

Blades

wherever

Cpl Myron Stone

young
baura
Veecey
Poon
Hines
walt
money
glasses
my money
Bishop

descent

Betty
- my boy
- Edith
- love

likeable
likeable

opposite

2.

Pre-Saipan days and the Battle of Saipan.

On April the 15th, 1944, our outfit, E company of the 88th Cml Bn, was shipped out of Camp Rucker, Ala, where we had our basic training. Upon boarding the train, we left for an unknown destination on the west coast.

The long train trip was very interesting, traveling through all the various states. We went through Mississippi, Tennessee, Illinois, and crossed the world famous Mississippi River somewhere in the vicinity of St. Louis, Missouri. We proceeded on to Kansas, Colorado, Utah, Nevada, and then finally our destination, Camp Stoneman, California. As we traveled through the various states we seen many beautiful works of man and nature. The oil wells in Kansas, the deer in Colorado, the floods in Missouri and Illinois, and the Great Salt Lake in Utah. Something I always wanted to see was the snow capped mountains, and to me they were very picturesque. We finally landed in sunny California.

After a day or so at our POE camp, we were issued clothing and equipment for the tropical weather that prevails in the Pacific. While at Camp Stoneman Zieske, Miller, Mastrone, Treuillian and I received a night pass and went to a town called Pittsburgh. We spent over \$60 on whiskey and all got drunker than hell. I met a very pretty WAC, and we had a few drinks and dances together and we parted as she was due back at camp. Our time was drawing short too, so we left the beer garden and hailed a taxi and went back to camp. I was the only one who had any money left, so I paid the taxi driver my last dollar. This was the first time Mastrone had ever been drunk, and we all had one good laugh.

Our orders came through April the 29th to go overseas, and I sure abhorred leaving sunny California. We packed all our equipment

then walked to Pittsburgh, which was about one mile from camp. There we boarded the U.S.S. Catalina and proceeded on to San Francisco Bay where we were greeted by a MP band, which played "Over There" as their opening song. Sure was a hearty welcome for all the sorrow and trouble that followed. We debarked from the U.S.S. Catalina and entered the embarkation building on Pier #7. I noticed, in particular, a sign on the embarkation building which read "Through these portals pass the best damn soldiers in the world", which I later found to be damn true. After being served coffee and cookies by the American Red Cross, we immediately climbed the gangplank and boarded the U.S.S. [REDACTED]. Again we were headed for an unknown Pacific Island. Sunday, April the 30th, we pulled out of the harbor and began our overseas voyage. We were not told where we were going, but my presumptions turned out precisely. We landed at Honolulu, Oahu, TH, after a six days voyage alone on May the 6th, 1944. Those six days on the ship were the worst I had encountered so far in my army career. I got very seasick and thought for sure I was going to die. Then came the worse on the ship, I was shoved on KP. I proceeded to carry out the detail but was so seasick I layed down to my hold until I felt better. I surely thanked the good Lord when that day was over. After the third day I felt much better and spent the remainder of the trip on deck playing pinochle and chess.

When I arose the morning of the 6th of May, I proceeded to the deck for some fresh air and my morning stretch. To my amazement I saw planes over head, and in the far distance, I could see the silhouette of land. It sure did make me happy.

as this ship ride was no thrilling matter.

As we came nearer to land, I'll never forget the large sign that read "Honolulu". I thought of my girl friend, Grace, and my Mother, and thought if they could only ^{know} where I was at. I've always wanted to see Honolulu and Waikiki and the other scenic places, and now I have my chance. It sounds like all peaches and cream, but I'll assure it wasn't.

We departed from the U.S.S. [redacted] and boarded the Oahu Express. It is a midget railroad system and we rode in a box car. From Honolulu we proceeded to our new home, Camp Malakole, in Oahu, T.H. While on the train, I rode past the now world famous "Pearl Harbor", and "Hickam Field". The mere sight of Pearl Harbor gave me a peculiar feeling and reminded me that it was due to the Japanese bombing of this harbor that forced me into this war. The harbor contained many ships of all sizes and colors. After our arrival at Camp [redacted], we were put in a barracks which to me resembled a corn crib. There wasn't the least bit of uniformity in the boards of the floor, and it was screened around the top to keep the insects out.

We finally settled down and was in training again, but my thoughts of home, now faraway, stuck close to me. My training consisted of mostly physical exercises, which included plenty of swimming, baseball, and hikes.

I finally got a pass, and the rest of the fellas and I who got passes, were herded like cattle in an army truck and were headed for Honolulu. It was on this trip that I fully realized where pineapple really came from. There were rows upon rows, acres upon acres of this delicious fruit growing.

Upon arriving in Honolulu, Ralph Zieske, Marvin (Andy) Trevillian, and I began taking in the town. After walking the streets for about three hours, noticing mostly the Hawaiian people and their environment, we boarded a bus and headed for the famous Waikiki Beach. We got off in front of the Royal Hawaiian Hotel, and just stood there noting its beauty and the picturesque surroundings. We strolled down the streets, which were shaded by coconut trees, to see the beautiful hotel. It was a wonderful sight, and we walked on to the beach. It was just like the pictures I had seen back in the states. Then there was the white sandy beach, contrasted by the blue Pacific Ocean beyond. There were quite a few people riding surf-boards and out-riggers, while the remainder swam or layed on the sandy beach, allowing the hot sun to give their skin a deep brown tint.

From the beach we walked a few blocks to the "Tropics" where we acquired nine or ten shots of whiskey. After spending a few more hours in the Waikiki area, we returned back to Honolulu for a steak supper. Following this, we went to the U.S.O., where a dance was scheduled for 8:00PM. It was here that I had my first dance with a Hawaiian girl. I really enjoyed myself there, and might add she was very pleasing to my taste. From the dance we went back to camp.

Our company was chosen out of the battalion to go on a "dry run", and Capt. Spessard called our company together and gave us all the details. We were to be on board ship the 18th of May, ready to sail for the dry run. We left Camp [redacted] May the 17th by truck, and went directly to the Schofield Barracks. There we boarded those damn rough riding box

cars again, and it took me to the boat. This ship was very large, and again I thought of being seasick. The ship was the U.S.S. [REDACTED], a peace time luxury liner. We boarded the ship the afternoon of the 17th, and the following morning we set out for Maui, another island in the Hawaiian group.

The object of the dry run was to invade the island, secure a beach head, and from there move inland. This we did, first by going over the side of the ship in to a LST (Landing Ship, Vehicles and Personnel) and thence into shore. It was very interesting, even though it was just for fun. We stayed on Maui all that day and that night, and I sure was one beat up soldier. The following morning we boarded the ship again and remained there until after noon chow. After chow we again went over the side into a LCP and rode around while the planes bombed and the ships shelled the island. Frankie Mastrone got seasick again and lost his dinner plus. After the sea and air show was over, we climbed the ropes to the ship's deck, and the next morning we left for Pearl Harbor, arriving there the 25th of May. There wasn't a training schedule when we got back to Camp Malakole, but our commanding officer told us to get everything we owned into shape as we were going to play for keeps very soon. This we all did.

Orders came through for us to be on the same boat on May the 30th, at 2:00 PM. We again boarded the trucks and went thru the same process of travelling as we did for the dry run, trucks and those damn rough riding box cars. Upon our arrival at the piers, I grabbed all my personal property, put my pack on my back, threw my carbine around my shoulder and

my heavy barracks bag on my shoulder, and climbed the gang plank.

The next morning, June the 1st, we set out for battle, but to where we didn't as yet know. I had my ideas as to where we were going, but this time I was wrong. This boat was very large and heavily laden with troops, about 1800, jeeps, trucks, tanks, food, water and ammunition. I think it was this heavy cargo that kept the ship from rocking, and also kept me from becoming seasick.

My bed was in the bottom hold, and the heat, together with the humidity down there was terrific. Sleeping down three flights of stairs in a ship is almost an impossibility. All night long you just roll and sweat, sweat and roll.

The second day out at sea we were told our destination was the island of Saipan in the Marianas, to be followed by Tinian and Guam. There was nothing to do on board ship save gambling, and this I done with ease. Cpl. Sterling, Sgt Surowitz, and I played pinochle every day for twenty-five cents a game and fifteen cents a set. I ended up exactly one dollar out.

There were church services every night, and I believe I only missed one night. The meals were absolutely terrible on the boat. Who ever, in Gods world, heard of stew or corned beef or baked beans or even hot dogs for breakfast! It sure was damn rotten, but I had to either eat the crap or starve, so I choked the damned stuff down. I will admit we had a good baker tho'. I don't believe I've ever eaten fresh pineapple pie as good as he made it. I might also add that the second out was my girl friend Gracies birthday. I just sat looking at

ocean and trying to recall the good times we used to have together. Then I thought of the last day of my furlough in the states when I asked her to marry me. I wondered if I'd ever see her again or if the good Lord would take me first.

I knew that each day that went by meant one day closer to battle. The ship passed the International Date line on June the 5th. The next day was June the 7th, thus completely omitting the 6th, invasion day of France.

On June the 9th we saw land, this being Kwajalein in the Marshalls. We anchored there for a few days, and together with an enormous convoy, set out for Saipan.

We sighted Saipan on June the 15th, D-Day for the Marines. I'll never forget that night. The ships were shelling hell out of the island and I knew the damn Japs were catching hell. During the shelling a Jap ammunition dump was hit. I can still see those great flames in the sky. Sure was one beautiful sight.

The following day I stayed aboard ship, and thought for sure that any minute we would get our call to go to shore, but no dice. The next day, the 17th of June, was a different story though. Our call came through to debark as the Marines were meeting very stiff resistance. My heart was in my throat and I felt chills run up my spine. Again a million things came to my mind. It was too late now to start worrying as our orders had already come through. Over the side I went, again into a LCVP, and then we headed for the beach of Saipan. About a half mile from the beach I was transferred to an alligator as the LCVP couldn't make it beyond the coral reefs. While transferring from the LCVP to the alligator, we

almost lost an mortar cart in the ocean as the LCV and the alligator began to drift apart. After the transferring was completed we resumed our ride to the beach.

From the alligator I could see the used to be town of Charan Kanoa. It had been completely demolished and leveled by our supreme naval and air fire. Before I continue on I will give the history of the Mariana Islands.

The Marianas are largely volcanic islands although the volcanic activity has died out save the northern portion of this group. Active volcanoes still erupt occasionally. The Marianas are much larger in ground area than the atolls of the Gilberts, Marshalls, and Carolines. Guam, Rota, Tinian, and Saipan constitute the four largest islands in the southern group. Guam is the larger of this chain, and it was our possession previous to the outbreak of war, while Saipan is the second largest. The greater percentage of the people live on these four islands as there is no volcanic activity here.

The first recorded knowledge known of the Marianas was in 1521 when Magellan, on his first voyage around the world, stopped at this chain of islands and called them the "Ladrones" or "Thieves", presumably due to the nature of the natives. A short time after Magellan departed from his first landing there, he discovered the Philippines and was later killed there in an intertribal battle.

It was then that word of the discovery of the "Ladrones" had seeped back to Spain, and in the year 1668, the first mission in these islands was founded. From then on Spain controlled these islands until 1898, and native labor was supplemented to a large extent by Filipinos brought from the south. Due to the intermixture of these races, the islands are today populated to a large

extent by a group known as Chamorros, whose language is a strange mixture of island languages and Spanish.

In 1898, Guam was ceded to the U.S. for the use as a coaling station. About a year later, the other islands were sold to Germany but were taken over by the Japanese at the conclusion of World War I. This gave Japan control over three of the four main islands in the southern chain. Then, shortly after the outbreak of World War II, Japan over-ran Guam, thus giving her control of the four main islands.

There are two seasons that exist in the Marianas, characterized as wet and dry. The dry season runs from November through March, while the wet season begins in April and continues through October. It is during this season that over 80 inches of water falls, which happens to be twice as much as occurs in the regions of Washington, D.C., Atlanta City, or St. Louis.

The last census reported the following civilian population of the southern chain. Guam - 23,000; Saipan - 23,800; Tinian - 15,339; and Rota 5,590. The larger percentage of natives on Guam are Chamorros. These people are descended from the Spanish, Filipino, and other soldiery who garrisoned Guam and other the other Mariana islands for generations during Spanish rule and took native wives. A minor group of the native population are known as Kanakas, and they are beneath the social scale of the Chamorros due to their more primitive ways and lack of development. They are related tribally to the natives of the Truk region in the Carolines.

The main peacetime industry of Saipan, Tinian, and Rota is sugar, while Guam was a coaling and cable station and more or less a minor naval and seaplane base. There exists, in the

three previously named islands, plantations or agricultural corporations, the planting of cane, harvesting, hauling, and grinding it in the mills. The main sugar mill on Saipan was in the town of Charan Kanoa. While driving through this town a few months after the battle, I had the privilege of seeing this mill. There wasn't much left of it to speak about as our naval and air shelling had all but levelled it to the ground. Before the outbreak of war, the sugar was exported to Japan, and in return, Japan sent rice and a few manufactured articles.

On Guam, many of the natives found employment with the American Naval Government. This they found to be more profitable and less strenuous than farming. Nevertheless, the majority of them engaged in some form of agriculture or another, but usually only enough to meet the requirements of their individual needs. Coconuts, bread fruit, papayas, lime, bananas and pineapple are grown, but not in quantity. A variety of vegetables are grown in season, and yams and taros are always obtainable. There are some wild deer, hogs, goats, and oxen, and ordinarily fish are very plentiful. Very unsanitary conditions prevail there.

The most important and spoken language on Guam is English, while on the other islands, there is the Chamorro tongue. This happens to be one of the most difficult languages in the world to learn.

Well, we finally landed on the beach of Saipan. I shouldn't say I landed as I fell off the alligator and landed square on my posterior end. I readily realized I was in battle as I could hear the big guns and also see dead Japs and Marines strewn on the beach. After pulling those damn heavy mortar carts for

some distance up the shore line, we stopped for a break. There were quite a few Marines around so I struck up a conversation. This one Marine said it was really hell, but he was damn glad to see the army come in.

The mortar cart was setting about a foot from the water, and I was sitting on the tool box of the cart. An alligator drove by and a huge wave from the powerful tracks caught me off the alert and washed me right off the damn cart. Everyone had a good laugh and I just grinned as it's damn uncomfortable to be drenched, mostly with GI shoes on.

Our break ended and we proceeded to an assembly area. I'll never forget that area either. Within fifty feet of my slit trench there were six dead Japs, with rifles and all. The stench from them was terrific as they had been dead for a number of days and were all bloated and covered with maggots. I was hoping that someone with more guts than I would bury them, but no one did. All night long I had to smell that stench and it sure was sickening. The night went by fairly quiet save for an air-raid. There must have been a thousand machine guns firing at that plane, but they never got him.

The next morning I ate breakfast but it wasn't very appetizing, mostly with that terrific stench right under my nose. After breakfast some Engineers buried the six dead Japs, throwing two of them down a well. There were also dead cows, pigs, and chickens which were readily disposed off.

That noon orders came through for our company to move up, which didn't please me in the least, as I figured we were close enough as it was. We climbed a hill and followed the

railroad tracks for about an half mile or so. We then turned left until we came to a row of trees then turned right and went about a hundred feet. Lt. McKee, our platoon leader, told us to set up our mortars and dig in. As soon as this was done the Japs began shelling us with ~~our~~^{their} mortar shells. I thought the Japs were coming over the hill and I was so damned scared I grabbed my carbine and took off. I ran out into a sugar cane field, this being the worse thing I could have done. I layed between the furrows as this was the safest place around. The bastards ceased shelling us and when I got up and looked around, the whole damn platoon, officers and all, we in the same area.

We got our orders to return to the mortars and tear them down and head the opposite way. This we did, and I was still scared as hell as I expected the Japs to open up again any minute.

We pulled our carts up a road to a demolished little town and there we took a break. I sat down and smoked a cigarette to calm my nerves and I'll be damned if they didn't start shelling us again, and thank God no one got hit. We got out of that place in a hurry and turned left at the first road and moved up about 150 yds. Here we again set up our mortars and dug in for the night. There was a few dead bulls about 30 feet in front of my slit trench and it stunk almost as bad as the Japs.

Around 4:30 PM, I heard planes over head. To my amazement there was a dog-fight between six Jap zeros and three of our planes. The score ended up three for us and one for the Japs. As the fight was on, one Jap zero took a dive and was

heading right for the row of trees we were in. I didn't know what to think. He finally came out of the dive and cleared the row of trees by about 500 feet. He made a right turn and a few machine guns opened up on him. He proceeded to the landing strip and made a landing, not knowing that the army had already taken the air-field. He landed and climbed out of his plane, and when he realized that the field was ours, he ran back to his plane but was captured by a sea-bee.

I didn't sleep much that night. The bulls around there hadn't had any water for days, and they kept walking around our slit trench. I expected any minute to get a hoof in the guts. I just kept throwing rocks at them to keep them away.

The next morning we got out of our holes, ate, and moved up again, this time into a cane field which had been burned down a day or so ere D-Day. We stayed there until noon, ate my dinner, then got word to move up again. I was getting damned tired of pulling those mortar carts. Again we followed the railroad tracks for about another mile. During this march I got my first glimpse of the native prisoners. They were guarded by two army soldiers who were taking them to a prisoner of war camp. The natives were very lightly dressed, in particular the women. They wore ragged skirts, no shoes, and bare breasted. I hadn't seen a woman in a long time, but their bare busts didn't appeal to me in the least. A few of the women were well on their way to another hood and I thought it would^{be} hell if one of them decided to give away at that time. Guess I would have had a baby too.

Again we stopped in a cane field and set up the guns.

The sun was blistering hot and I was sweating like hell. Soon after our mortars were set in, our platoon sergeant, S/Sergeant Thomas Woodward from Hattiesburg, Mississippi, took us to walk down to the beach and cool off in the shade. This I did, and there I found more prisoners of war and natives. While walking around, eyeing the Japs and civilians, I seen two of our soldiers instructing two Japs on how to dig a hole. The prisoners were very nervous and scared as hell, and I couldn't figure out just why the prisoners were digging this hole. I found out soon after that when our soldiers were capturing these prisoners, a woman's baby got killed. I'll never forget the sad look on the mother's ^{face}, poor woman, I sure felt sorry for her, when the Japs took that baby from its mother's arms and threw it in the hole. The mother cried and I walked away with tears running down my cheeks. It sure hurt me as much as the mother.

In particular, I noticed one Jap soldier. He must have been hit by a hand grenade as his head was completely bandaged as was both of his arms. I enjoyed seeing that.

They prisoners were rounded together and taken to a prisoner of war camp on the beach. We returned to our mortars, tore them down, and with all our guns and equipment we returned to the beach. There we had supper and dug in. It was a very quiet night and we had no trouble with the Japs.

I arose the next morning at daybreak and felt pretty lively after getting a good night's sleep on shifts. Three of us dug in together and we slept for two hours then took an hour's guard. There has to be someone awake in each and

every hole all night long. I walked over toward the ocean and the first thing I noticed was a dead Jap being washed to shore. A very cheerful sight as it was not one of our boys.

We pulled out of this area around 9:00 A.M., and moved up about 800 yards. Not long after we arrived there the Japs, who were in the hills before us, began to shell us. They only thru about five or six shells, and thank the Goddlord, noone got hurt. We sat up our mortars in case they needed fire from our guns.

We sat around all morning and in the early ~~ma~~afternoon we received our first orders to man our guns. This I really enjoyed as I knew some Japs were going to catch hell. We fired the first mission and our Lt. George claimed we had knocked out a Jap blockhouse which pleased me to the utmost. It was later said that our shells saved a whole platoon of infantrymen who had over-run their positions. I do not know if this were true or not. This was the first time I had heard that the front line boys really liked our 4.2 inch chemical mortar.

Around 4:30 that afternoon orders came through to move back to an assembly area. This type of orders I depended on as we then move away from the front lines.

At this area there were two wooded areas with an open space of about 50-60 feet between them. Our platoon filled in that gap to complete a straight line perimeter.

I had just finished digging my slit trench when one of my foxhole buddies, P.F.C. Walter L. Baldree, of Wilson, N.C., said "Hey, Stone, look!". As I looked up I saw two Saipan natives walk-

ing, one of them carrying a bucket, only about fifteen feet to my right. They spotted one of our soldiers with his carbine and they took off, running about ten feet in front of me. They over to the wooded area at my left and they saw one of our machine guns and ran as fast as their legs could carry them. One of soldiers hollered "tah-mah-reh", which means halt in Japanese, but they kept on going. The machine gunner mowed them both down.

Another quiet night was spent, and the next morning we got up, ate those damn C rations, and moved up to the same area that we were in the previous day. We fired a few missions that day and dug in for the night right there. I slept very uncomfortable that night as a big coral rock in my slit trench keep jabbing me in the back.

The following day and night we spent in that same locality, just laying around and waiting for our orders to move. Occasionally a Jap mortar shell would come our way, to just remind us that they were still on the island.

The next morning we were informed that we wouldn't have any more fighting to do at that end of the island. I felt quite relieved but knew we had a hell of a lot of fighting to do yet. We loaded our mortars and ammunition on the carts and dragged the same about a mile or so back up the tracks we had previously moved up on. We came upon a ramsacked native hut and took a break.

We stayed there close to four hours when word came that trucks would take our mortars and ammunition, but we soldiers had to walk and pull the empty mortar cart. The mortar cart with the mortar weighs approximately 400-450 pounds and it

takes four men to pull one. It's a very tough affair to drag them mostly up and down hills.

Four of us boys were told to stay back and keep watch over some equipment, one man from each of the four squads, and I was one of them. There we were, just the four of us, and no one else in sight. I was really scared out there alone. The trucks came back and took part of the equipment and two of the four men remaining. There we were, PFC John Wingate, from Georgia, and I all alone. Then I was more damned scared than ever. I thought of a thousand things that could happen, but Wingate was calm as a breeze. Every time something in that house made the least bit of noise, I thought it was a Jap.

I was damned happy to see the truck return, so we loaded on the remainder of the equipment and climbed on ourselves. While driving to the position where the rest of our platoon was, we were fired on occasionally by a few Jap snipers who were left behind by our advancing troops.

On the ride up, we passed through the center of Osleto Airfield, now named Isley Field after a colonel who met death during the campaign. Our soldiers were repairing the landing strip and there were a few of our planes there. I might also add there were a few Jap zeros and bombers there too, but they were smashed almost out of recognition.

Up and beyond the air-field we met up with the rest of platoon and another chemical platoon from our company. Together we moved to an assembly area where we dug in and enjoyed two days of rest. I really shouldn't say rest as the

first night bullets were flying every which way around the area. I really hugged the ground that night, and wished my hole was ten foot deep rather than about a foot.

The next morning after my C ration breakfast of hash, I asked PFC Alfred St. Pierre, from Detroit, about the shooting. He told me to follow him. He took me over a rocky, wooded area where we met three bearded Marines. During a conversation with them they us the story. He claimed he was laying in his slit trench when all of a sudden a Jap appeared at the foot of it with a knife in his hand. He shot the Jap and at about the same time, his buddy in the next slit trench saw two more Japs near by. So, he in turn shot those two. In the morning, to his surprise, he found that one of the three was a woman. I heard reports later in the battle that our boys had shot women who were manning machine guns. Well, any how, that is the story of the first night.

About 4:00PM of the second day, a 1st Lt. came over and told us they were expecting a Jap tank attack that night. I had already made my slit trench in solid coral rock the night before, but it didn't take me long to dig it a foot or so deeper thru that rock. Then came the night, then morning, and thank God again that there was no tank attack. I heard later in the day that there was a small tank battle just before dark, that the Japs lost five tanks to our one, a very good score. I sure enjoyed those two days of relaxation, but march order was called.

The boys again pulled the empty mortar carts while the trucks hauled the mortars, ammunition, rations and water.

Again three other fellows and I were told to remain behind and guard part of the equipment. I didn't mind that at all, anything to get out of pulling those damn miserable mortar carts.

The trucks returned and we four loaded on the equipment, ammunition and rations and climbed aboard ourselves.

The new position we moved into was really a hot one. It was approximately 800-900 yards behind the front lines. We set in our guns and no one had to tell me to dig in this time. I dug my slit trench and had a ring side seat for the show. To my left was a high rocky hill which contained numerous Japanese caves. Our tanks were right at the foot of the hill firing 105 mm shells point blank into the caves, and I might add they were doing a precise job of firing. Occasionally the Japs would throw a few mortar shells our way, but no one in our outfit got hit. It seemed as though our boys couldn't locate that Jap mortar and when it let go, it always scared the hell out of me. We nicknamed that gun "Pistol Pete", hoping all the time they would catch up with him soon.

Orders came through to man our guns, so I jumped out of my slit trench sans any hesitation. Our target was a house which supposedly contained some Japs. It wasn't long after we began firing that our mortar got a direct hit. I could see bits of ^{the} house flying through the air. I knew now that there wouldn't be any snipers in that house for a while.

That afternoon things were pretty dull, so Sgt Paul P. Surowitz of Wilkes Barre Pa., Lt. Jack Colgrove from Illinois, and I struck up a game of pinochle. We were having a lot

of fun when all of a sudden rifle bullets began whizzing over our heads. It seemed as though none of us gave a damned as we kept right on playing pinochle. If I recall precisely I lost every game.

Around 4:30 that afternoon we moved up about 100 yards into a wooded area which was an assembly area. The woods contained box upon box of Japanese ammunition. I guess the Japs retreated so damn fast from that area that they didn't even have time to take their ammunition with them. The woods contained about ten dead Japs who had been dead for a number of days as they flies and maggots were enjoying a good meal. I was damned glad though to see all that Jap ammunition there as that was just that much less ammunition they could throw back at us. I knew this was a bloody battle by the amount of our boys coming back on stretchers, on jeeps. It seemed as though there was one steady stream of stretcher cases.

Back to the assembly area where we are going to spend the night. On the front line of the second defense perimeter 37 mm anti-tank guns were scattered to avoid any possible Jap counter-attack. Between the guns were gaps, so our platoon was to fill in between the guns to make it impossible for any Japs to infiltrate through that night. I was scared as hell as we had been told they were expecting a Jap counter-attack any night now. PFC Sam Parrino from Detroit and I dug in together while PFC Walter Baldree dug in to my left and Pvt Vincent Terenzio dug in to my right. We arranged the guard among the three of us excluding Terenzio

as he was very tired and we didn't want him to take guard for fear he might happen to fall asleep. We arranged it so that we would pull one hour off and two off all night. I took it first beginning at 8:00 and I just finished my guard at 9:00 so I awoke Parrino. All of a sudden a hell of an artillery barrage began falling about 300 yards to our front left. The shrapnel was falling all around us, and branches, that were cut by the flying steel, were also fall. I was again scared as hell and didn't know what to do. The barrage finally ceased after about ten minutes and I never felt so relieved in all my 22 years. The big guns were firing into a pocket of Japs.

After a while I finally dozed off to sleep, and the night passed sans a shot being fired. I was pulled the last guard also beginning at 5:00 AM to daybreak. There was enough light by now to see the ground clearly in front of me. Terenzio was sitting up in his slit trench and we were discussing or cussing, I don't remember which, the terrific shelling of that night. All of a sudden he said "look, Stone, a Jap". I looked to where he was pointing and you could have bought me for a nickel. Walking toward us, about 100-200 feet away, was a Jap leading a white goat. By this time Parrino was awake too, so the three of us lifted our carbines and fired and down went Mr. Jap. He fell face down and hasn't lifted an eyebrow since.

We all got up and had breakfast, I had hash again for a change, and then our platoon moved back to the row of trees where we were the previous day. We spent the next three days in this spot and the three nights in the wooded area where all the Jap ammunition was left behind. Each night

we had different incidents occur that are well worth their mentioning. At 4:15 PM the first afternoon, twenty-five of us were picked involuntarily, to carry supplies, rations and water, to the 105th Infantry CP (command Post). Each man took either a case of rations or five gallons of water. I took a five gallon water can as it at least had a handle on it to carry it. It was hotter than the shingles on hell, but we started our journey. The passageway was a single foot path through rocky ground with up and down cliffs of four or five feet. Telephone wires were strung everywhere along the path, and they continually got twisted around my front sight of my carbine. I was getting pretty damned well fatigued, my clothes completely drenched with sweat, and I know I didn't miss a cuss word in the book. All along that single path we ran into stretcher bearers carrying the wounded over this rugged path. Every time we ran into a stretcher case we had to get off the path as the stretcher cases had the right-of-way. Along the way I met a lone soldier coming the opposite way so I asked him how far we had to go. He said about 500 yards. I thought for sure I would keel over with exhaustion before I could make that distance, but I kept on plugging.

The slowly moving column came to a halt. It seems as though the path went through an opening and a Jap had his machine gun sighted in on that spot. The first soldier who appeared in that opening got shot in the leg, but he was the only one who did get hit. From then on we ran across that opening.

I finally arrived and thanked the good Lord again.

for carrying me thru.

Our gang was rounded up again, after they had all arrived with their rations and water, and we started our return trip to our assembly area. About a quarter of the way back we ran into the stretcher bearers again. They were so damned tired I didn't think they would make it. They asked for some help as they wanted to get the wounded boys to the aid station ere dark. Ninety per cent of these men were either shot in the abdomen or in the legs. I was so tired and weak I was afraid to offer any assistance for fear I might lose my grip and drop one of the wounded. A few of our boys did assist and the wounded received medical care before dark.

Upon our arrival at our assembly area, we were showed where we were to put up for the night. This place was more or less a shelf extruding about six feet or so out and about twenty feet long from a rocky mount. We had natural overhead protection and we built a two foot wall in front for added protection. We spent three nights there, while we just lagged around during the days waiting for missions.

Now back to the three nights. It seemed as though every night one or two Jap planes would come over the island. We didn't have night fighter planes there yet, so the only protection we had was ack-ack guns and machine guns. It had just turned dark on the first night on this shelf when we heard the anti-aircraft guns spitting. I then knew there were Jap planes over the island. There were eleven of us on that shelf, sleeping side by side, and one of the fellas said "There's" bed check Charlie again". Bed check Charlie was

a special name we called this lone plane that flew over every night. We could hear his motor now and he appeared to be right over head but at a very high altitude. A few minutes later he let go of his bomb load, dropping them I thought at random. The bomb hit the beach about a mile from us but I could feel the jarring on the shelf. I sure was glad when he left.

The second night the same procedure followed, but this time "Bed Check Charlie" didn't get a chance to drop his egg. I was laying there shortly after dark trying to visualize home and my mother, when the ack-ack cut loose. The shells were exploding high up and they looked like stars. Then the best thing happened, the ack-ack got a direct hit. The plane was spurting flames and travelling at a rapid rate of speed. Suddenly the plane began to dive earthward, the motors roared and the plane exploded in air. It sure was a pretty sight, the reddish-orange flames in contrast with the darkness. That same night they got another plane near the air field, but I slept through that affair.

The third night was spent very calmly, and I enjoyed that much needed sleep. It was in the gun position in the row of trees that we had our first mail call in almost a month. I received something like fourteen letters and they sure did chase the blues away.

On Saturday morning, July the 1st, we left this area in jeeps and weapon carriers and moved up closer to the front lines. I saw plenty of dead Japs and a few American boys while moving up. This position was also in a row of trees but in defilade, so it wasn't a bad place. It would

take a direct hit from a Jap mortar shell to get us, and I knew those bastards didn't have much of that left to speak of.

We fired our mortars in the morning and also in the afternoon, and around 4:30 we got our orders to move up to another assembly area. This was on top a hill and the stench from three dead Americans was terrific. A few guys with more guts than I wrapped the boys in a shelter-half and carried them below the hill where they could be picked up and buried in the cemetery. Also dug in with us was our old buddies the 37mm anti-tank company and a medical outfit. We had no trouble that night and I was thankful for that.

The next morning I got out of my fox hole, ate breakfast, I had hash again for a change, and set up the guns in back of the hill about 100 feet from where we slept. We fired quite a few rounds but 'Pistol Pete' and his mortar kept us hugging the ground most of the time.

Just below us on the very bottom of the hill was a first aid station. I noticed some civilian women down there so, to be nosey, I took a stroll down there. There were two Japs, eight civilians, including a few young kids. One Jap was shot through the thigh and he was so damned scared he could hardly drink water from shaking so much. The medics fixed his leg and began giving aid to the women. One of the women got hit in the busta and I imagine the medics took their good old time fixing it; handling it with due care you know. I would have too if I were in their shoes. Then a short distance beyond I saw another medic

giving blood plasma to a baby. The flies were all over the poor kids and I thought I was going to vomit. That was enough for me so I went back to the gun position.

That night we moved up about a mile to a high spot of ground that had been taken the day before. I shouldn't say ground as it was about 50% coral. The second platoon of our company moved in with us and I felt rather safe that night. Baldree, Parrino, and I dug in together again that night, and again we had a quiet night.

The following day we set up our mortars before breakfast and later on in the day we fired a few missions. I inquired around about Garapan, the capital of Saipan, to see how our boys were doing around that vicinity. From a number of soldiers I learned that Garapan had not been taken yet as the stench, from all the dead Japs and civilians, was so strong it was almost impassable sans a gas mask. I also heard the town was level with the ground.

We spent that night on the same high ground again without any trouble. The following morning I had breakfast, hash for a change, and layed all my equipment out to dry, as it rains there just about every night. We didn't put the mortars up as we were expecting orders to advance early in the morning.

While sitting around chewing the fat with the boys, a rifle cracked near by and I knew by the sound that it was a Japs. I dove into my hole and waited for the next one. I didn't have to wait long as again his rifle cracked, but the bullet hit a good distance in front of me. I felt

abit better now that I knew they were landing a good distance from me, so I sat up in my slit trench to observe everything that took place. It seems as though there was a Jap sniper in the hill about 300 feet from us. He kept peppering away and killed one of our boys and injured three. ere they finally got him.

Our orders came through to move up so we loaded the vehicles and up we moved. During this ride I noticed a hell of a mess of dead Japs along the sides of the road. I later found out that the Japs layed their wounded by the road-side so they could easily be evacuated. I guess the Japs retreated so fast from that area that they just had to leave their wounded back.

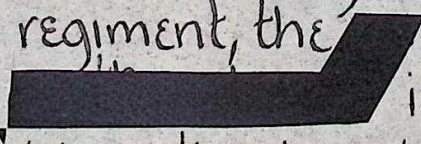
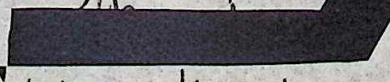
Our new position was again at the bottom of a hill. Back of our gun emplacements were two large Jap anti-aircraft guns that had been knocked out. Close by was also boxes of food, rice, canned fish, meat, etc. We fired quite a few shells that afternoon during a heavy rain which drenched everyone of us. Our shells were falling on "Flores Point", the Japanese sea plane base.

Having nothing to do between missions, I took a walk to the hill top. Up there I came across two dead Japs who had been shot that previous night. One had his head shot off while the other had one hand missing and part of his head; a cheerful sight.

There hadn't been any Jap mortar shells thrown at us for quite some time, so I presume "Pistol Petes" days of fun were over. The story I heard was that the Japs

had a cave dug into the side of a large hill, mostly all of it being coral. The opening to the cave was blocked by two large iron doors which were well camouflaged. When they decided to fire a few rounds, they would push the guns, which were mounted on tracks, to the doors, open the doors and fire five or six rounds and then close the doors again. It was a strong fortification but it was easily knocked out when our boys located it. These caves were very numerous about the island, and they caused our boys a lot of trouble. They were always located where a direct bomb hit wouldn't affect it in the least. As our boys would advance the Japs and natives would head for the caves. Then our boys had to dig them out. About the best weapon for a case as this was a flame thrower. The Engineers did a wonderful job with them.

That night we moved to Flores Point, the sea-plane base, and bivouaced there for the night. The only thing left at the sea-plane base was the skeleton of the hanger. All the buildings were levelled to the ground, and a few Jap planes, & mean what was left of them, were scattered about.

Just before we dug in I noticed the Marine artillery moving up. I sure felt safe then, thinking we were a hell of a long way from the front. The next morning at day-break the long overdue Japanese counter-attack came. One regiment, the  Infantry, had advanced beyond the  infantry regiment, and went and dug in. When the Japs broke thru this regiment was cut off from the rest of the division and suffered extremely high casualties as they ran out of ammunition. They

estimated the Japs that counter-attacked numbered well over 1000. As the Japs advanced they captured a battery of 105 howitzers, which was soon after recaptured by our troops. If it hadn't have been for the Marine artillerymen, our company would have been in one hell of a spot.

The Japs were enough trouble on the sea-plane base, but we also had to keep a good watch out for crabs. These damned crabs measured a good five or six inches and they crawled among us all night.

The next morning we were told to get our equipment in shape and be ready to move out at a five minutes notice. This I did, and our orders came through, so we loaded everything in the jeeps and weapon carrier and were driven up on a hill side where we were told that we would march with the infantry until we came ^{to} our new selected mortar position.

We hadn't spent twenty minutes on that hill side when Lt. (two-bundle) Jack Colgrove gave us our orders to follow. We walked about 100 feet and stopped and I heard a machine gun chatter near by. Our troops, who were about 200 feet to my right on the flank, began to scatter. I noticed that so I dove into the nearest hole which was so small I couldn't get all of myself into it. So, I buried what portion of my body the hole would hold and hoped for best. There wasn't anything to worry about as all the boys began roaming around again.

Shortly after this we resumed our march when out of nowhere came a Jap artillery shell whining over our heads. The damned thing was a dud, but I was so scared I lost all

the feeling in my legs. I actually felt wobbly for some reason and I felt for sure I was going to stumble. We continued on and I felt more sure of myself.

The march was halted and our mortar platoon was told to set in the guns and dig in in a farmers garden. This we did as the infantry kept moving up to the front. We didn't fire a round there, but we made up for it that night.

In the early afternoon, after eating dinner, I had hash for a change, we again received orders to move up, so we packed up and advanced another 500 yards. At this position we just around and waited for more orders which would determine where we were to stay that night. The orders read to move up behind the front lines and set up our mortars in case there was another counter-attack. That did not sound very appetizing, but who in the hell and I complain.

We moved up to within 600 yards of the front lines, and I was really afraid and wished that the night was over. Each squad was to dig a pit approximately 8-10 feet square and at least three foot deep. I was beginning to wonder if was in the army or an excavation outfit. This we did, and Sgt Surowitz and I were to stay with the gun in our pit all night. I had supper, had hash for a change, and then helped carry about thirty rounds of ammunition to the pit. The remainder of our squad dug in about twenty feet to our front for protection. I knew we were too near the front line for comfort as the chatter of our machine guns were very sharp and clear.

It was just turning dark and we got our orders, I mean our squad, to fire five rounds of white-phosphorus at forty-five minutes past every hour. That way, each squad would fire five rounds simultaneously every fifteen minutes all night.

We fired all the ammunition we had brought to the pit, and then came the task I completely abhorred. This was to climb out of the pit, walk about twenty feet, and carry more ammunition to the pit. Jap bullets were whizzing overhead continuously and my thoughts were all about getting hit. That walking around scared the hell out of me and I don't know to this day how I ever got through that night with getting hit.

We fired when our turn came every hour until 3:45 AM when Lt. McKee told us to keep on firing. We needed more men to prepare ammunition, so we got Baldree, and called Parrino. He was so damned scared he wouldn't come out of his hole, so we informed Lt. McKee and he ordered him out. I didn't like the idea of being out of the hole any more than anyone else, and Parrino was no better than I. With three of our squad members and two other men, the preparation of the ammunition was going full swing. As soon as a shell was ready they handed it to me in the pits and I, in turn, dropped it down the barrel. This went on until 6:00 A.M., and the steady blast of the shells leaving the barrel left me with a terrific headache that I will never forget. My head felt as though a ton of lead was resting on it.

That night "Bed check Charlie" payed us a visit. He

dropped his bomb on the hillside to our right, and when it hit it looked like a streak of lightning. No one got hurt.

Daybreak finally came and I never was as glad to see light as I was that morning. I sure thanked God for pulling me through that night. We tore the mortars down and returned to our old bivouac area on Flores Point.

Around noon of that day I heard a machine gun chatter up on the hill to our right. Not paying too much attention to it, I noticed our gang grab their weapons, and began firing up on the hill side. I looked up to the place where they were firing and saw a Jap go down. After he hit the ground I could see he was still alive by his movements. So, Lt. Colgrove and six of us boys grabbed our weapons and took up after him. I could see, as we advanced toward him, his legs moving and ever so often he would turn his head to see just how close we were to him. When we came to within 50 yards of him, I heard a grenade crack. I squatted down keeping a good eye on him. I saw him put the grenade to his chest and blow himself up. We then went up to have a look at him. His clothing was wet and he carried no weapon. When we searched him we found his wallet and a little pocket knife. The grenade blew his head off, one arm, and part of his chest.

When we came back to the bivouac area we all caught royal hell from Lt. Goldsmith.

The flag was raised on the island July the 9th and we were moved to another area and put on the alert for the battle of Tinian island. We were later taken off this, and were told to set up a garrison and wait for our orders to leave Saipan.

and go to some rest camp somewhere else.

I got my first hot meal in twenty-three days, along with a clean change of clothing, a bath and shave in the same length of time. I was very glad the battle was over and I heard that the Saipan battle was the toughest and bloodiest battle thus far in the Pacific.