This is a true story taken from the diary of a W.W. II soldier. It has been amateurishly re-written and illustrated so it can be presented to the children and grandchildren of the author. He wanted them to read first-hand "HOW IT WAS" for some veterans who fought in W.W. II.

Richard J. Foss

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The men shown on the front and back cover of this book were my machine gun squad members the day our Division prepared to leave the Admiralty Islands to invade Leyde Island of the Philippines. I kept this snap shot of the squad in my billfold for over 30 years. I removed the snap shot and made an enlarged, free hand, oil painting of the squad. The oil painting turned out successful. What you see on the front and back cover of the book is a photograph of the oil painting I made.

It may sound strange but I did not wish to learn 'too much' about the men I soldiered with. It became too emotional to develope a 'buddy' relationship one day and lose that 'buddy' the next day to an enemy bullet or exploding shell. With a few exceptions I learned to call each soldier I fought next to by either his last name or the state he came from, only.

Front Cover

Left to right. Back row. Burrows, who broke in wild horses for a living. He was from Idaho. Next to him was Stephens. Stephens was my squad leader. I believe he was a regular army soldier.

Bottom row. Foss. I am the author of this book. I was a clothing salesman before the war. I am from Iowa. Freeman was suppose to be next to me in the photo. At the time the picture was snapped Freeman was in the hospital. Freeman came from California

Back Cover

Left to right. Back row. Fastner, college student. He was from Minnesota. Next to Fastner was Gallagher. He said very little. I only know he came from Ohio.

Left to right. Bottom row Nolte, telephone employee from Minnesota. Next to Nolte was Sands. Sands claimed to be a roamer and nothing else. Sands came from the state of Pennsylvania

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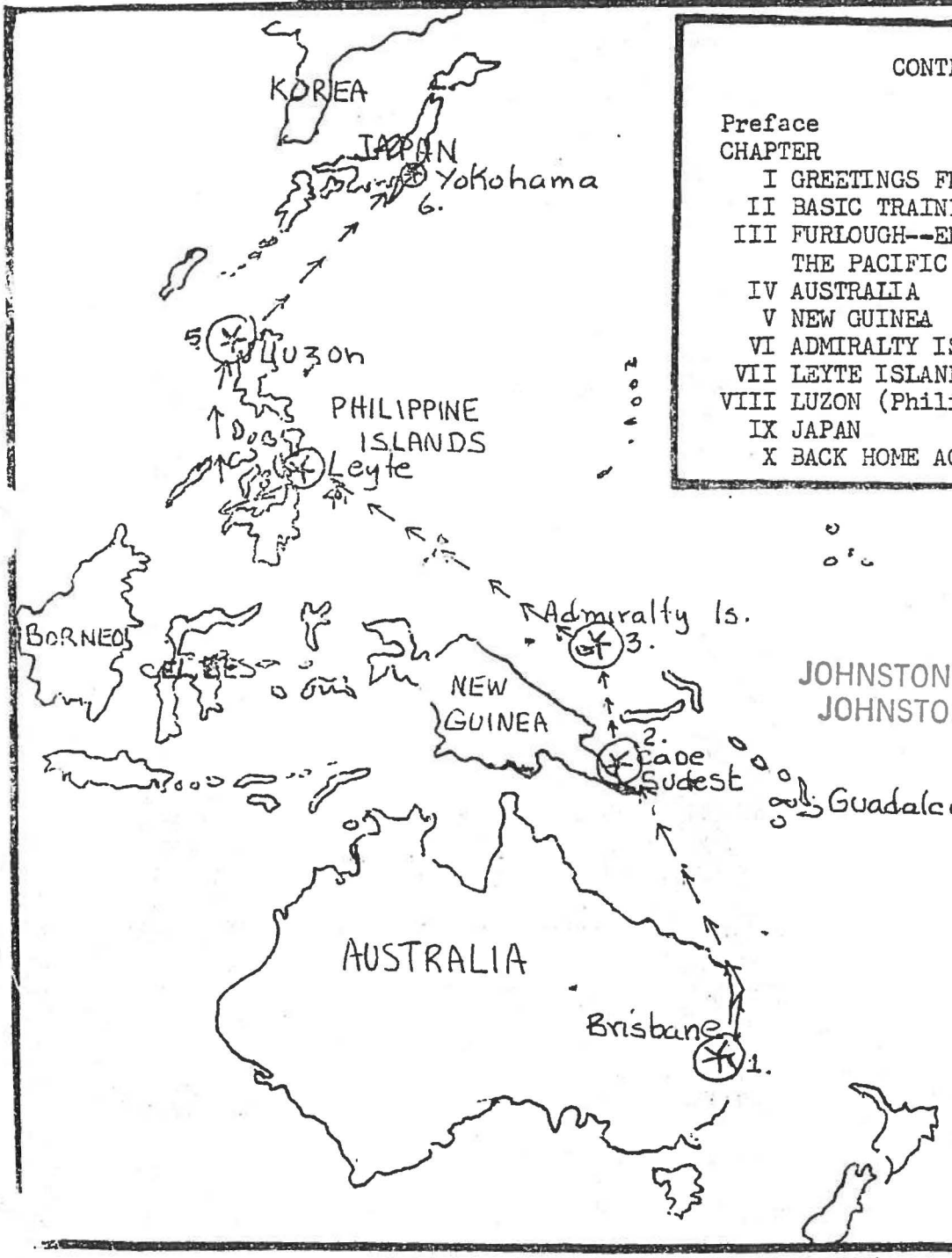
HOW IT WAS

SOUTH WEST PACIFIC AREA



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7th Cavalry
Moves

1. Brishane, Australia
2. Cape Sudest, N.G.
3. Los Negros. Admiralty Islands
4. Tacloban, Leyte Is.
5. Lingayen, Luzon Is.
6. Yokohama, Japan

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PREFACE

I was born six years before the 'Great Depression'. We were poor, as were countless of others. Mom was the sole 'bread-winner' since my Dad died of cancer two months before my birth. Mom earned $1.00 a day as a house worker. None of my brothers nor my sister graduated from high school since each, in order, needed to help care for the family. I did not know what it was like to have a lot of material possessions and it did not bother me. We had a loving, caring family. Life was good. I was happy.

During my elementary school years, we moved many times. The neighborhoods I lived in would be called 'ghettos' by today's standards. Junior High school years proved to be as difficult. While in 7th grade, I began working to help with family living expenses. I sold magazines, carried morning, evening and Sunday news papers and worked as a curb-boy at Reeds' Ice Cream stand at 21st and Forest Ave. It was during my Junior High school years that I developed a great interest in sports - especially Basketball and Softball. Participation in these sports filled many hours of my life and did much to keep me out of serious trouble. By the time I reached high school, all of my brothers and my sister were either married or out living on their own. I wanted to participate in high school sports but couldn't. It was now more necessary to work to help support Mom and myself. I was not one of those highly talented, intellectual students - in fact, my grade point was somewhat less than average but allowed me to become the only high school graduate in my immediate family.

At this writing, only my brother Gene and my sister Kate are still living of my original family of Mom, four brothers and one sister.

Why would anyone who has never written more than a 'term paper' for a classroom assignment want to get involved in the writing of and the illustrating of a book? Well, for one reason, I now have the time to do all of the things I have wanted to do. I just recently retired from my teaching position that I held for 35 years. Secondly, I enjoy drawing very much. If I fail as a

writer or illustrator, as I could easily do, nothing has bee hurt. I can just brush it off as a fun project I want to do during my retirement. My third reason for wanting to write and illustrate this book is the most important reason of all. I have had a strong urge for some time, to share a major experience in my life with those I love, trust and admire very much. I can not explain fully why I have this strong desire. I am sure most of it, is, I want to be remembered. I really think it is more than that. I hope that it is possible to import some feelings and positive messages to my children and grand children that might otherwise not be handed down. Hope fully, the words that are written and the illustrations drawn will promote the development of strong family ties and encourage some ideals, beliefs or goals for a healthy outlook on life. I want to convey a good feeling for our country and the need for faith and trust in our fellow The feelings of fear, courage and love, as well as human sacrifice, surfaces time and time again. Good or bad — I would like this story to become a living part of my offsprings and my grand children's life history

The time span of this story extended over a twenty-six month period - from May, 1943, through October, 1945. It is the time in my life that I served in the army during World War II. I was a machine-gunner. I chose this time in my life to write about because I have detailed information relating to events and happenings from a diary that I kept during this time. I wrote the details in the diary following each campaign we fought in, while our outfit was in a rest area. This diary stayed in a barracks bag, a safe distance behind the front lines while I was in a combat area. It was not difficult to recall all the combat experiences following each campaign. I wrote all the happenings and events as soon as I could after a battle, while they were fresh in my mind. Twenty-two of the twenty-six months I will write about were spent in combat zones of the South Pacific while the United States was at war with the Japanese.

Recently, I pulled out the foul-smelling, mildew covered 'V-mail' sheets of paper the diary was written upon, forty-five years ago, and re-read it. I

talked to friends about the idea of writing and illustrating this story. They all agreed it would be a good idea. I have told parts of this story many, many times to people, both young and old, including my children and grand children. Most of them seem fascinated by the happenings of these times. Now I intend to tell the complete story..

The characterizations in this book are not intended to be of specific individuals or groups. The illustrations are intended to show how or why an event or happening occured and its relationship to the total story. My attempt is to write each incident exactly as it appeared to me. Needless to say, the writing and the illustrations are done by an amateur.

CHAPTER I

"GREETINGS....FROM YOUR PRESIDENT"

In the late months of the year 1940 and the early months of 1941, I was aware that a world conflict was going on. Tires, gasoline and things made of metal were becoming more difficult to come by. The number of items that were being rationed also served as a reminder. News about the aggression of Germany in Europe appeared daily. Japan was buying more and more scrap iron which was being used against China and Burma. In the back of my mind I felt this world tension would 'blow-over' before I would become involved.

Things did <u>not</u> get better. Many of my close friends were going off to various branches of the service. When I graduated from high school in June, 1941 I was told by my draft board that I would be temporarily exempt from active service because I was my mom's sole support. Each day the problems of the world increased by leaps and bounds. One Sunday afternoon, a friend and I stopped in a neighborhood drug store to have a coca-cola after playing basketball at the Jewish Community Center. It was there that I learned from a radio report that Japan had attacked our Pacific fleet that was stationed in Pearl Harbour, Hawaii. The Japanese did a great deal of damage. Many American lives were lost. This incident shocked me into reality. I now realized that I was going to become a person involved. I didn't know when but I knew it <u>would</u> happen. I was now 18 years of age.

Gradually, over the next two years, almost all of my friends entered the service. Here I was twenty years old and still exempt - <u>then it happened</u>! I opened the mail box. There it was. A long white envelope that was very neat and formal looking. The envelope was addressed to me, personally. Upon opening the envelope a business like letter popped out. At the top of the paper I see "GREETINGS FROM YOUR PRESIDENT..... YOU HAVE BEEN SELECTED BY YOUR FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS TO SERVE YOUR COUNTRY....." Before you are inducted into the armed services you must be approved

by the Selective Service Board. This letter notified me of the time and place where the approval was to take place.

A few days later, as I headed down town to meet with the board, I felt a little apprehensive. I feared the unknown. On the one hand, I hoped they would reject me. On the other hand, if I was rejected I might be considered a 'draft-dodger', or worse yet, a '4F'. To most people at that time, a 'draft-dodger' was thought of as mentally unfit and a '4F' as physically unfit. Both of these classifications were looked upon with contempt.

I hated to leave the comfortable surroundings of home. Most of all. I hated to leave my Mom. How would she provide for her self. Deep down I wanted to serve my country. My wish was granted. The Selective Service Board took one look at me and told me I would be reporting to the Induction Center at Camp Dodge, Iowa very shortly.

A lot of things go through one's mind on the day the draft board says you will report for your physical. You picture yourself going off to war and coming home minus a leg, arm, or maybe an eye - if at all. You wonder if you will have the courage to adapt to whatever the service life has in store for you. Will you be able to take orders? What, exactly will the food and quarters be like? Will you get home sick? The top question is.... will you really be capable of killing another human.... if the occasion comes up? It really makes little difference what you think. If you are physically fit you must go into the service. It really is a scary, empty feeling to be told that you will report for active duty.

A few days after I was informed I would be inducted I received a second formal letter from the draft board. It told me to catch a train to Camp Dodge from down town Des Moines at the ungodly hour of 6.45 A.M. I did as I was instructed. The train arrived at the Camp about 9:00 A.M. There were a number of inductees. We were lined up alphabetically. Each of us was assigned to a clerk. The clerk asked us questions about age, occupation, and education... etc. Following the question period we marched off to lunch. This was my first exposure to the army term for meal time. The word used was "chow".

Following "chow", we were escorted by a soldier stationed at Camp Dodge to a large room. We were ordered to remove all our clothing. Doctors were every where. Every

part of your body was examined. The Doctors asked more questions. They punched, pinched, tapped, dug and then they injected. Before long, I stood before my last doctor. He shook my hand, congratulated me and told me I was A-1. I did not know if I should say "thank you" or clobber him. He was an officer..... I said "thank you". I now had the satisfaction of at least knowing that I was not a physical wreck. I will say this was the most complete physical examination that I had ever had.

After the physical examinations we were divided into groups of 50-100 and each group was led into a room. Here we were told to raise our right hand and repeat the words said by a Second Lieutenant. We were taking the oath that each serviceman must take before he offically becomes a soldier. Following this ceremony, we were led back to the trains we arrived on earlier in the day. Before boarding the train we were reminded that we were to report back to Camp Dodge in one week - as an army private. We then returned to Des Moines.

I spent a 'nervous-wreck" week worrying and meditating about what would be in store for me in the near future. I spent some time with a few close friends during that week and I went to a few movies and a couple of dances. I was shy but I did manage to have one date that week.

At the end of the seven days. I was ready. I got up early (that is, my mom got me up early). I dressed and packed the few personal belongings the Army allowed. I kissed my mom and bid her farewell. I think I detected a slight tear in **each** eye when I turned to wave at her.

I boarded the train as I had done before. This time when I arrived at Camp Dodge, I was escorted to a brick building called a barracks. They were one-story buildings with double sleeping bunks. We soon had another physical examination. This examination was not as complete as the last one. When the doctor said "A-1" again I knew there was no getting out now.

Private R.J. Foss, 37671---, that's me. Sounds more like a convict... If they had added 'Rocky' or 'Lefty' to my name I would have felt exactly like a convict. The butch haircut that soon followed would have confirmed it. Those haircuts they give you do two things to you in a hurry. They take away any self respect you felt you might have had and they make you look and feel ugly — I mean — UGLY!!

We next headed to the clothing room to get our TAILOR-MADE uniforms. It's a strange thing. They weigh and measure you in detail, they ask you what size you wear, and end up throwing you anything and everything but what you ask for. It's really comical. You strip completely and line up while some old Army "pro" hands you a cloth bag called a barracks bag. This army man informs you to walk along a counter and pick up your clothing issue. He reminds you, as you walk along, to give the man behind the counter your correct size. (Mind you, he does this with out a hint of a smile). How was I to know my leg was being pulled. I ask for size 32 shorts. I got size 34. I ask for size 36 under-shirt. I got size 34. I asked for size 15-33 shirt. I got size 15-34. Size 34 - that's all they knew. At first I thought they would give me size 34 shoe. The shoes they did issue to me were 1½ sizes too large. I was swimming in them. (Later on my feet flattened into them.)

We were ordered to get dressed upon receiving our clothing issue. As I was dressing, I remember looking at a mirror with a sign above it that said "YOU ARE NOW LOOKING AT THE BEST-DRESSED SOLDIER IN THE WORLD". Frankly, I thought I looked like something the cat refused to drag in. The army said differently. Who am I, buck private R.J. Foss, 37671---, to argue. Sad Sack, the army cartoon character, looked like Clark Gable in a tailor made uniform compared to what I looked like in my uniform.

After stuffing our extra clothing into our barracks bags, we marched off to our new homes. The exterior was brick. There was a front door, a back door and very few windows. The interior was one large, cold, bare room. At the far end was a smaller room. There were no rugs, curtains, easy chairs, tables or radios. The smaller room was shared by

three men. They were non-coms (non-commissioned officers.) Fifty-five buck privates shared the larger room of the barracks. The furniture in the large room consisted of twenty-eight double bunks. Each bunk had two large wooden boxes sitting at the end of each double bunk. The wooden boxes were called foot lockers. Foot lockers hold all of your personal belongings. Each private was issued a foot locker to use while at Camp Dodge.

We soon learned what NON-COMS were all about. They were the barracks keepers. They gave orders to us as the orders were passed down from the higher-ups. After only a few minutes of settling in our new home we were ordered out side to 'police the area'. 'Police the area' means — pick up everything that is not fastened down and put it in garbage pails. We were given a few other orders by the non-coms in our barracks at this same time. One of the orders was to haul garbage from the mess hall, another order was to clean up around the officers quarters. The third order was to clean up around the camp sump. Do you have any idea how degrading it can be to clean up a smelly sump area. Things even got worse, later on.

This first day we did very little but carry out a few small details assigned by our barracks non-coms. Most of the day we laid around, talked and read. Part of the day we watched the permanent personnel in the camp do "close order drill", and what appeared to be complicated marching moves. We were told we would all be doing all this drill ourselves, soon. It did not take long to learn how to keep out of sight of the three barracks non-coms. Actually, a non-com is much like an officer. He has certain leadership duties he is assigned to do, according to his rank. A non-com is a person who had not been commissioned. An officer has been commissioned. Officers wear metal bars of various shapes on their shoulders and hats to identify their rank. Non-coms wear cloth stripes on the upper portion of their sleeves. The more stripes a non-com has the more rank he holds. You learn fast about rank in the service. Usually, the higher the rank the more human the person. I did learn one thing in a hurry — whenever non-coms see buck-privates doing nothing, they automatically put them to work.

That first night while I tried to sleep, it seemed everyone else wanted to talk. The main topic of conversation was "where do you think we will be taking our basic training?" I finally fell asleep about 11:30 P.M. It seemed I

had just closed my eyes when I heard this sweet, soothi tender little voice from afar say "hit the deck Soldier — and damned fast". Boy, it seemed early to be getting up. I dreamed that I got up, dressed and was about to make my bed — when — suddenly this chunk of ice shaped like a human hand reached under the blanket and shook me. A very cold voice that came from the same body with the cold hand said, "WHATS THE MATTER SOLDIER - YOU HARD OF HEARING". I got up and managed to get my pants and both shoes on when the second order came over the loud speaker. "Get the hell outside.... on the double". This order closely resembeled a death threat. Our barracks sergeant was such a mild-tempered, thoughtful, pleasant, lovable kind soul.... god love him. I observed these gentle and pleasing characteristics our sergeant possessed as he shouted — no, as he frantically SCREAMED,... "SHUT UP..... FORM TWO LINES. NOW GET THIS STRAIGHT — YOU WILL BE FULLY CLOTHED — YOUR BUNKS WILL BE MADE. THIS AREA WILL BE POLICED. — AND MOST OF ALL YOU WILL HIT THE FLOOR OF YOUR BARRACKS THE SECOND I ANNOUNCE THAT ORDER EACH MORNING ON THE LOUD SPEAKER — DO YOU HEAR ME." As he was speaking to us, most of us were still half asleep and only half dressed. He again informed us that "we had better get with it". He tol us he has never seen such a bunch of misfits. The guy next to me said to me "Aw,.. I bet he says that to all of his new recruits." At the moment I would have loved to punch that barracks sergeant. Later, after he cooled down a bit, he told us this formation was called REVEILLE. Reveille is what gets the day started. He said "No one — repeat — no one was to miss it! He reminded us again we will fall out each morning fully dressed, our bunks will be made and the area 'policed' before we will eat breakfast. The sergeant then marched us off to the mess hall. The food at the induction center was very good. There was plenty of it.

After breakfast, when we returned to our barracks, we were each handed either a broom, mop, mop-pail of water or soap. We were ordered to clean the place up. I do not recall ever having my mom tell me to sweep or mop my room at home - especially at this ungodly hour of the morning. I thought, "you've got to be kidding". The Sergeant was not kidding.

About one half-hour after we finished cleaning up the barracks we were ordered outside for another formation. I did hear the sergeant say something about 'detail' I did not understand what he ment. After the first

day I found out what that 'nasty' word 'detail' meant. It meant work, work, work. My first detail was cleaning warehouses at Camp Dodge. I soon discovered the secret of these 'work details' - you half-work and you half-pretend to work. It all depends upon whether or not a non-com is present or if you are being watched over by an officer. After a while you get real proficient at fooling non-coms into thinking you are really 'doing something useful.

Detail assignments were done after morning chow, until noon. Around noon you returned to your barracks than on to chow. After lunch you returned to your detail till 3:30 P.M. At this time you again return to the barracks to get prepared for another of the army's important formations. The barracks Sergeant used a little more common sence about this formation. He told us we were going to fall our for "retreat". He followed this up by having the barracks corporal explain what we were about to do. He told us we were to fall out in sun-tans. He explained and showed us what sun-tans were. The Corporal told us when we fall out to form two lines. He showed us how to dress up each line and how to straighten them out. The Corporal explained that the "retreat" formation takes place in each American camp around 5:00 P.M. each day. It is a time set aside to honor those who gave their lives in American battles, both past and present. After the Corporals little speech we all showered, put on our sun-tans and formed two lines. While we were waiting for orders from higher-ups our barracks Sergeant explained how to stand at attention, present arms and what 'at ease' ment. Actually, we all did pretty well on the drills that the Sergeant ordered. He could not believe we were the same 'rum-dums' that failed to get out for reveille on time. If that idiot would have taken the time to explain what he wanted done the night before, there would have been no problem.

Shortly after retreat comes supper. When supper is over we are all pretty much on our own. We could go anyplace on the camp grounds we wanted to go. We could leave camp only with a pass. Everyone had to be back in the barracks by 11:00 P.M. Lights out occured at 9:00 P.M. The first night at camp I went to the camp Service Club. I called Mom and I told her how the first day went. I reminded her that I would call before I left for another camp to do my Basic Training. The Service Club had a dance that night. A group of girls were brought in for dance partners. I actually attempted to dance. I dance like a hog on ice. I faked it through the night and had a good time. I got to bed about 11:30 P.M.

Each and every day more and more new men

arrived while many of the older recruits were leaving for different training camps all over the United States. On the morning of the fourth day in camp, I was told by my barracks Corporal that I did not need to go on detail after breakfast. He told me I needed to pack and get ready to leave for Basic Training Camp. I did nothing all day but pack my barracks bag, eat and lay around. I did call my mom and told her I was leaving. I could not tell her where I was going because I did not know where I was heading for. I told her I would write. We did not have a telephone. At 4:30 P.M. I was told to "fall out" in formation with my full barracks bag. My name was called off to be dressed in O.D.'s and I was to be ready to board the train at 5:30 P.M. O.D's are winter clothing. My first thought was that I was heading for a state that had cooler temperatures. I ate chow early and I missed "retreat". We did board the train at 5:30 PM. We arrived at the Des Moines train depot four hours later. We had to travel to Des Moines going backwards. No one in the group, including the guy assigned as our leader, knew our destination. We were told by an officer in charge of the whole car load that there would be a two hour lay-over. We asked the leader to request permission to leave the train till time to leave Des Moines. The officer in charge agreed to let us leave as long as everyone promised to get back one-half hour before departure time.

I immediately caught a trolly car from downtown so I could visit my mom. Since she was not expecting me, she was already in bed. I almost had to tear down the house to get her to answer the door. She finally woke up. She was both surprised and glad to see me. I told her I had less than two hours to spend with her. She was not pleased with my hair cut. We sat and talked. I ate all of the butter scotch cookies she had made and drank all the milk in the house. I told her that since there was nothing else in this place to eat or drink it was time to leave. I kissed her, told her I would write and for her not to worry. My mom and I had a special thing going- whenever she left - she first kissed me. whenever I left - I kissed her - this was in case we didn't see each other again. This was the first time in my life I had ever gone far, far away from home. It left an empty feeling inside of me. The next time I saw my mom was five months later.

I got back to the train depot in plenty of time, found the rest of the group and we loaded on to the train. Sleeping berths were assigned to each man. We

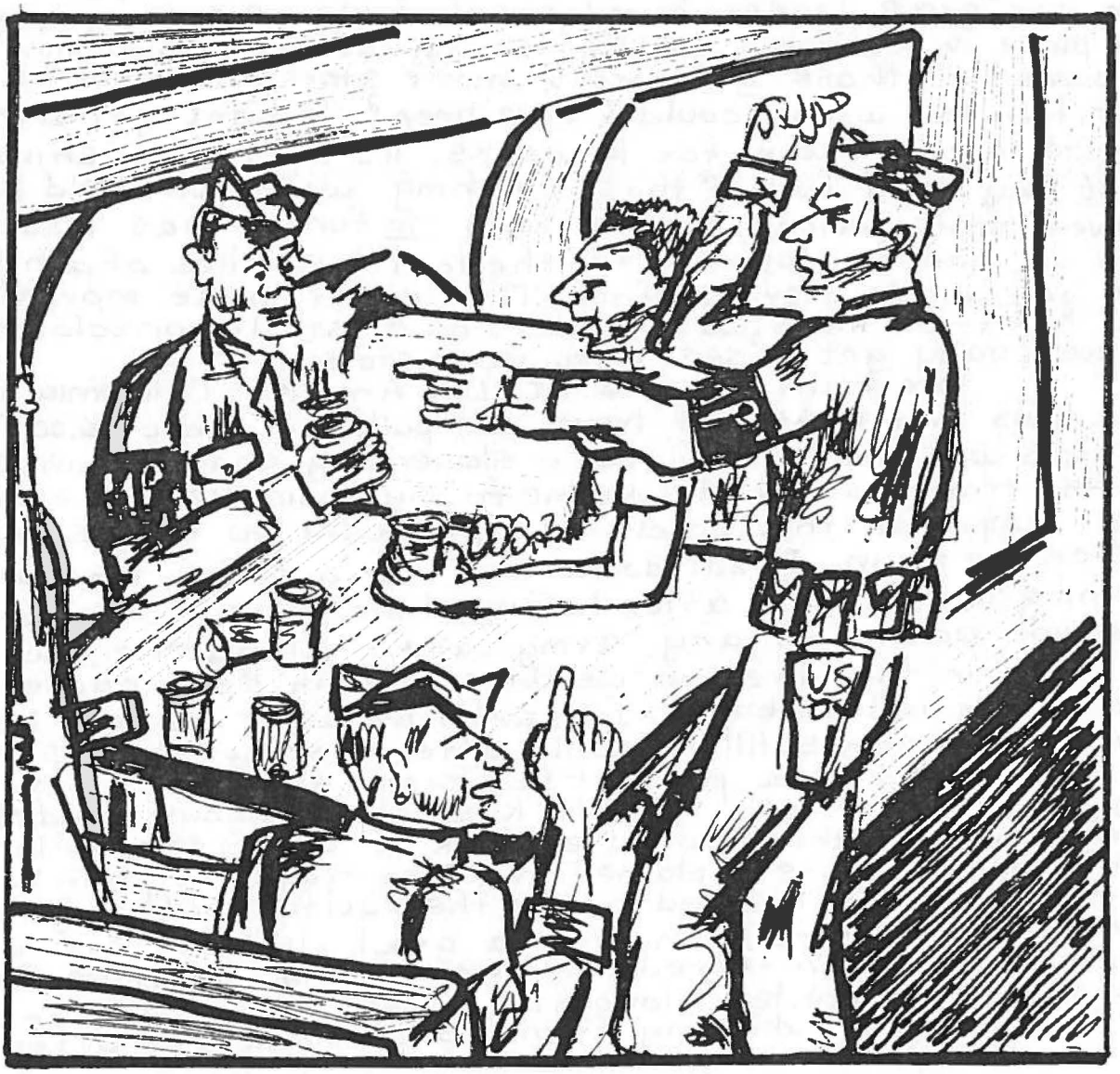
went to bed still not knowing where we were to locate for Basic Training. The train was heading West. The minute I stepped on this train, I changed from a frightened recruit into a scared soldier. We really traveled in style. We were in Pullman cars. Our car had a Porter to wait on us. We ate in the dinner car. We read a lot and watched the sights and scenery from the train windows. The things I saw I had only read about. I was really, really fascinated by it all. The first sight of real honest to god mountains, with snow on top, is enough to take your breath away. I was traveling in a fashion I could not have been able to afford if I was required to pay.

In the service rumors are always going around. The rumors in our car of the train had us being sent from the state of Washington to Texas and back. After the third day on the train our group leader found our that we were going to go some place in California ..... Ah! sunny California - swimming in the ocean - all those glamorous movie stars - it would be beautiful! How wrong could I have been? I didn't get even a glimpse of the ocean for 16 weeks. As for the sunshine — I got my belly full of that. Marching with full field pack for even short periods of time was no fun. It was less fun when we had to double time the last two miles of a hike, with gas masks over our face. The longer force march; over eight to fifteen miles, was murder. As a small consolation, I did eventually get to see a few movie stars.

Our train arrived at Los Angeles, California after three days and nights of travel. We pulled in about 6:00 P.M. Our group was transferred to a slower day coach train. This was the train that would take me to my basic training camp. I ate supper on this coach and proceeded to my assigned seat on the train. I sat down next to a sailor who was returning to his base after taking shore leave. I asked him if he was aware of any army camps along the route of this train in the direction we were heading. He mentioned a camp called Roberts. I asked him what he had heard about Camp Roberts. All he could offer was that it was very big and located in a part of California that was very, very hot. We had been told to keep the window shades pulled down on the train after dark. I asked the sailor next to me why. He explained that the track the train was moving upon was located along the Pacific coast - lights from a train can be seen for a great distance out in the ocean. It has been feared and rumored that Japanese "subs" were recently sighted along the coast. The railroad company was not going to take any chances. I experienced a feeling

about the closeness of the war that I had never felt in Des Moines, Iowa. As excited as I was, I did finally managed to fall asleep.

As I was dozing off I thought of another experience regarding war and people involved in war. It happened earlier, on the Pullman train. The Pullman car located between the car I was assigned to and the dinning car was occupied by Army Military Police. This group of soldiers had just returned from active combat duty in Italy. They got on the train in New York. They were taking turns guarding German prisoners holed up in a train car near the end of the train. This car next to us seemed to be where the M.P.'s took their "breaks." All of the Military Police seemed extremely tense and very nervous. They were all dressed in sun-tans that appeared not to have been changed in weeks.



most of them carried loaded guns. Every time we passed through their car to go to the dinner to eat, they seemed to be yelling or arguing - ready to fight each other. It was scary to pass through their car. One evening, just before dark, two of the M.P.'s did get into a fight. One of them knocked another's head through a train window. At the next train stop after the fight had taken place, an Army ambulance was waiting to take the injured M.P. to a near by Army Hospital, I do not know where these M.P.'s ended up but I was sure glad when they switched trains.

After I had fallen sound asleep and was in another world, I was awaken by one of those soft spoken, sweet voiced individuals - somewhat like our beloved sergeant from Camp Dodge. This monster hand grabbed my shoulder and shouted loud enough for everyone in the car to hear, "HERES WHERE WE GET OFF." I was droopy-eyed and a little cold. It was 2:00 A.M. I was in my summer sun-tans. The second I stepped off the train, if you can imagine, a much louder and gravel sounding voice said. "YOU GUYS GOING TO ROBERTS?" What a dumb question. We had been told nothing at all

about where we were going. We were herded into the back of a large Army truck and told to hang on tight. What a horriable feeling - you are cold, sleepy, hungry, over 2,000 miles from home and riding in the back of a truck with an insane driver at the wheel - not knowing what the future might bring (if in fact, I had a future). The driver finally slowed down as we approached what looked like a prison area surrounded by a high fence. It was now about 3:00 A.M. As we drove slowly through the camp, I could see the big yellow buildings that were the barracks. They seemed quite different from Camp Dodge. These buildings were much larger. They were two stories high. When the truck stopped, yet another mild and senseous voice shouted tenderly "GET THE HELL OUT AND GET OVER TO THE GOD DAMM ORDERLY ROOM." It was still pitch dark. I could not see the orderly room even if I knew what the "god damm" thing was suppose to look like. As it turned out, an orderly room is where you are to pick up your bedding. The soldier in charge of this orderly room was not overly friendly. He did not seem to be particularly happy to see me or any of the other guys. In between yawns and stretches, and a few profane comments, he issued us our cots and blankets. As soon as I was assigned a barracks I flopped down on my cot and fell into an exhausted sleep.

CHAPTER II
BASIC TRAINING

So this is where I do my basic training. It was the middle of the night when I arrived here and I was too cold and tired to care much about how anything looked. When I finally awoke, I discovered the barracks here were similar to those at Camp Dodge. The barracks had a shower and rest room area at one end, on the lower level. A small room for non-com quarters was located on both floor levels, on either end. The only difference was that the barracks here at Camp Roberts were two stories high. They held double the men that the Camp Dodge barracks held. I noticed that I had lost about one-half of the men that I had traveled on the train with from Des Moines. Somewhere along the trip they got assigned to other camps. Because of the long train trip we were allowed to 'sleep in'. About 10:00 A.M. I got hungry. I found the closest mess hall. I asked about breakfast. The cook just laughed and told me to come back around noon. Being a guy who does not like to waste valuable 'sack time', I returned to my assigned barracks to resume my beauty sleep. I woke up about noon.

While I was waiting in line for chow, I struck up a conversation with one of the day time clerks from the orderly room. I asked questions about Camp Roberts. He told me this camp was one of the largest training camps in the west.... possibly the biggest infantry camp in the United States. He told me I could count on a good, tough, complete dose of training before I would leave here. After lunch, I 'cased' the camp. First, I looked for the closest places to find food. I not only found the mess hall but the post exchange and the service club. The service club was about one and a half miles away. Next, I looked for recreational areas where I could play basketball, or at least shoot baskets. I found a place close by. I also found some ball diamonds where I could spent some time playing and watching.

The barracks I was assigned, when I arrived, was

really going to be a temporary housing facility. I was placed there till I could be interviewed as to my skills, talents, abilities, interests and education. After the Army made some decisions, I would than get a permanent placement. They intend to place you in a situation and an enviornment in which you would be best suited. Does the Army ever make mistakes — you might ask? You be the judge I was placed in, get this, the INTELLIGENCE and RECONNAISSANCE (I and R) Regiment. Me — in intelligence. Some one had to be kidding. It really sounded a lot more involved than it really was. The main responsibility of I and R personnal is to detect and collect all possible information related in any manner to enemy manuvers, tactics and weapons. What ever information that was found would be used against them. In simple terms we were going to train and learn to scout for data that could be made useful by our forces to help defeat our enemies. I was going into one of the two phases of I and R. I was either going out as a scout to find the information or I was going to be taught how the information that was brought back to head quarters, was going to be used against the enemy. Sound interesting?... I thought so.

After our interviews ended, we were ordered to leave the temporary barracks. More and more new recruits were arriving I picked up my barracks bag to move to the new permanent quarters and discovered how heavy that barracks bag gets when it is filled with all your worldly possessions. I only moved two blocks to my new quarters. It seemed more like ten miles. The sign in front of my new home read COMPANY "A". 1st Platoon, 87th Battalion. After another short interview, I was sent to barracks one. There were four barracks in a row that, I think, made up a company. I am not that sure of the size of platoons and battalions. In basic training the size may vary. Our barracks was next to the mess hall. We drew some equipment from the orderly room that same day. The equipment consisted of an M-1 rifle, helmet liner and steel helmet, shovel, pup tent and pack. We drew the rest of our gear a few days later. The rest of that first day in our new quarters was spent getting use to the grounds and making friends with the other new recruits. Not one other guy who left Des Moines with me was assigned to this company or to this whole Battalion. I was home sick already. It seemed very hard to make friends at Camp Roberts. The guy in the bunk

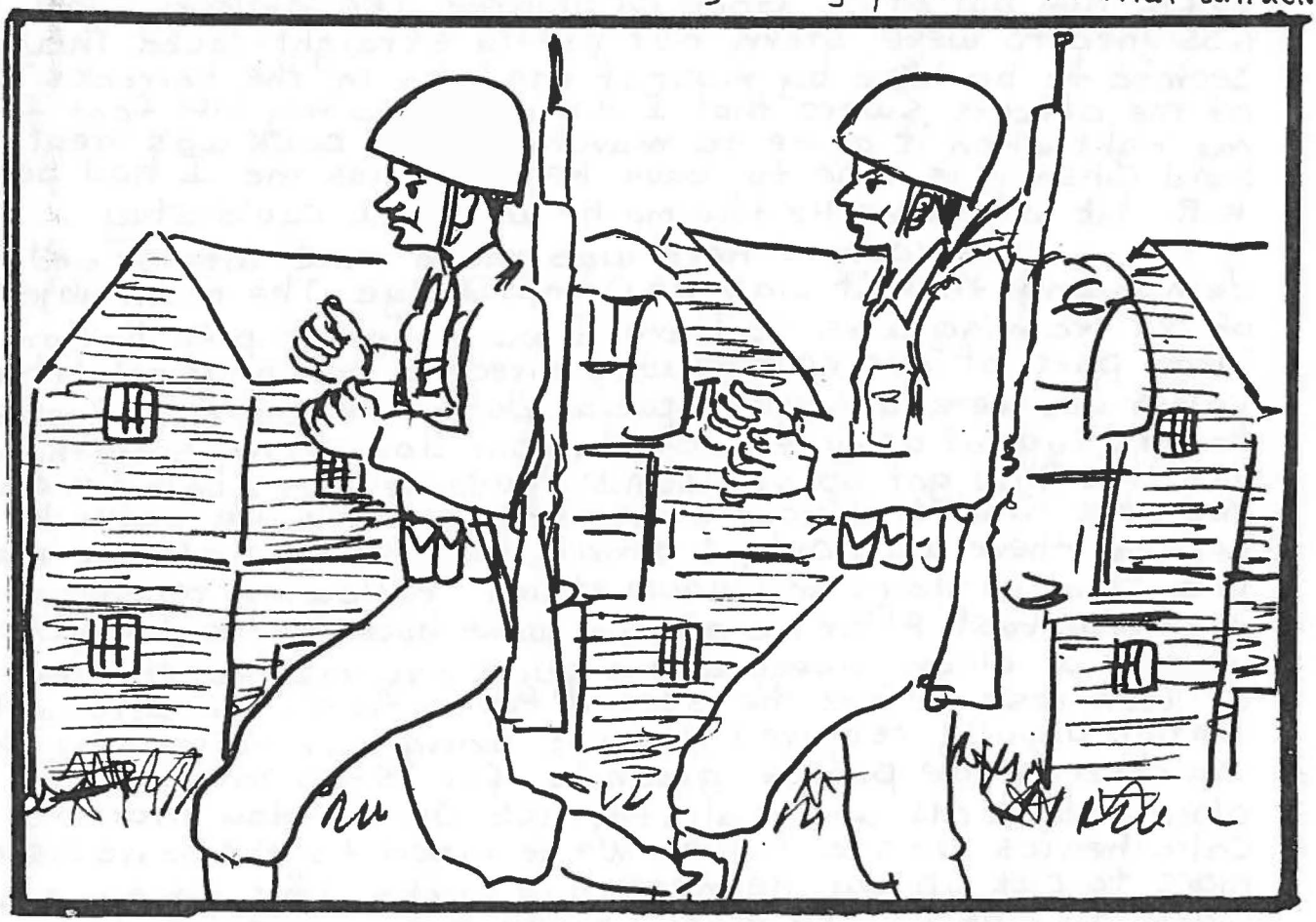
to my right lived in California. He was like "mikie". He hated. every thing. It took quite awhile even to get him to speak. The guy in the bunk to my left was from Missouri. You had to prove every thing to him. It was hard to get to know him. All he seemed to do was shake his head "yes" or "no". In fact it was really difficult to talk with any of them. I was assigned to the second floor. Finally, a guy from Kansas said he had been to big 'D' (Des Moines) but.... he didn't like it. This didnt make things any easier. On the second day, some one down the room from me agreed to walk with me to the P.X. (Post exchanae). He said he needed some exercise. Later we went outside and got into a basketball game. After that, I made friends fast. Before long I Knew everyone on the second floor and half the men on the first floor. Friend ships soon began to develope automatically. We were "all in the same boat" and it almost seemed like the whole barracks was one big happy family. Life got easier after I got to know the barracks non-coms and the training officers a little better. Almost every state in the United States was represented in this building. It was fun to listen to southern drowls and the eastern "youse-guys". A close friendship was developed with six buddies. Two of them came from Texas, two from Missouri and one each from Minnesota and Kansas. One of the two guys from the state of Missouri and I were given the distinction of being known as the biggest 'mess-ups' on the second floor. It was probably true. We both seemed to have two left feet when it came to marching. Neither of us could hit a bull in the butt with a rifle if we were standing five feet away. For some unknown reason, we both pulled more K.P. (Kitchen Police) than any one else in the company..

The barracks did not have pot-bellied stoves but they did have some type of heating system. Early mornings were very cool during the rain season. The 17 weeks I was in Camp Roberts it sprinkled one time for about five minutes. I believe I was there during the warmer months of the year. when the sun did come out each day it really got hot.

The number one man in my barracks was Platoon Sergeant Skinner. What a guy. He was number one in more ways than one. He really stuck up for the men in the barracks. He saved my skin many times during my short stay at Roberts. When he gave an order you knew it and you followed it. It was comical to see him "give hell" to a 6 foot 3 inch private for

Some dumb move that the private had made. He was so well thought of and respected, no one ever talked back to him. We nick-named him "Skin". There was one barracks non-com down stairs who bunked with Sergeant Skinner. Upstairs there were two barracks Corporals. The most memorable non-com, other than "Skin", was Corporal Keith. Corporal Keith was from Brooklyn, New York. Men who came from Brooklyn seemed to act real tough. A non-com who came from Brooklyn enjoyed his authority with a passion. It seemed he just waited for the opportunity to show "he was boss". We gave Corporal Keith his chance early in our stay at Roberts, to use his earned authority. One night about five minutes after "lights out", we were all in our bunks talking and singing like we did every night. Corporal Keith came stomping out of his room, which was at the opposite end of where I was bunked, and shouted "all right youse guys, pipe down". As he started back into his room someone from my end of the barracks, and it was not me who said it, blared out, "blow it out your butt". Now, even I knew that was not a smart thing to say to a person such as Corporal Keith. He flipped on the

lights and demanded to know who said that. Of course, no one knew. Every one ducked under the covers and pretended to go to sleep. Corporal Keith was very upset. Needless to say it got very quiet. About 2:00 A.M. the lights came on again. There stood our good buddy, Corporal Keith, who was shouting out orders as loud as he could. He was giving orders like "hit the deck, move, — move, Get completely dressed, lay out all your full field gear — pack that gear — "We will fall out in formation in three minutes" was one of the orders. After we all fell out in formation, in front of the barracks, in complete combat equipment including helmet, gun, canteen and all the equipment we had been issued by the clerk in the orderly room, he gave us a "right face." We double timed to the parade grounds. He marched us and gave us double time orders at that parade grounds for over two hours. We marched back to the barracks. we unpacked all of our gear. We went back to our beds. Two hours later we had to get up again. Corporal Keith got his revenge. He was given the number one rating on the "hate list" by every private in that barracks.



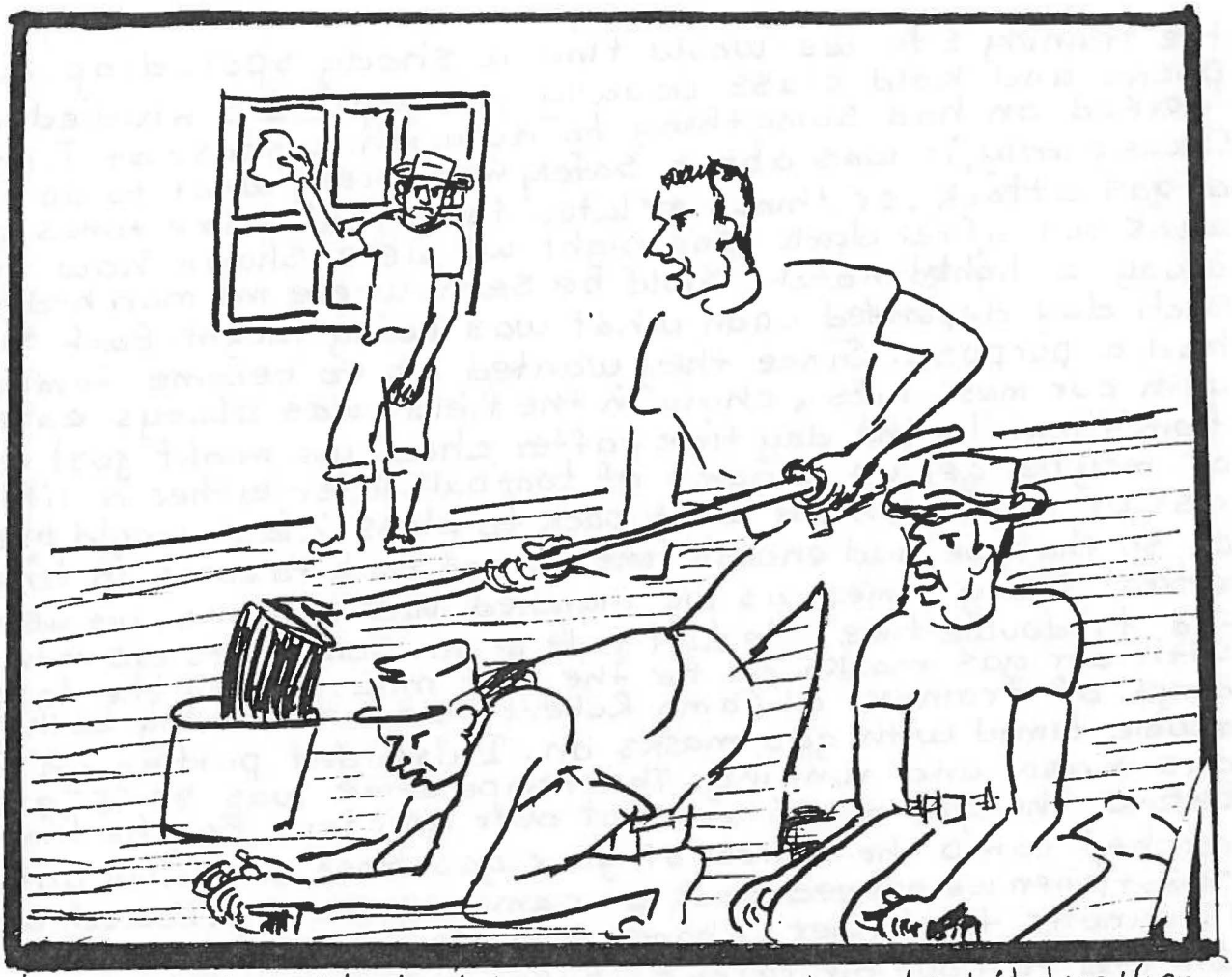
Sergeant Skinner and the other two non-coms in the barra gave us no problems. One of the non-coms left for the Air Force about the middle of our basic training. Corporal Keith eventually cooled down and turned out to be a half way sensible human.

The First Sergeant (Top Kick) of our Company was a regular army man. He was old enough to have been in World War one. In fact, he was wounded in World War I. He acted like a high rank officer instead of a non-com. He had a chip on his shoulder. Few men liked him. Even his so called non-com friends stayed clear of him. He slept in a room over the orderly room and could hear everything that took place in our barracks via an intercom system. One night a few of our guys came in a few moments after "lights out". They had a few 3.2 beers and were singing and raising a little hell. When the First Sergeant heard this commotion on the intercom from his room he came over to our barracks and threatened us with the same punishment Corporal Keith had given to us. Skinner talked him out of it. Good Ol Skinner. The officers we were assigned to were stern but pretty straight-laced. They all seemed to be liked by most of the men in the barracks. One of the officers swore that I did not know my left foot from my right when it came to marching. Our cook was neat. He said when it is time to leave he will miss me. I had been on K.P. a lot of times. He told me he wished I could stay.

The routine here was much more intense and demanding than it was at Camp Dodge. The main objective of our training was to learn I and R from top to bottom. A large part of our routine was directed at physical fitness. Unless you were assigned special duty like guard, K.P. or some barracks type of assigned detail, your day went something like this. You got up at 6:00 A.M. Reveille was about 6:15 A.M. You were limited in your movement around the barracks because there was only 1 small latrine for all the men both from upstairs and downstairs. Following reveille we ate breakfast. After we ate we went back to the barracks and gave it a clean sweep and a quick dry mop-with time for a quick rest before the second formation. The second formation usually required that we bring our rifles. We then marched to the parade grounds for 15-30 minutes of close order drill and calisthenics. On monday morning this calisthenics was a killer. We returned to the barracks once more to pick up our helmets and packs. This time we would march to one of the many, many training sites of Camp Roberts. We would usually march out from 5 to 12 miles. At

the training site we would find a shady spot, drop our packs and hold class. Usually the topic we studied or worked on had something to do with a phase of I and R. Occasionally, it was about safety measures, what to do in a gas attack, or things related to combat. Some times we went out after dark. One night we were shown how far away a lighted match could be seen. Where we marched to each day depended upon what was being taught. Each site had a purpose. Since they wanted us to become familar with our mess kits, chow in the field was always eaten from them. In the day time, after chow, we might just rest or may be get up a game of football. After either a little rest or recreation we went back to class. Class would break up so that we had enough time to get back to camp in time for retreat. Many times, as we marched back to camp, we were order-ed to double time the last mile or so. Sometimes we marched with our gas masks on for the last mile. During the last days of training at Camp Roberts we were doing both. We double timed with gas masks on. I dreaded putting on the gas mask and running. The temperature was 80-95°, even before the gas mask was put over your face. By the time you reached camp the bottom of your gas mask was filled with sweat. When we arrived back at camp we were allowed about 15 minutes to shower, change into clean sun-tans, clean your gun and fall out for retreat. It was not unusual for 3-10 guys to pass out at the formation due to the heat. I never did pass out. I got real weak-kneed a few times. Supper followed retreat. After that we were on our own. I would usually get into an outdoor basketball game or just shoot baskets till dark. Sometimes, if I had money, which I never seemed to have any of, I went to the P.X or Service Center for a Coca-Cola. Every once in a while I went to see a camp movie. They only cost 15¢. A lot of the time was just spent sitting on the barracks porch talking with your buddies. The first hike we took with all our combat gear on our backs I swore was over 20 miles. The distance was four miles, total.

We had some classes in buildings within the battalian area. We attended movies that explained what to do in certain situations. We were shown how to use the compass, both day and night. We practiced creeping and crawling under machine gun fire. One guy panicked, raised up and had part of his rear end blown off. We went through hand to hand moves, as you might need to do in combat. You name it.... we did it. We not



only had to be able to take our gun apart and put it together in the dark, but we learned about a number of other weapons and how they are fired. One weapon I did not get to learn about or get to fire in basic training, was a 30 caliber water-cooled machine gun.

We had barracks inspection every Saturday morning during basic training. Every Friday night we all helped clean the barracks from top to bottom. The chore ment deep cleaning with soap, water and brushes. Everything had to be spotless Saturday morning. Inspection was done by a Captain. In basic training a Captain was considered high rank. The Captain not only inspected the floors, windows, latrines and clothing but he checked out your personal belongings and the way your bunk was made. The last thing of yours that he looked at was your gun. If even a speck of dust was found as he swiped his white glove over any part of the barracks, a mark went against us. This mark was called a "gig". The one barracks of the four in each company that received the fewest "gigs" at the end of the total inspection, received an award. This award was given each week a few minutes following inspection. The

award was simply a piece of plywood about 2 feet square. Painted on this piece of plywood was a large "E". This "E" stood for "EXCELLENCE". That "E" served as a reminder and as a challange to the other barracks in the company. Our platoon must of had a great deal of pride and determination. We won the "E" 16 weeks out of the 17 weeks we spent doing our basic training here at Roberts.

Cleaning up the barracks on Friday night was a lot of work. Our system for getting this job done went something like this: first of all the bunks were piled on top of one another at one end of the room. We cleaned up the cleared our part of the room. After we cleaned up that part of the room we moved the bunks to the spot we cleaned and finished up the rest of the floor. We cleaned by breaking into work-groups. One group sweep. Another group polished the windows. The third group carried pails of water from the latrine sinks to the guys on their hands and knees, scrubbing. G.I. soap will clean anything. All the time we worked, the radio was playing our favorite "big band" music. This was about the only place you could wear what you wanted and not be out of uniform. Some of the garb worn by the guys doing these clean up chores, looked funny. Actually, we made it fun instead of work. Each man was responsible for changing his bedding, cleaning up his foot locker and folding his belongings as neatly as possible. He hung his shirts, jacket and pants so they looked neat. Above all, the shoes had to shine - <u>that was a must</u>. The last thing you did Friday night and the last thing you did Saturday, before you fell out for rifle inspection was polish your gun and clean the barrel. I swear you could clean the barrel ten times just before inspection and a speck of dirt would show up.

This is the only night of the week that "lights out" was at 11:00 P.M instead of 9:00 P.M. After the floor had been cleaned and bleached, no one was allowed to wear shoes for the rest of the night and up until inspection time Saturday morning. This little rule almost got me in serious trouble. One of the Friday nights, after my group finished our part of the clean up, I was sitting on the top steps of the back porch of the barracks putting the finishing touch to the shine on my shoes. It was dark. Some one started up the stairs of the porch and headed to the door leading into our barracks with his shoes on. I yelled. "Hey mac, take your shoes off before you go in there.... who the hell do you think you are... we just got done cleaning this place up." The person I spoke to stopped and as he leaned over to remove his shoes, I caught a glimpse of two bars glistening from the light that shined

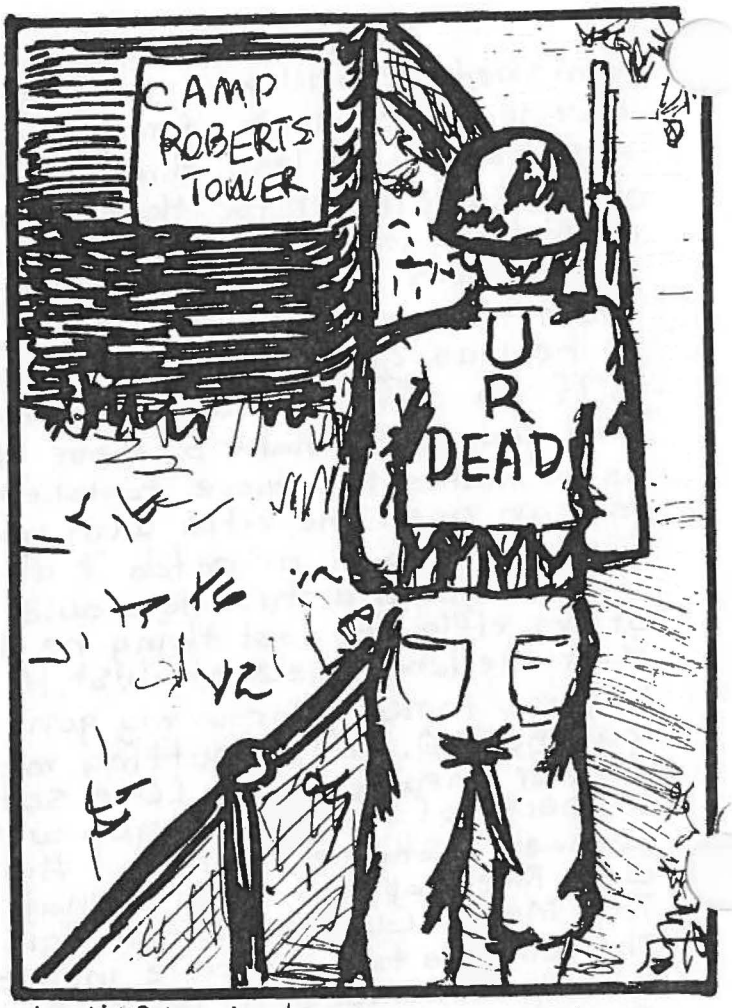
from the light in the door way. After he removed his shoes he continued up the stairs and entered our barracks holding his shoes. He stayed for but a short time. He came back out the door, sat down, put his shoes back on and walked away. He did not say a word to me. I froze from the moment I realized it was our Captain till after he left. Some one must have said something to Sergeant Skinner because he come busting out the door. He sat down next to me. He appeared to be ready to explode as he said, "Foss, you idiot, do you know who that was that you were giving orders to?" I had to tell Skinner the truth. I said "Yes.... but not until he leaned over to take his shoes off". Skinner told me I was damm lucky to get away with what I had just done. I really did feel a lot of respect for the Captain. I am sure the men who witnessed the whole incident felt good about him, too.

In a way, I believe all of us in the barracks looked forward to Saturday morning with anticipation. It was the time those who received week-end passes got to leave camp. We always awoke a little earlier, dressed in our cleanest suntans, had breakfast, and went back to the barracks to make our own personal, final inspection. This was a time we spent doing or re-doing anything we felt needed to be done to meet inspection specifications. At 9:00 A.M. we stood by ready for the Commanding officer to make his appearance. We could hear him as he climbed the stairs. He was always followed by a string of First and Second Lieutenants. Skinner was close by. Sergeant Skinner would shout "Attention" as soon as the Captain's foot hit the top step to our barracks. The Captain would hesitate a minute and Skinner would say "Parade rest". When the Captain stepped in front of us, we snapped back to attention. We looked him straight in the eye. The Captain insisted we do that. If he asked a question you gave a direct answer... followed by "Sir". (The first time he stepped in front of me I came just a fraction from busting into nervous hysterical laughter.) Following the inspection the Captain and his staff leave the barracks. You know inspection is going good when Sergeant Skinner gives the O.K. sign behind his back, after Captain and his staff leave, in front of "Skin". If the inspection goes bad many men lose their week-end pass. In the 17 weeks I was there I never heard of a man in our barracks who lost a pass due to a poor barracks inspection. The inspection does seem to cause a little nervous tension. After the barracks inspection was over, guys would yell, mess up their bunk covers, throw their personal belongings at each other and many other dumb things. It was a good feeling to have barracks inspection over.

When the barracks inspection ended, we were only part finished. We still had to fall out for rifle inspection. I had cleaned the stock of my gun some five times and cleaned my gun barrel no less than eight times, by the time we were ordered to fall out for this formation. The formation would be called to "attention". We stood at "right shoulder arms" until the Captain moved in front of us, than it was "inspection arms." From this position, the C.O. would grab the rifle from you as if he was going to take it and bash you over the head with it. (If an officer was inspecting your rifle and you did not like him, you could make a move that could cause him embarrasment. As he makes his move to take your gun — if you are quick enough — you can push the rifle with your thumbs and make him either fumble the gun or catch it about knee-high. Most officers hated it when you did this.) He would inspect the stock, body and butt of the rifle. The last thing he did was look down the barrel for that one lone speck of dust. It seems he <u>always</u> found that speck he was looking for in my gun. Skinner became an expert at talking the C.O. out of putting me on detail. Skinner used excuses I never knew existed. (One saturday the Captain could not find a speck of dirt — my gun was spotless. The Captain looked at Skinner — Skinner looked at the Captain, asked him what the problem was. The Captain said "what the hells going on, Sergeant, THIS MAN'S GUN IS CLEAN! This almost broke up the whole platoon. The completion of rifle inspection was the signal for those who had passes to leave camp. Passes were good until monday morning when it was time to fall out for reveille. Most of the guys came in late Sunday night. Passes were issued 16 of the 17 weeks. We all had one special week-end duty when no one was allowed to leave camp.

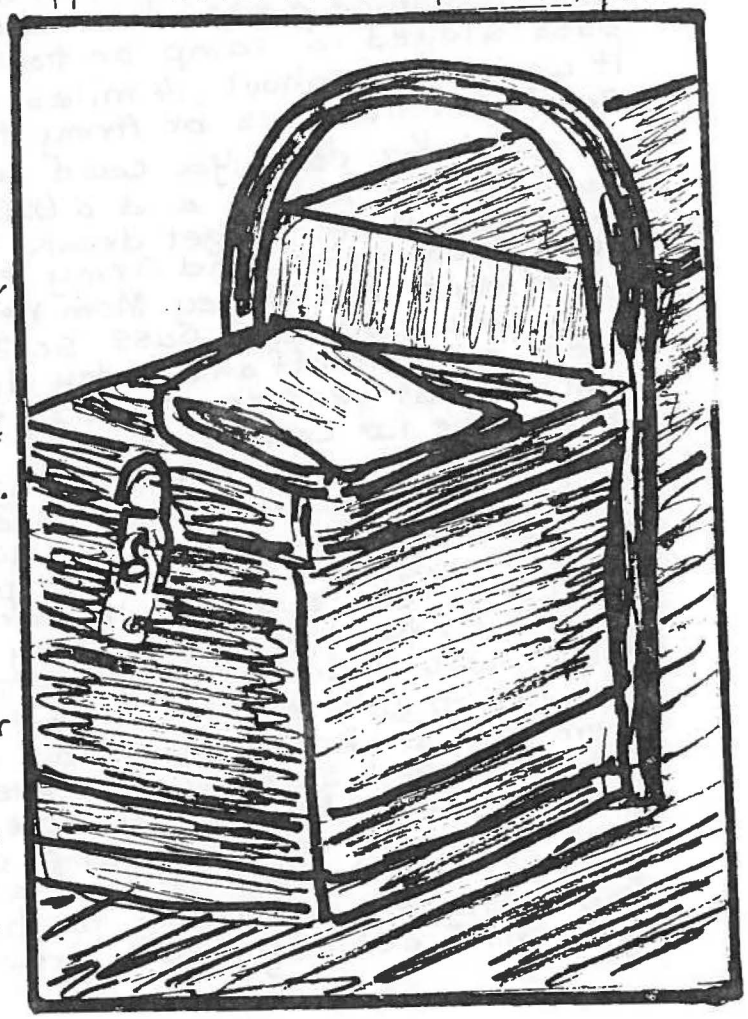
Each of us was assigned at least one guard duty task during our time at Roberts. My assignment was to pull guard.... off and on.... for a 24 hour period, at the Camp Water Tower. When you pull guard in this manner you spent two hours on guard for every four hours off duty till the 24 hour period was completed. Camp Roberts' water tower was located at the top of a hill off in a quiet, secluded spot of the camp grounds. At night time it was pitch dark. While you are on guard duty, protecting goverment property, you are in complete charge. Any one who comes near the spot you guard must be challenged and stopped. You have the right to open fire on any one who does not stop when you have commanded them to stop three times. You are usually only challenged by the Sergeant of the Guard at the time you are being relieved by another guard. Sometimes you must challenge the

Officer of the day when he is checking on you to see it you are doing the job right. Along with guard duty you are expected to learn ten commands that must be observed and followed. The only guard command I remember was number 1. If any officer asked me to repeat any of the ten... I always recited number 1. It got me by. This military command went like this. "I shall walk my post in a military manner.... keeping always on the alert... observing everything that takes place within sight or hearing."



The one and only time I pulled guard at Camp Roberts turned out to be a rather embarrassing situation for me. My second two hour period of guard duty took place during the darkest part of the night. It was real difficult to see even two feet in front of you. When I returned to the guard house, after my two hours on guard, the Corporal of the Guard asked if I had seen or heard any thing. I told them I had only see the Sergeant of the guard when he came to bring my relief. It was at this point I was told that if I had been on guard duty in enemy territory, I probably would have been a dead man. It seems a sharp American Reconnaissance unit was practicing moves to see if they could infiltrate this water tower guard that I was a part of. Supposedly, they had some way marked U.R. DEAD, in chalk, on the back of my shirt while I was walking round and round the water tower. I swear I did not hear or see a thing. To this day I am not sure the U.R. DEAD message was put on my back while I was actually on duty or during the four hours I was asleep before I went on guard. If those Indian Reconnaissance guys did do this to me while I was on guard duty... all I have to say is, "I'm glad they were on our side". This incident did do one positive thing for me. It made me double alert from that day on.

K.P., or, Kitchen Police, was used many times as a punishment for goofing up. In basic training it was a detail that every one was expected to do from a planned schedule. However, every one, for one reason or another, did not do it. At Camp Roberts, if your name came up for K.P you were informed of it the night before. You were told by the cook to place a white towel on your foot locker. This was the cooks way of knowing you were the one he was to wake up. He had to make sure because he came around at 4:00 A.M. If the cook woke up the wrong man there was usually a big commotion. The cook usually made sure who the men were that had to do K.P. After the cook woke you up, you got dressed and headed for the mess hall. You ate your breakfast. After you ate you set up the tables for the troops. when they arrived you served them food. After they finished eating, the tables were cleared. Next you washed all the dishes, silverware, and pots and pans and put them away. You did this routine for each meal. Between meals you peeled potatoes, cut up vegetables or fruit, smashed cans, carried garbage out to the trash cans, or hauled it to the sump area. If you were not preparing food you washed windows, swept, or mopped. After the troops left, you policed the area. It was a lot of work. It was not something you enjoyed doing. When it came your turn you did it. After I had finished my third tour of duty on K.P. and my name came up on the roster for the fourth time, my barracks buddies noticed that one of the men on our floor had not pulled K.P. even one time. They all felt this was very unfair. They did not have to try very hard to convince me that, Rodney, who had never been on K.P, should take my place.



Rodney was the kind of person that was not real well liked by any one in the barracks. No one seemed to trust him. As luck would have it, the regular cook was not on duty the day I was to spend my forth day on K.P. After every one was asleep I put my white towel on Rodneys foot locker instead of my own. Boy, was there a loud commotion in that barracks about 4:00 A.M the next morning. They almost had to bodily drag Rodney off to the

mess hall. We marched out to one of the training sites that day to visit the building that is used to test our gas masks. All the way out there I noticed Sergeant Skinner give me the eye. I could see he was puzzeled about something. Once he even said, "Foss, it seems I was suppose to tell you something but I forget what it was.... I'll think of it later." About an hour after lunch out in the field, he came over by me and said, "You are not suppose to be here... I distinctly remember seeing your name on the K.P. list yesterday. When we got back to camp and Sergeant Skinner found out what I had done he was really upset. I was confined to the barracks for two nights and put on K.P. seven straight days. After he found out why I placed my towel on Rodney's foot locker and learned that Rodney really had never been on K.P and I had been on three times, going on four, he was embarassed for the slip-up. It really was a dirty thing to pull. I was the barracks hero for a few days. Rodney not only failed to be assigned to K.P. but he never pulled guard, either. Rodney must have been related to some big shot in the service or something.

Earlier I explained how excited the guys were on Saturday, who had passes to town. Most of them went to either Los Angeles or San Francisco. Camp Roberts was mid-way between these two large cities. Those of us who did not have a two day pass stayed in camp or took a short trip into Paso Robles, Calif. It was a town about 14 miles away. Some of the guys would catch the free bus or Army truck that left every hour on the hour and spend the day. You could swim at the local town pool. They had a movie house and a USO. Center. Some of the men just went in to Paso Robles to get drunk. Some went into town just to get away from camp and Army sights. I usually did not go any where that cost money. Mom needed money much more than I did. I had no need for a pass so I did not request one. I usually spent my time off on Saturday doing my laundry, playing basket-ball or just resting. On occassion, if I did have any money I got some ice cream or went to the 15¢ camp movie. I did go to Paso Robles two times during my stay at Roberts. I went into this town with one of my buddies from Missouri. I wanted to see what the town was like. We rode the free bus into town, walked around the town and spent a short time in the USO center. We caught the bus back to camp about two hours later. I did not have any money that day. The second time I went into Paso Robels was a different story. The guys in the bunks around me got fed up with me never going to town for a "good time". I told them that I chose to give my money to my mom instead of going into town and spend it for entertainment. They all insisted that that was not good for me. My close friend from Missouri told me he was not going to leave camp unless I went with him. I could not go with him unless he was allowed to pay for every thing. He kept after me every day for two weeks. I did not want to, but I gave in. I actually had a great time.... I did feel guilty till he

let me know it was the most fun he had had since he had been in basic training. We walked around town. We went swimming. We ate supper in a restaurant. We went over to the USO. They were having a dance. We stayed there till about 10:00 P.M. After the dance I did something I had never done before. I drank wine and got intoxicated. I got silly. I got sick. We met some guys from our barracks and they laughed and made fun of me. I fell asleep in the truck coming back to camp. When the guard halted us at the main gate and said "who goes there" they said I shouted back "you wouldn't know me, any way, — I'm new around here". I don't remember saying that. I do remember I was very ill all day Sunday. My Missouri buddy said we had a good time. We must of had a good time. Monday mornings were always bad. Most every one seemed to have hang overs. Some resented being made to get back to the Army routine after spending a week end with their families or girl friend. By noon on monday every thing usually returned to normal.

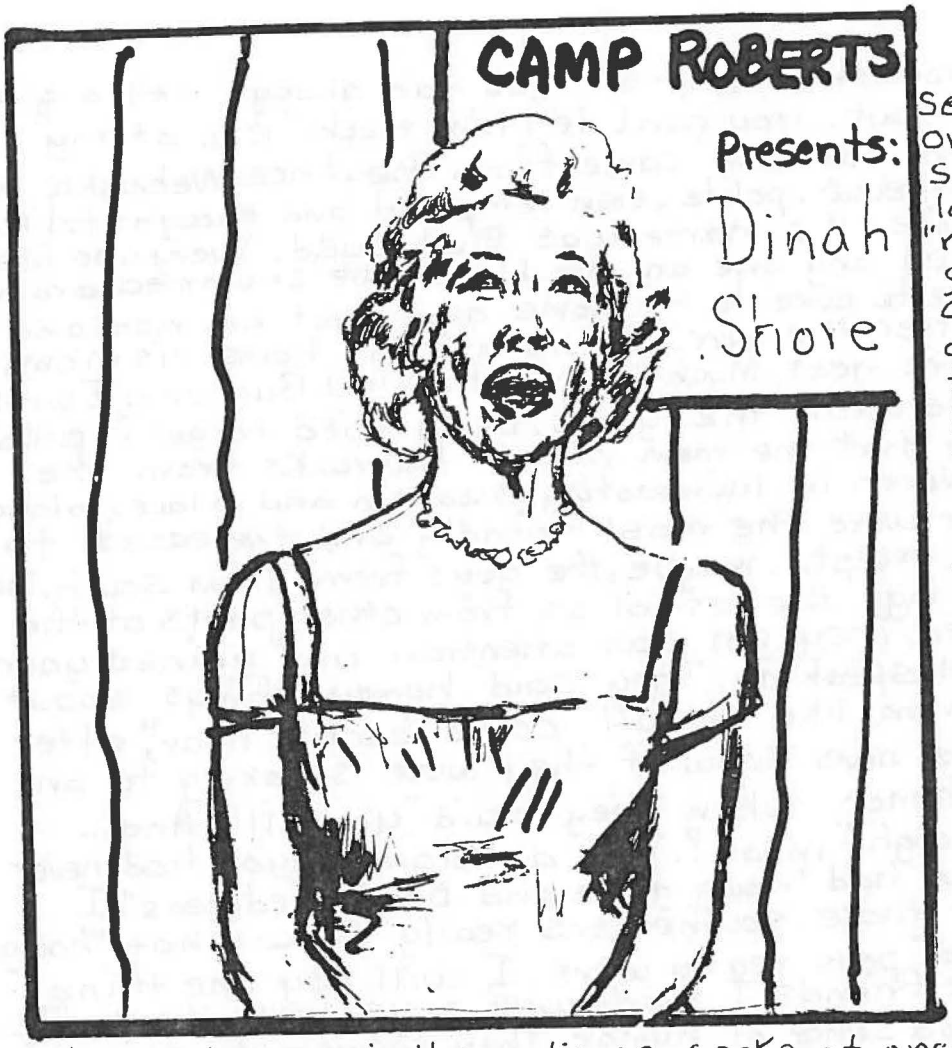
The most miserable place in camp, to me, was the firing range. We had many, many, "dry runs" with the rifle before we actually were allowed to fire a live round. Most every-

one in our barracks earned the highest award possible for marksmanship with the rifle their first trip to the range. It took me three trips out to the range to qualify for the very lowest marksman ship award. At that, they practically gave it to me. when ever I twisted into the "sitting" or "prone" position I would get the rifle strap tangled around my upper shoulder and high on my arm, to a point that I could not budge. At this point the order came "all right now, just relax and gently squeeze off that shot." They had to be joking. Before I got the straps undone that held me in the "sitting" or "prone" position, I was a nervous wreck. Could this possibly be the reason that I end-up in a water-cooled heavy machine gun squad?

By the time we had spent eight weeks in Basic training in the same barracks building, we began to know each other fairly well. The training got more bearable. The days seemed to pass more quickly. I think it was unusual how close we became in spite of all the different backgrounds we were raised from. Men from all walks of life working together. It seemed amazing how well things worked out. It was fun just to listen to others talk. The personalities of the men in the barracks were as varied as the shapes and sizes of rocks on any ocean beach. There were men from the east, like Tom Ainia, who was from New York City. He had a great sence of humor.... after you learned to understand him. He was a quick tempered "gold brick". He was a great athlete. It was difficult to get use to his Brooklynese dialect. If he liked you, any thing he had that you needed, or you wanted, was yours. Men from the east, to me, seemed hardest to get to know and make friends with. Out here in the west, just a short distance from Camp Roberts, lived Wade Bissell. He was typical of a lot of the westerners here in the barracks. He kind of stayed clear of most guys. He did not seem to trust just any one. Wade got mad over nothing. He appeared to have a lot of money. He liked to make others look dumb. He had more arguments than everyone else put together. As a result of his attitude, the men in the barracks haunted him. On nights he had been out drinking, the guys in the barracks would short-sheet him or hang his bunk out an upstairs window. Catch him in the right mood and you found a very thoughtful and a caring human. I do not know how many times he offered to give me money if I would just go into town and relax. Wade's G.I. haircut made him resemble an ancient monk.

The men in our barracks from the North or Midwest seemed to vary the most, as far as personality and character. Most of them, however, obviously carried around on their face and in their walk, that "big hick" look. I often got, "you big farmers from I-O-WAY, or "hows the corn doing back home." The guys in the barracks from the East, West and South kept remind

ing those of us from the midwest "you can always tell a guy from the midwest.... but... you can't tell him much." One of my favorite men in the barracks came from Beatrice, Nebraska. He was the most courteous, polite, even tempered and thaught ful man I met in the service. His name was Bud Judd. Everyone liked him. He never caused any one any problems. We chummed around a lot. He wanted me to come to his home and meet his mom and dad and sister after the war. (I did visit his home. His Mom, Dad and Sister were neat. Much too nice for me.). Bud and I wrote a song together. He wrote the lyrics. Budd tried to get it published. It seemed to me that the men in our barracks from the mid west and up North in Minnesota, Wisconsin and places along the Canadian border were the most friendly and the easiest to get along with.... except.... maybe, the guys from down South. These men had an advantage the rest of us from other parts of the United states lacked. They got your attention and gained your confidence by just speaking. They said homey things about where they came from, like "ya all come back.... hear", after you visited them. We never knew if they were speaking to one of us or a whole bunch when they said "you all". And.... what does "sure enough" mean?. They all claimed you had never lived until you have had "hawg jaws and black-eyed peas". I wonder if some of those southemers really knew what "hawg jaws and black-eyed" peas really were. I will say one thing positive about the friends I made with guys from the South... they all have a good sence of humor. They seemed to enjoy life and later I found out, in combat, they made the best soldiers. My most pleasant expecience with a Southerner happened with a guy from Arkansas, named Willis Bond. We kidded him unmercifully. We nicknamed him appropriately 'rebel'. His favorite expression, from the first day we heard him speak was, "a rebel never has a chance in a barracks full of damn yankees". Willis stood next to me in every formation. We had many laughs about our pot bellied Captain, as the Captain yelled out "BATTALIAN" especially when his voice cracked as he shouted. Willis was very good at imitating our C.O. We both usually whistled through our teeth when the band played for special occasions during formation. Willis marched in front of me a lot. On night hikes, he many times fell asleep while he was marching. Usually I would grab on to his shoulder if he started to march off the road while sleeping. One night I let him go and he walked smack-dab into a tree. He got mad at me. It cured him of falling asleep while marching. I could go on and on about some outstanding men that I made friends with in Camp Roberts. They were each special in some way



I did get to see two live shows put on by movie stars. One show starred Judy Garland. Every one went "nuts" over her. She was going to sing three songs and leave. She ended up doing 14-15 songs before the servicemen would let her go. The second show I got to see had many stars in it. There was George Raft, Don O'Conner Peggy Ryan, and a singing group called the Golden Gate Quartet. Later in the show, a guy named Ray Eberly, who was a big favorite, and Dinah Shore, who was my favorite, showed up to sing for us. Eberly did a great job. Dinah was even better. She asked for requests. All the servicemen in the audience spoke at once. She yelled "at ease, fellows." When that did not calm the crowd down, she put her hands on her hips and shouted much louder "All right..... Knock it off." All the soldiers seemed to really like her. She sang all the requests. She ended up singing some of the slower favorites. Dinah was on stage for over half an hour. They gave her a standing ovation when she went off stage. Both shows were terrific.

The last two weeks of basic training brought with it the big test. We were to go on a ten day bivouac. This is an army exercise done to expose everyone who has been training 15 weeks, to what living in combat - minus the fighting and shelling - is like. Actually, you are given a taste of what it is like to live off the land, so to speak. This excerise winds up basic training. For the next few days we would put into practice what we supposely have been learning. We all dug fox holes each night we were each limited to one canteen of water for drinking purposes each day, taken from the river. We marched, marched, marched. The non-coms and officers set up combat problems for us to solve

Actually, it was ten days of pure misery. It gave us a tiny picture of what combat could be like. I felt like I had not taken a bath for a month. On the next to the last day of the bivouac we had mail-call, just like it would be in combat overseas. It was a good feeling to get mail out in the field. I thought to myself— if it is a good feeling to have mail-call here— what must it mean to a soldier out in the field some thousands and thousands of miles from home. The after noon of the day we had mail-call, we found a nice open spot and challenged the officers and the non-coms to a football game. Those dummies accepted. God, it felt good to throw a block on to our pot-bellied Captain. Corporal Keith did not play— darn it. It also felt good to tackle a non-com as hard as you could. We all tried to rattle their teeth each time we made contact. We tore them up. Well— not really tore them up— but we did beat them 12-6. The officers and non-coms took the defeat like good sports. The night before we returned to camp we slept on the side of the road. We were awakened at 2:00 A.M. to start the 20 mile hike back. We were all sleepy. I had to wake up Willis at least six times. After we had marched in the dark for some 15 miles, the commander admitted he was lost. When we finally did reach camp we had gone 26 miles, It took us nine hours. The last 6-8 miles was almost double time. The last break before we started to do double time, I took off my shoes. I found two half-dollar size blisters on each foot. When we reached camp it was about 11:00 A.M. We were all very tired. The two blisters on each foot increased to three. It was a good experience and a good lesson for all of us to go on that 10 day bivouac. It did prove to help us for what was to come later. As soon as we arrived back at the barracks, we were told that after lunch there would be passes to town for those who asked. This is the time I went to town and my buddy from Missouri paid for every thing.

The last week of basic training there was not much doing. We spent most of the time cleaning up our personal equipment, the barracks and the area surranding the barracks. Every one helped clean the barracks inside-out. Our platoon Sergeant was more than pleased the way we left things. One of the nights during that last week there was a barracks banquet planned

as sort of a graduation affair. It was a dinner held in Paso Robles. Most of the men in the barracks were upset with me cause I didn't go to this affair. I took off before the buses picked them up to take them to town. I just couldn't see someone paying my way again. I had over ten offers. They said they had a great time. Most of them came in the barracks a little drunk. They woke me up by dumping my bunk over-with me in it.

About two days before basic training was offically over word was passed around that some of us would be getting "delay in route" furloughs. We were told to wire home for furlough money. I was a little confused. I was sure mom did not have money for foolishness like that. I wanted to see mom, my family and friends before I went overseas. The trip home would cost $30. The trip back another $30. Sixty dollars was a lot of money at that time. I finally built up enough nerve to ask mom if she could scrape together $60. I was really surprised, She did not even hesitate when she said yes. The men who were not getting furloughs were also not heading overseas. They were going on to places like officers Training school or the United States Air Force.

While we were packing and saying our "good-byes" our platoon officer came in the barracks to wish us all good luck. (When an officer steps into a room or appears when all the men are busy and one man spots him, that man yells "ATTENTION". Everyone stands at attention and drops what they are doing till the officer responds. "At ease"). All during the basic training days I had been doing this — with no officer even around. The guys in the barracks just ignored me. This time, the very first time it was for real, Not a sole moved to "attention". The officer caught my eye as I alone was standing at attention, he winked at me and shouted, "All right, you characters, didn't you hear Foss?" They all turned around with their mouths wide open and in a daze and snapped to attention. After the Lieutenant left, the barracks every guy in that room threw whatever they held in their hand at me.... I really engoyed that one!

Those of us who were going to meet a train and head for a short furlough home, were issued a sack lunch and told to line up near the troop street. We loaded our heavy, heavy barracks bag on our shoulder and marched two blocks to where the trucks would take us to the depot in San Maguel. The truck was late. As we left the camp, we all took one last long look. Basic was over now we will get down to the real thing. Years later I visited Camp Roberts. It did not seem anything at all like it did the 17 weeks I took basic training in the year 1943.

CHAPTER III
FURLOUGH... EMBARKATION CAMP... ON TO THE PACIFIC

The train from San Miguel to San Francisco was a day coach. We stuffed our barracks bags in the overhead luggage compartments. When the train stopped, one of the barracks bags fell and hit me on the head. I saw stars for a moment. I lost track of all my Camp Roberts buddies as we changed trains in San Francisco. I bought a box lunch at the depot before I boarded my train for good old Des Moines! It was fun traveling on my own for the first time. I can not remember all of the states I passed through but I took the southern route so I had to travel through parts of Arizona, New Mexico, Kansas and may be Oklahoma. I got off the train at a small town near Omaha to stretch and was treated to some candy and a cold drink by a cute "canteen" girl. Many canteens were set up to serve service men a long the way. In Omaha, there was a three hour delay. The canteen was located on the second floor of the depot. They served cookies and coffee. The cookies were home made — just like those made by my mom. They had a place where service men could listen to the radio, read, play ping-pong or pool. You could take a shower and they even provided soap and towels. They had cots to sleep on if your train was delayed for a long period of time. It was really a nice friendly place.

I had to make a mad dash to catch my train to Des Moines out of Omaha. I was enjoying myself and was not watching the time real close. I just got inside of the gate as it closed. The ticket-taker asked me for my reservation that I did not have. He told me to return to the ticket seller for a reservation. The ticket seller said all the tickets were sold. He told me if I wanted to stand all the way to Des Moines he could get me aboard. He gave me a slip of paper that got me past the ticket-taker. I got on

board with 15 seconds to spare. I was told this train was a Streamliner and the restrictions were much greater.

It seemed kinda funny that all of the people seated were civilians. The service people, both men and woman, were standing. I was just glad to be going home. While I was standing there on the train, I ran into a fellow I had known in high school. He was on furlough from the Air Corp. We talked about our old school days and before we realized it we were pulling into Des Moines.

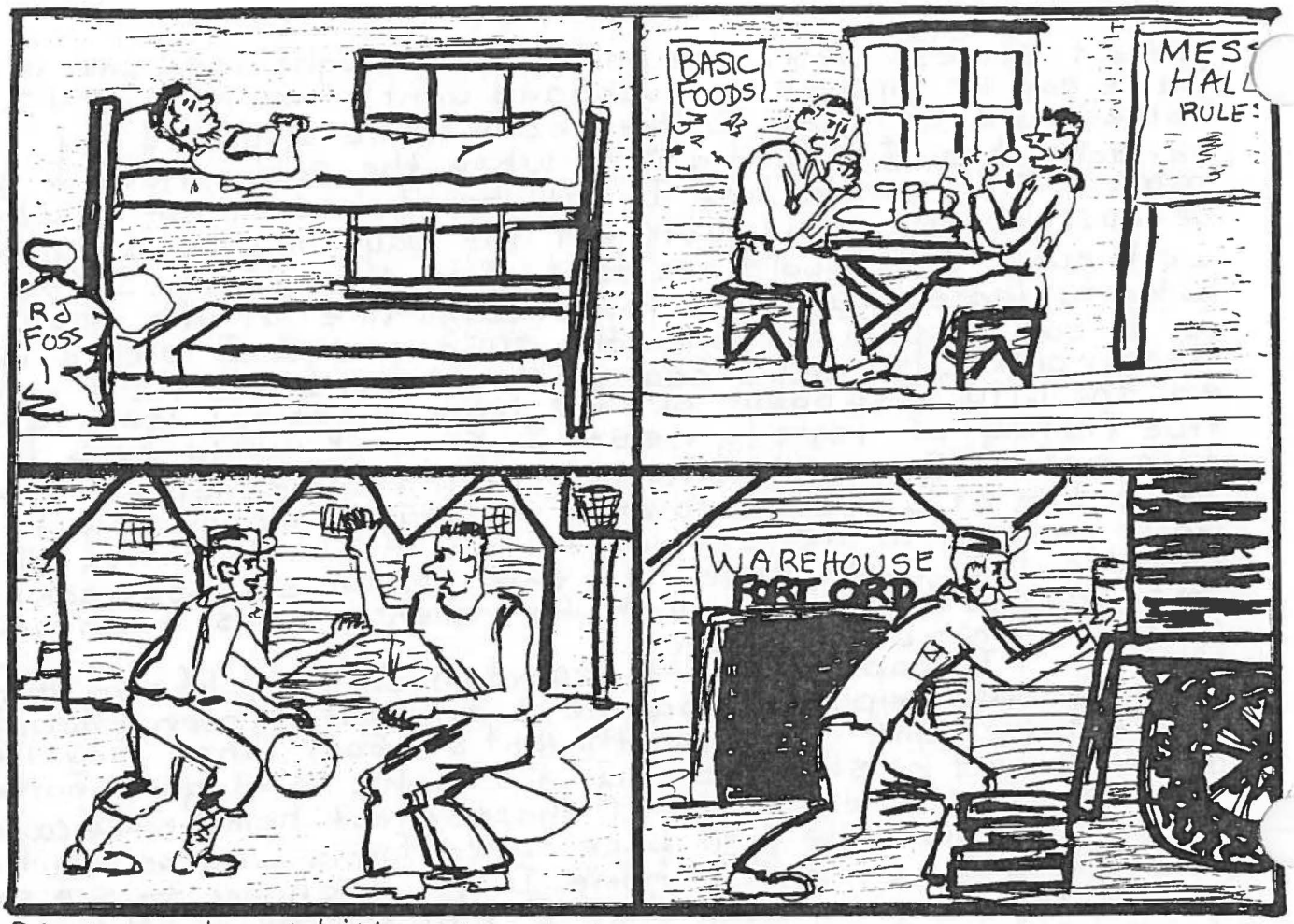
It was 4:30 A.M. when I arrived in Des Moines. The first person I saw was an M.P. He had taken his training at Fort Des Moines. He was at Camp Dodge the same time I was. I called mom. She told me to hurry home. I caught a cab. She was waiting at the door for me. I got one of her great big special hugs. Boy, did it feel good to see Mom and that basement apartment we lived in, again. We talked about every thing for two or three hours ate breakfast, then I went to bed. My own bed felt so good that I almost slept the day away. At 2:00 P.M. I went down town to the hotel that my brother-in-law and sister managed. This is where mom worked. I took mom to lunch. I had a feeling she was a little proud of me. After lunch mom went back to work. I took in a movie. My sister, Kate, invited mom and I to dinner that night. After the nice meal we all sat around and talked. Later that evening, I went to a dance. I did not stay long at the dance because none of my friends showed up. Besides, every one there looked so young.

My seven days at home on furlough, was spent mostly on working out down at the Y.M.C.A. I slept late each day. I didn't have any dates since I did not have a girl friend. The evenings were spent visiting my relatives or going to movies. I did manage to see my high school team play a couple of football games. I even spent one evening at home with mom. On the last day at home, I slept till noon. I went to a movie again and called a few friends. My train was not going to leave till 2:00 A.M. I told mom I wanted to see one more football game before I left. I promised her I would come home so that we could have some time to talk before I left for the train depot. I went to the football game with one of my best friends, Bob Broad. Bob wanted to get into the service in the worst way but could not do so. He had a serious knee condition. He must have tried 5-6 times

without success. After the game, Bob brought me home in his Dad's car. He wished me luck and went home. Mom and I talked and listened to the radio while I packed my barracks bag. I called a cab. When the cab arrived I gave mom a kiss and a hug. I told her it was no use to worry because things would work out the way they are supposed to work out.... God would see to it. She did not cry. I sure hated to leave, however. I had enough time at the depot for a cup of coffee. when the train arrived I picked up my heavy, bulky, barracks bag and got on board. As I watched the city disappear out the train window, I learned the true feeling of loneliyness I knew it would be a long time before I would return. Any thing could happen. I may not return at all. I discovered a very disappointing fact while waiting in the station for the train to arrive. I found out I could have had this jumbo size barracks bag shipped home and back for twenty-cents each way. What a first-class dumbo.

I had orders to report back to California. At first I dreaded the trip. After awhile I enjoyed it, even though I did have some negative thoughts about what may lie ahead. I had a short delay in Omaha and got another chance to sample more of those great home made cookies at the canteen. The trip back to California was as exciting and pleasant as the trip home. I got a chance to see some of the sights going back that I had missed on the way to Des Moines. My ticket said, to the train depot of San Francisco. I was met at the depot by Army personnel. They took me to a ferry boat down at the sea shore. The ferry passed under the Golden Gate Bridge. In the distance, you could see Alcatraz Prison. When the ferry docked, we were picked up by Army trucks that took us to Fort Ord, California. We arrived at 9:30 P.M. My furlough ended at mid-night

The barracks I was assigned to was only half full. Outside it seemed chilly. I found out later that the camp was next to the sea shore. I picked up my sleeping equipment, took a shower and turned in. I only stayed here one night. Next day I was assigned to another barracks. A lot of my Camp Roberts buddies began to arrive. Was I ever glad to see them. The non-coms at Fort Ord seemed reasonable to work with. We did a few details. we did some drills and a little night training. Mostly, we loafed, ate, and played out door basketball. Each of us was interviewed again. We were issued jungle



gear and additional combat equipment by the orderly clerk. More junk to carry around and be responsible for. While I was at this camp our barracks challenged a barracks of para-troopers to a knock-down, drag-out, football game. They were tough but we beat them.

The Service Club facilities at Fort Ord were the best I had seen during my time in the service. There was a large indoor gym. The view of the ocean from the club was beautiful. It had a big dance floor. You were charged at dances according to your rank. Privates paid 25¢, Corporals 50¢ and Sergeants 75¢. The Service Club had a nice library, bar, cafe, and lots of recreation space.

Joe Louis (who was the World's Heavyweight Boxing Champ at this time.) came to Fort Ord to put on an exhibition for the servicemen. Along with Joe Louis was "Sugar Ray" Robinson and Jake La Motta. They were champions in their weights. It was a thrill for me to see each of these boxers. I had read so much about them. Joe Louis was a hitter. He had the most dead-pan expression I had ever seen on a fighter. He sparred three rounds with

the Fort Ord Camp Champion. The Fort Ord boxer accidently hit Louis hard and squarely on the jaw. Joes expression changed for an instant. He jabbed that boxer from Fort Ord so fast that he didn't know what hit him. Louis must have hit that poor guy 15 times in about 4-5 seconds. Wisely, the Fort Ore boxer was quick to raise his hands and back very far away to let Joe Know that he had enough. "Sugar Ray" was unbelievably fast on his feet. I don't see how any one could have beaten him in his prime. I really enjoyed this whole exhibition.

Every thing seemed to be going along fine at Fort Ord till the morning we had a 'show-down' inspection. A 'Show-down' inspection is where you lay out all of your belongings, flat on the ground, on top of your poncho. The officer in charge of your barracks checks all of your gear to see that nothing is missing. If some thing is missing, you catch hell for it — but — you will be issued a replacement. They also check to see that all of your equipment is serviceable. During the week we had three more 'show-down' inspections. It looked like we were getting ready to move out of Fort Ord.

The following Saturday night, a barracks non-com came into the barracks and told us we were going to leave Fort Ord the next day. Sunday morning we got up early and ate breakfast. We gave the barracks a good cleaning, packed our barracks bags and fell out in the street in formation. We lined up in the ranks according to our last name. The officers gave us each one last check to make sure we had every thing we were suppose to have. This made the fifth time this had been done in the last two days. Next, we picked up our full barracks bags and marched down to the Fort Ord train station. Those barracks bags now felt like they weighed a ton. There was a large shipment of men leaving. The

train was packed with G.I's. We rode in the train all af noon. The men on board played cards, read, or just talke You could feel the excitement. The talking got louder and louder as the day wore on. About 5:00 P.M we entered San Francisco. I thought sure we were heading straight to the docks to board a ship. Instead, we went right pass the docks and ended up at another camp. When the train stopped we were all ordered to unload and stack our barracks bags in a big pile next to the train. Soon after we did this, a hugh semi-truck pulled up to the pile of barracks bags and some soldiers got out of the truck and started throwing our barracks bags into the back of the truck. We knew we would be staying in the United States a little longer, anyway.

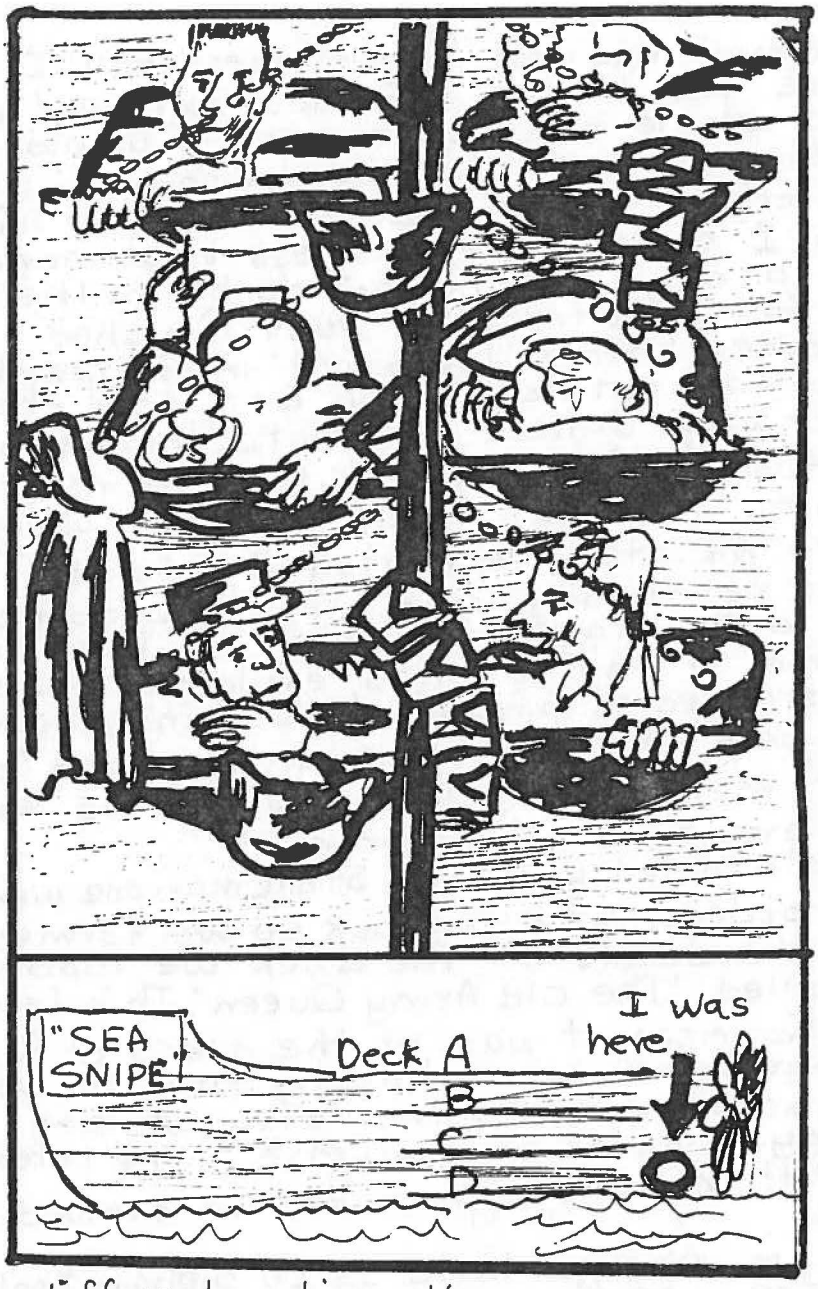
When you enter a new camp, there is one thing for certain that is going to happen. You will soon take another physical exam. Usually the exam will take place even before you learn the name of the new camp. Such was the case on this day. We had just had a <u>good</u> physical three weeks ago. We had not eaten since morning. I was near Starvation.... What did we do the first thing we hit this camp.... we had another <u>complete</u> physical. We ate supper about 9:00 P.M. that night. It was at the mess hall that I discovered the name of the camp. It was camp Stoneman. It was <u>the big</u> embarkation camp on the west coast. From Camp Stoneman you go overseas.

The barracks at Stoneman were much like those at both Camp Roberts and Fort Ord except they were painted dark brown. It turned out to be a real dismal place to be located just before you were going to leave the country. The atmosphere was awful. Besides all the barracks being painted brown, there was no grass, shrubs or flowers to be seen. It rained almost all of the time. The bare ground turned into deep mud that you sunk into up to your ankles. There was no place to go and nothing to do. Out side of these few things I mentioned, Camp Stoneman was really a neat camp. Thank God we only stayed here a short time. There were about 160-180 men in barracks that were suppose to hold 80-90 men. Everyone realized it was just a temporary situation so they all made a strong effort to get along. It did seem to work. There was one movie theatre on the grounds. It was filled every night. The one small town close by the camp, was so sma no one bothered to go there. At least none of my friends went there.

Camp Stoneman had the largest mess hall I had seen in the service. The line up for chow extended at least one-half to one whole block, each meal. I would say the interior of the mess hall could be compared in size to a large, modern basketball field house. We stood in line two hours, many times. I could not even guess how many meals were served in a days time. It had to be in the thousands. I do know that sometimes we just finished with supper a few minutes before "lights out" in the barracks. The food at this camp was outstanding. I was told they used over 100 K.P.s each day. Believe it or not — this is the only camp I was in that I did not pull K.P. It seems we spent our time at camp Stoneman much the same way that we did at Fort Ord. We ate, slept, played outdoor basketball (when it was not raining) and did a few camp details. We did have a few days of training on how to load in to a barge from a ship. We had explained to us the conduct that was expected of us while being aboard navy ships. While we were at Camp Stoneman, we were 'on alert'. Being 'on alert' ment we could be subject to leave for overseas duty at any time.... day or night.

We were stationed at Camp Stoneman one week. On Sunday morning orders came to pack up. We formed lines and marched to the docks. At the dock we loaded onto a ferry boat called "The Old Army Queen". This ferry took us over to San Francisco. It was at the docks of San Francisco that we boarded a large liberty ship. All the way over to San Francisco on board the ferry, we ate sand wiches and candy donated by, who else,... The Veterans of Foreign Wars.... I felt that was appropriate. We arrived at the docks about dark.

The officer in charge lined us up alphabetically and loaded us on to the liberty ship called the 'SEA SNIPE'. This is the first ship I had ever been on. We were taken to our quarters. Unfortunately, our quarters turned out to be the worse place you could be placed on the ship. Our quarters were located at the very back (aft) of the ship on C-deck. C-deck is the floor of the ship. My bunk assignment was bottom bunk, six inches from the floor. I could not get any lower. I learned that the propeller of the ship was less than three feet from my bunk. Every time the propeller made a complete turn, there was the sound of metal touching metal. I assume the sound was the propeller touching the ship. what ever it was, the noise it



made was shattering to the nerves. The area was packed with G.I's. There seemed to be very little space and even less fresh air. Our equipment and barracks bags hung everywhere. We were issued bulky life belts that had to be worn or within reach, at all times. I saw only one drinking fountain on the deck. Needless to say, our sleeping quarters left much to be desired.

As soon as we were assigned to our quarters and found places to hang our equipment, we got out of that "hell hole" for some fresh air. B-deck, above us, was where the toilets and showers for the soldiers were located. Near the center of the ship, on B-deck, was the mess hall (galley). Above B-deck was the main deck. I have no idea where the navy personnel slept on board this ship. I think they used the same mess hall we did. They had different rations than we did. I think the men who manned the 'sea snipe' were see-bees.

The plans, as we were told, were to sail early next morning. This gave us a chance to "case" the ship. There was not a lot to look for. There was a P.X on board but it was only going to be open to G.I.'s for one hour a day. Your chance of getting to the P.X each day was about as good as a snowflake surviving in hell. We found the life boat stations and spots on the main deck where we could stretch out during the daytime. They announced over the speaker system, before lights out, that first night, that there was going to be a movie shown for those interested. I was

more concerned about leaving good old U.S.A. In fact, I was upset in my stomach and sad just thinking about it. I sat and looked at the water in the bay most of the night. Part of that time I spent watching lights of cars as they crossed over the golden gate bridge way off in the distance. I am sure I said a few prayers. I was very, very lonely and I know I had to be feeling sorry for my self. After a while I got sleepy. I went down to my bunk in my quarters and tried to sleep. It was hot. I stripped down to my shorts about 4:00 A.M, I fell asleep. I realized that these close quarters and the fact that I was heading toward a foreign country was going to be a difficult adjustment I would have to make. At this point I got stubborn and made up my mind I could do whatever was needed.

I came up to the top deck of the ship to get into line to go to breakfast just as the boat started to move out of the bay. We were on our way. I waited to go to breakfast.... instead, I watched San Francisco fade out of sight. When I could no longer see land, I headed for the chow line. From this day on till we arrived home we ate all meals from our mess kit. The food for the army was cooked next to the mess hall. This made B-deck a few degrees warmer. The smell of oat meal, spam and coffee spread throughout B-deck. The heat, smell of food and the rocking movement of the ship at sea can do funny things to a person's stomach. I believe this is some times called sea sickness. A few of the men waiting in line seemed to be getting the signs of this illness. Many of them did not make it to breakfast. You could see, hear and especially smell the sickness signs as you came near the mess hall. It was really not what is called an appetizing sight. For some reason I did not get ill. After breakfast I went up to the main deck hoping I might see land. It had long faded away.

About 3-4 hours out as sea, everyone seemed a little "under the weather". when the bigger waves started moving the ship around, <u>all</u> the G.I.'s started to get sick. I got a little dizzy but I got over it very soon. I never got this feeling again aboard any ship and I was on a number of ships, large and small. A funny thing happened about the time everyone got "ozzy". One of the officers at Camp Stoneman, who really appeared to enjoy the authority the bar on his shoulder allowed him, was turning a little green around the gills. He had been rude, mouthy and unnecessarily insulting on many occasions. Actually he was a big pain in

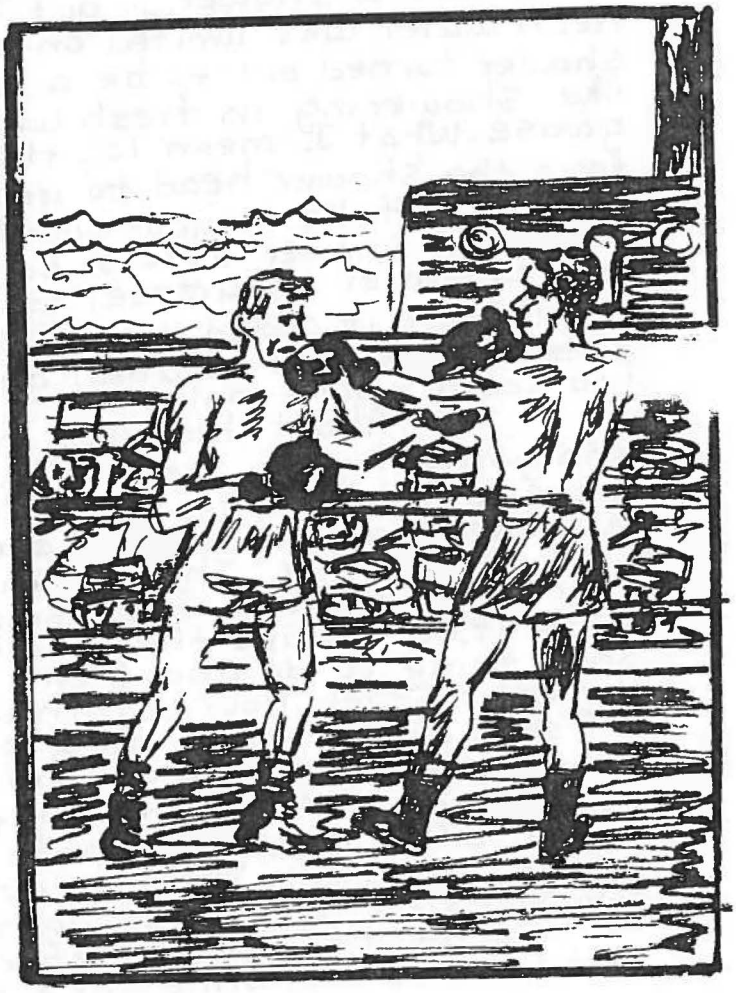
the rear. Most of his rude remarks were directed at tho ranked less than a non-com. A buddy of mine and I had been watching him as he stood next to the rail. I motioned to my buddy - ran over to the rail, next to the officer and pretended to vomit over the side of the ship. The officer looked at what I did and turned a deep pale color. At just the right moment my buddy ran to the rail and repeated what I had done. The officer could take no more of this. He turned and 'heaved' a good ten minutes. What we did might be called 'poetic justice'. My buddy and I both agreed in was just plain 'getting even' for all the crap our P.F.C and Private friends took from this officer.

The first day at sea I stayed on the main deck and watched the waves of the ocean and I kept an eye on a dirigible that was escorting us. The dirigible stayed with us three days. It was watching for "subs". Some time during that day I went down to my quarters to get a magazine from my barracks bag. I was witness to a sight that was really very serious - on the one hand - and very comical - on the other hand. To get to C-deck you naturally have to pass B-deck. In the part of the ship where I passed from B to C-deck I went by a compartment of toilets and showers. Out in the open space of the compartment there in this G I's latrine, sat 16 toilet stools, lined up in a single row. As I came by the door of this latrine, there were eight soldiers sitting on every other stool. Each one was throwing-up in the stool to their left. They were relieving themselves of a dose of sea sickness. The sight was funny. The seriousness of the illness was far from being comical. It took a week for most of the soldiers to get over the dizzy feeling caused by the moving of the ship under foot. Some of them never got over it.

We were each issued meal tickets. They were punched at each meal. The soldiers ate two meals each day. The crew ate three meals a day. With only one small mess hall, the lines extended from one end of the ship to the other. On windy, rainy days the line went up and down the different decks of the ship. When you are used to eating three meals a day... two meals are just not enough. It is logical that two meals is sufficient when your physical activity is decreased..... Wrong. Your tummy does not agree with that old jazz. It had three meals before. It wants three meals now. Some of the guys started complaining. The ships Captain gave in. In between our two meals, we were

given a sandwich and fruit. It got to be that all we seemed to do was wait in line for a meal. Some times you would hear guys standing in line say, "What you in line for..... lunch or supper?" At a certain time of the day, the ship P.X. opened up to the G.I's. Another line to wait in for food. If you had the money and were lucky enough to reach the P.X. window before it closed, you could buy candy, cookies, and one canteen cup of coca-cola. I ran out of money the first time I got to the P.X. window so I did not have to worry about this line anymore.

There was really not much to do aboard ship. You could sleep, read, wait in lines for meals, volunteer for light details and help the crew pull guard duty. It really got a little boring on board ship. One of the fun things I got envolved in was an exercise program provided by a group of para-troops who were quartered in another part of the ship. They really put it to us. I had to do 20 extra push-ups for failing to do their "exact" exercise. It was fun. A Chaplin on board felt we were getting restless and he got an elimination boxing tournament started. Only amatures were allowed. The Chaplin was to referee all matches. Any one could enter. This went over big. It lasted for four days. A bunch of us talked my little Mexican buddy, Adolphus Gunzoles, into entering. He had fought in the "Golden Gloves" before the war. We did not have to encourage him much. He won his first three fights by knockouts. He got sick on some greasy food from the mess hall. The navy doctor refused to let him fight in the finals. No doubt he would have won the championship of his weight. There was one movie show each week in the mess hall. We had to take turns to watch it. During certain times of the day the ship radio was played over the speaker system. We heard news and great 40's jazz. Crew members



said the radio was from "Frisco". A lot of men gambled. They played, poker and shot dice for high stakes. I did see one guy win over $500 at craps. I did not gamble because I did not understand either poker or craps. Most of the time on board the 'Sea Snipe' was spent just watching the ocean as we talked to one another. The only things I saw moving, besides the waves in the ocean, were two ships and one air plane. Both of them were so far off we could not make out what kind they were.

At night time we sat around on the main deck and talked or sang till it was time to retire to the "hole". After a few days at sea, the ship Captain allowed us to sleep on deck at night. He did set up a few rules to follow. We could not smoke after 6:00 PM. ...(I think he said 18 bells.) Light of any type made a beautiful target for an enemy submarine. We had to stay out of the path of the crew. We could not sleep during rain or storms and if we fell over board during the night the ship could not stop. It was so hot and uncomfortable down in our quarters that we all agreed to the Captains commands. Before you turned in for the night you could take a shower.... but it had to be a salt water shower. Fresh water was limited on board ship. Taking a salt water shower turned out to be a real experience. It was some what like showering in fresh water that immidately turned into grease. What I mean is, the time that the water is coming from the shower head to your body it feels like any shower you would take in your own home. The second the water from the shower sprays your body, it feels like it is covered with a thick layer of grease. You definately do not feel clean. I felt that it cooled me off but it did not clean me. Fresh water was turned on about one hour a day at the sinks so you could shave, only.

About half way to our destination, we crossed an imaginary line in the ocean. This line marks the spot on the earth where each new calander day begins. The date just west of this line is one day later than the date just east of the line. This imaginary line is called the International Date line. Because of this International Date line, those of us aboard the "Sea Snipe" gained one day. It has some thing to do about the degrees the sun travels over the earth each hour. If this all sounds like some kind of a "fish" story it was only because it was told to me by a crew member on board ship. Anyway,..... when a ship passes over this imaginary line, the captain of the ship knows when it will happen. The instruments in his working quarters tells him. There is cause for celebration and much tom foolery. If any passanger or crew member has not passed this imaginary line before in their life time, they are to be initiated while they are in the process of doing so.

The navy men say this celebration is done to honor the god who controlled all the water on the entire earth. This god was the god of the Sea in Roman Mythology. His name was NEPTUNE. After I had seen what was done to all of the army men on board this ship..... nothing was done to the navy men.... I do not believe this celebration is done to honor any god at all. I think it is all a put-up so the navy can put it to the army. I really did not understand all that took place but it was fun and it did break up the monotony of the trip. All the men who were crossing the Pacific Ocean for the first time by boat, were going to be initiated. The real fun of the entire program was the way that the sailors 'nailed' our Army officers. Many, many funny things happened. A lot of the officers had one-half of their heads shaved. The higher ranking Army officers had their hands tied behind their backs followed by pies in the face. One poor guy had his shoes removed, cut into pieces and throw overboard. Many officers and non-coms were knocked around by strong water hoses after getting their bodies painted with either dye or iodine. No one was exempt from some type of harsh treatment. All they did to me was pour shaving cream on me, knock me down a few times with a hose, remove my trousers and cut off one leg of the trousers. Every one seemed to be good natured about their treatment and both the army and navy men enjoyed the "initiation."

After 17 days on board this APA boat, word came over the loud speaker that we were going to arrive at our destination the following day. Early next morning we saw land. We spent the day cleaning our quarters, the latrine and the mess hall. We were all packed and ready but we did not dock till the next day. About 11:00 P.M, we saw a light coming toward us. A short time later we were surrounded by Coast Guard ships. They escorted our ship into the bay. The next morning we docked. We were ordered to dress in sun-tans. We made a final check to see that we left nothing behind. I could not resist returning to the "hell hole" one more time. I wanted to personally congradulate my self for surviving 17 days in that hot, miserable, stinking dungeon. Our ship was greeted by a high ranking Army officer and a large, large crowd of Australian civilians. We were unloaded in alphabetical order. It was a very strange feeling to come down the gang plank and touch your foot on a foreign land.

CHAPTER IV
AUSTRALIA

As soon as we unloaded from the ship, we were told that we were in the port of Brisbane, Australia. We dropped our barracks bags in a large pile on the dock. The trucks that our bags were loaded onto seemed different. For one thing, the steering wheel of the truck was on the wrong side of the truck. For another thing, the truck drove on the opposite side of the road that trucks drove on in the United States. We were ordered into the back of trucks that were driven by black American soldiers. As we traveled down the road we saw and heard things that were new to us. The language was new but very similar to our own language. We saw many people riding bikes. The roads appeared narrow. The homes looked old fashioned. Many of the homes were built high off the ground. The people along the road seemed very, very friendly. Many of them called out "Yanks", as we passed by.

The truck we were riding in pulled into a place that looked a lot like the Iowa State Fairgrounds. We entered a gate and we passed by a grand stand. In front of the grand stand was either a one mile or a half mile race track. At the far end of the race track, there was a road that led to many rows of army tents. These tents housed all incoming and out going American troops that arrived and left Brisbane. It was about noon when we arrived at this area. We found our assigned tents, dropped our barracks bags in our tent, picked up our mess kits and headed for chow. It sure felt good to be walking on land again. As we walked to the mess hall, we mingled with some soldiers who were stationed at this camp. I learned that this place was called Camp Ascot. The camp was named after the race track we passed getting here. At one time, this track was the biggest race track in the country of Australia. The mess hall we were about to eat in was very neat and clean looking. It was a lot like picnic grounds you would see in a state park at home.

The tables and chairs of the mess hall sat on a cement floor. A large canvas top covered the kitchen and eating space. Inside the eating area in the corner, was a large canvas bag that held drinking water. This bag was called a 'lister bag'. The kitchen was screened. The food was served cafeteria style and was very eatable. We had the favorite meal of their country for our first meal. Their meal was meat potatoes with gravy. The meal was great. Their national drink was "tie" (tea) I learned to hate their national drink with a passion. It was strong enough to knock out a cow. I liked coffee but not Australian coffee. It looked and it tasted like thick, black mud. Most of the time I drank water.

After chow, we went back to our tents unpacked and cleaned up. I washed a few cloths that I had gotten dirty on the ship. We had the rest of the day off. to look the camp over. I spent most of the afternoon with some soldiers across the troop street. They recently returned from New Guinea. They were from the 32nd Infantry. They had just recently returned from combat. They were going back to the United States on the same ship we came to Australia on. All of these men from the 32nd Infantry were either injured in combat, had malaria, or had turned over age for fighting. We talked with them about combat. They offered us many helpful suggestions. They told us all about Camp Ascot and what to expect if we got into the city of Brisbane. I noticed each man I approached had a yellow tint to his skin. They told me it was from taking atebrin tablets. These are pills you take each day to fight off malaria. They reminded us that we, too, would turn this yellowish color in time. I really thought that they were putting me on. It turned out that we did turn a slight yellowish color.

That afternoon we looked for and found the P.X.

It was located under the grand stands. I borrowed a few bucks so I could experiment. I wanted some candy. We cashed our American dollars for Australian money. It was a mess. We had a hell of a time figuring out how to buy something. It seemed like what ever we did we were getting jipped. We soon realized that all we had to do was learn what each paper bill and coin in Australian money equaled in American money. It was not as easy as we believed it would be. Each pound note, at this time, equalled $3.60 in United States money. They had a half-pound note. This was worth $1.80. The problem seemed to be learning the value of their coins. There was a FLORIN which equalled 32¢. a SHILLING was 16¢, The SIX PENCE amounted to 8¢, in our money. A THREE PENCE Australian coin was worth 4¢ and a PENNY in Australian money equalled 1½¢ of our money. Sound a little complicated? It sure was to all of us. It took awhile to discover that something worth $1.20 in American money, would cost three florin, one shilling and a six pence. We not only had to figure out the money system, we had to learn what to call items that we intended to purchase. I just wanted candy. It took three clerks and the manager to understand. It was not till one clerk saw me desperately pointing at candy in the counter that they discovered what I was asking for. One of the clerks finally said, "I think the Yank wants 'Sweets'." I got my candy. It was a whole new ball game to the American G.I. The grand stands at Camp Ascot were used for many purposes. Church services were held there. A movie was shown each night at one end of the stands. Boxing matches were held once a week in front of the stands. One night I watched an up and coming G.I. Knock an Australian boxer out with one punch ... in the first round. I wonder how this heavy weight G.I. boxer would have done against Joe Louis. He was over Six feet tall He weighed 235 pounds and was very fast on his feet.

We Stayed at Camp Ascot for seven days. During this time we did not do a bit of army training. We did have some inspections. The details we were assigned to amounted to very little. Instead of working in camp we were sent to do details in and around places near the camp.. We worked with Australian civilians in shops, factories, on farms, and lumber yards. There was a great shortage of manual labor in Australia at the time. Most of the men and women were in the service. There were many

young men working with us, however. One good sized young man I worked next to in a lumber yard looked to be about 18 years old to me. I said to him, "aren't you about old enough to be in the service?". If looks could kill, I would have been a dead man. He looked wild-eyed at me and said, "Listen, mite. if I was ighteen I'd join the bloody army..... I'm only fifteen and alf". It was fun for me to hear Australians talk. It was probably fun for them to listen to us as well. This 15½ year old young man was probably six foot tall. He had to weigh 220 pounds. I wondered why so many of these young men we worked with were built so stout. After a few days of working and asking questions I learned why. We had a break in the middle of the morning for "tie" and biscuits. In the middle of the afternoon they had "tie" and biscuits again. They had a late evening "tie" break again. Add breakfast, lunch, and supper that totals six meals a day. No wonder these young people appeared stout.

We did learn one thing about Australia on our own while staying at this camp. The mosquitoes were vicious They were not only mean but huge. We used mosquito nets every night in this camp. These insects made us aware of what was ahead for us. The days at this camp were fun. They would have been more pleasant if my turn would have come up for a pass to town. The captain started giving out passes to go into Brisbane the day we arrived. He gave passes to all the men in one tent each night. As luck would have it, I was in the last tent to receive passes. The day we were to receive passes, we moved out. I really wanted to get into town and hear the Australian people talk. Since I could not get into town, I did the next best thing. I got the "tough" little Australian boy who sold papers in the camp to come to my tent and teach me. He explained some of the most common Australian expressions to me. "Piper" was paper. I knew this, cause I had heard him say it as he made his rounds. "Stike and Eggs" meant Steak and Eggs. Those were easy. But, for the word train they used "tram". Turn on the "wireless" referred to radio. He told me when they dislike any thing or a person, they use the word "bloody" or the term "blooming". He wanted to know if I had heard the Aussies use the remark "those bloody Japs". My little friend asked for "Smokes" because the Australian cigarettes were awful. He was a good teacher.

On the last day at this camp as we packed our bags, it began to rain. It rained hard off and on for

the next three days. We loaded the bags on our shoulders and marched over in front of the grand stands. When we stopped to set down our barracks bags, I noticed a few high rank officers standing on a platform before us. Placed in front of the platform, about 30-40 feet apart, were four large printed numbers. Each number was printed on large white card board that was stapled to a wooden board staked into the ground. The four numbers were 5-7-8 and 12. As the names of soldiers were called off, we were told to line up behind an assigned number. When my name was called, I was told to line up behind 7. I did not realize it at the time but they were placing me in the Regiment I would be attached to. There are four Regiments in a division. I still did not know the division I would be in but I did know I was in the 7th Regiment

After all the names were called, trucks pulled up and loaded one Regiment of men at a time and drove off. There was a lot of vehicles in this truck convoy by the time all the men got loaded. As we headed for our outfit down the road, we yelled and whistled at Australian girls. On the out skirts of Brisbane, our truck got held up in some traffic for a short time. Some guys in our truck jumped out went into a bakery and got some rolls and milk. Later, as the convoy of trucks pulled near a camp area, some of the trucks up ahead began to peel off in different directions and disappeared.

As our truck came over a slight incline, I was able to see a big yellow and black sign. It was the size of a large high way bill board. The large printing told me I was coming into THE FIRST CAVALRY DIVISION area. The sign had an enlarged

painted insignia on it. The insignia was a yellow patch with a thick slanted line crossing it. Above the slanted line and to the right was a horses head in black. The word Cavalry Startled me. I understood Cavalry to mean horses. Horses and I just do not get along — and — me riding a horse. That was a big, big joke. We unloaded from the trucks we had been riding in from camp Ascot. Almost before we got out of the truck, we were greeted by two generals. They varified the fact that we were now member of the First Cavalry Division. They also told us we were proud members of the 7th Cavalry Regiment of the First Cavalry Division. In their short speech to us they informed us how good we new recruits looked to them and that we <u>will</u> be the best combat division in the Pacific before we are finished. My heart sunk a little when one of the generals told us we would be heading into combat before long and we would be moving into a combat area within two days. The second general backed up the first generals words by informing us we would be getting additional jungle equipment issued tomorrow. The equipment turned out to be jungle boots, helmet, mosquito netting, a bolo knife and some live ammunition for our personal weapons. The name of the camp was Camp Stratpine. When my mind began to clear after the two generals gave their little speech. I remembered from American History something about the 7th Cavalry. The 7th Cavalry was the Regiment General Custer Commanded. If my memory did not fail me ..... I believe the Indians

completely wiped out this Regiment at a place called 'Little Big Horn. This battle was known as "Custers Last Stand." Later on in combat we got ribbed about this "Last Stand" business from other fighting divisions who fought along side us.

The camp appeared to be a "ghost" camp. All that was visable were tent frames. The squad size tents and the other large tents had been packed for shipping. Both of the nights I spent at Camp Stratpine were miserable. It was a wooded area. The mosquitoes were thick. I had welts all over my body. we slept in hammocks in the rain. The hammocks must have forgotten how to keep water out of them. I tried every thing to keep dry but I slept in a puddle both nights. Since the regular rations had been stored for shipping, we ate K-rations both days. There was mud up to our ankles every where you walked. There was no place to take shelter from the hard rains. I was soaked for the two days. I was new to everyone except for a slight acquaintance with two guys I had met on the boat. I felt these men who had trained here at Camp Stratpine resented going into combat with us. We had to appear as raw recruits to them. Some of the men who had trained at this camp even camped together back in the Cavalry in Texas. Those of us who just arrived had only 17 weeks basic. All in all, it just didn't feel like a pleasant situation to be in.

On Sunday, just as the two generals had said, we got up early and packed. we loaded all of our belongings into our barracks bags, including the new additional jungle equipment. We put the bags on our shoulder, got into a truck and took off. It had rained all morning. It was pouring down rain as we passed back through Brisbane, the outskirts of Camp Ascot, and when we arrived at the docks. When the truck stopped we got out hurryingly, picked up our wet and heavy, heavy barracks bags and proceeded directly up the gang plank of a ship that was docked. My barracks bag got so wet and heavy I could hardly lift it to my back. I almost slipped and fell on the gang plank. when I reached "A" deck, I was pooped. I did manage to get a look at the name of the ship. It was the "James D. Dooley." The minute we got aboard we were taken to out quarters. From the appearance of this ship it was for sure that we were heading into combat. The quarters were just a bare floor. Things begin to look serious.

. I swear this ship we boarded had to be a Wor
War I reject. If not, I am sure it was the oldest, most de
jected, dilapidated piece of junk in the whole South west
Pacific fleet. As I came aboard, I could see that the latrines
and showers were out in the open on the main deck. The
mess hall was on the main deck, also. The mess hall kitchen
was covered by a canvas tent. We were served all of our
meals on the main deck, rain or shine. During a heavy rain,
your soup and coffee lasted longer. Our sleeping quarters
were located on the deck below the main deck. I called this
B-deck. Get this — we were each issued a 4 foot by 8 foot
piece of plywood. We slept on this piece of plywood and we
were expected to keep all of our gear of top of it. We were
only allowed to roam around on the main deck and B-deck.
C-deck was loaded with combat supplies and ammunition
of all types.

During any kind of heavy storm, when the waves
were high, the whole ship creeked. A Storm hit one night
and I put my life jacket on. I was expecting to have to
go over board. It was a scary trip. I asked one of the crew
why a ship this old and this slow would be used by the
navy. He look at me and very seriously said, "Hey, we are i
a dangerous combat zone — there are Jap 'subs' and Shor
guns all over this area... what do you expect?" This was real
comforting to know. I am sure, there were no navy combat
ships near by to escort our ship. At least, I did not see
any other ships during the day time hours.

We could take salt water showers only. It got
a bit hairy to go to the latrine at night when it rained.
It got down right frightening to go on A-deck on this ship
in a storm. We did stop over night at some remote bay but I
never found out the name of the place. I was told, however,
that the place we stopped had been bombed by Jap planes a
few nights before we arrived. It seemed that we stayed in
sight of land a lot on this trip. When the ship finally
did stop, it anchored in a bay in New Guinea. This was the
same New Guinea I had read about in my home town news-
paper just 4-5 months ago. The same New Guinea that our
Army, Marines and Navy invaded. This is for real!.... I was
now here and about to get involved. It was a total surprise
that the JAMES D. DOOLEY made it. I felt sure it would fall
into pieces and sink into the ocean before we arrived at
our destination. I often wonder if that ship ever made it
back to Australia.

All the men were ordered to pack their barracks bags and get ready to leave the ship. All the time I was packing my gear, I was concerned about that word Cavalry, as in First Cavalry. What did it mean? I was really a little bit disappointed. Could it be that I would end up riding horses like the Cavalry outfit that trained in the Camp in my home town. They looked ridiculous to me in their cute puffed trousers and high boots. I had a brother in that cavalry outfit at home. He loved horses. He liked the outfit. He even thought the uniform looked good. Not me... I could just not picture myself in a horse cavalry

About 2:00 P.M., we saw some amphibious vehicles coming along side the ship. These vehicles are built like a barge except they have large rubber-tired wheels. They move both on land and in water. They are called 'Ducks'. These "Ducks" were driven by very business-like black American soldiers. This was my first ride in an amphibious vehicle. It was not my last ride, however. My first impression of New Guinea was that it looked "combat as hell". It definately was not

combat or we would not have arrived or entered onto the beach as we did.... It did look like a combat zone. As we approached the beach, I could see a very high, rugged built, look-out tower. I could see lots of thick jungle. Some of the trees appeared to have been blown to bits. There were many, many, ships, both on the beach and in the harbor, being unloaded. Just a few days before we arrived these same ships felt a Japanese air attack. The ducks we loaded on from our ship in the harbor did not stop when they reached the beach. They went up a road off the beach for 2-3 miles in-land, turned left, off the beach road and stopped. The place the ducks stopped to let us off was an area where some tents were standing. The jungle was directly behind the standing tents. The drivers returned to the ship to get the rest of the men. We were now about one giant step from combat in a camp area near a village called Oral Bay, in New Guinea.

CHAPTER V

NEW GUINEA

As we rode down the road in the 'ducks' I got a first hand picture of what jungle looked like. It was about like I had expected. The coconut trees were a little taller than I expected. I had pictured the shorter thick brush and the smaller trees, fronted by shrubbery and the high grass that all blended together, correctly in my mind. It did look challenging. I could see how enemy snipers could easily hide themselves in the trees. The driver had let us out at a very secluded location. It was apparent that someone had camped here before. It looked like they had pulled up and left in a hurry. There was garbage all over. Some of the tents (squad tents) had fallen over. The grass looked like it had reached the cutting stage long ago. Mud, dirt and coconut leaves were piled high. I had a feeling this whole place was about to be cleaned up.

As soon as all the men arrived from the "James D. Dooley", we were told that we are now members of "H" troop in the 7th Cavalry. We were also informed, because we are in the Cavalry, that we are now to be referred to as "troopers" instead of soldiers. A high rank officer told all of the new men that this out fit is only Cavalry in name. We are an Infantry Division. We had nothing to do with horses. Boy, what a relief that was to me. We gathered in a large group to be introduced and officially welcomed. You could feel the platoon officers and the company commander looking us over. After the introductions the large group was divided. The men who trained together in Australia headed down to the opposite end of the troop street. The new recruits stayed in place. The troop commander explained to us what the "H" in "H Troop meant. It stood for HEAVY weapons. The heavy weapons he referred to were the water-cooled 30 caliber machine-

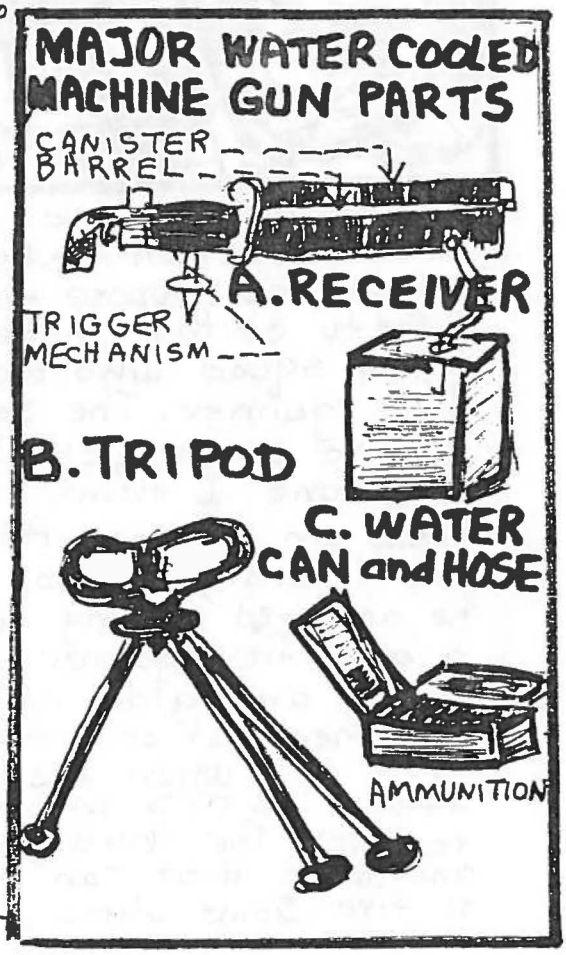
guns and the 81 millimeter mortar. He ended his short speech by telling us that each one of us will be assigned to a machine-gun or mortar squad in the morning. He also told us we were going to clean up this camp area.

I really did not sleep well that first night in New Guinea. I kept thinking this is New Guinea. New Guinea is jungle. In the jungle there are wild animals, snakes and creepy, deadly bugs. I do not know how it happened but I did finally fall asleep. I woke up to birds singing. The sun was shining. Breakfast was served by the troop cooks. My first taste of Army spam. After breakfast, the new recruits were ordered to gather up by the mess hall. We formed a long single line. Platoon officers looked us over like we were a bunch of cattle being auctioned off. The officers talked only to the top sergeant. The sergeant recorded our name and told us which officer to line up behind as our name was called. The new recruits said nothing. I was told to stand behind a machine-gun officer. After all of the recruits were called and assigned, the officer in charge led his particular group of new recruits off to his personal tent. Here we were divided into squads of eight. Each squad was assigned to a squad sergeant. Every two squads had a staff or tech sergeant assigned to them. Four squads made a platoon The platoon was headed by a Lieutenant. This was the man who chose each of us. Each squad in a platoon had a mixture of new recruites and older troopers in it.

The new men got acquainted with the heavy water-cooled machine-gun in no time at all. We had all kinds of instruction and many 'hands on' classes as to the use of the gun. I had never even been close to a heavy machine-gun before. I did not fire this gun in basic training. I fired every weapon but a water-cooled machine-gun in basic. I do recall that they fired this gun over our head as we crawled on our bellies about fifty yards in Fort Ord, California. When I was asked to pick up the whole gun at one time, I learned why it was called "heavy". When I first fired this gun I could "feel" the power it had. It fired 250 rounds in seconds. I learned how, where and when to set the gun up for action. All of us in the squad had to take the gun completely apart and put it together until it could be done in pitch dark, in less than 60 seconds. I discovered that if you

'rapid fire' without stopping, you can easily cause the gun to jam. When you jam the gun you endanger the lives of those around you. We were taught to fire the gun in short bursts. We practiced what to do when the gun failed to operate properly. It takes special tools to get the gun started firing after it malfunctiones There were two very obvious disadvantages to this gun that I could see immediately. One, at night time, you could quickly give your position away to the enemy. In order for a gunner to know if he was on target at night, every fifth bullet placed in the belt was a tracer bullet. The red flash caused by the tracer says to the enemy artillery and mortar men, "here we are, over here". The other noticeable fault is that the gun is so heavy. There is no easy way to get this gun to where you are going without carrying it on your back, in parts. Climbing up and down mountains and crossing rivers with excess pounds on your back, in addition to your pack, steel helmet, personal weapon and extra ammunition, sometimes can almost be more than a human can take.

The diagram to the right titled, "major water cooled machine-Gun Parts", shows the three general parts of the gun. The tripod is a foundation for the gun. If it is not weighted down, it will vibrate. Sand or dirt is many times placed over the tripod legs to hold it firm. The tripod of the gun has a groove in the top part of it. The receiver, sets into the groove. The receiver is that part of the gun from which bullets fire. The front part of the receiver is shaped like a canister. This canister is made of heavy metal and holds water. The water in the canister keeps the barrel of the gun cooled off. The canister is about 2½ feet long and has a diameter of some 5-6 inches. The gun barrel runs through the middle of the can-



lister, from the trigger mechanism through th end of the canister. The water that enters the cannister, to keep the barrel cool, is pressured from a hose that connects from a metal water can, Thus, the name <u>water cool</u> machine gun. The third gunner carries the hose and water. Bullets fired too fast cause either the barrel to burn out or the gun to jam.

The machine gun takes three men to carry the main parts of the gun and put it into action. The other five men in the squad haul ammunition for the gun. The men in the machine-gun squad are suppose to be selected for gun position in the squad, according to their knowledge of the gun, after having been tested and visually observed. Each man in the squad was suppose to have been watched closely as he reacted to certain make believe combat situations. The one man in the squad who received the highest score was to be the first gunner. The second highest score was assigned as the second gunner, etc. I did not really feel this is the way it was done. I think it was all done by the squad sergeant based on a man's attitude to follow the sergeants instructions, how friendly he was to the other men in the squad and if he appeared willing to learn. What ever the reasoning, we got a good first gunner and a good second gunner. I was third gunner and glad of it. I did not want the responsibility of either first or second gunner.

When the gun is taken into combat, the first gunner always carries the tripod. The second gunner carries the receiver. The third gunner carried the water can, water hose, and tools that can get the gun back in action if it fails to fire. Some where in that bag of tools the third gunner

SQUAD SGT.	FIRST GUNNER	SECOND GUNNER	THIRD GUNNER	THE LAST 4 MEN
Carries extra ammunition. His personal weapon is a 45.	Curries Tripod of Machine Gun. His weapon is a 45.	Carries the Receiver of the Machine Gun. His weapon is a 45.	Carries Water can, hose, and tools for gun. His weapon is an M-1	Each man carries 2 boxes of Machine Gun Ammunition. Their personal weapon is an M-1

will carry an extra barrel for the machine gun. In "heavy combat", barrels have a tendency to "burn out". In "heavy combat" all the men haul extra ammunition. The tripod that the first gunner carries weighs 53 pounds. The receiver of the second gunner weighs 51 pounds. The water can, empty, weights 20 pounds. Boxes of ammunition weigh 20 pounds each. At times, counting helmet, pack, personal weapon and machine gun part, a first or second gunner will be hauling 100-120 pounds on his shoulders. In case you are not aware of it, that is a lot of extra weight to have on your back when you are crossing rivers, climbing mountains, or running on to a beach while making a beach head. The first gunner and squad sergeant decide where the gun is to be set up each night in combat, unless orders come from higher up. The sergeant gives the command to fire:

My squad sergeant was named Stephens. He went by the name of "Steve". That is the only name he gave to us. The first squad I was in was made up of two new recruits and six experienced men. I refer to experienced men as being those who received extra training in Australia. We were the second squad, of platoon two. We did not bunk as a squad in a squad tent, in New Guinea, for the first few days. I was told by my platoon officer to go check in and spend a few days with Sergeant Rowe and a few other men. He was to be my temporary tent leader. When I met him I took a long look and I said to myself, "my god, what have I got here?" He had a handle bar mustache. He had a sour look on his face that meant business and he was old enough to be my dad. He was working at tightening up the tent as I approached him. After I watched him a few minutes he looked over at me and asked me if I had a broken arm. I got busy helping him and discovered that the sour look was just a put-on. The mustache was done on a bet. He was actually twice my age. He turned out to be a real trusted friend. We later called him "Old-timer".

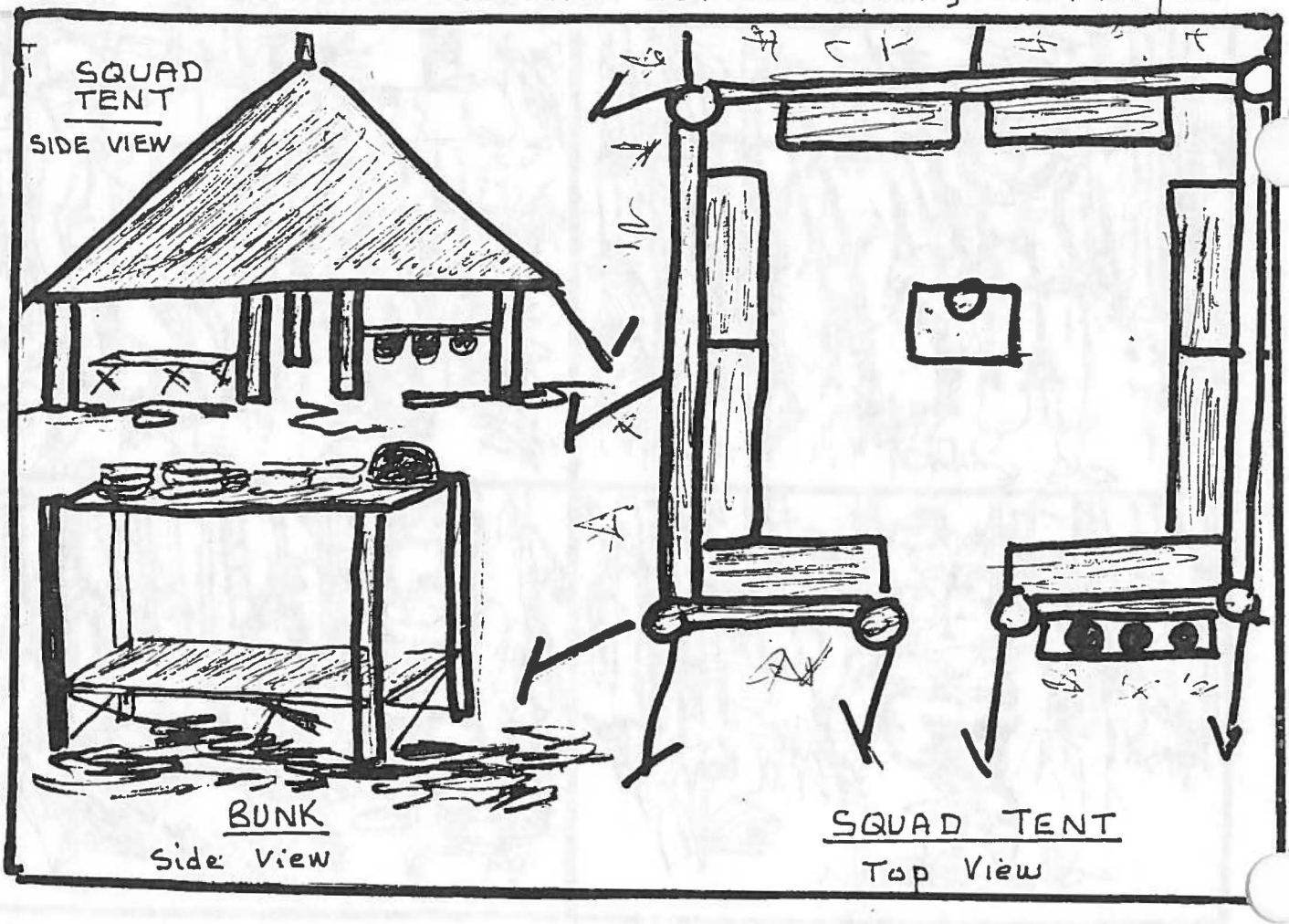
Sergeant Rowe and I decided to try and figure out a way to sleep in our hammocks in the squad tent until our cots arrived. This was not only a ticklish maneuver but it turned out to be a stupid move. There were four of us assigned to this tent. We all agreed to a great superior plan. Each guy was to tie a rope from one end of their hammock to the center pole of the squad tent. The rope at the other end of each man's hammock was to be tied to a corner pole of the squad tent. We all felt this would balance out the tent and work out for us as temporary shelter if no one got up during the night for some reason. One guy did get up without letting the others know. The hammocks came down and the squad tent fell in. Guess who the dummy was that got up—? Boy, it was sure nice when the cots arrived and we could sleep in something besides a hammock.

We did not do much in New Guinea the first week or so but go down to the beach and unload supplies and equipment that had been shipped in. We had classes each day on the machine gun or techniques of fighting in combat. We tried to improve our quarters in our spare time. I knew that one day soon the Captain was ready to give orders to clean this camp up. I no sooner told one of the men in our tent that it was going to happen, and it happened. The Captain called us all up to the mess hall one morning and wanted to know

if we were ready to clean up this "dump". He said "If you are not ready we're going to do it anyway". He had drawn up plans for a screened in kitchen, a supply room, dinning area for both enlisted men and officers with picnic type tables, and benches. We were going to have a roofed over latrine, a shower, day room, barber shop and a mail room. Our own individual tents would have in it, a table, gun rack and a place to put our helmets. The helmet holder would serve as wash basins. Over our bunks, made of bamboo, would be built shelves to hold folded clothing. The floor of our tent would be covered with white sand from the beach. He said "If I can think of anything else to do to make it a better place to live, I will do it." Was he kidding? No — he was dead serious. He ended his speech with "Anyone caught "goldbricking" (loafing) will regret it.

The wood with which to do all of this construction was less that 100 yards away. The coconut trees in the jungle are large. The wood from these trees was strong. We got busy saw-

ing, chopping and hauling. Some men dug holes, some built tent frames. The logs and lumber were carried on shoulders. A few guys were assigned to stretch canvas over the frames. Each tent was built just as the Captain had told us it would, earlier. The mess hall and quarters for both enlisted men and officers finished, it was now time to improve the rest of the camp. Below is a top view and a side view how each individual tent was intented to look. Two water wells were dug. One was dug out from the end of the troop street near where the shower was located. The other well was near the kitchen. Our shower had a cement floor plus a few benches so you could sit down to put on shoes and leggings. The water for the showers was pumped from the well into 55 gallon empty gasoline containers. These cans set upon a frame about 7 feet high. Each day there was a man assigned to keep the cans full of water during "Shower time". The water was cold but other than that it was just like home. The latrine was built much like the old farm outhouses only on a larger

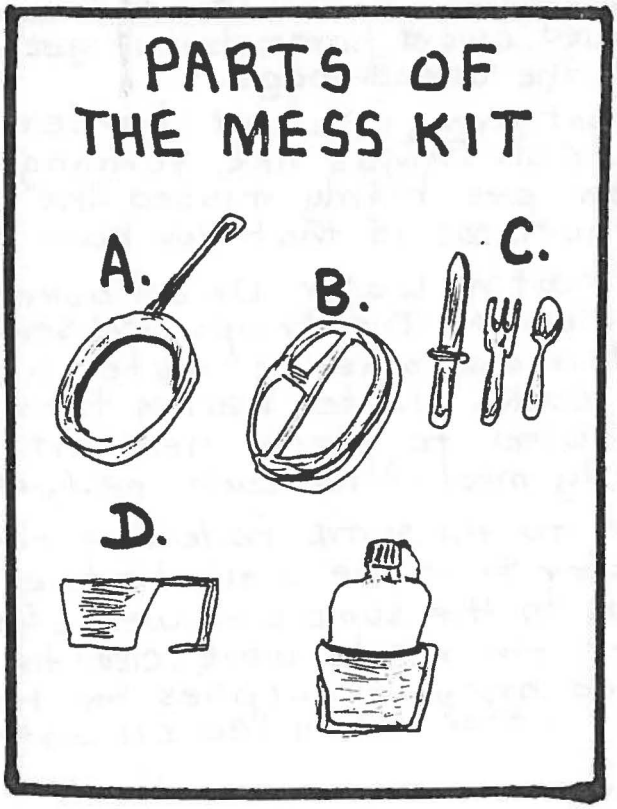


scale. Lime was used to hold down the smell. The eating area, which was as far away from the latrine as possible, had a screened in kitchen, supply tent and the whole area that the men ate in, was screened.

After the camp was completed, we went back to routine details. We were given loading and unloading chores to do down at the beach. We still had classes to attend, guard duty and my favorite sport, K.P. There were no dishes to wash. Each man washed, rinsed and dried his own dishes, after each meal, when he scrapped, rinsed and dried his mess kit and silverware. This whole kit was really a very simple piece of equipment to use. All of the parts of the mess kit are made of sturdy aluminum. The diagram below shows the parts of the mess kit and their uses.

A.- This is a solid plate. It is about 1½-2 inches deep. It is oblong shaped. The widest point of the plate is probably 6 inches. The longest point of the plate is around 8 inches. This plate has a handle.

B- If more than one food is served this plate is also used. This plate allows food to be served to you to be separeted. The handle of plate A clamps over a ridge in plate B. In combat this B container is seldom used.



C- These are traditional eating utensils. They are made of aluminum, also.

D- This is probably the most used item in the mess kit. The handle of the cup, when not in use, clamps around the bottom of the cup. The cup is shaped to hold the water canteen. Both the water canteen and cup are attached to a soldiers weapons belt. The canteen and cup are held to the belt by a canvas canteen carrier.

It was due to K.P. in New Guinea that I received my "battle scar." I tried to remove a stove pipe unit that heats the water

in the 55 gallon container, used to rinse out mess kits, only problem was the heating unit refused to move. I — of course, insisted. The black soot covering the sharp edge of the pipe attacked me. I was cut above my right eye. I came home with "New Guinea" soot in the skin above my eye brow. I was graciously awarded "the K.P. purple heart" for brave acts in and around the mess hall while serving in a combat zone. It was presented to me by my squad after I returned from the medics. This purple heart was made from the lid of a K-ration can. The lid was cut into a heart shape. The writing was done in purple dye. I wanted to bring this highly honored award home but it got lost some way in the shuffle of the barrack bags.

K.P. duty, in a combat area, is a lot harder than in a camp like Roberts or Ord. Things like running water, sink and sewage system are highly missed. The most difficult part about K.P. overseas is that you have to spent a lot of time hauling and heating water. On an average day of K.P. you got up about 6:00 A.M. The troops were served cafeteria style. All the 55 gallon containers of water had to be filled the night before. The cooks started heating them around 4:00 A.M. This water was used to clean mess kits and pots and pans after the early meal. After each meal, we hauled dirty water and garbage to the sump. Following the trip to the sump, you hauled water from the well to the kitchen. You repeated these trips to the sump and well after each meal. The jobs you did between meals were, clean the area wash and dry pots and pans, and bring in supplies for the next meal. We were usually done after we filled all water

cans for the next morning. This was about 7:00 P.M. Keep in mind, this is K.P. in a combat area where you are not actually fighting. You are waiting to be called into combat. In real combat there was no such thing as K.P. because the kitchen is rarely brought up to the front lines.

With in two days after our camp in New Guinea had been built to the satisfaction of our Captain, we had lights in our tents at night time. How — you may ask can you have lights in your tent in the middle of a jungle? I asked that same question. This outfit bought a generator in Australia to use in the wooded area where they trained. It cost each of us $3.00 to get this machine into working order. The government would not provide a generator for us. It was well worth $3.00. Each tent had two lights.

The night entertainment in New Guinea was not overly exciting. You could write letters, listen to records in our day room, read or you could sleep in your free time. If word got around that one of the outfits down the road was showing a good movie, we would hitch hike over to see it. All the units stationed on the island shared any entertainment that came their way. Trucks, ducks and alligator vehicles were on the road hauling goods and equipment almost all hours. Many of the drivers welcomed extra passangers. because there were still occasional Jap Stragglers around. It was for this reason that we did not travel alone at night time. We could not leave camp without carrying our personal weapon. We discovered there were boxing matches (amateur) being presented one night each week in Oral Bay. Oral Bay was about 10 miles away. If we asked the Captain ahead of time, he would get us a jeep or weapons carrier to haul men to the fights. You had to make things to do for your fun. We got a softball team and a football team together and challanged other troops. We went swimming down at the ocean beach. The Regimental doctor encouraged us to swim in the ocean. He said the salt water was good for our "heat rash". One day, when we went swimming down at the beach, we observed an unusual happening. A young, well developed native girl was taking a swim. All of us watched with wide open eyes. No one seemed to approach her. I could see why. Her dad was sitting under a coconut tree. He had a big grin on his face. He also had a rusty shotgun aross his lap. Good entertainment was just not available.

It was not all play, classes, and details in New Guinea. We were sent out on a three day bivouac in the jungle. We hiked, carrying the machine gun. We ate K-rations and drank stream water. Our squad dug fox holes each night. On the second night of this three night bivouac, I was charged by a wild boar. It happened just before dark. I had just gotten into my hammock to sit down and rest a few minutes before I climbed into my fox hole for the night. I looked up and saw some movement in the brush. Before I could make a move, this wild boar came running toward me. He was moving. I was paralized with fear. I laid there and stretched out on the hammock. Thank God..... the boars legs were not longer. The hammock was strung out just high enough off the ground so that the boar ran under me. If that boar could have reached me, with that horn or sharp teeth, I would have been minus one fat rear end. One of the guys in the squad fired at the boar and it ran off into the jungle. Talk about Panic! I did observe two things on this bivouac that I wish I had not found out about. One, I learned how difficult jungle is to dig into, to make a fox hole. I thought it would be just the opposite. Either there is water six inches down, which means you sleep in a puddle of water all night, or the ground is so difficult to dig in to you need a 100 pound jack hammer to evedent it. The second thing I wish I had not found out about

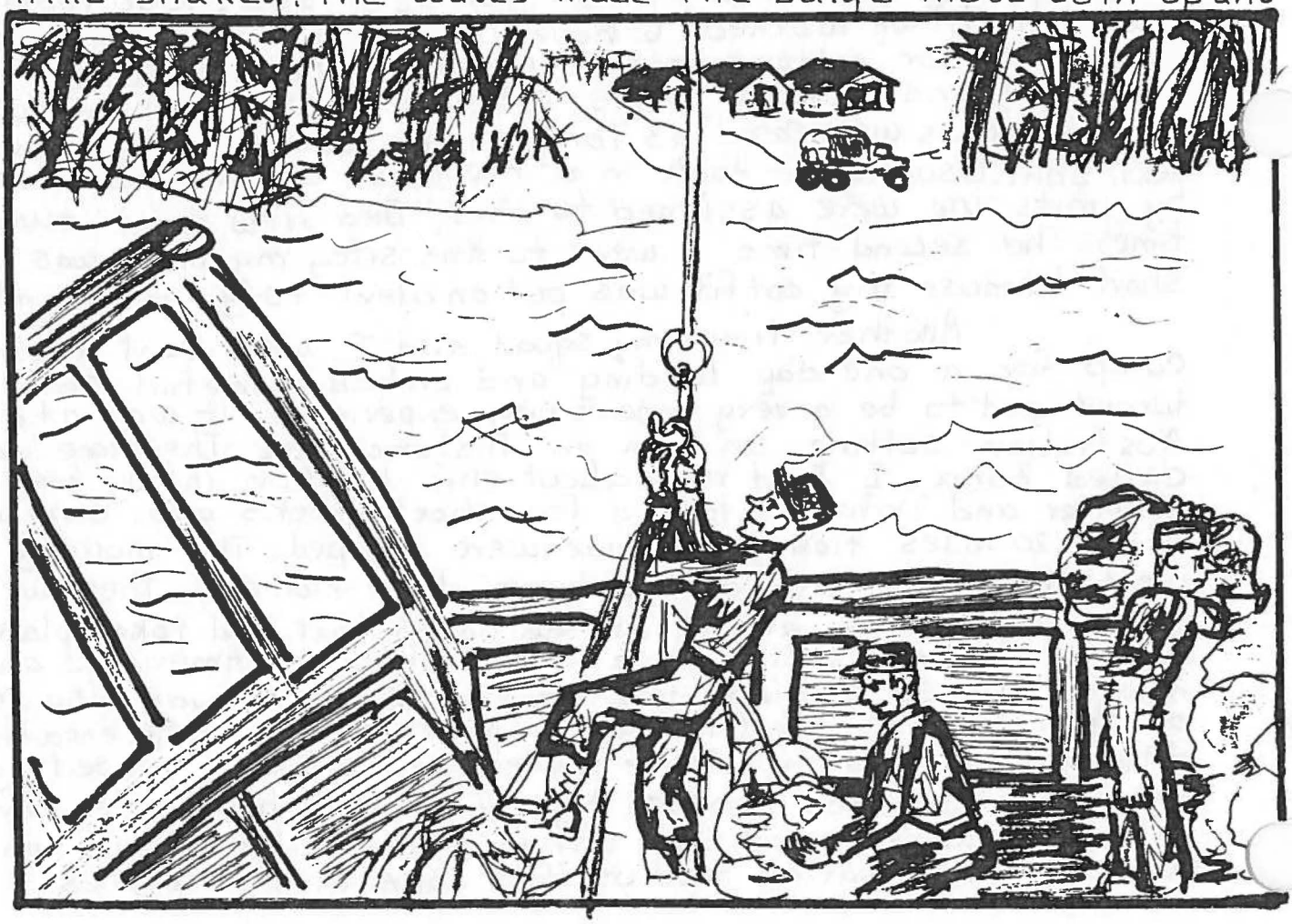
was how bad river and stream water taste with purification tablets in it. It is almost like taking a swallow of iodine each drink you take. I could have gone my entire life without discovering either one of these facts.

After the three day bivouac ended, we again spent a good deal of time loading and unloading supplies and equipment from ships in the bay. Two times we spent 10 days loading and unloading at a supply depot in New Guinea. A supply depot is a place where supplies and equipment that are loaded or unloaded from incoming ships are supplies and equipment used by any and all units in the surrounding area. The goods unloaded are taken to a "Community" depot. All units with in the area provide men to help load and unload at the depot. The usual stay at this site was 10 days. It was a camp right next to the beach. It was called the SEA VIEW HOTEL. Above the entrance into the camp was a large sign with the painting of a very sexy looking girl and printed below, it said, "1000 rooms and 1 bath." We worked 6 hours each day. We did not hold any classes or attend lectures. We just spent 6 hours unloading and loading ships. After we worked our 6 hours, we could do as we pleased as long as we were back for our next shift. Usually we took in a movie at one of the close by units. We were assigned to this "Sea View Hotel" two times. The second time I went to this site, my visit was cut short because my outfit was put on alert to go into combat.

Another time, my squad and I were sent from camp for a one day loading and unloading detail. This turned out to be a very interesting experience. It was at an Australian setting and in an historic area. The place was called Buna. I had read about this location in my home town Register and Tribune just a few short weeks ago. Buna was about 30 miles from where we were camped. The morning we went there we arrived by truck about 9:00 A.M. There were still many signs around of the battle that had taken place a short time earlier. It was a battle that the Americans and Aussies shared against the Imperial Marines. It was also one of the bloodist battles fought of the early battle encounters in the South west Pacific. There were many craters caused by artillery and bombs dropped by planes from both sides. Parts of Jap equipment was still sitting around. The Aussies who were camped near by told us that some of the supplies

and equipment left by the enemy was booby-trapped. The Jap and Allied air forces had a big battle above Buna. A short distance in-land was an American cemetery. Many American Cavalry men were buried there. They were not men of the First Cavalry, however. There were restricted areas and Aussie guards around to prevent souvenir hunters.

When we approched the area with our detail of men, our truck was stopped. Our sergeant showed a guard our pass and he let us through. Our job was to unload mail from a ship anchored out a couple miles from shore into a barge. After we filled the barge with sacks of mail, we brought the barge full of mail to shore and loaded the mail into waiting trucks. We got into the barge and took off for the ship. When we arrived at the ship, anchored in the bay, a crew member tied us by a rope to the ship. We started unloading the mail. The ship dropped a hugh net that held many bags of mail into the barge. We unloaded and stacked the mail on the barge. Two miles from shore in a barge can get a little shakey. The waves made the barge move both up and



down and side to side. Some times the barge went both directions at the same time. Most of us got upset stomachs during the time we were loading the barge. I got a little woozy. It was kind of nice to get a full barge of mail so we could go back and get our feet on dry land again. We did load three full barges of mail for the waiting trucks. It was hard work. The one consolation was that it was mail that we were working with and, not weapons or ammunition. Mail brings happiness to soldiers, I know. At noon we took a break and ate our K-rations. We took off our cloths and swam in the ocean for a short time after lunch. Just before we returned to our detail, we noticed an Aussie Infantry outfit boarding an Australian transport ship at the dock. We got to talk to a few of them while they were waiting to board their ship. One of them told us they were heading for the island of New Britain. We did not get to talk long. They seemed to be in a hurry. Each Aussie soldier was carrying a combat pack, personal weapon and rations We all wished them good luck and returned to our detail. We worked all day up until 6:00 P.M. The truck that delivered us was to pick us up at that time. At 7:00 P.M our sergeant had the Aussie guard send a call to our camp. The Aussie told us it would be 9:00 P.M. before the truck would arrive. We told the Aussie we were hungry The Aussie guard took us over to his mess hall and we ate bread, fish, and some hash. We drank some of their awful coffee. The meal was better than nothing.... but not much better.

After we ate, we all went back to the dock and talked to the Aussie gate guard. We asked him everything we could so we could hear him talk. It was 9:00 P.M. and still no truck. We went swimming in the dark for about one half an hour and sat around some more. At 10:00 PM, a canvas covered army truck arrived. Just as we got loaded into the truck, it started to rain. They told me it was a muddy, bumpy, and very dark, 30 mile ride back to camp. I really did not know.... I fell asleep. I was pooped. We got back to our camp about 11:30. We were given some <u>good</u> American coffee and cookies and we all hit the sack. We all had the next day off. After this detail, we only pulled guard in our own area. We attended classes, and played a little softball and foot ball. We did, however, keep an eye on the "GUINEA GOLD." The 'Guinea Gold' was the island newspaper. It was published by amateur, G. I. newspaper enthusiast. If one copy came out each week it was rare. The printers of this paper kept track of any and all servicemen news on the island. The 'Guinea

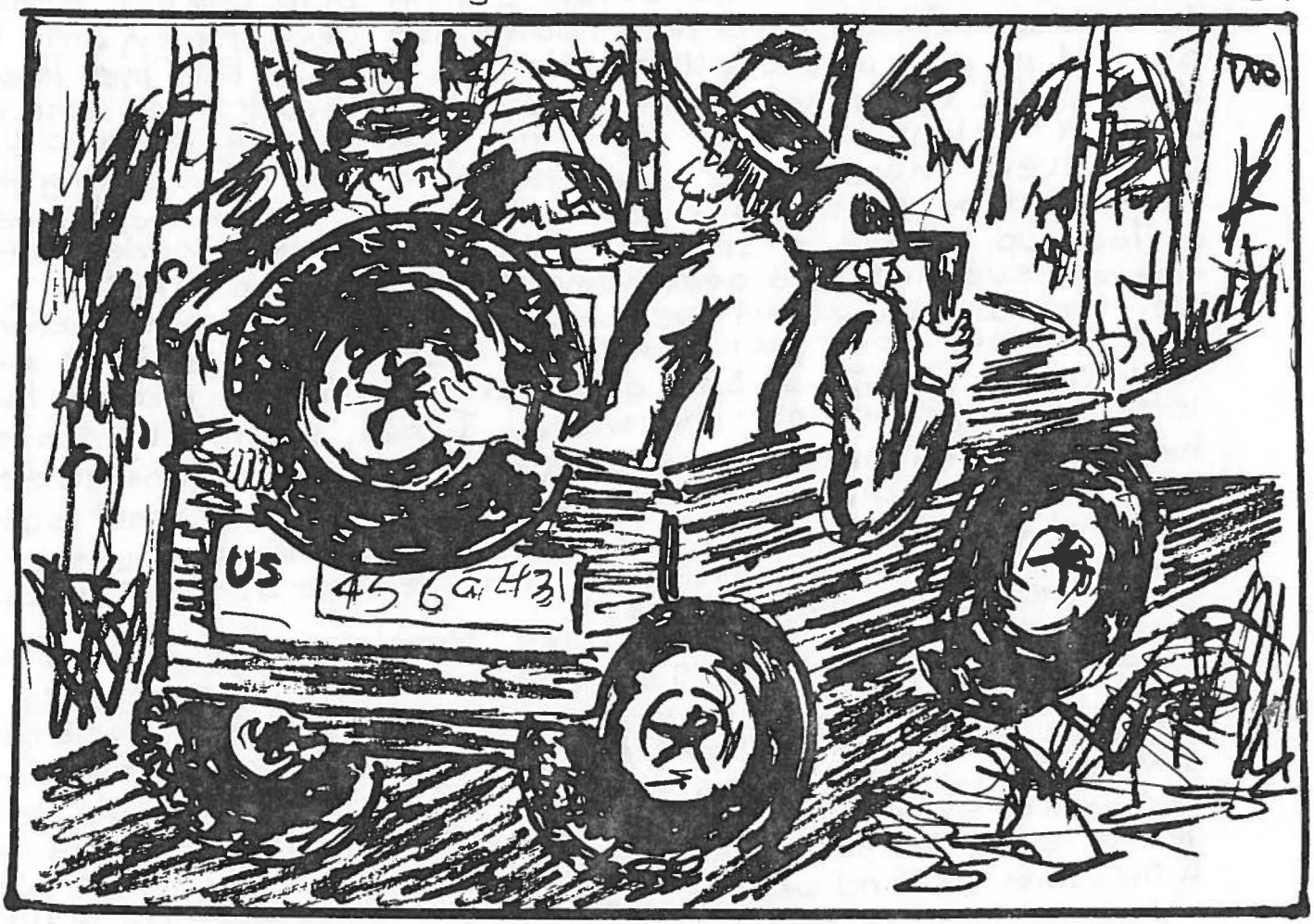
Gold news head lines said the 5th Cavalry was going to make a beach head on a small island just north of us. This was suppose to be a rumor.

The rumor was not a rumor at all. It turned out to be the real thing. The 5th Cavalry did make a landing. The 5th Cavalry was our sister Regiment. This means that if they get in any trouble the 7th Cavalry must be the first to give them aid. The island that the 5th Cavalry invaded was called the Admiralty Islands. The 'Guinea Gold' newspaper said that we should not be concerned because it was a low key invasion. The scouting reports said the 5th met very little resistance. The article continued by saying the 5th Cavalry took an air strip and they were dug in some 200 yards in-land. We learned shortly after we had read this article that the article was wrong. The scouting report miscalculated the number of Jap troops on the island. By the second night the 5th Cavalry had been pushed back to the beach. We all had a feeling we would be along side our 'sister regiment' buddies soon.

That night on the day we heard the news we got a jeep from the Captain and went to see the fights at Oral Bay. It was a special night for all of us in the squad. My first gunner, Ed Freeman, was going to box. There were a number of good matches that night. Early in the evening a few guest celebrities were introduced. One of them, in full combat uniform, was actor JOHN WAYNE. John Wayne originally came from Iowa. The other celebrity introduced was Paulette Goddard. My eyes almost popped out when they both stepped to the middle of the boxing ring. Paulette was a a beautiful gal. The best match of the night ended in the first round. A marine was hit so hard while fighting a First Cavalry Soldier that both of his feet left the floor of the ring at the same time. He fell over the ropes on to the ground outside of the ring. Smelling Salts did not

bring him to his senses for a good 15 minutes. The fights were held up awhile because of rain. We never got to see my buddy, Ed Freeman, fight because an announcement came over the speaker ordering <u>all</u> Cavalry men to report back to their quarters at once! There was a few seconds of silence before all hell broke out. We knew this was it. We were heading for combat. Every Cavalryman at the fights jumped up almost at the same time. All of the men ran for the jeeps and trucks they arrived in. The boxing matches were over. Men from other units at the fights, were shouting at us and wishing us luck. Many of them yelled things like "Save a few Japs for me".

This was a memorable night, to say the least. The driver of our jeep was really fired up. The road was a little slick after the rain and it was pitch dark. The way he drove had me a little afraid that I might get killed before I had a chance to see combat. All the way back to camp I had mixed feelings about going into combat. I was excited. I was afraid. Would I lose my nerve? What is it like to kill someone?



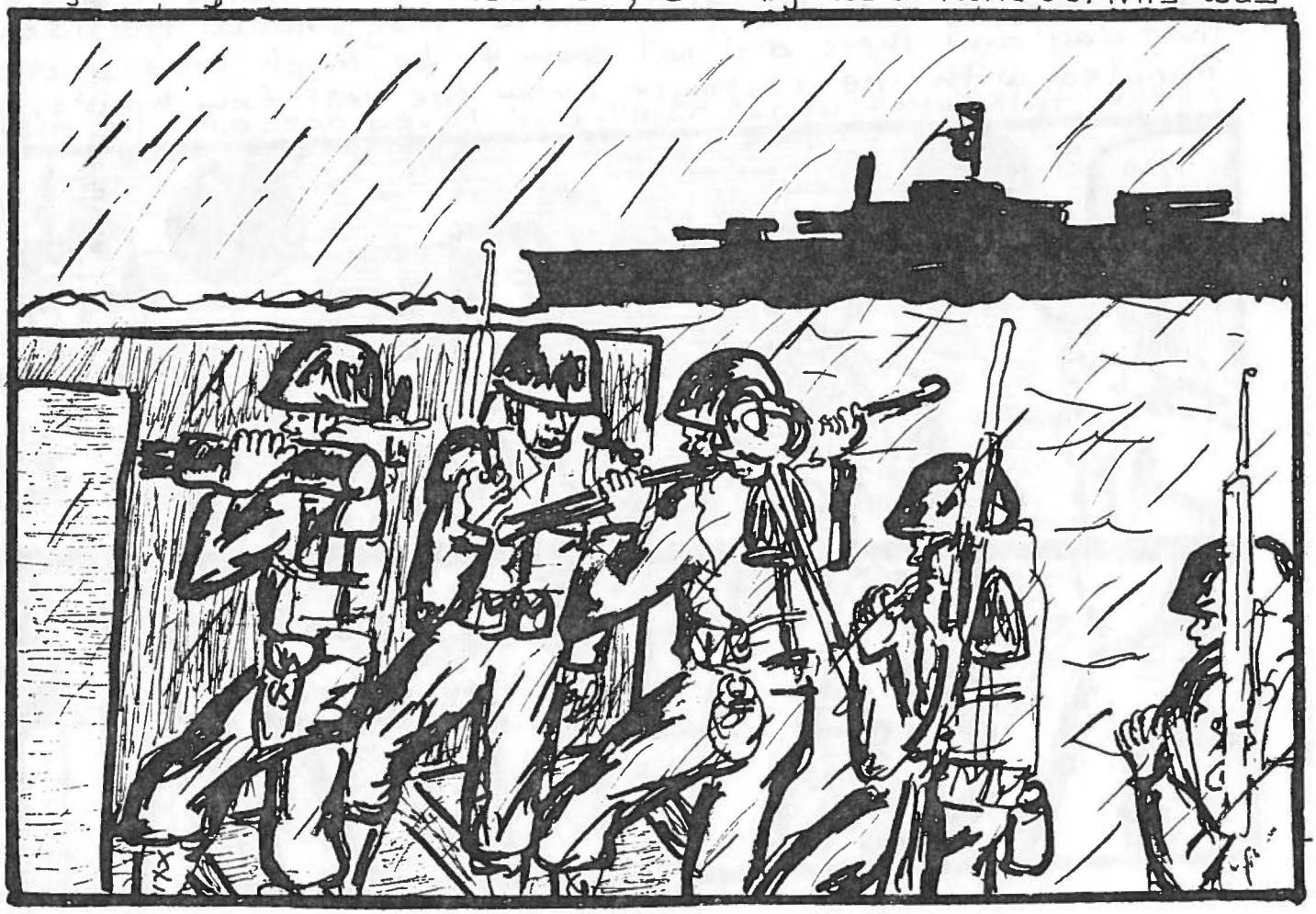
What is the feeling to be shot at or to get shelled? Actually I found myself feeling proud that I made it this far and I was now going to fight for the country I loved and for reasons I believed in. The last thing I thought about before we reached camp was— I wanted to do what I trained to do the very best that it could be done. If I do goof-up, I would want no American to die because of what I did. My whole life seemed to pass before my eyes on that ride back from Oral Bay to camp.

Back at camp, everyone seemed excited and nervous. Questions were being asked about the place we were heading. Everyone wanted to know how the 5th Cavalry was doing. No one had any answers. The first thing we did when we got back to camp was pack our barracks bags and stack them in a large pile. When you go into combat, your barracks bag stays behind. After you take an island you are invading and it is secured your bag will catch up with you. This is why I was able to write this diary. I put the diary in my barracks bag each time before I went into combat. After the invasion ended and the island had been taken, my bag arrived and I wrote all happenings that I had lived through during the campaign. Some times the barracks bag and all of your belongings get lost. My barracks bag showed up after every invasion. We were told the first time during the night to be packed and ready to march down to the beach to load up aboard a ship at 2:30 A.M. Trucks loaded with combat supplies and gear came into the troop streets. We took what we felt we needed. While we were packing and tearing down our camp the cooks made cookies and had coffee for us. I sat down and wrote my mom a long letter. I sent her all the money I had. I probably scared her by telling her it was possible that we may never see each other again. (The censors probably cut that part out.) I thanked her for being my mom. I told her she was my very, very favorite girl friend. I sent her one of my super, great big, mom loving hugs.

I tried to get some sleep, cause I knew I would need it later, but it was impossible. Every two minutes someone wanted something or wanted me to do something. First, it was loading some additional machine gun belts with ammunition. Next, I was told to get up to the supply tent and get a shovel for my pack. The last time I tried to get to sleep someone just woke me up to talk. When 2:30 A.M. came around we were suppose to leave. We did not leave.

The officers changed their minds. The new time set was going to be 4:30 A.M. We did pick up our packs and gear and head for the beach at this time. On the way to the beach, we stopped at another troop's mess hall and had a coffee break. I sat down and fell asleep for a few minutes. We got to the beach about day break. The date was March 3rd, 1944. I think it was a Thursday. As we reached the beach a light rain began to fall. There was a band on the beach playing marches, believe it or not. Here we are on a beach in New Guinea, getting ready to catch a ship to take us into combat and a band is playing. To top it all off, it is only about 6:00 A.M. This outfit is nuts! There were two division generals standing in front of the band. There were many, many lower ranked officers standing near the two generals. They all appeared excited as they talked to one another.

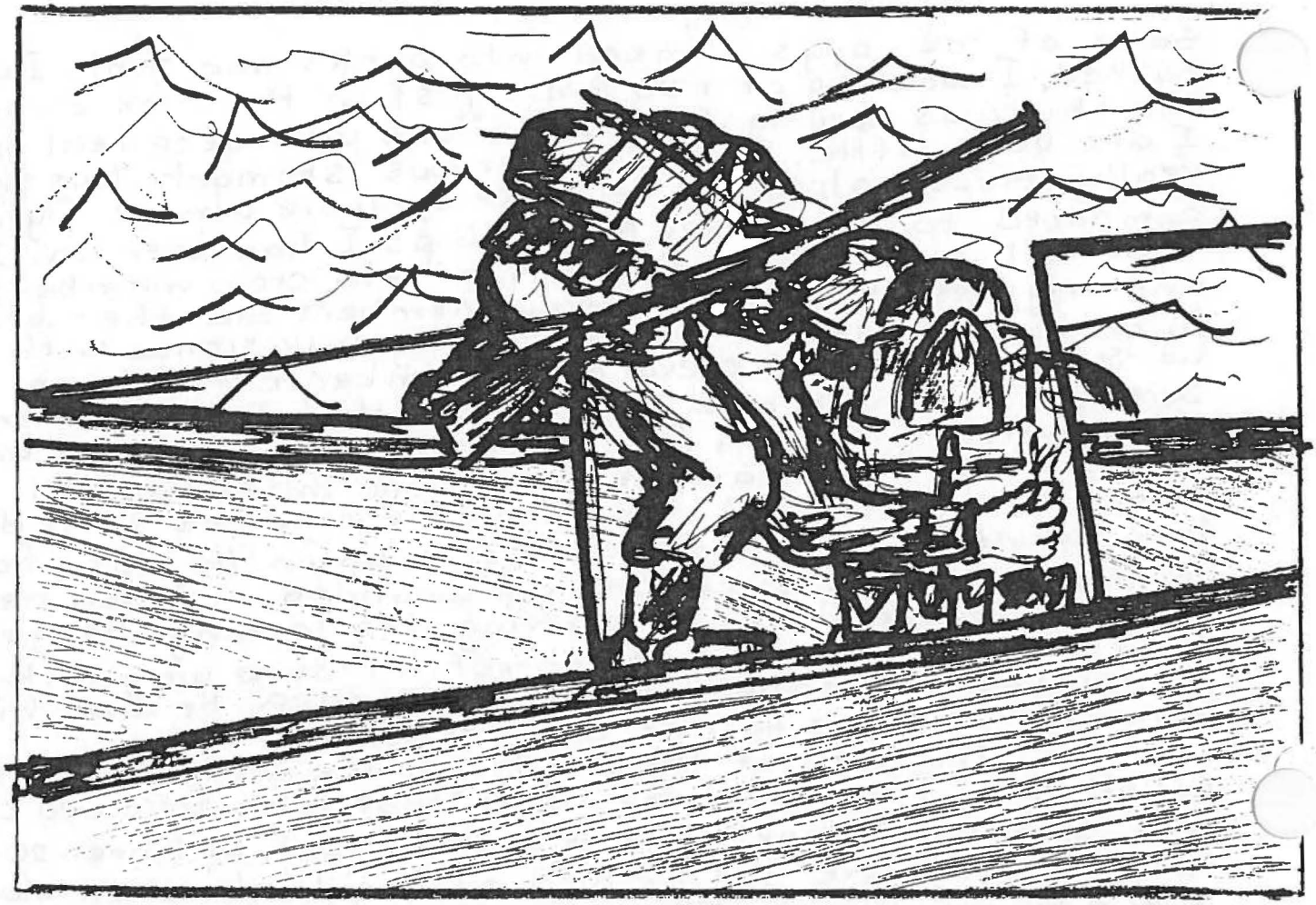
We knew that we were going to the Admiralty Islands. What we did not know is how we were going to get there. Out in the bay were a few navy destroyers. We thought they were there to escort us. Wrong — they were there getting ready for us to load on, so they could take us. This was



going to be a real experience — riding on a destroyer we sat on the beach. in the rain waiting our turn to load into a barge and move out to the destroyer. Just before our turn came to load on the barge, our squad was ordered to haul some rations and ammunition to another barge. All this time we are waiting the rain is coming down harder and harder. As we loaded into the barge it really poured. The pouring rain and winds made the ocean waters get rough. As the barge moved away from the beach, the waves grew stronger. Every time the barge dipped down a wave came up over the barge. By the time we got to the ship we were sopped. Loading onto the destroyer from the barge, in this heavy down pour, with the barge and destroyer both moving up and down and back and forth, turned out to be a tricky chore. We did get on to the destroyer without mishap, however. The crew showed us to our sleeping quarters. They gave up their bunks for us. This same destroyer had taken a load of the 5th Cavalry troops to the Admiralties earlier. They told us they shelled the island that day and there did not seem to be much resistance. We mingled with the destroyer crew the first few hours. Most of the talk was about home, our loved ones and the missio

Some of the guys climbed into bunks and slept. I was bushed, I woke up at 1:00 P.M., just in the nick of time. The ship was serving lunch. The food was excellent but I ate very little. I had a nervous stomach. This ship really moved along. It felt like we were almost flying compared to the earlier A.P.A. ships I had been on. I went out on deck with some of the crew members and my best buddy. The crew members did their best to get our minds off of the coming invasion — with no success. Almost every crew member offered me some ice cream. Would you believe that I turned them all down. My buddy, Earl Nolte, and I sat alone and talked about home awhile. He told me that when he fell asleep earlier on his navy bunk, he dreamed I had been wounded while making this invasion. He was afraid for me. As it turned out, he got wounded instead. He was not wounded while making the landing. He got shot on the second morning. He got hit some way with an automatic weapon in the groin area. He was hit a number of times. He lost one testical.

The name of the destroyer we were on was called the "Stevenson". The route that was followed by this ship was short and direct. It took between 20-22 hours to get there. We arrived at our destination about 8:30 A.M. on March 4th. We were eating breakfast in their mess hall when we heard this loud thundering blast. Our destroyer was shelling the island with its three inch guns. After the destroyer bombed and shelled for some one and a half hours, we got our gear together and prepared to board a barge that was to came from the beach to get us. It was raining hard again when the barge arrived. We learned this was the rainy season in these islands. The rain and winds again caused the waves to bounce and turn, both the barge and the destroyer. The very same problem came up unloading from the ship to the barge that occured in New Guinea, loading from the barge to the ship, only worse. As we were waiting our turn to load the machine gun and gear on to the barge, I was watching the beach. There were many barges heading for the beach from other destroyers. Three barges got about half way to the beach from where They had loaded. Many yards, off in the distance on a hill, I watched as a Jap machine gun fired. They opened



up on the second barge. Our destroyer fired three rounds at the spot the Jap machine gun fire was coming from. The machine gun fire stopped.

The instant it came my turn to step from the destroyer to the barge, the destroyer again fired a volley of shots. This caused the ship to recoil away from the barge. The barge was bouncing one way. The destroyer was bouncing another way. The recoil and sharp move of the destroyer cause by the shells being discharged, was a contributing factor in making me miss my step. I stepped for the edge of the barge and I missed it. I caught myself by my elbows. Here I was loaded down with the weigh of my full field pack, steel helmet, forty pounds of machine gun ammunition, a full steel container of water and my personal weapon hanging between a bouncing barge and a destroyer in choppy waters. I was frantically trying to raise my self over the edge of the barge before those two large masses of steel smashed together with my body between them. Just before I felt my heart stop,

this great big arm reached under my shoulder and lifted me over the edge and gently dumped me into the barge. With all the weight hanging on my body, the arm that was strong enough to do this could only belong to one body in our whole outfit. It had to be White Bear. It was White Bear. This man is full-blooded American Indian. He weighed 260 pounds and was as strong as a bull. Thank god for White Bear. When I looked up at him to thank him, he looked back at me with cold eyes as if to say, "you dumb ass, Foss". They don't call me "graceful" for nothing.

When we got into the barge, we were packed like sardines. It felt like hours before we hit the beach. About 100 yards from the beach I peeked. The trees were shattered. There were shell holes every where. When the barge got to the beach, the driver let the ramp down. We came charging out ready to blast away. There was one American soldier standing there. He held up one hand and motioned for us to hold our fire. When we got up to him he seemed very cool as he said "There is nothing to worry about.... the Japs are over 200 yards away. The island is called Manus Island. Manus was just one of many in the Admiralty group. We are now in combat.

CHAPTER VI
ADMIRALTY ISLANDS

It seemed the main object of the 5th Cavalry invasion was to take Manus Island and secure the air strip. Air strips were badly needed at this time in the war to provide air support for invasions made by American troops fighting on islands further north. The air strip I speak of is the one standing about 100 yards in front of where I now stood The officer we met, as we came charging off the barge, told us the air strip here at Manus was lost last night but had been re-taken earlier this morning. This officer of the 5th Cavalry, pointed the direction of the front lines and told us how to find the machine gun squad we were assigned to replace. It was raining hard as we moved toward our destination. It started and stopped raining at least five times before noon.

As our squad approached the air strip, heading for the front lines, we were surprised to see men driving bull dozers and heavy tractors. They were working to smooth out the run-way so that they could set down Steel mesh forms for the air strip foundation. The initial invasion left large craters in the run-way. Many of these men were driving their vehicle with one hand while holding a rifle in the other. Occasionally, you would see one of these drivers stop, take aim with their weapon and fire at a Jap sniper in a near by tree. It took a lot of guts for these men to do what they were doing. I learned later these men were excellent engineers. Most of them had to volunteer for this duty because they were <u>over</u> draft age. It was really something to watch these brave men operate. As we moved on we watched short range American bombers and some Navy fighter planes bomb Japs about a half mile away. The vibration caused by the bombs from these planes was very, very noticeable to us. It must have been a night mare to the Jap soldiers being bombed. We were held up for a-while. We all took cover while the officers were making a

decision of some kind. We ate our first meal in combat.

We did not arrive at the fox hole we were heading for till 2:30 P.M. When we did find the squad we were to replace and they realized who we were and what we were doing there, their faces lit up. They all seemed to want to talk to us at once. One soldier had but one round of ammunition left in the chamber of his personal weapon. He had no other ammunition for his weapon, on him. We talked for a few minutes before they headed back toward the beach for a night of rest. We asked them what kind of things we could expect during the night. I asked where most of the Japs seemed to be concentrated. One of the men in their squad, a big kid from New York, told us, "You have little to worry about during the day time — but — keep your eyes and ears wide open from dark till day light". Their first gunner told us, "they will infiltrate past your hole and try to pick you off at day light from the rear." Another of their squad men added, "Be sure you look in the trees behind you before you get out

of your hole in the morning. Another bit of advice was "you can not see them till they are right upon you — so — if you see something move, in the night, — fire." One of them warned us twice not to raise our head out of the fox hole any time during the night.... if you did... you could get shot by your own men. Almost all the men in this machine gun squad we were about to replace, pointed in the same direction about the same place, to indicate where most of the Japs seemed to be concentrated. As they packed up and as they were leaving, they each wished us good luck. What they had told us really opened our eyes.

The front lines in a combat zone, I imagined, would be more like what I had seen in movies about the war. There, it showed big shell holes with artillery shells going over your head while officers were shouting orders. Also, in the movies, you would see medics carrying soldiers on stretchers and explosions everywhere. It was not like that — not just yet, — That would come later. If mud had any thing to do with making combat appear real — this was really combat. In some places, you sank in up to your knees. Directly in front of our fox hole was a road. It looked kinda like a road, anyway. Across the road from us was thick jungle. Most of the trees and brush from our line of fox holes to the jungle, had been shattered and ripped from the ground by the shells fired from American ships in the bay. When the Navy fires shells and rockets they don't mess around. Many, many dead Japs were visable across the road at the edge of the jungle. About 50 feet to the right of our fox hole was a 10 foot high revetment. At the base of this small hill was hundreds and hundreds of dead Japs. They were piled six high in many places. Most of these Japs were killed by a light machine gun squad and one B.A.R. man. The B.A.R. man and light machine gun squad were dug in on top of the revetment. Riflemen along the perimeter kept crawling out to feed ammunition to the men behind the light machine gun and the B.A.R. The reason the Japs were piled six high, I understand, was because of their fighting tradition. I was told by officers, who questioned American-Japanese, it was honorable to die as they did. A 5th Cavalry officer told us next morning, after this attack,

he had heard the Japs shouting during the attack. They yelled "BANZI". We had been told in basic training that this ment — 'die for the emporer'. The officer who explained all of this to us, said, "as soon as one line of Jap soldiers lined up, charged, and were shot down, another charged our troops. In some places this happened six times." I really did not understand what a "Banzi" attack was all about till I got into the next campaign. As I walked over to see the results of the 5th Cavalry battle, it was plain to see they had a busy night. I quit counting when I reached 3,600 dead Japs.

The scouting report, on the number of Japs on this island said there was just a hand ful. This report was far from being correct. About an hour before dark, two of us were sent back to the air strip to get some additional ammunition that our squad sergeant felt we would need for the machine gun during the night. After I returned, I spent the remainder of the day light hours sitting in

light rain, trying to study and picture objects out in front of the fox hole that might cause me concern during the night. We ate our supper ration and as I got into my fox hole I took one more last good look around. As luck would have it, it started to rain harder. Every thing looked mucky, foggy and very depressing. I had a sinking empty feeling in the pit of my stomach. If any one would have creeped up behind me and said "boo", I think I would have jumped out of my skin. I was really scared. I tried to recall all of the advice given to me earlier by the 5th Cavalry machine gun squad members. The one suggestion that stuck in my mind was, — Keep your head down once you climb into your fox hole. In the fox hole to my right was "Steve", my squad sergeant. With him was the first and second gunner and the machine gun. I did my third gunner chore earlier. I connected the hose and placed the full water can next to the machine gun's trail leg. I also left the canvas bag filled with tools and the extra barrel in their fox hole. The gun was ready. The guys in the hole to my left were riflemen from another troop. I did not know them. I shared the fox hole I was in with a guy from New York. His name was, Joe Piscatello. Joe was nicknamed, of all things, "Pissy".

Our fox hole was big enough to sit up in. The top was covered with logs. We could see in front of us very well. It was difficult to see behind us. The floor of our fox hole was covered with a red parachute that had been picked up and placed there by the men of the squad we replaced. Joe, my fox hole buddy, told me he was very frightened. We promised one another we would try not to fall asleep during the night. We were reminded about 10 times, not to fire at any thing unless we were sure something was out there. It stopped raining about an hour after dark, thank God. Soon the moon appeared from behind some clouds — — that is when the firing by our men began.

Joe fired 90 rounds from his personal weapon during the night. I fired 30 rounds. Most of the rounds that I fired was at a stump of a coconut tree about 40 yards in front of me I swore there was something moving behind that stump. About 12:00 A.M, I heard the pop of a hand gernade from the fox hole to my right. I saw a big explosion go off directly behind the coconut stump I was worried about. Some one else was as concerned about something moving be-

hind that stump as I was. After that gernade explosion to place, I did not fire my personal weapon much more that night. Some time during the night there was a very, very loud explosion right behind my fox hole. I imagine it was a Jap mortar aiming at the machine gun. This mortar shell hit close because it threw dirt and shrapnel on top of our hole and it shattered some of the logs covering us. The men in the fox hole to our left set up a hand gernade booby-trap before they got into their fox hole for the night. What they did was string out a piece of cord across the front of their fox hole and connect it from a stick to the pin of a hand gernade. If the cord was touched, in any way, the gernade would explode. The gernade did go off during the night. There must have been Japs crawling close by. Day light did finally, finally arrive. Boy, was I glad. It was hard to keep awake even under these conditions. Joe did not keep his promise about staying awake. He fell a sleep twice. I once had to jolt him awake when he snored. Shortly before we got out of our fox hole we dug a little place under our roof in the back of our covered fox hole, to check the trees carefully. We saw no movement. However, down the perimeter line one G.I. did get shot in the back of the head by a sniper. No one within three fox holes on either side of me, got wounded or killed. I will never forget the first night of combat as long as I live. I learned a lot of things that night that stuck with me throughout the rest of my combat days

In the morning you would have thought that the mud road in front of the perimeter was main street. There were G.I.s walking all over. They were yelling back and forth like there was no war going on at all. There was even one jeep that came down the road carrying artillery ammunition. That second morning, while the rest of our men ate their K-ration break fast, I surveyed the damage that was done around me during the night. About the only big thing was the big hole left by a mortar shell, behind the fox hole I was in. There were a few dead Japs out in front of the perimeter but not a lot. I walked over to look one more time at the large number of enemy killed the night before last. I was overcome with the foul smell. I was taken by the many, many maggots crawling over the dead bodies. Some dead Japs looked like dummies you would see in a museum. on

you see this sight you never forget it.

Many of the things I had been taught about combat in basic did prove true, we were told it was easy to give away your position if you over fired the machine gun. We over fired and received a few more mortar shells than necessary. They explained in basic that you would imagine all kinds of movement out in front of your fox hole. That proved to be true. You could use up your personal ammunition shooting at imaginary targets and not have ammunition when the real thing happens. We were told they might try to infiltrate pass you and shoot you at down from behind. One guy did get killed this way. We were told about the 'Banzi' attacks. We were not attacked but the 5th Cavalry was by one Banzi charge, the night before we arrived. I remember being told in basic that if you wanted to get any rest at all during the night while in combat you must make arrangements with your fox hole buddy or buddies whatever the case may be, to share guard duty. At least you could sleep two out of every four hours during the time that nothing important is happening. Piscatello and I both tried to stay awake all night instead of counting on each other. The basic training experience did not teach me how awful the sights and smells of war can be I also did not learn the heart break of quickly losing close buddies. You had to live with it and not let it break you completely down. This was the most difficult lesson I had to learn. The advice we got from the men we replaced, about keeping your head down after dark the suggestion to look behind you in the morning before you get out of your hole was good. This was one time in my life that listening and observing paid off.

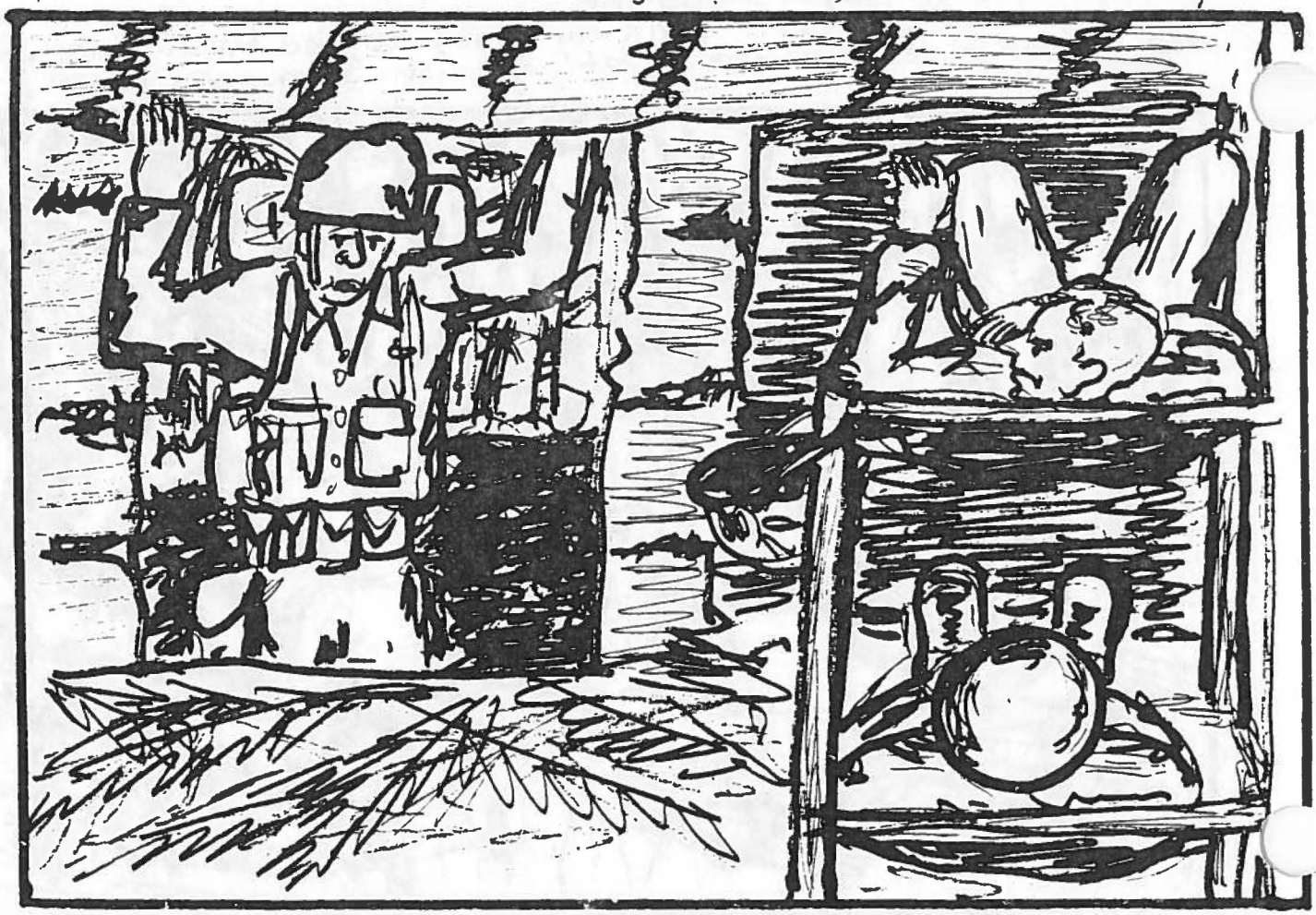
My close buddy, Earl Nolte, came up from his mortar position to the front lines to see me on the Second morning. He wanted to know how I made out during the first night. After he had that dream while on board the destroyer that I was going to get hurt. I pointed out the pile of dead Japs who pulled the "banzi" attack. We talked awhile. After he left, our squad sergeant told us to pack up the gun, we would be leaving soon. We did as he told us to do. No sooner had we picked up our gear and all parts of the gun, when all hell broke loose. Over by the revetment, where all of the action had taken place the first night of the invasion, the Japs started another attack. We all stopped what we were doing and watched. Our squad sergeant looked over at the first gunner and told him to set up the gun again. It was broad day light. We could see they were attacking.

I really did not understand why everyone just stood and watched. My Platoon Sergeant and our Tech Sergeant were standing to the right of my fox hole pointing and talking. They both stood in the open — no attempt to move for Cover. I Kneeled down in my hole to get my poncho out of my pack. It started to rain harder. Just as I got down to the lowest point in the fox hole, a great big explosion went off right next to my hole. It was close. It almost buried me in mud, dirt and loose sharpnel. I was not touched but Tech Sergeant Claussen got hit in two places. He seemed to be bleeding badly. Platoon Sergeant Rowe, standing one foot away from Claussen did not get a scratch. Rowe turned a light pale color. He became very, very tense. A corporal rifleman in the open fox hole to my left, got wounded by small pieces of mortar shrapnel. Both men were rushed back to an aid station. Sergeant Rowe told me to take Sergeant Claussen's field pack to him. I looked all over for the aid Station. I finally found a large shell hole that was covered with coconut logs. This served as a temporary hospital. The

Sergeant was not hurt too badly. He told me to tell Sergeant Rowe that he was now in charge. Just before I started back to the front lines, I met a war correspondent who had an interesting story to tell. It seems one of the 5th Cavalry officers pulled a stupid stunt, the first night of the invasion. He got himself killed. This officer thought there really were no Japs on the island. Some of his men said he was trying to convince them or maybe himself there was no point in being so nervous and jumpy. To prove his point, he told them he was going to set up his hammock between two trees and sleep in it rather than dig a fox hole. His men warned him not to do this crazy thing. He did it anyway. During the night his men hear him from their fox holes cry out, "No... No... Boys.... it's Major...." They heard a scream. The next thing was dead silence. In the morning he was in his hammock stabbed to death. Forty years later I read this same story in an article from our local library. It was from a collection of "Yank" magazine re-prints. I often wondered if the correspondent who told that story first hand was the same man who wrote the article in Yank Magazine

As I was walking back to the front lines, for the second time after the meeting with Sergeant Claussen, I was

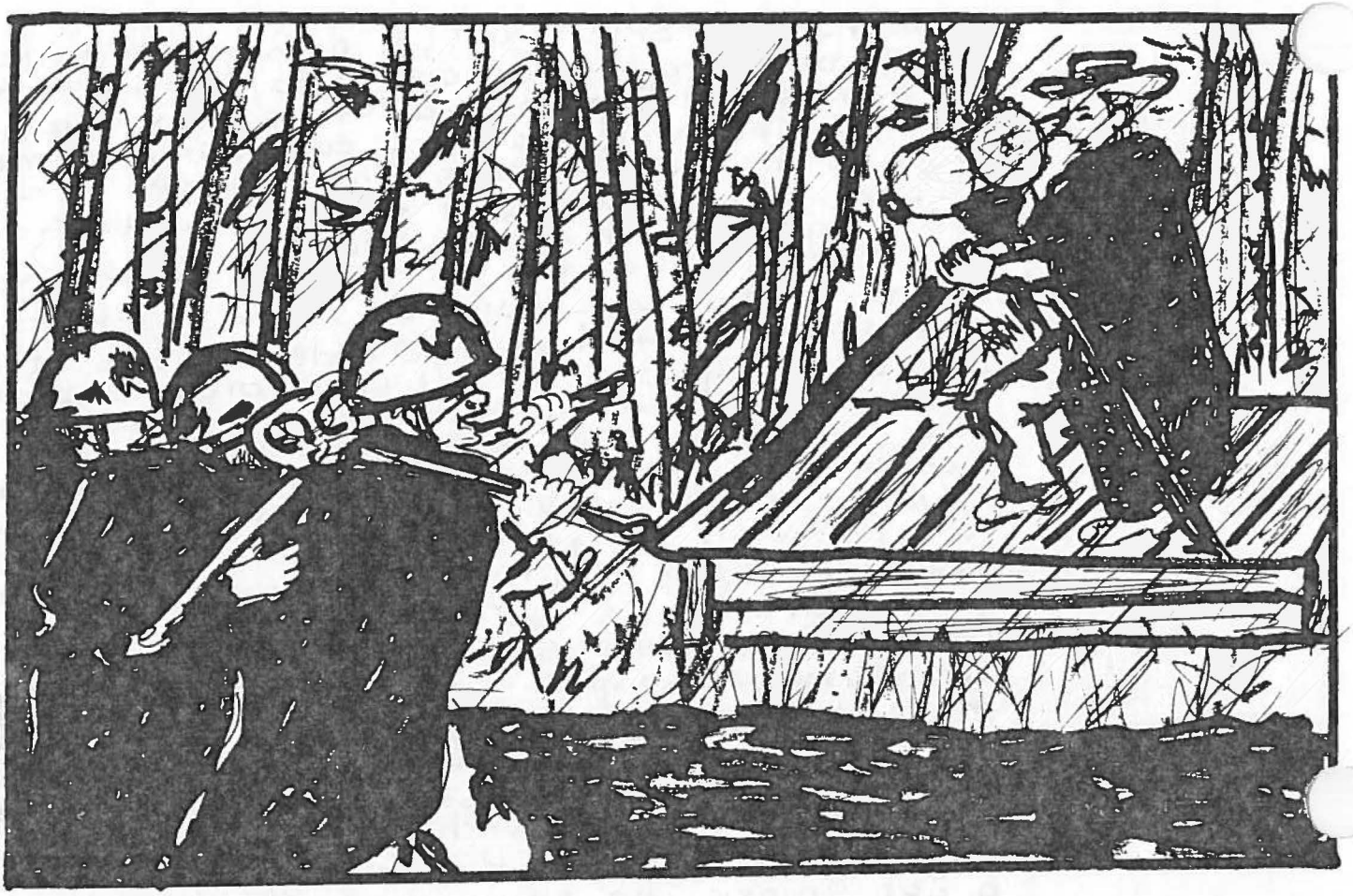
stopped again by a friend who told me that, Earl Nolte, r best friend had been shot. I had just talked to Earl less then an hour ago. I hurried back to the temporary hospital area. I found him but he was in such pain he could not talk. A medic told me that Earl had been hit in the groin and upper legs area by some kind of automatic weapon. I looked into the hole where he was laying and waved at him. He managed a weak wave back to me. I was really down in the dumps for awhile after this happened. Earl was a special friend. I felt sure he would be well taken care of. Our hospital system was the best. This temporary first aid station was just the beginning of a recovery. If a soldier is hit real seriously they tie him in a stretcher that is attached to the side of a piper cub plane and fly him to a more secure hospital on an island we had taken earlier in the war. I imagine the hospital, from this point, would be located some place on the furtherest tip of New Guinea. Those wounded, but not real, real serious were moved by "duck" or by "alligator" to the hospital ship out in the bay. The hospital ship was plainly marked with a huge red cross. It had no weapons



on board. The ship itself, is painted white. Hospita
not to be attacked according to an international
Sometimes the Japanese air-force was known not
that law. The medic, watching over Earl, told me Ear
taken to the hospital ship and returned to a larg
Hospital located in a safe part of New Guinea. I rea
that big dumb Minnesota bum.

When I finally returned to the front l
skirmish that was going on when I left to take
Claussens, pack to him had ended. It was still rain
I was waiting for the "all clear" order and the co
move out, I climbed under my poncho with the r
and oiled it. As we left, I looked up to see the
machine gun squad that we had replaced from
Cavalry returning. We yelled words of encourage
each other as we passed. I thanked them for t
and suggestions they gave us. Our outfit slopped
mud, mud, mud as we headed back toward the
The see-Bees were still at it. A bull dozer ste
in one hand, a weapon in the other. The rain sure
make their job any easier. As we approached the
the rain was coming down so hard you could n
but a short distance away. A few snipers were
pot shots at us. I watched two big American
as they took off in the thick jungle and heavy
a Jap sniper. The sniper looked to be about fou
I heard two shots. I saw the two American Sc
out of the jungle. I assume one of them killed t
sniper. As we stood at the edge of the air str
ponchos, getting soaked, we watched as B-26's
dropped equipment and rations along by the beac
were many colors of parachutes. Each color, I ir
represented some specific type of item. White pa
seemed to drop the food, ammunition and equipment

After what seemed like a long time, we
toward the far end of the air strip. We sloshed a
heavy wet mud. Each step seemed an effort. As w
along in the rain and mud I looked up to see s
that surprised me. There, standing in a heavy ra
a man on a wooden crate. He was looking thro
sights of a news reel camera. He had been tak
picture of my squad as we slopped through the m
did not discover his nationality until I said,
"what in hell are you doing in a place like this".
to me, "What the el you think I'm doing, bloke—



pictures of you bloody yanks" — who else but an Australian. About a month later, I saw this picture that was taken in a "Yank' magazine. I cut the picture out and sent it home. About 5-6 years ago it was thrown away. We finally left the air strip and moved down to a road along the beach. It was now getting late enough in the day to think about digging in for the night.

A short distance up this road, along the beach was a bend. Around the bend, our point scouts sighted a good size number of Japs heading toward us. At this point we stopped and dug in for the night. At the point which we were ordered to dig in were many, many dead Japs. Our troop officers told us this is the exact spot that the 5th Cavalry met the Japs, when the Japs re-took the air strip. It was a bloody battle All the Japs that lay dead around us, had been killed by 5th Cavalry men. Across the road, between the road and the beach was another, large number of dead enemy. Some of them were floating on the beach. These dead Japanese were special troops. Their size and insignas

explained how important they were. They were all six feet tall, or taller. The insigna on the collar said Imperial Marine. These men, who made an unsuccessful attack on the 5th Cavalry, were the "cream of the crop" in Japan. To be an Imperial Marine you must commit your life to your country and your emporer— this means you do not surrender under any conditions, what-so-ever. The Island of Manus in the Admiralty Islands must have been high on Japans priorty list— they sent their very best. The 5th Cavalry was not impressed— the Cavalry killed all of them. When you saw a dead Imperial marine laying next to a regular dead Jap the Imperial Marine looked like a giant.

As we moved in to this area, the smell was almost more than one could stand. Holding your nose did not even help. If the sun comes out tomorrow, for a short time, the odor would really get bad. This spot had to be important to the Japs. They have already lost two battles and now a third large group of them were coming down the road to fight for this air strip. The 5th did their job...

now it is our turn. The Japs heading down the road m
have stopped because nothing happened. We were told to ge
ready for a busy night. Our gun was placed to cross fire
with another gun TO cover the main road. The first and
second gunner found a spot in which to dig the gun. Two member of my
squad and I attempted to dig in. The ground behind, where
the gun was placed, was just to hard. "Steve" told us to roll
some broken coconut logs in front of us and lay down
behind them. It was not the best choice but it was getting
a little dark. We had no other choice. The logs were high
enough to protect us if we stayed down low enough. We
were positioned about 2-3 feet away from two dead Japs
that smelled to high heaven. The three of us, behind the
logs, took turns pulling guard during the night. It was
difficult keeping your head below the level of the logs..
None of us could raise very high off of the ground. It was
uncomfortable we could not sit up. we either stayed on our
back or laid on our stomach.

Just before we got into position behind the logs,
one of the guys I buddied with found a Jap rifle and
some Jap ammunition. Just for fun he started firing the
gun. Our riflemen are very sensitive to the sound of a
Jap rifle. Next thing we knew, he and I were being fired
on by our own men. My friend stopped. This was a very

miserable night. It rained all night. The Japs threw mortars. and artillery with out stopping. We had to lay on top of the ground and both guys I buddied with had to be snorers: I was frozen by morning. I did not think this night was ever going to end either.

One of the real weird stories shared by my buddies happened this second night of combat. Jim Gallagher, one of the men in my squad, found a spot soft enough to dig a good deep fox hole. No one else dug with him so he chose to stay in the hole alone. The hole was big enough for two men. During the night, after his eyes had adjusted to the dark, he watched as a Jap soldier crawled into his hole. The Jap had a bottle in his hand. The Jap made no attempt to shoot or kill Jim. The Jap soldier held out the bottle to Jim. All the time Jim had his 45 automatic aimed at the Japs head. He pulled the trigger. When Gallagher was telling us this story the next morning, he could not stop shaking. I went over to check his story out. Sure enough, there was a bloody mess of a dead Jap soldier. In the fox hole was a part

filled bottle of Saki. Jim had to sit in that fox hole most of the night with a dead Jap. That had to be a horrible experience. Far as I know Jim Gallagher never chose to stay in a foxhole alone again.

In the morning we got a little fire started. We brewed some instant coffee in our filthy canteen cups and gulped it down. It tasted delicious. Our Squad Sergeant told us it would be awhile before we would move out so some of the guys went souvenir hunting. They did not have far to go..... there were dead Japs all over the place. War souvenirs did not appeal to me for some reason. A few of the men returned with interesting items. One of the men in a mortar platoon came back with a rare knife of many uses. Another G.I. brought a leather case that held Japanese rations. I did taste one of their foods. It looked like Carmel corn that had been squashed into a small square. It tasted like a combination of rice and fish.... ICK!. Other than these two mentioned souvenirs, I was not impressed. We heard later in the morning that one of our men in the mortar platoon had been shot during the night. He stuck his head up to stretch. More than half of his head was blown off. The other two guys in the fox hole hole with him, had to stay in that hole all night. They were both helpless to do any thing. This was another lesson to all the rest of us to keep our head down once we climbed into the fox hole for the night.

Just a few minutes before we were ordered to pack up and move out, a jeep pulling a small water trailer appeared from nowhere. I was almost out of water so I was pleased to see this jeep. We filled our canteens, took an extra long drink and filled them again, picked up our gun and equipment and started sloushing through the sticky, heavy mud again. We had gone less than the distance of a football field before we were stopped again. It seems a whole new Regiment of the First Cavalry, had just arrived on the island. It was the 12th Cavalry. This is the Regiment my little buddy, Adolphus Gonzalas, was assigned to. Adolphus is the little mexican I had made friends with while on the ship coming from the United States to Australia. He was the prize fighter. If you had ever seen Lee Travino, the classic golfer, you would know what Adolphus looked like. The 12th had just come from New

Guinea. We were halted in order for them to catch up with us. It took a long time for the 12th to catch up, but they not only caught up— they passed us. The reason it took so long was because the entire Regiment moved up in single file. I watched as every man passed by me. I was hoping to see my little friend. It was raining hard again and each man that passed had his head down, fighting the wind blown rain. They were all wearing ponchos. I felt sure I would miss him. About the 10th guy from the end of the entire Regiment was "Gus". His eyes almost popped out of his head when I yelled and waved at him. Imagine, meeting in a place like this. Here we are, both sop and wet, mud almost up to our knees, hundreds and hundreds of dead Japs on the ground and all we can think and talk about is how glad we are to see each other. Adolphus Gonzulas was one of the finest men that I met while in the service. We only got to talk about two minutes. One of his non-coms told him to "move on". It was a real boost for me to see him. It poured all day. We ate in the rain, we walked in the rain and we cussed with each step we took in the rain.

The march we took, this third morning of combat was the kind we had been told about in basic training. This is what the army means when they say "forced march". The rain caused the mud to get sticky. Movement was extremely difficult. Many men had to "fall out" and take a rest about every 10 minutes. A jeep that can go through anything, was forced to stop. A tank was stuck so deep in the mud it could not budge. I ended up carrying all of my equipment and all of the gear of the guy marching behind me. One of our squad members fell out. He caught up with us later. The only thing that kept me going was my stubborn streak. I figured we only marched about five miles. It really seemed more like twenty-five miles. The more we marched the more dead Japs we saw. There were hundreds that had just recently died along that five mile stretch. Many of them were killed by U.S. Navy fighter planes early that morning. A few were killed by the fresh new 12th Cavalry soldiers that just arrived. We took one legal break — we should have taken more. During that break I noticed a Jap truck with the United States FORD insigna on it. We passed a Jap 3 inch shore gun that had been put out of commission. I saw one Jap non-com, who had been riding a motorcycle just before he caught a direct hit from one of our mortar shells.

When we came to a Japanese water pump that was in working order, we stopped. I was so tired and wet at that point, I could not move. I was pooped. It was getting dark. We placed the gun. Steve told us to dig in. Our Sergeant told us that the 12th Cavalry would be on the perimeter this night. That meant we could rest. All the men in our squad pulled their ponchos over their head and went to sleep in the hard rain.

It was still raining in the morning. As I got out of my shallow hole, I looked over at my little buddy, "mouse". He is just over 5 feet tall. I called his name. Just at that instant I heard a "gurgle" sound from him. He had been asleep on his back. As he

turned toward me, water rushed into his mouth and nose All I could make of it was that he was so exhausted when he fell asleep, he stayed in the same position all night. The rain filled up his fox hole. When he turned on his side, he did not realize his fox hole was filled with water. The "gurgle" sound he made scared me. I thought he was drowning. I took him by the arm and pulled him out of the hole. He did swallow a lot of muddy rain water but he was OK after he had a "swearing" fit. We lit a fire and had a cup of coffee. I have no idea where the dry match came from. While we drank our coffee and ate breakfast, we figured out that we had circled around behind the Japs.

We packed up and moved about 150 yards before officers changed their minds and had us return to the spot we started from. Our officers made us return because they felt the Japs were preparing for a counter attack of some kind. We had not heard a thing from them for one night and part of a day, so some of the officers felt they were up to something. This delay gave us a chance to dig good fox holes that we could make a little more comfortable. We dug a hole big enough for the whole squad. We placed a padding of thick grass on the floor of the hole and a layer of logs across the top. We sat around all day waiting to see if the Japs were going to do anything. All the Japs did that entire day was drop one large mortar shell. It fell close. A few guys got slightly hurt by shrapnel. That night, as we got ready to bed down in our fox hole, I heard a voice shout out, "don't shoot." At that same instant, I saw four strangely dressed people come out of an opening in the jungle. All four of them had their hands held high. One of them carried a pole with a white shirt tied to it. Just as a soldier close by to them shouted "hold your fire", some trigger happy dummy turned and fired at the four people. It was obvious they came out of to give up. The first two got shot. The last two turned around and ran back into the jungle. Unfortunately, the two that were shot died. When we checked them out we found that they were not Japanese. We really did not know what nationality they were. They looked like they came from India or maybe Pakistan. One of our high ranking officers told us, "If any one else comes out of that clearing in the jungle with their hands in the air, take cover, do not fire at them and allow them to surrender." He continued, "I want to see and talk to them." No one else came out of the jungle that night.

It had stopped raining for part of this day but it started raining again during the night. When it rains hard and the wind blows it is heard to hear. While I was

on guard I heard some one cry out "help." It was very faint. my squad sergeant said he heard it, too. We had no problems during the night but early next morning we were awaken by someone yelling "heads up". That sound usually ment that planes were dropping food, gear or equipment by parachute. It was a large cargo plane dropping rations. At the exact moment that the plane was dropping rations, a big commotion was taking place over by the jungle clearing where earlier four men had made an attempt to walk out and surrender. This time a large group of people, both men and woman, appeared. They were led by the two men who tried to surrender the night before. As we got a good look at them, it appeared they did come from India or Pakistan. The two men in front were frantically waving white cloths. All of the G.I's who saw them, yelled almost at the same time, "don't shoot." One G.I. was standing with a tommy gun on his hip. He had his back to them. As he turned around to look he touched his gun. The whole group hit the ground. When the officer who wanted to talk to them stepped up he asked a few men to cover him. We all listened as one of the leaders of the

group, told their story in broken english. The leader said they were Hindus from India. They had been prisoners of the Japs for two years. The man speaking called them 'Nippanese' instead of Japanese. He said, 'when we discovered the islands were being invaded we felt sure it was being invaded by the Americans. We ran away from our enemy.' They had been hiding for two days, waiting for an opportunity to surrender to us. They agreed this was the time. Most of the men in the group were carrying a bottle of wax. This wax kept their beard neat and stiff. The woman carried all of their belongings in one large bundle balanced on their head. Altogether, there were 65 in the group. After the commanding officer talked to them, he let them pass. They were all over joyed. It made me feel good just to be there and see this. The planes that dropped rations gave us a chance to share with them by dropping a few extra boxes of rations. As the group approached they walked in single file. Each was handed a box of K-rations. They were thankful but I am sure they did not know what to do with them. Their diet is so different — K-rations do not have rice and fish in them. The weaker members in the group were carried 'piggy-back' by those who were stronger. One man was totally blind. He said this was done to him by the "nips", as torture.

After all of the Hindus were fed and rested, they volunteered to go to work unloading some L S.T. boats that had just arrived. This was the last I saw of them. As they worked they were singing. They seemed excited and very happy. I heard later that they were taken back to some port in New Guinea. From there they were shipped on to India.

We stayed dug in at this same location all day. No Jap problems. The third morning we were told to pack up. We were also told to carry extra ammunition for the machine gun. We loaded onto barges. Our destination was a point in the Admiralty Islands called Los Negros Island. Either the reconnaissance was poorly done or the Japs who had been there moved out before we arrived. When we hit the beach; there was no resistance. we found one small blown up wooden shack, a water pump, and a Jap ration dump that provided nothing worth eating. After making sure there was no enemy soldier close by, we set up a perimeter. We again dug a squad fox hole. It faced the beach. It was easy digging. Actually, this beach landing turned out to be a chance for a few days rest. We were given 10-1 rations one day. I had a

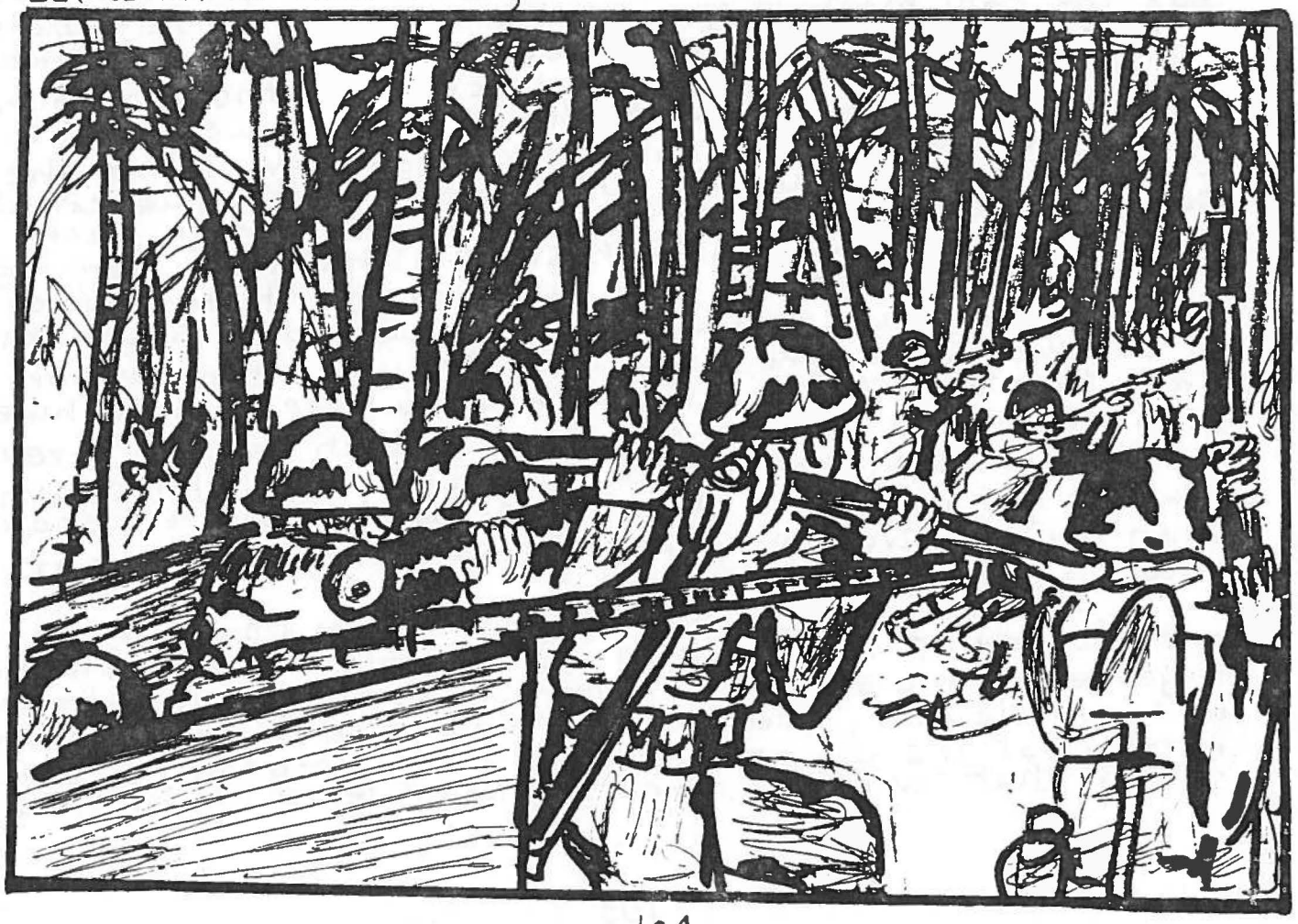
Chance to visit with some of my buddies in the troop tho I did not get to see much. We were not being harassed by attacks or shelling for the time being. I did, however, have the dickens scared out of me by one of my squad members. We were all still jittery because of being in combat and we were aware that anything can happen, which caused us to be very nervous and tense. On one of the three nights we spent on Los Negros, I had just finished my two hours guard in our squad foxhole, I woke up Jack Dudley, my relief. He seemed a little groggy and appeared blurry-eyed. I stayed awake awhile to see that he was fully awake. About the time I felt he was awake and alert, I moved in the dark to get something out of my pack. Jack saw my shadow and mistook me for a Jap crawling into the foxhole. Actually, he was not fully awake — He whipped his M-1 around, cocked the trigger and held the point of his rifle to my head as he said, "Who is it?" Lucky for me my Squad Sergeant slept with one eye open. He was laying between Jack and me. The Sergeant sat up, pushed the gun that Jack held to my head away and said, "Settle down, Dudley, it's only Foss." That was close. Jack was so embarassed. I was almost paralized with fear. My heart beat so hard the rest of the night I could not sleep. Jack did this same thing to me three times during our time together in this machine gun squad. I really felt sorry for Jack. He actually was a caring individual. Jack Dudley was a difficult man to awaken from a sound sleep. The second night in Los Negros the night was clear. The moon was beautiful. A couple of Jap bombers flew overhead. I could easily make out their shapes. They did not see us, thank God.

After the third day on Los Negros, our short "break" was ended. The following day as we were packing our gear, we were told about a small island we were about to invade. The officers gathered us around them and explained that it was going to be a difficult chore. The Japs were using this island from which to fire artillery at all of our vital spots. They would not give it up easily. Why did we want it so badly.... So we could do the same thing, only more so, what the Japs had been doing. After we took it, the island was going to be used by our Division artillary.

The next morning the 12th Cavalry moved into our place on Los Negros. we packed and got ready for the invasion of the little island. I did not realize how hot it was that day till we all crammed into barges. Instead

of waiting for ships or planes to bomb and shell the beach then make a landing, we sat in barges about 200 yards off shore in a scorching sun. we watched as three Australian fighter planes bombed and strafed. we stood in those barges close to three hours. Many of the men in the barges got ill from the heat. When we finally headed for the island, our barge went in with the second wave. For some reason, there was a high rank Marine officer in our barge. He told us before the invasion that he was very impressed with the First Cavalry Division. He told me he could use a few of us in the Marines. The name of the island where we were about to land was HOWIE ISLAND.

As we moved off of the barge a rifleman got shot in the head by our navy gunner who got overly nervous. He had his hand on the trigger of the 50 Caliber machine gun attached to the side of the barge. As an enemy bullet glanced off the top side of the barge the Navy gunner accidently fired the machine gun. He fired just as the rifleman stepped onto the beach. The soldier never knew what hit him. The navy gunner, when he found out what he had done, went into shock.



After reaching about 50-75 yards on the beach, we ran into trouble. We could see the first wave was held up. Many of the men in that wave were looking for protection or had already found some cover. This held us up. Right behind our Squad was a rifleman 60 millimeter mortar squad. One man, the mortar observer, was calling on his phone. We heard his responses as he gave orders and received instructions as to where to direct his fire. This man soon became the main target for a sniper or snipers. Trouble was, the snipers were missing him and coming awfully close to me. within seconds four bullets came so close I felt for my ear, I wondered if my nose was still there or if I had been hit on my left hand. I thought sure I was hit. I was told earlier, by a wounded G. I. that when you get shot you don't feel it right away. It does not really began to hurt till the air gets to the wound. Since I saw no blood and I felt no real pain I felt sure I was not hit. what a relief to know you are not hurt after shots come so close.

Our squad stayed at one spot, pinned down, for around two hours. We did not move till about 3:00 P.M, when some one up front called for a heavy machine gun. Our gun was the only machine gun in the area so we felt we ha to make a run for it. Those around us covered our squad by supplying rapid fire in the direction of the Japs gun fire. We all got as close to the ground as we could and made a run toward the voice that was demanding the use of a machine gun. As we moved forward, we could see guys getting hit left and right. We found a path and followed it. Men on both sides of the path were hugging the ground for all they were worth. At least three times as we moved forward, we were warned to stay clear of an area where the Japs had set up a machine-gun cross fire lane. A 'cross fire lane' is where two machine guns are placed so they can cover a much traveled area by criss crossing the fire of two guns. It is almost certain death to get caught in one of these lanes. You never know when you are crossing one of these areas till you get caught in the middle of one

"Steve", our squad Sergeant, held up his hand and stopped us at a small burning hut. As we gathered together to move on, that same voice, only more determined and much louder, shouted "get that god damm gun up here!" Just as we arrived at out destination, I saw a sight that caused the blood to almost leave my face. There

were four G.I.s partially dragging, partially carrying a poncho which held the remains of a human. There was so much blood in that poncho and he was hit with so many pieces of sharpnel you could hardly make out that it was a human. It was the first gunner of a heavy water cooled machine gun. He and his squad had taken a direct hit by a mortar. He was the first one they carried out. The rest of the men in the machine gun squad had also been killed. As far as we knew, this is the machine gun squad we were to replace. All of the men in our squad were filled with fear at what we had just witnessed. We set up the gun and got ready to move where ever we were ordered to go. The officer who was from B Troop, looked at us and said "who the hell are you?" — "what troop you from?" Our squad sergeant answered the officer. The officer looked at us in a disguising manner and told us to get the hell out of here. He said, "Your not attached to B Troop — Get out — Leave!". I thought the guy was crazy. We were all stunned: what difference does it make who you are attached to. If you need the gun right now — use

it. The officer looked at our squad wild-eyed and bellowed out, "I said, get the hell out of here!" Orders are Orders... ... WE GOT THE HELL OUT OF THERE.

Again, we kept low and moved fast as we headed across the island toward the rifle troop our troop was attached to . This troop was "G" Troop. In the process, we had to pass that "cross fire lane" once more. Five men had been shot in that lane already. One of them was a close friend of mine. I saw him as I crawled across the lane but I did not know he was dead at that time. I was later told that he was killed when he ran back through the "cross fire lane" to help one of his buddies who was wounded. There were a few attempts by mortar and artillery squads to knock out the two Jap machine guns that was causing all of the problems. None of them were success ful. It took a few irritated riflemen who were "tired of this crap" to finally wipe out both machine gun nests that caused all of the problems. Riflemen that are experienced are worth their weight in gold when it comes to ending a bad situation in the front lines

Our squad found "G" Troop before dark and we dug in for the night next to them on the line. So many men got Killed and shot up this day I was sure the night was going to be miserable, too. It wasn't. In fact we had nothing but occasional sniper fire all night. In the morning, I checked out trees behind me for snipers and found none. However, as I was sipping on a cup of coffee I found that I was in the sights of an enemy snipers gun located out in front of our fox hole. The bullets came close enough to cause me to throw my hot coffee all over the front of me. One of the "G" Troop riflemen saw what happened. He spotted the sniper right away. He told me to take cover. He picked off the sniper out of a tree. There were no infantry men better to be attached to than "G" Troop. Those guys were my heroes. After we ate breakfast we were told that we were going to push right through the rest of the island. The island was one mile long and one-half mile wide. We were going to move both lengthwise and widthwise at the same time. Sergeant "Steve" told us we were not going to move out until we had the support of a light tank that was to arrive soon.

while we were waiting for the tank to show up a funny thing happened, There was a mexican soldier in 'G' Troop called "Boogie". He was called this because of his love for the music called "Boogie-Woogie". He had a great sense of humor. It seems there was a chicken running loose in front of the lines. Boogie took off running after it. As he ran behind the chicken he talked to it in "pretend" Japanese. He chased the chicken all over, till he caught it. We all wondered why Boogie did not get shot by a sniper. He did not even get shot at. After he caught the chicken, he tied it to a tree. He immediately introduced his chicken as Colonel Kirk. That was our Regimental Commanders name. (I understand the Colonel did not appreciate the humor. Boogie could care less.) Boogie tried to sell the Japanese chicken for ten pounds in Australian money. He got no takers. Later in the day, Boogie ate the chicken him self. It did look funny to see an American-mexican chasing a chicken as he talked to it in 'made-up' Japanese language. I think it broke the tension we all felt from the battle of the day before. It also seemed

to put most of the men in a good frame of mind for the day. About 8:30 A.M. we heard the sound of a noisy motor behind us. It was a small tank. On the side of the tank in big letters was printed, "SLOPPY JOE". It served its purpose well. As the tank passed us, riflemen followed it. Some of the riflemen climbed on it. One rifleman started shooting off to the right flank, and accidently hit the tank. The driver turned the tank toward that flank. The gunner in the tank fired. One of our own men got killed. The tank turned back and pushed on. About 100 yards in front and to the right of where we had dug in for the night, was a huge Jap pill box. This bunker was really well fortified. It was built of steel and thick layers of concrete. The 75 millimeter gun on the tank fired point blank at the bunker. It did not even crack the outer surface. The tank tried two more times with no success. The tank held up while the riflemen took over. The riflemen put the bunker out of commission. First, they surrounded it and moved in very cautiously. One soldier went up to an opening while others covered him. He lobbed some gernades into the opening. The second that the gernades exploded, about five riflemen charged in the opening, followed by about 3-4 more riflemen. They killed everything that was inside including some rodents. It did not take long. After the pill box was destroyed, the tank and riflemen finished off the rest of the island resistance. Not one Jap surrendered on this island. They all chose to die. Our squad did advance behind the tank and riflemen as they mopped up the island. Our machine gun was not needed. "Sloppy Joe" did one heck of a job.

After the island was taken, I walked through to survey the damage. I saw a number of G.I.'s gathered over by the bunker that had been destroyed earlier. There were 8 dead Japs piled up near the only entrance to the bunker. Some riflemen were pulling the 9th Jap out feet first at the end of a long rope. All nine of them were a mess. One Jap had lost all of his face. Another had a leg blown off up to his knee. A third Jap was missing both hands. The other six looked to me, again, like wax dummies. One of the Japs was an officer. You could tell because of the saber belt he wore. The saber was gone. It was in the hands of an American Major. I walked through the bunker. It had look-out holes on all four sides of the

bunker. There were gun stations for at least six machine guns. It was divided into three sections. In the two smaller sections was stored ammunition and food. Again, most of the food was bags of rice. Off to the side of the room that stored food was eating utinsels, pots and pans, some army clothing and a stack of blankets. One room was larger than the others. They slept in this room because there were straw mattresses on the floor. I did not see a sewage system. The whole inside of the bunker appeared crudely built.

I saw one dead American soldier behind a tree. He was laying in high grass. The medics must have passed him earlier. They were now tending to him. The next sight that I witnessed bothered me a great deal. I wish I had not seen it at all. When I realized what I was looking at I almost threw up. There were 6 dead Japs in and around a machine gun nest. None of them could have been over 13 years of age. How could the government of Japan sent out children, dress them in military uniforms and have them perform as adults? They were dressed in Sun-tan

uniforms. One boy had on an Imperial Marine Cap. (That was the most respected unit in Japan.) This dead boy, no doubt, was an admirer. He was about four feet tall. To be an Imperial Marine you had to be at least 6 feet tall. Another boy had a tiny Japanese doll tied to his belt. This reminded me of "fads" young American kids had back home. If our G.I.'s had not seen these young men first, they would have been shot. These Japanese boys were trained and sent to this island to kill american soldiers. Against our experienced riflemen they did not have a chance. I just wish this did not have to happen

That afternoon, after the island was taken, we were informed that we would stay the night on Howie Island and that we would return to the fox holes we spent the previous night. We all felt reasonably safe that there were no Japs left on this island. We went for a swim on the beach. It was the clearest beach water I had ever seen. The swim was relaxing. Beforedark our Sergeant brought us 10-1 rations. That was a treat. I thought back to the happenings of the day and realized how fortunate I was to be alive. If the sniper that had me in his sights during break fast, was just a hair more accurate, I would have either been shot in the head or ear.

We took this island so our Division Artillery could have a suitable position from which to fire. Early that evening the Artillery unit began arriving. The Division personal continued to bring in equipment and trucks of ammunition into the next morning. This was their way of telling us to leave. Taking this island was very instromental in shortening the combat time on the Admiralty Islands. The Division could now give support fire any place on the group of islands. The artillery was centrally located. This was not the last we would see of Howie Island.

When we left Howie Island we returned to Los Negros. We had left Los Negros just three days earlier and you could not recognize the place. All types of ships had arrived. Most of the ships brought in large equipment for purposes of building. Roads were being started. A good sized tempovary hospital sprung up and a Red Cross tent appeared When our barge arrived at Los Negros it looked and felt good to see people around, again. We were sure we would get a rest period. We did. It was very short. On the beach was piled our "water bags". A 'water bag' is a miniature water proof bag that you may, if you wish, put in a change of clothes,

an extra pair of socks and toilet articles. You put this bag with your barracks bag as you leave for combat. If the occasion arises that your water bag can be delivered to you at a later day in combat, the quater masters corp. will do it. Evidentially, the occasion came up. Let me tell you... a change of clothing, after a week or so in combat, is almost as good as getting a piece of hot garlic bread with peanut butter on it. We picked up our water bags and marched four miles into the jungle to our rest area. If it had not been for about one million mosquitoes wanting to share our rest area with us, it would have been a great night. Next morning a kitchen truck arrived and we had a hot meal of coffee, hot cakes and oatmeal. It tasted good. First time I remember enjoying oatmeal.

So we got one day rest — wow! When they give you one day rest and bring up a kitchen truck for a couple of meals you know they expect something in return. After we ate we were told the 8th Cavalry Regiment needed help back on Manus Island. Manus was where we originally landed when we came to these islands. We marched back to the beach. We waited most of the day to load into L.S.T. boats. The L.S.T.s took two hours to get us to Manus. By the time we finally arrived we just had time to get our gun placement assigned and our fox holes dug. We slept two in a hole. This ment two hours sleep out of every four. While I was digging in I killed a coral snake with my shovel. If that coral had bitten me I would have lasted but a few minutes at most. It was a beautiful snake but deadly. The mosquitoes were bad, again.

It seemed like all we did for the next 5-6 days was follow the 8th Cavalry. Wherever they went, we were right behind them. Hills, hills and more hills. We moved from day light till about 5:00 P.M, each day. It was almost a daily routine. The place we dug in each night was always at the top of a hill. All we saw for those few days were mountains, mud, rain, mud, one dead Jap after another and mud. If I forgot to say mud — we had mud! When you are in the mountains and it is the rainy season you climb up two steps and slip back three. Our equipment got heavy. Besides the fight with mud, you seemed to be fighting off wetness from rain or sweat caused by the hot, hot tropical conditions. These wet and dry spells caused heal rash. This caused scratching. The scratching spreads the heat rash. If you ever have had your body covered by heat rash you know what 'uncomfortable' is.

Many things did happen the five days we followed the 8th Cavalry. One night we dug in foxhole to foxhole almost ____ no space in between. If the Jap artillery had known this, they would have had a field day. One morning out of those five days after filling some canteens for my squad buddies, I walked away and left my rifle leaning against a coconut tree near the stream. Leaving your personal weapon <u>anyplace</u> for <u>any reason</u>, is a top cardinal sin. Lucky for me a friend had found a rifle earlier in the day. Guess where my friend found this rifle. He found it leaning against a tree next to a stream. It was <u>not</u> my rifle. When my squad sergeant heard that I had lost my weapon, you could hear him yelling at me all over Manus Island. I had it coming to me.

Another day while mopping up Japs with the 8th Cavalry, we stopped for a break near a stream. The water in that stream looked cool and inviting. We each scooped up a cup of that refreshing looking water, put in one of our water purification pills and mixed in some lemonade and sugar. Lemonade was the drink provided in our lunch K-ration. We sat and drank the cool, refreshing lemonade and talked awhile. After the break was over, we moved up the path some 15-20 feet. All of us who drank the water from the stream suddenly felt the urge to vomit. Here, stretched across the stream next to the path, were four dead Japs. They had been laying in the stream for days. Maggots were crawling all over them. They smelled awful. The stream water we drank down stream, flowed right over their bodies. For some reason I lost my appitite for lemonade for a long time..

The last few days we followed the 8th Cavalry, the hills seemed to get steeper and steeper. It made the hills we had climbed back in California seem like mole

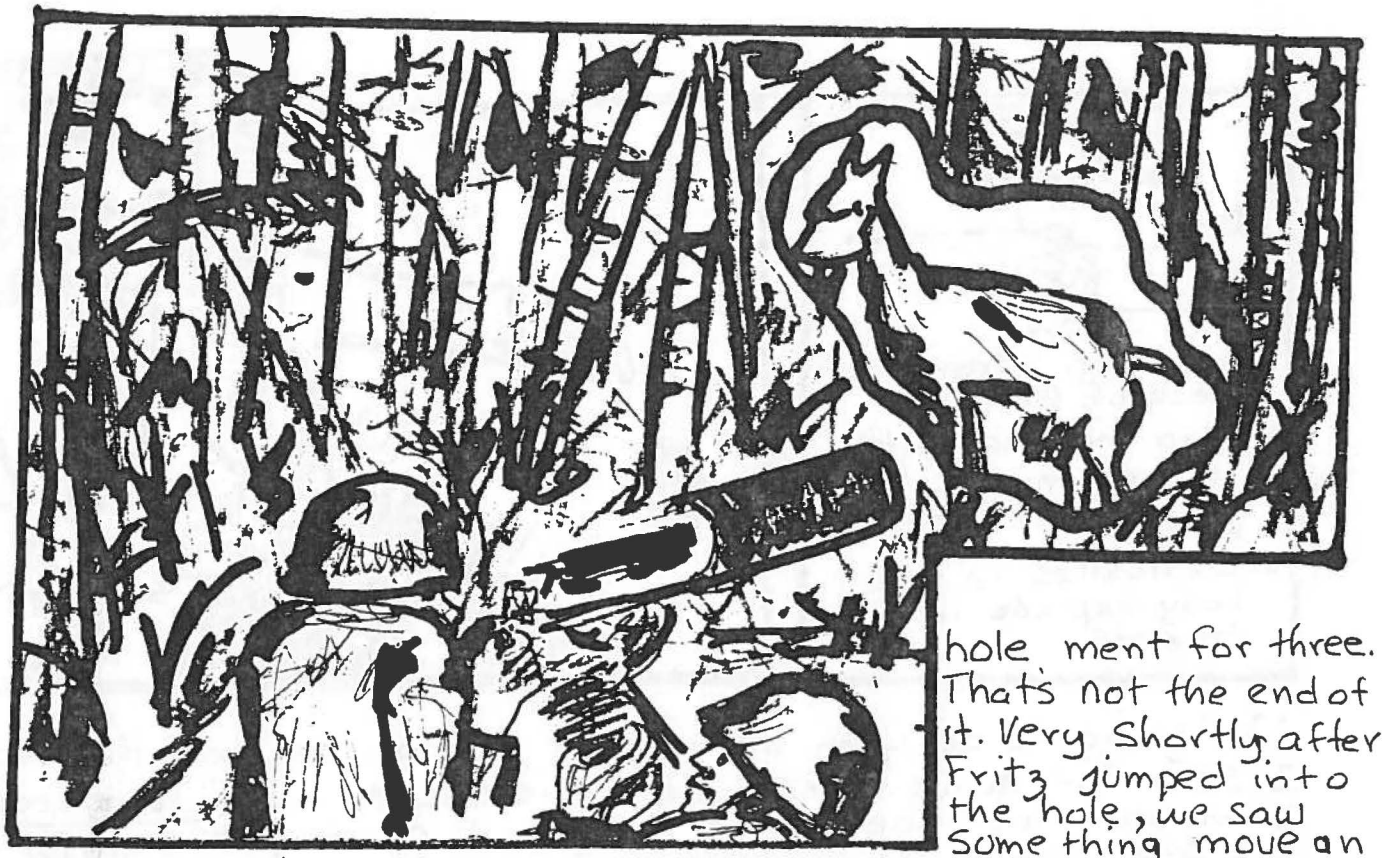
hills. The only thing that kept me in there was the old stubborn streak, along with the fun I had listening to "mouse" rant and cuss when it was his turn to carry the tripod or the receiver of the machine gun. We finally came to a spot where they allowed us to rest. Actually, we must have walked clear across Manus. When we joined the 8th, we had just walked off of boats at the beach. We started up into the mountains the first day. Here we were on the last mountain of the mop-up operation, looking at the bay on the opposite side. No one told us we walked clear across the island but my sore body told me we did.

While we were sitting and waiting for our next orders, we received some new recruits. All of these replacements came directly from the states. They were nervous, scared, extremely cautious and very leery of all of us in the squad. We tried to do all we could to put them at ease. We answered their questions concerning combat, taught them all that we could about the machine gun and tried to break them into the routine gently. It took a few days before they began to trust us. The first new replacement to "break the ice" was a tall skinny kid from Minnesota. His name was Fritz Fastner. He had a little previous experience in R.O.T.C., in college. He knew a little bit of what to expect. In no time at all, he was as goofy as the rest of us.

One of the guys who was attached to our troop found an old rusty pair of sheers at the place we were resting and awaiting orders. They were about a foot long. We never did figure out what their purpose was. The guy who found the sheers asked if any one wanted a hair cut. He said he use to sheer sheep so he was well qualified. I volunteered. He almost cut me bald headed. The hair cut felt good — until the hot sun hit it. We were warned to dig in at

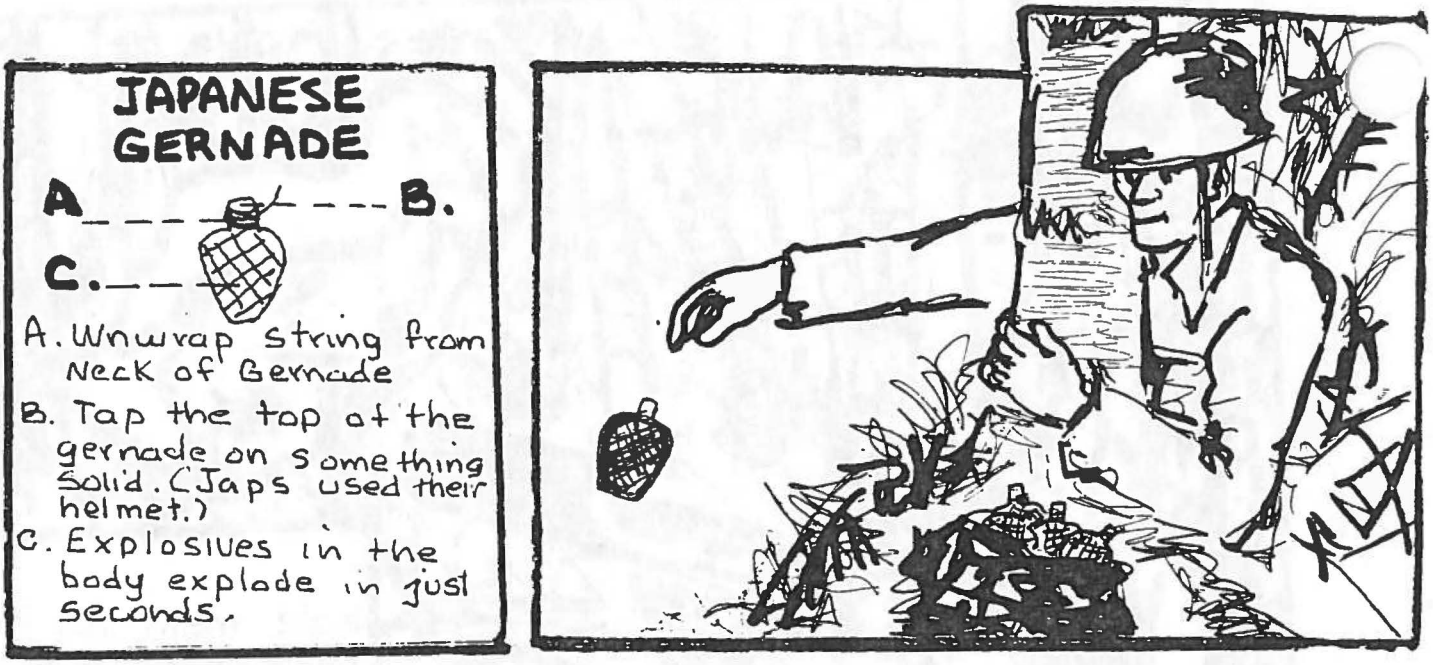
this resting place. There were still many Japs around. We were not really resting.... we were waiting for orders. Up the path from us, about 35-40 yards from where we dug in, was a Jap pill box that had been knocked out and abanded. They must have left in a hurry because the Japs left some ammunition, clothes, food, paper, ink and many other items. I went up to this bunker one day and brought back some ink and paper. I wrote a letter to mom and told her where the ink and paper came from. I folded the letter inside a V-mail letter envelope and sent it through a red cross that set up down the road. Mom probably never got to read about the pill box because it was a 'military subject'. The censors most times removed anything that might give the enemy helpful information concerning military tactics when they find and read the letter before it reaches it's destination. The censors were very strict about what was said in letters written while in a combat zone. It was difficult to get a letter mailed while in combat. They only sent letters home on rare occasions. The Red Cross if you could find one, would send a letter home for you but only if it was censored by the military officer assigned to do this type of job

One night, word came from the commander that we were on alert. Intelligence sent word that Japs were near. They were expected to attack us from the rear. That met they might come down the path that lead up to the knocked out bunker. The fox hole we dug was just right for three gunners and the machine gun. This later became a problem. Just after dark our artillery set up a barrage out in the direction from which they expected the Japs. As soon as the shells hit the ground, here comes a G.I. running toward us in the dark. It was my old nervous buddy, Jack Dudley. We asked him what he was doing. All he said was "I'm scared—, I want to be with the Machine gun." That made four of us in a fox hole dug for three. About five seconds after Jack jumped in the hole, another guy came running up and jumped in our hole. This time it was Fritz, the new recruit. Fritz wanted to know where his fox hole buddy went— and why. It was understandable why Fritz came to our fox hole, but not Jack. Neither one of them should have even raised their head up out of their fox hole, let alone run over and jump into a different fox hole after dark. None-the-less.... they did. It was much to dangerous to send them back to the fox hole they ran from. So — would you believe it— we now have five men in a fox



hole ment for three. That's not the end of it. Very Shortly after Fritz jumped into the hole, we saw Something move on the path. It moved again. we gave the machine gun a short burst over in the direction of the path. We heard what sounded like a groun. Jack was sure that it was a Jap scout looking for our fox hole. He felt Japs would come swarming in any minute. Nothing happened the rest of that night. We took turns pulling guard and listening. It was a very tense, crowded and needless-to-say—, miserable night. In the morning, we went out to see the Jap we killed during the night. Instead of a dead Jap soldier we found a Manus island goat. It was dead. We had to take the poor thing out and bury it. Fritz was given a lecture about leaving his fox hole after dark, by the squad Sergeant. He never did it again. I can not say the same for Jack.

The Japs we expected, I am pleased to say, never showed up. The Intelligence report was a false alarm. My Squard Sergeant, Steve, is one of the most inquisitive humans I have ever met: what he did on this day "just because", is hard to believe. Steve walked up to the knocked out bunker on the hill and returned with a big black leather case. I asked him what was in the bag. He smiled and said, "you'll see". As he opened the bag I could see it was filled with hand grenades. They were not our hand grenades so they had to be Japanese grenades. I asked Steve what he was going to do. He said, what the hell do you think



I'm going to do with them.... I'm gonna see how they work". I said for god's sake, "why?". His answer was "Just because." I moved over behind a tree so I could get a safe distance away. I thought sure he was going to blow his brains out. After a period of trial and error and I am sure a lot of plain irish luck, he discovered how they work. He called me over and showed me the secret. We started popping the caps and throwing them down a gully left and right. The diagram "Japanese Grenade" explains how they work. The sergeant and I threw about three dozen grenades down the gully. We made a lot of noise. I guess the officers inside the perimeter down the hill thought we were having a battle with the Japs. A First Lewie was sent up to investigate. When we saw him coming, we stopped. He wanted to know what all the noise was about. When we told him, he asked if we had any grenades left. He threw a few grenades with us. He stopped and said "I was sent up here to stop this." He ended by saying, "It was fun, wasn't it?" That finished our little Japanese grenade experience. If I would have gotten into a position that I had to depend on using Japanese hand grenades I could have done it.

After breakfast on one of the days we sat on this mountain. I could see Australian fighter planes drop peace pamphlets on the enemy across the bay. The next day after breakfast, I watched Australian fighter planes drop bombs and strafe. It did not make a whole lot of

common sense. It seemed to me the Australians were not sure what they wanted the enemy to do. After all of this time, waiting for the officers to make up their minds, we did nothing. In fact, the next decision of the officers was to give us a five day rest. I felt weak so all I did was eat and rest. There was a stream big enough to take a bath in, which I did, each day. At the bottom of this hill was the bay. We could swim in the ocean. I did that one day. The salt in the water was good for heat rash I was once told and I had heat rash. The Red Cross brought up a tent with in walking distance. They offered coffee and cookies each afternoon. one day they had coka-cola. We were each limited to one canteen cup full. A kitchen truck was brought to the bottom of the hill and we had two meals for the last two days of our five day rest period. All the time we were in this rest area my stomach was acting up. Food did not taste good. I threw up after I ate a few times, plus, I was having a small dose of the "runs". I felt we were going to move out again soon. I was right. We were going on a two week combat pat-

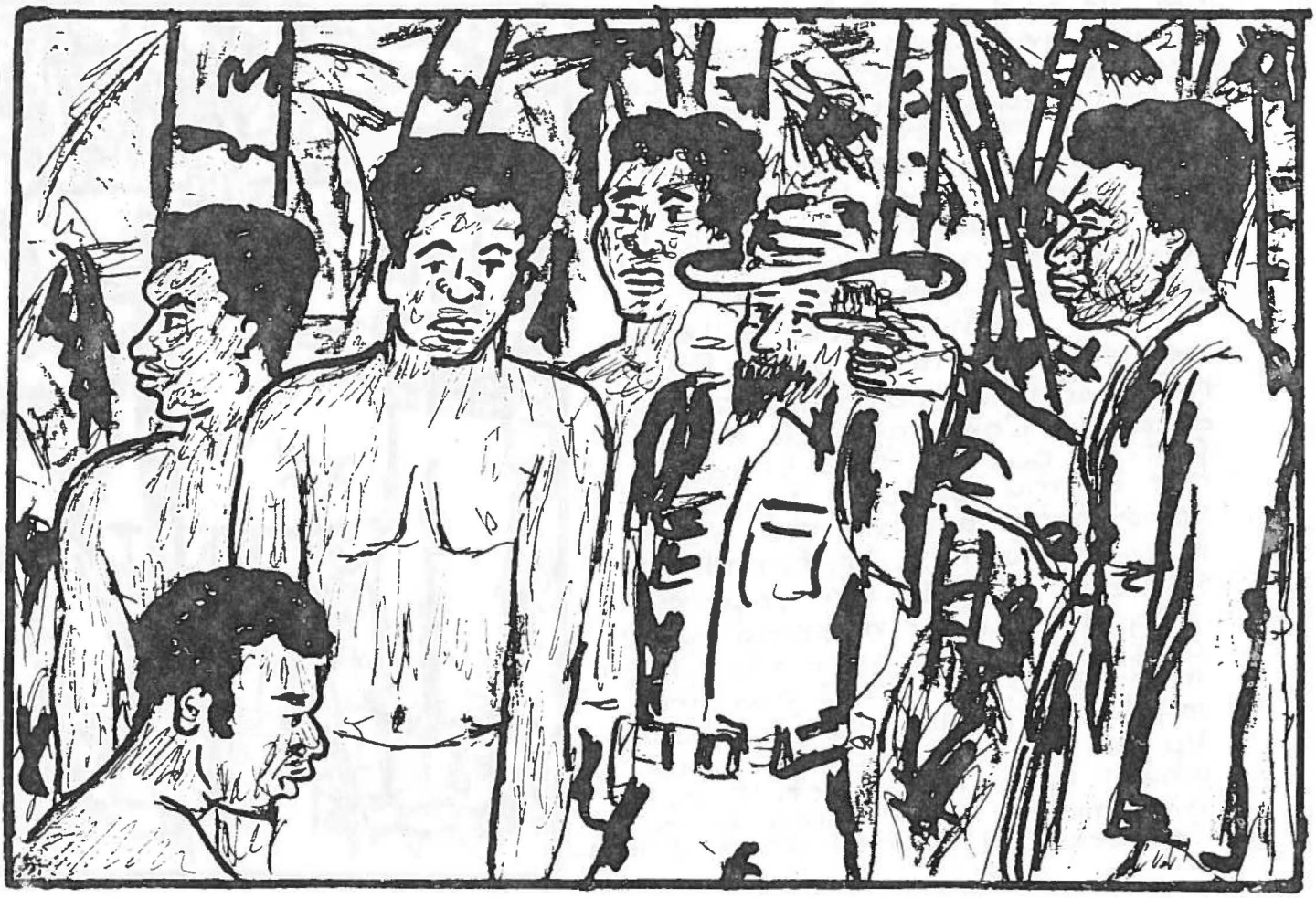
rol. Our mission was going to be to mop-up all stray Js with in a given area on this island. The night before we were to leave, I got deathly sick. I did not realize it at this time, but it was the beginning of an illness that stayed with me the rest of the war. I was now first gunner and I carried the tripod most of the time. The first day out, before we even got to the steep mountains, thick jungle and deep rivers, I got so weak. I could barely move. I had to stop and go to the bath room 17 times that first day. I threw up 'till there was nothing left to come up. I tried to carry the tripod but when it came my turn, I just couldn't do it. Once you are on your way, there is no turning back, especially in the mountains. They will haul you on stretcher, through hell and high water, to get you to a hospital of some kind if you are wounded, but if you are ill, just 'shut up' and keep moving.

Each time we went into combat situations it seems, we are followed by rain... this was no exception. The day we started our patrol it began to rain. We carried a few days rations in our pack. Other rations would be relayed to us at a later date. We had to carry our heavy water cooled machine gun and three boxes of ammunition. We were told the area we would cover on the patrol was supposed cover 33 miles. We ended up doing a whole lot more than 33 miles before we got done. All the Regiments were assigned similar partols on this island. This was a final mop-up — once and for all. As usual, we were treated to the same weather conditions we had met every where else on these islands. The mud was thick and heavy to the feet. It was either raining and we got soaked by rain fall or the sun shined down with such a force we got soaked by the sweat from our body. In either case, when we dried off, old heat rash went to work, overtime. A new thing started to haunt us — it was caused by high grass. On days you did not wear leggings the grass seemed to cut into the skin of your ankles. Small sores became large sores and scabs. It was called "jungle rot". Many times it spread up into your crouch and even to your belt line. Out side of heat rash, jungle rot, loss of appetite and general weakness I felt great to go on this patrol. The only real problem we seemed to have the first day was finding streams for drinking water. The problem of finding water changed when we arrived at our first stop.

This first place we stopped was a native village some where on Manus Island. We were met by the village natives. Their leader was called simply, "Ronny". Ronny

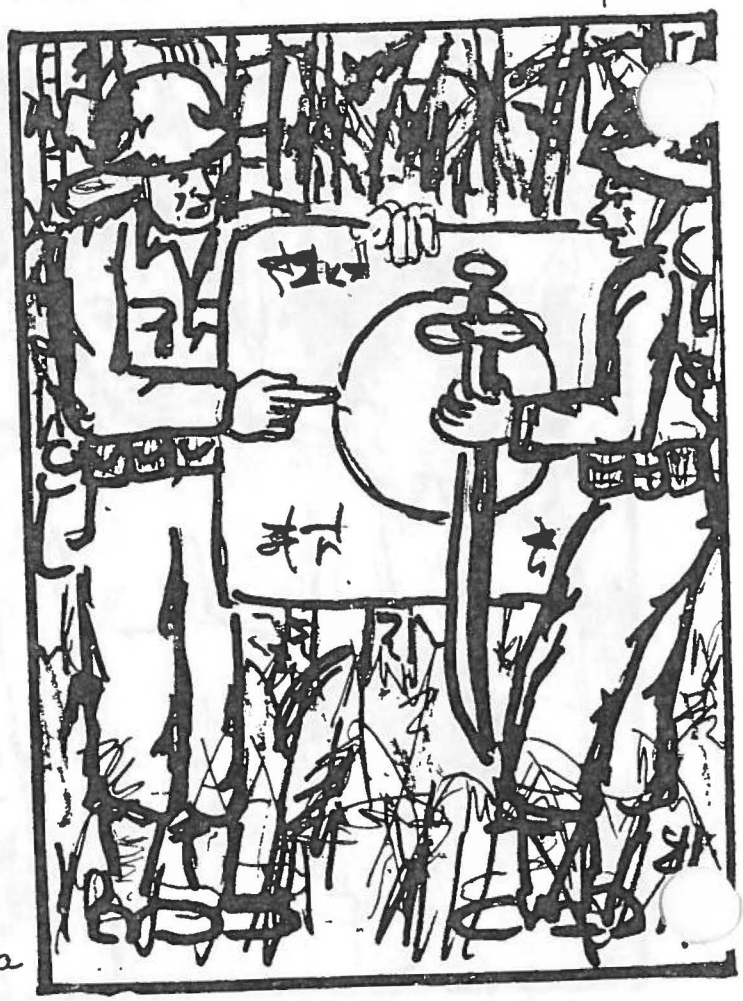
was an australian who had worked with the natives in the village during peace time. He knew the territory well. The natives gathered as we arrived. We were told they were to haul the rations we were to use. It felt strange. I had never been around jungle natives. I really did not know what to expect or how to act. I was, eventually in for a plesant experience. We could not communicate with the natives. Ronny did all of that for us. If we did wish to communiate with a native on our own, it was done with hand motions or stick marks on the ground.

Ronny's right hand man was called the "number one" boy. He was built some where between a world heavy weight boxer and any 270 line backer in the NFL. Number one boy was huge. I do know one thing, when he gave an order to any of the other natives they neither questioned him or refused to carry it out. All of the natives in the group that were going to be with us, looked like the tupical native you might see in 'geographic magazine'. They each wore a skirt with shorts under the skirt.



There skin appeared very black rathen than dark brown. N of them wore shoes. Their hair styles were different. This seemed to be their most individual characteristic. They were all very strong. Each one of them seemed sensitive to the feelings of those around them. They all appeared to be religious as I discovered later. They appeared happy They all had a personality of their own. They were very friendly and helpful at all times. I feel like I am not doing them justice by the way I describe them. They were so different than anyone I have dealt with before.

After we teamed up with the natives we moved along rapidly. We had a few skirmishes with Jap stragglers, but nothing big happened. One thing I did notice and was thankful for was the way the natives' found water. We never once failed to find water when we needed it. The night we arrived at the second village, it was Easter Eve. I was not aware of it but an army chaplin made the trip with us all this way, just to provide us with an Easter service. That night we built a fire, dried out our clothes and slept in dry huts. Next morning at 8:00 A.M we had our out door Easter service and sermon. It was very nice. After the service we packed our gear, gathered the natives together and went on our way. I dropped the machine gun barrel into the mud. I got it cleaned out before anyone found out. Thank god we did not need to use.



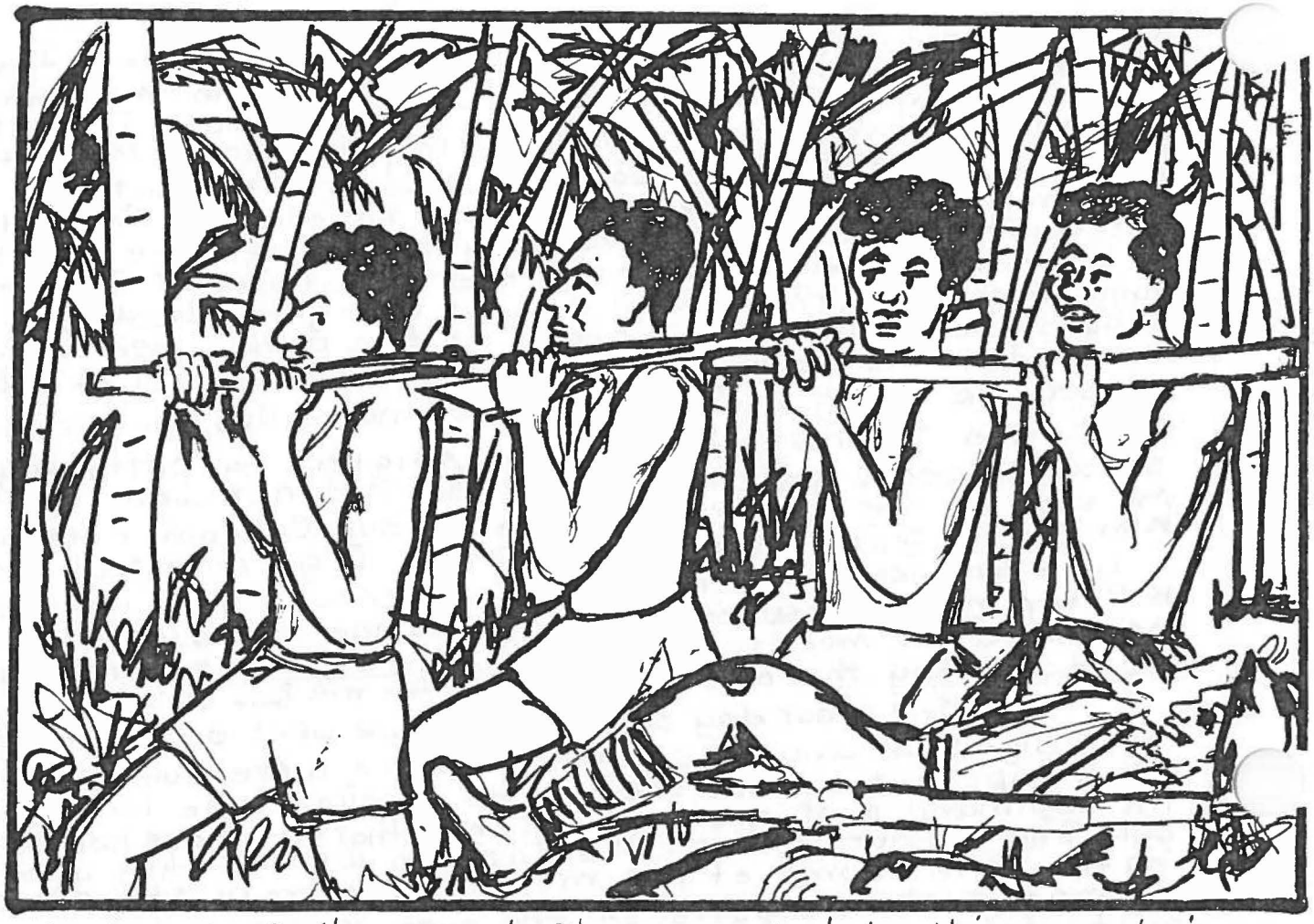
The fourth village was our command post. From this point, we patrolled every direction. Coming back from patrol out of this village, one of my buddies spotted something bright red over in some bushes. It turned out to be a '1000 stitch' Japanese flag. It had no meaning to me other than it was a flag that many Jap soldiers carried inside their helmets into battle. No one in the squad knew why it was important. It must have meant something to a See-Bee. My friend sold it to a

See-Bee later for 55 pounds in Australian money. At that time 55 pounds equaled some thing over $180.00 in American money.

One night from this command post, I really got sick. I threw up 13 times during the night. The next day I went out on patrol any way. My buddy Fritz volunteered to take my place but One officer would not allow it. Fritz almost got court marshal for threatening the officer who refused to let him take my place. Fritz told the officer if I did not come back from this patrol he was going to shoot him. I noticed the officer was waiting at the path when I did return from the patrol. I also noted a sigh of relief when he saw me. Fritz did not get court marshalled for his threat, thank-god. The next time I was assigned to patrol my squad sergeant protested. The same officer did not want to leave me back at the command post, but our Captain over ruled him. This officer that was insisting I go on patrol when I was so sick was the same officer who gave me 7 days K.P. for mental insubordination. Every one knows what insubordination means.... but what is mental insubordination? Would you say this officer had it in for me?— I would.

The four day patrols that we went out on did not show signs of any Jap activity. There were numbers of dead Japs but no live ones. The natives who lived around the command post area told Ronny that the Japs had moved out. The natives feared the Japs so we felt they were telling the truth. Some of the men of our troop stayed at our command post and patrolled the area. Our squad was ordered to take a long patrol in the direction of the sea shore. It was a mop-up operation. We were informed that it was possible we could meet up with a squad of men from 'F' Troop, Seventh Cavalry. These men were coming from the sea shore toward the command post. It was also possible that the men of 'F' Troop would be short of rations at the time we met up with them. Our native friends were assigned to go with us and haul rations. Part of the rations would be for us, part of them would be for the men of 'F' Troop.

This trip with the natives is an experience I will never forget. We were ready to go but we had to wait till they tied the rations onto poles, exactly the way they wanted. O.K., we are ready, now?— NO— they had to eat breakfast. I said earlier they appeared to have minds of their own. Just about the time your patience is about to give out they are ready. This delay never happened again after the first day. I really think the natives were testing us. I felt they were trying to see how far they could go before we got mad. Maybe not. When they did decide to



move, we really moved. They were used to this mountain environment with its rainy season. we had to bust our rear ends to keep up with them. We marched daily from about 8:00 A.M. till about 5:30 P.M. We had an hour for lunch but very few other breaks during the day. The natives appeared to be very frightened of dead Japs. When ever they saw even one Jap on the path or near it, they ran past him as fast as they could.

Each day with the natives was very different. Soon we all became good friends. Communication was a little difficult, but it was not long till our wishes were made known to each other. They liked the packets of sugar in our K-rations. They liked the biscuits, lemonade and some of the canned goods in K-rations, too. we gave them these things. We liked the meat and milk of the coconuts. They would climb a tree, knock down a <u>ripe</u> coconut, husk it, and present it to you in the same time it would take you to look up in a tree and decide if a coconut was ripe or not. Do you have any idea how long it takes the avergae G.I. to climb a coconut tree? Would

a G.I. really know a ripe coconut from a hole-in-the-ground. It takes skill to husk a coconut. I tried for 45 minutes one day to de-husk a coconut. I finally gave up. The natives took care of our coconut needs nicely. The natives liked our cigarettes. They had faith in the iodine in our first aid packs. They felt iodine would cure any cut. We gave them whatever we were allowed to give them.

There was one native by the name of "Jakey". He could sing the words in english to "My Wild Irish Rose". Jakey had spent some time earlier in W.W.II with the United States Marines and said he loved Americans. I harmonized with him as he sang "My Wild Irish Rose". His eyes got big. He smiled from ear to ear. We hit it off real good. I was trying to teach him the song, "I've been working on the railroad". Before we left he knew some of the words real well—the only thing is, he said them in the wrong order. "Jakey" was my buddy. Most of the natives were very good at cutting coconut leaves into strips and weaving the strips into mats. They could make a shelter in this manner in no time. One of the guys in our squad got wounded one of the days we were on the patrol. Just as he got hit, two natives picked out some coconut leaves and built the wounded soldier a shelter from the rain. He was dry under that shelter. The rest of us were soaked. That shelter was rain proof. They used nothing but split coconut leaves woven together. I was impressed.

The day before we contacted 'F' Troop, we met some slight resistance. We came upon two Japs in a path up in front of us. They were squatting down over another Jap that appeared to lay dead before them. One of of our squad members shot both of the live Japs. I hesitate to write about what I witnessed here because it will sound like I made it up. What I am about to write is true. It was, with

out a doubt the most gruesome sight I had seen in the war. It was a cannibalistic act. The buttocks of the Jap laying dead on the ground, as we came upon the three Japs in the path, was covered with blood. It looked like the flesh part of one buttocks had been removed. One of the Japs who had been squatting over the dead Jap had a bayonet in his hand. The flesh part of the dead Japs buttocks is what the bayonet appeared to be sticking through. I cannot be sure of this but we all saw this about the same time. One of the men in the squad instantly said what I was thinking. He said, "do you think he was fixing to cook that and eat it?". When I looked at the faces of the three Japs, it was obvious they were starving. It was a horrible sight.

The trip through the mountains from the command post till we met F' Troop, was easy. We ran into Japs only three times. In each case, they appeared to be running away from us. After we made contact with 'F'

Troop, we gave them enough rations to hold them till they returned to their command post back at the sea shore. Our mission was now over. We were given orders to return to the "H" Troop command post as soon as we met "F" Troop. On our journey back, the Aussie leader, Ronny, told us we could each pick out a native to carry our gear since they were not going to carry rations. He asked that they carry only weapons that were not loaded because they might hurt themselves. We were only three days away from our command post. Each of us selected a native to carry our personal gear. Two of the natives took turns carrying the tripod and receiver. We carried the belts of ammunition. Each of the two nights on our return trip, we slept under a village hut — on mats, woven by our "selected helpers". These men built our fires, dried our clothing and each morning they went off with empty water canteens and came back with full ones. They even heated our rations and made our coffee. They treated us like we were some one. They all appeared to be pleased serving us. Fritz had the number one boy. I had my buddy, "Jakey".

This group of natives must have known about our Christian God. One of the three days on our journey back to the command post, one of the guys in our squad made the mistake of showing his helper the small bible that he carried. He told the native it was a bible. The troopers first name was Craig. I did not write his last name down in my diary. His native helper held up the book and said bible!... bible...! bible! He starting jabbering to his native friends and pointing at Craig. Soon 7-8 natives gathered around Craig and started to point and jabber about him. None of us knew what the natives were excited about but we do know it had a lot to do with Craig's bible. All the natives wanted to be

Craigs helper. Number one boy made the decision. The native who was finally assigned to Craig sat up all night drying out Craigs bible, by the fire place one page at a time. Besides drying Craigs bible he also awoke Craig every so often to tell him he was watching for Japs. I am sure Craig did not sleep a wink that night. We kidded Craig about this for a long time.

On the third day we made it back to our village command post. When we arrived, there were some sick and a few wounded at the post. They must have had contact with the enemy while we were gone. Speaking of sick. I lost a lot of weight the few days we were gone. All I could eat that would stay down was cheese. So I drank coffee and smoked cigarettes all the time. Part of the time, even the cheese would not stay down. I was down to throwing up only 4-5 times a day. I had to go to the bathroom each day about 6 times That was a lot better then what I had been doing. I must have been getting better. The mission we set out to originally do was over. We had officially mopped-up our area. We were ordered to move to a river that led to the sea shore where a ship would take us to a rest camp. The natives told us that the river was a short distance from the village of the natives that escorted us. The natives volunteered to carry the sick and wounded on stretchers over steep hills, across streams and through thick jungle. Carrying wounded and sick on a stretcher is back breaking on just level ground. In mountains where it is both steep and slippery, it is murder. Our native friends did a great job. They dropped one man coming down a real steep mountain and apologized for the whole two days that it took us to get to the river. The first night of the two day trip from the village command post to the river, we passed another village. The commanding officer of our Regiment was waiting there to join us. This meant our native friends who were hauling some of our personal gear and the machine gun rather than wounded would have to drop our gear and carry the gear of the commander and his staff.

The natives protested when they were ordered to carry the commanders equipment rather than carry ours. Rank meant nothing to the natives. Number one boy stepped in and settled the problem. They carried the commander equipment and gear but they did so reluctantly. Let's face it— the natives were our friends. When the natives reached the river our journey with them was ended. You

could feel sadness. They wanted the friendships to go on. We wanted the friendships to continue. Some of them shook hands. A few of them stared and tried to smile. One or two came through with a hug. I got a slight hug from 'Jakey.' He got a good squeeze from me. It was really a little emotional. Before we departed, we gave them knifes, rusty bayonets, helmets, picks, extra clothing and what ever they wanted that we had. I messed up somewhat. I was going to give "Jakey" my bible... I forgot to do it. Being with these natives had been good for all of us. Those of us who live in the western world could learn a lot about what is really important in life from these people. They had so little yet they gave so much.

When we arrived at the river our combat in the Admiralty Islands ended. There were "ducks" waiting to haul us down the river to a native village along the coast. Here we would wait to be taken to our new REST Camp which was going to be on Howie Island. When we reached the village along the coast, I decided to move

around the village and observe the happenings. About th most unusual sight that struck me was two natives playing cards. The deck of cards had to be at least 10 years old. The numbers were almost worn off. I tried but I could not for the life of me determine what they were playing. What ever it was, the one guy won every hand. They were using three cards. If the native, who was winning every hand turned up low cards, he won. If he turned up high cards, he won. On one hand, the guy losing, turned up two aces. The other native turned up a two - four - and a six, all different suits The 2-4-6 card hand won. They were really having fun. The gambling stakes were 'betel nuts'. Betel nuts look like 'buckeyes' but they have a red intoxicating juice on the inside.

The tiny children in this native village were shy but they would beg for sugar and cigarettes. I did see one Tittle native boy not much older than three, I was told, smoking. To me, it appeared that the women were doing all the work. Included in that work done by women, was plowing out in a field. The native men were giving orders and directions to the women. Some of the women worked while their tin babies were strapped on their back or sometimes to the front of them. To me, it appeared no one was objecting. They seemed to be enjoying life. The young women, up to about their 20's ran around almost half nude. The eyes of we younger G.I's were almost popping out of our heads. You could tell how many wives a native had by the number of color bands he wore around his upper arm. The most I saw on any man in the short time I was there, was four. I think the idea was that the more wives you could support the more important you were in the village. The homes were made of straw and coconut leaves. Most of them were built up off the around. I was not overly impressed with their sewage system. In fact, I did not see a sewage system of any kind.

There soon was a large number of First Cavalry troopers in the village. They had arrived from various mop up operations on the island. They were waiting their turn to be taken by boat over to Howie Island. As you might recall Howie was the small island that we took so that

the Divisional Artillery would have a location that would allow them to cover the entire group of islands in the Admiralties. You might also recall that this little island was not easy to take. Division Artillery did make good use of it but had since left. Howie Island is now going to be a rest area for the Seventh and Eighth Regiment. As we waited our turn for a boat to take us over to the Island, we sat on the beach, looked across the bay at Howie and talked about how great it would be as a place for us to re-cooperate.

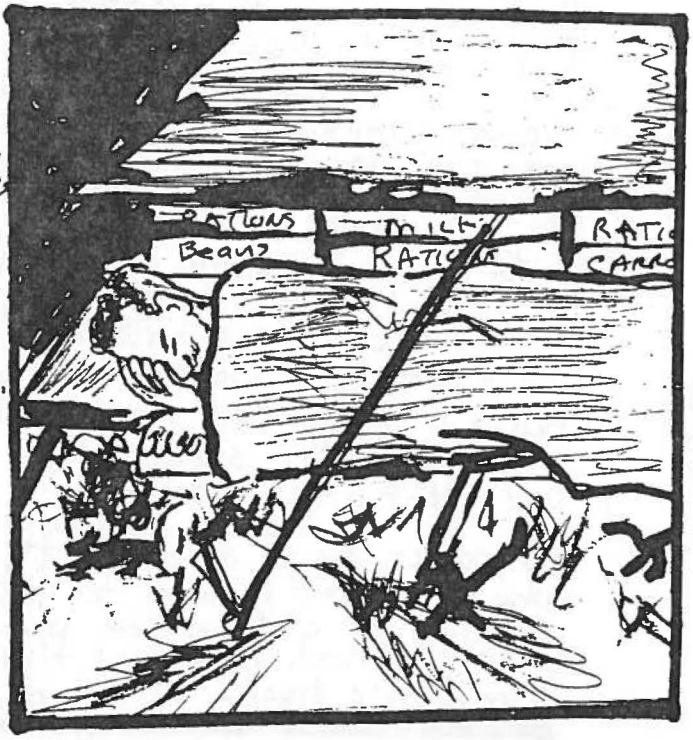
When our turn came to load our gear and equipment we were more then ready. we knew that when we got to Howie and settled down we were going to build a camp. As we came onto the beach it left me with an eerie feeling. we unloaded at the exact place where we made the invasion. At that time the entire island was still pretty much jungle. The Division Artillery unit had done little to improve it. There was one road that extended the length of the island. It was poorly built. As I said before the island was only about one mile long and one-half mile wide. Besides the island having to house the Seventh and Eighth Regiment, we learned that Squadron One was also moving in. This many troops were sure to take up all available space. Our Regiment area was going to be the opposite one-third of the Island. The Eighth was going to use the

first third of the island. The first squadron headquaters wa going to be the space between the Seventh and Eighth Regiment. After we walked off the barge we picked up our gear and marched to our designated Regimental area. The See-Bees were already at work trying to clear the area of the trees, swamp and jungle. The heavy equipment of the See-Bees was sitting every where.

We had not been assigned a particular troop space at this time. we were all just more or less on our own. We felt fairly secure that the enemy was not around. Some times a man has to go off and be alone — He has to think about things — he wants to clear his mind of the tragedies of war. when you lose friends that were as close as brothers, it takes awhile for your senses to return to normal. The sadness you feel never goes away. The strong feelings you developed for one another lingers on and on. I wanted time alone, so I could recall the wonderful things we did together when they were alive. You never forget the friends you had who lost their lives in the war. I am really not sure the feelings I had following the first campaign of combat, could be understood by anyone who was not involved in fighting on the front lines in a war situation.

We all slept on the ground out in the open. Most guys slept with a buddy under a pup tent. I slept alone I made the mistake of sleeping near the food supply tent. As I was laying there trying to get to sleep, I felt a thump, on my chest. A large rat ran over the top of me. In spite of the rats it felt good to lay down and not have to worry about snipers and shells falling. I was still sick from dysentery. Just before dark I was handed some letters from home. It was too dark to read them. I had to stuff them in my pack so that if it rained during the

night they would not get wet. Letters from home ranked close to gold in value. I finally dozed off. I felt a drop of rain. It was cold. I heard rats moving around too. I thought about moving for cover. I lay there and shivered awhile before I got up and moved over, in the dark, to the supply tent. I felt around for a couple of boxes to stretch out on. To my surprise, I found an army cot not being used. I stretched out and immidately went to sleep. In the morning I could again see and hear the rats.



They must have been Japanese rats because they were big and ugly. They were also mean and suicidal. I later found out that they only come in packs at night. The next three days, while the See-Bees were cleaning out the area where we were to camp was spent at target practice. We made use of our auto matic 45's. There were hundreds and hundreds of rats on this island. Most of them were gathered at one spot on the beach. We got rid of most of them with our target practice sessions.

We did however, after building our tents. wake up each morning to see the sand floor of the tent covered with rat tracks.

The first two or three weeks at Howie, the time was Spent working with the See-Bees cleaning out the area where we were going to build the camp. They leveled out a lot of ground for us . The Captain gave orders that we were going to repeat what we had done in New Guinea. we are going to build a liveable place to be . Every one was assigned to detail . In fact, it was detail ,night and day. We had to build officers quarters first. Next, we built our own quarters. Each troop was allowed about a 200 yard long by 40 yards wide area, to build a street of tents. The street itself was located down the middle of the strip. Until cots and squad size tents arrived we slept in pup tents.

After we got our tents and cots, our mildewed, smelly barracks bags arrived. The clothing in the bags smelled bad but what a relief it was to get spare clothing. After the tents went up and the cots were put together, the harder jobs seemed to be assigned. One of the jobs I felt was harder was shoveling sand into trucks at the beach. We shoveled sand for many days. We shoveled sand in front of the tents. We shoveled the sand into the tents and spread it around to make our floors I definately am not a shovel man. We had poles shipped in from Manus Island. These poles were cut and de-barked by our native friends. Incidently, we used these poles to make mosquito racks and shelves above our bunk. We really did not need mosquito nets on Howie Island. The nets were tucked in, under our folded blankets, to keep out mice and small rats. Our tents were furnished exactly like we had done in New Guinea.

When we finished our tents to the exact requirements of our beloved Captain, we preceeded to build a troop latrine.... an eight holer, mess hall, gun supply tent, a lay day room, barber shop, a

great shower and our own movie area. The movie booth was rain proof. The screen was large. There was a small stage in front of the screen for up-to-date war news announcements. Besides having some good movies we had some fine stage shows. Most of these stage shows were traveling bands from the air corp, navy, and even some U.S.O shows. we had a large Red Cross where we could get coffee all hours of the day. We brought along the generator again, so we had a light in each tent. we had boxing matches at Squadron Head quaters once a month. There was not a lot to do for entertainment but there was enough.

On Howie Island there were THREE parade grounds. Each Regiment had a parade grounds and Squadron Headquarters had one. This Division was parade happy. They seemed to have marching parades at the drop of a hat. We had at least one parade every two weeks. A parade every two weeks for most any other outfit, would be out of the question. The parade grounds served as ball diamonds, too. We did have a fair troop softball team. I played short-stop. It gave me a chance to meet a lot of men from all over the United States. The Soft ball games I played in were some of the high lights of my life on Howie. We all looked forward to the games against the other troop teams. Each troop

had a volley ball court. We played volley ball a lot at nigh after supper. Each Regiment built an outdoor basket ball court with a fence behind each basket. I loved that. During one boxing match, when the 12th Cavalry team came over to box our team, I got to spend time with, "Gus", my little mexican pal. We did have to pull a lot of guard and of course there was K.P. We were allowed many opportunities to rest, also.

There were two churches on the island. One was a Protestant church and the other Catholic. They were both built by natives from Manus Island. We had services every Sunday. The churches were used for orientation speeches of various sorts. We had a large dispensary on the island but for any real serious illness or injury you would be sent over to Manus island to the large General hospital. There were American female nurses in the general hospital. A lot of guys would fake injuries and illnesses to try and get over there. You had to be very, very ill or hurt badly to get over to the general hospital

The water on our island was furnished by wells. The Seventh Regiment had two large wells. One of them was located down by the beach next to our shower area. We drew water from this well to wash our clothes We not only washed our clothes weekly, we boiled and scrubbed them. In fact, o Clothing was inspected by officers. If your clothing was not clean enough you were made to take them out and clean them again on the spot. We hauled our own water for washing. Our weekly inspections had recently turned into daily inspections. We are now back into doing close order drill, daily classes on things like first aid, machine gun usage, combat techniques and good patrol practices. It was getting to be a lot like basic training. We started standing reveille every morning, and retreat every night. At reveille we fall out each morning in clean clothing and shaved. At retreat we fall out in sun-tans, shined shoes, and personal weapons clean enough to pass inspection. It got to be spit and polish. What it really got to be was a "big pain in the rear end".

Money on the island, meant very little unless you were a gambler and was sending the money that you won home.. Almost everything you needed or wanted was furnished free. There were a few things you could buy but you did not really have to have them. I sent what money I had home to mom until she insisted I keep a little for spending on personal items. When I got home I found my mom had put part of what I sent her into War Bonds. We did have our combat pay raised a few bucks once

while I was in combat. One of the few places you could spend money was at the P.X. They seldom had anything worth buying. Once in a blue moon, soft candy, cookies, or coca-cola would be shipped in. These items were sold out within a few hours. You were allowed to buy only one canteen cup of coca-cola each time it came. That one cup cost 32¢. For a short time the Army issued each soldier who wanted, it four beers a week for one-half pound (Australian money). This amounted to $1.60. It averaged out about 10¢ a can. I did not drink beer at that time. I got the beer and exchanged my beer with friends for their coca-cola ration.

During the three months we spent resting on Howie Island our Division Headquaters was having each of the four Regiments send squads of men into parts of Manus Island on patrol. Just selected squads from each Regiment were sent out. Guess which squad from our troop was sent out on this patrol. Yes— you guessed it. It was <u>our</u> squad. We were told that we were sent out to look for Stray Japs On Manus Island. I think it was done as a reminder to all of us that we were still at war. My other thought was

that we were soon going to leave this beautiful rest camp a return to combat and they wanted to break it to us gently.

We arrived in Manus by barge in full combat gear. We patroled inland two days. We saw no sign of Japs dead or alive in the area that was mapped out for us. We returned to our starting point and were informed that we would be picked up a day late. Fortunately, we met some See-Bees near by who knew of us. They were the same outfit we worked with the day we came in on the invasion at Manus Island. These See-Bees were also the same men who helped clean up Howie Island for us. One of their commanding officers—or leaders—(I am not sure they had officers or non-coms) told us they would be pleased if we would spend the night at their quarters. We were treated to a non-stop movie. That night for dinner they served us steak with onions and all the trimmings. Even extra steak, if you wanted. We slept on cots with a mattress. In the morning, to our surprise we ate honest to god bacon with our fresh eggs. There was fresh milk and fresh orange juice. After they insisted we eat all we wanted, of everything, I had to pinch myself to make sure I was

not dreaming. I damm near got sick. We sat on the porch that was built off to the side of their quarters that looked over the bay and talked till we could see the barge coming to pick us up. when we tried to thank them for their fine hospitality, they told us we already thanked them by being a good fighting outfit. One See-Bee told me it any thing— we owe you men much more than one comfortable night of rest and a couple of good meals for what you have done for us. These See-Bees sure made our day.

It was nice to get back to Howie Island after the four day patrol on Manus. But in a way it was nice to get a relief from the strict military routine that had been established on Howie before the patrol assignment to Manus. when we returned to the island, we were given a pleasant surprise. We were entertained by a beautiful woman singer. I did not write her name down in my diary. She was a knock-out. Most of the guys just stared and drooled as she sang. A short time later we were presented with a program from the one and only— BOB HOPE— and his cast. This was a great performance. All of the men who wanted to see this show

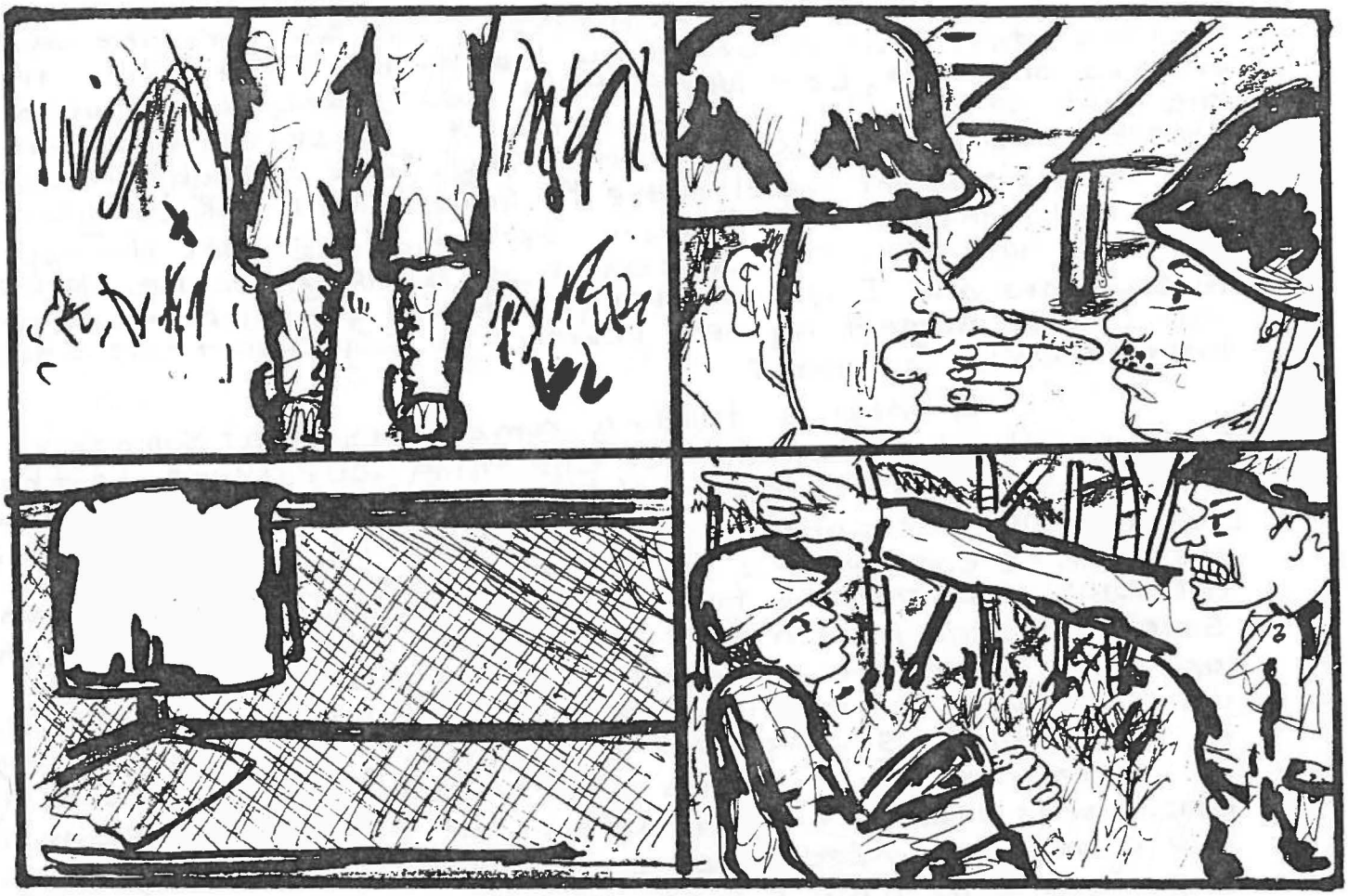
had to sign up for it. We all loaded on to barges and rod to a remote island in the Admiralities to a place I had never been. It took a half day to get there. We were given a packed lunch. When we arrived there was already a huge crowd waiting. Some eager telephone men were hanging high in coconut trees. The temporarily stage had just been built that morning. The back part of the stage was a dressing room — a squad tent. Included in Bob Hope's cast was Jerry Kalona, Francis Langford and a very young dancer. The dancer was really stacked. She jitter bugged, one at a time, with four different guys. One of the men was "Boogie". That brought on a standing ovation. Every one went nuts over her. Again, I did not get her name in my diary. In the audience was a group of nurses from the general hospital on Manus Island. We all felt that Hope held back on some of his "off color" jokes because of them. When he first appeared, he actually did not walk on stage — he walked in front of the stage, threw a big shovel on the stage which made a lot of noise and began his program with, "I dont know about you guys, but I ain't taking any chances if there is an air raid." There was a Jap air raid the night he arrived on the main island. He climbed up on stage and as soon as he got there he looked out to see our Division commander hurrying to his seat. Hope stopped him by pointing at him and saying, "Who the hell do you think you are coming to the show late". He continued, "some one ought to throw the bum out". I'm sure it was all a put-on but the G.I.'s sure got a kick out of him embarassing a General like that. He no sooner got into his joke routine when he broke into a laughing spell of his own. He pointed out toward the audience and said, "You have got to see this" — he motioned for a bunch of G.I.'s to come up on the stage. They were carrying something. It was a poncho. Across it was painted in white, "TO HELL WITH BULLY BEEF... WE STILL HAVE HOPE". I do not believe He was expecting this. He had a picture taken with the men and the sign. Francis Langford sang a few of her favorite songs and some of the G.I.'s just melted. Jerry Kalona Sang one of his noted long winded songs and played his slide trombone. On the island at this same time but in active duty with the navy, was another celebrity entertainer. His name was Lanny Ross. Lanny and Francis Langford sang a couple of songs together. All in all, it was a great show. It was a show I will remember forever. When it came to entertaining troops in World War II I really do not believe any celebrity could compare with Bob Hope. The show lasted for well over two hours. We just made it back to Hqrtrs by dark. This was one of my favorite days in the service.

All we did the last few weeks of our stay at Howie Island was to carry out routine chores. Reveille in the morning.... don't forget to shave. After breakfast we cleaned up our tent, which means we raked the sand out smoothly, folded our clothing neatly on the shelves above our bunk and policed the tent area. All of this was done for the benefit of the officers who inspected each day. After inspection each morning we did some close-order drill. The rest of the morning was spent attending classes, till lunch. We were given about one half hour after lunch to rest. Next, we played ball, washed Cloths, went swimming or just goofed off. Some times after lunch we were assigned to detail. They really wanted us to get involved in some physical activity during the afternoons. About 3:00 P.M. we got ready for retreat. Following retreat was supper. After supper we went to our tent and waited for ATEBRIN call. Atebrin is a lemon yellow pill that is taken daily to ward off malaria. It did do the job for most of the men. I had a slight dose of malaria later in the Philippines. As I mentioned before, atebrin turns your skin to a sickly lemon yellow color. Following "Atebrin Call" you were on your own. You could do what you wanted as long as what you wanted to do could be done on Howie Island. Stage shows, boxing matches and band music programs were rare as was expected, but you could go whenever one was staged. Mostly it was a movie at our own Regiment, Squadron Head quaters or at the Eighth Regiment area. Some guys played cards in the day room or listened to records. We had a good collection of "Glen Miller" records. The routine details were still K.P. and Guard Duty at vital points. They added "gun cleaning" detail. The guns that we cleaned and oiled daily were all the machine guns and mortars. K.P. was done 7 days at a time. Everyone took turns. K.P. was done the same as in New Guinea.

Speaking of detail reminds me of one of my most hated troop officers. This guy put me on more detail. I believe he disliked me — No, I think it was more like hate or despise. The day he arrived on Howie Island I said to my self there is a ninety-day wonder if there ever was one. I should have left my thoughts right there and let it go at that — I just could not let "well enough" alone. His last name in not Joke but the first letter of his last name begins with the letter "J". I will not use his last name to save both him and me embarassment. One time while on Howie, I got 14 straight days of K.P. My turn was to come up for the 7 day regular detail in one more day. I was given 7 additional

days of K.P. for saying, "go ahead, sir". I was standing in the back of a class conducted by Lieutenant Joke. He told me to sit down. I asked it it was all right to stand. He said "I told you to sit". I mumbled something unprintable and I sat down. He told me if I did not straighen up he would put me on K.P. for seven days. An intelligent man at this point would have shut up and looked the other way. No one ever accused me of being intelligent. I said "go ahead, Sir" which was not only a dumb thing to say — it was really just plain stupid. Lieutenant Joke told me to report to the First Sergeant and tell him what happened. The First Sergeant was everyone's buddy in our troop. He told me he could not give me 7 days K.P. for a stupid reason like that. He told me to go back and tell the Lieutenant he could not put me on K.P. for that reason. I went back, interrupted his class and told him what the First Sergeant said. The officers face got red — the veins in his neck almost broke as he shouted "WE'LL SEE ABOUT THAT! I waited as the First Sergeant and Lieutenant Joke talked. The Sergeant motioned me over to him and said, "Foss, you will have to go on K.P. an extra seven days. I never thought I would ever have to do a thing like this to any of my men." He continued, "For the record I want you to know I think Lieutenant Joke is a jerk." That was good enough for me. I pictured him as a jerk, too. Later in the day I asked the Captain if Joke could do this to me. The Captain said he could. Joke told the captain I was on K.P. for <u>MENTAL INSUBORDIATION</u>. Joke said my attitude was noticeably poor. Mental insbornation means that you look at someone as if you want to hit them. I'm sure it was truly mental insubordiation. I would have loved to put one good punch on the end of the Lieutenants nose. I was dumb — but not dumb enough to punch a superior. Four days into K.P., I got some revenge. The officers sleeping quarters were directly across the troop street from where I did the K.P. duty's. K.P. begins at 4:00 <u>A.M.</u> K.P. ended about 10:00 P.M. — when everyone was asleep. I simply sang long and loud, at I labored on my job. The Captain and Lieutenant asked that I be released of my punishment. I refused. They put up with this singing routine for 10 more days. Funny thing, — I was never put on K.P. in this outfit again.

Before this K.P. Caper of 14 days, I had another slight run in with the honerable Lieutenant Joke. That time I did the newest punishment for "goofing up". It was called Clean all the machine guns and mortars in the troop. How did I earn this honor, you ask? I earned it because I did not shave. The order came out to shave for revellie. I had never



shaved in my young life. I knew if I once started I would have to shave every day. I tried to bluff and it did not work. During one of the inspections a few days after Lieutenant Joke came to our outfit, he eased up real close to my face and said "you didn't shave this morning, did you trooper?" I swear that I do not know why I gave this answer— I said, "Shit Sir, I've never shaved." The men in the ranks broke up. Joke did not think that was funny. As I thought about it later, I did not think it was funny either. The next day was the first day I ever shaved in my life. I really should have known Joke was going to be a problem for me at the first formation he helped command. On the very first day I saw him we were in formation for retreat. He shouted "attention". He did an "about face" right in front of me. In the silence between "attention" and "present arms" I thought I said quietly "that dumb ass has his leggings on backwards", which he did. The problem was not what I said but how far what I had said, carried. He heard me. I was restricted to quarters for one week. The towel incident was not my fault. We had a

high rank General visit and inspect our quarters. The Gene and his staff was escorted by Lieutenant Jake. when they entered our tent, Earl Nolte's towel was hanging between his bunk and my bunk. Earl forgot to wash it. That towel smelled like a dead skunk. Naturally, Jake thought it was me that placed the towel there. He said I will talk to you later and pointed at me. Earl, in the meantime took the rap. Jake did nothing to Earl. Jake did not even apologize to me. Needless to say, Jake and I did not hit it off real good. Believe it or not I have something real positive to say about this officer later on while in combat

We had a feeling amoung us that something big was about to happen. For one thing, our Troop softball team was in second place about to play off for the Regiment Championship. For another thing, things were going to nice and much to comfortable. I say this because the officers and non-coms were getting to be almost friendly. Our platoon sergeant came into our tent one night, listened to our quartet and even talked — in a nomal tone. He never comes in to visit. He only comes into your tent following an officer, to write down suggestions on how to improve your quarters or to keep track of "gigs" for messing up some way. T gigs' ment trouble for you. when the platoon sergeant said our quartet sounded good — we knew for sure something important was about happen.

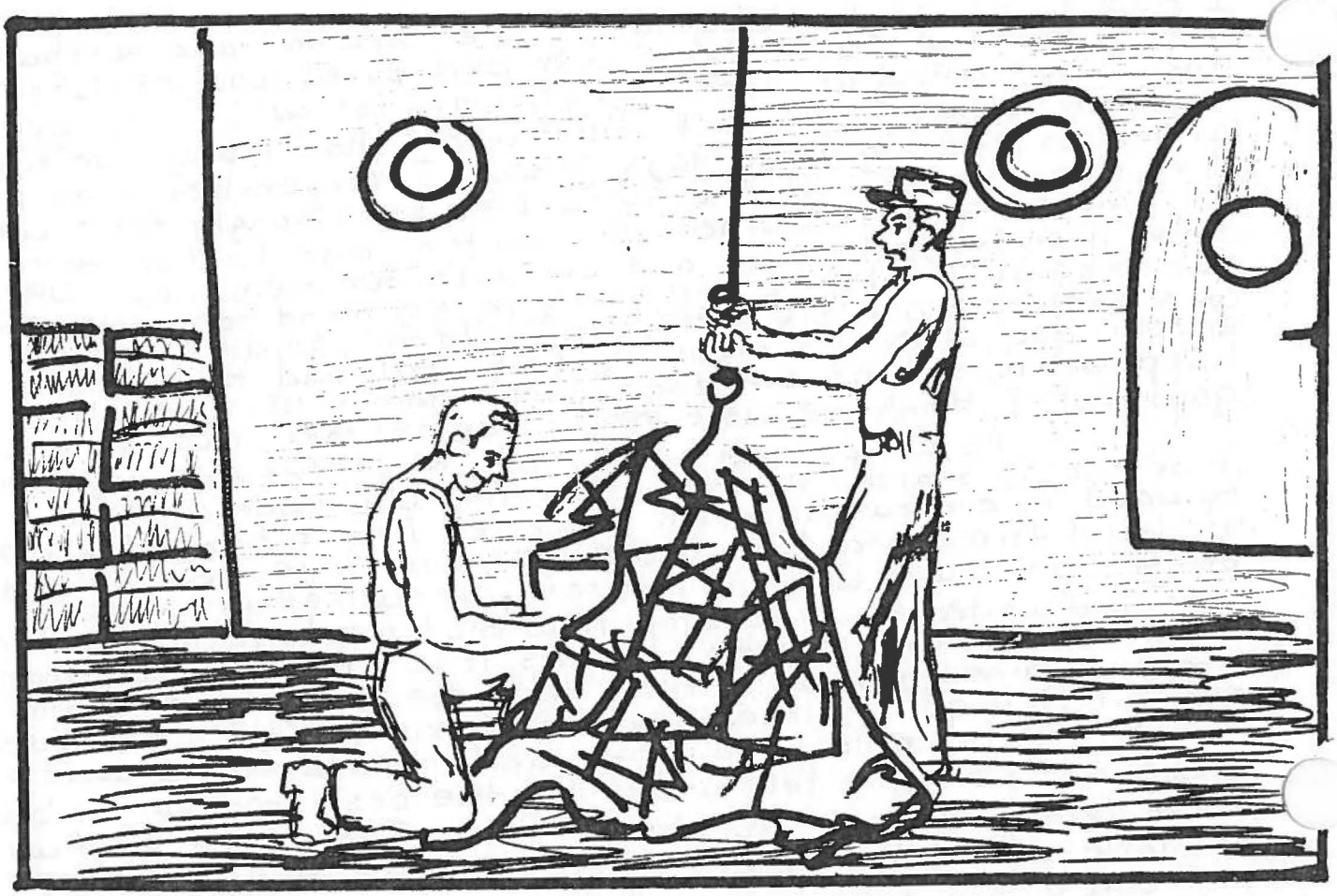
He finally broke down and told us what he was doing in our tent. He let us know that our squad was to be a detail whose job was going to be that of setting up a temporary camp on Los Negros. One of us asked what purpose the temporary camp was going to serve. No one of authority would tell. This camp was going to be where all the Regiments from Howie Island would move until boats arrived that would be loaded with supplies and equipment. As soon as all the troops arrived and the ships were loaded, we would be on our way to another invasion. I asked him where we might be going. He could not tell us. That night, our squad packed our barrack . We got our gear and pack together. We got up at 6:00 A.M. We tore down the racks and table inside our tent we let down the corner poles, folded up the tent and turned it in to the supply sergeant. We had eaten and were ready to leave by 7:30 A.M. We did not load into the barge till 1:00 P.M.

As we pulled away from Howie Island for the last time, I not only had some fond memories but some sad ones as well. I made some very good friends here.

I had a lot of fun playing on the baseball and softball teams. The night "Gus" came over and boxed was neat. Fritz and I got ahold of some australian 'rot-gut'. Fritz got to acting silly, I got sick. Earl and I had many fun times at movies and big band jazz shows. I remember one night it rained so hard and the wind blew so strongly that we all had to grab to corners of the tent and hold on for dear life. I could go on and on with "fun memories. One sad memory that I will carry in my mind for a long time was seeing those six little Jap "children" soldiers on the second day, after the invasion. The real bad thing that happened was that Lieutenant Joke joined us. We got a good rest. I think we were ready for another invasion.

As we arrived in the barge at Los Negros, believe it or not, it started to rain. Every time we made a move toward a combat situation it seemed like it brought on rain. We had three beautiful months of sunshine and balmy breezes on Howie. When it did rain, we walked into a dry tent and waited for it to stop. Now that we have no shelter except helmet and poncho, it pours. It is amazing how many times it rained just at a time we were wishing it would not rain. We got into a weapons carrier, after we loaded it with tents, poles and pegs and headed for a camp space our sergeant felt would be the best location to be. There was not much to choose from. Every spot that was available along the beach was a sea of mud. Compared to the camp we had left at Howie, they all looked like huge pig pens. We made a decision and dropped off the folded squad tents every 10-15 feet. we did this through three truck loads. We first ate our K-rations in the rain then we quickly put up pup tents and crawled in. About the time we got ready to sack in, an officer from our outfit arrived and decided to haul us off to a casual camp. for this first night. These Casual Camps are for G.I's on the move. These guys that use Casual camps are either coming back from a trip to a hospital or they are on their way back to combat after being in the hospital. We only spent one night in the Casual Camp. It was better than sleeping on the ground. The breakfast we had was better than K-rations. It was, however, oatmeal and dehydrated eggs. We returned to the area we selected for the temporary camp and completed our job. Did we ever get the "raspberries" for the area we picked for our temporary camp by the other guys in our outfit when they showed up. I was accused of picking the spot... "Only a farmer from Iowa would pick a pig pen like this to live in".

Most of the time we spent at the temporary camp



was used loading supplies and equipment into trucks on the shore which were later loaded on to the A.P.A. Ship we would sail out on or directly from a barge to L.S.T's.

It rained every day we were there. The sea of mud we sat in got deeper and deeper. We did get to see a few movies of outfits camped near by. We even had to sit in the rain to watch the movies. Our squad not only was selected as advance detail to set up the temporary camp but we were picked to load the ship we were to leave on. I must have made Lieutenant Jake real mad. I guess he wanted me out of camp. As barges brought goods, supplies, equipment and ammunition out to us on board the ship, we unloaded the loading nets. We hauled the contents to the proper deck for storage. We stayed on board for four days, we ate good navy chow. On the fifth day the other G.I's came aboard. We spent a few days learning to unload our gear and equipment down the rope ladders attached to the side of the ship. We sailed out about three days after we loaded on to the APA. No one told us our destination. We were sure we were going to the Philippine Islands.

CHAPTER VII
LEYTE ISLAND

I failed to write in my diary the name of the A.P.A ship on which we sailed from the Admiralty Islands. I do Know our squad was not assigned to the bottom deck, three feet from the ships rudder as we had been assigned on board the ship that took us from the United States to Australia, thank god. This ship did not seem overly crowded with G.I.'s. but the quarters still felt a little crowded because no matter where they assigned you, the space between you and the guy in the bunk above you, below you, and across from you was limited. The big reason you felt "pressed in," was. the "bulky" life jacket you were required to have either on your body or within arms length. After each man finds a place to hang his full field pack., helmet, personal weapon, canteen, belt, etc, there is little room left over.

This ship was headed for combat and it was loaded with ammunition and explosives. I Know this for sure. I was on the detail to load it, thanks to Lieutenant Joke. If for some reason this ship was hit by a land mine, or ^sub ?shell, The explosives stored in the bottom decks would

blow this ship sky high.

Life on board this A.P.A ship was very similar to what took place coming over from the "states". The food was not all that great but you could eat it. They did give us three meals a day. The shower situation was the same. You could take as many 'salt water' showers as you wanted. Fresh water was limited. Time dragged on board ship until you found yourself thinking of the seriousness of your mission. We were informed of our destination a short time after the ship left the bay of Manus. We were told that we were heading where "all of us" felt we would be heading. We were all told that we were going to the Philippines. The landing was going to be Leyte Island. No one seemed to be familiar with Leyte Island. One G.I. said it was located about in the middle of the whole chain of Islands. That was about as close as any one could come. The information we were given was short, simple and it logically appeared inaccurate. Most of what we learned was read from a booklet that was passed around from G.I. to G.I.

It read like an out dated travel agency advertisement. Things like "enjoy the beauty of the islands at sun set" and 'visit with the friendly, spanish speaking mountain villagers' did not seem to be what we were searching for. I will admit I was impressed with their description of the beautiful scenic mountains and the favorable tropical breezes. It almost convienced me that the Philippines would seem like a paradise vacation. The pamphlet lied. The people did speak a lot of Spanish. They spoke some English. The beautiful mountains when you cross them on foot, carring tons of equipment are any thing but eye appealing. On occasion, you could find a tropical breeze. Most of the time it was plain hot! It did not turn out to be a paradise. We were not going there on vacation. The information we gained from the pamphlet was not military orienated. We learned very little except that we knew most of the Philippines was jungle. It got very hot. It rained frequently. Some of the Filpino people would resent us but that most of the people living there wanted to be liberated from the Japs. We had read and heard

a lot about the surrender at Corregidor and Bataan. None of us on board the ship were "real happy" about what the Japs did to our men stationed there. We did know that General Douglas MacArthur was forced to leave the islands. We were also aware that the General wanted the islands back under United States control—, with a passion. We had read a great deal about how Japan invaded and controlled the Philippines. We watched films about how they controlled those they invaded. Even if the facts were not shown to us that would give us combat type detail information, I will tell you, the incentive to get a foothold in the Philippines and to soundly whip the Japs, was there.

In our first lecture, the commanding officer showed us a blown up map of Leyte Island and its relationship to the other islands in the Philippine group. Leyte Island was almost in the center of the group of islands, like the one G.I. said. It was really a little more south of the center of the group. He told us we had three objectives to overcome in making this invasion and we should memorize them. Two of the objectives our squad was to accomplish would be carried out on day one of the invasion. The third objective would be fulfilled on day two. I noted that the commander did not say we will do objective two if one was completed and objective three if two is successful. He explained all three objectives as if there was "no doubt". Objective one was to join 'G' Troop and 'F' Troop to give machine gun back up after the beach head was established. We were to secure a small air strip directly in line with the point at which we invaded the island. The second objective was to meet at a road behind the air strip. All three troops were to meet at a bridge on this road. The number of casualities were to be counted at this bridge. The third objective was to take the capital city of Tacloben down this road about 5-6 miles. How we were to attack Tacloben would depend on how many casualities we had. This whole plan sounded very, very simple as it was explained to us on board the ship, days before it happened

We really did carry out the three objectives, as planned. The whole task turned out to be much, much more complicated than it was diagrammed on paper. The biggest problem came even before we got to the first

objective. The officers neglected to tell us there would be large numbers of enemy waiting for us on the beach with automatic weapons eager to blow our brains out. We knew this was going to happen but there was no mention of it during the explaination. Most important of all, our commander was not aware that the barge we landed on was going to be driven by a sea-man who was a first-class bone-head.

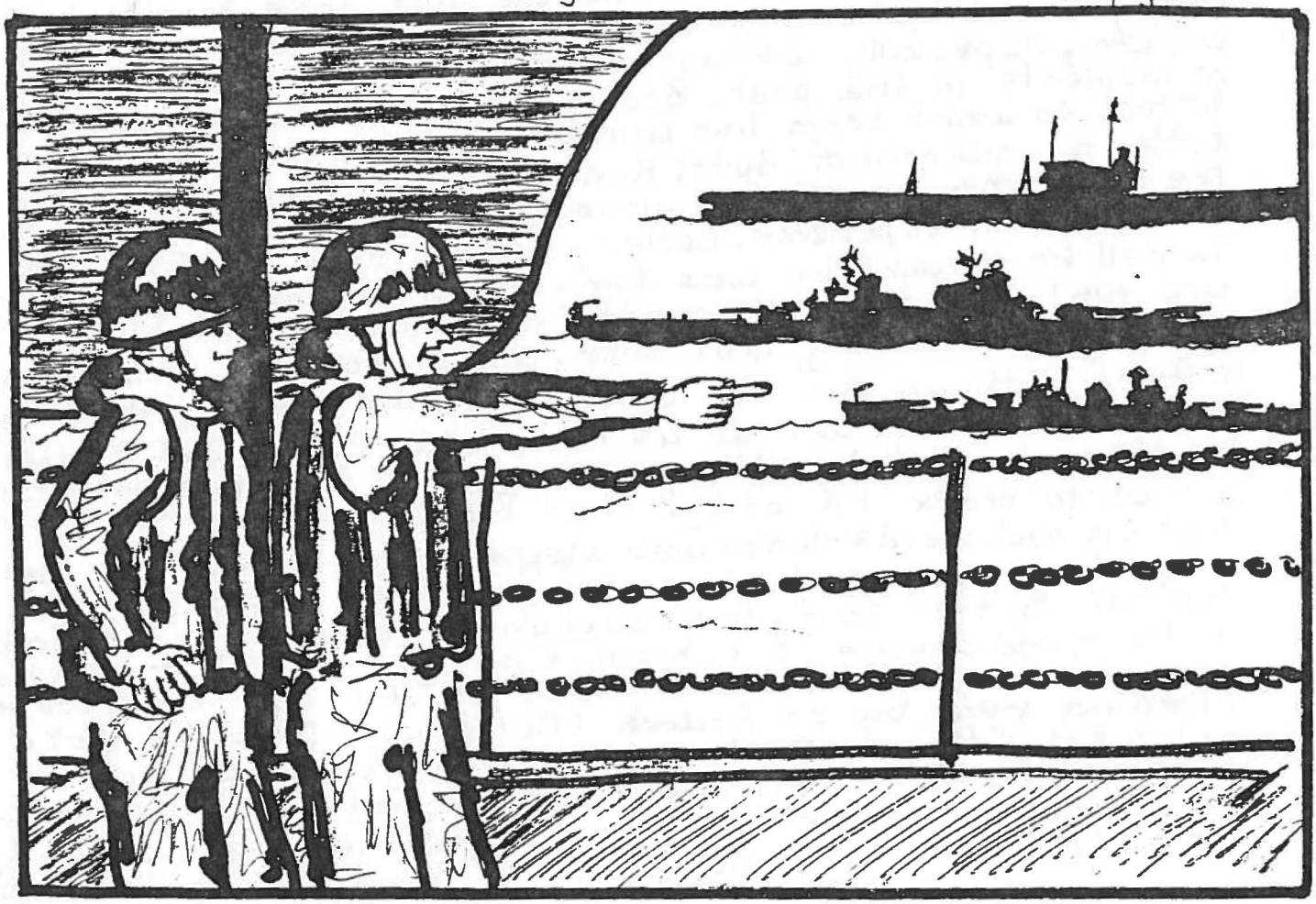
As our ship sailed toward Leyte Island we performed a number of drills that we had not done on past ships. Some of the drills were very simple. A few were complicated. One of the simple drills was called a 'fire drill'. All we did for this drill was to move out of the way of the ships crew upon a given signal so they could put out any fire that might start. No problem, we all caught on to this drill in a hurry. The ship was loaded with explosives and we all knew it. We were not eager for a fire to reach the ammunition storage decks. All of the men who were machine gunners were called out to be given instruction on how to load and fire the Navy 50 calibar machine guns. and a little instruction on their Anti-Air Craft gun We joined the regular navy crew drills when an alert was sounded for them to get to their stations. We did not actually fire either Navy gun. They just wanted us as a back up — just in case. We walked through a couple of drills on how to abandon ship, if we were attacked. Like I said before, if we were hit I think we would have blown up so fast that none of us would have known what hit us. The scary part about it is we could have been attacked easily. Our ship was sailing in <u>deep</u> enemy territory.

Besides a few drills we did do some detail We scrubbed the deck where our quarters were located. We kept the kitchen, latrine, and our quarters policed. Twice a day we did calisthenics on the top deck. At least once each day our troop met to go over the invasion objectives. We attended refresher classes on combat techniques. We rested, but we also worried a lot about what was ahead. I wrote mom a few nice letters that would not really be delivered till way after the invasion and then only after they had been 100% censored. Again, I reminded

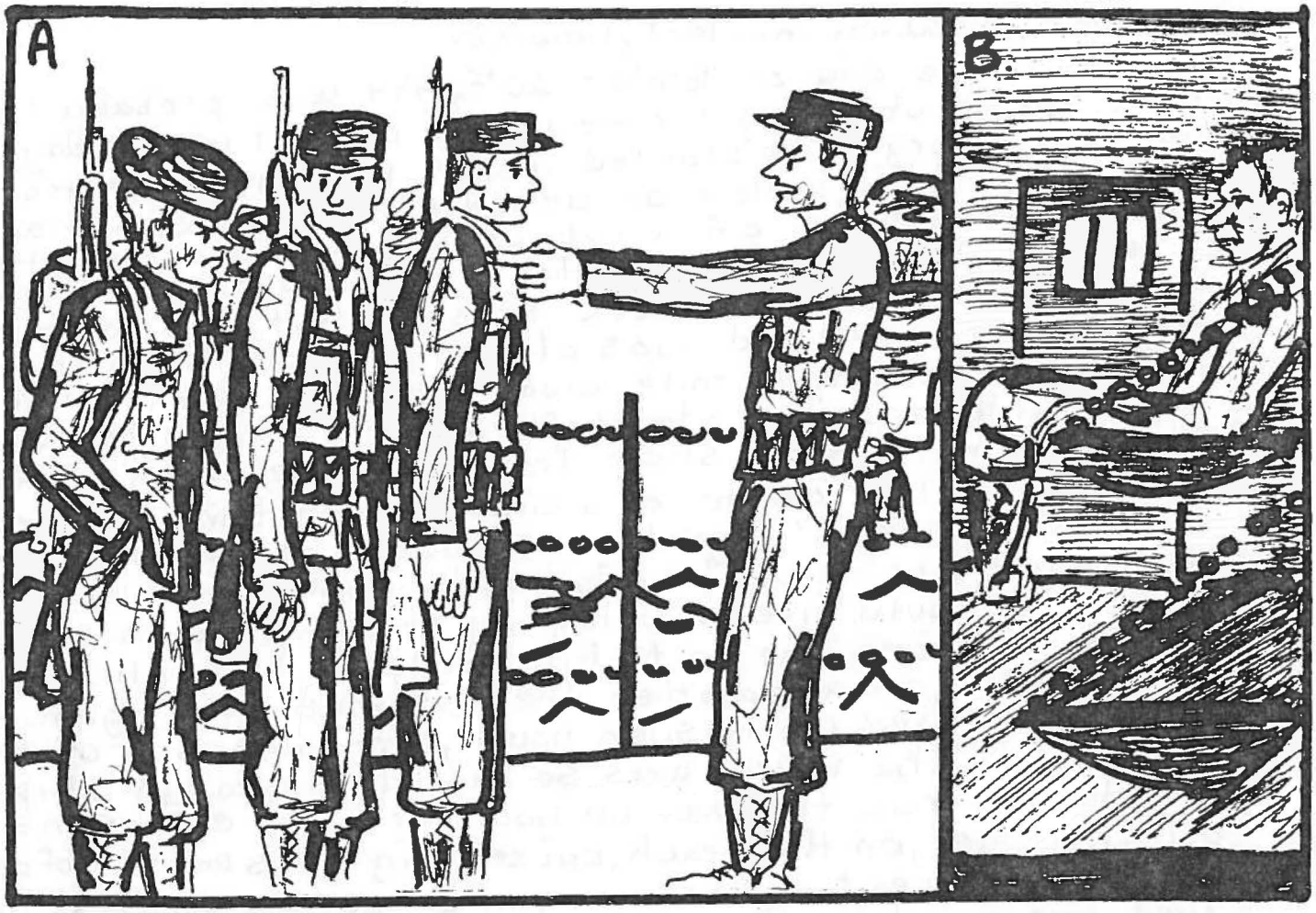
her how great I thought she was. I told her that I hoped I would do nothing in this war that would disgrace her or our family. It is really difficult to write a letter to a loved one at this time. You have no idea what fate has in store for you. We all felt this was going to be a big invasion..... it was.

The second day at sea we awoke to a very impressive and gratifying sight. When we came up on top deck from our sleeping quarters, we saw that we had been joined, during the night by hundreds of American ships. We could make out destroyers and cruisers on either side of us. More A.P.A. ships joined us. Off in the distance we could make out two Air-Craft carriers. Each day the air-craft carriers sent out patrol planes. The speaker system on the ship announced that we had thirteen battle ships in the convoy. This was a big convoy.

For a few days before the invasion my good



buddy Lieutenant Joke was at it again This time his sights were not only directed at me, he was doing his best to irritate the whole squad. For the life of me I did not understand his motive for doing what he was doing to us this day. He was having our squad appear on top deck for rank inspection each day after lunch. Not one other squad on the ship was doing this. He might have been showing his superior officers his skill in doing close order drill. Maybe he was bored. Possibly he wanted to impress his superiors how well he could discipline his men. We all think he did this to show us he was in authority. What ever his reason, it was in poor taste because one of the other officers asked me why we 'fell out' each day. I had to tell him, "I have no idea". The officer that questioned me agreed it was an unusual thing to do. I was embarrassed. We all took a ribbing from the other G.I's on board. Little did Lieutenant Joke know how upset he was making one of my squad buddies, Ron Butler. Ron did not take kindly to unexplained actions that were issued by non-coms and officers, especially officers. Butler had reacted to these kind of incidents in the past. Because he had reacted negative before to what seem like unreasonable orders, we all gave Butler the nickname of "Butt". Ron always got the short end of the deal when he reacted without thinking. Again, he had not learned from experience. Butler asked Lieutenant Joke what in hell he thought he was doing. When you are a private you just don't say to an officer, "what the hell do you think you are doing"? For sure, you do not say that to an officer with an ego like Joke has. Joke told "Butt" to keep his mouth shut and do as he is told. Butler did neither of these two things. The next day when the Lieutenant called us to order he noticed that Butler had his fatigue hat on backwards. When Joke stepped before him during the inspection part of the formation, he asked Ron to straighten his hat. Butler said, loud enough for everyone, on A-deck, to hear, and observe, "Sir, blow it out your A--." It shocked everyone in formation and most of the G.I's who were observing near by on A-deck. (Actually, I loved it.) Joke repeated, "Private Butler. Straighten your cap." Butler just smiled. Joke sent a non-com to get the ships captain to come up on A-deck. Joke requested the ship captain to address Butler. He nicely asked "Ron to straighten up



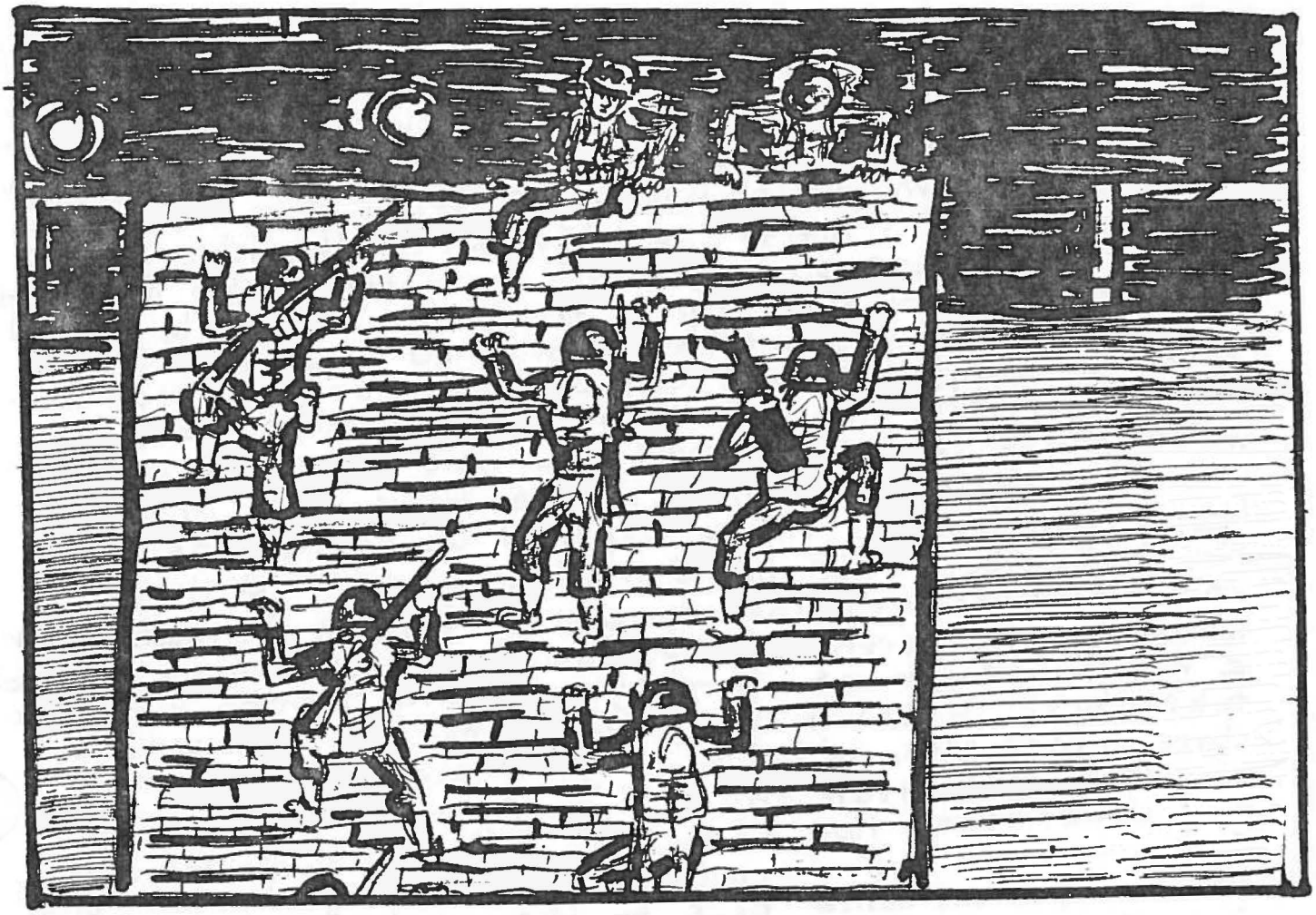
his cup." Butler said, "Sir, no disrespect to you is intended ... but, I refuse to obey your command." 'Butt' was put in the ship's brig' till the morning of the invasion. He survived on bread and water. The morning of the invasion he was released just in time to gather up his gear and equipment so he could go over the side of the ship into a waiting barge. Just before he went over the side of the ship, he walked over to Joke and said to him, "Joke, dont push me in combat or I promise you will not live to tell about it". Joke said, "is that a threat?". Butler said, "yes, it is". The third night we dug in after the invasion, Butler was dug in to my left. Joke was dug in to the hole to my right. Early in the night with no Jap threat around any place, I heard the pop. of a hand grenade to my left. I ducked deep down in my fox hole. The hand grenade exploded in front of the fox hole to my right. Next morning Lieutenant Joke wanted to know who threw the hand grenade last night, and why. There was no answer. In a way — Butler was my hero. I did not approve of the hand

grenade throwing incident, however.

The day of October 20th, 1944 was probably the most memorable day for me in the war. It was a day I will never forget. It started about 8:00 A.M. I was feasting in the ships galley on dehydrated eggs, oat meal, and I was sipping on a cup of god-awful army coffee. I felt the ship vibrate slightly. I finished my meal and hurried up to the main deck to see what was happening. The sight I witnessed was almost overwhelming. To the left, about one-half mile away from our anchored ship, were thirteen United States Navy battle ships. They were about 2-3 miles from shore. They faced the beach as they formed about a quarter of a circle. In rotation, they took turns firing their largest guns toward the beach, where soon our troops would be heading to make an invasion. One ship would fire a volley of shells. As soon as that ship ended firing, the next ship fired, etc. After all thirteen ships fired, one after another, they started over again. The large guns fired with such power, fire came out of the gun barrel. The noise was so loud it caused our ship to vibrate. You had to cover up your ears. The explosions you could see, on the beach, caused big gaps and tons of damage. The shelling went on for an hour or so. The battle ships fired again, at random, just before the first wave hit the beach. To someone from Iowa, who never gets to see ships, this was exciting to watch the Navy do its job

Just before the battle ships ceased firing I saw the first wave of soldiers heading for the beach. About one half mile or so behind the first wave was another sight I had never seen before. It was rocket launcher ships. They threw so many rockets into the air in such large numbers that they almost filled the sky. The thunder sound that was made as the rockets exploded on the beach was indeed the same sound that is made after lightening strikes, multiplied many, many times. About five minutes before the first wave arrived at the beach both the battle ships and the rocket launcher ships stopped firing.

When the rocket launcher ships stopped firing and the first wave was about to hit the beach that seemed to be the signal for us to get our equipment and get together, to go over the side of the ship, down the rope



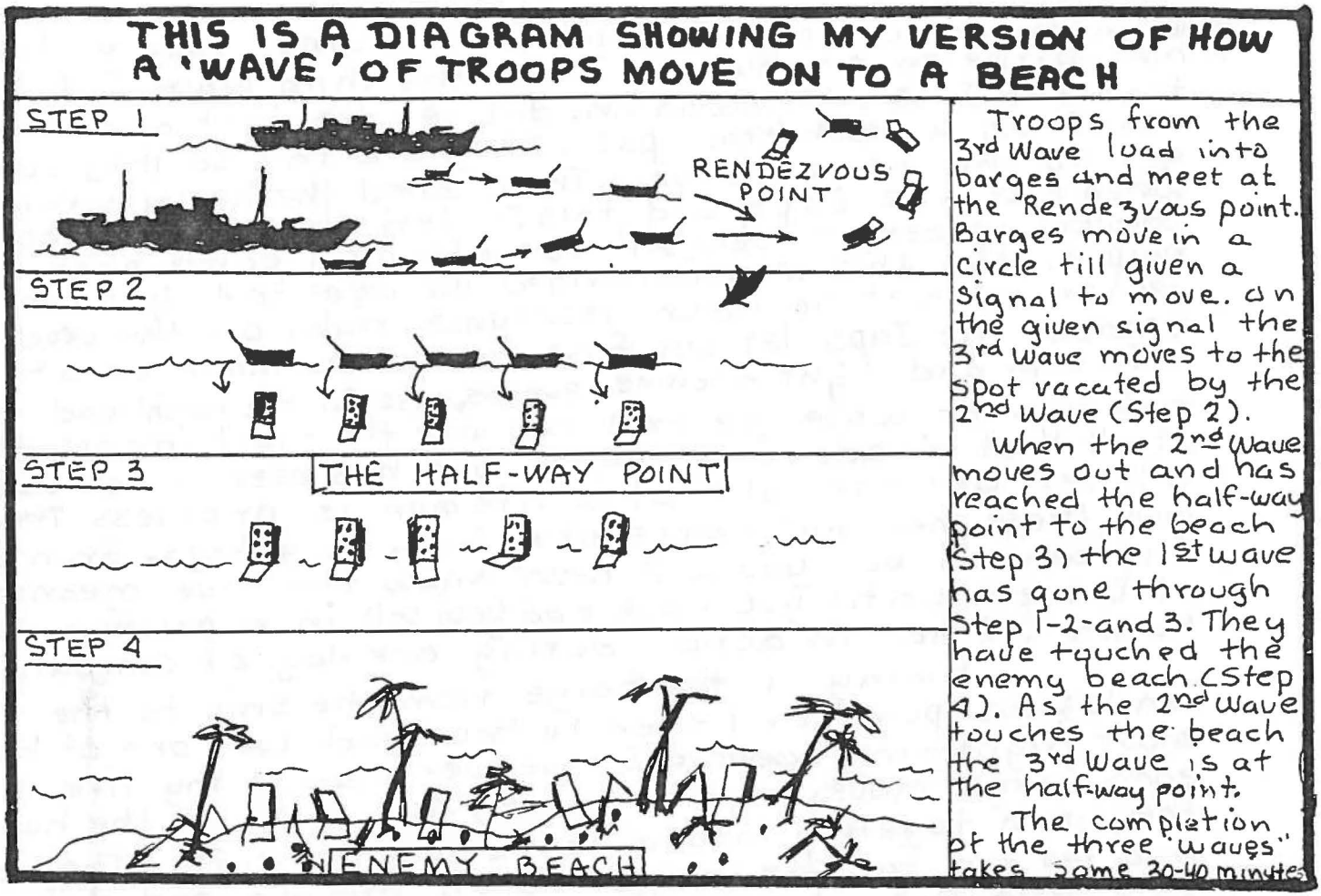
ladder, and into the barge that was soon take us to shore. we had practiced this loading from ship to barge for four days before we left the Admiralty Islands. Loading into a bouncing barge from a rope ladder that is some thirty feet below, I found out is difficult to say the least. What makes it difficult is the weight you are carrying. You not only carry a heavy full field pack, helmet, personal weapon, shovel and canteen but you are lugging a part of a machine gun that can weighs up to 53 additional pounds. Besides all of this you each carry two extra boxes of machine gun ammunition which weights twenty pounds apiece. I really could not believe I was doing this. All of the men in the squad had similar loads on their bodies. The most remarkable thing, I thought, was that we got all of this equipment, gear, and the entire machine gun into the barge without mishap. The odds of doing this is about the same as throwing a seven, five times straight, at the Crap table in Reno.

As we filled the bouncing barge I became aware

bullets were coming at us from many directions. As we pulled away my heart pounder very hard. I noticed a very loud explosion, another and another. The bullets and noise I heard was Jap fighter planes. They were straffing us and had dropped some bombs near by. (I really was not aware we were being straffed and bombed at the time it was happening. I was so engrossed on getting the men and equipment from the ship to the barge I hardly noticed. Had I noticed I might have panicked and done something stupid.) Our barge was one of many barges loading and getting ready to head for a "rendezvous" area in the harbor, so that we could assemble the third wave.

All of the men in the third wave carry heavy weapons. The heavy weapons we carry consist of the 30 caliber water cooled machine guns and the 81 millimeter mortars. The use and purpose of the machine gun in combat has been explained earlier. The dictionary describes a mortar weapon as a muzzle-loading cannon having a tube, short, in relation to its caliber, and is used to throw projectiles with low muzzle velocities at high angles. I quote from the dictionary because I really do not understand how to explain the way a mortar works. I can tell you from experience that I was glad when the mortar observer called back to the mortar squad for help in knocking out a convey of trucks coming toward us. With-in just a short time it was done. You could hear the shells drop down a tube. You could hear the shell as it left the tube. You could see the shell explode. What happened in between I can not tell you. Both the machine gun and the 81 milimeter mortar are used to give back-up support to riflemen.

By the time the barge I was on had reached the rendezvous point, in the harbor, to begin the formation of the third wave, the first wave was very close to the beach. The second wave had reached a position about one-half the distance toward the beach. The diagram on the next page shows how a "wave" forms and how it moves toward the beach to attack. A "wave" is simply a term given to describe a large number of attacking troops sweeping in a common direction. In this case, the troops are moving in barges. The common direction they are moving is from ships anchored in the bay

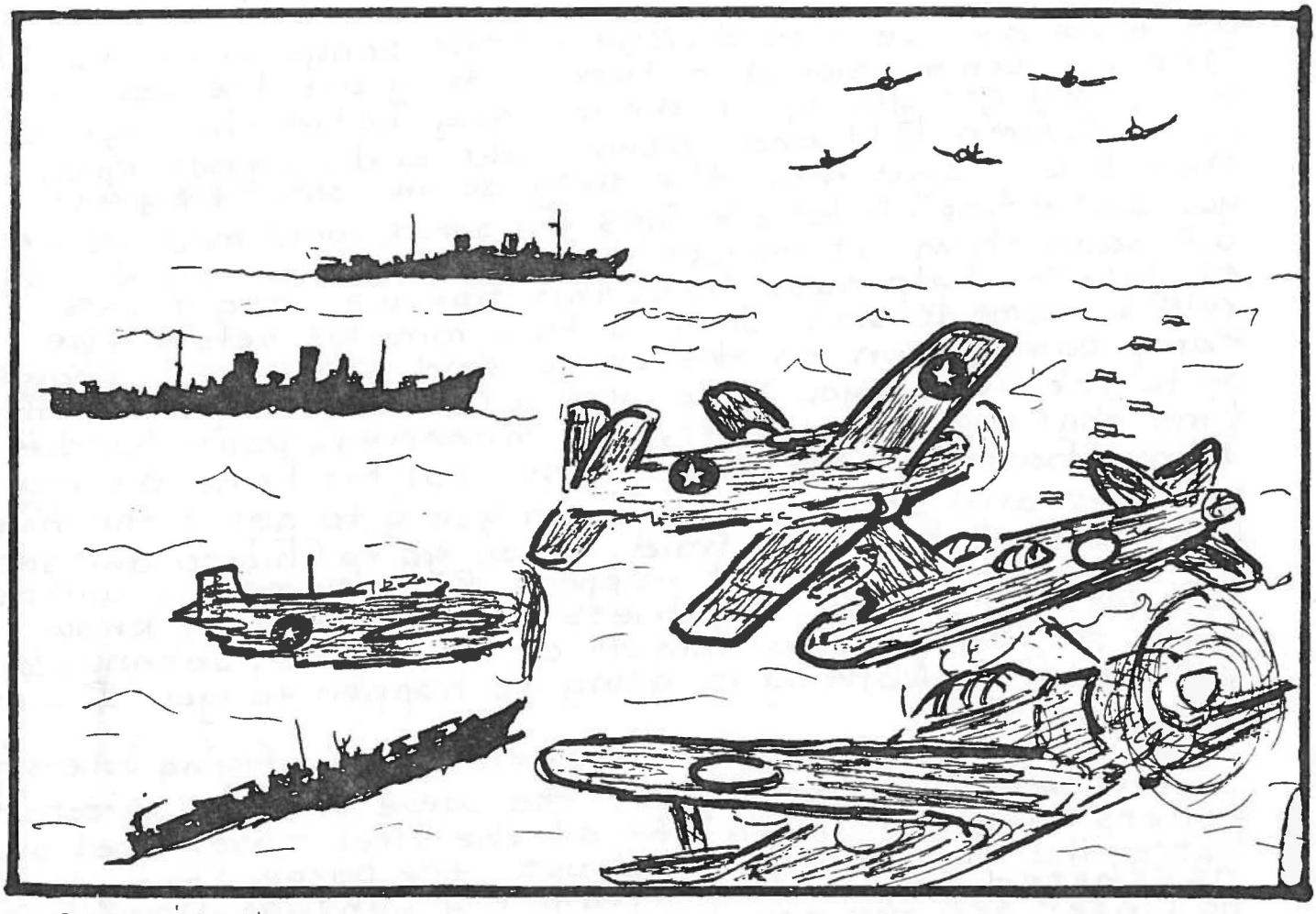


toward a designated spot on the beach. The line of barges, side by side with gaps between, resemble a "wave" of water as it heads toward the beach. Thus, the attacking troops sweeping toward the beach are referred to as a "wave".

I have only heard of three waves making a beachhead. There may well be more. The first wave is made up of riflemen. They are the ones responsible for getting a foothold on the enemy beach. The second wave brings in a combination of riflemen and <u>light</u> weapons. The light weapons are 30 caliber air cooled machine guns and 60 millimeter mortars. They do what the 30 Calibar water-cooled guns and the 81 millimeter mortars do.... but on a much lesser scale. The 30caliber air-cooled gun and 60 millimeter mortar are much lighter weight. They are used at shorter range. Along with the light machine gun and 60 millimeter mortars they bring in BAR's and many times bazookas. The third wave is the <u>heavy</u> weapons. I went

in on the third wave. I have no idea what type of fighmen arrive on an invasion after the third wave. I do knthat the Japs, on occasion, did let the first and second waves on a beach head pass. They did this so they could get to the heavy weapons. They feared the heavy weapons. when ever the Japs did this, it left the heavy weapons soldiers in deep trouble? till our riflemen came back and helped. After this invasion ended we were told that the reason we met so much resistance right on the beach was because the Japs let our first two waves, made up of the rifleman and light machine gunners, pass. On the beachhead the riflemen of wave one and two are the most important of all that invade. Any soldier who has been in combat will tell you the value of a rifleman is priceless. They give these men nicknames like G.I., Doughboys, Grunts, and "animal" but you will never know the true meaning of bravery until you have had yourself in a position to watch a rifleman in action during one day of combat.

Riding in the barge from the ship to the rendezvous point and then to the beach was one of the most frightening experience I have ever had in my life. As each barge moves to the rendezvous point in the harb, they join together into a large, moving circle. There are two reasons for the barges to be moving and doing so in a circle. One, it is difficult to directly hit a target that moves. Two, the moving circle is bidding time till all of the barges assigned to the wave can get there. All the time that the barges are moving, circling and getting ready to head for the beach, they are being harassed by enemy aircraft. Some of the Jap planes flew so low you could easily make out the pilots. It was scary, yet was exciting. The barge I was on was one of the first ones that arrived at the rendezvous point. It felt like we were out there going around in circles for a long time. The ack-ack guns from the many ships in the harbor kept the Jap Zeros fairly busy. I saw two Zeros go down in fire while waiting for barges to get to the rendezvous area. When the Zeros dove down to straff us, we hugged the floor of the barge. The Jap pilots were tricky. They would dive between two American ships firing at them. If the gunners of both ships were not alert and failed to cease fire as a Jap plane made it dive, the gunners of the American ship would be firing at



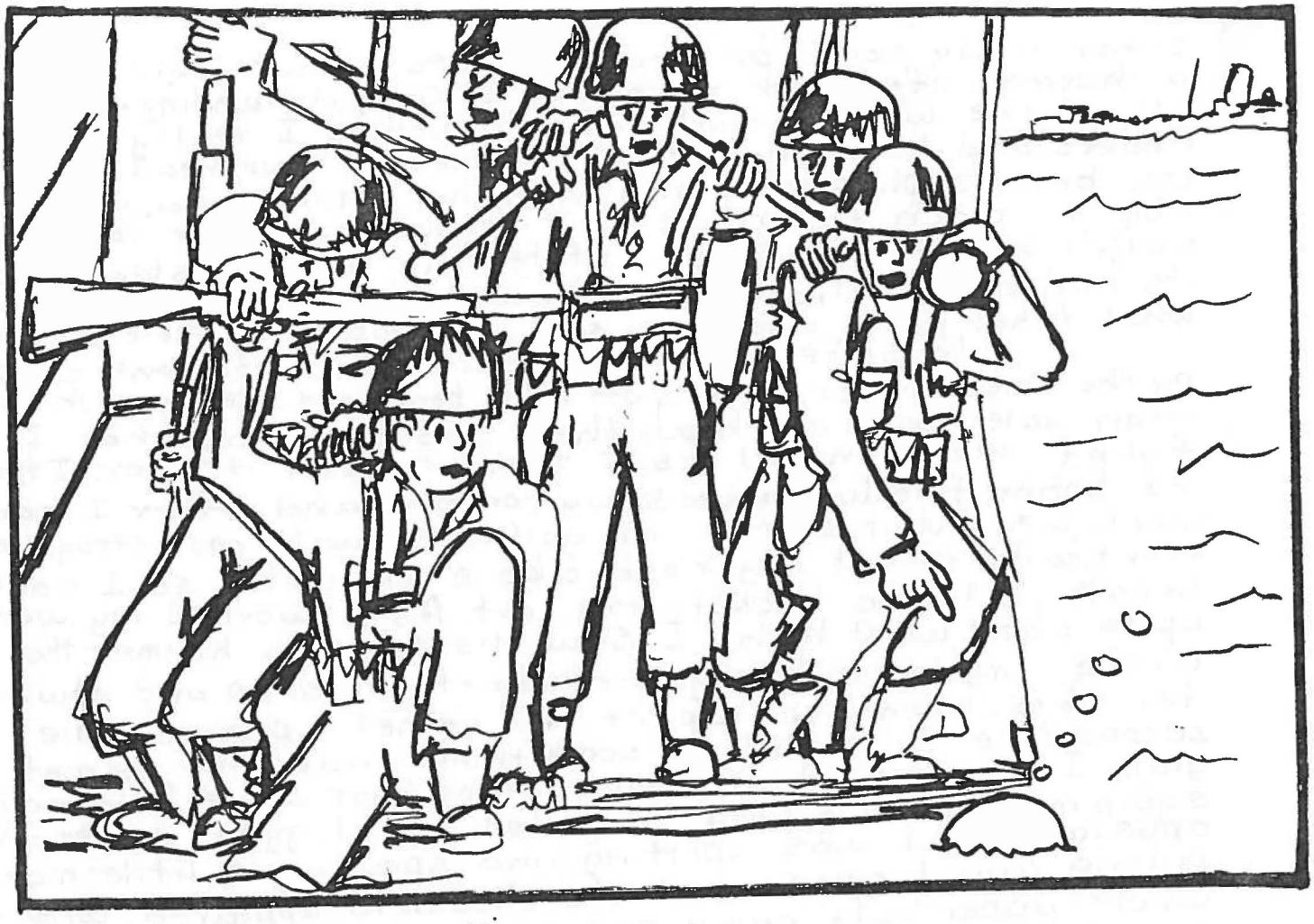
one another.

I was in a position in the barge that I could see the beach. I could see the second wave was over half way to their destination. That meant we would soon peel off and form a line (wave) to approach. In about ten or fifteen minutes we would be invading the island. I checked my watch just about two hundred yards from land. My watch said 10:00 A.M. Before I could see the beach, I remember looking at the blur of sand and jungle I could not help wondering how could anything, human possibly be alive on that shore after the beating it took from thirteen battle ships and hundreds and hundreds of rockets. I soon found out how the humans survived the shelling. They did it by digging very, very deep into old mother natures earth.

As the barge continued toward the shore the built up nervous tension got almost unbearable. we all did what we usually did when the tension built up— we sang the songs we had learned in basic training as

as loud as we could. One of the songs went like this "The non-commissioned officers.... they are the worst of all.... they get you up in the morning before the bugle call .... It's column left and column right..and... Squads upon that line.... and than the dirty so and sos..." they give you double time". A lot of times the songs were made up and we sang them at various times to keep our mind busy, or, just to help pass time. This time we sang just to release some tension. Just a few minutes before the ramp came down on the barge and we were to charge on to the beach, you could hear a pin drop. It was at this time that one of my quiet, well mannered, polite buddies, Johnny Baxter, looked over at me put his hand on my shoulder and said, "Dick, I am going to get it this time, I Know it. I am not afraid. Please go to Chicago and see my mom. Tell her what happens. Promise me you will do this for me." I was speechless. I really did not know what to say. After a minute or so I said, "Johnny, don't talk like that. Nothing is going to happen to you." I was mistaken.

As we neared the beach many flying bullets fr snipers began to rapidly hit the barge from all direction Bullets were glancing off of the steel turret that protected the navy man who drove the barge. Enemy bullets ricocheted into the barge. From my vantage point I could no longer see the navy man who was driving the barge to the beach. His body seemed to disappear.. All I could see was his hand over the middle of the steering wheel. The driver was getting panicky. when the barge struck coral, and hesitated for a second, the driver stopped the barge and yelled hysterically, "Get out!..., Get out!.... quick!.... hurry!" As he shouted he let down the ramp and exposed us. Lo and behold — we were sitting some 75-100 yards from the shore. The slight hesitation of the barge when we struck coral, along with the fear and confusion that was caused by sniper fire, led our navy driver to believe we had touched land. After he let down the ramp he had to realize we were not on the beach. He must have lost all control and become paralized with fear. He did nothing. He did not "rev" up the motor and force the barge closer to land. He seemed helpless to throw the barge in reverse. He did not even attempt to pull the ramp back up. We just sat there on that barge like 'ducks on a pond'. Thank god the snipers were poor shots.



Seventy-five to a hundred yards out from the beach, puts the water about two feet over your head. The fear encountered by the quick choice needed to be made about either getting shot on the spot or stepping off into water that might cause me to drown, left my mind a total blank. At this moment, I was so frightened that if you asked me my name I could not have told you. The choice I feared was made for me. I was second in line on the left side of the barge as we faced the beach. The first man in line was my verg good non-com buddy, Sergeant Rowe. As Rowe stepped off the barge, his body disappeared into the water. All I could see was the very top of his helmet plus a few bubbles coming up. I do recall saying very nervously, "my god, that poor SOB is going to drown." As I mentioned earlier, the choice was made for me as to whether I should drownd or get shot when the guy behind me gave a slight push to my back. All of us who stepped into the water from the barge must have

either made some outstanding moves or we were living a charmed life at this time, to escape drowning. With all of the weigh attached to our bodies I really do not understand how any of us survived. I have read that you become physically and mentally strong and you are able to reach far above and beyond your limited capabilities when the level of fear in your system reaches its highest point. I do not claim to know or understand what takes place when fear sets in. I just know there is a change.

In spite of all the fear and excitement caused by the barge driver, getting off of a barge and stepping into ocean water over our heads, there was one thing that I found was comical as I thought about it later. I touched bottom, finally. I moved slowly forward and after I had swallowed what seemed like gallons of water and I struggled frantically to get my head above the water so I could breath, I looked back to my left. As I worked my way up to about waist high I saw the top of a helmet that was coming in my direction. Actually, the helmet bobbed up and down a few times. When the top of the helmet appeared the second time I reached for some thing under the helmet to grab. I got a hold of some straps that were holding equipment on this body. I pulled and tugged. A head appeared that was spitting and spewing. A little more pulling and tugging and the shoulders appeared. When the whole upper body came out of the water and the person turned around I recognized who it was. It was my little five foot buddy, 'Mouse'. He half walked, half stumbled toward the beach till he was about knee deep. Disgusted, he stood looking at the barge with his hands on his hips. Out of the mouth of 'mouse' came some of the most foul, vulgar language I have ever heard. The end of his speech went something like this " and if I get my hands on you, you ~~[illegible]~~, I'll tear your ~~[illegible]~~ head off. Mind you, while Mouse is making his little speech and I am desperately trying to get him to move for cover, both he and I were being shot at by snipers firing from trees on the beach. I literally drug him onto the beach and threw him behind a fallen coconut tree. I don't think I ever saw a man that upset. About a week later we talked about this incident and had a big laugh about it

On this beachhead many, many men got wounded and killed. A lot of men from other troops who made the

invasion from barges on our right, got killed before they even reached the shore. I was aware of bodies floating in the water. Many bodies were laying half in the water and half on land. After I got out of the water and I was able to move my legs, I looked for cover. I spotted a shattered coconut tree and fell down behind it. Just as I fell to the ground, I glanced over to look for Johnny Baxter. I wish I had not done that. I was just in time to see blood shoot from his stomach. After my buddy fell to the ground, blood squirted out of his buttocks like a water faucet. The bullet that hit him went through his body. He looked over at me and said very weakly, "help me." I yelled for a medic. Usually there is none around. This time, thank god, one was close and ran over to help. Johnny lost a lot of blood in a hurry. I watched as they patched him up, put him on a stretcher, and carried him toward an "alligator" vehicle. As he passed by me, he was as white as a sheet. He motioned me over to him and he said very softly to me, "Foss, don't forget to go see my mom." I promised I would. I did not want to believe what was

happening. How did Johnny know he was going to get sho
The sad part about the whole thing was he should no
have been here making this invasion in the first place. He had
not fully recovered from a neck wound that he received
in the last campaign. He told the commanding officer his
neck and back were O.K. even tho, his neck was hurting. Johnny's
two brothers, whom he dearly loved, were in the service.
Because they were fighting he felt he must get into the
fight, too. The crazy part of the whole story about this
kid was that he lied about his age. He made all of us promise
not to tell. He was only seventeen years old. He had now
been awarded two purple hearts for wounds received in
action. Some how this all seemed un fair. We learned later
that the Japs began using a new bullet in this campaign. They
were using a bullet made of wood. when the bullet
enters the body it bursts and breaks into splinters. This
not only caused severe pain, it made it more difficult to
remove. We were told that the wooden bullet was used because
it was less expensive to make. After the campaign
ended we learned that Johnny was shot with one of these
bullets.

A machine gunner did get the sniper that shot
Johnny. We got up and moved slowly in-land. We had
gone but a very short distance when we all got pinned
down by a Jap sniper firing an automatic weapon. Some-
one behind me yelled over and said, "Foss, I have bad
news for you.... Earl got shot again." At that moment, I
was shocked. I was thinking.... how could that be. In
the last campaign Earl got hit three times. He just
healed a few days before we left for the Philippines. Now,
here he is.... shot again. He was not far behind me all
this time. tho' I did not realize it. As I came on the beach
he was very close to me I was talking to him as we
moved in-land. when the Jap with the automatic fired.
at me, Earl could easily have been behind me. It is possible
that the shots fired at me, hit Earl. My friend told me
Earl got shot at least two times maybe more. He was
laying out in the open. Some one drug him to a place
of cover. I later was told he might have been hit four times. He
was grazed in the head, hit once in each arm and one
bullet went through part of one buttocks. I went back
to search for him. Luckily I spotted him just as he was
being lifted into an "alligator" to head for the hospital
ship out in the bay. He said to me, "Keep your head down
.... Im counting on seeing you after this war is over."
I was not sure he would live through the day, let alone

till the war ended, with all those bullet holes in him. Both Johnny and Earl were shot with in minutes of each other. Earl had been wounded all of these times and he spent less than a total of 20 hours in combat.

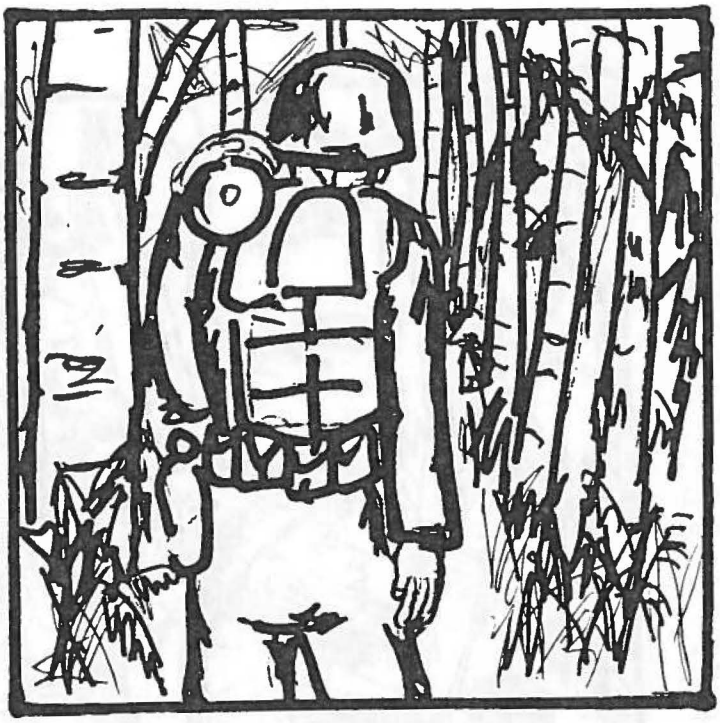
A short time after Earl was hauled away to the hospital ship one of the alligator drivers informed me that Johnny had died. After I was told the news about Johnny and watched as they took Earl out toward the hospital ship, I sat for a few moments in a state of depression. I must have cried. What a day.... It was really just beginning. As I sat behind a coconut tree, right next to the beach I noticed the others up in front of me start to move out. I picked up my pack and the receiver to catch up with them. I could not budge A sniper with an automatic had me in his sights. I wanted to make a run for it to the edge of the jungle which was about 40 yards away. Each time I made a move from behind the tree, 5-6 shots would rip into the tree. I could see the guys in my outfit move down the path into the jungle. They were leaving me. I yelled very loud. No one heard me or

noticed that I was missing I was now alone. I got real panicky. Many things went through my mind. All I had to protect myself was a wet 45 automatic pistol. The range for this weapon is about 30 feet if you were an expert shot. I was one of the poorer shots It seemed the sniper was 40-50 yards away. I sat and smoked about one-half pack of cigarettes while behind the tree. I removed my pack from my shoulders. I dismantled the receiver of the machine gun, and decided I would make a run for the path at the edge of the jungle. As I ran toward the jungle, I planned to rapid fire the 45 automatic in the direction of the sniper. I told myself if I made it to my squad it is possible we could return in force, and get my pack and receiver of the machine gun. If I did not make it..... I was saying a prayer all the time I planned. I was really asking for courage to, carry out my plan. I am not your John Wayne type, thats for sure.

At the second I stood up to make the planned run toward the opening in the jungle, a very strange thing happened. I saw some one walking down the beach. I had a strange feeling about this person coming toward me. He looked like an American and he talked like an American but he was not dressed like an American. He walked right up to me and spoke. The funny thing is he did not ask me if I was in trouble. He simply put his hand on my shoulder and set me back down behind the tree. He said, "its all right son, dont worry." I told him to take cover because there was a Jap who was shooting at me. I pointed the direction of the sniper. This man walked right out into the open. As he did this I heard a few bursts from a gun. This man came back and said to me, "Its O.K. son, you can le now, it's over." I turned around and picked up my pac

I turned back to face this wonderful person .... he was gone. He had disappeared. This whole series of events seemed weird. Every thing turned so quickly in my favor. It almost seemed like a dream. I am not sure that I am writing this incident as it really occurred. I was not only rescued but the man who helped me resembled someone in my family that I only seen pictures of. This man had died 20 years ago. It was probably not who I imagined it was at all. It was probably another one of those reliable, fantastic riflemen doing his everyday job. At the time I was rescued, I was frightened half out of my wits. I could not believe how calm this person was. He conducted himself as if there was no danger whatever. I did definately hear a few bursts from a gun that sounded to me like a Russian burp-gun. (That sound is much different from an American Tommy-gun.) The rescuer called me "son". He said, "It's O.K. Son, you can leave now" was the last thing he said to me. I have gone over this small bit of drama in my mind many, many times the last 40 years. The conclusion I came up with was that I was so frightened and sure I was going to die at this moment that I visualized the rescuer as someone I wanted beside me when death occurred. I replaced that 'someone' with the man who actually showed up and helped me. I really believe it was my mind playing tricks.

Before I got up from behind the tree, I waved my arm in the open to see if it would draw sniper fire. It didn't. I picked up all of my gear and headed for the path that led to the jungle. As I walked along the path I realized I was alone. In the distance I could hear small-arms gun fire. All the time I walked my



mind kept warning me to b alert. The soldiers we met in Australian, who were heading back to the states after some three years of combat, made it clear to us, "never go off alone in Jap territory." These vetevans said, if they take you alive they do every thing from stake you to the ground to cutting your head off with a saber. When they stake you to the ground they usually throw gasoline on you and set you on fire." That walk of 15-30 minutes alone in the jungle while searching for my platoon, seemed more like 15-30 hours. my worries were partially over when I recognized the sound of American rifles up ahead. If only they did not take me for a Jap. It was my outfit and one of the m did see me, thank god. Being alone in this situation was similar to walking alone through a cemetary at midnight when you are about 7-8 years old. Any second you felt some one or something was going to jump out and grab you.

My first gunner said he saw me over behind a coconut tree near the beach, but had no idea I was in trouble. He said he even yelled to me and motioned for me to follow when "Steve" told us to move out. He said that when I had not caught up with the squad after a few minutes, he began to worry. My first gunner had asked the other men in our squad if they had seen me. The squad sergeant told my first gunner not to worry. The squad sergeant told him, "Foss will show up sooner or later." what ever that meant The sergeant finally got concerned as to where I was when he was ordered by one of the officers to bring up the machine gun. I had the top part of the machine gun.... the firing part. Lucky that it turned out they really did not need the gun—, after all. To show how positively important I was to this squad, when I did show up my squad sergeants first words were "where the hell have you been? what good are you if your not here when

we need you?" I did not tell him the whole story about getting pinned down and rescued. He would not have believed me anyway. I just told him I was delayed and I hoped it would not happen again. Little did he realize that I really hoped that kind of delay would not occur again. The next man I spoke to was Joe Piscatello. He walked up to me, held my face between both hands, looked me square in the eyes and said, "It's you, it's really you. Are youse o.k?" He said he saw me sitting behind the coco nut tree right on the beach. Because It seemed I did not move for a long time he was afraid I had been shot and was dead. That nut gave me a hug and said "Youse don't know how glad I am to see ya". After what my first gunner said and after Joe told me what he observed about me there was no doubt I know I was pinned down and had been rescued. It was not just my imagination. It had been a long day already and it was just the middle of the afternoon.

At this point, I would like to stop and interject a thought or two. I think nature has a way of playing tricks on our sences when you least expect it. It is difficult to explain, but I do believe a person sometimes, tends to laugh at or at least sees a little humor in happenings, even though the thing happening is actually filled with tension. For example, I saw humor and even laughed and pointed at Sergeant Rowe when he stepped off of the barge into water over his head. Snipers were firing at those of us waiting to enter the water behind Rowe. Why would I laugh at such a serious thing happening to one of my most trusted friends? Part of it had to be nervousness. Another example was when 'mouse' and I came up out of the water after struggling to get our heads up to keep from drowning, mouse stood there in the open shaking his fist, jestering and cussing the barge driver. As 'mouse' stood there ranting and raving I was laughing out loud. This was stupid. we were being shot at by a horde of Jap snipers. The third example [All of these tension packed acts did happen with-in a one half hour period.] came up when I was trying to direct a friend from another machine gun squad away from trouble. What happened to my friend most assuredly was not at all funny at the time and I would not have wanted to be in his shoes. I got nervous for my friend. I watched him come on to the beach. He was heading directly into a Jap snipers line of fire and did not realize it. The worst

part about it was that the guy I was directing was one of my best buddies, Fritz Fastner. The result of my warning was a disaster. Fritz came off of his barge. He was carrying a machine gun tripod. He was really stepping it off. I yelled at him, pointed to a sniper and pointed for him to hit the ground. He did as I suggested. Fritz and the tripod of the machine gun went out of sight. He did not raise up for a minute or two. When he did raise up he was wiping himself off frantically. Fritz yelled back at me disgustedly, "Damm you, Foss, that was a Jap latrine." I was embarassed. Right there, in the heat of battle, both of us laughed. Later I wondered how we could find humor at times like those. If I had not written a diary, I might not even recall that these incidents seemed funny. I have read where there is an unexplained mechanism within the human system that sets off emotions when you are faced with an over load of tension. I did not believe that artical till the mo

ing of October 20th, 1944 during that short one-half hour period of time on the beach head of Leyte Island. Months after this invasion, I thought about these happenings. "Mouse", Fritz and Sergeant Rowe talked about them. We even laughed more as we reminisced. We all felt it was just a normal reaction to built up tension.

The battle ships and rocket launchers really did a complete job on the beach. Every thing was burning An oil storage dump and a Jap ammunition dump had been hit. Most of the coconut trees in the area we came upon were damaged badly. They were shattered or knocked to the ground. Our rifle troops were really moving. There was little resistance at the first objective (which was the small air strip) so the rifle troops hurried on. They did not wait for us. They could move fast while we were slowed down by heavy equipment. Besides carrying heavy weapons we had to cross a deep, slimmy, swamp area. 'Mouse' almost sunk out of sight. We did a lot of double time trying to catch up with the two rifle troops. We did not catch up with them till we reached the road that ran over the bridge. The bridge was our second and final objective for the first day. If the riflemen had not come across some cases of Jap Saki we might not have caught up with them at all. I sat down and talked with one of the riflemen while taking a break at the bridge. He told me his platoon had come upon a Jap bunker and were pinned down by a lone Jap, inside the bunker who was firing a machine gun. As soon as he fired all of his ammunition, he came out of the bunker with his hands up surrendering guy in his squad fired at the Jap at once. The rifleman said, "that nip was a mess." If he had run out and surrendered before he fired the machine gun he might have lived. That Jap had to be stupid to think our riflemen would spare his life. This was the first time I heard a Jap referred to as a "nip".

One of the men in our troop found a wild monkey near the bridge. He kept it for a pet He named it after our commanding officer who did not appriciate being named after him any more that he did the Japanese Chicken as was done earlier. The trooper kept this monkey with him for over two weeks. Every where this soldier went you would see the monkey sitting on his shoulder. During the night he tied the monkey to a bush or tree. It was kind of a moral builder. One night, during a shelling by the Japs the monkey got frightened and ran away. While at the bridge, we

were given new orders and we moved out. About a mile up the road near a clearing we came to a deserted Jap garrison. Our officers slowed us down long enough to get a quick look at the camp. Their main diet was rice and fish from the appearance of their food supply shack. The rice was in large burlap bags. The fish.... you could smell. Their sleeping quarters were huts made of bamboo and leaves from coconut trees. They slept in their huts on the ground on some worn mattresses stuffed with either grass or straw. That was all we had time to look at. We moved on. We again came to a big swamp area. 'Mouse' got into a little trouble but managed to kick, cuss and struggle his way out on his own.

About 5:30 P.M. there was a commotion up in front of the column. The problem was a large number of filipino civilians. They were shouting, shaking hands, hugging, and, in general celebrating our arrival. Actually, I think they were relieved to get out of their bomb shelters. We stopped for a short time and gave them chocolate and some cigarettes.

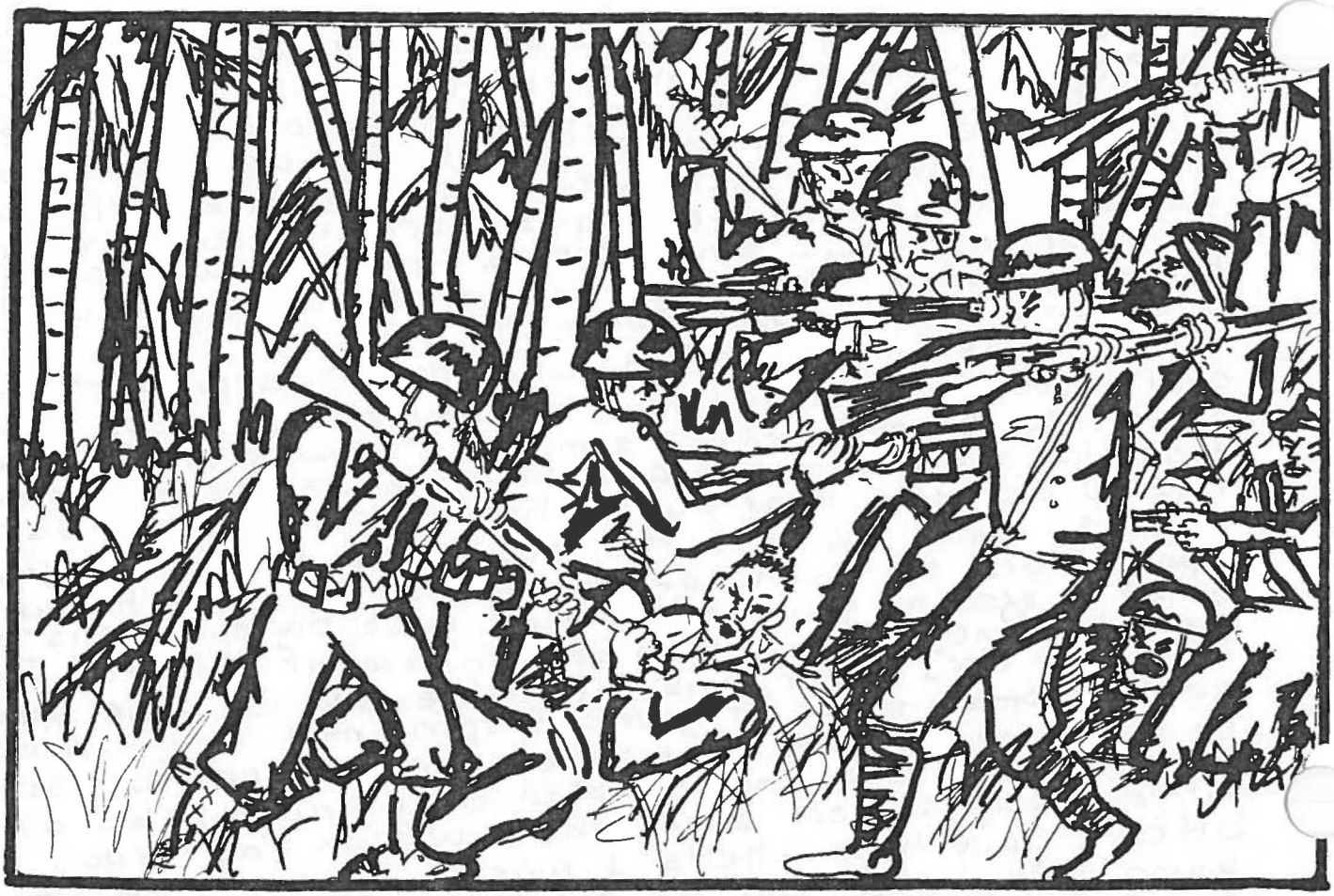
I saw the cutest little girl who was about threes old. She was standing next to her mom. She kept shyly staring at me. I knelt down and offered her a chocolate candy bar. She backed away from me till her mom spoke to her. Her little eyes were sunken in and her tummy was swollen. I had to almost force the candy on her. She did manage a tiny smile after I gave her a light hug. She had all the symptoms of starvation. It was a sad sight to see a small one like her in such a condition. We had to move on. As we left, most of the filipinos who had come out to greet us headed back to their bomb shelters.

It was getting close to dark as we moved down this road. We had not gone far till we stopped and were shown where to dig in for the night. We could eat but no fires.

our gun was placed near a swamp. There were a million mosquitoes. They were mean little devils. Some of us in the squad dug in a bit deep. We had to sit in water all night. Welcome to LEYTE ISLAND! It was a miserable, miserable night. Between sitting in a fox hole filled with water, fighting mosquitoes and sweating out shrapnel from Jap mortars, I don't think I slept one wink all night. I was pleased when day light arrived. We packed up, ate a cold meal and moved down the road.

As we progressed down the road, we met more and more enemy resistance. We came across a pile of Jap signal equipment. Besides some rolls of wire were lanterns, flags, large road block signs, and stands. We felt there had to be Japs near by. We had not met many Jap soldiers since we left the beach. We finally reached a spot where the exchange of rifle fire became heavy. One bullet whizzed by my ear. [I must have big ears. This is the third time since I have been in combat that I felt I was losing an ear.] After this skirmish ended we were approached by a small group of young filipino men. They claimed to be Philippine patrons. They asked our officers for some 30 caliber shells. They boasted they had located and killed, 9 Jap snipers since the invasion had begun. The officers gave them shells. I was concerned when the young men asked for 30 Caliber shells I thought only American guns fired 30 caliber bullets. If that is the case, where did they get the gun they were using. When we arrived at the edge of a hugh coconut plantation we were halted. Word was passed back in the ranks that our scouts found 80-100 Japs dug in and waiting for us, around the bend.

I saw things happen in the next 25-30 minutes I will remember for a life time The acts of bravery and determination that took place are things I had only read about in books or seen in movies. The actual hand-to-hand combat lasted only 10-15 minutes. The preparation before the battle took longer. The setting for the fight was a coconut plantation next to a dirt road. Next to the road was a small coconut grove. The grove was about four rows wide and extended as far as the eye could see. Past the grove, before you came into the coconut plantation, was a clearing about 30-35 yards wide. Our men assembled in small groups under cover of the coconut grove. The Japs were dug in on the edge of the coconut plantation. Between the two enemies,



eager to do battle, was a small clearing. The Japanese soldiers were dug in to deep trenches and individual fox holes. They were waiting for us to attack. They soon got their wish. Our two rifle troops were getting set to attack. Before they went into the plantation, they had to wait for one of their commanders to give us our orders. The Captain of 'G' Troop told us exactly what he expected of us. Our gun was placed under the coconut grove so that we would be able to cross fire with another machine gun, down the line about 40-50 yards away. The cross fire was to cover the open space between the coconut grove and the coconut plantation. The Captain told us to follow his instructions in detail. He said, "see those two men with a red cloth around their upper arm?.... If one of them or both of them motion to fire.... give it all you've got— if neither of them motion or if I do not yell or motion to you for help... do not touch that trigger. I do not want anyone hurt by some one nervous behind this gun. I am sorry to say enough men will get hurt and killed, without any out side help. Please do exactly as I say." As he left, he stopped and looked around at us and spoke, "If we are not able to whip them and the Japs come

Charging across that opening you are on your own." With that, he gave us a "thumbs up" sign and wished us luck.

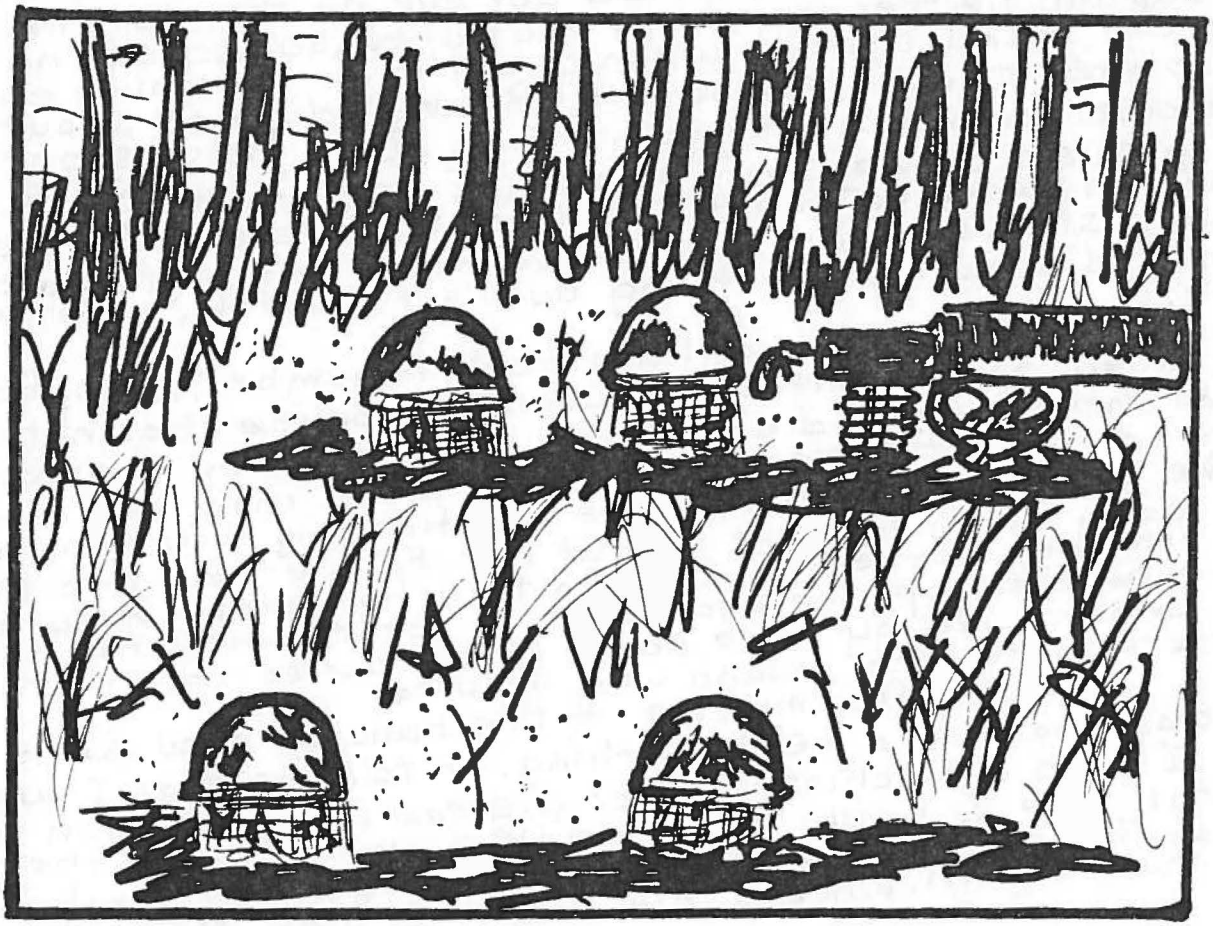
Our machine gun squad watched from behind our gun while the two troops of men made final preparations. The men talked softly as they attached their bayonets to the end of their rifles. The man in charge... the one who gave us our instructions... was respectfully called "Blacky" by his men. We heard him say "O.K. men, are you ready?.... follow me!" Just like that. Those men ran across that opening toward the Japs who were waiting like it was just another one of the the daily routine tasks. Most of them were yelling as they charged. They jumped in the fox-holes and trenches and fought like men possessed. It was hand-to-hand. I really did not get to see a lot of the fighting because I had my eye glued on one of the riflemen wearing a red cloth. I heard sounds that I cannot completely describe. It was a combination of metal to metal clashing, yelling, groans, and shots fired. Part of the time it was silent. We saw a few Japs retreat into the large plantation behind them. Neither of the riflemen with the red cloth on their arm motioned. We had our eye on them all the time. The captain neither yelled or motioned, so we did not fire one round. Usually when a battle or skirmish ends the officer shouts, "Cease fire". Blacky" did not shout that order but we all knew it was over. This is one of the greatest displays of bravery I saw. I hurt inside for those men who died in battle. I was completely drained. I was shaking for at least an hour after it ended and I did not do one thing but sit, watch, listen and wait.

Next came the hard part. A number of our boys were killed. Some were badly wounded. Believe it or not, a few of the riflemen did not even get a scratch. A small tank came up the road turned and went into the edge of the coconut plantation where the fighting had taken place. The badly wounded were hauled out to the road and put into weapons carriers and taken to a temporary hospital to be patched up. The dead were to be removed the next day and hauled by mule pack to be buried in a military cemetary after the island was secured.

Those few minutes that the hand-to-hand battle took place really told me something. It told me that I was glad I was a machine gunner instead of a rifleman. I am not sure I could have handled what I saw these men do. They were the best. I will never say "big dumb rifle man" again. When I did say it I was joking. In my

book "rifle men" rank very close to "general" in this man's army. When Captain "Blacky" talked to our machine gun squad before the battle, he was almost busting with determination and confidence. He showed no doubt that he and his men would succeed. Our country was fortunate to have such a leader. Captain "Blacky" was given almost every bravery award that could be given to an officer in combat. I many times heard him give orders over observation phones, usually they were to higher rank officers. They did as he said. It is a shame he was not moved up to a higher ranking. If you said any thing negative about "Blacky" in front of 'G' troop men, you had a fight on your hands. He was well thought of by both enlisted men and officers. Unfortunately, later on, Captain Blacky got malaria while in the mountains and died before they could get him to a hospital.

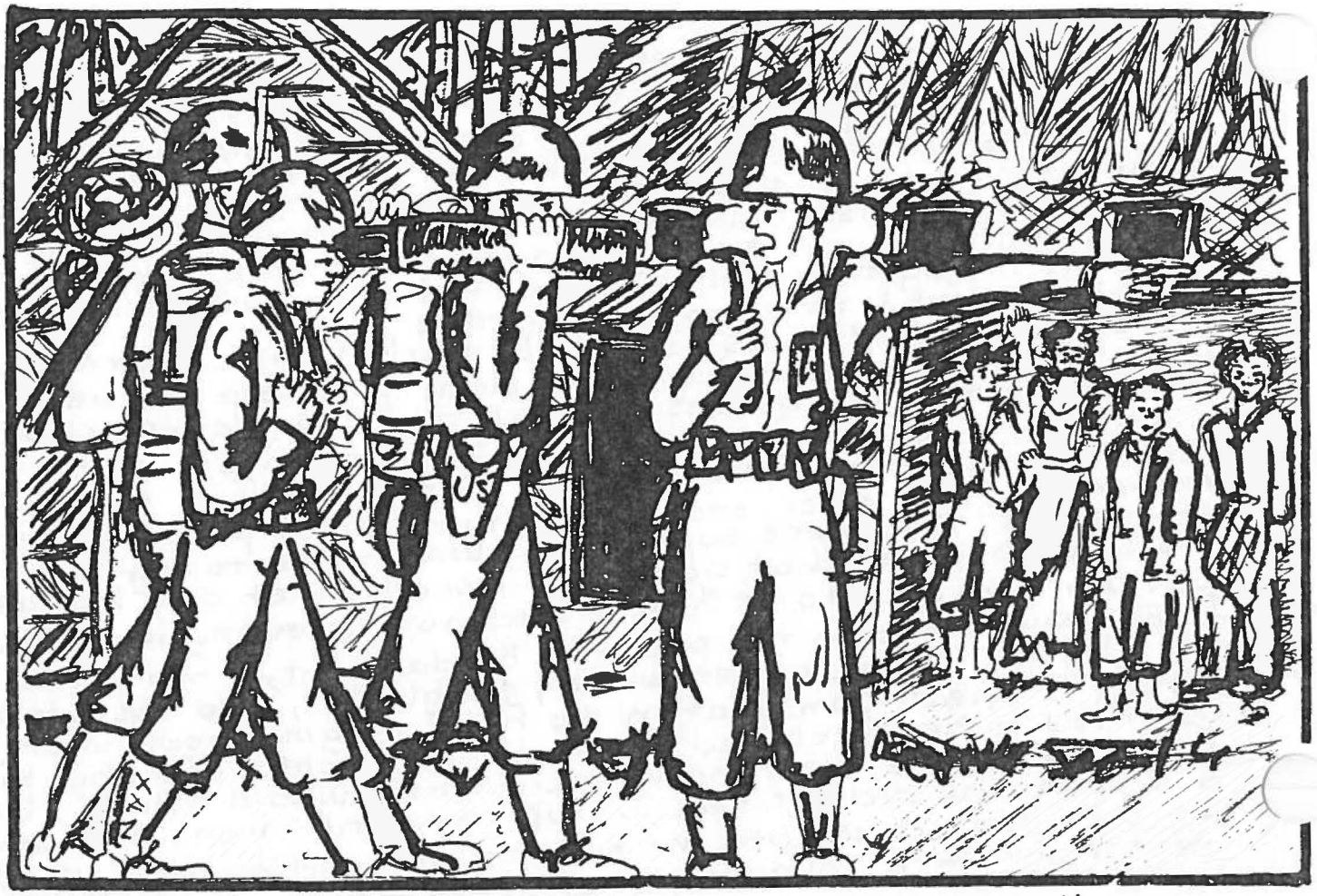
After the hand-to-hand fight we took a short break. When we moved on a short distance I noticed the first evidence that Japan and Germany were allies. I came upon a dead Jap officer, who was holding a German automatic hand pistol. I could have had it if I wanted to carry if. I did not want it. It would have been worth a lot of money today. About 5:00 P.M., we came to a large hill.



Just short of our next objective, which was the capital city of Leyte, Tacloban. We climbed the hill. We dug in. It was dark. About the time we got dug in, Jap mortars started to land in droves. They must of had the range cause they were doing a great deal of damage. The dirt of one explosion almost covered me and filled my fox hole. We dug deeper. I was so exhausted from the tension brought on by the earlier hand-to-hand battle that I slept through a light rain and a barrage of the Japs dumped on us. I awoke early in the morning when it was my turn for guard duty I awoke to the "attack by the mosquitoes". It had to be a planned charge. There were so many of them. I spoke of mosquitoes in terms of millions. I now speak of those devils in tens of millions. I have never seen so many of these pests gather in one place. They were so thick I was forced to dig out the mosquito bar net that goes over your helmet and hangs over your face down to the chest. I could not cover my hands so I put my hands in my pockets. By day light, I had welts all over me. Mosquito bite welts, jungle rot, and dysentery. This is a great combination to have in your body when you need to be alert and "fired up". We moved off this hill as early in the morning as our Lieutenant would allow. It's a wonder he did not keep us up there 'till noon. As soon as we came down off the hill the mosquitoes left us. We must have been invading their territory or something.

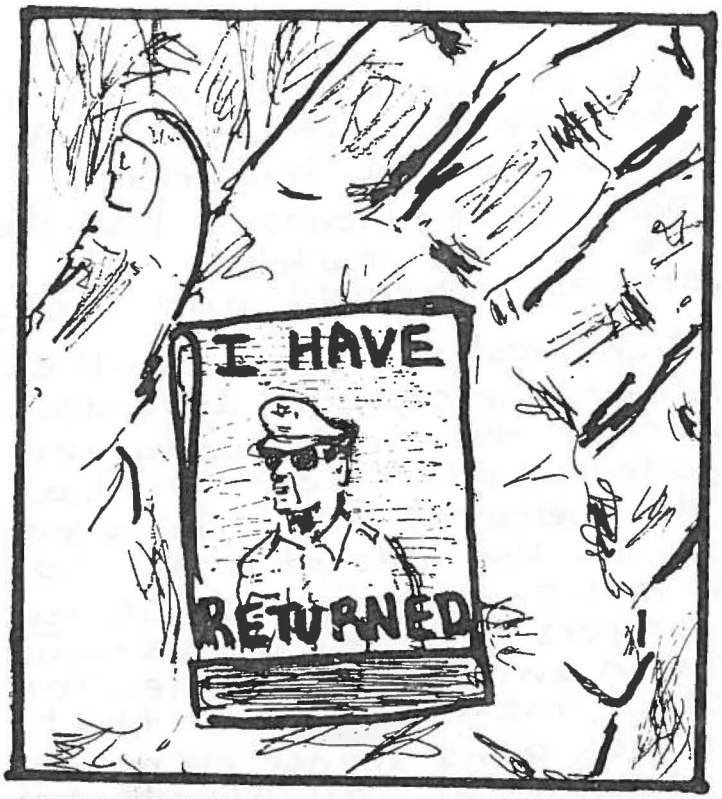
When we got to the base of this big, long hill we found out we were on the outskirts of Tacloban. We had not eaten a hot meal since we hit the island. Joke said no hot meal this morning. We cannot risk showing smoke. It would give our position away. We were not expected to enter the city till the Navy sent some fighter planes in to strafe and bomb the city. While we waited on the outskirts of the town, the fighter planes not only did their job of bombing and strafing but the huge navy war ships in the bay sent in a few rounds of their own. Since the Japs in Tacloban were kept busy by the Navy we convinced Joke it would be O.K. to get a small fire started so that we could have a quick cup of instant coffee. Coffee was about all I could hold in my stomach, anyway. The amoebic dysentery, I now discovered, was really getting to me.

We did not have to go through the middle of the city to flush out or mop up Japs following



the shelling and strafing. Our orders were changed. We were assigned to move along the outskirts of the town. Our job was to now search for Japs in the hills surrounding the city. Actually, after the navy got done the hills around the city were bare of Jap soldiers too. We were done by the middle of the afternoon. When we finished our task to the satisfaction of Lieutenant Joke, we headed toward the center of town to a pre-designated meeting spot I recall passing a school. I can not tell what age group they were. Some students were holding small American flags and singing in broken English, "God Bless America." At least I think they were singing "God Bless America." I can not begin to imagine how frightened these young people must have been while in their bomb shelters while the shelling was going on just two hours earlier.

It was a strange feeling to have those young children welcome us as they did. I did wonder if this same group of children sang "God Bless Japan" the day Japanese troops entered which was about the



Same time the Japs had put our American troops through hell at Bataan and Corregidor.... We will never know

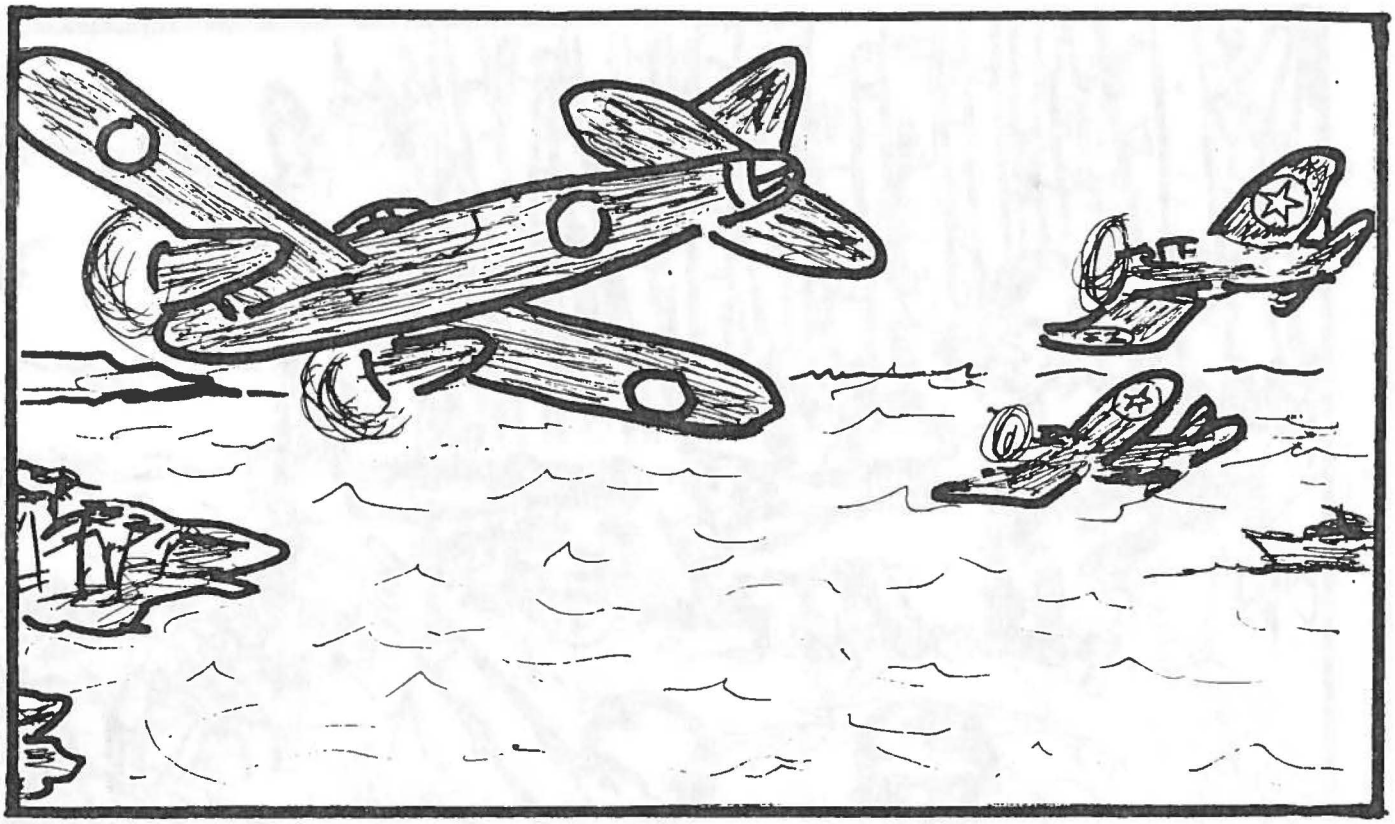
After the American troops had fought through Tacloban and it was fairly secure, American Cargo Planes flew over the city and dropped pamphlets and books of matches that had messages printed on them. On each book of matches was a picture of General MacArthur and printed in large letters "I have returned." The pamphlets that were dropped told a brief story of why he left the Philippines

in the first place and how pleased he was to return as he had promised. I do recall the pamphlets were colorful. A large number of them were dropped. I had three pamphlets and maybe 6-7 packets of matches. I lost the pamphlets and had to use up the matches. The Filipino people, in general, seemed impressed and happy about the liberation

We did get a slight rest after we walked three Kilometers past Tacolban. The officers were deciding were to sit up our perimeter for the night. During this delay, a Kitchen truck pulled up and we were served a complete hot meal. After the welcomed meal, we were ordered to place our gun on the side of a hill to guard a road our officers felt Japs might be using during the night. A few snipers did fire at us while we were digging in our gun and our fox holes. The riflemen took care of most of them. Early on that evening we could see Ack-Acks guns firing over the beach. The anti air craft were firing at Jap planes bombing ships in the bay. The sky was filled with red tracers. This shows how many shots were fired since a red tracer fires out of the barrel of an anti air craft gun only every fifth shell, same as a water cooled machine gun. Tracers help you stay on your target without them you lose your accuracy. From my observation point it appeared impossible for a plane to get within a mile of the ships. Somehow, a few ships got hit by the enemy aircraft.

During the night, some of our riflemen had some shooting matches off and on, with Jap snipers, down near the road. We did not have to fire the machine gun. We were told to save the firing of it 'till it was needed. Our officers told us they felt we were going to be attacked. It never occured. We had a good nights rest because we slept three to a fox hole. We each had four hours rest out of six. We stayed at this spot near the road for two days. The problem was that we were out in the open. We had no protection from the sun and we could be seen easily from a distance. We finally rolled a few branches over one fox hole so that we could take turns pulling guard in the shade. Our fox holes faced toward the beach allowing us to see most of the American ships in the distance, out in the bay.

About 9:00 A M on the second morning, one



of the guys in our squad noticed a formation of planes coming from behind us. They were heading for the bay. They were flying quit low and they flew almost directly over our head. The formation of planes were Jap bombers. We counted twenty of them. The next 15-20 minutes was one of the most exciting for me of the whole war. Here is why. About the time the formation of Jap bombers flew over our head we could see American fighter planes taking off from one of the air craft carriers in the bay. The american Air Craft Carrier was anchored out quite a way and the planes coming off the carrier looked like little specks. In a matter of seconds, our planes were almost over our heads. We had grand stand seats for the air battle. It was fabulous. Our planes were knocking down Jap planes left and right. Our whole squad went nuts each time a Jap bomber went down. We jumped up and down, patted each other on the back, pointed, clapped and yelled like crazy. We watched one Jap bomber with an American fighter plane on its tail, catch fire, nose up then it tailed off into the bay. It just missed an american transport ship. Myself,

I counted at least twelve bombers go down. As they caught fire they aimed their bomber toward our ships. Our navy fighter planes finished off nineteen of the 20 Jap bombers of the formation. Some of the bombers did not make it to the bay. The last Jap bomber tried to return to it's base. As it retreated it flew back over our heads. We fired our machine gun at it. The rear gunner opened up on us. He sprayed the hill Boy, did we scatter. One guy in the squad got shot. The last I saw of the lone plane trying to get away an American fighter plane was on it's tail.

All of the battle was not without casualty. One navy fighter plane was hit by machine gun fire from a Jap bomber. It caught fire, peeled off, and crashed head-on into the side of a cliff. This happened a short distance from where we were dug in. The plane burst into a ball of fire. We were all very upset and hurt by this sight. One of the catholic men in our squad did the cross sign over his chest.

Another American fighter plane also caught fire. we thought we saw the pilot bail out before it caught fire, we were not sure, we all hoped he bailed out. If he did it would have been out toward the direction our officers told us we were heading the next morning. However, we never spotted him. We worried about him for days. The air battles were very exciting to watch. Our navy pilots seemed to have done an excellent job of trailing the enemy planes and shooting them down. I had no idea how fast a fighter plane moves and how quick they can change position and how accurate pilots are on the trigger. Those navy fighter pilots did not know it because they were busy but they had a cheering section on that hill rooting for success on every move they made. We all bragged for days and days about what we saw those men do. We were all very impressed with what they did.

It so happens there was a lot of fighter plane-bomber activity during those first few days after the invasion of Leyte island. we heard from a signal corp radio that our navy planes, operating from air craft carriers, had shot down over 50 Jap planes and bombers. In the air battle above our heads we saw our pilots down 20 planes, ourselves The rest of that day, following the air battle excitement, we sat in our hot fox holes and roasted. A couple of guys went to a near by farm and traded some k-rations for some chickens. That night, Jap bombers returned to the harbor to bomb american ships and supply dumps. The sky was filled again with red tracers from ships and land Ack-Ack guns.

Next morning we had hot chow again. That made three days in a row. We sat around all day. No enemy resistance. The signal man from the radio and communication corp dropped by for a short time. We got to hear from state side how the war was going ____ the one right in front of us. The radio man tuned in on either a live broad cast or a delayed broad cast of a pro-football game. The broad cast came from San Francisco. Later that morning our short rest ended. We packed up and moved out but we only moved a short distance down the road. We must have been on a major road because it was marked. The markings were by Kilometer

We moved only eight kilometers. One kilometer being about one-sixth of a mile. You can see we did not go far before we stopped. Of course the other reason we did not go far was because the movement was slowed by Jap resistance. We were stopped many times. This trip was not only short, but with the sun beating down as it was, it was hot. Guessing, I would say the temperature was 105-108°. When we got to our stopping point, my clothes were sopped with sweat. A few guys passed out from the heat. This time the threat of Japs was obvious, so we immediately dug in under a coconut grove. It was a swampy area of high grass not far from the beach. The mosquitoes returned in large numbers. Jap planes were flying right over the coconut grove where we were. They flew over us night and day. I think we were in their direct line of flight as they made their approach to attack our ships in the bay. I'll wager to say the Jap pilots did not even know we were there. There were mountains behind the area we dug in. Jap pilots use the mountains to protect them from radar and it is a way to sneak up on the target before the attack. I noticed a lot of Jap fighter planes came in when the sun was shining. They kept the sun to their back as much as possible when they made their dives. Another reason I felt we were in their approach pattern was because of the sharpnel we got from the American Ack-ack guns firing at them. Some planes flew over the coconut grove so low you could easily make out the pilot. It was no problem at all to see their big "rising sun" symbol on the wings and body. I'm sure the enemy pilots were not aware of us being dug in there. They only seemed intent on bombing and strafing the cargo and navy war ships in the bay. We did have one problem concerning our position under the coconut grove. The anti-air craft crews on some of the navy ships were getting very accurate hitting enemy air craft. We were all sweating out what would happen to us if an ack-ack shell made a direct hit on a Jap plane right above the area we were dug in. We never had to find out.

The next fourteen days we did very little serious fighting. The Japs must have been re-grouping or moving the strength of their forces to other locations. From October 26th to November 10th, all we did (or seemed to do,) was eat, sleep, fight mosquitoes and heat, try to keep dry and wait for combat orders. We did see a number of American-Jap fighter plane one on one, dog-fights and some Japanese bomber attacks but no big formations of Jap bombers. we moved our perimeter three times. One night the Jap bombers hit one of our gasoline dumps on the beach and it lit up the whole shore area for miles around. At one of our positions where we dug-in and stayed things got a little hairy....The Jap bombers missed their target and dropped their load of bombs on us. Lucky for us we had dug in deep: It was a very noisy night. Probably most of the noise was my heart pounding.

At one of the three places we stayed during this two week period, my buddies and I were dug in next to a signal corp radio operator. He had a power

ful short wave radio. His radio picked up news from all ove
including the United States and Japan. His radio was
set into a jeep that he kept camouflaged at all
times. We got to hear news each day while he was dug in
near us. We heard of the progress in Europe and of all
the island-hops made by American troops in the
Pacific. We even heard news about Leyte. Almost all
of it was true. You have not heard World War II news
'till you hear it told by none other than the one and only.... TOKYO
ROSE. She was on the air at least once a day and
most days more than one time. Her English was very
good. I understand she was taught in the United States.
She later moved to Japan. The story I read about her
said she volunteered for this broadcasting position,
for a large income, I assume. Her broadcasts were
directed personally to American G.I.'s. She said things
like, "what do you think the 4F's and draft dodgers are
doing to your girl friend or wife tonight?, while
you are so far away..... maybe it would be better if you
did not think about it. Lets listen to a Glen Miller
record... O.K.?" Tokyo Rose never failed to mention ho
poorly the Americans were doing in the war and how
great the Japs were doing. I did hear her use the
word "Nippon" a few times. There were occasions that she
was very accurate with part of her information. One
example that caught my attention was the night I heard
her tell about the Leyte invasion. It was October 19th,
which was the night before we invaded Leyte Island.
I was impressed when she announced the time and
the exact location of the invasion. She not only told
the time and location but she said there would be
four divisions that would make the invasion. On top
of all of that, she named the four divisions. My eyes
really opened up when she said you "cowboys" from
the first Cavalry division were in for big trouble. I
had a hard time believing what I was hearing. She
ended up with "you'll be sorry..... Our Imperial Navy
is going to come in right behind you and bring an
army that is going to wipe you out." She did not
finish the story. Actually, every thing she annoynced
was true. The Jap Navy was behind us coming to wi
us out. What she failed to tell was that another

American fleet came in behind that Japanese fleet and destroyed them. Somehow, the American fleet that followed the Japanese fleet sandwiched them in and not only whipped them in a great navy battle, but almost completely destroyed the bulk of the Japanese fleet in the Pacific. Do you imagine our navy was listening to Tokyo Roses broad cast? Naw...., That couldn't have been the way the Imperial Navy was destroyed.

In between her attempts to break down the morale of the American G.I., Toyko Rose played the best and the latest popular music around. She had records of all the big name bands, top recording stars, and small singing groups. She played a large number of love ballads. The kind, she described as where you held your loved one close. The records were the ones that were most popular and they did make you think about the "good old times" at home. We heard all the late sport scores each night. I will admit she did a fair job of making G.I's home sick. If it had not been for her program, we would have missed a hell of a lot of good enjoyable 40's music. At the end of the war she was taken into custody. The story written about her said she was tried as a spy. I do not recall what her punishment was. Toyko Rose was as big a part of World War II in the Pacific as any invasion that was made.

During the two week wait for a combat assignment, we went out on a 'so-called' patrol. I say, so-called' patrol because it ended up being a flop. The patrol as originally scheduled, it seems, didn't materialize. The officer in charge ended up "biting his nails". The thing I did not like about the whole set up was..... I had to give up a nice neat, dry double bunk that my buddy Ralph Burrows and I spent an entire day building. We built this sucker out of bamboo and dry grass. It was up off the mud and was perfect to sleep on. Ralph and I got to sleep on it one night. Next day, we went on this stupid patrol and had to give this double bunk up. All we got from the two dummies who took over our bunk was, "Gee guys, this is really nice, thanks."

On the first day of this patrol, we were supposed to be searching for a large concentration of Japs. We saw no Japs and we found no resistance. Early that

evening we came upon a Filipino farmer. This man convinced our patrol officer that there were over 200 Japs in the mountains near his farm. Our officer determined it was the group of Japs we were searching for. The farmer gave the officer directions. He had the radio man call back for a heavy machine gun which our squad had to haul and more men. On the third morning we started a journey over two of the steepest mountains in Leyte. At the base of each mountain was a wide, fast current flowing river. In the middle of both rivers the water was neck high. We stomped through swamp. The jungle in the mountains was so thick we had to cut our way through. Finally...., finally when we got to this farm house.... how many Japs did we find? Not two hundred... not even one hundred, fifty, twenty, how about ten. We found one Jap which we killed instantly. What this Filipino really wanted to do was have us get his family away from the farm..... to safety. Wow, was the officer in charge ever upset. When we arrived at the farm, it was almost dark. Before we pulled away from the farm the officer in charge insisted that the patrol was going to keep moving till we reached our original bivouac area. It was much to far to travel in the day light hours that were left. I just figured he was "letting off steam" because he was upset with the way things had turned out on this patrol. I felt that when we got to the top of the first mountain and he saw how dark it was getting, he would have us stop, dig in for the night and continue on to camp the next morning. We all thought the officer was making a joke when he told us to keep going after we had reached the top of the first mountain. When we had crossed the first river it was getting so dark that you could barely see the man in front of you. By the time we reached the top of the second mountain, it was total darkness. We pulled one of the most stupid military stunts ever heard of when we started down the second mountain. We emptied our K-rations into our pack, tore the wax covered cartons that held the boxes... and..(get this)....used them as torches. We set the boxes afire, one after the other and used the light to guide us down the mountain. There we were, in a heavy combat area, carrying torches to light our way down a pitch dark mountain side! There were steep drop offs. Some places just had 2-3 feet clearance. To make

matters worse, a light rain fell so our torches kept going out. By the time we reached the bottom of the 2nd mountain no one had anything left to make a torch. After we crossed the last neck high river in the dark there was still a mile of path through the jungle, before we reached camp. It was a miracle that we made it. I not only had to pinch myself to see if I was alive but I asked one of the men in camp, who was not out on the patrol, if I was really there. It was shortly after 11:00 P.M. when we arrived in camp. If the enemy could have seen us coming down the steep mountain holding the torches to light our way, we would not have had to worry about them killing us..... they would have died laughing at us. This maneuver was against all principals of military combat. How this officer, who was not an officer of "H" troop, thank god, ever became a commissioned officer is hard to understand. He was a "90 day wonder" if there

ever was one. I thought only Lieutenant Joke did thing like that. After I spent a few minutes getting rid of my frustrations, I ate some of the loose rations I had dumped in my pack from the K-ration containers used to make torches. No use wasting them. I rolled up in my poncho and went to sleep in the mud. I was beat. My last thoughts before I went to sleep. I can't believe we made it back to camp. I thanked God again that we did not all get killed. We were all put out with a Filipino farmer. The men on the patrol were upset. with a stubborn, unthinking, United States Cavalry officer, too.

Next morning we sat around in a rain waiting for orders to move out to where our regiment was camped a few miles away. Every one in the regiment was there but us. They were waiting for us. As we started to move it began to rain hard. Movement was difficult. When we finally reached the beach where the regiment had been, they were gone. A radioman told us a huge tropical storm was heading this way. It was a storm similar to a storm we

get around Florida. We received word by radio to stay where we were, dig in and wait it out. The radio man had been told the storm had the characteristics of a hurricane. It could have easily been a hurricane. I can tell you this, I have never seen wind and rain like that, in any storm that came through Iowa. The winds blew so hard the coconut trees seemed to bend in half. It was impossible to keep any kind of shelter over the top of our foxhole. There were two of us in our fox hole. The rains, along with the wind caused us to chill. We laid on one poncho and covered up with the other. It really got cold. Our fox hole soon had a half foot of water in it. We tried to go to sleep but without any luck. Sleeping, we had found, could sometimes be the cure for pain and misery, at least temporarily.

Just before the storm came in full force, I looked out in the bay and saw a ship. The waves, even at this time appeared to be going wild. They were slashing and whipping around fiercely. I watched the ship 'till it became blurred because of the wind and rain. I am sure the bow raised high in the air. It appeared to me that the bow came clear out of the water and then it slammed quickly down into the ocean with a great force. I told my foxhole buddy, "That son-of-a gun is gonna sink." I only watched this happen a few times before the winds and rain completely cut off my vision. I remember wondering if there were people on board that ship. It was an APA ship. There had to be people on it. I also remember thinking if there were people on board, how could they keep from getting thrown around inside. Later, my questions were answered. I ran into a soldier who had a friend that was on board that troop transport ship. The ship was on its way to some islands north of Leyte and had pulled into the harbor to wait out the storm. The soldier I talked to met with and got a chance to talk with a buddy on board that A.P.A., before it left the bay. This soldiers buddy said all of them were tossed around 'till they discovered a solution. They tied themselves to stationary parts of the ship with whatever was within reaching distance and they just waited it out. My friend's close buddy said they all prayed a lot. He said everything that was not tied down was flying all over the deck. It was a night mare. I met the soldier, who told me this story just by accident. He thought it was strange that I was sitting in a fox hole on the beach watching the ship as it tossed and turned with his buddy in it

sweating out a big storm. At about 4:00 A.M. the rain died down and the winds almost stopped. Someone in another fox hole along the beach, got up and some way started a small fire. The small fire shortly became a big bon-fire. Soon everyone came out of their fox holes and went over to dry out and brew a cup of coffee. To be warm again..... what a good, good feeling. This day was November 11th. After we all got dry and ate, we were surprised to see some army trucks appear. Some of us loaded in the trucks and headed for a small coastal village named BURAGO. This village had just been taken by the 8th Regiment. All of the men could not get in the trucks some had to go in barges. The barges had not arrived but were on their way. Burago was about 30 miles away. I went by truck. To get to Burago we passed through Tacloban. It was our third objective during the landing on the first day. Tacloban had changed a lot in three weeks time. The Filipino civilians appeared less friendly. It looked like a large number of American temporary buildings and many tents had popped up. The town seemed to be taken over by quarter master troops we went through the town very slowly but we did not stop. We got stuck in the mud 10 times before we reached Burago. The men who went by barge ran into some minor trouble with Japs. In Burago, we spent our first night inside of a rat in fested ware house

Next day, November 12th, the rest of the men of the Regiment finally arrived. We had our first "mail call" on Leyte Island. It's a great feeling to come back from out

of the dead and return to the living. with news from home. You really have to be away from home and survive under combat conditions to realize the wonderful feeling that comes from receiving a letter from a loved one back home. Some times you read a letter over and over and over. A letter from home can also be a total disaster if it happens to be a "dear john" letter. I saw three of these sad situations during my army stay. Each guy was crushed. You are at a loss to help. I never got a "dear john" letter. I didn't even have a girl friend.

On November 13th we moved to a village called Tungo, some eight miles away. It was a hot, sweltering day. Tungo was located near a river that ran into the ocean. We sat up a fox hole, next to the river then ate our supper. One of my buddies and I decided to take a bath in the river. We hesitated taking a bath after seeing a couple of Filipino woman doing their wash just a few yards away. You never know when the opportunity will come for you to take a bath, so you do it when you can. As we took our bath, both ladies stopped, looked at us, pointed and giggled. I think they were laughing at our

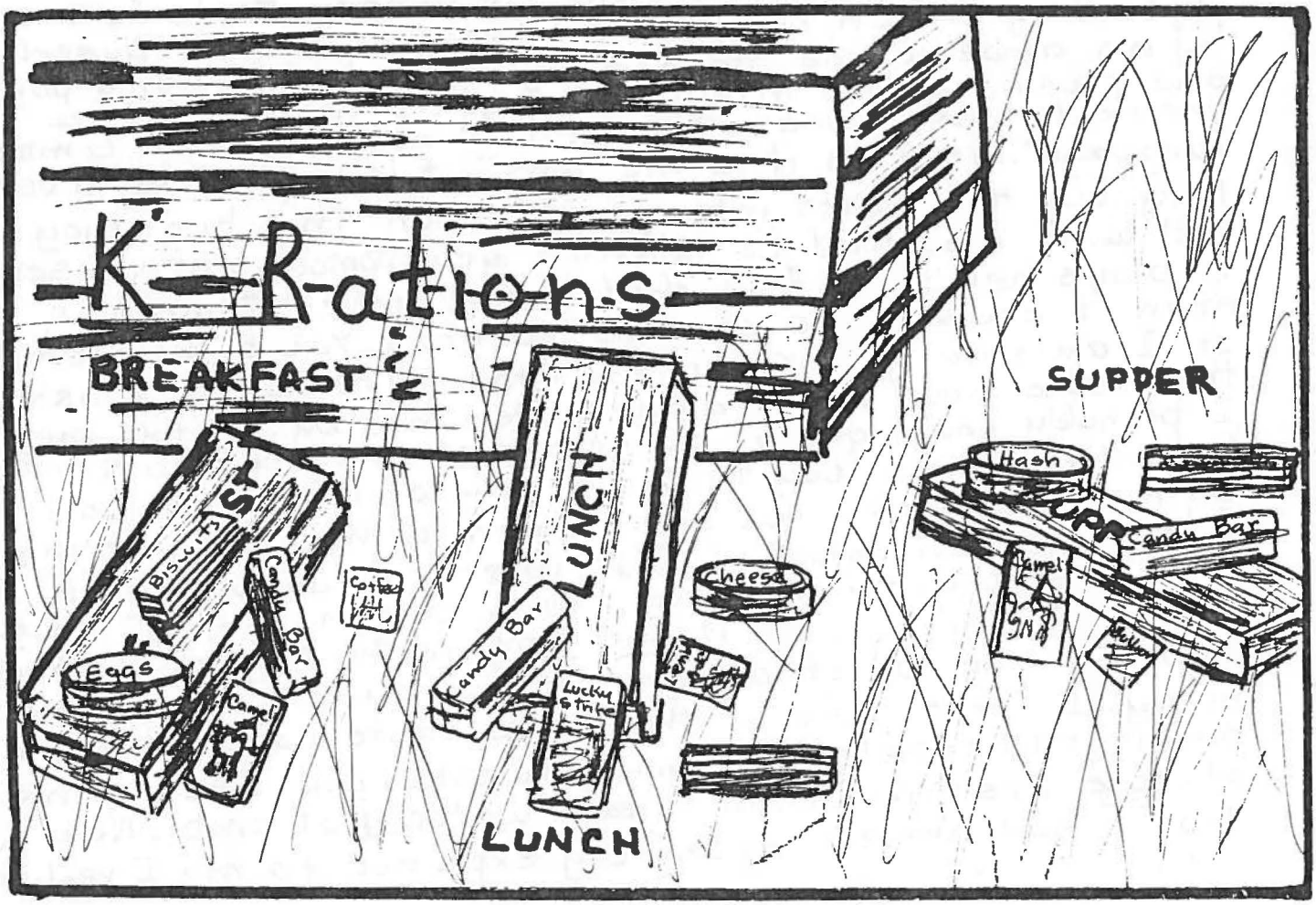
light skin. They could have been laughing at something else..... we were in water up to our waist most of the time.

Doing the wash, Filipino style, was quiet a chore. For most of them it was an all day job. Washing clothes for them went something like this. First, they picked a spot near a large rock that raised out of the river. After dipping and soaking a piece of clothing in the water they pounded it by slamming it against the rock, again and again very hard, till they felt they had beaten out the dirt. They did this with each individual article of clothing. After the beating session they wrung each garment out by hand and placed it over a bush on the river bank to dry. I think they stayed by the drying cloth till every article was dry. I could not imagine American woman doing their wash in this matter. I was told you could get anything from a Filipino woman for a bar of soap. The Filipino women knew what soap was used for.... they just could not afford it.

After we took our bath we sat and talked till dark. It always felt good to get a bath. We then took turns pulling guard so we could get some sleep. Unless you are in a critical situation where the Japs are close by and you know it, guard duty in a fox hole gets very, very boring. If there is evidence that you have fallen asleep you can get court marshalled and severly punished. You have to sit quietly in pitch dark and watch and listen. You can not entertain your self by singing, humming, or whistling. In critical situations you can not even stretch or move around. You sometimes have to force your self to keep awake, especially if you had a long tiring day. I kept my self awake by nibbling on K-ration crackers, better known as "dog biscuits'. I hated them but they kept me awake.

Our K-rations did have their place in combat. They were light to carry. They were highly concentrated. we were told they were nutritional. The only thing they lacked was variety... Some would say they lacked taste. Having the same meals day in and day out can cause you to lose interest in eating even when you are very hungry. Each breakfast was the same. Each lunch was exactly the same. Each supper was the same. For breakfast it was a small can of dehyrated eggs and bacon, four biscuits, a small date candy bar, four cig

arettes, a packet of instant coffee with a small container that held sugar and powered cream. You did not get these items for breakfast one day and a different number of items the next day. You got the same items in the breakfast K-ration container <u>each day</u>. When I got to Luzon island in the Philippines, I was in combat for approximately 90 days. I had the very same exact meal for breakfast 87 of the 90 days. The biscuits in any K-ration are about as tasty as eating the paper this story is being written on. Lunch consisted of a small can of highly concentrated cheese, four biscuits, four cigarettes, a small container of lemonade powder (which seemed to always melt into a lump) sugar, and a candy bar. The evening meal brought to us a small can of hash, four cigarettes, biscuits, a small container of bullion and a chocolate candy bar. I may have accidently put an item in the wrong K-ration box, but I was close. In an effort to get a little variety to meals, we mixed items. Eggs and bacon with cheese was good.



Hash and cheese mixed was O.K., but not great. Hash with Eggs and Bacon, to me, was the worst. I really felt the government got "ripped off" when they contracted for the "dog biscuits". Every one either threw them away or did like I did. They nibbled on them to keep awake while on guard. I complained about the rations but I know our government cared. I know they tried to keep us fed and alive 'till we could return to civilization. In spite of what I say, I am thankful for the effort. We still ate 100 times better than the enemy. I dont know how far I could survive on rice and fish.... or nothing at all.

On November 14th I woke up sick. I had a good dose of what is commonly referred to as the "G.I.s". It was not the plain old ordinary "G.I.s", caused by some spoiled food. I was in the beginning stages of an illness called amoebic dysentary This was not diagnosed as amoebic dysentery for sure till I was taken to the hospital later. The "doc" in our regiment told me...."oh, you probably have some form of dysentery. It will go away soon..... just don't worry about it!" The dictionary explains Amoebic dysentery as an acute intestinal amebiasis caused by an amoeba and marked by dysentery griping pain and erosion of the intestional wall. I inquired of a medical nurse what this ment in down to earth "common language". He said it is the "runs". It is caused by a very tiny bug that gets into your stomach This bug plays hell with food that is taken into your stomach. When I say it plays hell with food that enters your stomach, I mean it causes one of two reactions. You either vomit, or I am sure you know the other alternative. I asked the medic how I could have gotten the 'bug'? He told me I probably could get it a number of ways but he said, "the most common way to get a dose of this illness was by drinking water out of a stream without first putting in a purification tablet. I was careful to do that each time I dipped my canteen into a stream.... as I thought back..... I failed to do it <u>one time</u> in the Admiralty Islands. I was at the top of a high mountain and I said to a buddy. "I am so sick of the iodine taste caused by the purification tablet.... I'm going to take one small drink of pure fresh mountain stream water, just once". Now that I had amoebic dysentery explained to me, I realize

how stupid I was to think I could drink one small sip (that is all it was) of water without purifying it first. I dearly paid for that mistake. For the last part of combat in the Admiralties and so far this whole campaign in Leyte, I had to restrict myself to coffee and sometimes cheese, along with cigarettes. Coffee is the only thing I could keep on my stomach. I felt very weak most of the time. What the hell. Im young. That morning I ate some dehyrated eggs very slowly. I chewed slowly and I swallowed very slowly. With in minutes, I was "heaving" my guts out. The medic gave me a pill. He suggested I eat some cheese. That morning one of the men in our squad exchanged some K-rations for chicken and potatoes. He came running over to me and said. "Eat these potatoes and chicken.... maybe that will stay down. I threw up 10-15 minutes later. If I dont quit writing about that subject Im going to get sick.

Since I was not feeling well I pulled an extra two hours guard on the gun early in the evening. I pulled

additional guard time on the gun so all the guys could go back for some hot chow. While I was sitting alone, waiting for the squad to return, I had some unexpected company. A Jap Zero dived toward me from behind some coconut trees, across the river and was straffing at me. I saw him just before he started to make the dive. I was sitting directly behind the machine gun, so when he dove and strafed, I fired back at him. He came close but did not hit me. I came close but did not hit him. The whole thing was over almost before it started. I thought that since he received fire from me he might circle and come back. He didn't. He must have been returning from some mission, looked down and saw me alone next to the river and decided to see if he could get rid of me in one swipe. All the guys who went for hot chow came running back to see if I had been shot. They all saw the lone Zero dive down at me. They heard both of us exchange fire. I caught the devil from my squad sergeant for firing the gun.

Earlier in the day another new replacement arrived. What a neat young man. He was so strong I could not believe it. He picked up parts of the heavy equipment around us like it was a leaf or something. He was a friendly sort. His name was Jim Watkins. He was from Georgia. Besides being strong and friendly he was very frightened. We sat down and talked awhile. I tried to comfort him by explaining that it is a good sign to be scared. It keeps you alert. He asked me how many months I had been in combat. I told him. He said to me, "do you get scared up here on the front lines". My response was, "Jim, only when I am awake or sleeping". He acted like he felt better about being up here. I put him to work to try and help him get his mind off combat. He and I built one of those nice sleeping bunks out of bamboo and coconut leaves. The kind of bunk that is up out of the mud. We used the bunk to rest in during the day when we were not on guard. All we did the three days at Tungo was sleep, eat and write letters (V-mail) they said would be mailed later. We slopped around in the mud a lot, too. I was almost feeling good. I was only "throwing-up" 3-4 times a day.

On the morning of November nineteen, I was up early. I had been informed the night before that I was to take a turn on guard duty. We were all to take turns on guard duty at a bridge up the road a short distance. I had my usual cup of coffee and cigarette and went with a few of my squad members to find this bridge. We were taken to the post by weapons carrier. It was a sloppy, muddy, bumpy ride of 6-7 miles. We were M.P.'s (Military Police). We were given arm bands to prove it. There were eight men in the guard group. We each pulled guard during the day one on each side of the bridge for two hour shifts. At night, we pulled two hour shifts, but two men on each side of the bridge. For every two hours on guard we were given four hours of rest. The reason this guard was decided upon was due to some enemy resistance up the road. A Jap machine gun had fired at some of our American trucks who hauled supplies

to the the front lines. The commander in the area felt that if they were bold enough to fire at our trucks, they might even try to infiltrate into our lines or send troops down the road. we pulled guard three days. Nothing happened. During the day light hours the traffic was quit heavy. we watched to see that traffic did not jam. Most of the road leading to each end of the bridge was single lane. We simply held up some cars and trucks while others passed. It amounted to allowing traffic to pass by letting them take turns. We were not your top class military police but we did keep traffic moving along smoothly. we had to follow one rule that I felt should never be followed in a combat zone. We had to salute any officer who displayed his rank. If a Jap was close enough to see that being done, that officer would get shot. I do not recall one jeep or truck passing over that bridge after it turned dark. Actually, this detail was a change of pace and the time went by quickly. The time I was off guard duty, I tried my hand at cutting bamboo the way the natives do it..... with a bolo knife. I came back to camp with a big gash in one finger.

On November 23rd I was relieved from my Military Police detail. Some men from another Division replaced us. When I returned to our bivouac area near Tungo, squad tents had been erected for some reason. These tents had bunks in them. we all slept great. How many nights did we get to sleep in these tents with these wonderful bunk cots in them? you might ask..... We got to sleep in those comfortable cots one night. The army sometimes pulled some unusual stunts on us for no particular reason. Officers have a tendency to change their plans on a minutes notice, without explanation. We were ordered to tear down the squad tents and cots, return them to the supply sergeant, pack up our gear and leave. We returned to the coastal village that we just came from, Burago. We were ordered by an officer to set up the machine gun on the beach, next to the home of a fisherman. A doctor and a shool master came over and introduced themselves to us. They both spoke excellant English. The schoolmaster introduced us to a well mannered, polite,

shy family. They offered us a tasty sweet bar that is a Philippine speciality. It reminded me of our caramel corn. Late in the afternoon, the Doctor invited the whole squad to his hut for a glass of Tuba with him and his family. We had to turn him down, because we had to dig in and prepare for the coming night. Tuba, I understand, is a strong Filipino beer. They even offered us a place to rest for the night. Again we had to turn them down. As we left, they both asked us to please return someday. Both families seemed very sincere when they told us they were glad we had arrived in the Philippines. The Doctor told us he would be pleased, at the defeat of the Japanese, so they could begin to plan for their countries independence. This was the best we had been treated by any Filipino civilians while we were in the Philippines.

We only stayed at Burago one day. Trucks arrived to take us to another coastline village called Cary Gary. Fritz Fastner, my buddy from Minnesota, and I walked around part of Burago while we were waiting for the trucks to arrive. We located some more of that Filipino candy that tasted like caramel corn. We traded cigarettes for it. We also saw a Filipino playing a guitar. Fritz and I sat down next to him and tried to strike up a conversation with him. Between guestures of the hands, pointing, marking on the ground with a stick and "lucking out" on the few English words he almost knew, we got him to understand that we wanted him to sing a couple of Filpino songs. He had a beautiful voice. He did a good job of singing for us. In turn, we sang some American songs in harmony for him. He seemed to really enjoy it. The Filipino, Fritz, and I enjoyed our little sing-a-long. Soon a small group of Filipinos and later a larger group of Filipino civilians gathered. We thought it was better that we end this get-to-gether. Our trucks arrived and we got in and droue off. Our filipino friends were smiling and waving as we left them. Cary Gary seemed to be the gathering place for the whole regiment. At least it felt like all the regiment was together again from the number of truck loads of men. A regimental mess hall was put up in the middle of the village. We

unloaded from the trucks and ate. A Jeep took our squ and the gun to a position up the beach on the very ou skirts of town. Our Squad Sergeant informed us we might not stay there very long.

We dug in our gun right on the beach. I had just fallen asleep following my two hour guard duty. I awoke to some heavy ackack fire just in time to sleepingly see three Jap zeros flying low right over our fox hole. As I looked again, still half asleep, I saw one of them was on fire, then another. Soon the third one was burning. Two of them crashed into the ocean The third one clove toward the village and exploded in a ball of fire. After we all had coffee, we were ordered to return to Cary Gary for some kind of clean up duty. It seems someone neglected to clean up the regimental mess hall after the meal last night. I'll bet Lieutenant Joke volunteered our squad to do the job. After we cleaned the mess hall and policed the area we received an unexpected surprise. It was Thanksgiving Day. Some turkey, bread,

butter, and a small piece of punkin pie in crates was dropped by parachute. This dinner was served in the regimental mess kitchen. we dropped our gun, sat down next to a guy in a fox hole and ate. God, that tasted good. We were all very pleased because normally in combat, holidays are just another day. Actually, when in combat you lose tract of what day it is. I knew because I wrote most of the dates in my diary.

After that surprise Thanksgiving meal we were put into a couple of jeeps and moved far up the beach for guard duty. The spot where our squad and gun was assigned was the farthrest guard post along the beach. We would be the very first to see any visitors or enemy come into the town from this direction. We would be the last guards to see any one before they left. The fox hole not to far from us, had an observer for artillery in it. The observer had a telephone. If a problem came up the observer could call into head quarters. From the edge of water to the narrow dirt road along the beach, was about 40 yards wide. We dug in about 10 yards from the road. The road ran right in to town. Behind the road about 15 yards, was an empty shack. During the day, when we were not on guard duty, we could rest and keep cool in the shade of the shack. All Filipinos who went into Cary Gary used this dirt road. It was one of our duties to check and make sure none of them carried weapons or explosives on them. On one occasion we ran across another guitar player heading toward town. He had a slight understanding of English. Surprisingly, we got him to play jazz and some Boogie-Woogie. He was good. We gave him K-rations after he played for us. We talked to a young Filipino woman who had just arrived in Leyte from Luzon. She said she escaped from that island. Her husband was in the Philippine army in Luzon. She told us some terrible stories about the Japanese invasion in Luzon. She said American soldiers were badly treated in Corregidor. Her English was poor but we did understand most of what she said. She told us she was waiting for the war to end so she and her husband could finally live together.

The sleeping in the shade of a shack during free time after pulling guard duty, was great. We all got rested up. We not only rested but we took a bath

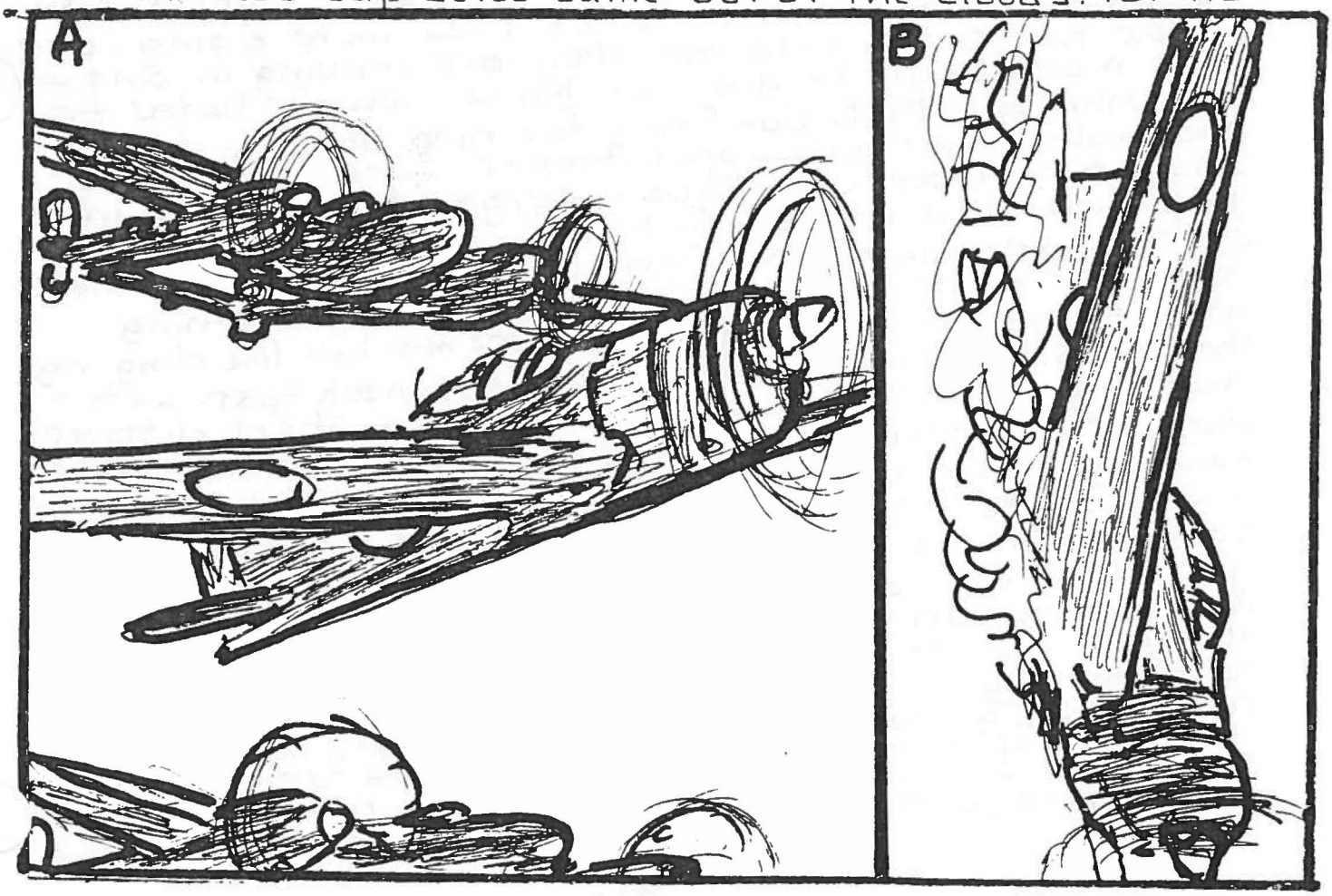
every day in a narrow stream behind the shack. Filipin women from near by, washed our clothing for the soap w gave them. We got 10-1 rations most of the time we pulled guard. These 10-1 rations prouide much more variety. Some of the men in the squad exchanged un-wanted rations for chickens and eggs. We had two little Filipino guys visit our shack one day asking if they could do things to earn rations. We had them run errands and pick up things for us. They policed the area each day. They even washed our mess kits for us. With 10-1 rations to eat, women washing our clothing, fresh stream water to bath in each day, and our little buddies, Kileo and Freddy to do our chores, we were living like the royalty. All we had to do was pull guard two hours out of eight, during the day and two hours every night, out of six hours. We had to report any unusual happenings concerning civilians entering the town. I bet Lieutenant Joke didn't know about this set-up.

We were at Cary Gary for nine days. A lot of interesting things happened during that time. The main thing was an air raid each night. These raids were carried out by bombers. The Jap air force knew we were there, all right. Early on one of the nine nights while I was on guard, my heart almost stopped. It did not take more that two seconds for my buddies to find the near by, pre-dug, fox hole and dive in to it. It was early enough in the evening that some of the men in the squad were still sitting in the shack talking. We heard only one Jap bomber. We did not see it. We heard this loud explosion in the ocean directly in front of us. The bomb hit some 150-200 yards out. It sounded like it lit on top of our heads. Following this bomb came two more bombs. It was still light enough to see. I do not understand how he missed us. Earlier in the day word came to us from Regimental Headquarters, that we should be on the alert for an invasion. I was sure that this was the beginning of it. If this would have been an invasion we would have been in big trouble because of how thin we were spread out this far down the beach. It was not an invasion, thank God. Another night Jap bombers bombed hell out of a deserted island which was 2-3 miles away from us. I never did hear what that was all about.

Another night, while I was on guard in Cary Gary alone, I heard two Jap bombers fly over. It

was a beautiful night, The moon was out bright. Up to this point it was a quiet night. I looked at my watch. It said 11:55. The first time they flew by they were flying high. It appeared to me they were hunting for a specific target. I watched as they circled and turned around. When they dropped down the anti-aircraft started to pound them. One bomber dropped a flare over near where our big heavy artillery was located. They seemed to know about where the target was because the flare lit about in the center of the gun emplacement. They circled once more, dived down a little lower and dropped a large load of bombs. For the life of me I can not see how planes can get through the anti-craft barrage our Ack-Ack guns throw at them. After they bombed the target they turned around and headed back the the direction they came. I thought the whole thing was amazing.

I was sitting in the fox hole alone, sunning my self. I was laying on my back, hands behind my head, looking straight up in the sky. There were very few clouds. Directly over my head.... I did not have to even move my head.... Two Jap Zeros came out of the clouds. For no



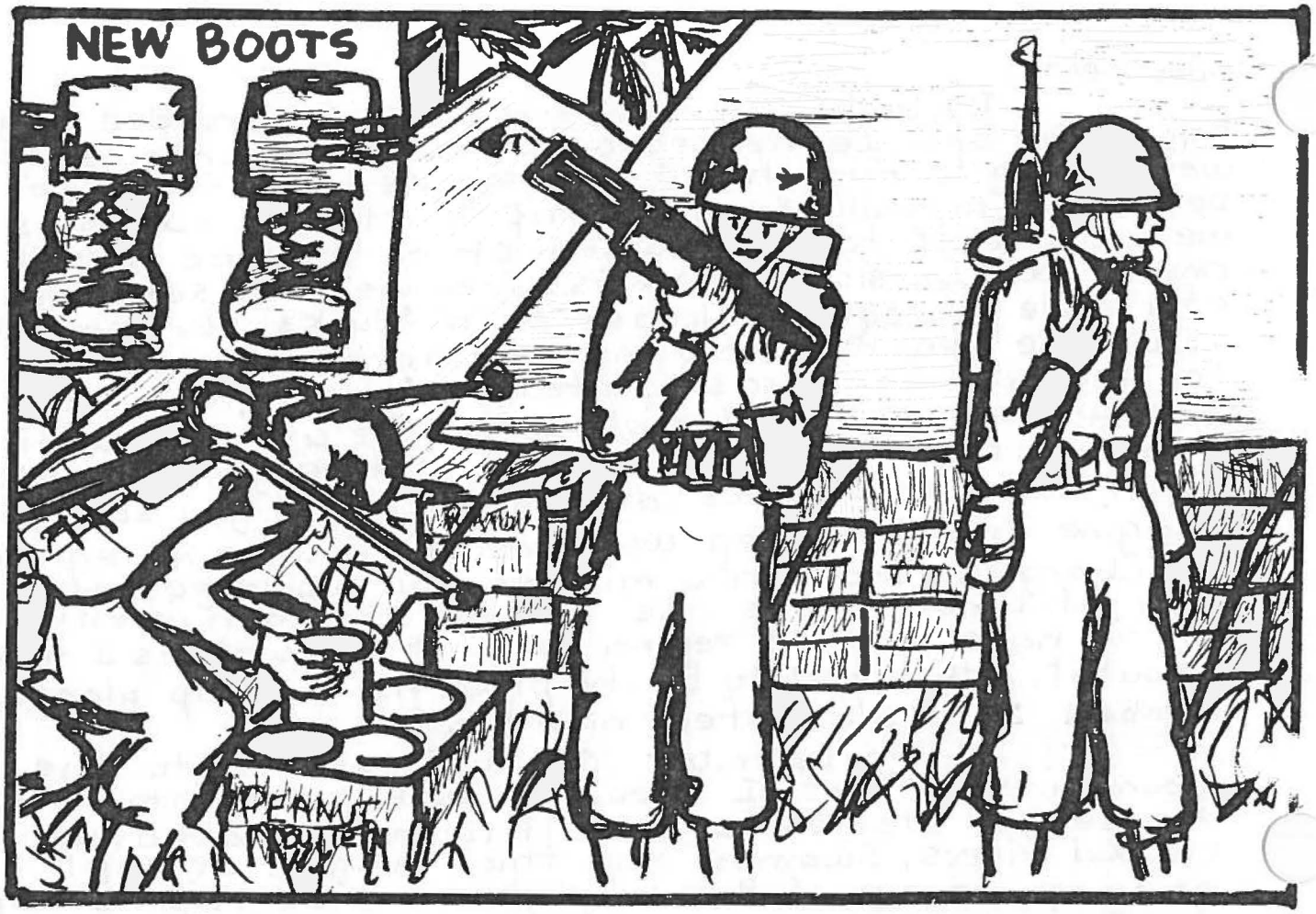
apparent reason, one of the two Zeros had a stream of black smoke coming from it's tail. That plane nosed down into the ocean. I am not sure, but I think the pilot bailed out. The reason I am unsure is because a second Zero came out of the same clouds a fraction of a second after the first one. Following the second Zero was two American P-38's. One P-38 was behind and below, the other P-38 was behind and above the Jap Zero. When the pilot of the Zero moved his plane up, the P-38 behind and above gave him a burst from his machine gun. When the pilot of the Zero moved the plane down, the P-38 behind and below gave the Zero a burst of his machine gun. That Zero was doomed. It took those two P-38's about 8 seconds to shoot both Zeros out of the sky. I'll bet I did not blink my eyes over five times from the second that dog fight started till it ended

On the morning of December 3rd Some army out fit came down the road, stopped in the area where we were located and started to erect squad tents, larger tents, and began to unload some supplies and equipment. I asked them what they were doing. One of the non-coms told me they are moving in and we were moving out. He did not know how I hated to hear him say that. Our 'King for nine days' mission had ended. What a disappointment. Sure enough, a short time later, our squad sergeant pulled up in a jeep and told us to, "pack up.... we are getting out of here." We returned to Cary Gary, slept in the mess tent that night. We had a "mail call" next morning after being awaken by guys in the mess hall line clanging their mess kits together while waiting for break fast. Later that day, we marched up the beach a short distance, dug in, and stayed two days. We spent most of the two days here unloading supplies and ammunition from barges into trucks. The last day we spent at Cary Gary was December 8th. On that day we were given time off, after our loading and unloading detail. We roamed around the village searching for something to do. Fritz Fastner found a party..... you heard me right.... a party. Some young people were having a pig roast. It was a very tasty meal. There were attempts at dancing. Fritz tried desperately to explain and demonstrate ball room dancing to the young girls, with out success. He kept stepping on their

bare feet.

December 9th turned out to be a dreaded day. This is the day we headed back into the mountains. We were going to hunt for the enemy. We were told that before we actually took the trip up into the mountains we would first take a journey off to the side to help one of our Division Regiments. They were in some kind of trouble. Our squad loaded onto 'ducks' that carried us up the beach a few miles near the area where the big artillery was located. The 'ducks', let us out and we camped that night near the artillery outfit. Wow, what a miserable night. The artillery fired rounds about every 15 minutes all night long. If you can imagine trying to sleep with an earth shaking explosion discharging every few minutes, you would get the idea of what it was like I'll bet the men in this outfit have trouble sleeping when it is quiet. As I think about it.... this had to be the place the two Jap planes bombed so badly a few nights ago.

On December 10th we started into the mountains on foot. I knew we were going into combat You see, it started to rain. It rained and rained. We crossed rivers, swamps and thick jungle. We kept going up, up, up. If this was just a side trip to help a regiment in need, what is the real mountain trip, hunting for Japs going to be like. Come to think about it they never mentioned the Regiment in need of help again. I think they were just breaking us in to combat gently, by telling us we were needed to help out one of our own regiments. At one point, high in the mountains, we came upon a Filipino camp. It was a supply depot: other Filipino outfits brought supplies and equipment to this point and returned to the bottom of the mountain for more supplies. The Filipino outfit that ran this depot hauled rations, ammunition, supplies and equipment up into the front lines, as needed. I did something here that I never thought I would ever do. I took a pair of new army boots and a one gallon can of peanut butter. The boots were so new they had not been issued. I mean, they were a brand new army style. The real reason I walked away with the army boots was to protect my ankles. Jungle rot was creeping up from my feet to my upper legs under the canvas leggings. I felt the flap that goes



across the front of the boot and the overall construction of the boot would be what I needed. Besides, the pair lying there on top of the crate was my exact size. Fritz told me if I did not take them he would take them for me. I really did feel guilty about doing it. We were all issued these boots a few months later. Now, as for the gallon of peanut butter that was a little different. If you would ask my family, they would probably say.... Dick would never, ever steal gold, silver or any other valuable — but — if there is peanut butter around and he has not had any for a long time, he might kill to get it. I really took the peanut butter so I could down the 'dog biscuits' in the K-rations. I spread the peanut butter on top of the biscuits that I nibble to keep me awake while on guard. I really do like peanut butter — and — my excuse was very weak.

We really started to climb about 2:00 P.M. We passed some of the soldiers we were sent to relieve. They were not from our division. As we passed, they tried to intimidate us by telling us how bad it was up there in combat. They were cocky. It was their

first combat duty. Most of us paid no attention to their remarks.. We had been there before

For the first time in combat I saw a sight that really made me sad and depressed. A short time after we passed the out fit we were to relieve, there was a long single line of donkeys carrying dead American Soldiers on their backs These dead Americans were returning. from the area we were heading toward. They were being hauled to a point that eventually would be a formal American Military cemetary. I did not realize at the time that the men hanging in ponchos over the donkeys, were our true American heroes. They gave every thing. They gave their lives for their Country.

Two hours, later we were still climbing the same stupid mountain and we were still only about three quarters of the way up. It was your typical tropical mountain. It was wet, muddy and slippery. You take one step and slide back two. We reached the top at dark. I don't think I could have taken another step without falling flat on my face. I drank all of the water

from my canteen, so I had no water that night. I wa really thirsty. I could not even eat my dog biscuits with peanut butter on them. If I did my mouth would probably stick together and stay glued shut. Fritz and I had to place the gun next to a path near a huge tree. The roots of the tree would not allow us to dig a fox hole. We took turns sitting in the mud and rain on top of roots, pulling guard. Two hours on. Two hours off. We decided to sacrifice one poncho to catch water. We caught enough so we could each have a cup of delicious, refreshing, dirty water coffee in the morning. There were times during the night that I felt day light was not going to come. All night long I kept dreaming about cool, cool water. Water with plenty of ice chunks in it.

The story about this whole mountain climb was—steep, mud, slippery and rain. Fall down, get up, cuss, slide, fall down, get up, rest, cuss, cuss, cuss. This is the way it went all day. I thought we had reached the top of this mountain—wrong. The third day we finally did really reach the top. None of us believed our officers when they told us we were there. They had told us this before. The big thing that makes this mountain climbing so difficult is the extra weight of the machine gun and ammunition. There were times I would have enjoyed throwing that 51 pounds of metal, I was carrying on my shoulder, called a receiver, down the side of the mountain.

We were really not at the very top of it yet. We were near the top, but not there. We dug in and set up a perimeter. This hill we were on was simply referred to as hill 1836. Its elevation was 1836 feet, I imagine. We stayed here a total of seven days. The job we were assigned was to haul rations and ammunition up to some ritlemen in our regiment from the point where we had dug in. The supplies were brought to us. We took the supplies to the ritlemen. Between the spot we were dug in and the place the riflemen were dug in at the top of hill 1836, was a stream. Each time we went up to them with supplies, we filled our canteens and exchanged the full ones with their empties. The riflemen on top of hill 1836 were not fighting there, they were working from the top of hill 1836. The difficult was the hill beyond hill 1836. On this hill it was obvio that the Japs were making some kind of final stand.

They completely fortified that whole mountain. They had every possible route to that hill covered. They had machine guns every where. They had mortars firing from dug in emplacements that could not be located. The big Jap artillery behind that mountain was firing rounds almost 24 hours a day. The Jap soldiers, were large in numbers and dug in very deep. This hill was holding up the war effort in Leyte. The Japs intended that we move no farther than hill 1836. The outfit we passed a few days back, had tried to take this hill for 12 days. The result was those many, many men we saw hanging dead over the donkeys. This was going to be one hell of a task. The way I looked at it, the Army needed the best to get the job done. When they laid the job on to 'G' and 'F' troop, they were getting the very best. I am not talking about my troop, which is 'H' Troop. We were just back-up. I'm talking about down to earth, hard fighting, "tell us what you need done — and we will do it"... riflemen. These men were the best. I had seen them operate. What ever it takes to get the job done they will do it. If you can not explain to them how it can be done, tell them what you want done After you tell them what you want done — back off and let them figure a way to do it. I promise you — It will get done. They eventually carried out my promise.

My outfit was a heavy weapons troop. After a few days on hill 1836, our responsibilities and duties changed. I explained that we took supplies and equipment, plus water up to the men on top. On the trip back, we paired off, in twos, and carried back wounded and dead on stretchers. I thought a machine gun was heavy and difficult to carry. It is much more work to carry wounded and dead weight. The wounded we brought back were tended to by medics who had set up a temporary hospital behind our perimeter. Those that the medics mended were hauled by stretcher down the mountain to a better equipped hospital. You could not imagine the conditions under which the medical staff worked, especially the surgeons.

One of the men in my squad was Spanish. His name did not sound Spanish. He looked Spanish. His name was Ed Freeman. I think Ed Freeman had more feeling for other humans than almost any one I have ever known. I do know that he had more "guts" in his little finger than most people have in

their entire body. If Ed was a friend he would do anything to help you. He was a good prize fighter. He was one of my best friends. He did not take kindly to friends cutting me down. They all quit doing it in front of him. Ed did have a temper. You would have to say he was his own man. I was probably the only friend he had that he could talk to and trust. Some times he would not even listen to me. This man, Freeman, received three medals for bravery in the war. He threw them away. To him, getting medals was worthless. We were sitting in our fox holes on hill 1836 about one hour before it got dark. We had just made a trip up to the top of the hill and back. He looked over at me and said, "Foss, round up all the canteens that you can find". I asked him why. He said, "will you do as I tell you". Just tell the guys you borrow from that they will get them back first thing in the morning, full". I had no idea what he planned to do so I could not tell the guys why I wanted their canteens. I was able to get 15. He asked if I would object to keeping my butt tied down to the machine gun till he returned. I asked

him what he planned to do. He quietly said to me, "those guys on top of the hill have to have more water. They are so busy fighting they can't get it. They are all my buddies and they need help. I am going to the stream, fill up these canteens and take water to them." I asked him when he planned to do this. He said, "Now". He told me that he was counting on me to keep my mouth shut about this. He told me not to worry that he could make it up and back in the dark and all I needed to do was pull guard for him and shut up. He picked up the canteens and left.

It was almost pitch dark when Ed took off down the path leading to the stream. It was pitch dark and a couple hours later when he returned, up the path. I was really worried about him. I wondered how he got the water to the riflemen without getting lost or shot. He came back with 15 full canteens. He asked if I minded taking the canteens back to each man first thing in the morning. I told him I would take care of it. I asked him how things went. He said, "fine". When I spoke to him again he did not answer. He was sound asleep. I kept my word to him. I never told a sole what he did that night. But one of his Mexican friends to whom he took the water did. After the campaign ended Ed was awarded another medal. He did not keep it. I think this man was a true war hero

In order to move across Leyte Island, flush out the enemy and complete our mission, it was absolutely essential that the Japs in the next hill be removed. For three days our troops pounded the hill with artillery and mortars and sent in the best riflemen we had. No luck. Patrols came back with the information that they had to many machine guns for us to infiltrate their lines. Every approach to the hill was double covered. I mentioned earlier if I & R cannot find a solution to a problem and if combat officers are stumped for an answer, let the so called lowly rifleman take a crack at it. They did just that. Seems there were a number of Mexicans and Spanish-Americans among those front line riflemen in the foxholes. They came up with a solution. A few of them volunteered to infiltrate into the Jap lines and find the machine guns that were holding things up. They would move at night, using only knifes and a very few hand grenades. If, for any

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reason, they had to talk or yell (heaven forbid) it would be done in Spanish. They claimed that alone would confuse the hell out of the Japs. The men who went on the patrol wore tenni's shoes, stocking tupe hats, the regular army uniform and little else. They explained to the officers that their mission was to locate the approximate areas in which the enemy machine guns were dug in so that our mortars and artillery units could blast them. These men were instructed not to kill any one unless it was absolutely necessary. I understand these men determined amoung themselves who would go on this mission. All I have to say is those who were chosen had to be some one outstandingly special just to volunteer, let alone, go through with the mission. The men of the patrol spent from dark to day light crawling and moving around that hill which was infested with Japs, looking for clues that told them where machine gun nests were located. When they returned, they pointed out approximate areas and near-by land marks that ear marked enemy machine gun placements. The information they presented must have proven accurate because the next day, after our troops charged the hill, they discovered that 12 enemy machine guns plus 4 mortar squads had been destroyed due to their efforts. I do not understand all the details of how this patrol was determined and how the hill was taken. I do know the group who was instrumental in getting the job done were American-Mexican and American Spanish soldiers. They were Ed Freeman's buddies. I asked him the details. He said "they worked it out themselves — no one was hurt in the process — who cares how it was done. We took the hill didn't we?" By noon that day, the nightmare hill in front of hill 1836, was ours.

After the Leyte Island campaign ended, our whole regiment received a thing called a 'Congressional Award'. It is a silver cluster that is attached to the campaign ribbons that are pinned above your pocket on your dress coat jacket. I even got one. The award should have been given to a few brave American-Spanish

and American-Mexican rifle men who had the know how and the guts to get a tough job done. Some of the stories told by these men who crawled around looking for enemy machine guns are priceless. I over heard a couple of them telling some of their friends about one of the incidents. When they got real excited while talking, they spoke Spanish, so I may have missed part of it. These two that were talking, were close buddies of Ed Freeman. That is the only reason I was there. Ed invited me over to listen. These two men plus another American-Mexican located three of the twelve machine guns that were knocked out. This story involved one of the guns they located. Just before day light, when they were on their way back from the mission, they spotted this Jap machine gun sitting in a fox hole, next to the ridge of a hill. As they approached the gun, they heard some rustling noises inside the hole dug-in to the ridge. One of the Mexicans had two hand grenades. He pulled the pin and tossed

one into the small cave. There was a lot of Japanese jabber as the grenade went off. The part I thought was comical was when the Jap crawled out of the small cave on his hands and knees, One of the other Mexicans picked up either a Jap pick or shovel that was laying near by and straddling the hole that the Jap was crawling out of and hit him on top of his helmet covered head. The third man ended it all for the Jap by stabbing him a number of times. There must have been others in the cave that died from the grenade explosion. As soon as they got a sight on about where the gun was located in relation to hill 1836, they got out of there. I asked if it bothered them that the noise of hitting a helmet with a shovel or pick might draw attention to other Japs near by. He just said, "yes, maybe so but we were just having a little fun."

The rest of the troops in our regiment, with the exception of a few riflemen who were going to serve as escorts to those of us carrying heavy weapons, moved on. Our troop remained to pull guard so the medics in the temporary hospital could doctor those men hu badly the morning our troops, from the 7th, rushed the hill. These doctors, I repeat, were outstanding. The surgeons had one small place that they lit up to do their cutting and sewing. It was inside a large shell hole that was covered with logs and dirt. The entry in and out of this hole was a set of doors about five feet apart which were covered with ponches. You did not go out the second opening 'till' you first closed the first opening. They kept some strong lamps lighted in that hole and the appeared to be operating 24 hours a day. The operating table, it seemed, was two crate boxes that were leveled off with a stretcher between. As soon as guys were mended well enough to leave this hole they were moved to another hole to recover. As soon as they were strong enough to be moved they were carried down the hill to temporary tent hospitals. You could tell the doctors with us were almost drained. They hardly slept at all. I accidently bumped into one of the surgical doctors as he was out getting some fresh air. We sat and talked about the war a little. He seemed very

very up tight. He wanted to save every life that came into that mud hole. He did not have the equipment nor the man power to save every wounded soldier. I tried to convince him not to blame him self. He told me if he ever got out of that place he would never complain again. while we were talking, I had to excuse my self and go "throw-up." He asked, so I told him about my dysentery. He said, "If you don't get that taken care of it can kill you." He wanted to know what kind of a Regimental doctor I had in my outfit, any way. He seemed to be a caring, sensitive person. we wished each other luck as we parted. I did not see him again.

There was an artillery observer with us who had been with the soldiers we had just relieved. He told us he hoped we would not have the same problem they had. It seems one of the men on guard behind their heavy machine gun fell asleep. A Jap crawled into the hole, cut the throats of each gunner and turned the machine gun on the american soldiers inside and along the out side of the perimeter. By the time they discovered it was a Jap firing the machine gun, a number of men had been wounded and killed. The riflemen on the line had one hell of a time getting that gun silenced. we all assured him we would not let that happen.

One of the three nights we pulled guard on this hill while waiting for wounded to be moved down to a hospital at the base of the hill my foxhole buddy and I got into a discussion. I said something about this single plane that flew over at night. It was a Jap plane. I had noticed it before in the Admiralty Islands. It always seemed to fly over between mid night and about 1:00 A.M. This is the time a lot of the guys change guard duty with one another in their fox holes. It is also a time when a lot of the men seem to have to relieve themselves. The pilot of this plane was given an appropriate nickname by the G.I.'s. It was not a very nice name but it did seem to fit. Each night this plane flew over you could count on someone down the line saying, "theres piss call Charlie." This plane flew over every night just to let us know they knew we were there. I bring this subject up because I have been asked many questions by young people who want to know what happened "when you had to go"

during the night while confined to your foxhole. The steel helmet serves many purposes. To protect your head from shrapnel and bullets is only one of them.

After the third night, we left the medics on hill 1836. They felt they could handle the rest of the wounded. We moved to catch up with our outfit. For the rest of the journey across the mountains we did not have to have rations, ammunition, and other supplies hauled to us and in turn, taken to the rifle men moving in front of us. Everything was dropped to us by cargo plane. The only problem we had now was trying to keep from getting killed by flying crates coming down in parachutes. Before we learned how to catch them, one guy got hurt. He was not looking and a crate hit him in the head. It just knocked him silly for a few minutes. The other problem we had was when the parachute caught more wind than was expected and our supplies lit into enemy hands or very close to them.

After we left hill 1836, we headed for a place called Ormac Road. It was a road in a valley located on the other side of Leyte Island. Six days after we left hill 1836 we reached Ormac Road. The only thing that kept us from getting there sooner was the many rivers, hills, jungle, and the stubborn resistance of the Japs. Just as we arrived at Ormac Road another Regiment of the First Cavalry arrived coming from another direction. Before we actually reached Ormac Road we watched from a hill as our heavy Artillery blasted some light Japanese tanks to bits. Our riflemen finished off the Japs in the tanks. These were the first tanks I recall us having any contact with. After Ormac Road was taken, we set up pup tents on a small hill over looking the road. We expected a rest but did not get it. We did have a 'mail call'. we also had a hot meal that night. The place we were assigned to dig in was near high grass. The high grass invited a million

mosquitoes. No sleep again. Maybe the reason we could not sleep was because it was Christmas Eve. It could have been we were excited about Santa coming. It might have been that we were wishing he might bring a message that "the war was over".... No, I think it was the pesky mosquitoes and not old St. Nick. Next morning, Christmas morning, we awoke bright and early to "pack up, we're leaving." My question was, "where?". The squad sergeant pointed and we moved in the direction he pointed. We did not move out in full force. Some of the men in the 7th stayed back because of minor injuries and illnesses. I did not qualify because all I had was jungle rot, heat rash, and dysentery. I also had another disease called, "Lieutenant Joke said there was nothing wrong with me." Oh well, I was getting used to throwing up 4-6 times a day and having a BM 5-10 times a day. One thing for sure, I was not carrying as much weight around as I had about a month ago. We no sooner got out of sight of Ormac Road when one of our attached riflemen killed two Jap snipers. Here we go again. Our squad sergeant informed us that we were after 200 Japs again.

December 26th was the birthday of Fritz Fastner. At least thats what he told me. Quite by coincidence the air corp dropped us 10-1 rations. Printed on the crates that held the rations were the words 'MERRY CHRISTMAS'. A day late but a very welcomed sight. I told Fritz that I ordered 10-1 rations just for his birthday. We ate good that night. We were trying to push the Japanese we were chasing toward another part of the island where they didn't intend to go. If we could get them to retreat the direction we wanted, eventually they would be trapped. We flanked them on one side and they moved toward the direction we wanted them to move. We caught up with them at a village next to the ocean. I did not learn the name of the village so it is not included here, besides, at the time, I was so ill I did not really care. The Japs knew they were in a precarious situation. Behind them was the ocean. Directly to their left and right was thick, deep jungle. In front of them was the 7th Cavalry. We were dug in and ready to do battle. Our only problem was that we were not at full strength. The Japs we were

chasing were not at full strength either or why were they retreating. This is simply not a natural move by the Japanese army. They do not retreat unless they are very desperate. They will sometimes, we had found, let you chase them so they can move you into one of their traps. This did not seem to be the case. It appeared to be an unplanned retreat. If this had been a controlled retreat, they would have made a few stands and given up some 'lives'. They did not do this one time. This unit of Japs were retreating to a point where they would make a planned 'last stand'. The day we caught up with them was December 31st.... New Years Eve. That was a New Years eve I will never forget.

As we approached the only entrance into this village, we stopped so our officers could decide where the machine guns should be placed. While they were deciding I chanced to see and smell a very sick sight. There, next to a coconut tree, lay a dead American soldier. His head had been cut off. His shoes had been

removed from under his leggings. He had been here for days and days in the hot tropical sun. His dog tags were near-by. One of the officers picked up his dog tags and put them in his pocket. The officer could turn in the "tags" to the missing persons department so loved ones at home would at least know he was not missing in action. Evidentially, he was an Intelligence and Reconnaissance scout. He probably came into this area under the cover of darkness to look for enemy troop power or where gun emplacements were located, with the intention of moving out in a day or two to report his findings. Generally, a scout that does this kind of job, does so with help of submarines just after dark. The 'Sub' drops them off. They row in to the beach in a small rubber raft than they hide the rubber boat, complete their mission, Meet the 'Sub' at a pre-designated time and move out. If this young man was a scout, it was obvious he was caught by the Japs and tortured. He had to be an I and R man. No other American soldiers have invaded this part of Leyte but us.

I was not sure the Filipinos in the near by village were all that crazy about being liberated. I also felt they were not wild about American soldiers. Other wise, they would have buried the dead American we found near the tree and indicated in some way where he was buried. May be I was just upset that the soldier died by being tortured. We did not have as many problems that first night at the village as I felt we might have. After we dug in word was passed around that barges were coming in, tomorrow that were going to take us out of there. We walked 75 miles, chasing Japs. we get them backed up, to the sea. They are hemmed in by thick swampy jungle, and..... we are going to get into barge and leave them!!. That does not make sense. We knew they would not surrender. Our only choice was to either wipe them out or get wiped out our selves. All the Japs did was take pot shots at us to let us know they were there. All I did that night was get the sickest and dizzyest I had ever felt. I could not sleep all night. I was sure they were going to attack in force. They didn't.

By early the second night I was almost hopi the barges would come and pick us up. I had such cramps

in my stomach and I was so dizzy I just didn't care what happened. If you have ever had the "dry heaves" you know what was happening to me. My squad sergeant finally caught on to the fact I was seriously sick and suggest I go over and lay down under one of the village shacks and try to get some rest. I was alone and beginning to feel a little better. The commander had two machine guns set up to cross fire on the only road that led out of the village. The perimeter was set up. Everyone was well dug in — but me. I was laying under the shack, about to doze off — I heard a "bugle". I thought I was dreaming. Wrong — I was not dreaming. The next thing I heard was a loud shrill "BANZI". After that I heard yelling and screaming like never before. All hell broke out. I could hear our two machine guns. They were really pounding away. The rifle men were pumping out shots as fast as they could. I heard our mortar's drop their shells. I heard the shells explode. Bullets and Sharpnel was flying all over the place. I was laying flat on the ground, under a shack. I could not see anything. I could only listen. It was pitch dark. For a short time I panicked and hugged the ground. I do not know how long the attack lasted. It seemed like hours tho' Im sure it was just a few minutes. If you are successful the battle ends quickly. I remember 5th Cavalry men telling me after their big "Banzi" attack, in the Admiralty Islands, "it takes guts but if you stay with them and do not panic, you 'got um'". I felt our guys "got um" this night. After the shooting ended it seemed to be over. I stayed alone under that shack the rest of the night. I did not sleep.

Next morning I walked over to see what damage had been done. I counted over 150 dead Japs, piled up and scattered over that road. One of the gunners said he was sure that some of the wounded were drug away during the night. To me it was a pure frightful experience. Guessing, I would say it lasted 5-7 minutes Most of the enemy did not have guns. They carried bayonets, knifes, and clubs of different sizes. I did not understand the "Banzi" attack tactic in the Admiralty Islands. I did not understand the one just ended. It appears to be a "one last stand" military maneuver that they almost always lose at. It must have some purpose or reasoning to it. I do not understand what it was.

A "Banzi" attack. What a way to welcome in the new year. I will admit I have seen drunks on New Years Eve act some what like these Japs that attacked on this charge,.. some of the drunks were even worse..., but not for the same reason. On Janurary 2nd, I was getting much weaker. Barges arrived at the village beach about noon. We did not leave right away. The remaining Japs that did not die in the attack on New Year's Eve were gathering, according to Scout reports, to make another move on us. Our mortars went to work, zeroed in on them and set up a tremendous barrage. The follow up report after the barrage said there were but a few Japs left. They were seen heading toward the jungle. Our mission seemed to be completed. Whether it was or not, I was too sick and weak to really be concerned.

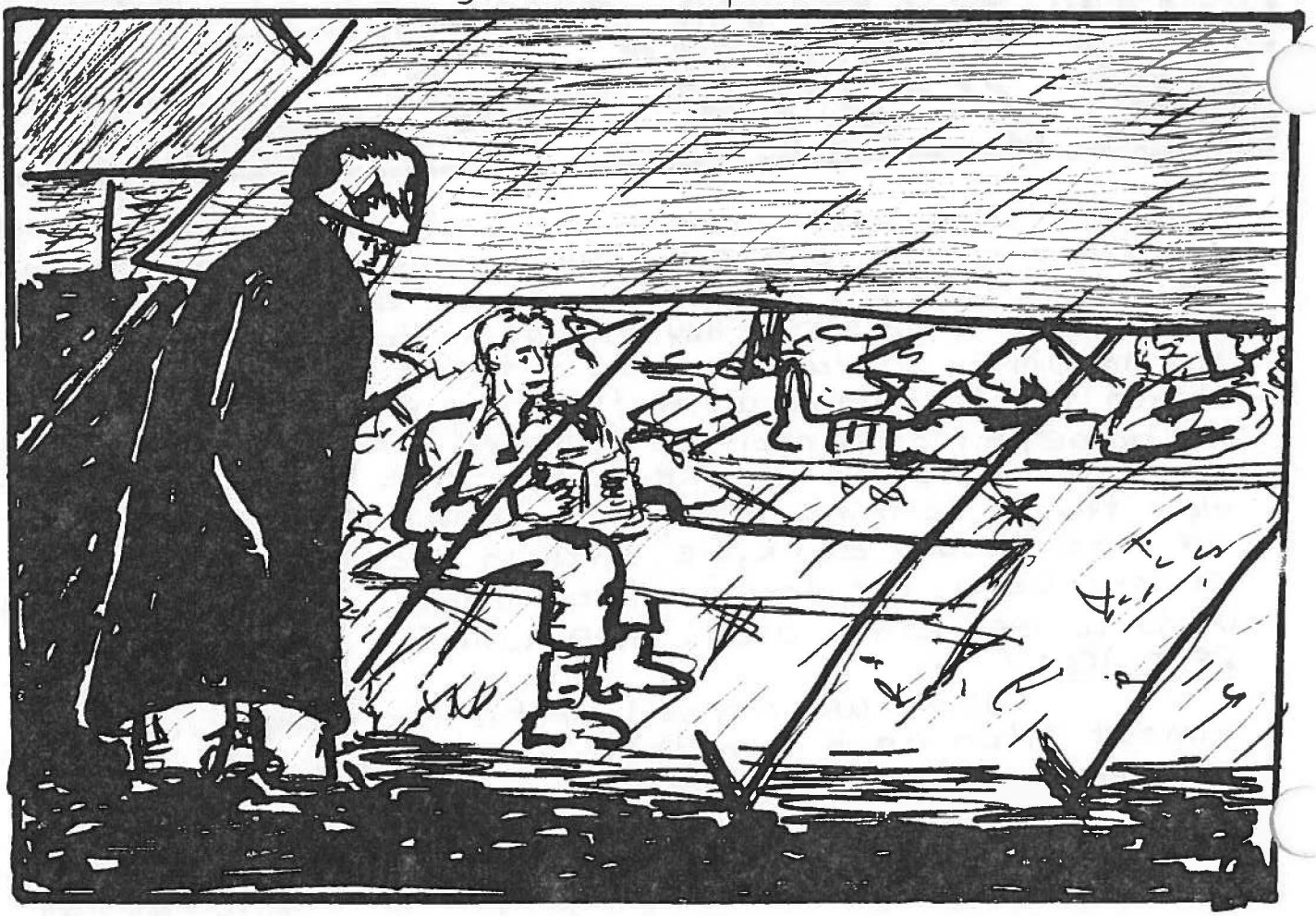
Besides evacuating all the Calvery men from this coastal village, the drivers of the barges were ordered to take any and all Filipinos who wished to leave. That turned out to be a good number of them.

It seems they each carried enough bundles for six people. We did manage to get all the civilians and their possessions, the troops and all of our equipment and gear on board the barges. I was sure they were going to sink with these loads, but they didn't. I was glad to get out of this place. We shared our K-rations with the Filipino civilians on board the barges. All afternoon we followed the coast. Along the way we saw some sunken Jap ships that, I imagine, were trying to bring in supplies and got caught by our air force. About dark, we arrived back at the village of Cary Gary. We loaded into "ducks". The "ducks" took us to a rest camp area. GOD, WHAT A GREAT SOUND..... REST AREA!

When we arrived at the rest camp it was almost pitch dark and there was a light rain. The mud in the camp was a little over ankle deep. It made a sucking, slurping sound with each step you took. We felt our way around and talked to voices in the dark, till we heard voices we recognized and were familar

with. The camp had cots. The tents were squad size. I plunked down on the first empty cot I found. The supply sergeant brought around some candles. At the time I was about to doze off I heard two very beautiful words. 'Mail call.' I was still very sick but after I went to mail call and picked up 30 letters, I could not sleep. I sat up over half the night reading by candle light. Reading those letters removed some of that ill feeling in my stomach, at least till morning.

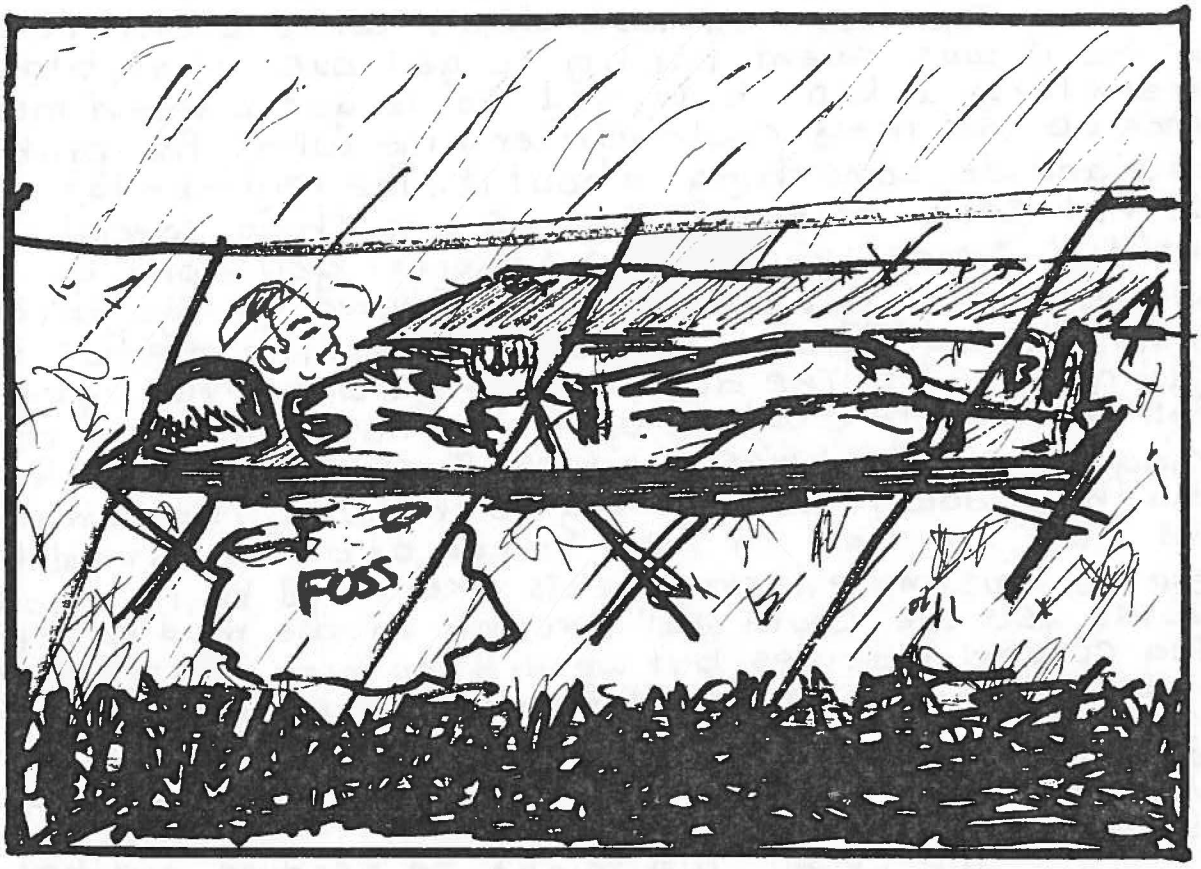
Next morning, after I had my coffee and cigarette, I went on detail. It had rained again. The mud was getting heavy and thick. When I returned from detail, I was soaked. However, my spirits were lifted by the sight on my bunk. There set six large Christmas boxes. They had my name on them. That was a very unexpected thrill. I had enough toilet articles, hard candy, gum, and reading materials to last for a month. Included in the packages were olives, pop corn and — A large can of peanut butter. This was



Christmas and New Year's all rolled up into one.

The next sixteen days were spent resting. For me it was spent trying to get over that blasted dysentery. I kept hoping I could get a good medical check up so they could determine what the problem was and do something about it. The regimental doctor did not seem to think it was any thing special. Unless the 'doc' sends you to the hospital you dont go. As I said before, if you are physically injured you go to the hospital, now. Illness means nothing. The medics kept giving me pills The doctor gave me a white liquid that was suppose to 'clog' me up. It did not work. The only thing that helped was the rest. I still could not hold any thing down. We did try to improve the camp but not like we had in New Guinea and the Admiralties Here we just made improvements like hand built wooden walks, so we could get around in the mud easier. We dug covered latrines but we did nothing special. We built a mess hall and we had to dig sump areas for the garbage. We had some classes. It actually felt like we were biding our time — like we were going to move out again soon.

We knew we might be heading further North. we did not know when. The officers in our troop were doing some re-organisation. It appeared as if they were trying to even up both machine gun and mortar squads with a balance of new men and experienced combat men. What ever they were doing, I was placed in another machine gun squad. They made me first gunner. My new squad sergeant was a guy every one liked He was a tough chicago inter-city kid. His last name was Morize. He shook my hand and told me he was more than glad to have me in his squad. I was pleased to be in his Squad. He was fair, had a sense of humor and was willing to explain any thing he asked of you, if you did not understand. The only one I did not get away from was Lieutenant Joke. I tried every thing. I had to leave Fritz Fastner. I did not like that. He and I had been almost side by side through three campaigns. Frits had a back ground in R.O.T.C. (Reserve Officers Training Corp). They asked him if he wanted to be a squad Sergeant. He turned it down. He said his dad was a private in World War I.... that was good enough for him. Later on,



during our next campaign, one of the machine gun squad leaders got shot. Fritz moved up to Sergeant we were all pleased for him. He tried to get me into his squad. They would not allow it. We did nothing for three days before we were ordered to leave. There were no out door movies, ball games nor boxing matches. There was nothing to do or any place to go in the area. We just rested.

On Janurary 9th, 1945 American troops invaded Luzon Island of the Philippines. The First Cavalry did not make this invasion, that was made at Lingayen Gulf. We arrived in Lingayen Gulf a short time later. After the 16th day in the rest camp at Leyte, we tore down camp, marched down to the beach, camped there for one day while waiting for a boat to dock that would take us to Luzon. The boat that arrived was not an A.P.A. ship. It was a large landing craft called an L.S.T.

The distance from Leyte Island to Luzon was not a great distance. This was the first trip while in combat that I was not assigned the task of loading supplies. I was put on guard duty down at the beach. It was kinda M.P. duty. I directed trucks where to go so they could be unloaded. It ended up being a 24 hour detail. We were relieved in the morning in time to eat breakfast and join with our outfit as they boarded the L.S.T. As we loaded aboard the ship, they asked if any one wanted to pull ship guard duty. I volunteered. The day we were getting ready to leave Leyte Island was one week after Luzon was invaded.

Our quarters were a lot different on this ship than the other ships we had been on. Not every one had a special sleeping space. Many guys slept on A-Deck. It seemed we were very crowded. I was assigned a bunk because of the duty I volunteered to do. Fresh water was really limited. The food seemed good. We were told that we were in very deep enemy waters with very little navy fire power to escort us. It did feel some what uncomfortable traveling on this landing craft. We got to Luzon with no problems, however.

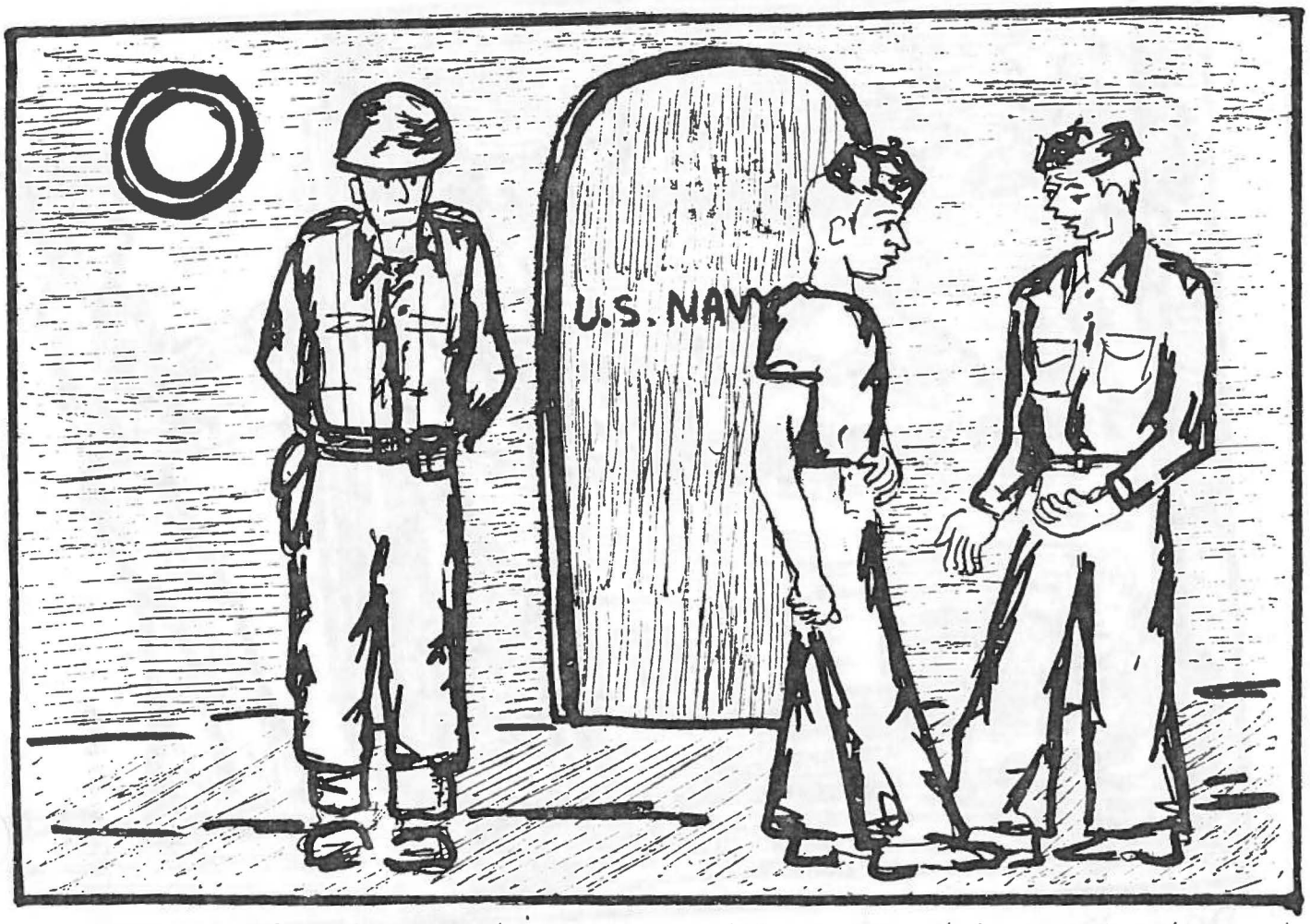
CHAPTER VIII
LUZON

Most of the soldiers while on board the LST heading for Luzon did nothing but rest, eat and worry about the coming invasion. As soon as we got on board our officers told us where we were going. No one knew where Luzon was in relation to Leyte Island. This was a short trip, thank God. We were sure that it was not going to be an 'all out' invasion like the one at Leyte Island. The navy escorts that usually accompioned us, was lacking. They were busy else where at this time. The whole convoy seemed to be made up of ships carring men, supplies, and building equipment. The convoy also felt like it was moving faster.

It seemed that most of the men on board appeared calm, quiet and very serious. Maybe this just goes with being in combat for a long period of time. There were no movies shown on board ship— I imagine that was due to lack of closed space more than anything. Actually, if it was not for two guys who bunked in my compartment, [They volunteered for guard duty on board the ship— same as I did] this trip would have been very dead. They were mortar men in my troop. I came over from the "States" with these two characters. They had a great sence of humor and a good out look on life. They had many jokes stored up in their minds. Most of the jokes were directed toward non-coms and officers, especially officers. They noticed how slow, most of us who carried 45 automatics were to release our pistol from our holsters. To improve on our speed and timing, they invented a game called 'DRAW'. This game was played each night after chow. Each day there was a "champ" chosen amoung us. The over all champ was the man who won most daily championships. It's amazing what soldiers go through to fight boredom. The purpose of the

game was to get your automatic weapon out of you leather holster before your opponent. The game began on the command "ready" as two men squared off some 15-20 feet apart. The command "ready" was preceeded by a handkerchief being dropped from a top bunk. when the handkerchief touched the ground, the two opponents drew The man who dropped the handkerchief was the deciding judge, as to who won. You think I'm kidding? It got to be funny how many guys were seen practicing their "draw". Did this game ever prove to be of any value, for any reason what-so-ever, you might ask? Yes, as a matter of fact it did. The man who was the "world's champ· leather holster-45 automatic drawer" gunned down a Jap so fast that the Jap did not know what happened. This was when they met coming around a building. This scene was witnessed and told by an opponent who lost to the "Champ". What I am saying is ___ this "game" probably saved the "champ" from getting shot. Who was the "champ"? My good buddy, Ed Freeman. The hardest part about winning this championship was that, Ed, who really is a shy person, had to give a three minute speech telling how he became the champ. We did a lot of things on this trip to break up the boredom. We even had an "amateur night" one time. Each gunner had the floor and was expected to preform a song, joke or story for the rest of the crowd. I got my quartet together. We won, hands down but because there were four of us preforming at one time we were shoved down to fourth place. The fun we had, we made ourselves. I was actually glad that I have volunteered for guard duty. It seemed to give me a purpose each day.

There were a few air raids and a "sub" alert every now and then just to keep the adrenalin pumping through your system. During all alerts on this ship it was a mad house. The ship was made up of compartments, up one side and down the other. When an alert sounded you were locked in your compartment if you did not get out of the compartment and up on A-deck. The locks on each compartment of the ship reminded me of the lock on a vault in a bank. If you did get locked in, it got stuffy.



As I mentioned earlier, the job I volunteered for helped relieve some boring hours. It was an easy job. I guarded the sailors 'mess hall' quarters. They call these quarters a 'galley'. Occassionally, a sailor would bring me an apple or an orange which is something we never got at our meals. My main job was to see that only navy personnel got in to that room.

One night the alarm went off for a "sub" alert. A crew member came down and locked the compartment. I was awake and I looked at my watch. Usually the alert is over and you can hear the door being unlocked in no less than fifteen minutes If it lasts longer than 20 minutes, you could be facing a 'sub' attack. I looked at my watch and 25 minutes had passed and still no sound of some one unlocking the compartment door. I began to feel myself get panicky. I was wondering what happens now. If this ship is hit and sinks does the locked door help to keep the compartment from flooding? Do I sink down to the bottom?

Do I run out of air? I was really concerned at the 30 minute point when I heard no compartment doors being opened. I had felt no jolt or sudden and unusual boat movement, so I felt nothing had really happened, yet. I was in the process of asking God to help me be brave and ready for what ever happens when you get trapped in a boat that has been attacked and is sinking. I finished my prayer. At that time, I heard the door being opened. A voice spoke into the compartment, from outside of the door, and said, "Sorry, about the delay..... I almost forgot". No one else was awake in the whole compartment but me. I did not answer. Only God and I know the fear I felt that night. If this had happened during the day, when everyone was awake, there might have been a crew member walking around with a black eye or broken nose. That experience, to me, was scary.

Over half way to Luzon from Leyte our convoy passed the island of Mindanao. This ment the convoy was

heading South from Leyte Gulf, down through Mindanao Sea, into the Sulu Sea then North to the China Sea, in order to get to Luzon. We came close enough to Mindanao Island that we could see some American planes take off and land. This Island had just recently been invaded by American forces. I didn't think the Island had even been secured at this time. If we were taking the route I had decided upon from a map I read, we were not a great distance from the coastline of Philippine Islands at any time. Even though we were possibly traveling close to the coast line, we were in "deep" enemy territory and combat waters at all times. I wore my life-jacket 24 hours each day.

Our ship landed on January 28th 1945, at Lingayen Gulf, which is in the north part of Luzon. We did not make an invasion. The invasion on Luzon was made by other army divisions stationed in the Pacific. We slept on the LST that first night we docked. From aboard the ship we watched as trucks came in and loaded up with supplies from large stock piles on the beach. It was a busy place. The battle at Luzon was going to be a different type of fight. It was going to be more mobile. Trucks were hauling supplies almost up to the front lines. There were roads throughout Luzon. There was at least one road and maybe more that looked concrete. Off in the distance from the deck of the LST, you could see our big artillery firing. The invasion had been made here while we were slopping around in the mud of the rest camp in Leyte. The American troops had moved in-land a considerable distance. Sitting on the LST we have little fear of being attacked unless it was by Japanese bombers. This did not happen.

The next morning, we disembarked. Before we left the ship, we were broken into detail groups and ordered to unload the supplies and equipment from the LST on which we arrived. We piled up what we unloaded on to the beach. Following that, we sat around till 1:00 P.M. We ate, of all things, apple pie, sandwiches and coffee. Yours truly had only coffee. Some trucks arrived and we loaded into them and drove off in a convoy. About ten miles from the beach, we reached an artillery depot. The convoy of trucks stopped. Lieutenant Joke was ordered to select some men to unload some trucks that carried artillery shells at the end of the convey. Guess who the second man chosen to unload that artillery was — you guessed

it— it was me. After we unloaded the trucks, we got back on the trucks and rode 20 miles through villages and towns that had been destroyed. The roads were very dusty and very, very bumpy. Finally—, it happened. We came upon a paved road. It was one of the main roads that led to the city of Manila. It was the first paved highway I had seen since we left Australia. We were very nervous so we sang and talked incessantly while we rode. Rumors were flying. We finally stopped for the night. It was near a rice patty. In fact, every time we stopped for the day to camp and dig in it was near a rice patty. Either the area we traveled was filled with rice patties or the officer in charge knew something we did not know. There was a kitchen truck with us in the convoy. we had hot meals. That first night there was a stream near by. We took a bath. we had 'mail call', we had time to clean our gun. I was not real tired. The truck carried our gun. I still had dysentery. It seemed like a real different kind of a 'combat' day. We were all use to walking and carrying heavy equipment. It was nice while it lasted.

The first night I was assigned to guard duty on Luzon, It was two hours on and four hours off. We roamed around the camp area or we could sit in one spot if we wanted. My job was to watch for Jap stragglers while every one slept. Every one was suppose to be quiet and resting. A few men in one section of our camp area found a partially filled bottle of Saki. They passed the half full bottle around, got a little drunk and raised a commotion. I knew some of them and they did settle down when I asked them. After they settled down, it was quiet the rest of the night in our area. I did hear a machine gun fire off a couple of bursts about two troops up the road. It seems one of the guards mis-took two G.I.'s in their troop for Jap stragglers. He shot both of them. My last guard on the first night in Luzon ended about 2:00 A.M.

Next morning we woke at 6.00 A.M. We were told we were going to move out shortly — not true. For some unexplained reason we sat around in the hot sun till 3:00 P.M..... that's nine hours, waiting for orders. At 3.00. P.M trucks arrived and we moved out. We moved a short distance, joined another convoy of trucks and got going. We arrived at a small village named Gimba, five hours later. Our troop sacked in on a concrete floor of a blown up building. At 2:00 A.M. we were awaken by excited sounding voices — it was pitch dark. Our officers were shouting that we had to get our gear together and get ready to do battle. Word went around that the 8th Cavalry behind us had been ambushed by a large number of Japs. It all turned out to be a false alarm, thank God. What a sensation — to be half awake and having people in pitch dark yelling orders — things like Japs have set up an ambush — get moving. You are so confused and drowsey, you really don't know whether to crap or go blind. Getting ready to fight on a minutes notice — night or day — is what you have been doing all this training for. When it comes at you out of a sound sleep, it is really difficult to get yourself prepared for it. Your heart skips a beat and you become all thumbs. We did respond. We were ready. We could have done what was expected of us. I'm glad it was a false

alarm. It could have turned out to be a disaster.

On Feburary 3rd, the 7th Cavalry and the 8th Cavalry joined forces till further orders, We did whatever was done— as one. Both Regiments stayed at this small town of Gimba for three days. It turned out to be a quiet three days. Some Filipino civilians gathered some straw and brought it to our squad members. We pulled guard and waited for orders. The second day we spent at this small town brought to me one of the great thrills that I felt in Luzon. I heard a big commotion some 300 yards up ahead on the road. I walked up to see what it was all about. It was a small convoy of trucks carrying some ragged dressed men. Most of them looked "like death warmed over." They were pale looking. The bones in their faces were sticking out— but they were oh, so happy. I under stand it was a few of the men who survived BATAAN and CORREGIDOR. They were on the way back to the beach we had just come from. The convoy

stopped so we could exchange greetings. We all shook hands with them. They hugged us, cried, laughed and shouted. You could feel what they had been through by the look in their eyes. We did not rescue them. They were found and released by special troops trained just for this purpose. It was a once in a life time thrill just to see men we had read so much about in the newspapers and in our high school history text books.

I had a rare thing happen that was related to this particular meeting on this road. There was an older gentleman sitting in a wheelbarrow in the back of one of the trucks. We 'shook hands' I welcomed him back to the real world. I told him how happy I was to see him heading home. I noticed his legs were very large. That is why they had him sitting in a wheelbarrow. I asked him if the Japs did that to him. He said "No. I got this myself while in prison. I have elephantiasis." I later learned it is a disease you can get in the jungle. I did not discover how you get it but it caused your legs to swell and swell till they are some 3-4 times the size of normal legs——. Lets now move to a time about a year later. I was downtown in Des Moines. I had just finished playing a basketball game at the Y.M.C.A. I was sitting in the "Y" lobby cooling off. I struck up a conversation with this old gentleman sitting next to me. I noticed he had elephantiasis so I told him about the incident in Luzon. His eyes almost popped out of his head when I told him I had met this guy on a road near Manila. He asked when this happened. I told him the first part of Feburary, 1945. <u>This man was the guy sitting in the wheel barrow in back of the truck</u>. He almost broke my hand shaking it. He wanted to take me out and buy me a drink, drinks, or a whole bottle if I wanted it. I turned down his offer but we talked for about two hours. He thanked me a number of times in spite of the fact that I told him three times I was not one of the commandos who went into the prison camp and rescued him. He was not from Des Moines. He was just passing through and was staying at the "Y". It really is a small world.....

Next morning, we were told to hurry up and pack, we're moving out. Guess what.... we hurried up, we packed, and moved out.... <u>NOW</u>! Usually we had to

stand around from one to nine hours before we "moved out". This was almost a shock to us, to move so fast. We left Gimba in trucks till we came to a partly torn up bridge. The bridge was not strong enough to take the weight of the trucks. We crossed the river on foot. For the next few days we moved by foot. Now we were back to doing things like we had done in the Admiralties and Leyte Island. All trucks assigned to both 7th and 8th Cavalry Regiments were going to be given to the 8th Cavalry only. The trucks were going to be used for a special mission that was being planned. We finally were told that the trucks were being turned over to the 8th Cavalry to form a 'flying squadron'. They were to "fly" by truck to Manila. Those of us in the 7th Cavalry were not told just Why they picked a squadron of the 8th Cavalry for this wild mission. It seems Manila was being destroyed by the retreating Jap forces The city of Manila was one of General MacArthurs' Philippine 'pets'. He wanted beautiful Manila preserved.... at any cost. He had made his promise to return. He wanted to keep his word. There were three army divisions moving toward Manila. He requested that one of the divisions, or at least part of one of the three divisions to get to Manila in a hurry to stop the destruction being done by the Jap forces there. The 'flying squardron', our generals choice, Represented the First Cavalry Division. The race to get to Manila first turned out to be no contest The First Cavalry and it's 'flying squadron' won. It was close I am sure the officer in charge of the 8th Regiment gained a lot of 'promotion' points with General Douglas MacArthur for his feat. A lot of men got Killed in the "race". The squadron had one hell of a time catching up with the retreating Japs. General MacArthur was pleased with the First Cavalry Division but he was more pleased with the 8th Regiment. We never did get back all the 7th Cavalry trucks we loaned them to use in this "race" till the battle in Luzon was almost over. We moved by foot almost continuously during the rest of the Luzon campaign. We spent a lot of time fighting in the mountains.

After the 7th Cavalry handed over their trucks to the 8th Cavalry so they could 'fly' to the city of Manila,

and we had crossed the blown up bridge, we found we were now officially in enemy territory. From this point on it was going to be strictly combat zone. The marching was tough and slow after having spent the first days in Luzon riding in trucks. It was hot and dry. Many men got sick from the heat. In most small towns and villages the Filipinos stood along side the road and waved. Many of them cheered. It was really a little embarassing. We were there but we had done very little to help liberate them. We knew for sure we would soon be getting involved but we had really done nothing yet. We marched till about 5:30 P.M. We marched 11-12 miles that day. Where did we set up our camp — next to a rice patty. We no sooner got the gun dug in and set up than the orders came to pack up and get ready to move again. To tell you how indecisive, leaders can get in a tense situation we packed, unpacked and set up the machine gun three times before it was finally determined that we were going to stay where we originally stopped and set up our gun. I am sure the intentions were sincere. The moving around, packing and unpacking was frustrating. Because it took so long to decide, we lost our chance to build a little fire to heat some coffee.

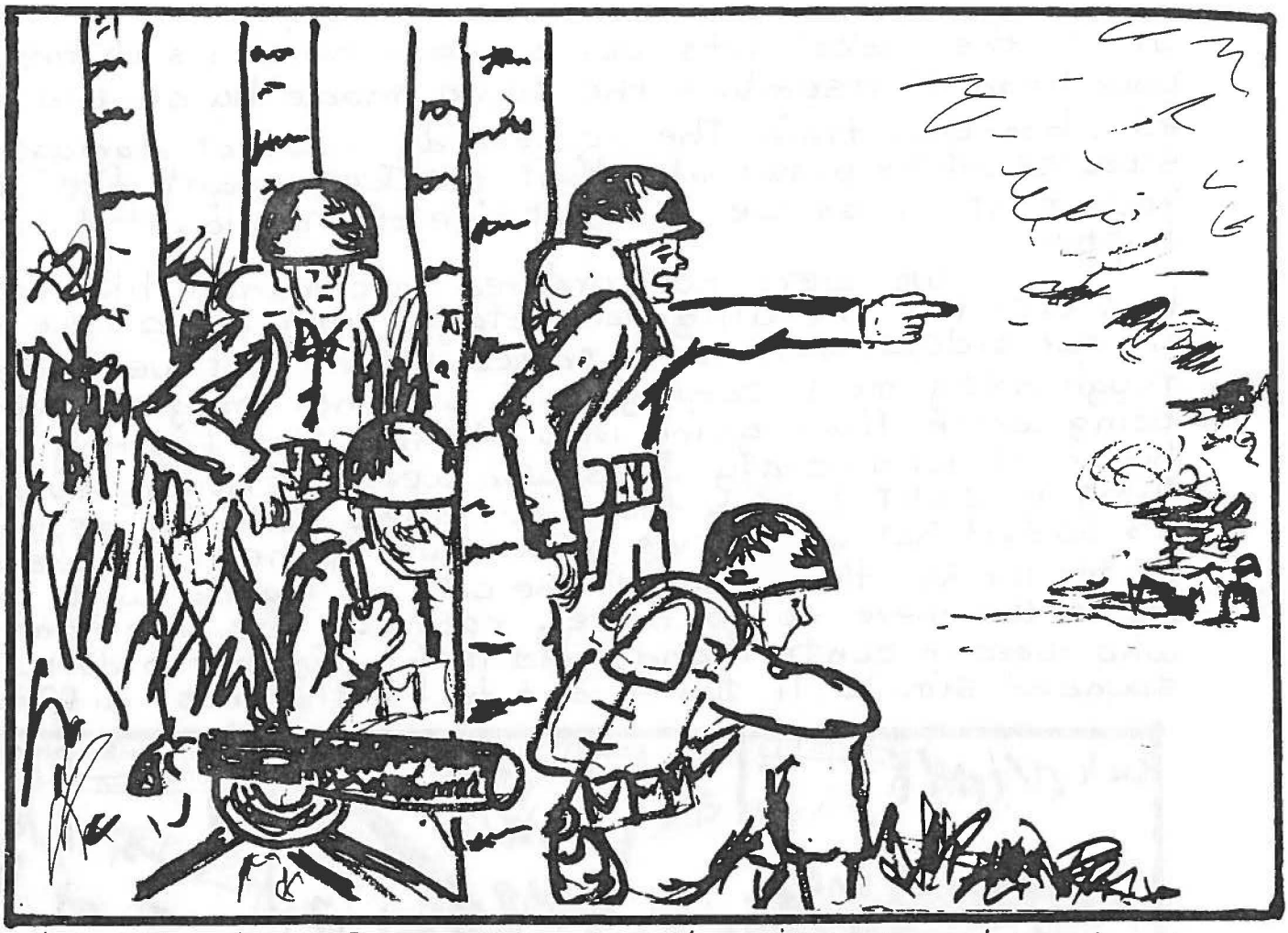
Old 'clog along on foot' 7th Cavalry followed, but very slowly behind the 'flying' 8th and mopped up stragglers. A few decisions were made and we again were put on mobile units. I guess we could not move fast enough on foot to satisfy the higher-ups. There were no trucks available so we were placed in alligator vehicles. We moved from town to town, stopped, got out of the alligators, knocked out what resistance we located, and moved on. The town where we fought and over took had a name something like TARLAC. (We were held up here either before we reached this town or after we took it.) The Japs blew up a bridge as they retreated. We crossed the river easily because alligators move on both land and in the water. The Japs made a slight stand.

Another of the small towns where we fought and took was one I am sure will be remember by the riflemen for a long time. It had a large brewery in it. Men were using every available container they could find that held beer. I think they drained the brewery dry. It was a little 'hairy' staying in that town that night. There were a lot of 'loose' guys who had consumed

a large amount of beer. Nothing serious happened dur the night so nothing was hurt. The name of the town was GAPAZ. we did not stay in town but stayed next to a RICE PaHy, again.

We really moved in these alligator vehicles we moved both day and night. On the night of feburary 8th, as we moved along, we were hit by bits of flack. The sides of the vehicle seemed to be pinging with the sounds of shrapnel falling. Many bullets rico-cheted off the walls as we moved through the dark, too. Our convoy arrived at a town called NOVALICHIES about 5:00 A.M. I had a feeling we were nearing Manila. For some reason we did not lose one alligator during that night. If I had been driving at the speed the drivers of these alligators were moving, as dark as it was, we would have all ended up wrapped around a coconut tree or probably. we would have sailed off the edge of a cliff. Im sure we would have at least gotten lost. The men responsible for driving these vehicles should have wo some kind of an award or ribbon for their driving abilities. I asked my driver how he kept the alligator on the road at these speeds without the use of head-lights. He looked at me and said, "we do this all the time — it is really no problem." Amazing!!

I just knew that the next stop for the Alligator unless we ran into serious resistance would be the major objective in Luzon, Manila. it was only about 25-30 miles away. When we stopped we did not stop in Manila. Instead we ended up at the outskirts of the city. We stopped on a large slope over looking the city we set up our permeter, dug-in. and sat. we watched from a distance, as Manila burned. We could tell which way the retreating Japs were moving by the next fire and puff of smoke that raised into the air. The Japs, who were retreating through the city of Manila, were being chased by our 8th Cavalry "flying squadron". The Japs caused all the damage they could possibly do. They blew up every usable item they could get their hands on. If they did not blow it up they set fire to it. They even destroyed churches.



The retreating Japs damaged hospitals by either bombing or burning. If they could find nothing else to do, they filled toilet stools with sand. They did these things in spite of a strong warning issued to them by radio from General Douglas MacArthur not to destroy the city. He said he would destroy Tokyo if they burned and destroyed Manila. I can testify that he kept his word. When I entered the city of Tokyo, as an occupation soldier after the peace treaty was signed. It was almost flattened to the ground.

From the hills on the outskirts of Manila we could see rockets thrown at our troops by the Japs. When the rockets are fired they set off sparks at the launching point. The sparks resemble the sparks of a sparkler used by children on July 4th. When the rocket lands, the explosion is tremendous. The vibration shakes the earth for at least 80-100 yards in all directions. I found out later when rockets were fired

ut us, the rocket lets our a weird noise as it fires ov
your head. It resembles the sound made by an old fashion-
ed choo-choo train. The rockets do a lot of damage. We
sweated out the possibility that the Japs might fire their
rockets at us as we sat outside of Manila. It did not
happen.

We were not ordered into Manila like we had expected. The alligators stayed with us as we wait ed our orders. Word was passed around that we had a tough assignment coming up. I could not imagine anything being worse than going into Manila and fighting a bunch of wild, crazy Japs who were destroying every - thing in sight. I soon found out there was an assignment as bad, if not worse. We packed up to head for the large water works that supplied the city of Manila with its water. We were to go there, root out the Jap forces who were in control and hold it 'till further orders. That sounded simple. It turned out to be the most difficult

task we had been assigned up to this point in the war. I think the Japs assigned to this public utility works were all recently released from the Japanese Imperial 'nut house'. From the things they did I would say all of came from the violent insane wards. They had to be crazy. I say this because they did many things that humans in control of their senses, would never do. Our squad spent eight of the most hair-rising, frightening nights here you could imagine. Each night was like living a nightmare.

The name of this water works was something that sounded like BULLIA. From the point outside of Manila to this water works, it took five and one-half hours. We traveled by alligators. We passed a number of Filipino suburbs. Every so often we heard Filipino civilians shouting. The walls of the Alligators were such that we could not see out easily. If we pulled ourselves up on the side of the alligator we could see what was going on. On occasion when we slowed down we could see people waving. If we slowed way down we could see flowers coming over the walls of the alligator. It must have been the civilians way of expression thanks to throw flowers. I do recall one thing for sure, it was hot, hot, hot in that alligator for the five and one-half hour ride. The Sun was beating down. We arrived at BULLIA around 6:00 P.M. You could feel the enemy was near and waiting. There was a dirt road that led into the water works from the main drag. The entire area appeared to be surrounded by a wire fence. As we were coming down the road toward the entrance I'm sure that I heard a Jap wood pecker (light machine gun) firing at one of the alligators up ahead. The alligators all stopped. All of us unloaded and took off for a ditch for cover along a small ridge. Our squad was fired upon by an automatic. Probably the light machine gun I had heard earlier. Again, I felt for an ear. This is the third time I thought my ear had been shot in combat. Our machine gun squad was told to stay down in the ditch while a couple of riflemen searched out the Jap light machine gun. In a few moments, one of our

non-coms motioned us into the entrance gate. By the time we got into the water works it was about an hour, from dark. Many of our riflemen were still out chasing Jap soldiers into the hills, behind the water works. As we were waiting for the return of the riflemen who had been chasing stray Japs I was envolved in an odd unexplainable experience. Two of my machine gun squad buddies were laying down, with their heads on their pack talking. I was standing, leaning against one of the 'alligators', smoking a cigarette. For some strange reason I heard a mortar shell drop down the tube of a 90 milimeter mortar (Jap mortar) off in the far distance. I do not know what came over me but the sound of that mortar shell being fired caused me to hysterically scream at my two buddies laying on their packs, "get out of there.... QUICK!" They jumped up and the three of us lit almost at the same time, under the back part of the alligator. Just as we hit the ground, under the alligator tank, an explosion went off. It was a mortar shell explosion. It exploded right on the spot where my two buddies had been laying and talking just seconds earlier. Their packs were torn into tiny bits. After they checked out where the explosion had taken place they both came over to me and just stared at me for awhile. One of them asked me, "Why did you do that?" The other one said, "What made you yell at us to get out of there?" I had no answer. I did not know why I reacted the way I did. I only know that I am glad I did. One of them said, "I dont know what to say to you." I told him, "Why don't you just say nothing." The other guy just said, "Thanks, Foss". They both kinda shrugged their shoulders, looked at me a minute and walked away. I do not know the answer for this reaction. It is just something that happened.

The riflemen chasing Japs in the near-by hills, finally returned. We set up our perimeter facing toward the front of the water works. We only had one squadron numbers in strength plus the alligators and men in alligators. Each alligator had one or two light machine guns on each side. We did not arrive at this site early

enough to both chase out the Japs and dig in properly. Later on, I was wishing I had dug in__ deep. We dug only shallow holes. We had two men in each hole. This met two hours on guard two hours off. About 4:00 A.M., a 90 millimeter mortar shell exploded near by. It came from the mountains behind us. One of the alligators was parked next to my fox hole. The first mortar shell lit about 25 feet away. The second mortar hit about 15 feet away on the opposite side of the fox hole. The second shell threw a lot of shrapnel and dirt toward the hole. Usually when one mortar shell lands on one side of you and the next shell hits on the opposite side of your fox hole, it means the enemy mortar squad is firing for effect and range. It also means a third shell can fall right on top of your head. Before the third shell did land, my fox hole buddy and I crawled over and under the front of the alligator for protection. We no sooner got under the alligator and a shell exploded about 5 feet away from our fox hole. I was glad one of us was awake enough to realize we were being zeroed in on. We stayed under the alligator left the machine gun unattended a minute 'till the shelling stopped then moved back out to our gun emplacement. We were lucky. What a relief to have that shelling move away.

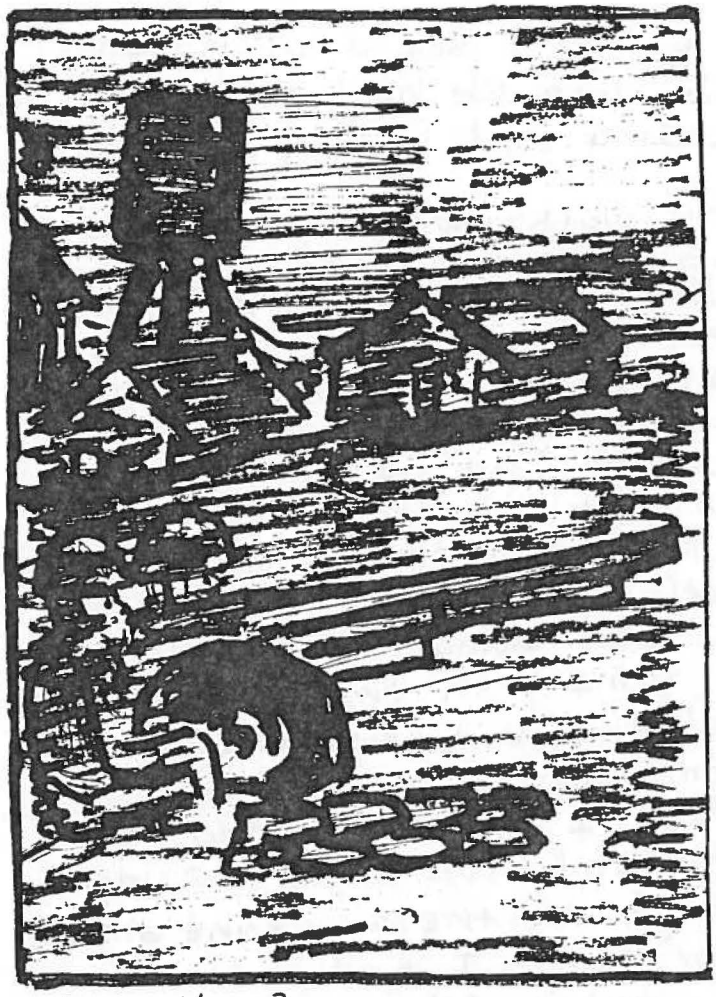
Next morning was February 14th. At home this would have been Valentines Day. I was in no position to send mom a Valentine but I told her I loved her in a dream__ or__ day dream I had about her. What did my idiot buddies do this day.... they went souvenir hunting around the water works area. This whole place is crawling with Japs. What are these dummies doing,... they are looking for military combat souvenirs. They had to be nuts. One guy came back with an arm load. He had a one thousand stitch flag, officer sabor and belt and some binoculars. I asked him who went with him. He told me he went with Fritz Fastner. Fritz did not bring back any thing but he did shoot one Jap. Fritz was witness to a unique situation I mentioned earlier. He watched the soldier, we declared the "World's champ- leather holster- 45 automatic drawer", on board the LST that brought us

to Luzon, without hesitation, gun down a Jap with his pistol. Fritz said it was almost comical the way it happened. They were walking along and talking. He and Ed Freeman came around the corner of this large shack. They met this Jap holding a rifle in front of him. Fritz said that before the Jap soldier could even whip the gun around to shoot them Ed had pulled out his pistol and fired 3 times. Fritz also observed the expression on the Jap soldiers face. It was an expression of surprise and fear, mostly fear.. who says it doesn't pay to practice. The souvenir hunters killed a total of four or five Japs who were all with in the boundries of the 'water works'. Each guy who made contact with a Jap said they appeared surprised that there were American soldiers around. Let me tell you — they did not appear surprised the night we came into this place. They almost blew the heads off of my two buds. The three mortar shells that almost did me and my gun in at 4:00 A.M did not make me think we were a surprise.

I had a feeling I was going to see a lot of Japs before we were out of this place. We had better be prepared All I got for expressing that feeling was, "Foss, you worry too much.

This BULLIA water works was operated by Filipino workers. They knew how to make it work. The Japanese army made the workers run the plant the way they wanted it done. Up to the moment we arrived the water works was controlled by the Japanese and it also seemed to be under their control for a short time afterwards. The Japs were not about to give up BULLIA without a fight. To me, when we first arrived it seemed the Filipino workers were working both sides of the fence. They were confused as to who was going to be in charge They asked permission to remain in their homes inside of the 'water works'. When our commanding officer granted them permission to do so they pulled some unexplained tatics. I would have told them to get the hell out of there until we drove the Japs out. It was bad enough fighting these insane animals without having outside interference. I had a hard time believing our leader said "yes"

The second night at this location the rest of our regiment arrived. We extended our perimeter. Ed Freeman, my foxhole buddy and I were moved to another spot just before dark next to the entrance road leading into the grounds. The surface was impossible to dig into. It was dark so we found three bags of dirt and piled them up in front of the machine gun. As you come into the 'water works' our gun was just left of the main gate. Across the road was an Anti-tank gun. This gun was placed there in case we were attacked by mobile vehicles of some sort. It fired 37 millimeter shells. This second night only one morter shell was dropped on us. I heard one of the men behind the Anti tank gun say, "Wow, that was close." I had the feeling these Anti-tank men were new. when I



talked to them the next day they asked us not to give away their position by firing our gun unnecessarily. I realized they had combat experience and probably would not panic.

The road that passed in front of the 'water works' was about a good city block away. Between where out gun was dug in and the road were many coconut trees, high bushes and high grass. In the horizon you could still see parts of Manila burning. This made the high grass and bushes play tricks on our eyes, especially when the winds blow. You thought you were seeing things that were not there. Or where they?

The third night, while it was my turn to pull guard. Ed had finally fallen asleep. He was pooped so I let him sleep awhile longer than usual. I was eating biscuits from K-rations with peanut butter on them. I almost swallowed my heart. Three Jap rockets landed... boom!... boom!... boom! The vibrations were like earth quakes. The third rocket I heard coming. I did not hear the first two. My heart was pounding so hard and loud! The choo-choo sound of the rocket going over head is enough to scare you silly. I had never before heard a sound like the sound given off when each of these three rockets hit the ground and exploded. My whole body shook. I never want to hear those sounds again. I did. Ed, my foxhole buddy jumped about a foot into the air from his sound sleep, rubbed his eyes and said, "What in hell was that?". I told him and he

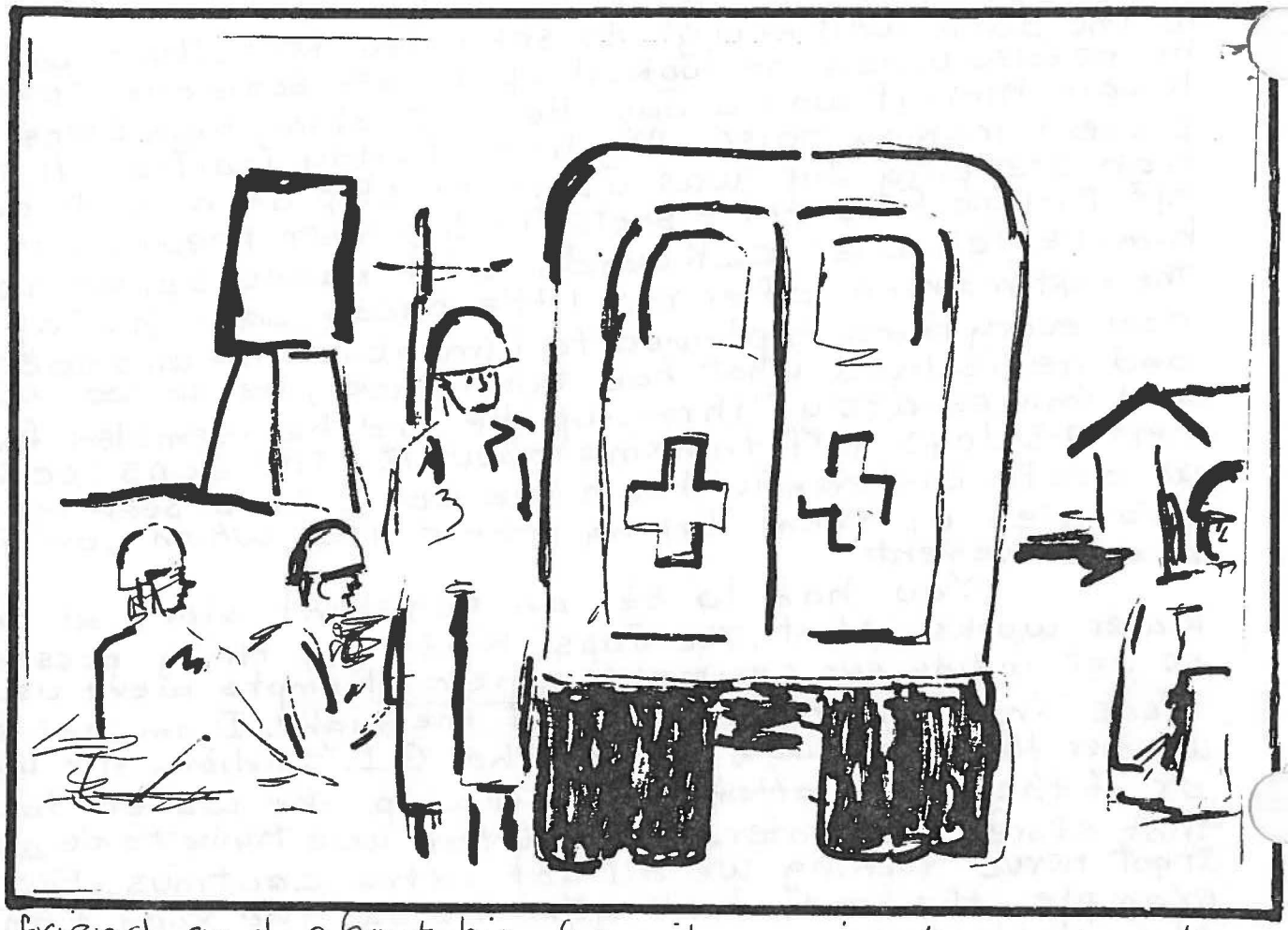
said, "I thought the world had come the end, or some thing." Following the rockets came many, many Jap mortars. In between, artillery was dropped on us. I will admit I did a great deal of sweating and a lot of praying. The shelling did a lot of damage to the troops and weapons. An odd thing happened during this barrage by the Japs. Not one Filipino home in the 'water works' was damaged and not one Filipino was hurt — yet their homes were but a very short distance from our perimeter. I thought that was strange. In my opinion it was some of those unexplained tactics pulled off by the Filipino workers. following their request to remain in their homes inside the grounds of the 'water works'. The next day we suggested that our officers investigate each of the workers homes. They did check out each home and found six two-way radios which were suppose to be turned in to us, some lanterns and flash lights and even personal weapons. One of our riflemen saw light signals coming from one Filipino home during the early part of the evening. A number of the riflemen volenteered to take all of the 'water works' Filipino workers out and shoot them. The officer in charge said "No". Instead the workers were ordered out of their homes temporarily until the Japs were defeated. Can you imagine what would have happened to the Filipinos if that situation had been reversed? After the Filipinos left their homes and we moved our foxholes around the accuracy of the Jap shells dropped considerably. I questioned what we were doing there.

The tactics used at night by Japs trying to inflitrate indicated to me that the water works was very, very important to them. We found out this plant supplied over half the water needed by the people of Manila. The population in 1945 was around 14-16 million. Control of the water made it possible for the Japs to dictate terms. As they began to realize they could lose this resource it made them apply more pressure. We had to work hard to take this water works. We had to work like hell to keep it. One tactic used by Jap soldiers trying to inflitrate into or behind our lines was really a lot more animal than

it was human. In fact, this tactic made me sure the people who went through with it had spent a few years in a mental institution before they enlisted in the Japanese army. One Jap was shot down trying to sneak in (on the third night we were at BULLTA.) He had enough explosives strapped to the front of his chest to blow up a large building or ship. The pack of explosives had an electrical charged wire extending down each arm to the palm of each hand. To set off the explosives all he had to do was touch his hands together. One would naturally ask, "wouldn't that blow him to bits, too?"... the answer is, "yes". I do not know how many times this tactic was attempted. I do know it was tried once — thank God, it failed. A good friend of mine three foxholes down, was laying on his back in the pitch dark trying to catch a little sleep. He had his M-1 right next to him. It was cocked and ready to fire. His eyes were adjusted

to the dark well enough to see a few feet. That was all he needed when he looked up to see some one coming toward him. It was a Jap. He was taking high steps to prevent making noise. My little buddy waited till the high stepping Jap was about to step on him. He raised his M-1 and fired three shots. The Jap never knew what hit him. He fell over backwards with hands spread apart. The next morning after my little buddy saw the Jap and had everything explained to him about the wires and explosives and he realized what had taken place, he walked away and immediately "threw up. He said he trembled for the next 2-3 days just thinking about it. The Japs looked at death differently than we do. I have seen many examples of them taking their life which verifies ~~that~~ statement.

You had to be on constant alert at this water works plant. The Japs tried every thing possible to get inside our perimeter. Their attempts were usually made in the darkest hours of the night. I am not sure whether they were trying to destroy the G.I. soldier, the weapons, or if they were attempting to blow up the water tower that stored the water — probably they were trying to do all three. It got nerve racking. We all got extra cautious. For example, the anti-tank gun across the road from us almost blasted one of our own ambulances while it was bringing in wounded American soldiers. The anti-tank gun crew challanged the ambulance and I heard them put a shell in the chamber. By rights the anti-tank gun crew should have fired and asked questions later because it was just turning dark. Anything that moves in combat takes a chance on being fired at. Thank God, the ambulance stopped the second they were challanged. As we decided what we should do one of the riflemen in a fox hole 2-3 holes down, offered some help. He told us one of his personal buddies was an ambulance driver. He asked us if he could ask a few questions before we let the anti-tank gun crew open fire. We agreed if he would make it fast. He asked if Jack Smiley was out there, Luckily a voice responded: "Yea, this is Jack Smiley, why?" Our fox hole man said "That's him — but let me question him to make sure." He asked his serial number, about his home state, his girl



friend and about his favorite major league baseball team. Our fox hole friend proceeded to give his buddy hell. "Did you leave your brains some place— who the hell do you think you are coming in after dark. You want to get your ass blown off or something." Jack's answer was, "we couldn't help it— We got hung up. This was the closest place to get to." He continued, "We have wounded out here— now cut the bull shit and let us in". Finally, Jack Smiley said, "Rob, came on out here and see yourself. I ain't gonna let you come out here if things ain't right". Rob, our fox hole friend, went out in the dark to the ambulance. We could hear the two argue. Soon Rob yelled back, "It's O.K... let the dumb butts in." We let them in. That was close. That ambulance missed being blown up by the luck of the irish. We were fortunate that no Japs were close by while this scene was taking place. Th ambulance should never had been moving after dar The driver told our commanding officer he had wounded

men who would die in that ambulance if he did not get some help for them soon. He felt he had to take the chance. This whole thing could have been a Jap trick — it wasn't, but you never know. They had been trying everything else.

We had many close calls at this place. One of the nights, while I was on guard and my foxhole buddy, Ed Freeman, was asleep, I had a scare. The anti tank crew was still set up across the road. For some reason I was extra restless and very nervous on this night. The moving grass and bushes didn't help. They kept playing tricks on my eyes and imagination. I guess I was tense because some mortar shells exploded close and two rockets had gone over my head. They exploded on the road out in front of us. It also seemed like there was a lot of personal weapon shooting going on. To top it off, everyone in the perimeter close by, seemed edgy and irritable. Maybe combat just makes you this way. I am not sure. I was sure that I saw some one moving toward me. I had had this feeling a few times before. Each time it had been a false alarm. For some reason — this time — I was certain that I saw a dark form. It would run a few steps, flop down, wait a short time, get up and move again. It was pitch dark. I sat and watched. — there, it moved again. If it was just one Jap, I would have to wait. I could not give away our machine gun position. I would have to use my personal weapon. I looked at my watch. It was almost 1:00 A.M. It had been an hour since I saw the moving shadow. If the thing I saw was really a Jap he sure had a lot of patience.

Just about the time I decided that what I was watching was only my imagination I heard a sound like some one taking steps on concrete in hob-nail shoes. At the same time I heard the foot steps, I saw a shadow move. It moved about twenty feet in front of me on the concrete road that seperated the anti-tank gun and our water-cooled machine gun. I heard the men in the anti-tank crew jabbering. They fired their personal weapons. I could see and hear figures moving in the dark. I heard one Jap talking. A machine gun fired at me but way over my head. They did not hit anything or any one. They did not Know where we were. Ed woke up when the anti-tank gun fired a few rounds and I fired our machine gun. The Jap machine gun stopped firing. It got quiet again. I still had 30 minutes or so left on guard. I was wide awake. Ed went back to sleep.

About the time I was expected to wake Ed to pull guard, I heard a grunt sound and a figure run in front of me. It stopped right in front of our fox hole. I was really scared. I tried to wake Ed. He was so tired he did not move. It was probably a good thing he did not wake up. He might have made a noise that would give our position away. Before we bed down in our fox hole for the night, either Ed or I placed our 45 next to the trail leg of the tripod of the machine gun. We did this so if a Jap crawls into the hole and we quickly need a weapon, This one is in a familiar place. We had it one-half cocked. I picked up this 45 and emptied it in the direction of the figure in the dark. I heard a "thud" sound. This was followed by a loud, long groan. I really had seen Something. I was not taxing my imagination. In the morning, no more than ten feet away from my fox hole was a dead Jap Soldier. The hole in his neck could have only been put there by an American 45 automatic. Believe it or not, this was the first Jap I Know I was really responsible for shooting. I am afraid there were others. I just never stayed around to count. I felt sorry for this Asian man. In his pocket was a picture of a Japanese woman and

two Japanese children. I realized, as did he, it was either he or I — the slogan we were encouraged to follow went something like, KILL — or — BE KILLED.

The anti-tank gun had been busy during the night. They knocked out or at least helped us Knock out, one Jap machine gun. They wounded one Jap about 30-40 yards out. This Jap had been hit by their anti-tank gun flack when they opened up on the Jap machine gun. One of the riflemen went out to finish off the Jap who had been wounded by the flack. The rifleman who was assigned to end it for the wounded Jap said, "You know what that little sucker said to me when I placed my gun to his head..... he said, "Banzi." He cussed me in English. War is really cruel.

Over to the right of my fox hole on the perimeter, two riflemen had a busy night, too. They shot and killed two Japs some five feet in front of their fox hole. The first Jap they shot was trying to fire a knee-mortar off the base of a coconut tree. The two of them were responsible for killing all three men of a Jap light machine gun squad. They also got a Jap carrying dynamite. This Jap was shot before he touched his palms together. All-in-all, it turned out to be a very busy night in our area. Incidentially, a knee-mortar is a very small mortar. It is usually handled by two men. In a pinch, one man can fire it. This weapon fires very small shells for short distances. The explosion of the shell sends many, many sharp pieces of shrapnel into any thing close by. Shrapnel is a major cause for many causalities.

As I mentioned before, the eight days and nights spent at this water works location were miserable. The last night we spent here, one of their rockets hit one of our weapons carriers inside the perimeter. The carrier was loaded with mortar shells. Our mortar shells were exploding all night long. Shrapnel was flying in every direction. About the minute you thought it was over and you felt you could relax another one blew up. I was scared from the second we arrived till we left. Sleeping was impossible. We had to pull guard 24 hours every day. They shelled us night and day. The resistance never stopped.

About the worse thing I felt were the many attempts to infiltrate our lines by those carrying the large packets of explosives attached to their bodies.

Some out fit came in to relieve us on the ninth day. I was so happy to get away from this place I did not make a great effort to find out who it was. I think it was a regiment in the 6th Infantry. We left this plant on feburary 25th. I was sure if we got away from this area things would improve..... Wrong. Things did not get better. As we moved out, I noticed we were attached to 'G' Troop. It always made me feel uncomfortable to see men along side of us from 'G' Troop because you knew you were heading for "tough combat". Where ever there was trouble or expected trouble, 'G' Troop is the Troop that was sent to end it. In a way, it was a compliment to be attached to them. They were the best. On the other hand, my stomach was doing flip-flops and I was scared. We were on our way to a small village. This village was located in a spot between Manila and a main Japanese depot. Our job was going to be that of stopping supplies from going toward Japanese troops in or near Manila. When empty trucks returned to their depot to reload, we were to intercept and destroy them. Our squad, along with an anti-tank crew plus an artillery observer, were assigned to set up a road block on one end of this small village. Another road block was set up at the other end of the village. The total distance from one road block to the other was about 6-8 city blocks. As you followed along the road from one road block to the other you found it curved about in the middle. The end of the village, that my squad guarded, was a point where empty trucks returned from Manila. Actually, we were on watch for anything and every thing coming from Manila. The Japs still had a slight foot hold there at this time. How far was it to Manila? My guess would have been 20-30 miles. About the distance from Des Moines to Ames, Iowa.

We pulled into this village around noon. Our Squad Sergeant pointed out just where we were to dig in. On the opposite side of the road was a 37 millimeter anti-tank gun. The road block on the other end of the village also had an anti-tank gun plus an artillery and mortar observer. They had a 50 caliber machine gun. At the point in the road between the two road blocks where the road curved was located a 'cracker jack' 81 milimeter

mortar squad. I knew they were good. It was some of my 'H' Troop buddies. I had seen them in action many times before. The road block on the other end of town seemed to get most of the action for the few days we were here. Each day a piper cub plane which is an observation plane for the artillery, flew over the village. It only flew during the day light hours. Nothing much happened at first. Before we left these road blocks, a lot of things happened.

The very first night after it got good and dark I was trying to get some rest before I had to pull guard. While I was sitting quietly resting my eyes, I thought I heard some marching up the road in front of us. Ed was on guard. He not only heard it but he had the machine gun trained on what ever it was and had the gun set up to fire. It turned out to be two Filipino people. Ed halted them. He told me to keep the gun on them while he walked out to talk to them. It was a woman Filipino soldier with her 8 year old boy. Her boy was ill and she wanted to know if they could stay inside our lines for the night. She told Ed that about 70 Philippine patriots, whom she called Guerrillas, were going to be coming down this road very shortly. She also wanted to know if they could stay in the village for the night. Things seemed to be getting a little hairy. I advised Ed to have the artillery observer contact our commanding officer and ask his advice. The commander told the observer to tell Ed not to let anyone inside of the perimeter till he came up to our gun position to check it out. Ed had me take the woman and child to our fox hole. He told me to keep a good eye on both of them.

In the next five minutes, three things happened almost simultaneously. None of them were good. First, a mob of men can down the middle of the road just as the woman with the boy had told us. The two men in front were carrying a flags. I could just barely make out that one of the flags was an American flag. The other flag was a Philippine flag. Ed shouted "halt". They all stopped in their tracks. They were probably 90-95 yards directly in front of us in the center of the road. Just as Ed halted this mob of men the officer of the day pulled up in a jeep behind us in the dark. The officer did not go out to talk to the guerrilla soldiers. Instead, he sent Ed out to talk to them. The

officer sent word through Ed, "We should shoot all of you for moving at this time of night. But, if you are quiet and do not move around you may sleep out side of our perimeter till day light. If every thing goes all right, you may pass through this town in the morning." Ed stepped out, asked their commander to step forward and relayed the message. Their leader told Ed they had been fighting in Manila. They were exhausted and needed to rest. They were heading for their home villages. Again, this could have been a Jap trick — but it wasn't. Ed had a lot of 'guts' to do what he did.

The commander of the guerrillas gave his troops an order. They moved off the road and started to lay on the ground. As Ed returned to the fox hole, the third thing happened. Some one across the road shouted "Jap truck". Behind us coming like a bat out of hell in the dark was a truck. It must have broken through the other road block. It had no lights. The truck just missed the officer in his jeep who had come up to check things out. Hand grenades were being dropped from either side of the truck. One grenade exploded just at the edge of our fox hole. No one was hurt. Ed whipped the machine gun around and fired at least 50 rounds. I am sure he hit it

but the truck kept moving. When Ed fired the gun at the truck he was also firing into the middle of some of the Filipinos who had yet to clear the road. I don't believe any of the guerrillas were hurt but they sure cleared that road in record time. What a night. Everything happened so fast we hardly had time to think

Naturally, our commanding officer blamed us for letting the Jap truck get by. He said if we had shot all 70 of the guerrillas in the first place, that truck would never had made it past us. I really would have found it against my better judgement to fire upon an American flag for any reason. Ed said, "If our commander wanted to kill all of those Filipinos so badly, why didn't he have it done by the artillery. They could have dropped a heavy barrage. Better yet, why didn't he come up to our fox.hole and use our machine gun and do it him self. After everything appeared to return to normal that night, Ed took the woman and the child over into a hut that was off to the side of the road. He did not return for a couple of hours. Knowing Ed, I am not sure there wasn't a little hanky-panky going on. Early the next morning, while I was asleep and Ed was on guard, the woman, her boy and all of the 70 guerrillas quietly moved on.

Shortly after all the Filipinos left we lit up a fire and brewed a cup of delicious but somewhat dirty coffee. As we were sitting and talking, we heard some personal weapons fire over near the other road block. We wondered what had happened. Later in the morning we discovered the shots were fired by one of the Anti-tank gun crew. It seems a lone Jap was out riding a bike down the road without a care in the world. The men on the road block said he was whistling and day-dreaming and

he appeared to act as if no one was with in a hundred miles. The anti-tank soldier hide in some brush and jumped out in front of him and shot him. we all wondered why in the world a soldier would be riding a bike in a combat zone. These Japanese soldiers did some strange things.

Along with the road block soldiers there were a few Filipino guerrilla soldiers who some way had latched on to our outfit. They camped in the village and sent patrols out daily to conture Japs who were brought back so our American officers could interrogate them. These Filipinos were true Philippine soldiers. They appeared to hate the Japs. They shot many of the Japs they captured. When we asked why they disliked the Japanese soldier so much, they told us that they hated them for many reasons. The main reason most of them gave was because their families were grossly mis treated. Some of them said the Jap soldier took their food and valuables.

The second night at the road block, nothing much out of the ordinary happened. The Japs discovered we were there so they threw a few mortars at us. A few of the riflemen that were brought up to give us support along the sides of the road got hurt. No one was killed. Early the third morning a barrage of mortars came in. They were off target. Some riflemen using a light machine gun, killed 4-5 Japs near the narrow part of a river behind us. The Japs were attempting to reach our road block. After the Japs threw a barrage of mortars early in the morning, they tried to lull us to sleep. All they fired at us for a long spell was 3 mortar shells. We all just Kinda' laid back, rested our eyes, took a turn on guard and began to feel a slight feeling of security. This was a stupid thing to do. At the height of our short term relaxation period, we were awaken to reali by the sound of the 50 caliber machine gun on the

other end of town firing up a storm. The machine gun fire was followed by a few rounds of 37 anti-tank. Shells followed by 81 millimeter mortar shell explosions. Four heavily loaded Jap ammunition trucks were trying to break through the road block at the other end of town. The observation plane must have seen the convoy and told the artillery observer. The artillery observer let our mortar squad know they were coming. As they rounded a bend in the road, our 81's set up a barrage. They made a direct hit on the first truck and it caught fire. This truck blocked the way for the other three trucks. The machine gun and anti-tank gun finished off the last three trucks. The drivers of the trucks just seemed to vanish. Bullets and shells of all kinds and sizes were flying all over the place for the rest of the day and half the night.

The fourth day was slow. We had no enemy shells dropped all day. The quiet was nice. I took a nap that afternoon. All of this quiet changed about mid-night. Ed was resting. I was on guard. Three big artillery shells lit 25-30 yards in front of our fox hole, off to the side of the road. I thought it was our artillery firing for range or effect. I yelled over at the artillery man, told him to call back and tell them to increase the range — they are getting too close. As he was making his call, another shell came about five yards away. The vibration shocked both Ed and I. we were covered with dirt. We did not get hit by Sharpnel — but I do not know why not. I yelled louder to the observer, "Tell those dummies to ease up." The observer yelled back, "That's not our guns — they said they have not fired a round for over two hours." That was not what I wanted to hear. I hugged the floor of my fox hole waiting for the next shell to land on top of my head. It was a nerve-racking wait. The Japs must have decided they had done enough damage since they did not fire any more rounds. They did fire every so often later on until day light, however. Their artillery wanted us to know that they knew we were there. About day light, the Japs shelled the road and our gun with a big barrage of artillery, again. I could not figure out what they were doing. They could have blown us to bits if they had just continued with the first barrage. For some unknown reason they stopped. I am thankful for whatever it was that made them stop

I just got my nerves settled from the artiller barrages when I heard the 50 caliber machine gun ope up, at the other end of town, again. This time, the anti-tank gun and mortars fired all at once along with the 50 caliber machine gun. They all shot off many, many rounds. Fire works filled the sky. I knew it was another Jap convoy trying to break through the road block. From the sound of firing and shelling it had to be a good sized convoy. I was afraid this time they would bring a number of soldiers with the convoy. But the only soldiers that came with the convoy were the drivers. This was a good sized convoy. There were 27 trucks on that road. The machine-gun and anti-tank gun stopped the first four trucks of the convoy dead in their tracks. These trucks were damaged so badly there was nothing left of them — only shells of the trucks. After the first four trucks were hit, caught fire and blocked the road, our mortar men finished off the other 23 trucks by dropping mortar shells right on top of each truck, right down the line. I said earlier that they were good at their job. I think these guys could hit a target the size of a dime if they just had a minute to get set up. I do exaggerate about them a little b I was very glad they were on our side. I thought sure we were going to have Japanese truck driver snipers all around us — we didn't. They must have high tailed it back to where they came from. Two attempts to break through our road blocks with supplies and ammunition. Two failures. Will they never learn.

Behind and a short distance off the side of the road, where our gun was dug in, was a small Filipino hut built of coconut leaves and bamboo. We used it during the day when were not pulling guard and when the area was not being shelled. It had a small porch on the second floor. The porch set up high enough that you could see about three-forths of a mile down the road we were guarding. On the fifth day at this road block I was sitting on this porch talking to the artillery observer. I asked him if I could use his binoculars for a minute. I thought I saw something moving on the road. It was a Jap soldier. He was patiently sneaking up on us. He was well-camouflaged. He looked like the Jap soldiers I had seen in the movies. He had twigs and branches tied to his helmet and shoulders and long strands of grass hanging all over his body. He looked very serio He would move a few steps, plop down, raise up, look around, move a few more steps and plop down, again. At.

the time, I was watching him I was wishing I had a camera and could take a picture of his deliberate moves. It would have made a good training film for recruits in basic training. I told all of the men around us about the Jap coming down the road including the Anti-tank gun crew. We all kept our eye on him. When the Jap reached personal weapon range, we each got our weapon ready. The signal to open fire was when he reached a pole that was sticking up next to the road about 50 yards away. One of the men in the anti-tank crew had just come up to the front lines about three days earlier. He had never shot at an enemy soldier. He could not hold back. He fired two shots when the Jap was about 75 yards out. The Jap dropped. He was both excited and embarassed. We gave him a bad time about being 'trigger happy.' Later that day I borrowed the artillery observers binouclars again. I saw three more Japs coming down the gully of the same road. All of them were on the same side of the road. It was early enough in the day for the artillery piper cub observation plane to be out. Our artillery observer called back to his head-quaters to have them radio the cub pilot about the three Jap soldiers. He must have spotted them. We soon observed the piper cub diving down toward the ground. We could hear him fire his automatic 45 at them. It sounded like a toy pop-gun each time he fired. I could see the three Japs hit the ground each time he fired. It looked to me like he dropped a couple of gernades. As I looked through the binouclars, I could see he did not have any effect on the three. They just kept coming down the road. The artillery observer got a call saying the piper cub pilot was "giving up". We called back to our commander. and told him about the three Japs advancing down the road.

Our commander told us to "hold tight". He was sending up some of the guerrilla Filipino soldiers that were attached to our out fit. In a very short time, four young Philippine Army soldiers arrived. We pointed where the three Japs were located. The leader said, "We take care". They not only killed the three Japs we sent them out after but they found two additional enemy soldiers and killed them, the The artillery observer that was assigned to us said, "The Japanese soldier had a great fear of the piper-cub plane that observed for the artillery. They were aware that if they attracted the attention of the pilot it ment they could get blasted to bits by artillery. The pilot of this observation plane could direct artillery fire to a given location in seconds. This small innocent looking plane was one of America's most deadly weapons.

On the fifth day of this road block assignment, at about 6:00 P.M., we were relieved by men from the 6th Division. I am not really sure if it was the 6th Regiment of some Division or 6th Division, itself. I asked what out fit they were in and they said "The Sixth I thought I later heard one of them mention the 20th Regiment. I assume we were relieved by members of the 20th Regiment, 6th Division. What ever out fit it was, they were very disappointed. They thought they were heading for a few days of easy duty. We pulled double duty with these 6th Division men that 5th night and we had artillery and mortars shells landing one after another, all night. The guy who pulled guard with me, was disappointed. He said, This dosn't seem like easy duty to me. Our outfit, like the men in the 20th Regiment, felt we were heading for a rest period..... Wrong. We headed for a place even worse than the water works. We now moved toward the battle that put me into the hospital.

The next day was March 5th. We marched all morning on the road that led toward Manila. I really had no idea where we were. I had a feeling that we were 25-30 miles from Manila. I had been in such a fog the last few days that I was not even sure if we were South, East or West of Manila. I was fairly certain that we were not North of the city. I did realize one thing for certain — we were amoung a lot of Jap soldiers. We passed one town that had been destroyed by Shelling. The Filipino civilians who survived, were more than pleased to see us. They offered

us cool water, bananas and coconuts. It was very, very hot that day as we arrived, about 5-6:00 P.M. I searched for a stream to take a bath. We settled for a Filipinos farm water pump. We washed from the waist up. It felt great.

It seems like every time we moved on foot, I started to get an up set stomach. I was sick again. This first day I vomited 5-6 times. I started my diet of coffee and cigarettes again. Nothing would stay down. That night. during my turn at guard, I noticed a light flash back in a village we had gone through earlier. It flashed off and on for a few minutes. I turned toward the direction in which we were heading in time to see more flashes of light It appeared to me that signals were being made from somewhere in a village back where we had marched through to someone in a village we had yet to enter. There was little question about the signaling that was taking place. I yelled over to a close-by artillery observer and told him about what I saw. All he said was, "Yes, I believe you are right..... it does look like they are signaling back and forth." That was it. I was hoping he would radio back and have the artillery blast both positions that the light flashes were coming from. He did not do it. Nothing happened to us— at least, not that night. I would have won a bet if I had wagered we would get the hell blasted out of us the next night. I felt we were being set up. The light signals made me feel a little uncomfortable. Again I got sicker and sicker and much weaker. My squad sergeant noticed and advised me to tell Lieutenant Joke. I would rather take a shot in the head from a sniper than ask anything from that jerk. If he had had any brains at all he would have sent me to the hospital back in Leyte Island. If I had said anything to him he would not have done anything but call me "chicken" and double my details.

The next day as we packed up to move out, many Filipinos in the village, both young and old, wished us well. All day long on this road, we ran into Japs. There were hundreds of dead Japs on both sides. We saw many live Japs, too. The live Japs we saw appeared to be running from us into the mountains. Many times during that day, we were told not to fire, or to hold our fire. We kept moving. I

Saw one Jap about 40 yards away running through a coconut grove. If I had a rifle, I could have shot him easily. I took out my 45 to shoot at him and Lieutenant Joke told me to "forget it" and keep moving. I really did not understand why we were passing up all these live Japs we came across on both sides of the road who appeared to be moving toward the cover of the mountains.

We entered a little village. I do not remember it's given name. After we spent the night there, it was nicknamed "Little Tokyo". There were many, many Filipinos who were sympathetic to the Japanese cause. Remember me telling you about the light signals up ahead?... they were coming from this town. We not only had to keep our eyes open for Japs — we had to keep a close watch on Filipino civilians. This whole day was a disaster. I stopped 17 times to either relieve myself or heave. The 5-6th time, I laid the tripod of the machine gun on the ground to go off the side of the road to relieve myself, the third gunner could take no more. He said "Dammit Foss, give

me that tripod, you aint fit to carry it."

After we got the machine gun set up in town I discovered none of us had been issued rations. we were really too busy to eat lunch. I dont know how our commander did it but he got a weapons carrier with some hot chow up to us. I say hot food. what it was, was steak, bread and cold water. No butter on the bread. No salt on the steak. who ever thought we would be sitting in the middle of a tense combat situation eating steaks. K-rations, yes — Steaks, No. The steak tasted good. It stayed down in my stomach for over two hours.

That night, I expected all hell to break loose. I had not forgotten the signals that were flashed back and forth. I could not believe it — nothing happened. Thank God, nothing happened. we could not dig in. The ground was much to hard. The machine gun was sitting on level ground. We were in high grass among thick trees. The Japs could have torn us to bits that night but They did not even try. In the morning we ate 10-1 rations. These rations must have been dropped by plane the night before or very early in the morning. It's funny but the Filipinos in the last village we passed though warned us to be careful of the pro-Japs. We hardly heard a shot fired all night. All the trouble we expected in "Little Tokyo" must have moved up to the next town. The shelling that we lived though the next night was so devastating that it is a wonder any of us lived though it.

I did not have to carry the tripod of the machine gun this day, nor did my third gunner who had felt sorry for me yesterday. we got to load the whole machine gun on the weapons carrier that brought us the steak and bread. That was fine with me, except I almost got left behind twice because I had to run off into the bushes. We moved slowly because we met a lot of resistance. I learned we were on a road South of Manila because the name of the town we ended up in was called TAGAYTAY. Tagaytay is South of Manila. At first we shot a few stragglers. Many of the Japs we saw were out of range Some Japs that we saw we were ordered not to fire at. I wondered why we did not fire. They fired at us. When we finally reached Tagaytay, the civilians told us we were a day late. They said there were large numbers of Japanese soldiers here yesterday. They headed North early in the morning. They had to be close.

The town of Tagaytay was on a hill. Our head quaters was located near the most dangerous spot in the village. I say it was the most dangerous spot because it was inside their church. It was not so much the church that made head quaters a dangerous spot — it was the 200 pound unexploded bomb that was laying on the floor of the church. The bomb was dropped by our air force. When we entered the town, we found ourselves waiting at the Chuch steps tor orders. As luck would have it we were assigned to set up our gun on top of a huge mass of broken concrete right next to the church. No way could we dig in. There was no sand and no bags to fill with dirt to weigh down the gun. We pushed and pulled hunks of concrete around the gun and our squad. This was not the best. It was better than laying on a flat piece of concrete out in the open. I really had a bad "gut" feeling about this town. We knew the area was crawling with Japs. I also did not feel real comfortable sitting near a 200 pound bomb that had yet to explode. My insides were churning like crazy. If we get shelled badly and I have to go to the bathroom real, real

bad it could result in an all out disaster for me. I was wishing I was in a place I could dig down 8 feet.

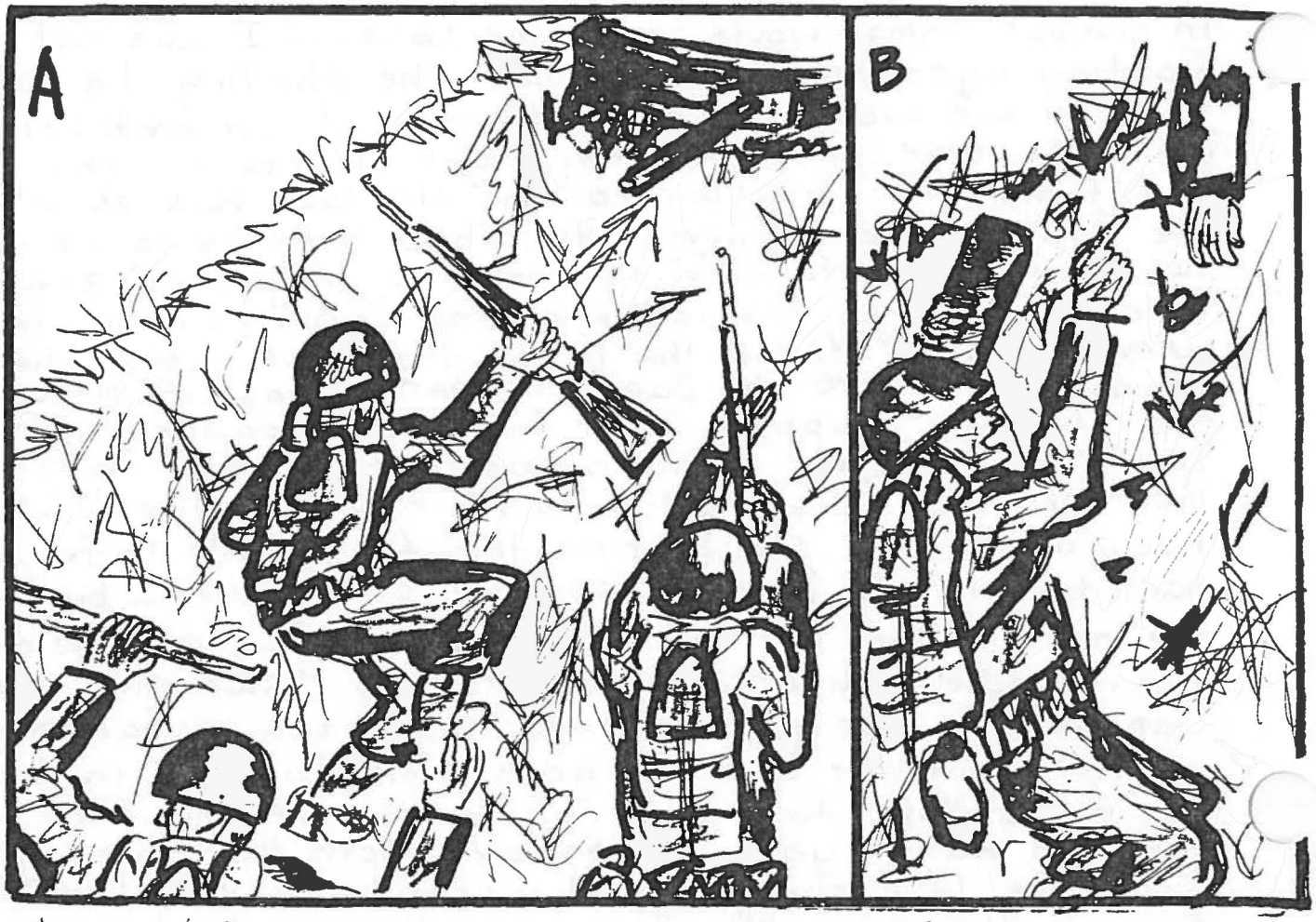
Early in the evening after we set up our machine gun the best we could, I was called over to the church along with two of my buddies. We had to sit with a Jap straggler till the commander had him interrogated. I got a little embarassed with what one of my buddies was making the prisoner do. He was teasing and pestering. He made the Jap tear up all of his Japanese money. He taught the Jap soldier to say nasty things about his country and Tojo. I made my friend stop teasing when he tried to get the prisoner to swallow mosquito repellant. Enough is enough. The other guy I sat with as we guarded the Jap prisoner, was an old Camp Roberts, California buddy. We talked about the fun we had playing softball and basketball at Roberts. We talked about the good times we could have together after the war ended. This guy was a major league base ball prospect for the Philadelphia Phillies. He played a few games in 1943 with the Phillies before he was drafted. He told me his chances to make it in the big leagues after the war, was much better than average. He was an infielder. A nicer person you could not expect to meet. He said, "Foss, if I make it through this war and I make it into the big leagues and you will visit me..... you will always have the best reserved seat in the house." He said that was a lot of "ifs" and "ands" but he said, "lets pray it comes true." Two days later he got a leg blown off. He lived—, it might have been better, as far as he was concerned, if he had died. I saw him at a temporary hospital before they moved him to the rear. All he said was, "this was not supposed to happen". My eyes filled with tears every time I thought of him for many months. In fact, over forty years later I still feel that way. He was a neat friend.

That night for some unknown reason, we had both 10-1 rations and "mail call". All I could think about when we were issued the Ten-in-One rations was the 'last supper' of a condemned man. I had a strange feeling about what the next few days would bring. Just before dark we retired to our inner-spring ala-cement beds. my stomach was very upset. Just as it got dark, we all noticed lights flash out in the mountains ahead.

At about the some instant the light flashed, two heavy artillery shells from the direction the Japs had been moving sailed over our heads. I remember a "vet" telling me, "don't worry about any shell you can hear going over your head — the time to worry is when you hear them coming down." The two shells we heard going over our heads landed a good distance away. But as more and more flashes from the mountains appeared the sound of shells going over head got shorter and shorter. Soon, all we heard was the SWISH sound before they exploded into the ground. It was now time to worry. Those big Jap artillery shells were landing all over the area. It was a helpless . Here we are sitting on top of crushed, concrete, wishing we were dug in the ground..... DEEP! I cannot really describe the sound of big artillery shells as they land close. It does remind you a little bit of someone taking two garbage pail lids and banging them together then multiplied by 100 or so. The ground shakes and trembles all around. The dirt and shrapnel make noise as it hits a solid surface that gives off "hail on a tin roof" sounds. The loose dirt and rocks almost covers up you and your fox hole — If you were lucky enough to be assigned a place you can dig into. To say you are scared is putting it very mildly. It is more like paralized fear. A couple of artillery shells hit the church and splattered it's contents about the area. All we needed was an artillery shell to hit that 200 pound bomb in the church and set it off. A large shack directly behind us got a direct hit. It caught on fire and lit up everything for at least a half block. A number of our men were hurt badly and few were killed. It seemed like the barrage was never going to end. I shook like a leaf during the whole thing. I, Kept repeating to the guys around me, "I Knew this was going to happen, I just knew it." I must have said it 10 times in 15 minutes. I threw up 3-4 times during the barrage. It is not pleasant for me to say but I did have to go to the bath room one time. I used my steel helmet. I was not able to get another helmet till the artillery barrage ended. One of the guys in my squad brought me another helmet from one of the dead Americans. I threw my helmet off into the bushes. This was one of my worst nights

in combat. Things would have gone better if I was not fighting dysentery. Such is war. The shelling did not stop till we could get the attention of our artillery observer and point out the light flashes in the mountains. The observer caught the last flashes of the Jap artillery barrage that had been firing at us. Our artillery zeroed in on them. It only took 3-4 rounds to pinpoint the range of the Jap artillery crews. When our 155's found the range, they saturated the area from where the Japs had been. It was effective because the shelling stopped. Just for good measure our artillery observer sent a barrage of 155's into the location of the flash light signals I had seen earlier. I do not know what the signals from the flashlights so far away had to do with us being shelled so precisely — but — the more those lights in the mountains flashed, the closer their artillery shells fell. On top of "sweating out" Jap artillery, we were also expecting a big infantry charge from the Japs. A good time to sent in troops is immidately following a barrage. At this time you are in a daze, your nerves are worn thin, and your reactions lack sharpness. It was pitch dark at the time. That is the time the Japs usually attacked. We waited — waited — and waited. The attack did not come. We lost a slug of men that night

A few weapon carriers stayed with us. We moved very slowly and cautiously down the road toward Manila. It seemed that at each bend in the road, we had to stop and fight. It felt to me that we were moving only a few feet ahead at a time. Our next objective was a village named ANTA-POLA. I never made it to this village. We did make it to the out skirts of the village we held up about 5-6:00 P.M. I believe the Japs were setting up a "last stand" of some kind. There were large concentrations of Japs protecting the mountain ridges on both sides of the road. As our riflemen tried to attack the ridge on the right side of the road they drew heavy fire from the left. They finally decided to attack both ridges at the exact same time. We were ordered to wait with the heavy guns till a Jap machine gun nest was knocked out. The riflemen moved in front of us and headed toward the emplacement to knock it out.



The machine gun was half way up the right ridge. When we reached the bottom of the ridge we were ordered to follow the rifle troops. About 40 yards from the top of the ridge, the Jap machine gun opened up on us. We were pinned down. The bullets from the Jap gun were spraying all around us as we hugged the ground. It is hard to believe no one got shot.

While we were pinned down waiting for orders, it began to turn dark. Right behind us appeared three men. All of them were crawling. One of them said to me, "where the hell is that woodpecker?", we all pointed dead ahead. One of the three said "just give us a few minutes". They took off. They were a demolition squad. They crawled toward the Jap machine gun. We all fired our personal weapons in an attempt to cover them. The three rushed toward the Jap machine gun. It looked like they threw explosives into an opening in the machine gun nest. When the explosives went o Bob Testa, a buddy of mine from New York, and I sa part of a human arm fly over our heads almost at the same time. It still had cloth around it. It was all

in one piece. It landed about 10 feet away. After the machine gun nest was knocked out we made a run for the top of the ridge and cover. Just as we reached the top a BAR man and one riflemen were shot and killed by Jap snipers. Our officers were shouting orders left and right. The most noticeable order was "dig in, fast! They wanted us dug in before the artillery, mortars and rockets started falling. As we dug in (in the dark) snipers were taking pot shots. We dug with hands, helmets, knifes and any thing else around that was handy. My fox hole buddy and I had one pick between us. My new fox hole buddy, since we changed men around in Leyte, was Benny Calandra. He was from Brooklyn, New York. Usually he was a funny man. He looked a lot like Jerry Kalona, the comic who performed with Bob Hope. To night, Benny was not funny. Benny was in a trance. It was called fear. He was to be my one and only fox hole buddy for the night. The hell of it was, I was more frightened than he was.

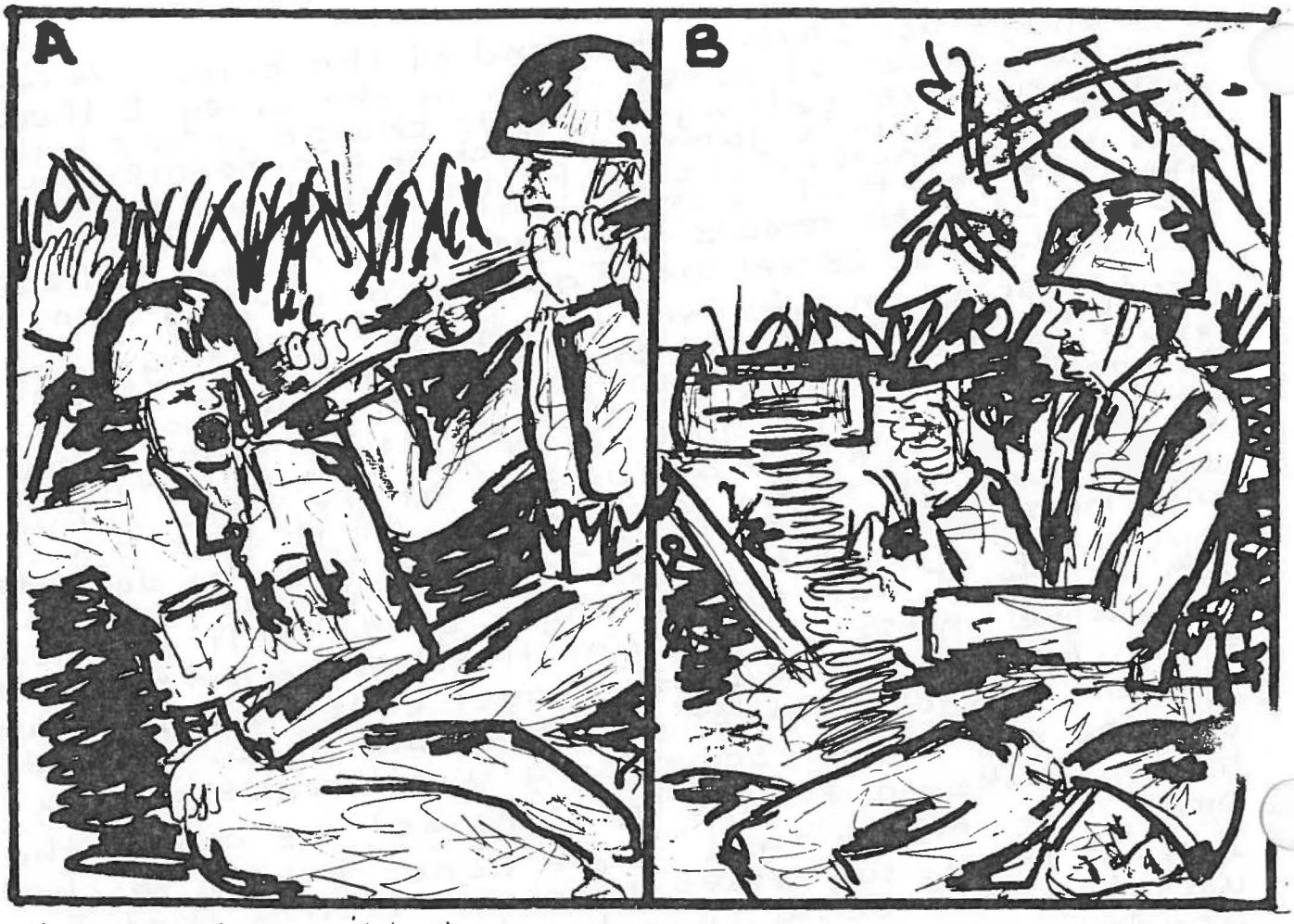
It was a relief to get dug into ground that was deep enough so your body was below the surface of the earth. It was pitch dark. We all knew that the Japs knew we were there. We also all knew we were in for a night of harrassment, possibly a "banzi" attack. The worst part of the night was what the moon was doing. The clouds were moving fast. The moon kept popping in and out of the clouds. when it went behind the clouds you could not see your hand in front of your face. With no clouds to hide the moon you could see fairly well. When we reached the top of the ridge, before we started digging in, our squad Sergeant moved us to the other side of the ridge near the top, to guard a path and watch for any one coming up that side. Luckily, our fox hole was partly hidden by bushes and high grass. We were not sitting completely in the open but we could see a good distance if and when the moon fully appeared. Benny kept saying to me, "if the clouds keep covering the moon how we gonna see anything?" I told him, "we will have to play it by ear" then whispered to my self, "and hope for the best". If I sounded confident, I wasn't. I was scared.

Benny was a great guy. He was one of my better army buddies. I knew how "up tight" he got In combat situations. That scared me because you

just never knew how he was going to re-act. The situation was soon going to get tense. I was worried. I knew I was the one who would fire the gun if it was going to be fired, this night. As soon as it got real quiet we could hear Japs jabbering down in the valley below. About 11:00 P.M., the talking got louder and louder. Some Japs were climbing the hill in front of us. Ours was the point gun on the ridge. This ment that we stuck out further on the ridge than all the other fox holes of the perimeter. we were more or less alone. Next thing we knew, two Jap Soldiers about 10 feet in front of the gun and maybe 5 feet apart, were talking. I could only hear them. I could not see them. The moon was behind the clouds. I held my breath till the moon appeared. One of the Japs moved toward me, stopped, turned around and said Something to the other Jap soldier which caused him to rise up and answer. while they both were in my gun sight I fired. I got both of them. At this instant one of the most unbelievable things happened that could possibly happen to a machine gunner. My machine gun jammed.

A cartlidge got stuck in the end of the barrel. We could hear a number of voices down in the valley. I thought sure they were getting ready to charge up the hill. Here I am with a jammed machine gun. Before you can inject another shell into the barrel you must remove the one that is stuck in the chamber. The tool that is used to remove this shell was in the tool bag in a foxhole 20-25 feet away. I did the only thing I could do. I reached in with my thumb and first finger, got a hold of the tip of the shell and worked it out. The space you have to work in, getting the shell out of the chamber is about 2 inches wide, 3½ inches long? and 3 inches deep. I will admit I did not do this feat on my own. I was praying at the time. I told God I was not ready to die yet— if it was O.K. with Him. If He was willing— I was ready to do something— or at least try to do something worthwhile with my life. I told God it might be difficult for me to stay alive unless I could get this gun back in firing order again. About the time my prayer ended I got the gun working in proper order I never did know if God allowed me to do something worthwhile in my life to make up for the mess He got me out of that night. The only thing I have done is be a teacher. I have many witnesses who will testify that I was far from being your highly talented, intellectual, academic instructor. I have had a beautiful wife and family and everything a man could want. I don't believe I have done that something worthwhile yet. When the time comes God will let me know. Funny thing, after the campaign ended a regular army Colonel told a group of us in a class situation that if a cartlidge gets jammed in a chamber of a barrel the only way you will get that shell out-if it comes out at all is with a "prying tool". If any one says they can pull a shell out with their fingers, they are telling a damn lie— unless it is a <u>miracle</u>, who was I to disagree with a regular army colonel.

During this bit of action when both of the Japs popped up in front of our machine gun and the gun failed to fire, my foxhole buddy went into shock. Its no wonder. I almost went into shock, too. Out of no where and for no particular reason, Benny started to sing, cry, and yell very loudly about how the Brooklyn Dodgers can whip any S.O.B.'s on earth. The last straw was when he fired his personal weapon at



the worst possible time. I only had a 45 so I had to take his rifle from him and bust him on the jaw. I looked right at his smiling face when I hit him with the butt of his gun. It knocked him out. Later, when he came to, I told him what I did to him and why I did it. He had a hard time believing me. He did mention that his jaw was sore. I told him I was sorry but I felt it was necessary. Benny told me he was glad I did it That made me feel much better. He seemed O.K. I did stay awake the rest of the night just in case. During the time Benny was out cold, the Japs in the valley threw knee mortars at us. Our 81 millimeter mortar crew and artillery blasted the hill directly in front of our gun. I was afraid they were going to land some of the shells on Benny and me. I shot three more Japs that came up the path. After Benny snapped out of what ever was bothering him, the night turned quiet. In the morning, Benny was O.K. It was a stressful, nerve-racking night. The next day and night was worse.

Living through the night gave me confidence that God was listening. The new day began badly. First

thing at day break, I heard someone yell, "get out of your hole, Slow — look around real good — the place is crawling with them!" "Them," ment Jap Snipers. I raised up very slowly after cautiously looking around. As I sat on the edge of my fox hole and looked over at the rifle men to my left, I saw a soldier from 'G' Troop that I had been friends with stand up and look through field glasses. He was looking at something down on the road. One single shot was fired. He dropped the field glasses. Blood gushed out of his knee. It was a Jap sniper 25 caliber bullet. The first casualty of the day and it had just turned day light. The other G.I.s having witnessed this shooting were now moving more cautiously. Shortly after this we built a small fire in order to brew some coffee, the Japs threw some more rockets at us. You could see the rockets as they left their launching pad from the next hill over. You could not miss the balls of sparkle as they were fired. We all wondered why our artillery did not blast them out of existance. The artillery observer told us why. The rockets were not being fired from a stationary position. Had they been our 155s would knock out the rocket placement in a few minutes. But the Japs were firing the rockets off the back of a huge platform built on a semi-truck. They could only fire a few rockets at a time or they would give their position away. Before American artillery could get the range, they moved the semi-truck rocket launcher platform to another position when the piper cub artillery observation plane flew around, the Japs did not fire the rockets at all. Fortunately for us the ridge where we dug in was so narrow that the rockets they fired at us went on over the ridge and down into the valley behind us If just one of those rockets they kept firing over our gun positions landed and exploded it would have been a total disaster. Everything on that

ridge would be blown to bits. The Choo-choo sound of the rockets going over head was enough to almost make your heart stop beating. Again, this early morning was tense and scary.

Later this same morning two heart breaking things took place that crushed me. I could not do one thing about either. The gunners thought the riflemen had cleared out the snipers near-by so three of us decided to sit down at the edge of a fox hole to have a cigarette and forget the war for a few minutes. Next to me there was my buddy Fritz Fastner whom I seldom got to see much of anymore since our squads were changed and a very likeable new southe guy. His name was Johnny Hughes. He was one of those southern soldiers you just loved to hear talk. In fact, I kept him talking just so I could listen to him. He was well liked by everyone. He was in Fritz's squad. He and Fritz became very good friends. We had no sooner sat down and lit our cigarettes when I looked up to see blood streaming down Johnnies face. Before I looked at him I had heard a real horrible sound. It was the sound of a rock hitting a ripe watermellon. Johnny had been hit in the forehead right between the eyes. He died almost instantly but first, gave Fritz a watch his mom had given to him. In the short time I knew him I never heard him say an unkind word about anyone. Johnny was 19 years old. What a great loss. I went back to my foxhole and cried despairingly. He was one of the men I fought along side of who were just plain "extra" special human beings.

Later that morning, my foxhole buddy from the previous night, Benny Calandra, was moved back to his old squad. My long time fox hole buddy, Ed Freeman, moved back with me. I always felt confident with Ed. He never seemed to get "shook" about anything. Besides,

me and literally threw me in the back of an ambulance that had some how appeared behind me. They locked the ambulance door from the outside. When I returned from the hospital months later, I was informed that my machine gun had received a direct hit that day. It killed the new machine gunner and blew my machine gun to bits. Here I had carried and babied that machine gun which we all referred to as "Old Betsy," through months and months of dangerous combat and the first day I leave it, it is destroyed. Some things do not make sense. "Old Betsy" deserved a medal.

The day I was sent to the hospital was March 10, 1945. That was the day I began to feel lost and useless. As the ambulance pulled away I developed a fear that something was more wrong with me than dysentery. All Joke said to me was that "I had had enough." What does that mean? Am I in this ambulance, going to a hospital for mental or physical disabilities? The way I had acted this morning, maybe they feel I was losing my mental processes. I heard that some guys do get physically exhausted in combat when they get constantly shelled. We had been getting shelled for three nights. That had to be my problem. I was a little nervous but I felt O.K. I kept thinking of Hughes, Freeman, and Ault. It was a long ride. Our first stop was at a temporary hospital, called the First medical Hospital. This was a place that they brought wounded soldiers so they could be kept alive 'till they were strong enough to move to a better equipped hospital

As the ambulance stopped to unload. some other wounded who were badly torn up, I got out. I peeked into a shack that served as an operating room and saw one of my 'H' Troop buddies, Ron Hill. Ron had been hit in the stomach by a large piece of artillery shell. His intestines were laying beside him. They were in the process of operating. The doctors were trying to

remove the shrapnel and sew him back up. I yelled good-bye, but I am sure he did not hear me. I wish I had not stuck my head in that shack door to see what was going on in that operating room. Ron was another of my good friends. (I was told later by one of the ambulance drivers that he did not make it. There was a shortage of his kind of blood or he was just not strong enough ____ or maybe it was both reasons.

I got into another ambulance from the First Medical Hospital along with a number of bad stretcher cases. These guys had physical problems. Some of them were in great pain. A few of them were completely knocked out. We ended up at a hospital called the 29th Evacuation Hospital. This was a better equipped hospital than the First Medical. Some of the patients here were getting ready to head for even a bigger and better hospital. A few who had seen their last days of combat would be taken to a hospital ship and sent home. Some of the men would be returning to combat again. I have no idea the route we took to get to the next hospital. I was in the back of an ambulance with no windows that I could see out of. I asked it's location from a staff member and all I got was, "It's South of Manila".

When I stepped out of the ambulance, I had a hand grenade in my chest pocket. I kept this grenade in my pocket all the time in combat. After I saw what happened to one of my squad members who was captured on patrol I felt it was a necessary evil. He was over powered, staked to the ground and set afire after having gasoline thrown on him. That was one of the most cruel acts I witnessed in the war. I carried the grenade with the idea of pulling the pin and holding it if I was ever surprised or captured. I am not sure I really could have gone through with it. It was just something I would have seriously considered. Any way, when I arrived with a live grenade in my pocket one of the male nurses asked if it was live. When I suggested that we pull the pin and see, he almost fainted

I really had a bad odor when I came into the hospital. One of the nurses said, "my god, what is

Ed had combat savvy and "guts" sticking out of his ears. At least he showed all of these qualities when we buddied in earlier foxhole situations. You might possibly recall, Ed was the man who was awarded three medals. He threw them away. As we sat down that morning and talked I got the shock of my life. Ed looked me square in the eye and said. "Foss. I have gone through as much shelling as I feel my body can take. I talked to the Captain and he spoke to our Regiment doctor about it. They both said they could do nothing for me at this time. I am getting shaky. My head keeps spinning around. If I do not get away for awhile I honestly believe I will go insane." Ed reminded me that I should have been placed in a hospital for my dysentery months ago. He said. "How many times have all of us told the doctor about you "throwing up", your diarrhea and your "weak" spells. That is not normal." He continued, "I am not going to take it any more." I tried to discourage him from leaving by explaining to him that going A.W.O.L. while in combat could easily result in a long prison term or death. Ed thanked me for caring about him. He told me to please keep my head down and don't let that god damm dysentery take me. He asked If I had any money. I gave him the 20 pesos I had. The last thing he said to me after we shook hands was, "If anyone asks where I am, you tell them I took this canteen and headed for a stream to get water, O.K?" With that he held up the canteen, waved and disappeared down the path we were assigned to guard. The end of this story went some thing like this. I had mentioned earlier that Ed was Spanish. He easily passed for a Filipino. Some how he made it back to an area where the fighting had stopped. I did not see him again till months later. In fact it was after the war ended and just before we went in to occupy Japan. He showed up at a village near a rest camp where we were training. A Filipino came up to me and asked if my name was Dick Foss. I told him yes. He said, "Ed Freeman wants you — nobody else, just you — to come get him. The Filipino told me where he would be in the village.

I told the Captain that I knew where Ed was. I asked the Captain to trust me to bring him back to camp. The Captain said I could do what I needed to do, I did not drive so I asked the Captain to get me a jeep and his driver. The driver took me to the village and dropped me off at the point where the Filipino said Ed would be then left for a short time. Ed stepped out from behind a village shack, we shook hands, I signaled for the jeep and we drove back

to the rest camp. (He told me on the jeep ride from the village back to camp that day he turned himself in that he was O.K. His mind was clear of cobwebs and he was no longer afraid. Before the pounding of artillery, mortar and rocket shells got to him, Ed Freeman was one of the bravest men I knew in the war. He was one of the few trusted friends I had in our outfit) We walked into the Captain's quarters. Ed and the officer saluted each other. Ed thanked me. The Captain thanked me and that was it. Ed was put in a single tent under 24 hour guard.

Next day the Captain called me into his tent and told me that one of two things would probably happen to Ed. He told me that the punishment for going A.W.O.L. while in combat is federal prison or he could be shot to death. He said that because of Ed's excellant combat record before he went A.W.O.L. and the fact that he turned himself in he would probably be sent to a federal prison. He was sent to Fort Leaven worth. I have no idea how long he served in prison. I wrote him a letter. He never answered.

The day that Johnny Hughes died and Ed went A.W.O.L my world caved in on me. It was like family leaving you. Later this morning we were informed that the 8th Regiment was going to relieve us. We were going to pull out and head for a village up the road. This was ANTA-POLA. We laid around waiting for the 8th. Regiment to arrive. Soon we heard mortar shells dropping down 90 millimeter tubes (JAP) from the valley. You would never mistake this sound once you hear it. It has a funny "pop" sound. About 3-5 seconds after you hear that "pop", you'd better dive for cover or hug the ground as tight as you could. We dove in our fox holes. The first 5-6 shells lit on all sides of us any where from .5-20 feet away. They were zeroing in on my machine gun. The explosions were so loud I lost my hearing for a short time. I saw my troop commander at the back of the ridge motioning to me to leave the gun and run back where he was. I told him I could not leave my gun. He insisted. The shells fell even closer. My ears were ringing. I am sure I panicked as I covered my head with my hands and arms and ran toward the back of the ridge where the commander was standing. I was in a daze. When I got to the

back of the ridge, I hesitated an instant and headed back to the machine gun. Captain Bordley, my troop Commander, grabbed my arm and asked me what I was going to do. I told him that I didn't remove the main spring from the machine gun — the Japs could use my machine gun against us if I dont unscrew that spring. He said, "Relax, Ill watch your gun till the barrage ends". Just as he said that, my gun was fired. I almost had heart failure. I just knew the Japs had rushed the hill and turned my gun on our troops. The Captain assured me that everything was O.K. The Captain said," Stagman is the one firing your gun". Stagman was a gunner from another squad. As he was running for cover, he sighted a mortar squad of Japs down in the valley. He stopped, got the whole mortar squad in his sights and finished them off. After doing this he ran for the cover he had been looking for. When Stagman finally got back to where I was, he said, "Foss, it's a good thing you did not remove the main spring on your gun. I would not have had a chance to wipe out that mortar squad." This is the only time I can remember where I messed up and it paid off.

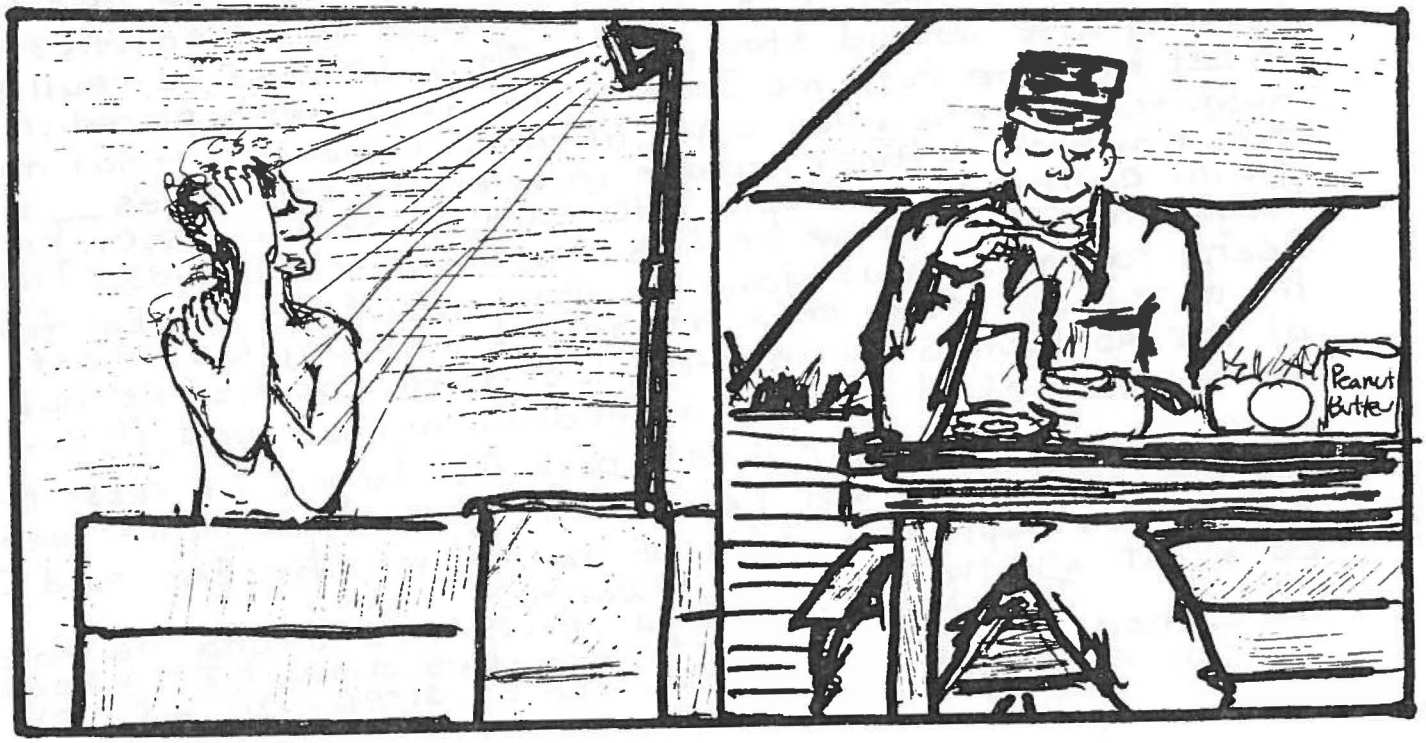
When I returned to my gun, Jap mortar shells came in a third time. This time I removed the main firing spring. I had to hit the ground and travel the last ten yards to the back of the ridge on my belly. A shell lit close then another and another. As I looked up, from my low crawling position, I saw a foot that was hanging by a thread to what was left of an ankle. I discovered that foot and that ankle belonged to my favorite non-com, First Sergeant Ault. He was the non-com who reluctantly put me on K.P. back in the Admiralty Islands because Lieutenant Joke lost his patience with me. Ault was probably the best liked and most fair Top-Kick in the 7th Regiment.

I knew I would miss him. This day had to be the number one, top miserable, most depressing day in the Luzon campaign — and we are not even half through the day yet.

Our artillery could not get the Jap mortars that were literally destroying us, zeroed in on and stopped, till around 1:00 P.M. At this time the 8th Cavalry showed up to replace us. I replaced the main spring in my machine gun, gathered the squad together and we moved down to the back of the ridge near the road and awaited further orders.. Earlier, they told us we were going to take the next town. We lost a lot of men on that ridge. As we stood there waiting for our officers to make their decision. Lieutenant Joke walked up to me and dumbfounded me by saiding "Foss, I believe you have had enough" I could not believe what I was hearing. I was stunned. This man speaking to me is the same person who made a special effort to make army life as miserable and as uncomfortable for me as possible. He used tactics "to get to me" that had not even been invented or thought of in this man's army. The perfect example was seven days K.P. for "mental insubordination". I had to look it up in the dictionary before I was able to understand what it was that I did wrong. I told him I did not want any favors from him. I rudely told him, you were an ass when I first met you on Howie Island. You have turned into nothing but a bigger ass over the months in combat. The only thing I have respected about you, since I have known you is the uniform you are wearing. I waited for him to tell me I was court-marshalled. He didn't do it. I told him I was O.K. and I would soon get over my stomach disorder. I must have been nuts. A chance to get out of his combat 'hell hole' and Im telling the man with authority to release me I was all right. I said I am one of the only first gunners left. They need me. Joke said, "No," you are going to the hospital. with that, two guys grabbed

that awful, awful smell." I told them it was me. My clothing had last been changed some time in January Here it was march. I had no more than three "river" baths". since the middle of January. I have had dysentery for this whole campaign. My clothes and shoes were so filthy that the hospital staff got me new ones. They burned my dirty clothes. I had bugs in my hair. They had to de-louse me. They also gave me a G.I. hair cut

. After I was finally checked in to the hospital, I was assigned a bunk. They gave me a clean towel, a bar of sweet smelling soap, and a pair of clean pajamas to wear. I stayed in the hot shower so long my skin shriveled up. I felt like I had died and gone to heaven when I came out of that shower. I put on my pajamas, crawled into my bed (with a real mattress) and fell asleep before my head hit the pillow. I was so relaxed and so comfortable that even the dysentery problem did not wake me. The staff let me sleep. I slept till almost supper time the following day. The food I was served was not 10-1 rations, K-rations or even spam. It was real honest to goodness fresh food. I ate every thing — my stomach would not hold it — what a disappointment. They had a movie at the hospital that night. I had not seen a movie for months. With the shower, bed, clean clothes, and the good food, I had to pinch my self to prove I was not dreaming..



That night, following the movie, I went back to the tent and laid down in my soft comfortable bed, after first talking a nurse into getting me a cup of coffee. I did not have to fear what the night might bring. No mortar, no artillery and no rockets to "sweat out". I could not sleep. I tossed around for at least 2-3 hours. All I had to do was relax, close my eyes, and go to sleep but I couldn't. My guess is that I was feeling guilty. After all the activity of the hospital stopped for the night in the quiet I could faintly hear our artillery firing. Those sounds in the night quickly returned me to the reality of war.

I really wondered what the professional staff at this hospital was going to tell me what my problems were. They do not tell you what is wrong, even though you ask, till they are good and ready. What that means is they tell you only after they have had time to review all the facts they had gathered on your case then make a diagnosis. A doctor came in the second day to talk. He asked a number of questions about where I had been the last couple of months and what was my job in this war. He asked what kind of physical ailments I had. I told him dysentery and "creeping crud"..... short, for jungle rot. He ran some tests on me. Next day, he visited me again and said, "According to your medical records, when you arrived from the states, you weighed 187 pounds. Now you weigh 142 pounds. Is that right?" I told him for the last two months in combat I had only coffee and cigarettes. Nothing else would stay down. This seemed to really upset him. He told me I should have been placed in a hospital over a year ago. He also indicated that my commanding officer lacked in intellectual capacities — he really called him "stupid". He said I should never have fought in either Leyte or Luzon as sick as I was. The Doctor told me I was going to stay away from combat till the dysentery thing ends. He said I probably lost most of the 45 pounds during the last three months. He had the hospital start me on a medication that was thick, milky, and chalky. It was spoon fed to me at least three times a day. I do not know what the medical name was but it was suppose to clog up my insides. The Doc said I could eat all the cheese I wanted.

I asked him what else was wrong. He told me I had gone under a tremendous amount of tension due to nightly shelling and lack of sleep. The common

name for it is 'battle fatigue". It happens to a lot of front line soldiers. The "Doc" told me it could be cured only by me. He told me I had to re-learn how to rest and relax my body. I must take all medicine that the hospital offered. I promised I would do my best to follow all instructions. I was really impressed with the professional staff at this hospital.

I really did find it difficult to sleep on nights our artillery could be heard firing.... which seemed to be every night. I was given sleeping tablets and that did help. In this hospital I was given every possible opportunity to rest. All the patients had to do both night and day was to loaf. I wrote letters home and read a lot. There were a few (very few) female nurses who were pleasant and easy to talk to. I did feel this hospital was a little too close to a combat zone for women. You could get bombed by stray planes. The Japanese long range artillery was capable of reaching the hospital. Occasionally, a stray Sniper showed up, searching for food and found reasons to shoot the place up. I only spent a few nights at this 29th Evacuation Hospital. The treatment I was afforded was excellant.

On the morning of March 13th I awoke to be told that I was going to move to a bigger and better hospital. I packed what had not been burned earlier. I turned in my hospital clothing and slippers. I said good-bye to a few of the nurses and a few of the friends I made. Also, I made it a point to thank the doctors who were so thoughtful. I loaded in a small army truck along with a few other patients. About 2-3 hours later the truck arrived at a large three story building. It was a rough cement building, shaped in a large U and painted yellow. It seemed each of the three lines of the U were about one block long. It was a big building. It had been bombed earlier in the war by Jap bombers. Recently, this building had been partially destroyed by Japanese soldiers as they retreated from Manila. A large part of the building was repaired and put into working order by our American forces. I can not swear by this but I was told by one of the medical staff that it was the largest T.B. hospital in Asia. The name of this medical unit was the 227th General Hospital. I had heard that any hospital with the term "General" in it was a well equipped place with a good staff. This hospital did appear to be a good distance from the combat area. I

really could not tell. There was to much hospital activi going on, I could only really tell if it was located close to combat in the still quiet of the night, after all had gone to sleep. I will have to say "I felt" we were a good distance from combat. The small truck we arrived in took us up to the front door. We checked into a receiving clerk. We were each assigned a ward and to a certain bed in the ward The bed held a mattress with double sheets. We each were given pajamas, robe, slippers, soap, towel and a good number of toilet articles. The head nurse in the ward was a beauty. She probably was really not all that great—. because it had been a long time since we had seen a real beautiful american girl— To us— she was a beauty. She had a great personality and a good sence of humor. How else could you call a First Lieutenant 'blondie' unless she had both a sense of humor and a personality to go along with it.

At night time, when it was quiet, you could faintly hear the artillery batteries fire in the distance. I was afraid that might happen. I could not sleep on nights they were really blasting away. Somehow I accustomed to it. Maybe it was because I knew the shells being fired were not going to come in on me each night. I really do not know what was happening but I could feel my self getting less and less tense. I had a feeling I was improving, health-wise. The other men in my ward appeared to be serious, quiet, untouchable; and an old bunch of sour-puss, humorless, patients. No one ever smiled. No one would talk or act friendly unless you almost forced them to do so. I set out to do something about their nagative attitudes. There were no first cavalry-men in the ward so I could not use that as an opening to strike up friendships. I finally got a break by picking on a soldier from the 37th Division. The First Cavalry and the 37th Division were two of the 3-4 Divisions that were racing to get to Manila to chase out the Japs. It so happened that the First Division got to Manila first. The 37th Division arrived just minutes later. The fact that the First Cavalry won that race was the reason I was able to start a conversation with the guy in the next bunk to me. I earlier over heard him tell the Doctor he was in the 37th Division as the Doctor questioned him. The doctor also said, "and they call you Jimmy." I am sure this guy did not realize I was listening. Later in the day, I said to him, "So your in that second place Division, the 37th,

huh, Jimmy?" He looked over at me and said, "how did you know I was in the 37th ___ and how come you know my name?" I told him, as I held my hand over my fore head, "Siam knows every thing". He followed up with, "what do you mean second place Division". The 37th Division is the best out fit in the Pacific." I reminded him that his Division was beaten by my Division into Monila. He looked over at me and said, "Oh god, your not one of those fancy pants, horse head, big patched cowboys from the First Cavalry, are you?" I realized he had a sense of humor. when he shouted for a nurse and asked her to get him some thing before he gagged. I had a feeling we were going to be friends from that point on. Jimmy was concerned about the patients in our ward, too. He said all they do is look down their noses. I suggested we try to do some things to liven the ward up a little. We both made it a point to move around the ward and introduce our selves. We both offered our services to those who could not move around with ease when the nurse was not available. We "teased" the patients. we sang and got a few of them to "sing along". We actually got a few nagative attitudes to reverse. In the process we each made a number of friends.

One day a new pleasant nurse came into our ward. She would chat with the guys, give them their medicines, and, I noticed, she was giving back rubs. when she came to me I discovered she was from Sioux City, Iowa. and that her boy friend was in the 5th Cavalry, our sister Regiment. She and I became good buddies. She gave me a rub-down every day without me even asking. Jimmy could not get her to rub his back. She said he was a big nuisance and a tease and she simply refused to touch him. I kidded him a lot about this.

Jimmy and I argued a lot in a friendly way. He was an unusual guy. He had a lot of "guts". At least two nights a week, he did some thing most

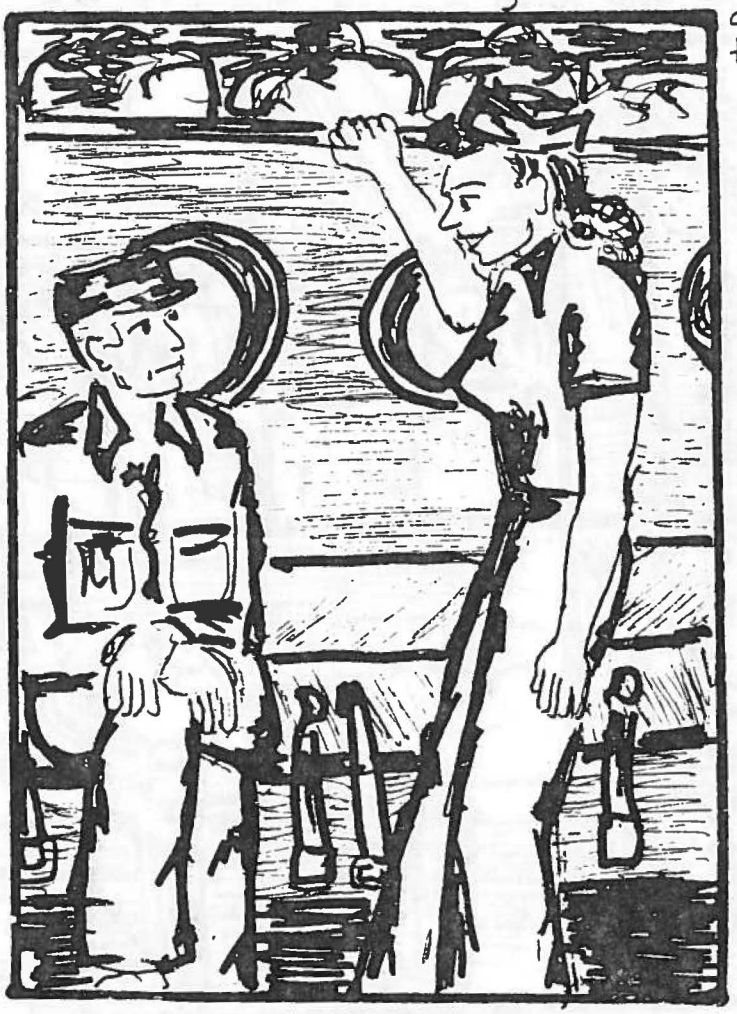
guys would not even think of doing. He left the hospital and took off for Manila after dark. I think he went to town to get drunk. I never asked him. I have no idea what he used for money. He always got back before breakfast. He told me once he hitch-hiked into Manila. You are not even allowed to cross the road from the hospital without permission let alone, take off all night. As far as I know he never got caught. If he would have been caught he would have been court marshalled. That did not seem to bother Jimmy.

Jimmy and I volunteered to help around the ward. When we had weekly inspection, he and I usually did all the cleaning up. We volunteered for K.P. We made so much racket we were told to forget K.P. While at this hospital, outside of trying to stir up some excitement for other patients, all we did was eat, sleep and help the nurses. On nights that Jimmy did not take off for Manila I had to do him a special favor — a request, if you please. I had to sing "That Soldier Boy of Mine" He loved the words in that song. They reminded him of how his girl, back home, treated him. There had to be something wrong with this man. He actually liked the way I sang the song — If you can believe that.

I liked the doctor in this hospital, too. The first day I met him we talked for over two hours. He asked if I knew I was shaking slightly. I did not realize I did. He, like the doctor in the last hospital, told me I would be o.k before I would be sent back into combat. He checked out the "jungle rot" on my legs and said they had medicine that would handle that. He x-rayed my back and told me he could not find anything. He said it could be the strain of carrying that heavy machine gun for so long. He was sure I would be o.k with rest. If my back still hurt when it was time to return, I could have it checked out again.

After about 20 days at the 227th General Hospital I actually begin to feel better. My stomach was getting so I could eat some solid foods and not get nauseous I felt slightly more relaxed. I even felt a little rested. When the "doc" came in to check me

out I had to tell him I was feeling better and I would be ready to go back to combat when he told me it was time The "doc" said it would still be awhile. He said I still looked a little peaked and that he still intended to remove me even further from the strain of combat for awhile. I was surprised, but pleased. He was excited as he told me he had made plans for me that would have me sailing for Hawaii tomorrow. That sounded great to me. I could hardly sleep all night thinking about the trip. Early the next morning I was informed that the trip to Hawaii for me was off. It seems one of our ships was blasted badly in Manila harbor. A large number of American sailors got wounded. Their ship was hit by Jap bombers. The ship that the doctor told me and some other patients we would take, it appeared suddenly became loaded with navy wounded instead. My doctor came in to explain what happened. He was really down in the dumps. He apologized about five times. He did the second best thing he could do. He told us he got us aboard a cargo air plane that would take us back to Leyte Island of the Philippines. I thanked him for his effort. What a thoughtful human this doctor was.



Next day was March 30th. I got up early, checked in my hospital clothing, and loaded into a big Army truck. There were many patients loaded on the truck. We rode to an air port near Manila. I had never been in a plane before. I was excited. It was a B-46. They were the type of planes that were used to drop US rations and ammunition in combat areas. There was a female nurse on the plane to care for the badly wounded. She was a well dressed and neat looking middle aged woman. When I told her she was the first gal I had seen powder

her nose for a long, long, time, she winked at me and smile We had to strap down in our seats. It was a funny feeling to me when the plane took off. The seats were along the sides. one long board on each side facing the middle isle. The ride was a little bumpy. One time during the ride, it felt like the plane dropped quickly— something like the first dip on a roller coaster— only more so. The nurse said not to worry it was only an "air pocket"—. what ever that was. It was a relief when we landed at the air strip on the outskirts of Tacloben in Leyte Island. Our Regiment helped take this air strip when we invaded Leyte Island on October 20th, 1944. They certainly were organized at this air port. The instant we landed and unloaded there were ambulances lined up waiting for us.

The ambulances were driven by strictly business like black American Soldiers. We were taken to the 133rd General Hospital. What a joint this was. These beds not only had mattresses, there were springs under the mattress. The floors were wooden slabs, up off the bare ground. The nurses and the

doctors appeared very attentive and professional. The quarters and hospital facilities were "tops". It was as good as any Army hospital in the states. It was almost as good as being in a hospital back in Des Moines, Iowa. I was asked questions by a doctor who was very sharp and really seemed to know what he was doing. Besides, he seemed to really care. I was again assigned pajamas, robe, slippers and more toilet articles. This hospital not only changed your sheets each day but they issued clean pajamas, also. This was a clean place. They started to work on me about the minute I got changed into pajamas and sat down on the edge of my bed. I had a thermometer in my mouth, they were taking my pulse and handed me some medicine for my dysentery within the first ten minutes. This hospital was either very efficient or they were eager to get you well fast, so they could return you to combat sooner. While I was at this hospital, till near the end of my stay there I visited the latrine a number of times each day.... but, the intensity and pain was gradually disappearing. It seems they were constanly sticking a needle into my rear end. There was little doubt in my mind the staff at this hospital was interested in getting you well.

I felt they were going to kill me with kindness at this hospital. All I did was eat, go to movies at night, read, and rest. Oh yes, they insisted I take my medicine on time. The most physical thing I did all day was to walk over to the hospital P.X. and buy a cup of coca-cola. The other most physical thing I had to do was get up to go over to the mess hall and eat. For the first few days I had my meals in bed. My nerves rested at night because of no artillery being fired. My body and nerves rested all day because we had very few required activities to do. My nerves had improved considerably. I guess I had not realized what combat had done to me till it was explained by the doctor who was about to release me and start me on my journey toward the front lines. I gained back almost all of the weight I had lost— how could I help it— the food was great. My "jungle rot" had disappeared. They X-rayed my back and found nothing wrong. The men with me in the ward were very friendly.... it was a good positive atmosphere to be in. The care I was given in the 133rd General Hospital could not have been better. I was about to leave this place.... someone needed the space at this hospital more than I did.

There was a period when I was hospitali
that was, for me, uncomfortable. It was not the fault of the hospital or hospital staff. It was a personal matter between a black man, who was a patient across the tent from me, and myself. We talked many afternoons and early evenings while we were resting. We discussed many, many topics. We were honest, sincere and many times emotional about our convictions. We were friends I had no way of knowing the stress and fear he felt inside. He tried to tell me. I am afraid I was not hearing. We talked about the advantages and disadvantages of being white and of being black. We both agreed there were few disadvantages to being white when you compared them to being black in the society that we live in. He was in this hospital because he lost part of one leg while serving his country. He lived in the South and gave me a number of examples as to why, in his words, "a black person is a second class citizen" in the South. If it was true, and I had no reason to doubt him, he had a reason to be concerned This man never knew how much I wanted every thi to turn out right for him. He knew or at least I felt that he knew that I did **not** in anyway consider him second class anything.

One of his pet peeves during our conservations was the lack of strong commitment toward education, on the part of most black people. He felt that so many blacks did not make use of their educational opportunities. He said, "the black people needed to make more of their education if my race intends to come up in the world and become more publically recognized." Many of the things he said left an impression on my mind. Later, after the war, I became a junior high-high school teacher. Little did that black man that I met in a hospital realize the influence he had on my teaching technique. I put into practice many of his wishes. I literally jammed education down the throats of students who resisted me. When they said, "I can't" — I said, "yes you can" — I waited till they did. I will have to say I was a little harder on some students than others. I tried to treat all

students, black or white, with the same emphasis. I'll bet if it got right down to the tiny details I more strongly emphasized the importance of education to the black student over the white student. I am not positive about this. If I did push black students it was caused by the influence of the black man in the same tent I was in. He would have been proud of me. I did this type of teaching day after day, for 35 years. These young people have my hospital patient friend to thank for whatever success they had in finishing school. His influence was felt by many potential drop outs, through me.

April 12th, 1945 was a sad day in the world. It was heavy on the hearts and minds of many in the hospital. It was the day our president, Franklin Delano Roosevet died. The Filipino women who worked at jobs like cleaning up the tents, carrying out trash and pushing around patients in wheel chairs, all took it pretty hard. Most of them wore black, for days after he died. He had been president through out the war up to this point. I felt he was a great leader. I was even more impressed with the man who took his place, Harry Truman.

Next thing I knew I was saying my good-byes to staff and patients. Another Army truck pulled up. We loaded into it and headed for the beach near Tacloben. We boarded an L.S.T. We thought we were heading back to Luzon and our outfit but we moved only to another camp on Leyte Island. The trip was short. We had no equipment but a small duffel bag with a change of clothes and some toilet articles that the hospital let us keep. The place we stayed after we unloaded from the L.S.T was right on the shore where we landed. It was called a convales-

cent hospital. To me, it appeared as a combination Camp-Hospital. Convalesce means to recover health and strength, gradually, after sickness or weakness. As soon as the staff at this hospital felt you have recovered, you would return to combat. As we approached the headquaters, I could see there was a lot of activity. This was something I needed. I had not been physically actwe for weeks and weeks. The program was to my liking. Each day they offered volley ball, soft-ball and outdoor basketball. I liked them all. They were all played under organized rules and regulations. The camp was located near a beach. This allowed for a daily swim in the ocean, if you so desired. The food was good. We had a good outdoor movie each night. You were issued a free canteen cup of coca-cola each day. You could relax when you wanted. No one was pushing you about K.P. or guard duty. While I was at this Convalescent Camp I got to see a very funny man, named Joe E. Brown. He was the comic that was teased about having such a big, big mouth. As a kid I had seen him in many movies.

While I was resting at this camp I chanced to meet one of the greatest bunch of guys I had met in the war. All of them were in the 11th Air borne. They were para-troopers. Two of the men I met were assigned to the same tent where I was assigned. These two men introduced me to two of their 11th Air borne buddies who were assigned to another tent. These four men were the most physical active people that I met in the service. I thought there was something wrong with them. Once they got out of the sack in the morning they were moving constantly. They practically double-timed every where they went. They were all good sport competitors, in all sports. Each one of them was as tough as nails. They each had a good sense of humor and weve f to be around. When I told them my first choice for the Service had been to bea paratrooper, I became their friend for

life. I really did ask for the para-troops when I was drafted. I had some kind of knee disability and was turned down. Each one of them, during our stay at this camp, asked me if I would consider returning to their 11th Air borne instead of going back to the First Cavalry. They were serious. That is how good a friendship we developed. Some of the stories they told about the war were priceless. One day they were talking about their "Jump" on Corregidor Island. The Commander talked it up big. It was historic. We could re-pay the Japs for what they had done to our men earlier in the war. It was going to be a feather in the cap of every man in the 11th We were set to land and "bust our butts" taking that island. The trouble was the area they were told to land on was near the beach. The wind changed. Many of them landed in the ocean and had to be dragged out of the water by navy men — in barges. By the time all the men who landed in the ocean were picked up and the barge made it to the beach the invasion had ended. One of the most important "Jumps" they could have made and they missed the island. My four friends from the 11th all missed the island.

One of the four para troopers pointed toward one of the other men and said, "Jim, tell him about your four hour delay." Jim was a little embarassed as he said "my chute got stuck in a jungle area and I hung from the trees four hours while a search party looked for me". The other guys laughed so I did not ask any details. There was more to the story. These four men were just what I needed. I felt ready and able when the staff at the Convalescent hospital told me they thought I was going to return to combat. I shook hands and said my good-byes to my four para-trooper friends — the last thing they were telling me was that they still wanted me to go back with them to their out fit. They assured me I would fit right in. Jim said "we could show you all the tricks of making parachute jumps in no time at all — no one would know the difference". I always believed that men in the para troops were different. Before I met these four men I thought they were rude, mouthy, pushy and they all felt they were better than any other person. I was wrong. Here were four of the most thought ful, concerned, helpful and most friendly people

I had met in my life time. They made that time in the Convalescent Hospital fly.

I was now on my journey back to Luzon and front line combat. I thought sure they would put me on a ship that went direct to Luzon. N.G. the move was more gradual. I was taken by jeep along with three other men, to yet another camp on Leyte Island. This was called a Casual Camp. This camp's purpose was to house soldiers coming back from the front lines to rest up a few day and for men who had been to the hospital and were on their way back to combat, too. You were assigned a cot, under a squad tent, and had three meals a day until transportation became available to take you where you were heading. Some times the delay was a day. Some times it was weeks. It all depended on what ships or planes were available and what direction they were heading. It was not the greatest place to stay but it did serve a purpose. You did nothing but wait for orders. If you left the camp to go to a movie down the road, you had to sign out and sign in.

On May 12th, I was given an issue of clothing and all new combat equipment and gear I received this "new" issue because I had had all my clothing burned when I entered the first hospital. I boarded a 'duck' which took me out to an A.P.A. boat. This boat was heading for Luzon. I was not alone. There were about 8-10 other men on the ship who also were returning to combat up on the front lines. I was assigned to guard the army officers mess hall for the whole trip. My quarters were a bunk in a compartment on "A" deck. I never had to wait in chow line. All Guards ate first. I did nothing on board this ship but eat, sleep, pull guard and over work my imagination wondering how combat would effect me. The trip lasted but a few days. It was very boring.

The A.P.A. ship must have either crawled at a snail pace or sailed to Luzon backwards because it took eight days getting there. It was delayed because we waited a couple of days in the harbor of Leyte and the ship also made two stops on the way. It was probably picking up more men returning to combat. Any way, we did not arrive in Manila until May 22nd. All the men heading toward the front were taken by truck to a camp outside of Manila. It was another Casual Camp. The city of Manila had not been completely taken by our troops when I flew back to Leyte. As I rode in a truck through Manila, it looked very busy. There were trucks moving and hauling in every direction. Manila looked nothing like the last time I saw it while I was standing on a hill on the outskirts of the city. The Japanese were on the run from the Eight Cavalry. They were burning everything they could set a match to.

I stayed one night at the Casual Camp. I was issued some more combat equipment, gear and ammunition. A truck took us part of the way to where our out fit was fighting. An "alligator" hauled us to within 3-5 miles. We walked the rest of the way. At this time my 7th Cavalry was in the lower mountains in the southern part of Luzon. I do not know exactly where it was or what it might be near. It was good to see the old guys. To me, they all looked exhausted Most of the men I went into combat with were gone. I had to make many, many new friends. The first night of combat it rained hard. What a welcome. Every thing seemed to fall into place. I slept all right. The Jap mortars that exploded startled me a little. I soon got accustomed to it. I wondered how my body and mind would react. I felt everything was going to be O.K. I

realized everything was getting back to normal when Lieutenant Joke passed by my foxhole and said, "Oh—you back My new foxhole buddy snored. He was a very, very nervous young man but he knew the machine gun well. We became friends very soon.

They wasted no time breaking me in again. The second day back I was sent out on patrol. We no sooner got out of camp and we had to cross a river that was neck high at the center. I lost my footing and almost dropped the tripod of the machine gun in the muddy river. We crossed the river and moved about a half mile down the bank, when we entered a coconut grove we were almost ambushed. Jap snipers were waiting for us. Luckily, as soon as we approached the spot they planned to ambush us our point man sensed trouble. He had been our point man a number of times. He claims he could "smell the enemy" when they were around. He was so good at the "point", he was given this job on all dangerous patrols. The guys name was "White Bear". I have mentioned him before. He has no other name but White Bear as far as I know. He was full blooded Indian. He was huge. On partol, all he did was point. He never spoke. When White-Bear stopped Every guy down the line, behind him, stopped. If he took cover behind a coconut tree, everyone down the line took cover. If he had his M-1 sights on a Jap sniper, that Jap was dead. This day. when he sensed trouble and we almost got ambushed, white Bear stepped behind a tree next to the path and pointed out snipers to all the guys on the patrol. On a given signal each man fired at the sniper White Bear pointed out for him. With in minutes the Jap ambush was done and over. Let me tell you, this man was not one to have fighting against you. When he got drunk it was best for you if you did not

speak to him. I once saw this man pick up a good sized man lift him up over his head and throw him almost all of the way across a squad tent after having had a few drinks, some what like the way pro-wrestlers do in a ring. The reason White Bear did this was because a soldier rudely slapped his little five foot, one-inch buddy. His little friend was the only man in the outfit that could talk back to white Bear. One day, before I realized this little guy was a great friend to white Bear I heard him say, "now, big man, you sit your butt down and shut up till Willie says you can talk". I waited for White Bear to tear his arm off and slap him across the face with it. Instead, White Bear sat down, pouted, and shut up. It was at that point I realized you do not— I repeat— do not cross little Willie in any way. Personally, I only spoke to White Bear when I had to. When I did speak to him I always said nice things about him. If I spoke to Willie, it was always in a friendly, complimentary manner. You might recall the day we invaded the Admivality Islands, White Bear saved me from being crushed to death when I slipped between the barge and the navy cruiser We were loading into. This man swooped me up with one arm and dumped me into the barge. At the time I had a receiver on my shoulder, two boxes of machine gun ammunition, full field pack, a 45 automatic and a belt full of ammunition. What did I think of White Bear? He was one of my heroes.

After White Bear saved the day for us again, (I say again only because he had done it numbers of times before) the rest of that second day went OK until early that night when we returned from the patrol. We met a little Jap resistance late in the afternoon but not anything we could not handle. The worst thing that happened to me was the bee hive I walked in to. Just about 50 yards from where we were bivouaced, I walked through some brush. The bees did not take kindly to me. Boy, those stings were painful. The medics said they had nothing to cure bee stings. One of the medics did locate some alcohol. Another miserable night.

On the third night back up on the front lines, a patrol was sent out. It was beginning to get dark when they returned. It was late enough that each of them was stopped by a guard and asked to identify themselves before they were

allowed inside the perimeter. The Sergeant of the patrol said they ran into resistance just about a mile or so back. One man was lost. They think he was hurt badly. They could not wait for him. After dark the excitement ended. We were all ordered to get into our fox holes for the night, to pull guard. Out of the night came a voice. It came from the direction the patrol had returned from earlier. The voice said, "Can any one hear me?— Im hurt— can some one help me?" One of my close buddies in the next fox hole named Stagman said, "Denny, is that you?" There was a weak, "yes, Stagman, its me." "You know Denny, before I can come and get you —— you have to answer a question for me. It has to be right." Stagman continued, "When our Regiment Softball team needs a pitcher to go into a tough situation, Who do we call upon?" Without hesitation Denny said, "Ortega, who else?" That was the answer stagman wanted to hear. Everyone in the Regiment down the line laughed when Denny gave his answer. In the pitch dark, Stagman Stood up yelled to all the guys on the perimeter, to hold their fire Im going Out to get Denny He's hurt." Stagman searched the area trying to locate Denny. We could hear them talking. Denny said, "I got shot in the shoulder." Stag - man picked him up and brought him into the perimeter piggy - back style. A medic came over and went to work on Denny in the dark. I think the thing that Stagman did was an act that took 'guts'. When someone suggested that Stagman be turned in for a medal. Stagman laughed and said, "dont be stupid. That was my buddy Denny out there. He could have died." The only guys who Knew it was stagman that went out to bring Denny in were the older men in the out fit. They recognized. his voice. I only knew this soldier

as stagman. He never mentioned his first name. We played softball on the Regiment team, during rest periods. I am proud to say he was one of my best army friends.

After returning from my long stay in the many hospitals and casual camps, combat only lasted for about one month The few Japs left fighting in Luzon were not giving up, that's for sure, but our Division Commander must have been informed that the "all out" effort by our troops was not necessary. For some reason about the middle of June in 1945, the 'mop up' partols were called off. American forces were still sending out patrols in certain parts of Luzon, but it seemed that general "over all" combat was coming to an end. The good news sent to us was that combat was over for us, at least for the present time. When the orders came for us to leave the mountain area where we had been fighting, we wasted no time. We marched out of those mountains and did not look back. When we arrived at a wide river some 5-6 miles away, there were enough ducks waiting to haul the whole Regiment away. We followed the river till we reached a point where a convey of army trucks were waiting for us. As we loaded into the trucks, we were told we would be taken to a rest camp. Again, "Rest Camp" was like music to my ears. I had a feeling this was not only going to be the end of the battle in Luzon but for some reason I had a "gut" feeling the country of Japan was nearing the end of it's trail. I am sure a lot of what I felt was fear and false hope. If this war did not end soon, I knew the First Cavalry was going to be one of the Divisions that would be selected to make the initial landing in Japan. To make a beach head on the main land of Japan would be suicide. I was hoping for some kind of a miracle. I was hoping somehow the war would end before the decision to invade Japan had to be made.

We arrived at a camp site. I have no idea where this site was located. I only know it was in-land, away from the coast. When we arrived, there were squad tents standing for our use. There were a few larger tents as well. I imagined they were going to be used for the kitchen, mess hall and storage.

All of these tents were put up and the camp site was partly cleaned out by Filipino labor. After we unpacked and had rested a couple of days, we began the task of improving the camp to the satisfaction of our honorable 'mr. Clean' commander. He insisted everything be just so-so. He not only insisted everything be neat, clean and military but he wanted it all done yesterday. I thought maybe combat had changed him — no luck. We improved the mess hall, supply kitchen, recreation room, officers quarters and the troop street. We cleaned up an area to make a ball diamond and — we built a parade grounds. We had not been out of combat for one month and already we had a parade grounds. I wondered what the hell we were doing — building a parade grounds. I soon found out. In a very short time we were put on strict military disciplinal orders. It was just like Camp Roberts basic training all over again. We had to "sir" all officers and salute them. There were a "zillion" inspections daily. We did close order drill on the newly prepared parade grounds. Our clothing was cleaned daily. We had to shave each morning. We fell out for reveille and retreat. The inspections were held daily. This camp turned out to be the most classy rest area we had ever built. The food we were served went from average to very good. The out door movies were almost the newest releases. If you went to the P.X., you could actually get things you wanted and without waiting in a long line. We had one day off during the week plus Sunday even though we could not go any place. With all of these new changes I honestly felt our commander had 'flipped'.

This regular army regulation crap was really getting to most of us, especially me. One night, one of the guys who worked in the kitchen supply room as a helper was assigned a jeep to go to a near-by town to pick up some supplies. He was told to take two other men with him to help. I was asked to go along. I knew the planned to do some drinking while they were in town. I told them I had no money to spend. One of them said "We didn't ask if you had money, dummy. We asked if you wanted to go to town." I went to town. That was a big mistake. I was not a drinker but they bought me some drinks. It did not take much, but boy did I ever get intoxicated. When we returned to camp the outdoor movie was on. I went to it. The screen was about 30 feet by

40 feet square. I was sitting in the third row and could not make out who the well known movie actors were. I went over to lay down in my bunk. My bunk kept spinning around about 100 miles an hour. I threw up a few times. This getting intoxicated by a man who was recovering from dysentery, was not a brillant move to make. The men I went into town with told me I wanted to drink to each of my friends that had died in combat but I only made it to four before I could drink no more. Next morning when we fell out for reveille, I must have looked a mess. The men in ranks later told me my shoes were un-tied, my shirt was buttoned wrong, my pants sagged and my fatigue hat covered my ears. When the Sergeant stepped in front of me preceeding the inspection of the commander, he looked, he smiled and asked, "what in hell is this?". He told Fritz to get me back to my tent before the Captain saw me. This whole thing turned out to be a good lessen to me. I wanted to go into town. and was hoping the guys who took me to town would get me a runk. I was feeling sorry for my self. It was a selfish, foolish thing to do. I never did that again.

Things started to get worse. we not only had to follow the regular army basic training routine but we had to participate in a physical training program, too. Every morning with out fail, we did calisthenics. We were awakened at 4:00 A.M. we did at least a 5 mile march which ended in double time. We attended gas mask classes and had training films presented each day. IT REALLY GOT SERIOUS! The whole Regiment was hauled by truck to a beach somewhere in Luzon. We all loaded into APA boats. For ten days, we made dry run practice landings. We did the exact same thing each day. The

area where we practiced the dry run landings was a military secret. Each day after we loaded on to the APA boats, we loaded into barges from the rope ladders of the APA boats, hit the beach and went through three imaginary objective landing proceedures which took us 3-4 miles in-land. Here we stopped and waited orders to return to the beach. We marched back to the beach, loaded into barges, rode back to the A.P.A.s, climbed up the rope ladder, back onto the ship and returned to our ship quarters. We knew this routine in our sleep. It was ten miserable, crowded, boring days on board that A.P.A. ship. Again we had to make up things to do to break up the boredom. They had a movie each night. We watched in shifts. That was it. Many of us did a foolish, dangerous stunt while in the harbor to help pass the time away. After supper one evening we dropped a rope ladder down the side of the ship, took off our clothing and dove off the side of the ship. We swam around a little then went over to the rope and climbed back aboard. Every thing stopped when the ships Captain came out a cabin door in time to see one of the soldiers dive over board. We had no idea why he was so upset. We had only been doing this activity for a very short time. Many of us were standing on "A" deck of the ship in the nude. He looked at us. He looked at the guys swimming in the bay and was speechless. It looked like he was going to have a heart attack. Finally, he composed himself. He shouted to the men swimming in the water to get up on board this ship, now! When he got all of the swimmers together he wanted to know if any one was missing. We checked. Every one was present. In a cool, calm voice he said "how long have you been diving over-board and swimming like this?". We told him less than an hour. He said "All of you are lucky — very lucky — this entire harbor is infested — I mean crowded.... with sharks." Now that was scary. I dove over the side of that ship no less than five times. I was in the water at least half an hour. Needless to say, we removed this swimming recreational period from our "what shall we do to break up the boredom" agenda.

We were all sure that one day soon this ship would head for Japan. The landing we would make

would no longer be a dry-run. The ship radio had the news each night. The last few days the news sounded encouraging. At other times it sounded discouraging. If we had to make a beach head it would be a blood bath on the beaches of Japan.

On the 10th day of our dry run practices we were going through our routine maneuvers. One of our three objectives was a road about two miles in land. We were to take this road and hold it till reinforcements could arrive. When the reinforcements came we were to move on. When we arrived at this road we noticed an American Jeep coming down the road toward us. This was not a part of the invasion plan. Something had gone wrong. As the Jeep came closer we noticed someone waving a white cloth and shouting. When the vehicle got close enough we could see it was a general waving his handkerchief. He told us all to gather around him he had something very important to tell us. He asked, "What is the one thing each of you would like to hear the very most — right now — this very moment?". One soldier said "If you are speaking to me, I would like to hear that Japan has surrendered — or, something like that." The general said "your right — they just did." There was a moment of pure silence. One guy said, "Did I hear you right — You ain't putting us on, are you — cause if you are, that ain't funny." The general smiled and said, "No — it's over." Every one in the group went slightly crazy. We did not return to the APA. ship but met trucks at the beach. They took us back to camp. I was so excited and happy I could not sleep. I must have thanked God a hundred times during that truck ride back to camp.

We stayed at our camp in Luzon waiting for the United States and Japan to work

our the Surrender terms We had been told earlier tha one way or another the First Cavalry Division would be one of the first combat units to enter the country of Japan, if not the very first Division. Thank God it would be as an occupational Division. While we awaited our orders I was called into the Captain's tent. The captain and I had been together through two years of combat, less the time I spent in the hospital. I felt he was a good commander. He was fair and he usually would take time to listen if you had a complaint. There were a few times I did not agree with his orders but I always followed them the best I could regardless of how I felt about them. On this day he said some thing that I never thought I would hear. He said, "Foss, you are now a Corporal." He was dead serious. I asked him if he was trying to be funny. I said, "Sir, you know no one would take me seriously. I take orders. I dont give them. In fact, I would have to refuse giving them. I would almost rather die than have to give an order that might cause some one injury or death. You have been fair to me sir. I know you mean well, but you have the wrong man. You probably feel you owe me some kind of promotion because of my combat record. You owe me nothing. Im sorry sir, I would not, be a non-com for any reason." When I said this the vains stuck out in his neck and his face almost busted. He said, "I can have you court-martialed, you know." I said to him, "You could do as you please, but you know I am not refusing your order out of disrespect." He did not court marshall me. He did say he was disappointed in me. He told me I was the only soldier he knew of that turned down a promotion. Little did he realize how many times I did give orders but only to those who asked who had much less experience. Actually, they were not orders. I gave honest helpful suggestions and recommendations along with explanations, that could either be followed or ignored.

The day arrived when we loaded into large army trucks and drove to a harbor near Manila. We loaded on to APA ships and headed for the Islands of Japan. This was the trip we were all waiting for. Japan had accepted the allies surrender terms. It was now some time after August 14, 1945.

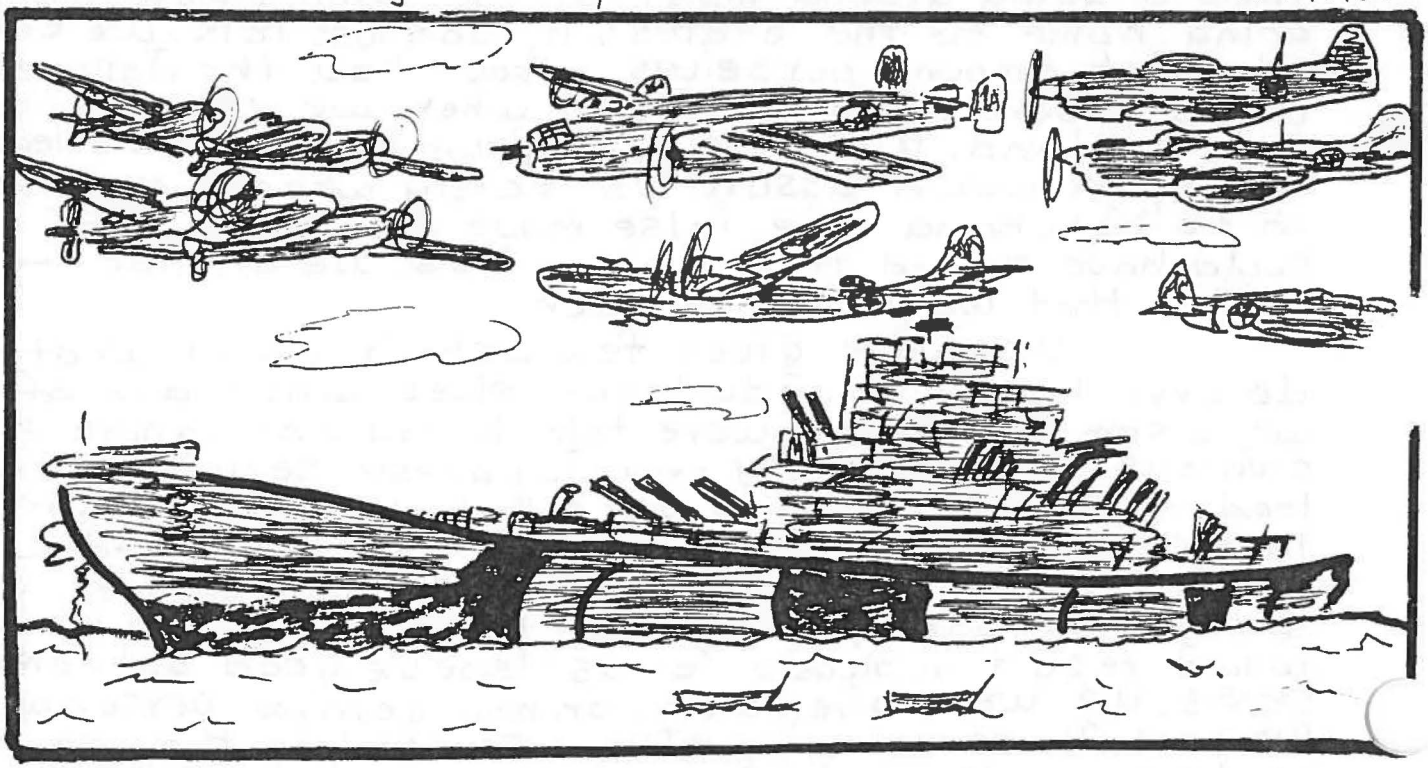
CHAPTER IX
JAPAN

The convoy of ships going to Japan seemed very small. There were maybe 3-4 troop ships and possibly 4-5 navy, escort ships. I, for one, was a little leery. I felt we should have been heading into Japan at this time, especially, with a large, impressive army and a number of navy ships. Our leaders had other plans. My buddies and I got to wondering if we were being used as guinea pigs to test the sincerity of Japan's agreement for surrender. This trip actually seemed the same as all of the others. It was different in that it could possibly be the last trip we had to make into enemy territory. The quarters were crowded. The food was average or below; we did all of our routine chores. There was lots of talk and a great many rumors going around. Most of the rumors were about going home to the 'States'. It was just talk. We chatted a lot, amoung ourselves about how the Japanese civilians were going to react when we stepped upon their homeland. We were all promised that the leader of Japan would assure us safety when we walked in to Yokohoma. One false move by any one of us could have ended it for all of us. We all had to believe that would not happen.

We were given few details about what to do and how to conduct ourselves when and after we disembarked. We were told to try and ignore the civilians and especially any Japanese servicemen. Our leaders said we would be o.k. if we kept from making 'eye to eye' contact. We were reminded a number of times that we are one division of men in strength compared to their strength of millions. An uprising would result in disaster for us. Please use good old common sense. We were given orders on how to carry our personal weapons. Those carrying rifles strapped to their shoulders would carry the weapon with the barrel pointing downward,

at all times. We were never to make a quick move at any time and we were never, for any reason, to point our weapon in the direction of either a Japanese soldier or civilian. Automatic weapons would remain in their holsters. These instructions were understandable — but — after you have faced the Jap soldier in combat situations for over two years and witnessed unexplainable suicide tactics performed by them, one had to wonder how he would act. Time and again, I watched as the Japanese soldier gave his life without hesitation. If the soldier had been told to die for the emporer, why not the Japanese civilian? I really did not trust them. I was a nervous wreck before the first day of occupation was over. I was almost as tense as when we had made landings back on the islands.

Shortly after our convoy arrived in Tokyo Bay, day light appeared. I was impressed with what I saw. I understood why we did not have a large navy escort from Manila. They were already anchored in Tokyo Bay It looked to me like the entire American Pacific fleet was there. Besides the large number of ships, my eyes feasted on an air force overhead that you had to see it in order to believe it. I had no idea we had an Air Force of this size. Some one reminded me that what I saw was but a very small portion of what our American Air Force

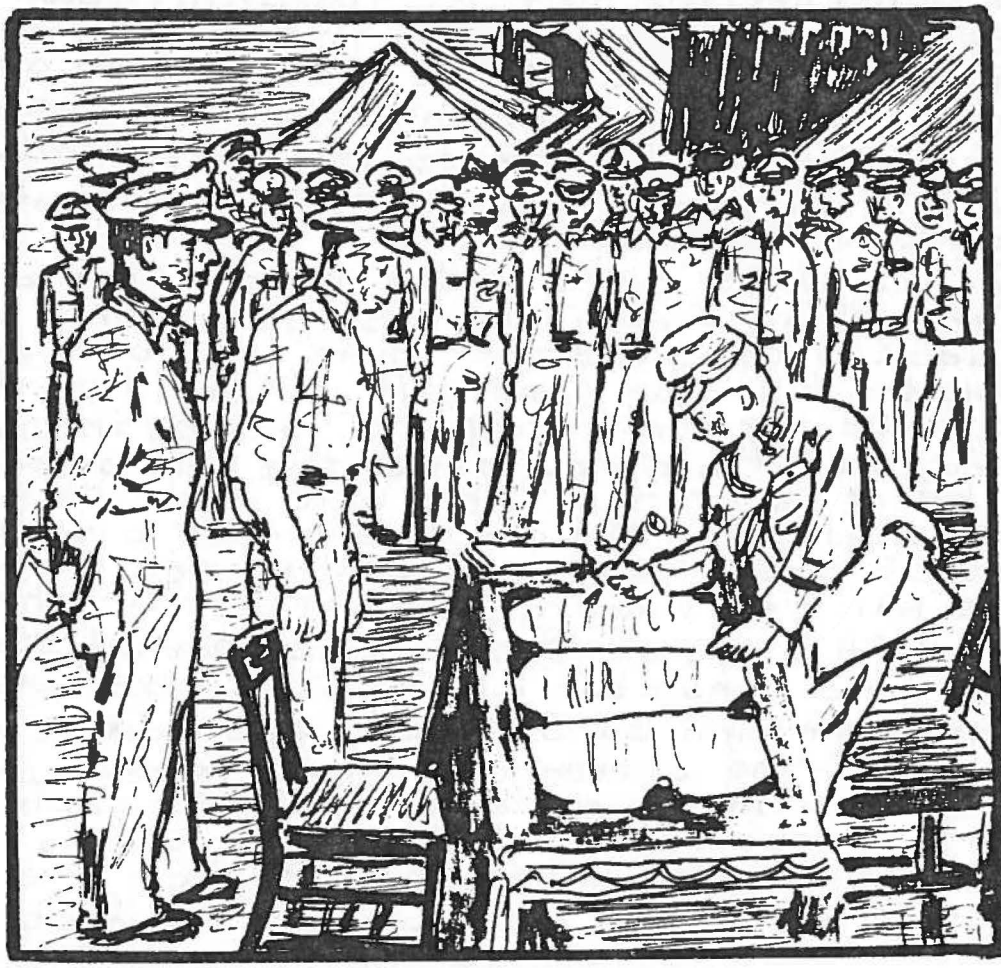


really amounts to. There were many, many more in Europe. I watched planes of all kinds and sizes fly in formations over this bay for two hours straight. They filled the sky as far as you could see to the North, South, East and West. If I had been a Japanese civilian I would have been scared to death. The sight of American Forces had to be impressive to the Japanese. My confidence moved up about 200%.

We had been ordered earlier in the morning to shine our shoes till we could see ourselves in the toe of them. We oiled our helmet liners to make them gleam. Our uniform for the day was clean sun-tans. our personal weapons were cleaned and polished. With all of the spit and polish, one would think it was a special day or something. It was a special day all right. However, one thing was missing In fact, a lot of things were missing. All of my buddies who had lost their lives. If they had been here to see this day, it would have been perfect. The heavy-water cooled machine gun was left behind. It really felt very strange climbing over the side of the ship, down the the rope ladder into waiting barges this time. There was no heavy, heavy equipment packed on our bodies. No one was firing toward the beach. Enemy planes were not strafing or bombing us. What really seemed odd was loading into barges while dressed in sun-tans, polished boots and shining helmet liners.

The only A.P.A. ships in the harbor seemed to be those disembarking First Cavalry soldiers. When we reached the dock it appeared that there was only one division of soldiers that had landed. If it was true it was an honor to be the first troops to land on the homeland of the enemy. I was the third man off of the barge and onto the dock. I heard later that there were some 11th Air borne soldiers waiting on the dock, when we arrived. I am not sure of this. However, I saw no one on the dock that was not First Cavalry while coming in on the barge from the A.P.A. ship, we passed a few partially sunken Jap ships and a number of Jap ships that were afloat that were being repaired by Japanese ship workers. As we passed ships being worked on, the workmen turned their heads to look and stare at us. If looks could kill we would all have been dead. We tried hard to ignore them About one half way to the dock, from the ship where we disembarked, we passed a large American battle ship. At first I did not recognize the name. As I got

closer I could see it was the U.S.S. Missouri. Our barge passed about 25-30 feet away. I was attracted by the large crowd of people on the main deck. There were sailors sitting and hanging from every where on "A" deck. I had no idea what was taking place at the time. As we came closer, I noticed a lot of top rank officers standing around. I pointed up to the main deck of the U.S.S. Missouri as we moved by and said to no one in particular, "look at all the brass up there. There must be something important going on." None of the men in the barge seemed concerned or even impressed in the least. They were probably more concerned about what was going to take place when we landed. Of course, later I discovered that what I was looking at was the historic site where the surrender pact was being signed. Some of the "brass" I referred to was General Douglas MacArthur plus numbers of top rank American Army, Navy, Marine and Air Force officers. The ranking Japanese officer who was sent to sign the pact was General Yoshira Umeza. Incidently, the day was September 2nd, 1945. Forty years later I had the honor of boarding this same U.S.S. Missouri as it lay in dry dock. It had been put out of commissi but visitors were allowed to come aboard and look around. You were only allowed on the main deck. There was a compartment on "A" deck open to the public. On display were a number of photographs showing the surrender of Japan on Septem-ber 2nd, 1945. All of the pictures had been taken of the surrender meeting from high aboue on the mai deck. Two of th photos showed



barges along side the ship and in the back ground. On one of two barges in the back around, it appears that a soldier is pointing up toward "A" deck of the battle ship, U.S.S. Missouri. I cannot say for sure but I honestly believe if that photo was enlarged, it would show that person to be me.] That was a proud day for all of us and a turning point for our country. I played a part in that day. I wanted my children and grandchildren to know that.

All the time we were making our way to the docks in Yokohoma, planes kept filling the sky. They continued to fill the sky over the harbor for a good time after we docked. The first look at the city was depressing. The entire city was demolished except for a few lean-tos and a few buildings that were left partially standing. As we unloaded from the barge, we fell into ranks and marched up the main street that led from the dock. We were halted at a ware house that was about three-fourths destroyed. As we marched I tried not to look at the civilians on either side of the street. It was almost impossible not to peek. Most of them ignored us any way. A few glared. As we passed their religious temples or what was left of them. I noticed each was guarded by a Japanese soldier who watched us closely. Just as we approached on of their temples the Japanese soldier on guard did an about face and bowed his head. It appeared to be a matter of pride. We stopped at the ware house to take a break. As I looked around, I really felt that the civilians were taking things in stride. Few of them ever looked at us. On occasion some one even gave a slight wave. No one caused a scene. I am not sure we would have known how to handle it if they had. I am thankful nothing happened. A strange thing did occur across the street from the ware house while we were taking a break. There was an old Japanese couple standing on the corner watching us. I looked up once to see them tending a pot. They were cooking something. The second time I looked at them, the man walked part way across the street and pointed at me, then to the pot. The old lady pointed to the pot and motioned to me with her hand to come over. We were ordered not to accept anything from them. I shook my head no. The man bowed and returned to where the boiling pot was located. I took this as a friendly gesture to me to come join them.

While we were still taking our break, we ate lunch and checked out the ware house. As I sat eating K-rations I was approached by our new First Sergeant. The old First Sergeant,

Sergeant Ault, was killed the day I went to the hospit
The new first Sergeant was now my good old friend, Staff Ser
geant Claussen. I had not seen Claussen more than twice
since I returned to the outfit from the hospital. He said,
"lets go some place and talk." when, he, approached me in
this manner, I knew he had something important on his
mind. I remember how glad I was when I heard he was
appointed to this important job. He treated me like an
equal the first day I met him even though he was a
non-com and I was a P.F.C. We younger men thought
enough of him to affectionally call him "Pop". He was a
good deal older than all the rest of us. He came right out
and said, "How come you turned down a promotion to be
a corporal?" I told him why and explained it was no
big deal and it was not really important. He said it was
important to him. He said, "You went through this whole
damm war doing every thing asked of you. You almost
lost your mind from fatigue. You came close to dying from
dysentery. Never once did you refuse to carry out an
order in combat. You tell me its not important. You are one
of the few gunners that could take the gun apart and
put it together in the in the dark under stress. Your leader ship
in combat, did not go unnoticed. Your help to those new
Kids that came up as replacements was appricated. Do I
need to give you any more reasons why you should be
promoted—dummy?" "Oh yes," he continued, "You did not
want to be a non-com because you were afraid you
might have to give an order to a private that may
cause him injury or death—is that what I heard?. How
many times did I order you to set up that gun in
combat. Don't you realize every time I told you to fire
that gun you could have caused mortar, artillery or rocket fire
that could have killed you. It was war. I had to do it.
What if I told you that you would get a promotion
and you gave no orders to anyone. All you did was
take orders from me—same as always. I need people
around me I can trust and depend upon. Now, you
take these stripes and shut up! All your buddies want
you to have the promotion. There is not a sole who
would protest....only you!" Actually, I could not get a
word in edge wise. I was speechless after his lecture.
I did manage to say, "I did not know it was so important
to you, Claussen. If I had known you felt this way, I would
never had said "no" to the Captain". After Claussen got
done talking to me, I was a Corporal. I really did not
understand what I was corporal of, but I was a Corporal.
Hell, there is no way I could turn down a man who had

meant as much to me as this man had meant during this war. I felt a little out of place walking around with two stripes on my shirt.

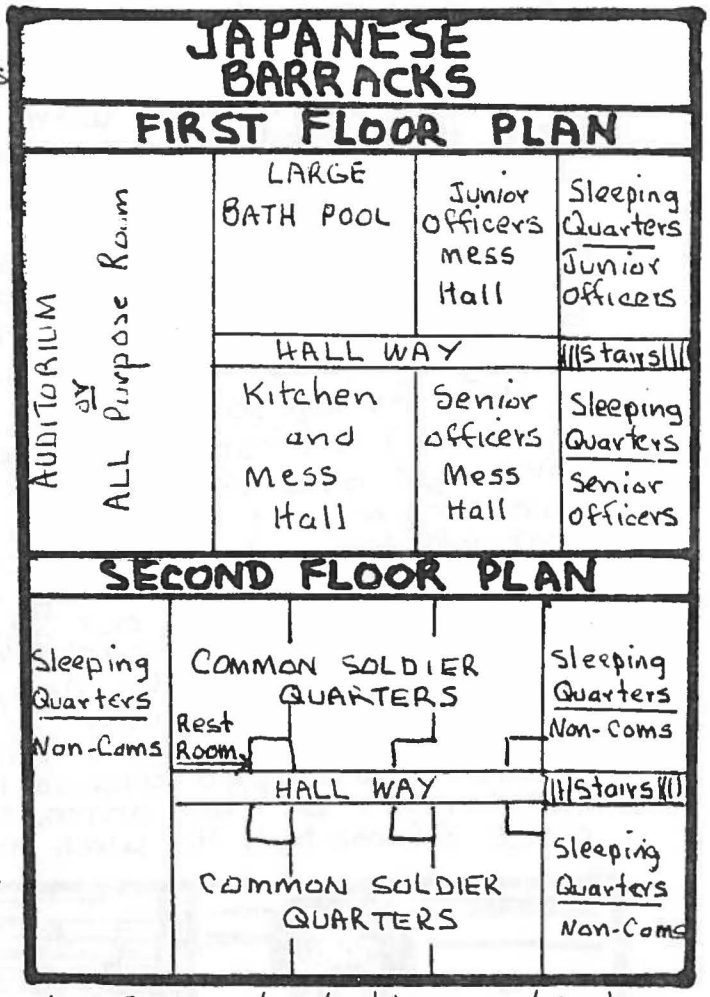
We had orders to pack up and move out of the ware house. A few minutes later we were ordered to unpack again. We spent our first night in Japan sleeping on a cement floor in the ware house located in Yokohoma, Japan.

Our Regiment was up early the second morning of occupation duty. I looked across the street to see the old Japanese couple still there. They waved at me, smiled and gave me the traditional Japanese bow. The officer we sailed to Japan with that briefed us on how to to act in Japan had told us not to show any feelings of friendship toward the enemy. He would have "flipped" if he had seen what was taking place between the old Japanese couple and myself. As time passed, more and more soldiers were making eye to eye contact with the Japanese civilians. The comments made by the soldiers as a result of this contact seemed to be more positive than nagative, that is, a great many of the civilians were bowing and waving rather than frowning and glaring. At least the bowing and waving appeared to be a big step in the right direction. I will admit it felt strange coming face to face with the enemy you were trained to kill, and then suddenly you were ordered not to do any thing at all to them. I lost many, many buddies to the fighting soldiers of Japan. As I looked into the faces of the very young and very old Japanese civilians, I could not help but think they lost many, many buddies and probably a large number of loved ones, too. It is not easy to forgive and forget when the loss is in human lives I'm sure many of the people I saw during those two days that I spent in that city had nothing to do with what took place on December 7th, 1941. It seemed the average citizen on the streets of Yokohoma and the privates in the U.S. Army were victims of circumstances. circumstances over which they had no control. I do know one thing. The first Jap soldier I killed made me feel very upset emotionally.

Basic training tried to prepare me but I still asked God to forgive me for taking a human life. At the time this happened I had convinced myself that I had to kill or be killed. I also felt concern for my country. If the United States had not defeated Japan and it's Imperialistic system of government, the Japanese would have defeated us and taken over our democratic form of government. I do sincerely believe in the basic principles of democracy. I would rather not live than to live under an Imperalistic ruler. This feeling is not based on what I read in text books during world history classes. My belief is determined by what I witnessed and heard from natives in the islands and Filipino civilians who lived under Japanese rule. I strongly believe I did the right thing fighting against Imperialism. I will be the first one to admit our system of government has many faults but, in my opinion, there is no other governmental system that can even come remotely close to what we have to offer.

About 2:00 P.M. army trucks arrived. We loaded in the trucks and rode off. As the truck I was in moved away my old friends across the street bowed and waved one last time. The truck convoy took us some 20 miles through a lot of rubble and destruction. We stopped at some militarily constructed barracks built on the outskirts of town. As we approoched the camp it resembled one of our own army camps back in the states, but only on the outside of the camp and the outsides of the buildings. The interior of the Japanese barracks were much different. The rooms were much longer in length than ours and divided differently. They had individual and double sleeping rooms instead of a wide open room that held 40-50 bunks like you might see at Camp Roberts. The hall way ran three-fourths the way down the barracks both downstairs and upstairs. The sleeping quarters for the priuates and non-coms were all located on the second floor. The officers quarters were on the first floor. Upstairs, there was a stool with a shower, in what I assume to be a bath room. Every 5th sleeping room had this bathroom. At one end of the hall were stairs that led down to the first floor. The second floor was all sleeping quarters. At one end of the down stairs, sectioned off, appeared to be sleeping quarters for lower ranked Japanese officers, probably the rank of our second Lieutenant.

Across the hall from the Junior ranked officers quarters were the larger, more privately constructed Senior officers quarters. The middle one-third of the down stairs was divided between the barracks, mess hall, and the large (community) bath pool. I say community because every one used it. It looked like a swimming pool, anyway. I guess it was just an oversized bath tub. I heard this pool was used by men, women and children. They all took a bath together. Not just one family at a time but many, many families bath at a time. I would think that might cause some embarassing situations. The last one-third of the down stairs barracks was a large open space. We all agreed it had to be an auditorium or indoor recreational space. An all-purpose room, maybe.



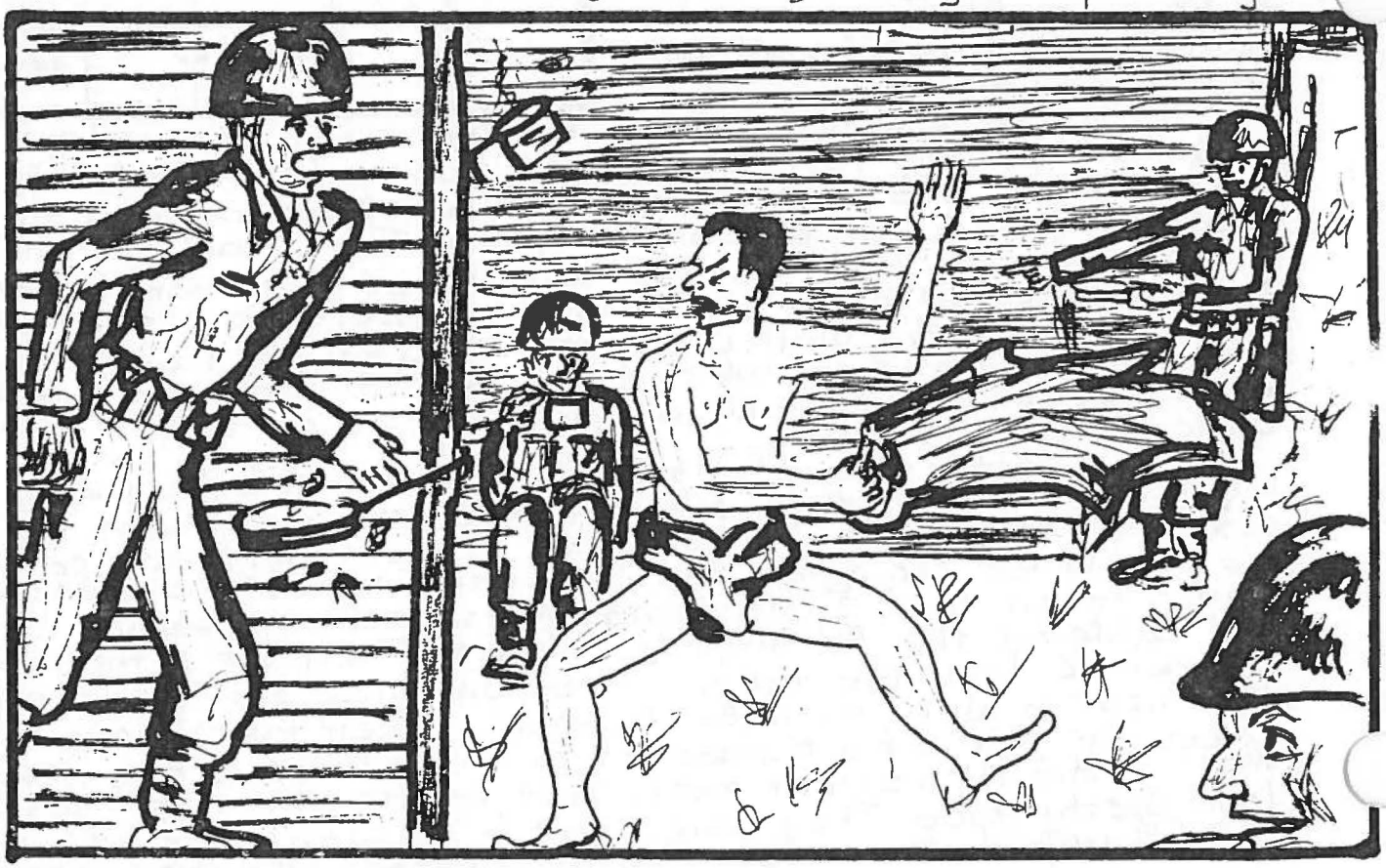
It was interesting to see what they slept on and how they furnished their room. That was easy to learn. Their beds consisted of a straw or hay filled mattress. They slept on the floor. They had no furniture. There was one light in the middle of the room. They had no place to hang clothing. There were no decorations or pictures on the wall. Of course they might have taken every thing with them when they left. Enough was left behind so we could make a good guess at what their barracks life was like.

After we stayed at the camp a few days, we learned that this place was a special training site. An interpreter relayed to our officers that this camp was built for training the Japanese Imperial marines. You might recall that I mentioned these soldiers earlier in the battle for the Admiralty Islands. They were the outfit of men 6 feet and taller. These Japanese soldiers were the most highly honored soldier in their entire armed forces. The men who trained at this camp were given the most difficult assignments. That makes the First Cavalry look pretty good. They were sent in to fight our 5th Cavalry. The 5th wiped them out. The interpreter said this camp served

as a miniature 'west Point' of Japan. It was here that many of Japan's better officers were trained. The interpret did not say if the officers were trained at the same time the Imperial marines were here. This camp did appear to be a top notch camp. The last class of Japanese soldiers did leave the place in tip-top shape when they moved.

When we took over the barracks, some of us got to sleep on mattresses that were left. Most of us slept on the floor. At least it was dry. The Japs had some how cut off the electricity into the barracks. We had brought along our old trusty generator that we had back in New Guinea so we had lights. An unexpected incident occurred the first night. Two different times we heard shots ring out and rick-a-shay throughout the second floor. They came from outside of the building because they crashed through the glass windows. This made it a little challenging and nerve racking to get up and go to the toilet. The following morning we found ourselves eating breakfast outdoors in back of the barracks because the cooks had trouble figuring out how to use the Japanese stoves and ovens.

As we were sitting around eating, another strange incident took place. A Jap man dressed only a cloth wrapped around his waist, came running around the corner of the barracks with a large, sharp edged piece of metal. He was jabbering and yelling loudly. He

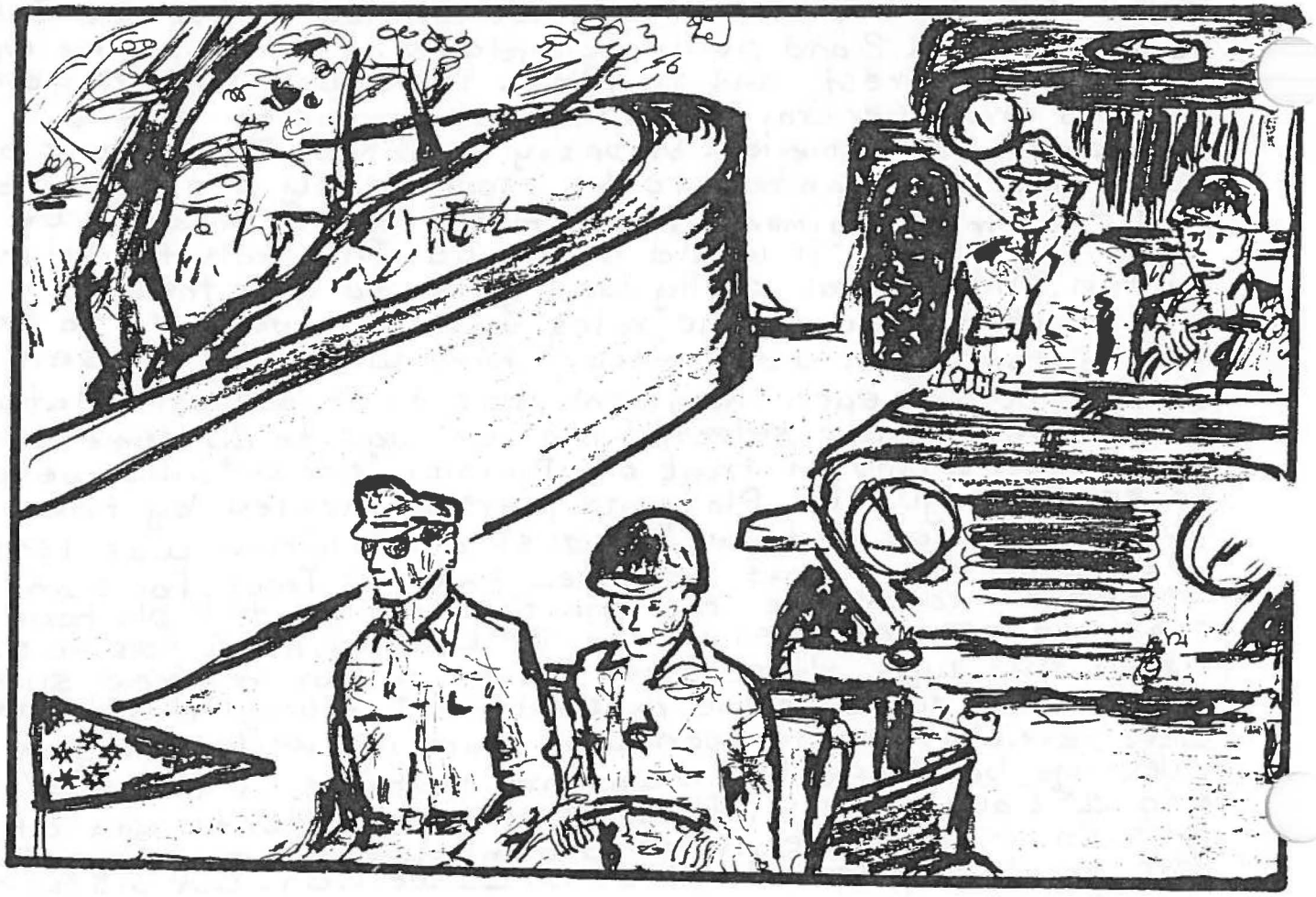


startled every one. He was swinging the sharp piece of metal back and forth. As he approached one of our riflemen the American soldier calmly laid down his mess kit, removed his M-1 that was strapped to his shoulder, stepped back and moved to one side and nonchalantly cold-cocked the Jap on the jaw with the butt of the M-1. The blow knocked the Jap a little goofy but it did not knock him cold. The Jap regained his feet and charged a second G.I. The second soldier did the same thing. He hit the Jap on his jaw with his M-1. Soon a crowd gathered. The Jap was staggering around but still swinging the big piece of metal. Finally, an officer walked over just as the Jap was knocked down for the third time. The American officer pulled out his 45 automatic, held it to the Jap's head and pulled the trigger. No one had any idea why this whole thing happened. There was not supposed to be any Japs around. He must have been the one who fired the shots into the barracks during the night. This Jap must not have been told that the war was over.

While we did not spend a long time at this camp. A lot of the time while there was spent adding our things and changing it the way we wanted it. We did take turns doing K.P. and pulling guard duty. A lot of time was used just to rest and to relax. There was rumors going around that General MacArthur was going to give a speech at the American Embassy in Tokyo. There was also talk that he wanted to be escorted by a platoon of G.I.'s from a Regiment in the First Cavalry Division. We were all hoping it would not be us. The talk turned into action. The General really was going to give the speech. He did want an escort. The rules were set just as to how the platoon that would escort him would be chosen. Each troop of each Regiment was to choose one platoon to compete. That selected platoon was to do some set close order drills in front of Division 'brass' who were to serve as judges. Platoons were eliminated by the judges, one at a time 'till just one platoon was left. Our platoon was selected from "H" Troop. For some unknown reason we out-marched all of the platoons that had been choosen in the 7th Cavalry. All I have to say about this was those other troops in our regiment sure did a sick job of close order drill. I always thought we were terrible. Our platoon was sure we would not win over the best selected marching platoons in the 8th-5th and 12th Cavalry. Our officers became stimulated to win at this point. We were drilled a great deal for two days. To the great surprise of all of us — we won. Our platoon

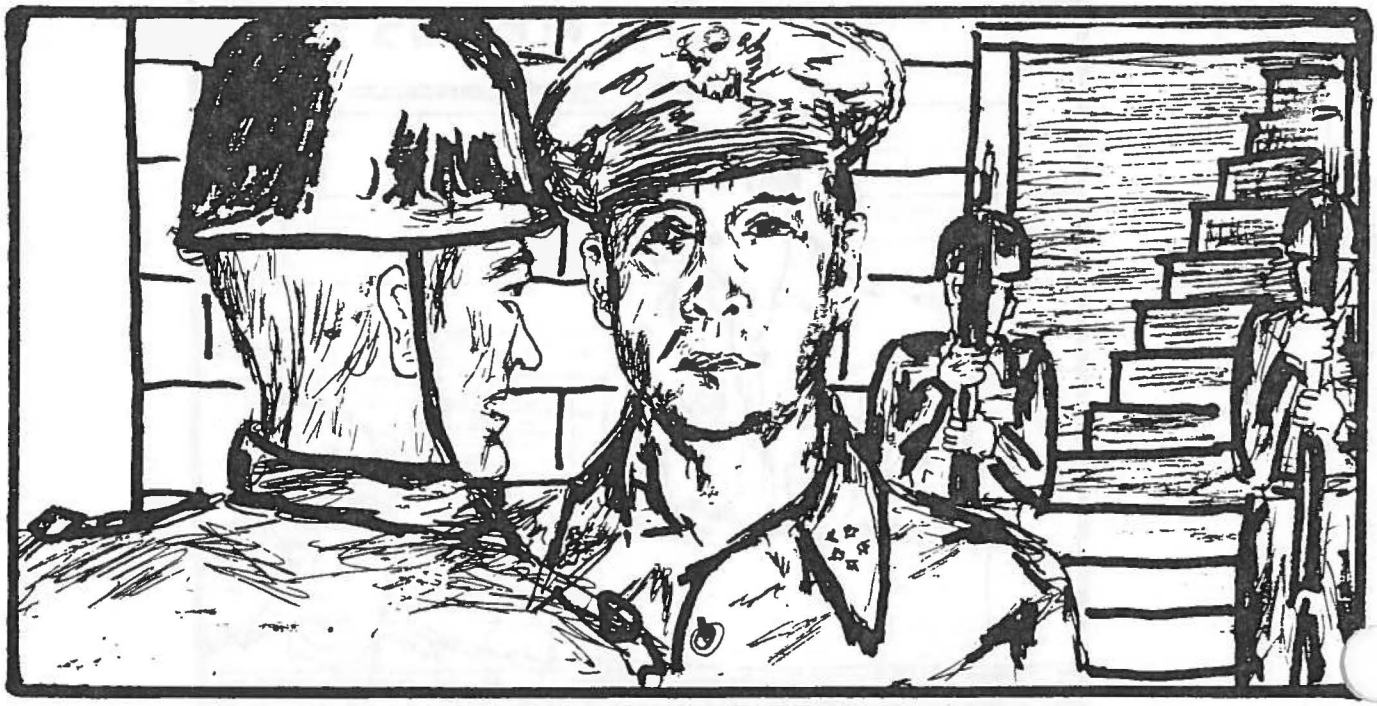
was chosen to escort General Douglas MacArthur into the American Embassy when he presented his "peace speech". After we won, I was not sure I wanted to be a winner. This escort for MacArthur turned out to be an honor guard. This ment spit and polish. Im not all that crazy about this kind of a deal. we were given exact instructions as to how we must dress and how we must act through the whole ordeal. We did not march, wie rode in trucks. Even the trucks were spit and polish. They were newly painted for this occasion. The convoy of trucks holding all the members of the honor guard drove to the Generals head quarters and picked up MacArthur and his staff in their jeeps then drove to the American Embassy with General MacArthur and his staff who led the convoy. It was a short trip. MacArthurs jeep had his 5 star flag on the front fender. As we pulled into the embassy we were called to attention. Imagine sitting in an army truck at attention. I mean this whole deal was strictly military.

The American Embassy surroundings were beautiful decorated with flowers and shrubs as you came into a circled driveway. Around the circle was the embassy



building. In the center of the circled driveway were flower arrangements. It was a mystery to me how this place was left standing after seeing the damage our air force did to the rest of the city. When the trucks stopped, we got out and were quickly assigned spots for guard duty. The spot to which I was assigned was a doorway that led up some steps to the terrace and the platform the General was going to give his speech. General MacArthur and his staff of high rank officers passed in front of us, up stairs and on to a platform. I gave each of them a salute and they each saluted me in return. From the spot I was assigned the vision was poor. I could not see the General. I could only hear what he said. The speech he gave was not very long but it was historic. I heard it later in College and a number of times when I taught the subject World History. The speech was a top news item of the day. It was covered by media news people from 60 countries, including Russia and China communists news papers. We were told that as long as none of the news media bothered or interferred with the proceedings, we were to leave them alone. The news people were all very cooperative. While

the General was delivering his speech, all of us on guard were given an "at ease" order. This allowed us to light up a cigarette and relax as long as we did not leave our post. when he finished his speech, we all almost got caught "off guard". I heard General MacArthur and his staff at the top of the stairs behind me. I looked up to see all of this top brass heading down the stairs. I got nervous and could not think of the correct command which was suppose to be a loud "Attention". I shouted "Jiggers" At this command, all the guards, at ease flipped their cigarettes. All of the troop and regimental officers plus every soldier within hearing range snapped to attention just as the first officer in his staff stepped out the door. MacArthur's staff was followed by MacArthur. We all gave him a rifle salute except the Regimental officer who gave him a hand salute. I was surprised to see the hand salute MacArthur returned to our Commander. I would say he missed his fore head by 10-12 inches. There was no snap in the salute, at all. His salute was nothing at all like we had been taught in basic training. I was told later by a regular army officer why MacArthur saluted so poorly at this time. He had a pain, similar to painter's elbow as a result of saluting so often. He was no 'spring chicken' we must remember. As he saluted our Regimental officer, he said, "This is the happiest day of my life." I heard this as he was standing only three feet away from me.



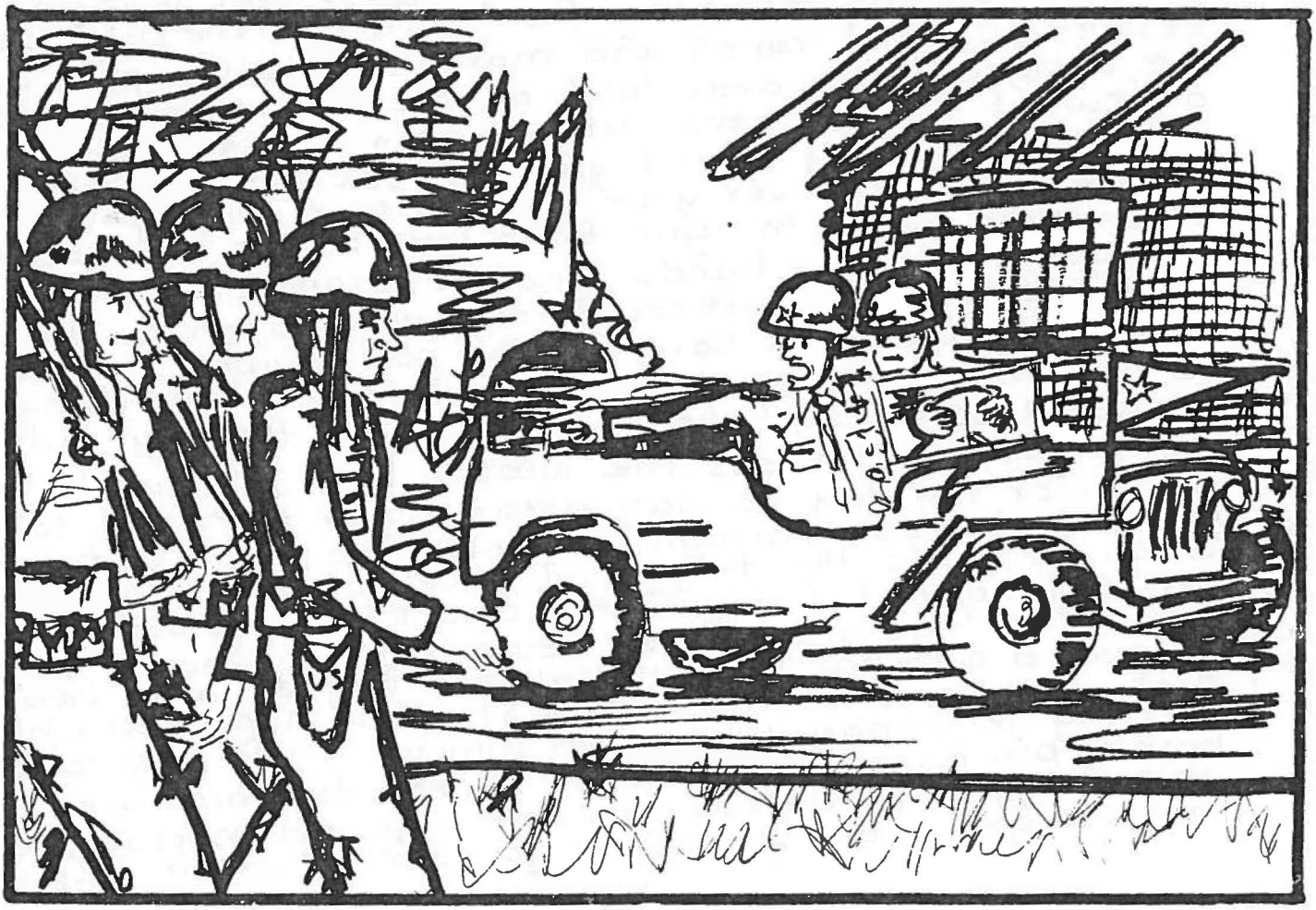
After our Regimental Commander finished speaking to General MacArthur, the General returned to his jeep. He was greeted by a large number of news people. They all wanted to speak at once. He took the news people in order and answered all their questions. This took time. We were allowed to "fall out" from our guard posts. Our officers allowed us to mingle with the news people till it was time to escort MacArthur back to his head quarters. There did not appear to be a newsman in the group that represented the Iowa papers so I was not personally interview as was some of my army buddies who lived in Kansas City, Missouri and Minnesota. One of my close buddies was interviewed and recognized in his local paper. This buddy was one of the men chosen to raise the American flag over the embassy. Our flag had been removed and burned during the war. The newsman from Kansas City took my friends picture standing near the flag, before he raised it. My buddy's Mom sent him the picture and complete story which made the front page. Although I was not interviewed and written up in the Des Moines newspaper for being a part of this historic event, I did accidently end up in the 'news'. When General MacArthur and his staff passed by me to go up the stairs to the platform to give his speech and when he returned by me after he gave his speech. He was on "news camera" all of that time. I was standing at attention in the background near a doorway. The news reel camera must have been on him as he stood in front of me for a long period when he talked to our Regimental Commander. I was aware of the General but I paid little attention to the Cameras. We had a job to do. I did not realize I was in the "news reels" till mom told me. She said, "I know where you are. You are in Toyko. I saw you in the "news" at the theater." We had been busy. Everything was hush-hush. I could not write about what I was doing. She was very proud of me. Actually, she said very little about the accomplishments of MacArthur. In fact, from the sound of that letter you would have thought that they were honoring me for giving the famous speech and the General was standing guard in the back ground. Oh well, moms are like that.

Years later, after I became a junior high school teacher, this scene at the American Embassy came

back to haunt me. One day, during my planning period I was walking down the hall toward the office and I hear a familiar voice speaking from one of the class rooms. It was a voice on a film that was being shown in a world History class. The class was studying about Japan. The teacher of the class was my good friend, Mr. David Miller. I stopped, walked over, stuck my head in the door and excused my self. I asked Mr. Miller if he would mind doing some thing for me. He said, "No" I said, "Mr. Miller would you please stop that film?" He stopped the film. I asked him to back the film up a little. He did that. Now, I said, "run that one part over again until I tell you to stop." Mr. Miller did as I requested. When he stopped the film it showed the General. In the background was a soldier A student took a quick look at the screen and looked at me and said, "Mr. Foss, is that soldier standing behind General MacArthur, you,.... when you were much younger? It sure looks like you." It was me. It was part of that news clip my mom had seen in the movie theater many years earlier. The students in the class and Mr Miller "flipped". Mr: Miller showed it over and over, to the class. I imagine the students were surprised. A teacher ... in a film used to teach wor history! This was not the first time I had seen the news clip I have been trying to get a copy of that film every since I saw it in Mr. Millers class but I have not been successful. I wanted my children and grandchildren to see it. That day was very important to our country and I was a part of it so it had a special meaning to me. Needless to say, the rest of my planning period was spent answering questions to make that lesson more meaningful to those junior high students.

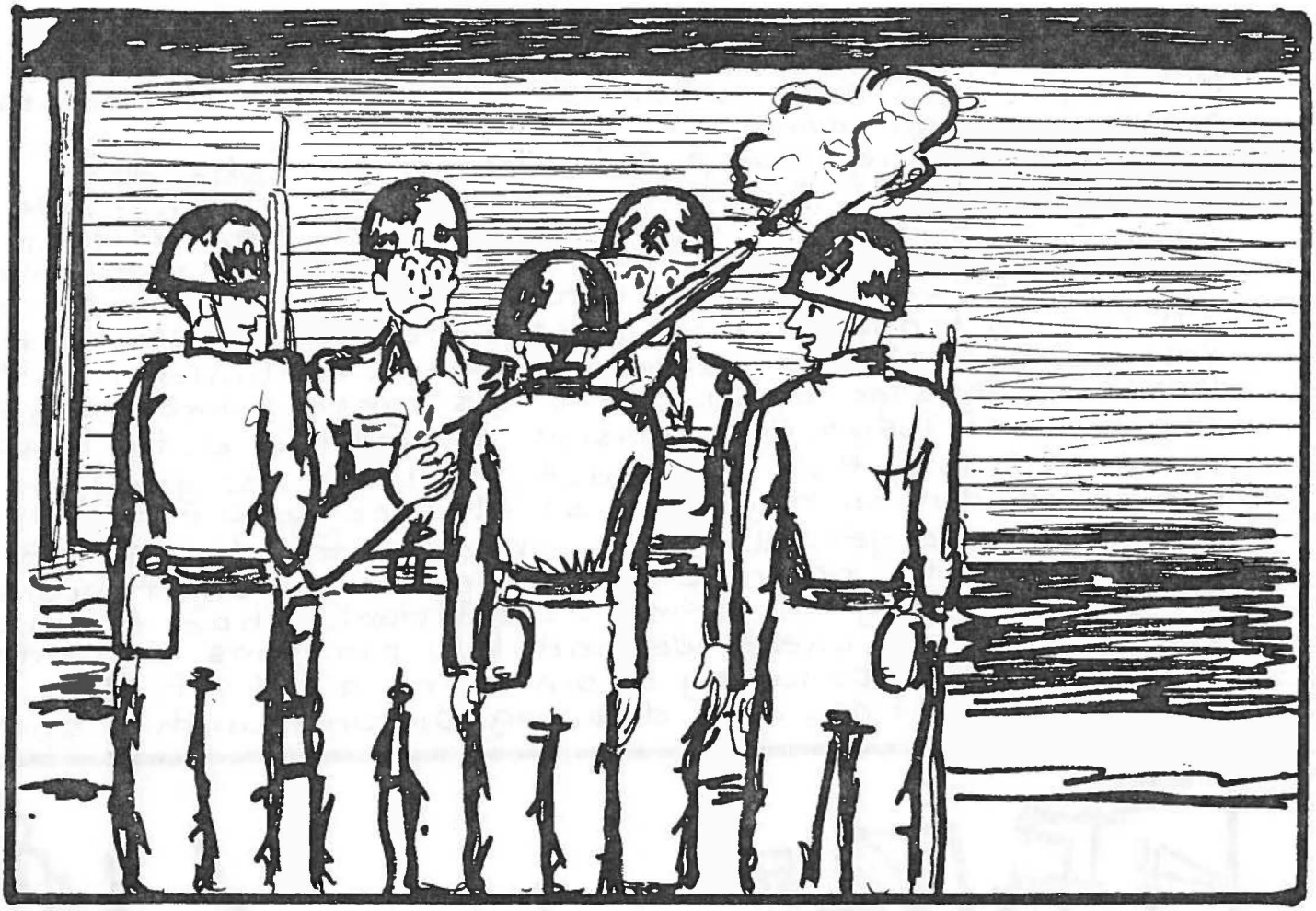
When we won the right to represent our Regiment in the task of escorting General MacArthur to the American Embassy, so he could present his historic speech, I was not looking forward to it. I did not like "spit and polish", nor did I care being around high rank officers for any length of time. Both of these things generally spelled trouble for a "private". Actually, it turned out to be an exciting, memorable experience. After the speech ended and we escorted MacArthur back to his quarters, I thought our job in Toyko was done. Wrong, we were asked to return to pull guard at the Embassy. Corporal Foss was the first non-co to lead a squad that pulled guard at the Embassy following the end of the war. My squad and I stayed

there for three days. Pulling guard. There was something I am glad I only had to do once. It was more formal than escorting MacArthur to the Embassy. When you marched your squad, you marched in cadence both to and from their posts. No one was to be out of step. Once you were posted on guard, you talked to no one. You admitted no one to pass your post without complete identification. The squad I was assigned did great. I screwed up. I was stopped while changing the guard by an unknown Brigador General. He was not in my Division or I would have known who he was. I had the strap of my steel helmet unbuckled. He was in a jeep. He motioned me over to his jeep and proceeded to chew me out for some ten minutes. He wanted to know who the hell I thought I was— a guard at the Embassy and in attire like that— a corporal besides. He went on and on and on. I felt like I had committed a major crime. I stood at attention and said nothing but "yes Sir" and "No Sir" the whole time he yelled at me. That is what he wanted to hear. I am sure he meant well. As he left



I gave him a snappy salute. Under my breath I told hi what a jerk I thought he was. I wonder what this General would have thought about my attire three months ago. At that time, we had not taken a bath or changed our clothing for weeks. He could not have stood the odor. I smelled to high heaven. He might have "thrown up."

After we returned to our barracks, things slowed down a lot. The war was over. None of us had our hearts into what the officers and non-coms had planned for us to do. we just seemed to be biding our time. We seemed to fake through everything except guard duty. The only reason we took guard duty seriously was because we still had doubts about the Japs that were around. most of us did not trust them. We all wanted to live to get back home. Many new recruits were arriving. Some of them had only been in the service a short time. Many of them were very, very nervous. Every once in a while one of them pulled a dumb stunt. It was not intentional — it was just dumb. A classic example was one night during "personal weapon" inspection right before you go on guard. Our personal weapons were inspected by the "Officer of the Day" just before you break ranks and march off to the post you are assigned to guard. Most of the men carry rifles. a few of the gunners carry automatic 45's. When the officer of the day checks your rifle, he steps in front of you, You maneuver your weapon to a given position, the officer snaps the gun from you. Before he snaps the gun from your hands, you are suppose to push back the bolt. The officer holds your weapon so he can look down the barrel. If the bolt is open and there is no shell in the chamber, the officer looking through the barrel, sees day light. The officer of the day pulls the trigger and snaps the weapon back at you. If the officer of the day is day dreaming or does not take the time to look through the barrel, he could be surprised when he pulls the trigger. I have not been in the service long but I have seen and been involved in a number of gun inspections. Never have I seen an officer inspect a personal weapon, pull the trigger and hear that weapon fire. That is just what happened one evening in Japan. when that gun went off you could hear a pin drop for at least 15 seconds. That would never happen — unless you were a scared, nervous, new recruit going on guard for your first time in Japan.

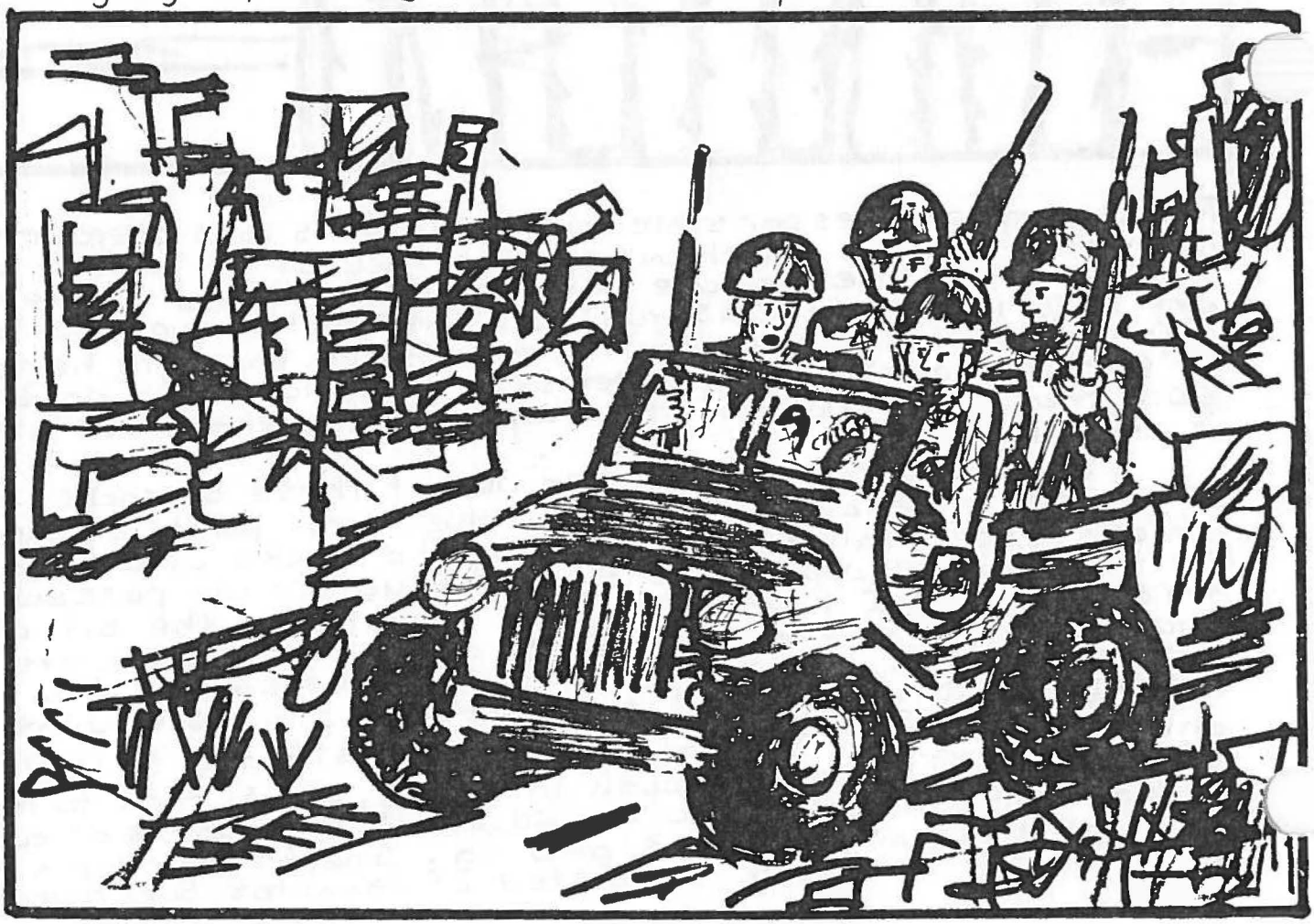


The young kid responsible for doing this was speechless. He left a shell in the chamber. The face of the officer turned "beat red". The private was court martialed - Since no one was injured he was just confined to his quarters for a period. Nothing happened to the officer. I'm sure he got a 'chewing out' by his superiors. I would like to have said that the officer of the day was Lieutenant Jake, but it wasn't.

We were soon moved out of these barracks where the Imperial Marines and the 'west point' of Japan officers once trained. We loaded into trucks and headed toward the opposite end of Tokyo. As we passed through Toyko I had an empty feeling in the pit of my stomach. Damage, rubble, destruction. There are no words that can describe what the bombs that dropped on this area did to whatever structures were once standing, in this city. I would estimate that 95% of the area I drove through in trucks, was flat to the ground. Occasionally, you would see small parts of a building here and there standing. Shelter for the most part, of the survivers consisted of lean-tos. Surprisingly,

life did seem to go on. The Tokyo I got to see was not the same city I saw pictures of back in our world History classes in high school.

The new camp site was an old abandoned commerical air strip located just outside of Tokyo. We were to stay in tents. At this time of the year it just started to get cold. We had been in the hot sweltering heat of the islands for over two years. At night time we all like to froze. With in days after we arrived at this new camp site even before we began to build it to the Captains satistaction, we were assigned guard duty in the city of Tokyo. Our Division shared this duty. It was more M.P. duty than guard duty. I was assigned this job twice during my stay at this camp. We traveled by fours in a jeep. We were on duty four hours, off duty eight. We returned to camp for our eight hours of rest. It really was kind of different. I had trouble trusting any Japanese. We had few problems. We worked with the Tokyo police by again using a lot of sign language, pointing, and drawing pictures with a stick

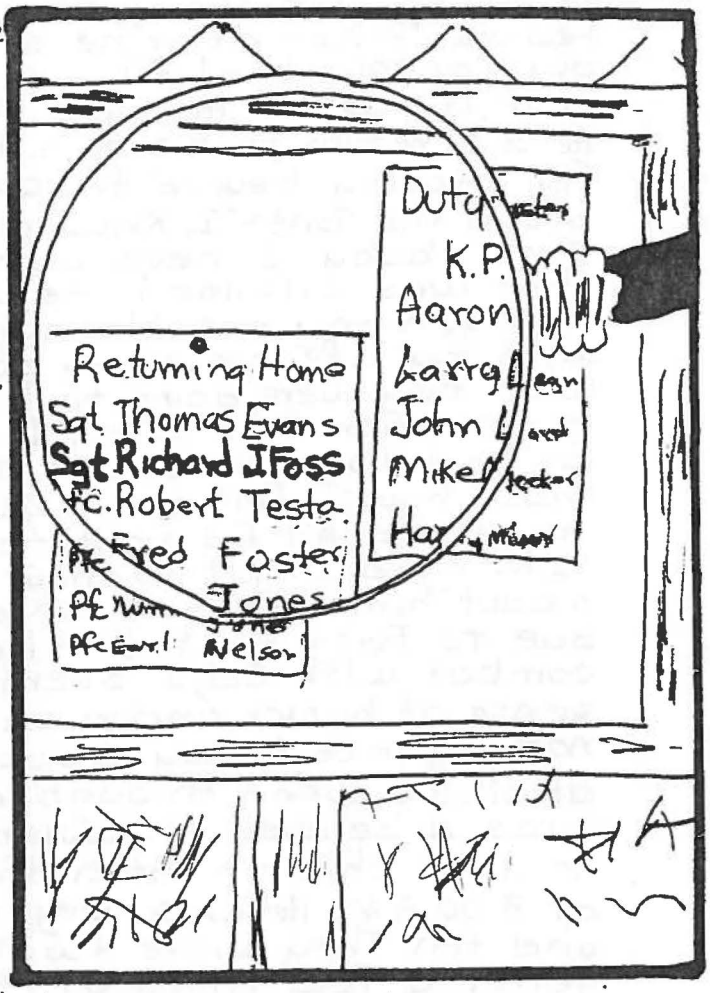


in dirt. I did learn where you could buy Saki. I discovered where the houses of prostitution were located. I guess that is all the Tokyo police felt we were interested in. Tokyo was a large city. We patrolled but a tiny part of it. There was really not much to look at as we rode around in the jeeps. Everything worth while was destroyed.

We did all of the routine jobs expected of us at this camp like K.P., camp guard, inspections, and improving the camp. We did manage to get in a little football now and then. You could get an eight hour pass into Tokyo if you wanted. They would not allow you to go into town alone. Most days at this camp were uneventful. One day, however, as I was on digging detail, which I hated with a passion, I was approached by a real old, tiny, Japanese lady. She had to be at least 90 years old. She was dressed in traditional attire. I noticed she stood off to one side "eyeing" me. For some reason I felt she picked me out of the group. She came back two more days. Each time I looked up she was watching me. She did not walk up to me till

the third day. she stepped up to me, touched my arm an motioned for me to follow her. None of the other guys wer around when this happened. I could not speak Japanese. She could not speak English. From the gestures she made, I could see she was asking for food. I could see in her eyes and frail little body that she was starving. I really wanted to help her but I did not at this time figure how I could. We were all told a "million times" not to ask for food from the mess hall to give to civilians. I made some plans to help her. The plans were not great, mind you, but maybe they would work. I asked my friends to help me. The hard 'dog' biscuits from C-rations and K-rations were usually not eaten by G.I.'s at any time. No one likes them. I asked the guys in my tent to take some and give them to me for two days. They did. Those biscuits, along with about one-half gallon of peanut butter I had in a can in my barracks bag that I had saved since we fought in Luzon, were about to be given to an old, old starving, Japanese woman. God only knows that was not much — it was better than nothing. Next day, the old lady showed up. I showed her how the biscuits and peanut butter could be eaten, and gave them to her. As she walked away I noticed she had tears in both eyes. Two days later she returned. I took her off to one side and explained with gestures and hand motion that I was sorry but I could do no more. She appeared to understand me. She did not wish to take something from me, she wanted to give me something. From under her sleeve she pulled out the most beautiful, ancient, antique object I have ever seen. It was handed to me, handle first. The object was a hari-kari knife. She pointed from her to me. Both sides of the handle were covered with diamonds of all sizes. On each side was two large pearls. The ridge of the handle that divides the handle into two parts, looked like gold. It could have been a fake. I'm sure it was real. She wanted me to take it. I could not accept it. The knife looked too important to give away. It belonged in her family. I probably did a very stupid thing when I shook my head 'no' and made her place the knife back where it came from, in her sleeve. I turned her around, pointed her in the direction she came from. I waved at her. She looked at me with sad eyes, for awhile. She turned and bowed, walked a short distance, stopped, bowed and waved. I never saw her again. I am sure if I took that hari-kari knife I could have sold it for a lot of money. To me it did not seem right. I told

some of my buddies about the old Japanese lady. Some of them called me a jerk for passing up a deal like that. I was told more than once if I did not take that knife some other G.I. would. I just hope it got back safe in that old Japanese womans home where it belonged.



Days became weeks. Each day names were appearing on the "rotation roster." Your name appeared on this roster when you accumulated points according to the number of months you were in the service. More points were added for combat duty. As soon as your name reached the magic number of rotation points, whatever that amount was, your name would appear on a sheet of paper posted on the bullentin board in front of the Captains tent. I stepped out of my tent on the way to the mess hall one after noon, and there it was. SERGEANT RICHARD FOSS under "Soldiers who will be going back to the states within the next few days." I was a little taken by the rank in front of the name. I knew we did not have another Richard Foss in 'H' Troop. I asked the Captain if that was me on the board. He assured me that it was. I asked him why the sergeant in front of my name. He asked me if I intended to give him static about it. I told him No. He told me it was more a token promotion than anything else. He also said I had earned it and he wanted me to arrive in the states with some rank so my girl friend would be impressed. I told him I had no girl friend. He said, "Foss, just shut up and get the hell home." Later, I arrived home as Sergeant Foss. I no more earned that rank than a man in the moon.

I was so excited about going home I could not sleep for two nights. Most of the night before I loaded into the truck that took me to the dock, I spent talking to buddies. I felt I might never see them again and I wanted them to know how much their friendships had meant to me. Most of them had been like brothers. I was greatly concerned about what was going to happen

to my Spanish buddy, Ed Freeman. He was going to be sent to Federal Prison after he returned to the 'states'. I was told by our Captain that Ed would be the last one to be sent home from our outfit. He was the one who went A.W.O.L in combat. He did return on his own. He had earned at least three medals for "bravery beyond the call of duty" probably more. He threw away the ones I know about. Ed was married and had a small baby. I never once witnessed Ed do anything that was criminal. He was my foxhole buddy through many, many terrible nights of combat. I trusted him with my life on many occasions. I did not feel right what they were doing to him. I asked the Captain to re-consider Ed's case. I told the Captain of all the things Ed had done in combat. The Captain told me he understood how I felt but it was out of his hands. I will never forget Ed. All Ed said to me when we shook hands was "I'm glad I got to know you". He told me not to worry about him he would be all right. I hated to say goodbue to Fritz Fasther. The nights I did not spend in combat with Ed, I spent with Fritz. Fritz had a great sense of humor and a wonderful outlook on life. If he had nothing nice to say about you or to you he said nothing at all. We went through a lot together in this war. Fritz was a believer in having a large family. He said that he loved children. After the war ended he called my home at 3:00 A.M. He was very, very excited about babies nine and ten. They were twins. We did get our families together a few times after the war and we had some wonderful times. Unfortunally, Fritz died of cancer just a few years ago. Another buddy I hated to leave was "Mouse". His last name was Sands. Mouse had a first name but I do not recall ever hearing what it was. To me he was always "mouse". Mouse was such a tiny built man I felt sorry for him. I would like to have a dime for every time I had to carry part of his equipment. When combat got its worst that's when Mouse was at his best: Mouse had a lot of "guts". If profanity was removed from the English language Mouse would have been speechless. He got mad at me for one reason or another in combat at least 15 times a day. By the end of the day he had forgotten why. Mouse would have given me the shirt off of his back if I had wanted it. How can you ever forget a man like "Mouse." I really cared about that little character. It was very, very difficult for me to say good-bye to these three men. It was hard to say good-bye to many, many others, too. I shook hands with every one I could that last night and the next morning. I reminded each one of them how important

I felt they were to my survival. I did not shake hands with White Bear. I told him he will always be my number one war hero. He smiled at me and waved.

There is one man I am sorry to say, that I did not hate to leave. This man did not have a good outlook on life as far as I was concerned. He appeared to have no sense of humor. He seemed to gloat when he made someone uncomfortable. He searched for ways to embarass you. He used his authority to pick you apart. In general, he made me miserable. He treated all privates like scum I tried hard to gain his confidence and make him feel needed and wanted. Every attempt to improve our relationship failed — so — I ignored him unless he gave an order. He did not like that kind of treatment either. He seemed to be the most unhappy, miserable human being in the 7th Cavalry. I even said a prayer once asking God to help him change. That did not seem to make a difference, either. Yet, —. this man probably saved my life. He insisted I be taken to the hospital after a battle on a ridge. The doctor at the hospital told me I probably could not have taken much more combat at that time. In spite of the fact that I disliked this officer, Lieutenant Joke, I am grateful for an act of thoughtfulness he did for me. Men like Johnny Baxter, First Sergeant Ault, Johnny Hughes and Captain "Blacky" I will never see again. They all died in action. They will forever remain in my memory. One other friend I must write about is a man who was probably one of my very best buddies. I did not write much about him because he did not stay in combat long. He spent most of his time healing after being shot. He only spent 20 hours in combat during two campaigns. The first campaign he got shot by an automatic weapon after being in combat about 19 hours. He spent most of the time till the next campaign recovering. He recovered in time to make a second beach head. He got shot the second time within a half hour by another Japanese automatic weapon. His name was Earl Nolte. We came overseas after training at Camp Roberts, California. We were buddies in New Guinea. He got wounded in the Admiralties and again in Leyte. He was wounded at least eight times. Today he is a successful businessman in Minneapolis. We see each other on occasion.

The morning the trucks came to pick me up I was "numb" with excitement about going home. I did not eat breakfast. I could hardly contain myself. If I asked once I asked a hundred times of the men around

me, where this ship was heading. My quarters were on the bottom deck, second bunk from the bottom. This was about a foot and a half from the lowest spot on the boat. It was very crowded. Barracks bags hung every where. The sea was rough and things kept falling and sliding to the floor. It seemed like the ship was going up and down while pitching from side to side at the same time. The weather was windy and stormy most of the days we traveled, so we could not go up on the main deck to exercise or get a breath of fresh air. Very few men got sick because they had been in this situation before. It was, however, a little rough going. We had two meals a day. We took turns doing K.P. and other chores. The trip was boring and we did little but rest, relax and talk about home. Of all the men on the ship I only recognized one man from the First Cavalry Division. He was from my regiment. He was a machine gunner from the first platoon in my troop and his name was Bob Testa. He and I came over seas together. He did not take his basic training the same place I did but we did arrive in Australia on the same ship. Bob and I fought in many of the same battles. We did not fight side by side a lot of the times but we did have one memorable, lasting experience together. On the day before I was sent to the hospital in Luzon, You might recall me telling about a Jap human arm flying through the air, after an american demolition squad blew up a Jap machine gun nest. The other man besides me who saw the arm fly in the air and light close by was Bob Testa. It was an experience neither of us will ever forget. Bob was heading for his home in Mount Vernon, New York. His bunk was directly above my bunk. We did a lot of reminiscing about the war during the trip home.

Bob reminded me of a funny incident that I

felt needed to be told about before I end my story. Our troop was assigned to pull guard at the command Headquaters in Tokyo. I understand this was at one time the original home of Tojo and it was known as the Imperial Palace. This is the area that General MacArthur and his staff operated from. During the 24 hour guard we pulled here we were informed that the rules would definately be enforced and in no way would they be altered. No one would be allowed to enter or leave any gate at the Imperial Palace without a pass showing a picture of the person requesting permission to pass and their signature below the pass. In addition to the picture and signature of the person requesting permission to enter, the pass was not authorized until it has the signature of the commander Douglas MacArthur, also. That seemed to be an easy, clear rule to follow.

There were a lot of people who entered and left these grounds in a 24 hour period. Most of them were important and of high rank. We were taken to our gates for guard duty by truck. We pulled four hours on, eight hours off. After every four hours we were returned to camp so we could rest and clean up. During our late night tour of guard duty I noticed a big, big crowd gathering in front of the gate down the road. There appeared to be a number of jeeps coming and going. It sounded like people were shouting at one another. I could neither hear what was happening nor see what the problem was. It was obvious there was some kind of altercation at that gate. I did not discover what happened till shortly after the trucks picked us up from our posts to return us to camp. It seems one of our new P.F.C. recruits got stubborn and insisted upon doing his job <u>exactly</u> as he was ordered to do. The commotion was over a very high ranked officer who wanted into head quaters. This officer did not have a pass. Our new recruit, who was from Tennessee, would not let the officer pass. This Tennessee Soldier even went so far as to click back the bolt of his M-1 and threaten to shoot the officer if he attempted to enter the gate without the proper credentials. Other high rank officers insisted the guard allow this man to pass. The P.F.C. stuck to his guns. GENERAL DOUGLAS MacARTHUR was forced to go get a picture taken, have it pasted on a pass and signed in two places before the recruit would allow him to enter his own quarters. The other guard, at the same

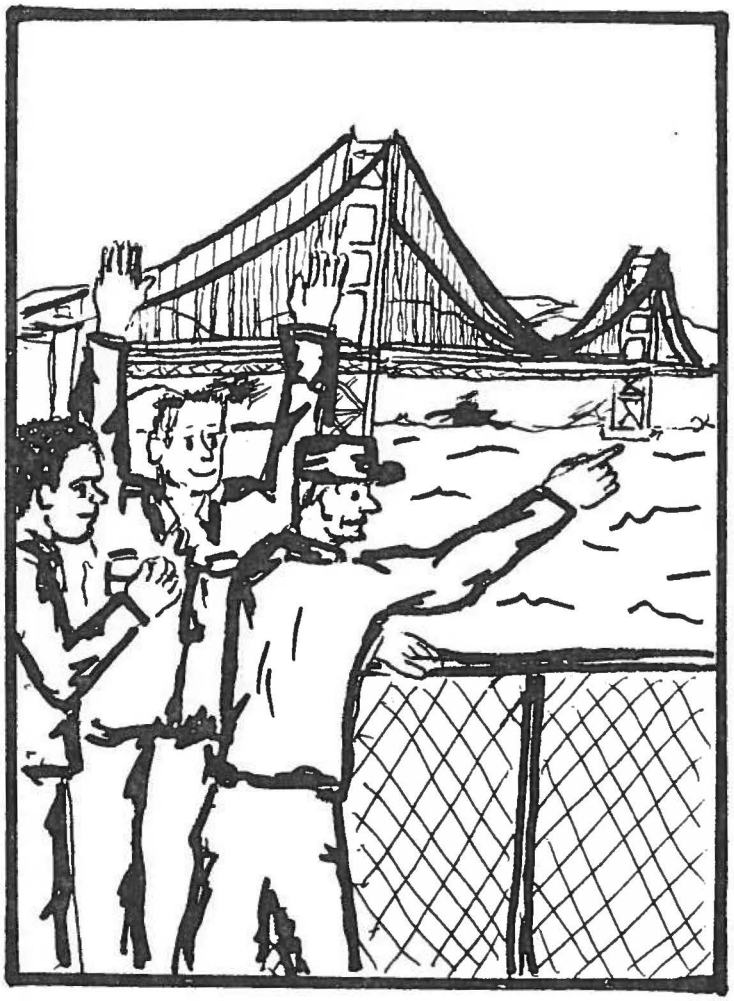
gate with the Tennessee P.F.C, sat in the truck shakin his head. He verified each statement the new recruit made, concerning who the high ranking officer was and just why he did what he did. The whole truck load of guards got concerned about what had happened that night. Usually, when a number of guards are assigned a job and one guy 'screws up', the whole group is reprimanded. On the other hand, if one of the guards does an outstanding performance that in some way is noticed, the entire guard is rewarded. As we rode back toward camp we all wondered which route the Tennessee P.F.C. 'act' would go. It did not take long to find out. The minute we hit camp our Regimental commander was waiting for us. Our Tennessee friend said, "Oh boy, I'm in real trouble, now." The commander motioned us over to him. All he said was, "The General was very impressed with what happened tonight. You will see what I mean tomorrow. Dismissed." I am sure we all stood around looking dumb founded. We sat around for awhile as we drank coffee and talked. We could not decide what the commander ment when he said, "you will see what I mean in the morning"

Next morning on the board out side the Captains tent was a short letter from General MacArthur Headquarters. It said he was pleased with our guard performance. He was proud of us for the way we completely carried out our orders. Actually, it was a letter of commemoration directed to the entire troop. His personal signature was on the bottom of the letter. Our troop commander was gloating all day. Personally, I think we lucked out.

When Bob Testa told me his home was in New York I explained that I had a brother in White Plains, New York. Bob asked me to give him my brothers address and he would give him a call. Most guys say they will do something like this but they just never get around to it. Testa, not only called my brother, Gene, he invited my brother and his wife over for dinner. As a result of this meeting they became good friends. Better yet, when my mom went to New York to visit Gene, Bob Testa invited mom to his house. Mom got to meet Bob's whole family. My mom was more than pleased with this visit. Later on after the war, I visited Bob Testa and his family. Bob was a nice, thoughtful, caring person.

The closer our ship got to the 'states" the more excited I became. I can not begin to describe the thrill I felt when I first saw the Golden Gate bridge. The feeling to sail under the bridge — home — was even a bigger

thrill. The first thing that entered my mind was that night many, many months ago. I sat on the main deck of the A.P.A. ship, called the "Sea Snipe", in the harbor waiting to sail to Australia. I really dreaded that night. If any one told me I would live to see this sight again I would not have believed them. Here I am. The bridge and the long string of warehouses along the sea shore tells me I am HOME. The many ships flying american flags verified that fact. I had to make sure so I asked the guy next to me, "This is San Francisco, isnt it?". He looked at me and said, "for the hundredth time, yes, this is San Francisco." what a great, great, great feeling to be home.



CHAPTER X
BACK HOME AGAIN

Coming home froma war is easy. To explain what it feels like to come home from war, is extremely difficult. The night I sat on the main deck of the A.P.A. ship in San Francisco harbor waiting to be shipped to Australia was like a bad dream. I knew I would soon go into combat. I honestly believed I would never see this country of mine again, once I left it. I did some deep thinking that night. I reasoned that night, my chances of surviving were very slim. There are so many, many ways to die in combat. one wrong move and it is over. Being the awkward, clumsy individual that I am, I could not see how I would possibly make it. I did not want to die. I did feel I was going to die. The funny part about it was, I was not really frightened. In my mind I was preparing for the worst. The greatest fear I felt was for my mom. She depended on me.

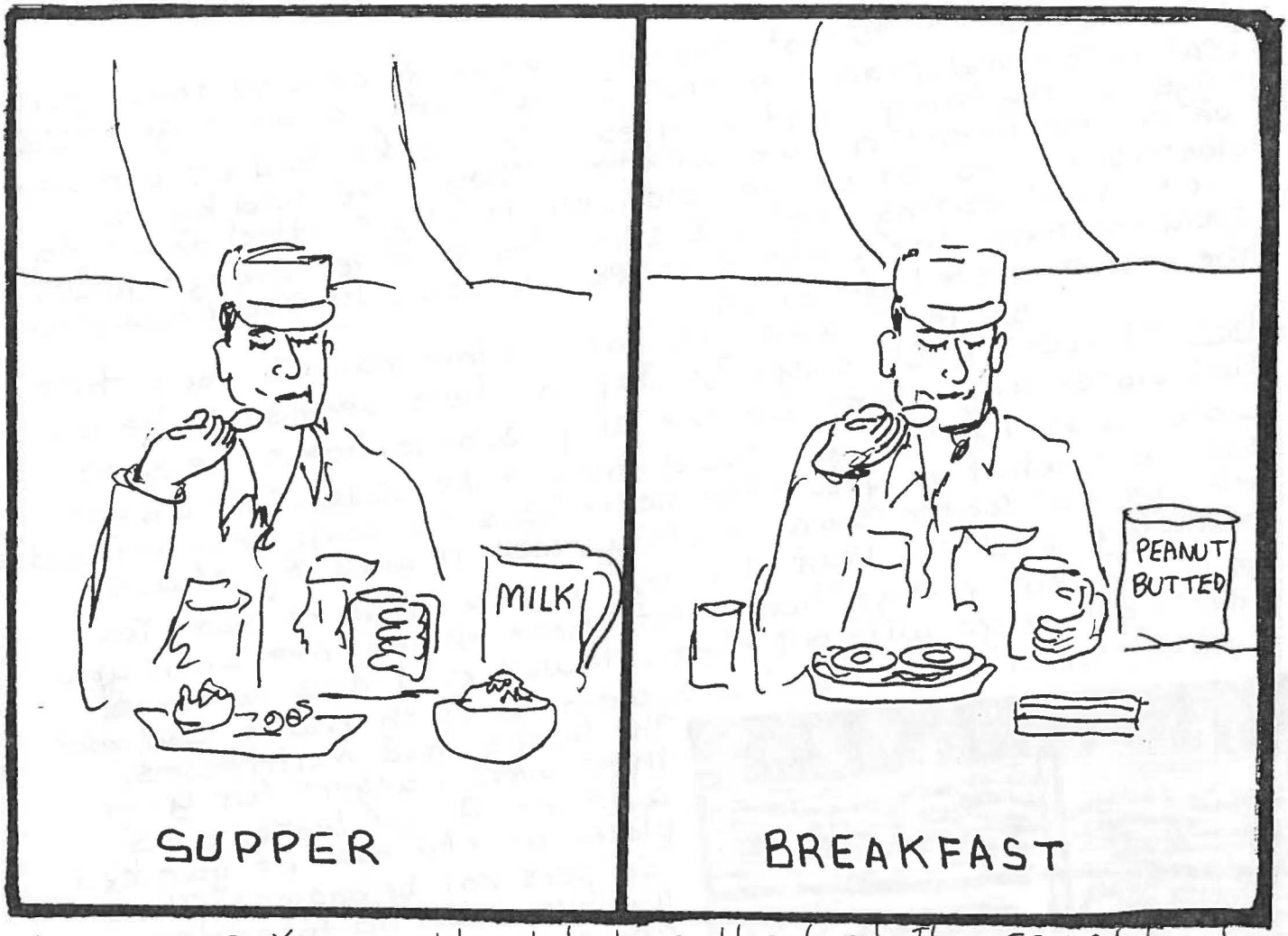
As our ship was heading <u>into</u> San Francisco <u>from</u> Japan, I realized the night mare was behind me. I was elated. I could not really believe what was happening.. someone up There had been watching overme. Arriving home after being in strange countries and fighting in a war, is comparable to being lifted up out of a deep, foul smelling dungeon into a sunshine day filled with mild breezes. All around you is the scent of flowers. I wanted to shout and wave my arms when I first sighted the Golden Gate Bridge. I could not shout. I had a grape fruit sized, super lump in my throat. When I gained my composure I did say, loud enough for those around me to hear, "Have you ever seen anything so neat." Later, I was asked how it felt to be home in these United States. I could only say, "It is a wonderful feeling."

As we came into the bay, I could see the docks, ware houses, and buildings along the shore of San Francisco. As we neared the dock we could see large crowds of civilians. I could hardly wait to disembark. When I walked down the

plank that led to the dock, I hurried. As I reached the dock I dropped my barracks bag. I knelt down on both knees and kissed the ground. Was I happy to be back in American my home, you bet I was. There was an army band playing. There were a number of happy reunions on the dock. As soon as all of us got off the ship we lined up and marched a short distance to a waiting ferry boat. We loaded into the ferry boat and headed toward Camp Stoneman, California. This camp was the last camp we stayed at till we loaded into the ship that took us to Australia. This is the camp I earlier described as a lonesome, dreary looking place. It appeared this way because the barracks were painted brown, there was not a blade of grass to be seen anywhere in the entire camp, it rained "cats and dogs" every day that we were there, and, most of all, it was lonesome and dreary because we realized, when we left this camp we were going to board a ship and sail off into "no-man's land."

The ferry boat trip to Camp Stoneman this trip seemed more appealing than the last visit to camp Stoneman. We were served sandwiches, soda pop and other refreshments it felt nice to be in a ship that was floating peacefully across a bay in this beautiful country. When we arrived at Stoneman, it seemed almost pleasant. The sun was shining. The camp itself still had the same dreary look. The barracks were all painted brown, there were no flowers or grass, but this time it did not feel "lonesome and miserable". You see, we were heading home.

When we arrived, we were assigned our barracks. After we dropped our barrack bags we were told to head for the mess hall. Supper had already been served but the cooks learned we had just arrived from Japan. They stayed late



to serve us. You would not believe the food. They served food to us we had seen very little of for two years. The words "chow hound" came back to my memory. On the top of the list was steak. Do you have any idea how good a steak tastes when you have wanted one and have not been able to have it? (I did have a steak sandwich in combat up in the mountains of Luzon, but I had dysentery so bad that I "threw up"). This steak was out of this world. The cooks told us we could have more than one steak if we so desired. I so desired — I ate three. I do not recall how many glasses of cold <u>fresh</u> milk I drank. I quit counting after four. The vegetables were all <u>fresh</u>. They served of all things for dessert, vanilla ice cream. It was topped with chocolate syrup. I had dreamed of chocolate sundaes no less than 4,000 times while I was overseas. However, I only ate three sundaes. I was full. It was my perfect meal. Next morning — same thing. I returned for <u>fresh</u> orange juice five times. I walked away from breakfast with two hugh California oranges in my pockets besides. I missed oranges a lot. The toast had real butter on it. I asked for peanut butter and

got it. I was so full of fresh orange juice and toast with real butter and peanut butter, I could only down eight fresh eggs. Every thing tasted great. The cooks told us we were welcomed to eat all we wanted. They were told by our doctors not to let us get sick. We finally settled down to our natural eating habits. I still drank three orange juices every morning. The cooks treated us royally. You know, even the water tasted delicious

While I was at camp stoneman, I took three hot showers each day. In Japan there seemed to be no hot water any where. On the ship coming home, because water was limited, you could only take cold, salt water showers. What a great feeling it was to soap your self and let the hot water soak in. How nice it was to shave each day under a light looking into a large mirror. You really do not realize how neat those things are until you have had to go without them. It was even nice to have a stool, toilet paper and a system to flush away bad odor.

The bunks had mattresses. There were hangers for your clothing. A foot locker was placed at the foot of your bed for personal belongings. The luxuries we had forgotten about were many. Again, I must say, it was nice to be back in organized civilization once more.

We did not do much at Camp Stoneman but loaf around and go to the service club. They wasted little time in getting rid of our clothing. I think they burned everything we turned in that we brought from over seas. We were issued complete outfits, all new. Maybe they thought the clothing we had on from overseas, had deadly germs in them or some thing. We checked in all of our equipment and gear, also.

I did get to play some outdoor basketball. I got into some good games and

got to play with some outstanding ball handlers and excellent shooters. That was fun. we did not spend a lot of time at Stoneman. We did not have to pull K.P., guard, or do clean up details. This was all done by their permanent staff. We were all called into the Administrative building a few times for interviews. Most questions I was asked concerned my health. They wanted to know all about the back pain problem, jungle rot, dysentery and the "battle fatigue" thing. I told them every thing they wanted to know.

From Camp Stoneman I was moved to a camp closer to my home. I was sent on a coach car, troop train. At this point, a few of my friends I had met over seas and I departed. I was sent to Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. When we arrived here it had just started to turn cold. All of us who had fought in the Pacific noticed the chill. We were trying to adjust to the change in weather. The camp was crowded. Where did they assign us to sleep? In out door tents. Every one else in this camp was put into brick barracks. I, for one, like to froze. It was like the tents we stayed in, in Japan. Each night I removed all of my clothing from my barracks bag and threw them on top of the two blankets I was issued when I went to bed. Besides this, I slept in my clothing I had on that day. I still shivered. It was cold. The reason we had to stay out doors in tents, was because there were so many men coming into this camp to get discharged. This outside area I stayed at, which I believe was their parade grounds, was the only space that was available. We were moved to warm barracks about two

days later. At this camp we were put on our own a lot. We could not leave camp with out a pass but we could move around camp as much as we wanted. They did not hassle us about doing K.P., guard, or work details. I spent some time at their service club listening to records. We were allowed to go to town a couple of times but I neither had money or any one to go with. I just roamed around camp. One night I attended a U.S.O. dance just to see if I could dance. I still moved around like "a hog on ice." The food was good at this camp. We had to be in the sack by "lights out" which was around 11:00 P.M. About all they did was check out our records that had been sent from Camp Stoneman. Occasionally, we were called in to a doctor's office or administration room and asked a few questions concerning our past military experiences. The time went fast at Fort Leauen worth but not fast enough.

The last camp I was sent to was just a very short distance away. The name of the camp was Camp Crowder. It was in Missouri. This was my final trip in a troop train. It was Camp Crowder that I received my discharge from the army. I was given one long, complete, physical examation. They checked every thing. We turned in all of the clothing we had except the bare essentials. Before we did this, they allowed us to change any part of our uniform that we did not feel comfortable in or which was the wrong size. I was asked daily if I cared to join the regular army. I had the benefits of staying in the servic explained to me a number of times. Some of those benefits sounded good. I said no. I was handed a commerical train ticket from Camp Crowder to good

old Des Moines, Iowa. It was an exciting feeling to be going home. The trip was not long. I was approached by many well meaning people. Some offered me drinks. Two people wanted to buy me a meal on the train. I could not understand the kindnesses. It must have been the ribbons displayed above the pocket of my army jacket. These people must have mistaken me for some kind of war hero, or something. It was nice of them but it was very embarassing. Our train was held up some where along the way cause we did not arrive in Des Moines till 5:00 A.M. The train depot we arrived at does not exist today. Mom had taken a cleaning job at a hotel down town, run by my brother-in-law, Bill Brown, and my sis, Kate. I called the hotel and they contacted Mom. God..... It was great to hear her voice. She told me to get home quickly and she would have breakfast waiting. I took a cab. When I saw Mom it startled me a little. Her gray hair had turned completely white. She was O.K. just older looking. No wonder her hair turned white. She had three sons in the war to worry about, plus her job. She fretted over my brother Don, who was in the First Marines, some where in the Pacific Islands. She worried about my brother Bud, who was a combat engineer some-place in an outfit in India, plus me.

After breakfast Mom and I sat and talked through lunch until supper. That woman wanted to hear every detail about my time spent in the service. I told her everything she wanted to know, plus a few details she probably did not care to hear. I explained to her about the dysentery, my back, jungle rot, and the battle fatigue problem. I told her how they took care of me and if I had any further problems they would take care of them. She was also interested in those embarass-ing things moms' want to know. Things like, did they feed you well enough?. Did you get enough rest?. Did they over work you?. Did they mistreat you? And last, did they take care of you when you did not feel well? I assured her they did well by me. As I was sitting I was tempted to tell her about Lieutenant Joke. I should have sicced her on him. He would not have known what hit him, if I did. I did not mention the Lieutenant.

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Mom asked me a million questions about what combat was like. I could never lie to her. I told her exactly the way it was. She wanted to know if I was scared. I told her the same as I had told a new recruit who asked this question, "only when I was asleep or awake." She asked if I got shot at, did I have to kill any one, and what was it like to get shelled? I wondered why she wanted me to not only answer her questions but to give her the details It was not till later that it dawned on me why she wanted me to explain all of this "war story" to her. I honestly believe she was pulling some psychology on me. If I told her every thing and held nothing back I might get it our of my system and it would not haunt me later on. This may not be the case at all. It did work out that way. Today I can talk about those horrible war experiences and it does not bother me at all. The one bad dream I had about the war only haunted me a few times and it faded away. That was a dream about running from a barge toward the beach in deep water. I moved very, very slowly, as I was being shot at by an automatic weapon. I would like to know if Mom did this same "asking a million questions about the war" of Don and Bud. I never asked them about it when they were alive. Both of them are now deceased. I will never know.

The war part of my story has ended. There are, however, a couple of things related to the war that can be told to bring the story to its conclusion. Following World War II, soldiers were afforded a chance to attend college or some type of career oriented opportunity at the governments expense, if they so desired. You were given tuition, books and a small "living income" to tide you over. This was called the "G.I. Bill of Rights." Since they damm near had to burn down dear old North Des Moines High School in order to get me out, I did not really feel I would be a good prospect. I did not apply. Instead, I returned to the clothing store I worked at before I went into the service. The man I worked for in the clothing store was Mr. Leslie Shaw. He insisted I take advantage of the G.I. Bill. He made me take the government sponsored aptitude test at Drake University to find out what my interests were. I almost went into shock when I tested out 98.8% to be a teacher.

I claimed a mistake had taken place. They added the totals again. It was 98.8% again. Mr Shaw told me I was going to go to college. I told him I still had to take care of Mom. He arranged to pay me enough to care for her. This man was like a dad to me. I found a place in teaching in the Des Moines Independent School District. I taught with success (slow, poor readers, and non-talented children needed a slow, non academic, non-talented teacher they can relate to) for thirty-five years. These were thirty-five happy years, I might add. I owe my chance to getting the formal education that allowed me to teach to the fact that I served in the war. I am grateful Mr. Shaw came into my life. In honor of this wonderful man I must tell this one last army type story that involves him. When I returned home from the war, I went to see him. He wanted me to attend a dinner with him and his wife. It was an exclusive club he belonged to. I really did not want to go. I was afraid I might do something stupid that would embarass him and his wife. He said, "nonsense, your going." I was in uniform. I had only been home for two days. He said he wanted to show me off. I showed off, all right. I shocked the whole table when I asked in typical gutter language army style, "will someone please pass down the God damm salt!" The noisy table members all fell silent. You could hear a pin drop. My face was red. I wanted to crawl under the table and disappear. With a straight face, Mr. Shaw said "you heard him, pass the God damm salt down this way". It broke the place up. This was one of Mr. Shaw's favorite stories. Mr Shaw passed away some 5-6 years ago. There just had to be a place in heaven for this man.

Two years after the war I met and I married Marjorie Jean Otis. That was one of the best things that

ever happened to me in my life. I felt I have known her all of my life a week after we met. Surprisingly, she told me that she felt the same way. I was so sure she was going to marry me that I did not even ask her. I made arrangements with the church for the use of their chapel on May 25th, 1947. I told her and we got married. Marjorie has been great for me and to me. She has always been an inspiration and a strong supporter. If it had not been for her level head and good organizational powers we would have nothing. She has all of the wonderful qualities and outstanding characteristics a man desires in a wife. I consider my self a lucky man to have found her and married her. We have two beautiful children. Jody, my daughter, is the oldest. She has a son Aaron. Mark is my other child. He has three children. They are Kinzie Jo, Jason Richard, and Shelby Lyn.

As I mentioned earlier in this book I wrote (printed) and illustrated this book so my children and grandchildren would be able to read and see pictures first-hand "HOW IT WAS" for me and many of my veteran buddies I served with in World War II. Hopefully, Jody will pass the book I published for her on to her son, Aaron and Mark will pass the book I prepared for him on to Kinzie, Jason and Shelby when they grow old enough to read and understand. I was proud of the small part I had an opportunity to play in this period of our country's history. I hope my children and grandchildren will feel the same way.

Sincerely,

and with much love
to my entire family
Richard J. Foss