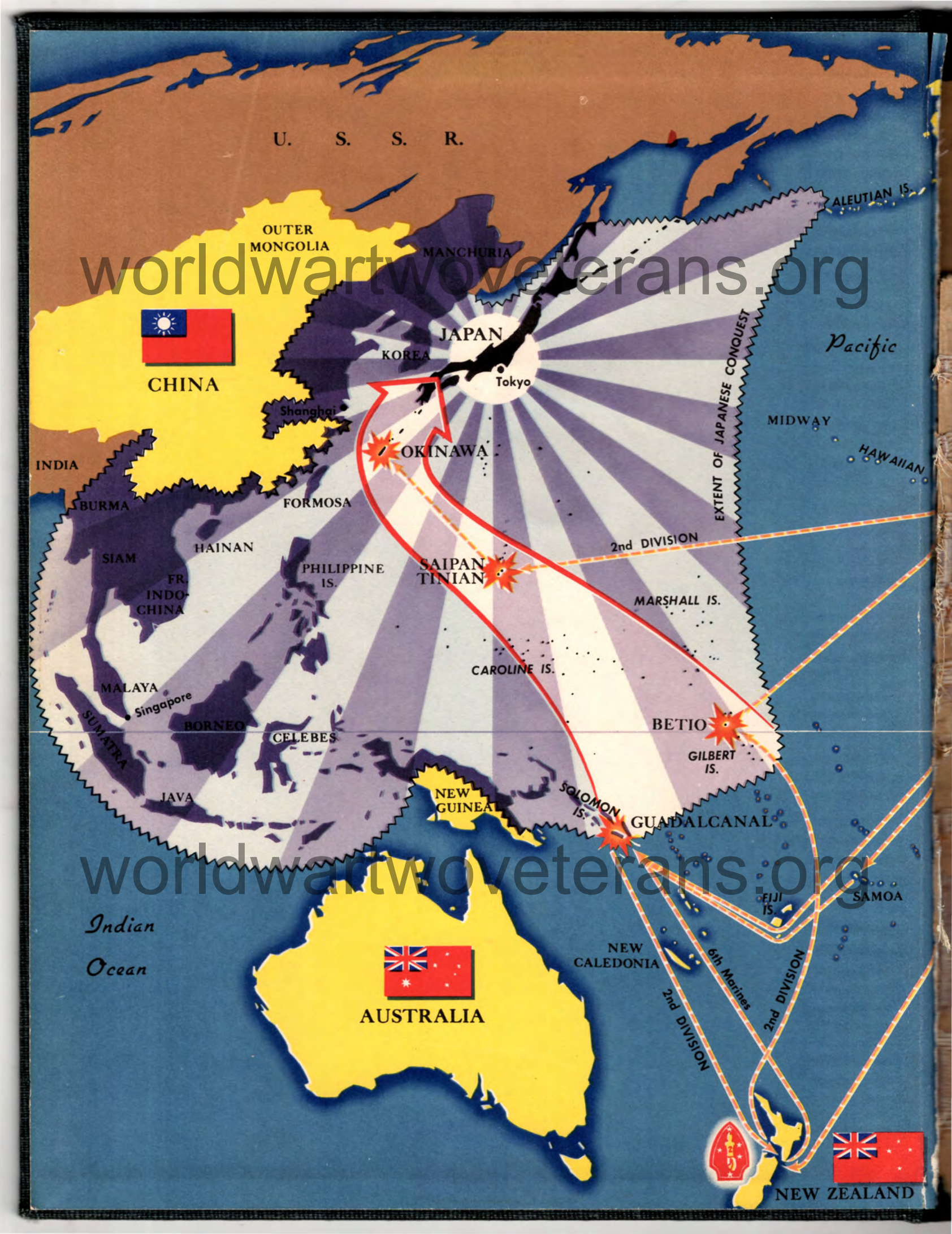
FOLLOW ME!

JOHNSTON

RANDOM HOUSE



IN REPLYING ADDRESS
COMMANDANT OF THE MARINE CORPS
WASHINGTON 25, D. C.
AND REFER TO

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HEADQUARTERS U. S. MARINE CORPS
WASHINGTON

for PEACE OF MIND- BUY SAVINGS BONDS

15 December 1948

To the Men and Families
of THE SECOND MARINE DIVISION:

It gives me great pleasure to forward to each of you this free copy of "FOLLOW ME!"--The Story of the Second Marine Division in World War II, with the best wishes of the United States Marine Corps.

This history has been paid for by the Marine Corps Fund, the fund which those of you who served in war time helped build up by your purchases at Post Exchanges. Since this money did not come from funds appropriated by the government, a share of it belonged to each man who served. This is one of a series of histories of all divisions and aviation. By this means, we are making a distribution of the war-time fund, and at the same time we hope this book will be a lasting memento of a great fighting division and the men, living and dead, who made it so.

The achievements recorded in this history are a part of the great tradition of the Marine Corps. On behalf of your comrades of the present-day Corps, I assure you that it is our constant endeavor to live up to this great heritage left to us by the men who served in World War II.

C. B. CATES
General, U. S. Marine Corps
Commandant of the Marine Corps

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FOLLOW ME!

THE STORY OF THE SECOND MARINE DIVISION IN WORLD WAR II

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FOLLOW ME!

THE STORY OF THE SECOND MARINE DIVISION IN WORLD WAR II

BY RICHARD W. JOHNSTON

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Most of the illustrations in this book are

by official U.S. Marine Corps photographers or combat artists.

The exceptions are as follows:

by official U.S. Navy photographers or combat artists—pages v, 8–9,

22, 37, 57, 100, 103, 107, 142, 145, 161 (above), 175, 178, 181, 183,

195 (above), 208–09, 242, 251 (below), 293 (above);

by official U.S. Air Force photographer—page 274;

by Interphoto News Pictures, Inc.—page 83;

by E. T. Robson, Wellington, New Zealand—page 91.

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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.

James Forrestal

NAVY DEPARTMENT

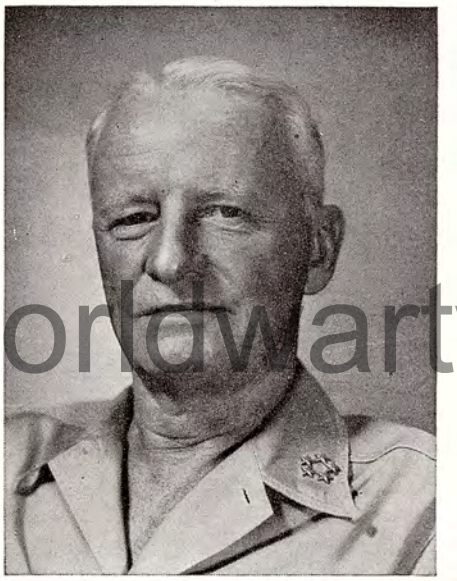
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF NAVAL OPERATIONS
WASHINGTON 25, D. C.

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
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.

CONTENTS

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LIST OF MAPS

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FOLLOW ME!

THE STORY OF THE SECOND MARINE DIVISION IN WORLD WAR II

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Chapter One

ON GUARD IN ICELAND *in the fall of 1941*

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 Division 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 attacks 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

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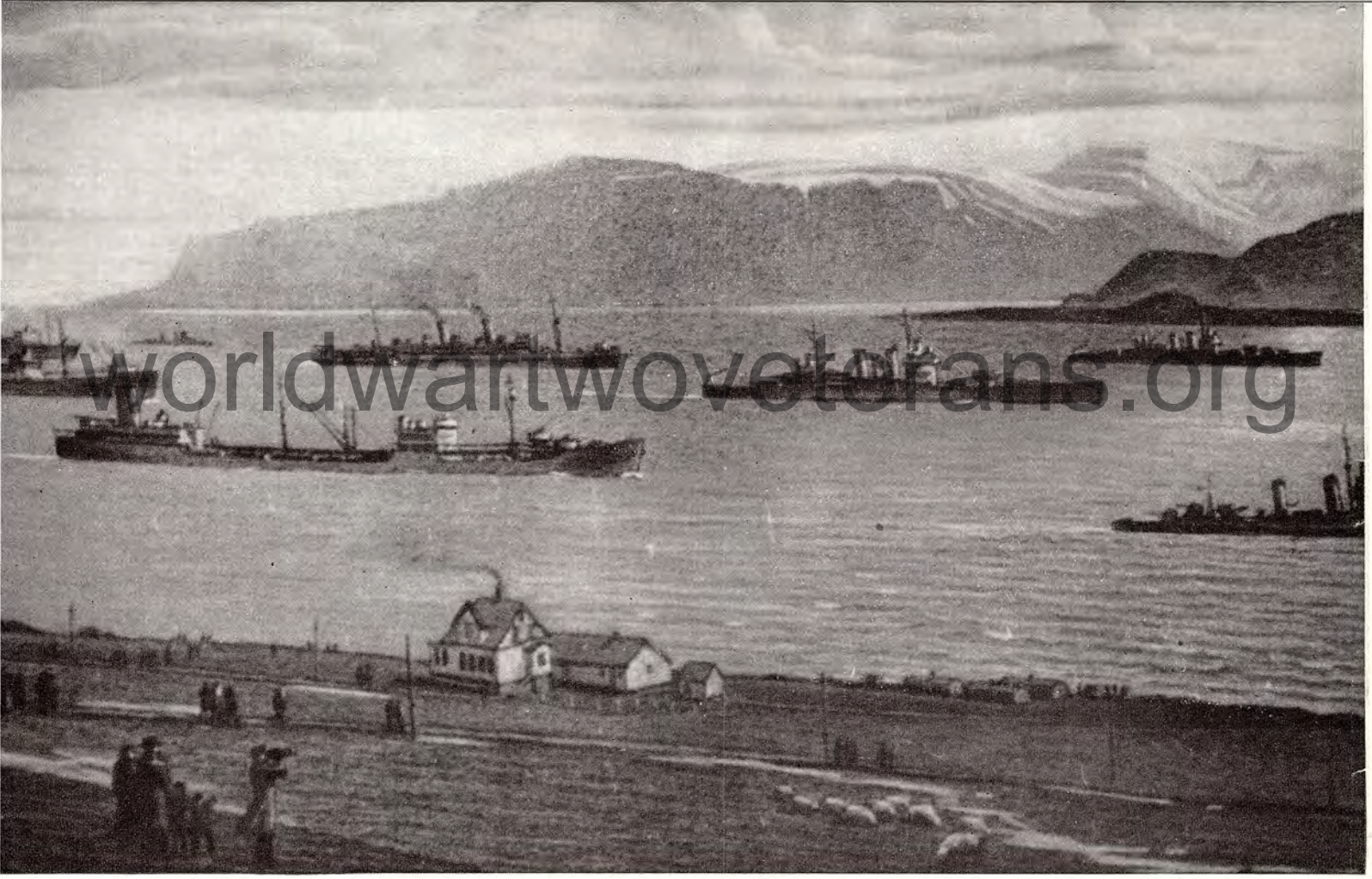
renamed "Le Bois de Brigade de Marine" by the grateful French. The Sixth Regiment went on from Belleau Wood to Soissons, where it again suffered heavy casualties, and from there to Mont Blanc and finally the Meuse-Argonne, the sergeant's cry still echoing in its ears. Through the intervening years, the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

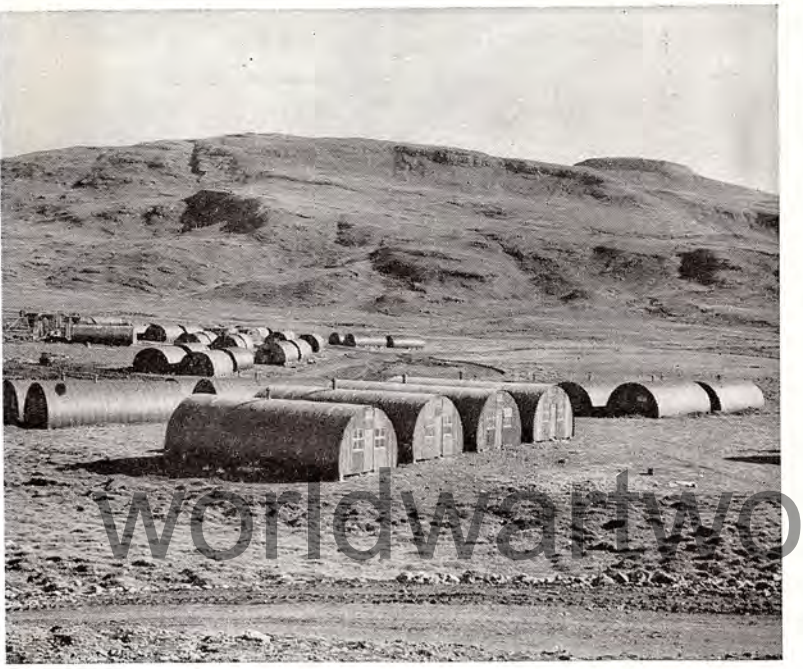
one-sentence memorandum from the Chief of Naval Operations: "TASK: IN COOPERATION WITH THE BRITISH GARRISON, DEFEND ICELAND AGAINST HOSTILE ATTACK." As the convoy moved north and east, it grew. The battleships *New York* and *Arkansas* joined the escorting force, which already included two cruisers and 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 seaplane 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 innoculated 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 *fourragere*, 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.

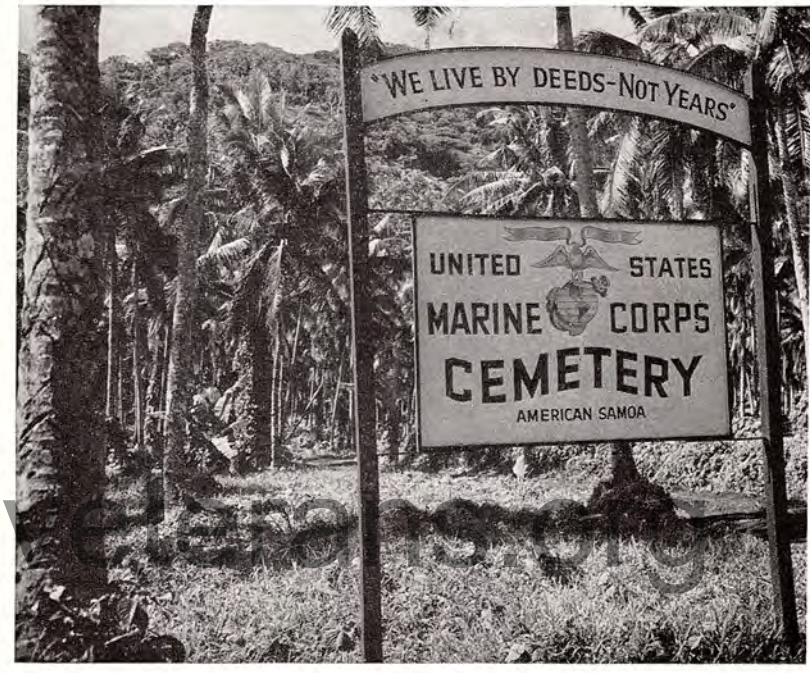
Three weeks after the last Jap ship went down at Midway, the "Home Guard" Second Regiment and other units which had helped make up Combat Team 2 for the practice landings were detached from the Second Marine Division. The ships that had carried them in the many amphibious drills now drew alongside the 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 riffling 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 horseshoe. 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

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 village, 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 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

* See author's foreword, p. viii.

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.

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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

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

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.

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.

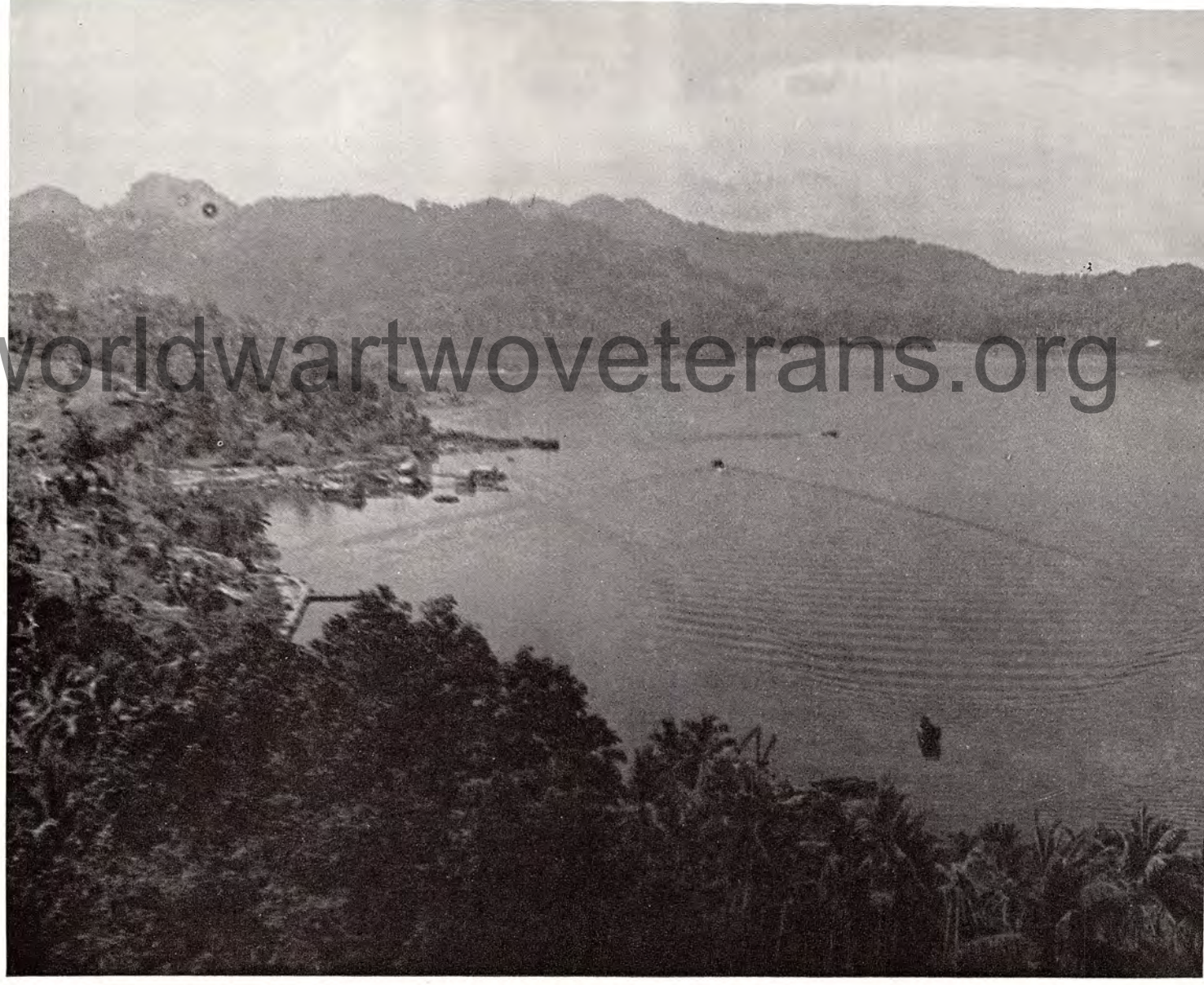
But neither the flag raising nor Bradley's inspirational response changed the immediate military situation. The reduction of Tanambogo remained the imperative necessity. How best to do it? Lieutenant Colonel Robert Hunt, whose Third Battalion would have the job, worked out a plan of attack in the temporary 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-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

* 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.



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

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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 Sergeant 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 Japanese 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.

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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 enroute 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-envious 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

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 tightening 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, moving 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 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

* 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.

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 Leineweber 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 scourged 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 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.

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

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 terrible 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 engagements 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 foxhole, 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.

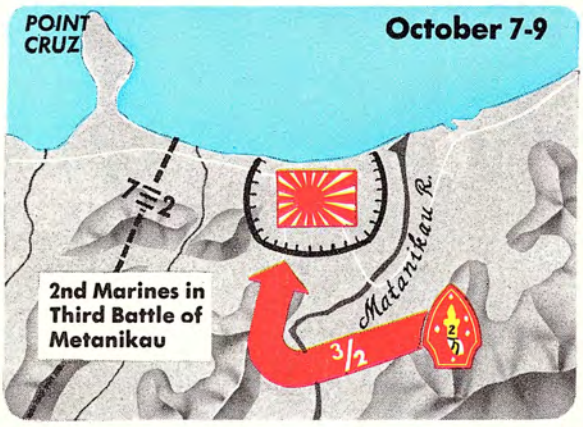
The remainder of the Second Battalion, the

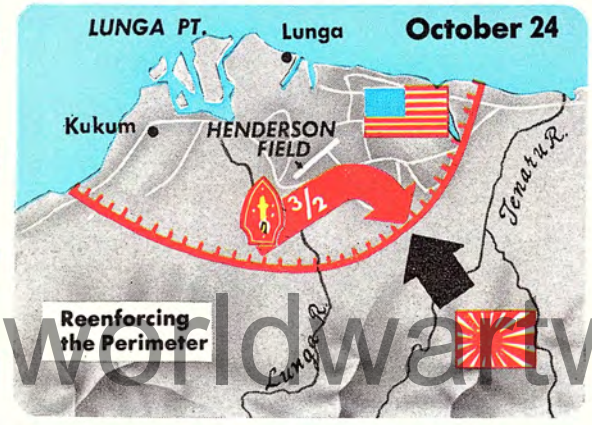
GUADALCANAL

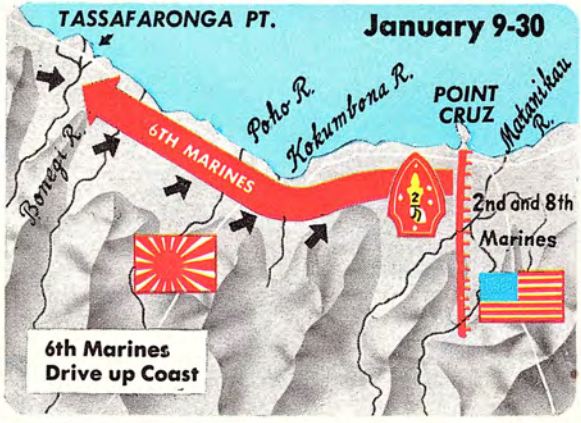
FLORIDA · TULAGI · GAVUTU · TANAMBOGO

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.







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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 remaining 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 shellfire 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.

Chapter Four

MOVING UP

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 unable 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—adequate 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.

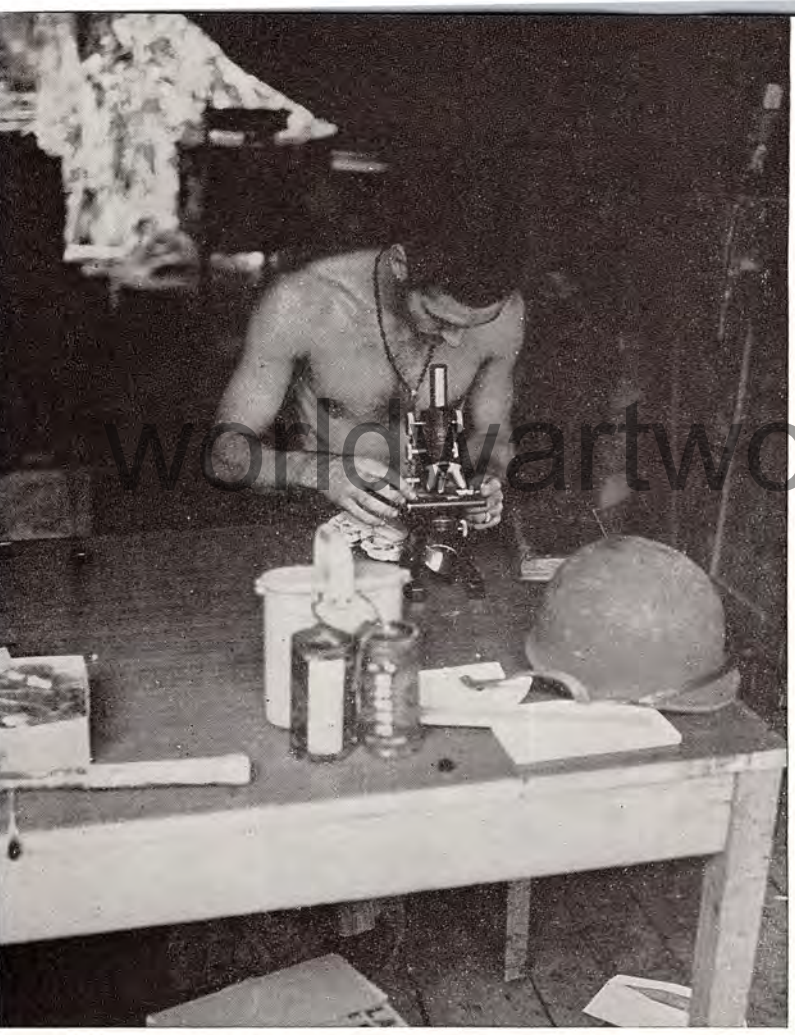
For forty-eight hours the assault continued, and for forty-eight hours the Japs refused to concede an inch of soil. It began to be clear that the enemy was staking everything on keeping possession of Guadalcanal's northern tip. The defensive positions were good. West of the Matanikau the coastal plain 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 Guadalcanal. 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 flies, 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).

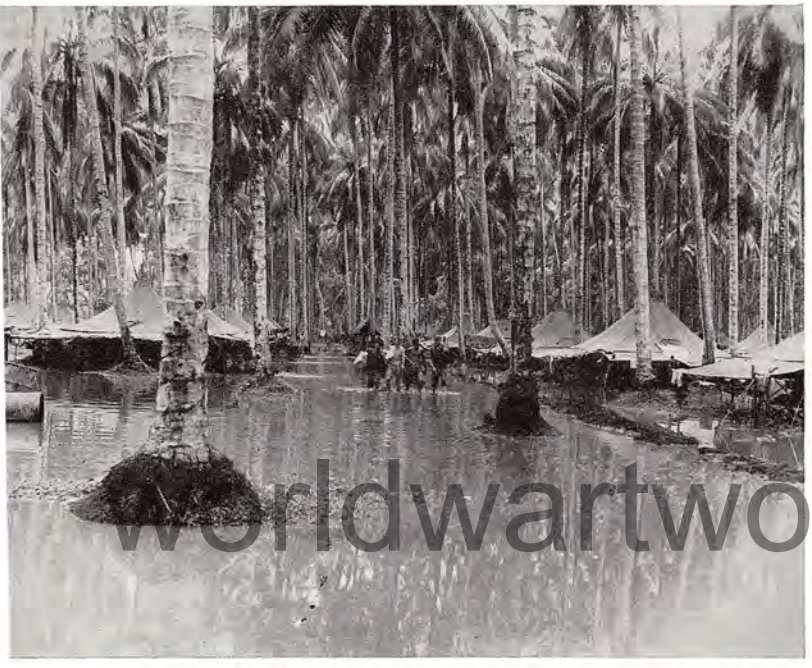
Troops in the line ate C rations or worse. In the bivouac areas galleys were placed under rigged tarpaulins, and field cooks produced meals of spam, wieners, beans, soup and canned vegetables, using the pack stoves carried by the Division. Some of these cooks and mess sergeants became real heroes to 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-

worldwartwoveterans.org

JAP BATTLE FLAG is exhibited by proud Marine who captured it in a Japanese bivouac area west of Kokumbona. 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 Pogey 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.

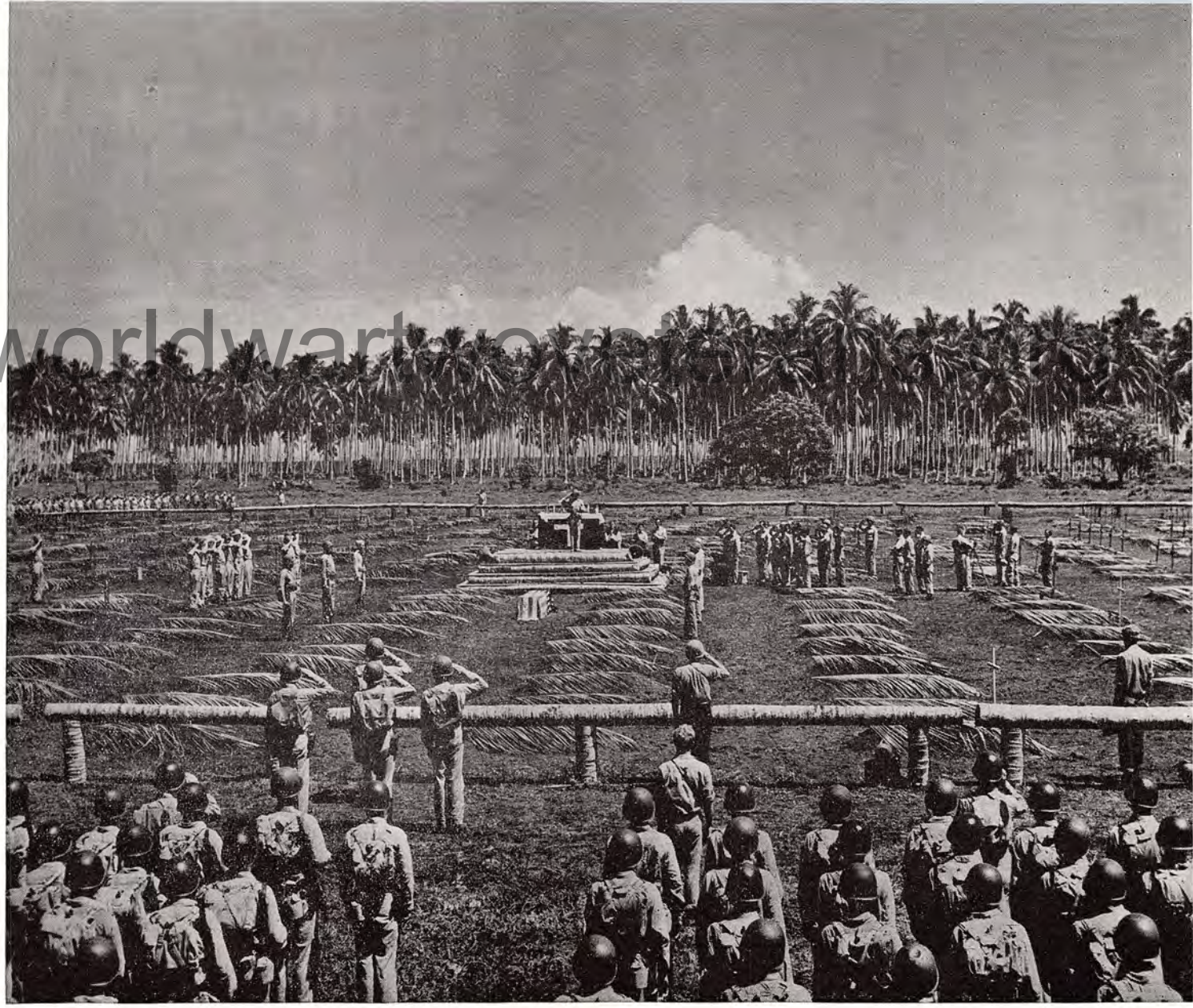
In the three days that followed the January 15 attack, the Sixth Regiment made steady progress. On January 16 3/6, under Major W. A. Kengla, relieved 3/8 on the beach. The front was narrowing steadily, as the island tapered off toward Esperance, and at 1400 on January 18 the Sixth Regiment's battalions 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 coconut-log bunkers. For the first time, the fighting engineers of 1/18 had experimented with the flamethrower-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-guners' 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.

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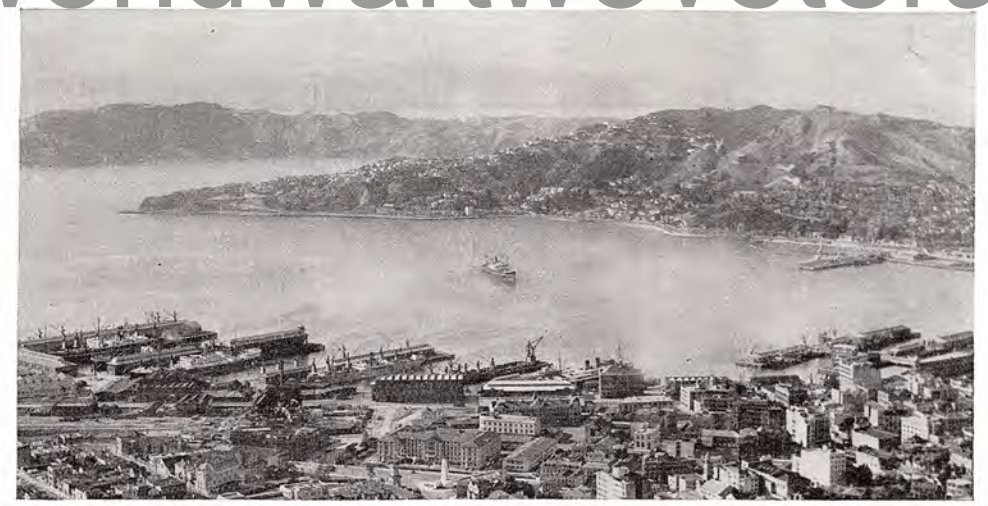
Chapter Five



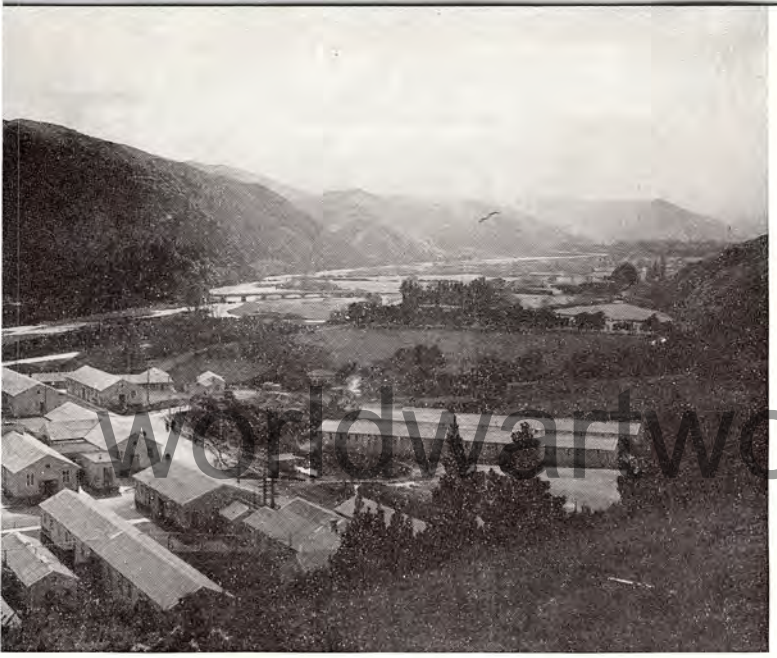
WELLINGTON HARBOR

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 Egmont; 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. . . ."

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*).

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.

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

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-

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

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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 reorganized 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 challenge 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 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

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

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 reassigned 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. Hiett (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 Wellington 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—Division 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 *Bellatrix*.

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.

Chapter Six

"BOATS WITH WHEELS"

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 destination? 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-operation 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 Ambryn 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 Devereux 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:

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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 exactly 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

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 battleships 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.

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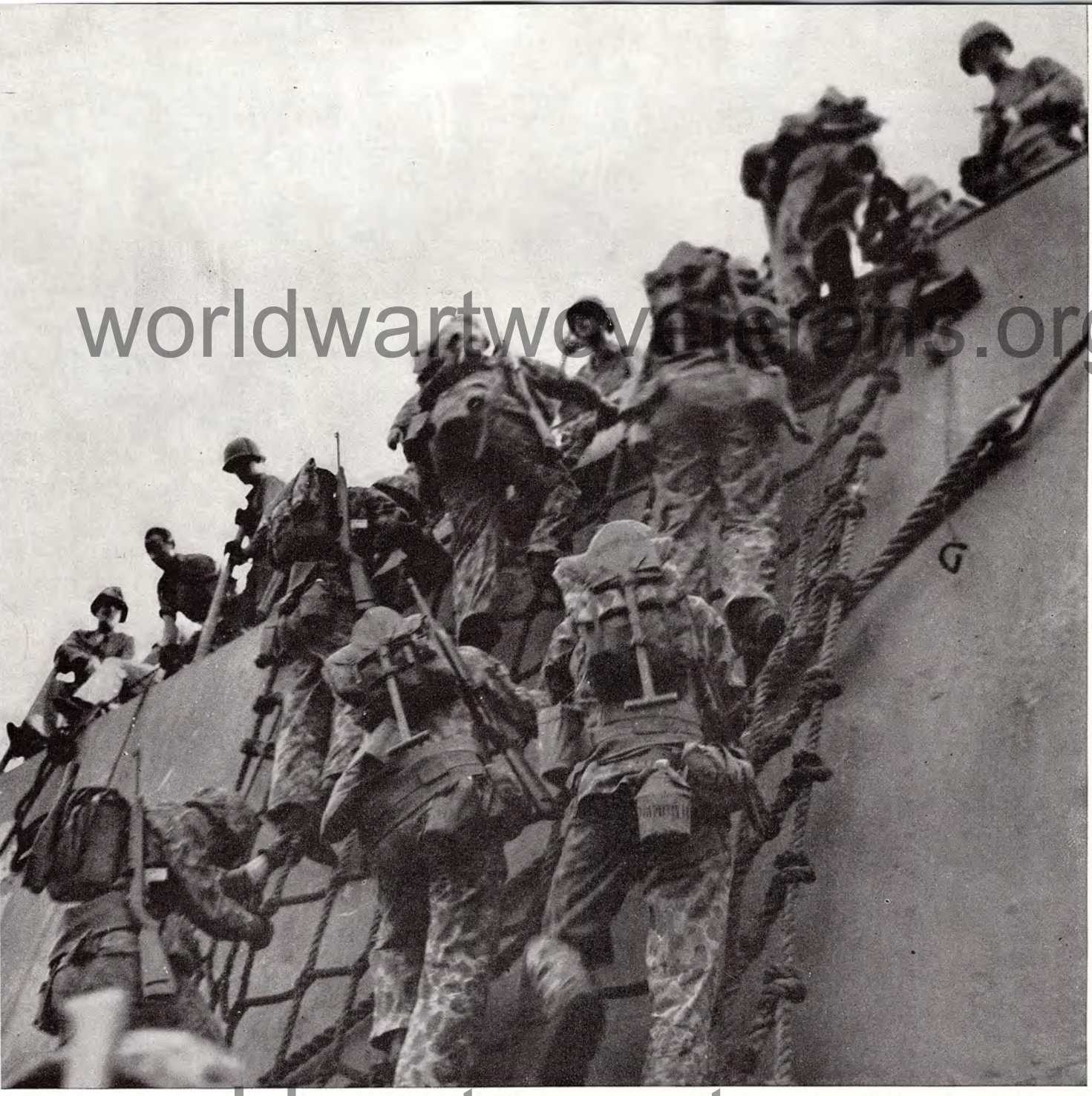
BETIO FROM THE AIR looks like the tip of an anchor on the curving coral of Tarawa atoll. Island at bend (*upper right*) is Bairiki. White water around islands indicates the extent of the fringing reef.



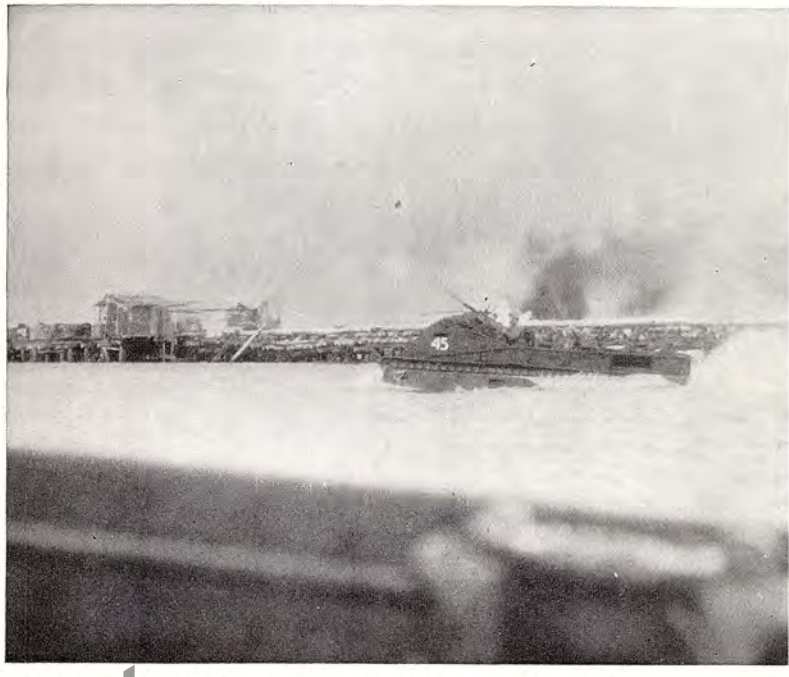
OVER THE SIDE go the assault Marines, down cargo nets into the swaying Higgins boats for the long, wet ride into the Tarawa lagoon—and the attack. The shovels were useful but the gas masks were soon discarded.

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."

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.

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 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.

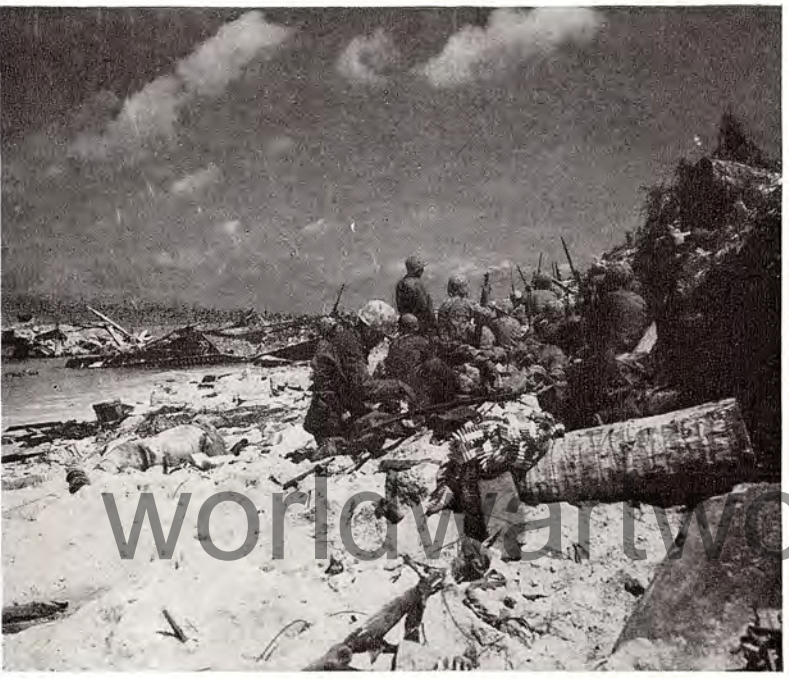
The U.S. battleships and cruisers outgunned the Jap shore artillerymen. The exchange of fire dwindled as members of the first three assault waves began the difficult transfer—made especially hazardous by the high seas—from LCVP's to alligators. The sun was not yet up, but the eastern sky was red as a 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.

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 beachead 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 well. 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 zigzagged, 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-smeared, 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 reinforcement 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-

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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 combined 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 departure. 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-cylindered 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 serious 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 tanker, 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.