THE OLD BREED

A History of the First Marine Division In World War II

McMILLAN

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THE FIRST MARINE DIVISION IN THE PACIFIC WORLD WAR II

ACIFIC OCEAN

UNITED STATES

San Francisco

Los Angeles

San Diego

MEXICO

HAWAIIAN ISLANDS

Oahu

1ST MARINES

1ST MARINES

1ST MARINES

THROUGH PANAMA CANAL

THROUGH PANAMA CANAL

TUAMOTU

SAMOA

SOCIETY ISLANDS

COOK ISLANDS

7TH MARINES

5TH MARINES

N

ROUTES OF REGIMENTS

ROUTES OF 1ST. MARINE DIVISION

PACIFIC OCEAN

VAHE KIRISHJIAN

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Norman Swenson
Company I, 3rd Bn, 5th Regt.

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. . . They were the Leathernecks, the old breed of American regular, regarding the service as home and war an occupation, and they transmitted their temper and character and viewpoint to the high-hearted volunteer mass.

COLONEL JOHN W. THOMASON

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A History of
The First Marine Division
In World War II

BY
GEORGE McMILLAN

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General A. A. Vandegrift

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Foreword

THIS HISTORY is dedicated to those who made it—the officers and men of the First Marine Division—and especially to those who gave their lives in its making.

The story of the First Marine Division is one of which every American may be justly proud. Having pioneered in the development of amphibious doctrine in time of peace, the men who formed the Division were fully prepared for the amphibious character of the Pacific fighting when war came. In our nation's darkest hour, it launched the first American offensive of the war at Guadalcanal, holding out against great odds and finally turning the tide against the Japanese. Gaining valuable experience with each successive operation, it administered other expensive lessons to the Japanese at Cape Gloucester, Peleliu and Okinawa. It was still in the vanguard of the westward advance, preparing for the invasion of the Japanese homeland, when the enemy's unconditional surrender was announced. The first Marine division to depart for foreign service after the war commenced, it was the last Marine division to return home after it ended.

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This book is intended to record briefly the major events of that history so that the achievements of the Division will be kept alive after time has dimmed the memory of individual experiences.

I shall always consider command of the First Marine Division as one of the highest honors that could come to a professional fighting man and certainly the most memorable occasion of my life. Seldom has a body of men given more in blood and human sacrifice for freedom's cause; never has a group of Marines given fuller meaning to the words "Semper Fidelis" and "First to Fight."

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A. A. VANDEGRIFT,
General, U. S. Marine Corps.

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Chapter 1

THE FIRST MARINE DIVISION was old before its time.

No use to look in its history for the helplessness of childhood, the misadventures of youth, the respectability of middle age. It was always a crotchety, cantankerous, prideful and intolerant, but wise and fearless, old man.

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The First was born with a beard. Like Minerva, an ancient goddess, the First leaped forth from the brain of the Marine Corps "mature and in complete armor"—mature

in the deep folkways of an elite military body, armored with the amphibious science its stubborn, aristocratic parent had made a specialty.

The First was always haughty with its younger brothers born after a more conventional lying-in period or sent to battle later in process more due. The younger ones sensed a difference beyond years. They proved that they had acquired the skills, only to discover that the Old One would not loosen his grip on the folklore.

As for the individual recruits who reported for duty with the Old One, they could only try to take on his image. Not one of them, be he general or private, could claim really to have changed the Old One, this way or that.

All found the Old One a hard taskmaster. He seemed to have a way of taking a man's measure, and of then demanding more than the statistic of endurance allowed. He often got it from his men, and when they had done more than they thought they could do—the Old One shared the pride.

He was, it must be said, perverse. He seemed to take pleasure in keeping his men a little unhappy. Whenever a grumble of misery arose from them, he would smack his lips in satisfaction of their morale.

He was a great storyteller. Each of his tales had a moral: things are not so rugged as they used to be; you should have been around in the old days. Sometimes when he told his tales he acted as though he were obeying some inner compulsion, perhaps that of prolonging his tradition.

Those who knew the Old One best sometimes thought of him as a vestige, a throwback to some earlier age, getting nourishment from deep and hidden roots.

Well, wasn't it antique to think that duty done under discipline would be its own reward?

II

The route the folkways followed to reach the First Division can be traced.

Around Marine slop chutes, they tell a story . . .

When the first Marine in history was recruited at Tun Tavern in 1775, he was ordered to report aboard a ship then lying in the Philadelphia yard.

"What the hell is a Marine?" barked the bewildered officer-of-the-deck. "You go aft there and sit down till I find out."

A few minutes later the second Marine reported aboard, and the still-confused OD told him to go aft and stand by with the first.

How did the first man greet the second?

"Listen, boy," he snarled, "you shoulda been in the *old* Corps!"

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By folk-route, the distance to World War I is short. Captain John Thomason saw in France "a number of diverse people who ran curiously to type, with drilled shoulders and a bone-deep sunburn, and a tolerant scorn of nearly everything on earth. They were the Leathernecks, the old breed of American regular, regarding the service as home and war an occupation, and they transmitted their temper and character and viewpoint to the high-hearted volunteer mass."

But how? Captain Flagg tells Sergeant Quirt in *What Price Glory:*

"Feed 'em up and give 'em hell. Teach 'em where they are. Make 'em so mad they'll eat steel rather than get another dressing from you. Make 'em hard, but don't break 'em."

In the peaceful Nineteen-Thirties the old breed was still around:

"I can just see old Lou now," said a friend of Gunnery Sergeant Lou Diamond who was an old man (by Marine standards) with a pot-belly, goatee, and a booming voice, "sitting on the quay-side at St. Thomas during maneuvers, drunk as a coot, soliloquizing about The Old Corps to a bunch of boots. He never failed to smokestack 'em.

"Lou," continued his friend in one of those never-terse moods of reminiscence, "was a man who could always walk himself home, and carry somebody on his back if he had to.

"Anyway, Lou's gimmick never changed. He'd line up his platoon—he was a mortar man—and call off a long list of outfits he'd been in in 'the old Corps' and then he'd let the boots know that no matter how good they thought they were, and maybe they were good, they were the biggest bunch of knuckleheads ever assembled.

"According to Lou, his present outfit could *never,* no matter how fast they hustled, be as good as one of those old outfits, when the truth really was that some of Lou's old outfits were made up of the worst bunch of thieves and outcasts ever to wear Marine uniform."

Of urgent 1940, when recruits began to fill out the ranks of the then newly-created First Division, an old-timer has said:

"Every night, just at dusk, the saddest and weariest time of the day, these woebegone boots would arrive by the busload. They sure were an unlikely lot.

"Every time a bunch of 'em arrived, I'd say to myself: 'This is a sad day for the First Division . . . a sad day!' Then I'd say to myself: 'Nuts, they're just another day's work. Give 'em a bad time. They'll be all right'."

So heavy was the cargo of folklore that the recruits sometimes chafed under the load, singing in protest the battle hymn of their own republic:

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"When this war is over,
We will re-enlist again.
When the war is over,
We will re-enlist again.
When the war is over,
We will re-enlist again . . .
In a pig's eyeball we will!"

Or, their sacrilegious version of the hymn, "What A Friend We Have in Jesus":

"When this bloody war is over
Oh, how happy we will be.
They can have my pack and rifle
But they never will find me.
No more Sunday working parties,
No more begging for a pass,
And we'll tell the Sergeant Major
To..."

III

An elite tradition was only one of the First Marine Division's two birthrights. The other was a surpassing skill in the science of amphibious warfare.

The story is well known of how the Marine Corps persisted between World Wars I and II, amid almost contemptuous indifference from other branches of the American armed forces, in its pursuit of a technique for landing against a defended beach.

By 1933 the Marine Corps had a doctrine and, when some of its less than 20,000 men (total strength) were recalled that year from Caribbean assignments, was ready to test it by forming the Fleet Marine Force, with the First Marine Brigade as its tactical unit.

Between 1934 and 1941 the First Brigade formed the nucleus for six fleet landing exercises. In these exercises the doctrine was honed and sharpened until, at the end, amphibious assault could no longer be considered a radical or an implausible concept.

In spending so much of its time on maneuver, the First Brigade picked up a name that distinguished it from the Second Brigade, stationed on the West Coast. By 1940 the First was being called, "The Raggedy-Ass Marines;" the Second, which occasionally furnished men for movie productions, became "The Hollywood Marines." And, as one officer of long service puts it, "the tradition of hard, dirty service had started in the First."

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Camp San Ildefonso, at Culebra, Virgin Islands

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The First Brigade tested and perfected many of the most important modern innovations in amphibious warfare, not the least of which were the amphibian tractor and the Higgins landing boat—actually only two of a long line of weird and often unseaworthy landing craft tried during the exercises. At the end of the 1940 exercise the Higgins boat was recommended for mass production.

But other recommendations that year seem to have made less impression, or no impression at all, on Topside. The Quartermaster was called on, for example, "to improve the quality of the canned baked beans," a recommendation which some men of the First may conclude was lost in the files. Heating and ventilating of troop transports was found bad then, and remained so throughout the war.

That year the actual exercises seemed the least part of the hardships the men underwent. Then Brigadier General Holland M. (Howlin' Mad) Smith commanded the brigade and had made it his goal, the men used to say, "to keep the fat out of the waistband" during the Brigade's seven-month stay at Guantanamo Bay, on the dry, hot and dusty coastal plain of tropical Cuba. But by the time they had completed the landing exercises at Culebra in February, 1941, though "they griped and growled, and cursed the steaming wilderness, the elements and the day they became Marines . . ." they

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nevertheless "came out the best amphibious fighters in the world," according to one report.

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IV

On February 1, 1941, the day the First Marine Division was created from the First Brigade, the men *did* have beards. They were aboard ship bound for Culebra. D-Day for FLEX #7[1] (February 4-14) was only four days away; like the old hands they were, they went on about their business. There is no record that any ceremony was held.

The Division was one in name only. It had, at least on paper, three regiments. The 5th Marines[2], nucleus of the First Brigade, was split to form the new 7th Marines; and the 1st Marines was put together by slices out of the 5th and 7th. This amoebic growth was possible only because the organized reserves of the Marine Corps had been called up in the fall of 1940 and had begun to arrive at Guantanamo in January, 1941. Thus FLEX #7, though one of the largest held, (the Army First Infantry Division took part) still was conducted largely on a battalion scale.

Small at the time though it was, the formation of the First Marine Division set some important precedents in American military history. The First was not only the first division in the Marine Corps but it was also the first integrated amphibious striking force of such size formed in the United States armed forces.

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[1]Fleet Landing Exercise No. 7.
[2]Marine Regiments are called within the Corps itself simply "Marines," as above.

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Chapter 2

"WE NEVER REALLY came out of the boondocks from then on—from the fall of 1940 when the Brigade went to Guantanamo until after it had, as the First Division, secured Guadalcanal," is a true comment from a veteran of that period.

Now too big to base solely at Quantico (home of the Brigade), the Division split its forces when it returned in May, 1941, between the Virginia base and Parris Island, South Carolina. But the men had hardly unpacked their gear when they were put aboard ship again for June maneuvers off New River, North Carolina. Here the Marine Corps had bought 111,710 acres of water, coastal swamp and plain, theretofore inhabited largely by sandflies, ticks, chiggers and snakes.

Although the 1st Joint Training Force (Holland Smith elevated to command, Major General Philip Torrey having assumed command of the First Division) exercises were not to be held until August, the regiments of the First trained intensely in June and July. In those two sweltering months the men of the First made their first landings on Onslow Beach, a stretch of sand that was to become so familiar that some claimed they had counted every grain on it, from eye level.

When the Joint Force exercises did come, their only newness was in their size; they were the largest of their kind ever held in the United States: 16,000 men, 300 vehicles and 2,200 tons of supplies were put ashore through the surf. Four Marine aircraft squadrons and 42 naval vessels were used. With D-day on August 11, there was an assault landing, seizure of a beachhead, and an advance inland of about nine miles. Finally, there was a simulated forced withdrawal which lasted three days.

But there was to be no real withdrawal from New River, not until the Division left there for overseas. The men moved into Tent City, for the handsome brick buildings which were to become the trademark of Camp Lejeune were still on the architect's board. The First's quarters were like so many others the Division was to move into: just as good as the men of the Division themselves could make with the time and materials they had on hand—and both time and materials were always scarce for the First.

II

If there is a difference between Army and Marine Corps training it is in the degree of discipline imposed on its recruits by the Marine Corps.

Thus, while an Army man may remember the size, the grand scale of his maneuvers, the length of his hike, the duration of his bivouac, the Marine is much more likely to

CHIGGERS AND SNAKES NOT SHOWN: Marines in firing positions shortly after landing at Onslow Beach in 1941 joint Army-Navy-Marine maneuvers

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ARRIVAL AT NEW RIVER: A P'toon sergeant leads men off to Tent City at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina

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recall the speed, the immediate obedience called for during what might seem to be an otherwise no more demanding physical program. To the Marine it is not so much what he does, as it is the way he has to do it.

This is not to say that the First Division did not have a rugged season of exercises of all kinds between August, 1941, when it set up at New River, and May, 1942, when it left. It did. But most worth noting are the conditions under which those exercises were conducted.

Tent City was just that. The winter, there on the edge of the coastal swamp, was bitterly and inescapably cold. Against the cold each tent was furnished with a kerosene stove, a smelly, ornery, and often dangerous contraption. If the stoves did not set tents afire—and they often did—they would at some time or other cover everything, including the sleeping men, with sooty smoke. "When this happened," one Tent City man has said, "you'd cough smoke for a week." There were wooden decks for the tents, but cracks were wide and unsealed. Many men stuffed newspapers, magazines and comic books into these chilly vents, for it was not until late in the winter that the Division quartermaster issued tar paper for flooring.

New River was isolated, far off the North-South main-line railroads. What bus service there was had been planned to take care of the few villages in the area. To have

given liberty to a company, not to say the normal complement of a division, would have put a severe strain on transportation facilities.

The PX, though large enough to sell a beer, had no place for a man to sit and drink it.

One of the few points of contact with the outside world was the local weekly, the *Onslow County News,* which described itself with unchallengeable accuracy as "the only paper in the world that gives a damn about Onslow County." Even if a man could latch on to a copy, it was difficult for him to read it. Each of the tents was furnished with only one dim bulb, and that sparse light was subject to the vagaries of a local power grid incapable of handling its new and unexpected load. The current was as often off as it was on. Men sometimes played blackjack, poker, and cribbage, the three favorite card games, by candlelight.

As for civilian entertainment, some of the men came to feel that the USO shows purposely dodged New River. It was difficult for the troupes to get to Tent City, more difficult than it was to reach Army camps in the southeastern coastal area. When the shows did begin to come at the very end, they discovered, too late, that they had been missing one of their most receptive service audiences.

Over the long haul of the winter, the principal sources of recreation were movies, boxing matches, and Marine talent shows.

The setting for these homemade variety shows was an old, "surveyed" circus tent, wangled from a carnival. The care and upkeep of this immense (7,500 men could be seated under it) piece of nearly-rotten canvas was made the mission of the division band, and four unwilling bandsmen were ordered to sleep in it, to stand guard on the sagging guy ropes. Even so, it often blew down, fortunately never before it could be cleared. Not until March, when the bandsmen had become expert in the use of patches and canvas cement, was the tent finally abandoned—and then only after it was ripped and torn beyond repair in a spring gale.

As usual, there was gum-beating and enamel chipping. The men complained that conditions at New River were not happenstance. "This is the way they want things," one salt explained. "You don't make a good fightin' man if you're in love with everybody. You gotta be mad, so sore at everything you'd slug your best buddy at the drop of a p . . . cutter."

There was some evidence that the state of affairs at New River did not entirely displease Topside. Even though transportation and limited housing would have made it impossible for all but a few, officers were forbidden to live with their families during

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UP WITH IT! Bandsmen raise a battered circus tent for the umpteenth time at Tent City

the week. "I heard that General Smith just didn't want us running home all the time," a second lieutenant, newly-married at the time, remembers. "When I look back on it, I guess he was right. The men grew proud of being able to take it. To tell the truth, I think morale went up during the New River days, bad and lonely as they were."

The shortage of materials was not limited to recreation. Although there were plenty of small boats for landings and Coast Guard crews to man them, the Navy could not spare ships for practice in going over the side. Men of the First mocked-up their own ship hulls and draped cargo nets over them. They built their own combat training ranges, many of which were used for the duration of the war.

What was thought to be New River's most serious disadvantage the men of the First could do nothing about. Some staff officers considered the flat, swampy area entirely unsuitable as terrain for maneuver. There were no draws, no ravines, no hills, no mountains. One staff officer remembers ruefully a statement he made in those days: "Why this division, training here, won't be fit for a thing but jungle warfare." He added, "It's surprising how much like Guadalcanal that damned place was."

III

By December 7, 1941, the organized reserves and the regulars had been molded together by strenuous and rugged training, and by that sharing of hardships that seems an irreplaceable requirement of unit *esprit*. The Division was still small: 518 officers and 6,871 enlisted men.

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War did not of course come as a bewildering surprise to hardened fighting men who had been simulating it for nearly two years. It seemed rather to give purpose to all the men had been through. And now that it had come, the men of the First ached to get in. Lieutenant Colonel Frank Goettge, division intelligence officer, and always one of the most articulate around the CP, began to say, "We're the first team, and we should be the first sent in." The inevitable rumors of impending combat, reflecting the wishes of the men, began to rush like a storm-flooded stream down the company streets.

But first came the new men. All the tenets of discipline, the symbols of an elite corps, would be utterly strange to them. These new men would have to exceed themselves for so quickly taking the title: United States Marine. The NCOs went to work on the new men who would have to be tested even more harshly, to prove themselves worthy of the Corps' first and finest fighting unit.

An officer, who had to do with personnel at the time, says: "They were a strange breed, this bunch that came busting in after Pearl Harbor. Many of them, we discovered, were officer caliber, and could have easily gained that rank if they hadn't volunteered. There's no doubt about it but they wanted to fight. If we resented them at New River . . . well, we learned better at the 'Canal."

The new men were filtered through the Division which itself was undergoing changes on a higher level. The 1st Battalion, 5th Marines, was lifted entirely away and formed into the 1st Raider Battalion. The 1st Marines, which had been skeletonized in June, 1941, was reactivated in February, 1942, and assigned a complement, most of whom, both officers and enlisted men, were green. On March 21, 1942, a few days before the Division got its orders for overseas duty, the 7th Marines was detached to form the nucleus of the Third Brigade, assigned to the defense of Samoa. The loss of the 7th was probably the most serious of all the changes. Because it was thought the 7th would see action first, many of the men asked to be allowed to go as a reward for their seniority. Some of the best NCOs in the Division were sent. When the 7th left New River it carried with it an undue proportion of the Division's best fighting talent.

The main convoy carrying the 7th sailed from Norfolk April 10, 1942, and reached Apia, Western Samoa, on May 8 when the outfit began a five-month stay in these beautiful islands. It was possible to get laundry done by native washwomen, and at one point a commercial steamer came up from New Zealand with 6,000 dozen eggs and 14,000 pounds of butter. Altogether the Samoa duty was not bad even though training in jungle warfare and combat firing was carried on so intensively there was, according to the 7th's report, "little opportunity or need for athletics on a large scale."

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Meanwhile another D-day had come. This was January 12 for another of the joint exercises off New River with the Army. This one lasted a week and was conducted under the eye of Major General Smith as Commanding General of what was now called Amphibious Force, Atlantic Fleet. Various regiments of the Division were being ordered to Solomons Island in Chesapeake Bay, off Maryland.

Would they never see action? Bitter gags began to make the rounds, one of which went:

"Oh yeah, we got a target, all right! Solomons Island."

That one was always good for a laugh in the spring of 1942 when the only Solomons the men had heard of was in Maryland.

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Chapter 3

IN A GLOBAL WAR, 15,000 men would not seem to make much difference, this way or that. But to an unarmed and unprepared United States already at war in the spring of 1942, 15,000 trained and disciplined Marines meant just about the only ready striking force the nation possessed. The bushes were full: thousands upon thousands of men were streaming into military and naval training installations all over the country. The First Marine Division was a bird in the hand.

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It seems inevitable now that the First would be first-used. When a plan, fittingly called LONE WOLF, arrived at New River in mid-April, ordering the Division to

move overseas to Wellington, New Zealand, at the earliest possible moment, "the Division had not yet attained a satisfactory state of readiness for combat" by General Vandegrift's standards. [Major General A. A. Vandegrift assumed command from Torrey on March 23, 1942.] It is the pride of the Corps to be ready, and this reason plus an assurance that the Division would not be expected to fight before January 1, 1943, prevented General Vandegrift from making a protest. Six months seemed a fair enough time to whet the Division's fighting edge, and in New Zealand the men would be far from home and cloying family ties.

An advance party of two officers was immediately dispatched to Wellington to select a campsite and get the buildings under way—for there *were* to be buildings. The camp was to be semi-permanent. Naturally, the advance men looked for a rugged place. On North Island, thirty-five miles by railroad or highway from Wellington, they found it. The "bush"-covered gorges and ravines of the Tararua Mountains were within spitting distance. The matter of the buildings was not so easily solved; lumber and labor were both short in New Zealand. The camp was finally built with green lumber by New Zealand women.

Back in the States, the advance echelon of the Division was ready to move by the end of April, went aboard trains at New River on May 1 (just two weeks after the Division got its notice), bound for Norfolk, Virginia, the port of embarkation.

Of the scene of departure, an older officer wrote home: "The average age of the enlisted personnel is very low, probably not 20 years—about 90 percent of them enlisted since Pearl Harbor. They are full of patriotism and have the 'up-and-at-'em' spirit."

As for himself: "It is very hard to try to describe my feelings upon embarkation to God only knows where. When a person is young and filled with the spirit of adventure, it is fairly easy to pick up and shove off to war. But it is an entirely different matter when you are older and have the responsibility of a family . . ."

Come May 19, General Vandegrift, by tradition the last to go aboard, was on *Wakefield,* the former SS *Manhattan,* and the big liner sailed the next day southward through the sub-menaced Atlantic toward the Panama Canal.

The personnel and the gear went in separate hulls. There seemed no need for combat loading for a move of this kind—one between bases, one in which there did not seem to be any urgency of time. Combat loading, the job of putting together the men and the equipment they would need immediately to fight a battle, would have been, it was then thought, pointlessly time-consuming.

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RELAY: One character has not even bothered to take off his cap, and he's in the lead, too

This mood governed the transport quartermaster. When he got his sailing list scheduled for both the advance and the rear echelons, he found it best to put nearly all the men into either *Wakefield* or *Ericsson* (for the rear echelon), while most of the equipment went in one of the following: *Electra, Del Brazil, Lipscomb Lykes, Alcyone, Libra, Alchiba, Mizar, Elliott,* or *Barnett.* The artillery regiment and the engineer battalion, for example, were carried in six different ships of both echelons.

Quarters aboard some of the ships were bad, and the old hands, to enliven the boring voyage, thought back upon an age-old joke. With great mystery, they would bring a covered bucket up on deck and gather round it, talking lowly, raising their voices only to say a few provocative words like, "Some bird, that Sea Bat!" When an unsuspecting recruit stepped forward to join the circle, to look in the bucket at this new winged creature, all the old hands stepped back, and one appeared from hiding to swat the recruit on his bottom with a broom.

A little less than a month after it sailed from Norfolk, *Wakefield* arrived safely in Wellington, docking on June 20, and the men began to move into their hastily-constructed encampment.

The Division had never been stationed near a city the size of Wellington, and not since the fall of 1940 had the men had a satisfactory liberty. As many as could began to "go ashore" from the camp into Wellington, only to discover that New Zealand girls were, to say the least, different.

"New Zealand girls don't recognize a 'line' when they hear it," one First Division man lamented. "When I take a girl out for the evening and say to her, 'Gee, honey, you're looking swell!', I expect her to come back with something like, 'You're not

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looking so bad yourself.' But instead of that, the New Zealand girls say, 'Oh, am I?'

"Back home," went on the Marine, "if I dated one girl one night and another the next, and then they both got together, they'd probably start tearing each other's hair out. But out here they don't seem to mind a bit—they just ask each other if they enjoyed their night out."

II

There are a thousand strange things about war, and not the least of these to men who have come from the languid climate of peace, is the importance of time.

In war you come to realize that time is a dimension. You learn this through time's perversities; when you're in uniform it seems there is never just the right amount of time to do anything: there is either too little time, or too much time. Both are bad.

If there was a man in the First Division who had not learned the meaning of time before June 26, 1942, he was to learn it then. On that day, six *days*—not six months—after the Division's advance echelon arrived in Wellington, General Vandegrift and his staff were called to a conference at the headquarters of Vice Admiral Ghormley, Commander of the South Pacific Area, and then General Vandegrift's immediate superior in the field.

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NOBODY THERE FROM MASS-A-TU-SETTS: Against the first cold weather they've felt in many months, Marines wear greens as they stare ahead at the strange shore of Wellington, New Zealand

The General journeyed to Auckland under the impression that he was going to hear the Admiral's suggestions for further training of the Division. Hardly were they seated when Admiral Ghormley handed him a sheet of paper. It was a dispatch from the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the highest-ranking military body in the United States forces, the top incubator for war plans, and it read:

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"Occupy and defend Tulagi and adjacent positions (Guadalcanal and Florida Islands and the Santa Cruz Islands) in order to deny these areas to the enemy and to provide United States bases in preparation for further offensive action."

Very interesting, but *who* was to occupy and defend these islands? "Why," said Admiral Ghormley, "the First Marine Division."

How long before this occupying and defending had to come off? "D-Day will be 1 August," said the Admiral.

That was thirty-seven days away and, considering that the second echelon would not arrive until July 11, the Division had a little less than a month to unload and to re-load, combat-style.

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The margin was slimmer than that, at least as it appears in a staff problem used in the post-war curriculum of the Marine Corps Schools. "The concentration," begins the problem, "is to take place in the Fijis, six days from New Zealand by transport. That leaves 31 days. Koro, in the Fijis, is seven days from the objective. That leaves 24 days in which to reconnoiter the objective, get information, study the terrain, make a decision, issue orders, load 31 transports and cargo carriers, embark 20,000 men and 60 days' supply, effect a rendezvous with supporting naval forces and, in addition, conduct a thorough set of joint rehearsal exercises . . ."

"Division headquarters and one combat team have just arrived at Wellington," continues the problem. "The second combat team, the First Marines, is at San Francisco, the third combat team, the Second Marines, is at San Diego, the First Raider Battalion is in New Caledonia, the Third Defense Battalion is at Pearl Harbor, along with supporting naval forces."

For a solution, it was plain at the Auckland meeting that Admiral Ghormley was caught as short as General Vandegrift. His staff had done none of that intricate, complex and very necessary planning that is normally done by higher echelons before the landing force is alerted. About all Admiral Ghormley had in the way of information on the islands that now so suddenly had to be captured was a Navy hydrographic chart made in 1910—thirty-two years before.

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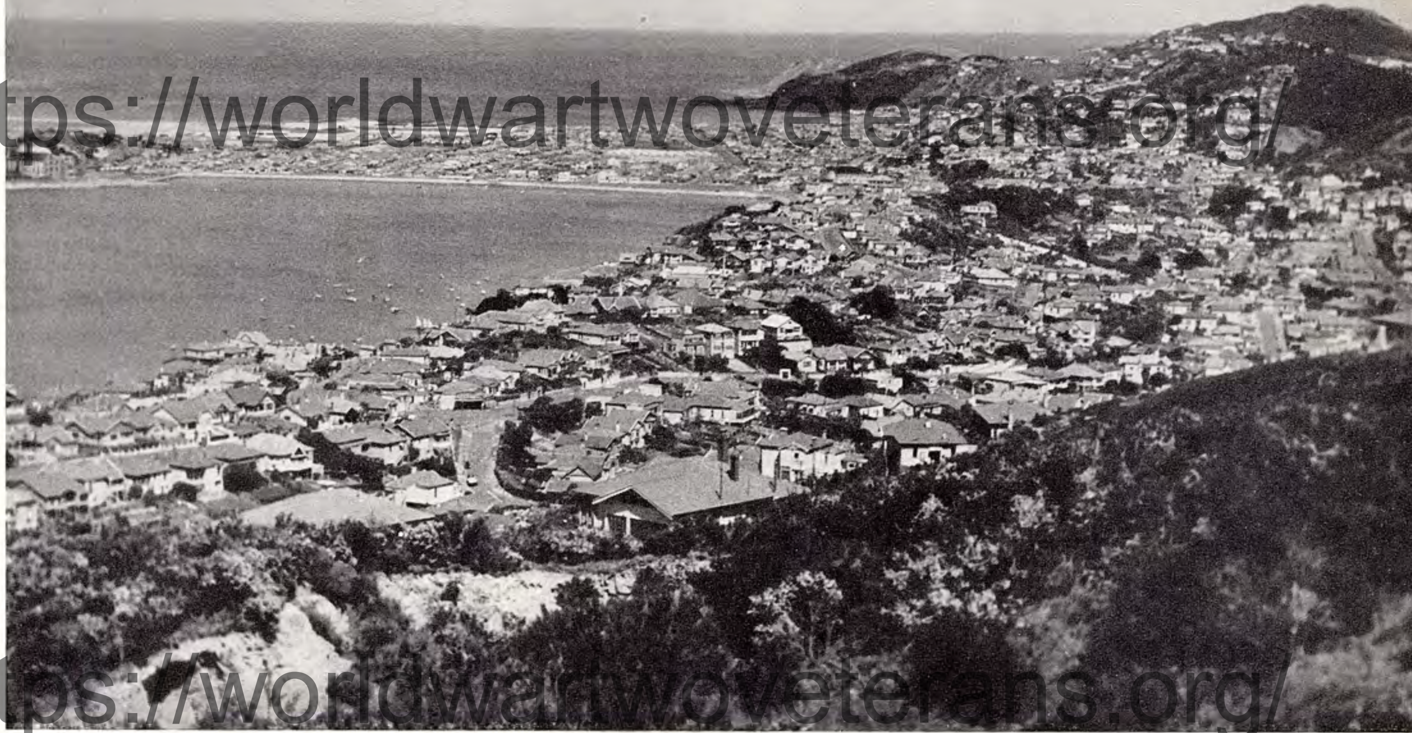
Lieutenant Colonel Goettge, Division intelligence officer, shoved off immediately



HERE'S HOW IT LOOKED: Wellington as it was not seen by many Marines

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for Australia to scout out men who had been running plantations in the Solomons, and masters of the vagrant trading vessels that had plied the waters around those islands. He spent a week in Melbourne and several days in Sydney, picking up charts, notes, and in the end arranging for eight of the planters to be commissioned, or made petty officers, in the Australian armed forces so that they could go along with the Division.

While in Melbourne Goettge also picked up from Army headquarters the Japanese Order of Battle for the Solomons, and the daily coastwatcher reports. The latter gave the only estimate of what enemy installations the Division could be expected to find when it hit the beach. Of these coastwatchers, a band of individualist islanders who chose to remain after the Jap occupation to form an espionage net, more will be heard later.

It was imperative at this stage [on July 10, D-day was moved back to August 7] that someone from the Division get a look at these outlandish islands. On July 17 two officers, Lieutenant Colonel Merrill Twining and Major William McKean, went to Port Moresby, New Guinea, where they boarded an Army B-17 for a flight to Guadalcanal. They barely returned with their skins. Over Guadalcanal three float Zeros

attacked the lone B-17 which shot down two and drove the third away in a run that left the American plane with so little gas that, when it finally got down at Port Moresby, its tanks were empty.

All the fragments of information were put together on a nine-sheet map (1/24,-000), that was quickly reproduced in quantity. It was handed out the last week the Division was in New Zealand. It showed only a narrow strip along the north coast of Guadalcanal from Lunga Point east to Aola, and actually was only a rough, uncontrolled sketch of the rivers, plains, coconut plantations and wooded areas. This was the only guide regiments, battalions, and companies were to have.

D-3 meanwhile had been at work. The first operation order setting up a combat organization for Guadalcanal was issued on June 29, only three days after the Auckland conference. By July 9, a complete embarkation order for the reinforced Division, for all the expeditionary troops who were to take part in the operation, had been pieced together.

D-4 called on all units to "reduce their equipment and supplies to those items that are actually required to live and to fight." Under tentage, to take an example, he specified that "only 'paulins will be taken."

One-third of the supplies would have to be left behind.

III

By now the men knew something was afoot. All overnight liberty was cancelled on June 30, and, shortly after, the Division was organized into working parties, formed into 300-man, eight-hour shifts for around-the-clock duty at Aotea Quay—which remains the most memorable spot in New Zealand to many men of the Division.

"The New Zealanders thought we were crazy," says a man who was there. "Some ships were being loaded, some unloaded, some were being both loaded and unloaded at the same time. It was winter and the cold rain came down in torrents, driven horizontally in sheets along the great dock. The supplies were coming in from the States in bulk lots. They had to be dumped on the dock, sorted, classified and reembarked. Much of it was packed in paper cartons which melted like snow in the driving rain. The dock was covered with drifts of mushy cornflakes, thousands of rolling C ration cans and cases of water-logged cigarettes and pogey bait. In the middle of it all sat D-4, in a little board shack . . ."

The flat-bedded New Zealand lorries, loaned to the Division, could hardly find room to move through the dock's disarray. It was all a man could do to walk through it.

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By the time the second echelon arrived on July 11, Aotea seemed a bedlam, for then the supplies of that echelon—mainly the 1st Marines—had to be taken ashore, inventoried, and lifted back aboard ship, all at double time. How well this was done is shown by the fact that the Division sortied from Wellington on July 22, eleven days after the second group arrived.

That the Division made the deadline was a particular tribute, thinks one high-ranking officer, "to the optimism and tenacity of General Vandegrift. And by optimism I do not mean a bland and fatuous indifference to the probabilities of tomorrow. I mean a studied cheerfulness based on an intelligent appraisal of all the facts. And by tenacity, I do not mean a stubborn and ruinous persistence in carrying out a predetermined course of action. I mean an unfaltering determination to achieve the mission assigned you.

"General Vandegrift seemed to know these things instinctively. He set us an example of studious optimism from the outset. Upon receipt of our original directive for the operation, I am sure that privately he was as appalled as the rest of us over what we were undertaking to do. Yet, then, and throughout the entire operation, no intimation of a doubt ever passed his lips. Success in embarkation, success in landing, and success in battle were taken for granted; there would be no time wasted in an appraisal of our somewhat brilliant prospects of failure. He made the few basic decisions necessary to initiate operations. These were invariably simple, definite and final. He delegated their execution to his staff. He never in any way interfered with his staff officers in the execution of delegated authority. They were either entirely supported or summarily relieved."

After a year of arduous and unrelenting training at Tent City, after a long and unpleasant ocean journey (many men on *Ericsson* lost as much as sixteen pounds from the bad food provided on that vessel), after weeks of stevedoring in rough weather, the men of the First Division were to make another dull and dispiriting trip aboard ship, and were finally to close with an enemy they had heard was one of the most treacherous in the world.

The Division was living up to its tradition of rugged, dirty service. These were still the Raggedy-Ass Marines.

IV

Whoever selected Koro Island, in the Fijis, as the pre-invasion maneuver area for Guadalcanal made a mistake. "Coral conditions on the island beaches rendered them

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impractical for actual landing operations," the Division's report says. What the few days at Koro did give was practice in large-scale boat movements, and the units spent their days (July 28-31) riding up to Koro's reef and back.

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When the convoy left Koro on July 31, and the men were told where they were going, they asked themselves, "Where the hell is Guadalcanal, and why? Why Tulagi? Why take these islands? And what was the hurry?"

The official "word" came after the war from the pen of Fleet Admiral Ernest J. King.

"From the outset of the war," Admiral King wrote in his report, "it had been evident that the protection of our lines of communication to Australia and New Zealand represented a 'must.' With the advance of the Japanese in that direction, it was therefore necessary to plan and execute operations which would stop them.

"Early in 1942, the Japanese had overrun the island of Tulagi. In July, the enemy landed troops and laborers on Guadalcanal Island and began the construction of an airfield. As the operation of landbased planes from that point would immediately imperil our control of the New Hebrides and New Caledonia areas, the necessity of ejecting them from those positions became increasingly apparent."

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The briefing, as it actually happened after the ships left Koro, was less formal. The following weather-deck conference between a lieutenant and his platoon was reported in Richard Tregaskis' *Guadalcanal Diary:*

"If a Jap jumped from a tree," the lieutenant asked his men, "what would you do?"

"Kick him in the b----," answered a Marine.

"That's right," said the lieutenant. "You hit the nail on the head."

That convoy that steamed toward Guadalcanal was pretty nearly the effective striking force of the Navy in the Pacific at that time. All the carriers then available were present, *Saratoga, Enterprise* and *Wasp,* with a strong escort comprising the battleship *North Carolina,* some cruisers, and a number of destroyers.

The men of the Division were carried in two transport groups of Task Force 62. Those who were going to land on Guadalcanal were assigned to Transport Group Xray (62.1), consisting of four sub-groups:

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Transdiv A: *Fuller, American Legion, Bellatrix.*

Transdiv B: *McCawley, Barnett, Elliott, Libra.*

Transdiv C: *Hunter Liggett, Alchiba, Fomalhaut, Betelgeuse.*

Transdiv D: *Crescent City, President Hayes, President Adams, Alhena.*

Transport Group Yoke (62.2) carried the assault troops for Tulagi:

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Transdiv E: *Neville, Zeilin, Heywood, President Jackson.*
Transdiv 12: *Colhoun, Gregory, Little, McKean,* (the destroyer transport group).

The total strength of all the Marine units embarked was, on the morning of August 7, 1942: 956 officers and 18,146 enlisted men.

The convoy had unusual luck in its approach to the target. The ships rode under a protecting overcast, and were not once challenged by Japanese air or surface forces.

At dusk on August 6, the eve of D-day, an officer aboard one of the transports noted that:

"Hatches were opened, sailors in blue shirts and dungarees oiled up the winches, coiled ropes, listened to the roar of the engines as Higgins boats were tested, unlashed, swung out from their davits; drums of wire, boxes of spare gun parts were stored along the deck at points where they were to be taken over the side; Marines checked their packs, made camouflage nets for their helmets, sharpened knives and bayonets.

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"It was hushed, tense activity which did not slacken until daylight was fading. And as night fell and the wind whistled through the rigging, 'Darken Ship' rang out for the last time in what was to be many months.

"In the wardroom the lights still burned, flickered dimly over the maps on the bulkhead, threw deep shadows over the long, green-covered table where the officers sat playing their games. Cigarette and cigar smoke curled up to the overhead where it lay in thin streaks.

"It was my custom to play three games of chess with a fellow officer every evening. That night we didn't even finish the first; it dragged on to a near stalemate . . ."

At 0200 on the morning of August 7, 1942, Savo Island and Cape Esperance appeared ahead out of the mist, visible in the light of the suddenly-emerging moon. And at daylight, the cruisers in the force began shore bombardment.

Colonel Clifton B. Cates, then commanding the 1st Marines and in 1948 Commandant of the Marine Corps, had a message for his men:

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"We are fighting for a just cause, there is no doubt about that. It is for right and freedom. We have enjoyed the many advantages given to us under our form of Government, and, with the help of God, we will guarantee that same liberty and

freedom for our loved ones and to the people of America for generations to come."

At 0647, transports reached their assigned areas, and the men of the First Division began immediately to go over the sides, their faces, one man remembers, "paled by days of inactivity, of being cooped up in the hold, were dripping with perspiration. Wet with sweat, their dungarees clung to their bodies..." as they went down the cargo nets.

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Chapter 4

THERE ARE TWO GUADALCANALS: the battle, and the legend.

"Hell, when I got home from the 'Canal, my family, all my buddies and my girl friend treated me as if I were a ghost, or a god," one veteran of that campaign has said. "They believed everything I told 'em. And that," he laughed, "was plenty."

The reasons why the story of Guadalcanal, and each of its episodes of heroism and hardship, took such an immediate hold on the American public are not hard to fathom. Guadalcanal was the first ground offensive Americans waged against the Japanese in World War II. "The First was first, all right," another veteran said meaningfully not long ago.

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SAN CRISTOBAL

MALAITA

SEALARK CHANNEL

INDISPENSABLE STRAIT

FLORIDA

GUADALCANAL

SAVO

BELLONA

SOUTH PACIFIC OCEAN

ONTONG JAVA

SANTA ISABEL

RUSSELL ISLANDS (Pavuvu)

TASK FORCE 62

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THE SLOT

Vangunu

NEW GEORGIA

Kolombangara

Rendova

CHOISEUL

Vella Lavella

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CORAL SEA

BOUGAINVILLE

THE SOLOMON ISLANDS

0 50 100

SCALE IN MILES

Vahe Kirishjian

The fact that Guadalcanal was the first offensive strike might not have impressed the public so much had not the Japs in the months before made Americans look like such easy marks. There was the humiliation of Pearl Harbor, a nasty and deep cut in the national pride; there was our helplessness to aid the men of Corregidor, Marines as well as Army troops; there was, altogether, our impotence before consistent and relentless Japanese advance throughout the Pacific.

True, the Navy turned back the Japanese at Coral Sea and Midway. But that, somehow, did not capture the imagination nor satisfy the national need, not so much for revenge, as for proof that our men were as good fighters, had as much moral stamina, as theirs. "People had come to believe," an officer recalls, "that the Japs were supermen, that maybe our American boys really weren't as rugged as the Japs. What people wanted, back in the summer of '42, was a hand-to-hand battle royal between some Japs and some Americans to see who would really win."

This exactly is what happened on Guadalcanal. The Japs and the men of the First Division came out of the thick jungle at one another day after day for four months, meeting in hand-to-hand combat, grappling with knives and bayonets, and firing at one another with the small arms of the individual foot soldier, the issue always in shaky balance.

But when this intimate campaign was over, the men of the First Division had proved to the satisfaction of themselves, their officers, and the American public, that the youth of a democracy can meet and defeat the youth of a nation regimented in fanaticism.

"There was a national sigh of relief when the Japs were knocked off that island," a radio news commentator has said, and the name Guadalcanal has passed into history bearing the magical qualities of such other American battlefields as Valley Forge, Gettysburg and Belleau Wood.

The men who fought on Guadalcanal may now get an additional satisfaction from their accomplishment: the battle is standing up well under the scrutiny of strategic historians. Today, when our military thinkers know even such details about the Pacific war as where exactly our bombs landed on each of the Jap ships that was sunk, they still say Guadalcanal was a turning point in the war.

Post-war interrogation of members of the Japanese high command confirms this. Japanese admirals and generals now say that Guadalcanal was a mistake. So sorry. They got overly ambitious. When they started the war, Guadalcanal was not in their plans. They meant really to take only the Philippines and the East Indies, what they called their "Southern Resources Area," and to hold what they already had in the

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UP AND OVER: A supply-laden truck goes over the side

Gilberts and Marshalls, and the Carolines. But when they got all that within a couple of months after Pearl Harbor, and got it easily, they decided to expand their perimeter. It is sometimes as hard for the nation on the offensive to brake the momentum of its offensive, as it is for the defender to throw it back.

Thus the first Japanese mistake was in moving into Guadalcanal at all, there in the spring of 1942 when everything was going their way. But they made, the Japanese now attest, a second mistake, that of pouring too much of their strength into a battle for an outpost. And this second mistake was based on a third, which they now readily concede: they underestimated the American will to fight.

It is the fact that the Japs threw so much into the battle for Guadalcanal that gives it its military significance, and has caused the U. S. Strategic Bombing Survey, which conducted the post-war interviews of Japanese officers, to conclude that, "The losses suffered in the Solomons weakened all subsequent Japanese defensive efforts and reduced Japanese naval air strength to a point from which it was never able to recover."

The good thing to know is that our Navy had figured out much of this Japanese thinking and planning, had accurately sized up the strategic if not the tactical situation before the battle.

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But the fact that the Navy knew rightly that the Japs were relatively weak in the Solomons did not by any means reduce the gamble of Guadalcanal. So was the American Navy weak, almost tragically weak.

Indeed our Navy planners thought that when the chips were down on that little island of which the world had never heard, the difference between the mistake of it all being on the Jap heads, and being on ours, would be decided finally by the bravery and the tenacity of the men they put ashore. If all else failed, as it might, would these men hold?

II

That first day on Guadalcanal, August 7, 1942, it didn't look as if it would take much trouble to hold the beat-up place. Privately, everyone had thought they'd have a bad time getting ashore. If you had conducted a poll aboard the transports on D minus 1, ninety percent of the men would have sworn that the stuff was going to hit the fan right on the beach. With typical understatement, most of the men would probably have said: "Somebody's gonna get hurt," the Marine way of prophesying: many are going to be hurt, maybe even me.

Nobody was hurt. The only casualty the doctors got that day was a character who cut himself trying to open a coconut. No more than he deserved either, acting like a Swabbie souvenir hunter.

With dawn, the cruisers in the task force opened with a shore bombardment and planes from the carriers, the stubby Grumman Wildcats, and the SBDs, opened fire on the island. Under this cover, the troops began to go over the sides on cargo nets. The sea was so quiet they could use both sides of the ships for debarkation. "There was no noise or confusion . . ." the Division's final action report said. "It proceeded with the smoothness and precision of a well-rehearsed peace-time drill."

H-hour was set for 0910, and exactly two minutes before, the boats carrying the two assault battalions crunched against the beach. "The ship to shore movement . . . an unusually successful operation—was a convincing demonstration of the fruits of long years of thought and planning and combined training by the Navy and Marine Corps in developing a practical working technique for the conduct of amphibious operations."

The spot the first boats hit was midway between Lunga and Koli Points, for what meager intelligence the Division had at hand showed the likelihood that Jap installations were at Lunga, and the final decision was to land east of them to allow room for deployment. Beach Red, some four miles east of Lunga Point, was a 1,600-yard dent

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STRIKING BACK: *Jap twin-engined torpedo bombers (Bettys) fly at a low level through ack-ack of an escort and convoy to hit at transports off Guadalcanal*

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in the beach bounded on the west by the Ilu River. On the east there was a stream called Tenavatu.

First ashore on Guadalcanal were the 1st and 3d Battalions of the 5th Marines. They landed abreast (1st Battalion on the right) and began to advance inland. At 1100, the 1st Marines (reinforced) landed in column behind, and began to move on a 260-degree azimuth with "Grassy Knoll" as its assigned objective. That was a laugh. Some British planter had sworn that "Grassy Knoll" was the dominating terrain feature in the area, rising immediately behind the beachhead. Maps didn't show it. Actually, it was several miles away through thickest jungle, a fact the 1st Marines soon discovered.

Progress was slow. The Ilu turned out to be deep, with high banks. The 5th Marines walked across on a sandbar at the beach, but the 1st Marines had to wait for the engineers to throw up a bridge, whose midstream support was an amphibian tractor.

Some units moved too fast, some too slow, and, according to the report, "There was a uniform and lamentable failure to use patrols—control and communication were difficult to maintain." The advance was halted at dusk to reestablish contact.

Where were the Japs? Very few, if any, had fired on the assaulting Marines, although one of them had apparently remained behind long enough to let the folks at Rabaul know the Marines had landed, for at 1230 a force of two-engined Jap bombers came on the first of their air strikes, making straight for the convoy. They sank nothing,

FLORIDA ISLAND

TULAGI HARBOR

TULAGI

MAKAMBA

BEACH BLUE

1st Raiders

2/5

HALETA
2 Miles

Lines Night
7-8 August

MBANGAI

KAKOTAMBO

SONGONANGONG

GAOMI

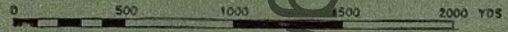
TANAMBOGO

3/2

1st Parachute Bn

GAVUTU

THE TULAGI AREA



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and damaged only one destroyer. The raid did bring home the war and it halted unloading, which was already fouled up.

One of the Navy captains was in a swivet. He wanted to get unloaded and get out of there. And from shorewards, General Vandegrift (who came ashore at 1400) had already received two messages, the first of which called for 500 additional men, and the second reported, "Unloading entirely out of hand." The Navy captain wanted men detached from the combat forces to help out, but General Vandegrift was in "the most dangerous of all positions—that of being in close proximity to a large enemy force which possessed complete knowledge of his dispositions and movements while he was unable to make contact . . . or to gain information about the enemy." There was no quick way to determine how many Japanese there were on Guadalcanal, and no way to know where or when they would strike. So the unloading suffered, and the combat troops stayed in tactical formations.

Besides, word from Tulagi was disturbing, and everyone on Guadalcanal who had ears knew there was a fire fight over there.

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III

The island of Tulagi was a little capital, the seat of the British Solomon Islands Protectorate—one of those far-flung points that gives truth to the saying that the sun never sets on the British Empire. Tulagi had its own cricket field, and one of those peculiarly British colonial institutions, a "Residency," whose resident governor was now long gone. The Japanese had taken over, knowing Tulagi for its strategic value: perhaps the best single harbor in the South Seas. The Japs had not really used it *yet,* but that they meant to was plain from the fact that they had already set up a permanent (as they thought) seaplane base.

They had done more. The four islands Marines were to take to secure the harbor—Tulagi itself, the twin islands of Gavutu-Tanambogo, and Florida—were each (with the exception of Florida which was unoccupied) heavily fortified in that peculiar method of fortification the Japs were so frequently to use. They holed up in caves, taking everything they possibly could underground. Even if they wanted to, as they did on Guadalcanal, they could not run away. There was no room; the islands were small.

A separate force of Marines, largely the reinforcements that had joined the Division at Wellington, was assigned to get the Japs out of their holes. The rugged 1st Raider Battalion (Lieutenant Colonel Merritt E. "Red Mike" Edson, USMC) was to

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take Tulagi, with the 2d Battalion, 5th Marines, in support; the 1st Parachute Battalion was to forget its specialized training and land from boats on Gavutu; and the 1st Battalion, 2nd Marines, was to land on Florida. Brigadier General William H. Rupertus, USMC, Assistant Division Commander, was in over-all command.

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Tulagi is shaped a little like a high boot, and at 0800 on August 7, the 1st Raiders landed on the upper part, just about where the leg muscle would begin to be big, that is, on Tulagi's northwestern shore at a beach designated Blue. The battalion's companies fanned first across the island, and then (with the exception of one which turned north) turned south, fighting snipers and scattered Jap small units all day, stopping finally for the night when it was plain the island could not be taken that day, just above the boot's ankle, leaving one-third of the island, the foot of the boot, to be taken on August 8. The Raider Battalion established a perimeter on a small, low ridge overlooking a ravine that runs across the island, echeloned in companies, from left to right: B-D-A-C.

That night the Japs hit between A and C, on the right side of the ravine and drove a wedge between them isolating C, next to the beach. As soon as they succeeded in this, the Japs turned on A, trying to sweep up the ridge toward the Residency, which was the command post. But A held, turning back five Jap attacks between 0030 and

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TULAGI AFIRE: This D-day aerial photo shows smoke rising from Jap installations on Tulagi

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0530, killing 26 Japs within yards of their lines, many in hand-to-hand fighting. Some, however, infiltrated, only to be nipped individually through the night.

During the counterattack there was some excellent mortar work, much appreciated, too, giving the lie to the traditional complaint of the mortarmen:

> We have a weapon that nobody loves
> They say that our gun's a disgrace
> You crank up 200, and 200 more
> And it lands in the very same place.
> Oh, there's many a gunner who's blowing his top
> Observers are all going mad
> But our affection has lasted
> For this old pig iron bastard
> It's the best gun this world ever had.

The Japs on Tulagi broke their back in this counterattack. Two companies (E and F) of the 2d Battalion, 5th Marines, pushed through the Raiders the next day and took Hill 281, the dominating terrain feature in the south of the island; and at about 1500, August 8, G Company, 5th Marines, pushed directly across the ravine with the Raiders, and secured the island.

In a tactical sense, the short campaign for Tulagi was the Island War in microcosm, much more typical of what was ahead of Marines in the three years of fighting across the Pacific than the battle of Guadalcanal. At Tulagi the Japs showed us everything. On the Raiders' march down the island the first day, the Japs for the first time pulled their trick of letting the point of an advancing force come through them, and then of firing on the main body.

The first night the Japs showed us their skill in infiltration, at first a very disconcerting accomplishment, but later to be looked down upon by our men. A post-war history of the First Division prepared by the Marine historical section notes why:

"Here for the first time," the report says, "a curious weakness in Japanese tactics could be seen . . . an inability to exploit . . . advantages gained momentarily by skill in night movement. Time after time he [the Jap] succeeded in coming through our lines by groups and by individuals . . . accomplishing no more than nuisance or harassing activities."

But perhaps the most significant lesson Marines learned on Tulagi was that there was only one way to take a Jap-defended cave, and that way was for the man on foot to breach it, with whatever help he could get from his comrades. This lesson was learned

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quickly, the first day. Almost as soon as the Raiders got ashore they discovered that neither naval nor air bombardment had disturbed the Japs in caves. And before the day was over the Raiders had established the tactical pattern for cave warfare that was to last until the end of the war—bazookas, tanks and flamethrowers notwithstanding.

One of the men, armed with demolitions, would advance on the cave, his squad or platoon giving him as much fire-cover as possible. He would hurl in the charge, retreat when it blasted, and wait. If he was answered with more fire, or with grenades, he would have to scamper up to the cave again, and hurl in another charge. And perhaps another, and another.

Sometimes it seems that the intensity of a fight against the Japanese can be prejudged by the size of the island they hold: the smaller the island, the harder they seem to fight. On big Florida, B Company, 2d Marines, landed at 0740 without opposition. But the action on the small islands, Gavutu and Tanambogo, where the Parachute Battalion did not go ashore until noon of August 7, was one of the bitterest of the entire Guadalcanal campaign. So small were these causeway-connected islands that it would be hard, if not impossible, to get a fair-sized football stadium on either of them. But each had a hill, and each hill was cave-pocked.

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There was an air and naval bombardment of the little islands before the Parachut-

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TINY BUT EXPENSIVE ISLAND: A view of Gavutu shows the small hill for which Marines fought bitterly

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ists landed, but it was to turn out that this did more harm than good. For one thing, the bombardment made a jumbled mess of concrete at the Jap seaplane ramps on Gavutu where the boats came in. Several of the thirteen boats were forced to go into a nearby concrete dock, and so well did the Japs have it zeroed-in that one out of every ten men who mounted the dock was hit and the whole right flank was pinned down for two hours, until 1400. The left flank had by then advanced enough so that the right could move. By nightfall, a firm lodgment had been made, and the Parachutists had learned, in their first day of fighting, to improve on the Tulagi-born Raider demolition technique. One captain tied charges to sticks which he boldly thrust inside the Jap caves, holding the charge there until it exploded, to make sure they would not toss it out before it had done its work. For his pains, he lost his pants: they were blown off. Without them, unhandicapped by any injury except that to his dignity, he fought on.

Almost at dark, not until 1845, B Company, 2d Marines, landed on Tanambogo. Or tried to. Silhouetted by a gas fire the bombardment had started, the men proved perfect targets for the Japs, and they retired to try again the next day. A few who were necessarily left ashore managed that night to swim over to Gavutu.

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The bitter fighting on Gavutu-Tanambogo went on during August 8, but by that

night, after reinforcements in the form of the 3d Battalion, 2d Marines, arrived (one company landed on Tanambogo at 1615 with two tanks)—both islands were under control.

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One of those tanks got a nasty reception. The Japs stuck a bar into its treads, stopped it, then set it afire with Molotov cocktails. Only the man in the turret was alive to get out, and when he tried he was swarmed. He fought the Japs off single-handed for a few minutes until some Marines afoot began to give him fire cover. So intent were the Japs on taking the Marine tankman's life that they didn't notice they were being picked off one by one. The tankman lived.

Altogether there were about 1500 Japanese on Tulagi, Gavutu and Tanambogo. Of these some 93 were estimated to be alive when the campaign was over: 23 were captured and about 70 are thought to have escaped to Florida Island. Total Marine casualties were 15 officers and 233 enlisted, of whom 8 officers and 100 enlisted were killed, missing, or died of wounds.

That night (August 8) the focus of the battle of the Solomons shifted back to Guadalcanal.

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IV

They say that coming events cast a shadow before. That is not quite true. What man lugging an '03 on his back, or worse, a BAR or a mortar tube, has time or energy to look for shadows? In battle, each man's world is a world unto itself, a struggle for survival delimited by the range of his weapon, the stretch of his arms, the length of his stride, the scope of his eyesight. The uneven pull of a pack, a not-tight-enough cartridge belt, a broken shoelace, a chafing legging, a finger cut on a ration can—these are the things that preoccupy a fighting man, and keep him from thinking out beyond them.

And that's the way it was on Guadalcanal the second day, August 8. If a man had time, he might sit down and figure that the Jap brass up in Rabaul, and even in Tokyo, cocky with conquest, weren't going to like what was happening on Guadalcanal. Even if Guadalcanal wasn't important, they still had their flat, strange little faces to save. If a man *really* had time on his hands, he might put it together and figure that the Japs were probably at that very moment on their way to Guadalcanal with something substantial. . . .

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The first night there had been too much trigger-fingering. Everybody wanted to fire one, and before the night was over, it seemed as if everybody had. Word was

passed the next morning to knock it off, and the two regiments that made up the force ashore on Guadalcanal, the 1st and the 5th, were ordered to move on the Lunga River as the day's objective. The 1st was to occupy the line of the Lunga and the 5th was then to pass into reserve in an area near the airfield. The 1st had the worst of it in the morning, cutting through seemingly impenetrable jungle, while the 5th moved without effort through flat coconut plantations bordering the sea. The 1st couldn't go fast, and the 5th, the Division's report says, moved too slowly.

A man in the 1st remembers that halting advance: "I moved forward to the head of the column where the scouts were clearing the trail with bayonets and machetes. They cut to the edge of a steep knoll where they slumped to the ground for rest, lit cigarettes. One of them thought he heard water; another growled, 'Knock it off, Mac, you're hearing things.' But the man was persistent. He climbed the knoll to reconnoiter.

"Here was the jungle, cold-hearted. I saw pyramidal tree trunks, proud trees, draped with brilliant green foliage, spread haughtily over dingy snarls of vines, thorns and tough roots.

"I looked up to the top of the knoll and saw the scout gesticulating wildly. I heard his shout, 'A river!' Retracking up the trail, I was happy to answer the question that came from all sides: 'Is there water up there?' 'Yes!' I answered."

By noon, the men had laid their hands on a few prisoners, who, as Jap prisoners almost always did, talked their heads off. They revealed two important facts:

1. We had greatly overestimated the number of Japs on Guadalcanal. When the intelligence people finished interrogations, D-2 sent the following message to all regimental commanders: "... enemy forces Guadalcanal consisted two Navy construction battalions about 1,800 men and under 500 troops . . ." Our pre-invasion estimate was 5,000, including 2,100 men who were supposed to make up a reinforced infantry regiment.

2. What few Japs there were had indeed flown, and to the west.

With this news, the 5th was given the word to contract its front, and to move westward quickly, faster than it had been moving, astride the road to Kukum, and to "seize the village and installations there before nightfall." This they did, without drawing any fire until they were in Kukum itself.

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NO ONE KNEW on D-day that transports would soon shove off, unloaded, and the scene on the beach at Guadalcanal might be any working party, any time, any place

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By 1600, the 1st Marines captured the nearly-completed Jap airfield, and that night occupied the line of the Lunga.

As night fell, things looked very good. The First Marine Division had taken all its assigned objectives on Guadalcanal–Tulagi. It should be only a matter of days until those five hundred Jap troops were killed and the Jap labor battalion either scattered or captured. Then the Navy and the Army could have the damned place. The amphibious expeditionary force had performed its mission.

One thing, as the day's events appeared to Marines, was wrong. Unloading was still bollixed up. The second Jap air raid of the Guadalcanal campaign came at 1230, and this time the bombers not only stopped the unloading, but actually found and hit a target: the USS *George F. Elliott* was set afire, and with it much of the supply of the 2d Battalion, 1st Marines. At sunset, the transport force cleared the area, expecting to come back the next morning and continue discharging cargo, perhaps at a better pace. A little more than half of the Division's total equipment was still aboard ship.

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V

Even General Vandegrift, who did not have to worry about his leggings, or his cartridge belt or pack, could not have foreseen the turn events were now to take.

He was ordered to report aboard *McCawley* for a conference that night, August 8. The order did not seem extraordinary. It was quite possible that Rear Admiral Richmond K. Turner might want a recap on the situation ashore, or perhaps even better, the Admiral might want to congratulate the General on the fine progress Marines had made.

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Not at all. The conference had barely started before Admiral Turner announced that the transports and cargo vessels would all leave the area, not to return, at 0600 the next morning, August 9. It was a long conference. General Vandegrift did not leave until 2345, just before midnight. He has since said that he found the news "most alarming," and that he did everything he could to make his senior officer realize the disastrous effect departure of the transports would have on the First Marine Division.

Admiral Turner's decision, it turned out, was based on another Naval decision, that of Vice Admiral Frank J. Fletcher, commander of Task Force 61. Fletcher had told Turner that, because of plane losses, and shortage of gasoline, he was going to take the carriers out that night. Turner said he could not leave his transports without air cover.

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And what was behind all of this was the news, the definite word, that a Jap surface force was on the way, down the slot of water that divides the Solomon Islands, to Guadalcanal.

In the face of this enemy threat, was the Navy going to abandon the Marines entirely? No, they were leaving behind a force of cruisers, two of them Australian, under command of the Australian Admiral Crutchley, at that moment taking part in the conference. He would have the following cruisers for the night's work: *Australia, Canberra,* (both Australian), *Chicago, Vincennes, Astoria* and *Quincy,* plus six destroyers, two of which would be on radar patrol. Crutchley had already stationed his force before leaving aboard his flagship (*Australia*) for the conference, putting his cruisers squarely in front of the two channels that led into the transport area: half of the force north of Savo Island, in case the Japs should come around by Florida; and half on the south side of Savo, in case the enemy should try to enter through Savo Strait.

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Because the naval battle fought that night was the subject of so much scuttlebutt in the First Division, and because the actual facts have until now been obscure, a description of it belongs in this history. One Captain Ohmae, chief of staff for the Jap force that came down the slot that night, has recently reconstructed the events for our Navy, which until after the war ended had no very clear picture of them.

What the Japs had was five heavy cruisers and two light ones, not by any means an

overwhelming force. We knew they were coming. At about 1130, August 8, an Allied search plane sighted them near Kieta, about three hundred miles north of Guadalcanal, but "confusion occurred in the relaying of the message," and not all our ships got the scoop.

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Two hours before they reached Savo, the Japs catapulted four scouting planes to illuminate the transport area, and they had additional information about the location of our ships from some of their own observers on Guadalcanal, who could see by the light of *Elliott* which was still burning in the channel.

At 0130 (August 9), steaming in column, with the flagship *Chokai* in the lead, the Japs sighted our picket destroyer. They slowed down and trained their guns on her. She didn't make a move. Her very silence gave the Japs some concern for fear they were steaming into an ambush, but they sped up again anyway, passed her to starboard, and came on at 25 knots.

A few minutes later, at about 0145, they saw our southern group of cruisers off Kokumbona in Savo Strait. Within *two* minutes, every Jap ship had fired torpedoes, and they hit *Chicago* and *Canberra,* the latter so badly that she had to be sunk the next morning. They turned left then around Savo and came at our northern group which had been under continuous observation by *Chokai's* plane.

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Just as they ran up under our noses, they turned on their searchlights and opened fire at point blank range. So surprised were our ships that they at first replied only with antiaircraft batteries and machine guns. Finally somebody on one of our ships let go a few main battery salvos, one of which very fortunately hit *Chokai* just aft of her navigating bridge, killing about thirty men and (importantly) destroying her chart room.

Some naval writers have called the Japs stupid for leaving the area immediately after vanquishing our cruisers, without remaining to sink the transports they had come after. The reason they left was a good one: *Chokai's* charts were destroyed, and she was helpless to lead the Jap force into another engagement at that moment. They could not have known that they had time to shift command, could not have known that in the second fire fight they sank *Quincy* and *Vincennes,* and that *Astoria* was to go down the next morning. In these engagements, now officially called The Battle of Savo Island, we lost altogether four cruisers, and had a cruiser and a destroyer damaged, while the Japs lost none and suffered only the easy-to-repair damage to *Chokai* and some minor damage to the cruiser *Aoba.*

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The only ship which did not suffer damage was *Australia,* Crutchley's flagship. She

went unscathed because, simply, she wasn't there. Admiral Crutchley did not get back from the troublesome conference in time for the battle.

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The transports, which had gone away for the night, returned briefly the next morning (August 9), too briefly for any more unloading, and then left the area.

One First Division staff officer can look back philosophically at the matter. "It was unavoidable, but the fact remains that our planning for Guadalcanal was not joint and mutual. The Navy failed to appreciate the scope of our supply problem. We, in turn, through lack of information, failed to appreciate the fact that the Navy was outnumbered and could not hope to maintain anything but a temporary superiority in the Solomons, and then only for the shortest possible time.

"And over-all control was exercised by a common superior in an office building in Auckland, a superior who perhaps faintly disapproved of the entire operation and remained somewhat aloof.

"Secretly, perhaps we, too, disapproved of the operation but we were stuck with it and we knew it."

Anyway, the only sign of the American navy the men of the First Division got on the morning of August 9 was the sight of burning and damaged ships. And this was more than they were to get for many mornings after that.

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VI

While this was going on at sea, it was natural that the forces ashore should take alarm. The first firing from the island started when the float planes came over, illuminating not only the waters around the island, but also part of the island itself. Around 2300, spasmodic and erratic streams of tracers began to arch across the misty sky, for a heavy rain had started at 2200.

Somebody on *McCawley* must have got nervous, for the command post ashore received this message: "Heavy enemy fire on Red Beach." That was the spot at which unloading was still going on through the night, a vulnerable and critical position; all our supplies sat there.

At this juncture, communications to Red Beach were out. Hardly was a runner dispatched down there before *McCawley* radioed ashore an even more ominous message: "Enemy attacking Red Beach in force."

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An assistant D-3 shot questions back at *McCawley* but instead of answers he got this conclusive news: "Enemy landing on Red Beach right now."

At 0130 (August 9) a beach sentry reported that boats were landing beyond his

position, and Marines along the beach opened fire. As the boats moved shoreward they were challenged.

"Yellow," called a sentry, using the challenge for the night.

"Who in hell says I'm yella?" came a voice from across the water. "Every damned Marine in creation has been shooting at me all night, and now one of you calls me yella!"

It was a coxswain from one of our transports, lost in the darkness, unable to find his ship.

That ended the alarm ashore—for that night.

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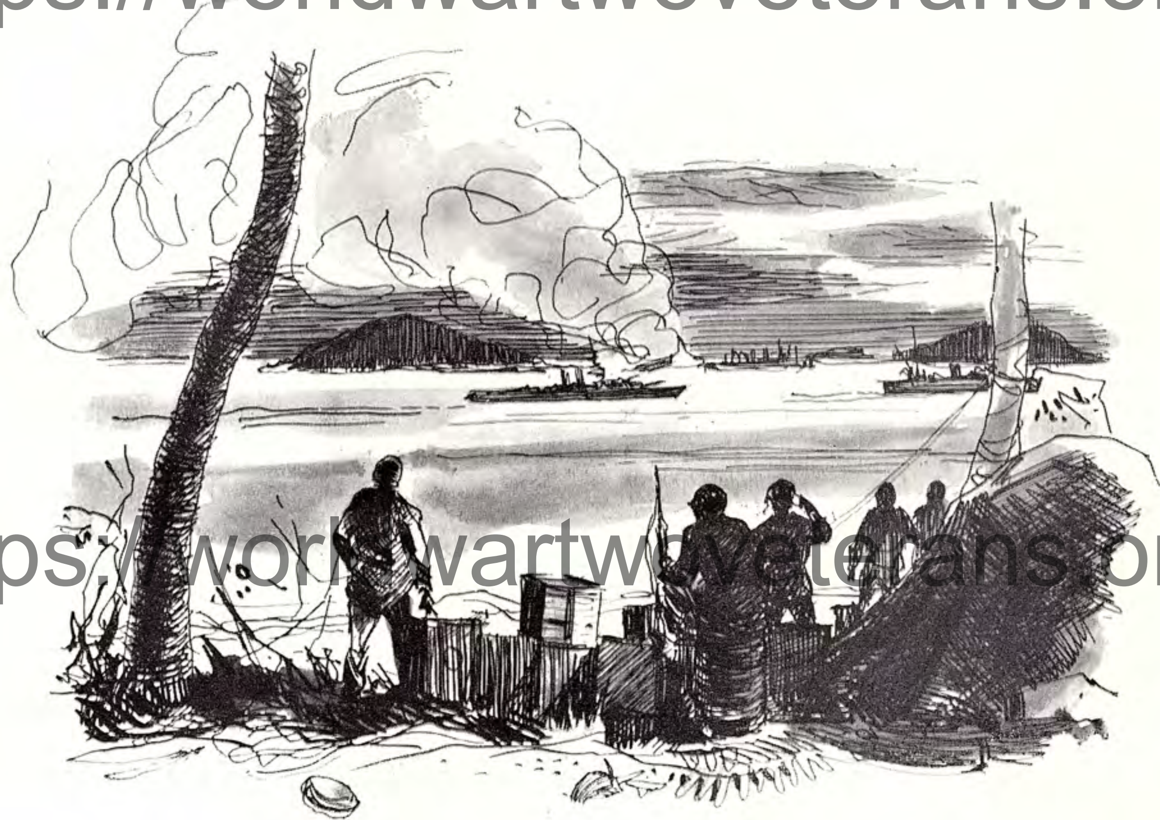

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Chapter 5

THE FEELING OF EXPENDABILITY is difficult to define. It is loneliness, it is a feeling of being abandoned, and it is something more, too: it is as if events over which you have no control have put a ridiculously low price-tag on your life.

When word got around Guadalcanal in the second week of August that the Navy had taken off and left the Marines, the feeling of expendability became a factor in the battle.

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"I know I had a feeling," says a man who was there, "and I think a lot of others felt the same way, that we'd never get off that damned island alive. Nobody said this out loud at the time. I was afraid to say it for fear it'd come true."

"But," says a captain, "there was an awful lot of talk about Bataan."

"It was about this time," recalls a sergeant, "that the men of my platoon began to knock off a lot of their letter-writing."

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"One of our battalion officers," remarks a second lieutenant, "used to sit around and mope a lot. I was called up to division CP once in a while, and every time I'd come back he'd pin me to a tree and want to know what scoop I'd picked up. At first I brought him all the rumors, but then I saw the way they affected him and I knocked it off. Why, he was getting so bad, so humped over with worry, I told him if he didn't stop his shoulders were gonna touch in front."

"I had it figured this way," says a private. "Our necks were out and it was just a question of how far down the Japanese were gonna chop."

If there was doubt anywhere that the Navy had really left, that doubt was dispelled when the Division went on short rations, when the chow was cut down to two meals a day, and most of that captured Japanese food.

"Fish and rice, fish and rice, fish and rice," is one distasteful recollection. "And black coffee without sugar, flat candy, dehydrated potatoes, cabbage and carrots. We finished off the meals with a Jap cigarette, using pasteboard holders provided with each pack so that the acid in the cheap paper wouldn't give us lip sores. Sometimes, the Jap diet was broken by a plate of beans, canned salmon, or a slab of beef from a Lever Brothers cow."

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The air raids started immediately, for it did not take the Japanese more than a few hours to discover that we had no planes to oppose them—no planes and only a few 90mm antiaircraft guns manned by the Defense Battalion. So they went into a routine, an arrogant, nasty, infuriating, frustrating routine.

Almost every afternoon—and the weather was good there in the Solomons in August—they'd come in, sending first a small group at noon or shortly after, dropping a few bombs as if to curdle a man's lunch. In mid-afternoon they'd come in greater strength, holding their tight formations. "It was a lovely sight, and the men used to watch, or at least they did until one came close," recalls a Guadalcanal veteran.

As soon as dark set in, a solitary plane would appear, cruise insolently overhead, sometimes caught in the Defense Battalion's searchlight. In its own good time, the plane would drop its bomb, cruise around a while longer, then disappear leisurely, only to be replaced by another. In such fashion the Japanese stayed over the Marine perimeter all night during mid-August. They truly harassed, and it is no wonder that the men personified the night patrol, calling all the planes that came over in darkness, "Washing Machine Charlie."

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The men found some relief in wild stories. One patrol told their regimental intelligence officer they had come across the toilet articles of some Japanese women.

"I immediately phoned Division," the officer says, "and requested permission to attack inland to free these women. The reply I got was: 'A lot of good it will do an old man like you. Stay where you are.' "

The facts challenged the fiction. On August 14, a lanky shorts-clad stranger appeared out of the jungle. He was Captain W. F. Martin Clemens, a British district officer, who had hidden himself through the Japanese occupation of the island.

"He arrived at our CP one afternoon with about twenty native carriers," says the officer who greeted him. "They were laden with all kinds of fruit, having hiked from up in the mountains. After drinking a bottle of brandy in nearly one gulp, Clemens had a few more drinks of Japanese sake, and he and Widdy [a British officer who landed with the Division] had a regular old home week. About 0300 I had to send them word to 'pipe down.' Although they had killed over two liters of sake, they didn't show any signs of it, except to talk loudly."

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II

Even the greenest second lieutenant in the Division knew enough to understand that an amphibious operation can't be sustained without naval support.

The First Marine Division, to put the situation bluntly, was surrounded by the enemy. The Japanese already on Guadalcanal could move at will around the Marine perimeter. With command of the seas the Japanese Navy could bring in as many supplies and reinforcements as the Imperial staff chose to send. Ashore only a few days themselves, the Marines had no field fortifications, no fixed defenses to oppose a Japanese landing, even if the Japs chose to land under their noses at Lunga Point itself. And if the Japs wished to land outside the Marine perimeter, there was very little the men of the First Division could do to stop them. The Division had no air support, no cover. It could not discover nor oppose from the skies any Japanese troop movement, either on the island, or in the waters around the island; nor could the Division protect itself from being observed and attacked by enemy aircraft.

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What was worse, the Division wasn't really one, but only two-thirds of one. The 7th Marines was still on Samoa, and the units on Tulagi and Gavutu remained there, still busy cleaning up sniper-infested caves.

Even had he wanted to, General Vandegrift could not fight this campaign by The

TOPSIDE FOR GUADALCANAL AND LATER FOR CORPS: Among a group meeting at Alligator Creek are two who were to become Commandant of the Marine Corps: General Vandegrift (front row, fourth from left) and Colonel Clifton Cates (front row, sixth from left)

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Book; the pages had flown out of his hand. So, forgetting The Book, General Vandegrift outlined his plan for the defense of the Marine position on Guadalcanal to his officers on the morning of August 9, at the Division CP near Alligator Creek.

One of the officers present has written his recollection of the meeting:

"It was raining and the group stood or sat close to share the dubious warmth of a smoky fire. Someone had made coffee, and it was passed around in empty, and not too clean, C ration cans. Just as the means of hospitality were short, so too was the news. Short and bitter as the G.I. coffee. Everyone had heard the news, and pretended to disbelieve it—we had lost our cruisers last night.

"Even now there was the heavy sound of naval gunfire echoing through the thick mist of the morning. The palm fronds trembled lightly with the concussion of each successive salvo, and sent down showers of tiny drops which went unnoticed in the general downpour. Nobody knew what the firing was about.

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"The mist lifted momentarily and offshore we could make out a single cruiser making slowly toward the east. Even from this distance it was plain that the cruiser had parted company with her bow and was picking her way painfully toward Sea Lark Channel, attended solicitously by a few destroyers. *'Chicago'*, somebody said.

"Then D-3 began to talk, his sentences punctuated by the driving rain . . ."

What Colonel Gerald Thomas had to say, speaking for the General, was, in summary:

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1. Get the airfield finished!
2. Get the supplies off the beach, disperse them, and, if possible, hide them!
3. Dig in! Get more fire-power along the beach, to oppose a counterlanding. Dig in along the Tenaru, the eastern flank; dig in on the west, along the ridges that abutted the sea.

Execution of these orders began as soon as the meeting ended.

The airfield was named Henderson (for Major Lofton Henderson, a hero of Midway), and the 1st Engineer Battalion went to work on it, using captured Jap equipment. Within four days, on August 12, they had completed the 2,600-foot runway laid out, but left unfinished, by the Japs.

To move the supplies the engineers built a truck road over what had been the island's coastal track. Soon the road was crowded—too crowded—with trucks, and amtracs began to help out, moving along in the water just outside the surf. Farther

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A JAP FLAGPOLE HAD TO DO: General Vandegrift hoists the United States colors over Guadalcanal on August 9

HASTY DEFENSE: Lacking barbed wire, Marines lash together sharpened stakes to protect their lines

out, lighters were carrying their share. "In four days," says the Division report, "the major part of the task was accomplished and the Division stores were segregated in dispersed and classified dumps."

The supplies, when counted, amounted to four units of fire and 30 days' supply of food, 10 of which was made up of captured Jap rations, only one of the many important items the Japs left behind when they took off for the hills. A recapitulation of what the First Division took in enemy equipment runs to four typewritten pages, and includes 6 road rollers, 4 tractors, 3 cement mixers, 41 serviceable autos and trucks, 40 bicycles, a quantity of blacksmith and mechanics' tools, 150,000 gallons of gasoline and 800 gallons of lubricating oil, 600 tons of cement, and a large store of building supplies, including nails, rope, cable, tarpaper, hinges, nuts and bolts and screws. There was even a refrigerating plant.

To guard the beach, weapons were laid down so that the .30 caliber machine guns would fire on the stretch of sand, should the Japs get that far; 37mm half-tracks were

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dug in (but not so deep that they couldn't be moved) several hundred yards inland. The 11th Marines (artillery) emplaced their guns so that they could fire in all directions. The 3rd Defense Battalion set up and manned 5-inch gun batteries east and west of Lunga Point, as well as a 90mm antiaircraft battery near the fighter strip. As might be expected, there weren't enough sandbags, and the men who did the digging had to turn to Japanese rice bags to protect their weapons.

To anchor the flanks of the perimeter, east and west, there was less that could be done. Along the narrow banks of the Tenaru on the right (eastern) flank, a 600-yard stretch was covered by the 1st Marines. Some 1,000 yards southwest of Kukum, on the left (western) flank, the 5th Marines set up on a high hill that commanded the beach.

It was impossible to put a continuous line on the inland (southern) side of the perimeter, across the chaotic jumble of ridges and ravines that rose above Henderson Field. This was a problem, General Vandegrift said, "for which no real solution was ever found." The best he could hope to do was watch for and anticipate a Japanese strike in this sector, move part of his mobile reserve to meet it when it came.

Altogether, the perimeter defense the First Division set up that first week on Guadalcanal was not the kind you'd like to have against the Japs. But it was the best that could be done with the men and materials at hand.

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III

There was the desire among the men—so much a part of Marine tradition—to close with the enemy. Defense was all right, but the idea of sitting on your dead duff and waiting for the Japs to come at you was not good.

So one day when a Jap naval rating was captured and told our intelligence people that some of his buddies up around the Matanikau would surrender if only we would go "liberate" them, the instinct was that it should be done. The fact that the Nip was surly only made his story seem more credible.

Also, some Marine on patrol up that way claimed he saw a white flag flying above the Jap bivouac.

There was not a single 8-ball among the party organized to make the trip. Colonel Goettge himself (he was D-2) was to be in charge, and he selected twenty-five men, most of them scouts and intelligence specialists, to go along with him. He just about cleaned out the Division intelligence section, not to say a big hunk of the 5th Marines -2 section. Colonel Goettge felt that his men would, among other things, be acting in a humanitarian role: The Japs were said to be starving. He, therefore, took along the assistant division surgeon and a language officer, one of the few in the division, to help out.

These men shoved off in a Higgins boat from Kukum shortly after dark on August 12, and put ashore opposite Matanikau village. Only three of them returned.

As far as the Division's records are concerned, the patrol disappeared into oblivion. There is no official record of what happened to the party after it left Kukum; indeed the historical monograph on the campaign says that the point where the patrol landed has never been fixed, and that no trace of the dead was ever found.

In an attempt to reconstruct the events of that night, the author of this book interviewed (May, 1948) Sergeant Charles C. (Monk) Arndt, one of the three survivors.

McMillan: Monk, start at the beginning and tell me about the Goettge patrol. Do you remember when you were first told about it?

Arndt: They told us about it early in the afternoon of August 12, told us that there was a Japanese party in the Matanikau area that was willing to surrender. Our idea was that this was a reconnaissance patrol and that no fighting would take place unless absolutely necessary.

M: What did you carry?

A: We had ponchos, a belt, canteen with no cup, one can of C-rations, and one can of fish. We left the CP around six o'clock. We went to Green Beach where we got into lighters and we went down to the area at night. There were 25 men in one boat, 4 officers and 21 enlisted men, plus the Navy coxs'n.

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M: About what time was it when the coxs'n let the ramp down?

A: He didn't let it down. He hit this sandbar and we waded ashore. Some of us tried to push the boat off the sandbar and I guess we made a lot of noise. I went on in.

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M: How far in?

A: Up to the edge of the woods which was about twenty yards at least.

M: Were there native houses there?

A: Just a few grass huts. It was real dark, no moon or stars, it was a little cloudy that night. I couldn't see much.

M: And what did you do then?

A: We didn't dig foxholes. We sort of buried ourselves in the sand. We all had a little conference there for a few minutes and then a few of them stepped through the little perimeter we made and were going to look for a place to sleep that night. Colonel Goettge was in the lead. He got hit.

M: Were you surprised?

A: All the men were surprised. No one knew exactly what was going on. Then a couple of other men were hit. One was Sergeant Custer. Commander Pratt, old Commander Pratt, one of the best doctors the Marine Corps ever had, was out there. He patched up Custer. Custer's left arm was bored a little by a bullet and he gave me his pistol and I threw away the lousy Reising (submachine gun) I had. Then the firing stopped for a minute and somebody crawled up to see if they could find the colonel. But first we called his name a couple of times. "Goettge, Goettge," somebody whispered. Then when there was no answer somebody crawled up to find him.

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M: Did you find him?

A: Yep, Captain .... put his hand right into the colonel's face, where there was a big hole. Then, Hugh, who was right with the captain, got jumped by some Japs.

M: How close were you?

A: At his heels. I could touch his feet.

M: They didn't jump you?

A: No, they jumped him. I made no sound whatever. Only Hugh. He said, "They jumped me." And he was stabbed through the left chest and into the left arm. It went right through his chest and into the left arm. Then Hugh started cussing.

M: What about the others? Was anybody else hit?

A: Right after that the Jap machine guns opened up.

M: Did you have a machine gun?

A: No. And no BARs.

M: No grenades?

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A: No, no grenades at all. Nothing like that.

M: When the Japs opened up, didn't they come on in at you?

A: No, they stayed back and fired close range, so close you could feel the air from the muzzles. About that time a corporal went out to the water's edge and started firing tracers,

trying to get an SOS back. We didn't have a radio. The fighting went on until about 1 o'clock.

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M: Do you remember anything you said?

A: No, we were all very quiet. Except for touching each other once in a while, and wondering what was going to happen next. About then old Commander Pratt was hit, first in the butt, later in the chest. He died a little while after that.

M: Wasn't there any cover? No coconut logs? Nothing?

A: No. Just the open beach.

M: When you were talking a minute ago you said something about 1 o'clock.

A: That's right. About one in the morning the captain said someone had to go back for reinforcements, and I was very close to the captain and I told him that if anybody could get through the line I thought I could.

M: Why did you think that?

A: Well, I was about the only senior scout in the group and I had taught those men everything they knew. I had more time in the service than they did.

M: So you volunteered to go back?

A: There was no chance to leave by land and I was a pretty good swimmer. I went in the water just like a snake, on stomach, hands and knees, and I went like this just as far as I could without swimming at all. Out for about thirty yards.

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M: Didn't you take your shoes off?

A: That was one of the mistakes I made because as I tried to take my shoes off they tied in knots. As I waded out I did take my clothes off. I had all my clothes off except my shoes and socks, the only things I couldn't get off. And my helmet. I still had that on.

M: You couldn't swim with a helmet on?

A: Oh, yes. It was very easy with the breast stroke. Anyway, when I crossed that damned sandbar I must have made some noise. Somebody fired at me. I felt funny out there naked and them firing at me.

M: Did you swim far out?

A: No, right along the beach. Quiet, with the breast stroke. I'd go in to the beach once in a while and there was a lot of coral that I had to hold on to and I have scars yet on my hands and legs where I was pushing around this coral. I was crawling over the rocks awhile and swimming awhile.

M: This place where you were going through coral was all in Jap territory? I don't understand either about the coral.

A: It ran right into the water. Shallow coral underneath the water and once in a while you'd hit a patch, and stand up. Then you'd swim on to another patch.

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M: Did you still have your pistol all this time?

A: I kept *that* all right.

M: How did you keep it dry?

A: I kept it up under my helmet, hooked the butt under my chin strap. . . .

M: You kept that helmet on all that time? And you had your pistol inside your helmet?

A: I sort of stuck it up behind my ear, under the chin-strap.

M: Where did you keep ammo?

A: I had a good clip in the pistol and the other one was wet but I kept it just the same. Then I saw a man and shot him, and I heard no running away from where I shot.

M: Did you stop awhile then?

A: No, I took off, out into the water. I was afraid to go too far out. I was getting pretty tired. But I swam on a while, along the beach sort of, and then I saw a native boat beached. I crawled in it and felt around and saw one end of it was all full of bullet holes and I pushed out and got in the other end. There was an old plank in it. I paddled away until I got back down to the boat base and there everybody was challenging me. I didn't know the pass word so I kept yelling, "Million, million." That had a lot of "l's" in it. And when I hit the shore and guys started looking at me funny I realized I was bleeding all over. I was cut all the way to the hips from the coral. They told me later that the bones were sticking out from my fingers. Then they wrapped a blanket around me and I told them that I had to get word to Colonel Hunt, and they got him on the phone and I told him that the patrol was all cut up and was being shot all to pieces.

M: What were you thinking about, Monk, on the trip back? Can you remember?

A: It's just like a man is just exhausted completely and ready to give up and then I'd look back where the patrol was and see a tracer shoot up in the air and then I'd go on again. I was thinking about those men down there.

M: Go back to the patrol, now for a minute. Did anyone there say anything about . . . did they show any signs they knew they weren't going to get back?

A: No. No one showed any signs at all. In other words, they were gonna stay there and fight it out.

M: Nobody got panicky?

A: No.

M: Nobody wanted to run back to the water and try to swim out?

A: No, no one thought that because, I tell you, they were all men who had been with the outfit two years or more. They were seasoned and they knew what to expect.

Of the other men who got back, the last was a half-Indian. He did not leave until nearly daybreak, and as he splashed out into the water to start his swim to safety, he looked back to see (he told a correspondent) "swords flashing in the sun," the Japs hacking up the last of our people.

About a week later, on August 18, a patrol of three-company strength (B, I, and L of the 5th Marines) set out to find the bodies and to kill the Japs who had killed the Goettge men, and whatever other stragglers they could come across—thinking by this time that a good part of the Japanese garrison on Guadalcanal must be in the Matanikau area. Results: not too satisfactory. L went around, crossed the Matanikau River

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inland, and came at the Japs from the rear. B faced the Japs from across the Matanikau at the beach and kept up a distracting fire while L moved into Matanikau village. Company I made a shore-to-shore landing, hitting farther up the coast at Kokumbona, to cut off the Jap retreat.

The plan worked OK, but only about forty Japanese were killed before the companies returned to the perimeter—not a spectacular number, and certainly not all the Japs there were on Guadalcanal. The bodies of the Goettge patrol went undiscovered. That matter would have to be avenged another day.

When the story of the Goettge patrol got back to the States, making all hands look bad, the General was ordered to write a special report on the matter. On the island, each man made a personal note of it; putting down the Japs as treacherous, fixing once and for all in his mind the phrase that was never after to lose its validity among the men of the First Division: "The only good Jap is a dead Jap."

IV

There were signs that if the Japs were coming, if they were going to give trouble, it would be on the opposite side of the perimeter from the Matanikau, not where the Goettge patrol met its fate, but on the eastern side, out beyond the Tenaru.

On August 12, a platoon from the 1st Marines, out on patrol, walked into a white man who turned out to be a Catholic priest, a Marist father who, like Captain Clemens, had chosen to stay on the island despite the Japanese. His news was that a large Jap force was in the area.

Just about a week later, on August 19, a company-strength patrol from the same regiment marched through the same area, looking for the Japanese. The lieutenant who had commanded the earlier patrol went along, and when Captain Brush, in command, chose a lunch stop, the lieutenant urged him to go on another mile to a village where the lieutenant said he had seen oranges.

A march for chow, as any Marine knows, is not a march at all. They went on and surprised a Japanese patrol of thirty-four men. In fifty-five minutes of lively action, thirty-one of the enemy were killed. A look at the bodies showed that this was no ordinary Japanese patrol. Too many of the uniforms were officers'.

Plainly, the Division action report says, the Japanese were reinforcing their Guadalcanal garrison.

But this word did not get around for the men of the Division to think about before the first cheering note of the campaign was struck. On August 20, two Marine air

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squadrons, one of fighters and one of dive bombers, circled Henderson Field for all to see, and landed.

As the planes came in, the men cheered and threw their helmets into the air. "I actually saw tears of joy running down the cheeks of some of my youngsters," wrote a regimental commander.

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Chapter 6

ONE OF THE THINGS a fighting man is likely to find wrong with the history of a battle in which he fought is that it makes the battlefield seem more neat and compact than he remembers it to have been at the moment he was fighting. In histories, events of desperate confusion too often appear effortless and tidy.

Take Guadalcanal. Looking back along the road that stretched from August to December, 1942, it is easy to set up stakes at the turning points, marking the battles in which we threw back the four major counteroffensives the Japanese launched against us, once a month from August through November.

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Yet Guadalcanal was, more than any other campaign Marines fought in World War II, the one fought most strictly off the cuff. It was an improvisation. Not only was our beachhead assault hurriedly planned and executed, but also our defense of what we had thus so quickly gained had to be erected on plans drawn after we were ashore.

The Japanese were as much fouled up as we were. At the moment we landed they were in the final stages of mounting a new offensive in New Guinea, had assembled two units of army strength to capture the last eastern portion of that vast island. One of these, the 17th Army, under a Lieutenant General Hyakutake, was, the first week in August, 1942, mobilized and ready to ship out from Davao, in the southern Philippines.

Hyakutake himself was still in Tokyo on August 8 when dispatches arrived telling the Imperial command of our landing, and he was chosen to knock down what must have seemed to the Imperial Staff an upstart threat. For his 17th Army he was given a new force. Altogether he had two divisions: The Sendai 2d and the 38th, plus the heavily-reinforced Kawaguchi Brigade, and a shock regiment, the Ichiki Detachment, plus a tank regiment and seven artillery battalions.

The trouble with this new army was that the units were scattered throughout the Pacific. The Sendai was in Java; the 38th in China; the Kawaguchi in Borneo; one of the antitank artillery battalions was as far away as Manchuria.

Closest to Guadalcanal was that Ichiki "shock" detachment at Guam. They were given priority, reached Truk August 15, and the advance echelon embarked the next day on six of the newest Japanese destroyers for Guadalcanal.

As for Colonel Ichiki, he was so confident when he arrived at Guadalcanal the night of August 17 with his advance echelon he did not feel it necessary to wait for the second echelon of his detachment, some 1200 more men, which was bound south in slower-moving transports. He was going right ahead. He was going to take Henderson Field with 900 men.

II

The rivers of Guadalcanal's northern coastal plain are not rivers as Americans would think of them. They are creeks. Most of those in the areas fought over by Marines were muddy, sluggish, fungus-laden streams, less than fifty yards wide.

Inland from where they meet the ocean, they stand stagnant (the Lunga was an exception), rising and falling only with the tides. At their mouths there are always spits, formed and re-formed endlessly by the tide, taking their direction (southeast-northwest) from the ocean current that flows around the northern side of the island. At low tide the spits close off the mouths of the rivers entirely, showing themselves as low bridges of sand from bank to bank.

So steadfast a landmark was the sandspit at the mouth of the Tenaru River that the peacetime "government trail" used by natives and planters bore outward from the coconut groves down to the beach to make the crossing at the spit.

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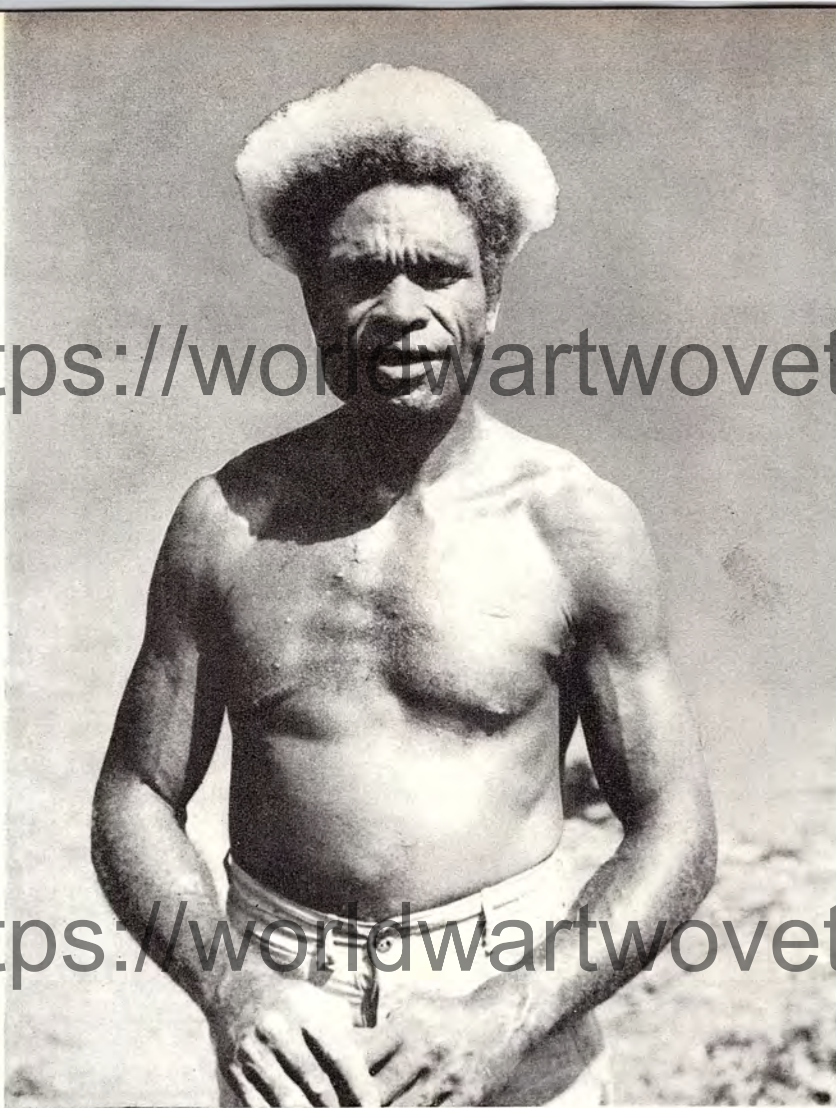

VOUZA: Scars still show on the chest of native scout Vouza in this picture taken in 1945, three years after he turned up bleeding from Jap wounds at the Tenaru

Now in the third week of August, 1942, the Tenaru sandspit was to become another kind of landmark.

Not that anyone in Marine ranks thought it might. Not that the men who were set up in positions on the west bank of the Tenaru (2d Battalion, 1st Marines) thought so. They had heard noises, to be sure, but so had everyone on Guadalcanal heard noises. Captain Brush, it is true, had run into a Jap patrol of surprising rank, but so had other Marine patrols run into other parties of Japanese.

But when, on the 20th, the evening after the Brush patrol, the outposts far beyond the opposite bank (some were 800 yards to the east) began to fall back across the spit with news of Japanese patrols, a certain sense of foreboding was felt by the battalion's commanding officer, Lieutenant Colonel Al Pollock. So that, when he heard some firing across the stream, and got the word that someone was wounded up that way,

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he sent a doctor up at once, and himself followed. This was a little after midnight.

Pollock did not get to the wounded man, to the scene of the firing. A runner caught him mid-way to tell him that a native, badly wounded, bayoneted in many places, gurgling news of many Japs on the other side of the stream, had come in through our lines, was back at the command post.

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Pollock hustled back to his CP, not many yards behind the lines along the river bank. The native was there. He tried to talk, blood streaming out of his wounds. What the native (he was Sergeant Major Vouza) said must have been something like the letter he wrote to an English friend after the war describing the episode:

"Well, I was caughted by the Japs," Vouza wrote, "and one of the Japanese Naval Officer questioned me but I was refuse to answer & I was bayoneted by a long sword twice on my chest, through my throught, & cutted by side of my tongue & I was got up from the enemies & walked through the American front line . . ."

Pollock listened intently through this recital, and then pressed Vouza for Japanese strength.

"Maybe 250, maybe 500," was Vouza's reply.

Round figures were enough for Pollock: "By this time I knew something was up." He called Division to come for Vouza, and while he was on the phone he could hear firing down by the banks of the river.

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It was now a little after 0100, (August 21) or so goes Pollock's recollection of the time. He puts it down that the Japanese struck at 0118, August 21, 1942, although the action report puts the time later. The time is something the historians may establish; the sequence of events is unquestioned.

First, a green flare rose from the opposite bank, throwing a ghostly light over the sandspit. Then a Marine sentry fired a shot. Finally—all this in minutes—approximately two hundred Japanese came charging across the sandspit—two hundred symbols of Ichiki's arrogance.

Against these Japanese there was a small group of Marines. G Company held part of the west bank of the river, with one platoon in position to stand off the oncoming Japs—these plus two platoons of Battery B, Special Weapons Battalion.

The Japanese ran headlong into a single strand of barbed wire the Marines had strung. When they hit the wire and *were hit* by our small-arms fire and by canister from the 37mm cannon of the special weapons outfit, "they waved their arms wildly, they shrieked and jabbered like monkeys . . . but they kept coming," writes a junior officer.

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This was the first organized Japanese attack on Guadalcanal. This was the first

chance to see whether or not the little men were really supermen. No more than five minutes had passed before some of the Japanese were in the Marine positions, before the two races stood face to face at arms' length.

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A grenade landed in the 37mm dugout and chewed up the crew. Marines who had never before fired such a cannon leaped over the bodies of their friends—and learned how.

A second lieutenant named McLanahan, wounded in the arms, the legs, the buttocks, unable any longer to fire himself, lay in his foxhole un-jamming the automatic rifles of those who still could fire.

"Corporal Dean Wilson," says an account of the battle, "was shooting Japs with a BAR. Three of them loomed out of the smoke and charged his foxhole. The BAR jammed, so Wilson threw it aside, grabbed a machete and slashed the first Jap across the stomach so hard that his entrails fell out. He jumped out of his hole, rushed the other two and hacked them to pieces."

When a machine gunner named Rivers was killed by a bullet, he froze on the trigger, fired two hundred more rounds into the still oncoming, and still closely-packed Japanese.

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Corporal John Shea moved to an adjoining foxhole where he hoped to find a few seconds' security to clear his tommy gun. As he swung himself down into the foxhole he felt a bayonet pierce his left leg once, then twice. He mashed his right foot into the Jap's stomach, pushing the Jap against the wall of the foxhole, struggled with his tommy gun, finally released the bolt, and shot the Jap five times through the chest.

Now-famed Al Schmidt fired on, though blinded.

Colonel Pollock moved his communicators forward to a foxhole, feet not yards, from the spit. "Line 'em up and squeeze 'em off," he yelled, reminding the men of their rifle range instruction. When Pollock came upon one man wounded in the groin, he threw an old chestnut at him: "Well," said Pollock, "I hope the family jewels are safe."

The men who fight in such battles as that at the Tenaru are the least reliable witnesses about how long the affrays are in balance. The lines seem to have been confused for more than a half-hour, probably nearer an hour.

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Pollock threw a reserve platoon in, sometime between 0200 and 0300, and they helped stem the tide, but the issue was still in doubt until 0300, when the first artillery concentration, ordered by Colonel Cates, the regimental commander, was called in. This caught the Japanese stupidly bunched together on the other side of the river,

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THESE TRIED TO COME AROUND: Instead of striking directly across the spit some Japanese ran out along the beach when they reached the west side, only to die like their comrades

caught the very ones who were waiting to get across and join the melee. The first concentration of shells fell 200 yards away, but then it was called in on the sandspit itself, so close to Marine lines that Cates hesitated to issue the order.

The tide was not only turned back; it was dammed in its swell.

"From about 4 A.M. to daylight," Pollock has said, "the battle continued more or less as a state of siege, with all weapons firing and no one knowing the exact situation. When daylight came, the gruesome sight on the sandspit became visible. Dead Japs were piled in rows and on top of each other from our gun positions outward. Some were only wounded and continued to fire after playing dead. Others had taken refuge under a two-foot sand embankment and around the trunks of the coconut trees, not fifty yards from our lines. But our mortars finally cleaned them out."

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At 0830, the 1st Battalion, 1st Marines, was ordered to cross the Tenaru upstream, fan out by companies, and envelop the Japanese.

"Hostile reaction," the Division report says, "took the form of the customary bayonet charges which were beaten off with heavy losses. Thereupon Company C closed in and bayoneted the survivors."

By 1400 August 21, the living among Ichiki's men, sensing that they had been nailed into a box, tried to get away along the beach. They thus exposed themselves to our newly-acquired fighter aircraft which by now were circling over the battlefield, looking for just such a kill. At 1500, a light tank platoon crossed the spit to deliver the *coup de grâce,* and although two of the tanks were disabled by the Japanese, they nevertheless served to spear-head an infantry advance that wiped out the remnants.

By dusk the firing had died away. Except for 15 prisoners, 13 of whom were wounded, Ichiki's "shock" detachment was annihilated. Ichiki himself that day burned his colors and shot himself through the head, leaving behind his diary with these notations: "17 Aug. The landing. 20 Aug. The march by night and the battle. 21 Aug. Enjoyment of the fruits of victory."

As against their 600-700 killed, we lost 34 killed and 75 wounded. "The attack of the Ichiki detachment," General Hyakutake messaged Tokyo, "was not entirely successful."

General Vandegrift issued a commendation on the spot, pointing out that the 1st Marines and attached units, "defended their position with such zeal and determination that the enemy was unable to effect a penetration . . ." and, by their counterattacks, ". . . achieved a victory fully commensurate with the military traditions of our Corps."

III

In the box score Hyakutake was keeping at Rabaul, Ichiki's performance at bat seems to have been marked as a sacrifice, and certainly not a serious enough matter to cause Hyakutake to forfeit the game before he had sent the rest of his batting order to the plate.

On the same night Ichiki ordered his men across the sandbar at the Tenaru, parts of the Kawaguchi Brigade were going aboard ship at Truk, their destination Guadalcanal. The Imperial Navy had guaranteed Hyakutake that they could safely bring this new force down to Guadalcanal and put them ashore intact for another and more elaborate offensive.

Not much the Marines could do about it—except wait. The situation hadn't changed: still the same terrain to deal with, the vulnerable series of ridges inland, south of the airfield, the same lack of a distinctive defensive point toward the Matanikau on the west; still the same number of men, with no immediate hope of reinforcement, although the Division's 7th Marines, sitting peacefully in Samoa, was at last being ordered up to Guadalcanal by Admiral Ghormley.

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HENDERSON'S PAGODA: A Jap-built building on Henderson was one of the most familiar sights on Guadalcanal, serving as headquarters for Marine aviation

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General Vandegrift did what he could: brought over from Tulagi on August 21 the 2d Battalion of the 5th Marines which was landed and put into mobile reserve, a move that permitted him to send another strong force out toward the Matanikau to see what was up with the Japs out there.

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This affair, called the Kokumbona Operation, is a sad tale of bad leadership and inconclusive results, and the less said the better. The battalion commander who led his men on this shore-to-shore maneuver on August 27, was, according to the Division's report, "irresolute," and the battalion, instead of pushing rapidly inland, moved slowly through the jungle, and then was committed to a frontal assault when a flanking movement was called for.

When word of this milling around under the noses of the Japs reached Division, the regimental commander was sent to the scene where he relieved the battalion commander and took over. But by that time the Japs had withdrawn. One good came of this faltering foray: it proved that there were relatively few Japs in the area, for if they had been there in strength they would obviously have taken advantage of our fumbling.

The Japs must be reinforcing on the other side of the perimeter; they must still be coming in on the Tenaru side. To find out we sent another group that had finished its work on Tulagi, the 1st Raider Battalion with what was left of the 1st Parachute Battalion, on a probing shore-to-shore maneuver to Tasimboko, far beyond the Tenaru.

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When they landed at dawn September 8, they found so many Jap supplies right on the beach it was plain they had come in only a few hours after a Jap landing party.

EVERY PLANE WAS PRECIOUS: Marines throw dirt on the bottom of this burning Grumman Wildcat set afire in the Japanese air raid

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Shortly after, the Raiders formed into attack groups and surprised a small Jap force, smashed it, then went on toward Tasimboko village where they ran into a Jap rear guard and fought briefly with them until they fled. They then turned their attention on what fortunately turned out to be the main supply base for the fresh troops Hyakutake had sent to that side of our perimeter.

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After destroying a battery of artillery, in addition to all the medical supplies, arms, ammunition, a number of landing boats and barges, and caches of rice, the Raiders withdrew at 1230 to the APDs, with only 2 killed and 6 wounded, estimating that they had killed 27 Japanese. When the Raiders returned to the perimeter, they were told they might rest out south of the airfield, toward the ridges, a quiet area.

IV

One of the heartening things about the Tasimboko raid was the sight of friendly planes (Army P-40s) in the air above the Raiders as they went about their work of destruction. But the presence of planes here was as nothing to the effect on the whole Division of having those two Marine squadrons (19 Grumman Wildcats of VMF 223, and 12 SBD-3s of VMSB 232, on August 20) permanently based at Henderson, dog-fighting within plain sight of every man on the island and giving the Japanese airmen a very bad time.

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Right away the pilots showed their mettle, earned the right to be taken into the

deeply filial and exclusive fraternity of feeling that interwove itself between every man who had been on the island since the first week in August. The pilots and their crews were welcomed into foxholes they had had no hand in digging, the final measure of battlefield hospitality. And when the captured Japanese siren at the Pagoda, the Oriental structure which had been converted into a makeshift control tower, began to whine in alarm of oncoming Japanese, good wishes, almost devout, went with the few pilots and planes who could ever be mustered at one time to rise against the Zeros.

The air battles were daily, sometimes twice- and thrice-daily, affairs, and our pilots took the measure of the Japanese flyers in ratios of five to one, a score that seemed surprising to Stateside laymen who wondered how the stubby Grummans, so much less maneuverable than the Zeros, could take such a heavy toll of the Japanese planes. The answer was a secret well preserved until the end of the war: we often knew when the Japanese were coming and got in the air before they arrived, this because of an almost fantastic indifference to danger shown by a small group of coastwatchers under the Australian Navy. The coastwatchers, most of whom were planters, had volunteered to stay in the islands equipped only with radio transmitters and small arms.

One of them sat boldly in the hills overlooking Rabaul's harbor and airfields, where

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the bomber flights took off; another hazarded his life to watch Buka, near Bougainville, where the fighter escort took off; and yet others moved in constant danger along the Solomons, noting and reporting the speed and direction of the enemy as he came on. Even so, our planes always fought at a perilous numerical inferiority; 5 of ours against 20 to 25 of theirs, was a usual contest.

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Fighting as they did, our flyers soon proved that they could do more than buck up morale. They shook Hyakutake's faith in the Japanese Navy's guarantee to deliver his troops safely by their work on August 24 in a tussle that has been given the official title, The Battle of the Eastern Solomons. That day our pilots turned back a Jap force escorting transports southward, finally forcing warships and transports west to the Shortland Islands where the troops were debarked and put aboard smaller and faster craft, on which they were shuttled down to Guadalcanal at night.

The work of our pilots in units, MSB-232, VF-223, VS-5, and 67th Fighter Squadron (U.S.A.), during the period from August 21 to August 30 was commended by General Vandegrift:

"Sustaining losses to themselves which were far below what might be expected in view of the results obtained they have destroyed 16 enemy twin-engine bombers, 5 single-engine bombers, 39 Zero fighters and 3 destroyers in addition to which they have hit and probably destroyed 1 cruiser, 2 destroyers and 2 transports.

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"Operating under difficulties from an unfinished advance air base with limited facilities for upkeep and repair, these units have without regard for the cost sought out the enemy at every opportunity and have engaged him with such aggressiveness and skill as to contribute conspicuously to the success of the Allied cause in the Solomon Islands Area."

V

Little else was encouraging. Food had not improved in quality and only slightly in quantity. One of the reasons those APDs could be spared to the Raiders for so short a time was that they had become the Division's principal means of supply. On August 21, for example, *Colhoun, Gregory* and *Little* brought in forty tons of food each (three and a half days' supply), slipping by the Jap submarines that now stood steady guard over the water approaches to the island. It was a costly ration: Jap planes sank *Colhoun.*

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If danger had become routine, as it can, the steady drain on the physical strength of the men began to show in the outbreaks of malaria and gastro-enteritis whose occurrence is first reported at this stage by the Division surgeon. There was not much he could do about it. He called for even stricter enforcement of field sanitation orders, but these

were being pretty well obeyed already; he caused an order to be issued requiring every man to take atabrine, but atabrine was only suppressive.

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Another disease, the less serious but no less annoying jungle rot, took its toll. The surgeon thought that he might stop some of this itching and debilitating fungus that grew on feet, under armpits, and on buttocks—at least on the feet where it was worst—if he could only get the men some socks. They had long ago worn to shreds the two or three pairs which each of them brought ashore. But if the Division couldn't get barbed wire, it couldn't get socks.

The tendency is to say that, on this first week in September, what with the victory at the Tenaru and the arrival of the airplanes, and the slight improvement in the supply situation, things were a little better, better than they had been in the second week in August.

Yet the Jap planes still got in at night and dropped their sleep-rending bombs, and destroyers still cruised up and down in plain sight, night and day, shelling our hasty installations at will—and, of all things the worst, no one could help knowing that Jap reinforcements were still coming in nearly every night.

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Chapter 7

NOT ONE MAN in the Division could have begrudged the Raiders the rest they were now to get. The Raiders were tired. "We're survivors," was the way one of them put it at the time.

Of the hundreds of Marines who had debarked around Guadalcanal on August 7, the Raiders clearly had seen their share of action. That intense three-day fight for Tulagi-Gavutu-Tanambogo hadn't ended then; almost up to the day they left Tulagi, Raider patrols were flushing Japs out of the island's coral caves. A company of the Raiders had mopped up on adjoining Florida, covered the island from stem to stern to rid it of Japs.

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Two companies of the battalion had landed on Savo, patrolled the island, and secured it. A delay at Savo had saved their skins. They were to *have* made another landing around Guadalcanal beyond Tassafaronga and were to have stayed aboard the destroyer-transports on which they made their inter-island journeys. But when on the night of September 2, they got back late, and the APDs had to stand out, Colonel Edson ordered the two companies that had gone to Savo ashore. One of the APDs was sunk that night.

These facts contributed to Division's decision to send the Raiders out to the south, inland back of the airfield, where there seemed little likelihood of trouble.

About this rest, Colonel Edson—a thinning carrot-top, short, and of deceivingly soft voice—was not so sure. "That bunch at Tasimboko was no motley of four hundred Japs, but two or three thousand well-organized soldiers," Colonel Edson has said. "When we got back to Lunga and they sent us out toward the ridge, I was firmly convinced we were in the path of the next Jap attack. That's the way I G-2ed it, anyway."

The 10th was a day of squaring away, but on the morning of the 11th, Edson had his patrols out, not letting his men settle into bivouac, hustling parties up into the jungle that clotted and covered the valley of the Lunga. That day they found little or nothing.

Stubborn in his suspicion, Edson ordered out patrols again on the 12th, sent them on deeper into the jungle, and that day his patrols did indeed make what reports call "a contact." Nothing big. Not a serious fire fight. Just some earnest and purposeful Japs who seemed at home in the area.

This was enough for Edson. He at once ordered his men to set up business-like lines of defense for the night ahead, sent them "as far forward as they could get," Edson recalls.

Meanwhile that morning, when the patrols were out, Captain Kenneth D. Bailey, commanding officer of Raider Company C, returned to Guadalcanal from Noumea where he had been evacuated for wounds received at Tulagi. He was still pale, and a little vague about his discharge from the hospital, and it did not take much questioning to reveal that he had gone over the hill from the doctors, hitched a plane ride back to the 'Canal. This irregularity was easily overlooked, especially since Bailey had been thoughtful enough to round up in Noumea the bags of mail that had piled up there since the Raiders left New Caledonia at the end of July.

Thus, shortly before the men went forward to set up their lines for the night of the 12th, they had their first mail call in the Solomons. As they marched out they carried

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packs of letters and boxes of cigars, cigarettes and candy with them — stuck into the pockets of their dungarees, hastily strapped onto their packs, pushed under the lids of ammunition cans.

There was some grumbling, as they went forward, about Red Mike. Edson may have doped out the fact that the Japanese were going to strike in the Raiders' rest area but his people had not. They had been told that they were to get a rest, and this digging in on the night of the 12th was certainly not a rest. "It was not," recalls a junior officer in the outfit, "that the men did not have complete confidence in Edson. They would have followed him any place. But the impression had grown among them that Edson was too eager. They thought he was always running down to Division looking for trouble, for assignments. As we dug in that night of the 12th, I remember one fellow saying:

" 'Jesus Christ, you'd think the old man would give us a chance to read our mail.' "

With many of their letters unread, their packages unopened, the weary Raiders and

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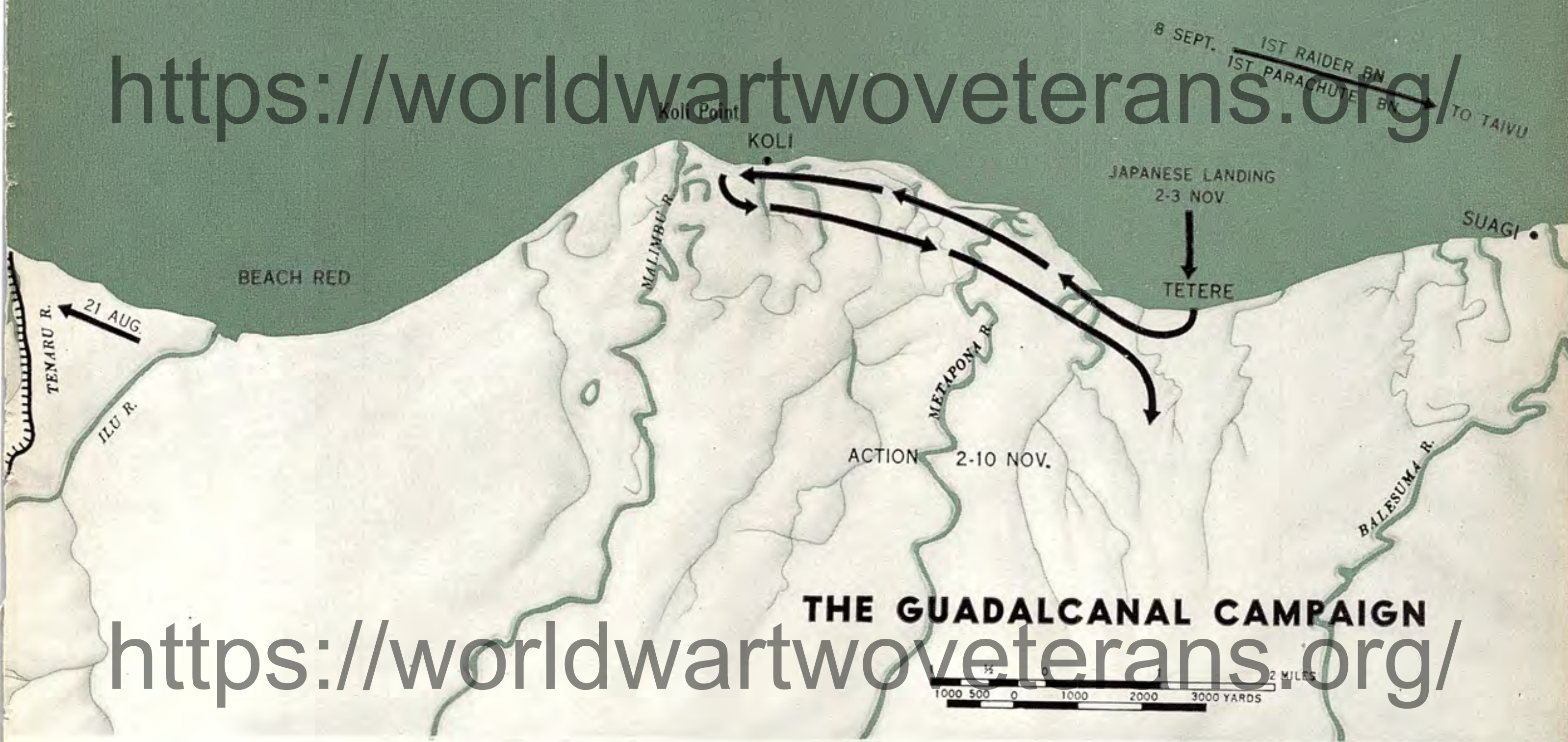

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Parachutists dug in late in the afternoon of the 12th, across the bald knoll and into the jungle out there south of the airfield, out where General Vandegrift had said the terrain presented such a difficult problem of defense.

II

The books call it variously, "Edson's Ridge," "Bloody Ridge," and "Bloody Knob." Most of the men who were up there on the nights of September 12 and 13 call it simply, "The Ridge," as if no adjective were needed to provoke their memories. It rose just south of the airfield where, according to one historian who has visited the scene and re-traced the battle on foot, "the land begins to fold into jumbled kunai-covered foothills."

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The dominating ridge was "perhaps a thousand yards long, with its length running northwest and southeast . . . rising out of the jungle a mile from the runway." Its slopes fell away "toward the stream bed of the Lunga, lying to the west, and toward

THE RIDGE FROM THE AIR: In the upper center curves the snake-like contours of the ridge defended by the Raiders in September, behind it is the airfield and the ocean. On the left is the Lunga, and in the foreground is the jungle through which the Japanese had to cut a path to reach the ridge.

that of the Tenaru, toward the east. Deep ravines, heavily and in some cases impenetrably wooded, bordered the hill on all sides. Four short but distinct spurs jutted from it, two on each side, slanting away from the ridge line."

The length of the sector and the small size of Edson's force "precluded any possibility of establishing a continuous line," says the Guadalcanal historical monograph. "Small strongpoints were set up, and it was hoped that fires from these, together with the extremely difficult nature of the terrain, would prevent anything in the way of a large scale penetration."

Facing south from the airfield, B and C Companies of the Raiders held the right of

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the line, from the top of the ridge down a spur some three hundred yards to the bank of the Lunga. The left spur of the ridge was held by the Parachutists.

At 2100, September 12, a Japanese float plane dropped a flare over the area. About a half hour later an intense bombardment from the Jap cruisers' 8-inch guns began to fall on the ridge area. This lasted about 20 minutes.

Then immediately the Japanese foot soldiers struck.

The main attack was against C Company. The Japs came down the bank of the Lunga and hit the extreme right flank position.

In plain terms, in fairness to the Japanese who are too often underrated, they overwhelmed the Raider position. Almost a whole platoon of C began to fall back along the river bank. The official reports say only that the Japanese "cut communications between the Raider companies."

The jungle was thick and there was confusion—Japanese as well as American. One man who stayed there through the night remembers hearing them "milling around, trying to set up, cutting fire lanes themselves in the jungle." C Company withdrew and forced B back, but even then the Japanese did not come through. The ground was as difficult to seize as it was to defend.

III

Next morning (September 13) a Division staff officer went up to have a look. "The men were standing on their heels up there, glassy-eyed, and too quiet," he recalls. It was his opinion that the Raiders would have to be reinforced, despite Colonel Edson's protests that his men could hold through the day and coming night. Thus, the 2d Battalion, 5th Marines, was ordered up, but they were far out on the west side of the perimeter and would have to cross the airfield. They did not, in fact, get to the Ridge on the 13th, at least not as a unit. What prevented them was the almost unceasing aerial battle that was going on over the airfield all that day, with the open field and the ridge under almost continuous bombardment by Japanese planes and ships.

Under this air attack, the Raiders themselves tried not only to reorganize, but also to regain their positions of the night before. Some got back up. One man remembers that he found the packages he had left behind, but that the Japanese had stolen the contents.

Generally, as the monograph points out, "the attempt was unsuccessful, and by mid-afternoon Colonel Edson decided to shorten his lines," and to deliver a speech to his men, or as many of them as were around and within hearing distance.

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TOTAL DEMOLITION: In shelling and air attacks on September 12, the radio station building was demolished when struck by an aerial bomb

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It was a small audience he had, and recollections of Edson's exact words are fuzzy. "He told us that this was it," one listener remembers. "He said that there was nothing but us between the Japs and Henderson Field. He said if we didn't hold, the whole Guadalcanal landing would be a flop."

Edson apparently communicated his intense sincerity. "The men really turned to, then. There was no more grumbling. It probably wouldn't be fair to say that they had a renewed spirit, but you could certainly say that they went about the business of getting ready for the second night with utmost seriousness, if not with an air of remarkable resignation."

As the afternoon sun of the 13th began to wane, the Raiders stood at about four hundred. How many Japanese (the Kawaguchi Brigade) were in front of them is hard to state precisely; conservative estimates put the number at around four thousand. The Raider line, though shortened, was still 1,800 yards long, which meant one Raider (or Parachutist) every five yards facing ten Japanese, a fair enough comparison of strength even though battles are not fought that way.

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For the second night "the southern slope of the high knob in the center of the ridge was chosen as the main line of resistance," says the historical monograph, "and Company

B, which had escaped the more powerful of the previous night's attacks, was placed in position on the right half of center, while Company A replaced C on the right flank. A tenuous contact was established with the 1st Pioneer Battalion beyond the Lunga to the west, and Company B of the 1st Engineer Battalion was used to strengthen Company B of the Raiders."

The 1st Parachute Battalion, meanwhile, had not been in serious trouble during the first night and its position had remained practically unchanged. Companies B and C were in position on the left (east) flank of the ridge across the flat jungle-covered lowland, while Company A was in reserve to the left rear of the center sector. All the Parachute companies were badly depleted, and one observer warns: "Remember that they were trained to drop, to hit fast. They were a little sick of being used as infantrymen. That's always the trouble with elite troops. Even the Raiders were a little bit that way. Both thought of themselves as hit and run boys."

As the day's light dimmed the Raiders and Parachutists could hear the yakety-yakety-yak of the Japanese out ahead becoming more shrill, more urgent, and at 1830, when night had just closed in, darkening and masking from the Marines' view the reassuring sight of nearby foxholes, some one of the Japanese (or at least every witness there so testifies) cried out in English, "Gas Attack!" Whether the Japanese actually uttered the words or not, some smoke, probably from a flare, came rolling down the ridge. With that, more flares rose from behind the Japanese line.

Then the Japs came on, some down the spurs, some down the spine, some in the jungle by the banks of the Lunga, firing from the hip, hurling grenades, now grunting with the weight of their weapons, now jabbering in shrill Bushido inspiration.

Company B of the Raiders was hit hardest, out on the right flank where the Japs had struck the night before. The Japanese quickly surrounded one of B's platoons, and this platoon followed by the rest of B fought in some confusion back to the top of the ridge to join Company C, leaving a gap for the Kawaguchi to come through. This many of them did before the flank could be anchored again.

The places where it is possible to put a finger on leadership and its value in crisis are rarer than most military histories would indicate; they often exaggerate the role of the commander. Many good units have fought gloriously under bad leaders.

The second night of the battle of the Ridge is, however, an instance where leadership possibly made the difference between defeat and victory, where three officers at least, and probably more, gave their men distinguished leadership under fire, held units together by example.

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THE BATTLEFIELD: The photographer stood at the point (foreground) farthest inland along the ridge, the knoll on which the initial Raider line was set up. When the Raiders withdrew the second night, it was through the defile on the left half of the picture, and much of the critical fighting took place on the far slope. Lieutenant Colonel Edson was at the top of the knoll in the middle background.

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Edson deserves high credit. Shortly after the dusk attack, he moved his CP onto the forward nose of the ridge, less than ten yards behind the most forward machine gun. The area was raked by fire. He lay flat on his stomach, raising himself occasionally to use the hand phone which was his only means of communication.

Sometimes, when events demanded, he arose and ran crouched to a scene of confusion. To one group of battered men who wandered aimlessly and dangerously around the knoll, Edson cried angrily, pointing his arm toward the Japanese:

"Listen, you guys, the only thing those people have got that you haven't is guts." And he grabbed them and led them forward to new positions.

But Edson's essential role that night seems to have been that of offering calm and steady example under fire, while Captain Bailey, who apparently made a surprising recovery of strength, was "the big guy that was all over the place."

"He was able to say corny things and get by with them," recalls one of Bailey's friends. "That night he was running around, grabbing guys by the sleeve and yelling, 'What do *you* wanna do, live forever?' "

There was never a time during the whole night when there was quite enough ammunition. At one time, says Edson, "we were down to a single box of grenades for the whole outfit." Bailey made supply his special business. Back down behind the ridge there was a small dump to which trucks and jeeps were running all during the

night. Bailey made many trips back there to lead ammo carriers to the most forward positions, to see that nothing went astray.

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The Parachutists, some of whose companies were down to fifty men before the evening's fight started, seem to have suffered most from the confusion, and Captain Harry L. Torgerson was, in Edson's judgment, the man most responsible for getting them back into the lines. Bailey helped there, but it was Torgerson who held an effective if informal roll call. He ordered his men forward by name, singling them out, challenging them to go forward.

"What it meant that night," said Edson after the war, "was instilling the will to fight into a lot of men who did not want to fight. It was done by voice. It was something that you started with two or three. It spreads."

The final tribute to the men is that they did stand despite the excessive odds. They fought on long through the night.

At 2200 Edson sent word that his force stood only three hundred strong against the still oncoming waves of Japs, a situation he seemed to be less alarmed about than did the staff at Division CP, where a few Japs had begun to snipe.

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At 2230 the Japs threw a fresh force at the Parachutists.

All this time the artillerymen of the 11th Marines had been standing in frustration by their guns because the lines were so intermingled it was hardly safe to fire effectively.

Now they were to have a chance. When the Parachutists were hit, Edson was forced to pull the whole line back, and re-form it along what had been the battalion reserve

PACK HOWITZER: A sandbagged pack howitzer position overlooking the beach at Guadalcanal

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line, back and a little bit higher to what was the highest of all the knobs along the ridge's uneven spine.

And as they moved back, our 105s opened up with the heaviest concentration Guadalcanal had so far seen. The way it fell it looked as if the artillery lads were trying to burn out their barrels, so fast and furiously did the shells go over the Raiders. Out of this barrage grew an apocryphal story: a Jap officer is supposed to have asked later, upon his capture, to see the "automatic artillery" we used that night.

The Japs contributed to the accuracy of our fire by throwing up a red rocket before every new assault, giving the 11th's fire control people the direction from which each attack was to come, just as it was launched. Of course some Japs got through. Those who did made the mistake of halting temporarily and throwing calcium flares to light our lines, and of then trying to come up the hill in that light. The Raiders themselves could, and did, cover those last few yards with automatic fire.

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By 0230 (September 14) Edson sent word that he and his men could hold; by sunrise the attacks were growing weaker; by daylight they stopped.

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No loss on a battlefield is light; if one man dies the loss is heavy. You can say about the Battle of the Ridge, however, that we suffered less than the Japs, startlingly less —at about the same ratio we lost at the Tenaru: 31 killed, 104 wounded, and 9 missing, or about 20 percent of the men actually engaged.

The Japs lost easily half of their men. More than six hundred dead ones lay there on the ridge to be counted, and many more were killed in mopping up. And almost all the Japanese alive on the morning of September 14 either died or fell desperately ill as they tried to retreat to the coast through that clawing jungle, out around our perimeter.

Both Edson and Bailey received the Medal of Honor for the night's work.

IV

Not until all the reports on the events of September 12, 13, and 14, were in did we realize that what we had turned back was a really big deal, a coordinated land-sea-air attack with the land strikes coming at three points, of which the ridge was only one.

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During the night of September 13-14, another force of Japs struck at the extreme east flank, held by the 3d Battalion, 1st Marines. Here the Japs never made it a contest, for our battalion sat at one side of an open field, behind barbed wire, with clear fields of fire in front. The Japs came across the open field, and some two hundred of them died in it without penetrating our lines.

And in the late afternoon of the 14th, the Japs set upon the 3d Battalion, 5th Marines, on the west side of our perimeter where they held a ridge commanding the coastal road to Matanikau. Here the Japs fought fiercely and determinedly, and it looked for a while as if they might carry the ridge. Indeed it looked bad through that night, but the next day the Japanese, for some unexplained reason, failed to take advantage of what was to us a bad situation.

At any rate, the main issue had been decided before this encounter began, and Hyakutake's September offensive was a failure.

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The really important fact to remember about the Battle of the Ridge is that it was the most critical and desperate battle in the entire Guadalcanal campaign.

Why the Japanese failed is not simple to put down, principally because the reasons lie in that complex and other-worldly thinking that made up the Japanese military psychology. Long before the war, their doctrine stressed the offensive, a direct outgrowth

of the Japanese belief in their racial superiority. The Division's report lists the errors that such arrogant mysticism can lead to:

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> The plan was complicated and gave little consideration to the difficulties to be encountered in night attacks delivered over rugged jungle country.
>
> There appears to have been a failure to reconnoiter our positions to detect the weak spots and the numerous gaps which existed in our defenses.
>
> The preconceived scheme of maneuver was rigidly adhered to, despite the fact that it was obviously based on information of our defenses as they existed at the time of the Tenaru battle.
>
> In action, subordinate commanders ignored opportunities to improvise maneuvers to fit the actual circumstances of terrain and defensive dispositions.

"Our own American officers and men" said General Vandegrift in a commendation "proved themselves to be among the best fighting troops that any service could hope to have . . ."

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Chapter 8

THE FIRST MARINE DIVISION, even in peacetime, never lacked its share of characters. Under the inevitable regimentation of military life, although that regimentation may be only of the barracks room variety, there arises a tendency for a man to exploit his quirks, his peculiarities. Common sharing of the hazards and perils of a battlefield can have the same effect. Now, at the end of September 1942, every man in the Division was a character, wearing his eccentricities on his sleeve as if in rebellion against the levelling drain of danger.

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Every man, for example, had his nickname. A big lumbering good-natured fellow

was called "Jo-Jo," not because he was a dog-faced boy as the name implies, but simply because the sound of the nickname seemed descriptive of his temperament. Another was called "The Panther," for no other reason than that he had a weaving walk. Very often it turned out that men, otherwise generous, became in battle possessive and miserly of the few belongings they could get and keep. Thus men were called "Shovel," or "Cigar," or "Juice," the last for a man who had ways of getting that homemade alcoholic beverage, jungle juice.

A man who in his loneliness began to talk too much about his girl friend back home, often was given her name, and some were called "Mary," and "Louise," and could laugh about it in this atmosphere where effeminacy was as rare as fresh milk. Comic strips showed their impact; many were called "Tracy" or "Dagwood" or "Terry."

Some of the most descriptive diminutives were too profane for print, which only illustrates another aspect of how life was on Guadalcanal by October.

"I used to think I cussed as much as the next man," one veteran said reminiscently, "but by God I never heard so much cussing in my life as there was on that island!"

A high officer has an explanation: "The profanity seemed to grow in intensity as the men shook off the vestiges of civilian restraints. I remember how I was shocked for

HOT JOE: Coffee can over the fire, Marines open C rations for mess in the boondocks of Guadalcanal

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a while, but then I became as salty as the rest, I guess, for I know I didn't seem to notice it any more."

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The profane vocabulary was not large. It was monotonously small. One word especially seemed to find its way into every sentence, used sometimes as adjective, sometimes as verb, sometimes as noun, sometimes as adverb.

The Marine motto was not sacred, at least to Marines. Shortened from "Semper Fidelis" to "Semper Fi," it meant selfish, always faithful of course, but with the fillip, faithful to one's self. "One-way" was used synonymously, and the retort, "I got mine, how are you doing?" was standard.

"Oh, I seeeee," a man would say if his request for a cigarette were refused, "so you're gonna be Semper Fiiiii! So you're gonna be one-wayeee!!" To which the man who owned the smokes would laugh and cry back in a singsong, "Semper Fi till I die!"

These remarks of seeming ill will were only a paradoxical expression of the intense comradeship the men had come to feel, a comradeship so closely held that by common consent it need not be spoken of.

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Something that happened on a patrol about this time gives an idea of how far one man among those on Guadalcanal would go for another when opportunity presented itself. A fellow name of Harry Dunn, Jr., a private, was left behind with some others when the Japs ambushed a company-strength patrol up along the Lunga. Dunn lay on the field all night, played dead when the Japs came over the next morning to have a look, holding himself still even while the Japs took some of the equipment off his body. When they left, he tried to sneak away, but as he moved he heard a moan from a wounded Marine nearby, another private, Jack Morrison.

Dunn stopped there far from our lines, gave first aid to Morrison, then picked him up and began the long trek back through the jungle along the river banks. A Jap patrol discovered them and opened fire. Dunn managed to get Morrison into the brush, out of sight, where they hid for the rest of the day.

When the second night closed in, Dunn started out again with his burden, crawling when he came to open spaces, dragging Morrison along the ground beside him. Again they saw Japanese patrols, one of which stopped and searched for them. By this time Morrison was in such weary and agonizing pain that Dunn had to hold his hand over Morrison's mouth to stifle his groans. They finally got to our lines: Dunn was sent to the field hospital, diagnosed as a case of complete exhaustion; Morrison was evacuated from the island.

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Their two-day journey had covered only two and a half miles.

DUSK PATROL: Men wade across the Lunga to begin a patrol

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II

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After the battle of the Ridge there came a period that the histories of Guadalcanal like to call a "lull." If Dunn's heroic episode does nothing else it illustrates that there was no rest on Guadalcanal. Dunn and Morrison were only two of hundreds of men who moved out of our perimeter on daily patrols.

There seem to have been more casualties on these early patrols than the Division higher-ups thought necessary. "Clumsy and . . . inexperienced leaders were either over-cautious or bold to the point of rashness," the Division report says. The coincidence that Lieutenant Colonel W. J. Whaling was at this juncture promoted to colonel, at a time when the Division had no regiment or other suitable command to give him, created the chance for improvement in our patrolling. Whaling was a hunter from 'way back—a stalker—could, and would hunt anything, from bears to Japs. Whaling volunteered to create a scout-sniper detachment, and when General Vandegrift gave him the go-ahead, Whaling began snooping around the battalions, seeking volunteers.

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For his own staff Whaling selected a few junior officers and veteran NCOs, but some men, sharing either Whaling's taste for stalking, or bearing within themselves some individual score to settle with the Japs, came in before Whaling got to selecting them. One was the Division postmaster, a man far on the wrong side of forty, a captain whose son, a Marine pilot, had been killed at Wake Island. There wasn't a hell of a lot of mail by this time, anyway, and the postmaster began going out on patrols with Whaling.

They became great friends, and before long the postmaster was acting as executive officer of this informal band of men.

Another volunteer was a hulking, red-bearded sergeant who bore the nickname, "Daniel Boone," because he had shown a penchant for wandering out of our lines alone, spending two or three days among the Japs. Whaling took Boone on, and Boone became acting first sergeant. Boone was a hard man on a trail; nobody could keep up with him, until finally Whaling had to tell him to ease up.

When, after not many days, the Whaling volunteers had learned his gospel of long marches, light equipment and scant rations, they were rotated back to their regular outfits where there was, the Division report notes, "an immediate and noticeable improvement in patrols." Never again were we to lose a patrol by ambush on Guadalcanal.

III

Those who weren't patrolling during the "lull" were digging in. "This was the time of the great Guadalcanal housing development," recalls one lieutenant. "Almost everyone was building himself some kind of shack or lean-to. We used old crates, Japanese rice bags, strips of corrugated iron, palm fronds, palm trunks—everything we could lay our hands on.

"There were quite a few tree houses, since the usual rumors about snakes were going

A LITTLE WOODEN SHACK: Here are typical Guadalcanal huts built when men settled down to the long haul of that campaign

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BATHING IN THE LUNGA: Native guides share an early water hole with Marines. The laundry and bathing area was later moved to the other side of the river below the bridge, and a water purification unit was installed on the opposite bank

around. If there weren't snakes there was plenty of other night-roaming fauna. The place was crawling with field mice and a tiny crab-like creature which liked to crawl over mosquito nets or bodies. I wish I could remember more about the birds. They were related to cockatoos. The noisiest sounded like someone clapping two boards together. Others chirped and whistled, and of course gave rise to rumors that these were all noises of Japs signalling to each other."

By now the Lunga had become one of the island's most popular gathering places. "I don't know what we would have done without it," said a sergeant. "The Lunga flowed quite fast and clean over some shallows near the 5th Marines CP and that reach of the river was a favorite place for swimming and laundry.

"There was an enormous tree lying flat in the river, just below the point where a temporary bridge was built early in the campaign, and at almost any hour of the day there would be a line of Marines washing and beating their clothes on the tree trunk.

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"A bit further down, over a deep pool, someone had rigged up a diving board early in the game. Just above the bridge was a water point, where much of our drinking water was drawn off, and of course 'purified.' So the Lunga served as bath, swimming pool, laundry, spring and, I suspect (though it was strictly forbidden) sometimes as latrine. More than that, it was one of the chief bright spots in the perimeter, a relief from choking dust and sweat."

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There had been swimming on the beach in the hot days of August, but later "the water was so full of oil slick, debris from sunken ships, and rotting provisions that most people preferred the Lunga.

"Besides, by October there was plenty of barbed wire and swimmers had to step carefully to pick their way through the double apron."

The Division command post was moved back from the sniper-ridden ridge, back to the low coral finger that ran out from the Lunga toward the airstrip, and the Operations Section got the Engineers to blast a hole in the coral . . . "then built up a structure of sand bags, very tiny and rather shaky which served as the nerve center for the rest of the campaign."

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A Division staff officer, though claiming that he realized the necessity for Division CP being where it was, nevertheless has bemoaned the choice of site.

"This location was one which almost invariably received the benefit of bombs in every Jap air attack. Although the coral finger had just enough height to give protection from naval bombardment, every time Pistol Pete (Japanese artillery) would start his routine shelling one could hear the explosion, which sounded like a raspberry, then in a few seconds the swish of the shell and the explosion. When you heard the swish you relaxed for you knew the shell was going to hit some place else. Visitors at the CP not infrequently remarked, 'I want to go back to the front lines where it's safe!' "

Much time was spent on cutting out fields of fire, and digging splinter-proof foxholes, a result of Division Operation Order No. 11-42, issued September 19. This was the product of Division staff's best thinking about what the future might hold, as well as what the past month had taught us.

We were still on the defensive, and would remain so, until American forces could gain clear superiority in the waters around, and in the air above, Guadalcanal. We would remain on the defensive as long as the Japs could bring in fresh troops at will.

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We now had ten infantry battalions (the 7th Marines arrived September 18) and one Raider battalion, supported by four battalions of artillery, a nearly complete defense battalion, a small provisional tank battalion and a growing air force. The order divided

RELIEF MOVING UP: Men of the 7th Marines take a break before going forward to relieve another Marine unit

the perimeter into ten sectors, of which three were to be held by non-infantry battalions: the Pioneer Battalion, the Amphibian Tractor Battalion, and the Engineer Battalion.

Because the perimeter was small (the same size it had been during the second week of August), and our lines of communication therefore short, Division itself took an unusually active degree of control over the other seven sectors. Each of the three regiments was given two, permitting each regiment to hold a battalion in reserve. The remaining sector was held under Division control, and Division assigned part of its small reserve (the Raider Battalion and the 3d Battalion, 2d Marines) to it, when necessary.

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This was a cordon, all-around defense which gained its flexibility from Division's being able to pull out any one, or all, of the regimental reserve battalions to meet a major attack wherever it came. Thus a mobile reserve of three infantry battalions was created.

Nor was it to be static. The perimeter (said the order) was to be "regarded as a final defensive position only. By passing to the active defense, the enemy could be denied the crossings of the Matanikau on the west and the Ilu on the east."

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It was toward the Matanikau that we were really going to move out. The plan called for us to establish "an advanced battle position" out there.

IV

The Field Service Regulations, a Bible for tacticians, warns sternly against "drifting aimlessly into action." Our first attempt to get a position on the Matanikau turned out to be an example of that sin, and resulted in what one history has called, "the only defeat suffered by the Marine forces in a land engagement on Guadalcanal."

What the fiasco seems to point up is the difficulty of keeping control of units moving through jungle.

The 1st Battalion, 7th Marines, was to shove off inland through the jungle on September 23, cross the Matanikau, and go on to investigate the hilly country between that river and Kokumbona. That this battalion would have tedious going on inland trails was known: they were allowed four days for the trip. The Raiders, who were to move on the easier coastal trail, did not leave the perimeter until September 26.

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There are still gaps in what is known of the events that followed. On September 24 the men of 1/7 ran into some Japs before getting to the Matanikau, surprised them at their bowls of rice, and killed an undetermined number. They got some help; 2/5 was sent up. It was not until the 26th, when the two battalions had turned seaward, down along the east bank of the Matanikau, that the Japs began throwing mortar shells at them from the direction of Matanikau village. Every try they made to force the mouth of the river was turned back by the Japanese.

While 1/7 was trying the Raiders arrived, expecting to find 1/7 across.

What should be done? Pull everyone back to the perimeter and try again later? Send the Raiders on to try a crossing elsewhere? The Raiders were sent on.

The Japs were waiting, having crossed to the east bank during the previous night and taken up positions on a commanding ridge. The Raiders went up at them frontally, suffering immediately the loss of their battalion commander, Lieutenant Colonel Samuel B. Griffith, severely wounded. Bailey, he who had led them so brilliantly on another ridge, was killed. They failed to get up.

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Word of the Raiders' plight did not get back to Division; instead Division thought that the Raiders had crossed the river and that they were fighting on the other side.

This confusion led to even more serious foul-ups. Someone suggested, and the Division staff approved, thinking the Raiders in better shape than they were, that two companies of 1/7 be put in boats for a shore-to-shore landing around and behind the Japs. In defense of Division thinking, it should be noted that the Raiders were supported by the 2d Battalion, 5th Marines, which had also tried, and failed, to cross.

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Guadalcanal was the kind of operation where almost anything could, and often did, happen. The fate of the two companies of 1/7 is a case in point, described by John Zimmerman in the official monograph.

> As the boats (carrying the companies) left the beach at Kukum, an enemy air raid developed, and the expected support from *Ballard* (a destroyer) was not forthcoming, for that ship found it necessary to take evasive action. The landing was made exactly on time, in two waves, and there was no opposition, the battalion having progressed well inland toward the ridges five hundred yards away before the first enemy fire began to fall. The first opposition was in the form of mortar fire, and one of the first shells to fall, just as the leading elements of the battalion reached the ridge line, killed the battalion executive officer, Major Otho L. Rogers, who was in command of the operation, and severely wounded the commanding officer of Company B, Capt. Zach D. Cox. At almost the same moment, a strong enemy column was observed coming from the direction of the Matanikau, and shortly thereafter it was engaged.

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BACKWATER BRIDGE: Engineers planned this bridge aboard ship, stole or "borrowed" the lumber from ships' stores and were ready with amtracs to make this improvised crossing of a brackish jungle stream

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The battalion succeeded in fighting its way to the top of the ridge and in setting up a perimeter defense. As this was being done, the Japanese, with entire freedom of movement, began working their way around the position. Enemy mortar fire was registered upon the small perimeter, and the seriousness of the situation was aggravated by the fact that Company D's 81mm mortar platoon had but one weapon and 50 rounds of ammunition. Radio equipment had not been brought ashore, and this circumstance, of course, made it impossible to communicate with Division headquarters or with the other units taking part in the operation.

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The situation was precarious and rapidly growing worse.

The commanding officer of the battalion (Lieutenant Colonel Puller) who had remained with the mixed force along the Matanikau, realized the situation, returned to the perimeter and secured permission to go by boat up the coast and evacuate the unit. Shortly before this, the pilot of an SBD plane, circling in the vicinity of the now beleaguered group, saw the word "Help" spelled out in white upon the ground within the perimeter atop the ridge. He immediately passed this word to the 5th Marines, with which unit he was in radio contact.

Ballard, with the battalion commander on board, passed up the coast in company with landing craft and thereupon began a movement of withdrawal characterized by brilliance of improvisation and by individual heroism.

The fact that the enemy was in force between the ridge and the shoreline made it necessary that fires be laid down by the destroyer for the purpose of cutting a path through which the battalion could run the gantlet to the beach. Communication was established by the only means available—semaphore signals from the ridge.

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Here occurred the first of several deeds of individual heroism. In order to send and receive the vitally important messages, Sgt. Robert D. Raysbrook voluntarily exposed himself to heavy enemy fire while semaphoring. His effort, which was rewarded by the Navy Cross from the United States as well as a comparable award from the British Government, was a complete success. Instructions were given and received, the necessary naval fires were delivered, and the battalion began making its way to the beach and the landing craft.

Withdrawal was executed under the severest difficulties. Company A, which led the movement, had set out, followed by Company B, when fire from enemy artillery emplaced to the northwest began registering on the battalion, causing several casualties. A second deed of heroism occurred here when Platoon Sgt. Anthony P. Malinowski, Jr., of Company A, singlehandedly covered the retreat of his company with a Browning automatic rifle until he was killed. The Navy Cross was awarded him posthumously.

A hasty defensive position was set up on the beach while the approach of the landing craft was being awaited. The boats, however, were having a difficult time carrying out their part of the movement. Heavy Japanese fire interlocking from the vicinity of Point Cruz to the east and Kokumbona somewhat to the west, disrupted the first wave and caused casualties among the defenseless but persistent Coast Guard and Navy personnel manning them. The remaining craft, discouraged by the reception given the first wave, were uncertain as to how to proceed, and once again the same SBD pilot who had taken an outstanding part in the maneuvering, Lt. Dale M. Leslie, of VMSB-231, demonstrated his courage and initiative. Flying low over the

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BETTER THAN WADING: This ferry across the Matanikau was later replaced by a bridge. Typical jungle maze closes in behind the men on the opposite bank

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faltering craft he herded them in to the beach, meanwhile strafing the enemy positions on the shore.

The battalion was evacuated, after having suffered 18 killed and 25 wounded. All wounded were removed and all material was taken out. The return to Kukum was without further incident.

V

Because we had failed once did not mean that we would not try again. We still needed what we had sought—a position on the east bank of the Matanikau.

Before a week had passed, orders were drawn and at 0700, October 7, the attack force, now six battalions strong instead of three, moved out from our perimeter along the coast, astride the Government track. The 2d and 3d Battalions of the 5th Marines were to advance to the river, hold there, and be prepared to cross on order. Whaling's scout-snipers plus the 3d Battalion, 2d Marines (now over from Tulagi), were to follow the 5th for a while, turn inland and cross the Matanikau at the Nippon Bridge (two coconut logs), and then turn back to attack toward the sea. And Whaling's force was to be followed by the 1st and 2d Battalions of the 7th Marines which were also to attack toward the sea, when they crossed the river. Air and artillery support were worked out in detail.

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The first day went well. The advance guard, 3/5, began a sporadic firefight at 1000, three hours after they'd got under way, but they kept moving through the day until

they reached the banks of the river, their objective. The 2d Battalion, 5th Marines, turned slightly to the left, and marched to the river without opposition.

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The Whaling outfit, and the 7th Marines, the enveloping force, made their turn inland, ran into a few Japs, but got to their assigned bivouac on schedule.

The only flies in the day's ointment were some Japs that 3/5 had bottled up on our side of the river. A Raider company was sent out from Division reserve to help. That first night the comparatively small party of surrounded Japs did nothing, while our men made a great deal of noise, grinding around in the dark with amphibian tractors, to confuse the Japs into thinking that it was at this point we were going to make our main crossing.

Next day, the 8th, the Whaling group pushed on in a tortuous march across the hills past the Matanikau, while the troops facing the river sat under clammy cold ponchos. It rained the whole day.

At the witching hour, at dusk, the Japs on our side of the river tried to break out of the barrel hoop the Raiders had bound. The Division's report puts succinctly what happened then: "There was a short hand-to-hand fight between a small group of Raiders who held this point and overwhelming numbers of Japanese. Most of the Raiders were killed but only after inflicting heavy losses on the enemy. The surviving Japanese broke through but only to find themselves trapped on the inside of the wire barricade which we had erected across the sandspit. Sixty-seven dead were found in the wire the next morning."

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While our men had been waiting for the rain to end on the 8th, the coastwatcher at Rabaul sent down a message that reached Division headquarters in time to cause our staff to change the plan of attack for the 9th. The news was that the Japanese were mounting, and obviously about ready to ship out, a new invasion force for Guadalcanal.

Whaling's outfit and the 7th Marines were to carry out their flanking movement as originally planned, but they were to return to the perimeter immediately upon making the turn. They were not to go on west, even if they were successful.

The 5th Marines were to hold while the flanking force carried out its maneuver, and until that force could get back across the river, and safely on its way home.

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Lieutenant Colonel Puller and his battalion (1/7), the same that had been marooned ashore two weeks ago, were the people who found a fight next day, October 9. Puller led his men to a commanding ridge, overlooking the coast, when they were struck at by part of the Japanese Fourth Infantry Regiment.

The geography was most unpleasant for the Japs. After their first futile attempt to

get up the ridge, they returned to the bottom which was in a narrow ravine, and sitting there, they made a perfect target for Puller's mortarmen. The Japs could either come up again at Puller's men or expose themselves by climbing the opposite ridge, in escape. They came up again, suffered losses, returned to the ravine briefly, suffered more losses. Then they tried to get out by going up the opposite ridge and there they fell, almost to the last man, under our machine-gun fire. The diary of a Japanese field officer said 640 of his men were killed in this engagement. Our losses for the entire three-day period were 65 killed and 125 wounded, while total Japanese losses were estimated at above nine hundred.

We had now our advanced battle position along the Matanikau, but we didn't know then just how shrewd we had been to go out after it.

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Chapter 9

BACK IN THE STATES the civilians, those strange and peculiar folk whose ways were by now so difficult to comprehend, were beginning finally to get the scoop about Guadalcanal.

"News from the Solomons," said the Washington *Post* solemnly, "is far from hopeful . . . it is ominous. Our forces may be dislodged from the precarious foothold they obtained on Guadalcanal Island. . . ."

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From the distance of a desk in the New York *Herald Tribune* editorial office a writer foresaw, "the shadow of a great conflict over the Solomons."

Reporters attending Navy Secretary Knox's Washington news conference on October 19 put the question directly to him: Could our Marines hold?

"I certainly hope so," Knox replied. "I expect so. I don't want to make any predictions, but every man out there, ashore or afloat, will give a good account of himself."

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To be reassuring at all to the men on the island, news of the American public's anxiety had to travel not only the global distance in miles, but also had to cross the interplanetary gulf of feeling and attitude.

And as was so often to be true of Stateside alarms, word of this one came too late to have much meaning to the men who had been so long isolated on Guadalcanal.

"Ya know, they're kicking up a stink about us back in the States," one sergeant remembers telling a Pfc.

"That's nice," was the Pfc's succinct reply.

And the cynical parody someone in the Division wrote on the British Army song, "Bless 'Em All," became more popular than ever:

Oh, we asked for the Army to come to Tulagi
But Douglas MacArthur said, 'No!'
He gave as his reason,
'This isn't the season.
Besides, there is no U.S.O.'

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For we're saying goodbye to them all
As back to our foxholes we crawl
There'll be no promotion
This side of the ocean
So cheer up, my lads,
Bless 'em all.

II

Without really admitting the outright defeat of the Ichiki detachment in August, nor of the Kawaguchi detachment in September, Lieutenant General Hyakutake now in October made a very strong pitch to Tokyo, part of which was a complaint that the Imperial Navy had not been giving him the kind of support he deserved and had to have if he were to recapture Guadalcanal from the pestiferous Americans of that peculiarly stubborn variety, Marine.

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He would now use his superior Sendai Division, about which he had not the slightest doubt, but he wanted to make very, very sure that they got to Guadalcanal, alive and healthy, with supplies, particularly some large guns to shell the airfield.

The Navy at first sulked under Hyakutake's demands but after various staff wrangles

came around and assigned four battleships and a number of lighter units, including six additional submarines, to the Southeast Area Fleet.

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When Captain Ohmae, the naval planner at Rabaul, got down to his desk to make assignments for this enlarged striking force, he saw quickly that giving Hyakutake the protection he asked meant knocking out Henderson Field and smashing on the ground every plane based there. Ohmae quite agreed with Hyakutake about getting in the big land-based guns to shell the airfield, and provided a seaplane tender to carry them down to Guadalcanal on October 11, with two destroyers to protect it. A cruiser division, bringing with it a fast transport, was to follow immediately to rock the island with prolonged and deliberate shelling. If this mission succeeded, if the planes were destroyed and the troops landed safely, the remaining troops of the Sendai Division would set sail for Guadalcanal the next night, October 12, under escort of two battleships.

Captain Ohmae seemed confident that he had nothing to fear from surface craft of the United States Navy. They had not appeared in strength in the waters of the Solomons since August 25. For almost two months the Japanese Navy had steamed as freely up and down The Slot as it would have moved in the East China Sea.

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III

Down at Noumea, one thing had changed. There was a new COMSOPAC to replace Vice Admiral Ghormley. If our Navy could not produce new ships on the moment's spur, it could send a slugger to command the old ones. He was Vice Admiral William F. "Bull" Halsey, and he did bring with him a few cruisers. Four of these he sent out from Espiritu Santo on the night of October 7 to "search for and destroy enemy ships and landing craft."

They took up station near the Russell Islands, found the Japs and gave them fight on the night of October 11, a fight unfortunately characterized by the kind of error that had marked the earlier naval battles. At the critical moment when two of our cruisers reported a formation of five Jap ships at 18,000 yards, "the United States commander [Rear Admiral Scott] was unable to visualize the situation since the flagship was not equipped with the most recent radar," according to the report of the Strategic Bombing Survey. The confused Scott held fire, thinking the five Jap ships might be his own destroyers. When our ships did open up it was only by good fortune that we surprised the Japs. We sank a cruiser and a destroyer, and damaged two other cruisers, while the Japs sank one of our destroyers, damaged two of our cruisers and another destroyer. *Duncan,* the destroyer we lost, was fired on by both sides.

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Although by actual count, the advantage of the battle was ours, the Jap losses were not, at least to Captain Ohmae, critical. During the naval battle, the big Jap guns (fired singly and promptly called "Pistol Pete") had got ashore from the tender, and they now opened up on Henderson Field, cutting up the main strip so much that it couldn't be used on the 13th. That same night seven transports waddled out of Rabaul, packed to the gunwales with the men of the Sendai, who watched eagerly as two sleek Japanese battleships moved out ahead when the convoy reached open water. And when the battleships reached the 'Canal, they shellacked it, doing the job the cruisers should have done, letting go with such violence that only four of the 38 dive-bombers we had on Guadalcanal were fit to rise from the ground the next morning. During the day, ten more were put in commission.

Even so these four boiled out, along with some fighters that had not been hit, searching for the transports, and found and sank one. The other six transports set their human cargo ashore on the night of the 14th.

The morning of the 15th, our dive bombers hit the Jap transports again, knowing that they had not yet unloaded the supplies, and burned out three more. Yet another transport was sunk by our PT boats. Thus the Sendai was deprived of much of its food supply, almost all of its heavy artillery ammunition, and all of its medical supplies.

IV

The men who were on Guadalcanal on the night of October 13, 1942 will always remember it.

One of them—and he is typical—was a thin, wiry, dark Italian youth from upstate New York. Months later, when the battle of Guadalcanal was only one of many Pacific battles, the Guadalcanal veteran was still with the First Division, now reinforced by fresh, Stateside faces. Looking at him, his new tentmates expected him to spit out his words, fast. Instead, the Italian boy talked slowly. He had a way of wandering off, leaving his sentences dangling. He slept fitfully, often disturbing his comrades with deep and woeful moans. There was a lot of jawing and cries of "Knock it off," until once, in an intimate bull session, the Marine described the one night that still haunted him—the night of October 13, "the night the Jap battleships shelled us."

An antiaircraft man, he had stood by his gun while the Jap heavy salvos fell around him, until finally, in frustration and despair, he had run to his dugout, crouched there, and given way, crying and sobbing without shame.

What made October 13th different and unlike any of the other sixty-eight nights

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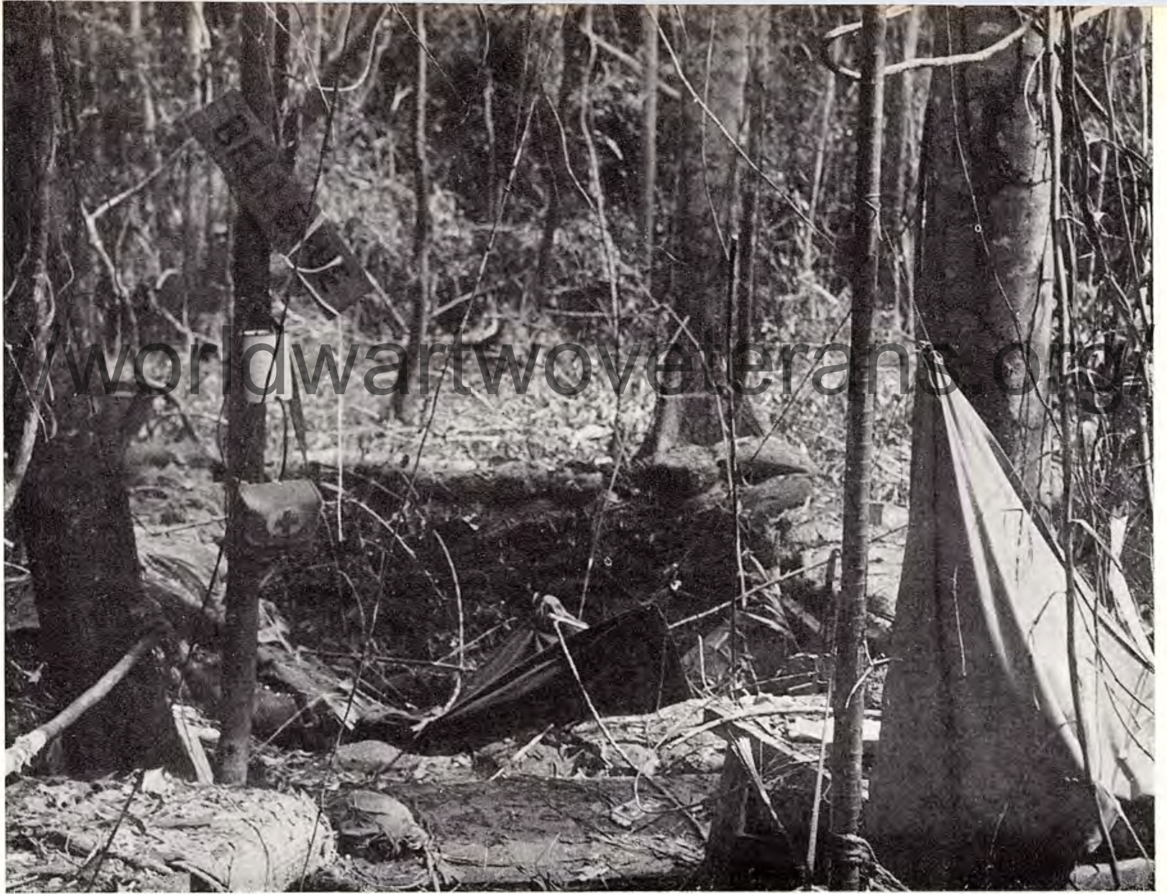

BELLEVUE: A sick bay struck by shell fragments

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the men of the Division had by now endured under Japanese attack was its unceasing, unremitting hazard. Our men had been fired upon by battleships, cruisers, destroyers, submarines, and by all variety of Japanese aircraft. But most of those bombardments had been hit-and-run affairs. On the 13th, the Japanese came to slug and stay.

There was hardly a half-hour from noon of the 13th through the afternoon of the 14th, when some kind of deadly missile was not being hurled into the narrow bounds of our perimeter.

And there was about the bombardment that quality of humiliating and degrading frustration that comes to fighting men when under an attack to which they cannot reply.

The whole business began at noon of the 13th, when twenty-four twin-engined bombers, escorted by Zeros, dropped their full loads on the airfield. Our fighters had this time got the warning too late, and couldn't rise to oppose the enemy planes before the destruction was done.

Two hours later, fifteen more twin-engined bombers, again escorted by Zeros, came over and this time set our supply of aviation gasoline afire, spreading flames around the airfield.

Still later in the afternoon, as the first Army reinforcements, the 164th Infantry Regiment (consisting largely of National Guardsmen from North Dakota), landed,

there was another air attack. These green troops suffered losses almost as soon as they reached shore.

At 1830, the 150mm guns that had come in on the 11th opened up on the airfield, the first time that Japanese artillery had ever reached it. When the first shell came rumbling over the Division command post, General Vandegrift's fleet-of-foot cook scrambled for his foxhole. Just then another shell came over. The general listened thoughtfully, and said, "Why, that isn't a bomb. It's artillery." Whereupon the cook, a victim of many shellings in Word War I, took off his helmet, said in disgust, "Hell, only artillery!" and climbed out of his foxhole.

Not many others felt that way, especially when the big guns turned from the airfield to the naval operating base at Kukum, then around the perimeter, and finally out toward the transports from which the Army had just debarked. One sergeant crawled along the ground begging his comrades to shoot him.

In the midst of this shelling, our searchlights caught a Jap plane circling overhead, and our antiaircraft guns flakked at him. He got away.

Those mortar-fired flares which had always before been a herald of Japanese ground attack, began to rise around the perimeter, and our men naturally concluded that the Japs were coming at our wire. "Up the line there in Rabaul they've probably given these birds the word to shoot their piece while they've still got some rice," was the comment at that moment of Colonel Gerald C. Thomas, now Division Chief of Staff. General Vandegrift warned all units to be on the alert.

On through the night Japanese planes continued to roost over the airfield, while our men stumbled in and out of their foxholes—until 0130, when the cruiser spotter

HERE IT COMES! That is the title put on this drawing by Captain Donald L. Dickson, sketched to show the effect of the October battleship shelling

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plane, "Louie the Louse," came over and dropped his usual flare directly over the airfield.

Suddenly then, horribly bright and treacherously beautiful naval star shells began to explode gleaming streamers through the sky.

And at the moment when this eerie illumination was its brightest, heavy, rumbling, cracking naval shells began to come over and in: there were fourteen-inch shells that came from the battleships *Haruna* and *Kongo,* eight-inch shells that had to come from cruisers, and five-inch shells that would be coming from destroyers.

For one hour and twenty minutes our battle-weary men huddled in their foxholes (there was no reason to come out) while the earth quivered above and around them. It was then, and remains, the worst shelling Marines took in World War II. And during these eighty minutes enemy planes and the land-based artillery fired continually.

The bombers continued to come over for the rest of the night, and at 0530, the artillery, which had stopped firing in the early morning hours, started again.

Not until daylight on the 14th could our men climb out of their foxholes with fair assurance that they might have a peaceful and unharried look around. They were "Wide-eyed men . . . bearing heavy base plates of fourteen-inch shells and huge shell fragments," wrote Captain Herbert Merillat, USMCR, in his book, *The Island.*

Our Navy that night was made up only of four motor torpedo boats which had arrived at Tulagi that morning. One of these PTs sent a torpedo into a Japanese cruiser, whereupon Jap destroyers chased them off.

V

The accounting of which Secretary Knox spoke on October 19 was to be rendered, it appeared, even sooner than he expected. On October 20 our men out at the Matanikau (the 3d Battalion, 1st Marines) heard the Japs milling around across the river.

Shortly before sunset on October 21, the Japanese began shelling our positions at the mouth of the Matanikau until, when dark fell, nine tanks, infantry following, tried to cross the bar, an attack that was turned back at the outset, with the Japs losing one of their tanks before they could retreat. And again, as at the Tenaru, our artillery caught them bunched up on their side of the river, killing an estimated six hundred.

That they should give up was puzzling to the Division staff which was expecting a full-fledged push from some point, or points, along our perimeter. On the 22nd, the Japs did nothing except bombard us which did not help clarify our thinking. The daylight hours of the third day, October 23, were also quiet, at least until sunset.

At 1800 they put down on our Matanikau position the heaviest artillery barrage

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they had yet hurled at us on Guadalcanal, and as soon as the barrage let up, nine 18-ton Jap tanks rumbled out into the clear on the sandspit, bound for our lines; only one broke our wire, so effectively did our antitank weapons fire. That one ran over the shallow trench of a Marine who, with startling presence of mind, simply reached up and placed a hand grenade in its treads.

The tank lurched forward and then backward when one of our tank destroyers fired on it. Our shell must have hit the tank's ammunition for it finally exploded so violently that it was blown twenty yards into the sea.

The time was now about 2200 and nothing more was seen of the Japanese that night, except for a small force which tried to cross the Matanikau several hundred yards inland. This Japanese outfit was commanded by a Colonel Oka, much-abused in histories of Guadalcanal for his lack of aggressiveness. Perhaps the histories are right; we had no trouble in turning him and his men back across the river. "The regiment," Colonel Oka wrote later, "endeavored to accomplish the objective of diverting the enemy, but they seemed to be planning a firm defense of this region."

A member of the weapons platoon set down a description of the scene he saw on the spit with daylight:

"What used to be flourishing coconut trees," he wrote, "were jagged stumps: wet peels of white bark hung from the trunks; tree tops were strewn on the ground;

THEY TRIED: Battered, demolished Japanese tanks sit on a spit of the Matanikau River

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palms fanned out crazily, and Jap dead, already beginning to ripen, sprawled in and out of the debris, slumped in the mud at the water's edge. Four tanks, twisted and shapeless, squatted like big, sulking dogs in the devastated palm grove. Five more made a ragged row across the spit. One of these was turretless and out of the gaping hole hung a limp arm."

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VI

What were the Japanese up to when they hit us at the Matanikau? Was this their main attack? Not very likely that it was, considering that they had certainly brought more than a division of troops in since September, and considering that not much more than a regiment could be accounted for at the Matanikau.

Where and when would they hit next?

The spot that seemed most exposed on Division maps was the flank of our advanced Matanikau position. From the sea, and the spit where there had been fighting for the last few days, our line ran inland, southeastward, for a few hundred yards along the banks of the river, then turned abruptly back east, away from the river in the direction of our perimeter, ran along for another few hundred yards, and ended in thin air—leaving between its outpost and the perimeter line about three thousand yards of unoccupied jungle.

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To reinforce this position, Division ordered two battalions of the 7th Marines, then holding the ridge south of the airfield, to march to the Matanikau flank, leaving the ridge to be defended by only the 1st Battalion of the 7th, under Puller.

"The need for weakening seriously one part of the perimeter to help reinforce any other part," is a staff officer's comment on the situation, "was an inherent tactical handicap of the first few months on Guadalcanal. The force available was just too small to keep sufficient strength at all places."

On October 24, while the 2d Battalion of the 7th was on the march, someone in the 3d Battalion, 7th Marines, the unit that alone held the inland Matanikau flank and which the 2d Battalion was to reinforce, saw a long Japanese column cross a bare ridge far out in the hilly jungle, and disappear into a heavily wooded ravine, bound south and inland, around and toward the rear of our exposed flank.

For a few hours it looked as if Division had shown real foresight in reinforcing on the upper Matanikau.

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By nightfall, October 24, Division was less sure. One Marine who had strayed from a patrol south of the airfield reported that he had seen a Japanese officer studying our positions south of the airfield through field glasses.

VII

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At thirty minutes after midnight the Japs came at us south of the airfield, where Puller's battalion stood unsupported. They came in much greater force than they had ever come before: at one point they simply swarmed through our thin line, driving a wedge about a hundred yards deep.

The Doggies, the reserve battalion of the 164th Infantry, were ordered into the line. As this battalion began its march, one of these buffeting torrential downpours began to sweep the area, a stroke of Nature that necessitated putting the Army lads into Puller's line piecemeal, squads of them joining squads of Marines, a unification of service under trying conditions, with command falling to the highest ranking man within sound of a voice. It is high tribute to the untried National Guardsmen that they fought sturdily and courageously, standing in their first combat experience against one of the most intense drives the Japanese were to launch against us on Guadalcanal. The Doggies held, held during the critical juncture between 0330, the time they went into the line, and 0700 when the Japs stopped coming.

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And so did the Marines hold. One of them who gained the Medal of Honor for his tenacity was Sergeant John ("Manila John") Basilone, killed later at Iwo Jima. Here is his story of the night, as told to Marine Combat Correspondent Diggery Venn in an interview a few days later.

When the first wave came at us the ground just rattled. We kept firing and drove them back, but our ammunition was getting low, so I left the guns and started running to the next outfit to get some more.

Soon after I got back, a runner came in and told me that at the emplacements on the right, Japs had broken through. With their knives they had killed two of the crew and wounded three, and the guns were jammed.

I took off up the trail to see what happened. I found Evans there. He had his rifle by him, and was screaming at the Japs to come on. What a guy he is! He's only 18 years old and runs around barefoot all the time.

After that I came back to my own guns, grabbed one of them and told the crew to follow me. Up the trail we went. I was carrying the machine gun by the tripod. We left six dead Japs on the trail.

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While I fixed the jams on the other two guns up there, we started to set up. We were really pinned down. Bullets were smacking into the sandbags.

The Japs were still coming at us, and I rolled over from one gun to the other, firing them as fast as they could be loaded. The ammunition belts were in awful shape as they had been dragged on the ground. I had to scrape mud out of the receiver.

MORTAR POSITION: An 81mm mortar section in position on a knoll

They kept coming and we kept firing. We all thought our end had come.

Some Japs would sneak through the lines and behind us. It got pretty bad because I'd have to stop firing every once in a while, and shoot behind me with my pistol.

At dawn, our guns were just burnt out. Altogether we got rid of 26,000 rounds.

After that I discovered I was hungry, so I went to the CP to see about getting chow. All we could get was crackers and jam. . . .

With morning, Marines and Army worked together to push the Japanese wedge back out, putting crossfire on the Japs that were within our lines while the artillery cut off the possibility of Jap reinforcement.

There was hardly time to lick a wound during the day of October 25 (Dugout Sunday). The violence and number of dogfights over the airfield made it clear that the Japanese were not through on the ground. Army and Marine troops holding the

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bitterly-fought-over area south of the airfield spent the day making preparations for the night ahead. The 3d Battalion, 164th Infantry, was given the left sector of the line, while 1/7 contracted its line to take over the right. Because the lines had been so intermingled, so fouled up during the fighting of the night before, it was almost dusk again before they were squared away.

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The second night was even worse than the first: "heavy fighting throughout the night," says the Division action report—a source never prone to overstate—of what went on during the late hours of October 25, and the early hours of the 26th. "This attack" the report continues, "was even stronger than on the preceding night, but it was thrown back with terrific loss."

To neglect mention of what our artillery did these two nights would be to overlook what might have been, as it so often was at Guadalcanal, the deciding tactical factor. The huge howitzers (we now had 155s) roared all night, as the men of the 11th spit on their hands and pulled their lanyards.

Before the night was over the mysterious legion of Japs that had been seen over by the Matanikau betrayed their whereabouts by attacking the 2d Battalion of the 7th Marines which had hurried over to the exposed flank there.

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The contest was over a ridge—on which the Marines had lodged three companies already (F, G and E) and hastily dug in. As usual the Japs struck at a narrow front, principally at the 2d Battalion.

By dawn of October 26, the position of Company F, the left company, "became untenable," says the monograph, "and the men were killed or began making their way to the northeast, toward the beach and the perimeter. The enemy, pushing his way to the top of the crest in spite of enfilading fire from machine guns to the west, cleared the crest line completely and emplaced two heavy machine guns there."

In the early morning light, Lieutenant Colonel Odell M. (Tex) Conoley, saw the vapor from barrels of the Japanese machine guns, and decided immediately to rush the position, to get the Japanese off the crest.

He took, in fact could take, only what he had at hand: three communicators, some bandsmen, several riflemen, a few company runners, and a few messmen who had brought chow up the evening before. All told, he had seventeen.

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With these men following, Conoley charged forward. "The extremely short range allowed the optimum use of grenades," the monograph says, "with which the two machine guns were knocked out, and the element of surprise permitted the small force to clear the crest."

In a saddle between F and G there was a machine-gun position the Japanese never got. It was manned by Platoon Sergeant Mitchell Paige who won the Medal of Honor for sticking. He tells his own story, beginning with October 24 when he first arrived at the ridge.

Before we could get set up darkness came and it started raining like hell. It was too black to see anything, so I crawled along the ridge-front until it seemed I had come to the nose. To make sure I felt around with my hands and the ridge seemed to drop away on all sides. There we set up.

With the guns set up and the watches arranged, it was time for chow. I passed the word along for the one can of "Spam" and the one can of "borrowed peaches" that we had with us. Then we found out some jerk had dropped the can of peaches and it had rolled down the ridge into the jungle. He had been too scared to tell us what he had done. I shared out the "Spam" by feeling for a hand in the darkness and dropping into it. The next morning I sent out a couple of scouts to "look over the terrain." So we got our peaches back.

That night Smitty and I crawled out towards the edge of the nose and lay on our backs with the rain driving into our faces. Every so often I would lift up and call some of the boys by name to see if they were still awake and to reassure myself as well as them.

It must have been two o'clock in the morning when I heard a low mumbling. At once I got Smitty up. A few minutes later we heard the same noise again. I crawled over to the men and told them to stand by. I started figuring. The Japs might not know we were on the nose, and we certainly didn't know where they were coming from or even how many there were. They might be preparing to charge us, or at any moment they might discover our positions. I decided to get it over with. As soon as the men heard the click of my pin coming out of the grenade, they let loose their grenades too.

Smitty was pulling out pins as I threw the grenades. The Japs screamed so we knew we had hit them. We threw a few more grenades and then there was silence.

All that second day we dug in. We had no entrenching tools so we used bayonets. As night came I told the men we would have a hundred percent watch and they were not to fire until they saw a Jap.

About the same time as the night before, we heard the Japs talking again. They were about a hundred yards from the nose. It was so damned quiet, you could hear anything. I crawled around to the men and told them to keep quiet, look forward and glue their ears to the ground. As the Japs advanced we could hear the bushes rustle. Suddenly all hell broke loose.

All of us must have seen the Japs at the same time. Grenades exploded everywhere on the ridge-nose, followed by shrieks and yells. It would have been death to fire the guns because muzzle flashes would have given away our positions and we could have been smothered and blasted by a hail of grenades. Stansbury, who was lying in the foxhole next to mine was pulling out grenade-pins with his teeth and rolling the grenades down the side of the nose. Leipart, the smallest guy in the platoon, and my particular boy, was in his foxhole delivering grenades like a star pitcher.

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Then I gave the word to fire. Machine guns and rifles let go and the whole line seemed to light up. Pettyjohn yelled down to me that his gun was out of action. In the light from the firing I could see several Japs a few feet away from Leipart. Apparently he had been hit because he was down on one knee. I knocked off two Japs with a rifle but a third drove his bayonet into Leipart. Leipart was dead; seconds later, so was the Jap. After a few minutes, I wouldn't swear to how long it was, the blitz became a hand-to-hand battle. Gaston was having trouble with a Jap officer, I remember that much. Although his leg was nearly hacked off and his rifle all cut up, Gaston finally connected his boot with the Jap's chin. The result was one slopehead with one broken neck.

Firing died down a little, so evidently the first wave was a flop. I crawled over to Pettyjohn, and while he and Faust covered me I worked to remove a ruptured cartridge and change the belt feed pawl. Just as I was getting ready to feed in a belt of ammo, I felt something hot on my hand and a sharp vibration. Some damned slopehead with a light machine gun had fired a full burst into the feeding mechanism and wrecked the gun.

Things got pretty bad on the second wave. The Japs penetrated our left flank, carried away all opposition and were possibly in a position to attack our ridge-nose from the rear. On the left, however, Grant, Payne, and Hinson stood by. In the center, Lock, Swanek and McNabb got it and were carried to the rear by corpsmen. The Navy boys did a wonderful job and patched up all the casualties, but they were still bleeding like hell and you couldn't tell what was wrong with them so I sent them back. That meant that all my men were casualties and I was on my own. It was lonely up there with nothing but dead slopeheads for company, but I couldn't tell you what I was thinking about. I guess I was really worrying about the guns, shooting as fast as I could, and getting a bead on the next and nearest Jap.

One of the guns I couldn't find because it wasn't firing. I figured the guys had been hit and had put the gun out of action before leaving. I was always very insistent that if for any reason they had to leave a gun they would put it out of action so that the Japs wouldn't be able to use it. Being without a gun myself, I dodged over to the unit on my right to get another gun and give them the word on what was going on. Kelly and Totman helped me bring the gun back towards the nose of the ridge and we zig-zagged under an enemy fire that never seemed to stop. While I was on the right flank I borrowed some of the riflemen to form a skirmish line. I told them to fix bayonets and follow me. Kelly and Totman fed ammo as I sprayed every inch of terrain free of Japs. Dawn was beginning to break and in the halflight I saw my own machine gun still near the center of the nose. It was still in working order and some Japs were crawling towards it. We got there just in time. I left Kelly and Totman and ran over to it.

For too many moments it seemed as though the whole Japanese Army was firing at me. Nevertheless three men on the right flank thought I might be low on ammunition and volunteered to run it up to me. Stat brought one belt and he went down with a bullet in the stomach. Reilly came up with another belt. Just as he reached the gun, he was hit in the groin. His feet flew out and nearly knocked me off the gun. Then Jonjeck arrived with a belt and stopped a bullet in the shoulder. As I turned I saw a piece of flesh disappear from his neck. I told him

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to go back for medical aid, but he refused. He wanted to stay up there with me. There was no time to argue, so I tapped him on the chin, hard enough so that he went down. That convinced him that I wanted my order obeyed.

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My ears rang when a Jap sighted in on me with his light machine gun but luckily he went away to my left. Anyway I decided it was too unhealthy to stay in any one place for too long, so I would fire a burst and then move. Each time I shifted, grenades fell just where I had been. Over the nose of the ridge in the tall grass, which was later burned for security, I thought I saw some movement. Right off the nose, in the grass, thirty Japs stood up. One of them was looking at me through field glasses. I let them have it with a full burst and they peeled off like grass under a mowing machine.

After that, I guess I was so wound up that I couldn't stop. I rounded up the skirmish line, told them I was going to charge off the nose and I wanted them to be right behind me. I picked up the machine gun, and without noticing the burning hot water jacket, cradled it in my arms. Two belts of ammo I threw around my shoulders. The total weight was about 150 pounds, but the way I felt I could have carried three more without noticing it. I fed one of the belts off my shoulders into the gun, and then started forward. A colonel dropped about four feet in front of me with his yellow belly full of good American lead. In the meantime the skirmish line came over the nose, whooping like a bunch of wild Indians. We reached the edge of the clearing where the jungle began and there was nothing left either to holler at or shoot at. The battle was over with that strange sort of quietness that always follows.

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The first thing I did was to sit down. I was soaked in perspiration and steam was rising in a cloud from my gun. My hand felt funny. I looked down and saw through my tattered shirt a blister which ran from my fingertips to my forearm. Captain Ditta came running up, slapped me on the back and gave me a drink from his canteen.

For three days after the battle, we camped around the nose. They estimated that there were 110 Japs dead in front of my sector. I don't know about that, but they started to smell so horribly that we had to bury them by blasting part of the ridge over on top of them. On the third day we marched twelve miles back to the airport. I never knew what day it was, and what's more I didn't care.

VIII

Lieutenant General Hyakutake had expected to lower the boom on us in October, and he had failed. Why?

Certainly he was perfectly confident the night of October 17 when he himself came ashore on Guadalcanal, landing at the native village of Kokumbona, and proceeding directly to the quarters of Lieutenant General Maruyama, commander of the Sendai 2d Division. He had reason to feel that the tide had turned in his favor. The Imperial Navy was at last carrying its share of the load, and no less a personage than the famed Admiral Yamamoto, commander of the Combined Fleet, was offshore in his flagship.

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Fresh troops in sufficient force to defeat the Americans were safely ashore, with most of their supplies.

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Maruyama's plan seemed quite good—in some of its parts even dramatic and imaginative. There was to be a two-pronged attack at the Matanikau, a three-pronged attack at the ridge south of the airfield, climaxed by an amphibious assault at Lunga Point.

What made the plan exciting was an elaborate trick Maruyama had worked out to fool the Yankees on the ridge. A full division would move from the coast, through the jungle around the Yankee perimeter but far outside the range of the Yankee patrols. It was a thirty-five mile trip, true, but would that be impossible to such hardened men as those of the 29th Infantry, a unit that had once made a practice march of 122 miles in 72 hours, and double-timed at the end of it? Aerial photographs showed no unusually difficult terrain features, just the typically lush growth covering everything.

Already Captain Oda and his party of engineers were cutting a track through. So proud was Maruyama of the project that he permitted it to be called, "Maruyama Road."

Yes, as Maruyama explained it on the night of October 17, the plan seemed good.

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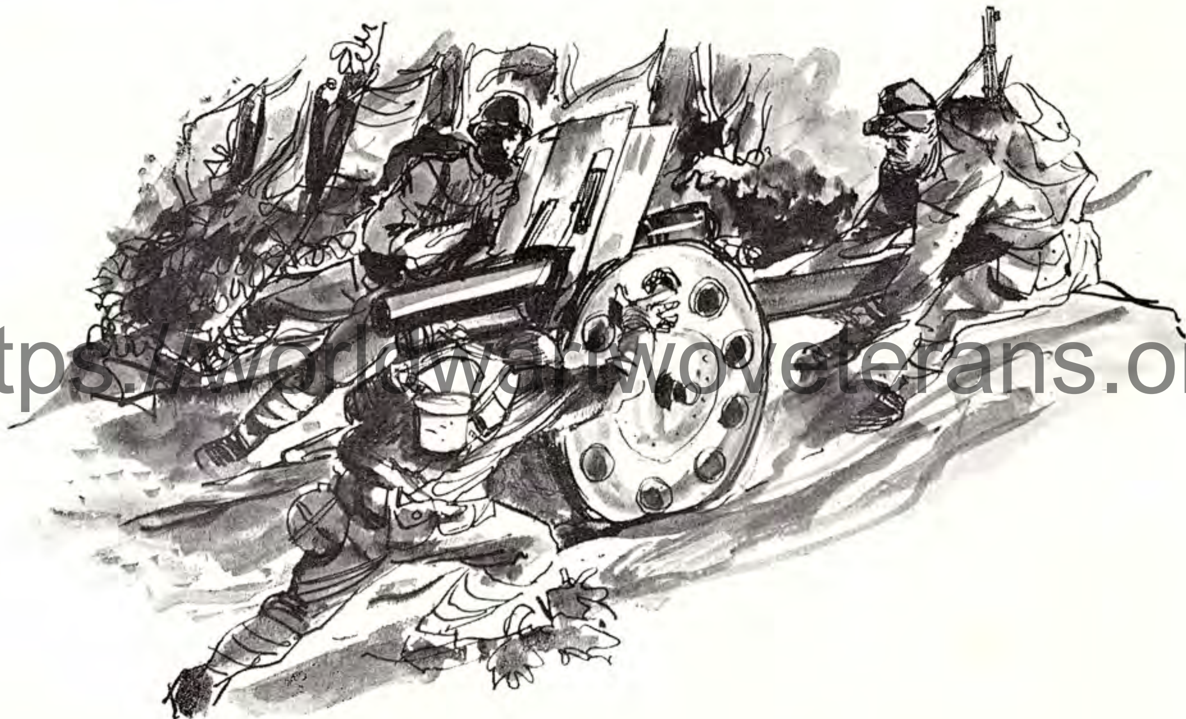
But things went wrong from the very outset of the plan's execution. The trek through the jungle took longer than Maruyama had expected. Captain Oda sent back reports of excellent progress, but when the troops started through behind him, they found the trail more suitable for a patrol than for a division of infantry, each of whom



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carried a personal load of fifty pounds. The guns had to be manhandled with ropes, up and down steep gorges that had not shown in the aerial photographs.

Hyakutake, under urging from the Navy, which was not eager to keep its battleships in enemy waters an hour longer than was necessary, grew fretful, churlish, and impatient. And as delay followed delay, he finally gave the word for the two-pronged attack on the Matanikau to begin on October 21 without waiting for the division in the jungle to reach its goal.

One of these two prongs was to hit the Marines at the mouth of the Matanikau, and the other was to strike inland up the river on the Marines' open flank. At the mouth of the river, affairs went forward on schedule, but upriver it was another story whose villain was that Colonel Oka of the already beclouded reputation.

Hyakutake learned, just as the attack at the mouth of the river got under way, that Oka was twenty-four hours behind schedule, and far from ready to carry out his assignment. By the time the Marines opened with counter-battery, a matter of minutes, Hyakutake sent word to call off the fighting at the river's mouth.

Curse that Oka! Why had he not been on time? If he had done what he was supposed to do, when he had been supposed to do it, the whole complicated attack might still have come off well.

No reason to think it still could not come off. There were yet no losses. Give Oka one more chance: delay the attack at the Matanikau until evening of October 23.

On the 23d, Colonel Nakaguma, who commanded the 4th Regiment and the 1st Independent Tank Company, led his units in a most gallant attack at the Yankees—gallant but unsuccessful, and when morning of the 24th came the dead were piled everywhere on the west side of the Matanikau. In the stagnant river, two crocodiles lazily snapped at some of the heroes who had tried to swim to the Yankee lines on camouflaged rafts.

But Colonel Oka still had not attacked, and indeed did not until dusk of the 24th, a day late. What then happened to his regiment was distressing. Better just to say that they failed to smash the Marines, and to forget the rumor that circulated through Japanese ranks that Oka himself had turned and run back to the Nippon Bridge, leaving his troops to get out as best they could from a ravine where they made shooting gallery targets for the Marines.

A thousand curses upon Oka! Of what had been planned as a simultaneous offensive at five points along the Marine perimeter, two had already on October 25 been defeated piecemeal, and the Marines showed no evidence of being thrown off-balance

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Where in the name of the Emperor was Maruyama? He had promised to attack the ridge south of the airfield on the 22nd, had postponed his assault to the 23rd, and again until 1700 of the 24th. Even then he did not strike. It was midnight October 24-25 that Maruyama's units, men who had been living on half rations for the last few days, ran into the Marines. They were disorganized, not advancing as they should. The commanding officer of the 29th Infantry, a Colonel Furumiya, rushed the wire himself, and got across, but when his men tried to follow, they were cut down. Furumiya was still inside the Marine lines the next morning, when his men began to re-group for an attack the next night, October 25-26.

It was hopeless, the next night's attack, as hopeless as Furumiya's individual exploit, and when they withdrew, defeated, they were without their regimental colors which remained behind with the valiant regimental commander who wandered three days within the Marine lines trying, and failing, to find a way back through them to his own. On the third day, in utter despair, Colonel Furumiya put his pistol to his head and ordered one of the men with him, a staff officer, to pull the trigger. Not, however, until he had ripped the regimental colors into shreds, and ground them into the dirt, so that those fanatic, those crazed and bestial Yankees would not capture the glorious banner intact!

As the exhausted and defeated men of the Sendai Division wandered out into the jungle, many must have thought of the appropriateness of their motto, of how well it applied to their, and to Hyakutake's, October travail:

"Remember that Death is lighter than a feather, but that Duty is heavier than a mountain."

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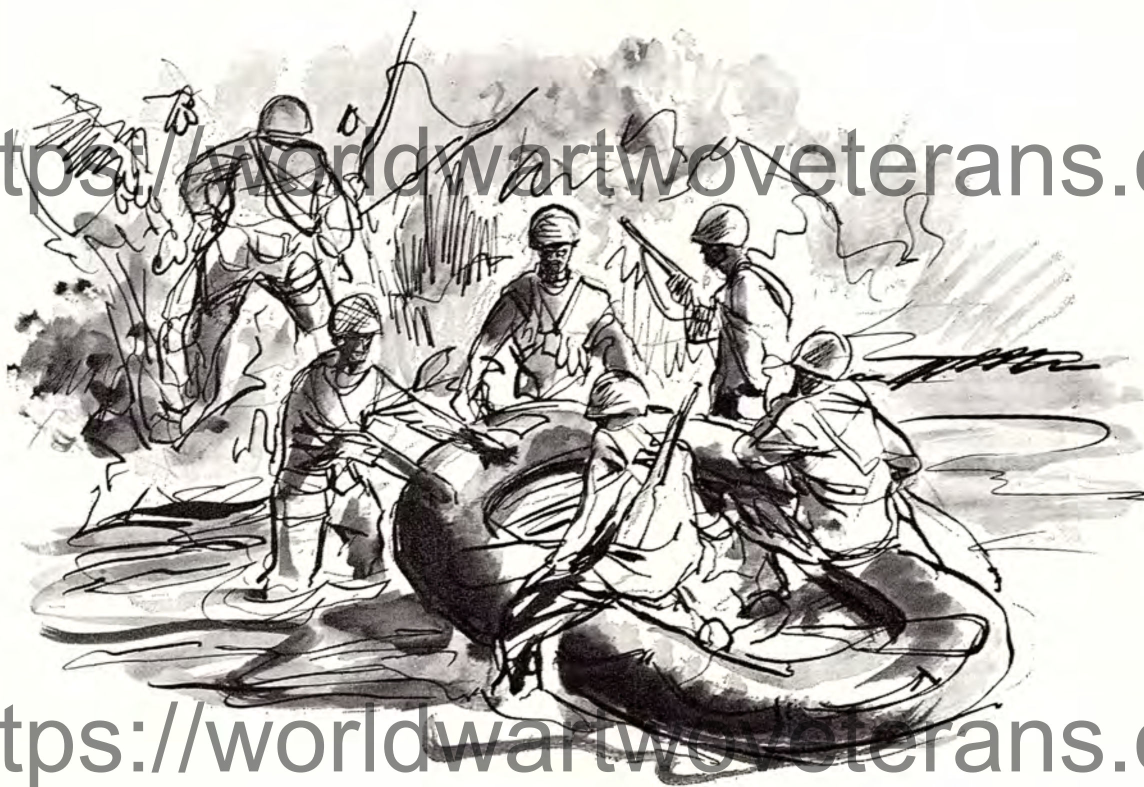

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Chapter 10

THERE WAS THIS DIFFERENCE between the pattern of behavior at the end of the September battle and at the end of the October battle: while at the first of October every man was conscious of an almost ungovernable compulsion to show off his quirks, by the end of that month the compulsion was there without the awareness of it.

"By then," said a corporal, "everybody was acting fruity."

A second lieutenant, as example, tells this story about himself:

Through some freak my sea bag arrived from Wellington about this time. It was full of good gear, starched khaki, dress shoes, and the like.

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Exactly why I did what I did I can't tell you, but one day I got it into my head to dress up and go stand down at the Division post office and pretend I was going home. So I did dress up and go down there. I even had a swagger stick.

Well, I naturally provoked a lot of attention. Guys began to come up and ask me where I was going.

"Why, I'm going home," I'd answer.

"Home?" they'd repeat in awe and wonder. "How're you goin'?"

"Why, by the Poughkeepsie bus," I'd say.

"Well!" they'd say, not quite sure whether I was nuts or whether they were nuts or—whether maybe, I wasn't really going home.

I'd look up the road like I was expecting the bus that minute. They'd look up the road with me.

I'd say: "It ought to be here any minute."

Then they'd look at me queerly, still not quite sure. . . .

Well, I stood there all afternoon, and a funny thing happened. Those guys would go away and come back with notes on which addresses, phone numbers and messages were written. "Call home for me when you get there, will you?" they'd ask.

Now get it, understand me—I took those notes, acted just like I was going to deliver their messages, and I think at the time I really got to believe myself I was going back.

By the time it was getting dark, I had a pocketful of messages. And I went off back to my dugout, slept in the starched khaki, and it wasn't till the next morning that I convinced myself I wasn't on the way home.

Later on, after we left Guadalcanal, this got to be one of those un-funny, funny jokes, and a lot of people heard about it. Three years later I was standing around the airport at Okinawa where the planes were unloading when I heard somebody yell, "Hey, are you still waiting for that Poughkeepsie bus?" Well, I *was*.

In one company there was a man who began to irritate his buddies by talking to a mythical dog. It so un-nerved them that the captain called in a doctor to observe the man. The doctor gave the captain a knowing look, and they were about to "survey" the man, send him off the island, when the first sergeant interceded, sent word for the man to come to his dugout.

As the man entered, the sergeant screamed at him:

"Now don't bring that flea hound of yours in here or my bull dog will chew its damned head off!"

The man hesitated there at the entrance, looked down, apparently for the first time in a week did not see the "dog," and then broke into a sobbing laugh. He remained on the island, never spoke to his "dog" again.

A corporal in the 7th Marines passed the word that he would pay a reward for the return of his valued wallet which he had lost during the October battles.

"A tall, ragged fellow turned up beside my foxhole and handed it to me," the corporal recalls.

"I was pretty slow those days, wasn't very fast on the uptake, and the fellow stood

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SICK BAY: Sick and wounded Marines find rest and treatment in a regimental sick bay set up in a captured Jap building

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there a minute before I remembered the reward. I zipped back the money flap and found 136 bucks.

" 'Here,' I said to the fellow, 'take this stuff. It's found money.' "

"He took the bills, leafed through them carefully as if he had never seen a buck before, and handed them back to me, saying very slow and tired-like:

" 'I ain't got no use for *that,*' and turned and walked away."

It *was* difficult by then to think that there was any other world than that within the barbed wire stretching around the narrow hunk of Guadalcanal's northern coastal plain that made the Marine perimeter, difficult to think that there might be a world in which money, instead of lives, could be spent, a world where there was anything a man would want to buy.

To those who had been on the island since August, Guadalcanal was not an episode; it was a lifetime, a tragic, and above all wearisome, reincarnation from which any other existence was only dimly remembered.

Malaria was becoming a far more devastating factor in the battle than the Japanese. For September, the 239 cases reported had seemed alarming, at least they had seemed so until figures for October were compiled:

First Week	173
Second Week	273
Third Week	655
Fourth Week	840
Total	1,941

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"The original plan of ten days' hospitalization for malaria had to be abandoned in many cases," says the Division surgeon's report for Guadalcanal. "Beds were not always available. Emergency admissions from ships and combat areas took precedence, and hundreds of cases were treated in their organization areas or in the one convalescent hospital. Most cases were hospitalized during the acute phase, however, and discharged only for follow-up treatment.

"Anti-malarial drugs were adequate in amounts and always available, but at times were used as conservatively as possible due to the low reserves."

But the principal obstacle to preventive measures was that "men in action and in constant physical danger from a concrete enemy have little patience with the menace of the mosquito. An unknown proportion of Marines lost or discarded these [Atabrine] tablets. This was due partly to a suspicion among the troops that Atabrine would result in nausea, vomiting, abdominal pains and even diarrhea. . . ." And even —by the most popular rumor—impotence.

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Very low was the number of combat fatigue cases evacuated from the island, perhaps because slight emotional instability was commonplace. Anything less than a total crackup seldom reached the notice of doctors, and it has been recorded by two Navy psychiatrists who treated patients from Guadalcanal ("A Study of Psychiatric Casualties From The Solomons Battle Area": *U. S. Naval Medical Bulletin*) that "although extreme fatigue and exhaustion were rarely proposed [by the patients] as a chief complaint, it was evident in many cases."

"The weight loss averaged about 20 pounds per man. Examination revealed marked dehydration as shown by dry skin and sunken eyes. Many of these patients reported being buried in foxholes, blown out of trees, blown through the air, or knocked out. Many who had no anxiety in the daytime would develop a state of anxiety and nervous tension at night."

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Though the number of evacuations was strikingly low, the doctors thought it significant that the percentage peak was reached around the first of November, after the shelling and battles of October, and they found it a credit to the stability of the men that

"these [psychoneurotic] states developed slowly, and reached their disability level after about 4 to 6 weeks." And, only after "noise in the form of rifle fire and machine-gun fire, mortar, and artillery fire, plane motors, bomb explosions, and shelling by surface craft, had its effect . . ."

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II

One of the things that could be done for morale on the island, Colonel Thomas, the Chief of Staff, thought was for our side to attack the Japs and give them, especially their planners up in Rabaul and Tokyo, "a sense of futility" about any future operations on Guadalcanal.

A logical target was the area out west of the Matanikau River for two reasons: First, those heavy-caliber Japanese guns ("Pistol Pete"), as well as other smaller artillery, still had not been silenced, and a successful attack would force the Japanese to move these guns back until they were out of range of the airfield. Second, such a maneuver would undoubtedly bring our troops into contact with groups of sick and weary and easily-wiped-out Japanese stragglers from the October battles.

The order for the attack was written in the knowledge that nobody on the island was daisy-fresh. The 5th Marines was chosen because its men had escaped the worst of the October fighting. Two battalions (1st and 2d) of the Second Division's 2d Marines, which had been garrisoned on Tulagi these many weeks, were added to the list and brought over to Guadalcanal. Almost by habit Whaling and his snipers were put down, and to fill out his ranks, the 3d Battalion, 7th Marines, was added. Three battalions of artillery would support the attack.

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WIRE-LAYING: Communicators ford the Lunga

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When word that there was to be a new attack at the Matanikau got around to the 3d Battalion, 1st Marines, still up in the Matanikau area, "Ramrod" Taylor, a young and eager intelligence first lieutenant went to Holly Whyte, the battalion intelligence officer, another young and eager first lieutenant, and proposed a plan not only to scout the area in advance of the big attack but also to spike some of those Japanese guns. "There's one hell of a lot of difference between five or six men crawling silently, and a noisy two or three battalion attack," agreed Whyte and sent Taylor along to the colonel, the battalion commander.

"You're crazy if you think you can get those guns under the noses of the Japs," the Colonel told Taylor, "but—Jesus wept—if you can get volunteers to go with you, go ahead!"

Now Whyte, who has among his accomplishments that of writing the definitive account of the Japanese on Guadalcanal, takes up the story of Taylor and the gun-spiking patrols.

Taylor already had six volunteers from his outfit and commenced a twenty-four hour period of preparation. I won't go into the details but it was intense; figuring what time the Japs would most likely be napping (we figured before 12 noon), making men memorize routes, etc., etc.

Just before dawn of October 29th, Taylor and his six men slipped across the Matanikau in a rubber boat, ducked into the cover of a palm thicket and waited. Not a sound; no one had spotted them. Then he set out on the rehearsed route towards what the intelligence section had doped out as the most probable of all the suspected gun-locations—a little gully in a ridge overlooking the river. Between it and the river lay only 250 yards, but Taylor spent three hours getting there, moving extra-cautiously along his predetermined route, not so much as cracking a twig lest the Japs awake.

When he was about twenty-five yards away, he sent a scout ahead. The scout crawled along the edge of the gully, soon came upon two piles of dried out kunai grass. He pushed away some of the grass. There, oiled and set for the noon bombardment were two Jap 75s. In a few minutes the patrol was silently at work removing the breech mechanisms.

A dog started barking. Taylor looked down into the ravine beneath the gun position. There, dozing peacefully, some in little caves, some in makeshift lean-tos fashioned from grass and twigs, were some forty-odd Japanese—and racing about them, barking violently, was a little dog. One of the Japs cursed, threw a stone at him, and went back to sleep. The dog stopped barking.

As it was getting perilously near the end of the Jap siesta period Taylor told his men to stay by the gun position. He would scout the next probable gunspot himself. It was a somewhat similar gully about two hundred yards further west—and into the Jap lines. When he reached

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the spot, under the expected pile of kunai grass, there were two more guns. Methodically he went to work on the breeches.

Halfway through the job he began to feel a sensation that someone was watching him. He looked around towards the grove of coconuts skirting the coast. Sitting in front of a native hut were two Japs, staring at him intently. Another Jap came out of the hut. They pointed Taylor out to him, began arguing amongst themselves. Taylor unfroze after several seconds. Should he run or bluff? To run would alert the whole Jap camp; he nodded to them, finished his job, nodded to them once more, and walked calmly—though shrinking his near six-foot frame as much as he could—along a Jap path back to the gun position. He never did know what the three kibitzers made of the whole thing, for he never looked back. The rest of the patrol was without incident. He rejoined his men (the Japs still sleeping) and got back across the river without a sound from the Japs.

By this time, thanks not only to Taylor's patrol but several other less adventurous ones, we now had a pretty good idea not only of the principal Jap positions but, almost more important for us, of their daily routine.

Taylor and I went to work on a rather ambitious scheme. Its purpose was threefold: (1) to get more exact intelligence for the offensive that the 5th Marines were to stage in a few days; (2) to spike some more gun positions; (3) to capture some Jap officers. We were particularly interested in the last, for we were certain that the Jap regimental headquarters was centered about some native huts just south of Point Cruz. Together, we drew up what we thought was a well planned little operation.

Regrettably, the Colonel asked that Taylor go back to the two gun positions and *blow up* the guns—"to make sure." Taylor acceded with misgivings; why both of us didn't protest more at this foolhardy idea I don't know.

Eventually, the plan worked out like this. About dawn of October 31st, two patrols would cross in rubber boats—six men under Taylor, six under myself. Across the river we would split, Taylor to return to the gun positions, my patrol to scout the coast road area for any guns concealed there. At 2:00 p.m. Taylor and I would leave our patrols, work our way through the undergrowth to a designated rendezvous, wait until one or the other showed up, make a final check and then start Part Two of our scheme. It was, briefly, for Taylor's group to work around to the south of the suspected Jap headquarters, for my patrol to skirt the beach to the base of Point Cruz. At 3:30 sharp each patrol would dash for the 100-150 yards to the Jap headquarters, grab whomever we could, set up one hell of a racket (we brought plenty of Thompsons and grenades for this), and then beat it like hell for our lines via a Jap trench system we knew was not occupied until about 5:30 in the evening.

Part One seemed to go splendidly. My outfit (which, unfortunately, at the last minute was augmented by six green men under a green Pfc) came to a camouflaged 37mm gun position sighted down the coast road. Corporal Yudin, who had thoughtfully brought a screwdriver, removed its breech mechanism. Not a Jap stirred (obviously the outfit Taylor had fleeced had kept its shame to itself). An hour later we found another gun and did the same to it. About

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this time (it was before noon) we heard heavy shooting from the direction of Taylor's patrol but after a few minutes it died down. At two I reached the rendezvous, but no Taylor. I waited half an hour, then decided to send the extra six-man squad—which was just getting in the way—back to our lines, and with my own six men work up to the base of Point Cruz, for the Japs in our area apparently still assumed no one would be damn fool enough to roam about their bivouac.

It was slow going, and it was not until about four that I saw, as I emerged from a dense piece of undergrowth, a curious, almost labyrinthine, network of coral-built fortifications about thirty feet ahead. Standing in an open space in one of them was a Jap. He was staring at me stupefied. Equally stupefied, I fired at him—as he did at me. We both missed. In a few seconds the other five were in firing position behind rocks, trunks, etc. There was quite a target. In the middle of the Jap position about a dozen Japs were squatting, evidently playing cards or something. None had their guns by them. The fire fight lasted only a few minutes. We got about nine outright, hoped we got the rest that got behind cover, with grenades. After the third minute or so Jap machine guns began to open up, one extremely near us, and the whole Jap camp seemed to come alive. There was jabbering and shouting from all directions, from behind us as well as in front; more guns began to open up. But it was obvious the Japs were not yet sure just where we were or how many. Accordingly we increased our fire, threw more grenades, as, one by one, we ducked back towards the trench. Here we were safe from the machine-gun and rifle fire, and shortly before dark we reached the sandspit at the mouth of Matanikau, with not a one of us scratched.

But what had happened to Taylor? This time the Japs had been ready for him. Approximately a company were waiting, under cover, in the same ravine in which the dog had done its fruitless barking. When Taylor's men reached the top of the ridge, they charged—a good, old style Jap charge, officers in front and much screaming. Quickly Taylor and his men fanned out and opened up with all they had. It broke the shock of the charge, but Japs were working up around them from all directions. In a minute or so Taylor's group would be surrounded.

Ramrod made the decision he had been building up to his whole lifetime. He pointed towards the Matanikau. Go back to the rubber boat, he commanded; he would delay the Japs. His men shook their heads. An order, he said. They began to crawl down the ridge, back to the Matanikau. The last they saw of him, he was on top of the ridge, firing down at the Japs with his .45. A few minutes later there was a big outburst of firing, then silence. All his men got back safely.

The next day the 5th Marines began their offensive, and after a bloody action took the ridge where Taylor was last seen. They found his body there—a bullet through his temple. He was not hacked up; even the Japs must have felt respect.

When the attack was launched on November 1, the advancing troops got safely across the Matanikau, but the 1st Battalion, 5th Marines, on the right, ran into opposition near Point Cruz from the same Japs that Taylor and Whyte had encountered. By

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NO LET-UP ON PATROLLING: Always patrols, crossing streams, disappearing into the heavy jungle

nightfall the 2d Battalion, 5th Marines, was well ahead on the left. On November 2, the 5th Marines' 3d Battalion, the reserve, was put into line with 1/5, while 2/5 was ordered to envelop the resistance in 1/5's zone. This maneuver was successfully executed on November 3. The surrounded Japanese, with their backs to the ocean, were mopped up in three successive bayonet assaults.

On November 4, the 5th Marines and the Whaling group were progressively replaced by the 2d Marines and the 1st Battalion, 164th Infantry — and the advance westward continued with good speed and every evidence that Kokumbona, original objective of the attack, could and would be reached.

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Kokumbona was not reached that day, nor the next, nor the next after that. Disturbing word of new Japanese landings on our eastern flank at Tetere caused Division to issue orders for the westward movement to halt. Some of the troops dug in where they were, and others were hurried back to the perimeter.

III

That disturbing word reached Division headquarters at 1445 November 3. It came from Lieutenant Colonel H. H. Hanneken who had been sent out on November 1 with his 2d Battalion, 7th Marines, in the opposite direction, toward the east.

On November 2 Hanneken's battalion marched eastward toward Koli Point, learned as they crossed the Malimbu River that a Jap patrol had crossed only a few hours earlier, but went on to the Metapona River, where they waited until dusk to make a crossing.

After crossing, the battalion moved on eastward for about two thousand yards and set up positions (which ran back to the river mouth) along the beach. Soon after guards were posted, Jap ships were seen offshore still farther eastward at Tetere. As soon as these were definitely identified as a cruiser, a destroyer and a small transport, Hanneken tried to send the word back to Division, only to discover that the battalion's radios had all been put out of order by rain. The Japs took three hours to unload, the Marine battalion watching and listening without being able to send word back.

Hanneken's communication difficulties were by no means a reflection on the Division's communications men. Signal units were stretched from the Matanikau to the Malimbu, twelve miles airline. There was radio to Tulagi, and to higher headquarters outside the area. It was a tribute to the communication men, especially to the wire men who were out day and night, that they were able to keep things going with few serious failures, despite critical shortages of equipment, supplies and transportation.

At dawn November 3 a Jap patrol of 8 men walked unsuspecting toward Hanneken's line. Four were killed, and four got away to alert the newly-landed enemy troops. Hanneken immediately ordered a concentration of mortar fire on their landing beach, and by mid-morning had decided to attack them. The Japanese apparently made a similar decision, for they opened with newly-landed artillery, and sent a force of several hundred men along the beach to attack us. Seeing that he was clearly outnumbered, and knowing that he was still out of touch with Division and in an untenable tactical situation, Hanneken changed his mind and ordered a withdrawing action back to the west bank of the Metapona so that at least he could put that river between his men and the Japanese.

It was afternoon when the battalion got back across the river, and no sooner were they getting into position there than they were attacked from the rear.

About this time, Hanneken finally got a message through to Division where rein-

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forcements were quickly lined up and dispatched to the now-beleaguered battalion's help. But help clearly could not reach Hanneken that day, November 3, so he assigned one company to fight off the Japanese who were harassing his inland flank and began moving back with his wounded westward toward our perimeter.

Division knew that the job was one for a man, and did not therefore send a boy to do it. Puller's 1st Battalion, 7th Marines; the 2d and 3d Battalions, 164th Infantry; Whaling's scout-snipers (to patrol inland on the flank); a battalion of the newly-arrived 10th Marines, artillery of the Second Division; and a special weapons battery were all sent to give battle to the Japanese who were pressing Hanneken. Brigadier General William H. Rupertus, assistant division commander, was put in charge only to fall ill and be replaced by Army Brigadier General E. B. Sebree, ADC of the Americal Division.

Not until November 6 did these units come in contact with the Japanese, and it was not until November 10 that they were in position for a coordinated attack.

The action of November 10, fought six miles from Lunga Point, brought death to 350 Japanese who were caught between Hanneken, now some two thousand yards east of the Metapona, and Puller, who was just across the Metapona on the east bank. Puller and his men were to compress the Japanese while the 2d Battalion, 164th Infantry, made an enveloping march around the Japanese pocket, to cut off their escape inland,

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toward the south. A large force of Japanese broke through the 164th, but supplies amounting to 15 tons of rice, 5 rubber boats, and 50 collapsible landing boats, plus artillery pieces, were captured. Our losses were 40 dead and 120 wounded.

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IV

While the fight was going on around Metapona River, another force of Americans was making a landing still farther eastward at Aola, thirty-five miles from Lunga Point.

Aola was selected by naval planners as a likely spot for Guadalcanal's third airfield, and engineers and Seabees were sent out there along with part of a newly-arrived Raider Battalion that was to land first and clear the way.

This assault force was the 2d Raider Battalion which had landed in mid-August at Makin, and destroyed the Japanese garrison on the island. They were called, "Carlson's Raiders," for their commanding officer, Lieutenant Colonel Evans F. Carlson, a Marine who had broken his service to fight with the Chinese Eighth Route Army. He had brought to the Raiders some expert knowledge about guerrilla warfare as well as a different kind of leadership, epitomized in the cry, *"Gung Ho!,"* the battalion's motto, meaning "Work Together." All were volunteers and all had answered, "Yes!" to Carlson's examining question: "Do you think you could cut a Jap's throat without flinching?"

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Carlson's Raiders started back westward from Aola toward our perimeter to catch that force of Japs which had broken out of our trap at the Metapona. Following inland trails, the Raider advance patrols ran into the Japs on the upper Metapona on November 11, and began that day a series of guerrilla actions which lasted until November 18, when the Japs began to move farther inland and out westward around our perimeter.

The Raiders turned in pursuit, and fought what has become one of the classic private wars of World War II.

"In exactly thirty days," the Division report summarizes, "the Raiders had executed a long and arduous transit of mountains and forbidding country. They had fought no less than 12 successful actions and had counted enemy dead in excess of 400. Their losses, 17 dead, were surprisingly small. This was a remarkable performance even for fresh, well-trained troops and the methods used are worthy of study."

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What were these methods? They were simply to keep the main body of the Raiders moving along a line parallel to the Japanese, with Raider patrols following on the Japanese rear. When the patrols ran into a strong group of Japanese and opened fire, the main body of the Raiders would attack from the flank.

The Raiders repeated this maneuver again and again until it seemed that the Japanese must have caught on to the trick. They did not. They continued to defend themselves conventionally. Each time their rear guard was attacked, the Japanese would turn and reinforce. And the Raiders would fall on them from one side or the other.

After crossing the Lunga, and the headwaters of the Matanikau, Carlson and his men finally turned into our perimeter near the mouth of the Matanikau on December 4.

It was a private war. Carlson had not thought fit to do much reporting to Division —except to ask for food, and he didn't often do that. He and his men found they could live on a very nearly unvaried ration of rice, bacon and tea.

V

Admiral Halsey himself came up from Noumea on November 8, donned new Marine dungarees and boondockers, and rode through the perimeter in a jeep, irritating his staff because he would not stand and wave to the weary men, let them know it was he who had come. Halsey's instinct was of course correct; word of his presence got around anyway and the men admired him the more for realizing that he was, when on the island, no more than an observer.

By the time Halsey got to Guadalcanal, the sandbags in the D-3 (Operations) dugout had begun to rot. "Now and then, without warning, a sandbag would quietly split open and spill sand over the deck, maps and messages," recalls a staff officer. "I was in the dugout when Halsey came in to see it and look at the situation map. While we all held our breaths, he smartly rapped a sandbag in the walls, and said: 'This seems like a sturdy shelter.' A few minutes after he left, the sandbag he had tapped collapsed."

Halsey returned to Noumea on the 9th and no sooner went to his quarters aboard his command ship there than his intelligence officer appeared with a sheaf of messages, reports from scouting and search planes that a heavy concentration of Japanese warships and transports was standing in to Buin, obviously intended for Guadalcanal.

When all these messages were carefully scanned, and the fragments of knowledge put in their proper places so that a tentative time schedule for the Japanese effort could be computed, it was plain that another major naval battle must be fought in the waters around Guadalcanal, that the Japanese were going to try once more to reinforce their Guadalcanal garrison.

"Now, four and a half years later," Halsey has written in his memoirs, "I can face the alternative frankly. If our ships and planes had been routed in this battle, if we had

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lost it, our troops on Guadalcanal would have been trapped as were our troops on Bataan.

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"We could not have reinforced them or relieved them.

"Archie Vandegrift would have been our 'Skinny' Wainwright.

"Unobstructed, the enemy would have driven south, cut our lines to New Zealand and Australia, and enveloped them."

Before he got the news, Halsey had dispatched a major task force to Guadalcanal, including transports bearing the Army 182d Infantry and an escort force of warships, moving on such a schedule that they were bound to smash into the Japanese. At least, they were if our reinforcements were to get ashore before the Japanese reinforcements could land.

Task Force Tare, made up of two groups, one based on Noumea and one at Espiritu Santo, making 6 cruisers, 14 destroyers, 4 transports and 3 cargo ships, was to rendezvous southeast of San Cristobal Wednesday morning, November 11.

Halsey held an even more impressive support force at Noumea—in case. This included two battleships, *South Dakota* and *Washington*, a heavy (*Northampton*) and a light (*San Diego*) cruiser and eight destroyers. Seabees were working night and day on the damaged *Enterprise,* the only aircraft carrier in the South Pacific, and it was not yet known whether she would make it if the support force was called upon for help.

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The whole naval effort would be turned toward a simple objective: to get our troops into Guadalcanal, to disembark them quickly and get the transports out—all ahead of the oncoming Japanese, so that when the Japanese did arrive our task force could give them uncomplicated battle.

The rendezvous was made on schedule and one section of the cargo vessels and escorts came on to Lunga Point the morning of November 11, anchoring at 0530. They had four hours before a Jap land-based air attack came in at them, damaging the transport *Zeilin.* This and another Jap air attack only slightly delayed unloading. That night the escort craft retired to Indispensable Strait.

Next morning, November 12, the second section came in and unloaded, withstanding another Japanese air attack in which the only damage was to the cruiser *San Francisco,* caused by an enemy plane which dived on her.

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With nightfall of the 12th, the task force commander, Rear Admiral Richmond K. Turner (he who was to lead so many Pacific amphibious operations) ordered all the transports out of the area and assigned three destroyers to escort them.

All his cruisers (two heavies, one light, two antiaircraft) plus eight destroyers he

BETTER ZIP UP THEIR POCKETS: Fresh Army reinforcements arrive, elements of the 164th Infantry (Americal Division), with bedding rolls and barracks bags

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assigned to Rear Admiral Daniel J. Callaghan who took up positions to fight a delaying action until the battleship force at Noumea could get to the scene, for they had been dispatched that day when incontrovertible evidence had been submitted to Halsey that the oncoming Japanese force included the battleships *Hiei* and *Kirishima.*

The "Big E" was coming too, even if it meant carrying aboard 85 repairmen who continued to work on her elevator as she journeyed northward to battle.

For some curious and unexplained reason our naval tactical officers in the battles around Guadalcanal seem always to have flown their flag from warships with not-too-good radar.

The night of November 12-13, Admiral Callaghan was aboard *San Francisco,* a ship with inadequate radar.

Thus although *Helena's* men saw the approaching Japanese as radar pips at 0214 of the 13th, and reported them to *San Francisco,* Callaghan still did not have too clear a picture of Japanese deployment, and our force moved on toward the Japs. When our ships finally opened fire, there was confusion and some, it is now known, fired on each other.

At 0148 in the midst of this confusion, the Japanese turned on their searchlights.

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THIS ONE KEPT COMING: One of the four (out of twelve) troop transports and cargo ships that reached Guadalcanal on November 15

This act seems to have served us better than it did the Japanese; at least we knew then which were enemy and which were friendly ships.

One immediate result was that *Hiei* was identified and turned upon by our ships, and before they were done she had suffered eighty-five hits, some of the most telling of which came from *San Francisco* which poured one grand broadside into her. *Hiei* answered this with a salvo that smashed *San Francisco's* bridge and killed Admiral Callaghan.

"The action, which lasted 24 minutes, was one of the most furious sea battles ever fought," said Admiral King in his report.

Our ships suffered heavily; of the force commanded by Callaghan, only three destroyers escaped damage. The cruisers *Atlanta* and *Juneau,* plus four of our destroyers, were sunk, and the cruisers *Portland* and *San Francisco,* plus three destroyers, were damaged.

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In addition to the total loss of *Hiei,* the Japanese lost two destroyers sunk and four damaged.

Callaghan and his ships and men had carried out their mission, they had turned back the Japs temporarily, and given the support force time to come up.

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VI

Ashore on the morning of November 13, there was little evidence that the men of the First Division realized exactly what was happening in the waters around the island: that their fate was being decided. There was a more immediate gain to be made.

It was for many a morning marked by Big Deals between the weary and combat-hardened Marines, and the new Army arrivals. The general objective of the Marines seemed to be to relieve the apparently over-supplied Army men (at least by what had come to be the standards of supply on the island) of some of their burden. For "souvenirs" and sometimes for less, the green Army troops surrendered some of their food, new socks, dungarees and even shoes to the tattered Marines.

"I never saw such stuff as those Army guys came ashore with," one Guadalcanal veteran has said. "You can't blame us if we shook 'em down a little bit."

But the naval action that is officially called, "The Battle of Guadalcanal," was far from over. Although we had landed our troops, and the Japanese transports and escorting cruisers had been turned back, it was expected that the Japanese would try again to bring in the estimated ten to fifteen thousand men of the Hiroshima Division that were aboard their transports. To oppose them we had no more cruisers, our force having limped off to Espiritu Santo. And if we had sunk *Hiei,* they still had their unscarred cruisers plus the battleship *Kirishima.*

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What we did have to oppose the Japanese was three weapons: a motor torpedo boat force stationed at Guadalcanal; the now-substantial Marine air force (supplemented by *Enterprise's* planes) based on Henderson Field; and the battleship force on its way from Noumea.

Each of these was to get its chance.

The PT boats got theirs on the night of November 13-14, when the Japanese sent their cruisers in at 0220 to bombard Henderson Field. These cruisers were trying to knock out our air force in preparation for the arrival of the enemy transports which had now reversed their course and were indeed on their way back to Guadalcanal. The PTs made three attacks on the cruisers which withdrew at 0340.

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At 1100, November 14, search planes found the Japanese transports. These became the object of our attack aircraft. "We threw in every plane that could take the air," Admiral Halsey has written, "planes from the *Enterprise,* Marine planes from

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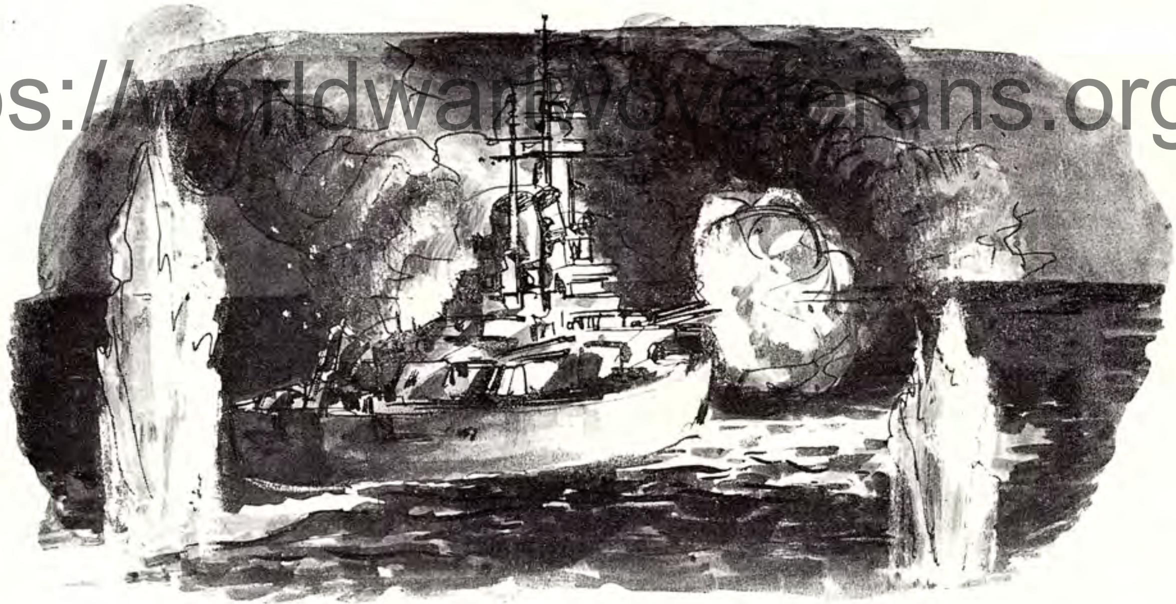

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Henderson, Army B-17s from Espiritu, fighters, bombers, dive bombers and torpedo planes. They would strike, return to base, rearm and refuel, and strike again.

"When the 'Buzzard Patrol,' as they dubbed themselves, had finished its work, one heavy cruiser and six transports had been sunk, and the three other cruisers had been damaged, as had four more transports and two destroyers.

"The four damaged transports straggled down to Guadalcanal and beached themselves near Tassafaronga next morning, to be shelled by our artillery, bombed and strafed by our planes, and finally riddled at leisure by the destroyer, *Meade,* which took them under fire at popgun range.

". . . we had rattled Hirohito's protruding teeth. The attack on the transports was the climax. I showed the dispatch to my staff and told them,

" 'We've got the bastards licked!' "

VII

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As dusk of the 14th lowered, and our exalted but weary pilots returned to Henderson Field, Rear Admiral Willis A. ("Ching") Lee arrived with *Washington* and *South Dakota,* plus four destroyers, and took up positions around Savo, waiting for the battleship tussle that would furnish the final and fitting climax to all the naval effort.

At 0016, November 15, *South Dakota* opened fire at 18,500 yards on the enemy

force which was at that point made up of *Kirishima,* four cruisers and nine destroyers.

After fitful firing by both sides for some forty-five minutes, a Jap destroyer turned its lights on *South Dakota* at 0100 and *Kirishima* opened fire. *Washington* steamed up to *South Dakota's* rescue and in turn opened fire on *Kirishima,* hitting her with nine 16-inch and 40 five-inch shells, forcing the Japanese to scuttle her.

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Our losses in ships were three destroyers sunk, with damage to one other and to *South Dakota.* In addition to sinking *Kirishima* we got one Japanese destroyer.

Whatever Japanese troops got ashore from the transports must have only added to the misery of those already there.

After the naval Battle of Guadalcanal was won, "we seized the offensive . . . ," Admiral Halsey has said. "Until then he [the enemy] had been advancing at his will. From then on, he retreated at ours."

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Chapter 11

THE FACT at last had to be admitted officially: by mid-November the First Marine Division was "no longer capable of offensive operations."

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"The cumulative effect of long periods of fatigue and strain, endless labor by day and vigilance by night were aggravated to an alarming degree by the growing malarial rate," says the Division's final action report.

Malaria had done what the Japanese had failed to do. From the 1941 cases reported in October, the figures had risen in November to:

First week	843	
Second week	765	
Third week	912	
Fourth week	693	(not a full week)
Total	3,213	

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With the malaria went, the Division's report says, "a form of secondary anemia which caused the endurance and resistance of the troops to decline rapidly."

During the time the 5th Marines was fighting at the Matanikau in November "the losses from malaria became so devastating that in order to maintain the combat line it was necessary to give each man twenty grains of quinine daily"—this from the Division surgeon.

Now that adequate reinforcements, both Marine and Army, were ashore, the question reduced itself simply to that of how quickly the men of the First Division could safely turn over their positions and get off the damned island.

Because most of the Japanese were west of the Matanikau, making the banks of that river still the forward battle position of American forces on Guadalcanal, the first shift in command was made there.

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The newly-arrived 8th Marines (Second Marine Division) was put into the front line, with an Army regiment on a ridge behind them in support, and the whole west sector was placed under command of Brigadier General Sebree who would be in charge of present defensive and eventual offensive operations.

This left the First Marine Division with only its defensive positions inside the perimeter around Henderson Field, and these were put under command of the First Division's ADC, General Rupertus. General Vandegrift was, in the last weeks of November, actually a corps, rather than a division, commander, having under him not only his own division, but also two reinforced regiments of the Second Marine Division, two Army regiments, Army artillery, the 2d Raider Battalion, and elements of two Marine Defense Battalions, plus many other supporting elements.

Command of the entire island was turned over by General Vandegrift to Major General Alexander M. Patch on December 9, 1942—two days after the 5th Marines had embarked, many of them so weak they could not climb the cargo nets.

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Before they left the island, most of the men visited the cemetery. The graves were then still crudely marked, most of them with the cross plus the dead man's mess gear and his identification tag, the man's name and an inscription written on the mess gear top.

RESTING PLACE: Palm fronds cover mounds where the dead are buried; mess gear can be seen tacked to crosses

The inscriptions were simple:

"To one swell guy."
"A great guy and a fine Marine."
"Our buddy."
"A big guy with a bigger heart."
"The harder the going, the more cheerful he was."

There was some poetry:

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"And when he goes to Heaven
To St. Peter he'll tell:
Another Marine reporting, sir,
I've served my time in hell."

Upon his relief, General Vandegrift addressed the following letter to those who had taken part in the Guadalcanal campaign:

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In relinquishing command in the Cactus Area, I hope that in some small measure I can convey to you my feeling of pride in your magnificent accomplishments and my thanks for the unbounded loyalty, limitless self-sacrifice and high courage which have made those accomplishments possible.

To the soldiers and Marines who have faced the enemy in the fierceness of night combat; to the pilots, Army, Navy and Marines, whose unbelievable achievements have made the name "Guadalcanal" a synonym for death and disaster in the language of our enemy; to those who have labored and sweated within the lines at all manner of prodigious and vital tasks; to the men of the torpedo boat command slashing at the enemy in night sorties; to our small band of devoted allies who have contributed so vastly in proportion to their numbers; to the surface forces of the Navy associated with us in signal triumphs of their own, I say that at all times you have faced without flinching the worst that the enemy could do to us and have thrown back the best that he could send against us.

It may well be that this modest operation, begun four months ago today has, through your efforts, been successful in thwarting the larger aims of our enemy in the Pacific. . . .

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II

If General Vandegrift could have known then what he knows today he would hardly have called the operation "modest." He could have been certain that the Guadalcanal campaign had indeed thwarted the Japanese.

At the end of World War II, Captain Ohmae, the smart naval planner, told interrogators:

"After Guadalcanal I knew we could not win the war. I did not think we would lose, but I knew we could not win."

General George Marshall, wartime Army Chief of Staff, wrote:

"The resolute defense of these Marines and the desperate gallantry of our naval task forces marked the turning point in the Pacific."

The Guadalcanal campaign drove a deep wedge into the Japanese Pacific perimeter and at the same time robbed them of a critically large number of their best carrier pilots and finest warships. The Japanese Navy was not to come out again for battle until June, 1944, nearly two years later.

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We gained a vital airbase and an important troop-staging area for our drive through the South Pacific, and we rubbed out the myth that the Japs were supermen. "Never did the enemy succeed in coordinating the attacks of his always superior forces," notes Marine historian John Zimmerman, in his monograph, *The Guadalcanal Campaign.*

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PAUSE FOR WORSHIP: *Religious service in the coconut grove*

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"He under-estimated both the number and the quality of the troops who first landed on the island. He committed his troops piecemeal, and thereby suffered shocking losses."

But the individual Japanese soldier was "in all ways except intelligence a worthy enemy and one to be respected," according to Zimmerman. He "fought as well and as bravely as any warrior the world has ever seen; he bore privation and hardship, and in spite of those hardships, and the privation . . . in attack he was single-minded and reckless of his life; in defense, he was bitterly tenacious."

A look at the casualty figures for Guadalcanal makes the Marines, not the Japanese, seem supermen. Marine losses at Guadalcanal were so low in comparison to Japanese losses that the statistics hardly seem credible.

First Marine Division casualties were: 621 killed in action and 1,517 wounded in action, plus 5,601 cases of malaria. The Japanese put upwards of 40,000 troops ashore and evacuated about 10,000. All the rest, some 30,000 Japanese soldiers and sailors, died on the island.

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Soon after the operation ended, the reinforced Division was awarded the Presidential Unit Citation, the highest that can be given to an American naval unit. "The courage and determination displayed in these operations were of an inspiring order," the citation said in part.

Five men were awarded the Medal of Honor; 113 got the Navy Cross; 4, the Distinguished Service Medal; 3, Great Britain's Distinguished Service Order; and 2, the British Conspicuous Gallantry Medal.

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A doctor at Mare Island, California, Lieutenant Commander E. Rogers Smith, MC, USNR, who talked with many men evacuated from Guadalcanal, paid them this tribute:

> Never before in history has such a group of healthy, toughened, well-trained men been subjected to such conditions as the combat troops of the U. S. Marine Corps faced during the days following August 7, 1942.
>
> These men do not like to exaggerate their trials—in fact they do not like to talk about them. But in their composite story they give a picture of physical and mental strain that combines the best of Edgar Allan Poe and Buck Rogers.
>
> Most of us consider the night as a time for rest and sleep but the Japs centered their activities during this period.
>
> All of these men lost weight and they were not pudgy when they landed on the beach. Weight losses in muscular, toughened young adults ran as high as forty-five pounds.
>
> Rain, heat, insects, dysentery, malaria, all contributed—but the end result was not blood stream infection nor gastro-intestinal disease but a disturbance of the whole organism—a disorder of thinking and living, or even wanting to live.
>
> And this incredible strain lasted not one or two days or nights but persisted and increased for months. This was not the quickly terminated but terrific rape of Pearl Harbor, not the similarly acute days of Dunkirk. This was the worst of both of them prolonged seemingly without end.
>
> They were alone on this island and their expected relief did not come. They had no way

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A TRIBUTE: The buddies of the Marine buried in this grave on Guadalcanal have given him their own crude tribute

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of knowing why it did not arrive. Soon they were sure none of them would get off the island—they were expendable, doomed.

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Fatigue produced by all these factors increased and wore them down. Painful aching fatigue that they felt could never be relieved. And this in men trained to such an extent that they had known no fatigue during most of their periods of training.

III

Every man in the Division left a part of himself at Guadalcanal. Every man feels, and has a right to feel, a sense of possession about the island, and an interest in what has happened there since he left it.

The ghosts of those who fought there, living as well as dead, seemed to hang over and give a sense of consecration to the island as it became in 1943 a great base, housing hundreds of thousands of soldiers, sailors and Marines.

Two other Marine divisions used it for a rest and staging area; the Third Marine Division came to Guadalcanal after its fight at Bougainville and remained until it left for the Guam campaign. The Sixth Marine Division was formed at Guadalcanal and embarked there for Okinawa.

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The First Marine Division itself held maneuvers at Guadalcanal before both its Peleliu and Okinawa campaigns.

Not until October 27, 1947, did the last Jap on Guadalcanal surrender. A New York *Times* dispatch from Melbourne that day said that the soldier turned in to the British constabulary on Guadalcanal and "bowed deeply before the British commandant."

"His hair was long and matted, his uniform hung in shreds, and rags were wrapped round his feet and held by wires. His only belongings were a water bottle, a broken Australian bayonet and a Japanese trenching shovel."

Almost as soon as World War II ended the natives and officials of the British Solomon Islands Protectorate began a conflict. The war had had a disastrous effect on the natives of the lower Solomons. Bombings destroyed many native villages and gardens. The natives were separated from their British-trained native medical men; yaws, influenza and tuberculosis took an alarming toll during the time of Japanese occupancy.

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When the Americans came to Guadalcanal, Tulagi and other lower Solomon Islands, the natives went to work for them and began to earn by doing such chores as laundry (not of course during combat) twelve to fourteen British pounds a month instead of the one pound they had earned by working on British-operated plantations.

"The effect of talking with U. S. troops, of seeing great wealth, was to give an impetus

BAKERS' HELPERS: Natives help at the Division bakery by carrying and cutting wood for the field ovens

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to desires for material welfare and to a hatred of Europeans for withholding it from them," says a monograph titled, *Post-War Developments in Central Melanesia,* published by the Institute of Pacific Relations in 1947.

And when the Americans left, the natives not only refused to go back to work on the plantations for the old wages but they also re-formed their age-old secret societies into a single one called, "The Marching Rule," and native secret agents "travelled widely, especially between Guadalcanal, Malaita and San Cristobal."

The soap companies seemed generally indifferent, in this atmosphere, toward returning and re-opening their copra production sheds which dot the coastal plains of the lower Solomons. But "perhaps the real reason was British failure to pay for war damages." Not one pound of copra had been exported at the end of 1947.

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It will be no surprise to many a veteran to learn that the companies did indeed file damage claims—if not, as the rumor used to go, "for every tree we cut down"—at least for most of the major damage. Claims for damage in the lower Solomons totaled nearly $7,000,000.

The post-war civil strife was halted when a British warship was dispatched from

Australia, and fired a few salvos, standing off Savo Island, above the sunken hulks of what had been some of the finest warships in the world.

The future hope of Guadalcanal may be gold, instead of copra. A mine has been started, and plans made to run a transport plane service in to supply the mines.

Naturally the planes will land at Henderson Field.

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Chapter 12

THEY SAT in facing bucket seats, between them the litter of packs, seabags, typewriters, briefcases—the kinds of things that staff officers would necessarily bring out of battle.

General Vandegrift had begun to be a little bored with the monotony of the long plane ride. "Twining," he said, "what are you doing?"

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Twining, full colonel and division operations officer, handed Vandegrift a sketch. It was on overlay paper.

"An idea I had for a shoulder patch," said Twining. "The stars are the Southern Cross."

Vandegrift looked at it for a moment, scribbled something on it, and handed it back to Twining who saw the word, "Approved," with the initials, "A.A.V."

That had been on the ride from Guadalcanal to Brisbane. Because the first few days in Australia were hectic, Twining did nothing else about the patch until one morning he was called to Vandegrift's quarters.

"Well, Twining, where's your patch?" Vandegrift asked, to the discomfort of Twining.

"I bought a box of water colors," Twining says in recalling the incident, "and turned in with malaria. I made six sketches, each with a different color scheme. In a couple of days I went back to the General with my finished drawings. He studied them only a minute or so and then approved the one that is now the Division patch."

Twining knew that there was more to his mission.

He placed an order for a hundred thousand with the Australian subsidiary of an American woven name manufacturer although money was one of the things the Division did not have when it arrived in Australia.

"I convinced the Army PX people that they should supply credit until our outfit could get some folding money," Twining remarks.

The patches went on sale in February, three weeks after Vandegrift approved Twining's design.

There was another problem of uniform: The lack of Corps emblems, the famed globe and fouled-anchor.

"To our great pride," says a quartermaster officer, "we discovered that, although many of the men lost nearly every other personal possession, they had kept their emblems."

Another, but unofficial, insignia was distributed. This was, at a distance, an impressive medal: on closer inspection, it turned out to be rather different.

The George Medal it was, and still is called by the few men who are proud possessors of them, because the First seemed to be the personification of the George in "Let George do it." There was bitterness in the bas-relief pictures on each side of the medal. On one side a sleeved arm, cuff showing rows of gold braid (unmistakably the symbolic arm of the Navy), held a steaming potato in process of being dropped into a helmet held by a bowed and weary Marine. In the background there was a cactus plant, for the code name of the Guadalcanal campaign was Operation Cactus.

The other side was a rear view of a cow with her droppings hitting a madly whirring electric fan. This somewhat earthy drawing was intended to show that the Gua-

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NO CHEERS: With quiet but genuine relief, Marines disembark at Melbourne, after a brief stay at Brisbane

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dalcanal campaign was the epitome of the common Marine expression, "the stuff hit the fan," an expression so popular on Guadalcanal that it was used as code in telephonic conversation to mean that there was action, a fight. It was typical for an officer at division headquarters to lift the phone and hear, "The stuff hit the fan up here at 0230. We need help."

The George Medal's ribbon was a small piece of green Marine dungaree cloth.

The details of how the George Medal was manufactured in Australia must remain a secret. "I have been told," one owner says, "that the metal with which they were made was not honestly come by."

II

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By moving to Australia the First Marine Division came under theater command of General Douglas MacArthur.

Either he, or one or more of his staff officers, had earmarked the First for defense of Australia, the Army command being then very short of troops with a gruelling war in New Guinea on its hands.

COLONEL AND SERGEANT: Two of the First Division's best-known figures, Colonel Merritt (Red Mike) Edson (left) and Gunnery Sergeant Lou Diamond

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A camp outside Brisbane was to do for billeting the First until permanent defense positions along the northern Australian coast could be assigned.

It was only for a look-see at their new division that two of MacArthur's staff officers came down to the dock to watch the first troops from Guadalcanal disembark.

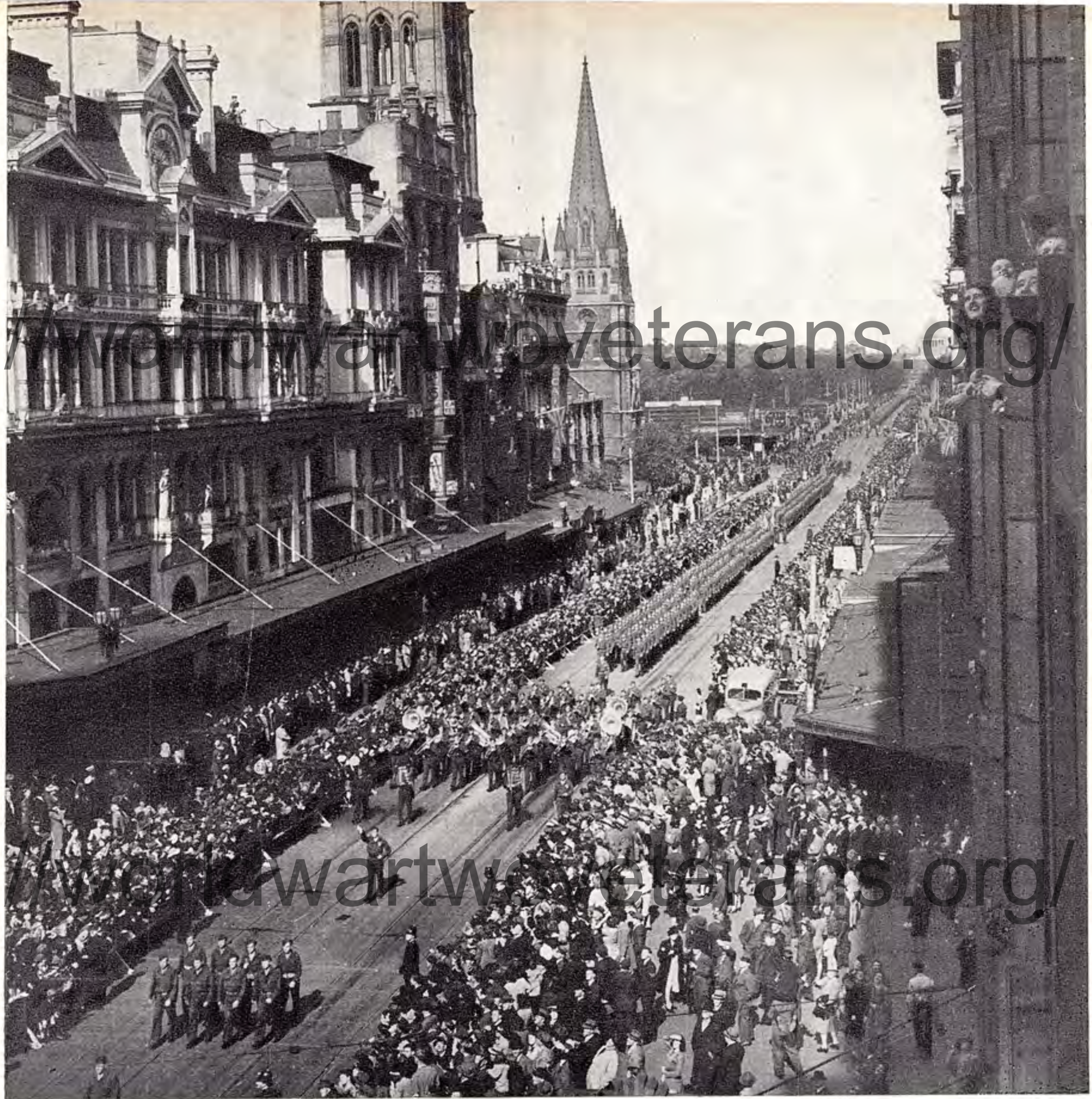
A First Marine Division officer who was with them recalls what happened: "The men were ragged, still dirty, thin, anemic, sallow, listless. Just about one out of every ten of them fell down, tumbling limply down the steep ladder on their backs, landing pitifully on the dock.

"I turned to one of the Army colonels and said, perhaps a little more bitterly than I should have, 'Well, there are your defenders of Australia.' "

Despite their condition the troops were moved into camp at Brisbane. "Don't call it a camp," a battalion commander has commented. "Just say we were dispersed in a swamp."

Liberty was only for the few strong enough to enjoy it. Not infrequently those men who did get liberty simply fell down from exhaustion on the streets of Brisbane. Some replacements had already arrived and the Division surgeon made the alarming discovery that even they, who could never have been exposed to malaria before, began to come down with the tropical disease.

"The camp was worse than Tent City ever had been," a lieutenant colonel recalls. "There was a bird there, the Kookaburra bird, aptly called the laughing jackass, and it would come suddenly screaming through the thick groves of the camp, jarring every-



PARADE: The Division Band in the foreground leads the parade through Melbourne

body's nerves. A lot of my men were saying, 'Hell, if this is the best they can do, why didn't they leave us on Guadalcanal.' "

Protests to MacArthur's liaison men brought no action. "When you talked with those people," one of the First's men has said, "you were left with the feeling that troops were an item of supply that could be warehoused."

General Vandegrift was something more than restless about the welfare of his men. He proposed a move to southern Australia where the climate was cooler and there were no mosquitoes and dispatched two of his staff south to look for a better rest area.

"There was too much Service—Army and Navy—in Sydney," one of the officer-scouts recalls, "so we went on to Melbourne where they gave us a royal reception and promised every hospitality to the Division."

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When the specific move to Melbourne was proposed to the Army staff they then said that ships could not be spared.

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Somehow word of the First's plight reached Admiral Halsey in Noumea, and he at once volunteered to send transportation—in tribute, he said, to what the First had done at Guadalcanal.

In an atmosphere something less than jovial, arrangements were finally worked out between the Marine and Army staffs for moving the Division to Melbourne in Halsey's transports, primarily the *West Point,* in peacetime the SS *America.*

"You can figure out just how listless the men were," said the officer who was in charge of cleaning up the *West Point* after the men disembarked in Melbourne, "when you know that many of them even left their rifles aboard. That's not like a Marine."

"If we'd stayed in Brisbane—well, we just wouldn't have been a division any more," another officer remarked. "It would have ended up with our having to disband and re-form. Even for the short time we were there, it was near-disaster."

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III

The remembered war is sometimes very different from the fought war. The details of pleasant wartime experiences can be recalled long after the rotten smell, the sour taste, and the menacing sounds of the battlefield are forgotten.

Only then does the following comment of a chaplain, who joined the Division later in the war, make sense:

"Why, you'd hardly have known that these fellows came from the U.S.," he said. "All they could talk about was Melbourne.

"It's easy to see why. A campaign like Guadalcanal dims everything else in a man's life. These fellows went to Australia possessing few memories except those of battle—and they wanted to shed those as quickly as they could.

"Melbourne was all the men of the division hoped it would be, and more. It became to them the symbolic civilian environment. And it remained so until the end of the war simply because they were never again to see, at least until the peace treaty was signed, anything like what they'd call civilization."

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For more than a year after the Division left Melbourne the volume of its mail to and from that city exceeded the volume to the United States.

The city was physically beautiful. Of the view he saw as his transport docked at Melbourne, one man wrote:

THAT'S WHAT THEY CALLED IT: In Melbourne it was Icy Cream

"Around us lay a city of wide streets, taxis, trolleys, department stores, bars, hotels, gas stations, street lights, soda fountains, factories, row after row of semi-detached houses and thousands of friendly people. Around the city lay suburbs geometrically arranged along asphalt roads lined with gum trees, modern-styled houses of stucco and brick with lush green lawns and carefully tended flower gardens. There were glistening white beaches crowded with bathers and multi-colored umbrellas, amusement parks with merry-go-rounds and spook houses, tennis courts and the undulating turf of the golf course. In the bays and inlets were the masts and sails of yachts. Beyond the suburbs was fertile countryside, farm and pasture land, rolling stretches of hot plains dotted with cattle, horses and sheep. All this was something like home."

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From the outset, the people of Melbourne seemed to sense the part they were to play. It was a city that had seen very little of servicemen since the war began. The day the Division landed, the city's papers called our men "The Saviours of Australia."

Although the Division's regiments and battalions moved directly into camps already prepared and there was never a need to call upon Australians for billeting, the

people of Melbourne nevertheless turned over their homes to the Marines, urging them to stay indefinitely.

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These invitations were readily accepted. "It seemed like each man wanted to dig in with some civilians," one Melbourne veteran remembers. "Everybody wanted to get with a family, to take part in family life."

"The first week I was in Melbourne I went out to a home, and spent the weekend playing with the family's six-year-old boy. It really gave me a point-four feeling."

Many Marines received, and accepted, invitations to farm homes where they picked grapes, pitched hay and herded sheep.

A captain said recently of his stay in Melbourne: "I became involved in a rather vigorous love affair the first day I hit the place, and during all of my stay moved almost exclusively in Australian rather than Marine Corps circles."

A sergeant was given the run of a huge country house near Healsvelle, about thirty miles out of Melbourne. "My hosts were so solicitous," he recalls, "that at noon they they would rap on my bedroom door to ask if I wanted 'lunch in bed, too.' "

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A top sergeant began to spend his weekends at a small country hotel whose proprietor made it a second home. "The owner had two daughters whom the 'Top' regarded as his own sisters," one of the "Top's" comrades has remarked, "and if anyone made caustic comments on Australian women he had a mighty belligerent sergeant on his hands."

It would of course have been unnatural for the Marines to have sought only domesticity. For the first two weeks especially, "they monopolized the taxis, flooded the street cars and the trains to the suburbs where they had picnics, went swimming, rode horseback and tried out the roller coasters in the amusements park," writes an observer. "The fast pace continued for a fortnight; off on liberty at one o'clock, back in camp by six the next morning; burning off steam. Somehow we were still living from day to day, still being happy one day because we knew the uncertainty of tomorrow."

"What they say about atabrine ain't true," was a common comment around the Division the morning after the first "liberty."

Hardly had any time passed before the Marines discovered that the differences between American and Australian women were more than superficial. It is the field of the anthropologist to examine customs of courtship, but even a layman could quickly see how confusing it was to the Americans to discover that "dating," that a sparring courtship, had no place in Australian life.

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"Those Aussie women unsettled a man," said one husky First Division Marine. "I never did really get 'em figured out."

Although the First Division never wore out its welcome in Melbourne, some disputes did arise between Americans and Australians.

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"The Aussies got sore because we complained about the steady diet of mutton," testifies a quartermaster officer. "They seemed to think that if mutton was good enough for them, it was good enough for us. The whole thing got mixed up with local pride."

After the Division was in Melbourne for a few months, the Ninth Australian Division was returned to its homeland for furlough from the Middle East. Why there should have been arguments between the men of these two famed divisions, both already proven in battle, is hard to say unless it was that the Australians resented the way our Americans had moved in on Australian life. Or unless it was the numerical shortage of girls in Melbourne.

Arguments and pub brawls there were. And to the curbstone and bar rail tacticians in the First Division it quickly became apparent that the Aussie soldiers were, as one man remembers, "gang fighters."

"Mind you, they weren't dirty fighters. No bottles. No sticks. No chairs. But they seemed to like to have some of their cobbers around."

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According to a popularly believed rumor, an Aussie colonel once warned a Marine colonel to keep his men off the streets of Melbourne on a certain night. The Marine colonel that very night gave liberty to his entire regiment.

No statistics were kept on the fights, many of which seemed to flare up on Flinders Street.

"I'll say one thing for the Aussies," remarked one Marine observer, "you couldn't keep 'em down. You could knock 'em down and knock 'em down again, and they'd keep on getting up for more—until their cobbers pulled them away."

To Major General Rupertus (he took command of the Division from Vandegrift on July 8, 1943) some peaceful overtures seemed called for, and he summoned band leader Captain Leon Brusiloff to his quarters. Brusiloff suggested a beer party, but with some special qualifications. First, that the beer be served in paper cups—"just so," Brusiloff told the General, "some character doesn't throw a bottle in the air and hit somebody."

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The second of Brusiloff's requests caused head-shaking: that no MPs come to the party. But the General finally let Brusiloff have his way, and the party, attended by more than 9,000 men, including 4,500 Australian soldiers, was a success. One of the most popular features of the evening was a tall-tale contest, won by an Aussie, who claimed that he had captured some moose antlers although he was unarmed when the moose

ran in front of him on a bush trail. What he had done, said the Aussie, was to throw turpentine on the moose's rear. The moose then had to run for the nearest tree to scratch himself. "All I had to do was stand there till the moose rubbed himself down to his antlers," the Aussie told the audience.

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Brusiloff's scheme worked. There were no fights at the party, and none later in the pubs of Melbourne. Peace was restored, and when the Ninth Division's furlough was cut short (the Division was hustled to New Guinea), there was marked regret in the cantonments of the First.

Jap propagandists nevertheless later produced some telling pamphlets exploiting the temporary ill-feeling. One of the most graphic showed an American soldier dallying with an Australian girl while the Australian soldier fought in the jungle.

IV

As the months in Melbourne wore on, the pattern of life turned out to be one of surprisingly satisfactory give-and-take between Marines and Australians.

By now "they had chosen their favorite girls and some had begun to 'go steady,' "

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NO BOTTLES: Marines and Aussies line up for beer at the party on the Melbourne cricket grounds

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PEACE CONFERENCE: A party for Australian service men given by the First Marine Division at the Melbourne cricket grounds

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writes a captain. "Their money was running out, liberty hours were stricter, and through a combination of necessity and desire they spent quiet evenings at their girls' houses and took longer and more frequent walks in the parks and on the beaches. There were many engagements and a few marriages."

The incidents of mild displeasure that resulted from the essential provincialism of both peoples were no longer noticed. The Americans were no longer shocked, for example, to discover that even young Australians wore false teeth. And Australian girls no longer startled our men by refusing to believe their teeth were real. One Marine, describing such an experience, said, "Finally this babe with me reached over and took hold of my teeth and tried to yank 'em and I let her. She was sure surprised when nothing gave."

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The point was reached where it seemed silly for Americans to remark on the strangeness of Australian football, and for Australians to wonder at the American gridiron game, and the rugby and American football rules were both somewhat modified to make a compromise game called Austus in which Australians could meet and play against Marines.

Brusiloff wrote a dance arrangement to "Mairzy Doats," a novelty song then in top popularity in Australia, which, when heard in the United States, caused Americans to begin singing it so widely that it reached the American hit parade list. Another current Australian favorite was a tune called "The Maori Farewell Song," and it became one of the tunes most requested of the Division Band. Brusiloff's arrangement of this tune was not a success in the States. Not until 1948 did it reach the United States, and then it came by way of England under the title, "Now Is The Hour."

"Brusiloff's Bums" became one of the favorite attractions in southern Australia, were booked for benefit tours that netted the Australian Comforts Fund thousands of pounds, and the band itself high praise from municipal officials.

It is probably accurate to say that by this time most of the men in the First Marine Division were in some stage of a serious love affair with an Australian girl. For many of the men—it must be remembered that the median age of the Division was quite young—it was their first serious love affair, and there went with it the intensity of first love. Some men had even rented apartments where, as one of them put it, there was a small kitchenette "for tea-brewing."

The person who can read between the lines of the following adaptation written on "Thanks for the Memories," will find much that is true about the First Marine Division's stay in Melbourne. It was written by two Australian Red Cross girls.

IS IT OVER? A scramble at the goal line in the Division championship game between the 1st and 5th Marines played on the Melbourne cricket grounds

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APT PUPILS: The young ladies of Melbourne were eager to learn American ways, including jitterbug dance steps

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Thanks for the memory
Of coloured campaign bars
Blossoms and stars
Of rum and cokes
And moron jokes
And driving in staff cars.
How lovely it was.

Thanks for the memory
Of castles in the air
Fingers in my hair
Of Collins Street
And kisses sweet
And those medals that you wear
How lovely it was.

Thanks for the memory
Of evenings in your clubs
MPs around the pubs
Of drunks and fights
And dreadful types
And whirling jitterbugs
How lovely it was.

Oh many's the time that we've flirted
I don't think that we'll ever regret it
I know I shall never forget it
I loved you so
But there I go.

So thanks for the memory
Of really good swing bands
Shaking famous hands
Of Artie Shaw
And Eleanor
And scribbling in the sand
How lovely it was.

Thanks for the memory
Of tidy little flats
Trying on your hats
And overcoats
And fishing boats
Of cosy fireside chats.

Letters with little secrets
That couldn't be sent by daywire
Too bad it had to go haywire
But that's all right
I sleep at night.

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Thanks for the memory
Of St. Kilda's Esplanade
You took me home
And stayed and talked
Of Luna Park
And gardens dark
Those football games you played
How lovely it was.

Thanks for the memory
Of visits to the Zoo
Those crazy things you'd do
Of southern drawls
Long distance calls
And dreams that won't come true
How lovely it was.

Thanks for the memory
Of 'Serenade in Blue'
That little beard you grew
I'm awfully glad I met you
And all the others too
I know I never should have hoped
That you could love me too
But all the same darling
Thank you so much!

Thanks for the memory
Of all that might have been
The things we might have seen
Of Texas bare
And old Times Square
And life in New Orleans
How lovely it was.

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I was so sad when we parted
Although I knew you didn't care, dear
I'd hopes all our dreams we might share, dear
But now I know
I was just snowed—but

Thanks for the memory
Of troops who'd been in strife
Kids who enjoyed life
Of love affairs
And foolish cares
And photos of your wife
How lovely it was.

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Chapter 13

WAS IT POSSIBLE that in the span of a year things could have changed so much at Rabaul?

Where was the happy air of mutual confidence in shared adventure so noticeable in November 1942? Where were the singing men who drank *sake* around the campfires that had lit the hills? Where were the prideful, arrogant, striding pilots? The sputtering motorcycles throwing dust? The emblazoned staff cars bearing honored dignitaries? Where the sleek battleships and cruisers that had made an ever-changing geometric pattern in the harbor, standing boldly into and out of St. George's Channel?

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Now at the end of November 1943, tempers had grown short, fires were no longer

lit in fear of Yankee air raids, pilots fell in flames on their own airfields, motorcycles and automobiles gathered dust for lack of gas, and the harbor was empty except for vagrant freighters and barges.

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How indeed could one look coolly back at the chain of defeats which had befallen since November 1942? There were some in the Imperial Navy who were saying openly now that the Solomons campaign was a mistake, the fault of a too-eager Army staff at Tokyo. That month was the one when it was plain the Army had failed, against all its boasts, to retake Guadalcanal. There had followed ugly and costly engagements at Vella Lavella, at New Georgia, and now in November, at Bougainville.

If the Yankees could build up air supremacy on their new field at Bougainville (and who, dismal as things looked, dared say they couldn't?) then Rabaul might turn out to be a besieged capital, rather than the staging area for an army on the offensive. The hope for air reinforcements from the home islands was growing thinner: many of the Army pilots flying down the mid-Pacific chain were never heard from after they left Truk for Rabaul, a flight that seemed to put too great a strain on their not-too-good navigational skills.

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The Yankees, as if to show that in their minds the Solomons campaign was won, had moved into the Central Pacific, had landed at Tarawa in the Gilberts.

How could things have changed so much?

II

In 1942 and for most of 1943 General MacArthur was in the uncomfortable position of commanding a vast theater of war with barely enough troops to keep the seats dusted. It was all he could do with what he then had in hand to wage a small war along the northern coast of New Guinea.

Now, toward the end of 1943, he was beginning to get men, and many more were promised for early 1944.

The strategy which would dictate the use of his reinforcements in the Southwest Pacific was obvious: he would return to the Philippines, training his reinforcements as he moved them westward along the New Guinea coast.

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Already his staff had plans for his first major shore-to-shore leapfrogging assault: from the Huon Peninsula a large task force would jump far into Dutch New Guinea and land at Hollandia behind the Japs.

Certain precautions had to be taken. One certainly was to seize the Japanese airfield on his flank at Cape Gloucester, New Britain.

NOT QUITE A BOONDOCK: Part of the 7th Marines' camp at Mount Martha

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What must be guarded against in such a move was the possibility of a disaster, of a force bogged down in the New Britain jungle, fighting a protracted and costly campaign of attrition against the jungle-wise Japanese.

What jungle-wise, Japanese-wise *American* troops were there to call upon?

Well, the First Marine Division, down in Melbourne, was becoming pesky and ornery, showing the incipient signs of Marine well-being. When MacArthur had activated Sixth Army as his field force, he had put the First into it for organizational purposes. In July 1943, Sixth Army, its headquarters that summer in Brisbane, sent to Melbourne the first directive for the Cape Gloucester campaign. Within a few days, the First dispatched one of its officers up to Brisbane to get a copy of the plan for the operation. When he returned, Division staff went to work, producing not many days later a complete organization and tonnage table that was immediately submitted to Sixth Army. Thus began the long series of conferences and negotiations out of which the final plan for the landing on the western tip of New Britain took shape.

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Division staff did not like this earliest Sixth Army plan. It was too complicated, and it called for a dangerous dispersal of force by landings at several points rather than concentration at one. The assault elements of one combat team (a regiment) were to land at Gasmata on D minus 6 while the rest of the Division was "by combined over-water-airborne operations to attack and capture the Cape Gloucester airdrome and defenses."

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Before a working relationship and mutual understanding between the two staffs could be established, before Division had a chance to argue its objections, Sixth Army ordered it northward to Goodenough Island and New Guinea, a distance of two thousand miles, for staging and training.

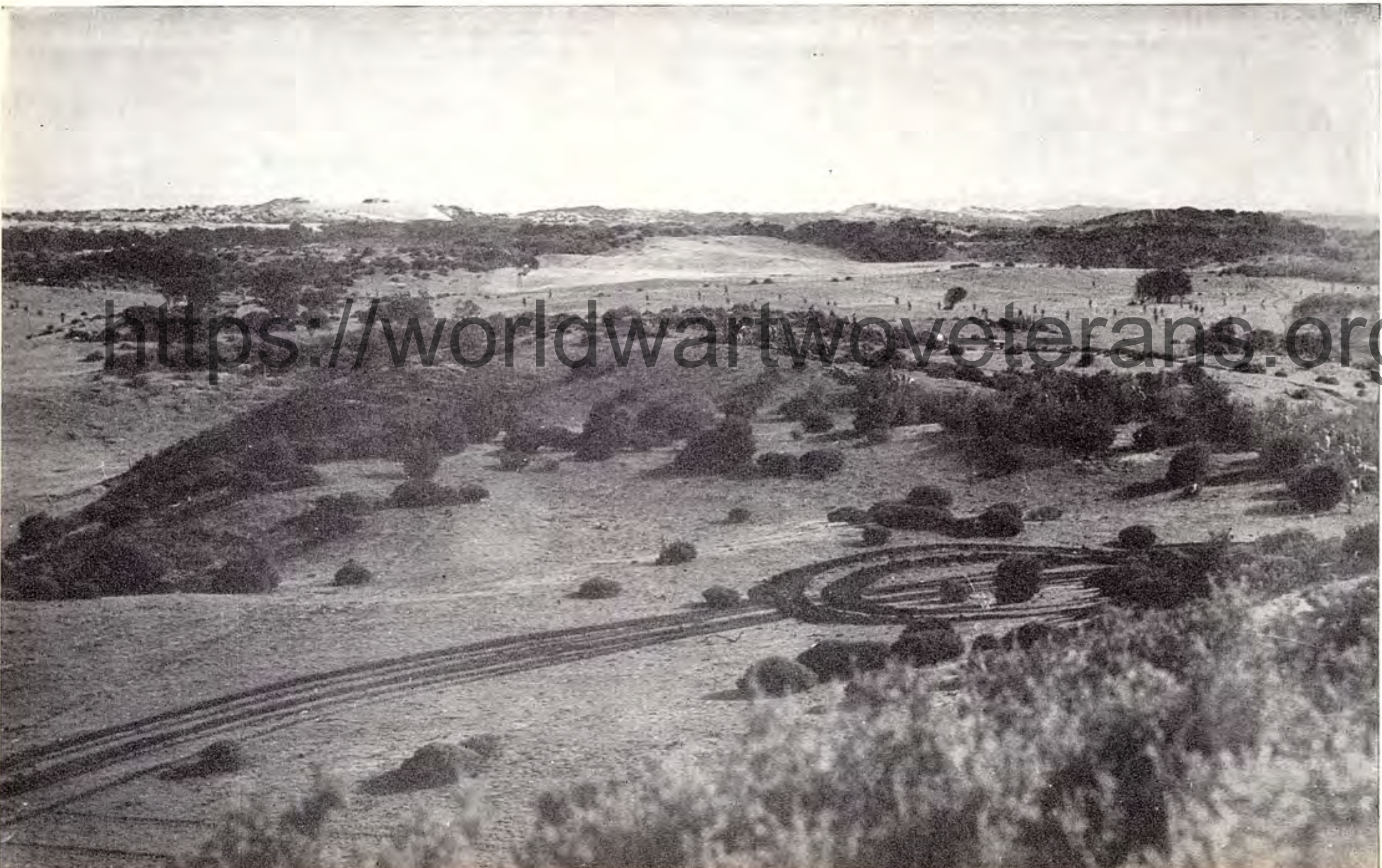
III

Nothing was ever too bad for the First Marine Division. When word came of the move, the transport quartermaster had blithely planned the loading of the Division's men and equipment on APAs, the Navy's especially designed troop-carrying assault transports. He was rudely disillusioned when the chit for the ships came down from Brisbane. The Division was to move on Liberty ships, a passage that would mean worse than steerage quarters for the men.

"Heads," showers and galleys were built on the weather decks, a guarantee that refuse of all sorts would wash the decks in bad weather. Food must be ladled out and eaten on the open decks whether the weather was fair or foul. And the only troop-quartering space was an area in the upper hold. Most of the men had to sleep topside, fashioning out of ponchos and shelter halves and stray pieces of line rude and flimsy canvas housing.

The idea of dispersion was carried out even in staging: the 5th Marines to go to Milne Bay, that deep cleavage of water in the eastern angle of New Guinea; the 7th Marines to Oro Bay, on past Milne on the northwestern coast of New Guinea; the 1st Marines, Engineer regimental headquarters and Division headquarters to Goodenough Island, in the D'Entrecasteaux group, some fifty miles off the eastern tip of New Guinea, about equidistant (eighty miles) both from Oro and Milne.

MOUNT MARTHA MANEUVERS: Marines moving up, preparatory to attacking the "enemy"



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The Engineers of course went up first to build camps, sailing from Melbourne between August 19 and August 24. A month later, on September 19, the infantry units began to follow. By October 23, the last of the men of the First Marine Division who were to take part in the Cape Gloucester campaign had left Melbourne.

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If the men had succeeded in forgetting in Melbourne what the tropics was like, the mucky, dark New Guinea jungle in which they staged was a reminder. Whether they were veterans of Guadalcanal or recruits fresh from the States, the rainforest produced a noticeable air of glumness in the new encampments.

Some of the few pleasant memories of the staging areas arise from a peculiarly Marine form of recreation. Each of the areas was also used by Army troops, and the men inevitably contrasted their own food and equipment—sparse by order when not by fortune—with the seeming bounty of the better-fed, better-clothed, better-housed Doggies. This became a challenge, for it is in the unwritten tradition of the Corps that foraging upon the Doggies is legitimate.

There was loot to be had at Milne Bay, an Army supply base in the fall of 1943, but to land-bound Marines, the problem was to get out in the busy harbor, aboard the incoming ships, where really big deals would be made.

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The 5th hadn't been at Milne two weeks before one of his men came to Colonel John T. Selden, regimental CO, with a scheme. The Army beachmaster was short of hands who could operate the small motor launches used to run messages between ship and shore. The Marine amtrac drivers were qualified. Why not lend them to the Army?

"Give a little, get a little!" was Selden's assent.

Thereafter each night at dusk, four launches pulled up at the Marine amtrac area on the beach and unloaded the day's loot. By the time the 5th was ready to leave Milne Bay, two of the four launches were assigned to the regiment for its full-time use, principally, remembers one of the 5th's officers, "for official sightseeing and fishing trips."

More sober attention was given in the staging areas to another kind of boat activity. In the year since the Division landed at Guadalcanal, a new fleet of blunt-nosed, small ships and boats had appeared in the Pacific. The new LSTs, LCIs and LCTs were ideally suited for the short haul from New Guinea to Cape Gloucester.

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The Division had had no experience with these new craft—and the Division was perfectionist. "The idea always seemed to be," one man recalls, "to do it again and again and again until it became automatic. That was the training technique of the Division. They tried to teach us through constant repetition, to do all the little things without thinking about them. Also, out of this monotonous going over and over things, you

COMMAND POST PROJECT: Fuzzy-Wuzzies build a thatched roof structure for the Division command post at Goodenough

came to think nothing could go wrong. You and your buddies did it so often together that you got to have a lot of confidence in the business of doing the thing with the group, whether it was a squad, a platoon, or a company."

As might have been expected from the Division's past experience with paucity of equipment, there were not enough of the new landing craft to train in the way Division staff wanted the men trained. Practice loading and unloading was conducted from mock-ups, from "slots" marked out on the New Guinea beaches with tape to conform to the exact size of an LST deck. It was not until three days before final embarkation from the staging areas that all the craft that were to take part in the main assault landing were assembled for a full rehearsal, and even though it was realized that the short time lag would not allow for repair, cleaning and re-waterproofing of equipment, the troops nevertheless were sent ashore at Cape Sudest. "The timing and experience gained in this rehearsal outweighed the harm it did to equipment," says one report.

Only one small segment of the training for Cape Gloucester lacked monotony. A

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few men, scouts who had proven themselves on patrol at Guadalcanal, had been sent north to New Guinea ahead of the rest of the Division for, as the rumor went, "commando training." Nothing had been heard from them since.

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IV

A strangely anonymous group of passengers it was that stood on the lurching deck of the PT boat, peering out into the darkness. They wore no rank or unit insignia. Instead of helmets, they had donned baseball caps—all except a couple of natives whose silhouettes were heightened by their tall brush of uncovered knotty black hair. Not one of the party had on a dogtag of identification. At hand this night of September 24, 1943, was a job to an irregular's taste: to scout enemy-held New Britain three months in advance of the main landing.

The loose name by which they went was "Alamo Scouts," Alamo being code for Sixth Army. These aboard the PT this September night had been selected from only a slightly larger force in turn picked from the Australian Army and Navy, from American Army, Navy and Marine units, and from loyal New Guinea and New Britain natives. They had trained at Ferguson Island, near Goodenough, where they had learned to move quietly through the jungle, using natives on the point, for the Japs had no way of knowing whether a native was friendly or unfriendly.

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For their first mission they brought along an Australian pilot who knew the waters of Dampier Strait.

"I'll get you in," the pilot said to Lieutenant John D. Bradbeer, chief scout of the First Marine Division in charge of the first reconnaissance, "but about getting you out —I can't say."

Nearing the New Britain coast they passed to starboard a string of five Jap barges. They were upon them before they knew it. The PT skipper cut his motors and the Japs went on, unsuspecting.

Soon after, the scouts went over the side into inflated rubber boats and began to move toward shore, paddles dipping deeply and silently in the way they had so long practiced. When the boat scraped coral, Bradbeer leaped out, the crunch of his feet muffled by the sound of the surf; he was the first Allied soldier to set foot on New Britain after the Japanese occupation.

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In the darkness and torrential rain which had fortunately come up, the scouts grabbed the rope handles on the sides of the awkward craft and hurried with it across the beach into the bush.

Reconnaissance in a jungle at night being impossible, they waited, soaked and a little chilled, for dawn. As they sat they looked out to sea, watching the PT move out of sight.

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The rain gave them a good start on their ten-day mission, part of which was to search for a government trail supposed to run north-south across the island. It was along such a trail that the Japanese would have to move their isolated garrisons to reinforce the Gloucester area when the main landing was made. Results: negative. There was no trail, a favorable piece of news.

Before they could be sure of this, the party of eight spent two days on the slopes of commanding Mt. Tangi (5,600 feet). When they returned to the beach to set up a base camp for further exploration of the area, Bradbeer cut his party. Eight were too many, made too much noise for Bradbeer's exacting ears.

On the third day the party that left for a look at native villages was to Bradbeer's order: two natives to form the point, working about a hundred yards in front; then Lieutenant Kirkwall Smith, Royal Australian Navy, a former coast watcher; then Bradbeer; and finally one native in the rear whose job was to eradicate footprints, to pull branches back into place, to pick up pieces of paper should any be dropped—to wipe out all traces of the white men.

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Yet word spread among the native villages that the white men had returned, and native chieftains with their councils appeared out of the bush for pow-wows. The state of native opinion was easily discernible. The natives were for the top dogs, but if they had to choose between the new Japanese rule and the prewar Australian rule, they'd take the Australian masters. The Japanese, cried the natives, had begun to raid their taro gardens, a vandalism the Australians had never committed. As for military facts, the natives knew and revealed the points of the Japanese barge route and the schedule of the barge patrol. Bradbeer and Smith themselves drew sketches of the beaches in the area, and marked behind them the positions of Japanese gun emplacements.

On the ninth day, the small party returned to the base camp, and with the others began the march back to the beach where they were to be picked up by the PT. They reached the beach the next day, found their rubber boats safe, set up security watches, and opened their radio to communicate with the PT. No reply. As the day wore on, some natives eager to be friendly came to tell them that a large Japanese patrol was searching for them.

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PT or no PT, they would leave that night, Bradbeer decided; if necessary, row in their rubber boats to Siassi, a small island in Dampier Strait. At dusk, when Bradbeer

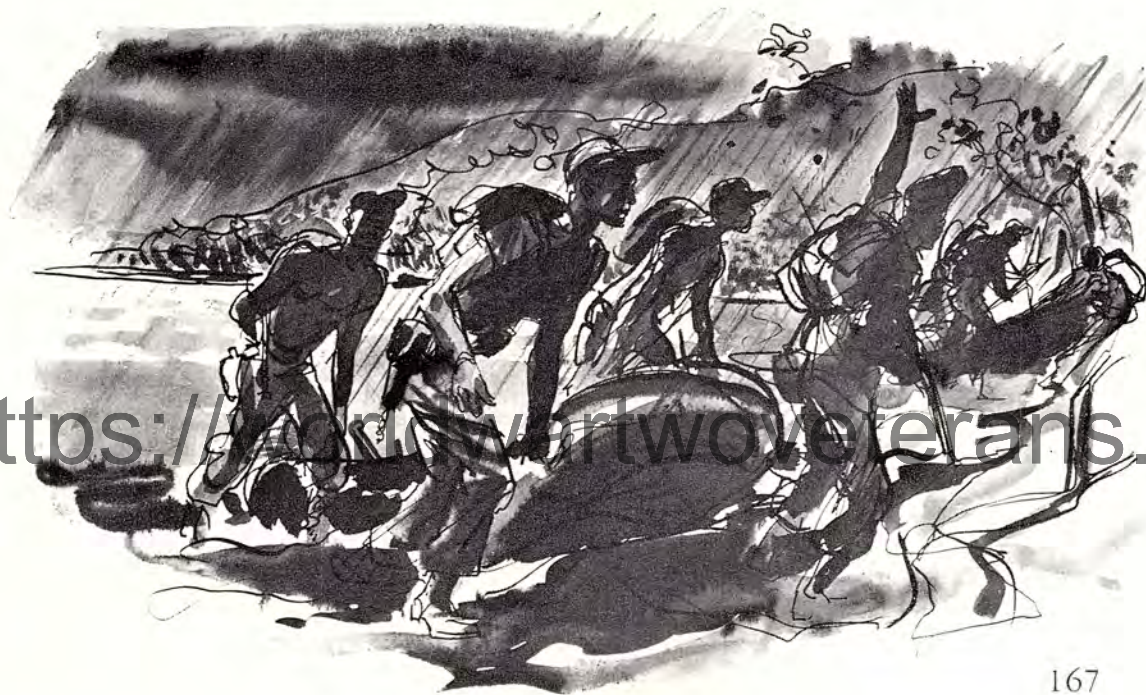
was ready to break up his camp and push out in the boats, he gave the radio another try.

There came the crackle of the PT's reply. Message received. With relief they built a fire out of wood the natives cut from rotted but still standing small trees. By stripping off the wet outer part of the log and burning the core, a fire without smoke was possible. Over it, they made tea and bouillon.

The success of a scout mission is not measured in the number of enemy killed; success depends rather upon avoiding the enemy while learning what you want to know about him. During their ten days on New Britain under the noses of the Japanese Bradbeer and his Alamo Scouts had not fired a single shot, but they returned with the facts Sixth Army wanted.

On November 20, at Semeru, near Dorf Point, Alamo Scouts landed again on New Britain. This time four out of five of them were First Division men; the fifth, an American Navy hydrographic specialist. Their job was to scout a nearby beach tentatively chosen for a landing. Again the scouts returned without casualties, and with information. The beach was a trap, backed by sheer cliffs and with only one narrow exit. This was knowledge impossible to gain except by on-the-ground observation because the cliffs were covered thickly with jungle.

Then what about the beach around Tauali Village? Five days before the amphibi-



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ous assault on Cape Gloucester, on December 21, the scouts went ashore again, looked at the beach at Tauali, measured the tide, determined the all-important "five-foot line," the depth at which landing ships must stop, found it satisfactorily close to shore, and got out to the PT uneventfully. Trouble began almost as soon as they got aboard. The PT's radar picked up some enemy barges, and because the scouts had accomplished their mission, the PT's skipper decided to close. He ran inshore of the Japanese at top speed, his crew firing to starboard, when suddenly the PT took hits from inshore of *their* position. A Jap barge they had failed to see was firing at them. It knocked out one of the PT's engines and wounded three of the crew.

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None of the scouts was hurt, but Bradbeer remembers, "I wasn't afraid at all on shore, but I did try to dig a foxhole in the deck of that PT."

News that Tauali Beach was OK reached Sixth Army headquarters safely.

Bradbeer's citation for the Soldier's Medal evaluates the job the scouts did: He got "valuable information contributing to the future success of the Cape Gloucester operation . . . with respect to enemy dispositions, movements, beaches, trails, nature of terrain and attitude of natives . . ." showing "resolute courage, vigorous initiative and shrewd judgment."

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V

The plan for Gloucester would not jell. As summer wore into fall, and fall approached winter, there was still disagreement between Sixth Army staff and the First Division over some of the main points.

With D-day set for December 26, Sixth Army as late as October 17, 1943, distributed a plan that seemed to the First's staff as unrealistic as the early plan that had been issued in Australia. This new plan, issued as Field Order No. 4, called for only a single regiment of the Division to land in the Gloucester area on D-day. This lone regiment was to be supported by an Army parachute regiment, the 503d, which would drop in a kunai patch southeast of the airfield. The Marines were to drive through the jungle and join the parachutists, a piece of maneuver that looked better on paper to the Army staff than it did to the Marines who had already learned at Guadalcanal some sad lessons about maneuver in the rainforest.

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This was still the plan, the fixed and set plan, when General MacArthur himself came to Goodenough in late November, primarily to make an inspection of the troops.

The day he visited the CP of the First Division the maps were spread out and MacArthur looked at them casually as the Division staff stood around. He was accompanied

DISCUSSING THE PLAN: General Douglas MacArthur, Lieutenant Colonel E. A. Pollock, and Major General William Rupertus (left to right) study the Cape Gloucester map

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by Lieutenant General Walter Krueger, Sixth Army commander, who had heretofore been adamant with the First.

MacArthur asked, as if in politeness only, how the First liked the plan for the coming operation.

"Well, General," spoke up Lieutenant Colonel E. A. Pollock, Division D-3, and the same Pollock who had commanded the battalion at the Battle of the Tenaru, "we don't like it."

MacArthur's surprise was evident, or so says a witness. "Well, what is it, Colonel, you don't like?" he asked.

"Sir, we don't like anything about it," was Pollock's bold reply.

MacArthur looked questioningly at Krueger, but that general was staring fixedly at Pollock. Recovering himself somewhat, MacArthur turned back to Pollock and said with a sternness still curbed by his surprise at the turn of events.

"You had better speak to General Rupertus about your questions."

"But I have," insisted Pollock. "None of us like it."

With that MacArthur turned and walked out of the tent, making no further comment, but apparently, thinks one Division staff officer, with the mental note to discuss the whole landing plan later with Krueger.

For, shortly after MacArthur's visit, word came down from Sixth Army that another joint conference was to be held between that staff and the First's staff. And at this conference, attended by General Rupertus and Pollock, among others, a new, and final

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BOUND FOR GLOUCESTER: Elements of the First Marine Division go aboard ship at Oro Bay, New Guinea

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plan was settled upon which met the Division's objections to the earlier plans. This was Field Order No. 5, and it permitted the First Division to use all its regiments in the landing, requiring only that one be held in reserve. "This plan was most acceptable," Pollock said in a speech he later delivered at the Army and Navy Staff College. "It kept the Division intact, and permitted the landing of a sizeable force against an enemy known to be numerically superior, and well established. This was in keeping with the views of the Division of initially placing an overwhelming force on the beach . . ."

When this final operation plan was ready, and reproduced by the Division Engineers in quantity, Pollock himself took copies of it to the regimental commanders, scattered through New Guinea, and explained the entire operation to each of them and their regimental staffs.

Shipping was still short and some hasty arrangements had to be made. All hands and all equipment were to be mounted out of either Oro Bay or Finschhafen. The 1st Marines had to be moved from Goodenough to Finschhafen; the 12th Marine Defense

Battalion (an antiaircraft unit) from Woodlark Island to Cape Sudest (Oro Bay); the Engineer regiment from Goodenough to Sudest; and a battalion of 105s, engineers, and amphibian tractors from Milne Bay to Cape Sudest. All had to move by LST, and the transfer was not finished until one week before D-day. There were, it turned out, four APAs in the Seventh Fleet but the Navy would not risk them in the uncharted waters of the Bismarck Archipelago. Indeed, all of the craft available (10 APDs, 24 LSTs, and 21 LCIs) had to be used in assault, leaving no reserve shipping.

But by the evening of December 24, 1943, all of the troops were aboard and the convoy had rendezvoused in Buna Harbor.

"As darkness fell over Buna that evening," says the Division's action report, "escorting destroyers and landing barges lay in readiness to move north to the target area."

The irony of their warlike mission on a day of peace did not escape the men as the convoy moved out at 0300 Christmas morning. "The heat below decks was intense," says the action report, "and men slept topside either in vehicles or on the deck."

When, the next morning, an extrovert who had once been in vaudeville tried to start the men singing Christmas carols, he got nothing but silence as a reward. "He started with 'Silent Night'," recalls a man who was on the LST. "Response was weak. Tentatively he began, 'Oh, Come All Ye Faithful,' and found his voice echoing back across the water. Somehow those songs seemed irreverent that day."

Not to be suppressed, the ex-vaudevillian tried a secular tune. It was "Pistol-Packin' Mama." This one seemed all right and "brought in half the ship a-singing, more and more of them joining in from the darkness where they were talking, or thinking of home, or wondering if they'd be alive next week. It made everybody feel better."

On another ship that day a corporal who had left divinity school to fight as a Marine, gathered a small group of men around him and read the Christmas story from the Bible. But that did not disturb a larger group of men playing poker on the deck nearby. They did not lower their voices for a while, at least until one of the players rose from the deck, cleaned, and cried out angrily: "This is one of those days when it doesn't pay to get up."

A Marine private, a former master at fashionable Choate School, was complaining that day to one of his friends. His Christmas packages had arrived just before he went aboard ship. "All I could do," he grumbled, "was pass them around, let everybody have a mouthful, and throw away the rest."

But most of the men sat quietly, alternately thinking and snoozing, propped, humped, around the sharp and inflexible edges of the gear of war which littered the

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COMBAT LOADED: Trucks bound for Cape Gloucester are loaded ready to carry cargo ashore

decks, keeping whatever thoughts they had to themselves as Christmas Day came and went.

VI

Each minute from daybreak to H-hour is a mute juror of fortitude. To each minute every man who is going in to the unknown shore must make separate inward testimony.

"Yes, this is me," every man must say. "It is I. This is December 1943. This is New Britain. I am on a ship. I will soon pick up this pack and rifle. I will go into a small boat. I will go to that shore. I will step out on it. *I* will do that. Not somebody else. Me."

Such is the testimony each man must make.

No other jury sits: only the sluggish minutes. Only time will decide.

This internal debate seems endless, nor is there relief from it in externals.

A man begins to think of himself as a spectator, finds himself looking upon all the

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confusion, all the noises, all the sweat and strain, including his own, all the comings and goings around him, as something outside himself. It is as if he were holding a peopled kaleidoscope in front of his eye. It is as if a series of vivid tableaux were being enacted in front of him.

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At 0600 when the escorting cruisers and destroyers opened fire, a man who was there that morning noted that the "flame seems to flow rather than leap from the ships' sides, a solid mass of vivid orange-yellow, disappearing at leisure into its own smoke."

Looking at the shore—"a tangled mass of jungle against which a few landmarks stood out"—he saw a "plume of whitish smoke" rise from the foot of a mountain. The side of one hill, then being bombed, "formed a great red-brown scar against the lush greenery."

He heard the bombers coming: "the sound of their motors a remote, intermittent humming," and saw "scattered smoke puffs" rise from the jungle until finally "a fuel dump went up suddenly in a great burst of flame."

A smoke screen thrown by shells from our destroyers far inland first swallowed up the hills and then moved seaward, causing "the shore line to disappear, and presently the landing craft vanished into it, in line now and churning white wakes. Soon the LCIs were gone, too, and the LSTs, which had been moving aimlessly with bare headway, came suddenly to life. Driving shoreward, they met the first of the landing boats returning. Coxswains shouted the cheering word, 'Landing unopposed!' Then the LSTs, too, were lost in the anonymity of the smoke. . . ."

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Time had run out. The world ashore was real and peaceful and safe. The jury need not have sat. Not for D-day. "No opposition was encountered at the beach by our troops," says the Division action report. It was enough to be thankful for, but instead of a sense of relief there was a feeling of anticlimax and some uncertainty. The assault troops were allowed only a moment for these emotions before they met a more immediate problem. The very first unit to hit shore (3d Battalion, 7th Marines, which landed at 0746, followed two minutes later by the 1st Battalion of that regiment) was hardly off the beach, which itself was overhung by jungle growth, before they struck swamp. This area was noted on the maps as "damp flat," but when elements of the 7th began to push through it: "time and again members of our column would fall into waist-high sink holes and have to be pulled out. A slip meant a broken or wrenched leg."

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This was a form of opposition that had not been expected, one for which the men had made no emotional preparation.

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Chapter 14

THE FIGHTING MAN expects that his vocation will carry him to unlikely and alien places. That is all right. It is one of the things he may look forward to. But there is a degree of strangeness beyond the bounds of the bargain, the bargain being: the natural hazards of the battlefield must never equal the hazards contrived by the enemy.

Break this law, put a fighting man down in a spot where the plant and animal life and the climate are as much or more of a menace to his existence than the armed human opposite him, and the fighting man will feel he is the victim of an injustice.

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That is why the men who fought at Cape Gloucester remember the place more for the jungle than for the Japanese.

"In the next war," a sergeant said as his transport pulled away from New Britain at the end of that battle, "I ain't even gonna plant a victory garden."

Because "jungle" was an overworked word in the journalistic jargon of the Pacific

war, used to describe such barren atolls as Tarawa as well as temperate, terraced Okinawa, the prewar notes of a naturalist who visited the Bismarck Archipelago in the 1920s when there was no compulsion to overdramatize it, give perhaps the most detached view of the Cape Gloucester battle ground.

When day begins in the rainforest of New Britain, wrote the naturalist, "translucent morning mists hang without motion in the treetops . . ." and the "heat vibrates, and there is the sniff of the heavy damp odor of the forest." Within the forest "the light is dim, frequently suggesting twilight. The wind as well as the light is broken, and the rain loses its force. Conditions are extremely constant, as if the inner parts of the forest were a natural conservatory. . . ."

The forest has a structure: "the lower limits are the ground, the upper the forest roof, supported by the forest skeleton, the trunks of giant trees. Not only is the forest roof thick, but also even in still stronger measure, the forest margin is closed by the overwhelming mass of lianas which frequently extend to the ground, and which can form so thick an overgrowth that the forest has been accurately called impenetrable."

There is no peace. "The primeval forest is a mighty organism" in which "the struggle for existence among species is . . . a life and death struggle. If the balance becomes disturbed, for example through the crash of an old forest giant which in its fall has torn open a great place in the forest, and has broken the forest roof, then we shall see immediately how the flora reacts to the infliction of the wound. There immediately arises in such a place a dense mass of tall herbs, shrubs, and young trees. At the same time the loose, flexible branches of lianas descend from the forest roof slowly to join with the lower flora and thus close anew the forest roof.

"In this struggle a few plants slowly triumph, in the long run not more than one or two trees, and thereby the wound is healed. Meanwhile, fungi and bacteria have done their work, completely destroying the fallen trunk. . . ."

With a fact of climate, the description will be complete: in late December the northwest monsoons come to New Britain and for three months subject the island to one of the heaviest concentrations of rain that falls anywhere on earth.

II

To some it seemed that the campaign was planned to coincide with the onset of the monsoon, for it began to rain early in the afternoon of D-day, and in the early morning hours of December 27, "a terrific storm struck the Cape Gloucester area," says the action report.

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UNPOSED POSED PICTURE: This was meant to be for the subject's home-town newspaper, but the smile was too thin

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Not the least of those soaked in the early morning storm was Major General Rupertus. Because only operational tentage was brought ashore the first day, the cot lugged in by one of Rupertus's aides was the only protection the General had. "Up there on his cot the General was the wettest man on New Britain when daylight broke," says the aide.

"Rains continued for the next five days. Water backed up in the swamps in rear of the shore line, making them impassable for wheeled and tracked vehicles. The many streams which emptied into the sea in the beachhead area became raging torrents. Some even changed course. Troops were soaked to the skin and their clothes never dried out during the entire operation." These are comments from the action report.

A junior officer found a Japanese battle flag the first day, but "it was eighteen days before I could get it dry enough to mail home."

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Unlike the General, most of the men not in front-line foxholes slept in the newly issued jungle hammocks, undoubtedly one of the most complicated methods of sleeping ever devised for combat troops. An ingenious staff sergeant in the 5th Marines thought, however, that he had found a sensible use for the hammock.

"In that hammock," he boasted, "I had a pair of dry pants. I treasured them. At nightfall, I would contort myself into the aperture, change my wet pants and sleep on them to dry them. I wouldn't get outside the hammock in my dry pants for the world.

"One night when the Nip bombers were particularly active, I dozed through 'Condition Red' sirens until suddenly my buddy was standing at my side yelling, 'Bombs away!' I could hear the banshee whistle of the bomb and I clawed my way out of my hammock and scrambled into the cold, wet mud. The bomb fell about a hundred yards away. I almost cried in rage and frustration. The bomb hadn't hit us and my pants were wet!"

A man who slept in a jungle hammock, or on a cot, was more fortunate than most. One corporal who slept in a foxhole for the first five weeks at Gloucester, tells how he tried to protect himself from the driving sheets of rain:

"About the best deal was to sleep with a buddy and share ponchos. We'd put one above us and one below. Of course, when our foxhole filled with water, and it pretty often did, this system didn't work so well. Other times, when I had a foxhole to myself, I'd just wrap up in the poncho—which was good if it didn't rain too hard, and if the foxhole didn't fill with water. If you could keep the water out, then the heat of your body, wrapped in the poncho, would dry out your clothes during the night. Sometimes,

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BY ITS OWN BOOT STRAPS: Even treaded vehicles got stuck in the mud of Cape Gloucester. Here a caterpillar tractor gets set to haul itself out of the mud by its own winch.

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HAMMOCK CAMP: Here is an encampment of men who have strung their jungle hammocks on blasted trees

when we weren't right on the lines, my buddy and I'd fix up a little lean-to, get a couple of saplings and stretch one of our ponchos on them, and cover ourselves with the other. We always covered ourselves. You always got cold at night, even there in the tropics, because, I guess, we were always wet."

The misery of the rain might have been overlooked in the knowledge that it fell on and was shared by all, one's buddies as well as the Japanese, if it had not been so destructive of private and treasured belongings.

A letter, for example, was least good on its first hurried reading. Letters ripened with re-reading, and were preserved not so much for the specific messages they contained as for evidence that there was some place a drier and better world. But not at Cape Gloucester. "They fell apart in your pocket after a day or two," complained a private first class.

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Nor were items of prestige safe. The quality which causes American youth to enjoy arguing the merits and demerits of various makes of automobiles was transformed overseas to watches. Each man who had one grew fiercely proud of it; but those men who had bragged in Melbourne of their "guaranteed" waterproof watches saw these same

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KNEE DEEP: It seemed that nothing was proof against Cape Gloucester's cloudbursts, least of all, tents

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FIXING THE ROOF: A Marine uses his camouflage helmet cloth to cover the pole on his Cape Gloucester home

timepieces corrode with green mold and stop. No watch was New Britain waterproof.

If a man hoped to keep his valued wallet, filled with pictures of family and girl friend, he had to resign himself to taking it out of his pocket at least once a day to scrape off the blue mold. Even with this care, the stitches might rot and the wallet fall apart, spilling out wrinkled and yellowed snapshots.

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The wells of fountain pens clogged; pencils came apart at the seams in less than a week; blades of pocket knives rusted together. "If you carried your tobacco around in an ordinary pouch or can," says a pipe-smoker, "you'd get sick on it when you smoked it."

The solution to the problem of tobacco, wallets, fountain pens, watches and knives was to carry them in the rubber sheath of a prophylactic device, sealed by tying a knot in the open end. Thus anything that fit this could be, and was, protected from the rotting moisture.

Issue gear was not immune from the humidity. Sturdy boondockers, the comfortable reverse calf Marine field shoes, the only type footwear ever issued in the Division while it was overseas, had to be scraped each morning—not for mud, but for vivid blue-green mold. Socks rotted faster than the quartermaster could replenish them, and many men recall the clammy feeling of bare wet feet in wet shoes. The laced issue leggings seemed only to hold the water in, and were soon thrown away.

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The rain made slop of the food, the at best unappetizing Cs and Ks, unless it was quickly eaten, for if the clouds above for once hung dry there was always a downfall from the dripping trees. Nothing suited quite so much in this climate as "a cuppa hot joe." Men seemed to live on coffee. But to make coffee you had to have a fire, and almost nothing at Gloucester was dry enough to burn, nothing except the waxed paper and the cardboard that covered the K ration. These were hoarded against that time at dusk when only a cup of joe could make the long, wet night ahead bearable. When the lines halted the men paired off, each contributing his paper to a feeble blaze, over which sat the ubiquitous canteen cup, serving in this instance as a coffee pot. Long ago at Guadalcanal the men had learned to chisel off the folded-over metal lip of the cup, for when the cup was used to brew coffee (and it was always so used in combat) the thick lip held the heat, blistered the mouths of the men who drank from it.

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Besides the crude functional re-design of the cup's lip, many men patiently cut their names in the sides of their cups. Others carved the place-names of the islands or towns where they had fought and lived. And a few not only carved, "Guadalcanal–Melbourne–Oro Bay–Cape Gloucester" but went on through the gamut of geographic

designation, like the addresses school children write in their textbooks, until they finished—"Planet Earth." The words were enclosed in carved scalloped borders as primitive as the lettering.

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If the damage to personal and GI gear had a depressing effect on the men, the few resources brought forward for uplift also suffered in the rain-forest. A portable organ, highly prized by the Division chaplain, first went flat and then would not play at all as its wooden pegs swelled with the humidity. Not to be outdone, the chaplain got the engineers to replace the pegs with sawed-off nails and the organ played again, rendering, recalls one man, "a very spirited, if wheezy, version of 'Onward, Christian Soldiers'."

III

A Marine historian with a strong distaste for overstatement (Frank Hough: *The Island War*) has called the invasion of western New Britain "the most nearly perfect amphibious assault in World War II."

Whatever its approach to perfection, the assault phase of the Cape Gloucester campaign was the only one of the four major landings made by the First Marine Division during which things happened—as nearly as can ever be expected in war—when they were supposed to happen. The landing went according to plan.

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And the plan was the very same one for which the Division staff had held out during the summer, and which it had finally had its way about in the late fall. That is, two regiments (not one) in assault, both ready to meet trouble if trouble should appear on D-day. When and if these two secured a beachhead, one of them would then turn quickly to the right and march toward, and as quickly as possible seize, the Cape Gloucester airfield, the principal tactical objective of the campaign. A single battalion (2/1) was to make a diversionary landing at Tauali.

That, to somewhat oversimplify the case, is what happened. The two regiments were the 7th and the 1st Marines; the third of the Division's regiments, the 5th, stood by at Oro Bay ready to go aboard ship on call.

The 7th landed first, striking at a point called Silimati, midway between the two areas—the airstrip on the western tip and the series of commanding hills behind Borgen Bay—where Japanese strength was thought to be concentrated. At 0746, 3/7 hit the narrow beach, followed two minutes later by 1/7. The reserve battalion, 2/7, was ashore by 0805.

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As soon as they were ashore, the men of 1/7 pushed painfully through the swamp toward Target Hill, a 450-foot mound behind and commanding the landing beach

area. The early morning aerial bombardment had left Target Hill a barren, pocked and blackened mass, and as the troops moved on it they coughed from the acrid, lung-irritating phosphorous smoke which still enshrouded the hill. When they reached Target Hill, the captain of the assault company sent two of his platoons around the hill, one on each side, and himself led a third to the top. By 1200, he and his men stood there unopposed.

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Only one thing was needed for the security of the beachhead. This was a perimeter, a line of positions to oppose counterattacks. The 2d Battalion followed the 1st through the swamp, ran into enemy outposts seven hundred yards inland and began—1,500 yards in—a sharp fight that was not to end for five days. Private Albion Sanderson of this outfit probably killed the first Japanese on Cape Gloucester in the following unglamorous fashion: Sanderson crawled atop a pillbox, looked through the aperture, saw a Jap staring back at him. Deliberately, Sanderson placed the muzzle of his M-1 against the Nip's forehead and pulled the trigger. The battalion also discovered a Jap supply dump hidden in the swamp so that when they stopped for the night the sergeant-major lined his foxhole with the boards of what had been a Japanese lean-to, smoked a Jap cigarette, and pulled a Jap rainproof about him as he brewed a cup of coffee with a tin of Jap canned heat.

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With such shenanigans characteristic of D-day, it was obvious that the 1st Marines (less the 2d Battalion, which had landed unopposed at Tauali), whose assignment it was to capture the airfield, should turn in that direction once they were ashore, without pausing within the 7th's perimeter. They were only an hour behind the 7th (landing at 0830) and they turned immediately westward toward the airfield, moving along the coastal track.

Here the reception was different. No sooner had the leading elements turned than they ran into a roadblock, well disguised in the jungle. Two captains walked unsuspectingly into the Japanese lane of fire and were killed immediately. An amtrac was brought up, but got stuck between two trees and the Japanese swarmed it. They shot one gunner, dragged the other over the side and beat and knifed him to death.

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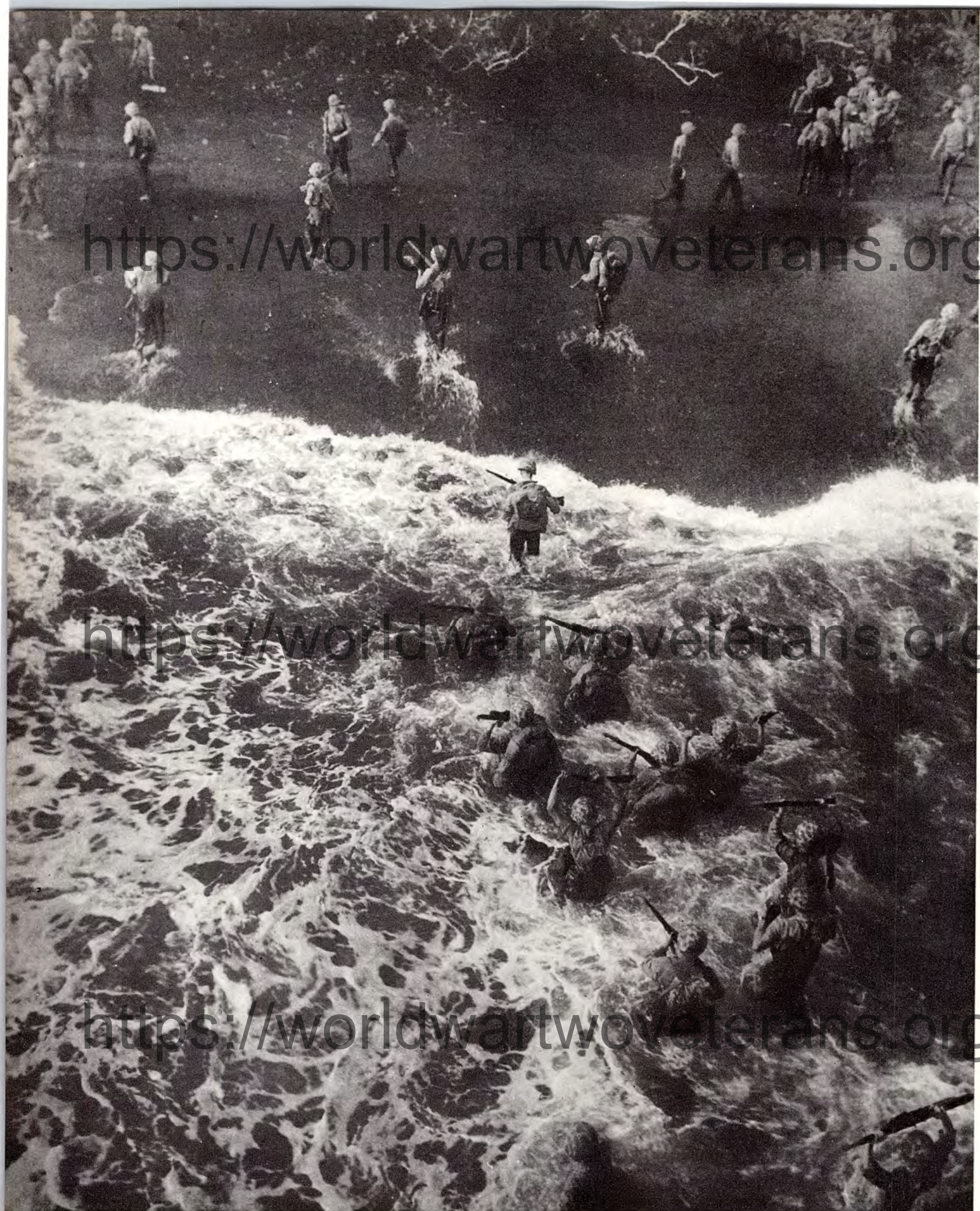
One of the amtrac men killed, Private Leslie E. Hansen, left his twin brother, Paul, aboard as a survivor. When General Rupertus learned that they were sons of a widow who had already lost an older son in the war, he ordered the surviving brother to be sent Stateside immediately.

Two Sherman tanks arrived soon after the amtrac was extricated and the infantrymen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THROUGH THE SURF: Carrying their rifles at high port, Marines come ashore at Cape Gloucester

joined in a brief skirmish to destroy the bunkers. By nightfall, the troops moving on the airfield had reached their assigned phase line for D-day.

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The one Japanese threat to the Division's D-day scheme turned out to be less than serious to the ground troops. The Japanese air force in the Southwest Pacific was still not one to be sneezed at, and some formidable number (probably more than two hundred) of planes were sent to bomb the landing force. Fifth Air Force fighters intercepted them while they were still at sea and shot down fifty-nine. What is described as "a small number of enemy medium and dive bombers" did manage to get through at 1445, making their strike from low altitude, passing through a few American B-25s. Our ships' antiaircraft shot down two friendly planes in the confusion, and the Japanese sank one destroyer and damaged an LST.

While the deployments inland and the air fights at sea had been going on, the engineers in the shore party had made herculean efforts at the narrow beach, had unloaded fourteen LSTs of all vehicles (preloaded with supplies) as well as fifty-five per cent of the bulk cargo they carried, some 2,100 dead-weight tons.

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Altogether, December 26 at Cape Gloucester had been a most surprising D-day, with our casualties 21 killed and 23 wounded and with only some 50 of the enemy killed.

The rainforest claimed one of the casualties. The falling of those giant, rotted trees described by the naturalist, was accelerated by the shell fire and explosions. The trees began to fall on D-day, and one of them caught and crippled a man under its trunk, presaging the nearly fifty casualties to be suffered from this cause during the Cape Gloucester campaign.

IV

There was some uncertainty throughout the ranks as the 1st Marines started their move toward the airfield on the second day. The only hindrance to the 500-yard front they pushed along the coast was the jungle: "because of rugged terrain and swamp areas along the shore," says the Division action report, "progress was difficult," and the front "finally was reduced to one company which advanced along the coastal track."

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With the narrower front, the regiment passed phase lines as if they were roadside jingles, gaining at 0845 the line they were supposed to have reached only by the end of the second day. They moved on and, about an hour later, ran into some scattered bunkers, deployed, fought briefly and successfully, and moved on again. When they got to the phase line for the third day at 1210, they paused, still somewhat bewildered

by the lack of resistance, to reorganize. They started forward again at 1335, not to halt for the night until 1720, when they rested their lines on the fourth day's objective.

Casualties for the day (December 27) in the First Marine Division were just 8 killed and 45 wounded. Most of these were suffered by the 7th Marines which had, in some further moves to strengthen the perimeter, run into sturdy Japanese resistance.

As much because of the uncertainty which continued to trouble the staff as for any other reason, word was sent before the day ended for the 5th Marines to go aboard ship and to come on up prepared to fight on arrival.

For the first few hours of the third day—D plus 2 (December 28)—the 1st Marines moved along much as they had on the second day, until, when they ran into a congregation of Japs at 1400, they found the presence of the enemy almost reassuring. The advance quickly halted and the support company (K) of the 3d Battalion was brought forward with a platoon of tanks to destroy the 75mm field pieces, antitank guns, mines, and machine-gun bunkers which were holding them up.

The tank platoon commander remembers how surprised the Japanese were by the strength of the Sherman armor.

"We turned a corner and ran right into a Jap 75," he said. "I saw one Jap walk calmly

AIRPORT DRIVE: Advancing from one bomb crater to another, Marines follow their Sherman tanks toward the Jap airfield on Cape Gloucester

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over and pull the lanyard. The shell, it was HE, hardly scratched the tank. They were so astonished they just stood there while we mowed 'em down and smashed the piece."

The tanks rumbled around through the Japanese bunkers (buttressed mainly with coconut logs and coral-filled oil drums), firing point-blank until the surviving Japanese ran out. Then the men of K company killed them with rifle fire. In less than four hours all the Japanese were dead, the action (the battle of Hell's Point) was over, and the 1st moved on again, halting for the night at 1730, in position to move onto the cleared airfield area.

The strongest and most determined Japanese charge since H-hour hit the 2d Battalion, 7th Marines, the same afternoon at 1413. More than a company of Japs sprang at the perimeter from well camouflaged bunkers, and there was a brief but fierce fight in the swampy area behind the beach, with the 7th holding its ground, killing 466 Japanese against losses of 25 killed and 75 wounded in Marine ranks.

The fourth day, D plus 3 (December 29), was more a day of maneuver than of fighting. With the arrival of the 5th Marines in the morning, it was decided to take the airfield in a coordinated drive with the 5th Marines moving on it from the south and the 1st Marines moving on it from the east. This meant that the 1st sat waiting for the newly arrived 5th to march from the beachhead up to the kunai-covered ridges south of, and overlooking, the airfield. The schedule called for the two units to start together at noon, and while the 5th was getting into position there was an artillery and air bombardment of the airfield.

The jungle slowed the two battalions (1st and 2d) of the 5th that were to take part, and they were not in position and ready to attack until 1500. When word was given for the drive to start, the 1st Marines went forward rapidly and were on the strip at 1755. When the 5th, however, started down the ridges toward the airfield, they ran into a series of bunkers in a ravine formed by a junction of two streams just south of the airfield. The men of the assault battalion, the 2d, closed in, hurling grenades, and when there was no reply they scurried up to look into the bunkers, only to find them empty. The battalion then turned on toward the airfield, reached it at 1925, after dark.

The 1st Battalion of the 5th, trailing the 2d, lost contact in the darkness and dug in on a ridge overlooking the field, only some 1,200 yards from the regiment's line of departure for the day, a day which had resulted in 5 killed and 38 wounded in the scattered fighting.

That night (December 29), the action shifted to Tauali where the 2d Battalion, 1st Marines (Lieutenant Colonel James M. Masters, Sr.) stood off what one historian has

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WESTERN NEW BRITAIN

O C E A N

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N

SCALE IN MILES

0 500 1000 2000 3000 4000

SCALE IN YARDS

1/1

28 Dec

BEACH BLUE

27 Dec

3/1

27 Dec

26 Dec

3/1 1/1

3/1

26 Dec

YELLOW 1

3/7

YELLOW 2

SILIMATI PT

2/7

4 Jan

1/7 Hill 450

2/7

26-30 Dec

12 Jan

3/5 3/7

BORGEN BAY

Hill 150

12 Jan

2/7

3/5 1/7

Barge Hideout

1/7

Weapons Co

3/7 Hill 660

18 Jan

14 Jan

18 Jan

NATAMO PT

To Aitape

To Nakarop

1/5

TWIN FORKS RIVER

EAST RIVER

NATAMO RIVER

NAKAROP

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GRUNT FOR ME: There were times at Gloucester when everything bogged down, even the jeep

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called "as futile an action as was ever fought; yet, acting without plan or imagination, the Japanese fought stubbornly, persistently, savagely."

Although the battalion had come ashore without opposition, the men had begun to feel the tension of their isolation for the battalion was, as Masters has said, "in radio defilade," unable to make contact with Division at Gloucester. Principally for morale effect, patrols were sent far beyond what would have been considered necessary for normal security, as far north as Dorf Point, as far south as Sag Sag Bay. What encounters there were showed that the Japs were not alert. One patrol, says Masters, "found a bunch of Japs 'flemished' out beside a trail, sound asleep with no security. My men killed twenty-three of them."

When the Japs came at Masters' all-around perimeter near Tauali Village on the night of December 29, they struck, as they so often had at Guadalcanal, on a narrow front, and a few broke through. The commotion awakened a gunnery sergeant who grabbed a light machine gun and rushed forward, gun blazing, toward the point of penetration. This halted the attack temporarily. Through the rest of the night the Japanese, in small groups, tried to come through. Next morning, December 30, a shallow saddle in front of the battalion's lines overflowed with Jap bodies, and the battle of Coffin Corner was over.

First thing the next morning back at the airfield, the 5th Marines sent a patrol out to establish contact with its trailing battalion, still up in the hills. The Japs, overnight, had moved back into the bunkers in the ravine, and there soon developed one of those typically nasty and intimate small actions, with each squad on its own and with a high degree of improvisation becoming the order of the encounter. The patrol sent word back and waited for reinforcements, which came in the form of a platoon from Company F. The job soon turned out to be too big for a platoon, and the rest of F came up, led by a captain who hummed his University of Illinois school song, recalls a member of the company.

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As the morning wore on, with close-in fighting, tanks assisting where they could, the company grew short of ammunition. A private rigged semaphore flags out of dirty handkerchiefs, and when this failed to attract attention he went back himself to lead ammo carriers up.

"Nice going," somebody said to him when he returned.

"I only went down for my pipe," the private deprecatingly answered.

More help was needed, and the 5th asked the 1st, now comparatively unengaged in its positions on the other side of the airfield, to send over a company to help F. This was Company I, 3d Battalion, and the two fought on through the afternoon of December 30 and into the next day before the last of the Japanese was killed. But it was an isolated body of Japanese that had offered the day's resistance on December 30, and the main elements of the two Division regiments secured the airfield.

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At 1300, December 30, General Rupertus sent the following dispatch to the Commanding General, Sixth Army:

"First Marine Division presents to you as an early New Year gift the complete airdrome of Cape Gloucester. Situation well in hand due to fighting spirit of troops, the usual Marine luck and the help of God. . . . Rupertus grinning to Krueger."

Next day at 1200, the United States flag was raised over Cape Gloucester airfield.

V

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The jungle mocks the most ancient military axioms. One: find and keep in touch with the enemy! Find him? Find him when he is crouched and camouflaged in the roots and the vines of the rainforest? Two: when you have found the enemy, mass your fires and bring your superior fire power to bear upon him! Perhaps, perhaps not. You'll do the best you can, willingly taking the fire of a 37mm cannon instead of a 155mm

THE UNSEEN ENEMY: The Marine on the far bank searches the trees for Japs while his buddies wade at high port through a jungle stream

howitzer, if the 37 is all you can manhandle forward. The rules must be looked upon with a flexible mind, for all jungle wars reduce themselves to small wars.

"They tell the foot soldier to advance by fire and maneuver," says a lecturer in tactics at a Marine school who was an officer in the Division Scout Company at Gloucester. "He's supposed to fire while his buddy, or buddies, advance. And they're to fire when *he* advances."

"I'm dying of laughter," went on the instructor. "How could you do this at Gloucester? You'd step off from your line in the morning, take say ten paces, and turn around to guide on your buddy. And—nobody there, Jap or Marine! Ah, I can tell you it was a very small war and a very lonely business."

The affair that was to be so lonely was the fight for three hills that rise around the rim of the cup of land which holds Borgen Bay: Hill 150, Aogiri Ridge, and Hill 660.

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Not until these were in our hands would the position in Western New Britain be secure. Except for an infrequent kunai patch the area was all swamp and rainforest. It was this fight more than that for the airfield which gives the Gloucester campaign its character. As soon as the airfield was captured, General Rupertus ordered the Assistant Division Commander, Brigadier General Lemuel C. Shepherd, Jr. (later to command the Sixth Marine Division) "to conduct operations to the southeast in order to extend the beachhead perimeter and clear the enemy from the Borgen Bay area." A task force built around the 7th Marines plus the 3d Battalion, 5th Marines, the last unit to come ashore, was created for the purpose.

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The scouts who went out in advance on December 30 got a promise from the Japs that Borgen Bay would not be taken as easily as had the airfield. When, ahead of them, they saw a wounded Jap and went after him, they were ambushed. Only one of the scouts escaped; the other four were either clubbed or bayonetted to death.

On December 31 and January 1, there was some more cautious patrolling after which, on January 2, four battalions (from left to right: 1/7, 2/7, 3/7, 3/5) sent their men forward through the swamp at 1000. The two battalions swinging out southeastward, 3/5 and 3/7, had not advanced three hundred yards before they came to a broad, shallow stream which ran swiftly below high banks. The leading scouts were fired at only by snipers as they crossed. But when the lead platoon followed, "the jungle exploded in their faces," according to Marine combat correspondent Asa Bordages, who was with 3/5. The platoon was stuck with its back to the water. The rest of the company, still on the friendly side of the stream, pumped automatic-weapons fire across to cover the withdrawal.

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And as the platoon pulled back a corporal heard one of his buddies muttering in bewildered anger, "I can't see, I can't see." The corporal lifted his sightless comrade, hauled him back toward the stream, pausing now and again to fire. Both, wrote Bordages in an account of the episode, got back safely.

All that day of January 2, 3/5 and 3/7 fought back and forth across the stream. Some men crossed it as many as four times. One had both legs crippled under him, but nevertheless dragged himself back to the bank and let himself roll down it head first into the water. There he was finally seen by his comrades, two of whom sloshed out and brought him to safety.

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On the morning of January 3, the Japanese began to fire mortar shells along the banks of the stream. A sergeant crawled along the line to see if any of his men were hit. He saw: "A kid sitting there in his foxhole. He didn't have any head. He just had

a neck with dogtags on it." One ashen-faced youth was muttering as he fired: "It don't do any good. I got three of 'em, but it don't do any good."

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By mid-morning Japanese snipers had moved forward to cover the stream itself, and no one could cross safely. One group that tried and failed hid themselves in the growth along the bank, standing in the water with only their faces above it. But not all of them reached the bank. One man hung over a log in mid-stream ("he must have had twenty holes in him"), kept crying, "Here I am, here I am." They could do nothing but listen while his cries died away as his blood, and the blood of others struck there with him, flowed down into their faces.

Another group tried to and did cross but had to turn back when their lieutenant was hit. Weakened by loss of blood, he barely got back to the water. He told his men to go on. "Keep the line moving," he said. They obeyed—all except two, a corporal and a private first class, who decided to go back for their officer. They crawled down to the creek, crouched neck-deep in the water, and listened. They could hear nothing. They were afraid at first to call the lieutenant for fear that he would, by answering, betray himself. Their silent wait was unrewarded, and at last they decided they must speak out. They called him softly by a nickname they had before only bandied in private, a jest on the lieutenant's college.

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"Tommy Harvard . . . Tommy Harvard," they whispered.

"I'm down here," a voice weakly answered.

"What's your real name?"

"Elisha Atkins," came the confirmation.

They pushed slowly through the water to him. "God," the lieutenant said hoarsely, as they took him in their arms, "Am I glad to see *you!*"

If the two battalions were going to get across Suicide Creek, not more heroism but more fire power was needed, and a request for tanks was sent back by the 3d Battalion, 7th Marines, on the morning of January 3. Nor would the tanks in themselves be the final answer. The banks of the stream were too steep for tanks. A bulldozer was brought up with the tanks; was, in fact, used to cut the way through the tangle to get the tanks up to the creek itself. As the bulldozer began work the troops on the west bank opened fire on the Japanese to keep them down, for the bulldozer was unarmored and the driver, Corporal John E. Capito, sat high and dry and exposed. Hardly had the big blade pushed three loads into the stream (it was paring the sharp near-side bank) before Capito was hit in the teeth by a bullet. Two volunteers, Staff Sergeant Keary Lane and Private First Class Randall Johnson, crawled forward, and as Japanese sniper fire began

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again, moved the bulldozer back into the stream, operating it from the side, working its levers with an axe handle. Lane climbed into the seat, was soon hit, but stayed on until nightfall when, says the Division action report, "the banks of the stream had been sufficiently lowered to enable the medium tanks to effect a crossing." Capito and Lane both received the Silver Star.

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On the morning of January 4, three tanks, oblivious to the bullets glancing off their armor, grunted across Suicide Creek, opening fire on the Japanese bunkers as soon as they came up the bank of the other side. They immediately conned two Japs standing upright and made short work of them, two who were, the following infantry discovered, carrying dynamite, obviously antitankers.

Though 3/5 and 3/7 were now, on January 4, across the stream, the going was still very slow, and they did not reach what had been the second day's objective until nightfall of this, the third day. That night the whole Borgen Bay task force was ordered

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to halt and to reorganize on January 5, for there had been another nasty fight back at Target Hill, the eminence captured the first day. The men of the 1st Battalion, 7th Marines, left there to hold it, had been counterattacked at 0545 on the night of January 2-3. The Japanese came up the steep slopes on steps they dug earlier in the evening. As they had so often done at Guadalcanal, the Japanese alerted us by firing a green flare, and by the flare's light the Marines spotted them trying to clamber over the barbed wire laid twenty yards in front of the Marine machine-gun and rifle pits.

The Japanese ran at the wire for two hours and never got past it, but they did not stop firing until many hours later, not until noon of January 3. The casualty tally seemed incredible: more than two hundred counted Japanese dead against Marine losses of three dead and less than a dozen wounded. It is hard to decide who the local Japanese commander hoped to deceive when he wrote (in a captured document): "Abe Company, as the leading company in the attack, succeeded in breaking through and taking Target Hill."

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VI

There were talks between G-2 section and G-3 section and General Shepherd on January 5. The object of these talks was to decide which of the ridges in the Borgen Bay area was the one the Japanese called "Aogiri." G-2 had a Japanese document that ordered "Aogiri" to be held at all costs, and a crude Jap sketch of the hill. It had to be either Hill 150 or Hill 660, both plainly to be seen by eyes of the staff and both lying directly in the path of the advancing troops. Aogiri was not 660, although it might be 150. A sure decision was impossible, but the renewed attack for the next day, January 6, was planned on the assumption that 150 was Aogiri, and the battalion commanders were so warned.

Whatever forward movement there was on January 6 had to be made against driving sheets of rain. The troops could not move until 1100 but when they did start, the 1st Battalion, 7th Marines, down along the beach, quickly got across a sand spit and walked on another two hundred yards before Company A got into a heavy fire fight. They halted and asked for tank support.

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When the tanks came up, the platoon commander hesitated before the stream. As at Suicide a bulldozer came up, pushed out across the stream to level its banks. Snipers soon opened on the driver, but he went on with his work until a passage seemed clear. Still the tank commander was reluctant. At this moment arrived Captain Joe Buckley, commander of the 7th's Weapons Company and one of the old Corps, who

had joined as private in 1915 and risen through the ranks. Buckley was aboard his half-track and was eager to get ahead with the battle. With a snarl of contempt, he went around the tanks and clanked up on the coastal trail to the sound of the firing, shortly afterward adding the din of his 75mm to it. Behind Buckley appeared Colonel Herman Hanneken, Chief of Staff to General Shepherd. After a quick study of the spit, Hanneken ordered the tank commander across—if he got stuck, he got stuck. The tanks made it, went on up where Buckley was and in the end did a good day's work, enabling Company A to capture two Japanese 37mm guns and five machine guns, as well as reach its objective for the day.

While this to-do was taking place along the coastal track, farther inland the rest of the 1st Battalion, 7th Marines, mounted Hill 150, found it almost undefended, and fired only infrequent shots to get to the top and to settle, by the end of the day, the argument about it being Aogiri. It was not. There were hints in what happened to the other battalions on January 6 that Aogiri was elsewhere, just possibly in front of the 3d Battalion, 5th Marines, where going had been very slow. On that day and the next, January 7, it became plain that the Japanese had a strong position in a densely wooded bottom to the west of Hill 150 and along a stream bed north of that point, for there was bloody hand-to-hand fighting when Company C of the 1st Battalion, 7th Marines, tried to cross the stream. As darkness came on, some of the men decided to give the new gadget—the bazooka—a try. In the jungle it was worthless; its shells would not detonate in the soft mud.

For the first hour or so of the 8th, the 3d Battalion, 5th Marines, made slow but encouragingly steady progress. Later in the morning, "it became apparent that the advance elements were ascending a gently rising ridge . . ." says the action report. "The map showed no high ground in the vicinity but as the advance continued the ground rose precipitously and terrific machine-gun and sniper fire covered every avenue of approach."

The debate was over: this was Aogiri, and the 3d Battalion, 5th Marines, halted for the night, soaked, bleary-eyed from nearly a week of bitter fighting in the jungle swamp, holding a little piece of it. They had lost their battalion commander, and Lieutenant Colonel Lewis (Silent Lew) Walt, a brawny, barrel-chested man with a square face and small but clear blue eyes, was sent up to take over.

A study of the kind of leadership needed in jungle warfare, based on Marine experience in World War II, would make a significant contribution to that ever-important military problem. One of the things it would reveal is the critical role of the battalion

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FIRE ONE! Pack howitzer men, clad in camouflaged dungarees, have just loosed a round at the Japanese

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commander. The battalion, in this kind of small war where maneuver by large units is impossible, becomes the critical tactical echelon, the echelon at which jungle campaigns are made or broken, fail or succeed. In the Pacific island war conquest of important terrain features seemed always to turn out to be jobs of battalion size.

In the Borgen Bay campaign, for example, with at most three battalions (from two different regiments) in the line, the battalion commander in effect reported directly to the task force commander, who was not a regimental commander but an assistant division commander, a brigadier general.

Finally, the battalion commander was the highest ranking officer in intimate contact with the rank and file of his command. The battalion commander was likely to be the highest ranking officer the ordinary fighting man saw frequently. In the seizure of Aogiri, between 0800 January 9 and 0800 January 10, "Colonel Walt practically carried the battalion in on his shoulders," one historian has said, a kind of exaggeration common among military historians who find it easier to dramatize with the name of an officer the collective anonymous bravery of a large group of men. At Aogiri every man in the 3d Battalion, 5th Marines, went up on his own two jungle-rotted feet,

searching with his own bloodshot eyes for the hidden enemy who might kill *him*. But in Silent Lew they had exceptional leadership.

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Walt began the day of January 9 with an improvisation. He needed fire power, thought of a 37mm cannon, a weapon weighing half a ton, and ordered one brought forward. It came by a small caterpillar tractor, the only motorized vehicle that could get even to the battalion's rear ranks. From rear to front lines it was manhandled. At the front, Walt himself put his shoulder to it, helped to push it forward as the troops advanced, stood by as the crew which manned it fired canister straight ahead into the jungle. This, if it did nothing else, opened a way through the tangle. "By superhuman effort," says the action report, "the gun was finally manhandled into position to sweep the ridge" where the "lines were only ten yards apart."

Walt figured that the Japanese on the reverse slope would attack during the night and he ordered his men to hold their fire until the Japs were upon them. At 0135, January 10, the Japanese charged up the hill with fixed bayonets, crying in their shrill, excited voices. The Marines waited what seemed a perilously long time and then fired every weapon they had, squeezing triggers until fingers ached. Many Japanese fell, others hesitated and pulled back. Three more times they charged, some falling, the others hesitating and finally retreating. When the fourth assault was turned back, Walt's four most importantly placed machine guns were out of ammunition, and he anxiously awaited the return of a party he had sent back for ammo. He believed the Japanese were coming a fifth time.

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His anxiety was justified. He remembers clocking the interval between the ammo party's return and the next, the fifth and last Japanese assault upon his lines. It was exactly four minutes. The fifth attack was stopped. When daylight came the weary Marines counted more than two hundred Japanese dead and the 37mm had proven its weight in Marine lives saved.

Next morning, when General Shepherd visited Aogiri Ridge, he told his staff that the ridge would no longer be called Aogiri.

"We'll call it Walt's Ridge," he said.

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A simultaneous but less serious counterattack was made against the 1st Battalion, 7th Marines, the same night. This too was turned back, and on the 10th and 11th, that battalion fought on into the area back of Walt's Ridge and discovered that it was the main Japanese supply and bivouac area in the Borgen Bay area. It was secure by noon of the 11th; only Hill 660 remained to be taken.

VII

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January 12 was an earned day of rest, and there was much cleaning and oiling of rifles and some sleep and very little talk.

The scouts were out during the day, probing to the foot of 660. They had a curious encounter with a much larger party of Japanese, proving that you could never put them down in your book as being either this or that. The platoon leader tells the story:

"The secondary growth was terrific, like a maze in a funhouse. Tracy, the best scout, was on the point. At the foot of 660, he ran smack into some Japs. Instead of throwing a grenade or firing a shot, Tracy just held up his hand for us to halt and then turned his head in the direction of the Japs. We followed his eyes and suddenly we were staring into their faces. They just stared back. This seemed like hours. Then, for no good reason, they turned and walked away. And so did we. If you look at it from their point of view, why it's damned funny they didn't shoot. As for us, we were supposed to get back alive, and I think it was pretty smart of Tracy to keep his head."

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More generally, what the scouts learned on the 12th proved that General Shepherd's plan for 660 was good. The right flank of the Borgen Bay task force line, held by 2/7, was to dig in and lay barbed wire along their entire sector to refuse that flank. Walt's men, 3/5, badly beat up, were to be pinched out. What had been the reserve battalion, 3/7, would march through 1/7 and attack directly up 660 on January 13.

The attack was to be two-pronged, and yet that gives the plan a grander sound than it deserves. The main affair was that of the 3d Battalion, 7th Marines, but Joe Buckley was to lead a motley force, including not only his half-track, but also two light tanks, a jeep and several 37mm guns, as well as a platoon of pioneers, a platoon of infantry, and one of the ubiquitous bulldozers, along the coastal road behind 660. This second prong ("Imagine me a prong," Buckley would surely say) moved out on the 13th in quite unconventional order: first a squad of engineers to act as scouts; then a bulldozer; then a light tank; and following it, the infantry; and then in order: Buckley's half-track, a little more infantry, another half-track, and finally, a second light tank.

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Buckley's rumbling army, tailored for jungle combat, marched with surprising ease along the foot of 660, getting nothing heavier than sniper fire until it was within 150 yards of its objective, a stream back of 660. Then the Japanese fired with their 20mm guns from the hill, giving Buckley's men a bad time because they could not seem to knock out the Japanese positions with their flat-trajectory weapons, although the Marines had the satisfaction of hearing, according to one report, "the sound of a

thousand pebbles, steel pebbles, ball bearings from our canister, falling in the woods." By 1030 Buckley and his infantry had silenced the guns and reached their objective, were behind the Japanese on 660, though still getting considerable sniper fire.

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The opening of the main attack is described in military language in the Division action report: "Preceded by a heavy artillery preparation, the 3d Battalion, 7th Marines, advanced rapidly in column of companies to the northern slope of Hill 660 and at 0930 started up its slopes."

A private puts the event in different terms: "You could hardly walk. If you'd try

WE ARE JUST A FEW PACES IN FRONT OF MILLER OF M/3/7

IT SHOWS IN THE EYES: A machine gunner shows the strain of the fighting on Hill 660 as he comes off after the battle has been won

"M" Co.

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TWENTY-THREE DAYS: These men make their way to the rear through the muck of Gloucester for an earned rest

to watch where you were stepping, the vines would cut your face. A Jap sniper hit my buddy in the hip. I waited till he fired again, found him in a tree, and let him have it. I shot five times, and he dangled. He was tied in the tree. A BAR man sprayed the Jap and he came bouncing down through the limbs of the trees.

"I began to pray. I lost my rosary, but I had a Holy Family medal. I prayed most of the time, I guess, except when I was thinking. When I got to thinking then I had the loneliest feeling I ever had in my life. There'd be a million guys around and you'd still feel lonely.

"Sometimes when we were pinned down, waiting to try again, I'd lay there with my face as deep in the ground as I could get it. And I'd fix my eyes on something. Once it was an ant. Once it was just a blade of grass. It started me thinking about all kinds of things. I was in a daze . . . forgot where I was. And all of a sudden I'd be in Forest Park [St. Louis], lying on the grass like I used to . . . thinking.

"Then a machine gun would open up, and you couldn't make up your mind where you were—in St. Louis, or out in this beat-up jungle. And when the order came to get

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up and charge, you'd just go ahead—half of you in Forest Park, and half on Hill 660."

As the hill grew more and more steep, the advance slowed and by the time it had become a 45-degree climb, Japanese fire was well placed and intense. The Marines were pinned down, tried to get up, brought down upon themselves fusillades of sniper and machine-gun fire, and were held there for the rest of the afternoon, unable to make further advances.

It was plain they would have to withdraw if they were to find a secure position for the night, but so furious was the Japanese fire that one company could not even move backward. The battalion commander, Lieutenant Colonel Henry Buse, Jr., got a light tank up and called on the artillery for help. A forward observer crawled out ahead of the lines to call the shots. He sighted them first into the top of the hill, and then gradually lowered the range down the hill into the Japanese positions until finally the shells were falling only fifty yards from Marine lines. It was then that the company withdrew.

The next day, January 14, Buse tried another scheme, did not send his men up the northern slope again, instead sent strong probing patrols to his right, around the base of 660 to the west and southwest, searching for an easier way. The farther around the hill the patrol got the less resistance they found. When they were almost around, when they got to the southern side of 660 (separated only by a swamp from Buckley) they found they could begin to mount the slopes with comparatively little resistance. They had found a passage.

But all this had taken time. It was late afternoon. Ahead was still a stretch of some 250 yards of nearly sheer cliff. Should they try to get to the top before dark? Would resistance continue to be light?

Buse chose to send them on, threw in more reserves, called for more mortar fire, more grenades, more machine-gun ammunition. The ammunition was passed up the slope by human chain.

"The boys were tired, wet to the skin, and going on nerve alone," wrote Marine combat correspondents Sam Stavisky and Jeremiah O'Leary. "Not even Colonel Buse could explain it, but spontaneously those bedraggled and bedeviled Marines rose and charged that vertical face of rock and clay. They had been broken into small units by casualties and terrain and enemy fire, but these small units just kept going. That night we camped on the crest of Hill 660."

As for the defenders, some died at their guns and others fled down the hill to hide for the night in the thick jungle. A few tried to get away through Buckley's men, falling

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into the sights of Buckley's watch about midnight. The Marine guard waited until the Japanese reached the beach and finally the water. Then they picked them off, watching the heads disappear under the surf. At 0400 (January 15) another party came out of the jungle onto the beach, and one by one they were killed, their bodies left lying in neat file.

With morning, the 3d Battalion mopped up the slopes, and Buckley sent a patrol out ahead which found a row of seven graves. At the head of each were rusty cans and dirty *sake* bottles into which wilted jungle flowers had been thrust, the only Japanese graves Marines found on Cape Gloucester.

The last of the Japanese on 660 counterattacked just before dawn (0530) of

***HILL 660 FACES:** Trucks bring men of the 7th Marines out of the lines at Hill 660 on Cape Gloucester*

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BARED WET HEADS: It rained, of course, the day the cemetery was dedicated at Cape Gloucester

January 16, some two companies of them coming at Marines with bayonets. They got their mental surcease.

VIII

What was the toll for the hills around Borgen Bay?

To count it, an unusual tally must be made. Most of the recorded casualties (since D-day: 247 killed in action, 772 wounded and 1 missing) can be attributed to the fight against the Japanese. But an almost equal number, unlisted, were those made unfit for combat by the rain and the jungle, including an estimated 25 men who lost their lives from the falling trees.

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A single platoon of scouts (twenty-two men) that was "in as good physical condition as human beings could be on the day we landed," according to its second lieutenant, had only six effectives. Two men were killed and six were wounded; six more suffered so badly from "jungle rot" that they could not walk; two others were evacuated as combat fatigue cases. Of the sixteen ineffectives, only half were made so by gunshot wounds; the other half were made so by the rainforest.

"Both of the fellows who cracked up," commented the lieutenant, "were top scouts. One of them had done a real spectacular job at the 'Canal, but at Gloucester he began to lag back on the trail, looking into the trees for Japs. When a Jap would fire, he'd want to stop and get him. That's no good. You've gotta keep moving.

"We used to go out in groups of six—myself and five others out of the platoon. Every morning, I'd point out the group I wanted for the day.

"Well, one morning when I pointed to this fellow, he went berserk. We had to tie him to a tree. His big idea was to go up and get some Japs all by himself.

"I knew how he felt," the lieutenant went on reflectively. "One of the really *bad* things about the fighting at Gloucester was that you couldn't see the Japs. You could be walking along a trail and the man ahead of you would go—just like *that,"* and the lieutenant snapped his fingers.

"It sounds funny, but I got so I almost liked to run into them and have a fight. Just to see 'em helped, made you feel there really were some Japs on the island, not ghosts."

The toll showed in the faces and bodies of the men who came off 660 when the 7th Marines, which had survived in the rainforest for twenty-three days, was relieved by the 5th.

It was raining the day they scrambled back down and one observer noted that "wetness is now as much a part of them as the clayish mud that blends helmets, packs, bearded faces, tattered clothes, hands, boots, into the reddish-brown of the soil. Some are slopped over with ochre-stained ponchos, some hooded by Japanese raincoats. They eat as they trudge along, cold beans and cold hash out of cans."

And already many had begun to come down again with malaria.

Even the dead suffered from the rain. In the new graveyard at the airfield the sharply spaded mounds that marked each bier were eroded and levelled by rain, and each morning it was necessary for the men who kept the cemetery to go out with shovels and rebuild the mounds.

It rained on January 19, the day the cemetery was dedicated. General Rupertus

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bared his head along with the others in the small party that gathered, and then said:

"These were our buddies. They took their hardships cheerfully—and died the same way. Their spirit was wonderful. Let us take a lesson from them."

To symbolize the security of the entire Cape Gloucester area, airfield as well as Borgen Bay, a flag was raised there in the rain. It was soaked before it reached the top of the pole, hung limp as the men slogged away at the end of the ceremony.

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Chapter 15

A SOLDIER'S LIFE is worthless unless given for his country, for the national purpose: that was the Japanese doctrine.

Yet, if the fruition of the soldier's life is death, what then is his status if he is captured? Is he dead or alive?

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For the Japanese soldier the answer seemed to be: Dead, and no longer of any use to his country; dead and free from the sanctions of silence usually bound upon a soldier by his continuing sense of national loyalty. Capture a Jap soldier, and he would tell you the names of his officers, the exact location of his unit, its name and number and

its present strength, where his unit had fought before—and answer every question accurately.

Division intelligence was quick to exploit this curiosity of national behavior. Strong-arm methods of prisoner interrogation were outlawed at Cape Gloucester. "You can get a 'confession' out of a man by bullying him," G-2 cautioned the language officers (interpreters), "but Intelligence is not interested in 'confessions.' Our reason for being is to get *information.*"

The results were spectacular, so much so that it is not only possible to reconstruct Japanese activities now, but it was also possible to know what they were in advance of the Division's various battles. A prisoner captured on the third day, for example, told the disposition of his battalion defending the airfield, said their artillery was knocked out and that they were left with only hastily emplaced machine guns along the coastal road, testimony that was borne out in our relatively easy capture of the field.

As the weeks passed and the numbers of prisoners increased, Intelligence identified practically all Japanese units in western New Britain, even down to the names of commanding officers of minor units. The picture thus unfolded was not a pretty one, but was like a weird distortion of the usual ordered charts of military organization. The Japanese did not bother to reinforce the small garrisons that had held western New Britain since they took the island from the Australians in early 1942, until May 1943, when they sent in the 65th Brigade whose main body was the 141st Regiment. In July the Japanese sent down Major General Matsuda, a shipping expert, to command all the forces in Western New Britain. He was to coordinate supply and evacuation to and from the fighting front in New Guinea, and he brought along some of his staff from the 4th Shipping Group in the Philippines. Matsuda's first act was to chart a roadnet and to set his labor battalions to work upon it.

Not until November 1943, little more than a month before Marines struck, did the Japanese send down a force whose purpose was primarily to defend the western sector of New Britain itself. What came was part of the 17th Division which had been sliced into pieces on its arrival at Rabaul, parts being sent to Bougainville, parts to Cape Hoskins midway down the coast of New Britain, and parts held at Rabaul. Of this force the 53d Regiment came down farther toward Gloucester, landing at Iboki plantation.

That was the last. By late November not even Japanese destroyers could move safely through those waters. The U. S. Fifth Air Force was there to intercept.

By the 1st of December, when increasing American activity foretold some offensive

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action in the area, the Japanese situation in western New Britain was this: Matsuda, in command of the 65th Brigade and supporting units, responsible for that part of New Britain lying west of the Riebeck Bay–Pulie River mouth, reported to 17th Division whose headquarters was at Cape Hoskins, some 150 miles from Gloucester, and 17th Division in turn reported to 8th Area Army at Rabaul.

Matsuda's force was respectable enough in size had he not made the very mistake which the First Division staff had fought so hard to avoid. He dispersed his force, posting them at the sites of tiny native villages and clearings. He had garrisons at Natamo, Aisega, Cape Busching, Umboi, Garove and Arawe, as well as at Cape Gloucester, none of which in themselves could do much more than stop a battalion. If he thought he could reinforce the point where Americans hit from other garrisons —well, he should have known better. Heknew the jungle, knew how difficult it had been to build even the sleazy and inadequate single-track roads he had laid along the Gloucester shore.

When, for example, an element of the U. S. Army's 112th Cavalry hit Arawe in a diversionary landing on December 15, a part of the Sixth Army plan, Matsuda hurried the 1st Battalion, 141st Infantry, from Cape Busching to reinforce his Arawe garrison. The 141st of course got to Arawe too late to stop the Army at the beach, to prevent the Army from securing a beachhead. And, once the 141st was at Arawe, they were too far from Gloucester to be of use when the Marines landed there. Thus it was that Matsuda was deprived of the use of one of his best battalions.

A similar disaster fell upon the 1st and 2d Battalions of the 53d Regiment which Matsuda had sent down to Gloucester from Iboki. Headquarters and the 1st Battalion, charged with defense of the Gloucester airdrome, were cut off from the 2d Battalion in the Borgen Bay area when we landed between them. We defeated them piecemeal.

Matsuda compounded his error and made capture of the airfield even more easy for the Marines by ordering part of the 1st Battalion over to Tauali to oppose the landing team from the 1st Marines which landed there.

Matsuda's supply situation had been so bad since November that his garrisons were on half rations when the First Marine Division landed on December 26. It was for this reason that Matsuda put such a high value on Aogiri: it was the hill that protected his last road of entry into the Gloucester area, his last supply route. By the road that ran along behind Aogiri he had sent up on December 26, as soon as he learned of the Marine landing, the main body of the 141st (approximately 1,535 men) to support the battalion of the 53d in Borgen Bay which numbered about 1,305 men. This gave him

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about 2,800 soldiers to stand against what he thought was a force of only 2,500 Marines. He scheduled his main counterattack for January 2, but the Marine attack in Borgen Bay opened the same day, anticipating Matsuda's plan. He revised it slightly and attacked Target Hill on January 3. When this failed, Matsuda ordered both his 2d Battalion of the 53d Regiment (which had already suffered heavily) and the 2d Battalion of the 141st Regiment to hold Aogiri. When they together failed first to hold and then to recapture it, the vital road was out and Matsuda's hope of reinforcing his Borgen Bay garrisons was ended. What remained of 2/141 tried to hold Hill 660, a nearly lost cause before it began, and when Marines finally got to the top, the Japanese retreat from the Cape Gloucester area had already begun. By January 26, most of the Japanese had fallen behind the Natamo River.

Above all, there was the rainforest, affecting Japanese just as it did Americans. One of our interpreters submitted the following paraphrase of a comment by a Japanese prisoner: "He remarked with feeling that this jungle warfare would take the spirit out of anybody and make them sick of combat."

And the Division intelligence summary of prisoner interrogations noted that "hunger, undernourishment, positive starvation, malaria, diarrhea, foot rot, skin disease, and all the rest, brought a large proportion of the Emperor's troops to a condition of physical weakness, emaciation and inability even to walk, a condition that would make the victims of famine in India seem fairly robust in comparison. It was their physical inability that caused their collapse."

II

Well, so the Japs *were* sick and on the run. Nobody was fool enough to think that they would simply come crawling into our lines whining the Japanese equivalent of "Uncle!" They must be kept on the run, not be allowed to halt and catch their breaths. If they were allowed to regroup and reorganize, it would certainly mean more nasty fights ahead for the Division. The answer was what official reports call "vigorous patrolling," or, less officially, foot-work.

Just when all hands had set their minds to this tedious task there was a flurry of excitement and some anger at Division CP. Sixth Army had other ideas for use of the First Division. Way back when, back in the days when MacArthur had first got out of the Philippines to Australia and been given his theater command, a directive had set as his goal the seizure of Rabaul, this before the later decision had been reached by the

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ARMED WITH PIPE AND PISTOL: Lieutenant Colonel Lewis (Chesty) Puller (left) gives orders to a subordinate

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Joint Chiefs of Staff first to take Guadalcanal. Indeed, the Rabaul show had never come off, and more than a year had passed. The idea, though, struck in the craw of MacArthur's staff, and even at this late date, at the first of February 1944, Sixth Army still wanted to make a landing up there.

That's what caused the excitement at Division CP. General Rupertus came back from a Sixth Army conference with a plan under which the First Division was to take Rabaul, supported only by air, by landing on the west coast of Gazelle Peninsula, and marching across to the city, while an Army combat team landed on the east coast. Arrival of the plan put the First Division into the kind of situation where it didn't know whether to laugh or cry, for Division could not like a plan which called for it to advance over a 2,000-foot mountain range to reach the enemy, a well prepared enemy. In place of this ill-conceived plan, some members of the Division staff worked out their own counter. This involved a fleet and no less than two full divisions in assault. This plan was sent to Sixth Army, and nothing more was heard on the subject, officially.

Thoughts turned back quickly to patrolling. Captains Stevenson and Hunt and Parrish had already led company patrols far inland, up the trails that went along the ridges of Mount Talawe, converging finally upon a group of thatched huts sitting in the uplands and called Agulupella.

What Division had in mind now was a cross-island patrol, a long affair, to be out there for, say, thirty days on your own, never knowing when you'd run into a parcel of

Japs, moving through country that perhaps no white man had ever touched before, the kind of thing to catch the imagination and to lift the minds of the men out of their wet doldrums.

The choice of a leader for such a mission was obvious.

Chesty Puller: Lieutenant Colonel Lewis B. Puller, executive officer of the 7th Marines. Chesty of the jut-jaw and rasping voice. Chesty, who had been a captain in the Haitian Gendarmerie (though an enlisted Marine), and who had been flunked out of the Navy's air school at Pensacola on this comment from his instructor: "Glides flat. Skids on turns. Climbs too fast." Chesty, the man who asked, after seeing a new type flamethrower demonstrated, "Where do you fit the bayonet on it?" Chesty, whose perspective of the high reaches of command got so blurred that he persisted in calling the top commander in the Pacific "Nitmitz." Chesty, who would not let his men use even the thin regulation mattress out of combat. Chesty, who had never to this day in January 1944, allowed the sawbones to cut out the shrapnel he still carried in his legs from Guadalcanal.

Chesty, who only a couple of weeks ago when his regiment was holding a perimeter around Hill 660 had taken a staff officer and made the trip around the whole length of the line, walking outside the barbed wire, in the no-man's land between the Japs and Marines, pausing at every emplacement to ask: "How's things going, old man?"

And the officer who went with him, remembering the effect of Puller's visitation: "Christ! Chesty might as well have been handing out five-thousand-dollar bills with the guys having some place to spend it!"

Chesty, who could take without rancor the answer he got from one of the woebegone men: "We ought to get the hell out of here, Colonel!"

Chesty, who could reply: "That's no way to talk, boy."

And the boy, looking into the distance with the thousand-yard stare, repeating: "I'm telling you, Colonel, we ought to get out of this hole."

Chesty, who did suggest: "Come on out back, boy, and let's talk."

And Chesty, who could sit there in the mud and say simple, reassuring things, like: "I wanna go home too. I'm not getting any younger, either. This place is no good. I know it. But neither one of us is goin' home till these bastards are licked. I'll try to get you some hot chow up here."

The lowest mental state in the Marine lexicon is: "garrison-minded," and Chesty was the man to elevate it. Puller was sent to Agulupella, picking up his force as he went, most of them being scattered through the inland area, having completed various lesser

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missions already. He was told he would find three or four companies (K of the 1st, E and G of the 5th) plus the 1st Battalion of the 5th, and a headquarters detachment made up largely of intelligence folk.

Once he had collected his force, which came from almost every unit in the Division and would total nearly 1,300 men, he was to march to the Itni River and halt at a village named Gilnit, where he was to be met by an Army patrol from Arawe.

One officer, whose memory of the incident may be colored by his admiration for Puller (for Puller's admirers are legion), claims that as Puller and his executive officer neared Agulupella, they rested by the side of the trail and when a group came along, Puller would order: "March on to Agulupella and halt. You're in my patrol."

Among the surprised groups was a small artillery party, led by a stoutish officer. Puller asked him: "Hey, where you goin', son?"

"I'm an artilleryman with Parrish's company," was the somewhat startled reply.

"Where is Parrish's company?" asked Chesty, sensing bigger game.

"I don't know," was the answer, "but I'm goin' back."

"No you're *not*, Fat," said Puller, "you're in the Puller patrol."

When he saw how abashed the officer was, Puller grew conciliatory.

"Fat, it'll do you a lot of good to get away from your jeep. I'm doing this for your own good. Christ knows, your artillery won't do *me* any good where I'm going."

Puller later told one of his officers that he liked the Gilnit assignment because "everything's on two feet."

When he finally arrived at Agulupella at 1045, January 30, Puller had the problem of forming a staff from what seemed to him a superfluity of officers. He ordered his exec to get them together, and when they had gathered he looked at the assembly with narrow eyes.

"Who we gonna have for a -2?" he asked his exec, and was told that Division had sent up a major to serve in that capacity.

"Which is he?" Puller asked, and when the unhappy major was pointed out, Puller exclaimed loudly, "Why, that man hasn't even got a weapon on!" The major was not chosen.

Even with his staff organized and his troops assembled, he found he could not move out in strength for lack of food. Division was supposed to have built up a backlog of eight days' rations for the patrol, but actually Puller seldom had more than enough rations to last the next day, and it was finally necessary for him to send out limited patrols—that is, if he were to have any patrols at all. One of these, the first long patrol

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PAUSE FOR REFRESHMENT: Men of the Puller patrol take a break in a native village

to leave Puller's bivouac, was to go to the headwaters of the Itni River, look around, and come back. The captain in charge of the handful of scouts who made the mission grew bold, crossed the Itni, scouted the other side, with understandable elation sent a runner back to Puller with the news that he had found no Japs, and bivouacked out there for the night. To Puller, this was disobedience. He sent runners forward to tell the captain he was under arrest, but was not so reckless as to send the captain back; indeed he used him to lead the main body of the patrol. Later Puller was reluctantly convinced that he should withdraw the charges. The captain went on to win the Navy Cross at Peleliu.

Puller left Agulupella on February 6 with only 389 men out of the 1,300 available to him, and then he had to be supplied by air-drop from Cub planes.

It was not an easy march to Gilnit, twenty miles distant by air, but by jungle path it seemed nearer two hundred. Puller led the men at a fast pace and they were never dry—

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Jungle juice

wet with their own perspiration if not from rain. They met occasional Japanese stragglers and quickly dispatched them, but otherwise proceeded to Gilnit without major encounter, arriving there five days later, Febuary 11. As a matter of course, Puller sent a patrol across the Itni at Gilnit to reconnoiter a commanding hill that bore the name Attulu. The patrol reported that the hill was unoccupied, and Puller waited for the Army patrol which was to meet him there.

Soon after, he received a puzzling message. The Army patrol was held up before Attulu Hill. Puller again sent a patrol across the Gilnit for a more thorough reconnaissance of Attulu, and his men found there an abandoned Jap supply dump with evidence that the Japs had departed more than a month earlier. With this news Puller somewhat contemptuously left behind a force amounting only to one platoon to make the final contact with the slow-moving Doggies, and turned back the rest of his men to Agulupella and to Cape Gloucester. They reached the Division perimeter on February 18.

III

By the end of January there was a perceptible change of attitude among the men about the jungle. This may have been nothing more than a gain in insight: the discovery, when the bitterest part of the fighting at Cape Gloucester was over, that they had become in two tropical campaigns possessors of a high degree of jungle wisdom and experience. If it was not with a sense of happiness, it was at least with a sense of competence that the men of the First now came to look upon the rainforest.

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It was well that they felt so for now a highly intricate and complex, if limited, amphibious campaign was to be embarked upon, moving, as the Division action report notes, "5000 men with their attendant supplies for a distance of 60 miles around and over some of the worst jungle terrain in the world," in a shore-to-shore operation eastward along the New Britain coast.

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Getting the campaign (assigned to the 5th Marines) under way first involved a Japanese rear-guard action at the Natamo River crossing, an almost typical action against the Japanese, with their letting our advance patrols get across, then firing behind them. Finally, in a five-day action from January 20 to January 25, the strength of the entire Marine battalion had to be used to wrest the point beyond the river from the Japanese.

The patrols that went on from Natamo found General Matsuda's command post, a skillfully camouflaged building set on stilts. The General was no longer there and the Marines got their kicks out of trying his four-poster bed for size, using his flush toilet, and issuing mock orders from his pink wicker chair. Carelessly buried headquarters papers proved that Matsuda had abandoned his home in haste and that he was not too far away. It would be quite a feather to catch him and when prisoners told that the next rendezvous point was Karai-ai, some thirty miles east of Borgen Bay, Marines were immediately loaded into boats and sent there. They arrived too late to get Matsuda, who had left the area only a few days before, probably early in the third week of February, aboard a ship that was waiting for him. Karai-ai was nevertheless secured by Marines on February 21.

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The Japanese seen along the trail by patrols afoot were objects more of pity than of hatred. "There was not a mile of that jungle trail," says Hough, "but was strewn with dead men, dying men, sick men; some with malaria, some with dysentery, some rotting with fungus infection, some with old wounds still suppurating, all on the verge of starvation. Wretched individuals, too weak to go on, and abandoned by their comrades, waited stoically until the point of the [Marine] patrol came into view, then blew themselves up with hand grenades."

The point (a scout platoon attached to the Fifth) was a hardy group and a look at their daily routine tells how much they, and the others who came behind them, had learned about the jungle.

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The second lieutenant who commanded them recalls:

> We refreshed ourselves on coconut milk, choosing the ones that were changing their color from green to brown, the ones that were almost orange. The milk in these was like a club soda, actually carbonated, zippy and peppy.

We travelled light, carrying a poncho, a chocolate bar, C rations, and maybe a pair of socks. Sometimes, about every four or five days, a battalion would catch up with us and give us water, but otherwise we'd find a stream and go up it to where the water was no longer brackish, and purify it with halazone tablets.

We'd stop every night between 4:00 and 5:00, almost always on the safe side of a stream, right where it came down to the beach, making a small perimeter with two or three couples of men along the bank of the stream, four or five other couples in an arc from the stream bank around and behind us down to the beach, and two or three along the beach itself.

As soon as we were settled, the platoon sergeant and I, and anybody else who was interested, would sit down and try to figure out where the hell we were, how far we'd come that day, and how far we could plan to go the next.

Then we'd eat our rations cold for we couldn't make a fire. And then we'd talk for a while. Almost everybody kidded the platoon sergeant who was a very thrifty character. He'd saved every cent he'd made in the service, at that time about two thousand dollars. "Well, Sarge, how much have you got in the bank *tonight?*" somebody would always ask.

Then there was a North Carolina boy who had a story he'd tell over and over again. It was about the time on Guadalcanal when he'd been on a patrol that ran into an abandoned Jap pack howitzer. The officer wanted to take the howitzer back, but it was too heavy to manhandle.

AMPHIBIOUS PATROL: A group of scouts starts on a reconnaissance of Natamo. Two of them were killed as they approached the shore

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"*I* knew how to take that howitzer apart," this North Carolina boy would brag, "but you *know* I didn't tell that officer."

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Our point man was a souvenir bug, and carried a special ditty bag in which he kept Japanese flags, buttons, caps, canteens, money, and those belts of a thousand stitches that the Japs thought brought them good luck. Every night he'd open his bag and carefully lay out his collection on the ground, look at them and then proudly repack them.

We got our mail dropped to us by Piper Cubs, and there was one fellow who was carrying on a *big* correspondence with a bunch of girls he never knew. This happened because he had the same name as another man in the Division and used to get the other man's mail all the time. He'd answer the letters as if he were really the other guy. It must have confused the girls, but at least their letters made for a lot of conversation.

Thus the nights passed.

This same platoon, supported by B Company of the 5th, was chosen to reconnoiter Iboki, with the rest of the 1st Battalion to come in behind, all to go aboard landing craft at Ketenge Anchorage. The scouts were to land more than a mile below Iboki, march up to a river near there, look around, and report what they saw. Instead, the landing craft went astray, and they came ashore in a grove of coconut trees, skirmished briefly with a few surprised Japanese, and halted to discover that they were at the plantation itself and that they had secured it that easily. These were events of February 24-25, and by 2000 hours of the latter day the 5th Marines CP was at Iboki. Two days later the entire regiment was bivouacked there and patrolling vigorously to the south, east and west.

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They had reached the end of the line—temporarily. They did get a laugh at Iboki out of a Japanese propaganda pamphlet picturing nude American women dancing among the white crosses of a cemetery, and singing a nonsensical doggerel:

> We've got oomph and we've got curves,
> We've got stars and a lot of stripes;
> We've got passion and we've got breasts;
> We've got everything 'cept our desire,
> And only the crosses mark them there.

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IV

Still no relief. Not even the most pessimistic among the men would have guessed that the campaign would stretch out this long. What was wrong? When were they gonna get out of this crummy place?

A new fear began to seep through the gloomy encampment. Perhaps they were to

be kept at Gloucester indefinitely, to train there for the next operation. This rumor seems to have reached the ears of at least one colonel, for he noted in his journal: "New Britain is manifestly not a suitable place to rehabilitate a division."

All the men except those in the 5th Marines at Iboki moved into a new bivouac along Borgen Bay, and the stiff and rotted canvas of tarpaulins and pyramidals stretched for fourteen miles along the shore line.

"We tried to keep the men near the beach so they could have facilities for bathing," noted an officer who had to do with the move, but "as a good bit of the beach line was backed by swamp, bivouac areas were pretty much strung out. And there was plenty of rain and mud."

The opportunity for bathing was appreciated, but the beach was for the birds, not for men to whom beach and sun went together. The sky at Gloucester was almost always overcast and the water was gray, often oily and withal uninviting. What was wanted was a place to get dry, not a place to get wet.

To keep everyone busy was impossible, and sack time became a major activity. Men passed endless hours turning in their cots (for cots had been brought up), reading what little there was to read, old magazines, a few comic books, some of the paper-bound GI books, letters; making joe; or talking spiritlessly, with none of the usual bold exaggeration; and many lay half-awake lulling themselves in reverie and fantasy, playing over and over again, like an endless film on their mind's eye, the pleasures of the civilian past, or of Melbourne.

The 5th Marines were at least to have some action. Few in the 5th were eager to remain at Iboki Plantation, whose coconut palms grew in a swamp. A visiting officer "had to do quite a bit of wading to get to them. The machine guns and mortars were set up wherever a hump of ground not under water could be found."

During the first five days of March, the 5th began to prepare for a landing at Talasea, the name given to a plantation, a group of villages, and an airstrip, on the eastern side of the Willaumez Peninsula. Willaumez was twenty-five miles long, in shape resembling the silhouette of a lusciously curved woman. Rodney Marsland, an Australian who had run the plantation at Talasea, said the landing would best be made at Volupai Plantation on the west, the side nearest Iboki, at the narrow waistline where a quick march could be made directly across Willaumez to Talasea.

Volupai was fifty-seven miles over water from Iboki, and the risk was in the shore-to-shore movement of the nearly five thousand men. The Navy could spare almost nothing in the way of escort or bombardment: exactly six PT boats, whose heaviest

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LANDING AREA ON WILLAUMEZ: Little Mount Worri in the foreground, Red Beach to the left backed up by Volupai Plantation

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fire power was a 20mm cannon. Only the smallest landing craft were available: 17 LCVPs (36-foot) as troop carriers; 40 LCMs (50-foot) for troops, supplies and some artillery; plus 5 of the somewhat larger LCTs to carry five amtracs (with the assault troops) apiece.

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There was some doubt about this use of LCTs. No one had ever launched an amtrac from an LCT in deep water except experimentally. Neither LCVP nor LCM was a type craft a landing force commander would choose to haul so large a group over fifty-seven miles of water. A certain amount of confidence had to be placed, and was placed, in the Army boat units, detached from the 593d Engineer Boat & Shore Regiment, whose coxswains had already made some spectacular runs, including one from Brisbane to New Britain, nearly two thousand miles.

Although adequate air support was promised by Fifth Air Force, something had to to be done to improvise fire support for the interval usually covered by naval gunfire, the period immediately before the troops go in to the beach. Someone thought of letting medium tanks fire from the LCMs. The idea was given a dry run, proving that the tank could fire above the LCM ramp if it was slightly lowered, and soldiers and Marines worked together to timber in the tanks with eight-by-eights.

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By 1800 of March 5 loading was completed, by 2230 all troops were embarked, and the convoy sailed at 2300 in what was, according to the official history of the Army unit, "the war's outstanding example of overloading small boats."

In the whole convoy, except for LCTs and the picket boat, there was nothing but the simplest navigation instruments, and a few of the boats strayed in the darkness,

including the one carrying the 5th's regimental commander, Colonel (later Major General) Oliver P. Smith, a tall, soft-spoken, distinguished student of war who had relieved Colonel Selden at Iboki.

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"When daylight of March 6 came," Colonel Smith has written, "the ocean was empty except for six straggling LCMs, three of them going in our direction and three going in the opposite direction. Buzzini, an Army boat group commander, had no idea where Beach Red was. Adams, Connor [staff officers] and I got out maps and by inspection determined that what we were looking at toward our right was, in fact, Willaumez Peninsula. By checking the silhouette of the peaks we were also able to determine the approximate location of Beach Red. I directed Buzzini to head in that direction.

"En route we hailed the straggling LCMs and told them to follow us. One of the coxswains who was going in the wrong direction told me that the convoy had run off and left him and he was 'getting the hell out of there.' Our trouble had been caused by a defective compass."

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The Fifth Air Force planes were supposed to start bombing at 0720, but that hour came and went with the sky still empty (they were grounded by a weather front in New Guinea) and the Army boat commander, aboard his picket boat, asked for instructions.

"Carry on," was Smith's order, and thereupon began one of the least orthodox amphibious operations of World War II, with tanks prepared to fire from LCMs while LCTs gave birth to amphibian tractors, with only a Piper Cub above the troops as they approached the beach. The Cub pilot reported later that he dropped eight hand grenades back of the beach.

Between a peak called Little Mount Worri and a swamp which ran to the water's edge, there was a sandy beach some hundred yards long which itself was backed, fifty yards inland, by rainforest. This was the landing beach, Beach Red, on which there was room for only three boats at a time. Nevertheless, five hundred men were safely ashore and the landing was considered a success by 0835.

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Immediately the 1st Battalion marched inland along the trail, advancing only two hundred yards before they ran into a fire fight. They fought briefly until they silenced the Japanese; then the 2d Battalion, by previously planned maneuver, passed through (1100), treading cautiously in the muck. The Japanese began to zero in on the beach with 90mm mortar shells. They hit a battery of artillery which was being manhandled ashore, causing heavy casualties to battery personnel, struck the beachmaster, and in-

flicted a mortal wound on the regimental surgeon. One shell hit the air liaison jeep. Although the officer in command was not in the jeep at the time, his later usefulness was "greatly impaired," according to an observer, "when he got to thinking about the fact that he was sitting in the jeep one minute before the shell landed."

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In the late afternoon there was some scattering and digging in by headquarters folk, as the 2d Battalion pushed up the trail hunting the mortar batteries. Some fifty seriously wounded were evacuated by boat to Iboki while a night guard was put around the collecting station, which by then was not a pretty sight.

"Men were laid out on ponchos to keep them off the wet ground," recalls a man who was there. "They were dirty. There were piles of bloody dressings. The dead could be distinguished from the wounded by the fact that their faces were covered by ponchos."

As night fell, the 2d Battalion had reached the northern end of the Volupai coconut grove, about two thousand yards from the beach. There the battalion set up an all-around defense.

The second day's plan was devised from information shown on a Japanese map, found on the body of a Japanese officer killed the first day. The main Japanese strength

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TAKE IT EASY: Medical corpsmen bandage a Marine at a jungle aid station

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on Willaumez, according to the map, was in the Waru villages, nine hundred feet up on Mount Schleuchter, overlooking and commanding Talasea Point and Talasea Plantation. To take them the 3d Battalion would relieve the 1st at the beach, enabling the 1st to push on to the villages; the 2d Battalion would move southeastward and take Bitokara Mission.

The plan proved good, although it was not executed on the second day (March 7), largely because the 3d Battalion did not arrive at Volupai until just before dark. The 2d Battalion did, however, push ahead and run into a brief skirmish with the Japanese. On the third day (March 8), the 2d Battalion marched without opposition into Bitokara, but when it turned patrols back up Mount Schleuchter toward the villages, there was trouble from a Japanese field piece and mortars. The 1st Battalion spent the day on the march.

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The fourth day did it. At 0800 artillery and mortar concentrations were hurled at the villages, and the 1st Battalion skirmished into them, capturing the field piece and the mortars, declaring the area clear of the enemy at 1300, March 9.

The Talasea campaign cost 18 killed and 122 wounded Marines, while Japanese losses were between 150 and 200 killed.

V

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All things considered, life was not bad on Willaumez in March and April 1944. From Mount Schleuchter you looked down into the groves of coconuts, along the brown thatched native huts to the bright red roof of Bitokara Mission house, saw a geyser spewing steam on your left, had your eye dazzled by almost lurid *bougainvillea,* flame trees, croton bushes, hibiscus, lime and orange trees. Beyond was the blue Pacific.

PRETTY PLACE

The 5th's CP was in the mission house itself where care was taken to preserve the altar, though the vestments and vessels of the church (German Lutheran) were sent to the Bishop of Australia.

Australian military government (ANGAU) men were asked to bring up natives to catch the chickens which ran around the house. The natives scattered rice around one day, failed to catch the chickens this way, and at last only caught them on their roosts. The chaplain got up an organ from Gloucester, and played in the evenings for sing-sings in the mission. There was hot and cold swimming; one stream flowed hot out of rocks near Bitokara, and the men went there to soak the mud off. Duty was light, consisting

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The Bitokara Mission

mainly of skirmishing with, and in many cases simply taking without gunfire, Japanese stragglers.

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The 2d Battalion was moved down to San Remo Plantation, where the eastern coast of Willaumez rejoins the New Britain mainland, and was very happy to be there. After a visit to the plantation, Colonel Smith wrote, "It was very evident why Gayle [commanding officer] wanted to base his battalion at San Remo. It was a beautiful place fronting on a long sandy beach. Part of the plantation was in cacao, and part in coconut. The cacao nuts had not been picked for a couple of years and the trees were heavy with purple and yellow nuts. The grounds were full of flowering trees."

While Smith was there, the natives gave one of their sing-sings for him. "We could hear them chanting as they approached," Smith wrote. "They were a little hesitant to start, but once they started they were not self-conscious at all. The first dance was a mixed dance: women with babes in arms, unattached women, children and men."

"The women were not very attractive. They wore their hair closely cropped and no clothing except a grass skirt. The children were in front, the men in column in the middle, unmarried women on either flank after the children, then the married women on either flank following the unmarried ones. Marsland [the Australian] told us the chants referred to feats of hunting, fishing, etc.

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"After this the native boys from the labor party put on a dance. Most of them were fine-looking men; well set up with bushy hair. Their faces were painted white or yellow. They wore costumes and headdresses made of small branches of the croton bush which has bright green and yellow leaves. Each held a bouquet of sprigs from the same plant. The leader had a whistle to call the numbers. There was a series of intricate steps and shaking of bouquets. . . ."

And so, March and early April on Willaumez Peninsula.

VI

It was like pulling teeth to get the First Division from MacArthur and away from Cape Gloucester. The negotiations reached their climax in the first week of April with a not altogether pleasant exchange of messages between Admiral Nimitz and MacArthur. The Southwest Pacific commander held that he could not get the First off New Britain before the latter part of June, until he had completed "the Rabaul campaign." Nimitz had to press hard, messaged Admiral King that he was put in "a most difficult situation," and then told MacArthur to relieve the First "as soon as practicable," which, in the usage of dispatches is the equivalent of saying, "Do it now!"

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In the second week of April word reached the Division that the Army's 40th Infantry Division was ready to relieve the First.

There was an unexpected visitor at Gloucester on April 17. That afternoon a cruiser (*Nashville*) hove into view, the largest naval vessel anyone had seen thereabouts since December. And about dusk word came from the beachmaster that General MacArthur was ashore. He soon arrived at Division CP.

"The General shook hands all around," recalls a man who was there. "He was very affable and gave you the impression that he was very glad to see you again (although he had never seen you before). The handshaking and the pictures (the General brought photographers with him) did not take two minutes. The party then departed for the beach to reembark. This was General MacArthur's first and last visit to Cape Gloucester during the time the First Marine Division was there."

It was about this time that General Rupertus broke out the Division band to enliven the atmosphere around the CP. But they got through only three tunes—"Onward Christian Soldiers," "Semper Fidelis," and "The Marines' Hymn"—before their lips began to go flabby from lack of practice. They had to stop.

A week after MacArthur's visit the first echelons of the Division went aboard ship to leave Gloucester. By May 4 the last man in the First Marine Division had left New Britain.

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Chapter 16

IT IS a fruitless and unrewarding business, that of trying to tell a civilian, or a soldier who served in another theater of war, about how rigorous and dispiriting were the periods not in, but between, combat in the Pacific.

At the beginning of the war what had to be countered was the fabled beauty of the islands, a concept so long lodged in the civilian mind that it was not easily dispossessed. Censorship during the war (some officers warned their men not to "gripe" in letters home) made the task no easier. Civilian correspondents could not tell the story, even if they had wanted to. Their first concern was the battlefield, and so great were the obstacles of distance and communication in the Pacific that they had little time to spend in "rest camps."

With the end of the war there was a prickly rash of literature about life in the islands,

most of which strikes the ordinary fighting man as counterfeit. There are the outlandish tales of adventures with native girls—fine perhaps as fiction but monstrously and unfairly exceptional as fact, distorting beyond repair the essential truth that unrelieved frustration was one of the important psychological facts about the out-of-battle Pacific environment. And there are the tales of rock-happiness and of boredom, noticeably written either by, or about, men on the periphery of the Pacific war, the "rear echelon" men.

Boredom does not quite describe the feelings of a man who is standing in the shadow of his last battle and looking at the dark prospect of the one ahead. What is wanted by the fighting man is not an account of what life was like in the isolated rear garrisons, but a picture of life in the "rest camps" where combat troops were put down between battles, a true narrative that will show how little there was on the islands to help a man turn his back on his last meeting with the enemy and gird himself for the next.

The men of the First Division, specifically, would like to have it explained why they remember more vividly the times they lived on a small island named Pavuvu than they do some of their most intense moments of combat.

II

At Gloucester the straight scoop was that the Division was going back to Melbourne. General Rupertus was supposed to have said so. The rumor narrowed down to a speech he delivered at the cemetery. When the transports were at sea, and the word passed that they were bound for a hitherto unheard-of group of islands called the Russells, few believed that "rumor." When finally the ships pulled into Pavuvu, there was some uninhibited disillusionment, some flaying of gums. Pavuvu? Why the very name sounded like a gag!

But Pavuvu was real, the largest of the Russells, part of the Solomon chain, lying some sixty miles from Guadalcanal, ten miles wide at its widest, 1,500 feet high at its tallest. The only recorded item of the island's history appears in a pamphlet of the Smithsonian Institution which tells how the natives fought off the raiding (and nearby) Malaita-men with small, earth-filled bags which they believed had supernatural power to kill; if you hit your enemy on the head with the bag he was supposed to fall dead.

More lately, as in the other Solomons, the natives had turned to the peaceful pursuit of cultivating and harvesting the coconut trees in an expansive grove which covered almost all the level land on the island.

As the ships entered Macquitti Bay from the Pacific, the precise rows of palms, seen

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across the water, had their undeniable grace, especially if their fronds were being stirred by a fresh breeze. The shore was dotted with pencil-like piers that ran out from tiny copra-drying sheds, and a plantation house sat high on piles back in the grove behind them.

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Along the beach hung a few strands of rusty barbed wire like dirty ribbons, marking the hasty and unnecessary defenses erected by a Raider battalion in 1943 when it had taken the island without opposition—and later left without regrets.

It was none of these views but rather a look from the air that caused the First Marine Division to be sent to Pavuvu when it was relieved at Cape Gloucester. Staff officers of III Amphibious Corps, to which the First was transferred from Sixth Army, had flown over the islands, seen only the graceful shore line, the symmetrical rows of palms that must have given them a feeling of tidiness about the place that a closer view would have betrayed.

Of course Corps had other considerations. Corps staff had already decided not to bring the Division to Guadalcanal (by summer, 1944, a vast base and Corps headquarters) for fear that what happened to the Third Marine Division might also happen to the First.

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The Third had been ordered by Guadalcanal Island Command to furnish daily working parties of a thousand men, and the debilitated First could ill afford such an oblique expenditure of manpower. Indeed, the manpower of the First had been expended. Although the Guadalcanal and Cape Gloucester campaigns were different in almost every other way, they were alike in that the Division was spent, used, burned out, when both campaigns were finished.

After Gloucester, as after Guadalcanal, what had to be done was rebuild from the bottom up, re-create a fighting unit. It was almost reaching the point (and it would reach that point before the war was over) where a generalization could be made about the First: that it was a characteristic of the campaigns in which it took part that the losses in killed and wounded represented only one part of the deficit; undernourishment, malaria, jungle rot, dysentery—these all played an equally undermining part.

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III

One disease passed the epidemic stage, was universal at Pavuvu. Marines diagnose it "Asiatic," prewar parlance to describe the eccentric pattern of behavior characteristic of those who had been too long in Far East stations. Except for the slight geographical error, the expression had a sure application at Pavuvu.

"You know yourself," a man remarked somewhat defensively, "that we were all a little queer then."

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Several degrees of strangeness are illustrated in the following story told by a sergeant:

"We'd put our tents up and were doing a lot of sacking out to avoid the ankle-deep mush. A sentry was posted along our row of tents, a fellow about eighteen or nineteen.

"This kid plodded stonily for four hours, lugging his M-1. Then, being relieved, he stopped by the last tent and put his rifle to his mouth and blew the top of his head off.

"It being wet and muddy and I being in my sack, I didn't get up and walk to the end of the row, but I could hear the switchboard operator in the next tent. And I remember this is what he said, to no one in particular:

" 'Now I gotta find the padre. It's getting so they won't even let a guy outa here *that* way without a pass.' "

In the story there is not only the tragedy of the suicide but also the self-conscious callousness of the narrator, and the forced irreverence of the switchboard operator.

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Less eccentric by Pavuvu standards was the man who ran out of his tent at dusk and began to pound his fists against a coconut tree, sobbing angrily: "I hate you, goddammit, I hate you!"

"Hit it once for me," came a cry from a nearby tent, the only comment that was made then or later by the man's buddies.

Nor did anyone think strange the unlikely behavior of a first sergeant who, forgetting his prerogative of remaining in bed at reveille, instead arose with the bugler and strode up and down his company street barking: "All right, let's hear ya beat 'em. Let's hear you people chip 'em!"

When some of the more bold of his men, speaking of course from the anonymity of their tents, cried back, "Go back to your sack, you old bastard!" he seemed happy.

"That's right," he exclaimed. "Beat 'em! Beat 'em till they hurt!"

And having finally provoked an answer, having had confirmed the bitterness he himself felt, the top would turn on his heel and return to his sack.

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Another episode proves that not just a few men were Asiatic. One night, shortly after the Division came to Pavuvu, a man in the 5th Marines ripped off his mosquito net and ran screaming into his company street. His story was that somebody had tried to stab him while he was asleep, that he had seen a face and a knife over him. That this might have been a hallucination did not apparently occur to anyone. Guards were posted that night throughout the regimental area. There was a second alarm, and a

PAVUVU STREET: A typical scene at the Division's "rest camp" in the weeks immediately following its arrival from Cape Gloucester

third. Soon the feeling of disquiet spread to the 7th Marines. Guards were posted there. Not until a week had passed, with no one turning up with so much as a scratch, did the feeling of disquietude subside.

IV

What was wrong with Pavuvu? "What wasn't?" asks a man who did the Pavuvu tour.

Of least concern to the average man were Pavuvu's limitations as a training area—an island so small that it was all but impossible to hold a division-size maneuver within its precincts, so small that eventually units were forced to skirmish down company streets.

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In that grove of coconuts which had looked so lovely from the air was a mat of rotted coconuts, unharvested because of war. Between the nuts there was an exotic green carpet of ferns growing in a topsoil of decayed non-absorbent coral. Hardly had the Division got ashore, hardly had the equipment-carrying trucks and jeeps pushed through the grove to assigned areas, hardly had the men pitched their pyramidals, before the whole surface turned to deep, stinking mush.

"The rainy season," comments a training officer, "was supposed to be over at Pavuvu when we got there, but it died a lingering death that year."

Many men abandoned their shoes, finding the only sure-footed way to get about was barefoot. Large areas that had been set aside for bivouacs stood under water, and in these the men wearily unrolled and strung their jungle hammocks. Pyramidal tents, where they could be put up, were discovered to be rotted, and the men at first threw their ponchos over the top of the tents to cover the worst holes. Later they simply rearranged their cots, often every night, as new holes appeared. In many cases, the canvas cots were rotten. The men borrowed needles from the quartermaster and tried to sew them up. Where the cots were irreparable, men strung their jungle hammocks across the wooden framework. Mosquito nets were suspended on the stripped spines of palm fronds, and when the tents had more leaks than could be avoided, men simply threw their ponchos on top of the mosquito nets, creating a one-man tent.

Desperate efforts were made to get personal gear off the ground. Many men scavenged the island to find a packing case or simply a scrap or two of lumber to place beside their cots as a dry foot-rest, until lumber discipline became one of the primary problems on Pavuvu. A Division order was issued to cover the matter, and guards were put over every pile of lumber. Six to eight men slept in a tent, and that tent community which had been able to find the lumber with which to build a crude table in the center, usually around the tent pole, was considered to live luxuriously.

Wooden decks for the tents, originally set as a minimum for Marine rest camps in the Pacific, were unthinkable at Pavuvu. What was sought was dry coral, which had begun to be excavated in quarries by Division engineers. But coral for tent decks had to come after coral for roads, and, as at the lumber piles, so at the quarries guards had to be stationed to prevent impatient scavengers from carrying away coral in company jeeps and trailers. One unit, whose mess tent sat at the foot of a slight hill, up and down which men helplessly slid, found a good vein of coral a few hundred yards away. Their first sergeant formed them into a coolie line which extended from the mired company street to the coral vein. The men passed helmets full of coral along until the street was

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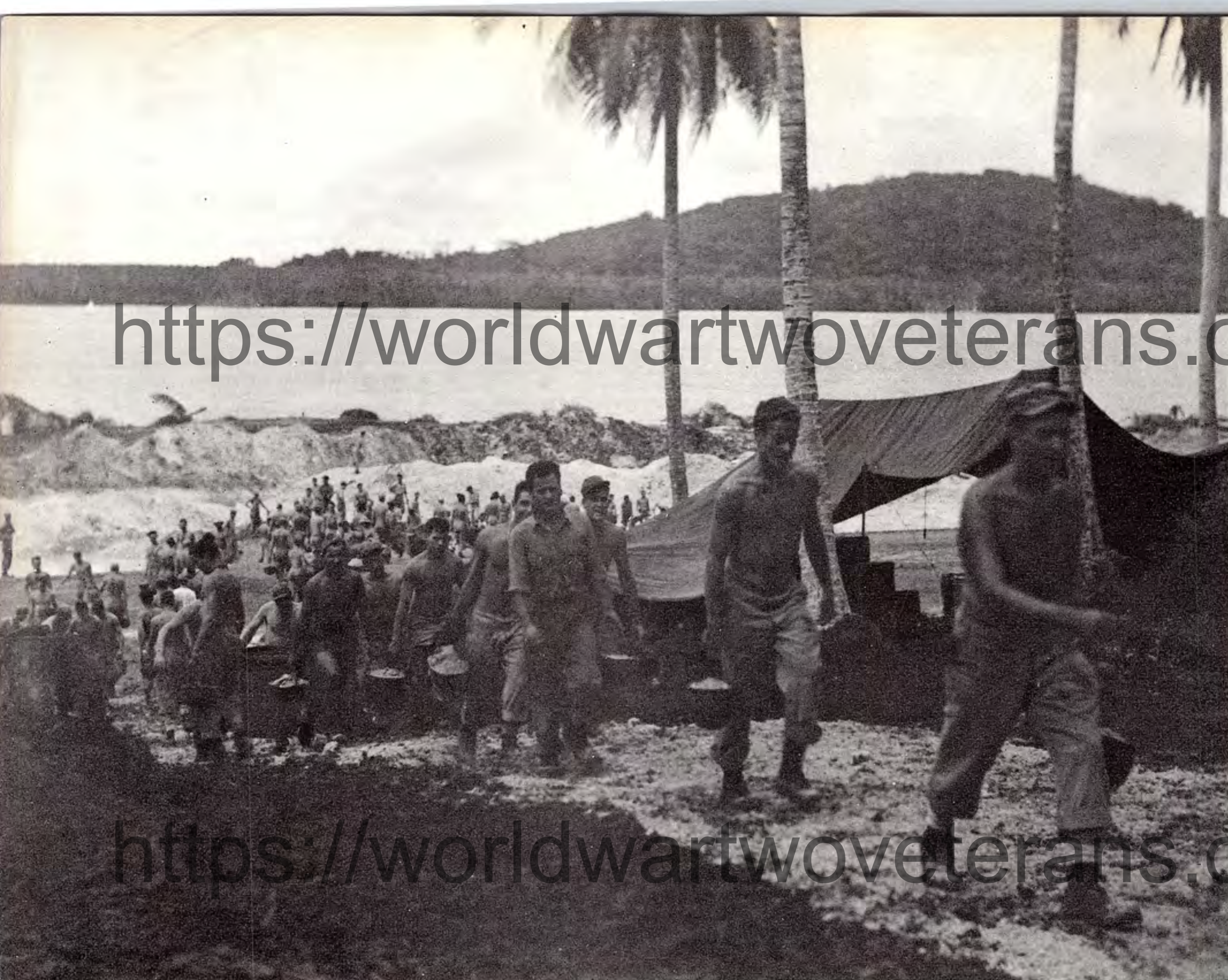
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ANTI-MUD CAMPAIGN: Coolie fashion, Marines carry coral to pave muddy company streets

covered. This way it was a hot, tedious, all-day job. Before it was finished the first sergeant had to delegate someone to watch the line and himself start patrolling the tents, to rout out those men who had sneaked away from the working party to their sacks.

It was one of the strange things about Pavuvu in the early days, how some NCO would start out in the morning with a working party which seemed, as a group, to be doing its duty, quietly and without complaint, but which would, unless his scrutiny was sharp, almost imperceptibly dwindle in size until, after a few hours had passed, there would be only one or two men left and these the lowest of low "boots." Doping-off became a high art at Pavuvu.

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Nobody can say exactly how many man-hours were spent picking up rotted coconuts, the most frequent and least popular mission of Pavuvu working parties. All six hundred acres were clean of coconuts by the time the Division left. It was hard work, and,

when a man picked up one of the rotted nuts chances were good that it would fall apart in his hands, the putrid milk spilling over his dungarees.

There were no lights at Pavuvu, at first not even at Division command post. There never were lights in the tents, and the more resourceful men found bottles and cans, filled them with "borrowed" gasoline, and cut a piece of rope from the tent stays for a wick. By this light they wrote letters, but there was little else to do.

There were no messhalls nor recreation buildings. Conditions of eating were pretty much the same, if not worse, than Gloucester. Chow lines were outdoors, and messmen rested the large metal food pans on stumps. If it was raining, as it very often was, a man's mess gear might be a slop of food and water before he got through the line. And because it was almost always muddy, the food had to be taken back to the tent to be eaten. It took a very agile man to balance mess gear and canteen cup as he walked through the coral mud back to his tent, and there were almost always men who slipped.

The quality of the food was something no one could do much about. No really adequate means of provisioning the Division had been set up in advance of its arrival at Pavuvu—a YP boat fitted with reefers (refrigerators) came over intermittently from Guadalcanal. But even if it had come often enough to insure occasional fresh meat for the Division, there were not enough reefers on Pavuvu to keep the meat overnight. The ration was something called B which, roughly speaking, means hot C, and C is the minimum combat ration; altogether, the menu at Pavuvu was monotonous and unappetizing.

A mass-produced kind of French toast, washed in a diluted syrup, was a standard breakfast item, varied occasionally with soggy cornflakes made soggier by diluted canned milk, or with powdered eggs. In the two years from the time it left Melbourne until it reached China, and excepting the brief times it was aboard ship, the Division was not served fresh eggs five times. After a few weeks of Pavuvu food, many men came to breakfast only with a canteen cup, satisfied to begin their day on coffee alone.

Lunch was one of the canned prepared meats which all came to be called SPAM, sometimes frittered and served with dehydrated potatoes or carrots. The vegetables tasted, one man testifies, "like cardboard." For drink there was "battery acid," a pale, bitter, synthetic lemon drink.

Dinner was corned willie cakes, or Vienna sausage, with more dried vegetables, and coffee.

To keep clean was absurdly simple. For a long stretch of weeks, there were no showers. Whenever the rains came at Pavuvu, men scrambled for their tents where

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NO NAPKINS: This is the way men ate during the early Pavuvu days

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they hastily slipped out of dungarees and shoes and hurried out into the rain naked, cake of soap in hand. The rains were so fickle that some were always caught fully lathered after the fall stopped.

Set on four tent pegs just outside every tent, each man had his helmet, every man's lavatory, usually kept full by rainfall. Every morning there were lines of naked men along the company streets, splashing their faces, shaving by mirrors propped on the sides of tents or nailed to coconut trees.

Clothes were usually soaped and rinsed by hand, although a few enterprising men tied their garments together and strung them into the bay from a stake on the beach to let them soak. Later, as scrap lumber from crates became available, most tents had their own crude washing benches. Some companies found lumber enough to build communal washing tables where clothes were washed by being thrown into a tub made of an oil drum cut in half and filled with scalding water. When this method was used, the men took turns stirring the tub and stoking the fire.

One good thing about washing clothes at Pavuvu: you hardly got them on the line before they were bleached dry by the tropic sun.

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V

There were those sides of life on Pavuvu which brought the strongest and bravest to near tears of fury and frustration.

The Pavuvu rat was alone enough to provoke a man beyond provocation, to cause him to arise from his sack in the night screaming profane threats.

Where the rats went in the daytime no one seemed to know; some said they lived in the tops of the coconut trees. On this theory the Corpsmen once put poison at the foot of the trees at dusk. Next morning there were so many dead rats around the trunks that working parties were organized to pick them up. It made such a smelly mess that poison was not tried again. The doctors ruled that the rats were less of a nuisance alive.

It was not hard to tell where the rats were at night: everywhere. They marched in armies on the tops of the tents, their feet rat-tat-tatting like drumbeats on the taut canvas. Bored with their drill, they would slide down the side of the tent, down the ropes to the ground, screeching in an annoyingly high static-like pitch. Then they would scamper through the tents, and if a man had not tucked in his mosquito net, or if he had made the mistake of taking food to bed with him, the rats would join him in bed, perhaps even gnaw through the net if there was food. A major in the engineers awoke one night to find a rat biting into his lip, a wound that soon infected and put the officer in sick bay.

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For human pride something had to be done. Some men got five-pound coffee cans, buried them in the ground and hung above a tiny gallows-like frame from which they suspended bait. Then they contrived a collapsible catwalk out to the bait so that when the rats went after it they fell to the bottom of the can. Two or three inches of water in the bottom was enough to keep the rats from escaping. In the morning, the rats were burned to death with gasoline.

The men of a chemical company made booby traps with percussion caps placed in cartons of crackers. The trap's owner waited, awake, until a rat entered the box. "It made a very satisfying explosion," he recalls.

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One company commander armed his men with flamethrowers and himself led an evening rat hunt. "We killed upwards of four hundred that one night," says the captain, "but the next night I saw we hadn't even dented Pavuvu's rat population, and I got discouraged."

It was possible to admire the rats for their aggressiveness, but Pavuvu's passive and slimy land crabs were nothing but revolting. They too came out at night, and the longer the Division stayed at Pavuvu the more crabs there seemed to be.

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"You couldn't put your shoes on in the morning without shaking the crabs out first; sometimes you'd find one, sometimes two or three," says one man distastefully.

On a Sunday morning when there was nothing much else to do, the men in one tent determined to war upon the land crabs, and the determination spread from tent to tent as the men armed themselves with sticks, bayonets, rifle butts, routing the crabs from under cots, seabags, and boxes. The ground soon was covered with the sideways-running crabs, and there was a continual "squish, squish, squish," as the men smashed the crabs. In one tent 128 were counted. They shoveled the dead crabs into empty gasoline drums, poured gasoline in and lit it.

"It was the damnedest, most sickening smell," says one of the leaders. "We couldn't come back to our sacks for the whole day, and it a Sunday, a sack day!"

Less annoying but more dangerous than either rats or crabs, were falling coconuts. The mercy was that they fell straight down and a man was not likely to be hit unless he was directly under a tree, but with the trees less than twenty-five feet apart it was not easy to keep clear. The heavy thud of one of the nuts hitting the ground was always enough to make a man jump, even if he was not hit, and there were some ten cases of severe concussion from this hazard. These cases got what the men called "Pavuvu Purple Hearts"—medical treatment and little sympathy.

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VI

Morning sick call at Pavuvu was a lusty scene, naked buttocks stretching from here to there as men bent over to have themselves painted for ringworm with pink merthiolate. Because there were too many for the Corpsmen, the patients took turns daubing each other. Jungle-rotted feet and armpits were painted by the man himself. The Corpsmen put bandages on that large number of men who were so eaten by jungle rot that they stood constantly in danger of infection, and the sight of men walking around Pavuvu with heavy wads of gauze adhesive-taped under their armpits was too common for notice. Many men were able to walk only when they cut their boondockers away into sandals and lined the straps with cotton to protect their raw feet. Many others were bedridden, so cracked were their feet. The worst cases of rot were usually called *cellulitis,* a diagnosis that could get a man into the Division hospital if either he or the

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