



SAIPAN; OKINAWA

Saipan

On the night of the 16th of June [1944] we were alerted and told that possibly we would go ashore sometime during the evening. After the meeting, about six that afternoon, we hurried to our respective state-rooms aboard the ship and started getting our things packed and equipment in readiness for a quick departure from the ship. This alert did not materialize and we spent the remainder of the evening watching the progress of the Battle of Saipan from the boat deck of our ship. The Cruisers and the Battle Ships as well as the Destroyers were really having a field day blasting the installations around the sugar mill at Charan Kanoe. Tracers, red, blue, green, and yellow and the white star shells for illumination were crowding the stars and moon from the sky. We were fortunate to see an ammunition dump blown to kingdom come and we saw the sugar mill made into a piece of twisted wreckage. I slept on deck that night, not because I felt that we would have any trouble with the Nip Navy or shore batteries but mainly because I didn't want to miss anything that happened.

Early the next morning, June 17th, D plus two, we were again alerted and we were told that this time we would surely go ashore. I was scheduled to go in with the Battalion staff in a free boat, an LCVP. After a hurried breakfast, we loaded our boat. That was about eight o'clock and started for the Island of Saipan. Something must have happened, I haven't found out what it was yet, but we circled around in the bay until 2:30 that afternoon before we headed for the beach. Up until this time we on the ship had no news whatsoever of the progress our troops were making on the beachhead. The battle that we had witnessed the night before left us with the feeling that we were taking the island without much opposition. We reached the pier at the sugar mill about three in the afternoon and I'm sure that I have never seen nor will I ever see as many landing craft in one place at the same time. There were ducks, LCVP's, LCM's, Amtracks, Alligators and everything that could float and take troops ashore there in an area of about 500 yds. square. Honestly, we had to wait our turn in line to enter. Our boat came up to the pier and we unloaded, much to our delight, without getting our feet wet. Some of the battalion had already come ashore so we got them together and waited for the rest to arrive. My outfit was scheduled to come in on the eighth wave so I knew that it would be some time before they arrived. The remainder of the BLT arrived sometime before four o'clock that afternoon and we immediately set off down the beach to our assembly area. Up to this time I still did not know the situation on the island and from all outward appearances it looked to me that the island

was secure. Everyone was walking along unconcerned and with their pieces slung across their shoulders. It didn't take long though to find out that the island wasn't ours and that there was stiff opposition. We had walked only a few feet south on the beach when we saw our first dead, both Jap and Marine and were warned by Marines that we passed that there were snipers about and be on the watch for them. Just about that time I received my real baptism. One of the Nip Mortar Batteries cut loose and we had to hit the wet sand quickly to avoid the shrapnel from their shells. We moved in to our assembly area about five and at once began to set up our perimeter for the night. Even before we had our foxholes dug the Jap planes came over to give us welcome and we saw a delightful dogfight that ended disastrously for the Empire. Two of their Zeros were shot down and we didn't loose a one. We completed our homes for the night; mine was the best I ever dug during the operation. We ate supper, a "K" ration, and prepared to sleep. Not very long after all the Company Commanders and Liaison officers were called to the Battalion CP and told that we were to move out and to be attached to the Marines. Some of the attached troops were sent back to regimental reserve but when I asked what we were to do, I was told that we were to stay with the BLT. We moved out some few minutes later down the road North to join the Marines and after walking a mile or so in the darkness I was called to the front of the column and informed by the Battalion C.O. that we were to go back to regiment. He apologized for having me come that far for nothing. Regiment was some three or four miles back and on the march down we had contacted sniper fire so I asked if my platoon couldn't bivouac in that area that night and join regiment in the morning. This request was granted and as soon as the boys arrived we set off to dig in a field a few hundred feet away. When we arrived at our designated area we found that it was already occupied by a Marine 10 How. Battery, who were at the time firing and receiving counter-battery fire. After some time on our bellies waiting for the firing to cease we contacted the Battery C.O. and attached ourselves to him. That battery fired intermittently all night but I'm quite sure that I slept as good or better that night than any of the others. I didn't know then what I know now, and I wasn't at all worried. Someone asked me after the operation if I was scared when we hit the beach. I told them that I really wasn't, in fact I was much more apprehensive when I got married.

The next morning the C.O. of the battery woke me at a little after five and asked if I would let my men help in turning his guns, that he had just received word that the Nips were planning an attack from the sea. We did all we could to help, turned their guns, helped with ammunition and for our help received rations and a resupply of small arms



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ammunition, that we knew we were going to need if the attack materialized. We waited for the assault for about an hour and when it didn't come helped again to turn the guns, 105 How. again to the hills. I set off with my platoon sgt. after that to find the reg't. C.P. and receive orders. I found them, sent for the platoon, and when they arrived received orders to join the 1st. Battalion, ___st. Inf. This was about ten in the morning and I finally found them somewhere in the neighborhood of three that afternoon. We moved our guns in for support but the only firing that day was done by the Japs. We were pinned to the ground most of the time by their mortar fire. That night I stayed with Reg't. as liaison officer and witnessed another bombing raid from the Nips where another dogfight occurred and two more of their Emperor's Zeros were lost. We lost one of our planes that evening.

The next morning early, D plus four, I set out to find the 1st. Battalion. They were in the airport. On the way there my radio operator and hopalite (security man) and I had to pass through a village. Just as we entered an 8" shell fell, I'm sure not fifty yards from us. We did what a good American soldier never does, retreated at once. A jeep happened to pass and we caught a ride to safety on it. There's a rule in the army that only five are to ride on a Jeep but that rule too was broken here. There must have been thirty on that 1/4 ton and trailer. We found the Battalion CP later and sent for the platoon. They arrived about noon and we immediately set up to fire our Initial mission. We fired most of that day at targets designated by the Battalion commander, enemy installations, personnel, and generally in support of the battalion. That night, and for the next ten we had our visit from "Bed Check Charlie." That's the name that we gave to the plane that came over, dropped his stick of bombs anywhere he could and left. We continued firing for this battalion the next two days from our emplacements in the bunkers at the airfield. The only instance of note during those days was my first visit to the front lines to observe fire. I had a funny feeling going up and for a time while I was there but it wore off soon and I came to the conclusion that it was just as safe on the front lines as it was anywhere else on the island; everyone was subjected to fire.

On D plus seven we were detached from the 1st. and attached to our original Battalion, the 2nd. We were able, however, to keep our battery in the same places only shift the guns to fire at the targets designated by the C.O. of the 2nd. We fired for them that morning and for that matter all that day and the next. The afternoon of D plus seven I was at the Battalion CP doing normal liaison work with the battalion when all of a sudden the most terrific explosion occurred. Seems that the engineers blew up an ammo dump of the Japs and forgot to warn us.

Rocks the size of jeeps were floating through the air and we (the battalion) suffered a few casualties from them. One man's leg was broken. It was really his time to go for he was killed in what occurred a few minutes later. We had just gotten over the shock of that explosion when five-inch shells started landing in the CP. At first we couldn't ascertain where they were coming from. Five salvos came in that many seconds and the CP was blown to bits. This same man whose leg was broken and seven more were killed and twenty-four wounded. All of us ran for any shelter that we could find until the shelling ceased, and we were pinned to the ground for some time by small arms fire that we soon found out was our own small arms dump that had been hit by one of the five inch shells. We found out that the shelling was from one of our own destroyers that had received a wrong target designation. Late that afternoon when we had sent the casualties and the dead back we moved some two hundred yards to a new location to form our nightly perimeter. That night my battery fired intermittently all night and I took Benzedrine to be sure to stay awake on the phone lest a short might drop too close to us. What was a helluva night. The Navy couldn't give us any illumination as they were on a Red Alert (Air Raid) and that was the same night the Naval gunfire officer had dysentery. His illness wasn't funny. That night he could have gotten us all killed if the Japs had been near enough to see him, but it was comical afterwards. He got cramps about eleven o'clock and there wasn't anything else he could do but come out of his foxhole and relieve himself (I afterwards found out how important it was to get relief; I had a touch of the same stuff sometime later and there isn't any fire that can keep you in a foxhole when you get those cramps). Well, he came out calling at the top of his voice who he was and not to shoot. The men were really trigger happy by this time and would have shot at anything that moved, and just as he hit the top of his hole he stumbled and had a bowel action of the worse kind all over himself. He just stood up and cleaned off as well as he could and dove back into his hole sans everything but shoes. That was all that wasn't ruined. I saw him the next morning clothed in his shoes and a Jap blanket that he had picked up somewhere.

The next morning we were sent back to reg't whose CP was in the airport. We had moved the guns forward the afternoon before. We arrived there late in the morning and took it easy the rest of the morning and until two that afternoon when we moved out to join the ___th. Inf. Reg't. and support them in the Central part of the island. That was the first time we had a chance to wash since we landed and it surely felt good to get soap and water on our faces. None of us shaved. We knew by this time that this would be a long drawn out operation and



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that there really wasn't any use getting too clean. We moved out at two in the afternoon, two platoons of us over the hottest dustiest road I have ever seen and pulled ourselves and our guns and ammo for three or four miles to our new assembly point. We were too tired to do anything but eat, dig in and sleep for the rest of that day and night. At the airport I managed to borrow a piece of Signal Corps message paper and a Sig. Corp envelope and scribbled a line or two to my wife. That was the first time I had written since the campaign began. I think the only thing I wrote was that I was alive and well and believe me I was thankful to be just that. I gave the letter to a Naval pilot and he promised to post it for me when he returned to his carrier. The letter was posted and my wife received it some weeks later. The night wasn't uneventful as we were bivouacked under a cliff and the Nips lobbed hand grenades and sent knee mortar shells over at us all night. There isn't anything to do when that happens but get as far down in your hole as possible and hope that none of them have your name. There wasn't any danger of my getting shrapnel in any part of my body but my head. I was always inquisitive and had to see what was going on.

We had already gained the callousness that goes with combat in the few days that we had been on the island. We had seen numerous dead and wounded and had at several times slept within several feet of dead Japs. For the most part we assumed that the Nips were burying their dead, carting them away at night. We knew that their losses had been as heavy or even heavier and their dead that we saw were comparatively few. The smell and the flies didn't bother us too much now that we had become almost used to it.

D plus eight and nine found us in reg't reserve and the only action we saw was the little attacks that were leveled at our bivouac area at night. Both of these two mornings we had to send sniper patrols out before we were convinced that there were no Japs around. The Nips had a habit of infiltrating during the night and as soon as someone stuck his head out of his hole in the morning taking a pot shot at him or better yet throwing a hand grenade into the perimeter. D plus ten, or the 15th of June, we were detached from the ___th. Inf. Reg't. and attached to the ___th. Inf. Reg't. who were north of us and having trouble in a draw. They felt that the fire support we could give them was what they needed to be able to go forward. We moved up that morning and I contacted the Battalion C.O. Our guns were set up and we began firing around ten o'clock. We fired most of that day and set up our perimeter that evening with their Anti Tank and Cannon Companies. The next day was the nicest I had since our landing. That was the day that we received our first mail. It was brought up to me and my Liaison section



that afternoon. I received somewhere in the neighborhood of thirty letters. They were all old, about a month or six weeks, but it was news from home and those I loved and thought of constantly, and regardless of the bullets that were whizzing by at the time, I read my letters and crouched just a little deeper in my foxhole. There were snapshots of my little girl and wife and I confess that after looking at them and reading the letters from my wife I felt a keener urge to do something big as my part to speedily end the war. Letters are without a doubt the greatest morale builder the army has.

We fired for this battalion for the rest of the operation, that is until we ran out of ammunition. Seems that the big shots thought the Saipan Combat wouldn't last more than ten days and we loaded under that assumption. The firing was routine and for the most part so was the daily life. Fire all day or for the most part of it and sleep at night with one eye open then hunt for snipers in the morning. I moved up with Fox Co. about D plus 12 to observe fire. After reporting to the Battalion C.O. of the battalion, I was told to contact Lt. _____, who was about 100 yds. away in an observation post on a little knoll. I set off with my radio operator and runner to find the Lt. and sighted him a few moments later. All this time we were under heavy small arms fire and took a covered route of approach to the O.P. I left the two men under the hill and crawled to the O.P. which proved to be an excavation about four by four by two feet deep with the center dirt still inside. I had no more than gone over the top of the hill and introduced myself to the Company C.O. of Fox company and the three other officers or men there with him when a Jap tank cut loose on us with a 47 mm tank gun. They must have fired four or five shots directly at us, three of which took effect. There were five of us in the O.P., and three were hit by shell fragments. The hole wasn't really big enough to accommodate three men and there we were with five of us in it. Consequently we were on top of one another but the remarkable part of this tale is that one of the officers who was partially under me was hit and I wasn't even scratched. Just wasn't my time to go then but it was a very few minutes later when I told Lt. _____ that I couldn't do any observing there and I actually couldn't. I took my two men, who by this time thought they were without an officer, and left for better cover pronto.

The tank, incidentally, was put out of action a few minutes later by artillery fire. That same afternoon the battalion pushed off from "Bloody Knoll" the nickname that we gave the ridge, and my small three-man section plus the other liaison section of three stayed back to wait for the battalion forward C.P. About four we decided that they were not coming and set in to form a defensive perimeter of our own. We had been



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augmented by two more men who had brought us water, the first we had since we left the company with two canteens early that morning. I want to say at this time that this was the first time during the operation so far that we had in anyway hurt for water and we certainly did—that day. It was hot as the devil and we gave out for the most part on the rough trip forward early that morning. Well, we dug in deeper than usual and fortified ourselves with all sorts of hand grenades, B.A.Rs, M1s, and additional ammunition and knives that the infantry troops had either left behind in the push or had been abandoned by casualties. We had no sooner gotten set for the night, that had all indications of being a rough one, when a whole battalion came forward and made a perimeter around us. I won't endeavor to relate how welcome they were.

Things went along in their normal way and we continued with 2nd. Battalion, ___th. Inf. Reg't. The fighting was hard, the progress in our sector slow, we were up against the ones who were dug-in in the natural and man-made caves. We fired daily at targets ranging from cane fields that the C.O. wanted burned to preparatory barrages for the infantry's advance until the 4th of July when we had advanced to a ridge overlooking Flores Point, the Naval Base of the Japanese on Saipan. We had just advanced to the ridge when an observer noticed a movement of troops in the base. I called for fire from my battery, the Artillery Liaison officer called for a Battalion of light artillery, and the heavy weapons company commander called for fire from his entire section of 81 mm mortars. In addition to all this the heavy machine guns cut loose on the fleeing Nips who by this time with all this metal dropping on them, were really fleeing. It looked as if there were a battalion or its equivalent there. As I said, all hell broke loose on them and every time a good round landed the artillery officer, the heavy weapons captain, and I, all said that it was positively ours that time. The shells were dropping in such great numbers on that concentrated area that none of us could rightfully tell if it was ours or the others' and we were not reluctant to claim the good ones even if we were doing what we were for the self-same cause. These men who we saw on Flores Point that day were, I am sure, the ones who made up part of the force for the "Banzai" rush a few days later. The next morning when we went down we found every building a wreck but few dead. Either the fire that we delivered was ineffective as far as casualties, or they carted away their dead and wounded as they had in the past days. At any rate it was effective as a harassing fire as we didn't see a live Nip about.

That, incidentally, was our last mission during the campaign. We (the company) had just about expended our ammo supply. One of the other platoons did, however, fire the night of the counter-attack all night in



support of one of the Battalions and did a grand job.

We bivouacked on Flores Point for the next few days. The operation was officially over on the 8th of July but we remained there a day or two after that and each and every morning when we awoke we sent out sniper patrols, and each and every morning bagged not less than two or three of the monkeys. On one such morning a Sgt. came across one with a grenade in his hand poised to throw. I don't know whether it was excellent shooting or luck, but the Sgt. shot the grenade with his carbine and in doing so detonated it and received four or five wounds from the fragments. This was the biggest Jap I had ever seen. He must have been well over five feet ten inches in height and weighed what I estimated to be about one hundred and eighty pounds.

I haven't mentioned before but souvenir hunting was good on Saipan: Samurai swords, pistols, flags, money, and other items of souvenir collectors too numerous to mention. When a soldier shot a Jap he immediately pounced upon him and stripped him of anything that could be classed as a souvenir. Then as an after thought shot him again so as to be sure he was dead. This wasn't a *coup de grace*, it was a precaution. I killed one myself purely by accident. I was talking to a Lt. in our outfit near a house that was burning, and three came out on us from an underground hiding place. I guess I thought quickly because I shot without hesitancy with my .45 and he fell. I wasn't thinking quickly enough afterward though because when I thought of getting his sword or pistols he was already cleaned by some soldiers who were near.

I mentioned my attack of dysentery earlier but did not go into details. It happened the night of the counter attack and well into the morning of the Saki rush. I went to the latrine twice before retiring and seven times during the night. I found out the next morning that I had kept the entire platoon up that night, calling out who I was and "don't shoot" every time I was forced to get out. That also seems humorous now but it wasn't funny at all then. The last time I got up it was after daylight and the bullets were really whizzing by. But bullets or no bullets if you got to go you certainly got to go then. I went to the dispensary later that morning and the medics gave me their twelve-pill treatment that affected a rapid cure. The medics, incidentally, did a marvelous job with their keen knowledge, sulfa drugs, and blood plasma. They certainly saved a vast number of lives that otherwise would have been lost.

After the battle we drifted from one place to another, finally getting ourselves attached to the service company of the ___th. Reg't. for rations and stayed with them until I left as the advance party for the company to the rehabilitation area. The company is still there at this writing.

An amusing thing happened just before I left Saipan. One evening

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about ten o'clock some of the officers and men from the cannon company of the ___th were in their mess hall chewing the fat when they heard a noise outside. Upon investigation they found it to be a Jap. Lt. who had come out of his hiding place in search of water. They took him easily enough and found out that he spoke a little English. I talked to him the next day and found out that they had taught him to say "To hell with Tojo, I like Roosevelt and Joe." Joe was the company mess Sgt. who had evidently given him something to eat. I asked him if he wanted to go back to Japan and he answered, "No, I want to go to California." So do I. He isn't so dumb.

Okinawa

[April 1945]

I certainly don't know why it is, but it seems to me that I get all the crap details in the Company. Whenever something extra comes up the Captain calls me and says, "Goldie, here's another job for you," and when I bitch about it, not to him, but to anyone else, that person smooths it over by telling me that it is complimentary. If that is true, and I have my doubts, it doesn't ease the task in any respect. At any rate, I'm Transport Quartermaster for this new operation that we are about to embark upon, in addition to my other duties. The job itself isn't a hard one, but the division to which we are attached is about thirty miles from us and the roads are terrible, and it is pretty necessary for me to go to see the Regimental Transport Quartermaster Officer daily. The T.Q.M., incidentally, is the one responsible for the equipment being packed, loaded and unloaded. There isn't any manual labor attached to the job, but the Army's up to par on the paper work, and five copies of each and everything must accompany everything.

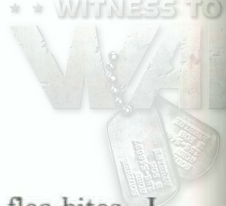
We have little G2, but the latrine rumors are coming faster than we have holes in the latrine to accommodate them. We have heard that the target is 350 miles from Tokyo, that the Japs are ready and waiting, that the island is surrounded by a man-made sea wall, that there's a reef all around it, that it is going to be worse than Saipan and that I'm going to make the initial beachhead. Some of this may be true, but we who have been on these missions before, have learned to discount practically everything we hear before the actual briefing and some of the dope that we get at the briefing, and so until D-Day when we land and find out what is what, the hard way, I guess we just have to sweat the business out.

This T.Q.M. detail has just about gotten me down. I am sure that I have a little less hair than when the job was given me, and the few hairs that I have left have turned silver, but the boat is loaded (that is the three that we have men and equipment on are loaded and ready) and my job is done. The detail of unloading will be taken care of by the ships' personnel, and when they start, I'll be on lend possibly trying my best to dig a foxhole deep enough for a Jeep. I go in with the forward Regimental O.P. on a free boat (DUKW) some time between the fifth and sixth wave. We leave here tomorrow, each and every one of us with a prayer on his lips. Someone once said that there weren't any atheists in foxholes and I'm quite sure that whoever made that remark was entirely correct.

My job of T.Q.M. is over in spite of the fact that I thought it never would be, and we have finally embarked on our respective ships for the "dry runs" before the real business. As usual we are split up, but this time it is even a little worse than it has been on the past trips that we have taken as a company. This time we are actually on eight different ships; the two forward observation teams are on LSTs, Spess is on an LST with a recon. party, and the rest of us are on APAs and AKAs with the troops. This time we are going to make our landing in DUKWs and the DUKWs are on five different ships with the squads and the officers on the ships with them. I have two DUKWs with me on this ship along with the two squads who make the beach in them. I, as usual, go in in one of the free boats right after the assault waves, with the regimental commander and his staff and other liaison groups. Incidentally, this regimental commander expects to make a beachhead by himself. That's the way he talks, as if he expects to go in directly after the first wave. I'm certainly not eager to go in so early, especially on this mission. I have no desire to become a dead hero, but if he says "Go," then there isn't anything I can very well do but tag along with him. Anyway, that remains to be seen and I am confident that the future will take care of itself.

After twelve days of practically no activity except for the "dry runs," we are at last at sea and on our way to the target, still officially "_____." Tomorrow, however, everyone will know by official word that the target is Okinawa in the Ryukyus. There probably isn't a Pfc. on board who doesn't already know where we are going and who hasn't known for some time, but they will all be told tomorrow at the first briefing. Compared to Saipan, there has been little secrecy about this operation.

We have changed our Philippine and United States currency into



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when I'm not jumping from the noise I'm scratching the flea bites. I guess a person in combat doesn't need much sleep. I don't feel bad from the lack of it. Possibly the nervous energy stored up takes the place of sleep for awhile.

This is L plus 9 and for the last three days the Nips certainly haven't made any gifts of portions of Okinawa to us. In fact they have given the impression in a few instances that they are "Injun Givers." Our assault battalions have been catching hell in the form of small arms fire, automatic weapons, 105 mm. and 155 mm. mortars up to 250 mm., i.e., a rocket weighing somewhere between 500 and 1000 pounds. I have seen a crater made by one of these. It was about 12 feet deep and about 50 feet in circumference. Their artillery and mortar fire have been very accurate, and we have been suffering a great number of casualties from the shrapnel. Last night around dusk the Nips laid down a terrific barrage for about 45 minutes, and we received 41 casualties in one battalion's headquarters company and attached medics who were working above ground. That speaks well for foxholes as no one who was dug in was scratched. Some of those shells landed very near our CP, close enough to make us scurry for cover.

This morning at 0045 and until 0245 they blasted away at us again. This must have been a counter-battery fire at one of our 155 mm. positions to our right rear, but they were off their target at first and put three shells in our CP perimeter, nicking two men who were operating a radio in a weasel. The concussion from this burst was so terrific that it shattered the safety glass in the windshield of the Jeeps 100 yards away. None of us did much sleeping after that. We were pretty happy to see daylight even with the rain that came with it.

This morning the division pushed off on an "all out" attack on high ground to our front, some 1500 yards. Naval gun fire, artillery, and our 4.2 mortars laid down a barrage starting at 0530 and lasting until 0700 when the push off began. Then the NGF and artillery increased their range and continued to neutralize the areas to our front until 1130. If we take this ridge line we'll be looking down Tojo's throat as he is doing to us now.

This is the morning of L plus 10 and at last things have quieted down. Yesterday was hell in every way. All three battalions caught it on their push off. Our company was shelled and got machine gun fire throughout the day, and to aggravate conditions the cold rain that started in the morning continued throughout the day also. We, the company, suffered six casualties yesterday—one killed, Board wounded pretty badly, and the other four minor shrapnel wounds. This morning I just received

word that Sgt. Atkins was killed by machine gun fire. That is eleven casualties for us to date—two killed in action. That's pretty high for what has been four days of actual fighting for a company of 158 men.

Last night was miserable. We got into our holes wet and cold. The temperature must have gotten down to 70 degrees and stayed cold all night. Even the fire we built and the canteen clip of steaming coffee I had at 0630 didn't alleviate the shakes I had.

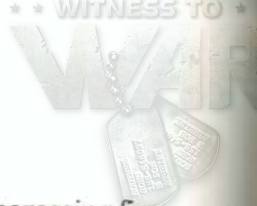
The medics, the company and platoon medics especially, are certainly doing a marvelous job and one that certainly should not be overlooked. They go about their tasks under fire without hesitation. The other afternoon when our guns were getting a helluva pasting from enemy artillery, and four of our men had received wounds from shell fragments, the medics were right there, running to and fro administering first aid with the big shells still exploding around them. That is their duty all right, but they are the unsung heroes.

The rest of L Plus 15 and 16 were quiet days here at the CP—quiet enough to take a helmet bath and a shave and write letters home. Last night, however, we got our regular nightly bombardment, but that doesn't even bother us any more unless the shells start landing within 100 feet of us.

We make another all-out assault on Tombstone Ridge Thursday. This time, and for that matter since the other time, we have been and will plaster them with artillery, naval gunfire, and aerial strikes. We are all a little more optimistic this time as we have better co-ordination, more supporting weapons, and we believe that the ridge is "softer" this trip. It will be costly, we know, but war is that kind of business.

Tombstone Ridge was named because of the burial vaults that literally line the slope and saddle of the ridge. The vaults are from 16 to 20 feet wide, 10 to 12 feet high, and about 10 feet deep. They are built of concrete and stone into the slope of the hills. A small opening 3 by 3 in the front at the base is the only entrance. These natives are ancestor worshippers. They bury their dead in a sitting position, leave them there for three years in the vaults, then place the remains in either a metal or earthen jug and put it on the shelf to be worshipped by the ages yet unborn. Our men have gone into these vaults that we have passed. They have seen the decomposed bodies and the ashes and have brought out with them more fleas than they could control, and so I believe the tombs won't be desecrated any more.

It is just about dusk now. The bright red sun is setting in the west, the night patrol is circling overhead, and the guns, our guns, are registering in for their night defensive fires. The enemy hasn't retired either. One of their big shells just exploded some 400 yards from the CP, so I suppose



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they too are getting everything in readiness for a night of harassing fire on our positions. Nights are pretty bad; days are, too, for that matter, but during the day one can see what is around. At night everything that is silhouetted against the sky looks like a Jap, and a leaf that rustles in the breeze is sure to be one. I believe that we, one and all, thank God for the new day when the first ray of light is seen in the east.

Today again there is little activity. We sent patrols out this morning and some of them advanced 1000 yards, meeting little or no resistance. That makes us believe that the Nips have withdrawn to the reverse slope of the ridge. Two air strikes this morning on the back side of "Tombstone" brought excellent results. So did the intermittent fire from our big guns.

L plus 24 finds us some 2400 yards ahead of our last front lines, past the objectives of two days ago and of yesterday, past "Tombstone" and "Sawtooth" Ridges and well upon the big escarpment that overlooks Naha, Shuri, and that which is believed to be the inner defenses. All of this barren ground has been won, but not without bitter fighting for every yard and heavy casualties. These last three days have been hell, and to make matters even worse, for the last two days and nights it has rained steadily. We have been made more miserable by the rains, and in addition our supply lines have been tied up. Even though the rains have now stopped for a while, it will take days for the roads to dry out again.

Day before yesterday Spess, our two security men, and I went forward to check with the four FOs. I'm sure that Spessard must be my jinx. Every other time that I've gone out with him on a reconnaissance, he's drawn fire on me, and this time was no exception. We were sniped at, machine gunned, dodged mortar fire, and even had three buzz bombs thrown in our direction. We ran for most of the morning, and towards the end I was so completely fagged out that I couldn't have run another foot even if the Japs had directed a Banzai at me personally.

Our last push was successful and we ate still moving ahead. Something pretty funny about it—the Japs just moved off the second ridge and we moved on with little or no opposition. That was yesterday, and still today we haven't contacted them in any force. Perhaps they withdrew to consolidate their defenses; perhaps to counter-attack. It all remains to be seen, but nevertheless we are still going ahead.

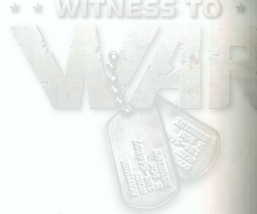
The Nips still have and still are using their artillery. Not too much is thrown out during the day but they always make up for it at night. Last night a 75 mm. shell exploded not more than 15 feet from my foxhole. (I paced it off this morning.)

L -plus 28 today, and we've had the big ridge for three days now and

are "looking down Tojo's throat." It is a grand view from the top. With glasses one can see the north end of the island, then do an about-face and see Naba and Shuri. In the front is a series of ridges and finger ridges, and with the observation that we have and they lack we believe that the going won't be too hard from now on. The enemy still has its artillery, and we still catch hell from it night and day. Every night they toss a few big ones in on us and it has begun to look as if our gun positions are check points for the Nips.

Today is, well I just asked, and it is L plus 36, and as I glance back to my last date of writing I find that it has been over a week since I made my last notes. During these past eight days of real hell so much has transpired that I could never remember enough to jot down all of the exciting and interesting incidents that occurred. During the past eight days I haven't found time to even brush my teeth. We have suffered many more casualties. York and Parker are dead from artillery fire in the gun position. Lt. McKee and Spaulding, his radio operator, were killed night before last by enemy mortar fire while they slept in one of the Battalion CPs. Lt. Layer, my ex-O, was killed by a mortar shell two days ago just five feet from my foxhole at our gun position, and the wounded and the battle nerve casualties are too numerous to mention. I feel these losses keenly, both personally and from the standpoint of the shrinking personnel in the company, McKee especially. We were very closely associated over so long a period, ever since the battalion was activated two years ago. I can't seem to believe that he is gone. War is certainly "Here today, gone tomorrow." We become calloused to death and suffering, but whenever someone very close goes, we still can't help but "fill up" and feel mighty bad.

Our position has been shelled incessantly night and day. It has gotten so that we can't tell the difference between our shells going over and the enemy's shells coming our way. Consequently we duck and run for cover at the least provocation. The mortars, I'm sure, are the worst of the lot even though they are smaller in size than the big ones; they drop from the sky with no warning whatsoever. We are all pretty jumpy, and this morning some more of the men had to be evacuated for nerves. At the present time we are at about 50% of our normal strength. There are no replacements in view nor any rest coming until the battle is over. The lines have been static for a week now. We have the ridge all right, but we can't seem to move more than the 300 yards to the front that we did last week. Infiltration on the part of the Nips has been on such a large scale for the past few nights that it could almost be called a breakthrough. Every night many of them get through the gaps in our lines



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and have to be hunted down individually and killed the next morning. Some are hard to find, and even one sniper like the one on the hill to our rear can cause a lot of uncomfortable minutes to a lot of men. He has been shooting at us for two days now and we can't seem to locate his hiding place. Those Japs are pretty shrewd. They use neither tracer bullets nor smoke powder, and so we are compelled to find them by sound or just by luck.

I got the Purple Heart the other day, damn near posthumously. I went forward to relieve Layer. He was doing FO and was with Baker company. (That was the day before he was killed.) I had a little trouble getting my party to the OP. Some shots were fired at us but nothing close enough to really worry about. I left my radio operator and my security man in a cave at the base of the hill (the OP was on the top) and I crawled up to the OP. Layer gave me the information I needed and he and his party left for the guns. A few minutes later I came down to contact the CO of the company, and while going from the cave my boys were in, to his CP, another cave some twenty yards away, a buzz bomb dropped out of the sky with no warning whatsoever and landed about fifteen or twenty yards from me. The shrapnel effect of those big babies is negligible, but the concussion is terrific. It knocked me down flat on my face, and before I could begin to recover myself I was completely covered with dirt and rocks. One of the infantrymen nearby saw what had happened and rushed out as soon as the rocks stopped falling and began to uncover me. He estimated that I was buried by about six inches of debris. I was pretty well shook up, found a shrapnel wound—a small one—in my wrist, and my back was bruised from the neck down by the rocks. The Medic examined me when I was relieved two days later and he said the affair and wound warranted the decoration. I was a bit reluctant to accept it for such as that, but the “points” toward release swayed me and I didn't argue the point.

For the past four days things have been unusually quiet either because of the bad weather or because the Japs have withdrawn again to a new defensive position. The past two days have been warm and sunshiny, but the two that preceded were cold, rainy, miserable ones. And, too, we had to move our guns during the worst part of it. Most of our transportation was bogged down in the mire, so it took most of a day to move the company and the equipment a mile and a half.

I had to send two more of my men back yesterday—they were just about ready to crack up. That makes five from my platoon in the past week. Looks like an epidemic. But I'm sure that these men I sent back weren't “gold-bricking”—they are really and truly “shot.” Sometimes I am sure that I'll be the next. I get the shakes pretty badly sometimes

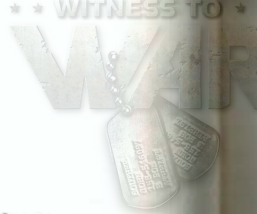
at night and can't seem to control myself. Still, I've managed to hold on somehow.

The news of Germany's unconditional surrender on May 8, 1945, came to us officially today and we took it just as a matter of course. There was no shooting or celebrating of any kind. It was certainly not accepted with the importance it was given in other places. Nothing seems important out here but our own selfish little war that we are in up to our necks right now, and I am sure we will not feel the real importance of VE day until we actually see the equipment and the replacements from that theater come in. We certainly can't see any VJ day in the near future.

We have had our usual rain, small arms fire, artillery, and mortar fire since I last had the chance to write. This is L plus 46 and it marks the 46th day of combat without rest for our company. We are all getting pretty tired—tired of the hard work, of fighting for our existence, tired of being dirty, tired of the noise and smell of battle, and tired mostly of the tenseness of war. The morale of the men, surprisingly enough, is still fairly high, and the combat efficiency of the company, even taking into account the few of us who are left, is excellent. We got some replacements—officers and men fresh from stateside; they helped.

This night-after-night sleeping in muddy wet foxholes is telling on me. I have a cold and every morning I wake up with a helluva backache that takes until noon to work out. The hills all seem higher and I know that I'm feeling my age and I know I can't do the things as well as I could when we landed full of vim and vigor. After all, this is 53 days in the line now, and that ain't hay.

Today, May 28th, [1945] marks the 58th day in the line and the second year of activation of our battalion, but even more important than either of these things, it marks the first day in a week that it hasn't rained to beat hell. For the past week the gods have really frowned on us and it has rained continuously day and night, and for the past four days our company has been practically isolated from the rest of the army, from water (drinking water only), supplies and ammo. Trucks could not get within seven or eight hundred yards of us, and for the rest of the way every thing that either came in or went out had to be hand-carried through the mud. That was a job, with the mud as deep and sticky as it has been. We have done everything that we could possibly think of to keep dry, but finally gave in and resigned ourselves to staying wet until the sun would come out to dry us. On two or three occasions the rains subsided long enough to let us build a fire and warm a little, but before we were dry the rain began again and out went the fire and in we



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dove for our somewhat dry shelters. Every engineering feat that was thought of was tried to make the foxholes dry and livable, but none seemed to work for long. We tried ditching around them, and the water would seep up from under. We tried putting ammo boxes under us, but in a few minutes the boxes would be floating and we were compelled to move to some other place or bail like hell to keep from going under. It was even no good digging a hole on the side of the hill as the water from the top would come down in torrents and almost wash us away. And so we just stayed wet throughout the day and slept wet throughout the night and made weak jokes about it. It was good to be alive even if we were wet and cold.

The troops in the real front lines caught even more hell. We could at least keep a poncho or shelter half over us when it rained, but those guys couldn't even do that, and they had to be alert for that one Jap sniper who might break through and take somebody's life or limb. We have all been on short rations and drinking water. Their supplies as well as ours now have to be brought up as far as possible in tracked prime movers and carried over the rest of the way by hand. The wounded have to be carried out on litters for a mile or two until the bearers can reach a place where a tracked vehicle can take them away. The battle, needless to say, has been practically at a stand-still. We have sent out patrols to find out where the enemy is located, and the Japs have tried one or two weak counterattacks at dusk, but they were easily repulsed. In the rear areas and near the air fields there has been some activity regardless of the rains. The Japs have sent planes over for the past three nights on their nuisance and suicide raids, and night before last they sent a few (rather a few got through) transports and gliders loaded with paratroopers trying to take one of the airports back—one that we took away from them. Only one of the transports and gliders got through the interceptors and dropped their troops, but they were either killed coming down or after they reached the ground.

Looks to me like this rainy siege has set me back at least two or three weeks. It will take five or six days of sunshine to dry the roads sufficiently so that the supplies can flow normally again and a few more to get the troops ready to fight. We still have a long way to go before we secure Okinawa.

Since the 28th of May until and including today, June 11th, so many things have happened that I should have jotted down and didn't, that I know I can not trust my memory to write after these past two weeks. First of all, and probably the most important is the steady rain that finally subsided four days ago. We left our old gun position on June 1st,

hand-carried the guns and important equipment about a mile to trucks and followed the infantry south in their fashion—on foot. The mud was knee deep everywhere and in some holes that we had to cross it was up to our waists. For three days we could not get the mortars through, and for four more not enough ammo to give decent support. All of us were wet day and night, miserably cold and dirty, but morale was still surprisingly high.

For the past four days we have been functioning normally again. Our gear has come up, we've bathed in shell holes, shaved. Rations and water are ample again and we are pushing ahead to try to complete this job.

During the rains the roads, almost all of them, were impassable to everything but tracked vehicles and many of the roads even to the M5s. Much of the food and ammo the front line troops received was from planes that made daily "air drops." Our water was from any shell hole purified by Halazone. The roads are open again now, and so all of that is history.

All during this period of bad weather the troops continued to push and we are now about 34 miles from the southern end of the island and again we find ourselves confronted with another ridge of 85 feet that extends across the entire front. For three days we have assaulted this escarpment and until now have made very little progress. This is possibly the Nips' last stand, and it may be that when we crack this, the battle will have been won.

G2 led us to believe that after the Naha-Shuri-Yona-Baru line was penetrated the resistance would be nil. That's a hot one. We cracked that line over a week ago during the rain and now on June 15th we're working again on the "last defense" of another ridge as high and inaccessible as Sawtooth. We are on the ridge and if all goes well, should be over today. Even I, as pessimistic as anybody could be, believe that this will be the last organized resistance. After all, there's but 4000 yards more to the ocean. The consensus of opinion is that there will be a counter-attack in force with all the force the Japs can muster. When and where is the question, but we are ready and willing and "Banzai" is like "shooting ducks in a pond."

Thought sure I'd be able to write *finis* to this and to operation "Iceberg" before now. This is 76 days and the Lt 45 line was at the south end of the island—another one of those "plans of mice and men."

It has been terrifically hot lately but the men have had so much mud and rain that they haven't complained.

Went up to the forward OP this morning. Saw the front advancing



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under mortar, machine gun, and artillery fire, but the thing that really caught my eye was a small wooded hill to the right front literally covered with vivid color. The Marines had gotten an air drop there yesterday and the colored chutes, red, green, blue, and yellow, hung on the stunted trees where they fell. Looked like Mardi Gras banners hung out to dry in the sun.

June 19th and I do write *finis* to the Battle of Okinawa, not that the fighting is over, but apparently it is for me. Two days ago I was sent to the hospital and my malady was diagnosed as jaundice. That is usually a long and drawn out process of treatment, and so I have resigned myself to my fate. After 77 days of combat I feel no remorse when I relax in the comforts afforded me here.