to move out & leave it. The place was getting to feel like home. It was by far the nicest, healthiest camp site we have ever had, bar none.
Rumors of a trade of cooks within the Bn. Chumbley rather worried. Says he will take a break & stay in Co.

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June 8 - moved from Oro Bay to Sanananda Pt. & took up defensive positions 3rd Platoon is in reserve, but are doing more than the other Platoons. Five men of the 3rd are on an Observation Post on the point (Cloninger, Chief, Jenkins, Zaluski & Wamsley). The rest of the Platoon to patrol Sanananda Track and Cricket Trail and all sorts of details. 25

June 9 - Lt. Brown assigned as 3rd Platoon Leader. Pretty good guy.

June 10 - Lt. Sutton, Slutter & I get lost trying to find Cricket Trail. Wandered around in the swamps & mosquitos for 3 hrs. If I hadn't had a Compass we never would have got out.

June 12 - Jap air raid during evening. Searchlights had the planes spotted and the ack ack was bursting all around them but we didn't bring any down.

We are swimming and playing on the beach about 6 hrs a day. I got a touch of Jungle ear. Perkins built a boat.

June 15 - Pay day - drew pay for April & May. I drew 41 $.

June 16 - Col. Sidstrom inspected co. area today and chewed on Capt. Dahlstroms butt for several hrs.

Hot Rumor that a bunch of Aussies are in Moresby, getting ready to relieve us.

and impatiently waiting to be called to O.C.S.

June 23 - Left for O.C.S. went by Jeep as far as 2nd Bn. at Sopuita - sure hated to leave the boys.

June 24 - went from Sopuita to Dobodura air strip by Jeep and flew from there to Moresby, landed about 1100 hrs. stayed all night with F.A. (14th).

June 25 - went to airport but no planes out today - sort of a dry run. Stayed all night with F.A. again.

June 26 - flew from Moresby at 1005. landed in Townsville at 1400 hrs. left Townsville at 1430 hrs landed in Brisbane at 1800 hrs (6:00 o'clock).

an even six months in New Guinea.

Epilogue - June 28 — passed out after stowing away 3/4 Gt. of Aussie whiskey. In Toowoomba, Qld. Big time had by all. (OVER)

Oddities of New Guinea Campaign

It was never figured out why the Japs didn't use mortar fire on us during the fighting. Lots of Jap mortars and plenty of ammunition was taken by the American when the Japs were finally cleaned up.

One Aussie plane, a "whirraway" operated over ours and the Jap positions all through the campaign. It swooped so low that no one could figure out why it never got shot down. It acted as a spotter for the Aussie artillery. It was reported that the old "Whirraway" shot down a Zero on one occasion.

I can't, or no one else, will ever figure out how we held up and kept fighting when we got hardly any food, hardly any sleep, plowing thru the mud and water carrying heavy loads on ration parties, sleeping in water and mud, keeping on constant alert for the Japs and the many other harrowing factors for almost a month steady.

The capacity of the men when the fighting was over was startling. One morning, I should say forenoon, CLONINGER stowed away 15 hot cakes (we had hot cakes several times) the CHIEF ran Cloninger a close second. Wild BILL RUMMEL ate a large supper one night and then topped it off with an Aussie mess kit full of Peanut Butter and Crackers. The capacity of an Aussie mess kit is approximately 3/4 gallons.

Some of the biggest men in the company were evacuated with fever soon after the fighting started, while the little puny guys held up all the way through. SORLIE was a walking skeleton when he went in and in fairly good shape when the fighting ended.

On the way to Moresby, on the boat we played Bridge constantly. Most of my partners got weeded out during the campaign. First SHERMAN was killed, then TAGUE was killed. D. DIXON and FRANKENFIELD were sent out wounded and sick - Sherman and Frankenfield were expert players.

Third Platoon never lost a man killed during the whole campaign although we were in just as much action as any Platoon. The first platoon lost 6, 3rd Platoon 6, Weapons Platoon 2 and Hq. Platoon lost 1 man killed during campaign.

The Chief (smallest man in Co.) carrying a B.A.R., one of heaviest weapons in Co.

During my patrols I heard something whistling "The last time I saw Paris." I figured it was Jap signals but later found out that it was a bird. It sounded just like some one whistling the tune.

MHS
MC 244
Hargis Westerfield Collection
947th Field Artillery Battalion: Biak Island
folder 1-7

out we returned to our gun position after most of the infantry had passed through, Tom and I were then reassigned.

After a short time Battery A was told to cover Battery C, until they were established in a new position back on the beach. Battery A would then pack up and follow. The Battalion spent that night in our new position. At the end of our first day on Biak Island, right back where we started.

William Lenzner, Btry. A, 947th F.A. Bn.

BIAK ISLAND, SCHOUTEN CHAIN- May 28, 1944- On this island there is about two inches of top soil, then coral. Two officers were digging a foxhole. Progress was slow and by late afternoon, by piling the loosened coral, they managed to get below ground level, by laying on their backs. About 9:00 PM, one said "I've got to go to the bathroom, or words to that effect". The other said "roll out of the foxhole". The first replied, "no, with all this wild firing, it would be my luck to get hit". After awhile there was tinkling sound. "what are you doing?" "I am using my helmet.

Anonymous

into the interior of the island, and to locate an Jap airstrip that had been surveyed, but never finished. Our destination was to join up with the 162nd and 186th Infantry. of the 41st Division.

That afternoon, after having found the camouflaged road and the airstrip, we met up with Col. Newman and a patrol from the 186th Infantry. It was now time to dig in for the night. We were scratching into the coral ground for foxholes, when we were suddenly ambushed. The whole area was being sprayed with machinegun fire and small mortars. Col. Newman ordered everyone to stay low and disperse. At the same time he ordered men from his patrol to search in different directions for the enemy. (a brave man)

Both Oldham and I were crawling on our hands and knees away from what we thought was the line of fire. A burst of machinegun fire intended for us, just passed between my head and Oldham's rear end. I thought surely he had it, and he turned around expecting that I had been shot, but we both lucked out. In a short time the men returned and reported they had found the Japs and my recollection was they killed eleven of them.

Our position was now intolerable and Col. Newman radioed the 186th Infantry saying "we were going to join up with them that same evening and that it would be after dark". We received an answer that their perimeter was already posted and that they would be alerted for us. In order to get a fix on their position, they were asked to send up a flare, and we were instructed to watch for it. We were lucky for we saw the

first one. The Colonel took a compass readingand we headed out through the jungle.

Single file through mud, water and darkness,,each man staying close enough to the man in front of him, to enable him to see the small radium button pinned on his back. We were each given one by the infantry. We finally arrived close to the infantry's perimeter and were challenged by them. After the exchange of the password of the day, they were satisfied we were the Americans they were expecting. we were passed through and were escorted to the spot where they had dug in for the night. Now all we had to do was to dig our foxholes- again in coral.

The next morning Oldham radioed to our headquarters on the beach, at which time he was told the Allies were storming the beaches of Normandy, France, what a day to remember. 6 JUNE ??

About this time we were watching a flight of B-25's and we could see they were antiaircraft fire from the Jap navy, which was trying to land troops. The bombers circled and on making a new approach, the bomb bay opened and they dropped their bombs. We could not see the ships or water, from the sound we could tell the bombs were finding their targets.

Our position was on the ridge above Mokmer airdrome and the plan was to descend on it at the same time our troops landed on the beach, just across the main strip. Just before we started down we were strafed by a P-38 who must have thought we were Japs.

He made two passes at us, and I heard an order for all to shoot back on the next pass, for which I thank God never came. On the way down one of our men was killed.

We setup an OP along side of the strip which was built up about a foot with coral. Soon we began to draw fire from the very ridge we had just left. They were firing 40 mm gun directly at us and much of it glanced off the strip immediately to our front. Between bursts of their fire we could spot smoke rising from the jungle on the ridge and then it would be our turn to direct artillery fire on them. Every now and then the Japs would come out of their caves and start shooting again. This would include mountain artillery and mortars. I remember well when Oldham said we had just been bracketed and the next rounds would be on top of us. The rounds never came, and having spotted more smoke on the ridge we directed more fire on them. During all this fire and counterfire, we were told we were firing Division Artillery which included almost every piece on the island.

After about six days and nights the ridge looked almost bare and the infantry was directed through that area. Several days later we met up with some of the men who went through and they told us there were dead Japs all over and hardly a tree standing.

After all this shooting there was still sporadic fire from the ridge. When our party was relieved we had to leave by a landing barge and help carry on wounded infantrymen who were on stretchers. This

was early morning at high tide, the Japs started shooting at us. Their rounds landed all around , no hits.

We arrived at our gun position after breakfast, but our Mess Sergeant J.O. Bennet had lots of hot cakes and coffee waiting, which proved that A Battery had just about the best cooks in the army.

For myself I know I will never forget that experience and I am sure that goes for Lieut. Runkle, Sergeant Oldham and Patterson.

William Lenzner, Btry. A, 947th F.A. Bn.

This happened on Biak Island- Our S-4, an Irishman from New York, in his usual industrious manner, was down at the Bosnek Jetty. looking for some extras for the Battalion. Pausing in his work to watch the Air Corps unload, he was accosted by an Air Corps Colonel: "Where is the air field"?, to which our friend replied, "Down the coast road in the Jap lines". "Thank you", said the Colonel, "what did you say?"

Our S-4 was down at the Quartermaster dump the next day when he was asked by a Quartermaster Lieutenant why some of his shells went Whe-Whe-Whe. Well, replied the Captain, we are required to shoot in the caves above you and they are at right angles to the guns, so when you hear our shells going Whee-Whee, the 947th is throwing a curve.

MHS Hargis Westerfield Research Collection
MC 244 DIARY Arthur Merrick
1/1 Sanananda Battle New Zealand campaign

Jan. 9 – 1943

Definitely on our way. Left Moresby camp in the Idlewa bushy. Trucked to airstrip. Split up into groups of 20; moved to Douglas Transport, and before you could blink your eyes we were dressing down stanky. 41 minutes later we landed at Old-adwa airstrip. Loaded our rifles, pitched up our packs, took off down track toward Deputa and Sanananda, and said, "Boys, this is it!" Walked 9 miles, walking 20 min. and resting 10, and camped for the night. I slung a hammock; rained; slept many a wink!

Jan. 10 – 1943

Moved on up to Deputa and established a Bn. perimeter. Before you could say 'kiss', Dr. I Co. trophy gunner cleaned his pal, accidentally, thru the right arm. Too many guns are jittery and ridiculous; bothers me! Set up camp, dug slit-trenches, and hit it once 'cause all hell busted loose when a BAR opened up. Some scenes; no Jafs.

Jan. 11 – 1943

Improved positions and moved into a native built hut. Now rain – dammit!!

needs reading

Feb. 14 '43 detail:
"Right on – ocean & mosquitoes & sand flies are terrific (March 1 – "I'm weak from loss of blood") [from mosquitoes]
Feb. 28 – eating pan-pans (like canteloupe)
March 1 '43 – tried J rations (Jungle rations): cereal, cocoa, potted meat, milk (chalk), lemonade powder, peanuts, candy, gum, canned vegs & cookies. "... a gd deal for a change!"
March '43: heat rash: "medics paint us all over w/ iodine & benzaine. Offers some relief @ night."
March 12, '43: "Have a novel description for WAR: 'Months & months of boredom punctuated by moments of intense fright!'"

Can hear the firing up towards Lamanda. Aussie 25 pounders blasting, rifle fire, and what not! Our 1st. and 2nd. Bns. are up there giving them Hiphavens Hell! Casualties coming back by Ritz Buggy. Wire due to move up shortly.

Jan. 12 - 1943

Tle order to move up! Four Aussie tanks have just preceded us. Mud and swamp and jungle! Lord, it it tough going! O ur point took off our track instead of slinging off on encircling movement. Jap and Aussie dead strewing around us. Backed

up and got on right trail. Everyone handed two grenades. Pistolmen issued in 45's for rifles. Big rumor the Japs picked up a pistol carrier as an officer — bang! bang! no officer! Reached edge of Hughins perimeter about 18:00 hrs. and we relieve B. Co. in perimeter. Moved in on the double. Jap snipers having field day firing at us. No casualties. Our first dose of jungle warfare and it is far from pleasant, believe me!

Jan. 13 — 1943

A sleepless night as you can imagine. It

ain't fun sleeping in a hole in the ground — in six inches of water! about 60 grenades thrown by our boys during the night. Jap casualties ?; ours; none. 15:00 hours and the snipers have opened a barrage. Ten minutes later my MG section caught one in the head, diving into a slit trench. Already, killed in action. Drive their dirty hides!! Etc. war, ain't, and the boys are fully aware of it.

Jan. 14 - 1943

Quiet to an extent, in the morning, thru a small-bagged log hole to sleep till noon. Much

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better! Co. C.O. ordered to attack Jap perimeter, 14:00 hours. H. Wall and 3rd. platoon go out to do job. assault mine laid from him to Co. C.P. They'll spreading out to attack pill box from 2 sides. Only one squad, H. Wall, do the work. Machine guns and snipers open up. Zurawski, Deland and Chadwick killed. Means, Milligan wounded. 4 men, S/Sgt. Haring, Mafford, Vis-nauskas, Childs missing in action. And we didn't even come close to taking Jap position! Infantry unsupported just can't do it! Estimated 40 Japs killed by our

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lads out there. Small consultation for losing what we did. "Fuck 'em! Fuck 'em! Hurry, hurry, hurry!" says Major Hawk (Ex. O. Ret. Rely from his phone in six foot dugout. Sad what happened! Next day, Hawk relieved, I hope!! Hawk! Have already concealed that Jap snipers are A-1 in camouflage!

Jan. 15 - 1943

Am ordered with my mortars to be in position near Tivik position at 02:50 hours. All set! At 09:00 hours our heavy MG's, our light MG's, our 50 Cal. MG's, our 81 mortars (15 of

our our side. Our 4 men missing in action, Turned out, S/Sgt. Harris wounded twice, otherwise okay. A relief for us, yards indeed! 4) Japs like Harris. Awaited Jap to come in open behind us. Lost 3/8 man of a platoon of 40. All 4 tanks knocked out. Still groping infantry, even supported by tanks, can't tell these Jap pill boxes!!

Jan. 16-1943

Now a cleaning up job to do. Today we got thru the Jap perimeter our Co. took yesterday and salvage all equipment, burp all Nikes. Most of the Japs dug

have found are fairly thin and in poor physical condition. These dirt base had plenty of rice and most thin just plenty of ammunition. Many documents and maps found. Lgt. Van Boss, Pvt. Blackdog, and PFC. Pauly and 2 Dent snipers hunting. Got one! A Mr. Miller, war correspondent of Chicago Daily Tribune, interviewed our boys for hours. Might get a line. "Look for it! I'll be waiting for you. Come in and ... and ..." — What in hell's the matter with me ... !! ? —

Jan. 17 — 1943

Mess clearing up to

do, both in our own perimeter (Huggins) and the Nips. Some of the boys picked up a few souvenirs; swords, pistols, flags, Jap invasion money, and what not! How'd like to do a little personal cleaning up. Slept, ate, waded jik mud, and fought in the same suit of fatigues since Jan. 2. Don't it'll ever get mine fatt clean again! Most of the kids being evacuated. Quantity, X Jones, Diehlad, etc. Captain Armstrong tied to R.H. staff - G-3. Lt. Peterson also commanding. Old Merrick moved up to Co. Ex. Officer.

MCNAMARA

Jan. 18 - 1943

More patrolling up to do. Our Co. is in Regt. reserve, along with 2 few other units, namely, Hd Regt. 81 mortars. Other Co's. are taking and attacking Jap positions. Mortars in action continuously. Pete Murphy back to Australia - fever. These stinking yellow bellies killed my pal, Will Fisk, and ate out his heart, liver, and right arm - TO EAT!! They will pay and pay for that!! Major Kelly, our X Bn. Ex. O, stuck his fuse out where he should'nt have. Result: a sniper shot 3 fingers

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off his ~~left~~ hand! Besides losing 3 fingers he got clobbered to a fare thee-well by Pvt. X Bac.

Jan. 19-1943

Little doing today. Our regiment is cleaning up in fine shape. I Co. held up, tho' just above Fish. perimeter. K and A Co's. stormed them one and killed a Jap colonel. Slow but sure we're going up Sanananda track. But what a nightmare!!

Jan. 20-1943

An attack was scheduled for us but it fell thru for some reason. I Co. attacked again. Result:

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Lt. Olsen, a new man from the 162, was killed by MG fire. They're up against something there! Ld, Lt. Slade gets in with a combat patrol. Result: Three men and Lt. Slade reported killed. A tough blow for everyone to take. Six hours later Slade crawls out of the Jap perimeter, evidently revived by rain. A nasty wound right thru the head. Guts and luck pulled him thru.

Jan. 21 - 1943

We're still sitting around Hugoine and the Regt. C.P. cleaning up and widening the trail.

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The Americs have cleared everything behind us so the trail is open. Ammunition and rations and evacuation of wounded by 'Jeeps' now. I Co. attacks again. Artillery and mortar fire supporting them. An 81 mm. shell drops short into X I Co. C.P. Captain Duncan (I used to play basketball against him in Mi. Ireland) and 1st. Lt. Eckert (former army football team and regular 1935 football team) were killed instantly. Three more wounded including Lt. 'Butch' Laibach, an All from Montana, (Wounded thru the leg). And all on account of these Japs, praise God!

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all our Co. officers go on reconnaissance. We attack with I Co. to maneuver! Shot at by Jap. snipers on recon, Lt. [illegible] and one Sgt.

Jan. 22 - 1943

Move up thru mud and swamp and mangroves to position. Initial attack order. We jump off at 10:30 hours following barrage. I Co. on the left; L Co. on the left. Our formation: 3rd. Pl. on the left, 2nd. Pl. on the left, Co. Hdqs. then 1st. Pl. in support. Then scout platoon, Fifth and squad succeeding assault platoons. Mortars under Co. control to the rear - lay barrage. Our

LMG's put a 10 minute concentrated fire thru - Just to get snipers. All hell breaks loose at 10:20 hours. Artillery, mortars, MG's, machine firing. Artillery lifts and we jump off - 3 min. later up 10 minutes. We creep up on barrage. X One Sgt. Leah I Co. killed. Last mortar shell lands and we go! Fire flares all directions. Last contact with a leading platoon temporarily. Artillery smoke from one tree to another. Finally in the early a.m. into defense line. Mortars are shot into C.T.P. — a miss. Last rounds a dud into line. One for my buddies!!!

In 41 minutes its all

over. Not one casualty in our Co! Lady luck's again! Estimated 36 Japs killed. We retrace our steps, tearing down all pill boxes, Tokyo huts, those things! More yelling nite and running to do! K Co. sitting X-O esses the track killed 32 out of 33 Nips we ran out. 31 mark officers G Co. up the track killed about 50 more who had slipped out. Plenty of booty and loot! We set up a Co. perimeter just in the edge of the line we'd taken. Stink! Sound, how it did smell!! Only 2 grenades tossed during all night. A Jap sniper

poured in a few rounds about 03:00 hours but hit nothing. No returned fire so he quit. off to sleep again. //

Jan. 23-1943

Did a bit of cleaning up again and > took my first bath. Perhaps a fair dead Japs in the stream but it was glorious bathing. All the sweat and grime of so many days! The flyers is hitting the front line out today! We're to move to Buna tomorrow and relieve the Aussies there, Good hunting, they say. It will be a pleasure to leave this place - believe me. Did I mention it?

Lt. Lawston of K Co.
was killed when 3 Japs
held up their hands to
surrender. He stood up
to bring them in and
a Jap MG cut loose.
Isn't how do you like
their sneaky tricks?

Jan. 24-1943

Before I tell about our
Br. moving out, let me
enlighten you how Huggins
regiment got its name.
The 32nd Div. was the
first to move in there.
A Co. C.O. of that Div. by
the name of Huggins moved
in there with his Co.
and they were moved out
except for one man, the
supply Sgt. Thus Huggins
Field Artillery got its

but not critical. Now we've got another little debt to settle. Had 2 prisoners here at the time. but they were ordered to be eliminated, which was done !! Not exactly my idea of warfare But orders is orders. I think Prisoners of War should be treated as such. But then.....

Feb. 22 - 1943

Another new day but not very bright 'cause Wooten was a good friend of everybody's! Sent a patrol to locate out those other Japs but no sign of them. Mosquitoes are

absolutely the worst I've ever seen anywhere. We've oiled the swamps but it does little good. Mail call and 5 letters from Jennie, 2 from Mom and pop. 'Tis a glorious feeling, 'tis. Rations improving steadily. Lots of tobacco. Left mess men via the Lever route. Promoted more also. Day ended with me crawling out of my mosquito bar with loaded .45 / while the 'skeeters' feasted to a four-thee-mile, I lay in wait for a approach Jap. A chump almost, no doubt. Who's a sucker or wasn't I?

Feb. 23-1943

More sad news this morning. Hughes died in the hospital. According to the doc, he just gave up! What a concussion grenade that ole war! Never get a repeat like that in a million years! Still no sign of those remaining Japs. Company strength about 190 now. Left Australia with 152. Shot one Jap. We are setta between flanks of Kumusi. Ranged in on 81 mortars and light and heavy machine guns. Had fresh fish today! What a tasty dish! A novel way of catching

them. Find a school, toss a grenade, stun fish, wade out and pick them up.

Feb. 24-1943

Japs supposedly cleared out from Oivi-Gona location so the natives who had moved north to escape them are returning! 3,000 of them coming down with boats, canoes, dogs, and families. Did you ever see one woman carrying all the family possessions, including one child and carrying another? Well, I did? We've had 23 native boys working for us here and by

find myself 'boss' man. Built huts, bridges, tables, etc. They know little English; I know less native tongue. But I can pantahine good! Learn to know words such as 'I no' (me man come); 'I mus' (everybody come); 'Ta-Ada' (white boss man-me!); 'Brisi' (native boss man); 'Katua' (native PIB sergeant); 'Kai' (quick). 'Nem mutto': "No mosh, no kai-kai." Worked okay, too! Two native women came up and asked me for their husbands. No argument; I gave them up!

Feb. 25-1943

Natives still coming down from Katuna, and villages north, by the hundreds. What a picture I could paint - with a camera. Yelling, jabbering, and jibbering. It's one after another while our medics try to body patch up some of the lames, many of them afflicted with 'no go' - too many of them! The native head want to save and join their families on their trek south. Tomorrow they go! Still running out Iregular patrols out with an occasional day being patrol. Lots of crocodiles in this

Kumusi River so rotten our days of bathing they still pretty safe to clothe. Malaria and dysentery too, but lower.

Feb. 28th 1943

Last day of the shortest month. Very little. Has been daily. Company strength now 83. Like subsiding to stasis, the fever has toned down somewhat. Lost our first officer via fever - Lt. Wilkes. The 1st. Evac. Hospital at Oro Bay is rapidly filling up. 7 Feb. Several fellows have died from malignant fever - One who had been

Everyone is sure aching to leave New Guinea and go home. I lead the list, but I'm afraid our job here isn't finished yet. Most of the men dream of steaks and French fries but I'll take the belly beef and dream of mom and pop and my June.

March 3, 1943

Have a few factual figures to present today. Two Regtl. boys came up today to change their Class A Warband allotment to Class B. I cancelled mine temporarily to keep my pay record straightened out. Our

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Regtl. strength is now about 900 hundred; 109 killed in action; 4 missing in action; a little over 400 have been shipped back to Australia (14 officers). 1st. Bn. has a total of 160 men; 2nd, about 400; 3rd., about 400. We couldn't do much in our present condition. Planes, planes, and more planes have been flying over going north. Rumored a cab-way leading toward New Guinea.

March 4, 1943

Explaining the air force. Up yesterday. Heavy, medium, and light bombers; torpedo planes,

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and lighters bombed, strafed, and sunk 23 Jap ships (13 transports, 10 warships). Over 15,000 Japanese killed or drowned. Glorious victory, I'd say. Nice headed toward Tokyo. Good work, you sky birds! Silver stars (U.S.N.) have been awarded men of our regiment. Many really earned them but many didn't and in the eyes of this company, Caldwell should intercede. It's a farce, really!

March 7, 1943

First Bn., 162, has been by-passing us regularly. Thayer headed for Middleburg Bay and will establish strong-

MHS Wayne Eveland ~~diary~~ diary (Burma etc.

SC2080

needs reading

Also sent a letter to Mom with Ohlinger.

Friday - May 1st '42

Back in Dinjan after quite an eventful trip.

Left here Tuesday A.M. (April 28th) and took a load of .50 calibre ammunition to Loiwing for the A.V.G. Just as we finished unloading the stuff the doctor drove up to the plane and told us to hurry our take-off as a Jap attack was expected. But the warning came too late for us. (Col. Haines, Hubbard, and Stoeger, who arrived ahead of us took off as we landed - so managed to clear the airport before the Japs arrived.) We could hear the Jap bombers - but couldn't see them.

I wanted to hop in the plane and take off but Col. Olds (whom Col. Haines had left in his rushed departure) said it was too late - so we all ran madly for cover. That is - in search of cover!

we dashed through the mud of the rice-paddies until we could see the Jap formation almost overhead. Guess we only ran for perhaps one minute - but it was a hard run - I put might heart into it - but was passed by some of the A.V.G. - by Col. Olds - and by dozens of Chinese - I must be a slow poke! I saw a hole in an embankment ahead - but several beat me to it - so I ran back twenty or thirty paces to sort of a shelf on the up-slope. The shelf didn't offer much protection from any bomb dropped in the rice-paddy - but at least I was safe from those dropped on the higher ground by ~~the~~ my airplane and the rest of the airport. Fortunately - the Jap bombadiers were good. Their aim was pretty accurate. Nearly all the bombs landed on the high ground of the airport. We could hear some of 'em on the way down. There - wham! - the ground really trembled!

One 300 pounder (or thereabouts) hit

within 10 feet of my airplane - and within 10 feet of 5000 odd pounds of ammunition I had just unloaded. ~~He ask~~ The runway was muddy - and the only damage to the plane was a demolished left elevator and horizontal stabilizer! Had the runway been hard surface the airplane would have been totally demolished. Some luck!

Those bombers, incidently, flew a perfect formation. About 15,000 feet high - twenty seven of 'em - ~~boxy~~ in a V of V's. Dam good bombing - though they accomplished nothing. My airplane was the only one damaged as all P-40s were in the air busy shooting down the "Zero" fighters intended to escort the bomber formation. The A.V.G. pilots shot down at least 13 confirmed - and didn't lose a single plane in combat. Not even a bullet hole in any P-40 in the scrap with the whole flock of Zeros! The only A.V.G. casualties

were Paul Greene - who landed okay out of gas and later flew his ship out - "P.T." Smith - who washed out a landing gear - and one P-40 full of bullet holes when the pilot made a single handed attack on the formation of 27 bombers! The P-40 still flies - and the pilot is uninjured!

The Japs, killed eight Chinese and damaged my ship's tail assembly - at the cost of at least thirteen of their own best pursuit planes - possibly two of their bombers - and many, many, bombs plus a devil of a lot of gasoline. ~~The~~ The whole attack accomplished less than is warranted by the expenditure of one bomb - yet the cost to themselves was terrific!

The night of the attack the Japs were officially reported to have advanced at least 25 miles north of Yashis - which was part of that days gain by ground forces. That meant that they must ~~be~~ have been within

ASSISTANT CHAPLAIN'S STAFFORD MHS MC244 Hargis Whitefield Collection 1-14 I/162

603 Sapphire Street
Redondo Beach, CA 90277
March 14, 1982

Dear Hargis,

I've given a lot of thought to your letter of 26 Feb. and perhaps some of the memories from that long-ago time will be of use to you. I hope so. I'm happy to learn that you've contacted Chaplain Youngs and hope he will help you fill in some of the missing pieces in your Salamaua story. As for the value of my old memories I'm no longer so sure, now that you tell me that Madison J. Aldige was killed later in the mountains. For almost 40 years I've kept the vivid memory of his body being brought back to the Bn. aid station at Nassau Bay on the first day of fighting, June 30. Was it someone else I saw? I must have known who he was then as I knew most of the medics. I've never forgotten the look of grief on Doc Ingresano's face (and I hope I remember his name correctly!) as he tenderly ran his hand through the poor dead boy's hair. I've written to Chester Clark about this and hope he will remember the scene - if he was present at that moment, of course. He was generally at the Bn. Hq. aid station. As I told Chester, it really doesn't matter much one way or another, but that was one of my most vivid memories of those first days of combat and if it's inaccurate then perhaps most of the old memories are.

A story of my life as a Chaplain's assistant would be dull reading I'm afraid. I don't know that I was truly able to assist the Chaplain very much during the Salamaua campaign except to be near him much of the time. We were and are good friends and were particularly close companions up on Mt. Tambu, sharing the protection of a couple of shelter-halves. Was I supposed to be his bodyguard? He never said so but he did manage to scrounge a very old 45 automatic pistol for me to tote in addition to my M-1! You ask how I got the job and I must say that I got it at Ft. Lewis the day the range officer reported to Chaplain Youngs that I was high scorer on the pistol range - and he know that I could play the piano or organ for his services! Without my field organ to play and without any equipment for religious services or clerical duties it seems in retrospect that my duties were negligible. I was just there!

I can recall very few times that we could get a group together for a service. The first I recall with any certainty was up on Bitoi Ridge for a group around the rear Hq. We were stuck up near the top of Mt. Tambu long enough to have had some services and were later for some time at Tambu Bay and must have had some there, but I must confess that I draw a blank. Can't remember a thing about them. Probably the most useful thing I did at that time was to carry rations up to Mt. Tambu from Tambu Bay, which I did

a couple of times! Didn't I tell you my story would be dull reading? I was never involved in any combat then on in any later campaigns. Never saw a Jap except a dead one.

You were wondering about Ch. Youngs denomination. He is or was a minister of the Bible Presbyterian Church, a fundamentalist group and certainly non-liturgical.

Now, going back to your questions in order brings us to the Nassau Bay landing. I landed with a party of Serv. Co. men, Chaplains Youngs and Haley (John Haley, the much revered Catholic Chaplain), and Ch. Haley's assistant, Frank Beckwith. Our boat landed just after the first assault troops and, like most of the boats, broached and was stuck fast. Ours was thrust well up on the shore by a huge wave and with such force that a Jeep slid against the side momentarily pinning Ch. Haley. Frank shouted for help and guys shoved against the Jeep freeing Ch. Haley so he was able to jump out with the rest of us. My next memory is the sight of a magnificent Aussie standing on the shore with his light, stark naked except for his beat-up old Digger hat. Now, I wondered, did he have the courage to penetrate this enemy-held beach on a pitch-black night and wait for who knows how long for our arrival. Did he wade throught the swamps to get there or did he swim in from a boat in such a stormy sea? So, I didn't come near to drowning and didn't lose any of my equipement. I think our little group moved more or less directly ahead inland from where we landed with not a clue as to where the rest of our troops might be. I do recall that it seemed a very long time until dawn! We had our slit-trenches dug and were not far from them when the first Nip planes came over to bomb and strafe. The bombs all fell between us and the water and the strafing also was directed to that area. Still, the noise and concussion of the bombs was scarey enough for my first experice under fire. The rest of that first day on the beach I can't recall except for the scene at the Bn. aid station which I described. As night fell Ch. Youngs and I were in front of the Portable Surgical Hospital tent and remained there throughout the night surrounded by wounded on littens awaiting their turn in the surgery. I remember thinking that it would be wise and comforting to be dug in rather than to be lying on the surface. Yet the thought of all the wounded lying unprotected on their littens and the medics busy inside the tent erased the thought from my mind. The shells or grenades didn't seem to impact too close to us, but then what did I know in this first experience under fire? I wonder if Ch. Youngs remembers wandering off toward the Bn. Hq. tent at dawn before the snipers had ceased firing. They told me he had to dive for cover after a near miss and landed on top of a body in a trench!

I don't recall any burials on June 30 or religious services. It seems to me that the burials I assisted with were on July 1. I remember being told to assist the XXXXXXX grave diggers and assisted by helping lower the bodies into the graves. Ch. Youngs and Ch. Haley read their respective services. Some time that day I walked quite far south along the beach with several other men but can't recall the reason unless we were looking for more bodies. The only body I remember seeing was that of a surprisingly large and husky looking Jap near the water. Just before we started back up the beach we were buzzed by a small single engine plane which I think we identified as an Aussie "Winnaway" (?) He came over us from the north, turned and came back over us even lower and I recall thinking that I hoped he wouldn't mistake us for Japs! Later in the day it seems we all moved further north and en route were again bombed and strafed. I hit the dirt(water as we were in a swampy area) with Capt. Ronald Carter, the Bn. surgeon, and the Bn. dentist on either side of me. Probably on July 2 I went with a carrying party to Napier. This was the party that was ambushed in the native garden a few miles inland. Ch. Youngs wasn't with us for some reason. He probably made the trek with the Hq. staff. Was it fate that having been quite close to the front of the column I for no reason that I recall decided to drop back to about the middle only minutes before the point was hit? All the armed men were requested to drop back on the double to regroup and I dropped my pack beside the trail and ran back as instructed. I remember a couple of walking wounded coming back down the path, one with a frightful head wound but still carrying his tommy gun. I seem to recall that we were told that he fired most effectively, though wounded, and helped greatly to repel the attack. After spraying the area where the attackers had been with heavy automatic weapons fire, we continued quietly and most cautiously until late afternoon when we formed a perimiter for the night in a clearing on the south bank of the Bitoi River. I recognized the dead men as we passed them where they had fallen in the ambush and I think they were from Bn. Hq. pioneer platoon. I don't know now whether there were 3 or 2 dead, but I'm sure that's on record. We arrived at Napier the next day in a pouring rain, were already wet to the skin having waded the river to get there, and were mighty glad to stand around the big fire they had burning there. Mighty glad too to feel the relative security of the camp.

Yes, I went on to the end and even got in a Signal Corps picture of the whole Regt. Hq. crew on the beach at Salamaua. I have a print, luckily, and a negative made when the print was fresh. Sent a print to Geo. Cisneros not long ago as he didn't have one.

I think I may have a Chaplain's story for you that should be of interest to Jungleer readers. I retained a carbon copy of Chaplain Robert Smith's Historical Report of the Mindanao campaign, 6 typed pages covering the period of March 6, 1945, when we left Mindoro, to July 7 when we returned to Zamboanga from the central part of the island. I've written to him to get his reaction to the idea of publishing the story. I see no reason why he wouldn't go along with it, but we'll wait to see what he says. I don't know if he has a copy to refer to and I may have to send him one to review. He was, by the way, an outstanding Chaplain and was awarded a Bronze Star for his fearless ministry to the men under fire.* I'll copy the order and include it. I joined him on Biak after his assistant left for home and was with him until the war's end. I believe he's now semi-retired but still lives at the monastery of him order at Cambridge, Mass. He's an Episcopal priest, you will be interested to know.

Well Hargis, you asked a few questions and I dredged up more than a few anwsers and far too many rambling thoughts besides! If any of the above is of value to you I'll be pleased.

Sincerely yours,

Audrey Hayford

P.S. Since you asked, I've remained a bachelor. I was a music student with some professional experience as a concert pianist before I was drafted. I went on to further study after the war and resumed my career playing mostly as an accompanist for touring singers, violinists and cellists. New York was my base in the 50s and Los Angeles since then. I do no traveling now but teach privately and work at California State University Long Beach with an old army buddy, Hans Lampl, in the opera department.

* On second thought, I'd better wait until he gives permission to send the order copy. At any rate I have it in case you're interested. I also have a few pictures that could accompany his story.

From Poplar to Papua. Martin J. Kibston
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peninsula with a series of towering peaks rising thirteen thousand feet into the clouds. Thick forests covered the mountain slopes. Damp rain forests spread below. Matted jungle mixed with swamps. Stands of kunai grass grew sharp enough to cut a man's skin. The heat and humidity were often unbearable. Only the New Guinea natives occupied the region, and it was the last place an American soldier wanted to go.

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By November 1942 the fight in New Guinea was under way. But the men in the 163rd were still in Australia, where they received little news from the battlefield. Still safe from the dangers of war, they were more concerned about their weekends, and Rockhampton was crawling with eager GIs. "It was a good thing there was a reasonable amount of liquor and beer available," Reynolds said. "Unfortunately, girls were not as plentiful."

The girls were plentiful enough. Australian newspapers reported an alarming increase in teenage pregnancies. In 1942 one Brisbane paper reported:

> Far worse than the plight of wives deserted by USA servicemen is that of teenage unmarried mothers, who are setting the authorities a serious problem.
>
> The problem is becoming so serious that it is a matter of US and Australian intervention. Maternity hospitals are crowded with young girls. The soldier-fathers are unable or unwilling to assume their responsibility.
>
> In some cases, young girls of good family, who really are in love with USA servicemen, get into trouble through promise of marriage, which under present regulations cannot be honored.

It wasn't much different elsewhere. The Townsville press reported that numerous young Australian girls were looking to American troops for "easy gain." One Townsville city councilman was quoted as saying of the girls, "I can pick them out from the locals any day.

They're giddy, young and garishly painted."

Naegele enjoyed chasing the local girls and drinking beer as much as any soldier. "It was the best beer in the world and we were liked. We were young, pretty well paid by their standards, and we were available. Their boys were all in North Africa."

Arthur Merrick, a young lieutenant educated at the University of Montana, had been watching a hockey game in Great Falls when he heard of the attack on Pearl Harbor. The road to war seemed fast for Merrick, who quickly got engaged to his college sweetheart, borrowed money from his buddy Pete Murphy for the engagement ring and vowed to return to complete his promise of marriage.

Now halfway around the world with a weekend pass in hand, Merrick went with six young lieutenants to shop at the post exchange in Brisbane. Meeting the "ladies of the time" required more rank than any of the men had, so one of the officers, Lieutenant Slade, came up with a plan. He bought a pair of general's stars, removed the lieutenant's bars from his collar and placed the new rank on his uniform.[5] It was funny for a moment.

"We walked out, keeping to the left of our 'general,'" Merrick said. "We heard the ladies of the time usually were in the hotel tearoom so we headed out. We were too new and green for these ladies, so we went back to the elevator. Guess who was descending at this same time? It was General MacArthur and a couple of his staff. He turned to Slade and said, 'Well hello, *general.*'"

Slade couldn't remove the stars from his collar fast enough. Impersonating a high-ranking officer was a serious offense. For the rest of their time in Brisbane, Merrick and his friends settled on being "just lieutenants." It was just as well. Time for shopping trips and courting Australia's women was about over.

Notes

1. On the Australian defensive situation in 1942, see Milner, *Victory in Papua,* pp. 3–5.
2. Milner, *Victory in Papua,* p. 24.
3. On the training at Rockhampton, see McCartney, *Jungleers,* p. 29.
4. Milner, *Victory in Papua,* p. 29.
5. Montana Chapter of the 163d Infantry Association, *The Bulletin Board,* Vol. 7, No. 3.

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Chapter Three
SANANANDA: REALITY SETS IN

In the opening campaign of most wars, soldiers are often ill prepared to wage the kind of battle they actually have to fight. The 32nd Division, comprising National Guard troops from Michigan and Wisconsin, experienced this when its leading elements marched into the New Guinea jungle in November 1942 to face an experienced Japanese army. Not only were the soldiers improperly trained and poorly equipped for the conditions they would face, many of the problems they encountered weren't foreseen by their command, and the results were troublesome.[1]

The 32nd suffered substantial losses in a few weeks of combat. Morale was low among the troops, who were hungry and increasingly sick. "They were shaggy and bearded and their clothes were ragged," one witness wrote.[2] "Their feet were swollen and in bad shape. Their shoes, which had shrunk in the wet [jungle], often had to be cut away so that the troops could even get their feet into them." Atabrine pills, salt tablets, vitamins and chlorination pellets were in short supply. Malaria, jungle rot, dengue fever and dysentery took increasing tolls. For every two men wounded in combat, five others were hospitalized from jungle fever. It became increasingly clear that more men were needed soon, and the 163rd got the call.

The 32nd Division had been tapped to fight in Europe, not New Guinea. In contrast, most of the 41st Division, including the 163rd,

had trained to fight a jungle war. "We were well trained," recalled Christian Hansen of his Rockhampton training, "But we didn't know what in the world we were getting into, and neither did anyone else until we were actually into it."

The 163rd arrived in New Guinea on January 1, 1943, at airfields at Dobodura and Popondetta. The regiment's uncelebrated arrival was something of a milestone. It represented the first full American outfit to fly into combat in the southwest Pacific theater.[3]

Stan Davison of Highwood, Montana, kept a detailed journal of his early days of combat, which included amusing cartoon sketches.[4] His stories revolved around the heroic character Black Bart, Davison's proud and courageous alter ego. As a member of C Company, First Battalion, the young soldier wrote of the flight north: "There wasn't a single gun on that plane but our own weapons. I don't know what we would have done if we had been attacked. I could only see three parachutes in the plane."

The arrival of the 163rd wasn't a glorious one. Those expecting reporters and cheering crowds found silence and rugged living. One B Company soldier remembered: "It wasn't what we expected. We sort of figured there would be some sort of village with at least one store. But it turned out to be only a few native huts occupied by sick and wounded Yanks and Aussies waiting to be transported to one of our base hospitals, or waiting to get back into the action."[5]

Instead of fame, celebration and pretty admirers, the men found thick jungle and muddy swamps. They also found their predecessors, the soldiers of the 32nd, in poor condition. As they passed sick and wounded men, many thin from hunger, dirty and confused, they wondered if they were up to the task of fighting a jungle war.

"It was pretty frightening seeing these 32nd Division boys walking out," said Fred Naegele. "They took an awful beating. They were tired. They were shot up. Their clothes were in tatters. Their feet were sticking out of their shoes–they had rotted off. I said, 'Geeze! We're going in to relieve them?'"

Howard McKinney put his own twist on the realities awaiting the Montana soldiers in New Guinea: "Sometimes the wounds of the





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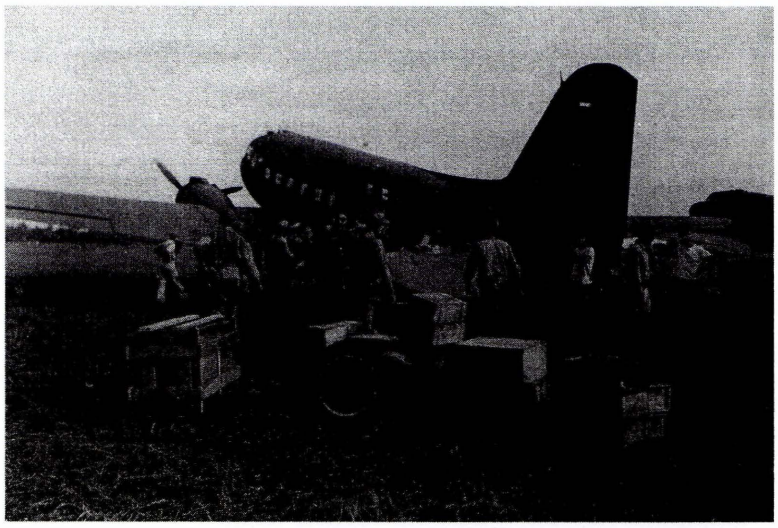

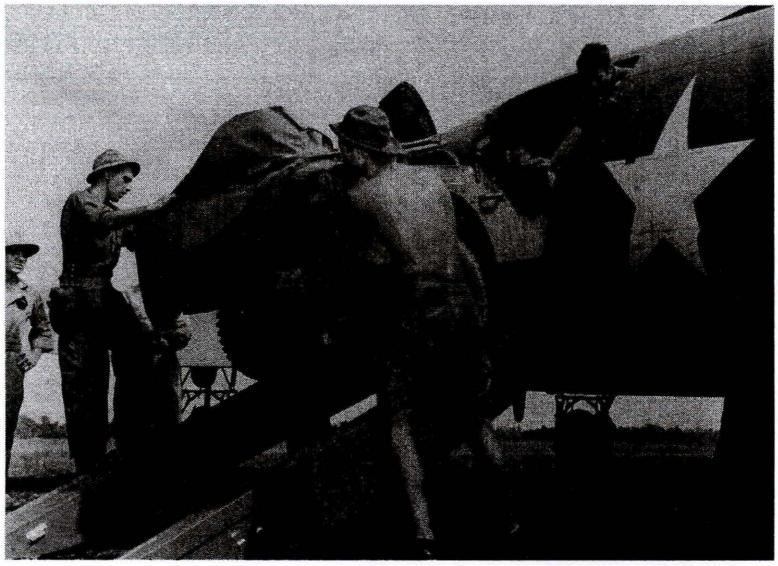

Unloading the DC-3s at Dobodura airfield. The aircraft were slow and clunky, making them vulnerable to Japanese Zeros patrolling the skies.

men they [natives] carried were repulsive and sickening to the eye. No man felt too good over this reception. Any illusions we had of the glories of war were quickly dispelled."

The 163rd and attached elements now consisted of more than 3,800

troops under the command of Col. Jens Doe. Doe's familiarity with the regiment went back to the Hunter Liggett Military Reservation in California where, in 1940, the Montana men had gracefully defeated Maj. Gen. Joseph Stillwell's army. Doe was aware of the 163rd's reputation as a fighting force, as were other commanders in the theater. In fact, Lt. Gen. Robert Eichelberger ensured General MacArthur that the entire 41st Division, including the 163rd, would enter combat at New Guinea better trained than the 32nd Division had.[6]

The biggest problem facing Allied commanders was their military intelligence, or lack of it. Intelligence officials failed to determine how large the Japanese force on New Guinea was, especially at Sanananda. "We decided we did not know whether there were one thousand Japs at Sanananda or five thousand," Eichelberger wrote. The latter number would prove more accurate, but Allied commanders had to settle on a plan of attack without that knowledge.

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The men in D Company climbed aboard a DC-3 at Port Moresby, New Guinea, on New Year's Day, 1943. The plane circled several minutes, gaining altitude to begin its turbulent pass through the Owen Stanley Range. "It seemed the wings of the plane were about to touch both sides," Hugh Reynolds recalled.

The aircraft climbed through Kokoda Pass—a narrow canyon of rock lodged high in the mountains. During the flight, Reynolds, the young guitar player, chatted nervously with the pilot. He had noticed many small holes cut into each window and, being curious by nature, he wanted to know what they were for. The pilot wasn't slow with his answer: "They're for you to put your rifle through to shoot Zeros if any show up."

The pilot flew low and fast to avoid the danger lurking in the New Guinea skies. Japanese Zeros soared sneaky and fast and could easily outgun, outrace and outclimb a fully laden, clunky DC-3. In sight of the runway—a strip cut into the grassy fields on a mountain plateau—the pilot took his plane into a dive. Just before the ground

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he pulled the nose up hard. Reynolds nearly swallowed his heart. The pilot aligned his plane with the runway, set it down and told the men to get off. No problem.

Reynolds sighed with relief when the transport landed on the sandy airstrip. He wasn't alone. The men were glad to touch down and the pilot was equally glad to take back to the skies. "Before we could move ourselves or our equipment off the airstrip, the pilot sped down the runway and into the air," Reynolds said.



Colonel Harold Lindstrom, left, discusses battle plans with two Australian officers at the Sanananda front in early 1943.

Captain John Sponenburgh of Chinook, Montana, moved the men into the jungle. It was best to get organized in the protection of the bush. Sitting on the airstrip was a fool's move that left the soldiers vulnerable to snipers. Sponenburgh unfolded his map and marked the company's objective–a point several miles down a trail and across the Girua River. As the captain studied the route, Reynolds watched "several natives pass up the trail carrying wounded GIs that were being evacuated. The sight of those wounded soldiers added to our concern. They were a glimpse of what was sure to come for us."

After an hour marching, Captain Sponenburgh played it smart. He

yielded to the unfamiliar jungle terrain and stopped his men short of the Girua River. This, he told them, was where they'd be spending the night. Reynolds took a good look around, wondering where, exactly, they were. Sponenburgh ordered a perimeter and the men complied. They sat back-to-back throughout the night, unsure of what they were supposed to look for, or of what awaited at dawn. They had already drank most of their water. The humid air was nearly suffocating, the foliage razor sharp. It was nothing like Rockhampton. The trail seeped, eternally wet from the rain and dripping foliage. Palms hung lazy in the muggy air. At night, the canopy blocked the stars.

That first night for Reynolds was sleepless. Every *whump*, *whump* of distant artillery was cause for concern. Every snapping twig and hoot caused his heart to skip and his palms to sweat. This was the largest tropical island in the world and one of its least-explored wilderness regions. It was home to egg-laying mammals and kangaroos that lived in trees. The butterflies were huge, the lizards long, the monkeys daring. Rats grew as large as cats, the roaches were as black as night, and the terrain changed daily in the constant rain. Crocodiles lurked in the swamps and brackish water. The natives, in the eyes of the soldiers, were wild and strange.

Reynolds was happy to see the first hint of daylight beam through the trees and the sunrise that followed. The jungle came alive in a flash of color and sound. The men prepared to cross the river and locate their position. The water grew deep and the soldiers, weary of their strange surroundings, gave thought to the crocodiles swimming near the muddy banks. Using makeshift rafts, they floated ammunition and equipment to the distant shore, where they picked up a native footpath cut through a field of kunai grass. Soon they found their objective–the Australian army's perimeter. The Japanese patrolled just beyond sight.

"In the swampy ground we established a perimeter of our own," Reynolds recalled. "We knew we were near the fighting because we could hear the sounds of weapons firing."

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In his thirteen-part series for the *Chicago Daily News*, Pulitzer Prize–winning journalist George Weller explained to readers back home just how complex the Japanese defenses at Sanananda were:

> The Japs had advanced and retreated through all this country and knew every inch of it. They knew exactly how the narrow mud road ran eight miles from Popondetta to the crossroads at Soputa, marked only by a broken down Salvation Army hut and six saddle-sore, diseased Jap ponies....
>
> The Japs, furthermore, were deeply, soundly and systematically dug in here, with pretentious officers' huts, firing lanes for machine guns, and sniper defenses....
>
> About halfway between Soputa and Sanananda beach, the marshy road has a fork to the left toward Cape Killerton, which is about six miles long but is a mere forest track, impassable for vehicles wet or dry. Thus, as the Australians and Americans faced the sea, their maps showed a simple road structure shaped something like a slingshot. The irregular and highly complicated Jap lines stretched across, between the prongs, corresponding to the slingshot's rubber. They could give with rubber-like resistance.

If anything was certain, the Sanananda front was a tangle of swamp and jungle, and the Japanese were known to hide in both. They built pillboxes from concrete and secured them with steel doors. Their log guns and bunkers, erected months before the 163rd's arrival, were overgrown with vines, making them nearly invisible to the eye. The bunkers were arranged in circular patterns five yards apart, creating a connected line of defenses–the rubber slingshot, as Weller put it. A patrol could walk into a trap and not even know it. The Japanese, the men feared, waited like ghosts at every turn.

That constant threat weighed heavy on a soldier's mind. "Couple the pure physical effort to move ahead, along with the psychological impact of knowing that the enemy is just a few yards from any section along the trail, and you have a...physical and mental

anguish that debilitates most any human being," wrote Charles Linderman of Helena, a member of Headquarters Company.

The strange surroundings had Stan Davison on edge. It was his job as squad leader to scout the battalion's surroundings. The Australian soldiers, familiar with both the jungle and the Japanese, would serve as his evening guide. Davison wasn't thrilled with their lesson plan.

"The Aussies told us we were completely surrounded by Japs except for the trail we came up on," Davison said. "At dusk we could see smoke from Jap cooking fires about 50 yards from us. The Aussies weren't very concerned about it. They knew the Japs were on the defensive. We weren't too sure about that and spent a restless night."

The next morning, C Company's Lt. Harold Fisk left for patrol with an Australian squad. Minutes into the patrol he shot a Japanese soldier, thus earning the company's first combat kill of the war. Four days later, Fisk himself would be dead and his body missing.

Reality set in that night, as frightening as it was. Each man received his grenades. When darkness consumed the jungle, the men were told that if a branch so much as snapped outside the perimeter, toss a grenade. Movement through the area after dark was strictly forbidden. It was a good and simple rule intended to keep the men alive. If it moved, the motto went, kill it.

"That first night would have made the Fourth of July in Chicago sound like a lady's aid meeting," Davison said. "I'll bet the Japs thought the whole U.S. Army was attacking. The boys were sort of trigger happy."

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Tensions ran high for good reason. Earlier that day the Japanese had launched two separate, hour-long attacks against the American perimeter. The attacks came lightning fast, hitting B Company the hardest and leaving six men dead. It was their first taste of combat and what a foul taste it was. Most of the men didn't know what hit them. To say the Japanese were strictly on the defensive had proved terrible advice.

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The next day Capt. Robert Hamilton, B Company commander, ordered his first counterattack. He sent a small patrol out to locate and eliminate what he believed was a single Japanese machine gun placed along the road to Sanananda. The gun had become an irritation at best, harassing B Company with random fire at all hours of the day and night.

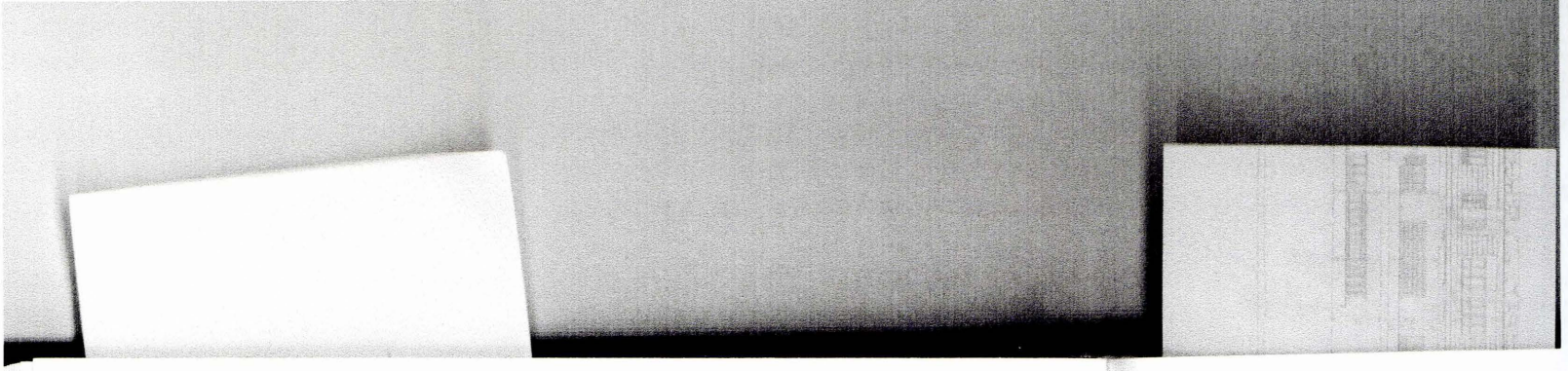
The men set out to find the gun's position. Despite their careful advance, their attack was repelled by heavy machine gun fire. Hamilton reconsidered his plan and launched a second patrol, this time supported by advanced mortar fire to soften the target.

In the lead was Sgt. Joseph Reddoor, a Sioux from Poplar, Montana. If nothing else, the first patrol had suggested the machine gun's approximate position, allowing Reddoor's men to advance with a little more confidence. His squad moved into the jungle, unsure of what lay ahead. Suddenly a muzzle flashed from a strange-looking mound built between trees. It was a Japanese pillbox, cleverly hidden. One round hit Reddoor in the hip. Another struck him in the foot. He collapsed and pulled himself behind a tree.

Reddoor had found the position. Now what? His squad was outgunned, unable to move closer. Despite his wounds, Reddoor examined the situation. He pulled the pins on two grenades, crawled from behind the tree and tossed the twin bombs. The blast shook the air, felt deep in the belly of every man. The explosions killed several Japanese soldiers, but the machine gun continued to fire.

Sergeant Herman Belgarde, a Chippewa from Brockton, Montana, was on the patrol that day. He saw Reddoor down and bleeding. Risking his own life, he raced into the open, firing his Tommy gun from his hip as fast as he could. He reached Reddoor and found his wounds to be deep and incapacitating. The gunfire continued even as Belgarde lifted the wounded man over his shoulder. Running and firing at once, he carried Reddoor to safety. Belgarde was injured in the rescue, but both men would soon recover.

It was a bad day for Captain Hamilton and his men. Two attempts to destroy the position had failed. Weller, in his colorful words, explained the mounting tensions and bloody toll:



> This was but the opening move in a kind of cat's-cradle series of attacks, back and forth, across and between the flooded Sanananda road and Killerton track which, by gradually shaving off and slicing up the Jap network of dugouts and fire lanes, eventually turned the whole 80 square miles of jungle into a kind of madhouse, where men slept in water, where demented Japs wandered alone and by dozens, and where many on both sides died alone in fern-strewn glades.

Captain Hamilton was ordered, and equally determined, to take the position. On January 5 he dispatched two B Company platoons, each with orders to overrun the Japanese bunker once and for all. To do so, Second Platoon would attack from the front while First Platoon swept in from the side. Assaulting the position from two directions, Hamilton hoped, would catch the Japanese off guard and allow his men to take the position. The problem was, nobody on the first two patrols had seen the additional machine gun placements hidden in the woods. What Hamilton believed was a single gun actually consisted of five, with four guns guarding the flank of the first.

Timing would be key, but the timing was off from the start.[7] The attack was to take place simultaneously from two directions. But Second Platoon began its charge before First Platoon was in position. The machine gun popped in the afternoon, dropping Ralph Sullender of Whitehall, Montana. He lay bleeding in the grass, mortally wounded. The rest of Second Platoon crashed into the position head on, but the attack stalled as quickly as it started and the men were forced to fall back.

Even as Second Platoon fell back, First Platoon continued to advance on the position from the side. There was no turning back for these two officers and twenty-eight men, even as the previously unseen guns opened fire on them.

Sergeant James Eder of Poplar, Montana, recalled the cost of that assault: "Leo Limbocker was the first man to die. Both John McMeel and Otis Potter tried to save him but they saw the Jap tracers pass too close to his body. Benske would have tried, but we talked him out of risking another death to save our man. Lieutenant Ellers and

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Corporal Pinkenstein were also wounded. Conners' grenade rebounded to kill both him and Lester Koustrup. Julius Mendoza was wounded and was left to die under the Japanese guns that night."

Mendoza's death was a bitter pill for the men in B Company. The soldier from Los Angeles, California, lay alive, bleeding in the open for hours. Every time his comrades mounted a rescue, the Japanese gunfire drove them back. The Japanese soldiers would neither kill Mendoza nor let medics treat him. Every time the man cried out, "Medics! Medics!" the Japanese soldiers mockingly imitated his pleas for help. It was a sadistic game that didn't sit well with American soldiers new to the battlefield.

With eight men dead and three wounded, Company B's failed attacks proved costly, and it had nothing to show for its loss. Both Potter and McMeel, the latter from Hayes, Montana, were missing in action and believed dead. "Nobody ever found McMeel's body," said Eder. Several weeks later, when the battle finally ended, the company chaplain found McMeel's mess kit in a Japanese bunker.

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"You don't hear much about one hazard–the big black rats," recalled F Company's J. Fallstick. "One rattled in our mess gear and guns cocked all down the line. I stabbed him with my knife and silenced him and ruined my mess kit."

When Fallstick reached the front on January 6, he and the other newly arrived soldiers with Second Battalion, 163rd Infantry, had to learn the rules of combat at New Guinea the hard way. "That first night somebody with dysentery left his hole after dark and was killed," Fallstick remembered.

The men sat in their trenches enduring a heavy New Guinea rain that never seemed to end. When it wasn't raining the jungle dripped water from prior storms. Trenches filled with runoff, leaving the men aggravated and miserable. Some tried to bail water with helmets. It was no use. Each hour brought new hardships.

"Muffled by the rain the Japs crept in," Fallstick said. "You couldn't see three feet ahead, but the brush moved with bodies."

Nobody hated the rain as much as Charles Linderman. The tall soldier from Helena watched the jungle take its toll on his friends. He hoped and prayed he would stay healthy, but the odds were against him from the start. "Only the most diseased soldier took the trouble to go to the bathroom after dark. The disease that drove Yanks and Aussies out of their foxholes at night was dysentery and diarrhea. Even these illnesses didn't drive all the men out of their trenches, and the newly issued steel helmets were used for a lot of odd jobs."

The GIs measured the rain in feet. Their foxholes became filthy, disease-ridden pools. Water seeped from the soil as if the ground itself were a saturated sponge. At night, when the men weren't using their helmets to bail water from their foxholes, they used them as pillows to keep their head above the rising grime. The smell of rotting bodies hung on the air. A good cigarette could cover the stench, but only for so long.

"A few troops were beginning to lose weight from the poor food, the tension and the constant water soaking," Linderman said. "The feet were beginning to suffer from being soaked. Jungle rot set in under the arms and in the crotch. Sores developed from the tiniest of scratches."

Insects loved the wounds. Flies, mosquitoes and sweet-bees swarmed around the men, feeding off their infections. Bugs feasted on bloated bodies left rotting in the jungle. When there was nothing left to eat, the pests moved on to the next victim, dead or alive. At night, when the bees and flies subsided, the mosquitoes took over, big and black, spreading their malarial plague.

Yet every day the sun rose new and every day the fighting started fresh. The heat turned the jungle into a sauna. For much of the 163rd, the battle for Sanananda had entered its second week, and Colonel Doe decided on the regiment's first big push of the war.

Doe was no stranger to combat. He graduated as a young man from the Military Academy in 1914, and just four years later was serving as the commanding officer of a machine gun battalion at the battles of Saint-Mihiel and Argonne in World War I France.

But Doe knew this was a different sort of war and a different style of combat. At noon on January 8, following artillery and mortar

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fire, he ordered B Company back into action. The company would strike the same Japanese position that three days earlier left eight of its men dead and three wounded. This time, however, C Company would offer support, attacking a second Japanese position across the Sanananda road.

Davison was at battalion headquarters that morning collecting rations and ammunition when he heard that C Company–his company–was preparing to attack. He and several others rushed up the trail to reach the company and join the fight. On the way, a shot rang out. The man running in front of Davison fell, a bullet in the leg. Davison helped carry the wounded soldier to headquarters for medical care.

There, as medics treated the wounded man, Davison discovered that he had jammed his Tommy gun into the mud. The barrel was full of muck and wouldn't fire. He stopped to clean the weapon, ramming the barrel brush down the gun and treating it with oil. He worked fast to get the gun into firing condition, but his company still left without him.

Captain Jack Van Duyn led C Company forward. The men sweated out an intense artillery barrage aimed at softening the Japanese perimeter. The soldiers stayed low under fire, hoping for the best. The shells hissed overhead and pounded a position to the front. The plan hinged on their attack starting the moment the artillery stopped. At the height of confusion, they would catch the Japanese away from their weapons.

It was a tactic that worked well when the timing was right. But "the artillery and the attack were not coordinated right, and what was supposed to be a rolling barrage landed among our foremost men," Davison later learned. Two soldiers were killed and two others injured. One man had his arm amputated. William Callantine of Three Forks, Montana, was among the wounded.

Captain Van Duyn couldn't hesitate. He pushed his men forward, but they soon encountered a swamp–dry the day before. This was a bad time to discover that rainwater had turned the crossing into an impossible marsh. The water was too deep to cross in rea-

sonable time. Mortars tossed mud and shrapnel through the air.

Doug Ferris of Sidney heard a mortar burst nearby. The fighting was so intense, so loud and fast, he didn't realize a piece of shrapnel had lodged in his abdomen. Adrenaline pushed him forward, but only for so long. "I started walking and I couldn't walk. I fell to my knees and then I lay down. I don't know how long I laid there."

Ferris was dizzy. The blast had knocked out his hearing. He saw three men prone in the grass ahead of him, but he couldn't hear a thing. "I thought they were just lying down. I didn't know they were dead. There was all kinds of firing–machine guns, mortars, artillery. You'd lay there for quite a while before they found out you were still alive."

As Ferris saw it, the Japanese held the advantage in the attack. They were dug in behind reinforced logs and bunkers. They waited back in the trees while C Company bogged down in the swamp, attempting a reckless charge under heavy fire.

The fight wore down by the time Davison arrived with A Company to carry out the casualties. The wounded included his friends from back home. Thirteen men were injured and eight dead, including Lieutenant Fisk, who had earned C Company's first combat kill just four days earlier.

Davison learned that, during the attack, "Lieutenant Fisk was killed standing up, throwing a grenade. The Jap position was impossible to take from the direction in which the attack started."

Ferris was saddened by the loss of Fisk. "He was from Idaho and had just gotten married before we went over. I always wondered what happened to his wife. He was a real nice guy. He was just a young lieutenant out of training school." Sixty years later Ferris still kept Fisk's picture next to his reading chair at his apartment in Helena.

Colonel Harold Lindstrom–who nearly took Dean Thorson's stripes over the cockatoo incident at Rockhampton–met the men as they fell back. Lindstrom ordered them to move forward and attack, again, from the same direction. Bullshit, said Captain Van Duyn, who refused to carry out Lindstrom's order. It was suicide, he said.

"The colonel lost considerable face, at least with us," Davison

said. "Company C thank
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said. "Company C thanked Christ it had a man like Van Duyn for company commander."

As the Japanese knocked A Company from the fight, B Company was engaged in its own battle, still trying to eliminate that machine gun on the Sanananda road. The artillery gunners had run out of shells, except those with delayed fuses. "The shells impacted like coconuts falling from trees," according to one soldier who described how the bombs burst harmlessly in the mud. "We charged bayonets again, only this time we blew no whistle and our charge was a walk in a ragged line. We got nowhere."

The losses suffered by B Company were heavy–at least six men killed, one missing and ten wounded. Those who didn't die suffered agonizing injuries like fractured ear drums and bullet wounds to the hip, shoulder, hands and feet. It became increasingly clear that the Japanese were dug in deep. Rooting them out wouldn't be easy.

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"If a bullet comes through the area the GIs duck down," Linderman wrote. "It's a game not unlike the Montana men have played before with gophers, ground hogs and chipmunks–a snap, a shot, the gophers duck. A little later their heads pop up again. The GIs play the same game, only they're the targets."

When cut-and-run patrols weren't harassing the American perimeter, Japanese tree snipers were. Even in the jungle the snipers could kill an unsuspecting soldier from more than two hundred yards away. For a shooter perched high in a tree, the soldiers manning the 163rd's outer perimeter were easy targets.

"The keen-eyed sniper could steady his precision killing tool on a branch and tighten the butt to his shoulder," wrote Hargis Westerfield. "He could take a clear site-picture and squeeze his trigger. A Yank cowered in a hole might hear the prolonged dying groan of a man in the next squad. Or, after a deadly silence, he might find his buddy a pale corpse with a deceptively small hole in his forehead."

Sniper fire remained a problem from the moment the men arrived.

The snipers were especially menacing for Adam "Pete" Petrovich, the factory worker from Michigan. He suffered a painful injury at the hands of a sniper early in the battle.

"I played possum because I knew the sniper got me," Petrovich said. "He got me on the right side of my [hand]. The bullet had traveled from my right side to my left and came out my arm. I knew I was hit." Wounded and dazed, Petrovich found his feet and stumbled down the trail. The first person he came across was the chaplain.

"I said to him, 'Why don't those yellow SOBs come out and fight like men!' I'm glad I played possum because, had I moved again, I might have gotten another shot, and it could have been fatal."

Sniper fire wasn't the only danger. At dusk, Japanese ground patrols probed areas that snipers, watching through binoculars, observed to be vulnerable. If the patrols drew close enough, the raiders fired randomly into the American line, then disappeared into the jungle with ease.

"A Jap patrol came to the edge of our perimeter and shot Richter through the head as he was sitting with his back to the outside of the perimeter–he died instantly," Davison said. "Frank Kundert [of Bozeman] was wounded through the back. This could have been avoided had the men been on alert as they were supposed to be."

The men placed counter-snipers on the forward edge of their perimeter to reduce such attacks. One observer scanned the jungle. Another, with his rifle steadied, took a deep breath and waited. If a sniper fired, the observer looked for the muzzle flash. The rifleman would then take aim to snipe the sniper.

It became a back-and-forth affair that left both sides vulnerable. Because the Australians had never briefed the 163rd on counter-sniping, it was a lesson the men learned on their own over time. They caught on fast, setting up their own tree snipers and building traps in the woods by linking grenades with cords. Nobody wanted to engage in hand-to-hand combat. They preferred to kill from a distance.

"The Japanese are excellent at cut-and-run tactics," Linderman said. "Our bayonets were much too long and made the rifle too unwieldy for close-up fighting. No one was talking about any bayonet charges, or even bayonet fighting with the Japanese soldiers."

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Second Battalion received its first big role of the war on January 9 when it was ordered to block the Killerton trail. If the battalion could block the trail, it would effectively remove the only means Japanese troops had of escaping to their more westerly garrisons. It could also break what had become something of a tiresome stalemate.

Under the command of Maj. Walter Rankin, Second Battalion marched on. The men strung telephone wire as they advanced, allowing commanders to stay in constant touch with headquarters. Progress was slow. The men chopped their way through grass, tangled vines and shrubs.

Ralph Marlow of F Company remembered crossing the terrain: "Our cruelest march of all was the 1,400 yards down Suicide Trail to Killerton. We climbed over huge logs and jumped into deep, muddy holes. Some men dropped their rifles into thick mud, which made them useless."

The silence didn't feel right to one man. His instincts proved correct. As the battalion approached a clearing, stepping free of the jungle's tangles and hidden hazards, a Japanese machine gun cracked from the tree line. Marlow hit the ground, hoping the gunfire would pass him by. The lead zipped through the air, coming too close for comfort. Some men were lucky, like Hooken Hopstad of Glasgow, Montana. Others were not, like Stanley Gorlewski, one of the first to fall. Robert Murphy was shot and killed.

Tree snipers looked down at the men prone in the grass. The soldiers moving below were easy targets, crawling like turtles in search of a rock under which to hide. Thomas Monsted was hit. He lifted himself once and fell, and never moved again. Major Rankin had to make a move, but he needed a clear picture of what his men were up against. Weller described the episode in the third part of his report:

> A giant tree was hung with long vines about two centimeters in diameter–the kind which the Japs, whose strength is in their upper shoulders and legs, scramble up easily, but Americans find difficult. Rankin called a for-



Young soldiers begin closing on Sanananda in Papua, New Guinea, not knowing what to expect.

> mer circus acrobat, Corp. Bernardo Escobar of Mountain View, Calif. These vines hang free as much as 60 to 100 feet before reaching the overlying branch. Hand-over-hand, Escobar's trained muscles carried him upward, a telephone strapped to his body. When he reached the top, despite the danger from Jap tree snipers, the irrepressible Latin ex-showman shouted, *I see them, I can see them clearly.*
>
> Rankin hissed his temperamental Tarzan into silence then got in touch by telephone with the mortars....After an experimental shot for range, Rankin called for a regular saturating fire.

Major Rankin ordered one platoon from G Company to the edge of the opening. There, the men could protect the battalion's left flank as it moved across the clearing. The men took the position as ordered, engaging heavy fire from inside the trees. Branches snapped and bullets ricocheted. The men couldn't see the enemy hidden behind the brush but they didn't have to–they knew they were fighting nose to nose.

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1. On the 32nd Division in
McCartney, *Jungleers,* pp. 32–3
New Guinea, January 1943 (C.
2. Milner, *Victory in Papua,*
3. McCartney, *Jungleers,* p.
4. Reynolds, History of Wc
5. History of the 41st–163
6. Preliminary assessments
7. Details of this action fr
41st Infantry Division, p. 21.



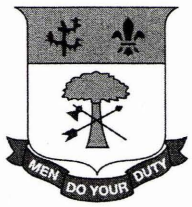
The firefight grew heavy. Rifle fire ripped past men hidden as low as they could get. Marlow was terrified by the gunfire and the sounds of men crying out around him. "Soon our second platoon was prone in the kunai (grass) fighting Jap machine guns a few yards ahead. Medic Bays ran through Jap fire to bandage Green, shot in the back, and Herman, shot in the shoulder."

Captain William Benson saw an opening. He took it, leading G Company across the clearing to cover the battalion's right flank. Captain Paul Hollister brought the rear of the column forward. Together they established a new position allowing the entire battalion to regroup.

The day's operation cost Second Battalion four killed and seven wounded, including Green and Herman. But the first stage of the plan to capture Sanananda had been completed. Second Battalion had successfully blocked Killerton trail–the last possible route of escape for Japanese troops now caught inside ground controlled by the Allies.

Notes

1. On the 32nd Division in New Guinea, see Milner, *Victory in Papua,* pp. 132–133; McCartney, *Jungleers,* pp. 32–38; and Charles R. Linderman, *The Sanananda Trail, Papua, New Guinea, January 1943* (C. R. Linderman, N. p., 2000), pp. 65–69.
2. Milner, *Victory in Papua,* p. 196.
3. McCartney, *Jungleers,* p. 36.
4. Reynolds, History of World War II (unpublished journal).
5. History of the 41st–163d Infantry, in *World War II Operations Reports,* Entry 427.
6. Preliminary assessments by General Eichelberger in Milner, *Victory in Papua,* p. 330.
7. Details of this action from Hargis Westerfield's interview with Sgt. James Eder, in *41st Infantry Division,* p. 21.



Chapter Four
SANANANDA:
ON THE VERGE OF VICTORY

Second Battalion had successfully blocked the Killerton trail, taking with it any hope the Japanese had of escaping up the coast. The tide of battle was turning in the Allies' favor, but the hardest fight still lay ahead.[1]

The 163rd had to flush out and eliminate strong pockets of Japanese troops caught behind the block. The men knew they had the Japanese in a pinch. The also knew the Japanese were ready to fight to the death. "They didn't have any replacements, and we didn't have any replacements, either." said Doug Ferris, who was wounded by a grenade burst in the marshy charge on January 8. "They were staying there until they died. They were fighting to the end, that's the impression that I got."

No one expected an easy battle, least of all the commanders, who were hungry for accurate and telling information. Where were the Japanese positions? How many were left? What condition were the soldiers in?

There was only one way to find out. On January 12, Stan Davison, a.k.a. Black Bart, the cartoon-drawing soldier, was ordered to lead a patrol to scout Japanese positions and troop strength. It was 0430 when he set into the jungle with a soldier named Nowlin and a man from regimental headquarters, whom he simply called Tommie.

"We made our way through the thick jungle, crossing the Jap trail," Davison said. "I had decided it better to circle around behind

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the Jap perimeter. About the time we were getting set to do a little observing, a lone Jap came wandering out toward us."

Davison dropped to the ground. None of the men had time to find cover. They sat motionless, holding their breath, hoping the soldier would pass them by. Davison watched the knife-wielding soldier, wondering what he had planned. He was surprised when the man began digging for roots. The look in his eyes, his emaciated body, told Davison he was weak with hunger and looking for food, not a fight. Like his fellow soldiers, the Japanese warrior was desperately hungry–near starvation.

"He circled up right in front of me," Davison said. "I was lying on my right side with my Tommy gun covering him. When he was about four feet from me he stopped and peered into the brush. I looked him straight in the eye. He was wearing glasses about a quarter of an inch thick and had a long black beard. His clothing was very filthy and he smelled rather rank."

Davison jumped to his feet, doing his best to hide his fear. He pointed his Tommy gun at the soldier and feigned confidence. The man fell back, his hands in the air, fright flashing in his eyes.

"I was sort of dazed myself, not knowing what to do with him, as we were too close to the Jap perimeter to fire and give away our position. I motioned with my left hand for him to come toward me."

The soldier stepped forward. Davison had already made up his mind to punch the man in the face and drag him into the brush, where he would proceed to kill him as quietly as possible. It was the only thing he could think of doing given the circumstances. Killing a man in such a manner wouldn't be an easy task, he knew.

"Tommie, who was lying in the undergrowth, got buck fever and jumped up and pointed his M-1 at the Jap. Tommie's face was partly gray, his eyes were sticking out of his head an inch, and his M-1 was shaking like a leaf. The Jap must have thought he was done for. He jumped back screaming, No! No! and fell flat on his back. He then jumped up and scrambled through the brush toward his position, falling several times. I stopped Tommie from firing on him. Tommie then turned and crashed through the brush like a

wild man in the opposite direction the Jap had taken."

Davison and Nowlin chased Tommie down. They held session in the jungle to decide their next move. They had to act fast, that was clear. In the confusion they weren't sure which way to go. Davison had lost his azimuth chasing Tommie, who was jeopardizing the patrol's safety.

If the patrol went north, Davison knew, it might hit Gona. If they went west, they might find Second Battalion on the Killerton trail. The third option was to go back in the direction they had come. Davison feared this would take the patrol into the Japanese perimeter–the heart of remaining Japanese resistance. Tommie's unpredictable behavior wouldn't help. With no azimuth to guide them and a frightened soldier threatening their safety, Davison still opted for the last and most dangerous option.

"We were soon in the middle of a knee-deep swamp with vines and undergrowth making progress next to impossible. One kind of vine in particular would hook to your clothes and rip them off of you unless you stopped and took the barbs out the same way they went in. The mosquitoes were around us in swarms."

The patrol wandered through the swamp for more than three hours. Davison dodged Japanese huts and dugouts. Snipers fired at him. Insects nipped at his exposed skin. The heat grew heavy and the men grew thirsty. They had been on patrol now for ten hours and wanted dearly to find their way back to camp. Finally, they found a partial clearing. A closer look showed that it was occupied by Japanese soldiers. Communication lines ran down the trail toward Sanananda Point. Footsteps approached. It was a thirty-man patrol, and Davison and company took cover fast. They jumped into the brush just as the troops passed by, some as close as five feet. One nearly stepped on Davison's hand.

This was it. This was going to be the end of it all. Davison and Nowlin lay on their backs as still as they could. All three men suffered from dysentery. "Tommie couldn't control his and had several accidents during the course of that afternoon," said Davison, who was certain Tommie's constant fidgeting would give them

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away. "All we could do was lie there and pray that no Japs would come digging around after roots. We heard them talking and laughing and walking all around us all afternoon long."

The hours passed. The flies buzzed and the mosquitoes nagged. Late that afternoon, American artillery rained down into the Japanese position. The shells ripped the air, landing like so many hammers on glass marbles. A hunk of shrapnel the size of a fist buried itself in the ground three inches from Nowlin's side. Tommie grew increasingly stressed.

"He had wanted to make a break for it all afternoon, but we talked him out of it, knowing it would be the end of all of us. Being the ranking man present, I could have ordered him to stay, but at times like that rank doesn't mean much."

Night fell like a curtain, heavy and fast. Only then did the three men appear from hiding. They crept through the jungle as quietly as possible, doing their best to remain undetected. "Tommie sounded like a bull in a China closet. We could hear Japs talking to the right and left of us. They must have heard us but I guess they thought we were Japs heading up to raise a little hell with the Americans."

Davison considered it a small miracle when his patrol stumbled on the battalion perimeter, which he recognized by its crooked tree. The next problem would be getting through the perimeter without getting shot by his own buddies. None of the men on Davison's patrol knew the new password. The password changed regularly, and they had been gone too long.

"Yates, are you there?" Davison called out, hoping his friend was on guard duty. Yates wasn't there but Johnny Mohl of Bozeman, Montana, was.

"Who's there?" Mohl called back.

"Black Bart and patrol!" Davison said, breathing a sigh of relief.

Mohl passed along the information: "Don't shoot! Black Bart has come back!" Davison was never so happy to see a familiar face, or to have a dry cigarette. He lit his smoke and felt the whir of good luck spin about his tired body. Everyone had thought he was a goner. He had, too.

"I think they were about as glad to see us as we were to see them. I called the captain [Jack Van Duyn] up on the phone and told him we were in. He thanked God right there on the phone that we were back, and he told me I could report in the morning. I have often heard some of my fellow soldiers remark that they prayed when the lead got to flying fast, or when they were in a tight spot. I don't believe that I'm an atheist, but I never once thought of God during that trying afternoon. I guess I was too busy trying to figure out what I was going to do in case the Japs discovered us."

★ ★ ★

Allied commanders learned more about the Japanese each day. What they didn't know was the impact starvation was having on the Japanese troops.

The same day Davison found his way through the jungle, Japanese soldiers received their last two ounces of rice. It was all that remained of their dwindling food supply. Starvation was wearing them down bit by bit, moment by moment, contributing directly to their defeat. Signs of cannibalism were turning up in abandoned camps. With rotting bodies scattered about the jungle, some half eaten, others bearing grotesque wounds, the entire battlefield took on a haunting and frightening feel.

One of the gruesome discoveries was that of Lt. Harold Fisk, who had died in C Company's failed attack of January 8. His body wasn't recovered immediately but was later found lashed to a lattice. Fisk's legs had been removed and presumably eaten by starving Japanese soldiers. A field sketch rendered by a medic detailed the discovery.

Major Gen. Oda Kensaku of the Japanese army watched sadly as his men died one by one, not at the hands of American soldiers but from starvation and disease. He wrote that "most of the men are stricken with dysentery. Those not...in bed with illness are without food and too weak for hand-to-hand fighting....Starvation is taking many lives and it is weakening our already extended lines. We are doomed. In several days we are bound to meet the same fate that



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Two soldiers hold up what is believed to be the cannibalized remains of a young American officer who died in battle in January of 1943.

overtook Basabua and Buna....Our duty will have been accomplished if we fight and lay down our lives here on the field."

Just how sick Japanese troops were became increasingly apparent to American commanders in the field. On January 14, just after sunrise, a patrol found a sick Japanese soldier lying in the brush outside the American perimeter. The patrol took the man prisoner–one of the few taken during the battle–and brought him back for interrogation.

The soldier's capture proved worthwhile. He confessed that Japanese commanders had issued orders that very day calling for the withdrawal of every healthy soldier from Papua. This soldier had departed with the rest of his men, but he had been too weak to keep pace in the jungle heat. He collapsed on the trail, where he would have surely died had he not been discovered by the American patrol.

The soldier's story filled Allied commanders with hope. It was all they needed to know. The tide had finally turned. Every available man within the 163rd was sent to block the escape of Japanese soldiers, sick or otherwise. The 163rd would surround them. The 18th

Brigade, along with other supporting elements, would sweep across the ring, crushing whatever resistance it encountered.

The brigade made quick work of the task. By early afternoon it had swept the pocket, reappearing with the trophies of war–Japanese anti-aircraft guns, grenade launchers, rifles. The only thing it left behind was 152 dead Japanese men.

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Lieutenant Howard McKinney, commander of A Company, First Battalion, had criticized the 163rd for its poor training back in 1940 when the men were still in Montana. Several years had since passed, and McKinney was now confident in the skills of his soldiers: "I felt we were as well trained as any. I know that commanding A Company in combat, all you had to tell them is what we have to do, where we're going to do it, and how we're going to do it, basically right down to the squad leaders. They took it from there."

The morning after the patrol had taken its prized Japanese prisoner, McKinney's company completed an equally lucrative task. Just after sunrise, an A Company platoon slipped across the Sanananda road. The men crept into the Japanese stronghold without being detected and called back the news–they were in.

When McKinney heard of the infiltration, he didn't hesitate bringing the rest of his company forward. He ordered an all-out attack to take the enemy by surprise. The Japanese soldiers resisted fiercely, moving fluently within their maze of interconnected bunkers and fire trenches. It was a perfect example of George Weller's slingshot analogy–bend but not break.

Word of the attack quickly made its way to Colonel Jens Doe, who immediately ordered an additional platoon from C Company to attack from the east. At the same time, he instructed B Company to attack from the west. The Japanese troops held their ground with stoic desperation. Despite the concentrated effort of three Montana infantry companies, it became clear the position was not going to fall that day. It was time to regroup.



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Colonel Jens Doe, commanding officer of the 163rd Infantry Regiment, takes a moment at the battle of Sananda. By war's end, Doe had earned the rank of major general and was placed in full command of the 41st Division.

For the first time since arriving at the front, First Battalion stood under the full control of Colonel Harold Lindstrom. Lindstrom was quick to devise a plan of attack. After harassing the Japanese with artillery fire at night, cannon crews would begin an intense barrage at dawn. First Battalion would then attack from the jungle. Companies F and G, borrowed from Second Battalion, would assist under the command of Maj. Walter Rankin, who had successfully led his men at the Killerton block.

"C Company was to be the spearhead of the battalion's attack and I was the man of the hour, as I knew the area in which the Japs were," Davison wrote in his diary. "We were issued one day's ration, a bar of chocolate and a can of corned bully per man."

The barrage began at 0850 on January 16–right on schedule. It was the heaviest shelling the men had ever witnessed. The whistle blew ten minutes later, marking the charge. The whistle pierced the jungle, softened only by the shouts of men screaming their way into battle.

With Davidson's squad in the lead, C Company rushed the trail. The soldiers had been instructed to form a skirmish line at the first sign of resistance. But the barrage had been so effective, blasting craters into the earth six feet deep, that Japanese troops had already abandoned their forward positions, running to bunkers farther back.

Davison found a Japanese soldier dead on the ground. He and his squad paid the body little attention. One man said he had never seen a soldier die with his eyes closed. Perhaps a closer look was necessary after all. The Japanese soldier suddenly awoke. He had been too sick to fall back with the rest of his men and decided to play possum. The heavy artillery had blown off his pants.

"I didn't think we should fire so I called to Jenkins that the Jap was alive," Davison wrote. "I guess Jenkins just passed him up, so Johnny Mohl gave him a burst with his Tommy gun and Captain Van Duyn shot him through the head. We then proceeded on and came to the same swamp I had been lost in."

Davison wouldn't get lost twice. He and the rest of C Company, supported by B Company, advanced unopposed into the Japanese line. Nearby, Company A took heavy machine gun fire on its side of the push. The heat was stifling. The air in the small, flat opening was dead still. Fatigue wore heavily on each soldier in the assault. Seventeen A Company men were already wounded in the attack and nine had been killed. Twenty others had dropped out from heat exhaustion and more would surely follow.

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The slingshot was about to snap. Major Rankin and his men prepared to abandon their block on the Killerton trail and help Colonel Lindstrom's troops in their advance. Rankin's soldiers dropped their packs and chopped their way through the jungle in columns. But the jungle, thick and hazardous, separated the columns and the advance slowed to a standstill.

The platoons regrouped under Rankin's order. It was time to cross the Sanananda road, not far from where A Company

remained engaged in its white-knuckled fight against entrenched Japanese machine gunners. The men stepped into the clearing, but the Japanese had it covered. The ambush caught F Company in the open. The men fell prone in the grass. No matter which side of a tree they moved behind, the rifle fire followed.

Rankin handed Ralph Marlow urgent orders instructing F Company to move back. Marlow ran forward, dashing past men pressed into the grass. One man was already down, a hole in his thigh. Sergeant Ellis Olson was dead.

Marlow handed the orders to Capt. Conway Ellers of Shepherd, Montana. Calm under fire, Ellers instructed F Company to fall back one man at a time. Robert Ordish of Kalispell, Montana, was the first to rise. Just as the soldier gained his feet and started to run, a burst of gunfire cut him down. Wounded in three places, he dragged himself into the brush to await help.

Ellers was forced into a difficult position, and he had to make a decision under pressure. If they couldn't fall back, the men would have to push forward. Ellers ordered the men to advance, but no one moved. He then ordered Cpl. Carlton Tidrick of Belton, Montana, to take his squad forward and destroy the two machine guns. Tidrick called his men to their feet.

"His squad doubled forty yards, hit the ground and emptied their guns at what they thought was the machine gun nest–a dangerous looking native hut," Marlow said.

The machine guns weren't in the hut. It was a decoy. Instead, they sat hidden above a small ravine, which offered the gunners a clear lane of fire. Tidrick's approaching squad became an easy target. Kenneth Paul of Bigfork, Montana, fell with wounds, and Tidrick himself was struck three times. He was still able to move and that was enough. He dragged Paul to cover, where the two men huddled in the brush, bleeding badly. Tidrick bled from a hole in his chest, his left wrist hung shattered. He wheezed with each breath and coughed in pain. Yet he sat there behind that tree, supporting Paul with his good arm. When help arrived, Tidrick insisted that his fallen squad member be treated first.

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As Captain Ellers and F Company remained pinned under heavy fire, Hugh Reynolds moved to a forward position designed to hold a telephone and two men. He connected his field phone to the communication line he and Lloyd Leppink had strung out the day before.

"I attempted to call back to the mortar battery, but all I could hear were Jap voices," Reynolds said. "They had tapped into my line and I dared not use it."

Reynolds needed a working phone. He examined his options and decided to link up with A Company's commander, Lieutenant McKinney. When Reynolds learned that McKinney's company was also engaged in a firefight, he ran toward Second Battalion's command post, where Colonel Lindstrom was keeping tabs on the battle. Reynolds reached the post safely and stepped inside. Moments later, several Australian soldiers followed him in.

The Australians seemed to pay little attention to the battle. They found their billycans and dug holes in the ground. They filled the cans with swamp water and boiled it for tea. Just as the tea simmered, a bullet ripped into the post, striking Colonel Lindstrom in the buttocks and knocking him to the ground.

Dean Thorson had been carrying a pot of tea up to the command post when the colonel went down. Just then, a Japanese soldier jumped from hiding and attacked Thorson with a saber. Thorson spun and leveled his gun. He pulled the trigger, shooting the man dead. Thorson took the man's sword as a trophy. The pot of tea was lost but Colonel Lindstrom would be fine.

★ ★ ★

The men were fighting more than a decimated Japanese army. They were also fighting disease, which crept in on nearly every soldier in the jungle–American, Australian and Japanese. The mosquitoes, flies, maggots and rats didn't distinguish nationalities when hunting for food.

"Fever has taken a heavy toll, along with the dead and the wounded," Davison wrote in his diary on January 17. He counted the men in his company, which had arrived at New Guinea with 179 healthy men. Nearly three weeks had since passed, and disease along with battle casualties had reduced the company to 115 men, many growing sicker by the hour.

Nowlin, who had accompanied Davison on his infamous patrol on January 12, nearly died of a chest wound. Davison himself showed the onset of malaria, fighting a temperature of 104 degrees. He wasn't the only man afflicted with fever. Confronted with a sudden malarial scourge, the medics worked at a frantic pace to save the entire command.

"Malaria and dysentery threatened an epidemic," medic K. B. Schooley reported. "We had too little medicine for dysentery and doubted that all the men, unsupervised, took quinine for malaria. Mosquito nets became so heavy with rain many were discarded. Mosquitoes were as bad by night as by day, and nets made little difference."

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Victory at Sanananda was inevitable. Yet as close as it seemed on January 19, it remained just out of reach.

"Most everyone held an opinion that there were plenty of [Japanese] in the bush with a lot of fight left in them, even though they were dying of starvation, sickness and shortage of ammunition," Charles Linderman wrote. "Short of everything except guts, they were known to die hard."

The final push to eliminate the last Japanese stronghold was on. The plan was simple in theory. It called for the men of B Company to clear a second line of bunkers while C Company took the first line. The swamp that caused C Company so many problems on January 8 still had to be crossed. Because of this obstacle, the men knew the advantage rested with the Japanese, who were now making a desperate last stand. As Major General Kensaku had written, the duty of his men would be accomplished by laying down their

lives on the battlefield. All evidence suggested that they were preparing to do just that.

For the men staging the attack–those present the first time–it was the same thing all over again. Rifle and machine gun fire was intense from the start. Mortar fire whistled overhead and pounded forward positions. This time, however, one platoon managed to cross the stream under the leadership of Johnny Mohl.

Mohl crossed the swamp with nine men, including Cpl. Wilbur Rummel. Covered by fire from their platoon, Mohl and Rummel crawled forward through rain and mud. They snaked close to the Japanese line, keeping their eyes on the targets ahead. Now within reach, still unseen, they tossed their grenades into bunkers. The bombs blasted in a bang of smoke and fire, and the guns inside fell silent.

Mohl and Rummel single-handedly knocked out the Japanese stronghold. The rest of the company crossed the stream before the smoke settled. George Weller, ever present on the battlefield, caught word of Mohl's heroic act:

> If the Japanese were still living they would remember Mohl....Mohl moved his boys to cover, worked his way alone to the nearest pillbox, and silenced it with grenades. Then joined by another soldier, the two destroyed five more pillboxes.
>
> Mohl then brought eight wounded men from his advance section, went back to the unwounded, and held the area until reinforcements arrived.

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Arthur Merrick of Great Falls, Montana, watched native New Guinea families flee the battle, crossing the river to the ocean. The women of the group wore large head nets and carried the family's belongings, which ranged from children to pets. The men of the group carried sticks. They beat them against the water to frighten off lurking crocodiles. Sharks were also cause for concern, but the

natives were accustomed to their wild surroundings and dealt with them as necessary.

Earlier that day, the GIs had shot and killed a stray Japanese soldier. The body lay on the beach near the river. Distracted by the natives crossing nearby, Merrick forgot about the corpse: "I was sitting on the beach at dusk, maybe twenty-five feet from the body, endeavoring to fend off the black gnats and wondering how I could be in such a godforsaken place. A crocodile surfaced near the dead Jap. In less than twenty seconds, the croc ambled from the water, picked up the body in its jaws, and disappeared back into the water. From a calloused point of view, the crocodile solved our problem about what to do with the dead Jap."

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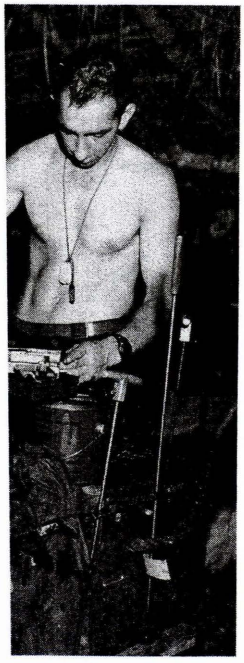
After engaging in two costly assaults of its own, I Company had been unable to capture and hold the southern tip of the Japanese line. One of the company's officers, Lieutenant Slade (the man who had pinned the general's stars on his collar in Brisbane to impress the ladies), was thought to be dead. But late one night, Slade dragged himself back into the company line. That same night, hot food arrived, morale returned, and every man in I Company hoped the next attack would do the job.

The men sat low on January 20 listening to mortars pound away at the Japanese position. When the barrage slowed, Second and Third Platoons attacked. The platoons covered two hundred yards when one American mortar fell short, wounding a soldier in the leg. The men got back up to continue their charge when a second mortar dropped in, killing Capt. Duncan Dupree of Poplar, Montana, and 1st Sgt. James Boland of Great Falls, Montana.[2]

Joe Upshaw, in charge of fifteen of the regiment's 81 mm mortars amassed in a nearby perimeter, explained what may have happened that day. "There were fifteen mortars firing with a time of flight of probably thirty seconds–think of all that stuff that's in the air at the same time. This one round went up and whistled. We





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knew by the sound that it had dropped off a tail, so it wouldn't fly accurately. It dropped short and killed two of our own boys."

Lieutenant Loren O'Dell of Billings, Montana, stepped up in Dupree's place to lead I Company forward. But the company's advance had slowed, giving the Japanese time to embrace the charge. Their machine guns fired, killing Lt. John Oleson and his runner. Another man fell with wounds to both legs. He lay bleeding for two hours before dying of his injuries. Alfred Carlson suffered a mortal chest wound and Howard Barnett died of a wound to the head.

The attack had been anything but successful, leaving the survivors bitter and frustrated. But late the next night a little luck came I Company's way, when several Japanese soldiers fled their position. Disoriented in the dark, they ran straight through I Company's perimeter. No need to shoot. One GI rolled a grenade onto the trail and waited for the blast. The explosion disabled one Japanese soldier, leaving him unable to walk. He continued to wail in pain all night long, dying a slow death just outside the American perimeter. The GIs obeyed their golden rule–never move from your foxhole after dark. The death wail kept the men awake until dawn.

At first light, Upshaw's 81 mm mortar crews pounded the position with several hundred rounds. The saturation fire ended with machine gun crews blasting treetops to knock hidden snipers from their perches. Covered by supporting fire, I Company rekindled its attack from the day before. No gunfire. The men drew closer. Still no gunfire. The men crashed through the perimeter to find that most Japanese soldiers were still hiding in their shelters. What resulted was a slaughter, according to one GI. The Japanese were killed en masse, their final position overrun. After six days of fighting, I Company had broken the stalemate.

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Davison was growing weak with jungle fever, his temperature of 104 degrees holding firm. He carried dead American bodies back to the chaplain for burial. Then he was ordered to count dead Japanese

soldiers. He came back with a number–two hundred of them.

"I got my Jap boots that day. All the boys were after souvenirs," Davison wrote in his diary. "We were probing around a Jap hospital tent looking for bodies and anything else we could find when the chief came running up to me and informed me there was a live Jap in the tent."

No one cared. After three weeks of combat, the men were too busy hunting souvenirs to care about a single, sick Japanese soldier. A GI stepped up and shot the soldier dead. "The Jap's body hadn't stopped twitching before [the soldier] reached in and grabbed his pistol off of him, fearing that someone would beat him to it. The Jap had a hand grenade lying by him with the pin barely hanging in it."

Sanitized version

Notes

1. Actions described in this chapter are covered in Milner, *Victory in Papua,* pp. 347–374; Westerfield interviews, *41st Infantry Division,* pp. 431–432; Charles R. Linderman, *The Sanananda Trail, Papua, New Guinea, January 1943* (C. R. Linderman, N. p., 2000), p. 139; and Reynolds, History of World War II (unpublished journal).

2. *41st Infantry Division,* p. 40.

MHS From Poplar to Papua
- Martin J. Kidston
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Chapter Eight

BIAK:
THE FIGHT FOR CORAL CAVES

The Butchers put their victory at Wakde aside and headed northwest toward the island of Biak, where other elements of the 41st Division were locked in combat with an entrenched Japanese garrison.[1] En route to join the battle, which called for another amphibious landing, the men of the 163rd Infantry caught up on sleep, often dozing in the shade of trucks and tanks. Over radios they listened to news arriving from Europe where, on June 6, 1944, Gen. Dwight D. Eisenhower and the First Army had made a successful but costly invasion along the Normandy coast, breaking through Hitler's so-called Atlantic Wall.

The tides of war were turning fast, but for the men still in the South Pacific the road home lay through Japan itself. There was no telling how long it might take to get there, or what would happen once they did. Japan showed no sign of surrender and, short of a miracle, the war in the Pacific might drag on for years.

The men enjoyed their time between battles. They had plenty to eat and drink. Plenty of cigarettes to smoke–stories to tell. Plenty of time to think about the next mission and making it home alive. Mail was always welcome, what arrived of it. Outgoing letters were censored, sometimes arriving home with text blacked out–whole paragraphs if need be.

"By the time the letters made it home, as long as it took, whatever you had written about had probably changed anyway," said Fred Naegele. "But still, you couldn't tell them anything about what was going on."

Most of the soldiers didn't know much about the state of the war anyway. That June, the Allies continued to close on Japan one island at a time. Two marine divisions were set to attack Saipan and Guam. In Europe, while Eisenhower's First Army fought its way through France, the Allies were also driving north through Italy.

The world was truly at war, and the Montana soldiers were ready to do their part. "There were these three big airstrips on Biak and that's why we were going there," Naegele said. "They were long enough and hard enough they could take our heaviest aircraft and put our bombing force within range of the Philippines and Borneo and Sumatra, where the Japanese were getting their oil."

One soldier described Biak as a "twisted old shoe thrown down in the sea by an angry god." Cliffs rose as high as three hundred feet above beaches carved by turbulent tides. Thick rain forests covered much of the flat ground, and a rocky plane advanced farther up,



High coral ridges, complete with caves and elaborate bunkers, proved to be effective fortifications for Japanese troops who successfully defended Biak for several months, causing a shake-up in the American command.



M-51 anti-aircraft gunner sits poised to counter Japanese air attacks.

offering little water. After floating in circles offshore to stave off the threat of a Japanese air strike, Second Battalion, 163rd Infantry, moved to the beach on June 12. The men met no resistance–a welcome change when compared to the landing at Wakde.

Ralph Marlow's first impression of Biak wasn't favorable. He saw the rocky shores covered with brush and debris. To the left he saw the sleek barrels of AA guns trained at the sky. Stenciled on each gun were Japanese flags–trophies for each plane the crews shot from the sky.

Just as Marlow dropped his pack, just as his company regrouped on the beach, an air alert sent them running. "We saw destroyers shoot red AA tracers far out at sea where three Jap bombers were diving on the ships." Marlow heard two loud explosions and saw the splash of enemy fire around the ships. "A Jap bomber fell from the sky in a ball of flames. As we cheered a second bomber burned in the sky."

Dark columns of smoke rose from the U.S.S. *Kalk* anchored offshore. The destroyer burned on the water. A third Japanese plane flamed in the sky, bounced over the waves and sank. The burning *Kalk* exploded when its deck torpedoes caught fire, a bright display seen for miles around. The ship was dead in the water, its engines no longer functioning. The violence of the battle rattled the men onshore.

Hugh Reynolds saw Japanese fighters buzz overhead, lining up for attack. He dug a trench as fast as he could move his shovel. Sand flew through the air and, just as the planes closed in, he jumped in for cover. "As they came into view over the ridge, their guns were already blazing."

The AA guns opened fire, banging away. Black puffs of flak burst overhead. But the attack ended as quickly as it started, and Reynolds moved with his company across the beachhead. He took up position near a shaded trail meandering from the jungle. Patrols scouted the woods and the men settled in, waiting for darkness.

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Naegele hated the patrols the most, especially on Biak. The 105 mm cannons that had served so well at Wakde were useless against Biak's steep coral terrain. Since idle time was wasted opportunity, the men were quickly put to work on jungle patrol.

"Our patrols were very small because it was so hilly," Naegele said. "You didn't have to go very far to find trouble. You never knew when the Japs would pop up, hiding in all those holes. You'd come up on them by surprise if you were halfway stealthy about it. Stealth was the name of the game–no smoking, no talking. Anything that rattled or reflected light was covered."

If Naegele hated patrolling during the day, he hated the nights even more. The hollow hours after sunset were never easy. The coral was unforgiving and rest came difficult. On a moonless night, phosphorous glowed strangely in the dark. Birds and animals emitted odd noises, keeping the men awake. The strange and frightening sounds floated on the dead-calm air. Some believed the Japanese never rested. They were always on the move, and Naegele's heart raced with apprehension.

"We'd be sitting in still positions with booby traps out on the trails," Naegele said. "You could hear them coming and you could smell them. They never quit smoking and with the dense heavy air, that smell carried. They had a smell of their own. By the time they got to

where they were endangering our position, we were waiting for them."

Such was the case when Dean Henry of Harlowton, Montana, heard a twig snap after dark. He remained still, peering into the night. A small Japanese patrol approached from the woods. Henry, a veteran of prior battles, watched and waited as the patrol moved down the trail. The young gunner held his breath, hoping they wouldn't spot him. When the moment was right, he placed his finger on the trigger, took a deep breath and opened fire. The machine gun flashed in the night, its *thump thump thump* shaking the ground.

Reynolds was in the patrol sent to scout the woods the next morning. He found one dead Japanese fighter along with evidence that surviving soldiers had dragged away two other men. "All of the sudden we stumbled onto an officer who was wounded but still alive. He was hidden behind a log, so we were right on top of him before we spotted him." The wounded officer rose halfway up, looked Wilbur Erbe directly in the eye and raised his pistol. Acting on instinct and fear, Erbe fired his own weapon. With a single shot he hit the officer in the hand and head. "The shot tore part of the grip off the Jap's pistol," Reynolds said. "It proved that he had his sights set on Erbe."

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The night attack was a sign of things to come. The Japanese had dug in for a long, drawn-out fight, supplied with the provisions needed to support an extended campaign. Accordingly, the ground fighting picked up on June 19–the day Lieutenant Kreiger led Third Platoon, G Company, onto a ridge in "Jap country" known among the soldiers as Ibdi Pocket. Thick with catacombs cut deep into coral cliffs, the men feared the terrain and its hidden Japanese guns.

Here was a forbidden forest filled with unknown hazards and traps at every turn. Kreiger's platoon encountered a grim sight from the start–a Japanese corpse tangled and hanging in vines high overhead. To reach the ridge, the soldiers moved along the cliffs, gripping tree trunks and branches, climbing like heavily armed Tarzans. At the top they spotted a Japanese pillbox. Seconds later, the platoon's

scout saw a helmet jerk back into the gun slot. The position was manned. The patrol was vulnerable.

"After a second of silence, we flattened under a rain of grenades that jangled our ears," said Hargis Westerfield. "Hot steel seared us. Arnold Johnson cried out. His rifle thudded to the ground. Most of us cleared that ridge in seconds."

The platoon slipped off the ridge for cover. But three men remained trapped in the open, including Arnold Johnson; he died of his injuries two weeks later. The effort to reach the ridge proved demoralizing. There had to be a better way.

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Down below the ridge that same day a convoy of men from I Company pushed through the hot jungle. Mostly unarmed, the group had been instructed to carry supplies to a new position occupied by K Company, about one thousand yards away.

"We knew K Company needed our supplies badly, but we did not know why the detail totaled only twenty-five to thirty men, and why we were mostly unarmed," said John Sullivan, the convoy's scout that day.

Sullivan moved through the heat, down the trail, his helmet off. One of the few men armed on the detail, he carried a Tommy gun at the ready, keeping his eyes on the track ahead. He couldn't see the Japanese soldiers hiding in the brush, and he didn't have time to react when the grenade rolled onto the trail.

The explosion sent the men to the ground. Fragments pierced Sullivan's neck and shoulders. He turned to see as many as eight Japanese soldiers charge from the grass, screaming, their weapons drawn. Chaos followed. Sullivan fired his weapon and, in a moment of irrational thought, he wondered if he hit anything. Just then, a Japanese soldier attacked with his bayonet, smashing Sullivan's cheek. Another soldier ran past, slamming the barrel of a mortar tube into Sullivan's head.

The ferocity and suddenness of the ambush stunned Sullivan. He had been tackled to the ground and was now engaged in a hand-to-





Biak was riddled with caves, providing countless hideaways for the Japanese defenders. Such caves caused many problems for Allies in the battle for Biak.

hand duel. The reality of the situation no longer mattered. Time stood still. This was a fight for survival and one Sullivan had to win. He acted on instinct, giving little thought to his actions as he rolled around with his attacker, grappling for the upper hand. Larger and stronger, Sullivan slipped behind his assailant, wrapped his arms around his neck and squeezed the life from the man's body.

The fight was on all around him. Sullivan was certain the four men behind him had been killed in the initial grenade burst. Bodies littered the trail as he began to run. He ran past other American soldiers wrestling with their Japanese attackers. He saw one man stabbed through the leg with a bayonet. He ran dizzy and half blind, his eyes swelling shut, filling with blood.

Walt Timm was the fourth man in the column that day. "The whole side of the jungle trail was moving in on us. Japs in camouflage uniforms charged in on us with rifles and bayonets and even the barrel of a knee mortar. Light was on their bayonets as they leaped at us from five to six feet off the trail out of the grass."

A Japanese soldier jumped on Timm's back. He flipped the man to the ground where somebody else–he wasn't sure who–shot him. A second grenade exploded nearby, knocking Timm to the ground. At the same time, Ballard Stanchfield saw a Japanese soldier drive a bayonet through the leg of a friend. Two other Americans beat a man to death with their helmets.

Depending on their position in the column when the attack began, the soldiers would later say the fight lasted anywhere from ten seconds to ten minutes. Clarence Miller, of Menard, Montana, was dead. Raymond Medina lived until the rescue party arrived to carry him back to I Company's perimeter. Godfrey Mihoover was mortally wounded in the opening grenade blast and died from shock. The bodies would lie on the trail until the next day, when an armed patrol arrived to haul them out.

Sullivan ran back to the ration station, his vision quickly fading. He was nearly blind by the time medics moved him by Jeep to a field hospital. Even with grenade fragments lodged in his neck and shoulders, a broken cheekbone from the bayonet, a deep head gash from the mortar tube, a cut under the chin and nearly blind, the most painful part, Sullivan remembered, was having his head shaved with a dull surgical blade for stitches.

When news of the attack reached headquarters, commanders suspected the ambush had been a matter of bad luck for the convoy. Because the Japanese had attacked with a mortar tube, not a

machine gun, commanders concluded that they had been setting up to bomb I Company's perimeter when the convoy suddenly approached. When the Japanese saw the convoy coming, they sat in wait. The size of the patrol gave them only one option: attack.

Allied commanders knew little about the strength of the Japanese forces on Biak, the extent of their defenses, or how long they could hold them. Intelligence had placed the Japanese garrison at around 4,400 troops. But they actually numbered nearly 11,500 men, and they were defending some of the most formidable fortifications in the world. Their interlinked caverns ran as deep as four stories underground. Their caves held everything they needed to survive for months on end. One cave was large enough to hold 1,000 men. Ringed with pillboxes, bunkers, trenches and machine gun nests, their positions were nearly impenetrable.

Still, news reaching families back home was upbeat, even if conditions on Biak were grave. In June, the Associated Press reported this:

> ALLIED HEADQUARTERS–American Sixth army forces advanced to within a mile and one half of Mokmer airfield on Biak Island Monday, having been stalled for several days by Japanese snipers and machine gun nests, it was announced today.
>
> Gen. Douglas MacArthur's communiqués announced that ground troops were approaching the cliffs dominating the Biak island airdromes as Liberators bombed enemy gun positions and installations in the rear areas. One Japanese plane was shot down.
>
> American's have been converging on Mokmer airstrip from two directions since the first push toward the field was slowed by fierce Japanese resistance from snipers and machine gun nests in the high area overlooking the coastal approaches to the field.

The truth was that the 163rd and other Allied elements couldn't penetrate the cliffs and drive the Japanese from their fortifications. A new plan was needed if commanders hoped to make progress.

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On June 26, after heavy preparatory fire, the Allies launched an all-out attack just before sunrise. The pre-dawn assault was a tactic rarely used. The commanders hoped to surprise the Japanese soldiers, who typically vacated their positions at night.

Hugh Reynolds joined B Company for the raid. "Things seemed eerie and strange," he said. "Things were going pretty well as we slowly moved up the trail. We bypassed several unmanned Jap pillboxes, which they manned during the day but pulled out of at night. Had they been there, it would have been much tougher getting to the bottom of that ridge."

The patrol had surprise on its side. Anything that rattled was taped down. Anything that reflected light was covered. Talking wasn't permitted. Silence was golden. The stealthy approach worked until one man stepped into a trip wire, launching a flare into the night. It was the worst thing he could have done. The flare signaled the company's approach and the Japanese were quick to react. Armed with bayonets, two soldiers lunged from the dark and were shot. If the flare didn't give the patrol away, the gunfire surely would.

The sky turned from midnight black to purple to pre-dawn blue. With enough light to see, orders were given to advance, never mind the flare. By now, company scouts could see the cave in the cliff. A closer look revealed its guard–a heavy machine gun. The men loaded a bazooka and fired. The shot was dead-on and the position was destroyed.

By slipping past Japanese scouts in the dark, and by eliminating the machine gun position, Company B scored what the men later called "the first pre-dawn infiltration assault of the war." It was big enough to label the mission a success, but the company didn't stop there. Reynolds moved with the patrol past the cave until the men reached the crest of the first ridge. The Japanese were waiting.

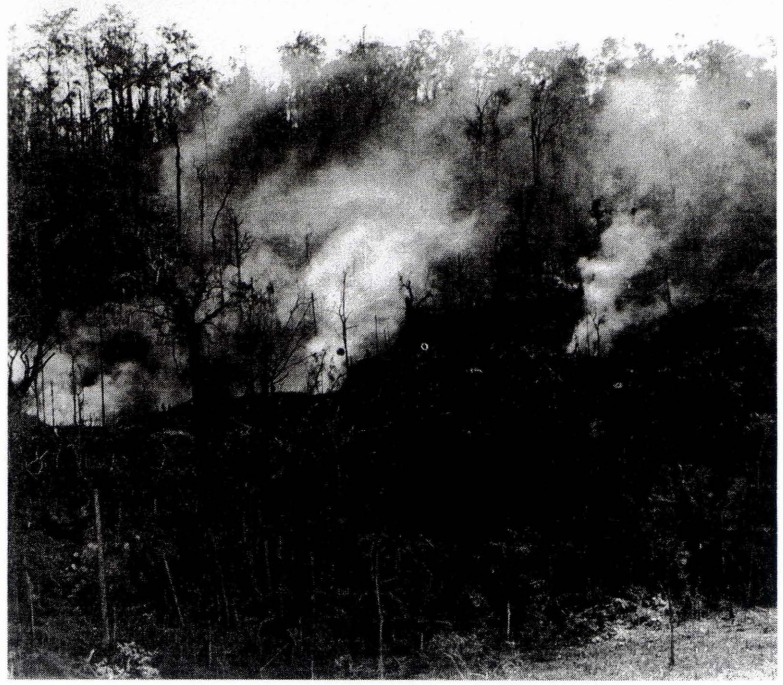
"All hell broke loose as we saw them and they saw us," Reynolds said. "Since they had been here for months, they had every place in those ridges plotted on their maps, and they knew the exact data to



American troops wait for Japanese soldiers to flee their cave position before opening fire with a .50 caliber machine gun.

give their mortars in order to hit anywhere they wanted. Everywhere we moved the mortar fire followed us. We returned mortar fire on them but they had caves and bunkers to protect them. We, on the other hand, had no topsoil to dig a hole in."

The mortars whistled down around them. The fighting was intense. The sun, now high in the sky, turned the black coral ridge into a furnace. Within an hour of fighting Raymond Gagnier and Bernard Kees were killed, and Reynolds faced his own worst fears: "A mortar round hit about six feet in front of me as I lay down among the jagged coral outcropping. Shrapnel became embedded in my hands and face, and as I took stock of myself, I realized everything



Japanese-held caves smolder after a gun and mortar assault.

had gone quiet. I was bleeding in several places but I didn't feel I was hurt too bad. But not being able to hear scared the hell out of me."

Reynolds found a medic. The medic wrote him a note: *You must be evacuated for proper care.* Reynolds said he wouldn't leave until he was sure someone else could observe the mortar fire in his place. "There were several wounded soldiers waiting to be carried out. Since I was able to walk, I helped carry the stretchers. On the way out, mortar shells were still bursting around us and I remember wondering if I would make it out of there alive. I could feel the percussion of the rounds and see the explosions."

On the way down the trail Reynolds saw Dean Henry, his friend from Harlowton, Montana. Henry was walking toward the battle with his machine gun. When the two men passed, Henry expressed concern about his injured friend. Neither had time to chat. Besides, Reynolds couldn't hear a word Henry said, so the two parted ways. Later that day, Henry was wounded in battle.

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Nearly a month had passed since Second Battalion arrived on the island. Back home, Montana celebrated Independence Day with the rest of the nation. But on Biak there was little cause for celebration. The Japanese still held their ground in the rocky ridges, and the Americans still probed for new ways in. The surprise predawn attack on June 26 had failed and the death toll was rising.

The slow progress threatened continued operations on Biak and caused a shift in the high command. General Horace Fuller was relieved as task force commander and replaced by General Robert Eichelberger. At his own request, General Fuller also resigned as 41st Division commander. General Jens Doe, a longtime favorite among the men of the 163rd, took his place and received his second star.

July 4 would see a different sort of fireworks on Biak. Commanders pulled their rifle companies off the line as mortar platoons from Companies D and H fired a steady volley of ordnance into the high ridges. The barrage lasted for three days and nights. Now it was time to inspect the damage. A reconnaissance team from A Company moved up for a closer look. The men returned with bad news–not only had the Japanese survived the volley, they were rebuilding their tattered positions.

The news was demoralizing and sent commanders scrambling to come up with a plan to dislodge the Japanese from the ridge once and for all. They devised a false escape route to allow Japanese stragglers to flee the battlefield. Those who took the route would be shot and killed; the Americans had the exit covered. Flamethrowers arrived as well. If the soldiers could get close enough to a cave to use them, they would burn anyone hiding inside.

The men in F Company put the new weapon to use. They approached a pillbox set into a cliff. When the patrol got to within fifteen yards of the position, the flamethrower fired a stream of burning fuel into the opening. "Japs screamed, crawled out, and ran around on fire," one soldier said. "We mercifully killed four of them as they ran. One died inside."

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On July 22, commanders called on the Army Air Corps to break the stalemate at Biak. Rifle platoons once again withdrew from the hills. At dawn, crews increased their artillery and mortar fire, and when eight B-24 bombers appeared on the horizon that afternoon, the men cheered.

"They came in low-level with delayed action fuses on 1,000-pound bombs," Naegele said. "All of them unloaded at once, the whole works. The concussion–Boom! Boom! Boom! It was incredible. We were a couple miles away. It didn't last very long. They just dumped their whole load and kept going. They put them right in that small area. It was so tough on the Japanese they were goofy from the concussion."

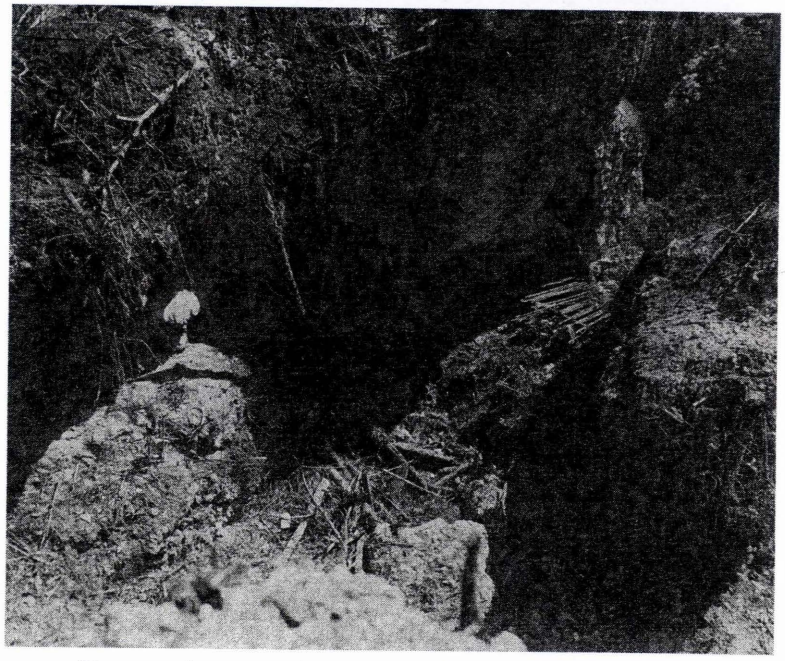
Westerfield remembered similar results. "The bombs seemed to just float down. The ground exploded and trembled like an earthquake."

Smoke lingered heavy on the ridge. The bombers disappeared as quickly as they had come. Now it was time for the soldiers to move in and destroy any pockets of lingering resistance. Just how entrenched the Japanese were became clear. They had constructed as many as seventy-five pillboxes and occupied as many as seventeen caves. A naval cannon guarded one cave, protected by a bunker nine logs thick. Inside, the cave ran four stories deep. The men climbed a rope ladder down into the darkness. They found two Japanese soldiers hiding inside and shot them both. As they left, they blew the cave shut.

"They had caves with rivers down below," Naegele said. "They had decks built for sleeping quarters and kitchens and everything else. They were protected. It had been an impossible situation."

The caves were more meticulous than anyone had imagined. A patrol with L Company discovered a large cavern descending three stories and containing four different levels. A command log from that day reads: "Will dynamite cave this afternoon....To date–total of 17 caves, which could accommodate two-hundred enemies." The log described four caves as "extremely large." The larger caves





Troops explore parts of the elaborate Japanese defensive complex after a heavy bombing run helped destroy lingering resistance.

were used as both living quarters and aid station. One cave held sixty cases of mortar ammo, one bag of rice and one case of canned meat. In another, the men found more than forty Japanese soldiers in varying stages of decomposition.

The GIs also found an assortment of American clothing, equipment and food. Rations included rice and canned meat. The dead Japanese soldiers found in one cave were said to be in good physical condition, equipped with good gear and clean clothes.

After such intense fighting, Naegele held little remorse for the Japanese soldiers who had died underground in the bombing run. "They deserved it. They were cruel, cruel people. They had no regard for life–none. Fortunately, their leadership was very weak. Their soldiers were well-conditioned but they weren't very smart. They were very devious."

Naegele believed better training, a tougher mentality and superior weaponry gave the Americans the final advantage at Biak. "The Japs had no supplies whatsoever, but they'd rarely surrender."

Notes

1. On the invasion of Biak, see McCartney, *Jungleers,* p. 117; Westerfield interviews, *41st Infantry Division,* pp. 183–192; and Reynolds, History of World War II (unpublished journal).