



U. S. S. R.

OUTER MONGOLIA

MANCHURIA



CHINA

JAPAN

Tokyo

KOREA

Shanghai

OKINAWA

FORMOSA

SAIPAN
TINIAN

PHILIPPINE IS.

HAINAN

SIAM

FR. INDO-CHINA

MALAYA

Singapore

BORNEO

CELEBES

JAVA

NEW GUINEA

SOLOMON IS.

GUADALCANAL

BETIO

GILBERT IS.

NEW CALEDONIA

FJI IS.

SAMOA

AUSTRALIA



NEW ZEALAND

Pacific

MIDWAY

HAWAIIAN

ALEUTIAN IS.

EXTENT OF JAPANESE CONQUEST

2nd DIVISION

MARSHALL IS.

CAROLINE IS.

6th Marines

2nd DIVISION

2nd DIVISION

INDIA

BURMA

FR. INDO-CHINA

SUMATRA

Indian Ocean

Ocean

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ALASKA

ICELAND



CANADA



U.S.A.

New York

Charleston

San Diego



MEXICO

Atlantic Ocean

Ocean

6th Marines

Pearl Harbor

2nd Marines
8th Marines
6th Marines

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James Gitter

Follow Me!

THE STORY OF THE
Second Marine División
IN WORLD WAR II

by RICHARD W. JOHNSTON

This is the official history of the important achievement of the Second Marine Division in the Pacific area of the Second World War, and the reader who by habit associates the word "official" with such words as "dull" should be warned that *Follow Me!* is a notable exception. The Division History Board and the author set out with a common aim—"to tell it the way it was"—and the result is an exciting, straightforward, accurate account, in text and pictures, of some of the fiercest and most crucial fighting of the War, including Tulagi, Guadalcanal, Gavutu, Tarawa, Saipan, Tinian and Okinawa.

Telling it "the way it was" has meant, as the author points out, "including a good deal of material which will not interest detached students of military history" and "leaving out some details which would be of interest only to such students." In other words, the story is told in terms of the human beings who made it, rather than in the abstract technical language of military strategy; and in order to round out the picture the author has included some account of the less martial activities of the Second Division Marines in Iceland, New Zealand and Hawaii.

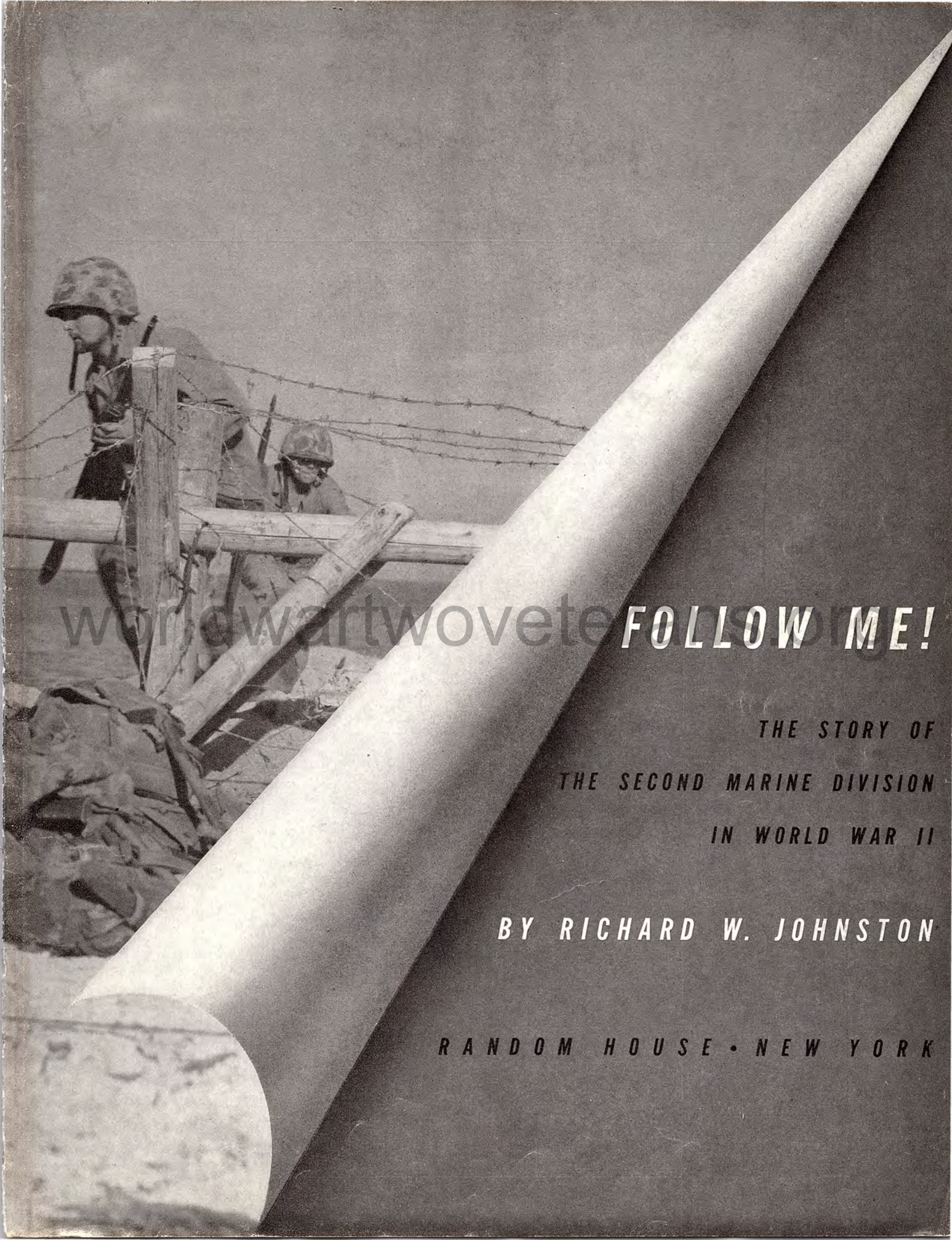
The story is liberally illustrated with more than 250 photographs, drawings, and paintings, and with nine maps (six in full color) which are a miracle of clarity and informativeness.

FOLLOW ME!

THE STORY OF THE SECOND MARINE DIVISION IN WORLD WAR II

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worldwartwovete **FOLLOW ME!**

THE STORY OF
THE SECOND MARINE DIVISION
IN WORLD WAR II

BY RICHARD W. JOHNSTON

RANDOM HOUSE • NEW YORK

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Published in Canada by Random House of Canada, Ltd., 1948

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THE SECRETARY OF THE NAVY

WASHINGTON

25 July 1947

It is a privilege to tender the Navy's salute to one of the proudest units in its proud Marine Corps which has been an integral and essential part of the Navy since the days of Barry and John Paul Jones.

As an essential member of the fighting team upon whose shoulders rests the seapower supremacy of our nation, the Marine Corps has ever displayed courage, skill and perseverance and when given a job to do, on ship or ashore, has done that job regardless of obstacles or limitation of means. There can be no higher praise than to say that the Second Marine Division has exemplified these characteristics in the highest tradition of the U.S. Marine Corps.

By perpetuating the gallant record of the Second Marine Division you have created for Americans of the future an inspiration to patriotism and service. From the pages of your history, all may learn the lessons of integrated devotion to the common purpose, and of that teamwork in service to the nation that in the future as in the past will insure the security of America because of strong and effective seapower.



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NAVY DEPARTMENT


OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS

WASHINGTON 25, D. C.

28 July 1947

From the fighting tops of the Bon Homme Richard to the occupation of Japan, the Marines have firmly established their reputation as the vital striking force on the Navy's seapower team. In no division has this quality been more strikingly exemplified than in the heroic record of the Second Marine Division.

The history of the invincible fighting units of the Marine Corps contributes to the American tradition of team work, integrity, and courage—a tradition we may well call upon today as we seek to assure our own security and contribute to the peace of the world.



C. W. NIMITZ
Fleet Admiral
U.S. Navy



TO THE OFFICERS AND MEN OF THE SECOND MARINE DIVISION:

Woven inseparably into the larger fabric of the story of the recent war against the Japanese enemy are the threads of the story of a fine fighting organization—the 2nd Marine Division. The enviable record of that division will live in American naval history as a monument to the efforts and sacrifices of the officers and men who served with it.

The role of the 2nd Marine Division in World War II, and the months preceding its outbreak, included many types of duty in Iceland, Samoa, and New Zealand. More important, that role included bitter action on remote and little-known islands where the Japanese had secured an early lodgment.

A grateful country, whose war history includes such names as Lexington and Concord, Gettysburg, and Belleau Wood, will long remember Tarawa and the epic heroism of the men of the 2nd Marine Division during those seventy-six hours of violent action. But the story of the 2nd Marine Division is not confined to one great battle. There was Guadalcanal, where the division first tested its strength against the enemy; Saipan, where the division landed in the face of bitter resistance and went on to help seize from the enemy one of his important bastions of defense; then Tinian, another step in our seizure of important island bases in the Marianas; then the participation of the one regimental combat team from the 2nd Marine Division in the last great battle of the war in the Pacific, Okinawa; and finally, enforcement of the peace in the Japanese homeland.

You who served with the 2nd Marine Division have every right to be proud of your division and its magnificent record. You have served your Corps and country well.



A. A. Vandegrift

A. A. VANDEGRIFT
General, U.S. Marine Corps
Commandant of the Marine Corps
August 15, 1947

AUTHOR'S FOREWORD

In preparing the story of the Second Marine Division, the author and the members of the Division History Board have had one paramount aim: to tell it, insofar as possible, "the way it was." This has meant including a good deal of material which will not interest detached students of military history; it has meant leaving out some details which would be of interest only to such students.

The book is for the men, living and dead, who made the Division great, and for their relatives, and also for the young Marines now serving with the Division. It is also for those general readers who may wish to know how a Marine Division is created, how its traditions grow, how it fights, and the kind of men that grow out of it. Although every effort has been made to avoid technical military language, the author has utilized one device in identifying units which may require some explanation. This is the system of referring to battalions by their numbers and the number of their regiments, i.e., the Third Battalion of the Eighth Marines becomes 3/8, and the Fourth Battalion of the Tenth Marines 4/10.

Both the author and the Division History Board

wish to express their appreciation to the nearly 7,000 Marines and ex-Marines who wrote in to offer suggestions, stories of action, and anecdotes; to Lieutenant General Julian C. Smith, USMC, Retired, for his interest and advice; to authors Robert Sherrod and Gilbert Cant for permission to draw upon their Pacific war histories; and to members of the Marine Corps Historical Section for valuable assistance in research. The author wishes to acknowledge special debts to the Board members, who have given a great deal of time, effort and enthusiasm to the work; to the editors of *Life*; to George E. Jones of the *Time* Magazine foreign staff, for critical assistance; and to his wife, Laurie Johnston of the *Newsweek* foreign staff, for both criticism and encouragement.

The author hopes that veterans of the Second Marine Division will find the book worthy of the men who served in the Division and the battles they fought. It is not a critical or non-partisan account. Like its members, the author believes that the Second was the "best damn Division in the war."

Richard W. Johnston
New York City, Aug. 21, 1948.

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RICHARD W. JOHNSTON (left) photographed at Tarawa on D plus 4 with Robert Sherrod, author of *Tarawa, the Story of a Battle*. Both correspondents landed with the original assault and remained with the Marines throughout the battle.

The author, who was chosen by the Second Marine Division History Board, was especially well fitted for writing this book, having been a United Press correspondent in the Pacific from 1943 until the Japanese surrendered. He was present at three of the battles with which this book is concerned—Tarawa, Saipan, Tinian—in addition to Kwajalein, Eniwetok, Peleliu and Leyte. The Marines gave him a citation for his activities at the Battle of Tarawa; and for getting out the first story on that battle he won the National Headliners Award in 1944. Mr. Johnston has had a varied career in journalism, which he began at the age of 16, and is now Assistant Foreign Editor of *Life*.

Follow Me!

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FOLLOW ME!

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Chapter One



ON GUARD IN ICELAND *in the fall of 1941*

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THE HERITAGE OF BELLEAU WOOD

THE NEW DIVISION IS STRENGTHENED BY A GREAT TRADITION

On a hot, sticky day in August of 1942, a Marine sergeant, crouching in a mortar observation post on the little island of Gavutu in the Solomons, was hit in the throat by a bullet or shell fragment. The missile smashed the sergeant's voice box and made his blood gush out furiously, but it did not knock him unconscious. As the battalion surgeon tried to stanch the flow of blood, the Marine made writing motions. The doctor gave him a pencil and a casualty tag. On the tag the sergeant wrote: "Will I live?" The doctor nodded. Then the sergeant

wrote: "Will I speak again?" Hesitantly, the doctor nodded again. The sergeant managed to grin, and then wrote with a flourish: "What the hell's the use in worrying!"

This story spread swiftly among the members of the Second Regiment, who for some thirty-six hours had been engaged in America's first savage offensive battle with the Japanese. Everybody got a sort of lift from it, and a lift was useful. Twenty miles away, across Sealark Channel on Guadalcanal, the First Marine Division had

made only light contact with the enemy. But on Gavutu and its tiny neighbor, Tanambogo, the resistance had been fierce from the start.

With the Marine Raiders, who had run into a hell of fire on nearby Tulagi, and the members of the First Parachute Battalion, who had fought their way ashore on Gavutu, the Second Regiment of the Second Division shared the honor of being "first to fight" in an American offensive in World War II. It had indisputably been the first to land on enemy-held soil. The day before, just after dawn on August 7, a company from another battalion of the wounded sergeant's regiment had splashed onto the gray-white beaches of Florida eighty minutes before Guadalcanal was invaded. On August 8, not long after the sergeant's mishap, a platoon from his own battalion crawled 100 yards across the causeway linking Gavutu and Tanambogo and met the enemy in the war's first American bayonet charge. Nor were these the only "firsts." Elements of the Division's artillery fired the first offensive shells that same day, from Tulagi and Gavutu to Tanambogo and the islet of Makambo. The Division's tanks were in fiery and fatal action the afternoon of August 8, and so were the Division's experimental amphibious tractors.

It was thus, on the hot sands of the Solomons, that the shooting began for the Second Marine Division, and with it America's global offensive. It ended on the turreted ridges of Okinawa, where Second Division Marines pushed the last bitter ground offensive toward Tokyo. But the story of the Second Marine Division is more than the story of a unit that was both first and last to fight in World War II. In a very real sense, it is the story of the U.S. approaching war, at war, and guarding the uneasy peace. Second Division Marines garrisoned our ramparts before Pearl Harbor, and they fought at Pearl Harbor. Second Division Marines occupied Japan after the surrender. And

in the jittery fall of 1948 Second Division Marines were on watch in the Mediterranean.

✓ In these momentous years, the Division did not always function as an entity. One of its regiments was detached in the spring of 1941 and sent, with attached units, to Iceland to meet the threat of a surprise German attack. When the Japs came down on Pearl Harbor, members of a Second Division engineer battalion helped man the guns against them. Another regiment sailed to American Samoa in the dark, early days of 1942 to await the Japanese tide sweeping out from the Mandates. And in the summer of that same year the last of the regiments to leave the United States became the first to fight when it was assigned to the Solomons invasion to reinforce the First Marine Division. It was not until January of 1943 that the Division's three infantry regiments—the Second, the Sixth and the Eighth—were at last united in the mud and misery of Guadalcanal.

Beyond the Solomons lay the Gilberts, beyond the Gilberts, the Marianas, and beyond the Marianas, Okinawa and the Japanese homeland. In seventy-six hellish hours the Division conquered Tarawa and gave the Marine Corps another name for its roster of "terrible glories." At Saipan the Division fought through the spiny limestone ridges of Mount Tapotchau to cut the heart out of Japan's great Marianas bastion, and then moved on less than a month later to help take Tinian. On Okinawa elements of the Second Division fought side by side with the First Marine Division, as they had on Guadalcanal, and then spearheaded the last infantry offensive of the war. Finally, in the Japanese homeland, the "SECMARDIV" achieved the goal for which it had striven longer than any other American division, Army or Marine.

"What the hell's the use in worrying!" The more than 60,000 men who served in the Second Marine Division during the war were well trained



AT BELLEAU WOOD the Sixth Marine Regiment established a great tradition that served as a challenge to the newly-formed Second Marine Division. This dramatic painting shows Marine bayonet charge.

and well outfitted. Some of them were veteran professionals, most of them were amateurs. At first most were volunteers. Later, there were many inductees. But they were all Marines, and it took more than training and equipment to make them that. They needed—and had—the conviction that the Second Marine Division was “bar none, the best damn fighting division in the war!” The early members of the Second were sustained and inspired by the great traditions it had inherited, the later members by those it created. The sergeant of Gavutu had spiritual ancestors, and the Divi-

sion was fortunate enough to be directly descended from them.

When the Second Marine Division was formally activated on February 1, 1941, its keystone was the old Sixth Regiment. Nearly a year before the Sixth had detached a battalion to found the reactivated Eighth Regiment, and these two regiments—with the Tenth Marines (Artillery)—had been joined in the Second Marine Brigade. Now the Brigade became the Division, and a battalion each was taken from the Sixth and Eighth to form the



STATESIDE TRAINING finds Marines wearing coveralls as they fire in offhand position on rifle range at Camp Mathews near San Diego. Second Division Marines also trained at Camp Kearney and Camp Elliott.

Second Regiment. The historic Sixth was an ideal father for the new regiments. It not only provided them with a core of seasoned troopers, on active duty since 1937, but it brought the Division the traditions of Chateau Thierry and Belleau Wood.

At Chateau Thierry, in World War I, the French lines were collapsing under savage German at-

tacks when the Sixth and Fifth Marines, organized in a Brigade, arrived at the front. A frightened French officer, his eyes hollowed by fatigue and terror, appealed to a young Marine Captain to join in the retreat. The Captain's answer still rings in the records and memories—and the character—of the Sixth Marines and the Second Marine Division.



MACARTHUR CAMP was one of many Iceland Marine barracks. Marines of Sixth Regiment remembered designation with greater interest after fortunes of war took them to the South Pacific.

“Retreat, hell!” he said. “We just got here.”

Less than a week later, the Marines fought for and secured Belleau Wood. It was a battle of unquestioned ferocity. The American forces drove forward into massed machine guns and in a frightful twenty-four hours the Marines saw thirty-one officers and 1,056 men killed or wounded. In the midst of the battle, the American

attack faltered. For an eternal moment the issue was in doubt. Suddenly, through the awful noise of battle, came the cry of an immortal sergeant of the Sixth Marines, voiced as he plunged forward at the head of his squad: “Come on, you sons of bitches! Do you want to live forever?”

The squad, and other squads, swept forward into the terrible woods, the woods that were to be



ICELAND

Reykjavik

Akranes

Saurbaer

Brautarholt

Kollafjörður

1st Prov. Marine Brig.

Reykjavik

Alafoss

Baldurshagi

Spidholt

Hafnarfjörður

10 MILES

James Carter

Taxa Fd.

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renamed "Le Bois de Brigade de Marine" by the grateful French. The Sixth Regiment went on from Belleau Wood to Soissons, where it again suffered heavy casualties, and from there to Mont Blanc and finally the Meuse-Argonne, the sergeant's cry still echoing in its ears. Through the intervening years, the memory of the sergeant and the captain was kept bright by the shoulder *fourragere* awarded the Brigade by the French Government.

The Second and Eighth regiments had had earlier incarnations, but they lacked the luster of the gaudy Sixth. The Second saw service in Panama in 1904 and Haiti in 1915, while the Eighth spent the First World War in Texas and then had a brief moment of action in Haiti in 1920. Even in peacetime, the Sixth had an affinity for trouble. In 1924 it turned up in the Dominican Republic and at Guantanamo Bay. In 1927 the regiment was rushed to Shanghai, under the command of Major General Smedley D. Butler, to defend the International Settlement from the warring factions in the divided Chinese revolution. On its departure, it left behind a battalion that grew into the famed Fourth Marines. Ten years later, in 1937, the Sixth again was reactivated—this time permanently—for another Chinese emergency, the Japanese invasion that foretold the Pacific war. The infusion of Sixth Regiment traditions into the reborn Eighth and Second was both a benison and a challenge. It gave the new regiments a stake in a great history, but it also laid a foundation for the intense rivalry that provokes Marines to attempt to outdo each other in action. The Corps nurtured this rivalry by assigning many members of the Fourth Marines—evacuated from Shanghai just before Pearl Harbor—to the new regiments. To its rival outfits within the division, the Sixth Regiment was the "Pogey Bait" Sixth—a nickname acquired in the Thirties when, according to legend, its members while enroute to Shanghai bought

several thousand bars of "Pogey bait" (candy) and only two cakes of soap from the ship's stores. But the Second and the Eighth were quite prepared to defend any or all Sixth Regiment traditions or claims if the challenge came from an outsider.

The creation of the Second Division (and, on the same day—February 1, 1941—at New River, the First Division) was an historic departure for the Marine Corps. Until that time, the Corps had never had a tactical group larger than a brigade. But in the winter of 1941 the Nazi armies were on the march and most of America was looking fearfully toward the East, to the stepping stones of England, Ireland, Iceland and Greenland. The United States was not at war, but some of our ships already had been sunk and the lend-lease line to Britain was slick with oil and blood. The Marine Corps, with a distrust of Japan born of a good many years of North China operations, had a watchful eye cocked toward the West.

The Corps had begun to expand the previous year, well ahead of the temper of the American people who still were hopeful that the United States would not have to fight. It attracted thousands of volunteers, most of them from the youthful age groups of 1922 and 1923—too young to have become saturated with what has been called the "hysterical pacifism" of the Twenties and early Thirties. The Corps was not seeking war, but it expected war and its function was to be first to fight. In its recruiting programs, it held out the promise of action and therefore attracted volunteers who wanted—or believed they wanted—action. The newly-formed Second Division's base at Camp Elliott, California, provided a "home" where these youngsters could be transformed into Marines.

There, among the brown hills, Major General Clayton B. Vogel, the new division's first commander, and Colonel Keller E. Rockey, his chief



ICELANDIC HARBOR, with its treeless bluffs and chill waters, is shown as Marine convoy drops anchor. This

of staff, began fleshing out the skeleton of the organization. The Second had the traditional components of a triangular infantry division: the three infantry regiments, Second, Sixth, and Eighth; an artillery regiment, the Tenth Marines; service, medical and engineer battalions; and transport, service, tank, signal, chemical and anti-aircraft machine-gun companies. But if Vogel hoped to bring the Division to early fighting form, he was doomed to disappointment. The newly-trained units slipped through his fingers like so much quicksilver. Some of them were broken into cadres and sent to form hard cores for new regiments and new divisions. Then in June—just four months after the Division's activation—it was literally ripped apart by Adolph Hitler.

To meet the growing threat of a German attack

on Iceland, the keystone Sixth Regiment was detached and incorporated into the First Marine Brigade (Provisional). With the regiment went the second battalion of the Tenth Marines, A Company of the Second Tank Battalion, A Company of the Second Medical Battalion, and the first platoon of A Company of the Second Service Battalion. The brigade was under command of Brigadier General John Marston, while Colonel Leo D. Hermle had the Sixth Marines.

The Marines embarked, in an atmosphere of wartime secrecy, at San Diego and sailed May 31, 1941. This little convoy—there were three transports and four destroyers—slipped through the Panama Canal and put into Charleston, South Carolina, on June 17. Five days later the Brigade sailed for Reykjavik, its duties prescribed in a



drawing, made by a U.S. Navy artist, gives a clear impression of the forbidding nature of the land.

one-sentence memorandum from the Chief of Naval Operations: "TASK: IN COOPERATION WITH THE BRITISH GARRISON, DEFEND ICELAND AGAINST HOSTILE ATTACK." As the convoy moved north and east, it grew. The battleships *New York* and *Arkansas* joined the escorting force, which already included two cruisers and ten destroyers. Two cargo ships and another transport had been added at Charleston.

On the way up, as the transports bucked through the rough green waters of the North Atlantic, the Marines began improvising one of the war's first wry parodies on the plight of the fighting man:

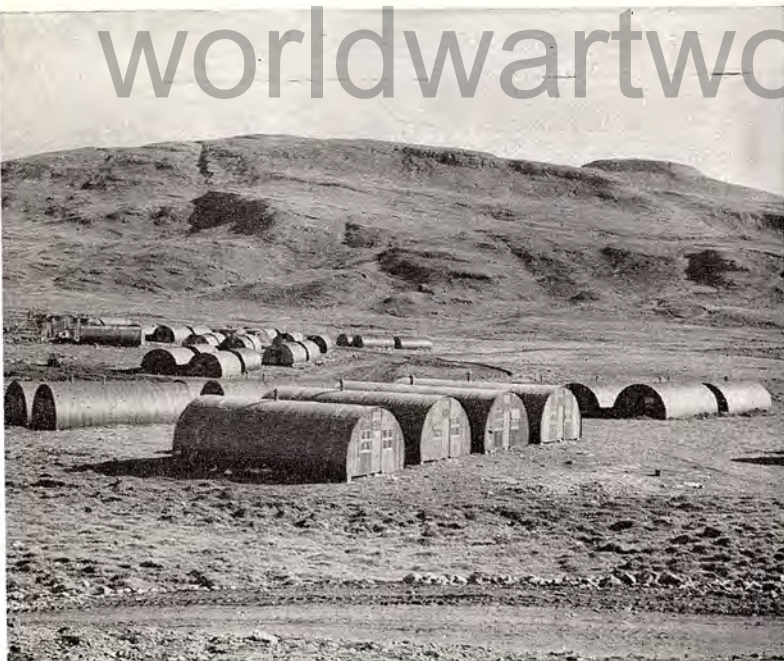
*Over sea, over foam,
Wish to Christ that we were home,
But the transports go sailing along.*

*In and out, near and far,
Wonder where the hell we are,
As the transports go sailing along.
So it's ho-ho-hum, Iceland, here we come,
Or maybe the Azores or Dakar;
But where e'er it be, we'll get no liberty,
As the transports go sailing along.*

Toward noon of July 7 the Marines saw the forbidding, snow-covered peak of *Snaefellsjokull* rise above the horizon, and that afternoon the hooks went down in the bay at Reykjavik. (In Washington, President Roosevelt announced the landing as a *fait accompli*.) The Sixth Regiment and its attached units had reached their first target, and though the Icelanders did not oppose them, the sea did. More than 1,500 tons of supplies had to be taken ashore by lighter through pounding



NEW JEEP AND OLD HELMETS form a bridge between two World Wars for these Marines stationed in Iceland. Marines borrowed jeep from an Army Unit.



THIS BLEAK CAMPSITE is typical of accommodations Marines endured during long, dismal Icelandic winter. Most camps were a long way from Reykjavic.

waves. Once on the beach, the Marines found a desolate land almost constantly illumined by the Midnight Sun, and their stay was not a very happy one.

The Brigade headquarters was set up in a camp near Alafoss twelve miles out of Reykjavik but its units were scattered over 300 square miles of territory. Only the Fifth Defense Battalion, which had been added at Charleston, got a permanent berth in town, although 3/6 spent two months in a Reykjavic suburb. Even battalions were broken up in an effort to spread the Marines over the defense area. Some of the camp sites were on barren plains or bleak plateaus, swept by 70-mile-an-hour gusts of wind. Almost all of the Marines had to turn to and build their own Nissen hut shelters for the oncoming winter.

Although, contrary to the song, the Marines did get occasional liberty, there wasn't much to do with it. The Icelanders were hospitable, but they didn't encourage their marriageable girls to waste time even on such romantic transients as the Sixth Marines. Reykjavik had only two motion-picture theaters, and there was only one presentable hotel. Worst of all, the chow was lousy. Officers and men alike lived on a tasteless diet of dried vegetables, powdered milk and some of the more inedible varieties of canned meat.

The Marines found the 25,000 British troops already dispersed through Iceland pleasant enough garrison companions. They also got along reasonably well with male Icelanders, although they went through one trying period when Reykjavik's equivalent of "dead end" kids harassed them with cries of "Moo, cowboy!" The Marines at first thought this was a compliment.

In August Winston Churchill, on his way back from the Atlantic Charter conference, reviewed both British and Marine Troops, and the Sixth Regiment paraded smartly in World War I hel-

mets and battle gear. September brought the vanguard of the U.S. Army, and the Marines saw hope of deliverance. It did not come until well after Christmas, however. By that time the dark desolation of the Icelandic winter was upon the Marines, who huddled in their huts, and cursed the rain, snow and wind. The weather was horrible, the food was worse. There was little cheer of any kind for the holidays—the U.S. was at war, but the war was in another ocean.

While the Brigade was alternately sweating and freezing out the first of many dismal islands, at Camp Elliott the dismembered Division was still processing New Marines and sharpening the skills of old ones. The Second Engineer Battalion, one of the Division's original units, expanded the Camp's road system and built a large outdoor swimming pool. In April of 1941 the Eighth Marines carried out an exercise which even combat veterans remember painfully—a 180-mile hike inland from San Diego through the Cuyamaca Mountains. A Los Angeles reserve battalion which had provided martial backgrounds for an assortment of films was incorporated into the Eighth Regiment about that time. This battalion bore the nickname "The Hollywood Marines," a sobriquet sometimes extended to the whole regiment.

During the hot months of the United States' last pre-war summer, most Americans had their attention centered on the Eastern Front. But Hitler's invasion of Soviet Russia had increased rather than diminished the Marine Corps' suspicion of Japan. The Japs were bound to Berlin by the tripartite pact, and as the German armies plunged deep into Russia, the fear grew that the Japs might attempt a sort of global pincers through Southeast Asia. Accordingly, in the fall of 1941, the Corps detached another unit of the Second Division to anticipate another emergency. The Second Engi-



BRITAIN'S WAR LEADER, Winston Churchill (center), pauses in Iceland after Atlantic Conference and reviews Marines and British troops stationed there.



TRAINING IN ICELAND is carried out over countryside that provides much rocky cover. Here Marines crouch low as they move down rock-walled trench.



MARINES IN ICELAND grin through their zippered parkas despite bitterness of winter and their regret at being on "wrong side of world" from Pacific War

neer Battalion was sent to Honolulu to build a big, new Marine camp.

December 7, 1941, the Sixth Regiment was still in Iceland, looking forward to a gloomy Christmas. The Second and Eighth Regiments and the Tenth Marines were at Camp Elliott, or on liberty in San Diego and Los Angeles. On a hill in the Hawaiian Islands, half-way between Honolulu and Pearl Harbor and overlooking the Salt Lake, a Sunday shift of Marines from the Second Engineer Battalion was just checking in for work on the half-completed Camp Catlin. *Mauka* (toward the mountains) from the camp, the clouds and mists carried by the northeast tradewinds were piled high over the Koolau range, *makai* (toward the sea), the Pacific shimmered in the soft morning light. The Jap planes came out of the mists and skimmed over the low Catlin hill. The engineers could see the red "meatballs" on the wings. Their reaction was prompt and effective. Perhaps it can best be described in the commendation sent the Battalion when it rejoined the Division the following April, its work completed:

"When the surprise attack on Pearl Harbor by the Japanese struck on the morning of December 7, 1941, your organization rendered prompt and efficient service in the defense of this station by manning available weapons, by hauling and delivering ammunition to Marine Corps and Navy defensive positions, by clearing the runways at Hickam Field of disabled aircraft, by operating a motor transportation pool for all requirements and by assisting in every way possible in collecting and evacuating battle casualties. These and the various other tasks were not only performed promptly and efficiently but at times at great personal danger."

In the Sixth Regiment and attached units, the Second Division had provided the first American troops sent overseas as a result of World War II. Now, on the day of infamy, its members had been among the first to fight back against enemy attack. Less than a month later, as the Japanese offensive enveloped heroic Wake Island, rolled through the Philippines and spread from the Mandates, the first American expeditionary force sailed silently and secretly from the Pacific Coast. It was made up of members of the Second Division, and its job was to prevent the vast Pacific from becoming a Japanese "mare nostrum."

The outbreak of war had united the American people overnight. In the fortnight that followed, the lights went down in the seacoast cities of the East, West and South, but American morale went up. On Wake Island Major James Devereux's small detachment of Marines beat back a half-dozen Japanese attacks before yielding to an overwhelming invasion force, and the Wake Island defense brought thousands of American youths into Marine Corps recruiting stations. The old boot camps at Parris Island, S.C., and San Diego filled up with volunteers. The Marines, who had taken no inductees from Selective Service, boasted that

the Corps was made up of men who chose to fight. (Later, after surviving some of the Pacific's jungle campaigns, these early volunteers occasionally remarked: "Yes, it is true that everybody in the Marine Corps wanted to be a Marine—at one time!" This kind of comment, however, was acceptable only from another Marine, not from soldier, sailor or civilian.)

The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor produced the immediate fear that the enemy might attempt a lightning invasion of the Pacific Coast. The Second Division, still minus the Sixth Regiment but otherwise taut and ready, was mobilized for action only a few hours after the first bombs fell on Hawaii. Its first mission was to defend the California coastline from Oceanside to the Mexican border. Division Marines manned the anti aircraft installations in the San Diego Bay area, and occupied other defensive positions. Reconnaissance of the whole sector began at once. But the notion that the defense of America should begin on her own shores was foreign to Marine philosophy. As soon as the danger of immediate invasion abated, the Second Division's units were pulled back to Camp Elliott for a greater adventure. The holidays were tense and poignant. There were no Christmas leaves, and every Marine guessed that his next trip would be to westward—and soon.

In the latter part of December, the word came. The Eighth Regiment, under Colonel R. H. Jeschke, would have the frightening honor of sailing out into the Pacific to oppose the might of the Japanese empire. With Wake secured, the Japs were stirring in the mandated Marshall Islands, and their ships were nosing around the British-owned Gilberts, only 2,000 miles from Hawaii. Ahead, in the same direction, lay the Ellice Islands, Samoa, the Phoenix group—and the Australian-American air and surface lifeline that



MARINES IN SAMOA, members of Second Division who were first to sail after Pearl Harbor, appear in dramatic contrast to their buddies in Iceland

Washington, London and Melbourne knew must be kept open if Japan were to be contained. Few of the Marines at Camp Elliott, and few Americans, for that matter, knew one Pacific island from another in those days. But the Japanese had made a careful study of Pacific geography, and so had Allied strategists. The Japs had to be stopped short of Samoa. It was up to the Marines to stop them.

For this first wartime American expeditionary force, the Marine Corps re-established the Second Marine Brigade, which originally had given birth to the Second Division. Besides reclaiming the Eighth Regiment, the Brigade took the First Battalion of the Tenth Marines; B Company of the Second Tank Battalion; B Company of the Second Engineer Battalion (later to become the Second Pioneer Battalion); B Company of the Second Service Battalion; B Company of the Second Medical Battalion; and C Company of the Second Medical Battalion.

On the 6th day of January, one day short of a month after the bombing of Pearl Harbor, the Second Marine Brigade sailed from San Diego, its destination known only to the command headed by



SAMOAN MANEUVERS include experiments with camouflage in which Marines fasten jungle vines and flowers to helmet nets, and to their uniforms.

Brigadier General Henry L. Larsen. The voyage was more like a peacetime cruise than a rendezvous with danger. Never again were the Marines to have it so good. Instead of the barren, overcrowded transports of later years, the Brigade Marines sailed luxuriously on three famous Matson liners—the *Lurline*, the *Matsonia* and the *Monterey*. These pleasure ships had not yet been stripped of their comforts, and their portholes had not been sealed. The cabins carried beds instead of bunks, civilian stewards waited on the Marines, and the large and colorful lounges were easily made into gaming rooms.

There were, of course, some disadvantages. What good is a tropic moon without a girl? And what's the joy of winning at poker or dice if the money can only be spent—on poker and dice? Then, too, there was the roll of the sea. As the

convoy zigzagged nervously through the deep blue swells, some of the Marines were seasick. It was the first voyage for many, and even some of the veterans occasionally felt qualms. Just as the Sixth Regiment, enroute to Iceland, had moved into an area of unaccustomed cold, now the Eighth sailed into steamy seas and a pervading, listless heat.

Despite these drawbacks, the Marines had mixed feelings when, on January 19, the green hills of a distant island began to grow above the horizon. By this time, everyone aboard knew that the Brigade's destination was American Samoa, some 1,500 miles south and east of the Jap-threatened Gilberts. The Matson liners had come more than 4,000 miles without incident; now, as they eased in between the big, jungled bluffs of Tutuila to the harbor of Pago Pago, the Marines came alive with anticipation. They learned that they had arrived none too soon. Only three days before a Japanese submarine, employing high angle fire, had thrown five-inch shells at the Tutuila radio towers.

But to Americans educated in South Sea lore by the motion pictures and Dorothy Lamour, Pago Pago was the first of many disappointments. A wretched village boiled by Samoa's watery heat, it at first promised neither romance nor languorous leisure. Fortunately, the Marines had time for little but work in their early days ashore. The Second Brigade did a good job of preparing for the attack that never came. The island's potential and existing defenses were built up. Artillery emplacements were installed, and an airfield and a sea-plane base were built, and barrage balloons were hoisted over the harbor.

The command learned that many of the husky Polynesian natives were anxious to help Uncle Sam resist the enemy, and the brigade organized the First Samoan Marine Reserve Battalion. Hun-

dreds of bronzed young men exchanged their flower-figured *lava lavas* for a strangely modified Marine uniform, and learned the intricacies of the Springfield rifle. Except for Britain's Fiji Scouts, they were the most colorful of Pacific warriors. They wore no shoes, and instead of confining trousers the Marines authorized a khaki *lava lava* embellished only by the Corps emblem. As their own concession to military dress, the Samoans gracefully donned World War I helmets and white U.S. skivvy shirts.

√ In the slow months that followed their arrival, the Marines gradually settled into the Samoan way of life. They practiced the strange arts of jungle warfare in the Samoan bush, decorating their new scoop helmets with leaves and vines. Their attached Navy Corpsmen cared for Captain Eddie Rickenbacker and his fellow survivors of an ocean plane crash and a twenty-one-day drift on life rafts. They learned to respect and avoid the scorpion, the centipede and other unpleasant insects. Gradually, the Eighth Regiment and its attached units became accustomed to the humid, oppressive heat and the monotonous warm rain. They also became inured to the steady biting of mosquitoes—mosquitoes that bit again and again and gradually inoculated the Marines with the germs of filiriasis, the strange tropical disease known in Samoa as “mumu.” The disease that, unless arrested, ends in the tragedy of elephantiasis, the grotesque swelling of legs, arms or genitals. There was little the Marines could do to guard against “mumu”—they could only hope for the best. “What the hell’s the use of worrying?”

In matters of recreation, Brigade members were a good deal better off than their brother Marines with the Sixth Regiment in Iceland. The command sponsored a variety of sports, and in the evening movies were shown on outdoor screens—the first of many such “theaters” in the Pacific.



TROPICAL JITTERBUGS cavort at a Marine dance in American Samoa. The Samoan girls soon learned to combine their hula-like dances with swing and jive.

The more affluent Marines, those whose earnings didn't vanish in the interminable dice and cribbage games, set themselves up in the native Polynesian thatched huts, called “fales” and appropriately pronounced “follies.” The passage of time had another interesting effect—the Samoan girls got whiter every day. There is a popular belief among other veterans of the Second Division that every member of the Eighth Regiment married his native laundress during the Samoan stay, but this appears to be exaggerated.

While the Sixth and Eighth Regiments guarded the United States' far-flung ramparts, the Second Marines and the rest of the Division troops were busy on the American mainland. Like the other regiments, the Second—by virtue of having been left behind—acquired a nickname it did not par-



MEETING OF CHIEFTAINS occurs at Pago Pago, where Marine officers talk with spectacularly-attired Samoan tribal leaders in formal ceremonies held during the summer of 1942

ticularly fancy. To the voyagers, it was ever afterward the "Home Guard" Second. But the Second's function in California was no less important to American security than the defensive activity of the traveling outfits. In the month of January, 1942, the great surge of Marine recruits swamped the depot at the San Diego base. The Second Division, now under Major General C. F. B. Price, was ordered to establish a recruit training depot at Camp Kearney, also in the San Diego area. This put the Division into the teaching business, and

it was so good at the job that in February enough "processed" recruits were on hand to make establishment of a new regiment worthwhile. Accordingly, the Ninth Marines were activated under Lieutenant Colonel William B. Onley to keep the lonely Second company. In March a system of division training schools was added, and more than 4,000 men were given specialized training as scouts and snipers and in machine gun, intelligence, bayonet, anti-tank, chemical defense and many other techniques. This rapid development of



VOLUNTEER MARINES, these husky Samoan natives were among several hundred who helped compose the famed Samoan Reserve Battalion. They are wearing the standard Samoan lava-lava.

expert enlisted personnel left the Corps short of officers, and necessitated establishment of an officers training school. The Division got that chore, too, and set up a one-month, short course OCS that eventually graduated 335 officers. Nobody called them thirty-day wonders.

If the schooling assignments seemed dull to teachers who were itching for action and to students who had become Marines to avenge Wake Island, they were not long in paying off. The Corps recognized only two kinds of Marines—

those who had gone and those who were going. No Marine had any reason to doubt that he eventually would see action. The Japanese had captured the Philippines, had driven the British from Singapore and had swept the Navy and the Dutch out of the Indies. They had laid claim to the Gilberts, but had not pressed on toward Samoa, presumably because of the presence of the Second Marine Brigade. But they were filtering down the Solomons, and in the Coral Sea, the U.S. Navy, fighting with superb seamanship, taking heavy losses

but making heroic use of its few ships and their brave men, had disrupted and then dispersed a Japanese push toward Australia. The U.S. had little time left for training. The time had come to carry the war to the enemy, making do with what we had. The Marine Corps began to get set to punch.

On the East Coast, the First Marine Division was practicing amphibious landings. Abruptly, the Navy assigned three converted President liners—the *Hayes*, the *Jackson*, and the *Adams*—to the Second Division for similar practice on the California beaches. The Tenth Marines' 75mm gun and pack howitzer batteries were hurried up to Camp Dunlap, at Niland, California, for a month of intensive field training. The Sixth Regiment, now sporting the Polar Bear patches of the provisional brigade as well as the *foutragere*, returned at last from Iceland, ending any doubt that the Pacific was to be the Marine theater. With Camp Catlin completed, the Second Engineer Battalion came back from Pearl. The First Battalion of the Second Regiment moved up to Mission Valley and established the first tent camp.

For a few brief weeks, the Second Division was almost back at full strength, with the Second, Sixth and Ninth Infantry Regiments and most of the Tenth artillery. Organized in combat teams, the division troops began splashing ashore at La Jolla—north of San Diego—from the clumsy, early-day Higgins boats. In the tents and barracks at night, there was excited "scoop." The Second Regiment was going to war. The Sixth Regiment was going to war. The whole division was going to move out. The Japs were about to attack Hawaii. The Japs were about to attack California.

The "scoop" reflected more than the natural excitement of Marines who saw the imminent approach of action. It was associated with a general

increase in tension along the whole West Coast. Part of the Division's forces, for some months integrated in the Army's Western Defense Command, resumed their old defense positions. The dim-out was darkened, and civilian police officers were issued emergency firearms and gas masks. Newspapers and press associations got secret orders from Washington not to use the word "Alaska" in any story. At Midway Island, 1,000 miles west of Hawaii, a handful of Marines went on 24-hour alert.

In the first thundering ten days of June, the United States turned the tide of war. Some of the "scoop" had—quite accidentally—been right. The Japs had hurled the maximum striking power of the Imperial Navy toward the Hawaiian Islands, and had sent diversionary forces into the Aleutians. Midway was bombed and so was Dutch Harbor. Attu and Kiska were occupied. But off Midway the U. S. Navy, drawn from the South Pacific at flank speed and in the veritable nick of time, lay in wait. The Battle of Midway was the Stalingrad and the El Alemein of the Pacific war. It cost the United States men and ships, but it forever ended the danger of a Japanese invasion, and it at last released the Marine Corps from its defensive strait jacket.

Three weeks after the last Jap ship went down at Midway, the "Home Guard" Second Regiment and other units which had helped make up Combat Team 2 for the practice landings were detached from the Second Marine Division. The ships that had carried them in the many amphibious drills now drew alongside the San Diego piers, battle-loaded and with two additions—the *Crescent City*, an AP, and the *Alhena*, an AK (Attack cargo ship). The Second Marines went aboard, and with them went the Third Battalion of the Tenth Marines; C Company of the Second Tank Battalion; A Company of the Second Engineer

Battalion; D Company of the Second Medical Battalion; A Company of the Second Amphibian Tractor Battalion; one platoon of the Second Special Weapons Battalion; the first platoon of the Service and Supply Company of the Second Service Battalion; the First Band Section of the Division Headquarters Company; and A Company of the Second Pioneer Battalion. That night, in blackest secrecy, the convoy sailed for the South Pacific and a rendezvous with the First Marine Division—and the Japanese.

The departure of the Second Regiment (Reinforced) once again stripped the Second Division to less than two-thirds strength, but in a sense the Division was being stripped for action and the eventual reassembly of its original units. While the Second sailed down the curve of the world, across the equator into the Southern Hemisphere, the Division command was shaking loose its own roots. On August 3, the Ninth Marines were detached permanently and moved up to Camp Pendleton, near Oceanside. At Pendleton, established as a western counterpart of Camp Lejeune, another division was taking shape and many units of the Second were split to form cadres for the new Third Division. The units split included the Headquarters and Service Battery, the Special Weapons Battery and the Fourth Battalion (105mm Howitzer), all from the Tenth Marines; the Second Amphibian Tractor Battalion; the Second Engineer Battalion; the Headquarters and Service Company of the Second Tank Battalion; the Second Parachute Battalion; the Second Special Weapons Battalion; the Second Pioneer Battalion; the Division Military Police Company and the Division Headquarters Company.

These developments were unknown to the departed Second Regiment, but the Regiment—under the command of Colonel John M. Arthur



RESCUED FROM RAFT, Captain Eddie Rickenbacker is welcomed on arrival at Tutuila. Samoa was his first sight of land after 21 days adrift.



THIS SAMOAN CEMETERY, with its prophetic motto, was first of many in Pacific to provide final resting places for Marines of the Second Division.



TRAINING SPEEDS UP for Marines still in the San Diego area as the time for a U.S. offensive nears. These men are firing on combat rifle range near camp. New style helmets have now replaced old World War I model.

—was preoccupied with its own problems. Unlike the Eighth Marines, who had sailed in luxury a half-year earlier, the Second now discovered the grim discomfort of a transport cruise in tropic seas. The crowded *Hayes*, *Jackson* and *Adams*—ships that had been stripped of any original resemblance to the cushy Matson liners—came to be known as the “unholy three.” The days were not so bad, despite the overcrowding of the transports, the long, slow-moving chow lines, and the frequent abandon-ship drills. There usually was time for a quick game of cards, or a few rolls of the dice. The nights were something else. The ships held the days’ accumulation of heat, and in the jam-packed, poorly ventilated troop quarters below decks the Marines lay in their sopping sacks and

gulped for breath, or writhed under the multiple needles of prickly heat.

There were other differences, and some similarities. Both the Eighth and the Second had experimental outfits along—in the case of the Second, the Company from the newly designated “Pioneer Battalion.” The Pioneers were converted engineers whose responsibility would be the vital organization of the beachhead. On undefended coasts, the pioneers would reconnoiter the beaches and designate the best landing places. They would construct access roads and piers and lay beach road mats; they would also provide equipment and operators to unload landing craft and organize supply dumps. In short, they would form a modern, highly efficient Shore Party responsible for

getting thousands of men and hundreds of tons of equipment into action.

√ While the Eighth Regiment had sailed for a defensive, garrison assignment, these Marines were sailing to attack. The Second Regiment and its attached units were fairly well equipped (although the Garand rifle did not replace the old Springfield until the following year) and they were thoroughly trained, but in every man's stomach a little cluster of butterflies swarmed and spread and swarmed again. There were moments when the ships, unendurably hot though they were, seemed to represent all the vanishing security left in the world. It would be hard to leave them for the last time.

But that time was quite a distance ahead. The Pacific is a wide ocean, and the convoy was barred from shortcuts. It swung far to the south, below Samoa and south of the Fijis. One morning the Marines, long since sick of nothing but water on all sides, sighted land ahead. The Corps had decided to break the endless voyage with a last liberty, and it had chosen one of the world's least-known spots for it. The transports dropped their hooks at Tonga Tabu, capital of the earth's last absolute monarchy, the domain of the 300-pound Queen Salote of the Tonga Islands. Almost every Marine got ashore on Tonga Tabu, some for only a few hours but long enough to stretch and get a first-hand look at a tropical island. It was all new and reasonably wonderful. In the Solomons the Second Regiment seldom had time to admire the purple bouganvillea or the softly tinted oleander, or to listen to the wind gently riffing the palm trees.

There was no such relaxation a few days later when the transports put into Fiji. In the intervening days, the Marines had "got the word." Their mission was to reinforce the First Marine Division in the invasion of the Solomon Islands. In officers'



INVASION PRACTICE gets underway in Southern California, with future assault Marines learning to scramble down a "mock-up" into Higgins Boat

country the regimental command spent long hours over maps and the reports of British agents who had spent years in the Solomons. The regiment's assignment was disappointing to some of the veterans. Except for the First Battalion, under Lieutenant Colonel R. E. Hill, the Second would be in reserve. The First Division would land on Guadalcanal, where the Japanese had built an airfield and were believed to have their main body of troops. Colonel Hill's battalion would move into Florida Island, across the channel that later was to be immortalized as the "Slot." For the rest, action depended on events.

Near Fiji on the 26th day of July the Second Regiment convoy rendezvoused with the ships that



SAILING FOR TARGET, the Second Marines get their first real taste of life in transport troop quarters, as symbolized in this Navy artist's crayon and wash drawing of the hot compartments below decks.

had brought the First Marine Division up from Wellington. Next day, the Higgins boats went over the side and the Marines scrambled down the nets into them for a practice landing intended to duplicate, as nearly as possible, the conditions under which they would go ashore in earnest. The practice went badly. There was much confusion, and when the Marines tried it again on July 31, improvement was slight. But there was no time for another rehearsal. That night, the boats and men back aboard, the convoy sailed. Although no one said so everyone knew and thought: "This is it." The ships swished through the tropic night, south

by southeast. The Navy crews, tense as the Marines, combed the dark waters with straining eyes. The guns were manned. So the night passed and a day and another night and another day and then, finally, it was the night of August 6.

Down inside the blacked-out ships, the Marines prepared their packs. Extra sox and underwear and toilet articles, neatly assembled in the small, shoulder pack. Extra uniforms, mess gear, maybe a Bible or maybe a picture, in the large, loose knapsack strapped below it. A mosquito net, a shelter half, and a blanket, rolled in the spotted poncho which was strapped over and down each

side of the double pack, like a polkadot horse-shoe. There were other, little things to remember—the mosquito head net, folded and placed inside the bucket-shaped steel helmet; the little pad of toilet paper, to be stolen from the ship's head. Finally, for many of the Marines, there were showers. The carefully conserved ship's supply of fresh water ran freely over grimy bodies, washing away accumulated dirt that might infect a minor wound or make a major wound fatal.

Sleep. Not much of it. The gathering excitement crystallizing into the emotion of assault. The old desire for action becoming a necessity for action, and choking down man's natural fear of the unknown. At 0300, the call to quarters. The Marines put on the fresh, jungle green uniforms they had saved for this day, and mess kits dangling from tense fingers, they moved into the long chow lines, stretching back almost to the engine rooms. Beans for breakfast—solid meal and strangely appetizing, the last for some of the men and the last for many hours for all.

Then up to the dark decks, to the debarking stations previously assigned. Company by company, in response to the loud summons of the ship's

bullhorn. A soft, moist wind greeted the Marines, as wet as the sweat bubbling inside their fresh uniforms. For a few moments, as the companies came topside, the night was still and nothing was visible. Then the night began to explode. Bright orange and yellow flashes came through the darkness, and after them a mighty rumbling from the ships' guns as the U.S. Navy began bombardment of America's first offensive target. In the flashes the Marines glimpsed a sea full of ships—warships, tiny Yippee boats, and the ragtag company of transports. Many transports.

Twenty thousand United States Marines waited silently to attack the empire of Japan, and as the blush of dawn crept across the horizon the black hulks of the empire's outposts began to separate from the darkness. Guadalcanal and Florida, first, the big land masses. Inside them, as it grew lighter, the palm tufts of Tulagi and Tanambogo and Gavutu. The thunder of the naval barrage grew and became a mixture of cracks and rumbles. It was a little short of 0600—two and one half hours before H-Hour on Guadalcanal—when Colonel Hill led the First Battalion down the cargo nets into the swaying boats.

Chapter Two



TULAGI HARBOR

FIRST TO LAND AGAINST JAPAN

THE SECOND MARINES GO INTO ACTION ON TULAGI AND GAVUTU

Crouched in the vibrating Higgins boats, the Marines at first saw little more than muzzle flashes from the naval guns, slanting off low and sultry clouds on this tropical morning. Then Florida Island, silent and vast, began to come up at them. Beneath the scudding boats, ink-blue water changed to apple green and then to white.

D Day came to the Solomons with a few boats and one company of men, and every Marine in that company got a terrible feeling of aloneness as the boats neared the shore. Once, not so long ago, these Marines had been involved in the great

complexity of the Marine Corps itself. Then there had been the Division, with its miles of barracks and thousands of men. Then the regiment, in the crowded transports. A few minutes ago there had been the battalion—but most of the battalion now lagged far behind, in boats which still circled in the rendezvous area.

Here, at a moment when it seemed that the whole world should be on hand, a few Marines in a thin line of flimsy boats moved into the Battle of the Solomons.

In the company commander's boat was Captain

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Edgar J. Crane, a soft-spoken and moustached Texan. Beyond the cream of surf and the ribbon of sand, palm trees were emerging from the blue-green mass of Florida's jungle. Crane spotted a native village off to his left. Its thatched huts might be empty. They might also be swarming with Japanese defenders. The captain snapped an order to Private Russell L. Miller, a member of the first squad of the weapons platoon's 60mm mortar section. Miller, manning a Lewis gun on the boat's port side, began firing.

No answering fire came from the village. None, in fact, came from the beach anywhere as the American boats bucked in through the light surf and ground into the sand. The Navy coxswains yelled: "Okay, this is it!" and the ramps of the boats went down. Staring fixedly at the shoulder blades of the man ahead, each Marine charged out through the foaming surf and onto the strangely silent shore. At 0740—twenty minutes before 8 A.M.—on the morning of August 7, 1942—the Second Marine Division began the long march on the road to Tokyo. B Company of the First Battalion, Second Marine Regiment, became the first American troops to land on enemy-held soil in World War II.

But B Company had no time in which to contemplate its probable place in history. Inland, somewhere in the tangle of brush and vine, lay a thousand waiting Japs—or perhaps none at all. As the last Marine splashed ashore, Crane motioned the company forward. Rifles in hand, and pockets bulging with grenades the Marines filtered into the jungle. Their first target was the native village of Haleta, which Intelligence indicated might be a Jap stronghold. Haleta was deserted.

By this time—something like an hour had gone by—B Company no longer fought a lonely war. The rest of the First Battalion landed to reinforce the invaders for the reconnaissance of Halavo vil-

lage, another supposed enemy concentration. Halavo, too, was empty. The Japs had been there, but they had taken to the high inland hills. Soaked with the enervating sweat of the tropics, the Marines reassembled on Florida's beach at noon. Relief mixed curiously with frustration; it was good to be alive, but they had come ashore to fight—and the Japanese had deprived them of this emotional outlet.

Elsewhere, the Japanese were more considerate. Sounds of heavy firing rolled across the narrow waters from Tulagi and Gavutu.

For the invasion of the Solomons, American Intelligence had to improvise and gather many loose ends of factual knowledge. Except for the head-hunting proclivities of some of its 100,000 fuzzy-haired inhabitants (known as Melanesians), few Americans and not many more Australians or New Zealanders knew much about this string of jungled islands which stretched from Buka and Bougainville on the northwest to Guadalcanal and San Cristobal on the southeast—a distance of some 650 miles. Great Britain had acquired the southern Solomons in 1893, and the northern islands had been mandated to Australia in 1920. Neither group had attractions for tourists or persons wishing to retire in the tropics.

But for an imperialist power southbound for New Zealand and Australia, the Solomons were beautifully situated stepping stones. The Japanese had rolled south like an avalanche in the early months of 1942. They took the Admiralties and New Britain and New Ireland and the northern shore of New Guinea. From Rabaul in New Ireland they started moving down the Solomons chain—from Buka to Bougainville to Vella La Vella to Choiseul and New Georgia and, finally, Guadalcanal, Florida and Tulagi. They seized the latter island in May, taking over the buildings the

British had used as their seat of Colonial administration. But to the Japs Guadalcanal was the real prize, with its long, flat northern plain, nicely suited to airdrome construction; and its orderly groves of coconuts (planted and owned by Lever Brothers), making a shaded and pleasant bivouac area.

On the basis of very limited reconnaissance, much of it from the then super-secret Australian coast-watchers who had remained on islands overrun by the enemy, we correctly estimated that the Japanese had placed the bulk of their troops on Guadalcanal and that Florida was only lightly garrisoned. But we seriously underestimated enemy strength on Tulagi and the neighboring islands of Gavutu and Tanambogo.

These islands lay in Florida's lee, on the edges of the harbor that later came to be known as "Iron Bottom Bay." Tulagi was an island of high bluffs, with a coastal ring of jungle like the fringe on a bald man's head. Southeast of Tulagi, Tanambogo and Gavutu looked from the air like an unbalanced dumbbell, with Gavutu the heavy end and Tanambogo only a palm-topped knob. Just 100 yards apart, they were joined by a causeway. Around Tulagi, Tanambogo and Gavutu, in the twenty-mile-wide channel between Florida and Guadalcanal, were the tiny islets of Makambo, Mbangui, Kakomtambu and Songonangong.

At noon of D-Day, there was little or no fighting on either Guadalcanal or Florida. But there were savage battles on both Tulagi and Gavutu, where Colonel Merritt Edson's Raiders and the First Division's parachuteless First Parachute Battalion were learning that cornered Japs were full of fight. Although Colonel Hill's battalion from the Second Regiment (1/2) * had come through its landing on Florida unscathed, a few Second

* See author's foreword, p. viii.

Division Marines already were involved in the shooting. These included six officers and fifty-nine enlisted men from A Company of the Second Medical Battalion, who had been assigned to the Raiders for the Tulagi attack; members of A Company of the Second Pioneer Battalion who had gone in to keep the beach-head operative; and tank crewmen from C Company, Second Tank Battalion, who also landed on Tulagi in support of the Raiders.

By early afternoon it was apparent that both the Raiders and the 'Chutists would need more help. Captain Crane's B Company was the first unit of 1/2 to be jolted out of the Florida siesta. At about 1400 the company was ordered to Gavutu. There, the Parachutists were slugging with Japs in caves and well-organized entrenchments, and at the same time were taking heavy flank fire from the Japanese on nearby Tanambogo. B Company found, on its arrival at Gavutu an hour after boating up, that it had been assigned the nasty job of liquidating this Tanambogo flank. The attack would be amphibious—the command felt that the enemy had the causeway too well blanketed with fire to make a charge feasible. The coxswains swung the boats around and B Company was prepared to reembark when the Japanese provided a diversion.

Down the "slot" from the Jap airfields in the Northern Solomons came a wave of enemy dive-bombers. Out in the bobbing waters above Sealark Channel, Navy and Marine gun crews aboard the thin-skinned transports manned the anti-aircraft guns. Puffs of white and black smoke erupted in the sky, but the Japs came through and down in the long screaming dives that make the plane as well as its bombs a destructive missile. One of the enemy pilots, a spiritual ancestor of Kamikazes, singled out the AP *Crescent City* for a bombless crash-dive. The gun crews hit the deck, but a Second Division Marine manned an abandoned gun



D DAY IN THE SOLOMONS finds the Second Marines making their first trip down cargo nets into Higgins boats. This scene, painted by a Marine artist, was to become a familiar one to all Marines.

and dueled, one against one, with the suicide pilot. The Marine won, and saved the ship. His bullets shattered the Jap's propeller and sent the plane

splashing into the sea only seconds short of the target.

The air raid and its attendant confusion de-

layed but did not cancel the attack on Tanambogo. With the sky clear again, B Company resumed its preparations. The zero hour was set for 1830—half past six—and a half-hour before that a destroyer began a hammering bombardment of the tiny island. The Higgins boats with B Company aboard swung wide from Gavutu and started their run-in toward Tanambogo under the whistling naval shells. On the beach a Jap oil dump, ignited by shellfire, burned furiously, but the Japs did not take cover. As the boats neared the beach, a hail of bullets came down on them from the crown of the island. Private Miller, who had fired the first shots at Florida, fell dead at the breach of his Lewis gun. And then a Navy shell dropped short and exploded in the midst of the little assault force.

At this moment the terrible confusion of war interrupted—and almost ended—the attack on Tanambogo. One of the shell fragments wounded a coxswain, and his boat swung out in a sharp curve toward Gavutu. The other coxswains thought a withdrawal had been ordered and swung away behind the pilotless craft.

Only three boats reached shore. One of them carried Captain Crane, another was commanded by Lieutenant John Smith of New York, his executive officer, and the third was loaded with a platoon of D Company machine-gunners under Lieutenant L. G. Hicks of Oregon, and was separated from the others. Concentrated rifle and machine-gun fire met the first two boatloads at the beach. As the ramp of Smith's boat descended, the lieutenant charged across the sand, shouting over his shoulder to his platoon: "Follow me!" It was the classic Marine order, but there are times when even Marines cannot obey it. As the men stumbled from the boat, the Japs brought all of their fire to bear and there was no place to go but down. The lieutenant already had vaulted across

the sand and into the thicket beyond. His platoon edged slowly sideways to join Crane's platoon, which was taking what shelter it could find behind a concrete pier.

It was thus that Lieutenant Smith found himself alone, and miraculously unhit, behind the Japanese lines on Tanambogo. In this terrifying situation, he somehow kept his nerve. Painfully, cautiously, he began circling behind the Jap positions, moving from one scrub of cover to another. Eventually he worked his way back to the thickets that fringed the fiery beach. Under a shadowy palm, Smith spotted a half-concealed figure. "Come on, Marine!" Smith half-whispered, believing one of his own men had gotten inshore and now was lost. The man whirled, bayonet flashing, and Smith shot his first Japanese.

Shaken but not panicked, Smith worked his way across the bullet-sprayed beach.

He found Crane and his own platoon, fighting fiercely to keep their toehold on the island. A lot of time had gone by, but the Marines had not been able to advance from the pier. Hicks' machine-gunners, meanwhile, had set up their guns but, silhouetted by the burning oil, had drawn tremendous Japanese fire and after suffering heavy casualties had withdrawn. The situation was hopeless.

Instead of the "15 Jap snipers" the Parachute Battalion had guessed were on Tanambogo, there were hundreds of first-rate enemy soldiers. The day that had begun so auspiciously was ending in nightmare.

Night had fallen, and under cover of darkness the company began a desperate withdrawal. One boat, taking wounded, got away from the pier. The other was smashed. For the Marines who were left, there was no escape except by wading or swimming, and there had to be covering fire. All through the fearful night a little knot of thirteen

Marines held the pier position, shooting back at the Japs, while their comrades made their way back to Gavutu. The thirteen did not escape until nearly daybreak. B Company had failed to take Tanambogo, but there was no word of blame from the Parachutists or from the Regiment.

Within twenty-four hours, the rest of the Second Division Marines were off the hot ships and into the hot fight. The balance of the First Battalion and the Second Battalion (2/2) were sent to Tulagi to reinforce Edson's hard-pressed Raiders. The Third Battalion (3/2) came to Gavutu, as did C Company of the Second Tank Battalion and A Company of the Second Amphibian Tractor Battalion. The Third Battalion of the Tenth Marines (3/10) dragged its pack howitzers ashore on both Tulagi and Gavutu. The Second Division Marines, who had been officially tagged as "reserve" for the First Marine Division, were now fully committed and at grips with the enemy on Tulagi, Gavutu, and Tanambogo, while on Guadalcanal, the First had scarcely established contact. These, of course, were the fortunes of war, but until Tarawa gave the Second Division a glory all its own, many a Second Division Marine bitterly resented the journalistic tendency to call the Solomons invasion a "First Division show."

The Second Regiment Marines who came to Gavutu and Tulagi the morning of August 8 got a swift initiation into the rigors of war. Although they were not making an assault landing, the landing beaches were far from secure. Jap bullets whined around their boats, and on Gavutu enemy fire from Tanambogo was still pinking the old Lever Brothers' store, which had been taken over as an aid station for the wounded. On the steep hill that rose above the Gavutu beachhead, a Japanese flag still flew, although the Japs had been driven from their positions around it. This flag



THIS IS THE ENEMY the Marines first met on Tulagi, Gavutu and Tanambogo, and afterward all the way across the Pacific. Note the split-toed canvas shoes.

brought grief to K Company of the Third Battalion soon after the Marines disembarked.

As the company reached the hilltop, an American plane dropped a fragmentation bomb on the Jap ensign. The bomb did not knock down the flag, but it killed and wounded several Marines. The enraged survivors hauled down the "meatball" and PFC. Edward Cooke of Missouri fished a small American flag out of his pack. K Company

hoisted it, and for the first time the Stars and Stripes fluttered over soil purchased from the enemy with blood.*

The flag raising had symbolic value, but it probably had less effect on the Marines than the careless gallantry of the sergeant who wrote: "What in hell's the use in worrying?" He was Sergeant Robert E. Bradley of Wisconsin, a member of M Company, 3/2. Bradley was perched on the upstairs balcony of the Lever Brothers' store building, manning a telephone circuit between the balcony OP and M Company mortarmen, when enemy fire tore away his larynx. It was a few minutes later, in the aid station below, that Bradley scribbled his immortal comment on a casualty tag supplied him by Dr. John N. Roberts, a Navy doctor from Arkansas.

But neither the flag raising nor Bradley's inspirational response changed the immediate military situation. The reduction of Tanambogo remained the imperative necessity. How best to do it? Lieutenant Colonel Robert Hunt, whose Third Battalion would have the job, worked out a plan of attack in the temporary command post he had established near the Lever store. He decided to send I Company, less its weapons platoon, by boat to the far end of Tanambogo for an amphibious landing. The attached platoon of C Company of the Second Tank Battalion—two light tanks—would accompany them in lighters. Simultaneously, a platoon of K Company would attempt to storm across the causeway, splitting the Jap defenses and clamping a pincers on the island. It was a good plan, and it worked, but it was not an easy way to take Tanambogo. Colonel Hunt didn't have enough Marines and enough time to do it the easy way.

The climactic battle for this virulent little fly-

* The Japanese flag, which the angry Marines trampled in the mud, later was recovered and now is on display in the Marine Corps museum in San Diego.

speck of an island began in the early afternoon when a Navy destroyer emerged from the cluster of ships in the anchorage area and opened salvo fire on Tanambogo's defenses. On the Gavutu bluffs overlooking the causeway, members of M Company's machine-gun platoon had been busy for some hours digging in their .30 calibre weapons in positions that would cover K Company's charge. The day, like the day before and most of the days to come, was almost unbearably hot and moist, though clear.

At 1620 Captain William G. Tinsley, a tough Kentuckian, led I Company onto the oil-and-blood-stained beach and Lieutenant Robert Sweeney of Illinois shepherded his two light tanks ashore. At the same moment, the K Company platoon began inching down the long, exposed causeway. The Japs fought back on both fronts. Their machine guns swung back and forth across the causeway like flaming windshield wipers. One Marine dropped and then another and another, but the survivors did not falter. The M Company gunners were answering the Jap fire, and Lieutenant J. J. Donahue kept his men moving forward. As the first few Marines reached the Tanambogo end of the causeway, the Japs rose from their holes to meet them. For a moment the Marines were engaged with bayonets, and the battle was hand to hand, man against man and steel against steel.

A few hundred yards away Tinsley's company was meeting the same kind of Banzai opposition. No Japanese expected or desired to survive. As Sweeney, the tank commander, drove his two egg-shell monsters inland, screaming Japs ran at the tanks with pipes and crowbars to jam the treads. Sweeney's guns were all going, and so were the guns of his companion tank, but there was a painful lack of room to maneuver. Rising from the turret to reconnoiter, Sweeney took a bullet through the head. The tank stalled and the crewmen fought



TULAGI HARBOR from another vantage point. In securing these shores, the Marines gained for the U.S. one of the best natural anchorages in the South Seas. Tulagi was the British seat of government in the Solomons.

their way out of it against Japs who were swinging knives and even a pitchfork. Meanwhile, the other tank had stuck between two coconut palms. Its trapped crew was confronted by an equally horrifying attack, with gruesome trimmings. The Japs fired the tank with gasoline and set upon the desperate Marines with knives and bayonets. Two Marines died and two others survived severe burns and multiple knife wounds. But the next day the bodies of forty-two Japs were counted within the sweep of the burned tank's guns.

Despite the loss of the tanks and heavy casualties in his own company, Tinsley held the beachhead and the K Company Marines, having successfully carried out the war's first bayonet charge, dug in for the night on the other end of the island. During the hours of darkness Marine patrols filtered across the island and shot up the Jap warehouses that were concealed in the palm groves. In the first light of August 9, they completed the mop-up, with the help of Marine artillery. The day before I Battery of 3/10 had got its guns em-

placed on Gavutu. Now the weary Tanambogo Marines were able to call for support from their own famed pack howitzers. These shells, hurled from Gavutu to Tanambogo, were the first fired offensively in the war, although H Battery of the same battalion was in action almost simultaneously, firing on the islet of Makambo.

While 3/2 was cleaning up Gavutu and Tanambogo (the Parachutists had been relieved from all but defensive missions), 1/2 and 2/2 had been catching hell on Tulagi, in support of the Raiders. No Japanese had surrendered. Instead, they drew into the honeycomb of caves patiently hollowed from the Tulagi bluffs and carried on a hopeless but relentless counter-fire. The Second Regiment battalions, under Lieutenant Colonel R. E. Hill and Lieutenant Colonel O. K. Pressley, had been landed to help dig the Japs out of these caves. It was slow and agonizing work. The Marines had not yet developed the efficient flamethrower-demolition teams that simplified the purification of strongpoints in later campaigns. On Tulagi the Japs were blasted out by frontal assault, or by satchel charges which members of the Second Pioneer Battalion attached to long poles.

After the fury of the first forty hours, the Marines on Gavutu and Tanambogo were faced with a similar mop-up. The problem and its solution was typified by the activities of a lean Wisconsin gunnery sergeant named Orle S. Bergner. Sergeant Bergner, who happened to be on Tanambogo, moved almost casually among the Jap caves and emplacements, and systematically blew them in. Ignoring the snipers, intent only on his explosives, Bergner inspired his comrades and won from them the designation "the one-man stick of dynamite." He later was recommended for the Medal of Honor.

The Solomons invasion had begun on a Friday.

As far as Tulagi, Gavutu and Tanambogo were concerned, the issue had been removed from doubt by Saturday night, the battles won except for the bitter-end snipers. On Guadalcanal the First Marine Division had occupied the airfield and pushed up the coast from Lunga point to Kukum and beyond, still without consequential opposition. Saturday night should have been a period of grateful rest, of sleep for men who had not slept much in three days. It was not.

The early hours of the evening were full of menacing sounds. The caves of Tulagi, Gavutu and Tanambogo still harbored a few live and lethal Japs. Their occasional bullets whined through the scrub where the Marines had finally found time to dig foxholes. Mosquitoes swarmed in the damp darkness, and Marines who had been too busy to notice them the night before now were acutely sensitive to their needling attack. Toward midnight, all hell broke loose in the waters northwest of Tulagi, around little Savo Island. Flares lighted the horizon and the sound of heavy naval guns came rumbling over the sea. There were flashes and explosions and then new salvos. No one on the beach knew what was happening. This, of course, only made the racket offshore all the more frightening.

When the night quieted, the Marines began to feel a new wetness in the air. It was wet enough at best. Rain spattered down, then poured, then became a deluge, filling the newly-dug holes and turning the jungle loam into slimy mud. When the dawn finally came it was welcome as a woman, but in the first light the Marines looked at one another with foreboding eyes. The thunder of the naval guns had been no bombardment, but a sea battle. Who had won?

The Japs had won. They had come down the slot from the northern Solomons, anticipated but undetected. Rounding Savo Island, they had found

two Allied cruiser and destroyer groups acting as a screen for the transports near Sealark Channel. Earlier on Saturday, a Japanese air raid had fired the transport *George F. Elliott*, and it was still burning brightly when the enemy task force came within range. The U.S. warships were nicely silhouetted by the flames, and the Japs opened fire on very visible targets. The result was disaster. The enemy cruisers gunned down three U.S. heavy cruisers, the *Astoria*, *Quincy* and *Vincennes* and the Australian *HMAS Canberra* in a quarter hour of savage salvo fire. They seriously damaged the cruiser *Chicago*. It was the worst licking the Navy had taken since Pearl Harbor. But for the failure of the Japs to press southeastward into the transport area, it might well have ended the Solomons offensive.

All day long on that muddy Sunday that followed the First Battle of Savo Island, the Marines tried to "get the word." It was not forthcoming in any verifiable detail, but for once the facts topped the scuttlebutt. There were hasty conferences on the command ships in the transport area, and important decisions were made. The Marines did not learn about these until the next morning. In the meantime, there was work to do. The islets of Makambo, Mbangui, Kakomtambu and Songonangong (the Marines called this one "Sing Song") were only coconut tufts sticking out of the blue waters, but they might conceal a good many enemy soldiers. Lieutenant Colonel Pressley's Second Battalion was split into small groups, boated, and sent to clean them out.

Going into the Solomons invasion, the Second Marines had been sustained by their spiritual inheritance from the old Sixth Regiment and from the Corps. On Gavutu they had begun creating their own legendry, in the exploits of men like Sergeant Bradley and Sergeant Bergner. Now, on little Mbangui Island, a squad under Gunnery Ser-

geant Jessie R. Glover gave the regiment another legend for future bivouacs and bootcamps.

Glover was a professional Marine, a bull-voiced veteran of many campaigns. He led his small squad into a tiny clearing in Mbangui's thick jungle. At the far end was a native hut. The Marines hesitated. They had just come out of the battle for Tulagi, and some of them were still shaky from this first experience under fire. Were there Japs in the hut, waiting, with a machine-gun ready? Glover surveyed his hesitant men with reproach. Then he picked up an extra handful of grenades and started across the clearing, alone.

The leathery sergeant kicked open the door of the hut, pitching grenades as he entered. Out of the flying mats and straw, between the explosions, the amazed Marines of his squad could hear Glover's joyous bellow:

"Good morning, you bastards!" Wham!

"Good morning, you bastards!" Wham! Wham!

The sergeant's squad hurried to join him. They found Glover in the midst of the wreckage, viewing his handiwork with satisfaction. He was unhurt and unruffled, and he was surrounded by what was left of six Japanese soldiers.

With the small islands mopped up, the Marines had a brief breathing spell. In some units the casualties had been heavy, but the Second Regiment had not fared too badly, nor had 3/10. The roster of achievements was impressive. Colonel Arthur's Marines had reconnoitered Florida, helped take Gavutu and Tulagi, captured Tanambogo, and cleared out the neighboring islands. Lieutenant Colonel M. L. Curry's 3/10 had provided valuable artillery support. The Second Division units had lost 56 killed, wounded, or missing.

They had helped dispose of about 1,400 Japanese.

In some later Pacific engagements, fighting divisions were landed, engaged, and reboated—victorious—in as little as a week. The Solomons were not like that. Only the Regimental headquarters, battalion rear echelons, and a few of the attached units escaped the stinking shores of Tulagi and Gavutu, and these only because of the naval disaster of Savo Island. As early as Saturday afternoon Rear Admiral Richmond Kelly Turner, the amphibious commander, had advised General Vandegrift on Guadalcanal that naval forces might have to withdraw temporarily for supplies of gasoline and ammunition. The Savo defeat made the withdrawal imperative—with four cruisers on the bottom and no battleship support, the transports were left naked. Turner decided on Sunday to get out and to get out fast.

It was a hard decision. It meant leaving the bulk of the First and Second Divisions on a hostile shore without adequate supplies of food or the prospect of quick reinforcement. But to re-embark the Marines and abandon the hard-won beachheads would be admission of disgraceful defeat, and might set back America's offensive months or years. To risk enough time to unload supplies and material still aboard the transports would be to invite destruction by the "Tokyo Express," as the fast-running Jap task forces came to be known. His decision made, Turner didn't wait to disembark the troops still aboard. In the darkness of Sunday evening the transports and their surviving escort vessels lifted anchor and sailed for Espiritu Santo in the New Hebrides, 557 miles to the south. Few Marines except those aboard and the top commanders ashore knew they were going.

The next morning everybody knew. In the dawn light the Marines on Tulagi and Gavutu and Guadalcanal looked out on Sealark Channel with unbelieving eyes. The ships were gone—the ships that were the last link with home, the last avenue

of escape if escape became necessary, the promise of help if help were needed, the source of supply for food and cigarettes, the haven for the desperately wounded, the proof that no matter how perilous the night, the flag was still there. At last one Marine said, in a soft, puzzled, half-frightened voice: "By God, they've hauled ass!"

Among the units departing with Colonel Arthur and his regimental headquarters staff were C Company of the Second Tank Battalion, A Company of the Second Engineer Battalion, and C Company of the Second Service Battalion. After the loss of the two tanks on Tanambogo, the Marines had decided wisely that new and more extensive training in jungle tank warfare was desirable. The Engineers had not been landed at all, except for a few who went ashore on Guadalcanal to help the First Division with water supply. Both the engineers and the service battalion Marines had manned the ships' guns against Japanese air raids during the three days off Guadalcanal.

Blue Monday in the Solomons! For the Marines ashore, the feeling was something like that of the "battling bastards of Bataan"—no mama, no papa, no Uncle Sam, and certainly no flight pay. Not knowing the strategic necessities involved, many of the Marines were bitter at the Navy's "desertion." They never quite forgave Kelly Turner for the grim two weeks that followed.

Most of the Marines had come ashore with only seventy-two hours rations. The seventy-two hours were almost up, and to the weary members of the Second and Tenth Regiments they had seemed a slow half-century. Of the scrubbed, neatly shaved, freshly uniformed young men who had scrambled down the cargo nets only three days before, no trace now remained. Some of them lay dead and still unburied among the jungles and caves or in the purling surf. More twisted and turned on the



THE FIRST TO DIE from the Second Division in defense of their country and to defeat the enemy were the Marines buried in this joint Marine-Navy cemetery on Tulagi. Native workman is a typical Melanesian.

blood-stained canvas litters that serve as hospital beds for those who are wounded in battle. The rest were bone-tired, their uniforms stiff with mud and sweat, their eyes lost in the red sockets that disfigured every stubble-and-grime-blackened face.

The departure of the ships had eliminated any chance of relief, if there had ever been one. The Marines had no choice now but to settle down in the island nests befouled by battle and prepare to defend them. The Second Division Marines were placed under the overall command of Brigadier

General William H. Rupertus, who had established headquarters on Tulagi. In the reshuffling that began at once, 1/2 and 2/2, with attached units, were given responsibility for Tulagi; headquarters and K and M Companies of 3/2 were assigned to Gavutu; I Company and I Battery were established on Tanambogo and L Company was set up on Makambo. The Raiders and Parachutists were moved across the channel to Guadalcanal. Small detachments were sent to Florida and the other nearby islands. This network of islands was

to be "home" to the Second Division Marines for several weeks, and a hell of a home it was.

Of the estimated 1,400 Japs killed in the fighting, only those buried alive in caves were beyond the reach of the tropic sun. The bodies bloated and burst and a million maggots crawled over and through them. On Tanambogo, dead pigs added to the overpowering stench. The myriad flies swarmed and multiplied, feeding on the dead and on broken cases of Japanese canned fish. The Marines had had no time to dig latrines during the battle, and the flies circled from dead Japanese to rotting fish to mounds of human excrement and then landed lightly—but long enough—on food in transit from a Marine's ration kit to his mouth. The doctors of A Company of the Second Medical Battalion, who had served valiantly during the fighting, suddenly were swamped with orders for bismuth and paregoric. The sweltering sun aggravated the complaint, and in the month after the landing few Marines escaped the violence of a dysentery that sapped the strength and wracked the bones with burning fever.

Despite this misery, the Marines were frantically busy. Patrols ranged the islands, on guard against infiltration by Japs who had escaped to Florida by swimming. The job of flushing the Jap remnants out of the caves went on, day on day. Along the beaches, other Marines dug trenches and emplacements and installed guns against the day when the Japs might try an amphibious counter-attack. Japanese weapons were salvaged and captured materials were used to build shelters and to reinforce the defense bulwarks. Sanitary parties were organized to carry out the revolting chore of burying dead Japs, and the tragic duty of laying away the Marine dead.

In one respect, the Marines on Tulagi, Gavutu and Tanambogo were fortunate. Their battle loot included some stores of tinned goods, both Japa-

nese and Australian. The Marines ate fish and crab and even peaches and pineapple from the Jap storehouses, but when these were exhausted they finally were reduced to one can of C ration per day—one-third of normal. This was enough to keep them alive, but not healthy. And for days they were tortured by a desperate craving for cigarettes—a frustration that transcended their worries about Jap counter-attack until the night of August 19.

Throughout their first "orphaned" week, the Marines had been plagued by occasional enemy air raids. They soon became air raid sophisticates, disdaining the alerts and gambling that no bombs would fall near them. But on the night of the 19th the Japanese made their long-expected sortie by sea, and the Marines got in their holes and stayed in them. War has many and varied terrors, but few equal the paralyzing horror of a naval shelling. The Japs had major calibre guns trained on Tulagi and Gavutu that night, and there was nothing on the beach heavy enough to answer. The Marines could only scrunch lower and lower in the shallow trenches and hope and, perhaps, pray.

The Tokyo Express had brought no baggage or freight cars. When morning came at last the Japs raced back up the slot. Two days later, to the infinite relief of every Marine in the Solomons, the U.S. Navy returned with the Second Regimental Headquarters, the rest of 3/10, and most important of all, food and cigarettes. The dreadful fortnight was over, but the Marines' tenure on Tulagi and Gavutu was not. The days still dragged in steaming monotony, and the nights were hellish with Anopheles mosquitoes, sowing the malaria that later actually endangered the Guadalcanal campaign. The word came across from the 'Canal of major actions in which the First Division was engaged, but the Second Regiment got no orders to move—to a pleasant place or an active one.



AS A U.S. BASE, Tulagi harbor proved invaluable. This painting by a Navy artist shows American warships at anchor. At lower right are some of the famed PT boats, for a time our principal weapon against Jap fleet.

September came to Tulagi and brought a sudden quickening of tension. A Jap destroyer, arrogantly patrolling the slot, shelled a YP boat that served as a ferry between Tulagi and Guadalcanal. Two Second Regiment weapons company Marines, PFC. Gerard B. Nevle and PFC. J. Murphy, who were attached to the YP, rescued several passengers under fire and Nevle finally ran the craft aground when its skipper and crewmen went over the side. Both Marines received the Navy cross. Machine gunners on the Tulagi shore suffered some casualties from Jap shells that overshot their mark. The "scoop" said the Japs were moving down again, this time with reinforcements.

During the night of September 13-14, the Marines on Tulagi, Gavutu and Florida could hear,

faintly across the channel, the sound of heavy firing on Guadalcanal. Flares appeared in the distance, and the coughing drone of Japanese engines came from the hooded sky. Rumors blossomed: the Japs had landed thousands of men and were attacking; the issue was in doubt; the Navy was ready to pull out again. At daybreak, all these guesses were given flesh and body by an urgent order transferring 3/2 to Guadalcanal as First Division reserve. The members of 1/2 and 2/2 watching their comrades churn away in the lumbering landing craft, were convinced that blood and perhaps death awaited them.

The "scoop" had been very nearly right. The Japs had indeed landed reinforcements and they had in truth attacked. But along the high rise of

Guadalcanal, above the flat plain where the Tenaru and Ilu rivers flow sluggishly to the sea, "Red Mike" Edson's Raiders had stopped the Japanese assault and thrown it back. This was the engagement that became famous as the "Battle of Bloody Ridge."

By the time Lieutenant Colonel Hunt's Third Battalion disembarked on Guadalcanal, the situation had eased. It was a fortnight before 3/2 was moved into the line, and nearly a month before its members saw violent action. The Third Battalion was the first infantry unit of the Second Division to move to "Guadal," but a few Second Division specialists had landed there on D Day. Besides the engineers who went in with the First Division to aid in water supply, a detail of eighteen men from the Second Pioneer Battalion under Lieutenant Harold A. Hayes assisted the First Division Pioneers in organizing the beach, then moved over to Gavutu.

September also brought changes in the Division's destiny in the faraway United States. On the first of that month, the Division's new commander, Major General John Marston, who had led the Brigade in Iceland, sailed from San Diego for New Zealand with a small advance echelon. Marston took with him Brigadier General Alphonse de Carre as assistant division commander, and Colonel Leo D. Hermle, who had succeeded

Colonel Keller E. Rockey as division chief of staff.

General Marston's appointment and subsequent sailing was of only nominal interest to the First and Second Battalions, still stranded on Tulagi and Gavutu. They were more concerned with their own dismal (and apparently perpetual) assignment as garrison forces. All through September a popular rumor grew that army troops were en route to relieve them. Actually, Army forces were not then available, but the Marines were not beyond converting wishful thinking into wishful conviction. When the Army did not come and day after endless day went by, the Tulagi and Gavutu Marines wrapped up their woes in a song.

A one-verse refrain, sung to the British Army song, *Bless 'Em All*, the song of Tulagi combined the Marines' determined feeling of superiority over the Army, their half-jealous contempt of such "morale builders" as movies and camp shows, and the seeming nearness of General MacArthur's troops in Australia. The Marines sang:

*They sent for the Army to come to Tulagi,
But Douglas MacArthur said "No!"
He said, "There's a reason—it isn't the season,
Besides, there is no U. S. O."*

Before the year was out, they'd sent for all the rest of the Second Marine Division to come to Guadalcanal, and there was no U. S. O. there, either.

Chapter Three



AN OBSERVATION POST IN THE
FRONT LINES

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CONDITION “BLACK” ON GUADALCANAL

IN THE DARK DAYS THE DIVISION HELPS HOLD OUR BEACHHEAD

The Marines of the Third Battalion, who stomped ashore at Lunga point amid the uncertainties of September 14, were a piratical-looking crew. They had come to Florida and Gavutu a month and six days earlier as neat and tidy novices. They came to Guadalcanal as sun-leathered veterans. To a man, they had leaned down, their muscles tight-

ening and hardening. The once new and stiffly sized combat uniforms, of green or spotted cotton, had faded and frayed from salt water washing. Beards and moustaches were plentiful, for shaving in brackish water out of a steel helmet, without a mirror, had become one of the expendable refinements. The Marines' hair was ragged, or their

skulls had been shaven clean. Some of them were wasted with dysentery and others were feverish with malaria. Yet, despite disease and disillusion, these were better combat troops than the eager youths of the August landings, whom they now so remotely resembled. In subduing the last remnants of opposition on Gavutu, in securing Tanambogo, in patrolling Florida and garrisoning Tulagi, the Battalion had become both battle and jungle wise. It would need all its battle and jungle conditioning on Guadalcanal.

The salad days on that island hadn't lasted long. Although the First Marine Division had secured its primary objective—the airfield which was renamed for Major Loften R. Henderson, a Marine flier killed at the Battle of Midway—without major opposition, the departure of the transports on August 9 had made expansion of the perimeter impossible. The Marines were short on supplies and they were short of men. The First Division had landed with only two infantry regiments, the First and the Fifth. The Parachute Battalion was on Gavutu, while Edson's Raiders were on Tulagi. The Division's other Regiment, the Seventh Marines, was still helping the Eighth Regiment garrison the Samoan Islands.

This didn't leave much of a force to throw into an island the size of Guadalcanal. Lying northwest to southeast, the "Canal" is ninety miles long and twenty-five miles across the belly. That was where the First Division had hit—smack in the belly, midway from tip to tip, on the island's north shore. But even by mid-September the Marine perimeter made only a teaspoon-sized dip into the Jap-infested rain forest. The Marines had the airfield, true—and on August 20 Marine fighter pilots had flown in from the light carrier *Long Island* to begin a long and often bitter but often glorious campaign against the enemy in the skies. But Japs still lurked to the east, beyond the Tenaru River,

and there were many more to the northwest, beyond the Matanikau (*see map*). And, after the disastrous August naval battle off Savo Island, the Japs had poured in more troops, on each side of the beachhead.

When enemy naval forces came down the night of August 19–20 to shell Tulagi and Guadalcanal, the Japs in the jungle were almost ready to attack. The next night they came at the Marines guarding the eastern flank. The First Division met the onslaught with rifle and machine-gun fire. In a fierce night of fighting ("The Battle of the Tenaru") the Marines trapped the Japs in barbed-wire entanglements and slaughtered 900 of them. The rest fell back. A few days later on August 24, in the naval Battle of the Eastern Solomons, U.S. Navy planes from the *Saratoga* and the *Enterprise* and Marine dive-bombers from Henderson Field joined to repulse a powerful Japanese naval force in the open sea north of Guadalcanal. This victory temporarily dissuaded the enemy from risking heavy and helpless troop transports within range of our planes. But it did not stop attempts at reinforcement—now the Japs sneaked in by night in destroyers, cruisers and even barges. They got enough men ashore, in a fortnight, to mount the offensive at "Bloody Ridge," an offensive fought on the high inland ground between the Tenaru and Lunga rivers, and pushed as before from the east.

This was the attack that had pulled 3/2 off Tulagi, a howling assault that had dwindled to a whimper when the Third Battalion finished unloading at Lunga. But even though the Tulagi Marines were not immediately needed, they were more than welcome. Disease as much as enemy action had weakened the First Division, and there were portions of the perimeter where the Marine lines were perilously thin. When, on September 18, the First Division's missing Seventh Regiment



A WOUNDED MARINE is carried through one of Guadalcanal's sniper-infested groves by his buddies, whose faces show the strain of battle. Two other Marines (*left*) utilize the scant cover of a coco palm.

arrived from British Samoa, its members were moved out to the defense lines at once. And four days later, on September 22, 3/2 also took its place on the Marine line which faced west toward the Matanikau River.

For several days everything had been as quiet as Guadalcanal ever got, which was a far cry from the quietness of security. While there were no concerted attacks, out yonder in the jungle, mov-

ing behind the broad green leaves and sneaking, monkey-like, up the great rain-forest hardwoods, the enemy remained. Bullets still snarled near the tent of Major General Alexander A. Vandegrift, commander of the First Division, and on the perimeter lines and among the patrols that continuously probed Jap territory quick, savage battles flared between small, isolated squads. The Matanikau "line" was a strain, but the Third Bat-



LIKE A WRECKED SHIP, this Japanese tank sinks slowly into the sandy beach at Guadalcanal after Second Division Marine gunners disabled it. In distance (right) is Savo Island.



HENDERSON FIELD was the principal objective of the early assault troops. It was taken quickly, although it was under fire for months.

talion Marines were experienced jungle fighters by now. They picked off the occasional Japanese who tried to infiltrate them. They lost no men. It

was a holding job, and the men of 3/2 held.

But Guadalcanal could not be won by holding. Eventually, we would have to cross the brown, twisting Matanikau River and engage the main body of Jap troops in the northwest section of the island. In the early stages of the campaign the First Division had made one stab at the Matanikau and had been stopped. Now, in late September, the Raiders joined with a Fifth Regiment battalion and tried it again, and failed again. These defeats had value as lessons. When, a fortnight after the second repulse, the Marines got set for a new effort, they had more troops and a better plan. The members of 3/2 drew a key assignment in what was to become celebrated as the "Third Battle of the Matanikau."

To get into position for the jump-off, the command began moving some units into the ridges early on October 7. The plan was a simple adaptation of a strategy Lee had used at Chickahominy in the American Civil War. Two battalions of the First Division were to attack across the lower Matanikau, where it empties into the "Slot." Their mission was to get a bridgehead on the west bank of the river and hold it. Meanwhile, further inland where the river tumbles down among Guadalcanal's sharply rising ridges, 3/2 and a special scouts-snipers group was to join two more First Division battalions in crossing the stream. Once on the western bank, this group of Marines would wheel northward toward the sea, following the Matanikau down to its outlet and a junction with the other Marine force. If it worked, it would destroy the Japs' tenaciously held west-bank defense line and might envelop a considerable number of enemy troops.

Some of the Marines had to hike ten to fifteen miles to get to the jump-off point. This was especially true of the inland group that included the Third Battalion. But by nightfall of October 8,

the Marines were atop the bare, grassy ridges which looked down on the precipitate draws and dank jungle that hid the upper Matanikau. Across from them, hazy in the twilight, were other ravines and ridges where the Japanese watched and waited. The next morning the Marines started down the cliffs, into the valleys * where the trails were only as wide as a man's shoulders and where the heat became deep and windless and smothering. At the Matanikau, where the Japs had planned an attack of their own for the next day, the enemy was ready.

For tactical purposes, 3/2 had been placed under the command of Colonel William J. Whaling, as part of his unique "group." The Whaling Group advanced along the ridges below Mt. Austin to "Nippon Bridge," a span over the upper river. On the right, the Seventh Marines pushed to the river bank and there met fierce resistance. (In the day's action the Seventh Marines killed nearly 700 enemy troops.)

Except for the mud and jungle, the Marines of 3/2 at first had little trouble. Whaling's forces got to the Nippon Bridge quickly and crossed the Matanikau, wheeling to the right for a push downstream toward the sea. The trap was closing, and the Japanese now began to scramble desperately to escape it. They had allies in the grim terrain through which the Marines fought. By mid-afternoon we had cleaned out the western ridges, but the bulk of the Jap troops had fled. While there is no exact estimate of the number of enemy troops originally defending the Matanikau, the number was large. The Japs had been steadily increasing their forces in this area, in preparation for an attack. The October 9 offensive not only drove them out of their bridgehead, but forestalled a serious

* The look and feel of the Third Battle of the Matanikau has been described brilliantly by novelist John Hersey in *Into the Valley*, an account of the attack and subsequent forced withdrawal of a First Division machine-gun company.



A WELL-GUARDED BATH is taken by Second Division Marines on Guadalcanal. Machine-gunner is on lookout for Jap snipers on the opposite shore.

assault on our own. Between them, the Seventh Marines and the Whaling Group disposed of more than 900 Japs in the assault, against Marine losses

of sixty-five killed and 125 wounded. The Third Battalion had six dead and twenty-four wounded.

While the Third Battalion was helping push the Japs west of the Matanikau, another battalion of the Second Marine regiment got its first taste of Guadalcanal. This was 1/2 under Lieutenant Colonel Hill. The First was still on Tulagi, still grimly waiting for the Army, when it was ordered to raid Japanese positions around Aola Bay, many miles to the east of the main battle area on Guadalcanal. On the afternoon of October 9 the Marines improvised a sort of sea-going freight train to take the Battalion across Sealark Channel. Four Higgins boats were strung out behind each of two YP's, linked by cables. The faster YP boats were expected to give the slow landing craft a needed boost in speed, in crossing a channel that still was Japanese water. The theory was better than the performance.

As the little flotilla plowed across the channel in the gathering dusk, the unpredictable tropic winds kicked up a nasty sea. The Higgins boats, ordinarily almost unswampable, were pulled low at the bow by the two cables. Just short of the Guadalcanal shore, one of them nosed too deep and the sea came in with a rush. The combat-clad Marines had no time to shed their heavy gear, and eighteen men were drowned. This tragic loss sent morale down in a way that combat losses never did. The rest of the Marines digging in for the night on the shores of Aola Bay were moody and depressed. But the next morning, as the Battalion prepared to close in on its objectives, the *esprit* came back, stimulated by the very precariousness of the expedition.

The battalion's mission was to clean out the last survivors of the Battles of the Tenaru River and Bloody Ridge—Japs who had escaped those actions and members of the rear echelon. There

were not many, but they had become a nuisance to the First Division by keeping up sniper pressure on the perimeter and by guiding enemy landing craft ashore. Intelligence indicated they were bivouacked at the village of Koilotumaria and at Garabusa, some five miles around the ragged shores of Aola Bay.

Koilotumaria proved both easy and unfruitful. The Marines found only one Jap, an officer who was killed resisting capture. But C Company which had been detached to attack Garabusa, got a hot greeting. As the company moved in through the bush, its members spread out to encircle and contain the enemy. Suddenly a Jap rifle snapped, and Captain Richard Stafford of Missouri, the company commander, pitched to the ground. He had been shot dead. The company did not falter, but as Stafford's senior platoon leader took command, the first enemy shot became the signal for a fusillade. It was wild fire, whistling through the leaves and splintering tree trunks, but it was dangerous because the Marines could not spot its source. They needed a "point-of-fire"—a man willing to expose himself in order to concentrate the snipers' shots and thus reveal the Jap positions.

It takes a very brave man to offer himself as a living target. The First Battalion had such a man in a rangy Texan named Hurshall W. Hooker, a private first class and a sharpshooter. Hooker moved out of the sheltering tangle of bush and brush, into the aisles between the trees where the tropical sunlight illuminated him. He walked forward slowly, shoulders hunched, his hands gripping his rifle, relaxed but alert. A Jap rifle splatted and a bullet flicked across Hooker's shoulder. While its strange, hollow hum was still in his ears, Hooker fired back. A Jap body pitched jerkily out of a distant treetop. Snap! Another Jap shot. Wham! Hooker's rifle answered again, and again a sniper came tumbling down.

The company was moving in fast, now, their rifles forming a chorus behind Hooker's. They charged into the camp clearing and in a short, savage battle slew the trapped enemy soldiers. Besides killing thirty Japanese, the company captured an anti aircraft battery, bundles of maps and documents, and one prisoner—a talkative Japanese lieutenant. Their only casualty was Captain Stafford. PFC. Hooker won the first of two Silver Stars.

The Koilotumaria and Garabusa attacks were intended as a hit-run raid—1/2 had made no permanent escape from Tulagi. In their two and one half days on Guadalcanal, however, they had carried out their mission effectively. Some Japs had been killed, the rest had been dispersed and their bases destroyed. The captured intelligence material was to prove useful. But the battalion's mission hadn't quite ended. While most of its members reboated for the trip back to Tulagi, a patrol of eighty-eight volunteers under Captain Thomas Leinweber of Oregon faded into the jungle. The patrol's destination was the First Division beachhead, some twenty miles to the west of Aola Bay. All of those miles were in Japanese territory. Four surprising days later the lieutenant brought his men in, safe and reasonably sound. They had scoured the intervening miles, destroying enemy supply and ammunition caches and wrecking any other installations that seemed likely to be of use to the Japanese.

The First Battalion raid, coinciding with the Third Battle of the Matanikau, considerably enlarged the Marines' sphere of security on Guadalcanal. The expanding beachhead now reached from the shore inland to the first major rises of the Kavo Mountains; it extended from west of the Matanikau to well east of the Tenaru. Although a tight perimeter could not be maintained on so



THE MARINES' ALLIES included these two Melanesian youths. Here they make throat-cutting sign to show their opinion of the Nips.

large a front, the possibility of a surprise Japanese attack from an unexpected quarter had been lessened. Snipers could and did infiltrate, but they were more of a harassment to tension-weary nerves than actual danger to the beachhead.

This improvement in the ground situation was counter-balanced in the next fortnight by one of the most savage and sustained sea and air offensives the Japanese mounted during the whole Pacific war. The Japs were a long way from giving up, and despite the magnificent efforts of the little group of Marine fliers on Guadalcanal (and of the Seabees and Engineers who worked around the clock to keep Henderson Field operative), the enemy still had superiority in the air and control



A DEAD JAPANESE lies huddled against a sharp boulder in a Guadalcanal thicket laced by trailing vines. He was killed while fleeing a Marine patrol, and there was no time or opportunity to bury him.

of the confined waters of the Solomons. The tempo of Jap air attacks had risen steadily through the first days of October. The Marines guessed accurately that a new landing must be in the offing, and on October 11 a Japanese naval force was discovered moving down on Cape Esperance, the northern tip of Guadalcanal. At the same time enemy planes came in with furious and continuous attacks.

The Marines on Tulagi had what amounted to grandstand seats for the Jap air offensive. Since the enemy was primarily interested in knocking

out U.S. airpower, Tulagi drew only occasional and incidental fire. Members of 1/2 and 2/2 (some of them just back from Aola) and I Battery of 3/10 perched on Hill 185 and watched the show. With them were some excited new spectators who had missed all but the opening phases of the Battle for the Solomons.

On the same day that the First Battalion left for Aola—October 9—700 members of the Second Regiment's rear echelon arrived at Tulagi from Espiritu Santo. Most of them had been there ever since Kelly Turner took the transports south on



A CAPTURED JAPANESE awaits interrogation, surrounded by members of Marine patrol who found him in an abandoned hospital area well beyond U.S. lines. Captured Japs usually talked freely.

✓ August 9. They had not wasted their time. As reports from the north told of the need for specialized jungle techniques, the Espiritu Marines had fanned out through the New Hebrides jungle to practice them. For these maneuvers the various elements were linked together and trained as a Raider Battalion, although as it turned out they were never used in that capacity. On Tulagi, they were getting a preview of life as it was being lived in the Solomon Islands. These new arrivals included the Regimental Headquarters and Service Company; the Regimental Weapons Company; G

Battery of 3/10; the rear echelons of 1/2, 2/2, and 3/2; A Company of the Second Pioneer Battalion; and the first platoon of H Company of the Second Amphibian Tractor Battalion.

Now, on October 11, these new Marines were to experience a feeling that the old-timers knew well—the sense of helpless confusion that always afflicts troops ashore while a night-time naval battle is in progress. That evening a U.S. cruiser force knifed into the “slot” and moved up to Savo to meet the Jap task force which had been reported enroute south. Between Cape Esperance and Savo

at about midnight the U.S. cruisers "crossed the T" on the Tokyo Express. The Battle of Cape Esperance was short and sharp, and it ended in clearcut American victory. The Jap remnants limped north. The enemy had lost one cruiser and three destroyers. We had lost one destroyer. But we also had shot ourselves out. The Navy was not prepared for action the following night, and the Japs were. They began with a heavy land-based artillery barrage against Henderson Field. They then brought their real naval might to bear. The Japs sailed battleships and cruisers into the waters near Savo Island and opened up on the Guadalcanal beachhead. No Marine who lived through that night will ever forget it. No Marine who did not can fully imagine it, or have it adequately described. All that can be said is that the Japs bombarded for eighty minutes with everything they had, from destroyers' five-inch guns to the fourteen-inch rifles of battleships, and that waves of bombers came over at the same time, and that the heavy artillery west of the Matanikau also was zeroed in on the Henderson Field area. The morning after, the Marines were dazed and shaken. But coming up through Sealark Channel the Guadalcanal veterans spotted a new convoy of ships, American ships, and they brought as much good news as the Japs had bad. They were full to the gunwales with soldiers.

"They sent for the Army to come to Tulagi"—The Army came to Guadalcanal instead, on the grim afternoon of October 13. The 164th Infantry Regiment landed at Lunga point during an enemy air attack, and the "doggies" dug in just in time to take a new enemy naval shelling. The next morning the Marines and the Army were faced with fresh Jap troops. Enough Jap transports had gotten in, behind the bombardment armadas and despite Marine air attack, to land to the equivalent

of a full division, reinforced, on the beaches fifteen miles west of the Matanikau.

For the next ten days the Japanese air offensive continued unabated, while the Japanese commander, Lieutenant General Hyakutake, planned his attack. The Marine and Army forces could only watch and wait. With their air support constantly dwindling as the Japs mauled Henderson Field, U.S. forces lacked the men and machines to try to beat the Nips to the punch. The night of October 23 the Japanese assault began against the defenses along the Matanikau. First Division Marines repulsed it, killing many Japs. But this was not the main effort. Hyakutake had managed to filter part of his force all the way around the perimeter to the east, and the next night—October 24th—the Japs attacked on a narrow front below "Bloody Ridge." A battalion of the Seventh Marines and one of the 164th Infantry met the enemy thrust. The fighting was savage. Before morning, another Army battalion moved up to reinforce the besieged Americans. The Japs pulled back to regroup, and Japanese warships scoured Sealark Channel and then bombarded the Marine and Army forces through most of Sunday.

It was apparent that this was a supreme Japanese effort. The Marine artillery had given the defending forces superb support, but there is no such thing as too much artillery. The command called for I Battery of the Tenth Marines, still on Tulagi and thirsty for targets. With the channel festering with Jap warships, and the sky full of Jap planes, it wasn't an easy job to move even the short twenty miles. I Battery loaded its "pea shooters" aboard lighters and made a run for it. Just before they reached Guadalcanal, a Jap destroyer picked them up and opened fire. One of the lighters went down, taking two men with it. The miracle was that any got across. That night they were needed.



JAP 'KNEE' MORTAR, which became famous throughout world, is fired by enemy soldier. Actually mortar is spring-actuated grenade thrower, and is fired from the ground, not the knee. Latter fallacy resulted from mortar's curved baseplate.

The Japs attacked again, almost in the same place, and now 3/2 got into the battle. Lieutenant Colonel Hunt led his companies through the Seventh Marines and 164th Infantry positions to the thoroughly wired front, and there, through a ter-

rible night in which the Japs attacked again and again, the Marines and soldiers held. When, toward dawn, the Japs finally punched a small hole in the defensive lines, the Marines of the Third Battalion joined in a savage crossfire that proved



BLOODY MATANIKAU River looks like a peaceful, lazy American creek in its upper reaches, but the Marines fought three desperate battles to cross it. For some months it was "western front" of beachhead.

the enemy's undoing. At the same time, on another section of the front (upper reaches of the Matanikau) General Hyakutake had played his last card, a lesser assault which also was repelled. The General had failed. The ground offensive which the enemy had so carefully prepared with a fortnight of air and naval action had cost the Emperor nearly 3,500 men and it had gained scarcely a foot of soil.

One bitter question had been on the lips of many Marines during the daylight naval bombardment of Sunday, October 26: "Where in hell is our Navy?" After its clear but strategically indecisive victory at Cape Esperance on October 11, the Navy seemed to disappear and the "slot" became a playground for enemy warships. Although the Marines didn't learn of it until later, the Navy was thoroughly committed on "Dugout Sunday." Some 700 miles to the northeast, it was engaged in the Battle of Santa Cruz, another in the series of en-

gagements which ultimately derailed the "Tokyo Express." But even if this information had been available, it would have been hard to persuade a battle-weary Marine, quaking in a shallow fox-hole, that the Navy could have more important business than getting rid of the Jap ships that were shelling him.

In its six weeks on Guadalcanal, the Third Battalion of the Second Regiment had suffered neither more nor less than the First Division Marines. It had done a first-rate job, both offensively and defensively. Like the Marines of every other battalion, its members firmly believed it to be the best in the Corps. But, like every other Marine on Guadalcanal, the Marines of 3/2 were sick and "bushed" by late October. Most of them had malaria, or had had it and would again. Many had come to believe that dysentery was a natural and inevitable expression of the functioning of the human system.

A lot has been written about the effects of disease on Guadalcanal. Almost no one in the Second Division (or the First, for that matter) escaped the malignant mosquitoes and the gut-wrenching flies. Once again, it must be confessed that no description can adequately convey the misery experienced by men who must battle filth, disease and the enemy, all at once. However, one Marine who served with the Second Division on Guadalcanal and later was attached to other outfits for other engagements, has contributed this succinct comparison of Pacific battles:

“Having been through the actions at Guadalcanal, Guam and Iwo Jima, I wish to state that I believe that Guadalcanal was by far the worst of the three. I’d like to express what enters my mind whenever I think of these three actions. My first thought is of conditions that go with a battle. On Guadalcanal where malaria was prevalent throughout the entire action, victory was almost lost. Conditions almost turned victory into defeat. I’ve seen quite a few deceased men out there, this sight is bad indeed, but one sight that affected me most was that of men that had lost 40 or 50 pounds, had malaria (dysentery too) and still insisted on doing their job . . . Dysentery had its effect during the operation of Guam, but outside of this conditions were not bad. Of conditions on Iwo Jima, I’d say they were excellent. Food was plentiful, disease absent, and the *fighting healthy!*” Marines of the Third, Fourth and Fifth Divisions may disagree—unless they, too, happened to be on Guadal.

The First and Second Battalions of the Second Regiment had been having their own bouts with dysentery and malaria on Tulagi, but—except for occasional shellings—considerably less trouble with the Japanese than their Third Battalion brothers on Guadalcanal. Even before 3/2 was called

into the defensive action of October 24–26, Colonel Arthur had been ordered to shift his own Regimental Command and the rest of the Regiment to Guadalcanal. A platoon of G Company of the Second Battalion, with three radio men and one wire man from the Second Battalion Headquarters Company, formed a dramatic vanguard for this transfer.

This tiny task group of two officers and fifty men slipped across the Channel in a YP boat and landed on October 22 behind the Jap lines at Aola, where 1/2 had carried out its raid a fortnight before. The platoon had an unusual mission. Its first job was to wipe out a Japanese intelligence squad estimated at a dozen men. Its second job was to escort about 150 natives the twenty-five miles west through “Indian country” to the Marine beachhead. The natives were needed for work on the airfield. The patrol landed without incident and was met by a member of the British commission who, like many jungle-wise Britons who had spent years in the Solomons, was operating as an Allied agent in enemy territory. The Marines quickly enveloped the Jap intelligence group and destroyed it.

Then the long trek began. Wherever possible, the line of natives and their Marine guards followed the coast, but occasionally it was necessary to move inland. It was a spooky journey. Sometimes the line straggled for hours through swamps. Sometimes it was broken by Jap snipers or Jap troops which had begun straggling away from the battle the enemy was losing near “Bloody Ridge.” Despite the hazards of the terrain and occasional encounters with the Japanese, the Marines not only got their convoy through, but did so with only one casualty—a native scout who was wounded in the chest by a Japanese sniper. The rest, natives and Marines alike, were weary but unscathed.

The remainder of the Second Battalion, the

GUADALCANAL

FLORIDA • TULAGI • GAVUTU • TANAMBOGO

2nd Division in Battle

In August of 1942 the Second Regiment spearheads the assault on the Solomons ... and in January the united division completes the conquest of Guadalcanal.



SAVO I.

THE

CAPE ESPERANCE

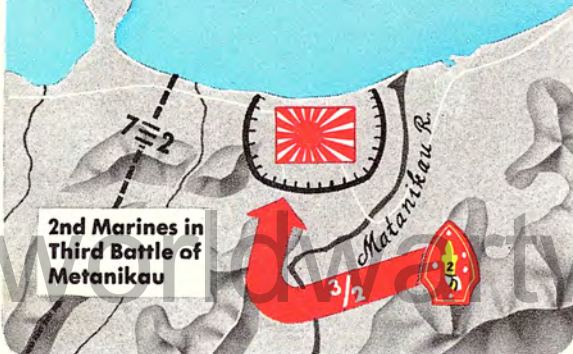
TASSAFARONGA PT.

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POINT CRUZ

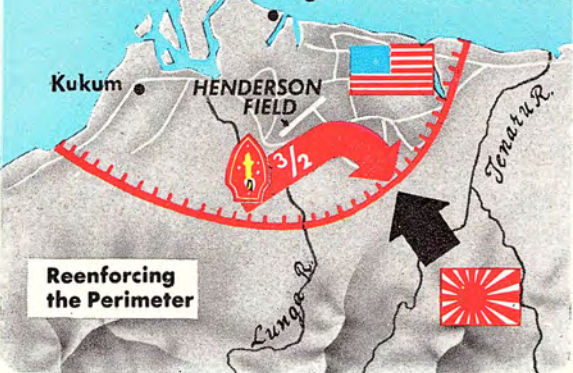
October 7-9



2nd Marines in Third Battle of Metanikau

LUNGA PT. Lunga

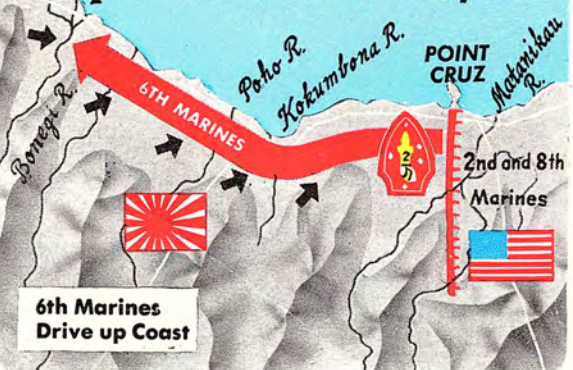
October 24



Reinforcing the Perimeter

TASSAFARONGA PT.

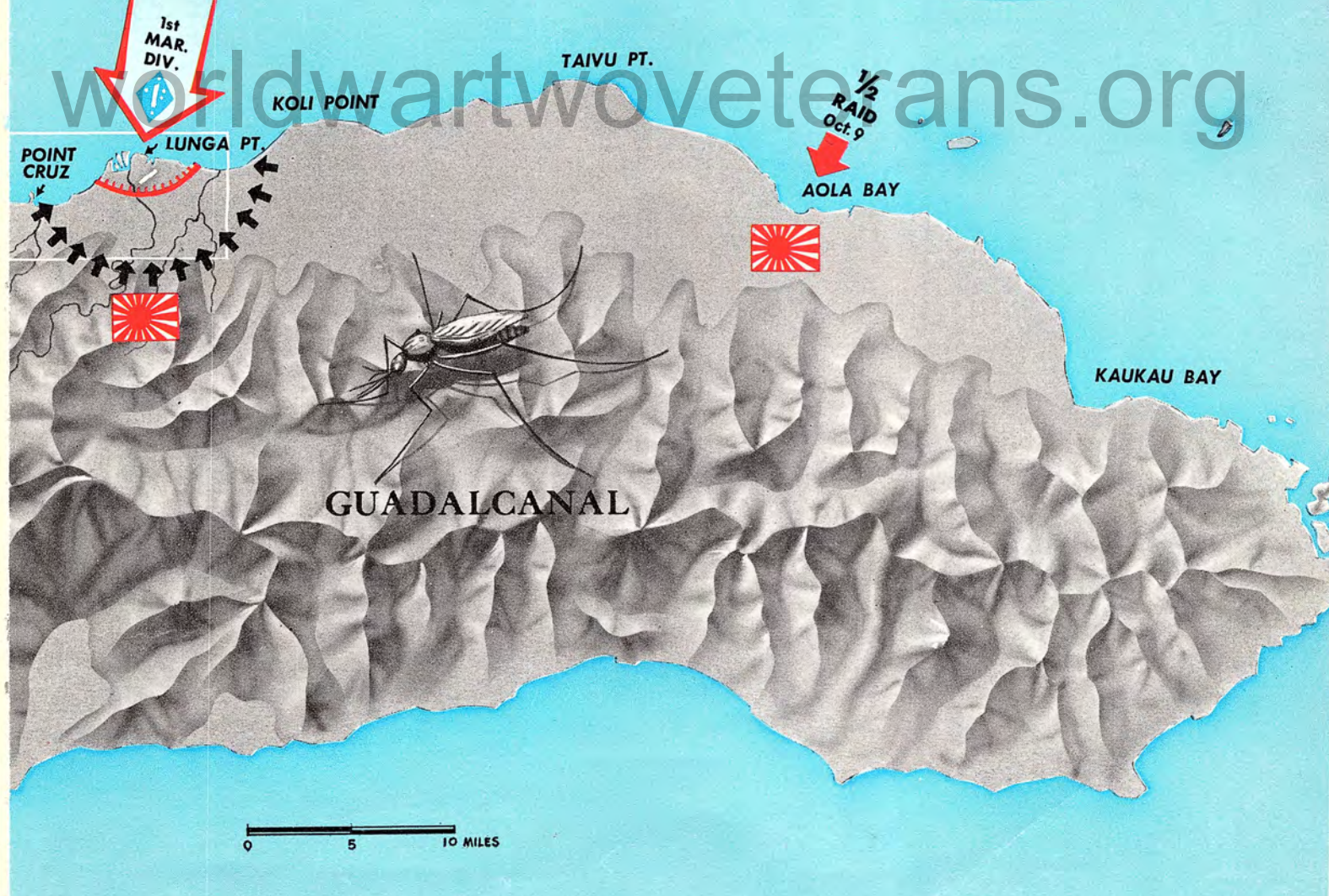
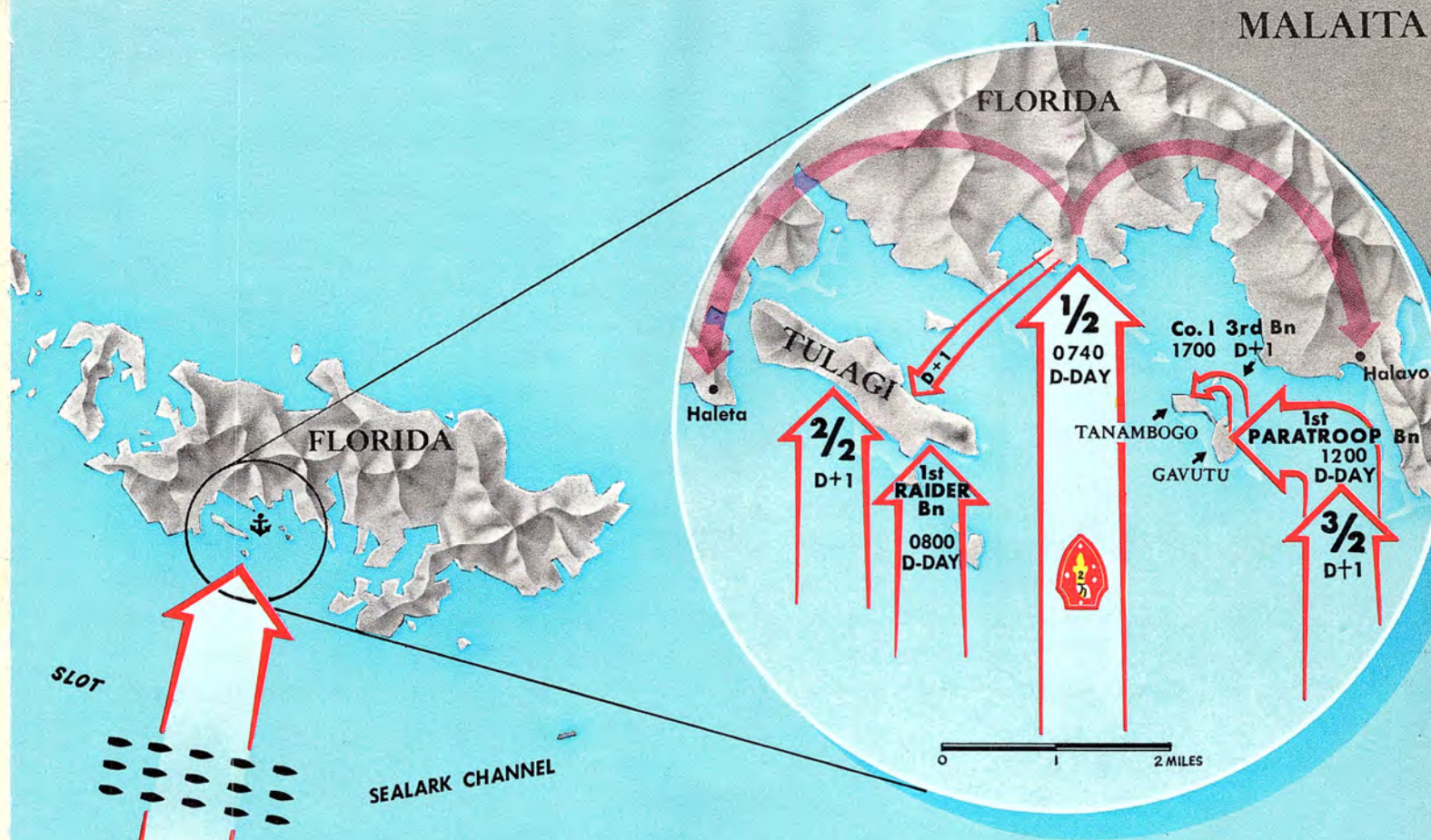
January 9-30



6th Marines Drive up Coast

POINT CRUZ

2nd and 8th Marines



First Battalion and the Regimental Headquarters made no such romantic entrance to the Guadalcanal perimeter. They simply boated up on October 29 and 30 and ran the twenty miles from Gavutu and Tulagi to Lunga Point, getting through without interference by Jap planes or surface craft. The boats that brought them over stood by and took the Third Battalion away—not to New Zealand, as some had hoped; not back to the States, as an optimistic few had dreamed; not even to Expiritu Santo, but right back across the “slot” to Tulagi, which was supposed to be their “rest” area. It was an improvement on Guadalcanal, at that. The heat was just as bad, the malaria was just as bad, and so was the dysentery—but Marines suffering the latter complaint could now answer the half-hourly call without fear that a sniper’s bullet would interrupt them at the least desirable of moments.

The Second Regiment moved to Guadalcanal at a historic moment. The Japs, despite their superiority in the air and on the sea, had failed in their efforts to break the Marine beachhead. Now they were winding up their Sunday punch. November would be the month of decision. To the north, around Bougainville and Rabaul and Truk, the enemy began massing his ships and his troops. To the south, a new commander was shaking up the old concepts of U.S. naval strategy and tactics. He had assumed command at our South Pacific headquarters at Noumea in New Caledonia just after the victory of Cape Esperance. He was Admiral William F. Halsey, and he had some interesting ideas about the use of warships in confined waters like those around Guadalcanal.

The Second Regiment’s Marines guessed that the Japs were planning more trouble; they knew that Halsey had become COMSOPAC. What they did not know as they moved to their bivouac area

on Guadalcanal was that the Eighth Regiment was enroute from American Samoa, and that the Sixth Regiment had sailed from San Diego October 19–21 for New Zealand. The reunion of the Second Division’s widely scattered units was less than three months away, but they were to be unforgettable months.

General Vandegrift gave the newly arrived Second Marines little time for contemplation of the differences and similarities of Tulagi and Guadalcanal. On October 31, only twenty-four hours after they landed, 1/2 and 2/2 moved into positions west of the Matanikau, supporting the Fifth Regiment. The next day the Fifth jumped off in the direction of Point Cruz, accompanied by the Second Marines and a battalion of the Seventh Regiment. This was intended only as a limited offensive, to expand U.S. holdings, and it ended abruptly on November 3. The Japs were again landing troops in the other direction—east of the Tenaru. Part of the attack force was detached and hurried back toward the eastern approaches to Henderson Field. To replace them the command sent the First Battalion of the 164th, and it was attached to the Second Marine Regiment. While the “gyrenes” and “doggies” dug in, side by side, a troop convoy slipped through Sealark Channel and dropped its many anchors near Lunga Point. The Eighth Marines under Colonel R. H. Jeschke landed to find the situation slightly out of hand.

The Eighth had sailed from Pago Pago on October 25, arriving off Guadalcanal the afternoon of November 3. An immediate landing had been planned, but it had to be delayed a day because the Japs were landing troops that night. As one Marine put it, “We were outranked!” The Eighth Marines reached the Solomons possessed of many advantages which the Second Marines had not enjoyed in August. While the Eighth lacked battle seasoning, it was thoroughly ac-

climatized—the nine months in Samoa had prepared the regiment well for Guadalcanal's unhealthy weather. (In addition, the trip had been comparatively short.) Finally, the regiment had had months of opportunity to train in jungle tactics. The Eighth Marines were bronzed, hardy, and full of fight. They brought with them the company of tanks, the medical company, the company of engineers and the artillery battalion (1/10) that had accompanied them to Samoa from the States.

For the five days following the Eighth Regiment's arrival, both the Marines and the Army troops were busy cleaning out the Japanese force which had landed east of the Tenaru. To the west, the Second Marines held the line near Point Cruz and developed a genuine affection for the Army's 1/164 which was now under Marine command and was performing exactly as a Marine battalion should. "That 164th," said some of the Second Marines, "hell, they'd make good Marines." It was a compliment not lightly awarded. During this period 1/8 got into action east of the Tenaru, and 1/10 was placed in direct support of Carlson's Raiders and the Seventh Regiment.

It is a terrifying and heartbreaking experience to be driven back, yard after yard, by a superior enemy force, as were the defenders of Bataan. It is almost as bad voluntarily to surrender territory paid for in blood as the result of tactical necessity. Yet this last was the sorrowful lot of the Second and Eighth Regiments at the conclusion of their first operation together. On November 10, the interrupted assault west of the Matanikau was resumed, with the Eighth Regiment moving across to join the battle-wise and cocky Second and the tough Westerners of the 164th. For approximately thirty hours the Marine and Army forces advanced, digging the Japs out of their underground warrens, blasting them from trees and dynamiting their concrete and log emplacements. Then, un-



MUD OF GUADALCANAL will be remembered for decades. Here several Marines lend a hand to a jeep driver trying to negotiate the hub-deep roads.



SOLOMONS JUNGLE sometimes rose in near-solid wall from roads hacked out by engineers on steep sides of ravines. This is west of the Matanikau.

accountably, at 1400 of the second day, they were ordered to withdraw. Not to the lines from which the attack had sprung, but clear back across the Matanikau, to the east bank. Six weeks of costly progress went up in rifle smoke.

Reluctantly the Marines fell back. The withdrawal was not completed until the next day, November 12. By then they had some "word"—the Japs had mounted their greatest armada and a veritable Superchief of a Tokyo Express was starting to roll southward. The Marine command had decided to shorten and strengthen our lines, although the arrival of more Army artillery and two battalions of the 182nd Infantry Regiment had considerably reinforced our prospects. The command was confident that we could take the new attack, but only from secure positions—particularly if the Navy could not challenge the enemy in the tight waters of the "slot."

There was not much Navy in Sealark Channel the night of November 12 when the first section of the new Tokyo Express arrived—only the cruisers and destroyers that had escorted the transports in to Lunga Point. These proved to be enough only because of the matchless gallantry of the officers and men under Rear Admirals Daniel Callaghan and Norman Scott, both of whom were killed in the battle. This tiny task force met the Japs head-on off Savo Island, steamed through the huge enemy force with guns roaring and torpedoes away, and completely upset the Japanese plan of attack. We lost ships and men, but the Japs lost more—two cruisers, and four destroyers sunk; and a battleship crippled (it was the *Heyei*, and she eventually sank).

That was the first phase of the naval Battle of Guadalcanal. The second phase came the night of November 13 when the Japs came again and this time there were only PT boats to meet them. Marines and soldiers huddled deep in their holes for

forty-five minutes while the paralyzing naval shells exploded over the beachhead. The next day—November 14—Marine fliers got away quickly despite the shell damage to Henderson Field. They found twelve fat Jap transports running for Guadalcanal, with an escort of eleven warships. All day long American fliers punished the slow, clumsy ships. Only four of the enemy transports got through to the Jap beachhead at Tassafaronga that night (several miles west of the Matanikau), and they were destroyed by long-range artillery and air attacks before they could unload many supplies on the morning of November 15.

There was exultation on the Marine beachhead. Nearly two Japanese divisions had been burned, shot or drowned. These were wonderful Japs, dead Japs, Japs who never would kill a Marine and Japs that no Marine would have to bother to kill. But there was still one large *Anopheles* mosquito in the ointment of victory. The Tokyo Express might not be able to deliver its passengers, but it was still running efficient deliveries of high explosive shells. It ran once too often for its own good, the night of November 15, and in a few brief minutes between Guadalcanal and Savo Island the United States really turned the corner in the Solomons.

Until that night some U.S. naval tacticians had been of the opinion that major ships—battleships—could not operate effectively in the tight waterways around Savo, Florida and "The Canal." The Navy had tried to lure the enemy into the open seas but had succeeded only twice and then not for surface action (the battles of the Eastern Solomons and Santa Cruz). The Japs were well aware of this U.S. complex. They were confident that any southbound force would meet nothing larger than cruisers in the "Slot." The Japanese command had been startled and discomfited by Callaghan's heroic charge the night of November 12, but the



THUNDER IN THE SLOT comes from guns of Battleships Washington and South Dakota, shown in this dramatic painting as they intercept the Tokyo Express near Savo Island in one of war's great naval actions.

enemy quite rightly discounted the likelihood that this sort of thing would become a regular occurrence. The Japs also discounted the effect of "Bull" Halsey's appointment as COMSOPAC, if, indeed, they knew of it.

So in the darkness of November 15 the Japs hurried south again, two battleships with cruiser and destroyer escorts. A Marine flier spotted them and passed the word. The Marines heard it and their earlier pleasure in the victory over the transports was chilled. They dug down, deeper still, and silently cursed the Navy. At Tulagi the PT crews heard it, too, and grimly got the three re-

maining boats that were operational out into the Savo slots. That was all the Navy there was, all the Navy for a thousand miles as far as the PT crewmen and the Marines ashore knew.

Not quite all. Coming quietly up the southwest coast of Guadalcanal, on the other side of the Kavo mountains from the Marines' beach, was a U.S. task force. Its commander also heard about the Tokyo Express. He already had orders for just such an emergency from Halsey in Noumea, who was far from convinced that major warships were useful only in the open sea. Halsey had told him: "Take 'em into the Slot!"



JAPANESE TRANSPORT lies aground on Kokumbono beach after Naval Battle of Guadalcanal. Marine shell-fire and bombs started fatal fires in the vessel, which settled to bottom before supplies could be salvaged.

In the dark waters around Savo Island, the PT skippers waited. It was just after 2300 (11 P.M.) and the Express was due. This was a suicide mission—three flimsy motor torpedo boats against the Imperial fleet. The young captains knew it and so did their men. They also knew what hell awaited the Marines ashore if the Japs were permitted to bombard without any interference at all. Beyond Savo they suddenly glimpsed the first outlines of the enemy vanguard. The squadron commander whispered over the TBS to the skippers in the other boats: “Ready?”

Instead of their answers, a strange voice came from the TBS amplifier:

“This is Ching Lee. Get out of the way. I’m coming through!”

If the avenging armies of the Lord had arrived in airborne transports, the PT men could hardly have been more thunderstruck. They scudded their little boats aside, and on the flag bridge of the new battleship *Washington*, Vice Admiral Willis August (Ching) Lee told his gunnery officer: “Fire when ready!” From the great 16-inch guns of the *Washington* came a salvo that split the night. As

the giant shells roared away with a sound like fast-running freight trains, the wide-eyed PT crews saw flame burst from another dark hulk riding in the *Washington's* wake—the battleship *South Dakota's* 16-inchers also were trained on the Jap warships which had plowed around Savo and into Ching Lee's trap. The aim was good. The Jap leaders exploded, melted and withered. Through the waters where capital ships supposedly could not operate, the *Washington* and the *South Dakota* moved swiftly forward. Salvo! Salvo! Then torpedo defense! The Japs sent their destroyers snarling in for a desperate torpedo attack, and Ching Lee's own valiant destroyer screen met the enemy "cans" and turned them back. Firing by radar at maximum range, the American dreadnoughts hit and shattered a Japanese Kongo-class battleship, the

Kirishima. They got two Jap cruisers and two destroyers. We had lost three destroyers of our own, in this swift and savage encounter, but we had wrecked the Tokyo Superchief.

With the approval of his commander, Admiral Ernest King, Chief of Naval Operations (and in defiance of traditional naval theory), Bull Halsey had ordered the battleships into the Slot. Ching Lee, Commander, Battleships, Pacific, had taken them there. Strategically, the battle of Guadalcanal was won. There were weary weeks of fighting left for the Marines ashore, but thanks to Halsey and Ching Lee—the quiet, bespectacled man from the China Stations—they never would lie doggo and deserted in their gravelike holes while the Tokyo Express insolently paraded the waters of Guadalcanal.

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Chapter Four



MOVING UP

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THE MOP-UP ON GUADALCANAL

UNITED AT LAST, THE DIVISION SWEEPS TO THE ISLAND'S END

So the battle was won—strategically. The Marines climbing out of their holes on the morning of November 16 did not know it. Neither did the mosquitoes. Neither did the Japs beyond the Matanikau. Washington and Tokyo may have known it, but what Washington and Tokyo knew at any given moment did not make a hell of a lot of difference at Lunga Point. What did make a difference was that for a few days there was a lull, while General Vandegrift mapped a new offensive. Unfortunately, the Second and Eighth Regiments were un-

able to take advantage of these relatively peaceful hours to compare battle experiences. They had been separated again in the withdrawal that preceded the naval engagement. The Eighth was left to guard the west bank of the Matanikau, while the Second was moved across Henderson Field to positions east of the Tenaru, where the Seventh Regiment had been busy mopping up the Jap reinforcements landed a few days before.

In this first fortnight of November, the newly blooded Eighth Marines had abolished the Holly-

wood nickname and won their battle spurs. Some of the regiment's units had taken heavy casualties—L Company of 3/8, for example. It had been caught in a Jap ambush near the Matanikau, in a ravine where the Japs had mounted five machine guns under heavy brush. Nearly one-third of its members were put out of action. While the Eighth Marines were getting this rugged introduction to battle, the Second Marines had undergone similar trials. On November 11 "A" Company of 1/2 lost all of its officers, and its first sergeant and gunnery sergeant, in a deadly skirmish with the Nips. But the Second also had produced a few more candidates for the legendary company of the sergeants of Belleau Wood and Gavutu.

One was a PFC. named Petrie, who moved out with another enlisted man and a young lieutenant on a combination scouting and "point of fire" mission. The trio proved a devastatingly attractive point of fire; the Japs welcomed them with machine guns, rifles and light artillery. As the lieutenant later described it: "They persuaded us to get down. We dropped behind a log. Well, the Japs began shooting at the log, and what should happen but four Nips, caught in their own fire, pop up from the other side of it and take off!"

Out of the corner of his eye, PFC. Petrie saw the Japs in flight. Ignoring the continuing Japanese fusillade, he rose on one knee and fired. A Jap soldier somersaulted and lay still. Petrie fired again. Another went down. Twice more the rifle spoke, and each time a running Nipponese plowed into the jungle floor. Grinning, Petrie eased himself down behind the log. "That's all for those little bastards," he observed amiably.

A few days later, a corporal named John Yaksich was advancing with his squad through the tangle west of the Matanikau. They came upon an arc of Marines held back by two Japanese machine-gun emplacements, built to support each

other and spitting .25 calibre bullets. Yaksich scooped up an armload of hand grenades and started for the guns. The waiting Marines could hear the regular blasts of the grenades. Then all they could hear was silence. Moving forward cautiously, they were greeted by a fantastic figure. Out of the jungle, into a small clearing, came Corporal Yaksich. He was bent under the weight of the two machine guns, he was festooned with shiny garlands of belted ammunition, and he bristled with a half-dozen long-bayoneted Jap rifles.

"Most souvenirs I ever got," beamed Corporal Yaksich.

Then there was "Red Dog" Van Orden—a young Oklahoman with "G" Company, 2/2. Many Marines wrote the author urging that the story of Van Orden's exploits be included in this history. Let one of his comrades, PFC. John F. Garcia, tell it in his own words:

"I should like very much to tell you a story that is brave, true and tragic. In the month of November on or about the 10th, 1942, there lived a boy just seventeen years of age who was fighting for his country on Guadalcanal.

"We were on a hill called 0-2; our objective was hill 0-4. Enroute the Japs stopped us dead with heavy machine-gun fire. We were on a mound, the Japs were in the draw and on hill 0-4 overlooking hill 0-2. Our platoon leader went charging over the hill; we never saw him or his body again. The casualties were running high. We were pinned down for the day.

"The next morning before the sun came up, a boy seventeen years old named Van Orden took it upon himself to go over to the Jap lines and knock out a certain persistent Jap machine gun. He went with another Marine whose name I can't recall. They went out early before sunup. They crawled and crept until light from the sun was cast upon them. Well, Van Orden looked the ter-



TALK BETWEEN ENEMIES is carried on through barbed wire as Second Division intelligence officers question a captured Japanese soldier.

rain over. He was surprised to see, not twenty feet away to his direct front, three Japs and one very wicked machine gun.

“He threw a grenade into the gun, wounding one Jap. He quickly shot one and dispensed with the other one by beating him over the head with the butt of his rifle. He then came back to the safety of our lines. He made a report to Captain Larson, who is now Major Larson, relating his story to the captain. The captain, in a spirit of fun, jokingly asked Van Orden: ‘Where is the machine gun? Why didn’t you bring it back?’

“Van took it serious, for he returned and brought the weapon back and placed it at the captain’s feet. This same person was fighting on

our last drive in January, 1943. Van was in a draw fighting a battle of his own with the Nips. When he was hit by mortar fire, he died quickly and brave.”

The first weeks of November also brought a little excitement to the Third Battalion of the Second Marines, supposedly resting on Tulagi. The “rest” had turned out to be mostly work, but there was occasional patrolling and one patrol—under Lieutenant James W. Crain of Oklahoma—was sent to Malaita, the big island lying north of Florida, to wipe out a Jap coast-watcher station. These Marines found thirty-one Japs. They killed thirty and captured one. For most of the 3/2 Marines, however, life was a dull round of hard work, recurrent illness and troubled sleep. Most, but not all. There were fourteen lucky ones.

One hundred and fifty miles south of Guadalcanal lies a peaceful, paradisiacal island called Rennell. It has a fresh-water lake, gleaming sands and attractive natives. Rennell is one of the great anthropological mysteries. In the vastness of Melanesia, with its inky black and—to Americans—ugly aborigines, Rennell is unaccountably Polynesian. Its people are light-skinned, shapely and fine featured. Fourteen Marines from the Second Regiment were detached one happily remembered day and sent to Rennell to establish a coast-watching station.

The island was lovely, after the stinking Solomons. The Marines were housed in clean, comfortable thatched “fales,” and their duties were light. They found the young women of Rennell, snow-white by contrast with their distant Tulagi cousins, good to look upon. The grass-skirted islanders were equally entranced with the Marines. The tropic moon was very, very big.

Rennell is ruled by a chief, and the chief is a perspicacious man. Not long after the Marines established residence on his island, he summoned



THE LOOK OF THE ISLAND is never the same—sometimes bare and grassy, sometimes a tangle of vines which makes forward progress difficult. Here a patrol pauses to rest at captured Jap command post.

them to the royal fale. He asked if the Marines found the women of Rennell attractive, and the Marines allowed that they did. In that case, the chief suggested, they would wish to take wives.

This denouement shocked the little company of Americans. They wondered if a whole series of bow-and-arrow marriages was in prospect. But no. Taking a wife, the chief explained, was very simple. It involved only two conditions: first, a payment to the chief; and second, a promise that the girls never would be removed from the island.

The Marine mission on Guadalcanal also was not entirely one of destruction. Within the perimeter, bridges had to be built, roads cut through or improved, and—as the situation stabilized—ade-

quate camp sites had to be established. During the three-day lull after the Guadalcanal naval battle, members of B Company of the Second Division's First Engineer Battalion went to work on these necessities. The company, which had been with the Eighth Regiment in Samoa and had arrived with it at the "Canal," was temporarily attached to the First Engineer Battalion of the First Division. These Second Division engineers had ceased to be regimental orphans by this time.

The engineering battalion which had been one of the newly formed Second Division's original elements, back in February of 1941, had grown into a full-fledged regiment. The Eighteenth Marines were formally activated on September 8, 1942, in San Diego. Like the division itself, the



THE ATTACK BEGINS with Marines sweeping down this grassy ridge west of the Matanikau in the start of the coordinated offensive that ended Jap resistance after long siege on the banks of the river.

regiment's units were widely scattered on that date. B Company of the First Battalion was then in Tutuila, about to sail for Guadalcanal. A Company was at Espiritu Santo, in the New Hebrides. The Second Battalion's D Company was divided between Tulagi and Guadalcanal, with a few men at Espiritu. E Company was enroute to New Zealand. The whole Third Battalion was in Rhode Island, preparing to embark for the Solomons.

The engineers on Guadalcanal sometimes had to double as infantry, and already were developing the art of assault demolition. But only the infantry regiments and the artillery could expand the beachhead, and General Vandegrift needed more room for his augmented forces. The First Division commander moved his battle-worn and disease-riddled men out of the line and got the relatively fresh Army outfits and part of the



THE ATTACK PROGRESSES as jeeps roll across coconut log bridges ingeniously devised by the engineers, bringing ammunition, food and supplies to the front. This assault was successful and river was secured.

Eighth Marine regiment into position to renew the westward offensive. On the morning of November 18 a battalion of the Army's 182nd Infantry crossed the Matanikau, spearheaded by Marine patrols and supported by companies from 1/8 and 3/8.

The crossing succeeded admirably, and the Marines and soldiers seized a desired ridge on the west side of the river. This was to be the jump-off

line for the new offensive, and in the next two days the Army sent three more battalions—one from the 182nd and the others from the 164th—to bolster the original team. In the damp dawn of November 21, Marine and Army artillery opened up on Jap positions to the west, and Marine fliers from Henderson Field plastered them with bombs. The Army units attacked—and promptly met fierce resistance.



A MAN'S CASTLE on Guadalcanal looked like this. Here a Marine takes time out to wash his socks in his helmet, but keeps his rifle close at hand. By 'Canal standards, this was a fairly well-equipped home.

For forty-eight hours the assault continued, and for forty-eight hours the Japs refused to concede an inch of soil. It began to be clear that the enemy was staking everything on keeping possession of Guadalcanal's northern tip. The defensive positions were good. West of the Matanikau the coastal plain narrowed and the attackers were forced to fight on a narrow front. By the morning of November 23, the Army was running out of breath. The command sent the Eighth Regiment's First Battalion, under Major Joseph P. McCafferty, and Second Battalion, under Lieutenant Colonel John

H. Cook, Jr., through the tiring soldiers and into the line. The Marines got a surprise. They went forward confidently to show the Army how to do the job and got rocked back on their heels. Although these elements of the Eighth Marines lost only nine killed and twenty-two wounded, at 1345 General Vandegrift decided the operation was not feasible and called a halt. The Army and Marine groups were told to dig in along their original line of departure and then assume defensive positions.

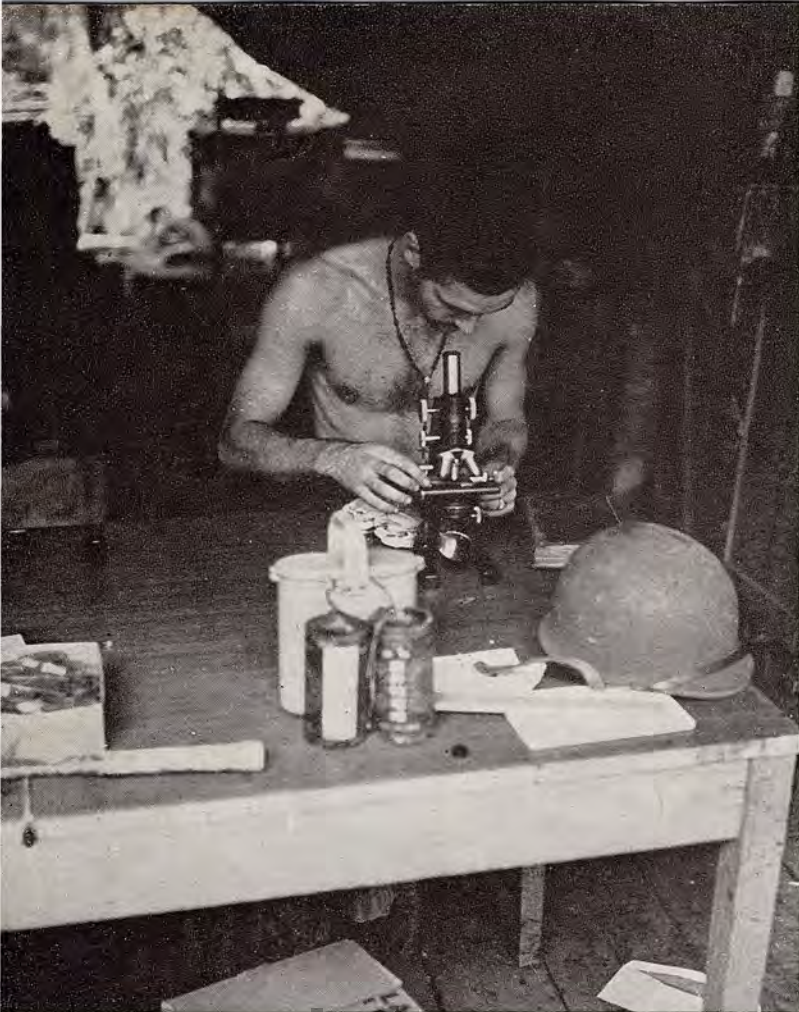
This was a strategic rather than a tactical decision. Vandegrift might conceivably have broken



CHOW CALL sounded seldom enough on Guadalcanal, where many Marines were on cold rations for weeks. When hot chow was available, it produced joyful reactions like those shown here.

the Jap defense if he had cared to risk the full force now available to him. But he had compelling reasons to delay. The attack, if successful, would still be expensive. Literally thousands of the Guadalcanal veterans—from both the First Division and the Second Regiment—were down with malaria or dysentery. It seemed unlikely now that the U.S. toehold in the Solomons could be dislodged. This removed the necessity for an immediate mop-up, in which gains in ground might be overbalanced by losses in lives. Vandegrift settled for the ridge just beyond the Matanikau.

For an even month, from November 23 to December 23, the Battle of Guadalcanal became a duel of patrols—an “Indian war” fought mostly in the dark, damp jungles or in the black, deadly nights. A war of sudden ambush and sudden death, in which the flash of knife might be followed only by the gurgle of blood, or a shot only by the whisper of skulking feet. The Marines fought like raiders, on the ground and in the bush. The Japs, in their split-toe sneakers, ranged through the branches or crept, silent as tennis-shod wraiths, to the black holes of the Marine perimeter. The



MOSQUITO FIGHTERS had just as tough a time with *Anopheles* as with the Japs. Here a pharmacist's mate studies specimens for evidence of malaria.

patrols fought to the death, taking few prisoners and leaving few traces except rotting enemy bodies.

One December night, Lieutenant Claude Grout, a platoon leader, took his men through the Japanese perimeter defenses, far into the bush beyond. Somewhere in the jungle, Grout discerned the flickering light of a campfire. He deployed his men in a three-quarters circle, and they edged forward noiselessly, covered by the darkness. Around the fire were fifty or sixty Japanese soldiers. They were relaxed, their weapons put aside. Some of them talked in low tones, and others slept. A sentry leaned against a palm trunk, dreamy-eyed.

This was how death sidled up, in the long nights

of the Guadalcanal patrols. We had learned from the Japanese, though we still preferred bullets to the bayonet and the knife.

The quiet darkness exploded. Grout's Marines closed, their rifles and BAR's on fire. The Japs were too stunned to move. They died around their tiny fire by tens and dozens. The sentry was shot as he stood, popeyed now, by his palm-tree backrest. In a few minutes the jungle was quiet, and the fire burned low. The patrol had passed on. It had not lost a man. It had not left a living Japanese.

The desired bag was not always Jap bodies. The patrols also sought information. One of them, under Lieutenant William Hawkins, of Texas, vanished for three days into Japanese country. They camped silently in the cover of the bush, building no fires, leaving no traces, burying the containers of their simple, cold rations. When they returned they had maps, documents and battle plans. They had killed Japs to get them, and this had been done silently, too, usually with the bayonet, in order to give the patrol time to loot. Hawkins got a commendation for that patrol. The day it was awarded the Japs were flying their warplanes off a shining coral airfield on an island in the Central Pacific no one in the Second Marine Division had ever heard of. A little less than a year later, Admiral Nimitz named that coral strip "Hawkins Field."

By no means all of the danger during this strange month lay in patrol and perimeter work. Although the Tokyo Express had been knocked off the tracks, the Japanese were still running nightly air deliveries. Sometimes they were in great force, sometimes only one float plane—the celebrated "Washing Machine Charlie"—came out of the darkness to harass the Marines. But someone came every night, making sleep a nervous luxury. For the Second Division units bivouacked around

Henderson Field, this relentless aerial onslaught is perhaps the most vivid and harrowing memory of life on the "Canal." When the Japs came in force, which was all too often, and plastered the airfield and its fringes with bombs, the perimeter seemed a comparatively safe and blessed place to be. After one particularly violent siege, 1/10 actually moved out to a forward area to rest!

From November 24 to 30, the Eighth Regiment lost fifty-five dead and fifty-six wounded in patrolling. Withdrawn from the perimeter, they had three killed and eleven wounded in an equal period. Somewhat later, the Second Regiment lost twenty-one killed and eighteen wounded in three weeks of patrol activity, while the Eighth had the same number killed and 113 wounded.

The troopships that once had come full to Guadalcanal were coming empty now and going away "heavily laden with time-expired men," to borrow another line from "Bless 'em All." The First Marine Division had, at long last, been rescued. The Marines of the Second Regiment watched the First Division sail away with envy. They were just as afflicted, as far as malaria and dysentery were concerned, and just as eager for the rewards of valor.

The departure of the First Division had been made possible by the arrival of more Army troops. The 132nd Infantry had landed, joining the 182nd and 164th to complete the Americal Division. On December 9 General Vandegrift relinquished command of operations on Guadalcanal to the commander of the Americal, Major General Alexander Patch, USA. At that time, Army units were holding the Matanikau front. But on December 12 the Second and Eighth Regiments were sent back into the line west of the Matanikau, except for 2/2, which was moved south to defend the beachhead from a possible enveloping and flanking attack.



LIBERATED SLAVES, the two Chinese riding in this Marine jeep had been taken by the Japs at Hong Kong and sent to Guadalcanal for forced labor.

The First and Third Battalions of the Tenth Marines and three Army 105mm battalions were ranged in support.

But General Patch was in no tearing hurry. Until the end of December, the policy remained one of constant pressure exerted through patrols or attacks on limited objectives. Most of this pressure was applied by the two Second Division regiments and the 132nd Infantry. It reached its apex on December 22 when Colonel Arthur, as commander of the Matanikau sector, sent the Army regiment to attack Mt. Austin, under a barrage of Tenth Marine shells, and the Second and Eighth bulged west from the lines just beyond the Matanikau. By the end of the month, a new line had been



A PATROL WADES across shallow river to begin a mission behind the Japanese lines, as attack nears end of island. Marines often had to ford shallow streams on foot.

consolidated, running inshore from the base of Point Cruz. In a way, this was a grim triumph for the Second and Eighth Regiments—they were right back where they had left off the attack on November 11.

New Year's Day. No one on Guadalcanal or Tulagi had gone dancing the night before. A few lucky scavengers had "scrounged" a little medical alcohol, but not many were that lucky. Like Christmas, New Year's was just another day. The Second Marines had been on Guadalcanal or its nearby islands nearly five months. So had 3/10, the Second Medical Company, some of the engineers, and a good many other Second Division troops. The Eighth Regiment was completing its second month, and already some of its members were coming down with filiriasis—the mosquito-borne disease of the lymph glands which produces the dreadful swellings of elephantiasis. They had acquired that bug on Samoa, but it is a slow reactor. On Guadalcanal, it added to the miseries of dysentery and malaria.

December had brought a few more of the division's missing elements to the island. The signal company had come up from New Zealand, and all the way from Norfolk, Va., the 18th Naval Construction Battalion. The 18th CB's were organically part of the Second Marine Division, at this time—and the bond that grew between the young men with rifles and the older men with bulldozers could hardly have been closer. It was one of the great mutual admiration societies of the Pacific War. By January 1, the Seabees were busy building a new airfield and maintaining the expanding runways of Henderson.

New Year's Day, and the end not yet in sight. Enemy bullets still whined through the shredded palm tops in the Lever Brothers' groves, deep within the Marine perimeter. It still was not wise for a Marine to go exploring alone. There always was danger, and the Marines had come to live with it. Their eyes automatically searched every treetop, and their reflexes were now so conditioned that their bodies reacted automatically to certain



THIS IS PISTOL PETE, the Japanese 108MM. rifle that alternated with "Washing-Machine Charley" in harassing Henderson Field. Actually, the Japs used five of these guns in trying to wreck Marine installations.

sounds, sights or even smells. They began to have the illusion that life always had been like this, rough and uncertain and uncomfortable, without conveniences, without security, lived in a primitive triangle of foxhole, chow line and "head."

No, New Year's Day wasn't much of a day on Guadalcanal. Not, for example, like the fourth of January, which was quite a day indeed.

That was the day the Sixth Regiment came to Guadalcanal, and the Second Marine Division ceased to be a name on paper and became a fighting fact. For, up from New Zealand with the Sixth Marines, came the advance echelon of Division Headquarters, under Brigadier General Alphonse de Carre, the assistant division commander. The Sixth, in dungarees now and minus the *fourragere*, and the Icelandic patch, bivouacked that night at Kukum, near Lunga Point. It was under command of Colonel Gilder D. Jackson, Colonel Hermle having moved up to the job of Division chief of staff. The next day General de Carre established

Division headquarters just east of the Matanikau, and assumed command of all Marine ground forces in the area. Four days later, he was directing the Division in its first big push.

Normally, the Second Division would have been led into battle by its commander, Major General John Marston. But General Marston had been left behind in New Zealand for a peculiar and highly unusual reason: He had too much rank! The U.S. had designated General Patch to command the mop-up of Guadalcanal. But General Patch was junior to General Marston, and if the latter had landed on the island Patch would have had to yield the command to him. There was only one graceful way to avoid this contretemps, and General Marston gracefully accepted it. He stayed put.

When the Second Division jumped off on January 10 in the offensive that was destined to wind up the fighting on Guadalcanal, it was very nearly complete. Originally, it had been planned to have the Sixth Regiment relieve the Eighth and Second Marines, but General Patch was anxious to launch

the long-awaited drive to Cape Esperance and he persuaded the Marines to keep the Eighth and Second on the line.

Thus, for a historic three weeks, the Division was united as a fighting force. On Guadalcanal were the Second Marines and their reinforcing units; the Eighth Marines and reinforcing units; and the Sixth and their reinforcing elements. The Tenth Marines had three of their battalions, 1/10, 2/10 and 3/10, in action, (4/10, with the 105mm howitzers, remained in Wellington). Portions of the First and Second Battalions, Eighteenth Marines were busy keeping Henderson Field in operation, while the Second Signal Company had a heavy responsibility in the maintenance of communications. Light tanks from the Second Tank Battalion companies attached to the Second and Eighth Marines were united into a tank pool in December. Probably the busiest of all division units was the medical battalion. Three Navy doctors died during the campaign, one killed outright by shellfire. Their replacements and survivors not only had to handle battle casualties, but sometimes were confronted by several thousand patients seriously ill with malaria or dysentery.

There were many experimental assignments for Division members or attached personnel. One of the most unusual was employment of Lieutenants (jg) Alfred Moon of Illinois, and Charles Hammond of California, who had been attached to 1/10 as Naval Gunfire spotters, in the direction of destroyer fire. Moon and Hammond served in the absolute front lines of the Eighth Regiment, adjusting flank naval fire by TBX radio—fire which blasted Jap positions on reverse slopes out of the artillery's reach. Like so many other experiments on Guadalcanal, this was to pay off handsomely in the Central Pacific offensive.

Even by the time of the arrival of the Sixth Regiment, there were few conveniences on Guadal-

canal. There was no main camp area. When units were out of the line, they moved into bivouac areas—but not into barracks or even pyramidal tents. Shelters were tent flaps, a few lean-tos and “pup” tents. There was no laundry, and only a limited issue of clothing. Marines had to wash their own filthy clothing in the Lunga River. As the campaign wore on working parties erected open air “heads” (the Eighth Marines brought prefabricated “Chic Sales” with them).

Troops in the line ate C rations or worse. In the bivouac areas galleys were placed under rigged tarpaulins, and field cooks produced meals of spam, wieners, beans, soup and canned vegetables, using the pack stoves carried by the Division. Some of these cooks and mess sergeants became real heroes to the men on Guadalcanal—they raided ships in the channel, traded souvenirs for canned peaches, and performed other magical feats of business that helped brighten the chow lines. There were no separate messes—officers and men ate together, slept in the same kind of holes, ate the same food and shared the same dangers on the Canal. There were no officers' “clubs,” and no beer. Contrary to the song of Tulagi, the U. S. O. did not arrive with the Army. But in December—and about time, too—the Navy finally got a fairly fast and reliable V-Mail service in operation. If Marine morale was still high for the offensive General Patch contemplated, it was not because of comforts or pleasures provided by the appreciative but distant world.

For the climactic offensive on Guadalcanal, General Patch had plenty of power. The Twenty-fifth Army Division arrived early in January, supplementing the reunited Second Marine Division, and some elements of the Americal were still on hand. General Patch now headed the XIV Army Corps, and besides the infantry there was a pleth-



JAP BATTLE FLAG is exhibited by proud Marine who captured it in a Japanese bivouac area west of Kolumbona. The Melanesians seem uninterested. Flags and samurai swords were most highly-prized souvenirs.



HOUSING PROBLEMS are solved by natives with bamboo and thatch huts. Marines chased Japs out of this village and restored it to natives.



HOME IN THE RAINS, where the mosquitoes played with the Marines who came back at intervals to this bivouac area. It was sometimes dry.

ora of special troops, Corps artillery and Marine and Army aircraft. On the morning of "D Day"—January 10—Patch sent down an order of the day. It read: "Attack and destroy the Japanese forces remaining on Guadalcanal." This sounded simple. It wasn't. The Japs were half-starved, malarial, sick with dysentery and sick with defeat, but they still showed little inclination to surrender. Some of them actually believed that they were fighting to maintain a bridgehead on an island off the coast of the United States.

The overall strategy for the attack was conditioned by the terrain. Patch decided to move the Twenty-fifth inland and send them down through the valleys and ridges to Cape Esperance while the Marines and units of the Americal Division drove along the northern shore. This pincers would prevent a Jap withdrawal into the mountains. At 0645 on "D Day" the attack jumped off inshore and to the rear of the coastal line the Second and Eighth Regiments had established near Point Cruz. For the first three days the Marines had a holding job—to contain the enemy while the Twenty-fifth wheeled through the foothills and into position. The Tenth Marine artillery was committed in support of the Twenty-fifth Division advance.

By nightfall of 12 January the Army had attained its objectives, and the American line stretched from the sea to the Kavo Mountains. The Marines launched their own attack the following morning, with elements of the Second Regiment on the inland flank, in contact with the Army. Next to the Second Marines, down toward the sea, was 1/8, 2/8, and 3/8, in that order, 3/8 being on the seashore. The battle plan called for the Second to attack first, across the head of a narrow valley, with 1/8 and 2/8 moving forward later and 3/8 last of all. Within three hours the Second Marines, spearheaded by G Company under Captain William Tinsley (back to duty from the wounds he had

suffered at Tanambogo), had attained its objective. The First and Second Battalions of the Eighth Marines attacked during the afternoon, 3/8 sitting tight and awaiting its turn.

During the first seventy-two hours of the new offensive, the veterans of the Second and Eighth had amused themselves with derisive taunts: "Where the hell's the Pogy Bait Sixth?" The night of 13 January the Sixth Regiment finally came to grips with the enemy, passing through the Second and Eighth Regiments and relieving them on the new line. However, 3/8 remained at the front and at dawn launched its own attack, to bring the seashore flank forward in line with the inland units.

The day before, the Marines inshore had met Jap resistance, but 3/8 got both barrels. The Regimental Weapons Company halftracks, pushing across a narrow triangle of land linking Point Cruz to the mainland, literally ran over seven blazing Jap machine guns, established in echelon. In the clearing ahead, the weapons company found 3/8 riflemen falling under AP fire from a powerful L-shaped emplacement. The attack was momentarily disorganized, and the Marines were taking cover.

Out of this chaos came a big, burly red-bearded Marine captain named Henry Pierson Crowe. "Jim" Crowe (as he was known to the whole division) had just led his weapons company through the Jap machine guns. Now he abandoned the halftracks to rally an assault on the deadly emplacement. He found a half-dozen dazed Marines crouching low in a shellhole and yelled down:

"Goddam it, you'll never get the Purple Heart hiding in a foxhole! Follow me!"

The Marines were galvanized. They came scrambling up from the hole and followed Crowe in a rifle and grenade charge that wiped out the emplacement. The advance continued, and the



FIRST TANK LOST by Marines on Guadalcanal already is being reclaimed by the tenacious jungle as the battle nears its end.



FAREWELL TO GUADAL is said without regret by these Second Division veterans, boarding boats which will take them to transports.

skirmish was won. That night the Marine lines were straight—the valley had been captured and U.S. forces stood on a new ridge.

But there were to be more skirmishes, most of them like this one with small, bitter-end coveys of Japs fighting to delay the U.S. advance, courting death and expecting it, sometimes eager for it. What we did not know then, and in fact did not learn until after the war, was that the Japanese were making frantic and largely successful efforts to extricate their command and some of their troops. Submarines and fast surface craft were slipping nightly into the Jap areas around Cape Esperance; slipping in empty and slipping out with men and materiel. We had waited too long to close the Guadalcanal trap, and part of the quarry escaped, to fight again on islands farther north. Those that remained to cover this withdrawal were the expendables—some of them ill, some of them battle-happy, all of them doomed by their own command to die, but all of them determined to sell their lives dearly.

In the three days that followed the January 15 attack, the Sixth Regiment made steady progress. On January 16 3/6, under Major W. A. Kengla, relieved 3/8 on the beach. The front was narrowing steadily, as the island tapered off toward Esperance, and at 1400 on January 18 the Sixth Regiment's battalions were united and the Eighth was "pinched out," its mission completed. The Eighth went back into Division reserve, and an hour later the Sixth's First Battalion, under Major Russell Lloyd reached its objective and was relieved by an Army battalion from the 182nd Infantry.

The first eight days of the assault had carried the American lines 5,000 yards beyond Point Cruz. The Marines had received a new kind of help in the nasty job of digging the Japs out of their coco-

nut-log bunkers. For the first time, the fighting engineers of 1/18 had experimented with the flame-thrower-assault demolition team. They found it an unbeatable combination against the holed-up enemy, one that was to be useful on many future islands.

In the next week, the Japs made their last well-organized stand on Guadalcanal. They were attacked and driven back by an organization that was to prove unique in the war—the CAMDIV, or Composite Army-Marine Division. When the last battalion of the Eighth Regiment was withdrawn on January 18, the command moved the 182nd and 147th Army infantry regiments into the line with the Sixth Marines. For tactical purposes, it was simpler to have the three regiments under a single command, and thus the CAMDIV was born. It functioned well. In five days of fighting, some of it brisk, the Jap positions were overrun and the offensive became a pursuit.

Since late December, there had been no Japanese aircraft over Guadalcanal. But on January 26 the Sixth Marines got a taste of the terrors their sister regiments had endured in October and November. Earlier, the Sixth had captured a dazed Jap engineer sergeant, and he told Division intelligence that his command had called for one last, big air attack. With this forewarning, Marine and Army planes were airborne and on station.

The Japs came in on schedule, 40 Zeroes flying fast and high. The Americans pounced and violent dog-fights rolled through the high sky. The Marines crawled out of their holes to watch and then got back into them in a hurry. The Zeroes had been bait, and we had taken it. Seven Mitsubishi-97 bombers, flying with open throttles and at near-treetop level, suddenly swept down the island and scattered their bombs. The Mitsubishis had come and gone before our gunners could catch them in their sights. They did some damage and killed



THE HEROIC DEAD REMAIN on Guadalcanal, some of them in the Marine cemetery under coconut fronds (above) and others buried under crude and improvised crosses in the jungle (next page).

some troops, but the attack was only a gesture. The Japs did not come back.

Throughout January we had been making good use of the air the enemy had virtually abandoned. Before coming to Guadalcanal, observers from the Division intelligence section had been schooled in aerial photography. Now, as our ground forces pushed toward Cape Esperance, the photographers got a chance to practice their new trade. From the rear-gunners' seats of SBD's, they were able to take

excellent air photos of the terrain ahead, providing the Sixth Marines and the Army regiments with invaluable data on the disposition of Japanese forces.

After the January 26 air raid, the Sixth Marines and the 182nd Infantry resumed the attack west of Poha—by this time they had made contact with the Twenty-fifth Army Division, which had cut far inland and was now struggling down the spiny ridges of Esperance. With the support of Tenth



AN UNKNOWN MARINE is buried where he fell, deep in the jungle of Guadalcanal. Lacking any other materials, his buddies have assembled a cross out of a Japanese machine gun clip.

Marine and Corps artillery, the drive moved rapidly forward. On January 30 the 147th Infantry, which had been in reserve, passed through the Sixth Marines to take a turn in the shifting line.

The end was at last in sight. Nearly twenty miles back, in the area which had once been the precarious Marine beachhead and now was a well-built-up camp, the end had come for the Second Marines. For several days they had been stowing their gear and packing their seabags. Off Lunga Point were the big, gray transports, which the

previous summer had seemed like floating furnaces and now held visions of heavenly rest.

The Second Marines began boarding the ships the next morning, January 31. Some of them, scarecrow-thin after repeated bouts with malaria, had to be carried aboard. Many others looked like old men. Their skins were cracked and furrowed and wrinkled, and their eyes held all the memories of the frightful nights and awful days they had somehow survived. With the Second Regiment went the First Battalion of the Eighth, a battalion that had seen more than its share of action and,



GUADALCANAL IS SECURED and under its waving palms, a Marine sentry keeps an alert eye over this tropical soil reclaimed from Japan by the Marines at a high cost in blood, health and treasure.

like the Second, had been hard hit by disease. As the Marines went aboard, there were few backward looks. None of them felt any sadness at leaving Guadalcanal.

Thus the Division once again was divided, with one of its regiments and part of another bound for New Zealand. But the split would not be for long.

The last Japanese defenders were dying on the western tip of Guadalcanal. This mop-up actually began on February 2. The day before the command had received a report that a Japanese task force was approaching, and the Marines had dug in. But

the rumored force did not materialize, and the Sixth Marines moved up the next morning to trade assignments with the 147th on the left flank and release the Army units for the final sweep to the tip of the Cape. When, on February 9, Guadalcanal was declared secure, the Second Battalion of the Tenth Marines was the only Marine unit still in action against the Japs. That night the Second and Third Battalions of the Eighth Marines, the headquarters troops, the weapons company and the special units, all boarded transports and sailed for New Zealand to join the Second Regiment.



FRUIT OF VICTORY in Guadalcanal was its availability for U.S. air offensives. Here a Marine Corsair takes off from the Henderson Field airstrip on the regular dawn patrol mission.

The Sixth Marines had been the last to arrive and they were now the last to leave, except for 3/18—the engineers who were busy expanding Henderson Field into a major offensive airdrome. From February 10 to 18 the Sixth took over the job of coast defense. But if the Japs were gone, the mosquitoes were not. The Sixth Marines were less severely hit by malaria than the Second and

Eighth Regiments, but they had plenty of sickness. Dengue fever developed from the bite of daytime mosquitoes. Fungus was acquired quickly in a climate which kept every man's body wet with sweat and confined inside poorly ventilated clothing. Few Marines of the Second Division escaped "the crud."

Departure day for the Sixth Marines came on

February 19, a little more than six weeks from the time when they had first set foot on Guadalcanal. The few remaining units, again excepting the Third Battalion of Engineers, went with them. The engineers were soon to follow.

What had these months of misery accomplished? A great deal, both defensively and offensively. The Marines had first blunted and then bent back the middle prong of Japan's triple-offensive in the Pacific. The Japs had used the Solomons as stepping stones toward New Zealand. Now we could use them as stepping stones toward Tokyo. This thrust at the center necessarily would handicap any Japanese expansion through New Guinea toward Australia, and any extension of the Central Pacific spearhead beyond the Gilbert Islands. Long before the Marines left Guadalcanal, new airstrips were under construction and our planes were attacking up the slot—at New Georgia, Bougainville, and beyond at the great bastion of Rabaul.

By March 1, the whole Division was reassembled in Wellington, New Zealand—an entity for the second time in three months. This time the

reunion was to be permanent, although many Marines who had left San Diego no longer were with their units. Some of them lay under white crosses in the Marine cemetery near the Tenaru on Guadalcanal, and on Tulagi. Some had been evacuated home, and many more were sick in Division hospitals at Silver Stream and Wellington.

In the six months of the campaign, the Division had lost 263 killed, fifteen missing and 932 wounded. A good 95 per cent of its members had been incapacitated at one time or another by illness. Breathing the crisp fall air of New Zealand (where the seasons are reversed), the Marines felt that they finally were back in the world they had abandoned for the terrible, unnatural Solomons. They were tired, they were sick, but they were proud. Stateside, people might not know that they had helped invade Guadalcanal and then had mopped it up, but the New Zealanders knew. Here the Marines were heroes. The food was good, the duty at first was light, the beer was plentiful, and the people were kind. It was wonderful to escape for a moment the memories of that—— island they never really could forget.

NEW ZEALAND



Auckland
Bay of Plenty
NORTH ISLAND
Hawkes Bay
Tasman Sea
Wellington
Christchurch
SOUTH ISLAND
Dunedin
Invercargill
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NORTH ISLAND



Chapter Five



WELLINGTON HARBOR

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THE LAND THEY ADORED

THE DIVISION HEALS ITS WOUNDS IN HOSPITABLE NEW ZEALAND

“—Bound for the Land They Adore!”

The convoys that sailed south from Guadalcanal with members of the Second Marine Division were not “bound for Ol’ Blighty’s shore,” but many a Marine came to consider New Zealand a sort of foster home. For each successive group lifted from the hot desolation of the ’Canal, the thrill of arrival at Wellington was the same. The transports swung around the headlands and into Wellington Harbor. Up from the wharf-lined waters, climbing hills as steep as those of San Francisco,

rose New Zealand’s capital city. A fresh wind hummed in the rigging and the cool air—cool for the Eighth and Sixth, but warmish for the Second which arrived in January’s mid-summer—was really like wine to the tropic-deadened Marines. The Sixth Regiment had been here before, enroute to Guadalcanal, and some Division rear echelons, as well as 4/10, were still in Wellington. But even for the Second and Eighth Regiments and the rest of the Tenth Marines, the green hills above Oriental Bay were like the hills of home, glimpsed



SILVER STREAM HOSPITAL, 12 miles outside Wellington, was first destination of many ailing Marines.



TYPICAL SHELTERS built for Second Division camps in New Zealand are these enlisted men's huts.

at last after incredible travail.

In the history of the 18th CB Battalion, an anonymous author speaks for Seabees and Marines alike in this terse description of the New Zealand landfall:

“Our first sight of New Zealand was Mount Eg-

mont; our second was Wellington and the harbor; and our third (of any importance) was women. . . New Zealand was excellent, and the people were wonderfully friendly and very tolerant of our ‘invasion.’ ”

The voyage down for all of the Marines was one of constant readjustment to civilized amenities. At first the simplest conveniences were a delight—the hard bunks on the transports, hot water and plenty of soap, hot chow in a clean container. The ships that had once seemed barren even of necessities now had the feel of floating palaces. For the Second Marines, they were precisely the same ships—the old “unholy three,” the *Hayes*, *Adams* and *Jackson*. The *Crescent City*, *American Legion* and *Hunter Liggett* brought the Eighth Marines south, and then the *Crescent City* joined the original trio to lift the Sixth off Guadalcanal.

As the Marines once again came to take conveniences for granted, they found themselves possessed of many strange and compulsive desires. One of the great hankerings was for milk. In their first days ashore in Wellington, the Marines almost drank the city’s creameries dry. “Milk bars” were located all over town and they did a thriving business in ice cream sodas and milk shakes. For a little while, at least, everything about New Zealand seemed incomparably wonderful: the cacophony of automotive traffic; the sound of feet on pavement; the caress of the brisk air; the steak and eggs, the roast lamb, the “morning and afternoon” tea; even the warm *Waitemata* beer.

New Zealand was short of hard liquor and could furnish only an Australian concoction, officially named *Corio* but nicknamed “jump whiskey” by the Marines (because one drink would make a man jump like a kangaroo). A “high-class Scotch” which found its way into New Zealand turned out to be a villainous, green Mexican distillation called “Juarez.” The Marines drank it anyway.



TWO MARINE GENERALS, Alexander Vandegrift (right), who was soon to become commandant, and Julian Smith, who has assumed command of the Division, confer at a New Zealand airport

General Marston, who had remained in Wellington because of the peculiar command situation described in the last chapter, had established the Division's headquarters in the Windsor Hotel. Too large to be concentrated in a single area, the Division's many units were deployed in several

camps. The three infantry regiments were sent north to the vicinity of Paekakariki, thirty-five miles from Wellington. The Eighth Marines bivouacked about three-quarters of a mile out of this small town, while the Second and Sixth were at Camp Russell and McKay's crossing, respectively



SOUTHERN HOSPITALITY—south of the equator—was generously extended to Division members. Here a family at Manurewa entertains Marines.



HAPPY LIAISON was established by many Marines, like this Second Division member drinking tea with a New Zealand WAAF.

—two miles out. Special troops, including the Special Weapons Battalion, the Second Tank Battalion, the Second Parachute Battalion and the Scout Company, settled down at Titahi Bay. The Eighteenth Engineers established “Moonshine Camp” in Judgeford Valley, and the Tenth Marines were located at Pahautanui, only eighteen miles out of Wellington.

As the weather sharpened through March and April, the Marines frolicked. Most of them had little work to do, and they received maximum liberty. But not all were free for fun. Some were transferred from the ships to the base hospitals established by the Division at Anderson Park and by the Navy at Silver Stream, fourteen miles from Wellington, suffering from wounds incurred on Guadalcanal or Tulagi. Nearly all of the rest were down at one time or another with malaria. The climate was ideal for arresting this disease, but the hospitals were always busy. The Navy corpsmen, who admired the Marines and thought of themselves as Marines, cared for the sick with great fidelity and compassion.

One Corpsman who joined the Division in New Zealand wrote of his experiences.

“Seemed as though every man had malaria, and every night someone was waking up telling you that Smitty had the ‘bug’ or that Johnson had a chill, and I certainly felt incapable of coping with ‘Benign tertian,’ as the specific type of malaria was called. To cap it all, I stepped into the largest pair of GI field shoes a man ever tried to fill when I came to A Company. I was taking the place of a Pharmacist Mate named Jobb, who was killed at the ‘Canal trying to save a man who was shot by a Jap sniper and getting the same treatment himself. He had been an extremely well-liked Corpsman and had built a reputation that I must equal, as I was always compared to Jobb. After working with the malaria boys for several months doing

everything I could for them—I received a compliment; a boy with whom I had worked for several hours, trying to knock out a fever and chill, said: ‘You’re just like Jobb used to be,’ and to this day I consider that a great compliment. If I am not mistaken Jobb was later awarded a Silver Star Medal for his work at the ‘Canal. . . . We had grown somewhat accustomed to the training routine of the Marines. There was one type of training to which I never grew accustomed, and that was the continual hiking; but as the Marines had it to do, I swore that I’d hike every mile that my platoon hiked In other words, I didn’t want the Marines to feel that they were to depend upon a useless guy when the going got really rough. . . .”

There were many ways to amuse oneself in New Zealand, but the cheapest and most often indulged in was talk. The Marines spent uncountable hours “beating their gums”—and by this time every Marine had a story to tell. Not all of them had been on Guadalcanal or Tulagi, but those units which had waited out the Solomons campaign in Espiritu Santo or New Zealand itself took no back seat in the bull sessions. Some of the tankmen had been present at Espiritu when the USS *Coolidge* struck a mine in the harbor and went down, and that made a particularly good story because it was still supposed to be a military secret. Marines who remained in New Zealand or had paused there enroute to battle couldn’t quite match the tall tales of the Second and Eighth Regiments, but they could boast of happier adventures in Wellington.

Not that there was any need to live in the past. It is doubtful if any alien troops ever received a warmer and more sincerely friendly welcome than the Second Marine Division got in New Zealand. Nearly every home was open to them, and thou-



MAIL CALL knows no uniform in New Zealand. When the news is shouted, Marines come “as they are,” from liberty dress (left) to skivvies (center).



ENTRANCED MARINES watch the Navy’s Chief Bandmaster Artie Shaw blow hot on his “licorice stick.” Shaw brought first big-time entertainment.

sands of Marines learned the niceties of 11 A.M. "morning tea" and 4 P.M. "afternoon tea." As often as they could, the Marines donned their green winter service uniforms and responded to dinner or week-end invitations in Wellington, Paekakariki, Palmerston, Otaki, Palmerston North and Foxton. The friendships were not one-sided—the Marines immediately and immensely liked the New Zealanders, and they charmed their hosts and hostesses by quickly adapting themselves to local ways.

There was the matter of food, for example. The New Zealanders liked to eat, and their tables groaned with steaks and mutton, mounds of butter and flagons of milk. Five meals a day were the rule, and the Marines took to this new system—after the unspeakable food of the Solomons—like Bacchus to the bottle. In the field of romance, the Marines were neither better nor worse behaved than most young Americans (or New Zealanders). Hundreds married their New Zealand sweethearts, and many more promised to return after the war.

Few Marines will have forgotten their difficulties with the New Zealand language. It didn't take long to exchange "Okay" for the Kiwi's "goodo"; it took a little longer to become convinced that "bloody" was not a word used in polite society; but the real stopper was the New Zealand synonym for wages. Sometimes these language lessons came the hard way. There was the case of the lieutenant, attending a rather stuffy family dinner, who cracked an innocuous joke turning on the word "fanny." The icy silence which greeted this venture almost froze the smoke of the lieutenant's cigarette. Later, his girl explained. "Fanny," she said, in New Zealand does not mean the back of the lap.

The social success of the Second Division surprised its members no more than their proficiency in battle. In the first weeks of their New Zealand

liberty they came to refer to the jaunts to town as "The Battle of Wellington"—not because of any difficulties with the New Zealanders, but for the strenuous fun they enjoyed in the capital city. The Marines generally got along fine with the Kiwis, and on only a few occasions were there real scuffles. One of these occurred in May when several Marines got into an argument at the Allied Service Club. Somebody swung, and as in all tavern brawls, everyone else started swinging without waiting to find out what the fight was about. No one was seriously hurt, and—though some Marine units were put in hack for a few days—the scrap cleared the air, as scraps often do. The Marines soon began to take the joys of civilization a little more calmly.

The first few weeks had been a binge, a big week-end, the Christmas holidays, the night-after-the-football game, the colossal bender, and Saturday night seven days a week. Now it was time to settle down. In the few remaining weeks before the cold Antarctic winds brought winter to New Zealand, the Marines who still had leave coming took a quick look at the country. There were week-end trips to Rotorua, the valley of geysers, and over-water jaunts to Christchurch, on the southern island. Some 400 to 500 Marines were sent to the South Island each week, and a special petrol ration was issued to New Zealanders so they could show their visitors the sights. As the shadow of Guadalcanal grew longer and fainter, a new shadow began to form—the shadow of the next battle. The war was still young.

For some Marines the training grind already had begun. The Second Battalion of the Eighth Regiment had made a tough "forced march" from Foxton—some forty miles north of Paekakariki. Replacements had been fitted into units decimated by wounds or sickness, although few Marines ever went home merely because of malaria. Actual



SECOND DIVISION BAND poses for a group picture at Wellington. The bandsmen played many dance and concert engagements in New Zealand. In combat they served valiantly as stretcher-bearers.

battle training was augmented by an extensive sports program, and the Second Division Boxing Squad under Lieutenant Shannon Burke fought 110 bouts, all the way from Auckland in the north to Dunedin in the south, winning eighty and losing thirty.

There were many changes in the command. On May 1 General Marston yielded the Division command to a quiet, fifty-eight-year-old professional named Julian C. Smith. "General Julian" did not conform to the Hollywood conception of a fire-breathing Marine commander. His entirely unassuming manner and friendly hazel eyes clothed a determined personality that could be forcefully displayed in decisive moments. His concern for his men was deep and genuine.

Julian Smith had joined the Marine Corps in 1909 as a second lieutenant. He had served in Panama, Cuba, Haiti, Nicaragua, England, and aboard the ships of the fleet. In Nicaragua he had earned the Navy Cross. His footlocker held many decorations from Latin-American governments.

Soon after Smith's arrival, Colonel Hermle was made Brigadier General and moved up from chief of staff to assistant Division commander, and in August Colonel Merritt Edson became chief of staff. By this time the training program had become severe. Edson's arrival confirmed the general belief that action was not far away. The Marines knew that Edson, who had won the Medal of Honor at Bloody Ridge, had not come for any desk job.

Edson was in many ways the antithesis of Julian Smith, and in consequence they made a good team. When Smith smiled, his whole face seemed to glow. Edson's smile was accomplished wholly with his mouth, and above it his pale blue eyes gleamed with the impersonal menace of pointed pistol muzzles. Smith was the brilliant planner and inspirational leader; Edson would function as his hard-boiled administrator, in bivouac or in battle.

The transition from play to work was gradual, rather than abrupt. Marines could still steal an occasional evening in Wellington, or with friends elsewhere. Their own accommodations were New Zealand-made huts and pyramidal tents each heated by coal and oil stoves, or, in a few cases, shelters erected by the Division Engineers. Although Wellington had ceased to be quite the fairyland it had appeared on the Marines' arrival, there was enough to do to make an evening in town worthwhile.

The Red Cross sponsored dances at the Hotel Cecil, which had been converted into a club. Marines in funds or with a thirst could take their dates to the Grand, St. George, Midland or Wakefield hotel bars—or, for a very special occasion, to the Majestic Cabaret. An occasional U. S. O. show turned up, and—for its own delight and that of the New Zealanders—the Division produced and staged a musical comedy called *The Fourragere Follies*. Some movies remained open on Sunday, as a concession to uniformed Americans and their friends.

The lucky Marine with an overnight pass seldom had to worry about a place to sleep. The less fortunate often joined in a commuter's rush for the 1201 to Paekakariki, a narrow-gauged train that evokes little nostalgia. After the "Juarez" ran out and the "jump" whiskey palled, the Marines

learned to drink other native concoctions such as the "shellshock," a mixture of one-third port and two-thirds stout. In some ways, members of the Division Band—actually, a composite of the three infantry regiment bands—were the most popular members of the Second. They played many dances, did an occasional concert, and in between times toughened up with the other Marines for their battle roles of stretcher-bearers.

In July the Marines were astonished to learn that Eleanor Roosevelt had arrived in New Zealand and was anxious to inspect Marine bivouacs and visit Navy hospitals. For several weeks America's First Lady circulated among the Second Division units. She appeared at dances and rallies, shook the hands of many men wounded on Guadalcanal, and expressed the Marines' appreciation to the people of New Zealand for their warm welcome to their American Allies.

Although there wasn't much inclination to use the Marines for show purposes, there were a few occasions when a parade seemed indicated. One was United Nations Flag Day. The Second Division, its members clad in their best finery and pressed to a knife-edge, marched smartly through Wellington behind the Division Band. The New Zealanders loved it.

During the winter the Marines had excellent food in their company and battalion messes—mutton, steaks, eggs and lots of milk. A few of them did even better. Once a week Lieutenant Colonel A. B. Swenceski of the Second Tank Battalion sent hunting parties into the Tararua mountains. The hunters had a lot of fun, helped keep down New Zealand's burgeoning deer population, and provided fresh venison for their comrades. Venison wasn't the only thing that excited the "tankers." From the States came the first medium tanks of the Pacific war—General Shermans mounting 75mm guns—and C Company, First



ORIENTAL BAY AREA of Wellington is shown in this photograph, taken from residential heights above city. City's hills reminded some Marines of San Francisco.

Marine Amphibious Corps, Medium Tank Battalion, moved up to Noumea to learn to operate these seeming monsters. The General Sherman was no large tank by later European standards, but it made the light tanks we had used on Tanambogo look like matchboxes.

Other interesting experiments were under way. The engineers were busy perfecting their assault demolition-flame-thrower teams, first tried out on Guadalcanal. On the Waioru artillery range the Tenth Marines carried out training in massing the fires of an entire artillery regiment, with the five battalions blazing away all at once. The Infantry Regiments' Scout-Sniper Platoons were re-

organized and their techniques improved. Further training was provided for Division air observers by RNZAF pilots.

As September began to bring warming breezes, and the Division moved out for intensive maneuvers, every Marine sensed that the vacation from war was nearly over. It had been a well-spent and significant vacation. There had been time to indoctrinate the replacements with the spirit and tradition of the Second Division, a tradition immeasurably enriched by the many valors of Guadalcanal. Every "gum beating" session in the barracks at night had played a part in shaping the attitudes and loyalties of the new Marines. Most



RED CROSS DANCES at Wellington's "Cecil Club" feature hot jive and swing, played by dance sections organized among members of the Second Division Band. New Zealand girls soon became expert jitterbugs.

of these were still volunteers (the great drafts for the Marine Corps had not come into major force as yet), but in their brief stay in New Zealand they became not only Marines but Second Division Marines.

And what did that mean? It meant a lot, and there are a lot of fancy ways to say what it meant, but the best way is the way many Marines have said it in letters to the author: "The Second Division was the best damned outfit in the war—bar none." But what made it so was the steadily building wall of tradition and the never-ending chal-

lenge to equal or exceed the great exploits of the past. The personnel of the Division was in a constant process of change—nearly 60,000 men moved through it in the course of the war. But the things that made the Division great did not diminish but only grew, like a slowly rising coral reef beneath the waters over which the Second fought.

While the Marines worked and talked and hiked and played, the great and distant wheels of World War II had been turning, sometimes noiselessly and sometimes in loud fury. The U.S. Army

had driven the Japs out of the Aleutians. Other Army forces had pushed painfully up the Solomons chain to take New Georgia. In New Guinea Douglas MacArthur inched his way along the northern coast. In July Admiral Chester Nimitz, Commander in Chief, Pacific and Pacific Ocean Areas, had issued a highly secret order for immediate planning of a Central Pacific offensive. The Quadrant Conference in Quebec the following month adopted the U.S. Chief of Staffs' proposal for a trans-Pacific drive toward Japan. In August and September the carriers slashed at the Gilbert Islands. And in August Vice Admiral Raymond A. Spruance brought General Smith in Wellington the "word" that the Second Marine Division would spearhead the great offensive.

Through August and September, lights burned late in the rooms at the Windsor which housed the Division command. All of Smith's genius for logistics and planning was concentrated now on the problems of the attack. Night after night Smith, Hermle and Edson huddled over the maps and the sheafs of documents, in endless conferences with the Division staff—the D-1, Lieutenant Colonel Cornelius P. Van Ness; the D-2, Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Jack Colley; the D-3, Lieutenant Colonel David M. Shoup; and the D-4, Lieutenant Colonel Jesse S. Cook, Jr. Sentries guarded the planning rooms day and night.

When Lieutenant General Vandegrift, elevated to command of all Marine forces in the South Pacific area, visited Wellington in mid-September, he was stopped at the door of "Plans" by a private first class who denied him entrance until he had obtained a certified pass. General Smith interceded, but the PFC remained adamant until Vandegrift retreated and got the required pass.

Late in September Smith and his staff flew to Pearl Harbor to present their preferred plan to the command of the Fifth Amphibious Corps, to



HOW TO CUT A RUG is demonstrated to a Wellington girl by a Marine at Saturday night dance.

which the Division had been attached on September 15. The "scoop" in New Zealand was getting hot. When a fleet of aircraft carriers raided the Gilberts, war correspondents over-optimistically reported: "Little Tarawa, heart of the Japanese hornet's nest in the Gilbert Islands, was smoldering in ruin tonight—."

At Paekakariki, a tired Marine slumped in his bunk and scanned a newspaper. "Another strike on Tarawa," he said. Another Marine, soaked and sodden in his spotted camouflage uniform, painfully unlaced a field shoe and nodded. Only that



THE FOOD IS GOOD but the facilities in New Zealand camps are the old familiar bare tables and aluminum mess gear. This is the way most of the Marines lived, most of the time.

day Tokyo Rose had announced—quite correctly—that there had been a complete new issue of combat equipment to the men of the “SecMarDiv.”

The days grew long but the time grew short. Once again, as they had long ago at La Jolla, the Second Division Marines boarded transports for practice amphibious landings. The Sixth and Eighth Regiments sailed north to Hawke Bay for these maneuvers, while the Second Regiment drilled off Paekakariki, and there were even some

practices in Wellington Harbor. The Second Amphibian Tractor Battalion under Major Henry C. Drewes of New Jersey was particularly busy—and this time the amtrac crews were not rehearsing the rescue or supply duties which had occupied them in the Solomons. The alligators were churning ashore in balanced waves, loaded with Marines, while other Marines fired over them with live ammunition. It was at about this time that a small group of Marines sailed far to the north and east to test the amtracs on the submerged coral reefs of



DISTINGUISHED VISITOR to Second Division camps is Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt, shown here talking with a Texas Marine wounded in the fight for Guadalcanal. Mrs. Roosevelt's arrival was great surprise to the Marines.

the Fijis. They found that the alligators would climb over a reef, carrying a full load of combat-equipped Marines.

The Division was at full strength (in some units replacements were as high as 55 per cent), although on any given day many men might be temporarily incapacitated by malaria. Besides the advent of Smith and Edson and the elevation of Hermle, there had been many other changes in the command. Soon after the Second Marines arrived in New Zealand, Colonel John M. Arthur, who had

commanded the regiment on Guadalcanal, was re-assigned to the States to instruct the newly organized women Marines (nicknamed "BAMS" by their brothers in Semper Fidelis). Colonel William M. Marshall succeeded Arthur as commander of the Second Regiment.

Colonel Maurice G. Holmes succeeded Colonel Gilder Jackson as commander of the Sixth Marines, and Colonel Elmer Hall—a white-haired one-time mining engineer—moved over from the Eighteenth Marines to take charge of the Eighth



TRAINING RESUMES for Division Marines with maneuvers at Hawke Bay, the Waioru Desert and Paekakariki. As boats churn offshore, Marines set up a 75MM pack howitzer on the simulated landing beaches.

Regiment. Colonel Cyril W. Martyr replaced Hall as boss of the Engineers. Only the Tenth Marines, under Brigadier General Thomas E. Bourke (who had recently received his star), had no change in command.

There were some shifts in the lower echelons, too, for the operation that every Marine knew was coming, and coming soon. The battalion commanders were:

Second Regiment: 1/2, Lieutenant Colonel Wood B. Kyle; 2/2, Lieutenant Colonel Herbert

K. Amey; 3/2, Major John Schoetell.

Sixth Regiment: 1/6, Major William K. Jones; 2/6, Lieutenant Colonel Raymond L. Murray; 3/6, Lieutenant Colonel Kenneth McLeod.

Eighth Regiment: 1/8, Major Lawrence Hays, Jr.; 2/8, Major Henry Pierson Crowe; 3/8, Major Robert H. Ruud.

Tenth Regiment: 1/10, Lieutenant Colonel Presley M. Rixey; 2/10, Lieutenant Colonel George R. E. Shell; 3/10, Lieutenant Colonel Lamar M. Curry; 4/10, Lieutenant Colonel Kenneth



SAILING AGAINST JAPAN once more, the transports move out through Wellington Harbor, carrying the Division to a new battlefield. Although many hoped to return to New Zealand, few were able to.

B. Jorgensen; 5/10, Lieutenant Colonel H. V. Hiatt (this was organized in New Zealand as a 105mm Howitzer Battalion).

Eighteenth Regiment: 1/18, Lieutenant Colonel August L. Vogt; 2/18 (the old Pioneer Battalion), Lieutenant Colonel Chester Z. Salazar; 3/18 (the 18th NCB), Commander L. E. Tull.

New Zealand now became very dear; Wellington once again was a wonderful town. Couples wandering along Lambton Quay knew that Wel-

lington Harbor was not filling with ships for fun or for practice. Marines striking their big camps were well aware that they would not soon return. Even so, in the interest of security, the Division attempted an elaborate hocus pocus. The story was spread that the Marines were going only to Hawke Bay, on the North Island's eastern coast, for amphibious maneuvers. Arrangements actually were made for rail transportation back to the Wellington area camps. This may have deceived Japanese agents, if any were present, but it did not fool the

500-odd Marines who had married New Zealand girls, and it didn't fool their brides.

On October 28th the Marines began boarding the transports. There were 12 APA's, one AP, and three AKA's. Onto the *Zeilin*, a veteran of the Mediterranean campaigns, went 2/2. The *Heywood* got 2/8, the *Middleton* 3/2, and *Biddle* carried the Second Marines' regimental headquarters company. On the *Lee* (famed as the "Listing Lee") was 1/2. This was Transport Division 4, and these Marines were Combat Team 2—a designation that seemed somewhat less academic a month later.

In Transport Division 18 were the members of Combat Team 8—on the *Monrovia* 3/8; on the *Sheridan* 1/8; on the *LaSalle* and *Doyen*, Division troops. The third transport division—Di-

vision 6—that with all the others made up Transport Group 4, carried the Sixth Marine Regiment, designated as Combat Team 6. Aboard the *Harris* was 3/6, on the *Bell* was 2/6, on the *Feland* 1/6 and on the *Ormsby* was Regimental Headquarters. Detachments of Combat Team 2, 8 and 6 rode on the AKA's—the *Thuban*, the *Virgo* and the *Belatrix*.

By late night of October 31, the troops and equipment were all aboard, and the ships were ready. Toward dawn of November 1 they began edging out through the rich green waters of the Bay. Along the rails the Marines watched Wellington, warm and gray and soft with remembered delights, slowly drop astern. And in many of the homes on Wellington's steep hills, moist-eyed girls waved unseen farewells.

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Chapter Six



“BOATS WITH WHEELS”

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AN ISLAND CALLED HELEN

A FEW ASSAULT MARINES STORM THE REEF OF BLOODY BETIO

At a speed of fourteen knots, which is good speed for a transport convoy, you can sail from Wellington to Hawke Bay in a single revolution of the ship's twenty-four-hour clock—from 0001 to 2359. Dawn of November 2 persuaded the last wishful Marine that the “Hawke Bay maneuvers” were fiction for the homebirds. There were other grim evidences that “this was no drill.” Hour by hour, the convoy grew. Cruisers and destroyers hulled up over the horizon and fell into place. What was the Second Marine Division's destina-

tion? Only a very few of the officers, and none of the men, knew the answer. The course gave little clue. The convoy zigged and zagged, moving always north but sometimes north by east and sometimes north by west. Beneath the ships, the waters changed gradually from the sour green of temperate New Zealand to the lush, cobalt blue of the tropical South Pacific. On the night of November 6 the old sailors could smell land.

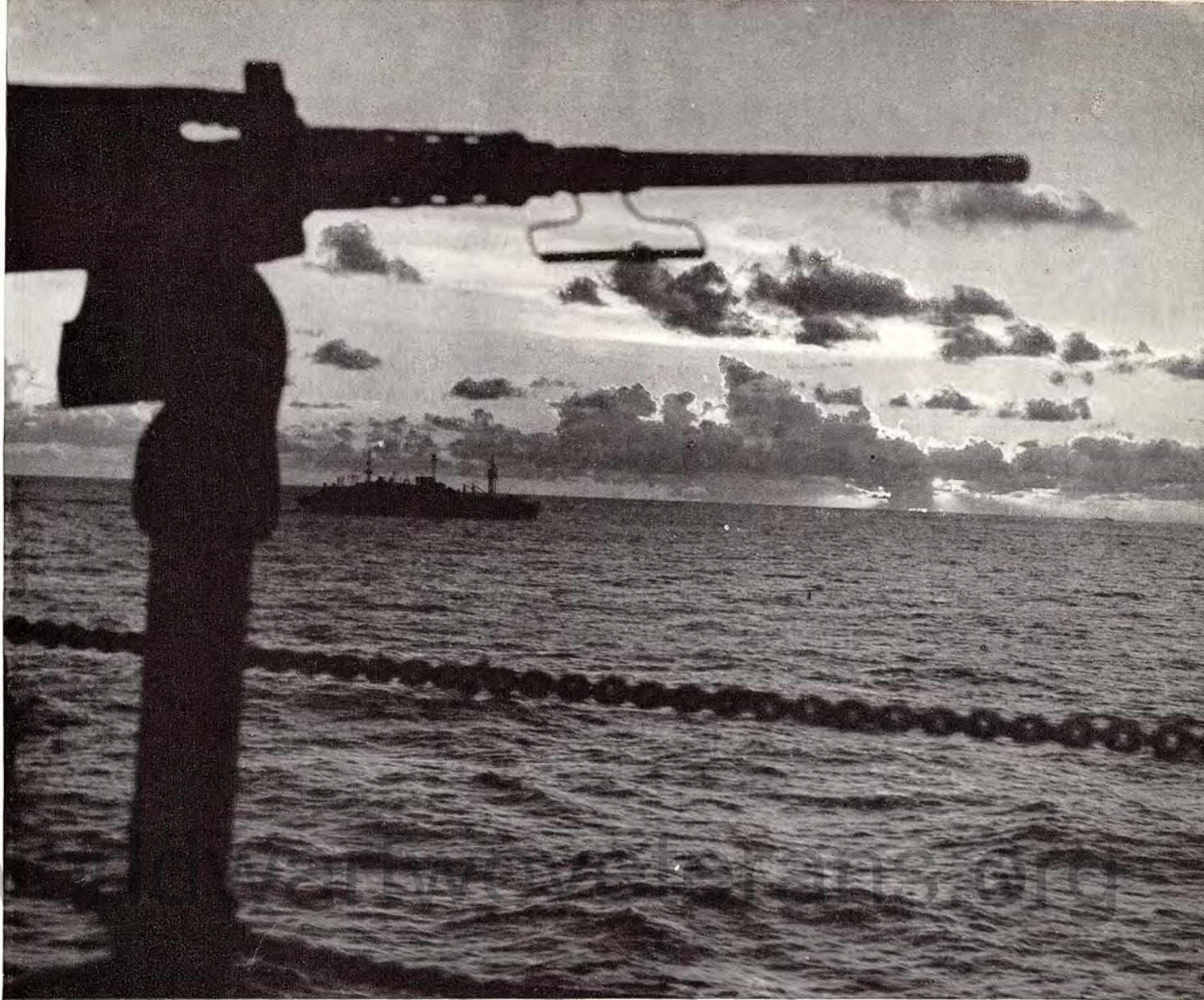
The land was there next morning, a rich, plateau-topped island, a big island that stretched



BEFORE THE LANDING, Betio had been pocked by aerial bombardment and shellfire. Note the zigzag trenches (right foreground) and the deep tank trap (center). Japs' formidable beach defenses were well camouflaged.

long arms on either side of the ships that had dropped anchor in Mele Bay. The island of Efate, south of Espiritu Santo, in the strange Anglo-French “condominium” of the New Hebrides. The Marines of Combat Team 2 were tumbled into amtracs and boats for a practice landing on the hot, sandy beaches. Out of the corners of their eyes they could glimpse coconut groves and canefields, and in the distance the little town of Vila and the green islet topped by the white governor’s mansion.

Around the corner from Mele Bay (it was a big corner of headlands that took twenty miles sailing to pass) was another deep indentation—Havannah Harbor. It, too, was full of ships—long, gray ships with guns. One of them was the old battleship *Maryland*. For months, earlier in the war, the “Mary” had laid at anchor in Havannah Harbor, waiting for the Japanese like a nervous but hopeful spinster who leaves her door unlocked. Sailors of more venturesome craft sang derisively, to the tune of “The Campbells Are Coming”:



DAWN IN THE GILBERTS finds the Tarawa task force close to the target and ready to disembark the assault battalions of the Second Marine Division. Old sailors shook their heads at the red sunrise.

*The keel of the Mary is broken,
And here is the story's moral,
The Japs never got the old Mary
She was hit by some fast-growing coral!*

But now the "old Mary" was ready, her sixteen-inch guns polished for battle or bombardment. Rear Admiral Harry Hill, a tall, spare, handsome expert in naval gunnery and a student of amphibious warfare, moved his flag aboard her. As Richmond Kelly Turner's deputy, Harry Hill would command the amphibious force in close co-opera-

tion with General Julian Smith, who also boarded the "Mary" with his staff. Hill and Smith already had had many conferences, in New Zealand and on the way up to Efate on the *Monrovia*. Now, as they perfected the last details, a painful duty devolved upon General Smith. Colonel William M. Marshall, who had rebuilt the Second Marines in New Zealand after the devastation of Guadalcanal, became ill and had to be relieved. Smith's choice of a replacement was his able operations officer, Lieutenant Colonel David M. Shoup. As he assumed

command of Combat Team 2, a day after Marshall was transferred to a Navy hospital on Efate, Shoup was spot-promoted to a full colonelcy. Such a shift on the eve of battle is always hazardous; but events proved Julian Smith had selected wisely.

The word was passed the afternoon of November 12: "Make ready to sail at 0600." Early the next morning the transports moved out of Mele Bay, where they had remained after the last practice. Out from Havannah Harbor came the *Maryland*, and the old battleships *Colorado* and *Tennessee*; the heavy cruiser *Portland*; the light cruisers *Mobile*, *Birmingham* and *Santa Fe*; and nine destroyers. With these big men-of-war were two small but invaluable craft whose duties would begin at the target—the minesweepers *Requisite* and *Pursuit*. There also was one addition to Transport Group 4. Up from Noumea had come a weird-looking vessel, a sort of LST with shoulders. Its name was the *Ashland*, and it was an LSD—Landing Ship Dock. Inside it were fourteen General Sherman medium tanks and the men of C Company, Fifth Amphibious Corps—an outfit destined for a fiery initiation into the Second Division.

On the way up from Wellington, the Marines had guessed that there would be a rendezvous. Now they knew that the next stop would be the target. Even as the transports and warships formed up in the glistening noonday sun off Efate, even before the great volcanic peaks of Ambrym dropped from view, the "scoop" began to spill from Marine to Marine, officers and men alike. Far off the port beam the battleships, almost hull down, fired booming practice salvos at the white limestone monolith of "Monument Rock."

"Boom! Boom! Boom!" said the battleships.

"Here's the scoop!" said the Marines. "It's going to be Wake!"

How this electric word spread from ship to ship is one of the mysteries of the war. Perhaps it was generated spontaneously on each. But in any event, before the battleship guns had quieted and convoy settled down to steady sailing, every Marine had heard the rumor. That night everyone went to bed happy in the conviction that the Second Marine Division had been chosen to avenge Major Deveaux and the heroic defenders of Wake Island.

Wake might have been easier, at that.

Disillusion came the second day out, November 14 or D minus 6. Admiral Hill flashed a message to the transports: "Give all hands the general picture of the projected operation and further details to all who should have this in execution of duties. This is the first American assault of a strongly defended atoll and with northern attack and covering forces, the largest Pacific operation to date." The big maps came out of the cabins which had been set aside for intelligence personnel, under armed and continuous guard. They were not, of course, maps of anything that looked like Wake. Instead, they showed the outlines of a long, skinny island which some writers likened to a hammer-headed lizard and others to an upside-down bird. The island's code name was "Helen," and on its northern shore three landing beaches were marked "Red 1," "Red 2" and "Red 3."

It had been no secret since the New Zealand and Efate practices that somewhere enemy beaches awaited the Marines, and that the three Battalion Landing Teams (battalions reinforced) of Combat Team 2—2/2, 3/2 and 2/8—would lead the assault on them. In the steaming hot cafeterias of the *Heywood*, the *Zeilin* and the *Middleton*, the commanders of these assault units told their men the story of "Operation GALVANIC," holding back nothing that they themselves knew. This much the Marines learned:



THE INVASION COMMAND, photographed aboard the *Flagship Maryland*, is headed by Rear Admiral Harry W. Hill (*second from right*) and Major General Julian Smith (*right*), commander of the Second Marine Division. With them at table are Brigadier General Thomas E. Bourke, commander of the Tenth Marines, and Colonel Merritt Edson (*left*), Division chief of staff. Standing are Captain Thomas J. Ryan (*left*), Hill's chief of staff, and Captain Jackson R. Tate, who was to become the first Betio island commander.

The Second Division had been chosen to open the Central Pacific offensive. The target was Betio (or Bititu) Island of Tarawa Atoll, "Helen" on the maps. Tarawa was in the Gilbert Islands, which the Japs had occupied in September of 1942. We were attacking Tarawa (and at the same time an Army division was attacking Makin Atoll, 100 miles to the north) in order to get at the Jap-mandated Marshall Islands, 800 miles closer to Tokyo.

The landing might be rough. Nobody knew ex-

actly how many Japs were on Betio Island, but it was between 2,500 and 5,000. These were not ordinary Jap soldiers, but the best the enemy had—Naval Landing Force troops, the counterpart of our own Marines. They had fortified the island formidably. Although it was only two and one-quarter miles long and 800 yards wide at its greatest width, it bristled with machine guns, automatic weapons, big dual-purpose guns and some coast artillery. We were going to take it by storm, to obtain immediate use of the airfield which



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LSP



nearly filled its broadest portion. We did not know much about the tides, and some of the Marines might have to wade ashore into enemy gunfire. There certainly would be some mines or obstructions on the long fringing reef. There were no plans for retreat—the Marine Corps did not contemplate defeat.

If this was a frightening picture (and to non-Marines like the author, who heard the briefing on the *Heywood*, it was), there were mitigating factors. Army land-based planes and the Navy's fast carriers already had begun (on D minus 7) a concentrated reduction of nearby enemy airbases such as Mili, Jaluit and Nauru—bases which normally would support Tarawa's defenders. This would continue day after day in our first really thorough experiment in "interception at the source," the destruction of enemy aircraft offensively at their own bases rather than defensively above the battlefield.

Nor were we neglecting the target. Also on D minus 7, Army bombers from the Ellice, Samoan and Phoenix island groups had begun a series of daily strikes on Betio itself. On D minus 2, the fast carrier planes would hit the island with bombs and strafing attacks, and the next day—November 19, D minus 1—they would return and U.S. cruisers would move in for a daring bombardment. Finally, on the dawn of D Day, November 20, the battle-ships escorting the Tarawa convoy would join the carrier planes in a co-ordinated and climactic air and surface assault. All told, the Navy hoped to put 2,700 tons of metal—very hot metal—on Betio before a Marine went ashore. It was more metal than had ever before been concentrated on a single target of Betio's dimensions. It was hard to believe that anything could survive such a battering.

Not only would the Japs be shell-shocked silly, but in the last moments they would be subjected to a double surprise. Intelligence indicated Betio's

defenders expected any attack to come from the southern, or seaward, shore. But we were going to slip into the lagoon and hit them from what everyone hoped would be the rear. And, for the first time in amphibious history, the initial waves of the assault would go ashore in amphibious tractors, which would climb up over the reef regardless of the tides and deposit cargoes of Marines dry-footed on the beach.

Did all this mean that the Marines could ride comfortably ashore and set up their tents, while burial details disposed of the enemy? The Navy seemed to think so. In the briefing of Division officers at Efate, Rear Admiral Howard F. Kingman, commanding the fire-support group, had declared: "We will not neutralize; we will not destroy; we will obliterate the defenses on Betio!" Although this remark was repeated on every ship the Assault Landing Teams went on perfecting specific plans and assigning specific combat duties. One commander warned: "Don't expect all the Japs to be dead just because they've been bombed and shelled. There's always some damn jackass that doesn't get the word and will still be shooting!"

The assault plan was relatively simple. A long pier jutted out into the Tarawa lagoon from the northern belly of the island. The 2/8 Landing Team would go ashore east of the pier, toward the tapering tail of the island. The airstrip dispersal lanes came almost to the shore here, and the plan envisioned 2/8 bottling some Japs in the tail and at the same time firing across the open airfield in support of 2/2 and 3/2 which, landing west of the pier, would attempt to strike straight across to the southern shore.

Since Betio had to be taken by storm, it was a good plan. It would utilize as much surprise as was practicable, and it would get the Marines the greatest possible amount of land in the least time.



BETIO FROM THE AIR looks like the tip of an anchor on the curving coral of Tarawa atoll. Island at bend (*upper right*) is Bairiki. White water around islands indicates the extent of the fringing reef.



OVER THE SIDE go the assault Marines, down cargo nets into the swaying Higgins boats for the long, wet ride into the Tarawa lagoon—and the attack. The shovels were useful but the gas masks were soon discarded.

If it actually took more than the three reinforced battalions of Combat Team 2 to capture Betio, 1/2 would be ready to land as Regimental reserve. The other two battalions of the Eighth Regiment would

stand by as Division reserve, but the Sixth was in a somewhat different category. It had been designated as Corps reserve, to be committed (if at all) either at Makin or Tarawa, depending where it

was most needed. To use the Sixth, General Julian Smith would have to get permission from Major General Holland M. Smith, commander of the Fifth Amphibious Corps, who would be aboard Kelly Turner's flagship off Makin.

The only thoroughly unhappy Marines on the long trip north and east were members of battalions designated as reserve. To the considerable amazement of non-Marines and Naval personnel, everybody in 2/8, 3/2 and 2/2—from riflemen to the top commanders—seemed delighted with the prospect of a fight, and fearful that the Navy and air arms would kill *too many* Japs. Lieutenant Colonel Herbert R. Amey Jr., a tall, handsome, mustached Pennsylvanian, prefaced his briefing to 2/2 with the remark: "We are very fortunate. This is the first time a landing has been made by American troops against a well-defended beach, the first time over a coral reef, the first time against any force to speak of. And the first time the Japs have had the hell kicked out of them in a hurry." Major Crowe, having advised members of 2/8 that Amey and Major John Schoettel (3/2) were "proud and happy" to have assault assignments roared: "And for the third beach—that's Red Beach Three—they've picked this battalion—and you all know me!" The Marines whistled and applauded. All three commanders said, in effect: "We're damn lucky! They've picked us—this battalion—out of the whole Marine Corps to take the toughest beach on the island!" When a correspondent asked an assault rifleman if he were afraid, the rifleman withered him with: "Hell, no. I'm a Marine."

Before D Day, this finely tempered esprit was subjected to a good deal of stress. The malaria bugs that had retreated in the chill of New Zealand now emerged triumphantly as the convoy cruised along the equator and dodged back and



AMTRACS MOVE IN toward the beaches where Japs are manning automatic weapons. Contrary to popular belief, most Alligators got ashore.



CLOSE TO TARGET, an amtrac grinds over the reef parallel to the burning Japanese pier. Japs had machine gun nests under pier.

forth across the International dateline. Many Marines came down with the chills and fever, and there was a steady demand for atabrin. One assault battalion commander had a temperature of

102 degrees only forty-eight hours before the landing. But by this time the Guadalcanal veterans had learned to live with malaria, and no one considered it adequate grounds for a Stateside survey.

Disease aside, life on the ships fell into that strange, monotonous pattern that distinguishes all target-bound convoys. Card games went on endlessly on deck, moving to follow the shifting patches of shade. Mystery stories were read until the ragged pages fell apart. An hour a day was devoted to equipment—to the cleaning of rifles and sharpening of knives. Detail maps were studied and memorized, so that each Marine knew his exact assignment. Millions of cups of hot coffee were poured down thousands of hot throats, and almost instantly became hot sweat. Water hours made shaving an uncertain luxury. And a good many letters got written—some to the U.S., some to New Zealand, some to both.

There were occasional alarums and excursions, announced by the ominous din of the general quarter gong and the sepulchral voice over the bullhorn: "General quarters! General quarters! All hands man your battle stations!" Sometimes it was a submarine scare, sometimes unidentified aircraft which always turned out to be friendly. After one nerve-racking GQ, in which the first word had been Jap submarines, then Jap aircraft, then submarines again—and finally, a whale—a disgusted Marine returned to his sack and declared: "The goddam Navy's sighted a flying Turkish submarine!"

On D minus 2 the sleek cruiser *Indianapolis*, carrying Admiral Raymond Spruance, joined the warships escorting the convoy. And the day before the attack the task force swung across the path of the sun and began driving straight for the Gilberts. The Tarawa convoy had gone far south of the target islands and ultimately east of them, to rendezvous with the Makin force. Rising out of the

earth's curve now were more and still more ships, spanning the horizons in all directions. For a few short hours, the Makin and Tarawa task forces sailed within sight of each other in the greatest assembly of warships and transports the United States ever had put together in the Pacific. Time, like the "Kee" bird of the Aleutians, was moving in ever diminishing concentric circles. So was intelligence.

For the forty-eight hours before the landing, incoming information swirled with contradictions. The Army bombers had received no anti-aircraft fire from the target; they had received heavy fire. Then again, no fire. Was Betio going to be a coral Kiska, with no Japs at all? The word got around, and was embraced, half with pain and half with pleasure. Then, at the opposite extreme, came a terrifying report that the Japs had anticipated our lagoon landing and had built a barricade of coral boulders across the reef, linked by steel cables.

On the transports, as the sun sank flaming red that last night, many men attended services. One chaplain handed out a mimeographed page of Scriptural quotations headed: "Spiritual Ration for D-Day." Kiska or no, the Marines were ready, physically and emotionally. From General Julian Smith, aboard the *Maryland*, came an inspirational message to all Marines of the Second Division. It concluded: "I know that you are well trained and fit for the tasks assigned to you. You will quickly overrun the Japanese forces; you will decisively defeat and destroy the treacherous enemies of our country; your success will add new laurels to the glorious tradition of our Corps. Good luck and God bless you all."

As the ships rode through the soft darkness of that last night, many men remembered many things. A few who had attended the fire-support briefing at Efate especially remembered a remark by Julian Smith. A battleship commander had



THE MARINES ATTACK over Betio's low seawall against murderous Japanese fire in the first terrible hours of the Tarawa invasion.

boasted: "We are going to bombard at 6,000 yards. We've got so much armor we're not afraid of anything the Japs can throw back at us." A cruiser commander had said: "We're going in to 4,000 yards. We figure our armor can take anything they've got."

General Smith rose to reply. He said: "Gentlemen, remember one thing. When the Marines land and meet the enemy at bayonet point, the only armor a Marine will have is his khaki shirt!"

The land battle of Betio began at 0910 on 20 November, 1943. It ended seventy-six hours later,

at 1330 on 24 November. The conquest of Tarawa atoll was completed at 0800 on 28 November. In that time, 3,301 Marines became casualties. They killed 4,690 Japanese. In its issue of 6 December, 1943, *Time* magazine said: "Last week some 2,000 or 3,000 United States Marines, most of them now dead or wounded, gave the nation a name to stand beside those of Concord Bridge, the *Bon Homme Richard*, the Alamo, Little Big Horn and Belleau Wood. The name was Tarawa."

What happened in those seventy-six hours, and in the five days that followed them, is a story that never has been told, and never will be told. A num-

ber of writers have tried to tell it, but they have failed, in the last analysis, because concentrated battle experience of the sort Betio provided simply cannot be communicated. It has to be lived.

During the months this book has been in preparation, many Marines have written the author to say: "Tell it the way it was." But the "way it was" is a personal thing, different for every man who waded through the chalky water that November morning, or fought beneath the pier, or somehow scaled the sea wall to attack, or somehow went forward when there was no prospect but death. The real story of Tarawa is what goes on inside a man in battle. And not a man can tell it so his listener will feel it exactly as he did and does.

However, if the story of Betio is the inside story of one man, an American, it is also the story of a whole division, the Second Marine Division. That last is a story that *can* be told, because what the Division achieved at Tarawa atoll was the result of the union of 20,000 men—some young, some old, some fearless and some afraid—in a fighting force rich in tradition and peerless in battle. One thing was the same in every man: he was a Marine, and a Second Division Marine. The sergeants of Belleau Wood and Gavutu and the captain of Soissons landed at Betio with Combat Team 2.

The Japs fired the first shot. At 0441 they sent up a red star cluster, and less than a half-hour later they suddenly opened fire with the big eight-inch guns that they had taken from Singapore. Soon after 0300 the transports had started dropping Marines into the Higgins boats. Now, as Jap shells cracked around and over the thin-skinned ships, they hurried north to get out of the way. The battleships *Maryland* and *Colorado* were ready to answer the enemy challenge with counter-battery fire. The LCVP's trailed along behind the transports, taking great baths of brine over their

square bows and making some of their passengers seasick. The Marines knew now that Betio had not been evacuated.

The U.S. battleships and cruisers outgunned the Jap shore artillerymen. The exchange of fire dwindled as members of the first three assault waves began the difficult transfer—made especially hazardous by the high seas—from LCVP's to alligators. The sun was not yet up, but the eastern sky was red as a cluster of roses. "Red sky in the morning, sailor take warning." Marine take warning? You bet! Between 0500 and 0600 a naval airstrike was due. When it failed (unaccountably) to come in, the Japs took advantage of the lifting of surface fire to blast at the transports.

All of this action occurred outside the lagoon, off the open side of the atoll where a channel cut through the submerged reef. Around 0700 two minesweepers, the *Requisite* and *Pursuit*, moved through the channel to clear the lagoon of mines. They were met by fire from Jap gunners undismayed by the naval shelling and the air attack (which finally had arrived, a half-hour late). The destroyers *Ringgold* and *Dashiell* raced up to support the sweeps, and then followed them into the lagoon, where the *Ringgold* took three hits but did not retreat.

The inside of the lagoon was like a smoldering volcano. The long, flat island was canopied in smoke, its splintered palms looking like the broken teeth of a comb. At many points orange fire studded the haze, and at dead center a great spiral of black smoke curled up from a pulsing blaze that now was red, but at first had been white and hot as a magnesium flare. An ammunition dump. All morning the wind had been fresh, fresh from the southeast. It blew the smoke of the burning island toward the small craft moving in, and the smoke helped hide the condition of the reef and the Jap defenses.

worldwartwoveterans.org



BESIDE THE PIER, two of the many Marines tumbled onto the reef by sinking boats work their way slowly toward the beach through intense Japanese fire, which seems to come from all directions.



DEATH ON THE PIER comes to Marines (*foreground*) who scrambled up seaplane ramp. Another Marine seeks cover of a Pack Howitzer.



THE MARINES CLUSTER on the narrow beachhead to prepare attack. The damaged pier is in background (*left*), behind two wrecked amtracs.

Out in the open sea, aboard the *Maryland*, General Julian Smith could not see the target for the clouds of smoke. But radio reports from the minesweepers led him to delay H-Hour, first to 0845 and then to 0900. The Jap shelling of the transports had slowed us up. In the meantime, out of the crazy chaos of bobbing boats near the line of departure—an imaginary line 6,000 yards out, marked by the sweeps, which had found no mines—a few craft loaded with specialists headed in toward Betio. They were about fifteen minutes ahead of the first assault wave of forty-two amtracs, carrying the storm troops of 2/2, 3/2 and 2/8.

These specialists were Marines of the Second Regiment Scout and Sniper platoon, under Lieutenant William Deane Hawkins of Texas, and engineers under Lieutenant Alan Leslie of Oregon. Their mission was to land on the end of the pier that reached 500 yards into the lagoon and clean out all Japs—Japs who might enfilade the assault waves. They made the pier, at 0855—the first Americans to land in the Gilberts, the first men ashore in the Central Pacific offensive (if the pier could be called shore). On the way in, they learned a terrible truth: instead of the usually low neap tide which had been taken into account, we had an even lower “dodging tide,” and the reef was almost bare. It would not float the shallow-draft Higgins boats. Only the amphibious tractors could be assured of reaching land. They learned something else, too. There were plenty of Japs left on Betio, and they were shooting with rifles, machine guns, anti-boat guns and mountain guns. Coral Kiska, indeed!

The first wave of amtracs got the word when it was 3,000 yards out, churning slowly toward the beach against the strong headwind. A sort of St. Elmo's fire began to flicker overhead, and something that felt like hot sand brushed the Marines

hunched low in the alligators. Air bursts, too highly charged to do much damage—but evidence enough that there were Japs ashore, Japs committed to proving that Admiral Shibasaki had spoken truly when he said a million men could not take Fortress Tarawa. At 2,000 yards the amtracs began to get bullets from long-range machine guns. At 800 yards the Marines encountered the reef. The “little boats with wheels”—as the Japs called them—waddled up onto the coral. Their drivers gunned them toward the beach in a grim, nightmarish turtle race.

Landing Team 3/2 won the race. At 0910 the tractors, most of them hit but none as yet disabled, crawled the last few yards out of the water onto the coral of Red Beach 1. The Marines piled out into the furnace of fire. Some of them hit the sand, a few on the far tip of the island broke across the four-foot-high sea wall. Seven minutes later LT 2/8 reached shore. Here, too, there was a coconut log sea wall. Like 3/2, 2/8 had experienced heavy fire all the way in, but had been helped by the close support of the two destroyers, the *Ringgold* and *Dashiell*, which whammed away at the Jap defenses until the first wave was less than ten minutes from shore. Last to land was LT 2/2, and for good reason. Moving in east of the long pier to the middle beach—Red Beach 2—they encountered the island’s heaviest and most effective anti-boat and machine-gun fire. Worst of all, they tangled up in a spiny barricade of barbed wire the Japs had strung across the reef, a web that stopped some tractors and disabled others. The wading had begun, and on Beach 2 many Marines died as they stumbled in from their wrecked machines.

Most of the three assault waves got ashore, one way or another. Casualties actually were not heavy for the whole group. But the tractors had taken a severe beating. Out of the eighty-seven that started from the line of departure, eight were knocked



THESE SINGAPORE GUNS, powerful eight-inchers, were overrun by Marines who landed on Red Beach 1. Japs had used them to shell transports.



THESE DUAL-PURPOSE GUNS, mounted east of Red Beach 3, took a frightful toll before they were silenced by naval fire.

out on the way in, a good many more were disabled as they attempted to wheel and return for more troops, and an estimated fifteen sank the moment they reached deep water. The remaining waves of the landing teams would, for the most part, have to cross the reef on foot. They were eager to do so, for even from 6,000 yards they could sense the fury of the fight. Before the first amtrac returned, a Marine radioman got this message from the beach: "Have landed. Unusually heavy opposition. Casualties 70 per cent. Can't hold!" The impatient Marines started for shore in the flimsy boats. With them came the General Sherman tanks, their turrets visible above the sides of the lighters.

With the battle for Betio less than an hour old, we had landed not more than 2,000 Marines on the island's northern shore. They were badly disorganized. Only two companies had reached Red Beach 1. On Red Beach 2, one company had come straight in but another had been deflected toward the opposite flank and one platoon had been driven all the way to Red Beach 1. Only on Red Beach 3 was the Landing Team more or less intact, and under full command control. But if Combat Team 2 was disorganized, its members were not immobilized. After the battle Colonel Edson said: "It is my opinion that the reason we won this show was the ability of the junior officers and noncoms to take command of small groups of six to eight or ten men, regardless of where those men came from, and to organize and lead them as a fighting team."

This was a particularly precious ability in the light of command casualties. Only one of the three LT commanders reached the beach during the assault. This was Major Crowe of 2/8. Lieutenant Colonel Herbert Amey, the big Pennsylvanian who commanded LT 2/2, was cut down by machine-gun fire when his amtrac stalled and

he attempted to wade to the sands of Red Beach 2. Amey's exec, Major Howard Rice, was in one of the tractors deflected to Red Beach 1. On Red Beach 1, where Major "Mike" Ryan, a company commander of LT 3/2, had taken impromptu command, the battalion leader, Major John Schoetell, had been halted at the reef by intense fire. And, finally, Major Henry J. Drewes of New Jersey, commanding the amtrac battalion, was killed in one of his tractors as he directed them in their first drive toward the beach.

Despite the confusion and chaos, against and beyond the sea wall, around the coral boulders and among the splintered palms, the Marines were fighting—not for their lives, for all normal caution urged—take cover!—but for the Second Marine Division, and the United States Marine Corps. A civilian correspondent who made the landing wrote of that first morning: "In those hellish hours, the heroism of the Marines, officers and enlisted men alike, was beyond belief. Time after time, they unflinchingly charged Japanese positions, ignoring the deadly fire and refusing to halt until wounded beyond human ability to carry on."

On Red Beach 3 the Marines somehow had manhandled their 37mm guns across the reef, after the boats carrying them were sunk. Two were dragged to the left flank, but because there was no break in the seawall, it now appeared impossible to get them inshore. Suddenly a Marine spotted two Jap tanks rolling toward the beach, and the gun crews yelled: "Lift 'em over!" This cry was answered by many willing hands, and the two 900-pound guns fairly soared over the seawall. Quickly placed in position, they knocked out one of the approaching tanks and forced the other to retire.

Only on the narrow ribbon of sand directly under the seawall, under the Jap guns, was there even a vestige of protection. And on the sand plateau above the wall, the Japs had erected defenses un-



MOVING UP TO THE WALL of coconut logs that was both cover and barrier, the Marines get set to plunge over it and begin digging the Japs out of their forts. Amtrac in background was disabled.

like anything the Marines had ever seen. There were big blockhouses and small pillboxes and worst of all, row on row of protected machine-gun nests, staggered in support of each other, made into tiny fortresses by sandbags and concrete and coconut logs—fortresses which withstood rifle fire and grenades, and had to be reduced by explosives and flame-throwers. It was not an exaggeration to say that there was not a square yard, or even a square foot, of land within Marine control which was either safe or secure. If not actually hand to

hand (and the Japs were wise enough to fight from inside their forts), the combatants were hardly more than a rifle length apart, and a man could stretch a hand above the seawall and get it shot off.

Behind the desperately engaged assault waves, in the warm, chalky water, made opaque by bomb and shell bursts that had powdered the coral reef, the Marines of the fourth, fifth, and sixth waves were stumbling to the assistance of LT's 2/2, 3/2, and 2/8. Some of them came in along the pier,



THE MARINES CHARGE, vaulting the seawall in single file, to establish a new line a few yards inland. Enemy fire was intense and constant at this point.



REINFORCEMENTS COME UP to support squad that made first foray (top). Jap bullets were coming from three directions on flat island.

which still had a few snipers' nests. But more walked directly toward the shore, a 500- to 800-yard walk in most cases in water that at first was waist deep and then only knee deep and finally only something slopping about the ankles, pulling at the ankles and slowing eager steps. "Spread out! Spread out!" their officers cried, as the Jap machine guns racketed viciously and the water was laced with ripples. The Marines walked steadily, their rifles held high at first to keep them clear of the water. Sometimes they slipped down into the treacherous coral potholes, sometimes they tripped over invisible obstacles. Sometimes they zig-zagged, but there was little point in zigzagging. Off Red Beach 1 there was direct fire. Off Red Beach 2 there was enfilade machine-gun and sniper fire from a few nests still remaining in the pier. Off Red Beach 3 were both of these and something more—flank fire from the stubby Burns-Philp wharf some 400 yards west of the pier.

Some of the Marines died in the deep water, sinking quickly under the weight of their equipment. Some of them died close in, lying half-exposed in the gentle surf. Some of them died horribly in the barbed wire off Red Beach 2; and on the eastern sector of that terrible beach, where the seawall was loop-holed, the machine guns looked straight out from the level of the sand and clusters of five and six Marines fell face down, making a fan of bodies at the very muzzles of the guns. Overhead, the Kingfisher observation plane from the *Maryland* flew back and forth, acting as eyes for Admiral Hill and General Smith. Its pilot, Lieutenant Commander Robert A. MacPherson, watched the Marines in the frightful long wade and wrote in his log: "The water seemed never clear of tiny men, their rifles held over their heads, slowly wading beachward. I wanted to cry."

The commander of Combat Team 2, Colonel

David Shoup, had planned to follow the assault waves into Red 2 and set up his Regimental CP. Shortly before 1000, he was waiting off the reef with a party that included Lieutenant Colonel Evans F. Carlson, the Marine raider who was along as an observer, and Lieutenant Colonel Presley M. Rixey of Virginia, commander of 1/10, who hoped to land his pack howitzers before the day was over. Shoup was in touch with some of the assault elements by radio, and also with the *Maryland*. All the news was bad, and many units could not report at all—their inefficient TBY sets had become watersoaked and would not work. Within forty-five minutes of the landing, as the messages reiterated that “the issue is in doubt!”, Shoup decided reinforcements must be hurried ashore if Betio was to hold. He ordered Major Wood B. Kyle of California to take his CT2 reserve landing team, 1/2, into Red Beach 2, where Lieutenant Colonel Walter I. Jordan, an observer, had assumed command after Amey’s death. Almost at the same moment, General Smith released Major Robert H. Ruud’s 3/8—part of the Division reserve—to Shoup for use as he saw fit. Shoup directed Ruud to take his men ashore on Beach 3. The colonel and his own party landed on the fire-swept pier to begin inching their way to the beach.

The news that help was coming electrified the Marines on Beaches 2 and 3. They needed more than men—ammunition was getting dangerously short, and so was plasma. Under the seawall on Beach 3 the line of wounded now stretched nearly fifty yards, and only those too badly hurt to move were there—the “walking wounded” were still fighting. There was even less protection—and even more casualties—on Beach 2. But balanced against this great need was the frightful problem of how to get help ashore reasonably intact. The tractor battalion had lost many of its machines



AT BEACH AID STATION a Marine wounded in the left arm and right leg is attended by Navy corpsmen, and calmly smokes a cigarette.



PLASMA FOR WOUNDED is administered under fire on beach by suspending bottle on rifle. Some casualties were evacuated during the first day.

and many of its men, particularly the .50 calibre machine gunners who had tried to answer the superior Jap fire. Now there were only enough amtracs to take two companies of 1/2, and there were none at all for 3/8. A little after 1100 the two battalions started in, Ruud's men in the flimsy Higgins boats.

The members of 1/2 got there first, crawling across the reef in the alligators and taking concentrated machine-gun and anti-boat fire as they neared the sand. One group was deflected, as others had been earlier, to Red Beach 1. But a company got through, despite the fusillade, and the smoke-smearred, bloodshot veterans of 2/2 took heart. It was a different story on Beach 3. Some of the smoke had drifted away, the clouds had lifted and beyond the chalky surf of the blue lagoon danced in the sunlight. The little blue Higgins boats of 3/8's leading wave came churning in, five abreast. There was no fire until they were almost within spitting distance of the reef. Then, as their ramps came down—"Whang!" The sound, on the beach, was like a steel girder hitting concrete. It pierced the ears, above the howling fury of the battle, and it echoed for seconds. Out in the blue water, the westernmost Higgins boat disappeared. Quite literally. It had been there and suddenly it was not. In its place, for a split second, there was a blur in the air, and then there was nothing. "Whang!" A second boat vanished. It was a terrifying and heartbreaking sight. And there was nothing to be done about it, nothing that could be done fast enough to do any good. The Japs had gotten one of their 4.7 dual-purpose guns back in working order, beyond reach toward the tail of the island, and they had the exact and absolute range. On the shore Marines who had fought tight-lipped all morning wept now and beat on the sands with their burned fists. In the remaining boats there was further disaster.

A coxswain some distance from the reef screamed: "This is as far as I go!" He let the ramp down, and a boatload of Marines, heavily laden with packs, tumbled into fifteen feet of water and many drowned. Other boats were raked with machine-gun fire. They straggled toward the pier, where Shoup was desperately motioning them, and their dazed occupants jumped into the chest-deep water only to face more fire, fire which could not be kept off the logs and sand of the long dock. There was hardly enough left of 3/8's leading waves to land. Many officers were dead, and many men were dead or so badly wounded they needed quick evacuation. The Japs' dual-purpose gun was knocked out by destroyer fire after about twelve shots—and after it had done its damage.

The afternoon of D Day was a jumble that saw confusion compounded. One thing was clear after the disastrous approach of 3/8: unless the few Marines ashore could get at the Japs' anti-boat guns, and the long-range machine guns, there was little hope of reinforcements across the reef. About noon Shoup and his command party reached Red Beach 2 from the pier and established CT2 headquarters behind a big Jap bunker (on D plus 2 twelve Japs were killed inside it). But communications were fragmentary. The CP was entirely out of touch with Major Ryan and his by-now composite LT on Red Beach 1. One thing was frighteningly clear both to the Regimental command and to Julian Smith on the *Maryland*—the Division had committed everything it had except one battalion, Major Lawrence Hays' 1/8, and it was not going to be enough. At 1330 Julian Smith radioed Major General Holland Smith, commander of the Fifth Amphibious Corps, asking him to release the Sixth Marine Regiment from Corps Reserve. Holland Smith answered in the affirmative—the Army had flushed only 836 Japs



BEYOND THE SEAWALL, the attack continues as Marines attempt to overrun Jap emplacements. In foreground two Marines lie flat behind fallen log to get their breath before pushing on up island.

on Makin. This meant that 1/8 could be sent into action without further delay. Smith instructed Colonel Elmer E. Hall to take his Regimental Command and Hays' battalion to the line of departure and await further orders. At 1458 Major Schoettel radioed Shoup that his boat was still off the reef and added: "Have lost contact with assault elements." Schoettel landed on Red Beach 2, and ultimately reached 3/2 overland.

About 1500 Smith messaged Shoup: "Do you consider a night landing by LT 1/8 suitable and

practicable on Beach Green?" (The alternate landing beach on the western shore.) "If not, can reinforcements land on Beaches Red 2 and 3 after dark?" The message failed to get through. An hour later Smith radioed Hall to land 1/8 and all remaining elements of CT8 on the tapering eastern tip of Betio and attack northwest, in order to prevent a Jap counterattack on the left flank of 2/8. Once again the message vanished in the air, and 1/8 remained at the line of departure.

Nothing much happened on the beach during the

afternoon. Nothing much, except that maybe 1,000 Marines, maybe more, performed acts that would have got them the Navy Cross in any other battle. On Red Beach 1 the mixed Marines of LT 2/2 and LT 3/2 were making better progress than anyone knew, but the point was no one knew. Now and then the engineers blew up a Jap pillbox. Everybody threw an occasional grenade, or blasted at places where Japs must be because so much fire was coming back. The Navy sent its carrier planes down to strafe, when asked, and out in the lagoon the destroyers banged away at hillock of coral, logs and concrete on the left flank of Red Beach 3. On Red 2 Shoup was trying to make sense of the battle and fight it at the same time. Out at the end of the pier, the Japs still had so many bullets going home that Marines there since morning could not move in. Part of the pier was afire, a blaze set by one of Lieutenant Leslie's flame-throwing engineers before the landing. The Navy corpsmen and the members of the Division band climbed up and down over the wall or raced between the blasted pillboxes, bringing back the wounded. There were no more morphine syrettes, no more plasma, not much water, no food, not many bullets. The sunset was pretty, though. It was especially pretty because it seemed likely to be the last for any Marine on Betio. On each of the three beachheads the commanders set up the best lines they could and then dug their men in as much as they could, to wait for the Japs' night counterattack. All along the beaches Marines died slowly, white-faced and in great pain, but uttering not a sound.

In some ways, the real situation on Betio at nightfall of D Day was not quite as bad as it seemed; in others, it was worse. The casualties, while high, were much lower than anyone believed at the time. Each of the Landing Teams held more ground than the others imagined they did. The Japs, although far from "annihilated," were

much more disorganized than we supposed. On the debit side, we had failed to land an overpowering force and were scarcely better than even with the Japs in manpower. We were short of ammunition, had no food, and, worst of all, we had almost no valuable positions. The beaches and the gouges in from them were wide open, while the Nips were still encased in their armored pillboxes. Finally, we had only the most uncertain of communications—everybody was still "lost," and almost nobody really knew what had happened on D Day, in terms of anything larger than a squad or company.

What had?

Let's start with Red Beach 1.

As previously noted, the two companies of 3/2 which got ashore on the western tip of the island—the "bird's beak"—landed under savage fire. When less than an hour later, L Company, a few engineers and the mortar platoon of M Company, waded ashore from grounded Higgins boats, they took 35 per cent casualties. Luckily, Major Ryan, the commander of L Company, was not among the dead or wounded. He organized the survivors of I and K Companies, and, supported by two Sherman tanks which had crept across the reef, launched an immediate attack. From the beginning it was clear that the Japs had a ferocious defense stronghold in the curve of sand between Beaches Red 1 and Red 2. Instead of fruitlessly attempting to storm this fortress, Ryan led his Marines through the only slightly less deadly pillboxes along the western shore—the shore that had been designated as "Green Beach." While this isolated 3/2, it flanked the Japs. By late afternoon, reinforced accidentally by several units of 2/2 and some of 1/2 which had been deflected to Red 1 by heavy fire, 3/2 had carved out a beachhead 500 yards deep along Beach Green and 150 yards wide. That night Ryan pulled back a little, to estab-



OUR PART OF BETIO by end of first day was only a narrow and crowded strip like this section of Red Beach 3. Marines in foreground have some protection from coral hummocks (*out of picture, at right*).

lish a 300-yard perimeter and await the inevitable Jap counterattack.

Between Ryan's composite LT and the Marines on Red Beach 2 was nearly 600 yards of Jap-held island. This meant that 1/2 and 2/2, on the center beach, also had a flank to guard. In the morning their own casualties plus the lack of adequate cover had slowed down 2/2. When 1/2 landed, before noon, the remnants of these two teams com-

bined to push as far inland as the diagonal taxiway of the airfield. In the afternoon, in frightful fighting, this slim hold was expanded to the area inside the airstrip-taxiway triangle. By nightfall, the battalions held a "line" (it was hardly a line, but only a series of blown-up pillboxes, captured trenches, and shell holes) roughly 200 yards inshore from the beach. Kyle's Marines, of 1/2, also were deployed among wrecked and smoking Jap

defenses on the right of Red Beach 2, to meet any night flanking attack by the enemy troops in the hot pocket to the west.

In the initial hours Crowe's 2/8 had made faster progress than any other LT, partly by virtue of naval support (from the two destroyers), partly because the command got ashore intact, and partly because it suffered the least casualties on the reef. F Company was sent immediately to the left to establish the flanking line across the island's tail. E and G Companies smashed directly inland. Crowe's executive officer, Major William Chamberlin of Chicago, had command of the flank, with Crowe directing the forward assault. The Japs fought as fiercely here as elsewhere, but 2/8 got across the corner of the taxiway quickly and then had to battle for every inch, paying dearly and in blood. The remnants of 3/8 straggled in during the afternoon and went into instant action, but despite repeated and heroic attacks the sunset line was no more than 200 yards inshore, and the flank line curved away from huge Jap defenses behind the Burns-Philp wharf.

The riflemen of the three assault battalions and the LT's which came in to reinforce them shared the glories—and the disasters—of D Day with a number of special units, each of which contributed a great deal to the fight. There can be no question of assessing the relative contribution of these outfits; let it suffice that without any one of them, the struggle would have been immeasurably harder and perhaps impossible.

We have mentioned the two tanks which provided firepower for 3/2's push on Red Beach 1. They were, of course, from C Company, Corps Tank Battalion—manned by Marines who had trained in Noumea and joined the Division at Efate. Early in the morning of D Day, fourteen of the Shermans floated out of the LSD *Ashland* in their own lighters and moved to the line of de-

parture. The plan called for six of them to land on Red Beach 1, in support of 3/2; four on Red Beach 2, in support of 2/2; and four on Red Beach 3, in support of 2/8. There were the first, second and third platoons, respectively. Shortly before 1000 the six lighters assigned to the First Platoon lowered their ramps and dumped the Shermans on the reef off Red 1, 800 yards from shore. The tanks started rumbling ashore under their own power, through water that came nearly to their turrets. Tank reconnaissance men splashed ahead of them, marking potholes in the coral with flags, and disregarding the intense Jap machine-gun fire.

In attempting to avoid running over dead and wounded Marines, who littered the beach and the shallow reef near it, four of the tanks dropped into reefholes and were stalled. Two got ashore. One of them was *China Gal* (like bomber crews, tankers are partial to naming their craft), commanded by Lieutenant Edward Bale of Texas. In 3/2's push along Green Beach, the tanks played an all-important role. Their 75's and machine guns were a partial substitute for the Marines' lack of artillery. *China Gal* outdueled a Jap tank in the course of the advance, and together the two Shermans smashed in numerous pillboxes and emplacements. One of them finally was badly hit, caught fire and burned. But as night fell *China Gal*, though damaged, was still operating, and Major Mike Ryan established her on his exposed flank.

The other Shermans, with one exception, landed on Red Beach 3 (according to plan). Less than fifty yards from the beach one of them dropped into a pothole and had to be abandoned. This tank was from the Second Platoon, destined for Beach 2. The three survivors climbed through a hole blown in the sea wall by the engineers and moved rapidly west to a prearranged assembly area.



STOPPED BY SEAWALL, this amphibious tractor which carried Marines in the first assault wave, has been put out of action at the water's edge.

They wheeled to assist the Marines of 2/2 in their desperate drive against the airdrome infield—the area between the taxiway and the airstrip. Meanwhile, the four Shermans assigned to Crowe's battalion—the Third Platoon—had crawled up on Beach 3, paused for orders, and then climbed the barricade. They struck due south, parallel to the Second Platoon.

The tanks of both the Second and Third Platoons moved out more or less on their own, with instructions to “knock out all enemy positions encountered.” They did well—as long as they lasted. But the penalties of operating blind (visibility is limited from the inside of a tank) were soon imposed. In the Second Platoon two tanks were knocked out by another Jap 4.7mm DP gun. In

the Third platoon, one tank was wrecked tragically. At nightfall the only survivor on Red Beach 3 was *Colorado*, smoky, battered, but still in fierce and effective operation under Lieutenant Louis Largey of California. As Ryan had done on Beach 1, Crowe established *Colorado* on the sandy flank of Beach 3, to await the uncertainties of the night.

During the first hours of the assault, a few half-tracks from the Regimental Weapons company had bumped and jolted and splashed their way across the reef, but despite the valor of their exposed crews they could not be kept in operation. One fell into an underwater shellhole before it ever reached the shore; another got in and fired effectively, but in changing position also became bogged down.

Long before the halftracks and tanks came, the Division's smallest but most spectacular band of specialists was on its way to Marine Corps immortality. This was the Scout and Sniper platoon under Lieutenant Hawkins, which had landed (as noted earlier) on the tip of the pier fifteen minutes ahead of the assault waves. The Japs had had a seaplane ramp near the end of the pier, and Hawkins (accompanied by four enlisted men and Lieutenant Leslie of the Engineers) got up on the ramp and went to work with grenades, rifles, and flame-throwers. They burned two Jap houses, cleaned out a Jap machine-gun emplacement, and worked their way along the pier until Hawkins was satisfied that it offered no major danger to landing troops. He then took his company ashore, and during the afternoon of D Day the Scout-Snipers and Engineers, still working together, were a major factor in blasting enemy forces out of the beach emplacements. The next day Hawkins would die, and in dying win the Congressional Medal of Honor, but that story belongs in the next chapter.

There is another fabulous story connected with the capture of the pier, involving the enterprise and heroism of a young Higgins boat coxswain named Stokes from the APA *Zeilin*. Stokes came back to his ship after delivering a group of Marines to the reef with his boat riddled by Jap fire. He had a plan—and he fought his way all the way up the chain of command to Commodore J. B. McGovern to propose it. What he needed was a new boat. What he wanted to do with it was this: take a Marine flame-thrower team down the channel beside the pier to knock out the remaining Jap machine-gun nests. The Marines had volunteered and were standing by. McGovern gave young Stokes his boat, and the mission was carried out with—surprisingly enough—only minor casualties.

In the later phases of the battle for Guadalcanal (see Chapter IV) Marines from the Eighteenth Regiment had experimented with flame-throwers and assault demolition. Betio was the perfect laboratory for their fiery and explosive specialty. Besides the unit under Lieutenant Leslie, which accompanied Hawkins, two twenty-man sections from the First Platoon, A Company, 1/18, went ashore with LT 2/2. One of these sections suffered 100 per cent casualties in the landing; the other had enough survivors to destroy six enemy positions before nightfall. On Red Beach 1 the Engineers (this was the Third Platoon of the same company) shared the heavy casualties of 3/2; even so, they got enough men ashore to attack five Jap positions with flame-throwers and several others with explosives.

Exactly what did these flame-thrower and demolition teams do, once ashore? Robert Sherrod, in his book *Tarawa*, has provided a vivid eye-witness description of the performance of C Company's Second Platoon on Red Beach 3: "A Marine jumped over the seawall and began throwing blocks of fused TNT into a coconut log pillbox about fifteen feet back of the wall. Two more Marines scaled the seawall, one of them carrying a twin-cylindrical tank strapped to his shoulders, the other holding the nozzle of the flame-thrower. As another charge of TNT boomed inside the pillbox, causing smoke and dust to billow out, a khaki-clad figure ran out the side entrance. The flame-thrower, waiting for him, caught him in its withering stream of intense fire. As soon as it touched him, the Jap flared up like a piece of celluloid." Not pretty, you say? Brother (or sister), on Betio that morning it was the most beautiful sight in the world.

The heroism of the Engineers in the D Day fight is exemplified in the story of Staff Sergeant William J. Bordelon of Texas, a member of the



DEFYING JAP SNIPERS, two Marines rise from broken coral near the base of pier to make dash for better position where they can get their fire on Japanese.

assault platoon of 1/18. The Japs got Bordelon's amtrac right in their sights, and he was one of four men who survived the trip across the reef. Ashore, Bordelon instantly went into action. In a matter of a few minutes he had made up two demolition charges and personally disposed of two enemy pillboxes. As he attacked a third position, he was hit by Jap machine-gun fire, but he did not fall. Instead, Bordelon caught up a rifle and covered another group of Marines who were scaling the seawall.

Corpsmen tried to give the seriously wounded sergeant first aid but he waved them away and presently splashed out into the water to rescue another demolition man who was injured and calling for help. He rescued two, spotting a second as he helped the first man to the beach. By this time Bordelon had done his duty and a good deal more, but he was not satisfied. Bleeding from his wounds but apparently oblivious to them, he prepared another dynamite charge and without assistance or cover attempted to blast a fourth pillbox. The Japs

caught him in a volley of bullets, and the valiant sergeant died instantly. He was the first of four Division members to win the Medal of Honor at Betio.

One more word for the Engineers: On D Day afternoon elements of the shore party landed on the end of the pier, to begin preparing it for the receipt of supplies. Under constant Jap mortar and sniper fire, they extinguished the fire started by the pre-H-Hour flame-thrower team and at midnight began repairing the fire damage. There was no more cover there than anywhere else, and many Marines—wearing the striped-trouser uniforms of the shore party group—lay dead on the splintered planks before the job was done.

Throughout D Day Lieutenant Colonel Rixey, the commander of 1/10, had eagerly sought an opportunity to land his pack howitzers and get them into effective support. He was frustrated by the simple fact that there was no place to put them—no position area from which to deliver normal fires. The “pack” crews waited, off the reef. In their stead, the Marines had the assistance of Navy air and the two destroyers which had remained in the lagoon all day long, firing when requested. Requests—for both air strikers and ship’s fire—were relayed by radio (when the radios were working). The men who did the job were young naval lieutenants and young Marines—Navy in the case of air, Marine for the surface fire. These liaison officers were with each battalion, and their functions were vital. They had the delicate responsibility of obtaining fire where it was needed, but keeping it off our own men. They stuck at their posts, kept the radios going, and got results. The Navy Hellcats came in for a dozen or more strafing missions during the afternoon, their racketing guns sounding like sticks drawn over giant washboards. The destroyers put heavy five-inch fire on the Japanese every time there was a seri-

ous threat from the left flank of Red Beach 3.

The air liaison officers were not the only Navy men on the beach. The doctors and corpsmen had heartbreaking and terrifying assignments. We had long since learned that the Japs did not respect the Red Cross. The young corpsmen went among the pillboxes unarmed and unmarked, bringing in the wounded. Many of them were hit, some were killed. On the narrow beach strips that functioned as aid stations, the doctors did everything that could humanly be done—and cursed the lack of drugs, plasma and bandages as the day wore on.

Finally, there were the mortarmen. Some members of the M Company mortar platoon got ashore on Red 2 and got their 81mm mortars into operation. Near the base of the pier, between Beaches 2 and 3, another mortar was set up. The shells soared away, and all too often the men who fired them sank down and bled and died. One team, manning the pier mortar, was wiped out in a few seconds by a deadly accurate Jap sniper. But others took their places. There were no vacuums on Betio—whenever a man fell, be he rifleman, mortarman, corpsman, engineer, or tankner, another stepped up to replace and avenge him.

What we had won, in a day of dreadful carnage, heroic endeavor and selfless sacrifice, was less than one-tenth of a square mile of stinking coral, blown to useless bits and stained with great draughts of American blood. But it was one-tenth of a mile such as few men had ever won before, one-tenth of a mile with more fortifications than the borders of most nations, jam-packed with fanatic enemy troops who not only were willing but eager to die. If, in the dreadful night ahead, every Marine died defending that one-tenth of a mile, the valor of 20 November would still be sung in the Marine Corps for 100 or 1,000 years. Seldom in the history of any nation had the mantle of heroism fallen over so many shoulders.

Chapter Seven



THE WOUNDED ARE EVACUATED

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AN ATOLL CALLED TARAWA

IN SEVENTY-SIX HOURS THE "SECMARDIV" WINS AN IMMORTAL VICTORY

Daybreak!

No great miracle? Happens every day? True. But daybreak of 21 November, 1943, seemed more like a resurrection to the Marines on Betio. In that long and forsaken night, each man had made his own peace with himself and with his God. There was no thought of retreat. When the Japs came, as they surely would, each man was prepared to sell his life dearly. But all sales would be final, and the dawn would never come for the Marines who had invaded Tarawa. Now

the dawn had come, like a glad shout of great news: the Japs had missed their epochal opportunity. They had not attacked.

Not that the night had been quiet, or without casualties. Neither the Japs nor the Marines had lain doggo in their holes. In the soft, death-laden moonlight the rest of the survivors of 3/8 had inched their way ashore, along the glistening white pier. And hundreds of Marines had been routed up to help the weary corpsmen carry stretchers out along the pier to the deep water where evacuation



JAPANESE BOMBPROOF near the center of Be'io is attacked by Marines on the third day. This giant, sand-banked fortress held the Jap power plant, and was the highest "ground" on the island.



THE JAPS FIGHT BACK but the Marines push over the rim of the bombproof and continue their assault. The Japs also are firing from the left flank, in a desperate effort to save fortress.



CREST OF BOMBPROOF is reached by Marine attackers. Assault demolition personnel used ventilating ports to burn out the interior of the power plant. Several Jap counterattacks were repulsed.

boats bobbed and waited. This was a long journey through rutted coral washed by warm air that sang occasionally with bullets or whispered with mortar shells. The Japs were acutely conscious of the pier, of the supplies piling up on the end of it as the little boats came in, and of the traffic back and forth along its torn length. They laid shells on it all through the night, kept bullets over it, and killed a good many more Marines. But in this blind concentration, they seemed almost to forget the vulnerable Marines on the beaches. For their part, the Marines maintained excellent fire discipline. There was no trigger-happy shooting to give away positions or dispositions. When the Japs finally got a bombing mission over Betio, toward dawn, the Marines snuggled down quietly and suffered few casualties from the new "Washing Machine Charlie."

The remnants of 3/8 were not the only "new" Marines to greet the lemon-tinted dawn ashore. In the early evening of D Day, the 1/10 pack how-

itzers landed on Red Beach 2. One of the batteries trundled to the beach in amtracs. Several sections landed in rubber boats, and several sections in LCVP's were spilled into the water at the end of the pier and the artillerymen waded ashore carrying their howitzers in pack loads. All told, the Marines got five sections on the beach before morning, managed to find enough clear space to set them up, and had them ready to fire when the sun came up. The positions were far from desirable, for artillerymen need both room and cover to service their pieces, and here they were hub to hub near the front lines, were restricted in range, and were exposed to all types of fire.

The coming of dawn also brought some clarification in the command situation. Everyone on the three beaches had been painfully aware of the communications snafu. It had been even worse than guessed. The previous afternoon General Smith had sent his ADC, Brigadier General Leo D. Hermle, to the end of the pier to gather informa-

tion on the situation ashore and prepare to land on order. The order to land was dispatched at 1750, but the radios failed, and Hermle spent the greater part of the night directing carrying parties which were bringing out wounded Marines and manhandling water and ammunition back to the beach. He had to return to the destroyer *Ringgold* to establish contact with Smith on the *Maryland*.

No one can say how the battle would have developed if Hermle had been able to carry out the landing order, and if the Division reserve—Major Hays' battalion, 1/8—had been landed during the night on the eastern tail of the island. By the time Shoup, Hermle and Smith had gotten in touch (just about dawn of D plus 1), it was too late for a diversionary landing. Shoup needed men on Red 2, and quickly. Hays was ordered to take 1/8 ashore there. At 0615 the first wave of boats bumped against the reef, 500 yards out, and the Marines started wading.

This was like no second-day landing in history. Even before the boats reached the reef, the bullets had started showering around them. The Marines of 1/2 and 2/2, and the artillerymen of 1/10, were attacking furiously toward south and west, trying to quiet the Jap anti-boat fire, but it would not be quieted. Crouched on Red Beach 2, correspondent Robert Sherrod watched 1/8 come in and wrote in his notebook: “. . . the machine guns continue to tear into the oncoming Marines. Within five minutes I see six men killed. But the others keep coming. One rifleman walks slowly ashore, his left arm a bloody mess from the shoulder down. The casualties become heavier. Within a few minutes more I can count at least a hundred Marines lying on the flats.” An hour later Sherrod added: “The Marines continue unloading from the Higgins boats, but fewer of them are making the shore now—there are at least 200 bodies which do not move at all on the dry flats, or in the

shallow water partially covering them. This is worse, far worse than it was yesterday.”

It certainly was just as bad, if not worse. The fire on 1/8 had been direct and from both flanks, some of it coming from the Jap strong point on the line separating Beaches 1 and 2, some of it from the grounded hulk of a Jap freighter 700 yards offshore. Air liaison called in the dive bombers, but they were unable to knock out the freighter nest, which the Japs apparently had filled during the night. The engineers, covered by riflemen, finally had to blow it up. But, despite the terrible Jap fusillade, 1/8 got a majority of its men ashore and by 0800 Major Hays was feeding them into the line on the western section of Red 2.

From dawn until about 1300, D plus 1 on Betio was like a supplement or extension of D Day. The fighting was savage beyond belief, the issue still in doubt. From his command post behind a Jap bunker on Red 2, Colonel Shoup urged the Marines forward. They went, somehow. Companies of 1/2 and 2/2 attacked to the south, and shortly after noon they clawed and blasted their way to the southern shore. On Red Beach 1, where Major Ryan was commanding a battalion composed of elements of 3/2 and 2/2, the attack also was to the south, along the shore of Green Beach. Ryan's radio was back in commission, and he got naval gunfire on the Jap positions ahead. His troops moved forward, supported by the tank *China Gal* and another Sherman repaired during the night. At noon Ryan's Marines were on the southern curve, and Green Beach with its many anti-boat guns was in our hands.

No one had an easy time on the morning of D plus 1, but Jim Crowe's 2/8 was now paying for the relative ease of its landing. On Red Beach 3 the Marines were jammed up against the Japs' most formidable fortifications, ringing their huge blockhouse command post. Fire from the left flank



DEFENDERS OF BOMBPROOF are strewn over sand Japs had used to reinforce it. Some of these Jap soldiers were killed by rifle and machine gun fire, others by flame throwers which charred uniforms.

was withering, and 2/8 was not in contact (except at the beach) with the elements of 1/2 and 2/2 that were pushing south. Even with the heroic support of the tank crew operating *Colorado*, Crowe's Marines were unable to make much headway and took heavy and continuous casualties.

As late as 1140 of D plus 1, Colonel Shoup har-

bored some doubts about the outcome of the battle. At that time, he messaged Division: "Situation ashore uncertain." Between noon and 1700, the tide turned. The reports came in of Ryan's success on Red 1, and Lieutenant Colonel Jordan (the observer who had taken command of 2/2 after Amey's death) worked his way across to the south



CORPSMEN HELP MARINE who has been wounded inshore over the rim of the seawall toward beach aid station, which is itself under heavy fire. Many corpsmen rendered heroic service at Betio.

shore and found several companies of 1/2 and 2/2 in the abandoned Jap emplacements, holding them resolutely despite fierce Jap counterattacks. Later, Lieutenant Colonel Rixey said: "I thought up until one o'clock today that it was touch and go. Then I knew we would win." At 1706 Shoup sent a detailed report to General Smith, concluding: ". . . combat efficiency: We are winning. Shoup." There were two notable harbingers of victory in that hot afternoon. One was a tendency of cornered Japs to commit harakiri; the other was an air report that some enemy troops had been spotted wading across the shallow reef from Betio to the neighboring island of Baikiri. Retreat? Withdrawal? No one knew, but the Division was now determined to contain and destroy the Japs on Betio itself. The time had come to employ the Corps reserve—the Sixth Marine Regiment.

Through the afternoon there had been some discussion of how the Sixth could be used most effectively. It was resolved when General Smith ordered Colonel Maurice Holmes to send 1/6 to Beach Green in rubber boats, for an attack west toward the tail of the island, and to land 2/6 on

Bairiki to stem any Jap withdrawal. At 1655 Lieutenant Colonel Raymond L. Murray took 2/6 onto Bairiki's white beaches, in the wake of a naval and air bombardment. There had been fifteen Japs on the island, manning an improvised pillbox with two machine guns. They were no trouble to the Marines. Shortly before the landing, a strafing plane punctured a gasoline can the Japanese had injudiciously stored in their little fortress. The gas flamed and exploded, deep frying its owners.

At 1840 Major William K. Jones landed 1/6 from rubber boats on the northern section of Beach Green, where the battle-weary Marines of 3/2 and 2/2 almost tearfully welcomed them. At about the same time, one platoon of light tanks from B Company, 2nd Tank Battalion, was put ashore on Beach Green and two more platoons headed for Beach Red 2. (They did not reach the beach until the following dawn.)

With the landing of the Sixth Marines, and the transfer of Regimental Headquarters to the beach, the Second Division was now fully committed on Betio. Colonel Holmes joined Colonel Elmer Hall,

the white-haired engineer who commanded the Eighth Marines and had moved ashore earlier in the day, and Colonel Shoup, who had gone ashore commanding only a Combat Team and had wound up with responsibility for the whole battle. Evening also brought some relief for Shoup. After a final conference aboard the *Maryland* with General Smith, Colonel Edson came in to Red Beach 2, white-faced and icy-eyed as ever, smiling his cold smile and inviting a personal attack by wearing a western revolver slung in a cartridge belt around his slim waist. Shoup had done a good job, a job that would get him a well-deserved Medal of Honor. He had had devoted and tireless help from his R-3, Major Thomas Culhane, who had kept the machinery of the CP in motion. In the frightful confusion of Betio, fighting with a map case and a field telephone was sometimes harder than fighting with a rifle.

Relief had come, too, for another hero of Betio, the one-time enlisted Marine who had led the Scouts and Snipers into Tarawa fifteen minutes ahead of the first wave. Relief came to Lieutenant William Deane Hawkins in the tragic cloak of death, and for several incredible hours he rejected and scorned it. "Hawk" was first wounded by a Jap mortar shell, a wound he ignored. After helping set up beach defenses on the night of D-Day, Hawkins had plotted the location of several Jap machine-gun nests, and at dawn he took his platoon along the beach to destroy them. The citation for the Medal of Honor awarded Hawkins posthumously tells the story as well as anyone could tell it:

"At dawn on the following day (D plus 1), First Lieutenant Hawkins returned to the dangerous mission of clearing the limited beachhead of Japanese resistance, personally initiating an assault on a hostile position fortified by five enemy machine guns, and crawling forward in the face



SQUAD CRAWLS UP behind leader (right, pointing) to take a Jap position under fire.

of withering fire, boldly fired point-blank into the loopholes and completed the destruction with grenades. Refusing to withdraw after being seriously wounded in the chest during this skirmish, he steadfastly carried the fight to the enemy, destroying three more pillboxes before he was caught in a burst of Japanese shellfire and mortally wounded. His relentless fighting spirit in the face of formidable opposition and his exceptionally daring tactics were an inspiration to his comrades during the most crucial phase of the battle and reflects the highest credit upon the United States Naval Service. He gallantly gave his life for his country."

When the last Jap had been burned out of the last barricaded fort on Betio, the United States named the Tarawa airstrip Hawkins Field.

On the second day at Betio, as on the first, heroism could be measured only in degrees, not by its presence or absence. It was not entirely absent in any man who managed to reach the shore. Sometimes it was expressed in valiant and spectacular leadership; sometimes in terms of teamwork, sometimes in individual exploits; some-



PUSHING DOWN ISLAND, Marines group behind captured Jap pillbox.



MARINE ARTILLERYMEN register on island's tail with pack howitzer. Note the Marine (center) who got a bullet through his helmet, leaving two holes but leaving helmet's owner unscathed.

times only in the dropping of a casual phrase. There was the loose-jointed young rifleman from Texas who picked off six snipers and then slouched his way through a fierce field of Japanese fire, sneering disdainfully over his shoulder: "Shoot me down, you son of a bitch!" There was the Oklahoma sergeant who volunteered to walk between tanks, guiding them from one pillbox to another. "They asked for an intelligent Marine," he said. "I ain't very smart but I went."

One decisive factor in the changing battle picture of D plus 1 was the increase in the Marines' firepower. The use of destroyers to clear the way on Beach Green was of great help to 3/2, as was the repair of one of the tanks. But for the presence of the pack howitzers on Red Beach 2, casualties during the landing of 1/8 might have been even greater. When the Japs opened up on the wading Marines from their blockhouse positions between Beaches 1 and 2, two packs were laid in position to blast them with direct fire. Firing delayed fuse, in order to pierce the coral and coco-log forts, the pack crews knocked out the anti-boat guns and silenced some of their supporting weapons.

The artillerymen did yeoman service throughout the day, firing from exposed positions and, when necessary, providing their own rifle cover. They were ably supported in this time of stress by a New Zealand recruit who had come ashore firmly secured to a gun tube. This, of course, was "Siwash," the fighting, beer-drinking duck. "Siwash" volunteered for duty with the Second Division in a New Zealand bar, making application to Sergeant Dick Fagan of Illinois. The Second Division Action Report inexcusably omits the incident, but it is reliably reported that upon landing "Siwash" immediately engaged a red Japanese rooster in beak-to-beak combat. Although he drove the enemy from the field, "Siwash" was wounded and subsequently was recommended for the Purple Heart.

The fall of night on D plus 1 was quite unlike the darkening of D Day. More men had died, many more, during the day, but the feeling of hopelessness that had beset the assault battalions had lifted. For one thing, water and ammunition had begun to flow to the beach in substantial quantities. For another, wounded men were getting off the island with less delay and the hideous spectacle of D Day, in which Marines lay quietly dying for want of bandages, plasma and morphine, was no longer being repeated. Boats were unloading needed materiel on the end of the pier, and the eighteen battered amtracs that still could be operated were bringing it in and taking casualties out.

Just after 1800, the first jeeps came bouncing and jolting down the pier, two of them dragging 37mm guns. At about the same time, the Weapons Company was wrestling some of its 75mm self-propelled guns onto the beaches. The arrival of the ubiquitous jeeps was a good omen. Noting it, Correspondent Robert Sherrod wrote: "If a sign of certain victory were needed, this is it. The jeeps have arrived." Although the pier was still under frequent fire (the jeeps were peppered), the Marines of the shore party were disregarding the enemy machine guns and mortars with the same quiet courage as their brothers ashore.

More encouraging than any signs or portents, however, was the fact that the Marines had expanded their beachheads, and thus reduced the dangers of defeat by counterattack. Toward evening, there were significant indications that the hopelessness of the night before had found a new home in the hearts of the enemy: more and more Japs were not waiting for Marine bullets, but were blowing their own guts out with grenades or shooting their heads off with toe-triggered rifles.

Perhaps too little has been said thus far of the weather. Although the nights were cooled by the



THIS COVEY OF JAPS was flushed by Marines as they over-ran tank trap.



AT BETIO COMMAND POST, Colonel David Shoup (center, holding map) gets report on position of lines. In background, hands on hips, is Colonel Merritt Edson with Lieutenant Colonel Presley M. Rixey.



NEARLY-NAKED PRISONER wounded in right leg is brought in by two watchful Marines.

trade winds, the days produced a kind of skin-cracking heat that was sharp as a physical blow on the head. In something like thirty hours of exposure to this terrifying sunlight, the Marines had felt their lips break and crust and break again. Their nose tips, unshaded by the big helmets, blistered and peeled and blackened. But if the equatorial sun was white-hot, the winds saved Betio from the infernal stickiness of the Solomons. Sweat dried on the body, and the wind—if a patch of shade could be found—was sweet. But one thing the wind could not do, and that was blow away the smell. By dawn of 22 November—D plus 2—the stench of Betio had become almost unbearable. Bodies of Japanese and Marines alike—for there had been no time or place to bury

friend or foe—swelled and burst under the broiler. The yellow intestines of Japs who had died by harakiri rose from their torn bellies in sickening loops and garlands.

The smell was inescapable. It was everywhere, and it was not the kind of smell one gets accustomed to. It suffused the Marines' hair, their clothing, and seemed to adhere to their bodies. They smelled it for weeks after the battle, and like all pungent odors, it evoked instant and nightmarish memories. There had been a hint of the smell on D Day morning, a product of the shelling and bombing. By nightfall it seemed to move in waves; by noon on D plus 1 the fresh, clean air of the tropics had yielded almost completely. And by dawn of D plus 2 all freshness was gone and Betio was nothing but stink and death, an abattoir in which the Marines now had to launch their supreme offensive.

The attack began at 0700, but in the dark hours of the night more help had come. The artillerymen of 2/10 under Lieutenant Colonel G. R. E. Shell, with more pack howitzers, were ordered to land on Bairiki, now in possession of 2/6, and prepare to throw shells into Betio's squirming tail. Battery E was registered soon after the landing, with fire direction to come from 1/10 on Red Beach 2. This unique arrangement, in which control was exerted by observers beyond (instead of beneath) the battery's fire had been practiced in New Zealand. It proved successful, except for one accidental long which came barreling into Red Beach 2.

During the night the Japs managed to sneak in another high-level bombing raid, but it was hardly more effective than the first. "Charlie" dropped two sticks, one on the Marine lines and the other in Jap territory. "The bastard's absolutely impartial," one Marine murmured. These early-morning raids, flown from bases deep in the Marshalls, were the only planes the Japs ever got over Betio



MARINE AND JAPANESE lie dead within arm's reach of each other in a Betio clearing. The Marines in background are awaiting order to continue attack.

during the battle. "Interception at the source" had worked wonders.

Hays' 1/8 was the first to jump off, striking to the west against the knot of Jap positions that still separated Red Beach 1 and Red Beach 2. Three light tanks moved with the riflemen, but the 37mm guns of the tanks hardly dented the Jap pillboxes and one was lost to a magnetic mine. Even when the Second Marines sent a section of 75mm self-propelled guns, from the Weapons Company under Major Frederic R. Smith, the pillboxes withstood them. Once again, as was so often the case on Betio, the forts proved secure against everything and everyone except the Eighteenth Engineers, with their bangalore torpedoes, demolition charges and flame-throwers.

While Hays' men were attacking and containing the Jap pocket, the first Battalion of the Sixth Marines was getting ready to begin its sweep down the island from Beach Green. Major Jones' troops and the light tanks landed the night before began their push at 0800, along the south shore of Betio. The front was scarcely 100 yards wide, and the tanks moved out ahead, sometimes twenty-five to fifty yards beyond the riflemen, banging away at everything that looked Jap-infested. By now the danger of Jap suicide soldiers, bearing magnetic mines, had been fully realized. Snipers (U.S. brand) kept a sharp watch on the tanks, ready to protect them with rifle fire.

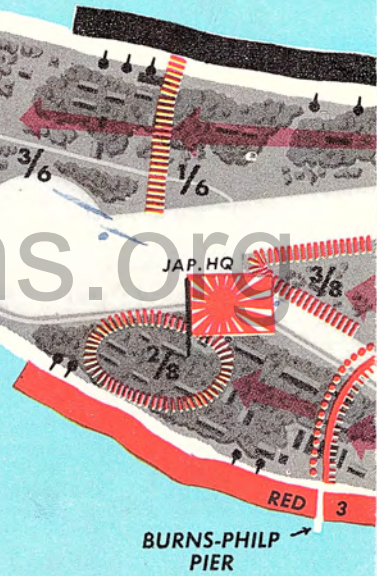
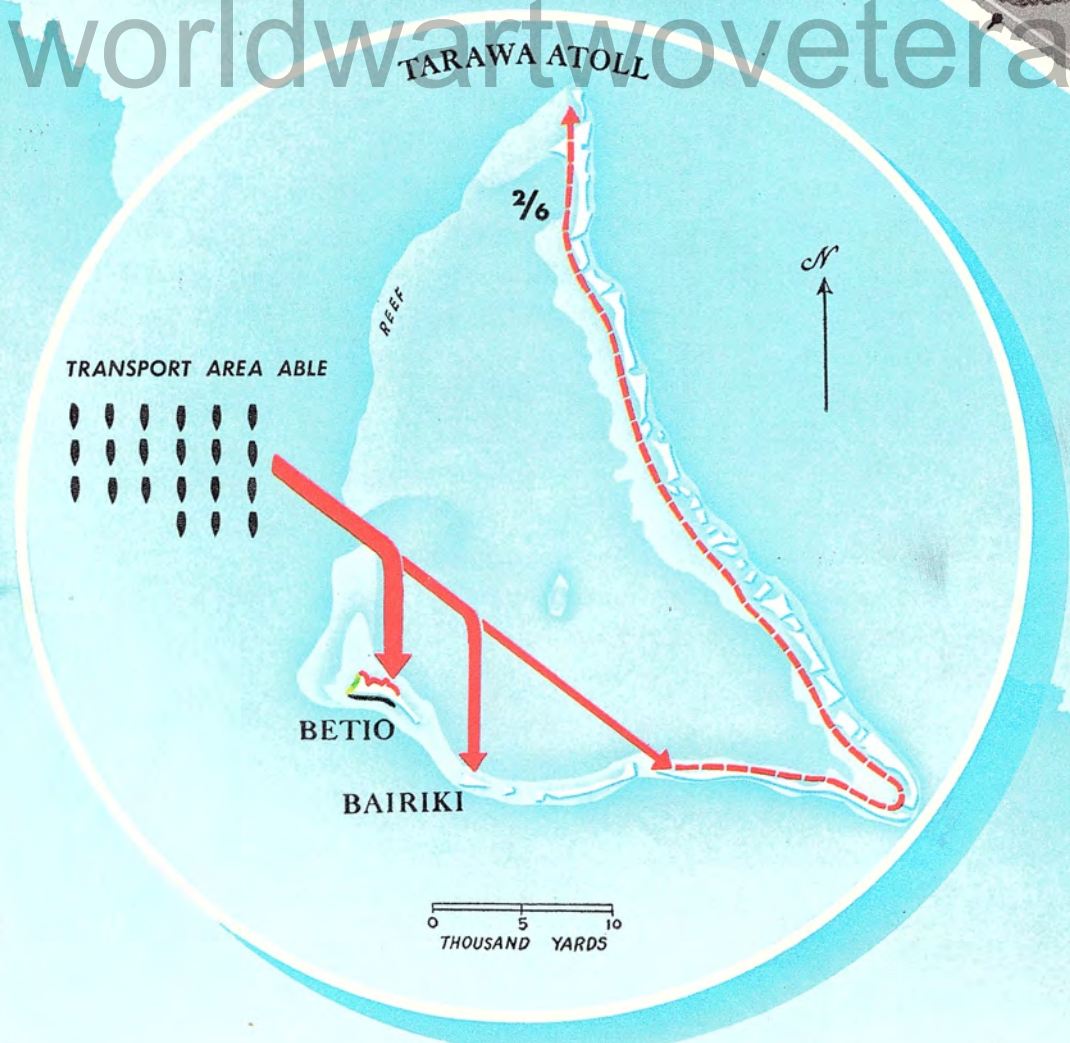
Jones's mission was to drive westward until he made contact with the units of 1/2 and 2/2 which

BETIO

KEY

- Advance position 1800 D-Day
- Advance position 1800 D+1
- Advance position 1800 D+2
- Remainder of Betio secured D+3

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BEFORE BATTLE ENDED, the Seabees had their bulldozers ashore and were beginning to level and grade the airstrip that was renamed "Hawkins Field."

had reached the south shore the day before. This would complete encirclement of the Japs in the lethal pocket between Red 1 and 2, and would clear the way for a climactic drive toward the tail of the island. At first resistance was light but as the Marines inched forward, bypassing some positions, burning out others, and stilling machine gun after machine gun, it intensified. However, the Sixth Marines were fresh and forty-eight hours overdue (in their own opinion). They drove fast and hard, and by 1100 they had reached the

perimeter of 1/2. Enroute, they had suffered only light casualties and had disposed of some 250 Japs. This swift advance could not, perhaps, have been accomplished by the battered Marines who had been on Betio since D Day morning. But there was still plenty of fight in the assault survivors, and over on Red Beach 3 they were proving it while Jones's men moved east. In the indecisive fighting on D plus 1, it had become clear to Major Crowe that three Japanese positions would have to be stormed and destroyed before 2/8 and the

survivors of 3/8 now under his command could greatly expand their beachhead. One of these was a steel pillbox, near the Burns-Philp pier. The second was a coco-log emplacement. These were mutually supporting. Slightly forward of them was an immense bombproof shelter, built of reinforced concrete with walls five feet thick and banked with sand.

To assist his red-eyed riflemen Crowe had engineers, a platoon from the Regimental Weapons Company, one tank, and a platoon of mortars. The mortars soared first. At 0930, as the attack jumped off, they got a direct hit on the coco-log emplacement, and it blew up—the Japs had stored ammunition inside. While Betio still rocked from this monumental blast, Lieutenant Lou Largey maneuvered *Colorado*, the medium tank, into a favorable spot west of the pillbox and sent several shells crashing home. This left only the giant bombproof, so big the attack was not unlike an assault on a hill.

For more than an hour the fight was as hot as any Betio produced. The Marines edged forward, their rifles cracking, and the Japs shot back with machine guns and their own flat-sounding rifles. But there was progress. Under the furious cross-fire Lieutenant Alexander Bonnyman, a lean, handsome Princeton graduate who in civilian life was a New Mexico mine owner, crawled up the sloping sides of the bombproof with his group of assault engineers. Using their flame-throwers and demolition charges, the engineers finally reached the top and for a dramatic moment the Marines held the highest ground on the island. Then a group of Japs counterattacked with suicidal fury. Alexander Bonnyman stopped them.

As the Japs charged up the sandy hillside, Bonnyman met them, firing his carbine in flagrant disregard of their weapons and numbers. No one knows exactly how many Japs died in the brief and

bloody encounter, but Bonnyman charged forward, followed by his men, and drove off the enemy. But the Japs did not flee without exacting a price, for Bonnyman's charge had been against bullets, and some of the bullets had found their mark. As the Marines surged up to support him and make secure our hold on the shelter top, Bonnyman sank down within arm's length of three of the enemy who had fallen before his fire and died of his many wounds. His posthumous reward was the Medal of Honor.

Bonnyman not only had saved the lofty position, but, with demolition charges, had flushed the Japs inside it. As the counterattack literally melted back, the hysterical Japs inside the shelter erupted out of its east and south exits. The Marines were waiting, and they sickled the enemy down with rifles, machine guns, grenades and 37mm canister fire brought to bear by the Regimental Weapons Company. To seal their victory, the Marines waved in one of the tough and grizzled bulldozer operators from 3/18—the Seabee battalion—and he shoveled sand and dirt into the entrances.

The Seabees had begun streaming ashore during the morning of D plus 2, bringing their heavy equipment in big lighters and tracking it in over the reef. Marines who had fought for hours with exemplary courage stood in open-mouthed admiration as the Seabees drove their bulldozers out onto the strip, still swept by rifle fire, and began smoothing out the shellholes and miniature coral mountains.

This victory on the left flank sparked the Marines of 2/8 and 3/8. Through the afternoon they kept up the pressure, and by nightfall they had smashed across Betio to the eastern end of the airstrip and their fire had begun to merge with that of 1/6, which had continued its push along the southern coast. In the numerous dugouts, trenches

and nests overrun that afternoon, the Marines got repeated notice that the Jap might not surrender but was vulnerable to his own fears—more than one hundred enemy soldiers killed themselves to avoid capture.

One of the disadvantages of trying to advance in several directions and on several fronts—as the Marines were now doing on Betio—was in keeping the troops supplied with water and salt tablets, two items which the climate made imperative. As a consequence of their rapid push along the south shore, Jones' Marines found themselves short of both vital commodities at noon. They were tired, hot—and thirsty. The lack could not be supplied in time, and in the afternoon they drove into powerful Jap defenses without having been adequately replenished. Even so, they made fair progress until they encountered a powerful Japanese network of guns mounted in steel turrets, with 360 degrees traverse. While the medium tank (still *China Gal*, the veteran of Beaches Red 1 and Green) was moving up to attack these fortifications, Jones got water to his men and in the late afternoon they fought their way to an approximate union with 2/8 and then dug in for the night.

Elsewhere on the island, the fighting had been savage but encouraging. Hays 1/8 had contained the beach pocket, now thoroughly enveloped but still resisting. The pack howitzers both from 1/10 on Betio and 2/10 on Bairiki, had provided direct support for Jones's push on the southern coast and had kept the Japs off balance in the island tail. During the afternoon General Julian Smith had decided to move his command post ashore, and in traveling from Beach Green to Red 2 drew heavy Jap fire from the pocket. The amtrac driver was wounded, and the general, accompanied by a Fifth Amphibious Corps observer and Brigadier General Thomas E. Bourke, the artillery commander, had to make a difficult transfer on the reef.

Forty-eight hours too late, the Japs finally counter-attacked. But for this consideration on the part of the enemy, the battle might have lasted several days longer. During the afternoon that preceded the futile Jap assault, Lieutenant Colonel Kenneth McLeod's 3/6 had been landed on Green Beach and had moved up behind Jones' battalion, in close support on the sweep of the south shore. Now as night came down, Marines of 1/6 and of 2/8 were abreast, forming a loose but effective line across the island at the western end of the airstrip. Members of 3/8 occupied a reserve line in the vicinity of the big bombproof. The fresh troops of 3/6 were dug in behind 1/6, giving the Marines an excellent reserve. Although there were some isolated Jap positions in the revetments around the airstrip, as well as the big pocket between Red 1 and 2, Betio was pretty much Marine territory—the tail excepted.

With the whole Division committed to Betio, except for 2/6 on Bairiki, there were now about 7,000 effective Marines on the island. Since it is doubtful if more than 1,000 Japs survived by this time, the Marine advantage was considerable. It was offset, however, by the fact that the enemy was invisible. This is not meant figuratively, but quite literally. There were hundreds of Marines on Betio the night of D plus 2 who had been engaged in the most exhausting action since dawn of D Day and had not yet seen a live Jap. The Japs fought and died in their forts, big or small, and they had to be dug out one by one or flushed by flame and blast. When trapped in exposed positions—which happened occasionally—they quickly killed themselves, partly out of fear instilled by Tokyo propaganda and partly to realize the Shinto dream of godhood at the *Yasakuni* warriors' shrine.

Why the Japanese reversed this defensive strategy on the night of D plus 2, abandoning the safety of their fortifications, is a mystery whose answer



DAY BATTLE ENDED a Navy cameraman took this aerial photograph of Betio's ravaged sands from a point approximately off Red Beach 2. Square structure in center of picture was a coconut log plane revetment.

may also lie in Shinto philosophy. Abandon them they did, beginning about 1930 with what looked like a reconnaissance in light force. Perhaps fifty Japs attacked on the narrow southern front held by 1/6, some of them getting in between A and B Companies. If they were the vanguard of a larger force, they failed miserably. Jones called for artillery support, and the pack howitzers of 1/10 on Beach 2 and 2/10 on Bairiki crisscrossed to form an exceptionally accurate curtain of fire

between the infiltrators and any Japs following them. At the same time, the three line companies of 1/6 and the headquarters reserve mopped up the attackers in tough, close-in bayonet and grenade fighting eschewing the use of automatic weapons which would have revealed Marine positions.

In the moonlight, U.S. observers could see signs of continuing movement behind the Jap lines. Jones was convinced the enemy would try another reconnaissance, and he asked Kyle to move 1/2



SOME OF THE MANY Marines who were cut down by the seawall guns on Red Beach 1 lie here. They died only a few feet from the gun muzzles.



MOMENT OF TRIUMPH after bloodiest battle in Marine Corps history comes when the Stars and Stripes is hoisted on a topless coconut palm.

into support. Kyle obliged. At 2300—three and one half hours later—approximately one hundred Japs, split into two groups, made another stab at the Marine lines. This time machine guns were needed to repulse them, and though most of the attackers were wiped out the Japanese command apparently got a rough notion of the Marine defenses. If there were to be a mass attack, it would come next.

Jones huddled with Kyle and McLeod, whose I Company had relieved 1/2 in the secondary line. Although the Marines were confident and ready, they were not averse to whatever support could be had from the Navy and their own artillery. Jones requested continuous naval gunfire on the tip of the island's tail, and harassing artillery fire between his own lines and the naval sector. He got it, but the Japs—possibly bolstered by a few shots of *saki*—were not to be dissuaded. At 0400 about three hundred of them came shrieking into the lines of A and B Companies in a fearsome *banzai* charge. The Marines fought back, silently and savagely, but the weight of the Jap attack swelled until Lieutenant Norman Thomas, acting commander of B Company, telephoned battalion: "We are killing them as fast as they come at us, but we can't hold much longer: we need reinforcements!" There was no time to move up reinforcements. Jones told Thomas: "You've got to hold!" * Somehow, the Marines of B Company held, helped by the howitzer shells of 1/10, which Lieutenant N. E. Milner, the artillery forward observer, brought down within seventy-five yards of the pulsing line. In the lagoon, the U.S.S. *Schroeder* and the U.S.S. *Sigsbee* pumped salvo after salvo into the Jap assembly area,

It was over in one endless, terrifying hour. The Marines who had been told to hold greeted the

* As reported by Robert Sherrod in *Tarawa, The Story of a Battle*.

breaking dawn with haunted eyes and tired but proud words: "They told us we had to hold . . . and, by God, we held." In their front lines were the bodies of 200 dead Japs, and beyond the lines were 125 more—some blown to shreds by shell-fire. The artillery and naval support had been superb, but it was Marine courage and Marine steadiness under fire that broke the attack. The Japs had made a poor choice in trying to break through Jones' battalion—an error they were to repeat months later at Saipan. Not only had the Japanese gained no ground, but they also had sacrificed uselessly the strength which might have been used to exact a higher price for the tail of the island. At his headquarters on Red Beach 2, General Smith followed the developing attack and its successful repulse with gratification. The Marine command moved at once to capitalize on the final and irrevocable Jap mistake.

Everything worked now. Down from the thin blue sky, wave after wave, right on time, came the carrier fighters and the carrier bombers. The first burst of airborne .50 calibre fire raked the Japs at 0700. Behind the swift strafers, swooping to the level of the shattered palm tops, came the dive bombers, hitting designated targets and firing their guns, too. The Marines had had good "on call" air support from the Navy all through the operation, but nothing to compare with this. The attack was maintained for a solid half-hour, until 0730, and then Rixey's pack howitzers, the batteries of 1/10, had an inning. They bounced shells up and down the island tail for a long fifteen minutes. A moment of silence, at 0745. Salvo! It was the Navy's turn again, this time with surface fire, from inside the lagoon and from the open sea. Fifteen minutes of that, too. Then—

"Let's go!" This was Lieutenant Colonel McLeod, whose 3/6 had moved up quietly into the



THE BATTLE IS OVER and these weary veterans are marching back across the hard-won coral to embark on transports and sail for—where?

line to relieve Jones's weary battalion, which had lost forty-five killed and 128 wounded in the night's fighting. The "line" was only two companies wide on the narrowing island, I Company on the left, L Company on the right, both facing east, with K Company behind them, in reserve. Jones moved 1/6 back into deep reserve, first handing over all available tanks and flame-throwers to 3/6. The Marines pushed off, at 0800, the engineers with their flameguns shoulder to shoulder with the riflemen, and the two wonderful, durable Sherman tanks—*Colorado* and *China Gal*—rumbling along with seven light tanks on their flanks. Fifty yards, 100 yards, 150 yards—and little resistance.

McLeod had hoped to make 150 yards before reorganizing. He made it in minutes, with few casualties. There were still 500-odd Japs alive on Betio, but they seemed stunned and dopey after the night's bombardment. There was no effective defensive organization. In isolated strong points



DISABLED MARINE TANK, its 75 still pointing toward the last target, stands forlorn in the hot Betio sun as the battle draws to a close. Only two medium tanks survived the four days of fighting.

—pillboxes, deep trenches, dugouts—the Japs fired back at the advancing Marines and then turned their guns or grenades on themselves. The Marines moved on, another 200 yards, before they hit a real obstacle. It lay in the path of I Company, on the north shore. In a series of supporting bombproofs, most of Betio's still-determined Japanese had gathered to make one last effort for the Emperor.

It was a good enough effort to halt I Company, temporarily. McLeod didn't let it hang up the

whole offensive. He kept L Company moving along the south shore, and after it was past the strong point, let it spread to make a one-company front across the whole island—now only 200 yards wide. I Company remained behind to reduce and destroy the pocket. It turned out to be good hunting, especially for the valiant tankers of *Colorado*.

As the Marines moved in, flame-throwers spouting and rifles barking, the Japs in the biggest bombproof suddenly broke from their cover and poured down the narrow exit channel. An infantry



THE TIDE COMES IN at last on the beaches where the Marines held on the first night, washing over the fox-holes and around stranded amtracs. This was normal tide for November in the Gilberts.

spotter rapped hard on *Colorado's* side, and Lieutenant Lou Largey swung the tank around. It was a dream shot. Largey brought the .75 down, point-blank, on the erupting channel, and let go. Largey thought he probably got fifty or seventy-five enemy troops with this bowling-ball shot, but there really was not enough left of the victims to count. That was all for the pocket.

While I Company was flattening these Japs and L Company was rolling on toward the end of the island—and the battle—3/2 and 1/8 were put-

ting the last squeeze on the fanatics, holding the deadly bastion between Beach Red 1 and Red 2. The Japs still fought with desperate fury, but the days of hammering had begun to tell. Hays' 1/8, in a semicircular line, struck from the east, supported by the 75mm self-propelled guns and flame-thrower and demolition teams from C Company, Eighteenth Marines. Major Hewitt D. Adams took an infantry platoon and two more self-propelled guns, to the reef, where so many Marines had died on D-Day and D plus 1, and attacked from there.

On the west side of the pocket, Major Schoettel's 3/2 spread out until they were in contact with the group on the reef and the flank elements of 1/8 in the airstrip area. The Marines pulled this circle tighter and tighter, like the drawstring on a bag of tobacco. By noon, it was almost entirely shut, and the last Jap defenders were dying in hot flame.

Down toward the tip, L Company just kept rolling along, bypassing emplacements that offered resistance and bowling over surviving Japs before they could organize or reorganize. The Navy came in, toward noon, with fire on the shallow reef between Betio and Bairiki, to keep the Japs in place for the Marine attackers. When they needed it, the Marines got swift-diving air support. It was a hot fight, because the Japs did not quit, but it was a good fight too, because the offensive kept rolling and the end was in sight. Like *Colorado*, *China Gal* was having a field day, blasting dugouts and pillboxes and rambling back and forth across the front. The seven light tanks, which also were in the advance, supporting the big mediums, found plenty of chores—and nothing big enough to hurt them.

At about 1300 a United States Marine stepped out into the warm water lapping the long flat spit on the easternmost end of Betio and, stooping low, washed his sweat-stained face. There was still rifle fire in parts of the island, and the occasional boom of demolitions. But there was no longer a Japanese section, or a Japanese line. All at once, tail and two pockets, the Japs had collapsed. The Marines of 3/6, beating through the fortifications at the western end of the island, past the big Singapore guns—one with a riven barrel—killed 475 of the enemy in the few morning hours of D plus 3, and lost only nine killed and twenty-five wounded doing it. So thoroughly were the bodies of the victims jumbled in the Red 1-2 pocket that there was no way to make an accurate count of the

last-day casualties. The best guess is 1,000 alive and dedicated Japs on the evening of D plus 2; 500 alive on the morning of D plus 3; maybe 50 to 100 left, in deep holes or the dark corners of bypassed dugouts, at 1330. Not enough to delay the victory, for at that hour, 1330 of D plus 3, 23 November 1943, General Julian Smith proclaimed Betio secured.

The day after Betio was secured, Major General Holland M. Smith, commander of the Fifth Amphibious Corps, inspected the wreckage and remarked: "It seems almost beyond the realm of human possibility that this place could have been taken." How, then, had the Marines taken it? Holland Smith suggested: "It was their will to die." At this point the author, who had the privilege of witnessing the battle, would like to intrude a respectful dissent. Many Marines died, but they did not embrace death. The Marines, men and officers alike, fought to win, fought for the Marine Corps, fought for honor and self-respect, fought for each other—and for General Julian Smith, who in a few short months had become a second father to every Marine in the Division. The Marines offered their lives, willingly and unselfishly, that no other Marine should be let down. They did not make death an end in itself. It was the Japanese who did that—when confronted by defeat.

On this foundation of heroic brotherhood in battle were built many contributions to victory, most of them unsung and destined to remain so. There would be more white crosses on Betio today had it not been for the quietly valiant work of the Navy doctors, led by Commander Donald Nelson, CT2's regimental surgeon, and the weaponless corpsmen and Marine-band stretcher-bearers, who advanced hour after hour with the attacking troops and brought in the wounded. There were few braver men at Tarawa than one slight, modest Pharmacist Mate from California named Frank



THE BATTLE CEMETERY on Betio was begun immediately after the shooting stopped. Each simple stake marks the body of a Marine killed in combat. Division CP was behind emplacement at left.

Campbell, who played a cello in civilian life—and who became a corpsman because he was a conscientious objector.

A good deal has been written of the tanks, but not enough has been said of the Regimental Weapons Company personnel who somehow got their halftracks and self-propelled guns across the fringing reef and into vital action. The same is true of the mortar platoons, the D, H and M Companies of the Landing Teams, who provided the first explosive projectiles on Betio and never stopped feeding their hungry weapons. And few Marines will ever forget the Seabees—3/18—driving their bulldozers up and down the potholed strip on the morning of D plus 3, while war still

flamed in the island tail and the pocket of Red 1-2. More than one bulldozer was drawn into dramatic action, driven fearlessly against Jap positions which could only be neutralized by burial.

The Military Police, normally assigned to guard prisoners and supply dumps, also got into the fight on Green Beach. Because demolition engineers were busy elsewhere, the MP's inherited the job of mopping up the numerous Japanese mines. They "dehorned" no fewer than 150 of them and then turned to mopping up bypassed pillboxes and concrete and log shelters. Before they were through, the MP's had flushed some eighty-nine Korean laborers out of the beach defenses, and thus obtained the prisoners they had landed to guard.

The artillerymen of 4/10 had a somewhat similar experience. They, too, landed on Green Beach, but by that time their fire was not needed. Instead, the artillerymen—like the MP's—went to work on bypassed bombproofs and pillboxes inshore from the beach, cleaning out many of them and sealing dozens of Japs in positions that could not be opened easily.

Perhaps one story will epitomize the kind of courage the Marines brought to Betio. It concerns a spindly kid, not more than eighteen, blond before the blood and dirt got into his hair. He came down over the seawall on Red Beach 3 the first or second morning, his whole left ear ripped to ribbons and half his face with it. He crouched, dazed and shaking, while a Navy doctor slapped a big sulfa bandage over his torn head. He would not lie down, just sat there stroking a bloodied rifle, his blue eyes jumping with pain. After a little while he asked for a drink of water and, having had it, began gathering the muscles of his legs. "Better lie down," somebody said. "Ah, — that!" said the kid, in a husky voice, spitting blood. "I gotta get back to my outfit." He got back up over the seawall and disappeared into the hell of fire on the left flank. Perhaps he will read this and remember. Perhaps he died. There were a lot like him.

Ninety minutes before Betio was secured—at 1200 on D plus 3—a Navy carrier plane fishtailed around the bulldozers and made the first friendly landing on the Tarawa airstrip. The Marines had come to take an airstrip. Thanks to their sacrifices and the remarkable work of Seabees and Engineers, it was already at least theoretically operational. The plane tarried an hour and then its youthful pilot waved farewell. The begrimed Marines watched it go wistfully—in every tired mind there was a rosy dream of a distant ship, clean air (the smell by now was so overpowering that men

occasionally paused to vomit, almost as though this were a natural function), and a thousand gallons of hot water.

The dream was close to being a reality. While some Marines, mostly engineers and flame-thrower units, proceeded with the painful job of burning out insecure blockhouses and pillboxes, General Smith arranged the battalions for beach defense. Working parties, directed by Father Riedel of Chicago, began at last to bury our dead, assisted by other chaplains of the division. Seabees scooped the rotting bodies of dead Japs into mass graves with their bulldozers. Now and then a rifle sang, but every Marine ached with hope for a quiet night. No such luck!

At 1800 an unfortunately placed grenade detonated a Jap five-inch magazine. It took the magazine all night to finish blowing up, and while shrapnel rained into Marine foxholes, a few hold-out Japs crept out and attacked their occupants. Two enlisted Marines and one officer were killed in hand-to-hand combat before dawn. Not all of the Second Division was thus harassed, however. The Eighth Marines (less 1/8) had moved to Bairiki, and were interested but unthreatened witnesses to the fireworks on Betio.

The morning of 24 November a wondrous sight greeted members of the Second and Eighth Marines. The transports had come into the lagoon, and the orders were: "Board ship." The Eighth Regiment went aboard from Bairiki—the Second Regiment from Betio. As the aged and battered survivors of Combat Team 2 marched down the long pier toward the waiting Higgins boats, their red-rimmed eyes stared in amazement at the too-well-remembered reef. It had disappeared. The tide, which would have floated the boats and minimized the carnage on the reef, had now come in. Along Red Beach 3, where hundreds of Marines had burrowed in sand and fought against the sea wall,



THE PERMANENT CEMETERY, in the same area as the battle cemetery, was decorated with shining coral and neat white crosses, and surrounded by a wall of coconut logs. Seabees did much of the work.

there was only water. On Red Beach 2, and in the crescent of Red Beach 1, gentle waves washed against the bloody coral.

It had not been the kind of battle in which flags could be hoisted. But now that it was won, it seemed right and appropriate that the Stars and Stripes should fly above Betio. The flagpole was the scarred and leafless trunk of a palm tree, but

that was appropriate, too. In the bright noon sunshine Marine privates and Marine generals stood, at attention, while a bugle blew "To the Colors" and the flag fluttered slowly to the splintered top. On a nearby palm, the Union Jack went up, too—as the Gilberts had been a British mandate prior to their seizure by the Japanese.

The flags stood out in the brisk tradewind, and

the Marines turned back to their work. Behind the blockhouse that had shielded the RCT2 command post, bodies and fragments of bodies were lowered reverently into the sandy graves. On the airstrip, the bulldozers scraped and clanked again.

As the sun dropped toward the horizon on 24 November, the loaded transports steamed out through the narrow channel of the lagoon. The Second and Eighth Marines were leaving Betio, though many members of each regiment would remain behind. Left behind with those honored dead were the surviving Marines of the Sixth Regiment. The battle of Betio was over. The Battle of the Gilbert Islands was not. The Sixth had a few more chores to perform.

While most Division troops were engaged on Betio, elements of D Company, Second Tank Battalion, the Division's scout company, were reconnoitering the other islands of Tarawa atoll. Led by Captain John R. Nelson, the Scouts found an estimated 100 Japs on Buota, the boomerang-shaped island which makes a sharp nose on the western bend of the triangular atoll. On 23 November, D Company's 3rd platoon scouted Eita Island, between Betio and Buota, and then the artillerymen of 3/10, the only pack howitzer battalion not committed on Betio, went ashore and set up their guns.

These landings were intended to forestall any Japanese attempt to reinforce the Betio garrison. The Japs had no such plans. Instead they fled through positions of the First platoon, which had landed to the north of Buota, in the other direction from Betio.

Late in the afternoon of 24 November, the job of overtaking and destroying the fleeing enemy fell to Lieutenant Colonel Raymond Murray's 2/6. This was a logical choice, for 2/6 had spent most of the Betio engagement on Bairiki, and was in good shape for what seemed certain to be a long

march. It was. The battalion moved by boat to Buota, where Nelson was waiting to serve as guide.

The "long march" began at dawn on 25 November. All day long the Marines hiked under the coco palms, meeting friendly Gilbertese natives but no Japs. Next morning it was the same story. But in mid-afternoon the Marines reached the last major island of the atoll, Buariki, at the northernmost tip. The Japs had to be there, unless they were swimming for Tokyo. Murray sent E Company ahead to see, and at sunset an E Company patrol encountered a Jap patrol. The Battle of Tarawa was on again. In a hot and sudden exchange of shots, two Marines were wounded and two Japs were killed.

With this news, 2/6 dug in for a possible night attack. It was not forthcoming, though the Japs promptly dispatched a few snipers to spoil the Marines' sleep. But the next day, 26 November, 2/6 more than made up for its light duties at Betio. The Japs were not well organized, but here—as everywhere in the Pacific—they took the fullest advantage of natural cover and terrain, and made the greatest possible use of primitive fortifications.

The Marines had little choice of a battle plan. They advanced, with E and G Companies in assault and F Company in reserve. E Company got it first, in dense jungle reminiscent of Guadalcanal. The Japs were everywhere, in trees and under them, and, of course, mostly invisible. With E Company hit hard, and in need of reorganization, Murray moved F Company into the "line," if it could be called that, while G Company slashed in at the Japs' eastern flank. As F Company passed through to attack, the one battery of artillery that had accompanied 2/6—Battery G of 3/10—opened up on approximated areas of Jap fire. After that, the fighting was too close for the packs to operate.

For long, maddening hours the Marines struggled with the jungle and the enemy. Slowly, in-



THREE HEROES OF BETIO who died of their wounds as the transports sailed north toward Hawaii are given a shipboard service before burial in the sea. Survivors are still wearing battle-stained fatigues.

exorably, they narrowed the Jap front and contained the frantic Jap attacks. But this was costly business, and Murray was taking losses. It was near nightfall when the last defenders broke under the concentrated Marine fire, and the island finally quieted. The Second Battalion had killed 175 Japs.

It had lost thirty-two killed and fifty-nine wounded, which makes the battle of Buariki considerably more than a skirmish.

While 2/6 was fighting its own small-scale war with the Japanese on Buariki, a strange and won-

derful thing happened to Colonel McLeod's Third Battalion. The Division assigned 3/6, which had suffered only light casualties in the final push on Betio, to capture Apamama, the nearly enclosed atoll which lies seventy-six miles south of Tarawa. The battalion sailed south, overnight, on the transport *Harris*, arriving offshore the morning of 25 November. Brigadier General Hermle accompanied the LT, aboard the *Maryland*. Before the Marines could charge ashore under a naval bombardment, a rubber boat bounced out to the "Mary" from the shore and a young man made up like a minstrel came aboard with the happy news that of the twenty-three Japs previously showing hostile intentions on Apamama, twenty-three were now good and dead.

This bearer of good tidings was Captain James L. Jones of Missouri who commanded the Fifth Corps Reconnaissance Company, and had landed on Apamama by submarine. The Japs, after a few brisk exchanges, had been brought under naval fire and had obligingly committed harakiri. Jones, whose peculiar facial adornment was designed to make him invisible in the dark, assured Hermle and McLeod that the Marines would be more than welcome ashore.

So, in soft afternoon sunshine, the landing began. Like Betio, Apamama had a fringing reef and everybody had to wade the last 300 yards in to the wide, white beach. The reception committee could hardly have been improved upon. Small boys were tossing down green coconuts and other small boys were opening them. Most Marines got a fresh drink

of cold coco milk (the green husks are natural refrigerators) a few moments after stepping ashore. The island was clean, the air was sweet, the coco milk was tasty, and flitting about beneath the palms and pandanus were bebies—literally bebies—of brown-skinned maidens whose clean-cut Polynesian features looked every bit as good as Dorothy Lamour's to the Marines from Betio. Possibly a little bit better, for the missionary influence had worn off under the Japs, and the Gilbertese girls were beautifully but simply dressed in absolutely nothing but grass skirts. Unfortunately, the majority of 3/6 had to leave Apamama (which means "Land of Moonlight") only a few days later.

The ships were sailing again. On December 4 General Smith turned over command of Tarawa to the Navy. The Scouts had occupied Abaiang, Marakei and Maiana atolls without incident. The luxuriating Marines of Apamama once more were at sea, as were the casualty-riddled 1/6 and 2/6 Marines. Destination: Hawaii. Over Betio, the smell of death still lingered, and burial parties were still at work. The cemetery behind the command post had grown, and others had been established. Fresh green sprouts were starting from the palms, and the wind whispered gently in their tattered fronds. No one yet knew the full story of Tarawa, how it began, why it was fought as it was, the ponderables and imponderables. Some of them would not be known for years. The men under the white crosses on Betio would never know.

Chapter Eight



ON THE MARCH IN HAWAII

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ENOUGH OF PILIKIA

BETIO'S HEROES SHIVER ON THE DUSTY SLOPES OF MAUNA LOA

The bombers began flying off Hawkins Field early in December, stabbing into the Marshalls, hitting Mili and Nauru and Wotje and Maloelap. Their huge engines filled Betio with an alien roaring, and their whirling propellers sent coral dust drifting over the graves of the Second Division dead. The cemetery was larger now, and barriers of coconut logs kept careless feet from the sandy mounds and the white crosses. The crosses were neatly lettered—here a lieutenant colonel lay between two privates, here (many times over) there was only the word “unknown.” Here lay the great-

est heroes of Betio, under the now gentle palms, near the noisy airstrip they had died to secure. Above the cemetery gate a white plaque bore their epitaph, written by Captain Donald L. Jackson of California.

I

*To you, who lie within this coral sand,
We, who remain, pay tribute of a pledge,
That dying, thou shalt surely not
Have died in vain.*

*That when again bright morning dyes the sky
And waving fronds above shall touch the rain,*

*We give you this—that in those times
We will remember.*

II

*We lived and fought together, thou and we,
And sought to keep the flickering torch aglow
That all our loved ones might forever know
The blessed warmth exceeding flame,
The everlasting scourge of bondsman's chains,
Liberty and light.*

III

*When we with loving hands laid back the earth
That was for moments short to couch thy form,
We did not bid a last and sad farewell
But only, "Rest ye well."
Then with this humble, heartfelt epitaph
That pays thy many virtues sad acclaim
We marked this spot, and, murmur'ing requiem,
Moved on to westward.*

The Second Division came to its new "rehabilitation camp" on the island of Hawaii secure in an unshakable faith in its command—loving Julian Smith and respecting Merritt Edson, who was promoted to Brigadier General and made assistant division commander after the battle of Betio. The Marines were realistic and, having been at war, they knew the imponderables of war. They trusted Julian Smith and knew that, if he could have prevented it, no Marine would have died on Tarawa. Knowing these things, they expected the American people to honor their sacrifices, to appreciate their losses, but not to react violently against the blood contribution they had made. They learned with dismay of proposals for Congressional investigations, of speeches decrying the Pacific leadership and expressing horror at the Marine losses.

"If the Marines could stand the dying, you'd think the civilians could stand to read about it," one sergeant remarked bitterly.

The outcry died down, but its echoes persisted

throughout the length of the Pacific war. Correspondents who covered the invasion of Kwajalein, on 1 February, 1944, contrasted the Army tactics there with those employed at Betio, and editorialists at home severely criticized the Marines for their "reckless assault." For security reasons, the public could not at first be told that the landing was made through the lagoon, and that amphibious tractors were used. A myth began to develop—unofficially fostered by many "Stateside" officers—that the Marine Corps was careless of the lives of its men, that it hardly bothered with tactical planning, and that it actually liked to "get its nose bloody" hitting nearly-impregnable targets.

The Marines who died at Betio certainly did not die in vain—their valiant contribution made the American offensive "on to westward" possible. As Admiral Nimitz put it, they "knocked down the door to the Japanese defenses in the Central Pacific." But was it necessary to attack across the Central Pacific? Who decided to invade the Gilberts, and who assigned Betio to the Second Marine Division? Were Marine lives sacrificed needlessly in a frontal assault when a flank landing would have been cheaper and equally effective? What about the tides? Why didn't the Navy provide close-in fire support (rocket ships)? Why wasn't the pre-landing naval and air bombardment more effective? How good (or bad) was the intelligence?

All these are plaguey questions which too often have been answered in terms of prejudice, based on misinformation, or not answered at all. Few Marines who participated in the conquest of Betio knew—or know even now—the story behind the story. But no Marine need be afraid of the truth about Tarawa, for the truth reflects only credit on the Second Marine Division and the Marine Corps.

1. *Was it necessary to attack across the Central Pacific?* The Navy believed that such an offensive



ARTILLERY MASCOT "Siwash," the fighting duck, expects and receives a great deal of attention from his fellow Marines aboardship after the Tarawa battle.

was the shortest route to Japan; it is no secret that some highly placed strategists disagreed. But the answer is: the Joint Chiefs of Staff agreed with the Navy, and so did the Quadrant Conference at Quebec in the summer of 1943. The decision to invade the Gilbert Islands was made at the Quadrant Conference—not by the Navy or the Marine Corps.

2. *Who assigned Betio to the Second Marine Division?* Acting on the Quebec orders, Vice-Admiral Raymond Spruance came to Wellington in August of 1943 with verbal instructions for General Smith. Spruance told the Second Marine Division staff that the key objective in the Gilberts was Bititu Island of Tarawa atoll (Bititu was the Japanese name for Betio), and that the Division

had been chosen to conquer it. Spruance advised the staff to prepare a preferred plan of attack, and indicated all available intelligence on the island and its defenses would be forwarded from Cincpac.

3. *Why was Betio attacked by storm?* This question had, perhaps, aroused more controversy than any other pertaining to the GALVANIC operation. In several published accounts it has been contended that Army representatives at the early planning conferences urged the Marines to land first on Bairiki and to reduce Betio's defenses with land-based artillery (the plan followed subsequently at Kwajalein). It has been claimed that the Marines rejected this proposal as contrary to Marine tactical doctrine. This is a false thesis, based on misinformation. First of all, the Army

did *not* participate in the planning for Tarawa. Second, far from being exclusively an Army concept, the proposal for the Bairiki landing was the plan preferred by the Second Marine Division. This plan called for a D-Day landing on Bairiki and an assault on Betio either on D plus 1 or D plus 2. Third, the rejection of this plan by Corps and the Navy was not based on any narrow adherence to doctrine, but was for profound strategic reasons. As General Julian Smith recently wrote:

“When GALVANIC was planned, there was a Japanese fleet in being, which in number of ships, planes and gunpower was the equal of the United States fleet in the Pacific. Based in the Mandated Islands were hostile surface craft, submarines and land-based aircraft capable of striking any force attacking the Gilberts within three days of its discovery. The probable damage to be expected from a combined attack on the transport group had to be weighed against the probable losses of a direct assault on Betio, as compared to those to be expected if landings were made first on other islands of the Tarawa atoll. The successful air strikes on Rabaul and the landing of Marines on Bougainville in November lessened to a marked degree the danger of a counterattack by the Japanese naval forces. But even if their results had been evaluated at the time, they came too late to affect the plans for the capture of Tarawa.”

Thus, the Navy view was that the ships had to be unloaded quickly, the assault had to be directly on Betio, and it had to be swiftly successful. The record shows that, while General Julian Smith acquiesced in these conclusions, he requested from Corps—and received—specific written orders to make the landing on Betio rather than on Bairiki. To quote: “Land on Betio. Seize and occupy that island. Then conduct further operations to reduce the remainder of Tarawa atoll.”

4. *What about the tides?* This question has

many ramifications. First of all, the Marines were not entirely unprepared for the danger of a low tide on Betio’s fringing reef. When Spruance first came to Wellington, the tide problem was discussed and the Division at that time made a radical proposal: that amphibious tractors be used in the assault, to assure a passage over the reef. Up to that time, the amtracs had never been used except as supply or rescue craft. The Navy approved and every effort was made to supplement the number of available alligators. There weren’t enough, of course—and the reason was that the U.S. simply didn’t have enough.

There have been some suggestions that the attack might better have been made against Green Beach, from the open sea. This won’t wash. Observation indicated landing conditions would be at least as bad there (this was borne out when the Sixth Regiment and supporting artillery came ashore). In addition, the narrow head of the island would have made it necessary to land in columns of battalions, permitting the Japs to concentrate all their fire in a compressed area.

Well, then, why not from the south? Every Marine who stood on the south shore of Betio, on or after D plus 2, thanked God that the attack had *not* been made from the south. For one thing, the curve of the island would have exposed the attackers to permanent enfilade fire. For another, the reef was equally shallow—and it was barricaded by two lines of heavy wire—attached to tetrahedrons and heavily mined. If Japanese firepower was extensive on the north shore, it was positively bristling on the south. The Japs had expected us to attack there. By invading from the lagoon, we hit them in their weakest defenses and achieved a measure of surprise.

Finally, there is no escape from the conclusion that the fortunes of war went against the Division in the matter of the tide on D Day morning, and

for several mornings thereafter. The U.S. offensive calendar made a landing necessary on the date chosen, despite the fact that this was in a period of "neap" tides, which are always lower than "Spring" tides (these are determined by the relation of sun, moon and earth). The Division's authority on Gilbert Island tide and hydrographic conditions, Major F. L. G. Holland, a Britisher who had lived at Tarawa for many years, warned at Efate that at neap tide periods there would be serious danger of "dodging" tides which were erratic and unpredictable and which might expose the reef. A number of other Gilbert Island veterans disagreed with Holland (although he proved dead right), but the compelling reason for the Navy's failure to heed his advice was simply the fact that any delay in the invasion would have upset the whole Pacific offensive timetable.

Conclusion: Betio had to be taken by storm, and it was attacked in the right place. The low tide was bad luck. The fact that the Division, in its brilliant use of amtracs, had anticipated the danger was great good luck, and something more than that.

5. *Why wasn't the pre-landing bombardment more effective, and why didn't the Navy supply better close in fire support?*

The preliminary bombardment wrecked the Japanese communications system, which is probably the main reason the Marines were not violently counter-attacked the night of D Day. It disabled the 8 inch batteries on the southwest and southeast corners of the island, eliminating a threat to our ships. It destroyed most of the anti-aircraft guns and some of the anti-boat guns. These things the preliminary bombardment did do.

It did *not* destroy or even greatly damage the beach defenses, blockhouses, pillboxes and similar installations. It did *not* cover the assault waves during the last (and most vital) period of their



DEADLIEST FIRE of all during battle for Betio came from Jap positions inside seawall. Photograph shows gun ports.



HOW JAPS BUILT Fortress Betio shows up clearly in this coconut blockhouse, which is reinforced with heavy steel.



THE JAP COMMAND POST on Betio was built of concrete reinforced by steel. A disabled Jap tank is in foreground.



JAPANESE GUN NESTS on Tarawa were nearly impregnable from above, front or flanks, but were vulnerable when encircled.

push toward the beach. What had gone wrong? Was the plan inadequate? Or was the fault in its execution? The answer in the light of hindsight is: Both. The plan called for area coverage of Betio with the destruction of visible targets. What was needed was pre D Day pinpoint bombardment to destroy the defenses. In terms of execution, the plan called for naval gunfire on the landing beaches until H minus 5 minutes. Actually fire was lifted 15 minutes before the first wave reached shore on Red Beach 1 and in that period the assault was covered by aerial strafing and bombing.

The plan called for a carefully synchronized progression of events beginning with a dawn air attack at 0545 followed by continuous naval gunfire and aerial bombardment until H-hour. At 0545, Naval gunfire which had been returning Japanese coast defense fire since 0441 lifted in preparation for the air-strike. The failure of the planes to appear until 0610 left a blank period of 25 minutes during which time the Japs were free to move about and may have manned their battle stations including their well-protected beach defenses. Gunfire was resumed at 0620 immediately upon termination of the air-strike.

In both the Naval gunfire orders and in conference, it was stressed that "H-hour and H minus 5 will be confirmed by the Southern Attack Force Commander." H-hour was postponed 30 minutes (to 0900) but the first troops did not reach the beach until 0910. Again, gunfire was lifted to prevent shooting down our own aircraft which began planned final strafing runs at 0855 at which time it was believed on the flagship that the waves would reach the beach at approximately H-hour. The report of their further delay came in after "Cease Fire" had been given. In the smoke and dust that covered Betio and the reef, Admiral Hill feared to renew the fire lest it fall on our own troops and planes.

In all subsequent Pacific operations, pre D Day bombardments were begun earlier and directed at the destruction of enemy installations. Ships' gunfire was supplemented by rocket ships and amphibian tanks which maintained their fire until the troops were at the very edge of the beach. Landing forces were supplied with more reliable radio equipment and intensively trained to make maximum use of both air and surface Naval support after the beachheads were established. All Betio lessons.

On the first day, liaison was not entirely successful chiefly because of the failure of radio communications. Moreover, available gunfire and strafing support could NOT be utilized fully because the front lines were in actual contact and even intermingled.

The Betio difficulty was that the Japanese defenses were invulnerable to any conceivable amount of flat trajectory Naval gunfire that could be supplied on D Day. Pinpoint fire *WAS* used on visible targets until the smoke from burning oil, ammunition and supply dumps and wooden buildings obscured the island and nothing but area fire was possible. The final 45 minutes of fire were concentrated on the beach defenses but the destructive effect was practically nil.

However, it must not be said that the Naval gunfire support on Tarawa was ineffective. Without effective gunfire support a landing could not have been made on Betio nor the island secured. Even with admitted errors due to lack of experience and the fact that the Naval Attack Force was not assembled for combined training until Efate, the assault waves in the amphibian tractors landed with remarkably light losses. It was the supports and reserves who had to disembark and wade across the exposed reef who suffered the bulk of the casualties in landing. Lack of troop-carrying amtracs accounted for more losses on Tarawa than

did the insufficient gunfire support on D Day.

6. *How good (or bad) was the intelligence?* It was good, all things considered. We underestimated the ingenuity of the Japanese in fashioning virtually bombproof and shellproof pillboxes and gun emplacements out of railroad iron, coral sand, concrete and coconut logs. (Later, one correspondent who saw all or nearly all of the Jap defenses in the Pacific remarked: "The Japs had one good engineer, and they lost him at Tarawa.") Against this failure, however, can be balanced a remarkably accurate forecast of the number of Jap guns, the relative strength of the dispositions, and the number of troops on the island. Our final estimate of Japanese manpower, before landing, was not less than 2,700 men and not more than 3,100. Actually, there were 4,836 Japanese and Koreans on Betio, of which 2,619 were "Imperial Marines."

We estimated the Japs had four eight-inch, four 14cm, and six 80mm coast defense guns. All correct. We had spotted four 127mm twin mount, dual purpose anti aircraft guns, eight 75mm dual purpose ack-ack units, four 13mm twin mounts and fourteen 37mm light tank guns. All correct again. But we expected only twelve 13mm single mount anti aircraft guns, and there were twenty-seven. Instead of six 75mm mountain guns, there were ten; instead of five 70mm battalion guns, there were six; and instead of sixteen 13mm machine guns, there were thirty-one. We also erred in guessing six 37mm field guns, when there were nine.

It is unlikely that 100 per cent accuracy on the number of guns would have made much difference in the trend of battle. We hit Betio with all we had, as hard as we could. We chose to hit it on the northern salient beaches (instead of the southern, re-entrant beaches) at least partly because of first-rate aerial photo interpretation by D-2. If we had known the toughness of the Jap fortifications, we

probably would have used a different type of naval bombardment and more of it. But only a spy on Betio could have gotten us that information, and a spy we didn't have. The information gathered by the Intelligence Section of the Division under Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Jack Colley was excellent. This group's contribution to our final success can hardly be overestimated.

7. *Why weren't more troops landed?* About 12,000 men conquered Betio. A Division such as the Second at the time of Betio has approximately 16,000 men available for action. But these include many units whose usefulness depends upon establishment of a secure beachhead. The simple answer is that only 12,000 men fought for Betio because, on that "square mile of hell," there wasn't room for any more. The fact that only 12,000 were involved makes Betio the most costly territory the U.S. ever has won, in terms of percentage of casualties suffered.

In the foregoing, the author has not attempted to deal with the Japanese side of the battle, nor with related sea and air successes which affected it (notably, the Rabaul strikes and the Bougainville invasion). These have been amply covered elsewhere,* but it may be appropriate to clear up a few main points. Marines wondered why there was no Japanese counterattack on the night of D Day, and why so few mortars fell on the beaches at a time when effective mortar fire might have destroyed our toehold. The failure to mount a counterattack can be credited to the preliminary bombardment and bombing—the Japs had virtually no communications left, and their runners were not efficient. The lack of heavy mortar fire (of the type used against the First Division at Peleliu the following year) is explained in the type of troops used by the Japanese at Betio. The

* *The Marines' War*, by Fletcher Pratt.
The Great Pacific Victory, by Gilbert Cant.

Navy Landing Force units did not have mortar platoons. These were reserved for the Japanese Army. Fatal weakness. The death of their commander, Admiral Shibasaki, on D plus 1, certainly hampered the enemy, particularly in view of the Jap inability to improvise, either in command or tactics.

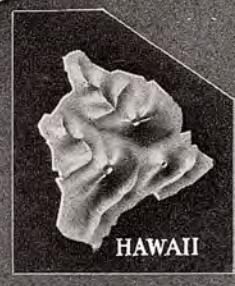
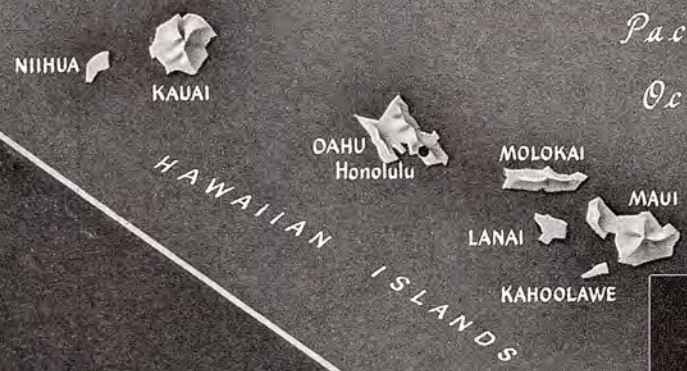
The lessons learned from Betio were of incalculable value in the subsequent offensives in the Pacific. The Division had proved the excellence of the amphibious tractor as an assault vehicle. Its experience on the reef and the beaches led directly to development of the LCI-(R), the shallow-draft rocket boats. Betio permitted a sound evaluation of the effectiveness of air and surface bombardment against strongly fortified positions. It proved the necessity for separating command and bombardment functions—the two hours *Maryland* spent bombarding seriously damaged her radio communications and very nearly cut off General Smith from the action ashore.

Betio was the first laboratory for the revolutionary system of close naval air support developed by Captain (later Admiral) Richard Whitehead, which released future amphibious assaults from dependence on land-based air cover. As Captain James Stockman has concluded in his excellent monograph, "Tarawa":

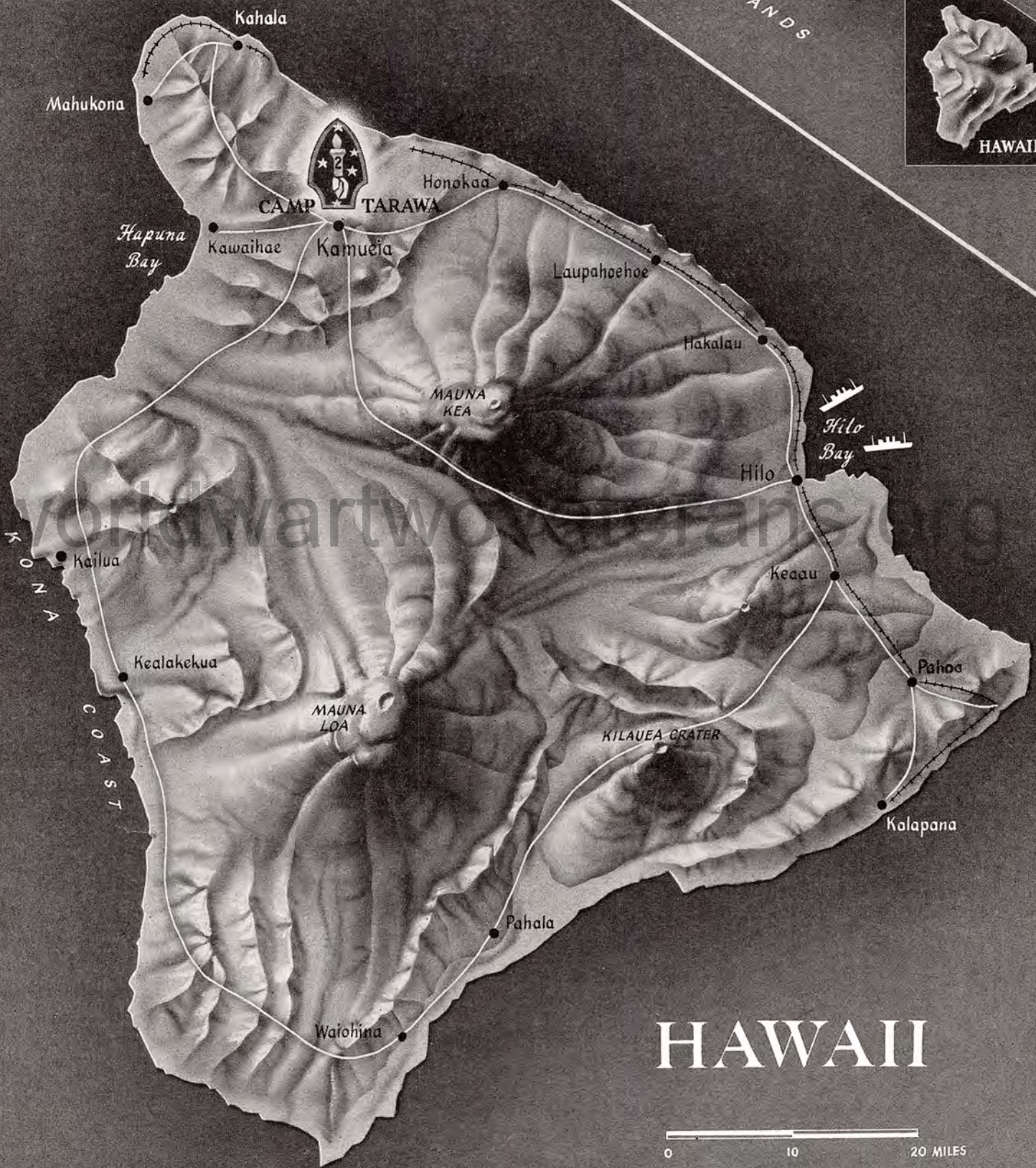
"There had to be a Tarawa. This was the inevitable point at which untried doctrine was at length tried in the crucible of battle. The lessons learned at Tarawa had to be learned somewhere in the course of the war, and it now seems providential that they were learned as early and at no greater cost than was involved."

No, the Marines who died at Tarawa did not die in vain, nor were they unnecessarily sacrificed. Perhaps no other troops of World War II, giving their lives for their country, made a greater and more lasting contribution to victory.

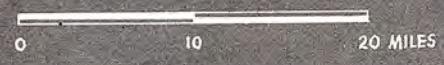
Pacific Ocean



HAWAIIAN ISLANDS



HAWAII



The Marines and sailors and soldiers who spent part of the war in Hawaii usually learned at least one Hawaiian word—*pilikia*, meaning trouble. A good many also learned, and often sang, a song whose last verse begins:

*I've had enough of pilikia,
And of Kole Kole pass . . .*

Nobody suffered more—or deserved less—*pilikia* in Hawaii than the weary survivors of the Second Marine Division. The 2,000-mile voyage from Tarawa was in itself a postscript to horror. The transports reeked of the awful smell of the island, of disinfectant, and of blood. There were no fresh clothes for unwounded Marines, and almost everyone had lost his gear in the shuffle of battle. Every day there were funerals aboard the transports, and flag-covered bodies slipping into the silent seas.

The Eighth Marines were the first to arrive. Their ships nosed into Pearl Harbor, on the island of Oahu, and for several hours Navy ambulances moved back and forth, taking the wounded to Aiea and the other naval hospitals near Honolulu. Next day the ships sailed again, 200 miles more to the big island of Hawaii, where the Marines hoped to settle into a comfortable and capacious camp in a gentle climate. They found neither. The campsite was sixty-five miles out of Hawaii's port of Hilo, sixty-five miles over one of the world's most snake-like roads, in the lofty saddle between the great volcanoes of Mauna Kea and Mauna Loa.

Hilo had been warm; the mountain saddle was bitterly cold. (In December snow touches the peaks of the two Maunas, and the barren rangeland between—it is part of the huge Parker ranch—is swept by high winds bearing icy fog and mist.) The lightly clad Marines, racked by the long truck ride, found the campsite laid out near the village

of Kamuela, but no camp. Platforms for tents were stacked in long rows, and the pyramidals themselves had not been unfurled. Thus were the heroes of Tarawa received—shelterless orphans in a strange cold land.

For three grim weeks the Eighth Marines, and after them the Second and the Sixth, toiled at building Camp Tarawa. By day they worked, in chill rain or mist. By night they froze under makeshift shelters, lacking blankets or sleeping bags. When Regimental officers sought to borrow blankets for their men from the Army warehouses in Hilo, the request was rejected by the Island commander, (a decision that was reversed as soon as it came to the attention of Lieutenant General Robert E. Richardson in Honolulu). Slowly the camp rose, in the face of these difficulties and hardships. The 18th CB's fell to with a will, assisted by other Seabees sent over from Pearl, and mess halls, heads and showers were erected. By mid-December, when General Smith and his staff arrived from Betio, the camp was nearly complete. But it had been a frightful fortnight, particularly in the wake of a battle such as Tarawa. Christmas of 1943 was not a holiday that many Second Division Marines remember with any great pleasure.

The reasons for the selection of the Kamuela campsite have never been publicized, but they are fairly obvious. The cold climate was beneficial to men still haunted by Guadalcanal malaria. The Parker ranges provided excellent training terrain—and the Corps command knew (if the Division did not) that the next battle would be fought in mountainous territory. Finally (and this was probably only by accident), the initial isolation gave the Marines time to make an important adjustment—time to realize that Hawaiian residents of Japanese ancestry had no relation to the enemy Japanese they had just conquered on Tarawa. It also gave the island populace an opportunity to identify



JAP BIG GUNS on Betio were fed by this circular track, which kept the 8-inch shells moving toward breech. Here Marines take notes on the mechanism soon after the end of the battle.

the Marines for what they were: brave young Americans and not “paid killers,” as they had been advertised by certain detractors. This canard—never officially encouraged—was spread by some of the garrison troops in Hawaii, who were fearful of losing their girl friends to the romantic “Gyrenes.”

Actually, it didn't take the Marines long to win friends and influence people. Their conduct generally was exemplary, and they scored a major victory when they helped finance reconstruction of

a nearby Mission church that had burned. The grateful parishioners erected a monument to the Division. Even so, the location of the camp made it difficult for the Marines to mix much with Hawaii's many races. The Division had to depend on itself for entertainment.

Under direction of Captain Orion Todd, Jr., of California, an extensive athletic program was organized. There were boxing championships, baseball games, and many other sports events (including one favorite in which teams of Marines en-



HAWAIIAN CAMPSITE was in the saddle between the two great volcanoes of Mauna Loa and Mauna Kea, on land belonging to the huge Parker cattle ranch. Camp was often chill and foggy.

gaged in battles royal in a dugout full of mud). As spring warmed the mountains, General Julian Smith arranged with the Parker ranch for a rodeo. There were plenty of Marines from the Great Southwest who could ride the hurricane deck of a bucking Hawaiian pony. There were some from South Boston who were determined to prove that they could, too. Many failures but no major casualties.

A few things the Marines did have at Kamuela that they had missed on Tulagi, Guadalcanal and in New Zealand. One was the U.S.O. From Hono-

lulu many U.S.O. troops fanned out through the Hawaiian group, and most of them played Camp Tarawa. Another thing was good U.S. beer, although it was in limited supply (the ration averaged two cans per day per man).

In Honolulu some observers (and they were not all civilians) wondered if the Second Marine Division could be restored to first-line battle efficiency. The Tarawa losses had torn a great hole in the fabric of the Division's organization, and few of the wounded had been returned to duty (nearly all

those who entered hospitals were sent to other outfits). For years the Marine Corps had boasted that its ranks were filled exclusively with men who had "chosen to be Marines." That was no longer strictly true. There were plenty of seventeen-year-old volunteers in the replacements sent to Camp Tarawa, but there also were a good many Marines who had come to the Corps through Selective Service. Although it was pointed out that such boots had preferred the Marines to the other services, they still were not volunteers in the old sense.

Nobody need have worried. The twenty-year veterans were cynically resigned to any and all camp conditions. The Guadalcanal and Tarawa veterans occasionally were bitter, about both the camp and the U.S. reaction to Betio, but their bitterness was not directed toward the Marine Corps. The newcomers, volunteers or selectees, came to an outfit whose pride in achievement had, if anything, been enriched by adversity. The Marines of the Second Division knew that they had given a name to the ages, a name to stand with Belleau Wood and Chateau Thierry and the *Bonhomme Richard*. The whole Division now had matched or surpassed the heritage of the Sixth Regiment and the exploits of Guadalcanal. New Marines would have to live up to a new and immediate tradition of greatness.

These new Marines had no opportunity to escape that responsibility, even for a moment. In the long days they trained under officers who had fought at Tarawa or the 'Canal. In the long evenings they drank beer with enlisted men who had known Betio's beaches and the Lunga jungles. Days and nights they lived in a camp that was somehow a good camp, cold as it was, because it was called "Camp Tarawa." They read a camp newspaper called *Tarawa-Boom-De-Ay*, and they were surrounded by souvenirs plucked from Betio's burning sands.



WEARING COCONUT HAT, a Marine cook prepares to serve up the barbecued beef at Division Rodeo.

Nor were they (or any of the Marines) looking only backward. Soon after January 1, General Smith had begun training the Division for its next battle. In the first month or so, the training was largely conditioning: getting sick Marines well, toughening up men who had been weakened by battle, by wounds, or by the climatic change; working the replacements into the units so that they functioned smoothly. With the approach of spring, it became more specific.

Army engineers built dugouts and other fortifications on the training range, and the tank, infan-



SECOND DIVISION RODEO found Marines accomplished at storming beaches a little less sure of themselves on the bouncing quarterdeck of a wild steer. There were no serious casualties, however.

try and engineer combinations which had proved so effective at Betio were given a new polish. The Navy brought in its carrier pilots for drills in close support, using live ammunition. The Second Division, which had received the Presidential Unit Citation for Tarawa, obviously was not through with the war. No member doubted that in future operations it would have a key role. As one Marine wryly remarked: "We'll always get the tough beaches, and we'll never dare retreat. Not after Betio."

While the Marines swiftly rebuilt the Division in

the Hawaiian mountains, the Pacific war swept closer and closer to Japan. In February the new Fourth Marine Division and the Seventh Army Division combined to capture the Marshall Islands. The Pacific Fleet dropped anchor in a great new western base—Majuro. Admiral Spruance took the battle fleet to Truk and bombarded the Jap bastion, and then hit the Marianas with carrier air. From the Marshalls to the Solomons, Army and Navy long-range bombers shuttled back and forth to neutralize Japanese Oceana.

At PHIBSPAC Headquarters in Pearl Harbor,



THE SONG OF THE ISLANDS was a song of hard work to most Second Division Marines during their stay on Hawaii. Only a few were lucky enough to get this kind of attention from *wahines*

Admiral Richmond Kelly Turner and General Holland M. Smith got busy, in guarded offices, on new amphibious plans. The hit-and-run raids by the carriers on distant Japanese possessions were effective and useful, but were only a prelude to invasion. An island was indicated and a date was set. At Kamuela, a guard appeared outside the door of Second Division intelligence.

General Julian Smith had nursed the Division back from the bloody disruption of Betio to exuberant health. He now had only one ambition: to again lead his Marines in battle. But that was to

be denied. In April the commandant of the Marine Corps relieved Julian Smith for more urgent duties elsewhere, and Major General Thomas E. Watson replaced him in command of the Second Marine Division.

Watson was fresh from a recent and impressive victory. He had commanded the Twenty-second Marine Regiment and the 106th Army Regiment in the assault of Eniwetok atoll, in the Marshalls. That success won him another star and division command status. A skillful, seasoned veteran of many years in the Marine Corps (he had started

as an enlisted man), Watson had the reputation of a stern disciplinarian. Everyone in the Marine Corps envied him his inheritance of the Second Division; but no one much envied Watson the job of trying to replace Julian Smith in the hearts of the Marines he had led at Tarawa.

As always happens between battles, there had been numerous changes in the Division command even before Watson came. Edson had got his first star and moved up as assistant division commander, with Colonel Shoup replacing him as chief of staff. Lieutenant Colonel James T. Wilbur arrived from the States to serve as D-1. Lieutenant Colonel Thomas J. Colley remained as D-2—intelligence. General Watson brought with him his D-3, Lieutenant Colonel Wallace M. Greene, Jr., and Colonel Robert J. Straub to serve as D-4.

In the Second Marines, Colonel Walter J. Stuart succeeded to the regimental command, with Lieutenant Colonel John H. Griebel as his exec. Kyle was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel and kept 1/2; Lieutenant Colonel Richard C. Nutting took over 2/2, (with Major Ryan as exec), and Lieutenant Colonel Arnold F. Johnston was given 3/2.

The Sixth Regiment went to Colonel James P. Riseley, with Lieutenant Colonel McLeod moving up from 3/2 as exec. Major Jones kept 1/6, Lieutenant Colonel Murray kept 2/6, and Lieutenant Colonel John W. Easley succeeded McLeod with 3/6.

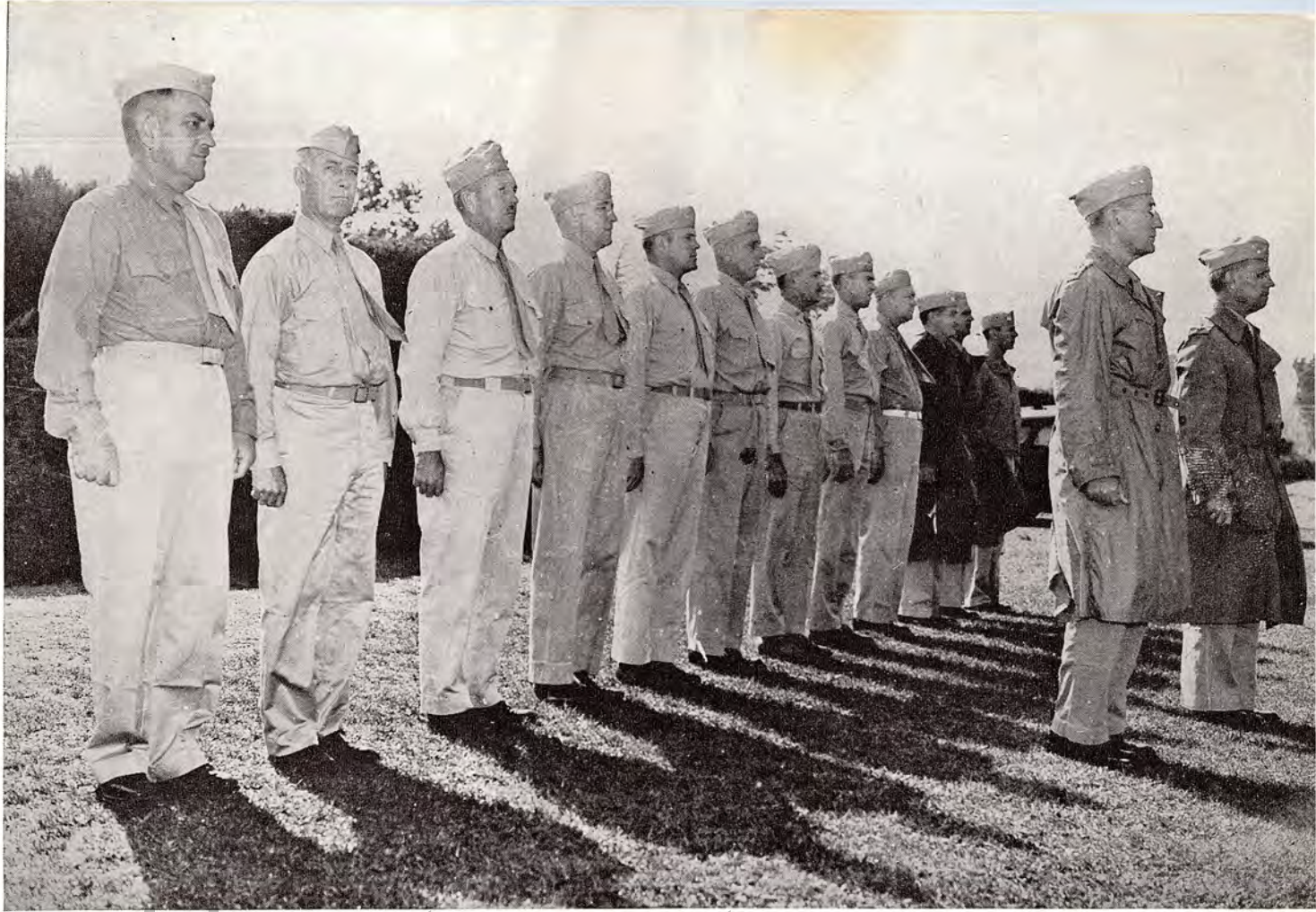
The Eighth Marines also got a new commander, Colonel Clarence R. Wallace. Lieutenant Colonel Jack P. Juhan was executive officer. Otherwise, the Eighth was the least changed of any of the regiments. Hays kept 1/8, Crowe (a lieutenant colonel now) was retained in command of 2/8, and Lieutenant Colonel John Miller took over 3/8.

In the Tenth Marines, Colonel Raphael Griffin succeeded Colonel Thomas Bourke, who had been promoted to Brigadier General. Battalion com-

mands were unchanged, except for 3/10, which went to Major William L. Crouch. Colonel Cyril W. Martyr kept command of the Eighteenth Marines. Lieutenant Colonel Chester J. Salazar took over 2/18, and the Seabees of 3/18 were detached. Lieutenant Colonel Russell Lloyd was made commander of the Shore Party groups.

This was the command picture as the Second Division entered final intensive training. In February and April a school for transport quartermasters and unit-loading officers had been conducted; in March amphibious problems were worked out at Maalaea Bay on the nearby island of Maui, and some Marines went through a jungle-training course. April brought intelligence lectures on Western Pacific islands and atolls—Ponape, Wake, the Marianas, Yap, the Palaus, the Bonins and Truk. April also brought a clue as to the Division's destination. The Marines suddenly were ordered into canebrakes made available by one of the many Hawaii plantations. Not all islands of all those studied had sugar cane, Saipan and Tinian *did*.

The plan for invasion of the Marianas came down to Division on 10 April, 1944. It called for the assault of Saipan on 15 June, the subsequent attack on Guam, and the capture of Tinian. Guam had been ours before. Saipan and Tinian, about 100 miles to the north, were Spanish for centuries, then briefly German, and had fallen into Japanese hands after World War I. On the intelligence maps, Saipan looked like a monkey wrench hanging by its long handle from a thread of islands stretching up toward Japan. Tinian, only four miles south of Saipan, was a semicircular blob. Since the Marines (other than the top command) could not be briefed until actually at sea, even the target's code name was kept secret. But now it was possible to simulate actual conditions, and late in April a full-scale mock-up of beaches and even a



CHANGE IN COMMAND—comes at Camp Tarawa in April when Brigadier General Thomas Watson (extreme right) relieves Major General Julian Smith (beside him). Watson soon made his second star.

dummy city were laid out in Hawaii. In the first week in May embarkation began.

This time there would be two combat teams—CT8 and CT6—in the assault, on a four-battalion front. Of the four, only 2/8 had been in the assault wave at Betio. Said Lieutenant Colonel Crowe: “Always a bride, never a bridesmaid.” This time, too, there would be plenty of amtracs—the U.S. had been rushing them to the Pacific ever since Tarawa. The four assault LT’s would proceed to the target in LST’s, instead of transports, taking their amtracs with them. The Marines of CT2, in the reserve, the Division staff, and other Division troops would ride the big ships. All told, the Division was assigned 22 LST’s to boat its initial attackers and the Tenth Marines. In the

transport group were twelve troop and cargo vessels and two LSD’s full of Sherman tanks. The LST’s also carried a new weapon—the LVT-A, an armored amphibian tank. Nobody was quite sure how these would work out under combat conditions. General Edson sailed on the *Bolivar*, while General Watson and his command staff took quarters on the reliable old *Monrovia*, which only six months before had brought Julian Smith and Harry Hill to Efate.

The omens were not too favorable. Even before the final rehearsals, the Division suffered twenty-nine casualties when three LCT’s washed off the decks of LST’s in heavy seas around Hawaii. A few days later, after landing practice at Maalaea Bay on Maui and a mock invasion of Kahoolawe

Island, the Division ships put into Pearl and Honolulu Harbors for staging and rehabilitation. There, on 21 May in Pearl's West Loch, six LST's blew up and burned. There were ninety-five casualties among Second Division Marines, and all supplies were lost except for five amtracs. What caused the explosion is a mystery to this day. There are many theories, but none has ever proved out. One thing is sure—it was not enemy sabotage.

At dawn on 25 May, the slow and cumbersome LST's cleared Pearl Harbor. The destroyed vessels had been replaced; so had the lost Marines. The Division was sailing at full strength for a destination still unknown to most of the men. The faster transport group followed on 30 May, and on all of the ships full intelligence on the Marianas was distributed. On June 9 the last of the ships entered Eniwetok lagoon—the atoll General Watson had captured only four months before. In those few weeks it had become a great forward rendezvous area. No one present had ever seen so many ships, collected in a single enclosed harbor. For the Second Division was not going to Saipan alone. It would share the attack with the Fourth Marine Division, and would be supported—if support were necessary—by the Twenty-seventh Army Division.

There was no general liberty. The Marines looked hungrily through the ships' glasses at the peaceful ribbons of beach on Eniwetok Island, dotted with gaudy beach umbrellas and ornamented by Navy nurses in brief white bathing suits. On the next shore there would only be guns again, and angry Japs and death. Two days after dropping the hooks at Eniwetok, the great task force sailed again, for that distant and deadly shore.

Study. The last long looks at the maps and the mass of intelligence material: "Saipan has a garrison of 13,000 to 19,000 men. It is a land mass of

seventy-two square miles, with a 1,500 foot peak—Mt. Tapotchau—midway of its length. It is volcanic, with sheer cliffs except along the west and southwest shore. It has a village, Charan Kanoa, and a city of 20,000, Garapan. It has a barrier reef, 500 to 1,000 yards offshore. It is a cultivated island with many canefields. It has a native population of Chamorros who may be friendly. It is 5,000 miles from San Francisco and only 1,500 miles from Tokyo!"

Speeches. The battalion commanders once more: "We've been chosen to cut the guts out of this island because this is the SecMarDiv, and they figure this particular beach is tough but not as tough as this battalion!" Or: "This is something new. We've got half of one town and all of one city and a goddam mountain to take, and they figure this is the Division that can do it!"

And on Vice-Admiral Richmond Kelly Turner's flagship, the Rocky Mount: "Admiral, we have a dispatch from one of our pickets. The Japanese fleet has sortied out of Tawitawi and is steaming north through the Sulu sea."

Night, 14 June, 1944. Blacked out ships and cloudy moonlight and now and then a flare on the horizon. The task force moved, silent and sure, around the northern tip of Saipan and down along the western shore. The night began to thin out, and the hulk of the island took shape. Little pinpoints of fire studded its base, relics of three days of fierce surface bombardment and carrier air strikes by Vice-Admiral Marc Mitscher's Task Force 58.

Dawn, 15 June, 1944. D-Day in the Marianas, with a sunrise like solid gold off Marpi Point and clouds above Mt. Tapotchau rimmed with rose. An enemy sea, full of American ships. An enemy sky, fast filling with American planes.

0542 15 June, 1944. Six battleships and cruisers, in an arc around the landing beaches, open fire.

Chapter Nine



LST'S LAUNCHING TRACTORS

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TO THE HEIGHTS OF TAPOTCHAU

MOVING ON TO WESTWARD, THE DIVISION ASSAULTS SAIPAN

Take all the Pacific battles that had gone before, from the fall of Corregidor to Eniwetok. Take Tulagi and Guadalcanal, and Tarawa and Attu, and Los Negros and Buna and Gona. Stir them all together, and add a little European seasoning—perhaps from Sicily—and pour them out on a flat blue sea under a blue bowl of sky, and you'll have something that looks and smells and feels and hurts like Saipan. For Saipan had everything: caves like Tulagi; mountains and ridges like the 'Canal; a reef nearly as treacherous as Betio's; a swamp like

Buna; a city to be conquered, like those of Sicily; and death-minded Japs like the defenders of Attu. A lot, for so small an island. But Saipan never seemed small, though it was only seventy-two square miles.

Nor did it at first seem particularly hostile, that D-Day morning as the warships began to beat at it with shells and the LST's edged close to the southwestern beaches to discharge their Marine-laden amtracs. From the transport area, Saipan was two islands—one long, low-lying, hugging the sea, with

the village of Charan Kanoa directly inshore from the ships and the city of Garapan only a glint in the sun off our port quarter; the other a sky island, the peak of Mt. Tapotchau, floating in the air above the band of smoke raised by our exploding shells and bombs.

But as we closed in, our ships converging on the vulnerable beaches, the Japs finally were stung to premature retaliation. Battleships impudently cruising back and forth in the narrow strait between Saipan and Tinian began to get counter-battery fire, from both islands. The dive bombers zoomed in to help silence the enemy positions, stringing bursts along Ushi field on the tip of Tinian, shrouding that island in dozens of plumes of smoke, black and gray like deformed mushrooms in a green truck garden. Down a roller coaster of clouds came 161 Navy bombers in a single, fifteen-minute strike on the blazing houses of Charan Kanoa, flat on the coastal plain behind the sugar mill whose high smokestack separated the Second Division and Fourth Division beaches. The old battleship *California*, refloated from the mud of Pearl Harbor, lay broadside to the island and vengefully blew the lining halfway out of its guns. Admiral Raymond Spruance took his cruiser flagship, the *Indianapolis*, straight in toward Charan Kanoa, almost to the reef—in so close that Jap shells burst on her decks.

At 0815 the first wave of alligators left the three-mile long line of departure—the four assault battalions of the Second Division deployed parallel to the center of the reef, north of the sugar mill and the old Japanese pier; the Fourth Division to the south of it. Ahead of the infantry-bearing tractors strange alligators hooded in steel and armed with cannon swam and jolted toward the shores. And ahead of all of these, already at the reef as the amtracs started in, moved the LCI's—the shallow-draft landing craft converted into

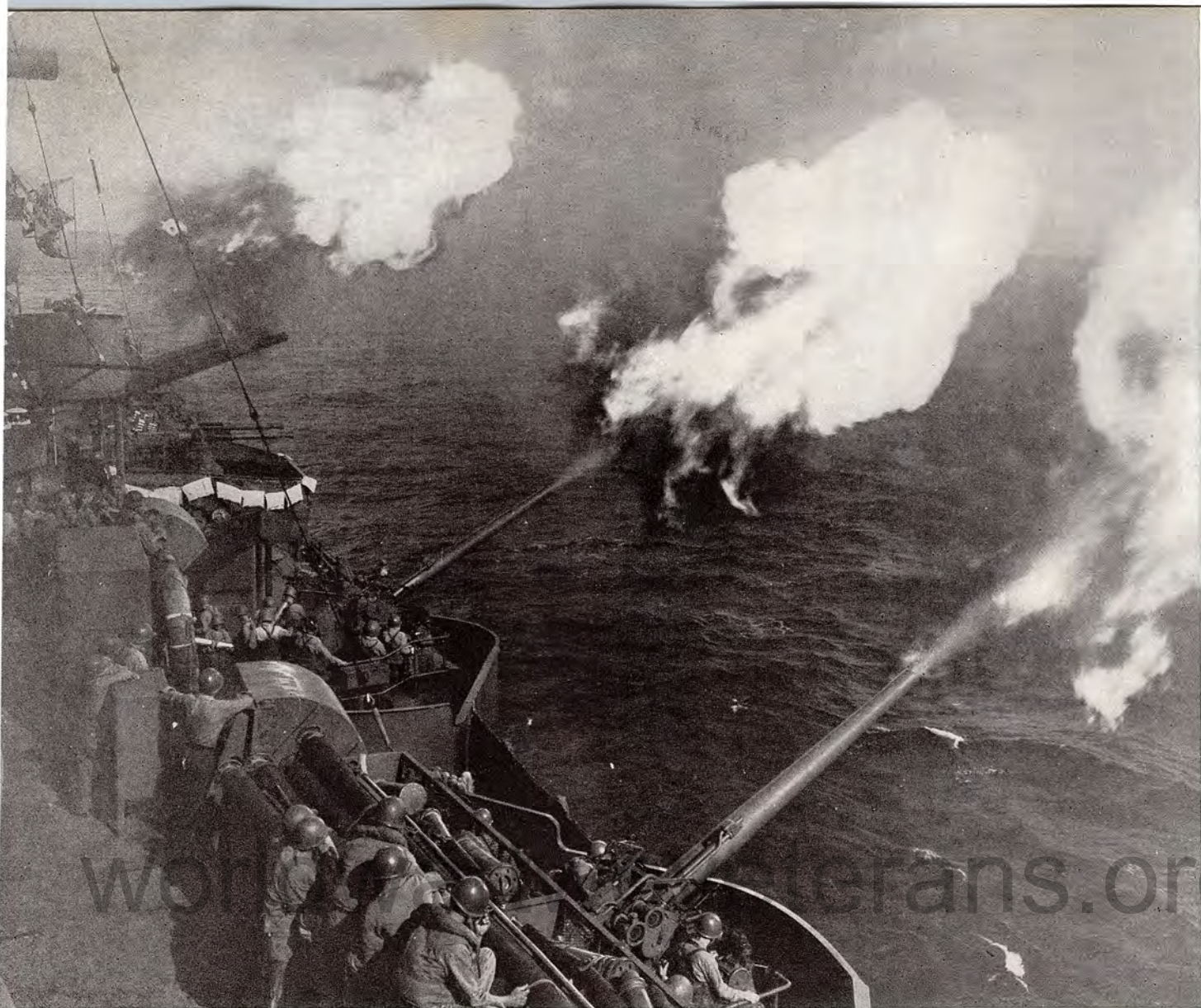
rocket-firing gunboats to solve the problem of close-in fire support.

The naval fire lifted inland, against the red and green hills. The tractors crawled up over the reef and down into the water beyond it, and in Garapan, smoking and smoldering six miles up the northern beach, an oil dump exploded and sent up great balls of orange fire, like a monster Roman candle. White geysers suddenly plumed in the waters between the reef and the beach. The Japs were shooting back in earnest, now. Our naval fire became a continuous, breathtaking rumble, the salvos bursting so close together they formed an almost solid wall of flying dirt. The LCI's made their rockets dance along the beaches, like brush fire in a forest. The amtracs were very close, and the white geysers were rising steadily as the pre-registered Jap artillery raked the reef. At 0843 the first amtrac crawled up on the beach, and the battle of Saipan ceased to be weight of metal against strength of fortification, as it had been for four days and nights during the carrier and surface attacks. Now once again it was the Marine—the Marine who had fought at Guadalcanal, or at Tarawa, or only in the sham battles of training—against the stubby, tape-putteed little Japanese soldier whose philosophy of battle did not admit the possibility of surrender but only glorious victory or glorious death.

Reveille had come early in the steaming LST's, the sharp braying of the horn echoing through the dark, hollow amphitheatre below the main deck, where the tractors stood, their stubby noses pointed toward the great swinging doors in the prow. For the majority of the Marines of the Second Division assault battalions—2/8, 3/8, 2/6 and 3/6—there was familiarity in the D Day routine—the 0200 awakening, the unchanging (since New Zealand) breakfast of steak and eggs, the hot, clammy, misery of full combat gear inside the sealed, air-



ON HEIGHTS OF SAIPAN Second Division Marines fight a new kind of war, over cruel limestone ridges. Here a squad works its way up mountain against invisible enemy firing from caves and ravines.



SOFTENING SAIPAN, a U.S. Navy cruiser hurls five-inch shells into the Japanese installations along southwest coast just before the landing. Cruisers moved in almost to destroyer range.

less ships. But it was a familiarity that bred no contempt. Their memories were of D Day mornings at Tulagi and Tarawa—mornings that grew into days of fearful battle. They expected hell on the beaches of Saipan.

The doors of the LST's swung open at 0700, and for the first time the Marines could see their objective, floating in smoke and writhing under the bombs and shells. This time there would be no awkward transfer from LCVP's to amtracs—the Marines already were loaded in the alligators, and

the LST's had moved close to the line of departure. The drivers inside the lightly-armored cabs released the levers that set the treads in motion. The amtracs bucked forward and nosed down into the blue water and then, suddenly, were afloat. A little before 0800 they were at the line of departure, each battalion in place.

At Tarawa there had been one combat team—CT2—and three assault battalions. Now there were two teams—CT8 and CT6—and four battalions. Facing the island, as the Marines were, Lieutenant

Colonel Raymond Murray's 2/6 was on the extreme left; next came Lieutenant Colonel John Easley's 3/6. CT6 was to land on Saipan's Red Beaches 2 and 3. On Easley's right was 3/8, under Lieutenant Colonel John Miller, and on Miller's right—on the Division right flank, in fact—was 2/8, still under Crowe, now a lieutenant colonel. CT8 was to hit Green Beaches 1 and 2.

Ahead of all these, in little clusters, one group in front of each infantry battalion, were the Amphibian Tanks under Lieutenant Colonel Reed M. Fawell of Washington, D.C. These were filled with Marines who had become specialists in a hurry, 30 per cent of them inductees going into their first combat. Seven Marines were inside each one of the floating tanks, fantastic armored vehicles abristle with machine guns and mounting, in each gray turret, a .75-millimeter howitzer. When the command for the assault came, shortly after 0800, the amtracs led the way. At first there was little fire. Then—

For a long, cruel moment the tractors hung on the reef, silhouetted and almost out of the water, their treads clutching at the coral and then plunging down into the deeper, quieter pools inside. "Looks like we'll get in all right," a Marine breathed, and like an exclamation point came a thunderclap of sound. Water sprayed into the tractor and shrapnel laced its sides. The waves of amtracs did not falter, but they became confused. The barriered shoals spouted white columns of water from a rain of plunging shells, and from the flat, wooded tip of Afetna point, on the right toward the old Japanese pier, orange tracers fanned toward the alligators, caroming and ricocheting off the water and coral.

In this fierce barrage, the Navy wave guide led the amtracs of Crowe's battalion too far to the left, into Miller's landing area. The walls of water and smoke obscured the beaches, and the landmarks

which once had set off the assigned landing area vanished in the haze. Now the shells were bursting in an almost rhythmical pattern, every twenty-five yards, every fifteen seconds, some of them mortar, some of them artillery, pumping down on the beaches and the reef from the Jap positions in the foothills of the mountains. On Afetna point an anti-boat gun that somehow had survived the fearful pre-landing bombardment added its deadly, surface-level fire. An alligator suddenly stood almost on end and then sank quivering under a smother of smoke. Bloody Marines twisted on its cramped deck, and in the tiny, glass-hatched driver's cabin another Marine slumped among the stained levers. But an assault engineer, groggy from concussion and splattered with blood, somehow crawled into the cabin and, pushing aside the dead driver, restarted the engine. The amtrac resumed its slow rumble to the beaches.

There were other hits and other mishaps. One company captain and his men were forced overboard when their amtrac stalled and then drew direct fire from a Jap shore battery, but they eventually swam back, were able to start it and took it in. A Tarawa veteran shook his helmeted head and murmured: "The same old dish of soup, warmed over!" But not quite the same old soup. The amtracs were getting in. Some of them had decks red with blood, and others were awash from shrapnel penetrations. But the Marines were going ashore, and the Japs with the mortars and artillery in the hills, the stubborn Japs who had mounted the boat gun at Afetna point, the desperate Japs still fighting on the beaches, could not stop them.

Driven to the left by the clanging gun on Afetna point, the Marines of 2/8, 3/8, and 3/6 reached the erupting sands together, in a great jumble, at the junction of Green Beach 1 and Red Beach 3, near the northern end of the mile-long Charan Kanoa airstrip. Only 2/6 was approximately on



THE TRACTORS START IN toward Saipan's smoky beaches, where Navy shells and aerial bombs are still bursting in an unprecedented invasion bombardment. As they approach shore, rocket ships lay final barrage.

its proper station and unimpeded by other units. The alligators, shaking water from their gears, climbed onto the shore and the Marines poured out of them, going swiftly over the sides to charge toward the fringing woods and seek the always invisible enemy. All along the beach the mortars made the sand shake, and the air was full of their soft whuffles. Artillery shells burst among the treetops, shearing the green leaves and sending down shrapnel showers.

The Marines surged forward, inshore through the brushy thickets and south down the beaches toward Afetna, where the Japs were still directing flank fire at incoming waves. Many men were dying on those hot beaches, and many more were falling wounded. A shellhole at the water's edge filled with seepage, and the greenish, scummy liquid was turned first gray by the complementary red of the wounded's blood, and then as red as the blood itself.

The Japanese curtain of mortar and artillery fire covered the reef, the beach and the airstrip—inland as far as the infantry penetrated, but no

farther. There were Japs in the seedling cedars behind the airstrip, and in the houses and ruins of Charan Kanoa (in the Fourth Division area), but there were not many of them. They were the sacrificial rear guard, whose function was to hold the Marines on the beaches so the gunners and mortar-men in the distant hills could maintain their murderous barrage. There were clear areas, in the first slopes of the foothills, where there were neither Japanese nor mortar fire.

It was here, on a grassy, tree-clad knoll, that the crews of a pair of amphibian tanks sat in the shade, at 1000, and heated and ate their C rations, scarcely conscious of the carnage only 1,200 yards away. The amtanks had jolted inland, ahead of the first wave of riflemen, their 75's blowing an open road. The Japs in the bushes and branches had drawn aside to let the mysterious monsters pass. They crossed the end of the airstrip, plowed through the planted seedlings, and turned up a dirt road leading toward the mountain.

These amtanks were commanded by a pair of sergeants, Ben Livesey of Massachusetts and Onel



THE JAPS OPEN FIRE on Second Division landing craft with pre-registered artillery. In this photograph four shells have just sent geysers up from reef. Despite fire, most amtracs got ashore with their passengers.

Dickens of California. They had been land tankers, and now they were to try out the sea-going “armored pigs” in tank-to-tank combat. Right after breakfast they had their chance. Dickens spotted three Jap tanks moving down the dirt road, below the hill. The Japs were bearing down on three Marine amphibians stuck in the slime of the swamps inshore from the beach.

As the Japs moved in for the kill, Dickens and Livesey and their twelve crewmen came bucketing up behind them. The Japs wheeled, too late. One stalled. Dickens blew it to pieces with a blast from his 75, even as Livesey opened up on the other two. Wham! The lead Jap rocked up on one side and then caromed off the road. The Marine “pigs” came up side by side and blew the treads off the last Jap tank.

There was a wonderful sort of clarity about this tank skirmish. The enemy was visible, the risk was calculable, the targets were defined, and the course of action was clear. None of these things was true of the beaches, where the Marine riflemen were like men naked in a hailstorm. Yet,

despite the incessant shower of death from the skies, and despite the confusion of the landing, and despite heavy and immediate command casualties, the Marines kept moving. They did not wither into immobility, and die uselessly in holes and behind logs. The beachhead grew. Having landed too far north, 2/8 began the painful job of fighting south to Afetna and a junction with the flank forces of the Fourth Division. The Marines of 3/8 and 3/6 drove inland, toward the tall towers of the Saipan radio station across the coral-paved airstrip; and 2/6 fanned north.

And, disregarding the fire on the reef, more Marines landed to help. At about 1000 Lieutenant Colonel Hays' 1/8 landed on Green Beach. At about the same time Lieutenant Colonel Jones brought 1/6 into Red Beach. An “attached” battalion, 1/29, under Lieutenant Colonel Guy Tannyhill, also came ashore, in support of CT8. (Some time before H-Hour, CT2 and LT 1/29 had made a diversionary feint at the narrow beaches of Magicienne Bay, on the east shore of Saipan.)

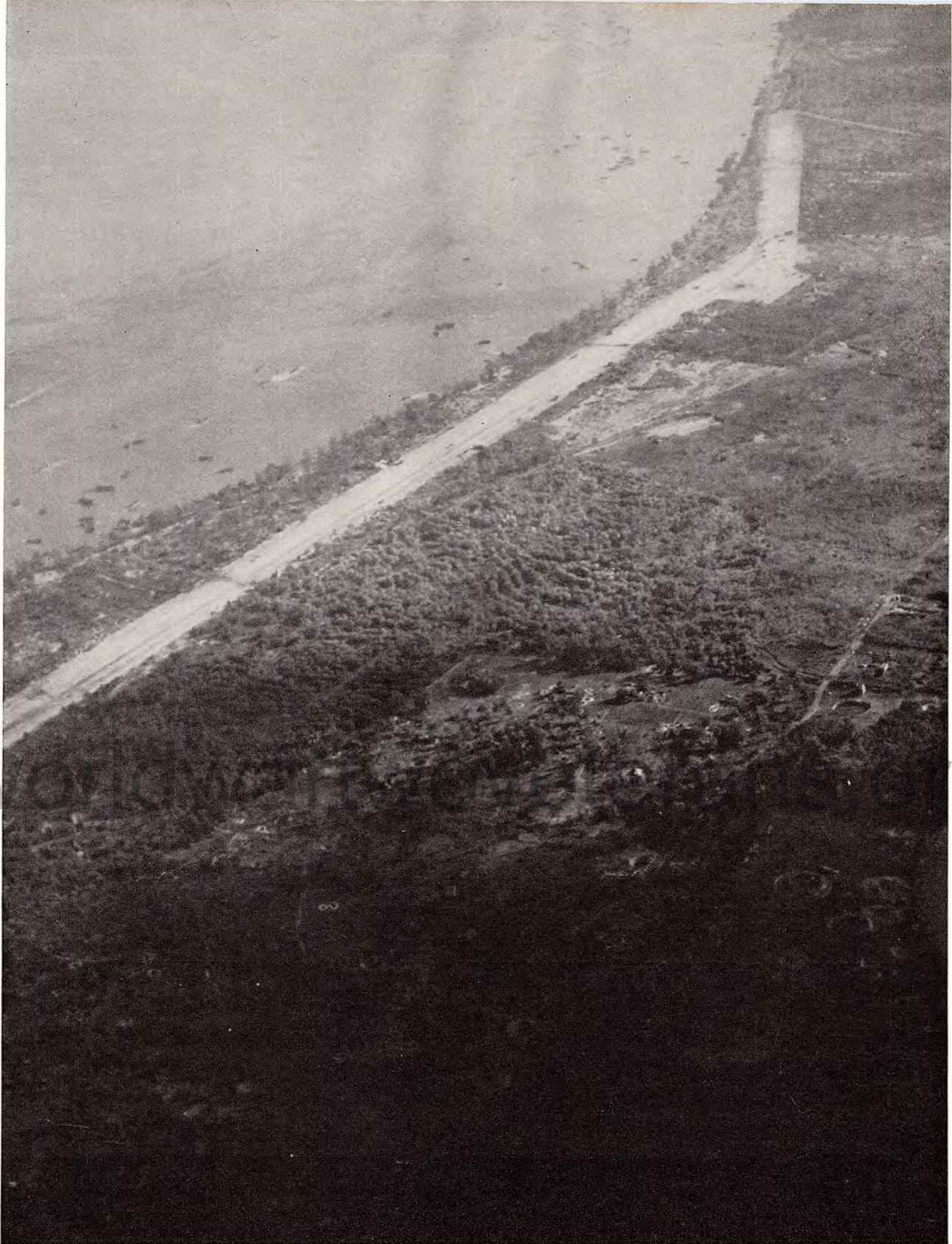
Noon. The invasion of Saipan was three hours and seventeen minutes old. How were we doing? Good and bad. Good from a standpoint of numbers of men landed. Good from a standpoint of expansion of the beachhead. Good from a standpoint of organization. The commanders of both combat teams—6 and 8—were ashore, and had their CP's in operation. We had seven battalions in the fight, on the Second Division section of the beach. This as compared with only fragments of three battalions at noon of D Day on Tarawa. We had pushed inland 1,000 yards, captured the airstrip and the radio station and were driving south toward the swampy shores of Lake Susupe. But we still had no land tanks and no artillery—and the Japs still held Afetna point, west of Susupe. And we were taking heavy casualties—so heavy that the Navy waited ten days to announce them. As at Tarawa, there was no area of security—the beaches were dangerous, so was the airstrip, so was the reef. The reinforcing battalions had suffered as much as the assault teams in the ride to shore.

The afternoon was just three things: reinforce, fight, hell. The Navy kept its great guns hammering the mountains, but nothing stopped the Jap artillery. We had our beachhead, insecure as Anzio was insecure, but before we could go on it had to be consolidated. All through that long, grim afternoon, the parade to the beaches continued. The General Shermans of B and A tank companies clanked onto Green Beach 1, following the route of a pilot tank which was itself hit and disabled. (We lost eight tanks on D Day, but only one permanently. It sank in deep water when a hole was opened in the LCM carrying it toward shore.) The Eighteenth Marines, now organized in Shore Party teams, landed on Red 2 and Green 1. At 1615 the old, reliable peashooters of 1/10, the 75mm packs, landed, followed shortly thereafter by 2/10.

The assistant division commander, General Edson, reached the beach in the early afternoon, to co-ordinate and direct the efforts of the two combat teams—CT6 under Colonel James P. Riseley and CT8 under Colonel Clarence R. Wallace. As the day waned, with no cessation in the savagery of the Jap barrage, more troops were landed. At 1800 the first elements of CT2, the reserve combat team commanded by Colonel Walter J. Stuart, landed to support 2/6. This was LT 3/2, under Lieutenant Colonel Arnold Johnston. An hour later, Lieutenant Colonel Richard Nutting brought in the headquarters company and one rifle company of 2/2.

Meanwhile, Murray's 2/6 had occupied all of Red Beach 1, the northernmost beach, and Easley's 3/6 had cleared a small, rocky grove just north of the airstrip of the last Jap defenders. This was to be the Division CP, and as the sun dropped toward the horizon, General Thomas Watson landed with his staff. "By God, the old man's ashore," the Marines whispered, and Watson had, like some of the other newcomers to the Division, crossed one of the barriers mentally erected by the veterans of Tarawa and Guadalcanal.

In that first, fierce day on Saipan the Second Marine Division had 238 men killed and 1,022 wounded. At nightfall 315 were missing, in the inevitable confusion of the assault. Unlike Tarawa, where a high percentage of wounds were from rifle and machine-gun fire, most of the dead and injured here had been ripped and torn by shrapnel from exploding mortar and artillery shells. Only twice had the Japanese counterattacked in any force—the first time with the three tanks destroyed by our armored amphibians, the second time with three more tanks, against the CT2 lines. The second attack had almost succeeded. A private with a bazooka blunted it, and other bazookamen



THE DIVISION'S TARGET is the beach along the Charan Kanoa airstrip, on the southwest shore of island. Command post was established at upper end of strip, in a cluster of rocks shaded by a small grove.



ON FIRESWEPT BEACH two Marines duck as a Jap mortar shell bursts nearby. One of them waded in after Japs sank amtrac. In background are amphibian tanks which gave fire support all the way to the beach.

joined him in wrecking it completely, only seventy-five yards from the CT6 command post.

Make no mistake—the heroes of that first day were the enlisted Marines and non-coms who conquered man’s natural terror of an unreachable and unseen enemy and, disregarding the Jap artillery, somehow expanded the beachhead and kept the shores clear. Take the drivers of the amtracs, for example, who shuttled back and forth fearlessly through plunging fire that frequently upset their cumbersome but vital craft. Or take

Platoon Sergeant Walter Fieguth, who commanded the “pilot tank”—the General Sherman sent ahead to find a way through the reef for the A and B Company lighters. Fieguth found the route, got to the beach—and met the enemy, rather than friendly troops he had expected. The tank was disabled, but pioneering paid off, and we got the Shermans in. Or Corporal William S. Thompson, a communication man of 2/8, who was hit through the legs in the first few minutes but stuck with his radio until he had been wounded a second

time, and could no longer even sit up in the sand.

There is no way to tell the stories of the 238 men who died to make Saipan's D-Day, for the stories died with them. In that early turmoil, few men had time to speak of their experiences, and almost no one had the time or the detachment to record mentally the deeds of others. Yet there were many evidences of great compassion and tenderness, as well as heroism and devotion to duty. One Navy doctor nearly died of his men's affection. Grievously wounded soon after the landing, the doctor was bandaged by one of his loyal corpsmen and given a shot of morphine to ease his pain while awaiting evacuation. Some minutes later, another corpsman came by and, seeing the anguish on the doctor's face, gave him another morphine shot. A half-hour passed, and a third corpsman discovered him—and gave him the same treatment. Luckily, the doctor was evacuated before a fourth and, possibly fatal, shot could be administered.

The evacuation of wounded also distinguished Saipan from earlier operations. Risky though it was to take injured men through the reef artillery fire, it was a better gamble than trying to treat them on the beach. By nightfall, our hospital ships and many of our transports were filling up with the wounded—privates and PFCs and corporals; platoon sergeants and lieutenants; captains and majors and lieutenant colonels. For the Jap artillery was no respecter of rank; June 15, 1944, turned out to be the roughest day in Marine Corps history for majors and lieutenant-colonels. In a very few hours, the personnel of the command changed amazingly, and yet the Division never became disorganized, and there was always someone—at whatever level—to carry on.

The first of many battalion commanders to be wounded was Lieutenant Colonel Miller, of 3/8. Miller was hit first by mortar fragments, on the



BATTLEFIELD CONFERENCE finds Major General Holland M. Smith (*right foreground*) talking with General Watson (*with pipe*) and Colonel James Riseley, commander of the Sixth Regiment (*facing camera*). Brigadier General Graves B. Erskine has back to camera.

way in in his amtrac. At the beach a Jap grenade caught him between the feet, and stripped much of the flesh from his limbs. The command passed to his executive officer, Major Stanley Larsen. That was 3/8. It was almost the same story in 2/8. Crowe caught a bullet through the rib cage and then was sprinkled by mortar-shell fragments. Major Chamberlin, who had held the left flank at Tarawa, assumed command and led 2/8 in a new flank attack—this time toward Afetna point, on the right. Lieutenant Colonel Easley was hit,



JAP TANK ATTACK was launched against CT6 lines just before dawn of D plus 2. Marines repelled it and destroyed between 24 and 32 tanks. Five can be seen burning in this photograph.

and Major John Rentsch of Ohio took over 3/6. But within the first ten hours of battle, 2/6, on the left flank, had four commanders. Lieutenant Colonel Murray was wounded and evacuated, and his exec, Major Howard Rice, took over. When Rice was hurt, Lieutenant Colonel William Kengla, who had come ashore with 2/6 as an observer, took command. But before long Kengla was needed elsewhere, and the battalion passed to Major Leroy Hunt, Jr.

To make it a grand slam, or very nearly one, for the two assault combat teams, Lieutenant Colonel Hays got a chunk of shrapnel soon after 1/8 was committed. Of the first seven battalions ashore, only Jones of 1/6 and Lieutenant Colonel Guy Tannyhill of 1/29 escaped injury on D Day, and Tannyhill was hit two days later. This was a frightening toll; it would have wrecked the fighting efficiency of many divisions. It did not affect the Second. The details of these command casualties have been written here not because it is of

greater moment that a lieutenant colonel should be wounded than a private or a corporal, but to illuminate the fact that in the Second Division command casualties did not impair battle effectiveness. These were good men, hard to lose. But there were other good men to take their places. This was true all the way up and down the line.

When a platoon leader of George Company, 2/8, was mortally wounded during the sweep south down the brush-clad plain inside the airstrip, a platoon sergeant named Victor Srodulski of Illinois instantly took his place and performed so brilliantly that he was recommended for spot promotion. When Amphibian Tank No. 4, manned by seven Marines who had had only six days practice in these strange new machines, was surrounded by Japs in a tank trap near the sugar mill, its commander—a lieutenant—was shot dead. Corporal Paul A. Durand of Connecticut inherited the command. His order: "Shoot all the sons of bitches you can!" Another Chicagoan, Private



THE MARINES MOP UP Jap survivors of the tank assault, moving out over the battlefield where 700 Japanese infantrymen, many of them riding on the tanks, organized their push against the U.S. lines.

Leroy J. Clobes, opened the starboard hatch and killed a whole cluster of Japs with his machine-gun. Durand fired a 75mm shell into a nearby straw house, and blew up a dozen Jap soldiers.

That first night, the Division was ashore with most of its company commanders and platoon leaders unhurt, but with its battalion command almost completely reshuffled. It had a fairly deep beachhead, but the dusk brought no surcease from the Japanese fire. At 1800 the Japs shelled General Watson's Division command post, and they kept up the steady, relentless pattern over all the rest of the plain. The Marines wearily digging fox-holes for the night knew they could expect no safety and little rest. There would be the shelling, there might be counterattacks, but always the shelling, coming from nowhere, offering no targets, a terror against which there was no defense.

The night was a nightmare. Along the lines of CT8, the Japs launched a whole series of minor

counterattacks, none of them in much force but always enough to keep the Marines awake and on guard, robbing them of needed rest. The main Jap effort came in the area of CT6, on the curving northern flank; 2/6, now under Major Hunt, bore the brunt of it, and it was one of the more fantastic actions of the war. At about 2000 hours, the Japs began moving along the coastal road from Garapan, in a column of platoons, tanks in the lead. At 2200 the Japs were close to the 2/6 lines and ready to mount their attack. Swords flashed and flags were unfurled in the moonlight. A bugle actually blew the Japanese equivalent of "charge," and the enemy rushed forward. The Marines were ready. Suddenly our alerted ships illuminated the whole area with star shells, and the Japs came head-on into a tornado of fire—machine guns, bazookas, 37's, rifles. It was too much for the enemy force. The Japs fell back in disorder, and as they did so Marine artillery and naval gunfire pursued and punished them.



THE WINNERS—Three Marines stand in front of a wrecked Jap tank and look over the Saipan battlefield littered with the remains of the enemy's armor and crews. The Marine on the left holds a Jap automatic rifle.

But the enemy was not discouraged, and for a good reason. The Japanese commander for the Marianas, Admiral Chuchi Nagumo, had received electric news, and had passed it along to Lieutenant General Yoshio Saito, commanding the Saipan defense forces: The Imperial Fleet was coming, at flank speed, to destroy the Americans both afloat and ashore! The Japs had only to contain the Marines on the southwestern beachhead, and wait for deliverance. With this purpose, they renewed their counterattack against CT6 at 0545,

once again from the direction of Garapan, along the coastal road, spearheaded by two or three Jap tanks. It came with such a rush that the Marines were forced back some fifty yards. Then five of our General Shermans rolled into the action, and once again the Jap column was splintered and broken and driven back. But not without inflicting casualties. In repulsing these attacks, CT6 lost heavily, both in men and equipment.

One thing was evident at Division headquarters: the Japs were making military use of Garapan to

stage their assaults. General Watson requested the Navy to destroy the city with bombs and shells, even as he sent out our own attack orders. The Marines jumped off at 0700, 2/8 still pushing south toward Afetna. The mortar and artillery fire slacked off for a time, and suddenly everything was in high gear, the Marines working against the Jap defenders with the same precision they had attained in Hawaiian practice, flanking them, passing them, killing them with BARs and rifles. The point and the Charan Kanoa pier were both secured before noon, contact was made with the Fourth Division, and the area between Afetna and Lake Susupe was cleared of the last Jap defenders.

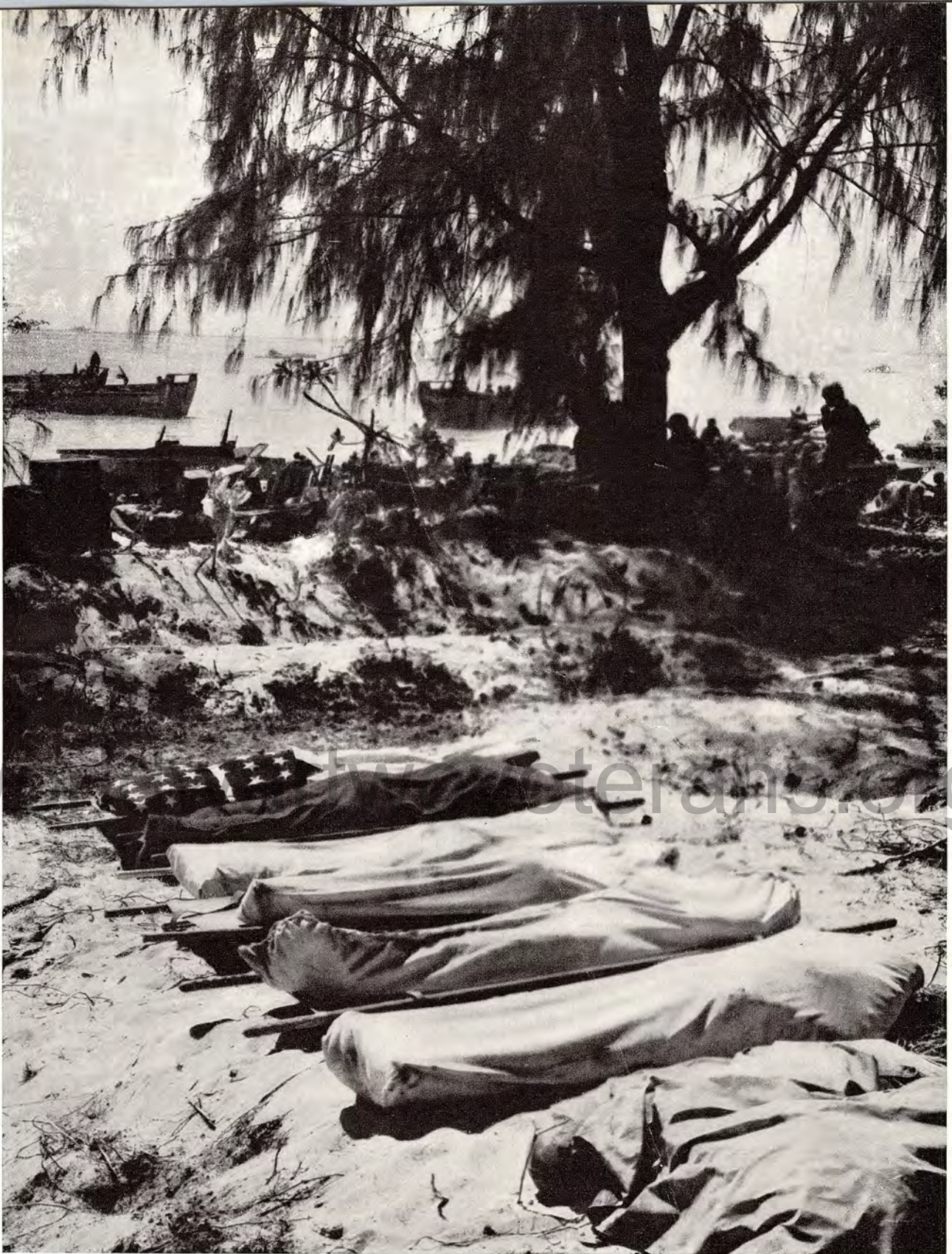
During the night, the Japs had kept their big guns busy, pouring shells on the reef and beaches. The usual night evacuation of wounded had been slowed, and few men or supplies had been able to get in. But with the resumption of the Marine attack, the traffic over the reef again speeded up. In early afternoon LT 1/2, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Wood Kyle, joined the Division and LT 3/2 relieved 2/6 (which had been severely buffeted by the night counterattacks) in the line on the northern flank. The rest of the Tenth Marines landed, 3/10 and 4/10, their 105s ferried to the beaches by members of the Second Amphibious Truck company—another new outfit which proved at Saipan the great value of the DUKW both in amphibious and land transport.

Besides the rest of CT2 and the Tenth Marines, the Division got its 75mm self-propelled guns, its rocket trucks and 37mms, its radio trucks and cargo trucks, and more flame-throwers onto the beaches. Let no one think that any of this was easy. The Japs were still "looking down our throats" from the heights of Tapotchau, and although there were occasional lulls, every outfit coming across the shallow waters offshore took some casualties.

One of the worst hit was 4/10, with one battery commander and the Bn.-3 killed, the exec wounded, and many of the men killed or hurt. Death was still playing no favorites, and every Marine ashore or coming ashore was highly eligible for selection. Late in the day E Company of the Second Medical Battalion was landed, and the doctors and corpsmen were in keen demand. The Division had lost fifty-four killed and 484 wounded in a day principally spent in cleaning out Jap pockets, extending and strengthening the flanks, and in getting set for the big push to come. Nightfall found the Division lines curving inland from a point midway between Charan Kanoa and Garapan, to the foothills of Tapotchau and south to Lake Susupe, with CT2 on the left, CT6 in the middle and CT8 on the right.*

It was a thinly lighted night, the moon lurking behind a haze of gauzy clouds, and the Marines of A and B Companies, 1/6, spread in a foxholed line along the undulating rises, were nervous. All evening long Marine and Jap artillerymen had dueled, with 4/10 and 3/10, both set up in the CT8 zone, taking heavy fire and heavy casualties. (By dawn 4/10 had lost four pieces, and 3/10 had only three left in working order.) Jones's battalion was about the middle of the expanding Marine line. On his right was a rifle company of 2/2. To the rear, shapeless, black hulks under their camouflage nets, were the halftracks of the CT6 Regimental Weapons Company. The Marine line ranged over a gradual rise; ahead, dark and mysterious, were the escalating ridges of Tapotchau, and the black entrances to the ravines between them. It was out of one of these ravines that the Japs came, along toward 0400 on the morning

* This is an approximate grouping. Throughout the battle battalions and even companies were used interchangeably among the Regiments. The night of D plus 1, for example, found 2/6 under tactical control of CT2, and a company of 2/2 in the CT6 line.



CASUALTIES ARE HIGH for the attacking Marines, and while battle focus swings inland the bodies of fallen comrades await burial on the beach. Cemetery was established within the first week.

of D plus 2. They came in force, with between twenty-four and thirty-two light tanks,* and with infantrymen and machine-gunners riding on the shoulders and turrets of these modern chargers. They passed about 200 yards in front of the outposts of F Company (2/2) and hit B Company (1/6) squarely on the nose. By then all hell was breaking loose.

A B-Company sentry had been the first to sight the approaching enemy. He had sounded a quick alarm and at 0330 Captain Claude G. Rollen of California, the company commander, had telephoned the 1/6 CP to report the imminence of attack. The Marines of B Company opened fire with rifle grenades, and at the same time machine-gunners attached to F Company's Second Platoon, under Lieutenant Raymond Marion, began bouncing orange tracers off the tanks. Meanwhile, Colonel Jones had called for star shells and the front was almost immediately illuminated. Although some of the tanks turned short to attack F Company and others ranged beyond into the lines of A Company (1/6) under Captain Charles Durfee (who had won the Navy Cross at Tarawa), there is no doubt that the greatest weight of the assault was on the B Company sector.

The tanks came fast, in groups of four or five, slowing only to drop off their free-loading infantry, and the temptation to run must have been very great among the Marines of the line platoons. But they did not run. Machine gunners, 37mm gunners, bazookamen, riflemen—all held their positions and fought back with heroic fury. Captain Rollen fell wounded when a Jap bullet detonated a rifle grenade he had just attached to his carbine. The tanks rolled over two 60mm, mortar

* Although all of the tanks were destroyed in the ensuing battle, counts of the wreckage do not agree. The Division action report lists twenty-four; Robert Sherrod in *On to Westward* lists twenty-nine. Some Marines present insist there were at least thirty-one or thirty-two.

positions, the Marines flattening themselves in their holes as the clanking treads went overhead. Captain Norman K. Thomas of California, assigned to replace the wounded Rollen, was himself killed before gaining command.

The force of the Japanese attack carried many of the tanks well inside the Marine lines, but that turned out to be a disadvantage for the Japs—the bazookamen were able to hit them from all angles. By now the Marines of A Company, on B Company's left, were thoroughly involved in the fierce battle, and back of the immediate combat area the halftracks of the Regimental Weapons Company and B Company tanks were moving into action. There were a thousand little, savage fire and bayonet fights in the lines, between Marine riflemen and the Jap infantry transported by the tanks. The Japs were disorganized, but they attacked with the usual furious disregard for their own lives and, in this instance, of sound military tactics.

In this wild and confusing maelstrom, it was difficult to single out heroes. All of the Marines fought well; some fought with spectacular effectiveness. There can be little doubt, however, that the presence of the B Company bazooka teams in the front lines was a major factor in our victory. The bazookamen were accurate and their rockets were deadly—PFC Herbert J. Hodges of one B Company team hit seven tanks with seven rounds. Another bazooka team got three hits out of four tries, and one bazookaman scrambled aboard an enemy tank and put a phosphorous grenade through the turret. Sergeant Dean T. Squires of Oklahoma, a squint-eyed sharpshooter, blew off the head of a Jap tank commander, who was imprudent enough to rise out of his turret for a look at the action, and then tossed in a satchel charge to wipe out the crew. The Marines of K Company, 3/6, in support of the line companies, accounted

SAIPAN

MT. TOPOTCHAL

Tanapag

OBSERVATORY HILL

Garapan

worldwartwoveterans.org

MARPI PT.

CT-2

Makunsha

CT-6
CT-8

MAGICIENNE BAY

TANAPAG HARBOR

MUTCHO PT.

Garapan

CT-6
0843
D-DAY

CT-8
0843
D-DAY

CT-2
1800
D-DAY

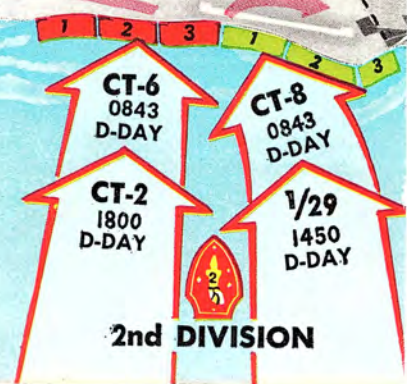
1/29
1450
D-DAY

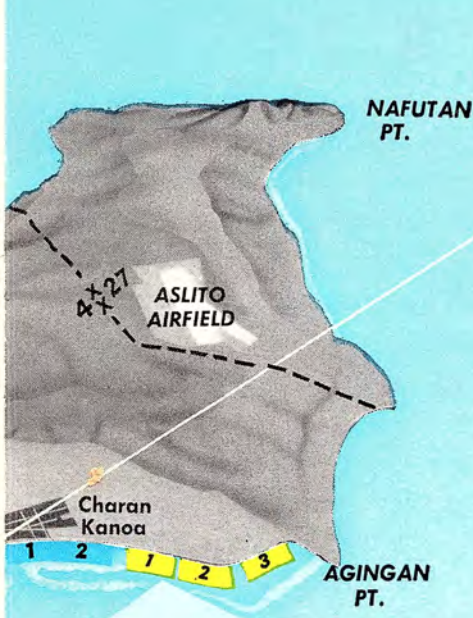
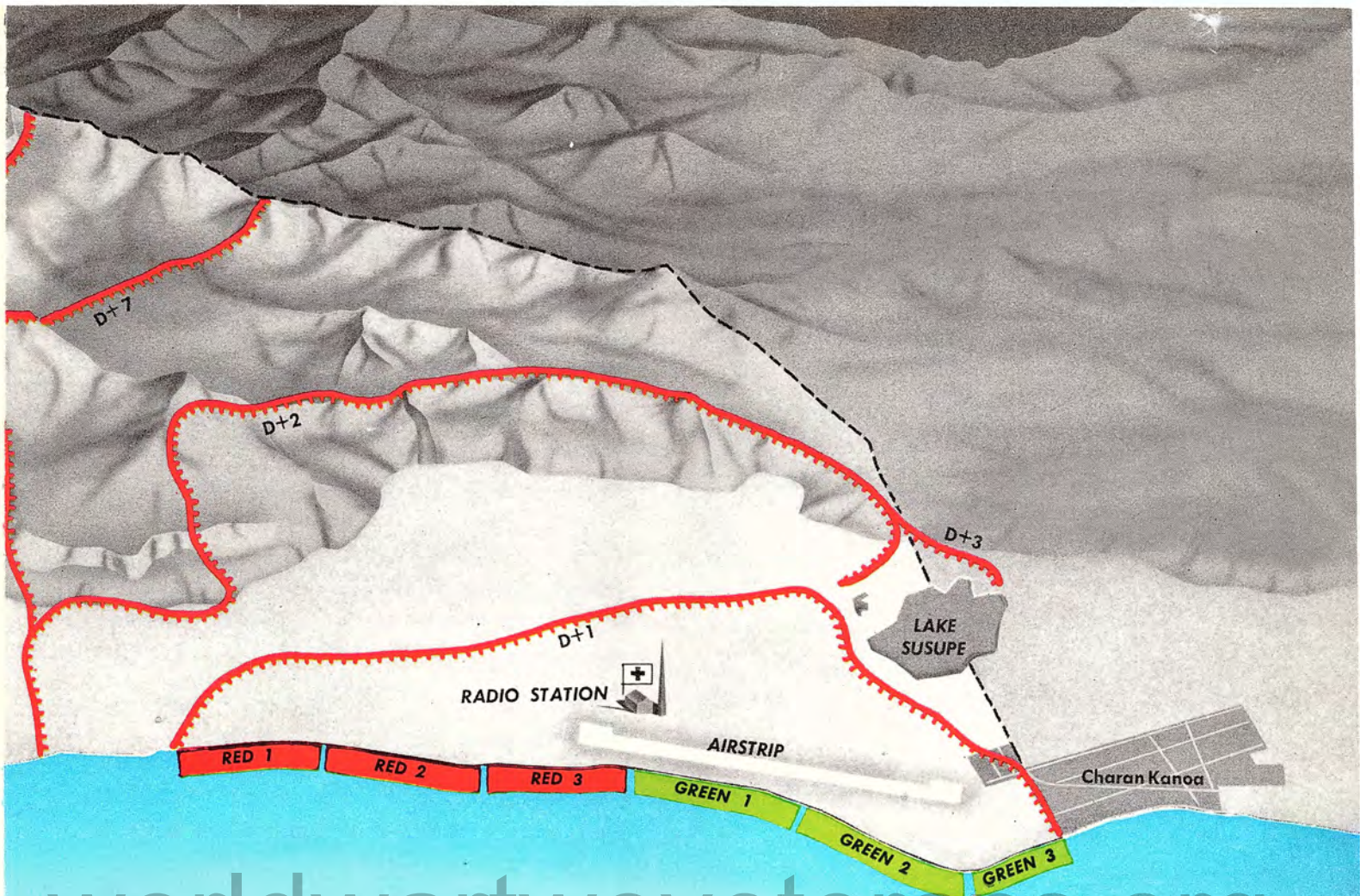
2nd DIVISION

James Cutter



Dr





4



A JAP SURRENDERS after Marines give him smoke treatment. Enemy soldier stripped himself to waist to prove he was concealing no weapons.



CIVILIANS SUFFER during battle despite efforts of Marines to spare them. Here a group of Christian Chamorros gather at the internment camp.

for several tanks and the halftracks finished off several more. C Battery of 1/10 destroyed some tanks in the Jap assembly area by direct fire. Marine 37mm platoons helped break the initial wave of the attack, while machine gunners attached to A and B Companies, 1/6, and F Company, 2/2, took a tremendous toll of Jap infantrymen.

This battle—the largest tank attack of the Pacific war up to that time—actually lasted only a little more than forty-five minutes, although Japanese infantry continued to attack until 0600. In that period, slightly more than a battalion of Marines destroyed at least two dozen Jap tanks and around 700 Jap soldiers. It is a footless task to attempt to assign credit, or to evaluate the sacrifices of the units involved. Frequently many Marines were firing on a single tank. When it went up in flames, each unit marked down a score—and the resulting compilation totals between fifty and 100 Jap tanks. There weren't that many—thank God.

Despite the disruption of the tank attack, the Second Division jumped off in a new offensive at 0730—just one-and-one-half hours after the last Japs were turned back in the CT6 sector. That morning the Marines had a special incentive to drive and drive hard. At midnight the night before a regimental combat team of the Twenty-seventh Army Division began landing on the secured pier at Charan Kanoa. The decision to commit the Twenty-seventh, boated as floating reserve, had resulted in part from the tactical situation of the previous day—D plus 1. Originally, the Fourth Marine Division was to have fanned out to occupy the whole southern end of the island and, at the same time, to cross its narrowest part to Magicienne Bay (called “Magazine Bay” by most Marines). The Second, meanwhile, was to wheel to the right, move up over Tapotchau and cut back to the western shore, coring Saipan like an apple.

The Fourth had fought its way up the rising slopes of the southern plateau toward Aslito airfield, but the combination of Japanese artillery and mortar fire and the enemy rear-guard action spread the Marine lines too thin. Lieutenant General Holland M. Smith, aboard the *Rocky Mount* as expeditionary troop commander, decided to bring in the Twenty-seventh to sweep around the southern tip of Saipan and occupy Aslito, freeing the Fourth to drive across the middle in force and then wheel north on the eastern plateau below the Tapotchau ridges.

All that day the members of the Twenty-seventh poured ashore, and by evening the entire Division had been landed. And all that day the Marines kept pushing. CT2 reached the O2 phase line. CT6, to the left of the Eighth Marines, also got up to the O2 phase line after a bloody battle for "Hill 790," a limestone, table-top cliff. CT8, meanwhile, was completing an intricate maneuver that looked something like an attack through an English maze.

From their original beaches, the battalions of CT8 had been forced to swing north to circle around the swamp which lay above Lake Susupe. On D plus 2 Battalions 1/8, 3/8 and 1/29 had driven east and southeast to occupy a steep ridge, tipped by a fortified, sheer "nose." LT 2/8, in reserve at this point, was facing due south (toward the Fourth Marine Division area of operations) on the east side of the Susupe swamp. (See map.) The immediate attack now would have to be to the south and east, to secure the shores of Susupe and encircle the captured "nose." Then CT8 at last would be free to turn north again.

Down below Charan Kanoa, bigger and bigger guns were speaking in behalf of the Marines. The Fifth Battalion, Tenth Marines, under Lieutenant Colonel Marvin H. Floom had been redesignated the Second 155mm Artillery Battalion, and had



THE MOUNTAIN FORTRESS of Tapotchau, 1,500 feet above sea level, is attacked by CT6 and CT8, supported by artillery, bombs and naval fire.



MARINES LOB GRENADES at Jap positions directly ahead as the assault pushes into the mountains. Japs defended every gully and ridge.



OBSERVATION POST, Lieutenant Colonel Kenneth McLeod (left) watches attack with General Edson. McLeod was killed a few days later by a Jap sniper who infiltrated area Marines had cleared out earlier.

now incorporated its howitzers into the growing phalanx of Corps heavy artillery. Still in direct support were 1/10, 2/10, and 4/10, with 3/10 in general support. All things considered, D plus 2 was a profitable day and a less costly one than its predecessor. Even with the tank attack, the Division lost only fifty-five killed and 218 wounded.

The rapid debarkation of the Twenty-seventh Army Division was not entirely dictated by the situation ashore. The day before (D plus 1), on

Kelly Turner's flagship 3,000 yards off Green Beach, the first act in a high drama had taken place, unbeknown to the Marines and the soldiers. Admiral Raymond Spruance, commanding our whole Marianas invasion force and the Fifth Fleet as well, had boarded the *Rocky Mount* to discuss with Kelly Turner a secret the Japs believed was theirs alone: The Imperial Fleet was, in all truth, coming to Saipan's rescue.

This was no surprise to our command. From the moment a U.S. picket submarine spotted the Japs

steaming north through the Sulu Sea from their great base at Tawitawi, we had guessed that this invasion would bait them into an action long desired by our Navy. It had. The Japs had cleared San Bernardino strait, in the Philippines, and were heading straight for Saipan at maximum speed. The patrolling submarine *Cavalla* had sighted them and, crash-diving to a depth of 100 feet, had counted their vibrating propellers. Battleships and aircraft carriers. Not the whole fleet, of course, but a formidable battle force. Estimated time of arrival: June 19 (D plus 4).

Two problems were discussed on the *Rocky Mount* that morning of June 16. One: How could slight, cold-eyed Ray Spruance best deploy his forces to repel and destroy the Japanese fleet, and still provide protection for our tender beachhead? Two: What should tall, tough Kelly Turner do with his thin-skinned amphibious shipping? Answers: Spruance would form an aerial and surface arc, west of Guam and Saipan, to intercept the Nips. Turner would unload and get out until the battle was over.

If we were successfully to ambush the Japs, the tightest possible secrecy was essential. The word could not be passed to the men ashore, or to the Twenty-seventh Division troops suddenly ordered to disembark. Or to the crews of cargo ships which worked all that night and most of the next day, getting supplies onto the beaches. Or even to the lower echelons of General Holland Smith's staff, when the General moved ashore to establish his command post in Charan Kanoa. As darkness closed down on the night of D plus 2, the *Rocky Mount* got under way and so did the majority of the emptied transports. The leavetaking was not easy: the Japs sent in an air raid in some strength, and for a time the waters off Saipan (Garapan Roads) flamed with anti-aircraft fire, and near the beach an LST was hit and set ablaze by Jap bombs.

(The night of D plus 1 the Japs had also put some bombers over Saipan, from their bases in the Bonins, but this raid was not in great strength and did little damage.) By midnight only a few ships still hung at anchor off the Marine beaches. One was the *Cambria*, flagship of Rear Admiral Harry Hill, who had taken the Second Division into Tarawa. It was Harry Hill's job, as Turner's deputy, to sit tight and keep unloading supplies so precious and so badly needed they had to be risked in the target area.

In the blue, landless waters many miles to the east of the Marianas, Turner's amphibious force cruised in endless circles all through June 18 and 19. With him, beside the ships of the Saipan invasion, were the low-in-the-water transports filled with the Marine and Army forces which would invade Guam in mid-July. Round and round, going nowhere, looking for no one. West of Guam and Saipan, Ray Spruance in the *Indianapolis* and Vice-Admiral Marc Mitscher, commander of Task Force 58, in the *Lexington*, waited. At about noon on June 19, the "great Marianas turkey shoot" began.

The story of the First Battle of the Philippine Sea cannot be told in detail here. There were two phases. In the first, the Japs launched their carrier aircraft from far beyond the "point of no return," confident they could land on Guam. Our carrier airmen caught them coming in and shot them down by the hundreds. Phase two was pursuit. The Japs, having lost their airpower, wheeled away to the north and west. Long before our air searches located the fleeing enemy, the Japanese accidentally bisected the path of a U.S. submarine. The sub sank a major carrier, and got away itself. The next evening our fliers overtook the Japanese survivors, and punished them with bombs and torpedoes.

The Japanese effort to relieve Saipan had failed. The Imperial Fleet had come—and gone. It



LOVELY FROM ABOVE, these jumbled peaks were a hot and deadly hell for the Marines.

left behind 402 planes and their dead pilots, and at least one carrier. It took away with it a number of seriously damaged ships. It left an intact U.S. fleet, minus only 106 planes, most of them lost in night and water landings after the chase. (And the majority of their pilots and crews rescued.) On Saipan, most of the Marines who had been fighting steadily through the tense days of the naval battle knew nothing about it. But there *was* a hot rumor that the Japanese had declared war on Russia, and it was on every Marine's lips.

In the three eventful days in which the battle of the Philippines Sea obscured, in the public interest, the battle of Saipan, the struggle on that seventy-two-square-mile island had become a microcosm of the whole Second World War. The Battle of the Beachhead was succeeded by the Battle of the Plain, the Battle of the Mountain, and the Battle of the Plateau, all of which went on simultaneously for the duration of the campaign. Saipan was like some gigantic motion-picture lot, on which a dozen companies were photographing a dozen different wars.

The Sixth and Eighth combat teams were now wheeling northward, into the foothills of Mt. Tapotchau. The Second CT edged along the coast toward Garapan. Perhaps the easiest way to visualize the Second Division role in the Saipan campaign is to think of the forging of a huge clamp, and then of its application. The Sixth and Eighth were to be the frame, extending from the landing beaches in an arc over the mountains and back to the shore north of Garapan. The Second Marines were to be the piston, to be driven against Garapan once that city had been enveloped—thus squeezing the lifeblood out of Saipan's heart. It was a first-rate plan, and it worked; but one of its limitations was the fact that CT2 and CT6, on the inside of the arc, could advance only when CT8 advanced; and that, ultimately, CT2 had to wait for several days on stabilized lines for the final breakthrough to the northern shore.

After the gains on D plus 2, the Japs counter-attacked once again—this time at 0100 of D plus 3 (June 18) against the mutual flank of CT6 and CT8. The attack was in force, but not in force comparable to the tank and infantry assault of the preceding night. CT8 had two machine guns overrun and LT 2/2 had to be thrown into action to fill the gap between the combat teams.

The Japs were repulsed, and the dawning day



BENEATH SHEER CLIFF Marines pause while artillery hammers Jap positions. Some battalions used ropes to scale cliffs which rose from Tapotchau jungle, and in other cases supplies had to be lowered in slings.

brought considerable progress. You will recall that CT8, on D plus 2, having completed its swing around the Susupe swamp, had occupied the high hill east of the swamp. Now, on D plus 3, 2/8 pushed south along the banks of Susupe to establish contact with the Fourth Marine Division. Contact was made, but the Eighth Marines were not yet free to attack east around the captured "nose," into the mountain ravines. Their movement was dependent on the Fourth Division, and the Fourth was held up by a Jap strongpoint in a

clump of woods south and east of Susupe. CT8 patrolled—and waited. Casualties for the day, Division-wide: eleven killed, fifty-nine wounded. Next day: same story, except CT6 moved up to take a hill and CT2 patrols destroyed two Jap tanks. Up the beach there was a genuinely spectacular show. The Navy had assembled its old battleships and cruisers, both as a final defense force in case of a Jap fleet breakthrough, and for bombardment. Beginning soon after dawn, they got down to the business of leveling Garapan, per

General Watson's earlier request. They leveled it.

"One if by land, and two if by sea." Nobody lit any lanterns the night of June 19, but the Japs—having failed in ground attacks—now attempted an amphibious counter-blow. Thirteen enemy barges came out of Tanapag harbor, loaded with troops, and tried to slip unnoticed into the Green Beaches. The Marines had foreseen just such a maneuver, and had set an ambush on the reef.

Deployed across the shallow waters, in a line at right angles to the shore, were the surviving amtanks of the Second Armored Amphibian Tank company. Just outside the reef, the Navy had LCI's cruising watchfully. The Japs sailed straight into this trap. The amtanks opened up first with 75mm fire, and then the LCI's sent automatic weapon tracers skimming across the flat waters. The Japs were caught. As the barges milled in the crossfire, some of their terrified occupants attempted to swim ashore—but on the shore alert Marine riflemen were waiting. All thirteen barges went down, and with them went the Jap troops.

At 1300 on June 20 (D plus 5), Marines of CT8 reached the 04 phase line, and finally were in position to launch the great offensive to the north.

The Twenty-seventh Division, meanwhile, had driven around the south shore, captured Aslito airfield, and cut off Nafutan Point. In these tense days, during which no Marine or soldier could fail to notice (if not to understand) the sudden absence of much U.S. shipping, the troops on Saipan had been annoyed nightly by Japanese air. The Nips sent in a small raid on the night of June 18, and on the morning of the 19th twelve bi-motored Jap fighter-bombers strafed the Marine lines. To our considerable amazement, we then discovered they were operating off Tinian's Ushi Field—less than four miles from our big Corps artillery in-

stallation! Some of the guns were turned around, and Ushi Field ceased to be a problem.

Although casualties had dropped from the slaughter of the first two days, the Second Division command was still drawing an unequal share of bullets. On D plus 5 Lieutenant Colonel Arnold "Johnny" Johnston, hit earlier in the neck, took a wound in the legs that sent him back to the ships, and Major Harold Throneson of California assumed command of 3/2. Lieutenant Colonel George R. E. Shell, of 2/10, also was seriously wounded, and had to yield his command to Major Kenneth C. Houston. Before that, on D plus 2, there had been another casualty-induced shift: Lieutenant Colonel Guy Tannyhill had been wounded, and Lieutenant Colonel Rathvon M. Tompkins of Colorado succeeded him in the leadership of LT 1/29.

From the moment of its landing on D-Day, 1/29 had been very much in the fight. Yet it had come to Saipan under considerable handicaps. Formed the previous February, it was a polyglot outfit originally designated as the Second Separate Infantry Battalion. The battalion had had a bare month of training for the Saipan operation. Enroute, it was redesignated the First Battalion of the Twenty-ninth Marines—a Regiment most of its men had never heard of (it was part of the forming Sixth Division). In its first five days of battle, 1/29 took heavy casualties. But its ordeal was only beginning. Both death and glory waited on the heights of Tapotchau.

The Battle of the Mountain actually began at 0600 on D plus 7 (22 June). Both CT8 and CT6 by now had completed their half-turn to the north, while the Fourth Division had slashed across to Magicienne Bay. The line-up, reading from west to east: CT2 (on the beaches and plain), then CT6, with 1/6 and 3/6 in that order, and 2/6 in regi-

mental reserve; CT8, with 1/8 tied into 3/6, 3/8 next, and 1/29 on the extreme right flank, relieving 2/8 which had been pulled back in reserve. These Marines had fought their way up from the plain and the swamps, up from hill to hill, sometimes through tangled brush and deceptive clearings that proved to be Jap fields of fire, sometimes through long ravines with Jap guns in echeloned caves. Now they crouched in the high foothills, this dawn of 22 June, and confronted the mountain itself.

From these hills and the saucer-like plateau in the CT6 area, the final battlements of Tapotchau rose almost vertically, in a long, sheer, seldom-indented line on the east, dropping 1,000 feet to the Magicienne Bay coastal slope, and in a series of scallions on the west. Between these ultimates, the cliffs approaching the coruscated peak resembled a handful of rusty razor blades, jumbled in a box. And they were just as sharp—needled coral and lava heads, and limestone crags with a thousand cutting edges on every rocky knob. It was no country for tanks, or even jeeps. Here, in these heady heights of a lost continent, the battle would be won or lost by foot soldiers.

It was tough from the start. Tompkins' Marines hit the mountain head-on, driving up the jungled valley that rose between two ridges toward Tapotchau's crest. On the spurred plateau along Tapotchau's western shoulder, 3/6 fought across the crest of a subsidiary peak (Mt. Tipo Pale), against savage Jap resistance. Patrols ranged ahead of the struggling battalions, and they seldom came back intact. The Japs were still fighting from invisible positions, the incredible network of caves and underground forts which had housed their artillery during the battle of the beaches. The terrain ranged from the improbable to the impossible, but somehow the Marines dragged themselves up over it, and at the same time fought



TO DISLodge JAPS in hills on right, the Marines fire shells from 37MM gun. Marine (left) moves machine gun to better position.



JAP MACHINE GUNNER lies dead beside his weapon on Saipan. This light machine gun took many Marine lives, from Guadalcanal to Okinawa.



FLAME SEARS BRIDGE of rock as Marines close in on a Jap strong point. Both flamethrowers and demolitions proved invaluable on Saipan.

and hacked their way through gigantic pandanus roots that shielded machine-gun nests and seemed as big as pyramidal tents and as impenetrable as pillboxes.

It got tougher still on the second day (23 June, or D plus 8), and the CT8 command moved LT 2/8, which had been following 1/29, in reserve, to the right to secure the flank of Tompkins' battalion. To understand what ensued, it is necessary here to describe in some detail the terrain confronting the Eighth Marines. Start with the peak of Tapotchau. Directly to the south of it, a long jungled valley fell away between two high, knife-edged ridges—the real flanks of the mountain. On 23 June 1/29 was starting to push up this valley.

The assignment for 2/8 was to occupy and hold the southern tip of the East ridge. To the east of this ridge was the rolling terrain of Kagman peninsula, above Magicienne Bay. To the west of it, beyond the valley, was its companion ridge (also CT8 territory) and then the plateau and Mount Tipo Pale, where CT6 was in action.

Until now, the Fourth Marine Division had been moving up the east side of the island, in contact with the Second Division. But at this point the Twenty-seventh Army Division moved in between the two Marine outfits. And on the afternoon of 23 June Major Chamberlin of 2/8 visited the Army CP and was loaned F Company of the 106th Infantry. The plan was to place this company on the flank of CT8 and have it establish contact with the remainder of its battalion, thus welding a firm link between the Second and Twenty-seventh Divisions. Although this did not succeed, for several days the Army company fought on the ridge with the Marines and gave an excellent account of itself. This, then, was the situation, terrain and deployment, on the night of D plus 8 when word came around that CT8, the 106th Army Infantry, and the Fourth Division (now along the extreme Eastern coast) would jump off at 1000 the next morning in a coordinated attack.

At the appointed hour, CT8 jumped—and so did the Fourth Division. The 106th Infantry did not, exposing the Fourth Division flank (the sheer ridge protected CT8). Down in Corps headquarters in Charan Kanoa, Lieutenant General H. M. Smith issued an order relieving Major General Ralph Smith of command of the Twenty-seventh Division—thereby setting off a controversy that raged from Garapan to Boston and from New Guinea to Key West.

At 1100 on 25 June, after more than sixty unbroken hours of toil and combat, twenty-three sweating, bearded Marines broke across the last

crag and stood triumphant on the very peak of Mt. Tapotchau. The story of how they got there, how they held, and how they finally were reinforced is one of remarkable ingenuity and enterprise. Of these twenty-three pioneers, twenty-one were members of the Division Reconnaissance Company—Marines loaned to 1/29 when that hard-pressed battalion had to commit all three of its depleted rifle companies to the line. The twenty-second was their commander, Lieutenant Marion M. Drake. The twenty-third was Tompkins, who had turned over the battalion to his exec in order to personally lead this small group to the mountain crest.

The plan for Tapotchau's capture was devised at a hasty conference between CT8's commander, Colonel Clarence R. Wallace, and 1/29's Tompkins and 2/8's Chamberlin. It was decided there that early in the morning of 25 June 1/29 would attack up the valley and try to take the mountain-top from the front, while 2/8 ran the ridge. The valley turned out to be extremely tough, both in terms of terrain and Jap resistance. The ridge, oddly enough, was lightly held.

By 0930 the Marines of 2/8 had swept several hundred yards along the heights and had reached the base of the sheer, fifty-foot cliff just behind the mountain's peak, that made Topatchau's crest look almost like a tank turret. In a way, 2/8's position was not happy. The battalion was deployed in the open, with any Japs on the actual crest able to look down its throat. The ridge here became a narrow shelf, with a steep drop to the east and a nearly sheer fall to the north, where it curved around the crest. Chamberlin developed an intense and understandable curiosity about the amount of force the Nips had above him. Just before 1000, he sent a platoon of E Company scrambling up the rocky face of the cliff to find out. There was nothing on the lip of the cliff. A small patrol swept nearly to the crest and came



CLIMBING AND FIGHTING at the same time, the Marines claw their way up through the barbed brush of Tapotchau's peaks. Terrain ranged from bad to awful.

back to report that the tiny plateau at the very top also was unoccupied.

Meanwhile, in the valley it had become clear to Tompkins that a frontal push up the mountain was out of the question. He detached the Reconnaissance Company Marines and went with them, up the side of the ridge into the area 2/8 had swept and then forward to Chamberlin's CP. At about 1100 the little band of Marines began crawling up the cliff to the position where the E Company platoon waited. They paused there a moment, and then went on—to the absolute crest.

The Reconnaissance platoon found a twelve-foot square dugout the Japs had abandoned, and established positions around it. Tompkins left

them there and went back to get 1/29, while 2/8 dug in to hold its position and support the valiant little group on the mountain top. The platoon of E Company held its exposed position, half-way up.

It was a tense afternoon. Tompkins had the difficult job of disengaging two front-line companies and moving them up, in columns of files, by the same route he had traveled to reach 2/8. He left one company in the valley to deceive the Japanese, but this deception probably would not have proved successful but for the savage fight 3/8 was waging against the enemy on the west ridge. Unlike 2/8, Larsen's battalion found its terrain heavily defended, and fought for every inch of Tapotchau's left buttress.

Back on the shelf behind Tapotchau, Chamberlin expected the Japs to throw half the mountain at him at any minute. In the late afternoon, despite 3/8's continued assault on the other flank of the peak, they began trying. Jap positions to the northwest began plastering mortars on E Company. On top, the Reconnaissance platoon fought off a whole series of small Jap infiltration attacks, killing forty enemy troops and losing three of their own men. As the Jap fire increased in intensity, the platoon of E Company was driven down to the shelf, where 2/8 was catching fire but not so much of it.

Just before sundown, Tompkins and his companies arrived—and down in the valley 1/29's mortar platoon began hurling smoke shells over the crest into the Jap positions. From far below artillery joined in the support, and 2/8 put all of its weapons to work. As dusk fell, the Marines of 1/29 clawed their way up the cliff, single file, and broke across the top to the relief of the long-besieged Scouts. The battalion did not lose a single man in this remarkable scaling job, and despite the gathering darkness managed to dig in without casualties. Before midnight, the Japs counter-

attacked—but 1/29 was ready for them, and the enemy was turned back after some furious fighting.

What kind of Marines captured the crest of Tapotchau? One civilian correspondent, Mac R. Johnson, climbed the rocky trail to join the Reconnaissance platoon. He wrote: "I spent three hours on the highest crag of Tapotchau today, seventy minutes of it pinned flat while Japanese snipers killed one Marine and wounded two others. I wanted to see what breed of men captured this peak, which as an observation post commands the entire island, and I found assault Marines of unrivaled fearlessness, courage and tenacity."

For nine dreadful days the Japs had been able to "look down our throats." Now we could look down theirs. But the Battle of the Mountain was far from over; not even the worst of it. There had been a semblance of pattern in the formations we had ascended from the south, but to the north where the ridges stretched all the way to Marpi point the terrain lost continuity in an appalling patchwork of unscalable cliffs, pockets deep as wells, and blind valleys and ravines. Only the mortarmen found it appealing. Said one: "This is the greatest mortar country I ever saw, or read about in books. Soon as we spot the Nips, we just pour mortars on them." For several days after the occupation of the crest, 1/29 and 2/8 were busy working their way down from the plateau that stretched a short distance north from Tapotchau, into the nightmare terrain below.

Meanwhile, a good deal had been happening on the other side of the mountain. On 23 June, as previously noted, CT6 had advanced across the ridges angling down to the high western plateau, with Rentsch's 3/6 in the center. The Sixth Marines had advanced another 600 to 900 yards on



A JAP COMES OUT of cave beneath this immense boulder as Marine (*left*) waits to see if he intends to surrender. A moment later the Jap tried to throw a stick of dynamite and the Marine shot him dead.

24 June (D plus 9). Higher in this tangled and difficult terrain, on CT6's flank, 1/8 and 3/8 moved around the western battlement of the mountain, keeping a tenuous contact with 1/29. By the afternoon of D plus 12 (27 June), the swing back toward the beaches had begun and 3/6 was pinched out at noon, leaving 2/6 under Hunt and 1/6 under Jones in the line.*

While the terrain on the eastern slant of

* A detailed account of the progress of 1/6 will be found in Robert Sherrod's *On to Westward* (Duell, Sloan and Pearce).

Tapotchau prevented use of any machines that could not be carried by marching men, the battalions fighting along the plateau got some tank and a good deal of rocket-truck support. When 1/6 was halted by Japs in echelon positions in a rearing limestone cliff, the rocket men from the Regimental Weapons company lined up one of their trucks in a burned out canefield far below and blasted the position with good effect.

From the top of Tapotchau the mountain battalions began to pivot to the left, angling back

toward the curving northwest coast above Garapan, back toward Tanapag harbor. In the two-dozen square miles of descending cliffs they at last were solidly against the Japs' interior defenses, and at grips with their real objective—investment of these heights whose mountain guns forbade a coastal advance to occupy the shattered city and its strategic harbor. From the windswept crests they moved down into a strange lost world so fantastically made that even the unimaginative Japanese referred to it as "The Valley of Hell."

The descent from the Tapotchau plateau was an agony in itself. One battalion of CT8 had to swing down a sheer precipice, a crevice in the cliff no wider than a man's shoulders—and for desperate days there was no route for evacuation of casualties except back up this painful trail, where litters had to be lifted foot by foot as up a gaint staircase. And the Division was still taking casualties—twenty-six killed, ninety-two wounded, as noted earlier, on 23 June; thirty-one killed, 105 wounded on 24 June; thirty-six killed, 150 wounded, on 25 June; twenty-two killed, 119 wounded, on 26 June; twenty-four killed, 123 wounded, on 27 June; fifty-four killed, 130 wounded on 28 June.

On Guadalcanal patrols often had utilized one or two members as "points of fire"—usually volunteers. Now every Marine was a point of fire. The Jap snipers hidden in the rocks or trees, protecting the echeloned positions, were revealed only when they shot. Marines died alone, in the hot sun, to lie for hours on the cruel rocks before discovery

by their comrades. And these no longer were crack Marine troops, physically fresh and psychologically eager. They had been ashore twelve to sixteen days, always under fire and never out of the front lines more than thirty hours. The original units making up the battalions had dwindled. Replacements sent up from the shore party had to be co-ordinated, and sometimes trained in the simplest principles of mountain fighting. Corporals and sergeants were commanding platoons which had left the ships under lieutenants, and lieutenants were commanding the companies once led by captains. There had been no hot meals, nor even water for washing. The Marines were wearing board-stiff uniforms in which they had come ashore, eating the dismal K rations, and sleeping—if at all—under the constant menace of the Japanese or the maddening thrusts of mosquitoes.

On 29 June (D plus 14) the great clamp was nearly forged, and the piston was poised for the final thrust. The blind-tired Marines of CT6 and 1/8 and 3/8 moved down from the jungled slopes west of the mountain plateau to nearly envelop Garapan and form a tight line across the rolling hills above Tanapag harbor—a line whose right flank tied into the Marines of 1/29 and 2/8, still slashing through the ravines. Down along Radio Road, in the ruins of Garapan, Marines who had fought an entirely different kind of battle looked up at the hills wearily and wished their comrades Godspeed. The Battle of the Plain was almost over, too, for the Guadalcanal and Tarawa veterans of the Second Marine Regiment.

Chapter Ten



BANZAI AFTERMATH

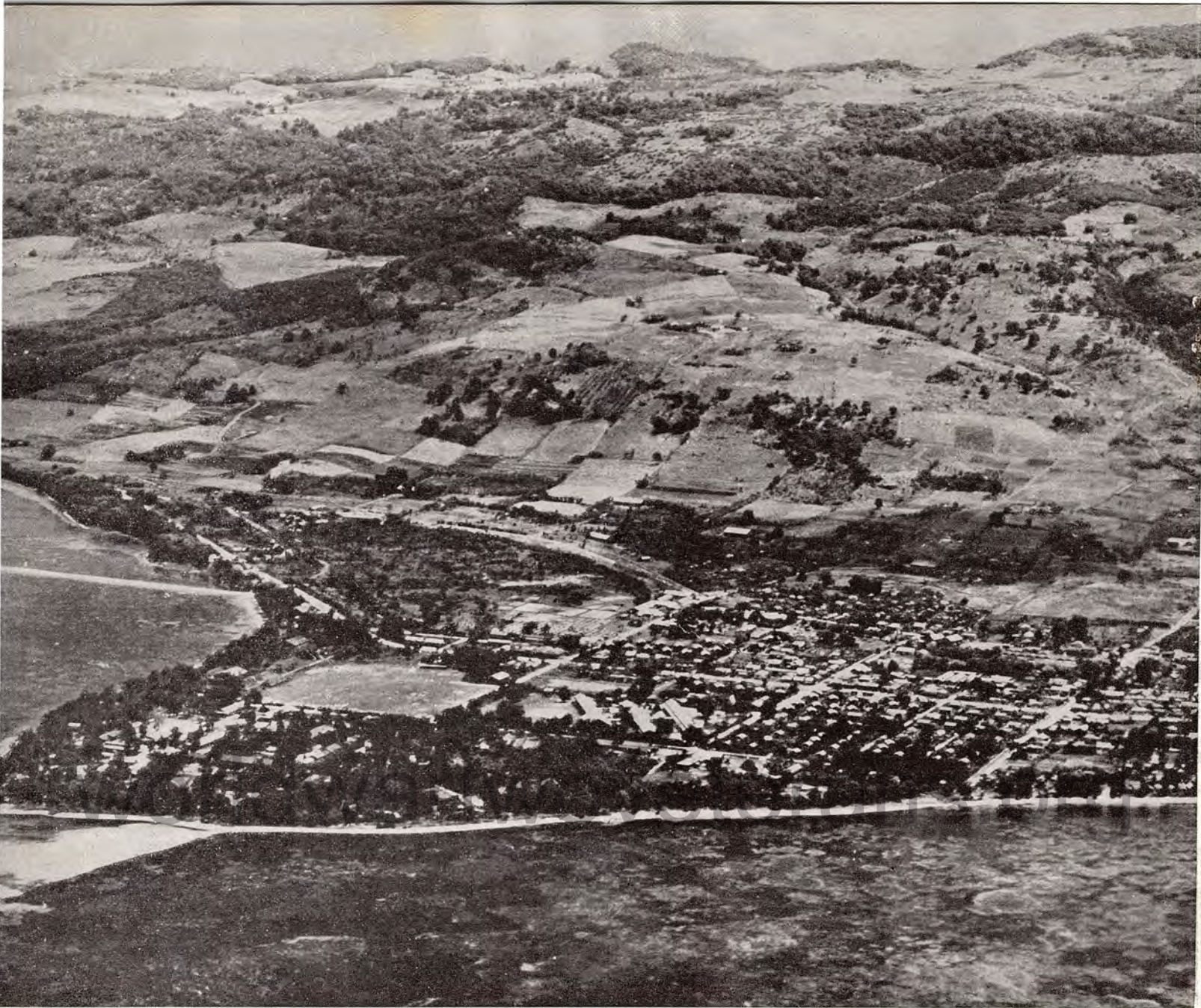
THROUGH THE STREETS OF GARAPAN

THE MARINES APPLY A GIGANTIC CLAMP TO SAIPAN'S HEART

The Battle of the Plain had not been the easiest battle in the world, but the men of the Second Regiment—secure in earlier glories—did not begrudge CT8 its costly victories in the mountains, or CT6 its savage crossing of the plateau. The Battle of the Plain really got under way when Colonel Stuart's regiment turned left—at right angles—on D plus 1 to begin a parade through a fantastic wonderland of surrendering civilians, dotted with homes and shrines and even a Chris-

tian cemetery. The parade began and ended with sharp battles, and there were many skirmishes interspersed.

North from Charan Kanoa the narrow coastwise airstrip provided a natural military highway of supply, and behind the airstrip, in the marshy land where the Japs had planted seedling cedars in an apparent bulwark against typhoon and tidal wave, not unlike the plantings on highway cuts in the United States, the Second Marine Division



TOWN OF GARAPAN looked like this before Marine invasion. As CT2 moved up the plain from airstrip, Navy

established its hospital in the once-luxurious Japanese radio station. Beyond the airstrip, in a clump of eucalyptus trees bordering the beach road to Garapan, General Watson established the Division's permanent command post, among gigantic boulders washed down from Tapotchau hundreds or perhaps thousands of years before.

The battalions pushing north along the plain—actually the terrain was gently rolling, rather than

perfectly flat—didn't meet many Japs in the three-mile gap between the Division CP and the outskirts of Garapan, once the initial night counterattacks were repulsed. In the general offensive of D plus 2, the Second Marine battalions had moved along the coast to the 02 line, almost directly west of the peak of Tapotchau. For the next five days, action was limited to patrolling as the Marines of CT6 and CT8 wheeled toward the mountain. But this



shelled Garapan and almost leveled it. The Japanese command post was located at left on Mutcho Point.

did not mean quiet and security for the Second. As long as the Japs held the mountain heights, they continued to pour shells and mortars down on the coastal strip. The Division CP was shelled morning and night, and ten days after D-Day the barrages were still falling on Marines who would infinitely have preferred a chance to fight back to just sitting tight.

Throughout much of the campaign, the plain

was more interesting for its revelations of the native life of Saipan than for its military adventures. Not long after the invasion, civil affairs officers established the first compound for civilian prisoners of war in a clearing in the seedlings near the radio station. The Saipan natives were Chamorros, small, brown-skinned Pacific people who genuinely welcomed our attack. Most of them had (or had had) family ties with the Chamorros of Guam,



BATTLE OF THE PLAIN finds Marines moving slowly through rolling terrain just south of Garapan as other regiments attack across the crest of mountain. This area, bordering the sea, had many small farms.

and understood the meaning of U.S. rule. The Japs had made virtual slaves of them.

Thousands of the natives lost their homes in the battle that raged over the fruitful fields and gardens below the mountain. Many were hurt in the

cross-fire of U.S. and Japanese arms. But they were for the most part uncomplaining, confident that this trial would end and that a new era of liberty and security awaited them. Moving among them, throughout the campaign, was a valuable

emissary of good will—a young Chamorro we had rescued from the Japs on Kwajalein and who had since become a Marine mascot. Little “Mike” wore full Marine uniform, and he proudly assured his compatriots that the Marines were the world’s finest people.

But the Chamorros were not the only more or less permanent residents of the plain. The dead were there, too. North of the Chamorro compound the Marines had established a huge ammunition dump. On the night of D plus 6, at about 2100, it exploded. The dump became a molten furnace of continuous explosions, and all night long shells soared out of it, in all directions. There is no accurate count of resulting casualties, but there were a good many. A few were among Marines who had been working for several days in the Second Division cemetery, only a few hundred yards north of the dump. This was no cemetery of clipped green lawns and marble stones and sweet flower odors, where people paid hollow homage to the dead.

The day after the explosion of the dump, correspondents visiting the cemetery found brown, half-naked corpsmen valiantly carrying out their grim tasks under the direction of Major Charles Janvier of Louisiana and Captain Orien W. Todd, the San Diego Marine who had been Division recreation officer at Camp Tarawa on Hawaii. Nearly 500 members of the Division already lay beneath the ugly gray dirt of this narrow square, bounded by a single strand of barbed wire. On the inland side, a bulldozer ground back and forth, scooping out an immense pit, fifty feet long, ten wide and six deep. By its side, on soiled stretchers, lay all that remained of a dozen Marines. Some had died in the rocks on the mountains. Others had been blown into twisted, terrible pieces. The smell was overwhelming. Janvier and Todd looked grim.

They had been doing this for more than five



NEARING GARAPAN, riflemen from CT2 advance cautiously through a grove of trees where Japs are fighting stubborn rear guard action.



IN GARAPAN SUBURBS Second Division Marines get their first taste of house-to-house combat.

days, their corps of aides searching each mangled body, removing identification tags and preparing charts which actually made each huge pit into a row of separate graves. Many more Marines would be laid to rest in that cemetery, and in others on



FLANKING GARAPAN, tank and infantry teams blast Jap strongpoints inland from city along low foothills. Plain proved excellent "tank country," and rocket trucks also operated in support of infantry.

Saipan, before the battle was won. Marines who had fought on Guadalcanal and at Tarawa; Marines who a few months ago had been down-faced kids in small American towns. Marines who had "moved on to westward."

The Second Marines had inched their lines up the edge of Garapan's suburbs by the evening of June 23. The next morning, at 0800 (D plus 9), they finally got the go ahead to invade the city—the first honest-to-God city under American at-

tack in the Pacific. Two battalions had the job—3/2 on the left, under Throneson, and 1/2, under Kyle. Throneson's Marines were the first to catch opposition, from a suicidal Japanese rear guard. As they moved into the first rows of shabby houses, along winding dirt roads above the leveled waterfront area, the Japs opened up with machine-gun, rifle and mortar fire. This was what CT2 Marines had been waiting for. They charged, overrunning the defenders while their own mortar platoon, set up on a small knoll nearby, gave them enthusiastic

support. The push on the left was an unqualified and relatively easy success—by nightfall LT 3/2 had reached the 05 line, which was a major Garapan street running crossways of the island. At only one point, a Buddhist Shrine called “Hongan Temple Park,” had the Japs offered really substantial resistance. The Marine maps coded the 05 line as “Radio Road,” a name it possibly still bears. On the right, in Garapan’s outer suburbs, Kyle’s battalion had more trouble. Meeting intense Jap opposition on a crown-topped hill, the 1/2 Marines attacked with flame-throwers and rifle platoons and by 1600 had occupied the crest and brought their line up to the day’s objective. But the Japs weren’t quite ready to write off Garapan.

Massing in the northern part of the city, they counterattacked in the late afternoon behind seven tanks. As the fury of the assault grew, Division assigned a provisional battalion, under Major Francis X. Beamer, formed from Shore Party personnel to support Lieutenant Colonel Richard Nutting’s 2/2, which had been in Regimental reserve. Aided by the 75mm self-propelled guns of the Regimental Weapons company, and utilizing both hand and rifle grenades and bazookas, the CT2 line company Marines beat back the Jap assault and destroyed six of the tanks.

In the week-long lull that followed this attack, the foremost Marine command post on Saipan was that of 3/2’s L Company, under a black-haired Bostonian named Captain Robert O’Brien. It was located less than 100 yards behind Radio Road, on a broad avenue paralleling the shore which the Marines had named “Broadway.” For a forward CP, it was gaudily equipped. The push into Garapan had given the Marines their first battle practice in house-to-house fighting. It also had given them a wonderful opportunity to collect souvenirs. O’Brien’s CP was comfortably up-



A BATTALION COMMANDER who had been twice wounded hobbles back to direct final push.

holstered with an extravagantly figured Japanese mattress, silk-sheeted and soft as a cloud. O’Brien’s Marines were colorfully clad in silk kimonos, silk pants, or fanciful obis. Some of them lolled comfortably under big pink parasols. Others wobbled about the now-quiet streets on captured Jap bicycles. The final musical-comedy touch was provided when L Company’s radioman had occasion to call battalion, using the code name assigned to 3/2: “Musclebound! Musclebound! This is Musclebound Love! Overrrr!”



SCATTERED LIKE LEAVES by Naval shelling, metal rooftops of Garapan make a crazy wilderness for Marines of CT2, shown picking their way through “business district.” Snipers hid under the rubble, had to be dug out.

If it appears that the Marines of CT2 were enjoying their brief hiatus from battle, the impression is correct. But most of them, after the first day of joyful investigation, would have preferred to be in the hills or on the mountain. The waiting was onerous, and every Marine along Radio Road and to the north in Kyle's crescent-shaped line knew that a tough fight was in prospect, once CT6 and CT8 were in position. Directly ahead of 1/2 stood a great, sugar-loaf-shaped limestone hill, rearing out of the eastern Garapan residential district like a Pacific Gibraltar. That would have to

be taken. Above and behind it was another hill, surmounted by a lighthouse—Observatory Hill, the Marines finally named it. That, too, would have to be taken before the piston could be driven home, but that was a chore for CT6.

Some mention has been made earlier of the problems faced by CT6, fighting along a plateau constantly furrowed by ravines and ridges running from the high mountain down to the sea. Colonel James P. Riseley had moved his command post to Mount Tipopale soon after CT6 captured it, on



CAPTURED JAPANESE are marched toward prisoner stockade along road ground to powdery dust by Marine vehicles. These Japs are soldiers, not civilians. As in other battles, many Japs chose suicide.

D plus 7. By 25 June (D plus 10), 1/6 had moved forward several thousand yards, with 3/6 on its right, tied into 1/8 high on the mountainside. A jeep track wound uphill and down, in and out of the draws and ravines, from the Regimental CP to the battalion command posts. On the morning of the 25th, a bypassed Japanese sniper added to the Second Division's already impressive toll of command casualties: Lieutenant Colonel Kenneth McLeod, who had taken 3/6 ashore at Tarawa and then had occupied Apamama, was shot dead while traversing this risky route. McLeod had come to

Saipan as Riseley's executive officer. (A few days earlier another lieutenant colonel, Ralph E. Forsyth, executive officer of the Tenth Marines, had died in a fierce counter-battery exchange.)

From Tipo Pale, Jones and Rentsch pushed their tired but efficient battalions over successive ridges, held up sometimes by echeloned Jap machine guns, pausing sometimes to clean out caves and clear ravines of enfilading fire. Then, like 3/2 in Garapan's ruins below, CT6 also had to wait while CT8 completed its agonizing task of skinning the Japs off Saipan's knife-edged mountains. On

29 June another provisional company was formed from Shore Party personnel and sent over Tapotchau in support of the Eighth Marines. Two days later, on 1 July, the time was almost at hand for the Division-wide push to the sea.

Down from the dreadful ordeal of Tapotchau came the grimy, red-eyed and relatively unsung heroes of LT 3/8—a battalion that had fought around the cone of Tapotchau on its western side and then had sheared across the jagged peaks at the side of 1/29. This was the battalion Major Larsen had taken at the water's edge, when Lieutenant Colonel Miller was injured. It was now sadly depleted, but its record shone. Without its flank support, Tompkins might never have taken Tapotchau's crest. Without its steady and determined progress on the fiercely defended western ridge, the whole campaign might have buckled. Up to the mountains to relieve 3/8 went Nutting's 2/2, which for several days had been resting in the reserve position of CT2, after plugging numerous holes in the first days of the campaign. The tank companies of the Second Tank Battalion were moved up the treacherous, bulldozed roads that now circled Tapotchau and into the lines of 1/29, 2/8, 2/2, and 1/8. Just before dusk the battle order came from Division: "Coordinated attack, 2 July. CT6 and CT8, jumpoff at 0830. CT2, jump off at 1030."

On this climactic dawn the Marines of the mountain were fighting principally on *esprit de corps*. They were physically tired beyond any normal conception of fatigue, and they were so exhausted mentally that they scarcely sought to make conversation in their nightly bivouacs. But, as they dragged themselves into position for the jump-off, they were buoyed by the vision of the sea, shimmering far below; and by the presence of the tanks, finally here to help them in the last

great drive to victory. At 0830 they started down the narrow valleys, seemingly lifeless in the sun. As they deployed, the ridges suddenly crackled with rifle and machine-gun fire, and Marines went down like wheat before the whirlwind. Pull back. Regroup. Flank the fire and push ahead. Blast the caves. So it went, slow but steady, deadly but decisive, for the Marines of CT8. All that long, paralyzingly hot day they drove forward, tanks rumbling along in support, 75's roaring. There were plenty of casualties, among them Lieutenant Colonel Tompkins, who was succeeded in command of 1/29 by the CT8 executive officer, Lieutenant Colonel Jack P. Juhan. But nightfall found them strung across the rounded hills below the mighty ledges they had conquered, Garapan's smoldering ruins in sight off to their left. They had circled the city and nearly forged the frame of the clamp. Tomorrow they could complete it.

Like CT8, the Marines of CT6—1/6 and 3/6—had jumped off at 0830. The first hours were not too bad. Rentsch's 3/6 pushed along, almost due north, through the foothills behind Garapan. Jones's 1/6 wheeled slightly to come up against the eastern base of Sugar Loaf Hill, along toward noon. On their left were the helmeted, grimy veterans of Kyle's 2/2, forming an arc around the Loaf's long, southern side. Kyle's men already had fought a severe skirmish which came to be known as the "Battle of Flame-Tree Hill."

When the 1030 jumpoff time came for CT2, no linked assault battalions ever faced more completely differing problems than 3/2 and 2/2. In front of Throneson's 3/2, on the shore, was the long, flat surface of Garapan, like a crushed ant-hill under a carpet of autumn leaves. The concrete buildings of the business district had been shattered by thousands of bombs and shells, until only ragged sections of wall still stood. Between these somber monuments the ground, nearly every inch



THIS IS MAIN STREET in Garapan after Naval shelling and Marine attack. Japs are still defending shambles in distance as Marines (left center) race forward toward northern boundary of city and Tanapag harbor.

of it, was covered with twisted sheets of tin, the corrugated roofs that once had shielded the city's 15,000 inhabitants from tropical storms—but not from high explosives.

Before 2/2 was a smallish, flower-covered hill, like a bright bouquet against the ominous gray sandbank of Sugar Loaf. It was full of Japs, under the flaring red blossoms of its tropical flame trees, and the Marines knew it. But they were not sorry to leave a command post area that was haunted by the memory of a tragic accident a few days before. A Navy torpedo bomber had been shot down by enemy fire and had crashed directly into the CP, killing several Marines.

On the dot at 1030, as the Marines of 3/2 began moving up "Broadway" from "Radio Road," Kyle's halftracks swept toward "flame-tree hill," and behind them came the riflemen of A Company. They took the hill in one furious assault, against Jap machine guns. Then they stopped and looked across the bare valley floor to Sugar Loaf. No one then had seen (or even conceived) of Iwo Jima. Sugar Loaf was a prelude, a stone mountain hollowed into a fortress. The Japs were prepared to defend it.

The two battalions of the two regiments—1/2 and 1/6—were prepared to attack it. The rifle companies moved down the slopes, 1/2 from the



THE WEARY AND THE DEAD return from the front. These Tarawa veterans are carrying the body of another Betio survivor to the rear.



AT REGIMENTAL 'OP,' Marines watch attack jump off while regimental commander, Colonel Walter Stuart of CT2 (left), telephones instructions.

arboreal riot of the newly captured hill; 1/6 out of the green and purple shrubbery to the east. On the heights, the Marine half-tracks dusted the flaky sides of the fortress with 75's, and the Japs fired back from the caverns, sepia blotches on the cliff face. As the half-encircling arc was tightened around the base of the great outcropping, the Japs spotted knee-mortar shells around the Marine line like pencil dots on a compassed circle.

Somewhere along that line, a private bellied forward over a rock and a bullet struck him in the left eye, just under his spotted helmet, and tore away the whole top of his head, jerking the helmet off into the dust. The blood spattered on the white rocks, and on the uniform of a sergeant who had been moving at the private's side. The sergeant stood up suddenly and yelled. He yelled at another Marine, ten feet away, but a lot of Marines heard him.

"Goddam it, Mac," the sergeant bawled, "let's go up and get these bastards!"

The Marines came up from their bellies and surged up against the cliff, moving up among its rocks, circling and digging their way toward the caves. They clutched stony knobs and threw grenades with their free hands, pinning themselves against the rock, and they silenced the caves. Lieutenant Bob Maher, who had inherited Baker company when its captain was wounded, took his men up one side of the cliff. Captain Lou Brooks took Able company up the other. And on the eastern slope, Lieutenant Raymond Graves led Able company of 1/6 up the fearsome cliff and was wounded in the charge. (Graves was the fourth commander of A/6 to be killed or wounded in the battle of Saipan.)

Marines were shot dead by the Japs as they scaled the walls, to fall limp and lifeless to the rocks below. Marines were wounded and fell also, to die when their bodies shattered on the cruel

boulders. But Marines were going over the top, and as they did so twenty wild-eyed Japs, deserting prepared positions which pointed only one way—the wrong way—ran at them in a shrieking, futile banzai charge. The Marines flopped on their stomachs and their Garands and carbines and BARs played a symphony of death. That night 1/2 camped in the shellholes our own artillery had dug on the rock monument's flinty crest, and they killed a few more Japs who had hidden in the many hallways of the caves.

Meanwhile, the balance of 1/6 and the Marines of 3/6 swept on to the north and west across the cultivated, flat-topped hill behind Sugar Loaf where the Jap lighthouse stood. The lighthouse was a poor fortress, but the Japanese tried to defend it. In its concrete basement they had mounted many rapid-fire weapons, using huge circular ammunition drums like the old-fashioned Lewis gun. The Marines killed them behind their guns and CT6 settled down for the night on soft, well-cleared ground—but ground made dangerous by our own unexploded rocket and mortar shells.

The attacks by CT8, CT6 and 1/2 had little similarity to the drive through Garapan town. Although the area ahead of 3/2 had been thoroughly patrolled for days, the Japs—anticipating our offensive—had filtered down the night before to establish final defensive positions. Two hundred yards from our jump-off point on Radio Road, the Japs opened up. There weren't many of them, but they had the light, portable machine gun which slightly resembles our BAR and is carried by a carved wood handle like the grip on a Gladstone bag. They fired from the half-dissolved walls of the buildings and faded back into shellpits to fire again. It was slow, hot work for the Marines. "Broadway" curved slightly, and below it "Main" was a ghost street. The Marines picked their way through the rubble between these avenues, prefer-



IN DIVISION HOSPITAL Navy doctors and corpsmen operate on a seriously wounded Marine. Hospital was set up in Japanese radio station.



IN AMBULANCE JEEPS natives and even Japs are carried to safety. Here Chamorro woman nurses baby while wounded Jap lies on top litter (right).



CLOSING VISE ON JAPS above Garapan, a half-track moves into position to blast enemy strongpoint as Marines emerge from the mountains and begin drive to the sea. Japanese did not make last-ditch fight in Garapan.

ring the sweaty job of climbing and descending to a march down a perfect field of fire two miles long.

That night they held more than half of the city, and the Battalion CP was established in a bomb crater beside the undamaged wall, marked by Gothic arched windows, of the Spanish Catholic Church of Garapan. Across "Broadway" was the

wreckage of the Bank of Taiwan. Behind the CP was all that remained of a theater. Inside the church, the Marines were shocked to find that the face of Christ had been blown away by shellfire.

This was the day. The 3rd day of July, 1944—
D plus 18.

The mountain battalions of CT8 started early, down through the last spined escarpments and tangled valleys which tapered to the coastal plain like the curved fingers of a half-closed hand. Beyond the troops, where the ridges flattened at last into tables of cane, the shells burst in tight patterns, sending up monuments of rock and sand, dissolving and recurring, to be silhouetted against the transparent blue waters of Tanapag harbor. The harbor itself was framed in smoke, on the left by the black billows from sunken, blazing hulks of Japanese merchant ships; on the right by the pale vapor of a hot gasoline fire at the shattered Tanapag seaplane base. The smoke spread and smudged in the windless heat, drifting in toward the mountains from the harbor fires and obscuring the ruins of Garapan town.

At the same time, the Marines of CT6 began their descent from the red-earthed valleys beyond Observatory Hill, still inside of the wide-ranging battalions of CT8, inside and closer to the water. There was no storybook smartness to the men of these two combat teams, stumbling down the draws and across cruel rock outcroppings. Dirt and sweat had caked their spotted dungarees into a monotone, and stiffened them so they bent only at the elbows and knees, like coats of mail. The dust had settled in the deepening lines of their faces and in the hollows of their eyes. It formed a sort of mudpack in their untrimmed, stubbled beards.

Their haunted eyes returned always to the blue sheen of the harbor, and all of them were driven by a terrible urgency to reach the shore. The shore meant many things. It meant cool water to bathe in and soft earth as a cradle. It meant victory, the completion of a terrible and costly mission. For nineteen days and eighteen nights they had fought the Japanese and the terrain of Saipan.

Down in Garapan town, CT2 also had jumped off soon after dawn from "27th and Broadway,"



DEAD IN THEIR TRENCHES, Japs on "Observatory Hill" are left to lie in the sun until battle ends.



DEAD ON THE BEACHES, Japs who staged Banzai are cut down along sea as well as in canefields.

north of the battalion CP—the most advanced point of the line reached the night before. The Japs were still fighting in the rubble of their Oceana headquarters. Progress was slow in the morning hours, and by early afternoon there was still 600 yards to go for the Marines of 3/2 who already had taken thirty-seven casualties. At the

L Company command post a Division bandsman carried in, with the help of a comrade, a litter with a wounded Marine. The bandsman, a corporal named Harry Drendall, sank down by the wavering concrete wall of the CP and picked up a Jap accordion. The thin music seemed strangely incongruous, with bullets whining constantly, sometimes near by and sometimes far away.

On the front line, less than 100 yards ahead of the company CP, two Sherman tanks straddled "Broadway" and blasted with their 75's at a Japanese house a city block to the north. There, a little earlier, the Japs had run up a white flag. When the Marines rose from their holes, the Japs opened up with machine-gun fire.

While 3/2 was pushing across the rubble business district, Kyle's conquerors of Sugar Loaf cut their way through the residential areas on the eastern shelf of the city. They surged around the great Royal Palm Park, where, on a forty-foot shaft, was the double life-size statue of a Jap statesman, dressed in Western clothing. They sheared over the gentle ridge where the homes of the wealthier, Mainland Japanese were spread in neat, landscaped rows. These homes were splintered, but not in the manner of the houses in the flat below. They still retained their essential shape, and some of them still had unmarred, ornamental gardens. Delicate, modeled concrete bridges crossed tiny burbling brooks, and shell-shocked tropical fish floated belly-up on the now-dirty waters of decorated ponds.

Japanese snipers fought from these abandoned dwellings, but they were in a hurry now, and they retreated before the hungry Marines, working back toward the narrowing escape route to the north. As the afternoon wore on, Jones's 1/6—cutting toward the sea—pinched out Kyle's tired troopers. Higher up in the ridges, CT8 was still having the most trouble. Like CT2 and CT6, the

Eighth Marines and the forces attached to them—2/2 and 1/29—had paused at noon to rest and regroup. Now, in the general resumption of the attack at 1630 (this was front-wide), the General Shermans began to rumble down the last hill toward the flat canefield below, as Marine mortars whuffed overhead. Suddenly there was a flurry of movement at the base of the hill, among the canestalks and in the ditches around the fields. The flurry became a wave of scrambling bodies, and then the whole field was alive with Japs in disordered flight.

The riflemen of CT8 fell to their knees, shooting furiously; getting up to run forward and shoot again; the whole line sweeping down, rifles singing, BARs chattering frenziedly, as though they could not throw bullets fast enough. The 75's on the tanks roared again and again, making the Shermans rock on their treads, and the mortars and artillery, registering quickly, built an explosive wall around the trapped Japanese. "Kill the bastards!" one battalion commander shouted. "Get the sons of bitches!" There was fierce joy in his face, and in the faces of all the Marines. This was a moment of Old Testament vengeance, in which the enemy finally was revealed.

The tanks ground down into the canefield, and the Marines moved with them or ahead of them, their weariness forgotten, ignoring the Jap rifles and machine guns which still spoke from the ditches in the field, overwhelming the occasional *banzai* attackers who ran toward them screaming and waving Samurai swords. The Jap bodies piled up in the canebrakes and were tumbled through the ditches. The tanks passed over them, and the Marines paused only to whisk away a battle flag or a sword. Satisfying as this engagement proved to Marines who had long fought an invisible enemy, its turmoil was sufficient to stop CT8 a few hundred yards short of the Tanapag Harbor shore



SECOND DIVISION OBJECTIVES—Garapan and Tanapag and the heights of Tapotchau—are secured on 3 July, the Marines reaching the sea at the right of smoke column. This, however, did not mean end of fighting.

that night of 3 July. Not so CT2 and CT6.

The two battalions engaged in this final push—3/6 and 3/2—were once again under their original commanders. At about the same hour on 3 July, Lieutenant Colonel Easley, who had been wounded on D Day, and Lieutenant Colonel Johnston, who had been wounded twice, returned to duty. At 1630 3/6 began to drive for Tanapag harbor, pinching out 1/6 to move flank to flank with 3/2, which had jumped off the line just north of “27th Street.”

Both of these battalions had functioned well and had been excellently led during their commanders’ absence. Even so, the return of Easley and Johnston—both still suffering from the after-

effects of their wounds—had an inspirational effect on the Marines in the line. On “27th Street,” the word went from group to group: “Hey! You guys know ‘Slaughterhouse’ is back?” A puzzled correspondent was told that “Slaughterhouse” was Lieutenant Colonel Johnston.

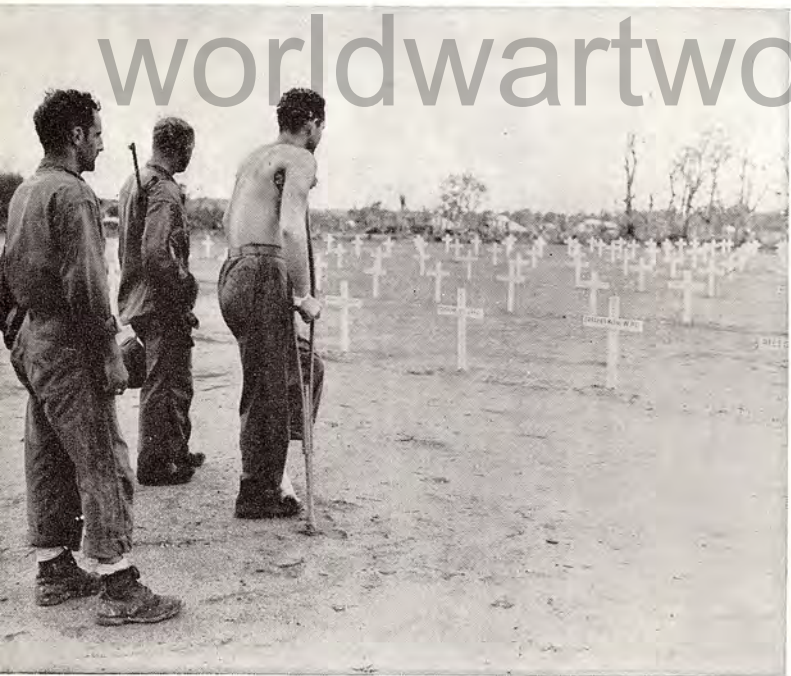
“He’s dead but he won’t lie down,” the sergeant who had brought the news said. “Crazy gyrene bastard!”

“How’d he get off the ship?” another voice asked.

“Told ’em he had a ‘desk’ job ashore and got ’em to mark him ‘effective,’” the sergeant said. “They lowered him over the side in a litter. Then they had him tied down in Division hospital for



LYING WHERE HE FELL, the body of a dead Marine is marked by his upended rifle (note dead Jap in trench). During battle, burials had to be delayed.



IN DIVISION CEMETERY where most Marines eventually were laid to rest, three survivors—one wounded—pay tribute to buddies who died on Saipan.

awhile, but the docs couldn't hold him. Stole a jeep and drove up here today. Stampin' around down there now with one gimp leg and a Jap cane!"

These Marines slashed forward a few minutes later, into the smoky distance, spreading around the sniper-filled house and then rushing into envelop it with fire, disappearing beyond it, their rifles now crackling, now silent. Two hours later they were through the last houses, fanning out over the burned Japanese barracks of Mutcho Point, past the abandoned concrete Japanese Naval command post, on and on to the curving, southern shore of Tanapag.

At about the same time, as the sun balanced on the horizon like a bright marble on a ruler, the Marines of 3/6 crossed the tiny, narrow-gauge railroad that paralleled the coast, broke through the trees lining the coastal road, and spread over the shattered concrete apron of the great Jap sea-plane base. It was deserted, save for one or two snipers. On its broad, cratered surface were the burned wrecks of eight huge Kawinichi four-engined bombers. For a moment, the Marines clustered around them. Then they left the planes to tramp slowly over to the scummy waters of the harbor. Kneeling, they dipped their crusted heads and grimy, black-nailed hands.

Standing offshore were the transports the Marines had left in the dark, scarce-remembered dawn of 15 June.

"Son of a bitch," said a Marine private, to no one in particular. "Tomorrow's the Fourth of July."

The Battle of Saipan was not over, but on Independence Day, 1944, the Second Marine Division had accomplished its mission. That morning the battalions of CT8 came down to the sea from their canefield bivouac, and the Division was once again united—and relatively at peace. The Japa-

nese garrison area of Mutcho Point looked like circus day in a small town. Jap battle flags were festooned in most of the splintered trees. Near a captured ammunition revetment, a group of Marines sat in the shade and played fearfully unmusical Japanese "Polydor" and "Nippon-phone" records on a captured Jap phonograph. Inside the blockhouse which had sheltered the Jap command the Marines found hundreds of cans of delicious crabmeat—wet pack.

Back at Charan Kanoa, a war correspondent, writing of the Second Division's great sweep to the sea, said: "No bells were tolled; no people ran into the streets to welcome the troops; no flowers were thrown." The Marines of the Second Division expected none of these things. There had been none at Guadalcanal and none at Tarawa. They were content, that July 4, with very little. Rest, in the shade. A chance to wash and shave. A swim in the ocean. A can of crabmeat. And, finally, the excited exchange of battle stories, one battalion to another, one regiment to another. There were plenty to tell, but perhaps the best one was known only to Jones's battalion, which was camped inshore, partly on the sloping red hills. It was only an incident of the campaign—but it was the kind of incident that made the Second Division a great division.

Scene: The rugged hills just beyond Tipo Pale, in the CT6 sector. Time: 0200 of 25 June. Personnel: Three machine-gunners—PFC Harold G. Epperson of Ohio, Corporal Malcom Jonah of Connecticut, and PFC Edward Bailey of Washington. Action: Jap counterattack. Subject: Heroism.

The Jap attack was not in great force, but it came suddenly and savagely against the lines of C Company, 1/6. The night was black, the jungle was very close, and the Japs were almost upon the Marines before they were spotted. Corporal Jonah's machine gun emplacement was directly in

their path. Young Harold Epperson manned the gun, in the words of a subsequent citation, "with determined aggressiveness, fighting furiously in defense of his battalion's position and maintaining a steady stream of devastating fire against rapidly infiltrating hostile troops, to aid materially in breaking the abortive attack."

But that was only the beginning of the story. As Epperson's hot machine-gun continued to belch bullets, a Jap body lying near its muzzle suddenly came alive. The Japanese sprang up and to one side and hurled a hand grenade directly into the emplacement. Before Jonah or Bailey could move, Epperson dived headlong on the missile, spreading his body over it deliberately to absorb the terrible blast and save the lives of his comrades. To quote the citation again: "Stout-hearted and indomitable in the face of certain death, PFC Epperson fearlessly yielded his own life that his able comrades might carry on the relentless battle against a ruthless enemy. . . ."

The citation: The Medal of Honor.

There were many other heroes, some rewarded, some not—many, many of them dead. There was PFC Robert Lee Barker of Kentucky who walked straight into machine gun fire to rescue his wounded buddy. There was Dutch Van Ullus, who volunteered for mortar observation from a post that already had claimed several lives, and did it brilliantly. There were non-commissioned leaders like Staff Sergeant Kenneth Martin, of the Second Signal Company—a "wire chief" who served from the 'Canal through Saipan. Of Martin a corporal wrote: "I can't find the correct, or enough, words to really describe how we felt about him. How many other Staffs can say that?"

The record goes on and on. It would surely include the bare-headed supply officer who somehow got fresh oranges to the desperate troops descending Tapotchau. It would embrace the twelve Ma-

rines of 2/10 (one officer and eleven men) who died fighting the fire in the ammunition dump on Green Beach. (All got posthumous Silver Stars.) The difficult and sometimes almost impossible feats of the communications personnel of the Second Signal Company, trying to string wire over the mountain cliffs, must be noted. And, as at Tarawa, the engineers and flame-thrower operators once again distinguished themselves, blasting Saipan's myriad caves. So, too, did other engineers—those entrusted with the delicate, nerve-racking job of bomb disposal and mine detection. Engineers walked ahead of the troops through Garapan, clearing the Jap minefields. Other engineers disarmed hundreds of U.S. duds in the areas wrested from the enemy. Mention has been made earlier of the excellent work of the Amphibian Tanks—but it should be added that the battalion suffered 81.4 per cent casualties to its machines, yet got some of them back in operation.

Hundreds of living Marines might be dead today but for the efforts of the Second Medical Battalion, which operated the big hospital in the radio station. And, as was always the case, a whole chapter could be written on the selflessness and devotion of the Navy doctors and corpsmen, who went over the mountain and up the plain with their battalions, never faltering and never failing in their missions of mercy. No, the record does not end. The credit can never be fairly distributed. Some of it belongs to every man who fought in the forging of the great clamp on Saipan—every man, regardless of rank, buck private or general officer, early arrival or last-minute replacement.

There was still some mopping up to be done in the Second Division areas, that evening of the Fourth of July—and there was still a lot of war left on Saipan for the Fourth Marine Division and the Twenty-seventh Army Division. The soldiers

had cut across to the western sea on the right flank of CT8 and now were facing north, toward the handle of the Saipan monkey wrench, with the Fourth Marine Division on their right. The Fourth had moved up the eastern coast, securing Kagman Peninsula above Magicienne Bay. The narrowing stretch ahead of the two divisions was furrowed with more of the same kind of jigsaw valleys and ravines, except at the northern tip—Marpi Point—where the Japs had cleared a short airstrip.

The afternoon of 4 July both 3/10 and 4/10 were moved north of Tanapag, to positions in general support of the Fourth Division, under Corps Artillery control. The next morning the Second Marines learned that their victory in Garapan was not enough. They were attached to the Fourth Division, along with one company of medium tanks and a platoon of flame-throwers, for the push toward Marpi. The battalions of CT8 retired into bivouac areas along the coastal hills, stretching back toward the airstrip. CT6 still camped in the heights of Garapan, though 1/6 moved downtown into the rubble. Division artillery dusted off Manigassa Island, in Tanapag harbor—just in case.

There was no major action the afternoon of 6 July. None, at least, on our side. We had observation now, could look down the island toward Marpi, and our artillery played over the zigzags whenever Jap concentrations were spotted. Both the Twenty-seventh and Fourth Divisions kept up pressure on their fronts. The Twenty-seventh had its 105th Infantry in the coastal line above Tanapag, two battalions abreast, spanning low rolling hills dotted with stubbled cane and gouged by occasional creeks and paddy fields. About 1,200 yards to the rear were the Marines of 3/10, set up in an echelon slanting to the right: H battery forward, the fire direction center some fifty yards behind it, I Battery back and to the right, and G Battery farthest back on higher ground. Major



ARTILLERY BATTERY firing 105MM howitzers blazes away at Jap targets. It was 105MM battalion which helped stop Jap Banzai charge after it broke through front lines north of Tanapag Harbor.

William L. Crouch of Indiana was in command.

If there was any feel of menace in the air, that sticky afternoon, it escaped the troops who most needed to sense it. The Japs appeared to be on the run. Our observation did not indicate any major assembling of enemy forces. The artillerymen of 3/10 and 4/10 were delivering intermittent fire on distant Jap positions. As evening came, the battalions of the 105th dug in, but left a substantial gap between them which they planned to cover by fire. During the hours just before midnight some of the soldiers thought they heard eerie singing, in

the hills ahead and to the right. Their comrades scoffed.

The Japs were singing that night, singing the fatalistic war songs of the Empire, singing and passing around their few remaining bottles of saki. They had a supreme appointment with destiny, at 0300 of 7 July. The appointment had been conditioned by events which began on 3 July. On that date the Japanese had been forced to abandon their fifth provisional headquarters and retreat to a sixth and last CP—a CP located in the area of the Valley of Hell, which the Marines had left to



DESIRE FOR SOUVENIRS, typical of all Americans, kept Marines busy prowling through captured houses and installations and finally prompted this sign. Japs had booby-trapped some souvenirs.

drive to the coast. On 4 July Marine forces fired on the enemy headquarters with automatic weapons from the opposite rim of the valley. Let a subsequently captured Japanese intelligence officer take the story from there:

“General Saito” (Lieutenant General Yoshio Saito, commanding all Japanese army troops on Saipan) “was feeling very poorly because, for several days, he had neither eaten nor slept well and was overstrained. He was wearing a long beard, and was a pitiful sight. That morning (5 July) the valley received intense bombardment.

It was so fierce that I thought perhaps the cave where the headquarters was would be buried. At this time the staff and General Saito received shrapnel wounds. I felt that the final hour was drawing near.

“General Saito called his chief of staff and held a secret conference of his unit commanders. The contents of that conference were never revealed to us, but nevertheless it undoubtedly was aimed at taking a final action in realizing the end in true Japanese Army fashion. It was decided to make a last attack and fight to the finish. However, in

order to carry out the decision there were many difficulties to be encountered. First of all, to what extent could the soldiers be assembled? Even if they could be assembled, only a few could be supplied with weapons. Furthermore, it would take two days and two nights to assemble them and issue the orders. Whereupon, the evening of 6 July or 7 July was decided upon. Having lost the freedom of maneuverability, there was only one road left open, a last all-out, desperate attack. There was no hope for success. The final order and instructions were written up. . . . The opinion of Vice Admiral Nagumo" (Vice Admiral Chochi Nagumo, Japanese Naval commander for the Marianas, and the man who had commanded the 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor) "probably was received, but even though he was in the vicinity there was no communication between the two headquarters. Under these conditions, the final plan was drawn up. However, since the fighting on Saipan Island was under the command of Saito, combining both Army and Navy forces, this was quite proper. . . .

"After issuing the orders, it seemed that the work of headquarters was finished. Everybody put his personal belongings in order. By the kindness of the headquarters cook, a farewell feast for General Saito was prepared for the evening of 5 July. However, this consisted of only saki and canned crab meat. Why did they have this last farewell feast? Because General Saito, owing to his age and the exhausted condition of his body, would not participate in the attack of 7 July and had decided to commit harikiri in the cave. Ten A.M., 6 July! This time was set by the General himself as the final hour!"

Before General Saito kept his date with death on the morning of 6 July, he issued a last order-of-the-day, according to interrogations of another officer captured by the Marines. In this order Saito

gave the impression that he would personally lead the attack, but presumably he meant only in spirit. At any rate, he enjoined his soldiers: "Despite the bitterness of defeat, we pledge 'Seven lives to repay our country.' . . . In death there is life. We must utilize this opportunity to exalt true Japanese manhood. I will advance with those who remain to deliver still another blow to the American devils, and leave my bones on Saipan as a bulwark of the Pacific!"

There were no surviving witnesses to Saito's suicide, but the captured Jap officer quoted earlier reconstructed the scene as follows:

"I had to be up at the front that morning . . . so I was unable to witness the final hour. I think that it happened in the following manner. Cleaning off a spot on the rock himself, General Saito sat down. Facing the misty East and crying: '*Tenno Heika! Banzai!*' (Long live the Emperor! Ten thousand ages!) he drew his own blood first with his own sword, and then his adjutant shot him in the head with a pistol. When I returned to headquarters at 10 P.M., 6 July, they had already cremated the General's body. He had probably said: 'It makes little difference in this battle whether I die today or tomorrow, so I will die first. I will meet my staff in Yasakuni Shrine! 3 A.M., 7 July!' This last was the time ordered for the commencement of the attack.

"Because the units were confused and mixed . . . from the middle of the night of 6 July we set out for Matansha to gather the troops. However, as usual, we were shelled enroute. At 0330, the troops who were able to gather at Matansha, the non-combatant troops of the headquarters, all together totaled barely 600. Many had no weapons. The total participants I would estimate at about 1,500, mixed Army and Navy.

"The battle commences!"

"We had only one machine gun, but it kept

firing bravely, making night into day! About the time the gun was silenced the whole attack came to an untimely end, fading like the dew on the dawn of 7 July. 7 July! This is a significant day in the war. This was the day marking the end of the fighting on Saipan; the day when the brave officers and men of the Japanese Army followed General Saito to his end.

"I will attack the enemy again soon and join my brave comrades."

Despite the difficulties of mustering their men, Saito's staff had contrived the attack ingeniously. It was not a wholly disorganized charge. Advance infiltrators located the gap between the two Army battalions and slipped through it; by 0430, when the Japs began screaming "*Banzai!*" and abandoned all concealment, many of them were almost upon the Marines of 3/10. Although an accurate count was never possible, it seems likely that the captured Japanese officer underestimated the Jap force—2,000 is the best available figure. The Japs attacked with tanks, with rifles and machine guns, with mock rifles made into spears by lashed-on bayonets, with grenades, with bamboo spears, and with flashing Samurai swords. They hit both battalions of the 105th and then poured through the gap like rice through a funnel.

There may be some doubt as to the wisdom displayed in the manner of deployment of the 105th Regiment the night before the *banzai* charge; there can be no doubt that the soldiers of the two battalions fought with exemplary heroism. But they were overwhelmed by the fanatic attackers who sought not victory but death, and without the support of the veteran Marines of 3/10 and 4/10 and the reserve battalion of the 105th, the Jap offensive might well have swirled all the way into Garapan.

The first battery of 3/10 to be hit was, of

course, H Battery. A member of that battery, PFC Robert A. Olsen of New York, has written a dispassionate but graphic description of what happened next:

"At this time (about 0500) two enemy tanks, one amphibious, with approximately thirty Japanese behind the first tank, passed within three feet of my position, which was in the rear of the H Battery position. At the same time, there was a breakthrough in the Army lines, and approximately 2,500 Japanese charged our position from that direction. There were undoubtedly more acts of unnoticed heroism committed this day than could ever be counted.

"The gunners of the pieces were firing at less than $\frac{1}{10}$ th of a second, time fire. When the fuses could not be set fast enough, they fired ricochet fire, by lowering the muzzles and bouncing the shells off the ground. Individuals not on the guns were firing every conceivable type of weapon that we could find ammunition for.

"Approximately two hours later, when word was given to retreat, the men followed two paths: one led to safety, the other led to a position directly to our rear in the middle of an old enemy equipment dump. It was in this position that about forty of us formed a circle to ward off the enemy. We stayed in this position until about 4 P.M. At this time an Army tank and truck rescued us. During our encirclement, the casualties mounted until by the time we were rescued there were only nineteen of us that could still shoot a weapon."

The Japs who thus surrounded H battery and overran the fire direction center and aid station actually came from three directions. The breakthrough of the 105th lines was not entirely in the gap, but on the sea and inland flanks as well. The tanks mentioned by PFC Olsen came down the beach road and turned inland on another road that actually passed between H Battery and the



ON ERRAND OF MERCY, a Marine of Second Division reassures Japanese mother and children found hiding in hillside cave. This frightened family was led to safety in the internment camp near Lake Susupe.

FDC. The Marines, already occupied with the Japs attacking from the front, at first mistook them for U.S. Army troops. Meanwhile, another Jap spearhead had plunged south through the foothills, coming up against the Marines of G battery. The fire from G battery deflected this Jap force toward the sea—and into the I and H Battery positions.

Unlike some earlier *banzais*, the attack did not end quickly, however. The canefield just ahead of the 3/10 positions—between and to the rear of the army battalions—was alive with enemy troops.

All the rest of the morning and most of the afternoon was spent in digging them out and killing them. The Army moved up the reserve battalion of the 105th and parts of the 106th. The Marines of 4/10 came to the assistance of the valiant survivors of 3/10. As noted earlier, many pages would be required to record the heroic deeds of that terrible dawn, even if they had all been reported. The Marines in the Fire Direction Center were among the first to be assaulted, and they had retreated not an inch, fighting and dying at their posts. An ex-raider named Lea Bell, a



INSPECTING SAIPAN battlefield are Admiral Ernest King, chief of naval operations (*left*), Major General Holland M. Smith, and Admiral Chester Nimitz, commander of Pacific Ocean areas.

staff sergeant, had lain beneath a jeep and shot Jap after Jap, despite frightful wounds of his own. He died squeezing the trigger. A BAR man, PFC Bailey Naber of California, was attacked in his foxhole by more than a squad of Japs. He fought them off, killing several. Early in the attack Major Crouch, aware of the desperation of his position, hurried over to the coastal road to request the assistance of two Army tanks parked there. The tankmen were unwilling to leave their own areas without orders. Returning to his battalion, Crouch was shot and killed by Jap rifle-

men in the open field. Both the BN 2 and the BN 3, and nearly all of the computers in the FDC, already had perished. The surviving officers carried on brilliantly and bravely, with Captain Gavin Young of California and Lieutenant Arnold Hofstetter of Oregon providing particularly outstanding leadership.

When the fury of the attack became apparent to the nearby Marines of 4/10, a young PFC named Harold C. Agerholm instantly volunteered to go to 3/10's assistance. Agerholm found an unmanned ambulance jeep and headed it straight

into the battle, in reckless disregard of Jap rifle and mortar fire. Reaching the 3/10 zone of action, the youthful Marine from Wisconsin loaded as many wounded men into the jeep as it would hold and ran the hot gauntlet back to safety. Then he returned. Again and again Agerholm made this trip, loading, returning, loading, returning. In three amazing hours, single-handed, he evacuated forty-five wounded Marines. On his last trip, Agerholm spotted two injured comrades lying in the open, in a field of intense Jap fire. He vaulted out of the jeep and went to get them. A Jap sniper shot Agerholm dead. He became the sixth member of the Second Marine Division to be awarded the Medal of Honor.

The banzai charge cost 3/10 and 4/10 forty-five killed and eighty-two wounded. But these two artillery battalions, fighting with the big guns and with rifles, with bazookas and grenades and bayonets, paid back the enemy sixfold. They killed at least 300 Japs, and they formed the unbreakable line beyond which the enemy could not advance.

Banzai brought the Sixth and Eighth Marines out of bivouac and back into the final victory march on Saipan. In the afternoon of 7 July the two regiments were ordered to move up in support of the Twenty-seventh Division, and the next morning (8 July) they passed through the Army lines, crossing the canefield where most of the Japs had been slaughtered. The bodies of the enemy dead lay in clumps of five, ten, a dozen, or a hundred. They clogged the ditches and spilled over the hummocks. The veteran Marines walked through this gruesome field of corpses without emotion, wincing only when they saw the body of a dead Marine or Army soldier among the enemy troops he had slain.

The new Marine attack was a miniature repetition of the original Second Division assault on Saipan. While Marines of CT8 pushed up the

beach, CT8 wheeled through the hills in a wide arc designed to bring the Regiment back to the sea about three miles short of the end of the island. Saipan's knobby handle would be taken care of by the Fourth Division and the attached Second Marines, now pushing up the eastern coast.

For this offensive, the Twenty-seventh Division's 165th Regiment was attached to the Second Division, on the flank of CT8. The soldiers performed so ably that the Marines conferred on them their highest compliment: they called them "The 165th Marines." There were still plenty of Japs in the CT6 and CT8 areas, Japs who hadn't got the word in time to join the *banzai* charge, Japs who now sought belatedly to get passage on the one-way spirit express to Yasakuni. The General Shermans of the Second Tank Battalion bumped along, abreast of the Marine infantry, and with them rolled the halftracks of the various regimental weapons companies. It was on this day and the next that the Second Division contributed several more examples of selfless heroism, one in the person of a B Company Tank commander.

B Company was moving up in support of 2/6 when the infantry was held up by a strong Jap position. Sergeant Grant F. Timmerman of Kansas wheeled his big Sherman out ahead of the Marine line, and turned it toward a series of Jap pillboxes and trenches, firing his machine guns. Then Timmerman spotted a more substantial target—one that called for the Sherman's 75. He stopped the tank and lifted the hatch. As he stood up in the turret, a Jap soldier lobbed a grenade toward the open tank. There was less than a split second to make his decision, but Timmerman needed no more. He dropped on the grenade, blocking the opening into the body of the tank with his own body. The explosion almost tore him in two, but not one of his men was harmed. For this devotional sacrifice, Timmerman—like Agerholm the day be-

fore—was given the Medal of Honor posthumously.

At about the same time, in the Second Marine zone on the eastern shore, Sergeant Arthur Kozak of Nebraska was ordered to take his section of the K Company (3/2) machine-gun platoon through fifty yards of caves and underbrush to set up positions on the beach. With Pvt. Norman Arsenault, an eighteen-year-old ammunition carrier who came from Massachusetts, and Pvt. M. L. Duran, Kozak got two firing positions established on top of a seven-foot ledge. Below the ledge were many Jap pockets, and the section's job was to maintain a firefight with the Nips and thus prevent their escape to K Company's flank. It was a hot job, for the overhanging nature of the cliff made it necessary for the three men to expose themselves in order to find targets. They were using their rifles, for the positions provided no adequate fields of fire for machine guns. This little trio contained the enemy for more than an hour, unassisted, and Arsenault was particularly effective, crawling to the edge again and again in casual disregard of Jap bullets. The last of these trips came just as support arrived—and, ironically, it was fatal. Arsenault was shot through the head by a Jap sniper as he drew a bead on another enemy soldier.

On 9 July—D plus 24—CT8 came down from the hills to the sea, joining CT6 on the narrow beaches just short of the point where they disappeared in the high cliffs of Marpi Point. Once again the action was over for the Sixth and Eighth Marines. At about the same time, the Second Marines—attached to the Fourth Division—reached their assigned objective just short of the fighter strip at Marpi Point, and the Second Amphibian Tractor Battalion, carrying some bazookamen, rounded the cliffs by sea, to attack the Jap caves. On the northernmost height of Saipan, the

Marines looked off to the blue horizon. Every Marine knew that Tokyo lay just over it, only 1,500 miles away—a short distance indeed in terms of the vast Pacific. At 1600 Admiral Richmond Kelly Turner declared the island secured.

Secured? That's a very flexible word, as the Marines know. At midnight of the day Saipan was "secured," about fifty Japs crept out of their holes and hurled a small-scale but fearsome *banzai* attack at the 81mm Mortar platoon of 1/8. The platoon was under command of Lieutenant John Vickers, Jr., of Georgia, and he and his mortar-men fought off the Japs, though the latter had rifles, grenades and at least one heavy machine gun. Nearly all of the attackers were killed, and the platoon lost only one man killed and two wounded.

Early the next morning, elsewhere on the island, a wireman in the communications platoon of 3/2 was sitting on the edge of his foxhole, chatting with a friend. The wireman, Corporal Burton A. Brenden of Washington, heard a sound and turned. Coming out of the brush, only a few feet away, was a lone Jap soldier, his raised right hand holding a grenade. Brenden's friend, Pvt. Clifford A. Cederbloom of Minnesota, charged the Jap barehanded and took the full blast of the grenade in his groin and stomach. The grenade killed both Cederbloom and the Japanese, but it left Brenden unharmed.

On 10 July, on this "secured" island of Saipan, more than 2,000 additional Japs were killed, better than 500 of them by the Second Division. Some of the outfits were coming back to bivouac, but others would spend several additional days blasting the great caves around Marpi Point and mopping up numerous other bypassed pockets from Tapotchau to the end of the island. Few Marines who were present will ever forget the grim trage-



SUBLIME CONFIDENCE of Saipan's conquerors is exemplified by this Second Division Marine, who perches on an unexploded 16-inch shell to shake sand out of his shoes. This was not recommended procedure for Marines.

dies enacted near Marpi Point in those last days. The Jap military had terrorized thousands of Japanese civilian residents of the island with stories of Marine brutality. Now these misguided people, spurred by the surviving Jap soldiers, cast themselves off the high cliffs or swam out to drown at sea. In a way, the big Marpi mop-up was more rescue mission than an expedition for slaughter. The Second Marines made every effort to reassure

the horror-ridden civilians and at the same time to capture or destroy the remnants of the Jap military. Sometimes they were successful, sometimes not. But in terms of human values, there were many inspiring sights. Dog-tired Marine riflemen who had fought the Japs with all their skill and heart for twenty-five days now laid down their guns to carry wounded civilians or lost children to camps where they could be given treatment.

Although the Division did not know it at the time, this kindness was to be rewarding. Saipan, unlike Tarawa, was no hit-conquer-and-depart island. These bloodied fields and cliffs were the Division's new home, once the Marianas were secured. And for nearly a year Marines from the Second, Sixth, and Eighth regiments would sweep back and forth along the trails they had cut with bullet and flame, cleaning out the last, bitter-end defenders of the defeated Empire.

But that was future history, not present or past. A few immediate chores remained. On 13 July John Easley's 3/6 got a special assignment: the capture of tiny Maniagassa Island, in Tanapag harbor. The battalion, supported by amtracs, moved out about 1100 that morning and made the landing with little difficulty, after a twenty-minute artillery preparation by the Tenth Marines. There was slight resistance, and only one Marine, Sergeant Elva L. Moss, Jr., of Georgia, was wounded. In less than an hour, the island was secure.

On 15 July Garrison troops took over defense of the island, and at last—one month to the day after their arrival—the Second Division Marines were finally out of the line to stay. They trailed slowly back to their bivouac areas, to rest briefly, to repair their equipment, and finally to sort out the dead, the wounded and the missing. They had very little time for any of these things. Everybody knew by now that Saipan was only Phase I of the Northern Marianas operation. Across the narrow channel to the south lay Tinian, gleaming green in the sun and full of Japs. Occasionally shells shuttled back and forth across the channel, in renewals of counter-battery fire that had begun in the first days of the operation. Tinian would have to be taken, the Marines of the Second, Sixth, Eighth,

Tenth and Eighteenth, knew, and they would almost certainly be in on it.

Some of the Marines who had come all the way from Tulagi to the now-peaceful heights above Garapan looked long and hard across the blue waters and spoke quietly, as though to themselves. "How many times can you do this?" they asked. "How many beaches and how many islands before your luck runs out?" This was no slump in morale or esprit, but only the normal question that must in time occur to every brave man—particularly as he contemplates the losses of a campaign just ended. And the losses had been great—up to 60 per cent in some battalions. Greater than Tarawa, both in officers and men, though over a longer period, of course. All told, the island of Saipan had cost the United States 3,126 killed, 13,160 wounded and 338 missing. That was for all outfits on the island. The Second Division had the most killed, and the Fourth Division had the most wounded.

These were the Second Division's casualties: Killed in action—seventy-three officers, 1,077 men; wounded in action—226 officers, 4,688 men; missing in action—one officer, 105 men; total—300 officers, 5,870 men.

The dead Marines lay peacefully now in the cemetery Janvier and Todd had tended faithfully and well, in the flat below the radio station. White crosses would go up over the graves, as they had gone up at Tarawa and Guadalcanal and Tulagi. The scars of the Saipan earth would heal, and the orange blossoms of the flame trees would come again. The flame lighted by the Marine heroes buried here also would burn again—at Tinian, at Okinawa, wherever and whenever the Second Marine Division was called upon to serve its Corps and its country.

Chapter Eleven



SURPRISE LANDING

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WAR IN THE CANEBRAKES

TINIAN FALLS QUICKLY AND A NEW CAMP RISES ON SAIPAN

The tired veterans and bright young replacements of the Second Marine Division landed on the island of Tinian on the evening of 24 July and the morning of 25 July. By landing there, in company with the Fourth Marine Division, they saved themselves a much rougher landing later: the invasion of Japan itself. No one, of course—not even President Roosevelt—foresaw this at the time. But that was the way it worked out, as will be shown later in this chapter and in the chapter that follows. At the time, it just looked like more misery for men

who had drunk a full cup of the stuff in the preceding weeks.

Tinian Island was shaped like a blob of green grease, dripping off the head of the Saipan monkey wrench. It was a big blob, only slightly smaller than Saipan, eleven miles long by five wide, but its terrain was mild compared with the sister island two-and-one-half miles away. Tinian rose from a creamy girdle of surf in a series of gently-sloping plateaus, one stratum atop another, to a maximum altitude of around 500 feet. Only on its southern



A PLEA TO SURRENDER is addressed to Japs in cave by Marine language officer. Loud-speakers were used on both Saipan and Tinian.



BANZAI COMES QUICKLY on Tinian and ends with more than a thousand Japs cut to pieces.

tip were there wild crags and sharp escarpments. The island's western shore curved like the letter "S," and on the southwestern, inside curve was Sunharon, or Tinian Town. Its garrison was esti-

mated at 8,000 fighting Japs, 3,000 laborers and an undetermined number of civilian Japanese. On its long flat northern coast, just across from Saipan, was Ushi airdrome, the finest Jap airport in the Central Pacific.

Three days before the invasion of Tinian, the Marines and soldiers of the newly created Third Amphibious Corps, under Major General Roy S. Geiger, attacked Guam, and Lieutenant General Holland M. Smith sailed down to observe, from Kelly Turner's flagship. The Tinian job was left for Rear Admiral Harry Hill and Major General Harry Schmidt, who had been elevated from command of the Fourth Marine Division to leadership of the Fifth Amphibious Corps, in the same shift that made Smith Commander of FMF Pacific.

Seldom (if ever) in the Pacific campaign had Divisions as badly riddled as the Second and Fourth been launched into new offensives with only a fortnight's recess. Unlike Saipan, Tinian had relatively few imponderables—but among them was the question of whether the Marines could snap back from the exhausting battle ended on 9 July in time to make a fresh assault on 24 July. The answer proved ultimately to be "yes," but the period of "rest and rehabilitation" was not an easy one for the Second Division.

The overall breakdown of Division casualties cited in Chapter X gives only a faint clue to the problems of reorganization which had to be solved before Tinian could be attacked. These were largely at the battalion level—the Division command had come through the battle intact, and had functioned well.

But the battalions had suffered enormous percentage casualties, and had undergone many impromptu changes in command. Let's take one outfit, and call it Battalion X:

Battalion X, on Saipan's D Day, had totaled 960 men, with its LT reinforcements. In the shock-



CRUISER SUPPORT is provided Marines as their amphibious tractors head in for Tinian's narrow, boulder-flanked landing beaches. Ships and planes had been bombarding island for weeks.

ing month of Saipan's conquest and mop-up, it had had 104 men killed, 365 wounded, and on 15 July seventeen were still missing. There had been 155 cases of illness—dengue or dysentery or

recurring malaria. That made the overall ineffectives, including sickness, 641—641 out of 960. Most of the sick had returned to action, as had seventy-five of the wounded. But this still left the



TINIAN AIRDROME falls to Marines of the Second Division, who overrun it in two days and then swing to the south. Hangars are at left, beyond earth revetments. Many Jap planes were cut up for watch-bands.

battalion with a final casualty figure of 62 per cent. And Battalion X had been at Guadalcanal (casualties 25 per cent) and Tarawa (casualties 50 per cent). Add them up: 137 per cent for the war.

The problem now before Battalion X—and before all the other Second Division battalions—was the fitting of replacements, many of them “boots” fresh from the States, into the depleted companies and platoons. Not only fitting them in, but training them quickly for action against the enemy. Some of this training had been done already, on the heights of Tapotchau and on Tipo Pale and Sugar Loaf and in Garapan. Some of the young replacements were veterans now, aged a year in a fortnight. Some but not all. And the old and new veterans had to turn out and train with the brand-new members, train instead of rest, because there was so little time.

The new recruits weren't all in the ranks. The men who inherit command of battalions during battles don't always keep them after battles end. Seniority figures, then—and, of course, promotions. In the hiatus between 9 July and 24 July, seven Second Division battalions got new commanders. Lieutenant Colonel Walter F. Layer of

Pennsylvania took over 3/2; Lieutenant Colonel Edmund B. Games of Ohio was given 2/6; Lieutenant Colonel Lane C. Kendall of New York got 2/8; Lieutenant Colonel Gavin C. Humphrey of Nebraska assumed leadership of 3/8; those were the infantry changes. In the Tenth Marines, Lieutenant Colonel Donovan D. Sult of Iowa became C. O. of 1/10; Major David L. Henderson of Virginia took over 2/10; and Lieutenant Colonel William C. Capehart got 3/10.

The old Marines of the Second Division took their brief rest and resumption of training philosophically, just as they took the imminence of a new battle. “Anyway,” one of them said, “we'll get a couple days on shipboard, with showers and ice cream.” A shower and a Dixie Cup seemed like little enough reward for men who had conquered Saipan and now would challenge the Jap in another Marianas fortress.

For nearly fifty days, from the time of our arrival off Saipan, the warships of the fleet had been bombarding Tinian. After Saipan was secured, thirteen battalions of artillery, corps and division, (all bigger than 75mm) reversed their positions and began tossing shells across the deep-water

strait. Carrier aircraft carried out periodic bombing missions, and the Thunderbolts of the Seventh AAF, flying off Aslito Airfield on Saipan (newly named "Isely Field" for a carrier airman), made the war's shortest milk run daily. With this vast preparation, it seemed almost impossible that we could attain surprise in the landing. There were only two reasonably good beaches—one at Sunharon, and the other on the eastern shore. However, on the northwest coast near Ushi Field were two narrow strips of sand between coral boulders, washed by a hard surf. The Japs didn't think we could land there, so we did.

For three days before Jig Day (so named to differentiate it from D Day on Saipan and William Day on Guam), the battleships concentrated on the Sunharon beaches. While this was going on, Marines "in blackface" actually stole ashore on the northwest and eastern beaches of Tinian to investigate landing conditions and Jap installations. These were the daring members of the Corps Reconnaissance battalion, under Major James Jones of Missouri. They shared honors for these nightly forays with the Navy's underwater demolition teams. On Jig Day morning two regiments of the Second Division, CT2 and CT8, boated in APA's, steamed down to the area of Tinian Town and simulated landing preparations. The battleships bombarded the Tinian capital with the customary pre-landing fury, and the destroyers moved in close to hit at pin-point targets. The Japs mustered all their strength to meet this invasion, firing back and getting hits on the Battleship *Colorado* and the Destroyer *Norman Scott*. Sixty minutes before H-Hour the U.S. force suddenly melted away, and for a moment the Japanese experienced a wild sense of elation. This didn't last long.

The bombardment ships had not retreated, but only moved. Now they brought the "White Beaches" at the northwest tip under intense fire,

and rocket ships closed the coral. Thunderbolts swept in to drop bombs which sent flame mushrooming over huge areas near the beaches—"Napalm" bombs, a mixture of gasoline and a special jelly, being used for the first time anywhere. (The Japs of Yokohama and Tokyo came to know them well, later on.) On Saipan, all thirteen battalions of artillery were in action, building a wall of flying steel fragments across Tinian's midriff, to bottle up the suddenly frustrated defenders of Tinian Town. Under this furious barrage, the Marines of the Fourth Division invaded Tinian Island.

For this time the Second Division was, at last, a "bridesmaid." Not surprisingly, General Schmidt had chosen his own old outfit—the Fourth—for the assault. And, thanks to the brilliant scheme of using the impossible beaches, we had attained surprise. The Fourth got some fire, especially on White Beach 2, but nothing to compare with Saipan. As they had at Saipan, the Marines of the Second Armored Amphibian Tank Battalion led the assault waves ashore in the big "armored pigs." Offshore, CT8 and CT2 waited in the transports, ready to go in when ordered. CT6, meanwhile, boarded LST's at Garapan to join the other Second Division regiments.

There were, however, some Second Division Marines in the assault. These were the two "peashooter" battalions of the Tenth Marines, 1/10 and 2/10, which had been attached to the Fourth Division for the landing. They established their positions quickly and joined with the artillery firing from Saipan to prevent the Japs from moving up-island to meet the Marine offensive. Noon came and passed, and out of the transports other members of the "SecMarDiv" fidgeted. Finally, at 1615, an order came to 1/8 to prepare to land on White Beach 1. Before dusk, the riflemen had joined the two artillery outfits. Although there had



LIKE A BIG CHECKERBOARD from the air, Tinian is highly-cultivated island of canefields. This view looks north, with smoke marking Ushi airfield. Main roads were graveled and passable even in downpour.

been only a sprinkling of enemy fire during this D Day debarkation, the landing had been complicated by the rough surf and the narrowness of the beach—LVT's had to go in two abreast. It was nearly black dark, before 1/8 completed digging in for Jig Night.

We had learned at Tarawa that any measures calculated to bring the Japs out of their holes and lure them into attack are profitable. That first night at Tinian, Marine intelligence guessed the Nips in Sunharon would scurry north and try to sweep our troops off the beach. The Marines planned accordingly. Just after dusk the whole beachhead perimeter was looped with barbed wire. Then the line

companies withdrew a few yards inside this jagged barrier and set up their guns. And waited.

The Japs did not disappoint us. Soon after midnight they began moving up the north-south roads. When some of the Japs penetrated the junction of the two Fourth Division CT's, members of 2/10 brought them under heavy machine-gun and rifle fire and accounted for at least 100 enemy troops. All around the perimeter the Japs rushed in, sometimes, with tanks—and all the way around the Jap soldiers tangled up in the barbed wire and were cut to pieces by Marine fire. Jap artillery—all 75mm—was put out of action by our own counter-battery efforts. Toward morning, one com-



PUSH THROUGH CANEBRAKES finds Second Division tank and infantry teams advancing with perfect precision toward plateaus which rise from Tinian's southern shore. Japs made their main effort on higher ground.

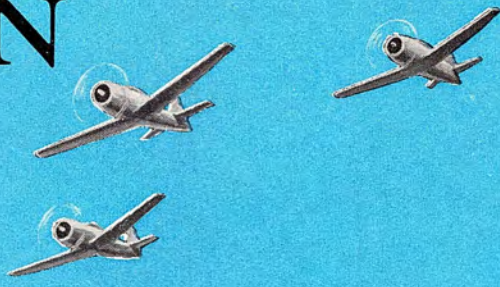
pany of 1/8 was sent forward to assist 2/10 and Fourth Division riflemen. The rest of 1/8 was not needed. When the last attack was blunted, broken and then shattered, along the entire front, more than 1,500 Japanese had uselessly sacrificed themselves. The beachhead was intact, and Marine losses were light. The Marines only wished that they could entice the rest of Tinian's garrison into such foolhardy and profitless assaults.

The Second Division began coming ashore in force on the morning of Jig plus 1—25 July. First in were the other units of CT8—2/8, 3/8, and the Regimental Command. Around noon CT2

joined in the parade ashore, and before nightfall the Division command had reached the beach. While these ship-to-shore movements were in progress, 1/8 and 2/8 were attacking due east on the left flank of the assault, in the direction of Ushi airdrome. Opposition was light. During the night, CT6 landed from LST's and the Division was once again fully committed and ready to roll. The Corps plan had cut Tinian neatly in two, with the Second Division scheduled to sweep around the northern tip and then, coming abreast of the Fourth Division, drive straight south to victory. Everything went as planned.

On Jig plus 1 (25 July) CT8 and CT2 relieved

TINIAN



25 July
1944



the Fourth Division's CT24. The next morning they pushed inland and to eastward, supported by the General Shermans of the Second Tank Battalion, under Major Charles W. McCoy of Texas, which landed about 1000. The morning of Jig plus 2 was rich in rewards. The Marines overran Ushi airdrome, virtually without losses, to give the United States a fine, wide, beautifully drained airport aimed straight at Tokyo. They swept over the low ledges and plateaus, moving behind their tanks and the rolling curtain of artillery. We had secured the waters around Tinian, and there was little necessity for the haste of Saipan. Both the Second and Fourth Divisions were tired, and the command knew it. They could afford to move at a leisurely pace, utilizing firepower to diminish risk. By mid-afternoon the eastward objectives had been obtained and CT6 moved in on the right of CT2 and both teams wheeled toward the south, with 1/10 and 2/10 in close artillery support. Nightfall found them well advanced, and almost up to the Fourth Division line across the right flank of the island. Casualties for the day: two killed, fourteen wounded.

But that night the Japs lashed back once again, counterattacking fiercely in the CT2 zone. The Marines had not become careless—they were well prepared for the Jap assault, and they repulsed it without serious losses, killing 137 Japs. At 0730 on 27 July—Jig plus 3—our own offensive resumed, with CT2 and CT6 in the line and CT8 in reserve. The terrain was favorable, and we had killed most of the adventurous Japs during the night. The two combat teams advanced more than 2,000 yards, without serious trouble, tying in that night with the Fourth Division flank in a line that split the whole northern nose off Tinian. During this day of battle the 105mm howitzers of both the Second and Fourth Divisions which had been placed under control of the Tenth Marines on

Saipan, moved to Tinian to support the push south. These included 3/10, 4/10, 3/14, 4/14, and 5/14. On Jig plus 4 and Jig plus 5 both Divisions were engaged in a sort of race through the plateau canefields, against constantly light opposition. In some areas the countryside (cane crop aside) looked almost like sections of the rural U.S. In others, it was gouged by volcanic ridges and low cliffs. But one thing Tinian had that set it apart even from the Middle West in July—and that was heat. During these two days we lost more men to heat prostration (call it sunstroke, if you like) than we did to enemy action.

When the Second and Fourth Divisions halted to consolidate in the afternoon of Jig plus 5—29 July—they had occupied two-thirds of the island. Ahead on the right, and not far ahead, was Sunharon. Ahead on the left were the high stone outcroppings that made southern Tinian a jungled plateau almost as difficult to penetrate as Tapotchau. There were Japs in the town and Japs in the ridged jungle. They were almost ready to make their last stand, and the Marines were not surprised to find them determined to make it. Nobody believed any more that the Japs would ever surrender in a body.

We had invaded Tinian with bright sunshine glittering off smooth, tropic seas. The fine weather did not hold. On 27 July the Marianas were whipped by the tail of a typhoon which had centered far to the south and west. Rain deluged down on the Marines, turning the heat to steam and the rich red soil of the island to an abysmal, ankle-clutching muck. The seas turned dirty blue and began to pile up around the island in higher and higher waves. The surf roared among the boulders on the White Beaches, and rocked the floating piers which had been installed on Jig Day. An LST was driven against the shore and had to be abandoned.

Even with the light resistance encountered in the middle days of the operation, this storm might well have brought costly delay but for the efficiency of the Marine Amphibious Truck Battalions. In seas that often swamped LVT's and made Higgins boats completely unmanageable near the beaches, the DUKW's swarmed back and forth, ship-to-shore, bringing needed ammunition and supplies, and evacuating casualties. There was an even swifter and more comfortable route to safety and hospital care for the latter. After Jig plus 3, many of them were flown from Ushi Field to Isely Field—probably the shortest air evacuation run in history.

Despite the discomfort of the rain and the nightly misery of digging in through deep mud, the Marines were prepared for the stiffening defense that began to become manifest on Jig plus 6—30 July. There had been a few minor infiltrations during the night, none successful. At dawn Kyle had sent a 1/2 patrol 500 yards forward to inspect the base of the rocky hill just ahead of the Division, on Tinian's easternmost bulge. The patrol had been caught in a steady fusillade of Japanese rifle and machine-gun fire, and was pinned flat.

A platoon of Tanks from C Company, 2nd Tank Battalion, was dispatched to relieve the patrol, and finally outgunned the Japs. The Division attack jumped off, and CT6—CT8, less one battalion, was still in reserve—pushed forward inshore without meeting much resistance. The Second Regiment, with 2/8 attached, had more trouble. The Japs who had halted the patrol were entrenched in the nose of the hill, but an accurate heavy artillery concentration from three battalions of the Tenth Marines finally destroyed them and the Marines of 1/2, 2/2, 3/2 and 2/8 swarmed over the high ground and pushed ahead to the O-7 phase line facing the final high plateau



AN UPHILL FIGHT in the literal sense confronts Marines of CT6 and CT8, as they begin to slug their way up the southern Tinian cliffs.



DESPONDENT JAPANESE prisoners are hauled out of bush by two Marines, who herd them toward POW stockade for interrogation.



AFTER TWO BATTLES in as many months, the dead-tired Second Division Marines drop off to sleep on Tinian's rocks whenever a lull in the attack permits a nap. Japs seldom permitted an uninterrupted night's sleep.

—a plateau barred from the attackers by sheer cliffs and dense jungle. There appeared to be no way up this natural fortress from the area of the east coast. While 3/2 was busy destroying a by-passed Jap strong-point which suddenly had come to life in its rear (flame-throwing tanks and demolitions were used), General Watson was wrestling with the problem of how to take the cliffs. His decision: to send CT8 into the line on the right of CT6, with CT2 holding its position of the left flank to contain the Japs on the plateau. Over on the west side of the island, the Fourth Division had driven through the ruins of Sunharon

behind a fearsome naval bombardment and air strikes in which 1,000-pound bombs were used, and come up even with the Second, on the O-7 line. The cliffs rose in front of both Divisions, and both were ordered to attack the next morning.

The jump-off came at 0830, CT2 on the left, CT6 in the middle, CT8 on the right. By noon the Second Marines were at the very foot of the cliffs, deployed in an arc designed to hold any Japs attempting to flank the attack. CT6, moving along higher ground, reached the approaches to the plateau at 1330—like CT2, without suffering particularly heavy casualties. In the CT8 zone of ac-



BABY AND MARINE make friends through wire of internment camp after Tinian battle ends. This bearded veteran has paused to share his candy ration with native tot. Even in heat of battle Marines tried to spare the innocent.

tion the story was different. The Japs were giving the Eighth Marines everything they had saved up during the week of the operation. Mortar and artillery fire rained down from the skies, and machine-gun and rifle bullets came from every section of the CT8 front. Lieutenant Colonel Humphrey's 3/8, inching forward despite the fierce resistance, found a narrow road that appeared to lead to the top of the plateau, but did not. On Humphrey's flank, Hays had taken 1/8 straight up into the brakes—and before long the two battalions lost contact in the high cane.

But at 1630, after a breathless and valiant two-

hour climb against desperate opposition, Marines of A Company crawled over the edge of the plateau and continued the attack. Finding little resistance to their front, they moved rapidly forward some 500 yards. But the Japs were not yet through. They launched a counterattack against the exposed left flank of the first battalion, forcing the Marines, now almost out of ammunition after the day's fighting, to pull back this flank in order to meet the new threat. Colonel Wallace immediately ordered Kendall to take 2/8 up the cliff to exploit the breakthrough and support Hays' battalion. Although Humphrey had brought his bat-

talion to the base of the cliff, the gap between 1/8 on top, and 3/8 at the base, was too great to be closed. Holding out a considerable reserve, 2/8 tied into Hays' left flank, extending a line down the face of the cliff. By nightfall the Eighth Marines had a precarious perch on the rim of the rocky table land, and ammunition was rushed up over a narrow winding road. At 1830, choosing the point of juncture of the two battalions, the Japs again counterattacked and were repulsed. The Marines knew they would come again.

They did, but by then a platoon of 37mm guns had been dragged up the cliff road and were in position on the right of 2/8's line. The Japs were very close—when patrols moved out they found the enemy only 20 yards away. Barbed wire, in the face of enemy fire, had to be passed from foxhole to foxhole, and then rolled into position. Despite their obvious knowledge of Marine preparations, the Japs attacked again at 2300 and ran smack into canister fire from the 37s. The enemy switched his strategy. 1/8's right flank was refused as far as possible, being tied into the top of the cliff, but approximately 150 Japs circled it about 0100, cut the narrow road to the lowlands, and drove into the Marine positions. Promptly the reserve of 2/8 counterattacked to dispose of this new threat from the right flank rear. In a sharp close skirmish most of the Japs were killed, 20 of them choosing harikiri.

All of these attacks had been preliminaries. The main event came at 0515 on Jig plus 8—August 1. Some 500 Japs came howling into the frail lines along the ridge, concentrating their main strength in the area of the two 37mm guns on the right of 2/8's line. The Marines answered from below with 81 and 60mm mortars and from their foxholes with rifle, machine-gun and canister fire. The battle was savage while it lasted—only two members of the 37mm gun squads escaped death

or injury. But the Marines held, and when the Japs withdrew, our Sherman tanks—crawling up the rough road from the foot of the cliff—closed on them and destroyed their rear guard. The battle cost the Japs 200 dead, and CT8 sustained seventy-four casualties.

It had been a night of insecurity and alarms, but also a night of worthwhile achievement. The Japs had shot their bolt, now. In the first light hours of Jig plus 8 the Marines of CT6 scrambled up the cliff to reinforce CT8, and at 0815 two battalions—3/6 and 3/8—struck across the plateau to establish a line on its southern rim, where the rocks fell away in a series of escarpments to the sea. Both combat teams joined in this push, spreading out over the whole plateau. This southern tip of Tinian was called Marpo Point (not to be confused with Marpi Point, the northernmost tip of Saipan) and strange scenes of desperation now confronted the Marines. Once more the Japs were seeking release in suicide, and far below on the narrow beaches civilians were wringing their hands and leaping out into the water to drown. In the honeycomb of caves in the cliffs, the Marines could hear grenades popping. The news came up from Corps soon after that: Tinian declared secure at 1855.

If there was a touch of irony in the "securing" of Saipan, there was a fistful at Tinian. Oh, sure, "secure" means the end of "organized resistance"—not *all* resistance. But the Japs who hit the command post of the Third Battalion, Sixth Marines, on the morning of 2 August were fairly well organized in the opinion of the men who fought them. The night of 1 August Lieutenant Colonel John Easley had set up his headquarters on the plateau. There seemed little likelihood of any further attacks in force, and the CP personnel were equipped only with pistols and carbines, except for two BAR men. Most of them were clerks and corporals.

At about 0500 a group of bitter-end Japs closed

in on the headquarters unit. How many? Estimates vary, from 100 to 250. But plenty. The Japs carried some of their light Nambu machine guns, as well as rifles. The alert came in the nick of time, and Easley quickly organized his little company for defense. The fight was brief but violent. The BAR men kept their guns pumping and every Marine present fought as though his very life depended on the outcome—as it did. Before a tank rolled up to the rescue, the defending Marines had killed more than 100 Japs. But they had taken some casualties, too—and one of them was Easley. He was the only senior officer of the Second Division killed on Tinian—and, in the opinion of many enlisted Marines who wrote the author to describe this incident, he was one of the best.

As if the 3/6 incident were not enough, the next day—3 August—a Second Division Marine performed so heroically that he was awarded a posthumous Medal of Honor—a medal won two days after the battle officially ended! Like Timmerman and Epperson on Saipan, Pfc. Robert L. Wilson of Illinois sacrificed his own life to save his comrades from a Japanese hand grenade. Young Wilson was advancing ahead of a squad of Marines attempting to neutralize caves on Tinian's rugged southern cliffs when a Jap grenade landed squarely in the midst of the group. Wilson screamed a warning and threw himself over the missile, smothering it with his body and taking the full force of the explosion.

The mopping up of the southern Tinian caves took elements of the Second Division a full three weeks, and brought death to hundreds of Japanese and some Marines. Like the terrain around Marpi Point on Saipan, this wilderness was difficult to approach and there were only a few paths down its steep cliffs. One Marine battalion lowered much of its supplies down an improvised "trolley," made by stringing a Jap cable from a higher cliff



MILLIONAIRE MARINES (in terms of yen) play poker with Japanese bank notes captured on Tinian.



INSIDE NATURAL FORTS on Saipan and Tinian Marines found network of caves and tunnels which Japs had used for defense and for storing supplies.



MARINE MASCOT, a monkey captured on Saipan and named "Eight Ball," looks on disapprovingly while Marines enjoy a swim in one of the island's tiny bays. This was one of several mascots adopted by Division.

to a lower one and using jeep power. In one way the operation was a considerable success. Word apparently had traveled from Saipan that the Marines had been misrepresented by the Jap military, and the Japanese civilians of Tinian proved a good deal more willing to surrender and less enamored of suicide. Marine language teams, with loudspeakers, lured many of them to the safety of the big internment settlement established in the north, near Ushi Field.

The battle of Tinian ended officially in nine days, with more than 5,000 Japs destroyed,

counted and buried; more than 9,000 civilians interned; and with 252 military prisoners. The Second Division lost only 104 men killed—the same number lost by a single battalion on Saipan. It had 654 wounded, but only three missing.

A day or so after the battle ended, a civilian correspondent asked General Edson: "Which was the worst campaign, General?" Edson grinned and sucked on his cigarette. "They were all bad," he said. "There are no easy campaigns. At Guadalcanal it was the dirt and the strain, and having to lie there night after night in the lines and take it



AN EARLY COOKSHACK at Saipan camp puts out hot chow for Marines who have been living on K rations for weeks. At this point any kind of warm food was welcome.

from the Japs. At Tarawa, for the first thirty hours the issue was in doubt. At Saipan it was the mortars and the artillery and the terrain.

“The worst campaign,” Red Mike said, “is the one in which you get hit.”

For the 104 men of the Second Division killed on Tinian, that “easy” campaign was, beyond argument, the worst.

The end of the northern phase of the Marianas operation found members of the Second Marine Division scattered over half of the face of the

earth. Some of the wounded had been flown back to the naval hospital at Aiea, in Honolulu, and thence to the States. Many more had been carried almost due south, on the big, brightly lighted hospital ships, to the naval hospitals in the Russell Islands, north of Guadalcanal. The “attached” battalion which had performed so superbly on Saipan—1/29—was detached in September (after sitting out Tinian) and sent to Guadalcanal to join its parent outfit, the Twenty-ninth Regiment of the Sixth Marine Division.

The Marines remaining in the Marianas were

split between the two islands, with the Eighth Regiment settling down on Tinian and the Sixth, Second and Tenth moving back to Saipan. During this movement, largely made from the piers of Tinian Town, one legitimately frightened Marine accomplished something the Japs had never been able to do—he made 3/10 take cover. The alarm began when said Marine came around a corner on the dead run, yelling like crazy. The battalion didn't know what was after him, but its members didn't wait to inquire. They hit the deck, and the scuttlebutt flew—Jap attack, bombing raid, dud blockbuster about to go off! The final explanation: the running Marine had stumbled into a hornet's nest while souvenir hunting.

For the week immediately following the "securing" of Tinian, most of the Second Division's elements were either mopping up or packing up. On the morning of 9 August the Division CP shut down on Tinian and reopened within a few hours on Saipan. By 13 August the entire Division, except for the Eighth Marines, were back on the monkey-wrench island. Meanwhile, the Fifth Amphibious Corps had dreamed up a new chore for the Second: the capture of Aguijan Island, south of Tinian.

Aguijan looked like trouble. It was small but it rose sheer from the water, like a gray and ominous iceberg. On 11 August Division officers reconnoitered the beaches, and on 13 August a special landing force was set up to take the island, under command of Lieutenant Colonel John H. Griebel of New Jersey. This highly heterogenous force included the Division Reconnaissance company and one rifle company of 1/2, commanded by Major Loren E. Haffner of Washington, whose regular duty was with the Sixth Regiment; the remainder of 1/2, plus a Shore Fire Control party and Air Liaison team, under Lieutenant Colonel C. O. Totman of Massachusetts; and a support group made

up of engineer, amtrac, pioneer and medical detachments. One battalion of the Eighth Marines was placed in reserve.

On 23 August artillery, surface bombardment, and air strikes were used in a concerted reduction of Aguijan that lasted three days and had been ordered despite the inability of a ground reconnaissance party to effect a preliminary landing. After this assault, a new reconnaissance was attempted and P-47s smashed Aguijan's tiny town. Having done all this, on 8 September the Corps called off the whole business and decided to keep Aguijan under surveillance, like a bad boy on probation.

While these abortive preparations had been in progress, the Second Division units not involved had been busy with many other tasks. One was the building of camps, which as usual fell to the Marines themselves. They were pretty well distributed, from the north end of the island near Marpi Point, to the southern plateau near Aslito. This period also saw further changes in the organic structure of the Division. On 16 August the Eighteenth Marine Regiment was inactivated. The old 1/18 under Lieutenant Colonel A. L. Vogt was redesignated the Second Engineer Battalion while 2/18 under Lieutenant Colonel C. J. Salazar was renamed the Second Pioneer Battalion. Structurally, this got the Division right back to 1942.

In some ways, the battle of Saipan never seemed to end. On 22 August the Second Division formally took charge of the continuing mop-up, relieving the Twenty-seventh Army Division. Japs were still being killed on Saipan when Japan surrendered, and in the first months of occupation the bag often was large. Both the Second and Sixth Marines were involved in extensive patrols through the Tapotchau ridges in September, while the Eighth Regiment was similarly occupied on Tinian. In early October the final resistance dwin-



BLONDE BOMBSHELL Betty Hutton lines up for chow at the enlisted mess on Saipan after Second Division camp is established. She was one of the first major stars to bring USO show to the Marianas.

dled to infrequent sniper fire on the latter island, and CT8—less 1/8—was moved across to Saipan, in preparation for a Division-wide offensive.

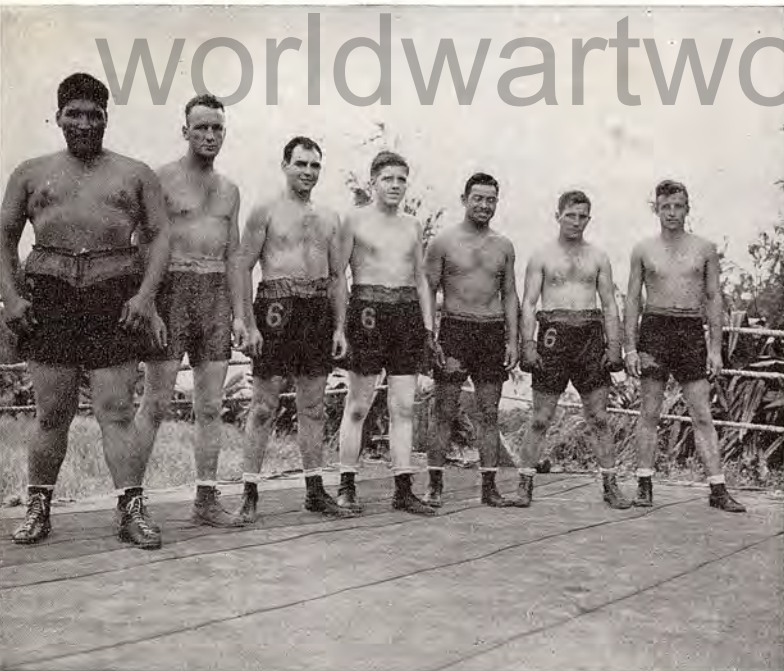
With their camps built, canvas stretched, and hot chow available, life was a little less gloomy for the Second Division Marines. The rainy season that had kept Saipan and Tinian floating in mud through much of August and September was about over. Both islands were beginning to take shape, to look like areas normally inhabitable by Americans. The Second Motor Transport Battalion kept its big two and one-half-ton trucks running twenty-

hours a day to supply the various infantry and artillery outfits, after setting up shop in forty-eight hours in a muddy canefield. (Later the battalion built a storeroom and garage, thirty by sixty feet, using Jap railroad iron.)

There was occasional entertainment—Betty Hutton and her U. S. O. troupe turned up, as did other film and vaudeville stars (“poor trade for Wellington,” muttered the old-timers, meaning no disrespect toward the luscious but terribly unavailable Miss Hutton). There was also much sickness. The Marianas had their own boneracking bug—



THE PRIZE SOUVENIR of Saipan battle is this gigantic Japanese flag, captured in Mutcho Point command post area by Second Division.



FIGHTING WITH FISTS instead of guns, these seven huskies won Division boxing championships in winter sports program at Saipan camp.

dengue. This mosquito-borne misery sometimes was called "breakbone fever," for obvious reasons, and few Marines escaped it. Corpsmen and pharmacist's mates worked long hours fighting mosquitoes with DDT and other preventatives.

In November, as security became ever more important and Jap air raids increased, the nuisance attacks by surviving Japanese on the island became insupportable. Each new day found a Marine killed here, a civilian captured or supplies stolen. A good example of the prevalence of Jap interference was the experience of 1/10. While on a routine service practice, the artillerymen were engaged by two groups of Japanese. Marines from the firing batteries under Lieutenant Colonel Sult killed eleven Japs in the caves near the water on the East coast, while forward observer parties commanded by Major Frederick Aldridge of Virginia killed twelve more. One Marine was killed.

To put an end to such organized disruption, General Watson ordered a Division-wide offensive for 15 November, through the northern and central sections of Saipan. This drive jumped off on schedule and swept through the ravines and ridges for three days, with all the Division Marines in action except 1/8, now under command of Lieutenant Colonel Richard W. Hayward, which was doing much the same thing on Tinian. When this mass patrol ended, the Marines had killed 255 Japs, and captured forty-seven. Marine losses were nine killed and forty wounded. Impressive? Yes, but so was Tinian. When 1/8 finally embarked for Saipan six weeks later, on 30 December, 542 enemy Japs had been killed *after* the secure date.

The changing character of Saipan and Tinian had its counterpart in the changing personnel of the Second Marine Division. Marines who had come to believe that only a wound would ever get

them home were pleasantly disillusioned after the Marianas offensive. Rotation finally caught up with the Second Division, and an estimated sixty-four officers and 1200 enlisted got that long-dreamed-of ticket home to the States, sailing from Tinian on 7 August, 1944. Many others were transferred, as FMF Pacific got set for new amphibious operations. By the end of November, the Division strength was down to about 16,500 men—an all-time low point. Only a few of these had personal war memories stretching back to Tulagi and Gavutu and Guadalcanal. More were veterans of Tarawa, but many of the heroes of Betio also had gone Stateside or to other jobs.

Yet, as we have observed many times before in this narrative, the essential character of the Second Marine Division did not change, no matter how greatly its personnel shifted. Replacements sometimes learned the Division way the hard way—as in the ridges of Tapotchau. They sometimes learned by a kind of osmosis, the result of endless hours of bivouac association with Marines who themselves knew only by hearsay the fabulous tales of Lunga and the Matanikau and the Burns-Philp pier.

Other Marine Divisions were being formed or already were in the field, many of them bulwarked by cadres of veterans from the Second. The old First Division, after an almost 100 per cent turnover in personnel, had again been in dramatic and costly action, in this fall of 1944—capturing Peleliu in the Palaus, an Iwo Jima in miniature. The Fourth Division, back at Maui, was resting for a new ordeal; the Fifth had inherited the old Second Division camp on Hawaii; the Sixth was shaping up in Guadalcanal. The war was hammering toward a conclusion, and it had been a Marines' war in the Pacific. Appreciating the valor and the victories of its sister units, the Second Division still considered itself second to none.

Now on Saipan the Division, after its October low-water mark, began to get new drafts of replacements. It passed out of control of the Fifth Amphibious Corps, to the Third Corps which was part of the new Tenth Army. The Marines sensed that something new lay ahead, and that their units were being “beefed up” for it. Meanwhile, there was the work of patrolling, the grind of training, and the many essential specialties to be maintained. One of these last was particularly valuable. This was the Second Division Japanese Language school, founded by Captain John E. Merrill of California and Lieutenant Paul S. Dull of Washington. The value of Japanese-speaking Marines had been proved at Saipan and Tinian. Now, in the school, experienced instructors crammed young Marines with the strange, difficult tongue—a knowledge that was to prove extremely useful before the approaching year was out.

While the battle for Saipan was in progress, Stateside newspapers reaching the besieged island carried two stories that were bitter tea for the fighting Marines. One was a repetition of the Tarawa canards: The Marine Corps once again (it said) had charged recklessly into a Jap strong-point and was slaughtering the nation's youth. The other told of the Army's triumphant entry into Rome, through streets crowded with cheering Italians, on streets paved with flowers, between sidewalks teeming with beautiful, affectionate and grateful girls. The Marines looked up from these sad newspapers and looked out across the awful mountain and down on the ruins of Garapan. What they said was scatological, and to the point.

The Marines before long got vivid confirmation of the value of their sacrifices in the Marianas. By the end of July, Army engineers were working around the clock building a giant airfield on

Kagman peninsula, along Saipan's eastern shore. Isely Field was enlarged and improved. When Tinian fell, other engineers began expanding the Ushi airdrome and building another near it. These airstrips, with their gigantic installations, were not being established to bomb the next Jap island, but the Japanese homeland itself. The Marines knew this, the Army knew it, and the Japs knew it. Night after night through the fall months and the winter and spring that followed, the Japanese attacked Saipan and Tinian with all the planes they could muster. The air raids were reminiscent of Guadalcanal, for the old-timers. But now we could shoot back in strength, and field night and day fighters to meet the threat. The Japs were a nuisance, and sometimes a deadly one. But the work went on.

On October 12 the Marines heard thunder in the skies, and they turned out of their tents and crawled up from the ravines, where many were patrolling, to watch in awe and wonder. What they saw was the biggest airplane any of them had ever seen, coasting down toward the great new airdrome on Kagman point. The B-29's had come to Saipan, and the climactic air offensive against Japan was at last in the making. Many Marines had died to make it possible for these silver mon-

sters to land and take off and land again in the Marianas Islands. Was the sacrifice worthwhile? If there was any doubt, any doubt at all, it should have ended on 5 August, 1945, when a B-29 called the *Enola Gay* took off from Tinian Island on a mission that shook and revolutionized the world. But that story belongs in the next chapter.

The first B-29 bombing raid on Tokyo was flown from Saipan on November 24, 1944. Night after night, month after month, the big bombers flew north—through the Jap interceptors at Iwo Jima—to strew ruin on the cities of the enemy. In January, to stop Jap interference with the '29's and to gain an effective base to fly fighter cover for them, Marines of the Third, Fourth and Fifth Divisions invaded and secured the fortress of Iwo Jima. In March tough Major General Curtis LeMay brought the big bombers down to 6,000 feet and burned up most of Yokohama and Tokyo with the Napalm bomb first used at Tinian. And on April 1 the U.S. Tenth Army, under the command of Lieutenant General Simon Bolivar Buckner, invaded the huge island of Okinawa, 500 miles off the China coast and only 300 miles south of the Japanese mainland. It was April Fools' Day, and the Second Marine Division was on hand to play an April Fools' joke on the Japs.

Chapter Twelve



FIRST RYUKYU LANDING

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THE CURTAIN FALLS ON OKINAWA

AND THE SECOND DIVISION OCCUPIES THE JAPANESE HOMELAND

1 April, 1945.

April Fools' Day everywhere.

Easter Sunday in the Christian nations of the world.

"Love Day" on Okinawa.*

It had been a short trip for the Marines of the Second Division, who sailed in the last week of March from Tanapag Harbor at Saipan—a 1,200-

* From the phonetic alphabet, in which "L" becomes "Love." The Okinawa target date was designated as "L Day" to avoid confusion with other operations.

mile dash across the Philippines Sea. For the final three days of it, they had been extensively briefed on the nature of the target and their own unusual duties. This was to be a very different operation from Tulagi, or Guadalcanal, or Gavutu, or Tarawa, or Saipan and Tinian. Those had been the hedgehog outposts of the Empire of Japan; Okinawa was close to the core, the last line of defense short of the enemy homeland.

There were compelling reasons for the capture of Okinawa, although all of them were not clear

to the Marines sailing across the blue and infinite waters of the "Philippine Deep." Primarily, Okinawa was needed as a last, great stationary air base for the final hammering of the Japanese mainland. Secondarily, when the air assaults had had their maximum effect, it would provide the close-in staging area for the troops that would attack Japan itself. Until now, the Marines had fought only in the Pacific basin; at Okinawa, they were invading the Orient. West of Okinawa were the choppy reaches of the East China Sea; south was Formosa; north was Japan. Shanghai, the "Paris of the East," was only 500 miles over the western horizon from this Easter-morning target.

Unlike Tarawa, which had looked something like a bird or a lizard, and Saipan, with its resemblance to a monkey-wrench, Okinawa bore no resemblance to familiar shapes. Some seventy miles long and varying sharply from three to fifteen miles wide, the island had rolling hills, sharp ridges and cliffs in the south, miles of terraced fields, and some plains and plateaus. A little of everything. Intelligence was fragmentary. The Marines were sternly warned to beware the deadly "habu," a ferocious snake—but only one Marine ever reported seeing a "habu," and he was not attacked. The best guesses on the strength of the Japanese garrison ranged from 50,000 to 75,000 men, while it was believed that some 435,000 civilian Okinawans inhabited the island.

On 26 March an Army Division, the Seventy-seventh, had occupied Kerama Retto, the islands flanking Okinawa. For some days U.S. naval vessels had raked the long, winding coastline with shellfire, and carrier aircraft and land-based bombers had blasted its airfields and the town of Naha. The U.S. was hopeful of obtaining surprise for the landing, and had been careful to conceal its choice of landing beaches. To further the deception, the Tenth Army command had elected

to carry out a diversionary feint on L Day morning. This was the joke the Second Division hoped to play on the Nipponese defenders.

All through the spring months (as noted in the last chapter), the Division had grown back toward combat strength after the depletion of the previous fall. Brigadier General Edson had moved on to other duties, and Brigadier General Leroy P. Hunt, father of the former 2/6 battalion commander, had succeeded him as assistant division commander under General Watson. Both the Forty-first and Thirty-fifth replacement drafts had been incorporated into the Division. And there were some new outfits, some tested in structure at Saipan and Tinian, others going into action for the first time. The Second Joint Assault Signal Company (JASCO) had proved its worth in the Marianas. As an indication of the more stable nature of the war, the Division was now embellished by the "Second Semi-Mobile Laundry Platoon." The transition from coral atolls to enemy land masses, land masses with civilian populations, had produced two military government detachments. The great success of the rockets had resulted in the designation of the "Second Provisional Rocket Detachment." Finally, to lend a really bizarre touch, the Division now acquired canine allies—the "Second War Dog Platoon."

Most of these changes had come in the months following the previous October, when the Second Division was formally shifted from the Fifth Amphibious Corps to the Third Amphibious Corps. When the Third Corps was incorporated into the U.S. Tenth Army, it was the first time the Second Division Marines found themselves under an overall Army command. In the hundreds of ships of the great amphibious armada approaching Okinawa in the pre-dawn darkness of 1 April were two full Corps—the largest number of troops ever carried to a target in the long Central Pacific drive.



OKINAWA BOUND, Second Division Marines line up on one of Saipan's floating piers to board Navy transports. Marines did not know when they sailed that only a feint was in prospect.

One was the Third Amphibious, with the First, Second and Sixth Marine Divisions; the other was the Twenty-fourth Army Corps, with the Seventh and Ninety-sixth Infantry Divisions (the Seventy-seventh was already in action at Kerama Retto).

At H-Hour, the First and Sixth Marine Divisions were to land on Okinawa's western shore, from the East China Sea, flank to flank with two Army Divisions. The Second Division, assigned as Third Corps reserve, meanwhile would carry out a pretended attack on the southeast coast of Okinawa, in the vicinity of Chinen Peninsula. Later,

depending on the progress of the campaign and Japanese defensive strategy, the Second might be committed anywhere.

This must have seemed a dubious strategy to most of the Marines of the Second Division, convinced as they were that the Second was the world's best fighting outfit. Still, there were compensations. To the handful of veterans of the Solomons, and the survivors of Betio, the prospect of landing on a beachhead already under control was not unattractive. The Second Division had carried out a similar feint at Tinian, and had not lacked for

action soon afterward. But it would be nice, on this Easter Sunday, to be able to get in the little blue boats and go in toward the beach and then come back to the transports and a good bed. It would be fun to fool the Japanese. As it turned out, it wasn't much fun.

It was still dark, though the first banners of dawn were beginning to streak the eastern sky. Inside the LST's and the bigger APA's, Marines of the Second Division were at early chow when General Quarters sounded. The convoy was in sections, the LST's some four or five miles ahead, all moving slowly in toward the southeastern shores of Okinawa. It was barely light enough to discern one ship from another. The sound of the Japanese aircraft engines at first was very faint, and then it was much louder and it began to develop that snarling, frightening, insistent quality of airplanes diving toward targets. In the vanguard of the task force were the Marines of 3/2, the headquarters group in the APA 120—the U.S.S. *Hinsdale*—the rest of the battalion up forward, distributed through three LST's.

The naval gunners waited, tense, at their stations, trying desperately to spot the approaching Japs against the dark, lightly ribboned sky. The ships speeded up a little. "Jap bombers," one Marine said to another. "Guess nobody knows how many." The noise of the Jap engines got louder. Antiaircraft fire began spitting against the sky, orange tracers and bright-red ascending balls of flame. "Watch for torpedoes!" Some eyes down, now, looking along the surface of the sea for swift sneak attacks.

But these Japs were not on bombing and torpedo missions. Japan had begun the supreme and sacrificial defense of the homeland. These Japs were Kamikaze pilots, flying one-way missions, flying bombs, not planes. These were the warriors of the "Divine Wind."

At precisely 0520, in the quickening light of this holy Easter dawn, a Japanese pilot sent his single-engined "Val" dive-bomber smashing through the unarmored side of the *Hinsdale*, right at the waterline and just forward of the engine room. A matter of minutes later, four miles ahead, another Japanese brought his Zero fighter arcing down from the sky and smashed it through the flimsy hull of LST 884, carrying I Company of 3/2. And, a few minutes after that, another Jap bore down on a second LST and took a fatal hit just as he reached the ship's wide iron deck. The Jap exploded, blowing two Americans off the fantail of the vessel and wounding several others.

All of these attacks were costly, to us as well as the Japanese pilots, but the worst was on LST 884. The force of the impact, on the ship's port beam, sent the Zero's engine hurtling through the port compartment and into the tank deck on the starboard side. This flaming engine fired the amphibious tractors, in which many Marines were sleeping—and sent fire racing over the whole ship. A bare half hour after the hit, the abandon-ship order came, and I Company's survivors went over the side. They left many dead Marines behind them—Marines burned in the amtracs before they could escape the roaring inferno of the tank deck.

On the *Hinsdale*, the casualties were principally Navy. Only one man escaped the engine room alive. The loss of power left the *Hinsdale* dead in the water, and before long she began to settle. Despite heroic efforts at damage control, it was decided at 0900 to abandon ship, and the Marines aboard APA 120 were transferred to an LST already crowded with members of 4/10. (The *Hinsdale* did not sink and was towed into Kerama Retto.) For more than a week the Marines lived in acute misery, on a vessel completely unable to handle so great an infusion of refugees.

Had the Second Division been moving into as-



IHEYA DEFENSE POSITION is established behind rugged stone wall as Marine sweep continues across island. The Marine landing was not opposed and native population had taken cover.

sault position (rather than preparing to execute a feint), these Kamikaze hits might well have had a serious and disruptive effect. Strangely enough, they were all confined to the single battalion, even though it was dispersed through widely separated vessels. No other ships were hit that day off Okinawa, and there were no other major air attacks. But for the Third Battalion, Second Marines—the battalion which took the bird's beak at Tarawa and fought through Garapan at Saipan—Love Day at Okinawa will remain a grim and bitter memory.

The memory is not softened by one further

ironic fact. Across the island, above Naha in the region of Yontan airfield, the First and Sixth Marine Divisions landed unopposed. The Japs had pulled away to the south, in the area where the Marine feint was staged. When nightfall came, not a single Marine of the two assault Divisions had died by enemy action. But the Second Division, without having landed a man, had suffered the only major casualties inflicted on any U.S. unit on the first day at Okinawa.

Around Shuri Castle, the ancient palace of the Okinawan kings, the Japs lay in wait. They had



**8th MARINES
Reinforced**

AGUNI
SHIMA

CT
8

REEF

17 JUNE

18 JUNE

IBARU RIDGE

19-21 JUNE

REEF

U.S.M.C.

APRIL 1, 1945

U.S.A.

KERAMA
RETTO

OROKU
PENINSULA

Itoman

Minatoga

FEINT LANDING
D-Day and D + 1



IHEYA SHIMA

IZENA SHIMA

YORON SHIMA

OKINAWA

Hedo-Saki

IE SHIMA

Unten

Ora

Ishicha

HONSHU

Hirashima

Yawata

Fukuoko

Sasebo

KYUSHU

Nagasaki

Kumamoto

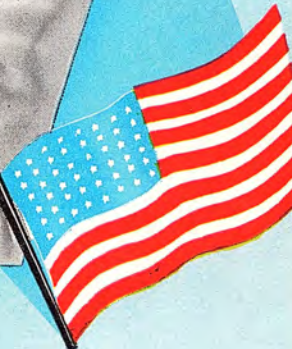
Kagoshima

Inland Sea

JAPAN

SEPTEMBER 1945

2ND MARINE DIVISION



worldwartwoveterans.org



SEARCHING IHEYA for Japanese, Marine riflemen move cautiously through picturesque native village. No Japanese military were found on the island.



IHEYA CIVILIANS return to their village after fleeing preliminary bombardment. They greeted Marines with white flags of surrender.

foreseen the invasion, and they had decided to concede Central Okinawa—airfields and all—to the invaders. They would fight only in the far north, where a small, highly organized mobile force was prepared to sell itself dearly, and in the natural bastion of the south. Their main defense line ran across the lower belly of the island—from Naha to Shuri to Nakagasuku. Here they had dug and tunneled and emplaced and fortified. Here were cliffs like those of Iwo and Peleliu, hollowed into frightful fortresses. Here the Japanese would pin and hold the invaders while the fliers of the “Divine Wind” wrought destruction on their men, their ships and their morale.

This was the Japanese strategy, as it finally came to be understood. But in the first week of the invasion, it was far from clear. Only one thing was apparent: the amazing lack of resistance. The Third Corps sliced across the middle of the island and turned north; the Twenty-fourth Corps wheeled south, occupying Yontan airstrip and Machinato. The only Second Division troops to get ashore in those first days were some thirty-five members of the Second Motor Transport Battalion. They went in on L plus 2 to rescue their trucks, which had been dumped on the beach by mistake. They got the trucks and got back aboard ship a week later.

The morning after L Day, the Division repeated its feint landing. Then the trick wore thin. The Japanese obviously were in stabilized positions, and would not be lured into new tactics. Meanwhile, all evidence indicated that the enemy was massing aircraft in Kyushu for a savage aerial offensive. The Second Division ships were kept circling in the East China Sea. But the command was increasingly aware that some morning or evening these frail transports would be subjected to a devastating air attack. This danger was too great to be risked—three torpedo hits could kill

more Marines afloat than a month's campaigning ashore. The Second had either to be landed or sent home. The decision was: back to Saipan.

Before sailing, a few much-needed men were landed. On 12 April the Second Marine Division detached the 130th Naval Construction Battalion—a new Seabee outfit that had been attached at Saipan—and the Second Amphibian Truck Company. With the lines rapidly moving both north and south on Okinawa, the Third Corps needed good roads and machines to move over them. The Seabees could provide the first; the DUKW drivers would take care of the second. By mid-April, the remainder of the Second Division was home in its familiar bivouacs on Saipan, redesignated as “area reserve.”

Back on Saipan, and back in training, in training for battles never to be fought, in the case of the Second, the Sixth and most of the Tenth Marines. For, in the spring of 1945, only a few men in New York and Washington and Chicago and a place called Alamogordo, somewhere in New Mexico, had any reason to believe that the war with Japan would end before 1948. In the days ahead, the Second Marines and the Sixth Marines and the Tenth Regiment artillerymen could see many things—return, perhaps, to Okinawa, the ominous beaches of Kyushu or Honshu, bloody fighting in the streets of Nagasaki or Kobe or Yokohama or Tokyo. Victory, perhaps, at some distant day when the last Japanese warrior had been driven up the hill in Tokyo on which stands the Yasakuni Shrine.

These were the visions of most of the Marines of the Second Division, as they trained in now-populous Saipan, an island with a bathing beach and bright umbrellas, a U.S.O. theater, a baseball field, and always overhead the drone of the B-29s. But not of the Eighth Marine regiment. The battles of World War II were not over for the Eighth

Marines, as they were for the Second, the Sixth and the Tenth. In the hot August of 1942 the Second Marines had made the first U.S. landing on enemy-held soil. In the hot June of 1945 the Eighth Marines would make the last great infantry drive against that same enemy, only 300 miles from the Empire's heart.

The Eighth Marines got their call to action on 16 May, a full month after their return to Saipan. It came from the command of the Tenth Army, and it did not immediately involve a campaign on Okinawa proper. During the weeks after the Second Division's departure, the situation on Okinawa had worsened considerably. Not only had U.S. forces, both Army and Marine, found the Japanese southern line a Pacific Maginot—the Japs also had expanded their aerial onslaught and every day were sending suicide pilots by the dozen or hundred against vital American shipping. The inspiring story of the Okinawa destroyer “picket line” has been told elsewhere, and cannot be detailed here. But despite the Navy's valiant defense, the Japs were still getting in—and they often were getting in virtually unannounced. We desperately needed better radar search facilities, and an adequate fighter director station. Okinawa itself did not offer desirable sites for these installations.

In consequence, it was decided to capture two small, nearby islands—Iheya Shima to the northwest of Okinawa, and Aguni Shima, almost due west of Naha. The Tenth Army Command ordered the Second Division to organize a landing force for this purpose. The order was carried out at once, with the Eighth Marines chosen as the basic component. The Division ADC, Brigadier General Leroy P. Hunt, was named to command the landing force, although the Eighth Marines remained under Colonel C. R. Wallace, who had led the regiment in the Saipan and Tinian battles. To provide artillery, 2/10 was attached. Other units included

the Division reconnaissance company; A Company of the Second Tank battalion; C Company of the Second Engineer battalion; B Company of the Second Motor Transport battalion; E Company of the Second Medical battalion; the Second Platoon of the Ordnance Company, Second Service battalion; the Third Platoon of S & S Company, Second Service battalion; the third section of the Second Marine War Dog platoon; four trucks of the Second Provisional Rocket detachment; D Company of the Third Provisional Armored Amphibian battalion; and the Second Amphibious Tractor battalion. The Second Battalion, Tenth Marines, was now commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Richard G. Weede of Kansas. Lieutenant Colonel Richard W. Hayward of New York had 1/8; Lieutenant Colonel Harry A. Waldorf of California was in command of 2/8; while Lieutenant Colonel Paul E. Wallace of Washington had 3/8. The Sherman tanks were under Captain Bale—the commander of *China Gal* on Betio.

The task group carrying the landing forces rendezvoused for final briefings at Okinawa, and in view of uncertainties concerning Jap troop dispositions, it was decided to preface the Iheya Shima landing with a heavy naval bombardment. On 3 June the twenty-six LST's carrying the Eighth Marines and their supporting units dropped the hook off Iheya, a pretty island that soon was popping with shellfire and bursting rockets. There was no answering fire, and at 1100 LT's 2/8 and 3/8 whooped ashore and began moving inland, followed in short order by LT 1/8. To the pleasant surprise of everyone, there was no opposition—except from the weather. The Marines camped that night in a wallow of mud, the result of a drenching rain that set in shortly after noon.

The following day—4 June—the Marines completed their sweep of the island, which yielded nothing but frightened Okinawa civilians and an

amazing number of farm animals. Six days later LT 1/8, having been detached for the purpose made a similarly peaceful landing on Aguni Shima, west of Okinawa and miles to the southwest of Iheya. Nothing quite so pleasant had happened to the Second Marine Division since the occupation of Apamama, nearly two years before.

For nearly a fortnight, the Marines of the special landing force enjoyed what could almost be considered a resort vacation. True, some units were busy rounding up and interning civilians, and the doctors and corpsmen were occupied with treating the few Okinawans injured in the bombardment. But many of the Marines had little to do. They rode the little Okinawa ponies and even tried to break the bullocks to bareback riding. One Marine, describing this happy hiatus, commented: "It looked like the old Horse Marines." Another member of RCT8 wrote: "Iheya Shima came as close to measuring up to story-book versions of South Sea islands as any I have ever seen. Swimming was good between the coral reef and the white, sandy beach. Picturesque were the tile-roofed houses in the villages, and the terraced hillsides gave our island the appearance of being halfway civilized. What with the ever-present mosquitoes, lice, etc., our stay there was anything but comfortable, but I remember it as one of the more pleasant moments of my time with the Corps in the Pacific." The same thing was true of Aguni Shima, although some excitement was added there by the capture of two Japanese Navy pilots, who were trying hard to look like Okinawans. Only the Reconnaissance company, which carried out a night rubber-boat investigation of the neighboring island of Izena Shima, had much feeling of war in progress while on Iheya.

The establishment of the radar and fighter director stations on Iheya Shima and Aguni Shima aided materially in the interception of Jap *Kami-*



IN OKINAWA FIGHTING, a burial tomb becomes just that for a Jap sniper who had used it for attacks on Marines. This blast from a flamethrower killed the Jap instantly and permitted offensive to move ahead.

kazes. By mid-June, the Army was able to relieve the elements of the Eighth Regimental Combat Team, and the happy vacation came to an end. The transition from the pleasures of Iheya and Aguni to the deeply grim realities of Okinawa came with shocking swiftness. On the big island the Marine and Army forces had ground their way through the cliffs and cave fortresses of Shuri and had fought through the city of Naha. They were nearing the southern end of the island, but they also were nearing the limit of human endurance. Casualties had been high, and men had been in the line

for days without relief. The Japs were just as groggy, but someone was needed to furnish the knockout punch. The Tenth Army sent for the Eighth Marines.

On the evening of 16 June the Marines from Iheya and Aguni landed across the bay from the rubble city of Naha on Oroku Peninsula. There, as night closed down, they were placed under tactical command of the First Marine Division. The orders: to be ready to relieve the battle-weary Seventh Marines in the first daylight hours of 18 June. At 0630 the regiment began to advance to



ON AGUNI SHIMA, another of the Ryukyu islands which Division Marines occupied after Iheya landing, mud two feet deep was main obstacle.



LIFE ON IHEYA was almost like a vacation. This Regimental postoffice was established on D plus 2 day, and Marine mail came through quickly.

the front, in a column of battalions led by 2/8. The Regimental CP was established before noon at Tera Village, and by 0730 of 18 June, Waldorf had moved the Marines of 2/8 through the red-eyed, bewhiskered veterans of the Seventh Regiment into the lines on Mezado Ridge. At the same time, Lieutenant Colonel Paul Wallace's 3/8 moved up in reserve, occupying Kunishi Ridge, where the First Division had bypassed many points of resistance.

The fresh, thoroughly trained Marines of 2/8 attacked to the south almost immediately upon their arrival at the front, driving toward Ibaru Ridge across an open slope slanting down from Mezado. The Japs welcomed the newcomers, first with rifle and light machine-gun fire on the flanks, then—as the attack progressed—with increasingly heavy mortar and artillery blasts. At dawn a regimental observation post was established on the east shoulder of Mezado Ridge. This was a high and rugged hill, crowned by coral boulders. From it, a man could look south to the sea, over most of the remaining Japanese terrain.

From this point, the Regimental Commander, Colonel Wallace, with his operations officer, Major Chamberlin, watched the regiment's offensive. Down below, they could see 2/8 slugging its way toward Ibaru; shortly after noon a big man came up and joined them. The big man was the commander of the U.S. Tenth Army and of the Okinawa offensive, Lieutenant General Simon Bolivar Buckner. Buckner sat in a cleft of rock and looked out over the Eighth Marine zone of action. He stayed for about an hour and remarked finally: "Things are going so well here I think I'll move on to another unit."

These were almost his last words. Whether the Japanese, through their powerful, long-range glasses, had somehow discerned his presence, probably will never be known. At any rate, with

the suddenness of a clap of thunder, five Japanese artillery shells struck directly on the observation post. They were big shells—probably 15CM—and they blasted the coral heads and the men between them. Wallace and Chamberlin escaped, almost miraculously. But Simon Bolivar Buckner sank mortally wounded to the dusty rock, his glazing eyes looking out toward the distant sea where victory waited, only a few days away.

The death of General Buckner in the Eighth Marine OP was only one of two dramatic casualties of 18 June. To describe the second, a brief flashback is necessary—a flashback to the 18th day of June, 1944, when the Third Battalion, Eighth Marines, also was engaged with the Japanese enemy on Saipan. On that day Corporal Bennie E. Rash of Kentucky was moving forward at the side of Corporal Grover Wells when Japanese fire cut Wells down. Three months later Wells' brother, Earl, joined the Eighth Regiment and, by startling coincidence, was placed in the same squad. End of flashback. 18 June, 1945, Okinawa. Two Marines move cautiously around the dangerous boulders and ledges of Kunishi Ridge. There is a burst of Japanese fire, and Earl H. Wells falls dead, at the feet of Corporal Rash! So died two brothers, doing the same job in the same unit, on the same day and in the company of the same mutual friend, exactly a year apart.

No slackening in the speed of the final Okinawa offensive resulted from General Buckner's death, tragic though it was. Temporary command passed immediately to Major General Roy Geiger, commanding the Third Amphibious Corps, and the Eighth Marines drove on to the south, with 2/8 still in the line. Ahead on the left was the town of Makabe, where the Japs had concentrated some artillery and many troops. Nightfall found the battalion at Road 33, abreast of Makabe. The position was precarious. On the right flank the Japs



MARINES ON "BIG ISLAND" found fighting fierce, in contrast to the peaceful occupations of Iheya and Aguni. Here they move against ridge.



DEVASTATED HILLSIDE gives Marines some cover as they inch forward on Okinawa. Bazooka team (foreground) is prepared to support riflemen.

still had artillery on Kuwanga Ridge, while on the left the battalion was getting occasional fire from the town. The regimental command accordingly detached B Company from 1/8 and hurried it forward, to tie in the left flank with the Fifth Marines (First Division) who were moving south with the Eighth.

During the night the howitzers of 2/10 interdicted Makabe, firing in support of B Company. The morning of 19 June found 3/8 in position behind 2/8, ready to pass through and storm the heights of Ibaru Ridge, dead ahead. But there was a delay. The Japs in Makabe had not been knocked out, and now they opened up with everything they had. The Regiment's rocket trunks were called to the front, and 4.2mm mortars also went into action. The Sherman tanks rolled forward, and Makabe was subjected to a thunderous barrage. When it lifted, the town was quiet. There was no more fight in those particular Japs.

As 3/8 pushed into the line and moved toward Ibaru, the Marines turned their artillery on that forbidding height. For a solid hour the big guns and howitzers hammered the ridgetop, and then—as the riflemen neared Ibaru's base—a dense curtain of white phosphorous smoke was strung along the cliffs. The smoke behaved perfectly, shrouding the Marine advance from the defenders and then lifting, as if on order, as the Marines charged and clawed their way to the top. They were up and over before the bemused Japs had any clear idea of what had happened. Up and over and starting down to the sea, now only 500 yards away. It was a swift offensive, the Japs rolling back off balance and the Marines sweeping forward—sweeping forward in the last great organized attack of World War II.

At 1623 on 19 June, K Company of the Third Battalion, Eighth Marines, broke through the last brushy cover and raced to the southern shores of

Okinawa. Twenty minutes later the rest of 3/8 surged to the beaches, and the death noose had been pulled tight around the remaining Japanese, some of them trapped in their CP area to the east, and a few others isolated to the west. The battle of Okinawa, except for mop-up, was over.

But for once there was no haste about declaring the island secure. For the next three days the Eighth Marines assisted the First and Sixth Division troops in cleaning out the last pockets. On 20 June I Company took heavy casualties while attacking a Jap ridge position. The Japs in Makabe inflicted a few more injuries before the town was overrun, as did Nip artillerymen firing from Hill 85. On 21 June one company of 2/8 was detached to the Fifth Marines to help in blasting loose a concentration of Japs southwest of Mezado Ridge. And on 22 June CT8 reassembled and joined other forces in a final swing northward to Naha, to eliminate any last, overlooked strongpoints.

That afternoon—22 June—Okinawa was officially proclaimed secure. The Eighth Marines, in their brief but devastatingly effective drive, had lost ten officers and 313 enlisted men. But they had killed 1,223 Japanese; they had split the bitter-end Jap garrison and rendered it ineffective; and they had carried out the last major land drive of the Second World War. To the east, in the camps on Saipan, the Second and Sixth and Tenth Marines did not begrudge this final glory to the Eighth—it was a glory shared by all. First to fight, last to fight; Florida Island to the heights of Ibaru.

Although the designation “secure” had been delayed three days to facilitate the mop-up, as was always the case on Japanese islands some enemy nests still remained. Marines of 1/8, 2/8 and 3/8 carefully combed the ridges south of Naha, using war dogs in their patrols, and killing a dozen



DEATH BY SHELLFIRE came to Lieutenant General Simon Bolivar Buckner (*right*) a few minutes after he entered this Eighth Marine observation post on Okinawa, to watch Marines attack in the valley below. Colonel Clarence R. Wallace, (*center*) CT8 commander, and Major William Chamberlin (*left*) were unhurt.

to two dozen Japs daily. This sort of activity continued for several days. Meanwhile, Marines trained in the Division's Japanese language school at Saipan were serving effectively in rounding up remaining civilians and in interrogating prisoners of war. The first platoon of the Division Military Police company handled POW's from the three Marine regiments in southwest Okinawa, turning them over to military government personnel at a stockade north of Itomia.

The transfer of Second Division personnel to

Saipan began in the last week of June and continued until mid-July, as shipping became available. The Okinawa veterans found their buddies in the Second, Sixth and Tenth engaged in intensive training—and this time nobody had to be clairvoyant to guess what the next objective would be. There was only one target of consequence left in the Japanese war—Japan! The Division Command already had been alerted and was making preliminary plans for the OLYMPIC operation, the invasion of the enemy homeland. This time



PAY-OFF AIRDROME of the Pacific was this great installation on Tinian. It was first used for the mass B-29 raids on Japan, finally for the atom bomb flight which brought the war to a sudden close.

there would be no feints. The Second Division would again be a combat bride, with assault beaches.

One of the major training problems, on islands as crowded as Tinian and Saipan, was development of an artillery range. The only solution was another island, and in July the Tenth Marines boated up and moved 50 miles to the north to occupy Agrihan Island, near better-known Pagan. The Tenth carried out its own reconnaissance, occupied the island and developed it. There were no Japanese on Agrihan, but the Tenth Marines were not at this time seeking living targets. There was room enough for howitzer fire, and that was all that was needed. The Tenth Marines were quite unaware that they had brought another singular honor to

the Division in capturing Agrihan. It was the last enemy island occupied in World War II.

On the very day that Okinawa was secured, the Second Division got a new commander. Major General Thomas Watson was transferred to Washington, and Brigadier General Hunt—who had commanded the Eighth RCT landing force at Iheya, Aguni and in the push to the southern shore of Okinawa itself—got another star and moved up to the full Division command. Leroy Hunt was a big, bluff Marine, with hooded eyes and a wide, firm mouth under a strong nose. He had served with distinction during the peacetime years. Now his elevation to Division command was a fitting tribute, not only to his qualities of leadership in earlier operations but to crown



PAY-OFF AIRPLANE was the famous Superfort, "Enola Gay," which took off from Tinian in the early hours of 6 August to drop history's first atomic bomb on Hiroshima when Division was preparing to invade Kyushu.

the successful Okinawa push. It would be no light or casual honor to lead the Second Marine Division into Fortress Japan.

The reduction of that Fortress, to clear the way for the invasion troops, was proceeding apace through the summer months of 1945. Early in June Admiral William F. "Bull" Halsey had relieved Admiral Spruance in command of the fleet (the Fifth Fleet when Spruance had it, the Third Fleet when Halsey was in command). The long campaign on Okinawa had kept the fast battleships and carriers on a defensive leash. Now Halsey was able to break away for operations in the Jap home waters. Beginning on 10 July, the hundreds of planes of Task Force 38 raked the Imperial Isles from Hokkaido to Kyushu. The

battleships went in to bombard, at Kamaishi, Muroran, Hitachi and Hamamatsu. The dive-bombers battered the remnants of the Jap fleet in the Inland Sea (the huge battleship *Yamato* had been sunk by Navy torpedo pilots while the Okinawa battle was in progress).

This naval blitz was paralleled by sustained and savage B-29 strikes from Saipan and Tinian. Day after day the U.S. offensive gained power and fury. The Japs, unable to strike back effectively and with their cities aflame, sent peace feelers to the Soviet Union, hoping to obtain Russian mediation. But the Japs were not ready for unconditional surrender. They wanted to quit, but they were not willing to accept occupying forces. The bombs kept raining down.

In late July an aura of secrecy enveloped the Marianas. Its focus was Tinian, the “after-thought” island captured in July and August of 1944 by the Second and Fourth Marine Divisions. While the riflemen of the Second, Sixth and Eighth Marines practiced on Saipan the techniques they would need in the coming invasion, other Marine and Army personnel formed tight barriers around certain of Tinian’s highly developed military areas. The transports coming in at Ushi airdrome brought numerous visitors from the United States—some of them in civilian clothing, some wearing many stars. They were whisked away from the airport in swift automobiles, and were seldom seen by the regular defense forces of the island.

Far to the north, the Third Fleet was making final plans for its most dramatic summer foray against the Japanese. The Baker Bombardment Force would, on 6 August, drive into Sugami Bay, to the very gateway of Tokyo Bay, and shell Yokohama. Plans were almost complete, on 3 August, when a mysterious order came to Admiral Halsey. He was instructed to take the fleet east, at least 500 miles off the shores of Japan, and cruise in circles until further notice.

Long before dawn on 6 August, 1945, a single, silver Superfortress roared away from Tinian Island. In the great silence that followed its departure, the Pacific war came to a full stop, suspended and breathless. The hours ticked slowly by. In Japan air-raid sirens sounded and the beaten, numbed populace glanced toward the sky. Above one sprawling city of Southern Honshu, so high it was only a gleam in the sun, the Japanese saw a single aircraft—a plane that looked like all the reconnaissance and weather planes that now flew frequently above the mainland of Japan. Few of the Japanese bothered to take shelter. They were accustomed to great fleets of bombers.

There was a flash so bright it almost seemed that the sun had collided with the earth. There was a great rushing sound, like all the winds of the world. There had been a city and now there was no city. The single, gleaming plane, so high in the sun, was the *Enola Gay*. The city that had been was Hiroshima.

From their tents on Saipan, the members of the Second Marine Division looked across the narrow strait toward Tinian and remembered the wearisome fight through the mud and the hot fight on the southern ridges. They looked across at Tinian and listened with alert ears to the Armed Forces Radio, blaring the word that Japan—after a second atomic bomb had been dropped, this one on Nagasaki—had agreed to Allied terms for surrender. They looked at Tinian’s clean and rocky coast, at the coral boulders where they had gone ashore, and they thought of the forbidding coasts of Japan—the coasts that had awaited them in the fall. “That Tinian was a pretty good investment, I guess,” one Marine finally said.

Thus it came about, in the fateful August of 1945, that the ultimate blow against Japan was delivered from an island captured in part by the Second Marine Division—the Division that had been first to man America’s outposts in World War II: first to land and fight in the Solomons; first to storm the bastions of the Central Pacific; the Division that had cut the heart out of Saipan, swept over Ushi airdrome of Tinian, occupied Aguni and Iheya and delivered the knockout blow to Okinawa. The long journey across the cold wastes of the Atlantic and the hot jungles of the Pacific, begun in 1941, was over at last. On 23 September, 1945, the Second Marine Division landed at Nagasaki—not as an invader but as a conqueror—to begin the occupation of Japan.

EPILOGUE



SASEBO, KYUSHU, JAPAN—1945

The story of the Second Marine Division is a story that has no end. The landing at Nagasaki in September of 1945 closed a great chapter—but only a chapter—in the history of an organization that is still on active service for the American people.

Even before the Second Division Marines went into Kyushu, most of the veterans of Guadalcanal and Tarawa had been sent home, some to new duty with the Marine Corps and some for honorable discharge. The veterans of the Marianas and Okinawa carried out their new, peacetime occupation duties with the same steadfastness that once had overcome the best of the Japanese armies. In nine months in Kyushu, they successfully demilitarized Japanese military areas and supervised the repatriation of many Koreans and Chinese. Their conduct was exemplary and when, on 15 June, 1946, they sailed for the States, it was with a merited “well done” from the First U.S. Army Corps.

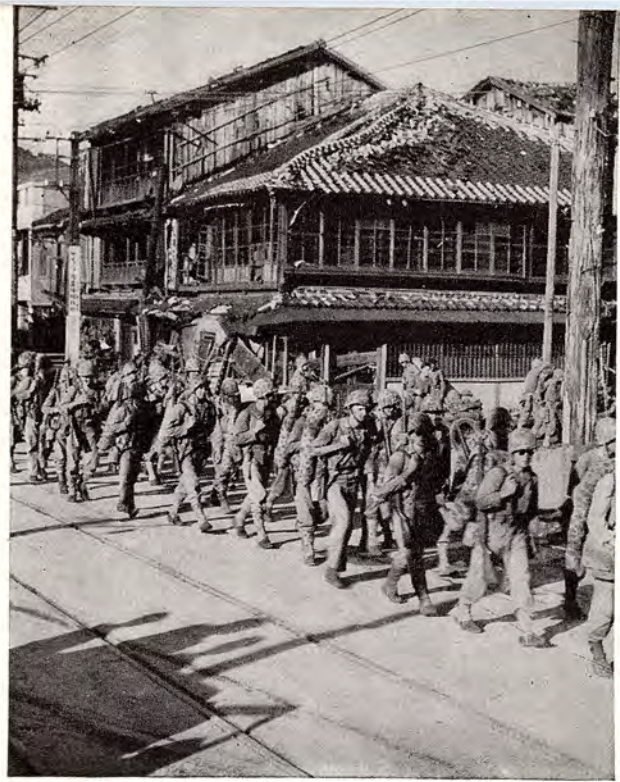
In July of 1946 the SecMarDiv was established at Camp Le Jeune, N.C., as one of the two permanent, peacetime Marine Divisions. In the tense

spring of 1948, when U.S. interests were threatened in the Mediterranean, it was the existence of the Second Division—combat-loaded and ready—that strengthened the arm of American policy. And it was the presence of Second Division Marines aboard U.S. ships in European waters that helped manifest American determination to the nations of the world.

The detailed story of the Second Marine Division in the postwar world must necessarily be written by a future historian. But the highlights of the Division’s postwar activities have been captured and preserved in photographs, some of which appear on the following pages. These are not the same men, but they are the same kind of men, who garrisoned Iceland in the chill days of 1941 and who fought across Betio’s beach two years later. For the Second Marine Division, although it has undergone many personnel and some organic changes, remains today as the custodian of the great traditions of Tulagi and Gavutu and Tarawa and Mt. Tapotchau.



STRANGE ALLIANCE for Marines who had fought the Japanese all the way across the Pacific was formed on arrival in Japan, where big Marine MPs joined small Japanese policemen in keeping order. There were no major incidents and conquerors and conquered got along well together.



LIFE IN JAPAN proved interesting from the first, when Japs boarded ship to sign surrender (*upper left*). Marines marched ashore through devastated city (*upper right*) and silent Japanese, but got liberators' welcome from Chinese (*lower left*). In field of rubble they spotted brooding idol at lower right.



END OF THE JAP AIRFORCE comes near Nagasaki where Second Division Marines piled up a collection of Japanese aircraft and turned it into a gigantic bonfire. Planes were drawn from Kyushu fields and were stripped



of useful parts before burning. They included nearly all kinds and types Japs had used during the war, from early "Zeros" to late-model carrier-borne dive-bombers and improved twin-engine jobs.



JAPANESE FIELDS OF FIRE, cleared for defense of Kyushu beaches where Marines of Second Division would have landed, indicate enemy was ready and that atomic bomb spared Division heavy casualties.



QUAINT JAPANESE HOMES claimed interest of all Marines, including Division Commander, Major General Leroy Hunt (*foreground, left*), and his assistant, Brigadier General John Walker (*extreme right*).



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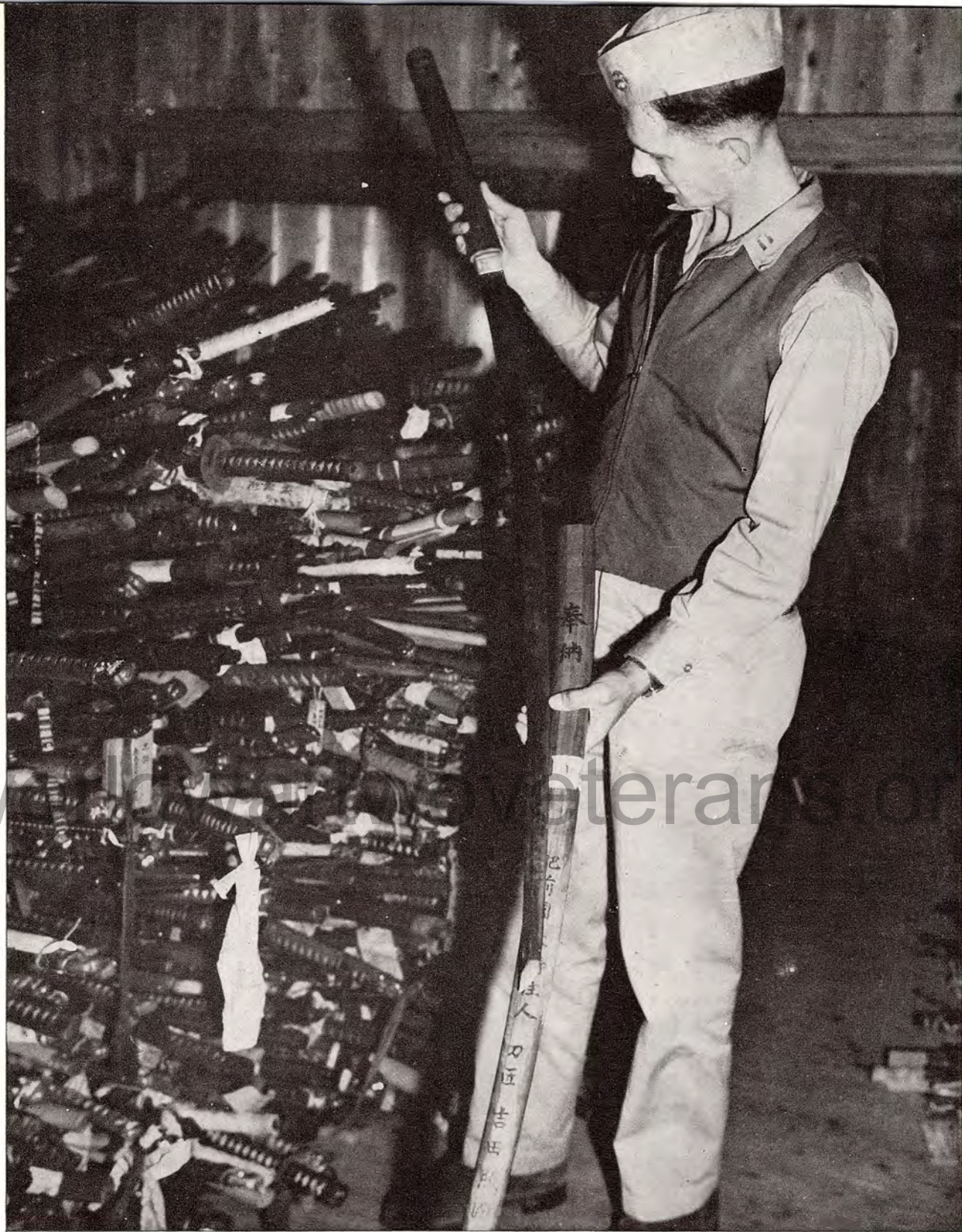


DIVERSIONS IN JAPAN were numerous and varied for Marines who had spent the past several years on dismal islands. Despite the handicap of their long kimonos, obis and geta, Japanese girls made a sincere effort to learn to jitterbug (above). For Marines who got the long-desired "ticket home," there was the delightful experience of being able to hire bearers to carry luggage. In the picture at left two grinning Second Division members pose with Japanese servants. One of the most interesting and heartwarming experiences Marines had in Kyushu was a visit to the Angel Guardian Home (upper right), a Catholic refuge for Japanese orphans located at Kumamoto. Nuns remained on job throughout the war. Nearly every Marine had a picture made by a Japanese cameraman (right). Marines found it amusing and a bit ironic to stand calmly before a Japanese and order him to "go ahead and shoot."



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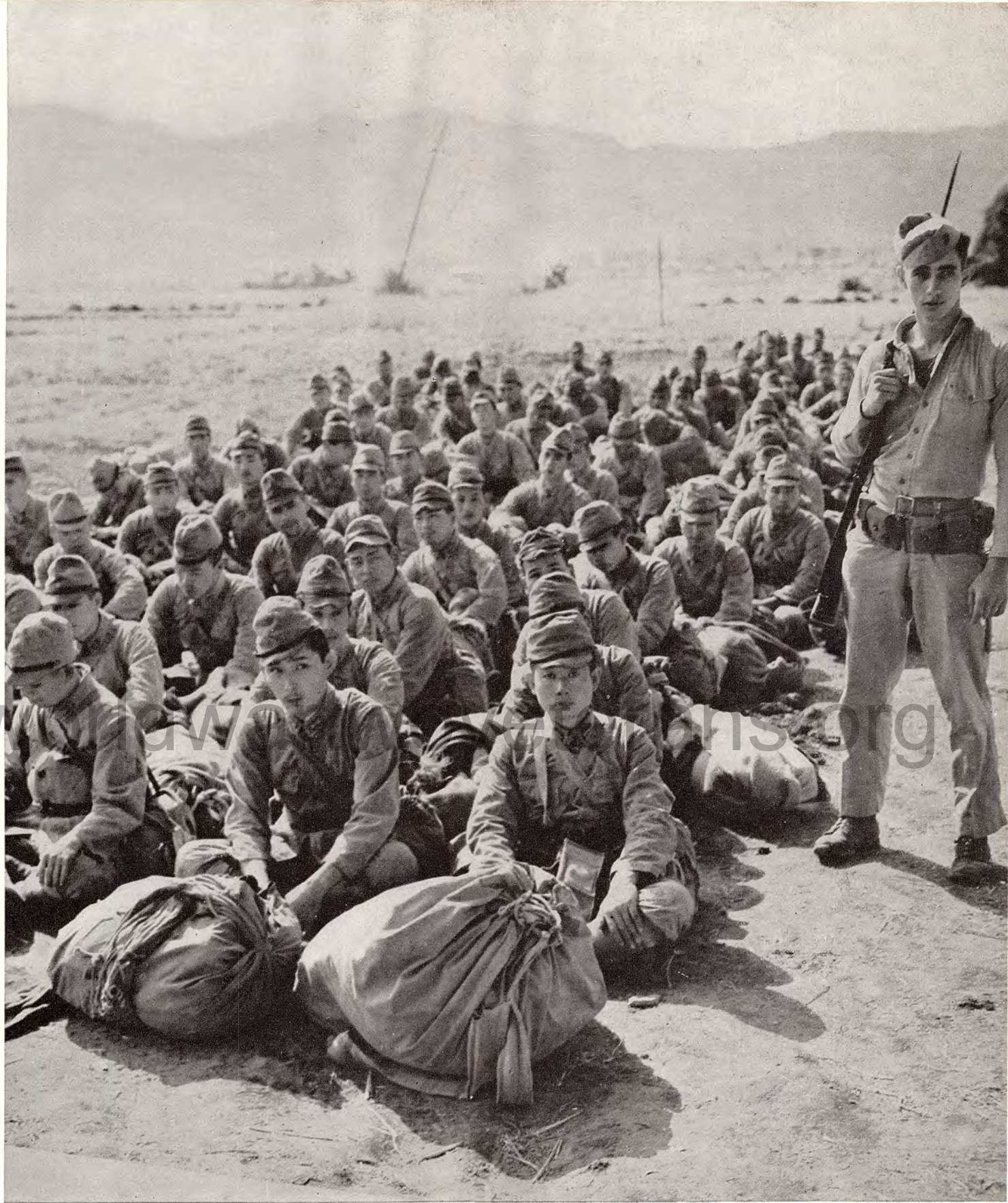
THE EASY WAY to get a samurai sword is demonstrated by a Marine captain who is ready for the trip home.



AT HOME AND ON VACATION in Japan, Marines at long last had beds to sleep in. Top picture shows barracks established in Nagasaki school. Below, vacationing Marines enjoy the luxury of a Japanese resort.



PLEASURE AND DUTY were mixed in Japan, although the occupation chores were considerably less unpleasant than the work the Marines formerly had done. At upper left Marines visiting Mt. Aso Inn eat in style, off table linen. Inn provided attractive waitresses and U.S. food. Below, another group of Marines at Mt. Aso enjoy a bull session and a few bottles of the excellent Japanese beer. The more serious side of the occupation is indicated in picture opposite, with a Marine standing guard over Jap military personnel repatriated from Kita Daito Shima.





MITSUBISHI FACTORY in dock area of Nagasaki was almost demolished by atomic bomb. Here a group of Marines aboard U.S.S. *Marvin H. McIntyre* view the wreckage as the ship nears its anchorage.



HAPPIEST MARINES in the Western Pacific are crowding the rails of this transport as a Marine band plays farewell. These are high-pointers bound for the States after many months of overseas duty.



EXPLORING A NEW OCEAN, postwar members of the Second Marine Division enjoy a liberty in San Juan, Puerto Rico, in the Caribbean (*top*), and then investigate the historic ramparts of Morro Castle (*below*).



ABROAD AND AT HOME, the Second Division remains alert and ready. At top, Aircraft Carrier *Valley Forge*, with Division Marines aboard, passes Gibraltar. Below, Division marches in review at Camp Le Jeune.



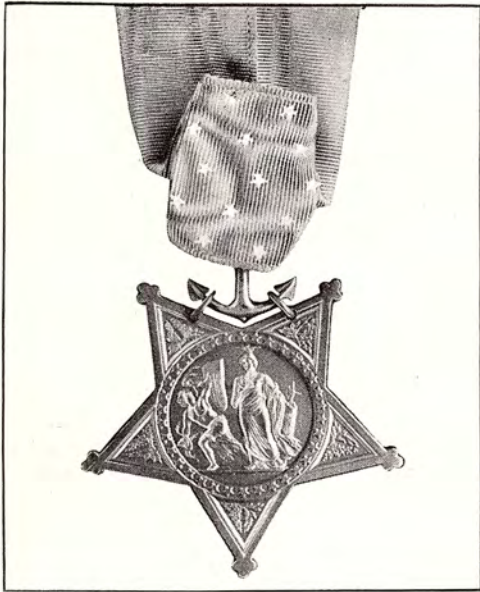
TRAINING NEW MARINES in the amphibious techniques learned in battle in World War II, the Second Division sends an "assault wave" ashore in LCVP's at Culebra Beach (*top*) and then attacks Onslow Beach (*below*) from amphibious tractors. Marines land carrying full combat load.



SPECTACULAR CLIMAX to training comes after practices in LCVP (top) when elements of the Second Battalion, Eighth Marines, storm ashore at Atlantic City in a demonstration for the Marine Corps League convention. Smoke indicates degree to which combat conditions were simulated.



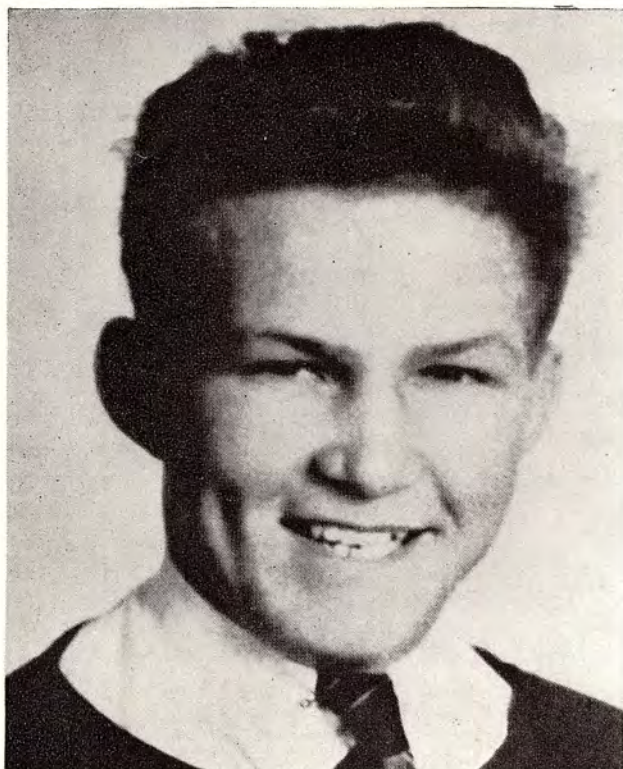
AS IT WAS IN THE BEGINNING, so is it still for the Marines of the Second Division. Like their predecessors in the San Diego area in the early days of World War II, these young Marines at Little Creek, Virginia, are practicing the techniques they may someday need to defend the United States.



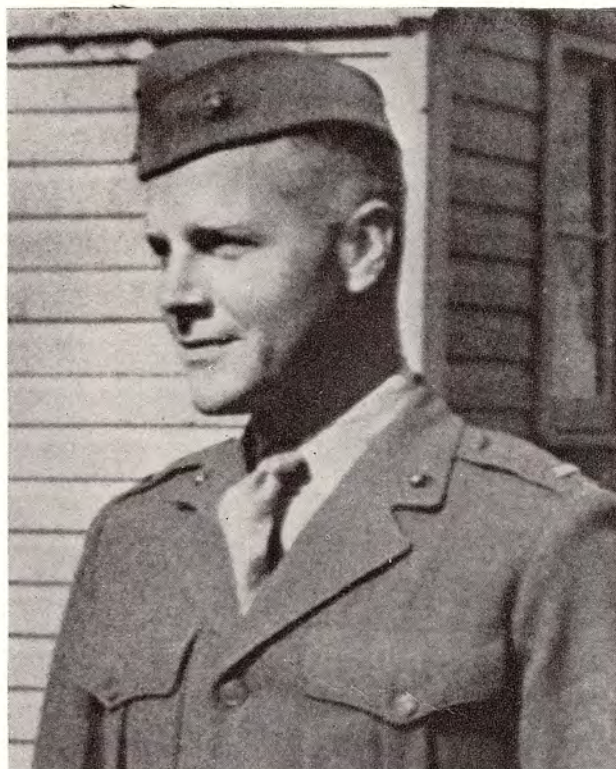
THE MEDAL OF HONOR

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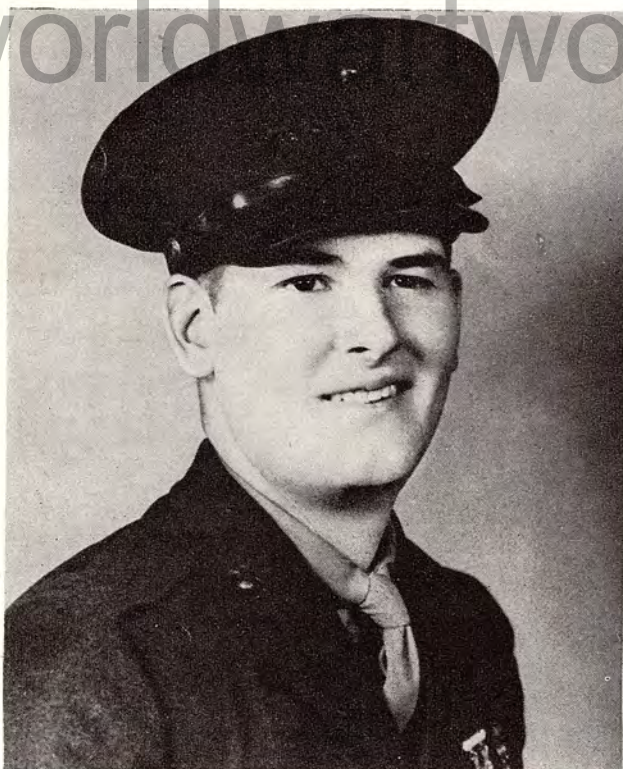
“ . . . his relentless fighting spirit in the face of formidable opposition and his exceptionally daring tactics were an inspiration to his comrades during the most crucial phase of the battle, and reflect the highest credit upon the United States Naval Service . . . ”



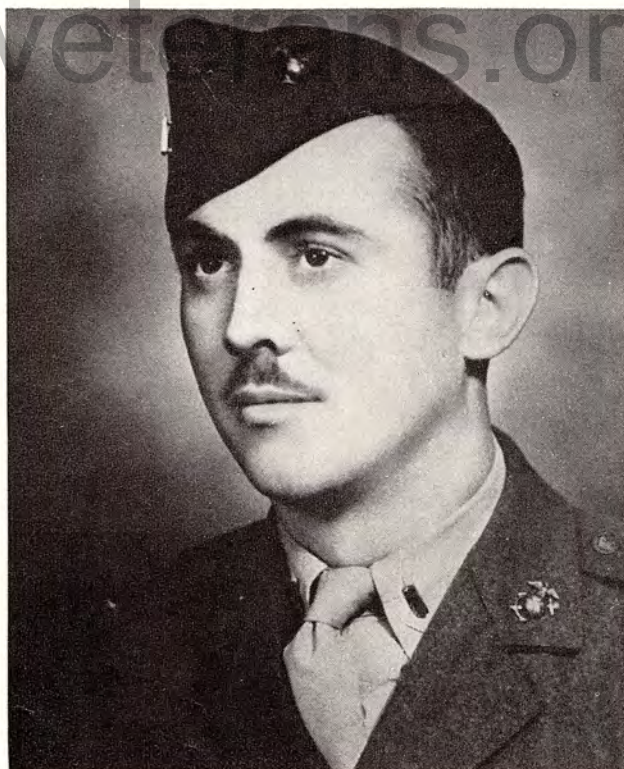
HAROLD C. AGERHOLM



ALEXANDER BONNYMAN, JR.



HAROLD G. EPPERSON



WILLIAM D. HAWKINS



•WILLIAM J. BORDELON

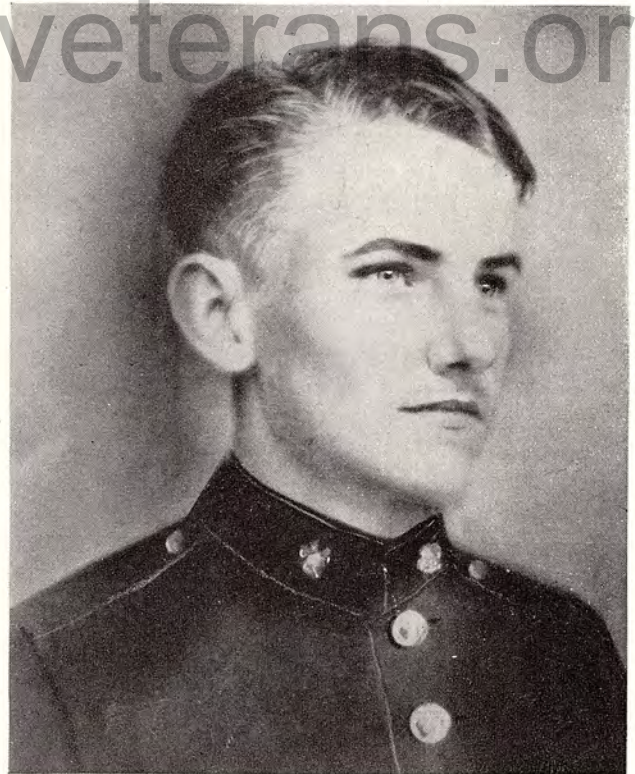


DAVID M. SHOUP

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GRANT F. TIMMERMAN



ROBERT L. WILSON

THE SECRETARY OF THE NAVY
WASHINGTON

The President of the United States takes pleasure in presenting the PRESIDENTIAL UNIT CITATION to the

SECOND MARINE DIVISION (REINFORCED)

consisting of Division Headquarters, Special Troops (including Company C, 1st Corps Medium Tank Battalion), Service Troops, 2nd, 6th, 8th, 10th and 18th Marine Regiments in the Battle of Tarawa, as set forth in the following

CITATION:

“For outstanding performance in combat during the seizure and occupation of the Japanese-held Atoll of Tarawa, Gilbert Islands, November 20 to 24, 1943. Forced by treacherous coral reefs to disembark from their landing craft hundreds of yards off the beach, the Second Marine Division (Reinforced) became a highly vulnerable target for devastating Japanese fire. Dauntlessly advancing in spite of rapidly mounting losses, the Marines fought a gallant battle against crushing odds, clearing the limited beachheads of snipers and machine guns, reducing powerfully fortified enemy positions and completely annihilating the fanatically determined and strongly entrenched Japanese forces. By the successful occupation of Tarawa, the Second Marine Division (Reinforced) has provided our forces with highly strategic and important air and land bases from which to continue future operations against the enemy; by the valiant fighting spirit of these men, their heroic fortitude under punishing fire and their relentless perseverance in waging this epic battle in the Central Pacific, they have upheld the finest traditions of the United States Naval Service.”

For the President,

James Forrestal
Acting
Secretary of the Navy



THE DIVISION'S COMMANDERS

“ . . . remember one thing. When the Marines land

and meet the enemy at bayonet point, the only ar-

mor a Marine will have is his khaki shirt!” . . .

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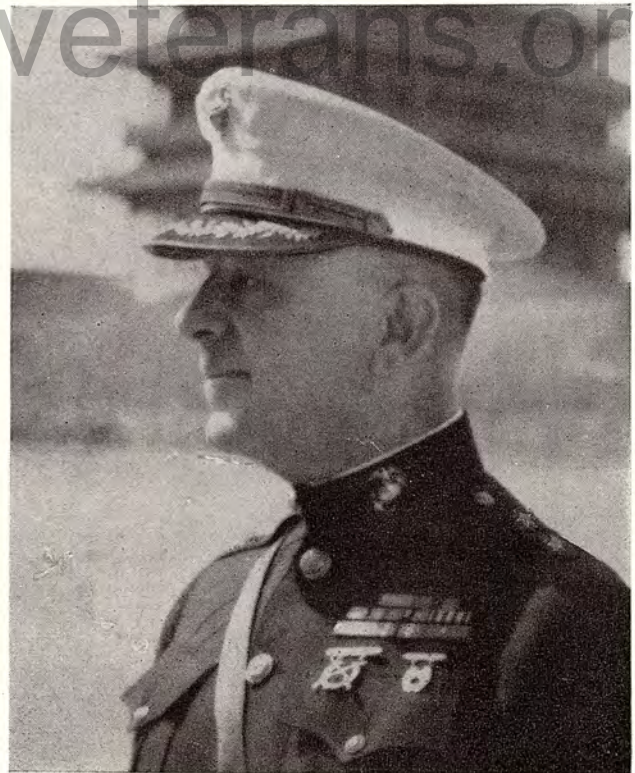
MAJOR GENERAL CLAYTON B. VOGEL



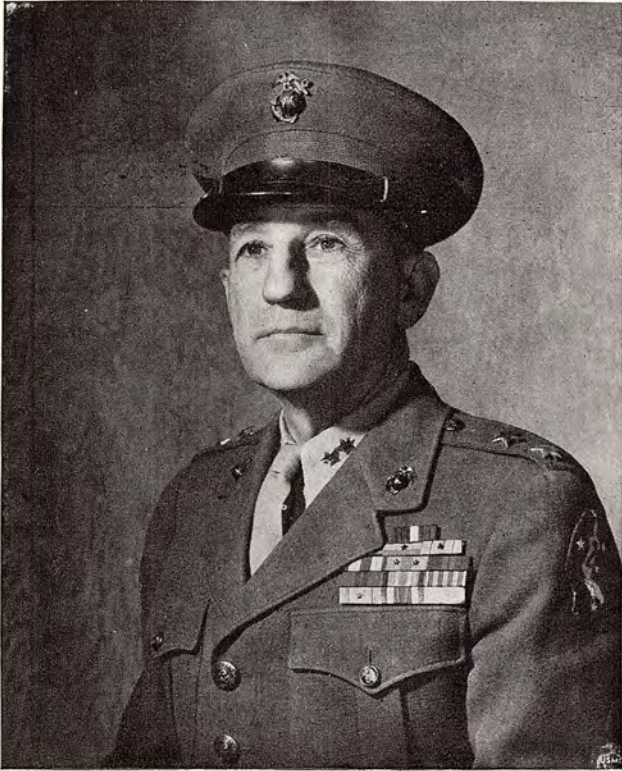
MAJOR GENERAL CHARLES F. B. PRICE



MAJOR GENERAL JOSEPH C. FEGAN



MAJOR GENERAL JOHN MARSTON



MAJOR GENERAL JULIAN C. SMITH



MAJOR GENERAL THOMAS E. WATSON



MAJOR GENERAL LEROY P. HUNT



BRIGADIER GENERAL ALPHONSE DE CARRE



BRIGADIER GENERAL THOMAS E. BOURKE



BRIGADIER GENERAL LEO D. HERMLE



BRIGADIER GENERAL MERRITT A. EDSON



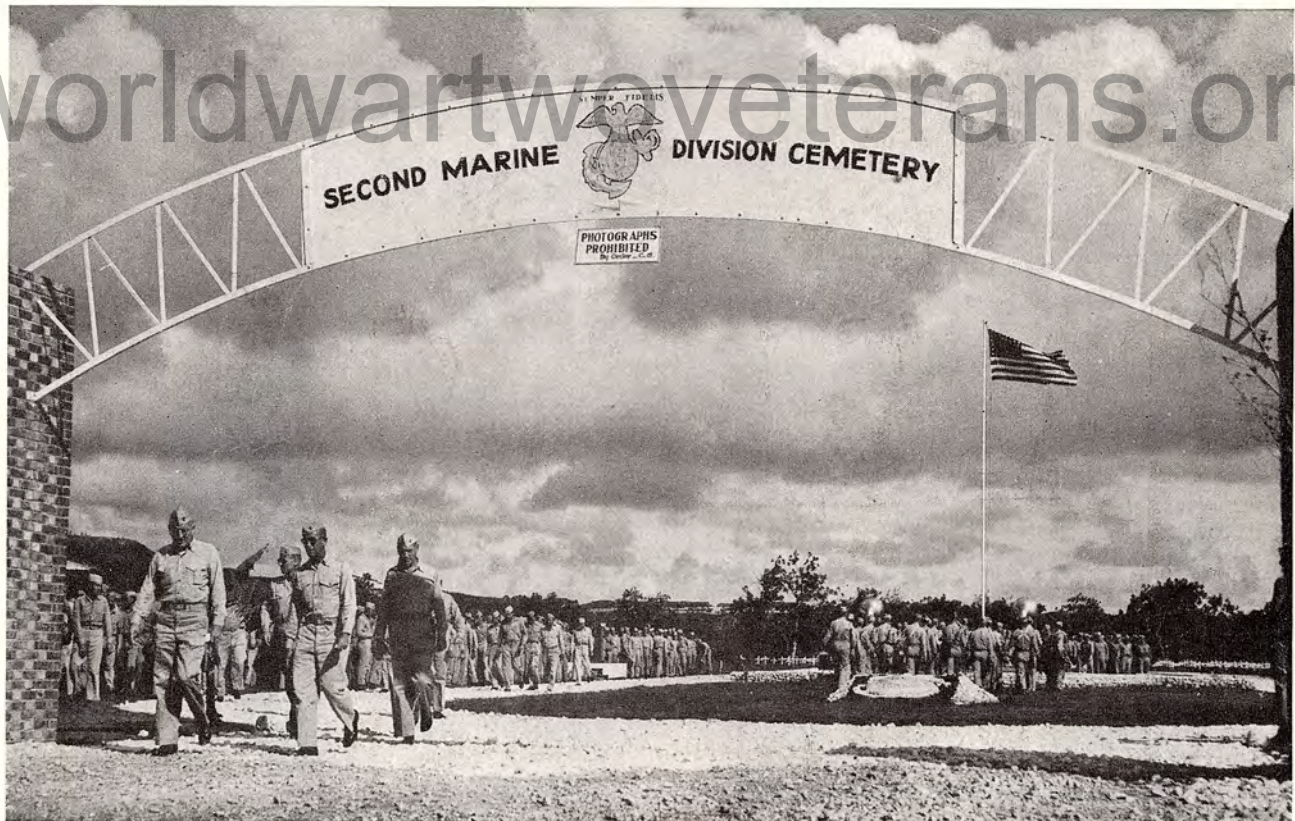
BRIGADIER GENERAL JOHN T. WALKER

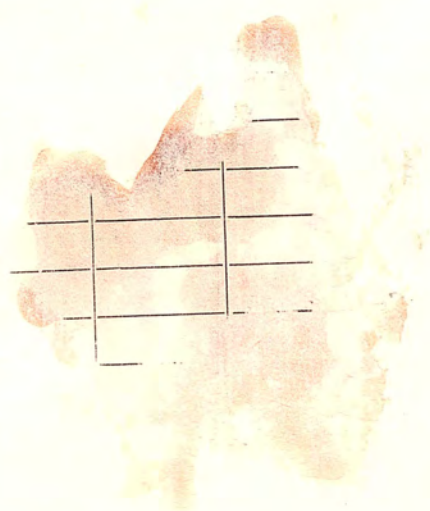
SECOND MARINE DIVISION

TOTAL BATTLE DEATHS AND CASUALTIES OF OFFICERS AND ENLISTED PERSONNEL

7 DECEMBER 1941—2 SEPTEMBER 1945

LOCATION	KILLED IN ACTION		DIED OF WOUNDS		WOUNDED IN ACTION		TOTAL CASUALTIES
	Off.	Enl.	Off.	Enl.	Off.	Enl.	
GUADALCANAL AREA.....	12	228	3	29	57	858	1187
TARAWA.....	48	846	8	76	102	2086	3166
SAIPAN.....	73	1029	6	205	256	4946	6515
TINIAN.....	9	129	2	34	38	865	1077
OKINAWA.....	1	45	0	12	10	382	450
TOTALS.....	143	<u>2277</u>	19	356	463	9137	12395





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MANCHURIA

JAPAN

KOREA

Tokyo

Date Due

Pacific

MIDWAY

HAWAIIAN

INDIA

BURMA

FORMOSA

HAINAN

SIAM

FR. INDO-CHINA

PHILIPPINE IS.

SAIPAN TINIAN

2nd DIVISION

MARSHALL IS.

CAROLINE IS.

BETIO

GILBERT IS.

MALAYA

BORNEO

CELEBES

NEW GUINEA

SOLOMON IS.

GUADALCANAL

FIJI IS.

SAMOA

Indian Ocean

Ocean



AUSTRALIA

NEW CALEDONIA



NEW ZEALAND

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ALASKA

ICELAND



CANADA



U.S.A.

New York

6th Marines

Ocean

San Diego

Charleston

Atlantic Ocean

MEXICO



Pearl Harbor

2nd Marines

8th Marines

6th Marines

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SOUTH AMERICA



James Gutter

