

The Dave Stockham Story

by
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CHAPTER 1

Make my day

Friday August 13th 1943, my birthday. A day to remember as I enlisted in the Army Air Corps or so I thought. One reason for enlisting was the fact that I couldn't continue my education as my father told me to go to work which I did. Then there was the embarrassment by the Black assholes in Richmond whom every day that I went to school they violated by what to-day would be my civil rights. White boys and white girls were pounced upon by the blacks. I attended Richmond High for one semester and damn near every day was in a fight with the blacks. My dad decided to move to Vallejo to get away from them and then the government moved them to public housing and put them to work on Mare Island.

Mare Island is where I witnessed the riot by the blacks just before my 18th birthday and saw the Marines called out to put them down. I was hiding in a store front just short of the Ferry slip on Georgia street and saw the Marines set up machine guns and order the Blacks to disperse, which they refused. The machine guns opened up and started to kill them and then they dispersed. This made me enlist and I was immediately sent to Camp Roberts Ca., a real hell hole.....! First they get you bareassed naked, then you are given a physical. There is some god-damn rule that you must double-time everywhere and then stand in the cold while some bastard with a stethoscope and tongue depressor starts pulling on your balls and shoving his finger up your ass. Problem is that they looked like they enjoyed it.

Then you are given a test to find out your mental outlook on life. My IQ was so low that I thought they would send me home. Apparently it was good enough to assign me to heavy weapons training, even if I had enlisted in the army air corps. I was assigned to a company run by a complete 4F by the name of Sgt. Percy. This guy always said that if you could he would be the first one going to battle, but his job was so damned important they wouldn't let him go. Just knowing him gave me the ability to kill with no problems. It was a miserable 17 weeks that we had to spend with him. He must have had abusive parents as he believed that he was in the Marine Corps and they firmly believed that they were part of the immaculate conception.

I spent my first night in the army on K.P. (that means Kill Privates). It's nice to know that you gave up an apprenticeship to be come a god-damn dishwasher when if you had stayed home you probably would have been 4F because of your eyes. This is day 2 of my military career and it is very important that we get up at 4 A.M. to hand scrub the floors to install discipline in us. Then make bunks, inspection and then breakfast to ingest a food called shit-on-a-shingle, that actually was very good. I guess that all the old times worked in the kitchen as they wore fatigues and we weren't yet issued them. Then back to the barracks.

That is when we all fell out into a formation (more or less) , then we were marched to a warehouse to receive our uniforms. This was fun as the person (old timer of at least one week) threw shoes and clothes at us regardless of size and we were told that if they didn't fit that we could. exchange later. Now come the hard work. We got lesson on how to make up a field pack

to people who couldn't pick up their socks at home. Then we were told to strip our bunks and we would be shown the military way to make them up. Because I could not seem to satisfy our military bosses I never received a pass in 17 weeks of basic training. Also I could not clean my weapon to the satisfaction of the head ape, which also contributed to my lack of freedom.

Day 2 started out like day one, up early, run our asses off, learn how to count the military way, fall in, fall out, eat and go to bed early. Funny thing I don't ever remember taking a crap or even if they gave a damn there was no time for it. The days became a blur with indoctrination, whatever that was. I was being brainwashed and didn't know it. Now I said yes-sir, no-sir and how to salute the proper way. I found out that flipping your non-com was not part of a salute and this resulted in further brainwashing.

There were men from all walks of life in our barracks, some smart and some not too smart. We had Pollacks, Krauts, Limey's, Jugheads,, Black Irishmen, Chinamen, Mexs, Cowboys, Indians, Frogs, Dagos and many others who more often than not were referred to by their ethnic background, rather than by their name. There was absolutely no Blacks. We were all Americans, period, and were all treated the same, very badly. Some enlisted to become citizens and some to escape a jail term. Not very many for pure patriotism. Majority were drafted, which shows where patriotism lies. It's funny to-day to watch all those white haired draftees, with tears in their eyes, telling their stories about how much they love their country, all wearing their little cunt caps in parades loaded with emblems, probably drawing disability for having gotten a social disease and then the only way that the government got them in was to draft them. Infantry combat veterans don't parade as they want no part of the Army.

There wasn't room for all of us in basic training when we got to camp Roberts located near Paso Robles, Ca. So until Nov. we spent our time doing K.P. and serving in the officers mess. We cleaned their barracks and policed the parade grounds. This is where I learned the basic fundamentals of the Army----- keep busy. I learned that to be a good soldier you must show initiative, so when policing I would carry scraps of paper in my fatigues and when we ran out of something to pick up I threw more on the ground and got points for being busy. The others would just stand around doing nothing. This got me promoted to acting Corporal, which did not last long as I thought that my new found power would let me talk back to my sergeant. How wrong I was! Demotion, more K.P. and full field pack on the parade ground.

November 15, 1943. To-day we are soldiers! This is the start of basic training and learning how to kill. Reflecting back, I didn't see a killer among us. We were issued a Rifle which they kept locked up. No ammo anyway. Apparently it was very important to clean this weapon every day and to have it inspected by good old Sarg, who many of us thought was blind, as he thought he could see a piece of lint in the dark. Now we get to learn such valuable items as packing, walking, marching falling, fallout, salute, saying yes-sir, (no-sir) not allowed, double time here, double time there, and more KP on how to peel potatoes and wash dishes. Same thing every day. Get up to a bugle, go to bed by a bugle, Dress properly, fall out into formation, and

then eat getting access to the messhall by the last name. We also practiced walking in step to the old hup, tup, trup and making a effort to keep in step.

Came the day when we would go to the rifle range. Never did get used to a person standing on my feet while I am laying flat on the ground trying to aim and shoot. Found out what maggie's drawers was, it was a complete miss of a whole target. I got a lot of those. In those days no-one was concerned about your hearing. My ears still ring at times. Then we got to double time back to the barracks and clean the damn rifle, which as I have said before that I never could satisfy the head ape. We learned about hand grenades, bazookas, mortars, heavy and light machine guns, explosives, pistols, and gas attacks(those not caused by eating veggies).

The amazing thing is that I enlisted to become a Air Corps person and never got close to a airplane until Leyte where we destroyed a B-24 landing gear by running into it with a jeep, more about this later. We completed our 17 weeks of training and everyone got what they wanted except for the enlisted. We were loaded like cattle onto a troop train. These trains must have been from WW1 as they had velvet seats and pulled by coal burners. Our 1st stop was Ft. Ord, Ca.. Now Ft. Ord is approximately 100 miles as the crow flies due north and the trip took two days (this is where we got used to not eating and going to the bathroom). We were disemboweled from the train and moved into barracks where the rumors got out of hand. I guessed that we were sent there for re-assignment to our stations. When we reloaded on the train I didn't know anyone. At this time I came to realize that to enlist was a very bad move. Drafted personnel did not like enlisted. My self esteem and outlook on life became very bad.

We had been issued our clothing for overseas assignment, and I came to realize that suntans did not mean Europe where I had asked to be sent. My overseas physical was a laugh. A example was my eye test. I couldn't read the chart with my glasses off so was asked what color the wall was and like a damn fool I said white which passed me with flying colors. We were soldiers going into combat with a enemy that looked like a drowned rat as depicted by pictures all over the place and still no weapons to fight them with.

Now I had been in the service since August and it took 8 months to get to a Island in the San Francisco bay called Angel Island. We arrived there in May of 1944 and packed in like sardines. We still didn't know where we were headed as this was a secret from us but I'm sure that the Japs knew. This was one of the big secrets in the war. In a few days we were loaded on board a ship named the "Morning Glory". Now this was a vintage WW1 ship. It was so crowded that we took turns down below for sleep, many of us including myself never got down below. We got one blanket and were supposed to get two meals per day of C-Rations and all we got were beans, beans and more beans., and one meal per day. 7 days of beans. I forgot to mention that we were loaded in the middle of the night and given a cup of coffee and a donut for a going away present. We really felt like we had been captured and were the enemy We spent 7 days on this miserable piece of iron called a Ship, packed in like sardines and having to sleep on the deck and lucky to get one meal a day.

We were unloaded at Pearl Harbor where the large Aloha clock was and this was a day I will never forget. Talk about the treatment of Jews being loaded into trains, we were packed into trucks and I mean packed, then driven about 40 miles in the hot sun and unloaded at a replacement depot called the 13th. What a lucky number! This then began the saga of Dave serving his Government Overseas.

I wound up in a Replacement Depot called the 13th Replacement Depot. Within two days I was in the Hospital with a high fever. Just outside of our barracks was a pineapple field and we were warned not to take them as the penalty was jail. Can you imagine these assholes telling us that we would be in trouble when our main reason for being there was to die for the country. Anyhow we all got diarrhea and a high fever and my excuse was that I had been sick for a week and I was refused sick call and they bought it. I stayed at the replacement depot until August of 1944 and played baseball and still stole their damn pineapple (no green ones)

I never was one to make friends, so I spent a lot of time roaming around Honolulu all by myself. It wasn't too bad as I got to meet Hilo Hatti a famous Hula dancer and Harry Owens a famous Hawaiian band leader. by going to the youth center downtown instead of to bars like the rest of the troops. It had a huge swimming pool and other recreation activities. Lots of girls always were there although I never met any as I couldn't dance.

I had been assigned to a Truck battalion playing baseball and not doing anything else. I made one hell of a mistake, I said that I had joined to kill Japs not to play games. I was immediately shipped out in August 1944 to join the 96th Infantry Division at Schofield barracks. Apparently a memo followed me from my previous assignment that I was a discontent and to treat me as such. I was assigned to 382nd Inf. Regiment "E" Co., 3rd platoon, 3rd squad. I became immediately aware that this was a group of malcontents which I guess fit me perfectly. We were assigned to squad tents which housed 12 people in close quarters and tempers could be set off for nothing at all.

Life in a Division is completely different from Basic training or being unassigned. Saluting became a minimal thing as Officers and Non-Coms had been told that the Japs picked on them first, so we became last name people. This meant that if your last name started with "A" you were in the front and if it started with a "Z" you were last. This was applied to chow line, payline and anything in line. "Z" was not good!

The first guy I met was Paul R. Shelton. He was sitting in a corner cleaning his rifle, looking mean, and I had to say HI! For this effort I got a cold look and immediately backed off. You would have to look into his eyes to see his attitude. This man had the coldest blue eyes I ever hoped to see and I never again saw a person with that look. The next person I met was Paul R. Kummeth, a easy going individual who could talk to Shelton. It's not easy to remember names after all those for years as we didn't become friends, just faces. Until I die I will never be able to forget the two Paul's. Somehow we became friends and I can't remember how it happened. It

was probably the best thing that ever happened to me as for a year plus we looked out for each other.

We didn't know that we would be 12 people bound to-gather until the end of the war and that only a couple of us would not be killed. We went through jungle training , weapons training, drinking brawls and spelling our guts out to each other. For example I found out that Shelton was a problem to the army his first day there. Once he got drunk and tried to kill our company commander in the mess hall in San Diego, Ca. while on maneuvers there. He also threatened to kill our Company Commanders wife. This caused him to pull Stockade time and he just got out in time for the Divisions move Overseas. I also found out that he had brothers serving time in Federal Prison for trying to kill Federal officers while doing shotgun riding over illegal booze was told that his family was involved in running illegal booze from a dry state into a wet state and when Paul was 15 years old he rode shotgun as protection. Shelton was engaged to a very nice lady but this didn't stop him from chasing women, he was good looking and women went after him.

We were kept busy loading ammo onto ship's, loading bandoleers with clips, loading machine gun belts with both 50cal and 30 cal bullets. The real Soldiers practiced beachhead landings on Maui and Jungle training on Oahu and I got to do Officers mess and other crap. We got to know each other a little but nothing permanent. Our entertainment was throwing a Mexican by the name of Rudolfo Vargus into the shower as he never took one. As I got to know Vargus better, he was one hell of a person. Only 4 of us made it thru Leyte without being seriously wounded or killed and Vargus was one of them. I guess that I earned Sheltons respect by not being afraid of him. One day he came in drunk and was going to beat the Shit out of me. He had a habit of standing sideways with his hands in his pocket where he carried a large knife in his right hand. When he made that move I stepped on his right foot and drove my left knee into his balls. From then on we were the best of buddies and did everything to-gather. That was a trick that my Dad taught me as he was a gang member when in his youth.

In September 1944 we were told to get ready to ship out. We were told in detail about the Island of Yap and how we were going to attack it. In the meantime I had met a fellow by the name of Robert Riley who became my best friend, and while we were packing up he was told that he couldn't go with us. His Grandfather pulled strings and he was a big time Lawyer and with his pull had bob transferred out and this really upset him. Everyone filled their Duffel bags with stones when they informed us that was their method of barter. We knew that we were going when they gave the entire 96th and 7th division leaves at the same time for one day. All night long busses were coming back and dropping off drunks in their areas. This kept all the N.C.O.S. busy piling the guys into trucks and hauling them back to their areas. It took two days to find everyone and finally we were ready to move out. The amazing thing was that I never met our Company Commander or Platoon Leader. I was made to believe that the first soldier was in charge of everything. I knew no-one in the other platoons or squads. The sad thing was that I felt I didn't belong as I had made no real friends and we had no shoulder Patches or anything to be identified as the Double Diamond, Deadeye Division. It sure as hell was too late to get out of it.

CHAPTER 2

On our Way

To-day is the big day! Everyone saddle up and fell into squads with full field packs, Gas masks, Rifles and other assigned weapons (still no ammo). We were loaded into trucks and taken to ship's, Division by Division. We were at a loss to figure out why it took this many troops to take a small Island. However, 45,000 men with rocks in their pockets was no small matter. We must have been at sea a week or more before we sailed right on by Yap Island. We could see land but no Japs. The new rumor is that we are going to Australia, but that had no reason behind it.

Needless to say we unloaded our rocks. Every day more Ship's joined our convoy. We had Cruisers, Battleships, Destroyers, Cargo ship's, Aircraft Carriers, Submarines and others. We now knew that whatever it was, was going to be fatal to many. One day we dropped Anchor in a Lagoon and was told that we were in the Admiralties. Then the bomb hit ----, we were going to the Philippines to invade a Island name Leyte. They started to indoctrinate us about the islands and we had been chosen to make McArthur's dream come true. ***We really believed this crap..*** After we dropped Anchor they allowed us to go swimming and forgot to inform us that the Lagoon was loaded with sharks. We discovered this when some asshole on ship dumped garbage overboard on the fantail and immediately we saw nothing but fins. This caused a mass exodus out of the water and up the landing nets. The Navy people were having a hilarious time with this and caused a deep hatred between us. From that point on I hated the Bastards.

For recreation they gave us shore leave. This amounted to getting on board a Landing craft and being taken to a beach. We were supposed to be given 3 beers each free and this didn't happen. The Shit Birds (See Bees Enlisted) charged \$1.00/beer. When we left the island we overpowered them, tied them up, and took the rest of the beer for nothing as there was 1000's of us and few of them. When we got back on board the ship no-one farted around with us as at this time we had live ammo and knew that we probably only had a week to live. this Island was the most peaceful place I had ever seen. Not really hot, swimming in clear Lagoon and water so salty you couldn't sink.

Shortly we were separated into our own Companies, gathered up our equipment and disembarked(crawl down a rope latter) loaded with a rifle, ammo, field pack, etc. to be taken to our L.S.T.'S. These little ship's were packed with all kinds of equipment, most of all our means of getting to the beach. Once on board we checked to make sure we had all of equipment and plenty of ammo. I took on two extra bandoleers of .30 cal myself. I only hoped that we didn't have to swim to shore as we would be gone like a stone.

We pulled up Anchor and sailed out the Lagoon. The Non-Coms told us that there weren't many Japs. WOW! Were they ever wrong. Hard to understand why the people that are your leaders have to lie to you. Problem is that they lied to our Non-Coms and Platoon Leaders. It seems to me that we sailed due West all the time going over the beach head landing. The day

before we hit we were told that my Battalion was picked for the 1st wave assault. This did not do our moral any good. Now we knew damn well that we would be killed. Our objective was a Hill known as "Catmon Hill", then it was supposed to be a walk to a town named Dagami. All we had to do take a hill loaded with Japs, then cross a river and take a town Called Tabon Tabon, then on to Dagami a total of about 10 miles. Our officers gave us a talk on how proud we must be to fulfill McArthurs promise to the Phillipinos. **BULLSHIT!** The line of ship's stretched across the horizon.

October 20, 1944 a day that will live with me forever. We pulled inside Leyte Gulf and parked off a Island that I was told was Leyte. It was so damn quite and peaceful. At 8 o'clock sharp the bombardment began. For miles along the beachhead the sky turned black from smoke and shells. The roar was deafening. Planes off the Carriers were dropping bombs all over the place. We could see dogfights between the Japs and our planes. About 9:30 were told to saddle up and get on board our Alligators. These were boats with tracks on them that were supposed to land and take us at least 100 yards inland. For breakfast that morning we were supposed to get fresh eggs and milk. What we were fed was Powdered milk and Powdered eggs, cold. We assumed that this was in retaliation for what we did to their buddies in the Admiralties. Now this made us very unhappy and when McArthur came on the squawk box to tell us what a glorious thing we were doing, we booed him.

The doors dropped down and we slid into the water and began to circle up to form a formation in line to hit the beach. At exactly 10 o'clock we started for the beach. There was a loaded 50 cal. machine gun on the back of this alligator. One of our guys was so pissed off that he grabbed it when we circled the L.S.T and emptied the whole belt into it. I don't know if he hit anyone but they sure as hell ran for cover. It seemed to me that we were a long way from shore and I hoped that we didn't run out of gas. You could see the fear in all the faces of our guys. This was something that we had trained for and never thought it would be like this. The shooting of the L.S.T. broke the tension and a fellow by the named of Zackeriason was moved up front to be the first out as he was always complaining about being last. I don't know how many people were on board this damn thing, but we were packed in like Sardines. Our Platoon was led by one Billy Parham who I met for the first time. Our squad leader was scared shitless as his eyes were as big as saucers. What a deal! Our leader didn't want to go!

CHAPTER 3

Beachhead Leyte

Time 10:00 A.M., 20th October 1944. After 2 hrs. of shelling of the beach we were on our way to San Jose, Leyte. I was in the back of the Alligator so my vision was limited to what I could see. I know that the Japs were shelling us as I could hear and see the Splashes. I wasn't worried about the shells, my concern was running out of gas in the middle of this crap. We stayed as low as possible and no one tried to look over the side, not even the asshole who unloaded at the L.S.T. with the 50 cal. Good old Zack was in the back with me and he was told to

go up front to release the door locks so the door would open when released. On one side was Kummeth and the other side was Zack. We came out of the water with a thump and down went the door. Kummeth got hit and so did Zack. I got out of there in a hurry so didn't know how bad they were hit. No one stopped to help them as we were concerned about ourselves.

There was a small bank about 20 yards in front of the Alligator and that is where I flopped. I lay there thinking not about the Japs but about Zack who was last in everything was 1st out and could have been the very first causality of the landing. We tried to get back to our squads and that was impossible. A couple of us got up and ran to new cover as the 2nd wave was coming in and no room for them. There wasn't too much action in front of us except for a Japs machine gun nest about 50 yards dead ahead. Our platoon Sargent showed up and started yelling for 3rd squad to come to front. A few more showed up and we charged the damn nest. They had to be focused on something else as we took them out with no problem. Our squad leader couldn't be found.. We moved on to a tree line to again try to get to-gather. As I looked back to the beach the 2nd wave was coming in. The Jap Artillery was really getting zeroed in. I saw a direct hit on one of the Alligators. I didn't look back after that. Now the Japs started up with their rifle fire. You could tell immediately as a Ariska 6.7mm has a completely different sound that a 30 cal. Also their machine guns fired faster than ours with a high sound and they were really cutting loose. You know that they are coming close when you can hear them popping. All of a sudden I wasn't scared anymore. My only concern was surviving. The damn gas mask got in my way so I took it off and left it on the ground so I could move better. We started to move forward about 20 yards at a time, taking whatever shelter we could find. Now our heavy weapons were on shore. We started to get overhead fire from the Heavy 30's and bazookas. Also the mortars kicked in. From then on we only had to point out the pillboxes and trenches and the Flame-throwers went into action.

Firing my gun did very little good as I couldn't see very much to shoot at. The guy next to me was in the open with his helmet back as it was hot and he took a round in the middle of his head. From then on I kept my helmet pulled down over my eyes. We kept on moving about 20 yards at a time and I couldn't find any of my squad or squad leader so I was on my own. I knew that I had to keep on moving as to stop was to get hit. I doubt if we made 500 yards the first day. I guess that the radios started to work and we all got to-gather about 5 P.M. The first thing we did was to dig in using buddy holes(that's a trench shaped like a "T"). We were in the middle of a rice paddy and it started to rain hard. Just like basic training at Camp Roberts, laying in a hole filled with water as every time we went into the field there it rained. The water was about one foot deep in a two foot deep hole. I didn't know the guys I was dug in with. They were from my company and that was all I knew. Put your trust in three strangers and don't sleep.

My first meal in combat, a can of Australian beans. Had to open it in the dark in a hole filled with water. Some of the guy's got smart and strung handgrenades mounted on strings on our front line. The pins were tied to-gather so that if one was hit they would all go off, most of them anyway. It really started to rain and as I looked over the side of my hole I swore that a Jap was crawling up on me. I put a whole clip into him . This made the flares come out, but I

couldn't see any dead Jap. The grenades we put out started to go off and it sounded like we were in the middle of a cattle stampede. We were! The Japs ran a whole herd of buffalo thru us. Some of the animals were shot by our guys and they really went crazy. What a bunch of bastards the Japs were! We had to remember that we weren't fighting civilized people. This was a Jap infantry division with years of experience and they didn't care how they won their battles. The Japs came in right behind the Buffalo, but couldn't get through our lines. All night long I kept killing Japs in the same place, However come morning I discovered that it was just a bush. What a night for the first in combat. At least I kept the guy's alert all night long.

Day 2 and I again met my platoon leader who congratulated me on my alertness and for at least firing a gun as very few fired theirs. Now our squads were finally getting organized. It seems as though 4 of our guys didn't make it through the beachhead. My squad was picked out to go on a short scouting trip to check out the area. We came upon a small house walled in with brick and saw some Japs having breakfast over a small fire. Our squad leader wouldn't go in after them so we rallied around Paul Shelton, who showed no fear as we took them out .In searching them we found pictures from China along with pamphlets and organization papers showing that they were part of I believe the 16th Infantry Division. Now this was a find as we didn't know who we were up against. What a deal coming up against seasoned veterans! We made it back to our Company lines and this is where I found out who our Company Commander was. This was the first time I had seen him. His name was John Harbison.

We gave him all the information we had gotten and told him about what happened to our squad leader and we all wanted out of the squad. He called our squad leader along with our platoon leader into his hole and shortly Parham came over and told Shelton that he was the new squad leader and that the old one had been transferred to another Company. This was fine with us. Shelton told me that both Zack and Kummeth had caught it on the beach, so this made us short of manpower. Now Shelton became a gung-ho leader. Volunteered for everything. Along with Shelton getting squad leader I was made Company scout and too damn stupid to know what that meant. I didn't even know what a MOS was. From now on I was point man. Being first wasn't all that bad. The Japs had a habit of firing into the middle of the Column always letting the first ones thru and then try to separate or split our people into two separate units. Maybe that's why I am still alive. After all the commotion we went back out on patrol and didn't find any more Japs. (Found out later that this hill 200 was one hell of a battle and a monument was erected to the Regiment at the site).

Day 3 and we got out of the rice paddies into the coconuts nut trees. We heard the sound of a airplane that was really low so we ducked down and saw a Jap fighter plane just over the palm tops of the trees. It's engine was sputtering and the guy was looking straight down at us and could be seen very clearly. He was in no condition to attack. I opened fire on him but probably didn't hit him. I'll never forget his face as he showed absolutely no fear. We ran into more pillboxes. Now we had our Mortars, flame-throwers, and heavymachine guns. Those along with satchel charges took them out , but our squad kept getting smaller.

Still haven't seen a live Jap up really close. This was about to change. Our new target was a village called Tabon-Tabon located on a river that was quite deep and wide. We skirted Catmon Hill as the big shots saw no importance in. At least that got us out of the rice paddies. It was about 2 o'clock in the afternoon and not having seen any Japs We were very relaxed and walking single file on a Jungle trail and trying to be very quite. Only hand signals allowed. Probably went about 3 miles as the crow flies and it seemed so peaceful as if the war was somewhere else. Even had parrots in the trees chattering. This is where the nut that shot at the L.S.T. with the fifty Cal. Shot and killed a parrot in a tree. The gun blast was enormous as it was so quite and our Platoon leader came running back to find out what happened. We told him that someone slipped and his gun went off accidentally, man was he pissed off. Firing broke out in front of us so we knew that there had to be Japs around. Either we found them or they found us. We started to get Jap mortar fire, so we dug in. The river was just in front of us. We must have taken a airstrip as P-38's started flying over us. One of them flew upside down right on top of the coconut trees and had a large streamer between his tailbooms. Found out later that it was a pilot by the name of Dick Bong, and when he shot down a Jap he always did a victory roll over the front lines to let us know that he was there. We also got over head support whenever we wanted it., and this was damn close support. These pilots were a wild bunch and later on I got a chance to talk to some of them.

CHAPTER 4 *TABON TABON*

The Jap Mortar and Artillery fire started getting heavy. It was getting late in the day and orders came down to dig in for the night. First we had to cross over the river and check it out. Naturally Shelton volunteered again. There was a small foot bridge that we used to cross the river. We very carefully walked through the town and came upon a Platoon ,all dead in the middle of the road. Apparently they were marching in a column of ducks and were ambushed. They were out of the 7th division, so we took the dog tags of the Lieutenant and withdrew back to our lines. We knew now that they were the ones drawing the fire earlier. We crawled back into our holes knowing that in the morning we would be going back across the river, but at this time not knowing that this walking straight into hell.

All night long we shot flares and mortars into the village to keep the Japs down. Tanks moved into the area and we really welcomed them. This was the first time that we were going to have some heavy support. A Sherman Tank is quite a large object and we had a whole platoon (5 tanks) for heavy support. This is where Shelton picked up his Thompson Submachine gun from one of the tankers who had no use for it anyway. (Later I found out that he stole it from them). They were damn good to us as we were their eyes when they buttoned up. Do not know where they got the beer from but it sure tasted good. These guys fought a different war than we did.

Came dawn and time to move out. Inasmuch as we had already been in the village we were chosen to lead the troops in. How exciting! We used the same foot bridge to cross over

which showed stupidity on our part. The damn Japs probably watched us cross. As we moved into the village we could see no signs of life. It was too damn quiet. The dead soldiers of the 7th were still lying in the middle of the road so we picked up their weapons and ammo and moved on thru. Our Radios did not always work and this was the time for it. Funny thing dying doesn't seem as bad as it was a few days ago. When we got to the end of the village the Japs opened up with all they had. This is when we found out how good they were in concealing themselves to blend in with the terrain. They dug holes in the ground and covered them with Palm fronds so we walked right over them. Now everything became hazy and all I can remember is running and shooting. I can remember one incident that afternoon on the outskirts of the village and I was lying on the ground trying not to be seen, when a soldier came up identifying himself as a Colonel and asked me where all the troops were. I yelled at him to get his ass down before it got shot off, and he replied that he wanted me to get up and go find some troops and to stop being a coward. I yelled out "Is there any Americans around?" Got a Colonel here. The answer came back "there's no-one here." Just then the Japs opened up with a machine gun in the Colonel's direction and he disappeared. Found out later that he was Macy L Dill our battalion commander. Never saw him again until 5 mos. later on Okinawa but that's another story.

Our tanks finally joined us on our side of the river and we were glad to see them. We fought our way to the outskirts of the village and ran into a Jap counterattack. We were in a groove of coconut trees and I was behind one of the tanks. A Jap came running up and stuck an explosive that I later learned was a magnetic mine, the explosion taking off the tank's tread. I shot the son-of-a-bitch as he ran back past me. The tankers fired up their flame thrower and burned the crap out of them. This drove the Japs back away from us. There was a guy in a hole about 25 yards to the left of me talking into a radio to get artillery fire in. He was a non-com from another squad. Found out later that he got the silver star for this. It sure pays to be a non-com. as they are the hero's. The Japs that got through us on their counterattack were now on the way back. They were in full retreat and I hunkered down and watched them go by. The tankers again opened up with their flame thrower and Wow! That fried a bunch of them. I might have shot some of them but at a time like this your mind isn't functioning. You only do what has been instilled into you and you have a problem recalling exactly what you did.

By this time it was getting dark and word came down to dig in. We were on the outskirts of the village with tall grass in front of us. This grass was about waist high and about 100 yards ahead of the grass was a groove of coconut trees. As we started to dig in we heard yelling and screaming from the area of the trees. We could see them running back and forth yelling "to-day you die." We didn't shoot at them as we were astounded by this display as being relatively new to Jap combat, all we could do was watch. In the meantime with all their background noise they crawled thru the high grass right up to our positions. All of a sudden it got real quiet and we got our 1st banzi charge. The Japs blew bugles, then yelling and screaming and here they came. I hadn't finished my hole so dove into a ditch along side the road and lay down flat on my back with my rifle on my stomach. Not a smart move! They had set up a machine gun in the ditch and started to fire down it. I could feel the rounds right over my head. I was frozen in place.

They overran us and hit our backup company. The bad part was that they had put snipers in the tops of the coconut trees and did a good job of keeping us pinned down. We could tell that it was not Jap guns doing this sniping from the sound, as it sounded like a 30-06, unlike a 6.7 mm. The next day we found out that they were 30-40- Kregs captured on Luzon complete with scopes. We called for artillery fire to hit the tree tops. Grape shot came in and it was devastating. In the meantime the Japs were in full retreat and coming back thru our lines. This is when I crawled out of the ditch and into a shell hole. All of a sudden it was quite again. We stayed put for the night. Flares all night long lit up the entire area and we did not get attacked again.

At first light the word came down to move out. Our squads and platoons tried to get together again and it was next to impossible with the Japs shooting again. First we laid out a mortar barrage in the tall grass and as it move up we moved thru the grass to-towards the Jap line shooting as we went. About 4 clips later we broke out into the tree area and stopped. Took about 2 hrs. to move 100 yards. We never thought that any Japs would be left in the area. Wrong again! I took up a position under a coconut tree with another guy. He had just told me that he was out of the 7th division when a shot rang out above me hitting him in the shoulder, going through his body and coming out his ass. I didn't have time to give him any help as I started to shoot into all the tree tops as fast as I could pull the trigger and reload. Apparently everyone started to hit the tree tops as Japs were falling and hanging down as if they had been tied there. I called for a medic and moved on. The Japs must have spent the night moving into the trees after the Grapeshot barrage the past evening as I doubt that any one could live thru the barrage I saw.

We pretty much stayed put for the rest of the day having dug in again right after getting them out of the tree tops and it started to rain again. This time the tanks stayed with us and it felt pretty good even with us knowing that they were a major target. When it got dark the Japs attacked with Mortars and Artillery. Our tanks fired back with their 75mm big guns and we got overhead support from our own Artillery with the fire being so close that we got concussions and had to call for them to raise their fire or wipe us out. The smell of Cordite was strong. No sense in shooting as I couldn't see anything to shoot at. I was dug in on a small hillside and stuck the knife that belonged to my grandfather into the ground in case I needed it fast. The reason for this is that I lost my bayonet and had thrown away my machete which was supposed to be for cutting Jungle growth which we hadn't yet seen. When dawn came we counterattacked and I forgot my knife. We must have surprised them as we caught them sleeping. Must have killed about 100 of them as after it was over I couldn't walk without stepping on one of them. None of them were alive and if they were they sure as hell would be shot.

After we ate breakfast we started to search them for loot. They could have gold, money, swords, Emblems or personal Papers. Mostly they were just like us. pictures of families, kids and girl friends. This is where it gets morbid. One guy was knocking out the gold teeth of the Japs with his rifle butt and another was cutting off the ears and keeping them in a little bag by his waist. No one stopped them, what the hell, they did it to us and what's the difference now. God-damn war has made us into animals. It was getting to high noon and getting hot. We did our bean

thing right in the middle of all the dead Japs. The bodies were starting to stink so we moved down the road abit. Everyone is somber. This is not the group I hit the beach with. No joking, laughing, or farting around. We were just dead tired. Our backup company took the point so we got a break. As I looked around I knew that if the Japs hit us now, that no one would give a shit. I even forgot what day it was or what week. Got a mail call, I didn't expect any and didn't get any.

We finally moved on out into a clearing and dug in for the night. Here is where we learned a new trick that the Japs had. They would put live grenades under their dead, knowing that we would turn them over and search them. Lost a few guys that way, so I wouldn't touch them. The war seems to have stopped, so damn quite. Daylight comes along so time to move out again. Last night a couple of guys couldn't handle it anymore so shot themselves in their foot. Damn fools! Why couldn't they have just stuck their foot out side of the hole like the rest of us? That way you are a hero and not a coward. We crawl out, eat our beans and saddle up. At this time we are told to not use ammo or food as they were having some problems on the beach. What a crock of shit. We found out later that the Navy pulled out to go meet the Japs in Leyte Gulf and if they had lost we would have been wiped out. We didn't find out about this for over two months. Just another lie by our commanders.

CHAPTER 5

Moving On

We are in the rice paddies again. No tank or Artillery support. We have been wet so long that our shoes are rotting and our clothing stinks. Not only that but our feet are shriveled and full of sores. Who cares as long as we can walk. Not meeting too much resistance and wondering if the war is over. As we got near to Dagami the shooting started up again. As we got closer to the outskirts and the shooting got closer we got the scare of our life. The damn Japs were shooting wooden bullets! The bad thing was that when you got hit, they exploded in your flesh and could tear a arm off. This lasted about a hour and pissed us off, as all we could do was hunker down and try not to expose ourselves. We really went out after the bastards and drove them out of town. We captured a convoy of trucks made by Ford with a right hand drive. It's nice to know that as recent as a couple of years ago our country was doing business with them.

We captured a warehouse full of Jap beer and Saki. What a time we had until the M.P's showed up and closed up the warehouse. Until we got through the town the assholes were never far behind us. Inasmuch as they couldn't stop us from doing what we wanted to, orders came down to get us the hell out of Dagami. The Army did that fast! We went to the outskirts and dug in. The Japs had taken up a position on the road about a hundred yards in front of us just beyond a bend in the road with bunkers, mortars and machine guns. Not wanting to die that afternoon we dug in.

Just before dark a amphibian vehicle came roaring down the road and slid to a halt at our position. Person driving was a blackman with a poor attitude. His partner was setting on top of the load not doing much but the driver yelled down at Shelton with a "hey boy where is the front

lines?”. The driver had no way of knowing that he was talking to one of the original rednecks of the south and it cost him his life. Shelton answered his question by telling him to keep going and he would run into it soon. The guy took off and ran right into machine gun fire. Both of them were killed and turned their vehicle over into the ditch. Our leaders saw what happened and made us move out and attack the Japs position. The fire fight only lasted about fifteen minutes before the Japs took off. Surprisingly neither side had any casualties, but the blacks were both dead. We looted the vehicle for food and ammo and dug in again for the night about a half mile outside of the city.

We discovered that night that the Japs could move around anytime they wanted to. It had rained during the night and the next morning we found their footprints all over the place. It was easy to tell who was in the area. The Japs wore a canvas shoe with the big toe separated from the others and used that big toe to feel their way around, very quietly as we didn't see them or hear them. From now on any movement at all in the area caused a fusillade of shots to ring out and flares to go off. Anyone caught out there was dead.

We started to get Artillery fire from somewhere, so Shelton and I along with a Artillery spotter formed a patrol to see if we could find where it came from. This was our second week in combat and the very thought that this could be dangerous never entered our minds. If it had it would not have made any difference to Shelton. We moved out with good old Dave in front as usual. About a half mile from our C.P. we found the gun. It was a Jap 75mm and after watching them for a short time it appeared that they fired it whenever the mood struck them and at no particular target. We lay in the bushes about a hundred yards out when one of the Japs crawled to the top of a log and dropped his pants as if to relieve himself. He never got the chance as Shelton took aim and killed him. Our observer called in the co-ordinates for fire and we got the hell out. When we got back to the C.P. the report about the incident seemed very funny at the time.

The next morning we moved out again and left the rice paddies. As far as we know it is the end of October and our supplies are getting low. Our rations are getting cut and we are told not to waste ammo. It was a long time before we found out the reason for this and that we could have been left on Leyte. After we were on the Island for a few days our ships went north after a flotilla of Japs coming down through Leyte gulf. If the Japs had won that battle I wouldn't be writing this saga. Our goal now is to reach the top of the mountain with the Japs having the advantage. As we start up the mountain walking a narrow trail the Japs open up on the middle of the column. Some of the guys dive off the trail into bushes and that's when we discovered punji sticks. These were sharpened sticks stuck into the ground at a angle and loaded with poisons such as fecal matter and when jumped on you were impaled. Being at the head of the column I did not know what was going on back there, so held my position. We called in heavy mortars and artillery and bracketed the sides of the trail. It was right on top of us but we didn't have any choice. We didn't receive any more fire so gathered our wounded and dead and sent them back with a escort down the mountain. Now our force was reduced about 20 people and that was no good.

We continued up the mountain and I ran into a large force of Filipinos who told me to stop and pointed their weapons at me. My platoon was about 25 yards in back of me, so I yelled out for Shelton. He came running up and when he saw the size of the force he sent back for our platoon leader. When he came up he also was overwhelmed by the size and called up the machine gunners and their weapons and set them up. In the meantime our Company commander came up and heard the demands from the White guy dressed in Navy fatigues. His answer was to fire over the heads of the Phillipinos and tell them to move or he would lower the guns. Again the White guy identified himself as a Naval office with 150 Flip Guerrillas and they wanted food, weapons and ammo. He also stated that if those weren't given to him that he would take them from us. The skipper fired another burst over their heads and gave them 1 minute to move out. They left! We found out later that this guy had escaped capture on bataan and had been a pain in the ass to the Japs until we landed. This was the first time our skipper showed any guts and I got new respect for him.

We got to the top of the mountain without seeing another Jap, a distance of about 7 or 8 miles. We set up a bivouac and dug in to await orders. The first nite was a wild one. First someone had put his canteen cup on a branch of a tree and during the night some asshole thought it was a Jap and shot the hell out of it. In the morning the owner saw what happened and the owner and the shooter had one big fist fight, as this was the only canteen left in the outfit. We had a ball watching it until the first soldier came up and stopped it.

We had made some fires that could be seen in the dark to cook by and to keep warm and either the Japs or our own people dive bombed us around 11 or 12 o'clock midnight. This scared the living piss out of us as the falling bombs made a loud screeching noise and fortunately they missed by over 200 yards. This ended any sleep this night and doesn't say too much for the accuracy's of the Japs or our own airforce, anyhow no more fires at night.

From this point we started moving out on patrols. On the first one I really hurt myself and was too embarrassed to report it. I was leading the platoon in thick jungle and looked down through a opening and saw that I was about 50 feet off the ground. I was standing on a log and in my shock I slipped and fell damn near losing my gun while landing flat on my ass on top of the log. I was in pain but got up and back tracked back to Shelton and told him the story of the Ravine and not possible to cross. We changed direction and went through less dense jungle and running into a company of Japs. Everyone started shooting them at us and us at them. It was so fast and furious that there was no time to think about it. I was next to Shelton when a Jap charged us yelling and screaming in Japanese. Shelton started shooting when he was about 25 feet from us putting at least 25 rounds of tracer bullets into him. When they hit they set his clothes on fire and that is when he turned and ran away. I was shooting at him when he suddenly went down dead. This guy had to be on something as when the battle was over and we checked him out he had about 30 rounds in him. This was the type of person that we had to battle every day. we gathered ourselves up and returned to base.

Now we were really getting short of food and ammo. We were told that we were getting a air drop of supplies and to put our markers out about 100 yards from camp. The skipper got word that they were on their way so we moved out close to the drop area. This is where it got to be funny. They made the drop and as we started to move in to recover the supplies we saw Japs running at full bore towards them. Now it became a race. We didn't shoot and they didn't shoot. Everyone grabbed what they could and made tracks toward their own areas. We didn't chase them and they didn't come after us. What a war when your hungry! The new 10 in 1 rations were included along with our beans. No instructions came with the new rations, but we soon discovered that they had to be cooked. Raw bacon, powdered eggs, powdered milk, etc. was no good raw. I wondered how the Japs figured this one out.

It's been quite for a while and my turn for perimeter guard came up. After one trip when we ran into Japs on patrol the skipper figured that we had better post a guards out around the perimeter about a quarter mile from camp. This I didn't like as it was raining hard and I had rather be under a Poncho in a hole sleeping instead of getting my ass wet. Anyway my first time was my last. I had a bad case of diarrhea and had spent the night doing my thing in my helmet as there was no way I would get out of my hole in the dark with this bunch of trigger happy assholes. I was supposed to be at my station for about 2 hrs. It was in a deep forest and so damn quite that every sound made me take my safety off. If I had been attacked or had encountered a Jap patrol I was sure that there was no way I could live through it as I knew that no one would come to my rescue. I found a hollow tree and made myself invisible. After about 2 hours of this I became bored and no relief showed up. Just then a flock of chickens came through and I let loose a volley and killed three of them. What a racket a M1 makes in a quite Jungle! I gathered them up and started back to camp when I heard a noise on the trail. The whole damn platoon had heard the shooting and was coming out. I told them that I had made a mistake and that there was no Japs out there. They seemed to be damn happy that they weren't getting into a fire fight. When I got back to camp I raised hell with the first soldier for not giving me a relief and was told that the skipper had changed his mind and they forgot me. At least I had some fresh meat to cook.

I went to first aid to see what could be done about my boils and diarrhea and to get them treated. (everyone had boils, jungle rot, yellow fever and/or diarrhea). When I returned I saw a bunch of guys hunkered over a fire cooking my chickens in my helmet. After this my helmet was so soft I threw it away. I was invited to share but declined knowing the history of that helmet.

As I remember it was just before Thanksgiving when we were told to go out on Patrol again. My platoon was chosen to be the lucky ones which meant I was point man. We moved out with good old Dave in the lead and not expecting to encounter any Japs as they were getting scarce in our area. We came to a clearing with numerous huts about 50 yards apart. I waited for a few moments and couldn't see any Japs so moved into the clearing to check some of the huts out. As I came up to the first one I could see a sock hanging out of the front window. Not being on guard for anything, what I did next almost cost me my life. I reached up to the window and pulled the sock through and was just standing there looking at it as it didn't belong to any G.I. When I looked back up at the window a Jap appeared and we just both stared at each other for a

moment. He very calmly reached back inside for his gun and stuck it out the window aiming it at my head. In the meantime I'm trying to fire and the damn safety is on. Shelton came up behind me and saw what was happening and yelled at me to duck as he fired over my head killing the guy. There must have been a bunch of them in there as we could hear them running through the bushes. That was a close one!. Also got me into Stars and Stripes mag.

Billy Parham our platoon leader decided to follow them to see where they were headed. Billy was only a few years older than the rest of us and the only 2nd Lt. platoon leader in the whole damn Army, that's how screwed up we were. This proved to be not a very good decision. They led us into a valley and we were both trapped. We couldn't get out and neither could they. The shooting started and got hot and heavy. There was about 50 of them and 40 of us. I took up a stand behind a tree on the side of a hill and immediately drew machine gun fire. The tree was only about 4 inches in diameter and I got creased in the leg. it wasn't serious but burned like hell. It took about a half an hour to get them to move out of the valley and that only happened when we brought up the mortars and cleared a path for them.

We must have killed about half of them and only got a few wounded on our side, nothing serious. When we got back I went to first aid and had my crease sewed up and bandaged. Never got the purple heart for it but didn't give a damn. They told me I wasn't eligible as I wasn't hospitalized. We were told to search them and being the scout I wasn't involved. As one of the guys turned a dead one over a grenade under him went off. Luckily my guy got out of the way and wasn't hurt. The damn Japs booby trapped their own dead by putting live grenades under them. The grenades happened to be American as theirs had to be bumped on something hard to fire them. They probably brought them down from Bataan. We had gotten some replacements and they wanted trophies and all they got was hurt. This was good as they learned fast or got dead. We packed up and went back to camp.

It was getting close to Thanksgiving and were running out of Japs. So we moved back down the mountain and dug in near a Airfield named Burauen. One humorous thing that happened on our way down was near Dagami. A marine field Artillery Battalion in a field adjacent to the road. They had stretched a large banner over the road stating that "**With the grace of God and the help of the Marines, Mac Arthur would retake the Philippines**". We thought it was funny but old Mac didn't. He shipped their ass out posthaste leaving us without artillery support and those guys were good.

CHAPTER 6

Taking a break the Army way

We set up a new bivouac near a airfield located on the main road into Dagami. Don't even remember the damn place, even though we fought our way thru here in October. It's around the 1st of December now, still raining and miserable. I dug in with a fellow I had never seen

before. Reason was that we were down to only a couple of people left in our squad due to high casualties and our company was only operating at about 50%. The guy was not a new man but a veteran like me. A new guy got moved in from another platoon and made buck Sergeant in my squad. We never at any time had another leader in our group so this had to be political. He was from Boston and family friends of some big politicians. This really caused a poor attitude in the survivors of my squad. Needless to say he was a complete asshole.

A mess hall had been built across the road from us which at least gave us hot meals. Any hot food tasted good! We had just finished digging in when we were told to get ready to go on patrol in the mountains. They just can't give us a break. These patrol's were harder than being up in the mountains with our C.P. located up there. At times we had to fight ambushes going up and ambushes coming down. We were fighting the stragglers from the Jap Infantry and they were tough and desperate. None would give up as their leaders told them that we would torture all captured. We had no intent to take any prisoners anyhow and they should know that by now. They had very little leadership and usually fought on their own, which could be very viscous. On our first patrol up the mountain we ran into what appeared to be a entire company with officers and they were organized.

We moved into a small village on top of the mountain and ran into machine gun fire. We fought our way thru to the outskirts of the village and stopped just short of tall Elephant grass. (This was grass about 8 to 10 foot tall and very thick). We formed a line and everyone started to empty clips of ammo thru the grass about waist high. We could hear them retreating and Parham brought up a Mortar platoon with their 81mm. mortars and they started to lob shells over us. The damn fool in charge got excited and moved the rounds into us instead of away. 81mm. mortars are really devastating and kill within 30 foot. Shelton grabbed me and we ran back to where they were set up. Shelton yelled at the Lt. in charge to stop his fire as he was killing us. The guy didn't pay any attention so Shelton shot at him and the firing stopped. We ran back up the hill to our squad and Parham decided to move into deeper bush. We got about 50 feet in and I was crawling on my belly being lead man not wanting to get shot by our own troops. All of a sudden there was a Jap kneeling in front of me. I shot about 5 times and he went down. I saw that it was a Jap officer with a sword and a pistol which I immediately took off him and got the hell out of there.

The Japs started to lob mortars in so we decided to get the hell off the mountain. We ran all the way to the bottom where Parham called in the Artillery. In those days I could run 5 miles and not work up a sweat. That night we could see the shells bursting all over the mountain, so the next day we went up again. That night I had to show my sword off to everyone in the whole company as no one had ever seen on before. I was a local hero. The only problem was that I had to wear it at all times or someone would steal it.

In the morning we went up the hill again. When we got close to the old position we called in the artillery and they cut loose for about 5 minutes with us moving in as they raised their fire. Nothing is more sickening than the smell of cordite. Didn't see any dead Japs but as I started thru

the high grass I heard something in front of me. I held my breath as long as I could when all of a sudden a damn Jap got up in front of me. Twice in two days same area. He stopped, looking surprised and I put a couple of rounds in his belly. I don't think that I would ever shoot someone that close again as he almost fell on me. The only trophy he had on him was a pair of chopsticks in a case which I took. Don't know why as I was not a souvenir hunter. Watching someone die like that is etched into your memory forever. You never forget it. At this point I didn't feel like moving on so sat down on the trail to wait for my platoon. They came back thru and we moved out avoiding the tall grass and didn't see anymore Japs. I think that they were hiding in the tall grass and I don't blame them, because if they came out they were dead. At this point we decided to go back down the hill to our camp.

I guess that we had done our part as the job was assigned to another platoon to finish up. Made me happy as hell as I didn't want to go up there again. It gave us a few days of just setting in the sun when it came out and doing nothing. Around the 7th of December around dusk a formation of what we thought were cargo planes came over and people started to jump out. We were fascinated and just stood there watching thinking that some type of maneuvers by the airborne troops. We had no idea that they were Jap paratroopers as never before had they ever done this. Shortly we could hear shooting about a half mile from us near the airport and word came down that the Japs were attacking in force to try to take it.

We were told to hold our positions and dig in deep. Again I dug in with a stranger named Withrow who was a asshole. We agreed to 2 hour watches, or at least I thought so. It was about 2 o'clock in the morning when I was awakened by a voice speaking Japanese directly into our hole. My buddy who was supposed to be on watch grabbed his gun and started to shoot. I almost crapped my pants when this happened. He emptied his gun at the Jap while that poor Jap was running away screaming. Guess it scared the living shit out of him also. Both of us stayed alert the rest of the night and that kept our mortars going the rest of the night with flares every few minutes to light up the area. When it started to get light we crawled out of our holes to see what was happening and found a dead Jap about 50 feet from our hole. My buddy fired 9 times and put 8 rounds in him in the dead of the night, what shooting! The shooting stopped at the airfield and the word came down what happened.

We were told that the Japs had overran the airforce personnel and that a company from the 96th was called in to retake the airfield. Heavy fighting took place and what broke their back was a guy who crawled up the control tower with a machine gun and not only took all their fire but killed a bunch of them. I don't know what happened to him but I understand that he got the congressional medal for that action. You never know what someone will do at any given time. I myself probably would not have done it-but you never know. We didn't do much the rest of the day but sat in the sun when it came out. Needless to say I found another guy to dig in with as the other guy was nuts and I wanted to live a little longer. Also found out that the Japs had gotten into a field hospital and killed everyone in it. Another reason we didn't take any prisoners.

At night you could hear sounds coming from the mess tent across the road and no-one wanted to check it out. We finally figured out that the Japs were hungry and raiding for whatever they could get. As far as the food was concerned they were welcome to that crap. Shortly just as we got settled in the brass told us to get ready to move to a new location. They put us about halfway between Dagmi and Tacloban and for the first time in over 2 months we had a roof over our heads. We were put up in tents with a real messhall and decent food, well as good as the army could provide. We also got sick call and I could get my boils and wound attended to. The boils were really painful and the only treatment was lancing them. One of the good things was getting new uniforms and a new type of canvas shoe. Also Shelton had befriended two young Phillipinos who could speak Japanese and gave them old uniforms and called them scouts. It was a little late but we got a kick out of it.

We didn't set on our asses long as replacements started to come in and this was not good news. It meant that we were not though fighting. In a few days I was given the task of taking a platoon of new recruits out to a empty field and see how well they could shoot. This is where I got into trouble as Turley said I was up for Noncom and this day was hotter than hell. As we started out I appointed a new guy as acting corporal and hitch hiked a ride to a empty field and waited for them. Here came the asshole I had put in charge and he looked and sounded like a real pro with his Hup,Tup,Trup sound.

The first thing I asked them was if they had fired a gun. Over 50% said no. that's when I found out how long that they had been in the army and where they came from. Some had only been thru basic training and were sent right over to Leyte as replacements. Some had been in a little longer in trucking battalions, cooks, S.C.U. and training camps. The first thing I did was to show them how to load a clip into a M1 rifle. This can be a very dangerous undertaking if you don't have a fast thumb. If when you push the clip in and don't get your thumb out of the way you have fractured it. Out of about 40 guys we only lost two of them and had to send them back to medical and this was only loading the weapon. I kept them there long enough to use up all our ammo and tell them that they were combat ready.

I put the same guy in charge to march them back to camp and again hitch hiked a ride in a jeep. The trouble started when this idiot marched the troops into camp with his hup,tup and trup and I wasn't there to head him off. I had gone into my tent to wait for them and had fallen asleep. I was woke up by the 1st soldier who tipped over my cot and he was really pissed off. He told me that my chances of making Sergeant were gone and I told him to go to hell. He couldn't do anything to make my life more miserable than it was and I sure didn't want to be responsible for other people.

The new troops needed some experience so it was decided to move us back into the hills for a week or two. We didn't go all the way to the top again but dug in near a river at the bottom of the hills. From there we hiked into the hills, one platoon at a time trying to find some Japs. Every now and then we would come across some and take them out. We took no prisoners as was

our practice and the new guys wouldn't get into the action when the firing started so the old timers had to do it.

At least we could take a bath every few days now. We were camped right on the river and the women would come down to wash their clothes while we were bare assed naked. If we looked at them we could catch them peeking looks under their hats which were huge. One guy couldn't handle it any more and followed one of them up the trail to camp and threw her in the bushes. When I got back to camp the skipper was mad as hell as the women after the assault came right into camp yelling that she had been zig-zig without her permission. He lined up the whole company and marched the girl up and down to point out the culprit who had raped her. She couldn't identify the person, but the skipper knew who as only one person had gouged off his beard with a knife and was bleeding from it. Guess the skipper figured that that was enough punishment. Not only that but the river wasn't sanitary as it was loaded with dead Japs and probably some Phillipinos and Americans. Some of the guys came down with Jaundice and a snail disease. We sure were a sorry lot.

CHAPTER 7

Tacloban

It was getting close to Christmas so they pulled us out of the hills. We didn't go back to the old area but instead marched into Tacloban and settled on the airstrip. We were set up in squad tents with a real messhall. It's starting to get real hot and everything is a casual atmosphere, no falling-out for formations or saluting. I guess that they figured that what we had been through enough and to just take a good rest. One of the first things that Shelton did was arrange to have a squad picture taken as this was his squad and he controlled it with an iron hand. If you crossed Shelton you had to fight him and he fought dirty. I don't ever recall any one beating him, except he knew that I wasn't scared of him. I still have that picture of the bunch of assholes.

We spent most of our time sleeping and swimming. Now and then we would have a drunken orgy whenever we good find the booze. The Japs were still making bombing runs on Tacloban from Luzon. They usually came in with dawn and the anti-aircraft guns would fire 3 rounds fast round to tell us to head for shelter. The bad part was that they had learned the recognition signals of our planes and would get into the formations and as our planes were landing they would drop a string of bombs right down the middle of the runway. Our planes varied the blinking of their running lights and were changed each day. However they would wait over the mountains and join in the approach and make their running lights the same as ours. Instead of landing they would drop their load and get the hell out of there.

One of the new guys got a nickname "air raid". This guy was a walking time bomb. You could come up behind him and he would jump and damn near faint. At night to protect himself from an air raid he tied his mosquito net up, then lift the side of the tent up so he could slide under it. He then would put his helmet on a stake outside and make sure that he had a deep hole

to fall into. One night while getting boozed up we got a bright idea. We waited until he was asleep and tied his mosquito net down to his cot, let his tent down and put rocks on it to hold it down. Then tied his helmet to a stake by the chin strap with a short piece of rope. Then filled his hole with water. Sure enough the air raid warning came. This guy hit the side of his net with such a force he tore it open. This didn't slow him down as he ran into the side of the tent. He dug a hole like a dog would under the rock and came up running. He grabbed his helmet off the stake and when he hit the end he went ass over appetite. He recovered to dive into the water filled hole. We thought that he was having a convulsion and that made us damn sorry that we did it. He just didn't belong with a combat outfit and the damn brass ignored it and wouldn't let him out. From then on we left the guy alone.

Shelton found some shit birds (Navy shore personnel) camped a short ways from us. Seems like they were Seabees with a very poor attitude. We were considered by them to be a bunch of ignorant assholes and it took Shelton to prove different. I had gone swimming and didn't take my sword with me. Shelton found out that there were some See-Bees looking for souvenirs so he made a deal for my sword without my knowledge. For a five tube radio, a thousand bucks and a dozen bottles of booze he traded for my sword. I had just came in from swimming and was setting on my cot looking for my sword when Shelton came in with the loot. At first he didn't tell me what he had done but when I asked the whereabouts of the sword he informed me that it was gone. At that point Shelton handed me a bottle of booze and 500 bucks and that was it. It didn't pay to argue with him so we opened a bottle of booze and started to drink. Shelton plugged in his radio and nothing came out of it. We did not know anything about electronics and couldn't figure out why it wouldn't play. About this time the platoon Sergeant came in and after looking into the back of it started to laugh and he told us that it needed the tubes, five of them to be exact. Shelton's face turned red and we could see the anger building up. Now this was one person you did not cross. He took out two hand grenades and unscrewed the fuse in one of them and dumped the powder out. Then replaced the fuse. He put the dead grenade in one pocket and the live one in the other and said that we were going for a walk. When we arrived at the shitbirds tent, one of them looked at the radio and burst out laughing. He asked Shelton what was wrong and Paul said "lets go inside for a moment". The guy that did the original trading was setting on his bunk and Shelton wanted to know why the radio wouldn't play. The guy said that it was very simple. All it needed was tubes that he had and that they were \$100.00 apiece. Shelton told him that he didn't think so and said "I'll see you in hell" and took out the dead grenade, pulled the pin and threw it on the guys bunk, turned and ran out. Now there was probably 20 guys in there and they almost tore the tent down getting out. All they heard was a "**POP**"! The shitbird screamed at Shelton that he was nuts and we all agreed as Shelton pulled out the live grenade. Shelton had his Thompson Sub machine gun with him as he never went anywhere without it. I told them that Paul had every other round in that gun loaded with tracers (which he did) so that he could see them hit. Shelton again asked for the tubes and I informed them that the grenade in his hand was live. They immediately turned over the tubes and moved their tents to a new area away from us.

In January 1945 we were told to pack up as we had to go to Samar to cut off Japs trying to leave Luzon as the troops had just made their beach head north of Manila. We were loaded onto Torpedo boats at Tacloban and given a fast trip to the Island of Samar near a town called Lapaz. There was a small village in the area and a church that must have been 200 years old. While we were waiting to move out we took a trip through the church. This place was just waiting to be looted as everything was so old. Before we could do any damage the First soldier came and got us and told us to saddle up and move out. We headed North and inland, into the mountains.

When we reached our destination, which was a crossroads we dug in and set up heavy weapons. After zeroing in the mortars and heavy machine guns we just sat and waited. After a week of no Japs and not even a Phillipino we pulled back to our landing place and wondered why in the hell we ever came here. The PT boats still had their engines running and I asked one why. He told me that it takes up to a half hours to start the diesels and they never shut them off. (Our hero Kennedy put his boat in the middle of the Jap shipping lanes and turned off his engines. Can you believe that this asshole became a hero and President). The trip back was uneventful but made some connections with the Navy guys for souvenirs and booze. This worked out real well for us as part of the deal was a supply of Navy food. In a few hours we were back in Tacloban, our home away from home.

The next day I went swimming again and saw the most awesome thing I had ever seen. Our Battalion commander decided to go for a swim not taking into account the size of the beach swells and breakers coming in, which could be huge. He marched out about 50 yards being the good leader he was and was bowled ass over appetite by a huge wave and sucked under. Me and another guy dove in after him and pulled him out. We had a big laugh for a long time after watching that. Even though we had yelled at him to watch the breakers he paid no attention. Anyhow I was sure that it was the same colonel that asked me earlier at Tabon-Tabon if there were any Americans around. The other guys were pissed off that we had dove in and saved him. You never know what you will do in any given circumstance.

When I got back to our area the Company commander wanted to see me. Seems like Shelton was drunk and setting inside his tent firing at a coconut tree. There must have been a hundred people standing around watching what was happening, but no one would volunteer to take the gun from him. I was ordered to do it and laughed, but when he said if I didn't do it he would shoot him through the tent and kill him as he was nothing but a pain in the ass anyway. At this point I said that I would do my best and walked up to the tent. I walked slowly to the front of the tent, called out Paul's name and told him that it was Dave and I was coming in. For some reason he stopped shooting and told me to come in. I asked him what the problem was and he was lonely for his girl friend and hadn't heard from her for a while. I told him that its O.K. as I never get a letter and it does not bother me one bit. He gave me a pistol and a bottle of booze and asked me to join him. I guess that we spent about a half hour shooting and drinking when Paul passed out. By this time my ears hurt from the noise and my hand was swollen from shooting the 45 cal. pistol. Anyhow the Ammo was almost all gone anyway. I pulled Shelton out the door and

staggered over to the skipper and fell down. I must have been a sight as I can remember him bursting out in laughter and telling me to get Shelton and go sleep it off.

About this time we were told to go watch a movie about the retaking of the Philippines starring us and sponsored by Mc Arthur and Macy L Dill. It's absolutely amazing to set and watch something that you know is a complete setup. One scene showed Mc Arthur at the beachhead leading the troops in. This received a lot of catcalls and another scene showed good old Macy L Dill leading the charge into Tabon-Tabon. This was more than we could stomach and left before it was over.

Because of the fear of the Japs attacking the airfield our platoon was moved onto the airstrip. When I say onto I mean right in the middle of it. This did not last very long because of a collision by a aircraft and our tent. One of the navy planes came in on a wing and a prayer, skidded sideways, one wing grabbing the top of the tent and taking it with it as it skidded down the airstrip. I was not in it when this happened, but witnessed it from afar. Scared the hell out of the guys in it and they refused to reset it up and go back to it. The only choice that the big shots had was to move us back to our old place.

Just when we figured that we would finally get a break the big guns decided that we should patrol the airstrip at night. My squad was chosen to be the first involved and this made us mad as hell as it cut into our partying. Besides staying up all nite and protecting the big guns from the Japs we had to patrol in Jeeps and report any attacks on the airstrip. Fortunately for me I was doing something else and couldn't enjoy this activity. They loaded up booze and five guys in a Jeep and took off. At first it was just drinking and that was not enough. For a while they said that they just spun circles in the dust and then Shelton decided to play some games with the planes. The airforce had lined all the B-24s up in a line and the game was to dodge in and out between them, dodging the props and wheels. The game ended when they collided with a wheel of a bomber, throwing them onto the coral. This caused numerous dents in their bodies with the end result of sobering them up. They righted the jeep noticing that the landing wheel that they hit was somewhat broken as was the jeep. They gathered their wits and pushed the jeep into the ocean as far as they could. Unfortunately the tide was in and in their stupor they didn't notice it. They took off for our area yelling at the top of their voices that they had been attacked by a bunch of Japs, alerting the entire airstrip and while they were searching for the enemy they went to sleep in our cozy little tents.

Inasmuch as no Japs could be found that night they started to doubt their story. They heard about the coming inquisition and took off for Dagami in a stolen Jeep from the airforce. Damn airforce people just let them set around not knowing about us being on the loose. They came back when everything quieted down and got ahold of the first soldier to explain what happened and to inform him that with his co-operation that we knew where we could get steaks from. Some shitbirds that we ran into in Dagami were looking for souvenirs of which we had quite a few and willing to trade for steaks of first quality. This got the co-operation of the first soldier and he got us into a arms cache of Jap rifles at the M.P.s headquarters. It was a very

simple matter to make a midnight raid and gather up our loot as it was not guarded at night. Our mission was a complete success when we swapped the guns for steaks and everyone was happy. Our skipper didn't care where we got them or how and the airstrip incident was completely forgotten.

Shelton came down with jungle rot and a snail infection. They told him that he was going to have to go to Hawaii to be cured which made him happy. In the meantime he gave me his Thompson machine gun which I didn't really want and got ready to leave. Just before he was to ship out word came down to get ready to go to another Island and we thought that it would be for a rest, maybe Australia. Shelton then refused to leave the outfit and took his damn gun back much to my relief. The damn thing was worn out any how. No rifling left in the bore and bullets just sprayed all over hell. If he hadn't taken it back I would have sold it to some shitbird and got my money back for the sword he stole from me.

Things are getting really slow Our booze was running out and our airforce was getting ready to move to Luzon to bomb other places. Before they left we had one hell of a drinking party with some crew members of a B-24 that we had become friends with. As a matter of fact Shelton had gone on a bomb mission one night that very few knew of. At the height of the drinking the pilot said that he was not going on another mission as he had filled his quota and they wouldn't let him go on leave. We asked him how he was going to accomplish this and he said to be at the airstrip at 4 sharp and he would show us. At about 6 in the morning they started to move out to the end of the strip in formation to take off. You didn't have to be woke up to miss the excitement as the noise of 50 or so bombers got your attention. As they lined up to take off he was about #3 and as he taxied into position and reached the middle of the strip he pulled his wheels up. That was all for the day. It took them most of the morning to jack the plane up and get it off the strip. Amazingly they did nothing to him and that really pissed him off. The only thing that they did was move him to the rear of the formation. In a few days they left for Luzon.

It's getting into March now and the rumors are that we are going to Australia for training. The only problems with that was that all the company's were being brought up to strength and I knew that we were being lied to again. These rumors are making us all nervous. This in no way affected our partying. Got bombed again and did something that I later regretted. We got to talking about our first soldier and it came up what to do with him. The more we drank the worse it got. Shelton suggested that he be killed and that I be the one to do it as he harassed me more than anyone. He was always on my ass for something I did or didn't do. Later on they told me what happened. Shelton gave me the Thompson and helped me to his tent. I went in with the intention of blowing his head off, but the gun wouldn't fire. This is where I passed out. They told me that the first soldier finally showed some emotion by screaming and pissing in his pants. No one was concerned as the gun I had was empty, which I guess I didn't know. When I came to, Shelton had hauled me back to our tent and was waiting for me to wake up. The first soldier and I had a long talk along with Shelton , and Paul verified that some of the things that the first soldier had been on me about and had to do disciplinary action was not mine but one of his finks, of which we had plenty. This cleared the air between me and the first and I had no more trouble

with him. We knew most of the finks and singled them out. Each one was told that if they ever again made up any stories about Shelton or I they were dead. They had good cause to believe us because of our reputation. That ended all my problems on Leyte and gave me a chance to die for my country on Okinawa. **SUCH A DEAL!**



CHAPTER 8

Okinawa

It was getting to the middle of March and we were issued new equipment. We reasoned at this time that if we were going to Australia that they wouldn't go to this trouble. Our canvas shoes were traded for combat boots and ammo and hand grenades issued all around. one morning bright and early we were told to saddle up and get ready to board L.S.T.s. Now we knew damn well that Australia was out. Nobody would tell us anything, but we figured out that it was going to be another beachhead. We loaded at night and stayed on board, now we knew that we were leaving Leyte. Early in the morning we moved out of Leyte Gulf and started to get into a convoy heading due North. We could tell this as the sun came up on our right. As we moved north we picked up ship's all around us. Aircraft carriers, Battleship's Destroyers, Cruisers and whatnot. Again there was a line of ships that stretched clear across the Horizon and we couldn't see the end.

The next day we got the information we really weren't looking for. We had been chosen to invade a Island called Okinawa located South of the Japanese Islands. We were told that we

would have to climb over a seawall after wading through about 100 yards of Coral. I figured that this should finish me off as there was no way a person could live through that. We spent the time until the first of April cleaning our guns and talking about home. I had been gone from the U.S. about a year and a half and some of our replacements had only been overseas about a Month. We were told that this was going to be a easy one as all the Japs were in the North part of the Island, and this task fell upon the Marines. All we had to do was go South about 10 miles and occupy a City by the name of Naha, which should only take about 3 days and we were through. The night before the beachhead one of our religious fanatics of which we had more than one, threw his guns and ammo over the side of the ship and told us all to do the same as the world was coming to a end that morning. The poor bastard was really surprised when the sun came up and the Island in front of us. Funny thing was that there was no resistance at all at the beach. I had heard that some of us got tired of this type of bastard in our outfit and wanted him out of there. Later we knew that he really got a favor as he lived and thousands of others didn't.

The Battlewagons got as close to shore as possible and with their big guns pounded holes through the sea wall. This was good news as it meant that we did not have to climb over it. Not knowing even what day it was we were told that it was the first of April, what a April fools day! At 7:30 A.M. we loaded up in the Alligators and went into the water to wait for the beachhead siren to sound off. We circled around for about a half an hour gaining other units for the assault and started to circle a battlewagon. We were right under the big guns when we heard the squawk box on the ship say "gunners clear your guns" and we found out immediately what that meant. They fired their last rounds out and drove us sideways thru the water and almost deafened us. 8 o'clock sharp the sirens went off and in we went.

It was a rough beach to hit as our alligator got stuck about 100 yards out and we had to wade thru the coral to shore. Fortunately we didn't receive any Jap fire going in which saved us. All we had to do was wade thru the big holes in the sea walls and form up with our platoons. We formed into a column of ducks and off we go. Where in the hell the Japs were we didn't know, but were soon to find out. I'll never forget a Piper cub stuck on a power line which he apparently hit making a pass over the beach. I was later told that he was a observer for the big guns. The scary thing was that we were marching right down the middle of the road and no damn Japs. Every now and then we would get out of formation to get some fresh vegetables in fields along the road. We stopped that as soon as we found out that they used human fecal matter for fertilizer.

We started to come upon some small villages surrounded by walls and the firing started. This was something that we hadn't been trained for or told about. What a intelligence Department! The afternoon became hectic as we were going from house to house, firing and throwing hand grenades. Still haven't seen any Japs. We learned on Leyte not to advance without plenty of firepower. We finally got through the village and worked our way to the top of a ridge that was in a forest of pine trees and dug in for the night. So far no casualties, at least in my outfit. Around dusk right after we had eaten, Shelton yelled at me to come over to where he was. He asked me to watch cross the valley for movement on the side of the hill.



We concentrated our efforts in the area he pointed out and sure enough we saw movement. As far as we could see it was two Japs with bushes tied to their helmets. You might call it camouflage 101. I told Paul that I would shoot above them if he would shoot below them and that way we could bracket them. It was about 200 yards and a hard shoot. Shelton shot first and they started up the hill wide open. I tried to lead them by shooting to their right in the direction that they were going but they turned straight up the hill. We missed them completely, but I am damn sure that they knew how close they came to seeing their maker. If they were scouts I doubt if they would volunteer again. This was still the quietest I had ever seen a beachhead.

It's morning again and no activity at all during the night. The rain is starting and it seems that no matter where we are it has to rain. If I am going to die I guess it will be a wet going. We move off the ridge and across the valley onto a smaller hill. Now we are starting to draw Jap fire. Funny thing no Jap tanks or Artillery fire yet which was very unusual, with us knowing that they had a lot of troops somewhere. All the rain did was to make it difficult to move. As we move off the hill toward a flat area we ran into huge concrete edifices. These had to be the tombs that we were told about and not to disturb them. Perhaps they should have told the Japs the same thing as they were firing at us from them as we went by requiring that we blow them in with bangalore torpedoes.

Another small village in front of us. This time we used more caution and entered very carefully. We got into a firelight and slowly started to advance. Hard to see the bastards and they were on you even before you could see them. We were taking a break behind a stone wall when one of the new guys looked up and saw a Jap was getting ready to throw a grenade. Our B.A.R. man fired a burst into the Jap and he came over the wall into us. This shook up the new guy and I

swear that his hair turned white on the spot. He was going ape on us so he was sent back to the aid station and I never saw him again.

This is day two and from this time on everything is fuzzy. We are seeing more Japs and drawing their fire. It was getting hard to understand why Shelton, Vargus or me didn't get hit as our casualties were high and already getting replacements on only the second day. Kummuth took a round in the chest so he was out of it. Some guys are just luckier than others as I can only see about 6 of them that I hit the beach with. When someone is killed or hit in combat you don't really pay any attention to it, at least I didn't. It was getting close to nightfall and we decided to dig in and set up our parameter of identification. If we didn't do that our own troops would fire on us. This was not Leyte!

I can remember on the 5th of April that we had dug in adjacent to a road in a open field. Star shells would go all night and in the dark we heard some movement in front of us and sent up flares and started firing. I think that by this time we were getting spooked. When the firing quieted down we could hear screaming and children crying. After that it quieted down and at first light we discovered that the Japs had herded women and children in front of them to find out where our front lines were. Sadly we had killed about thirty of them by our fire. This really intensified our hatred of them, from now on absolutely no mercy for the Japs. We started to eat before saddling up and the Japs hit us with an intensive Mortar barrage. The guy next to me , one hole away took a direct hit on the head. I can't for the life of me remember the guys name but it seemed like I had known him for a long time. How in the hell can a guy be so unlucky as to take a hit right on top of the head. The guy in the hole with him blew his stack and had to be sent back to the aid station. Another one out. Losing two more was not good as the day hadn't even started yet. As we moved out I could remember a explosion right next to me that blew off my glasses breaking them. Without them I could not see fifty feet and figured that I was out of it. Not that easy as I was sent back to the company C.P. where I discovered that they had a dozen pair of them backed up just for me. How lucky can you get!

All the time that I had been in combat I had never seen a Jap being interrogated. War makes people do strange things. They had captured 2 Japs and they were being questioned by two guys who appeared to be Japanese-Americans. They apparently could not get anything out of him and they were beating the living shit out of him with a club. Not my problem so went back to my outfit. Anyone who believes that war isn't hell surely has no idea of what he is talking about.

From this point on I have absolutely no recollection of anything until the morning of the 6th of April. We were on the outskirts of a village, just below Kakasu ridge. To the right of us was a open field that we had to go through and because that the Japs were throwing more fire power at us, tanks were called up. Before the platoon showed up we came under heavy fire on our left flank and as we could see it was caused by large drums of explosives sailing thru the air and launched by rockets from caves. When these things hit the ground it was deafening and

everything shook. We found out later that this was another Jap invention. Why they didn't use artillery we didn't know. These things you could see coming and try to dodge them, Artillery you had no chance. When the Tanks showed up we were all hunched behind a stone wall parallel to the field. Our battalion commander was there with us. Hadn't seen him for a while. The tanks lined up and moved out about 50 yards . There was a guy out in front of the tanks firing into clumps of bushes trying to blow up land mines placed there. As I was leaning against the stone wall a Colonel came up and told me to get to the tanks and use the phone on the back to tell them to get the hell out of there. Like a damn fool I ran thru a mine field and grabbed the phone on the first tank I came to and told them what was happening and they buttoned up. All of a sudden we heard the swoose of artillery and it was not ours. This was coming from the direction of the ridge. We were bracketed by at least 5 shells and the first rounds were long. The next ones were short and we knew that they had us. I screamed into the phone for them to back out as fast as they could. They went into reverse and moved out and my buddy and I ran back to the wall. The Japs were a little stupid as they held their fire for about 5 minutes and we could see why as we looked towards the ridge. The planes were dropping Napalm and smoke to cover us up. This held up their artillery fire and enabled us to move out of there. This time the tanks did not move out with us.

One of our own planes got hit. We saw the wing fly off as a shell hit it. There was a lack of communication between us and the navy. Not unusual in combat. We moved out to the bottom of the hill to start our first assault. The fire from the Japs got really heavy and we wound up right in the middle of Jap pillboxes and taking a lot of hits. Up to this time I had been very lucky not to be hit as the bullets were coming very close and you could hear them pop and I swear that I actually saw them. Around noon we had advanced to within 50 yards of the first pillboxes and I could see fire coming from a clump of trees right in front of us. I got hunkered down in rocks that were the size of a good boulder and returned fire as did the other guys. It was too far to throw a grenade and in the excitement I stood up to get a better view and emptied a full clip in their direction, then reloaded. I must have still been exposed as a burst of fire from them hit my gun right on the clip blowing it into two pieces in my hands and I thought that I had been hit. I was only stunned. At this time I had no weapon and this was of great concern to me. As I looked to the side I saw one of our guys down and full of blood. I knew he was dead so dove to get his rifle and as I started back to my cover the bastards opened up on me and I got hit with ricochets off my rock cover. I guess it knocked me about 5 feet through the air and I didn't know what happened. It felt like I had been hit with a baseball bat as hard as someone could hit me. All I knew was that my left arm stopped working and I was bleeding like hell. Shelton jumped up and came over to me and held me down and tore off my shirt. I can remember him saying "Davy if you can get out of here your going home". He pulled my first aid kit and doused me with Sulfa Drugs and put a rough bandage around me to try to stop the bleeding.

I was not of any more use to the squad at this point so Shelton told me to get the hell out of there. The only way out was to walk or run. I waited for the firing to stop for a minute and got up running. As I left they opened up on me and I actually saw the bullets go between my legs and past my head. I don't know how they missed me but I made it to cover. By this time I had no idea

how I got to the aid station but there I was. I had lost my glasses and the casualties were so heavy I had to wait in line for a Doctor. I finally got to a Doctor that had me lay on a log face down and gave me a local in the shoulder. After he got through cutting on me he put a piece of skin and muscle under my nose that was about 5 inches in diameter and asked me if I thought that he had cut out a lot. He told me that because of the injury he had to go down to the bone to remove fragmentation and clean the wound as he didn't know when I would again get medical attention. Because the C.P. was also there I got another pair of glasses. Surprised that the Army didn't charge me for them. That was two in less than a week. From there I was put in the back of a Jeep and taken to a field hospital.

I couldn't stay there as there was no room ,so I was sent North to a 1st Marine aid station where they had some room for me. This I did not like as the Marines and Army could not get along at all. One of the shitbirds asked me how I got hit as to their knowledge there were no Japs on the Island as they had been all the way North and did not see any. I told him that if he went South he would soon find out. He came back with some smartass reply and I threw my cot at him with one hand. At this point a Sergeant came in and told all the Marines on sick call to saddle up and get ready to move out. This created a new problem as this was their aid station and had to go with them. What a war! There was about 10 of us, so the army came by and picked us up in truck and moved us back to our own area where there was now a cot available. A hospital ship had moved into Hagushi bay and was starting to take on wounded with the more severely wounded going first. My wound was treated for the 1st time in 3 days and it was really stinking and it's a wonder that I didn't get a bacterial infection, lord knows it hurt bad enough.

In the meantime the army had moved a artillery battalion into place around the hospital and every time they fired all the patients jumped a foot including me. The first night back to our own area we got quite a show. The Jap suicide planes started to come in, in waves one right after another. You could see the entire Island from my advantage point and the navy ringed it completely with Anti-aircraft fire. We were scheduled to board the hospital ship the following day but unfortunately the Japs suicide bombers dove into it and set it on fire ,even though they had lights on it from all over and huge red crosses on it. What a bunch of bastards! I know that this happened as I witnessed it with my own eyes. Seeing this was a new experience for me as I had never believed that anyone could do something like this. Once on Leyte the Japs had gotten into a field hospital and took swords to the wounded. They were all caught and killed on the spot.

It was decided to fly us out on C-54 hospital aircraft as Yonton airstrip was now operable. The only problem was that this was a fighter strip and was very short. We were loaded onto trucks and moved to the strip early in the morning. We were just standing around when our plane came in as most of us were ambulatory, even tho we were pretty badly shot up. Unfortunately it hit a bomb crater on landing and broke in half. At this point we were loaded back onto trucks and taken back to the hospital. The next morning bright and early we were back on the strip. This time it landed safely and we were put on board. The pilot came back and told us that the takeoff was going to be exciting as he had never taken off on such a short airstrip, but not to worry as he would do his best as he didn't want to die either. I guess that the worst thing that could happen

would be to ditch in the ocean and drown. The end of the runway was only about a mile from the cliffs and the ocean. He locked the brakes and got up to full throttle and the plane shook as if it was going to fall apart. I remember looking out the window and watching the wings go up and down at the tips. He released the brakes and we were off. We bounced a couple of times when he hit the jado rockets as he was trying to get airborne and as we came to the end of the strip we still were on the ground. All of a sudden the plane felt light and we were airborne with the cliffs just below us. This was my first airplane ride and as far as I was concerned----my last!

Much later I found out that there had been 12,520 Americans killed and 36,631 wounded. For the 82 days of the war 153 were killed/day and 447 wounded/day and I was one of them. Was this worth the pain and suffering. On Leyte our division had 603 killed and 1401 wounded. On Okinawa we lost 1598 killed and 5614 wounded. I will never know how I came thru this and they were not thru with me yet. I am sure that I would have been killed in the invasion of Japan.

After I found out where my Company commander was living I wrote to him to see if he remembered me. He didn't really remember me but remembered Paul Shelton. He told me that My Company got down to less than 30 men 3 times in capturing a hill called Dick Hill on Kakasu Ridge on Okinawa. I never got any further than the foot of the hill. I got a roster of the Division members that belonged to the current 96th Div. I didn't know any of these people so kissed them off.

CHAPTER 9

Recuperation at St. Louis College

As we were pulling away from the Island I couldn't have been more relieved. Between this and Leyte I thought that I had done my part for the war effort. As I looked out the window of the aircraft I saw fighter planes joining up with us. I asked the nurse what was happening and she told me that every since the Jap suicide plane attack on the hospital ship that all unarmed flights and hospital ships were getting fighter cover while in range of them. She also said that the day before a hospital plane had been shot down. Lord! If we had gotten off the ground that day it could have been us. Must have been destiny that we didn't fly that day. As we left the Island I could see the hospital ship still in the harbor with blackened areas all over it. These people have absolutely no compassion for their fellow man. Of course we at this time figured them only one generation from the apeman. Funny thing is that we had absolutely no fear of them, but I believe that we had instilled a great fear of us into them. I had killed my share with no regrets at all.

The guy in the litter next to me had not said much on takeoff. I noticed that both his arms were in casts and I had to ask him why. He was out of the 27th Division and told me that they were by the cliffs on the ocean and they got it from two fronts. The Japs started a attack and he was in a hole when one of them shot him thru the upper arm and as he turned to defend himself one had gotten behind him and shot him in the other arm so at this time he played dead. At the same time a Navy destroyer started shooting at them from the ocean, even tho they had their

front-line banners out. Their only defense was to lob 81mm mortars at them to get them to back off and all the while the Japs were trying to overrun and kill them. At this point he said he must have passed out and woke up in a field hospital not remembering how he got there. What a War!

We settled down to a long flight with the first stop at Christmas Island. This was a little Atoll about 100 sq. miles in size located in a Atoll named Kiribati. Because I was ambulatory the pilot invited me up to the co-pilots seat, while the copilot was taking a rest. As I looked close at him I thought that I had seen him before. He didn't volunteer who he was but later the nurse told me that he was a famous movie star. I guess that they weren't all draft dodgers or assigned to S.C.U. units(that is Army for sick, crippled and useless). The pilot told me that we would be landing in about a half a hour and at that time I would have to give up the seat to the co-pilot. This sorta worried me as I could see nothing but ocean from my litter by the window. We were slowly descending and all of a sudden I could see it. Looked about the size of a pea from our altitude. How in the hell he found this in all this expanse of ocean was to me absolutely amazing and he made a perfect landing.

We took on fuel and food, had a good meal at the messhall and we were off. I slept most of the way to Oahu as the trip at this point was boring. We landed about dusk and were loaded into a ambulance for a trip to the hospital. The asshole driving must have thought that this was a emergency as he turned on his sirens and went careening thru downtown Honolulu full speed. We pounded on the rear window and yelled that if he didn't slow down we were going to kill him. This only made him go faster and when we got to the hospital he jumped out and ran and we never did catch up to him. After 2 beachheads the thought of dying in down town Honolulu was not comforting. Because of the huge casualties the Army had taken over St. Louis college and converted it into a hospital. This was pure heaven. Good food, sheets and waited on hand and foot by the nurses. The only problem was sleeping in a bed after having been either on the ground or the hard deck of a troop transport. for almost a year. Also, after being treated like a homeless person it was really hard to imagine that life was this good. At anytime we wanted we could go to the messhall and either get ice cream or steak.

In a few days I was operated on to close up my wound. It's hard to imagine that they tried to close up a five inch hole by stitching it to-gather. A week later the doctor took out my stitches and asked me to move my shoulder. What a feeling when you can feel your skin coming apart and the wound opening. then the damn fools tried it, again to no avail. It took them about a month to come up with a solution to my problem. This time they figured that I would need a skin graft. Apparently they had never tried anything like this before and it was a sorry attempt. The back of my legs was raw where they took the skin from. Needless to say the graft didn't take.

While this was going on I heard that the first soldier was there. I found out from a nurse where he was and decided to visit him. *What a shock!* His leg was gone and he probably didn't weight 150lbs. He was laying with his eyes closed and when I said "Seidler" he woke up and took my arm in a death grip. He told me that no one had visited him. This was a man who had the reputation of being the most roughest, toughest, mean son-of-a-bitch in the army and was

crying. He said that he was sorry for all the things that he had done to me, but he hated Shelton and because we were friends he took it out on me instead of Paul, who he admitted he was scared of. I can remember looking at him and not feeling sorry. I told him to go to hell and walked away.

Shelton and Kummeth showed up. Kummeth had been there awhile before either me or Shelton and both had been hit pretty bad, Shelton in the leg and Kummeth in the chest taking out one of his lungs completely. When I found out that they were in the hospital we got to-gather again. Because of no security at the hospital we could walk off any time we wanted to. Usually we went downtown Honolulu, got drunk, loaded up coke bottles with booze and went back to the hospital and raised pure hell. What were they going to do to us, one with his arm and shoulder in traction, one that needed a cane to walk and one who couldn't walk 100 yards without setting down with only one lung. Again my biggest problem was my shoulder. Only thing holding it together was a wire cage and a bandage. On one of our trips we went down to King street which was nothing but warehouses and bars. You were only allowed three drinks and had to get out into line again. We had our three and wanted a fourth. Unfortunately the female bouncer had a different idea. She grabbed my shoulder and reopened my wound and when she saw that her attitude completely changed. She asked where we were from and to our surprise when we told her , she gave us the keys to her house and a bottle of booze. She said to wait for her but we drank the bottle before she got home and left her a note thanking her and took off. When we got back to the hospital we were charged with being A.W.O.L., but who gave a shit! We were then informed that we were being transferred to Schofield barracks hospital for more surgery, and that they were glad to get rid of us, having become a pain in the ass to them.

Around the 1st of May I was given my purple heart. I had just came back from Surgery and found it thrown on my bed when I woke up. I was so damn proud that I threw it in the trash can. A Nurse by the name of Irma Lime salvaged it and sent it home. It arrived about the same time that the Army informed my parents that I had been wounded a month after it happened. I love this country!

CHAPTER 10

Schofield Barracks

It took 10 months to get back to where we had all met and started from. Here we are at Schofield Hospital getting ready for more surgery. This time after the skin graft my arm was completely immobilized by securing it to a wire contraption that kept my arm in the air and unable to move it. Schofield barracks was not easy to escape from. M.P.s all over the place and a pass was required to leave the post. We really wanted to go to downtown Wahiawa ,just outside of the post. This did not stop us for long as we made acquaintance with another malcontent and formulated our plans. Danny was his name and being nasty was his game. We were now the big four instead of the big three. Danny made the arrangements for us to sneak out of the hospital in

the laundry truck which made daily trips to Wahiawa to drop off and pick up laundry. The first trip was uneventful as we just went in to pick up our booze and get back with no problems. The booze didn't last very long and our next trip is where we got into trouble. We decided to have a stopover in a bar on the wrong side of town. You will have to imagine what the four of us looked like. I was tied to a wire basket to keep my arm from moving, Kummeth had a hard time breathing from one lung, Danny had no fingers on one hand, and Shelton was on crutches. The more we drank the happier we became. Danny who hadn't had sex in six months was horny as all hell. He tried to play grab ass with one of the waitresses who immediately called for the bouncer. He made a dive for Shelton who smacked him with his cane. The bouncer tried to take on all four of us but he was losing and the fight moved to the outside. I can remember leaning up against the building trying to protect my arm and the other three getting the hell beat out of them by the bouncer. When the M.P.s showed up I got into it when they pulled their guns. We finally got the bouncer down and started to work on the M.P.s and we had just got their guns when more showed up. They threw us in a paddy wagon and took us to jail.

We were searched, interrogated, stripped of our belts and money and thrown into the drunk tank. The M.P. in charge was a Lieutenant and he didn't believe our story of having been attacked by a goon squad and that we had escaped from a mental ward in Schofield and needed to be treated with respect as all of us had been given the medal of honor for service in China. He didn't believe this and threw us in a jail cell. In the meantime the Colonel in charge of our ward in the Hospital was looking for us all over the place and found us in the drunk tank. He obtained our release and provided us with transportation back to the hospital. We really got our asses chewed out for this one and were watched very carefully from then on. Fortunately our Colonel was a combat officer and was easy on us. They removed our only way out of Schofield so we had to find other things to do.

It's now July and getting hotter than hell. My wound is finally starting to heal and they had removed the wire cage. Shelton and Kummeth had been released and Shelton with his rank got the possession of a hut with two bedrooms and Kummeth moved in with him. This just left me in the Hospital but I could come and go as I wished. Life was getting boring so for the want of something better to do we decided that we needed transportation. Stealing a jeep to roam around in was out of the question, so one day we were walking behind the hospital and discovered a large green area with a huge lawnmower on it. Inasmuch as it was idle and not being utilized properly this was going to become our transportation. Little did we know that this large expanse of grass was called a golf course and that the lawnmower was used to keep the grass short. In about a week we got up enough nerve to steal it, but 1st we had to make some arrangements with the mechanics at the 13th Airforce, which was located adjacent to the hospital. With the transfer of some money and the lawnmower they agreed to do it. I think that the agreement was in retaliation to the big shots who would not let anyone but officers play golf.

We decided to raid it one night and after midnight we went to the course and started it up. It was about 5 miles to the hanger we were going to and in the middle of the night with a damn one lunker making a huge racket and on top of this driving it on a two lane narrow road we took

off. Everything went well with Shelton driving and Kummeth and I hanging on. What a sight this was! A huge Lawnmower, making a racket with a one cylinder engine, in the middle of the night, on a two lane narrow road, with one guy driving and two hanging on for dear life, driving it right through the barracks area for the Jap Neise in training and no one stopping us or questioning us about it. It took a short time for the conversion to a small pickup. We never went to the golf course again but I'll bet it took a long time for them to mow the grass again.

We had a lot of fun with this thing and drove it until a stateside 2nd Lt. shipped us out after the war ended. We even stole a license plate from a Army vehicle so the M.P.s wouldn't stop us and throw us in the brig. There are times when I believe that everyone knew about this and never said a damn word, as it was all our way of getting back at the Officers and the Army. Everyone was getting tired of the military after 4 years of war and putting our asses on line every day. Our buddy who didn't go with us to Leyte was still at Schofield. He had made Master Sergeant and was put in charge of the bowling alley. Poor assholes like us who had no money or political pull did all the fighting and the rich got all the glory. However Bob was a nice guy and so being in charge of the alley we spent a lot of time there. Every night after he shut it down we took it over. What a blast! Now we had access to booze and fun and took the full advantage of it. This also became boring in a short time.

Bob's pull got him transferred home and discharged right after the war ended. He had never seen combat, younger than us, overseas a shorter time and got out first. So we had to devise a new form of entertainment. The bowling alley was right across from the movie theater so we would set in the alley until dark, then go across to the theater and steal a jeep. The Officers would bring their dates and when they went inside we jumped into the jeep and took off. In those days there were no keys in Vehicles. Shelton had gotten a pair of Lieutenants bars from a nurse and the damn fool Officers would leave their jeep authorizations on the seat. We would go in style to Honolulu, get drunk, drive to the Neise barracks, park the jeep, go to sleep and then get up early and call the M.P.s to report where the jeep was and watch them being fell out to explain how the damn thing got there. We believe that this caused numerous problems for our Neise buddies but war is hell. We had to stop this as we were close to being caught.

One day I decided to go to the large indoor pool at Schofield. I was doing slow laps because of my shoulder, when I noticed a guy doing high dives off the platforms. Now this guy was good! Surprisingly there was no one else in this huge pool expect for me and the diver. I got out to watch him and in about 15 minutes he was thru and came over to where I was and started talking to me. We introduced ourselves and he told me that his name was Sammy Lee and that name had no impact at all on me. During the 1952 Olympics that I was watching on our 1st TV that I found out who I had been talking to. He won a gold medal for platform diving in 1948 as well as 1952 and no one would believe that I had met and talked to him. Such is life.

The war being over we just sat around waiting for our time to be called to go home. This was the middle of August and Kummeth had found out that a Priest by the name of Spellman was coming to Scohfield to I guess, give his blessings to all the Catholics that survived the war.

Kummeth had to go see him but didn't want to go alone. I didn't care one way or the other, but Shelton wanted to go see I went along. It was decided that inasmuch as the church would be crowded for Spellman's visit we would go to the Protestant service 1st so as to get a seat and stay for Spellman. Kummeth led the way into this small church that was located adjacent to the bowling alley. Shelton was following him and this particular day it was very hot with no air-conditioning available and everyone sweating profusely. Kummeth went up to the alter with Shelton following him and Genuflected. I took a seat in the very back row and was a interested spectator. Now I was aware that Shelton had probably never been inside of a church much less know what to do. I myself hadn't been in one since I was a kid. From the alter Kummeth moved to the back row in front of me with Shelton following like a puppy dog and everytime Kummeth went to his knees, so did Shelton. Now the sweat was pouring off both of them. After the service was over we got up to leave and Spellman was standing just outside the door to shake hands and talk to the people coming out. Shelton was in front of Kummeth and walking past Spellman when Spellman reached out and grabbed him and pulled him to one side. Now Kummeth and I didn't wear any ribbons or medals and Shelton had loaded up and this is probably what caught Spellman's attention. I had in the meantime moved over to one side and Kummeth was doing everything he could to get to see and meet the good man. Spellman thanked Shelton for coming and asked him how he liked the service and at the same time asked him about his shoulder patch of the 96th Div. and then about all his ribbons. There were all kinds of Admirals and Generals in line waiting to meet the good one and he had to pick on poor old Paul. Shelton's answer to the Priests inquiry should be recorded in the archives of all time. Shelton said "*well sir; if I had knowned that coming to church would have meant doing all those calisthenics, I would have gotten a group of boys and done them in the middle of the street instead of in a church*". with that Kummeth let go with a foot towards Shelton's ass, but missed. Spellman got to laughing so hard that he turned his head to hide his merriment.

The month of September we spent mostly eating and sleeping. I guess that we were just tired of raising hell and the war having ended on August 14th and we still were unassigned we knew that we weren't going home. We only had one more incident that could have caused a problem, but we got away with it again. Every evening we would go down to the beer garden to get our free beer. We were only allowed three and then were expected to leave. Usually no one checked up on how many times we had been thru and we were getting a snoot full. A black who was under the influence decided to get in line ahead of Shelton. Now this poor bastard didn't know Paul from Adam and that Paul had already sent two of their race to black heaven on Leyte. Two things that the black also didn't know was that (1) Shelton was from N.Carolina, and (2) the guy didn't know who he was messing with. Shelton told him in a very nice tone to go to the back of the line. The asshole told Shelton to screw himself but little did he know that Paul always carried a Jap pistol with him that no-one had ever been able to take away. This gun was taken off a Jap Officer on Leyte by me and Shelton swiped it and it was his to keep forever. As a matter of fact it was the cause of him being killed himself in later years, but that has nothing to do with this incident. Shelton took the pistol from his belt and laid it under the blacks ear and told him to get ready to go to black heaven. The guy took off running with Paul shooting behind him not trying to hit him. The poor bastard scaled a 10 foot high fence in one huge leap and disappeared.

There was probably 200 guys in the beer garden during this time and they all ran for cover. We moved Shelton towards the main gate where Kummeth took the gun from him and buried it in the sand while I shielded him from the other guys who were incomplete pandemonium could have cared less. The next thing I knew there were about 15 M.P.s around us. They couldn't find the gun and no one inside the beer garden would even state that anything had occurred. That night after midnight we went back and recovered the gun and away we went.

At this time I reflect back to August 14th, 1945. The war ended this day, the day after my birthday. That night we retired to the bowling alley to celebrate our living thru pure hell. We got drunk and really tore up the alley and Kummeth and I almost came to blows. We never discussed this again and it was over a statement he made that there would never be any wars again and I told him that he was full of shit. Kummeth never talked to me again except when he had to. Anyone who only spent about 2 hours total in combat and didn't have to suffer every night and day for weeks on end to make a statement that it was worth all the pain and suffering to end wars I wanted nothing to do with him. Even to-day I wonder what the assholes observation of the world is. He really wanted to fight right there on the spot and I told him that he didn't have a chance as I was used to killing and he wasn't. At this point Shelton broke it up. I probably would have killed him as I was still in that zone.

The wars end put us in a reassignment depot. We were scheduled to rejoin our division in the Philippines but that was changed when a second Lt. got on our ass. The dropping of the Atomic bomb made us very grateful and were hoping to get rotated back home. This asshole made the decision that we were too young to go home and told us to pack our duffel bags and get ready to ship out to somewhere South of Japan. He assigned us to a troop ship and had us dropped off at the dock in Aiea, next to pearl harbor. We stood there for a minute thinking about it, spied a empty 4 by 4 truck, hopped in and went to Honolulu. We spent three days there and ran out of money and turned ourselves into the M.P.s. They took us back to Schofield and the asshole 2nd Lt. stated that he was going to court-martial us. He was told to shove it up his ass and then he immediately had M.P.s escort us back to a troop ship that was headed to Japan loaded with prisoners of war and made sure we got on and they stayed there until the gangplank was pulled up.

CHAPTER 11

Back overseas

Well here we are back on board a troop ship again. The only difference was that this thing was loaded with ex prisoners of war, all Japs. What a country! They teach us to kill the bastards and then as a reward we can't go home as we are too young, then have us escort the sons-of-bitches back to their country and their home. Never got their reasoning. Send the Japs home but keep the young combat soldiers overseas. As if they had not seen enough hell. Our quarters were

Navy slings down in the hold. A little better off than the Japs as they had to sleep on the decks. This was a civilian ship under contract of the government and we three were the only soldiers on board. 1000 Japs and we didn't even have guns. They didn't search Shelton as he still had his Nambu pistol. We stood on the deck and watched the Island disappear from sight and knew that it was going to be a long time before we came this way again. The time was around the first of September and with the war ending the 14th of August they sure as hell didn't waste any time sending the bastards home. The first night out Shelton decided to go down to the Japs hold and pay them a visit. Hard to imagine that we were in the middle of a thousand Japs who hated our guts as much as we hated theirs and Paul was the only one armed.

As we walked among them Shelton every now and then would jerk one of them up and lay the Nambu under his nose and ask him if he wanted to die. The answer was always no and when they saw the Nambu they knew that this was a combat man and don't fart with him. One of them that spoke pretty good English told Shelton to keep his hands off him as he was a former jungle fighter and could kill him with his bare hands. **Wrong thing to say to Shelton!** Paul grabbed him and took out his knife and told the asshole to commit hara-kiri by ripping out his belly or else Shelton would do it to him by blowing out his brains. This got the Japs attention right away and he started to bow and pray. With that we got out of the hold and went to bed. The next day one of them complained to the Captain who talked to us and the only thing that he asked of us was to stay out of the hold which we did.

Our next stop was in the Harbor in Yokohama, Japan. The war had only been over a couple of weeks and the Japs acted like there had never been one after we unloaded the prisoners. There was a lot of ten and one rations left over and we were anchored in the middle of the bay as no docks were available. While we were waiting for orders on the next port the Japs at night would bring their Sampans up to the fantail to negotiate for food. Where they got all the dollars from I would never know so we exchanged food for dollars and anything else valuable. Never having been in Japan before we decided to take a little side trip. The 1st mate told us that we wouldn't be leaving for at least 3 days and that our next stop was Okinawa. Going back to that hellhole did not make us very happy.

We bribed a boatman to take us ashore and promised him more if he would wait for us to come back. Now this was taking a chance as the mate could have lying and we could not get back to the ship. When we reached shore we had no idea where we were so decided to employ a Jap to interpret for us. Had a hell of a time finding one as they all ran when they saw us. Not all was lost as a youngster around 12 to 15 came to sell souvenirs and we talked him into going with us and he spoke surprisingly good English.

Our 1st stop was the warehouse district in Yokohama where for 5 bucks you could get laid. Our transportation was a hand drawn cart called a rickshaw and what a ride. This was absolutely amazing as the whores took all this in stride and didn't care what your nationality was as long as you had the bucks, mainly American. There was no way that I would fool around with them because they could have a venereal disease or worse. However Shelton and Kummeth had

a go at it while I sat around drinking Jap beer which was excellent and Sake. In about a half and hour Mama San was pounding on the ceiling with a broom and yelling that they had used up their time and to get the hell down there. They all came down shortly and all the girls got together and sang us a song. It's one that you never forget. In their broken English it went like this.

Cigaretto
 Chcolato
 Chewing gum and 30 yen
 Short time presento
 Hubba Hubba
 Come again

We didn't even ask what presento meant and got the hell out of there. We had enough of Japan for our 1st trip so went back to the ship along with our Jap companion and rickshaw driver. We gave them a couple of boxes of 10 in 1 rations and that made them happier than hell. Lucky for us as we sailed in the morning and if we had waited a couple of days we would have been stuck and that would not have been good. Our next stop was Okinawa and a officer from the M.P.s came to take us in tow and escort us to our new station. We had not yet been assigned as they couldn't find any records of our existence and had to wait for them to be flown in from somewhere. In the meantime we were put into a large squad tent in a relocation area just outside of Naha, the capitol of Okinawa. This town was supposed to be our destination in April but we never made it. We hadn't been there but a couple of days when a typhoon hit. It started around 2 in the afternoon just before chow time. At this time we were being given only 2 meals per day probably due to the fact that we were of no value to anyone but a pain in the ass. As the wind came up I figured that maybe I had better get something to eat as it could be a big storm coming in and closing the chow hall. When I got to the chow tent there was no one there. I grabbed some canned things out of the kitchen and went back my tent. Just as I sat down the wind came up and tore the tent from the ground with one big crash. This was a huge tent, probably about 50 foot long and it just disappeared. I started for the hillside near us and ran into Kummeth and Shelton who were also concerned about what was happening. The only shelter that we could find was the hillside tombs of the Okinawan's and the one that we were headed for already had been broken into so we joined them. We stayed there all night and found out the next day that it was a full typhoon of winds around 150 miles/hour and that people had died not finding shelter. Huge seaplanes were blown 5 miles inland and there wasn't a plane on the Island that was flyable. Large ships were lifted out of the water and deposited on the beach some as far as 300 yards inland. We had been in typhoons on Leyte but nothing like this.

In a few days we were assigned to the 785th M.P. Battalion for the duration. This did not make us very happy as we had never seen eye to eye with the bastards and we figured that they were as sick, crippled and useless as they come. When we arrived we saw what a hellhole we were in. It had very few tents and the outfit had been sent to Okinawa after the European war and this one ended, because the majority had been court marshaled for selling army supplies to the enemies. Seems like they had their own train from the beach that went all the inland to Germany. What got our attention mostly was a large barbed wire fence that enclosed a prisoner compound

with as far as we could see contained only blacks. They were all in there for one reason or another, mostly for insubordination and fights.

Our main job was to escort the prisoners on policing assignments around the Island. All together there must have been 200 of them in the stockade and like I said I believed that they were all black as I couldn't see any whites. One of them was a character by the name of "Red" who was in for trying to steal a airplane not knowing that it belonged to McArthur. It was kinda funny as Red had gotten tired of being away from home and figured that the fastest way to get there was by air. He never realized the difficulty of this as he had never flown a airplane before. He figured that all you did was step on the gas and steer it. Well he damn near got airborne before he nosed over straight into the ground destroying the plane. Amazing he wasn't even hurt. His defense was that it wasn't his fault that a airplane was left with the engine running to force him to steal it. Back in Chicago if you left something with the engine running it was your own damn fault that someone took it.

We had a lot of fun with these guys. They knew every cook on the Island and we spent all day eating, not policing. It was getting into November and Shelton was getting bored again. Shelton found a way that we could travel all we wanted to and it was no problem where we were stationed as they didn't give a damn where we were as long as we kept out of their hair. We went down to Naha Airfield and found a willing plane dispatcher to co-operate with us on getting to Japan. We had stolen a 52 gallon barrel of medicinal alcohol from a storage area to use as barter for whatever we wanted. it was very powerful medicine as booze was not available to the common GI per good old Mac. We got orders cut reassigning us to Tokyo, Japan for one week as Military observers. We had a ball for about 3 days, unfortunately we did not know that McArthur had issued orders for dress to be woolens. Inasmuch as we were in Suntans we knew that our time was short lived. Before we got caught we had some fun with the Japs. We went into a P.X. and bought some chocolate cakes. We stood on a street corner on the Ginza and gathered a group of Japs who spoke non or very little English. We had them gather around us and made to understand that we were going to all sing a American song and they were very happy to do it for a piece of Chocolate cake. We only taught them the start of it which went "Tojo eats shit out of a garbage can". We were just getting started when a bunch of M.P.s showed up and took us into tow. They immediately took us back to the airport and returned us to Okinawa where some asshole had put out a want on us listing us as AWOL.

They didn't do anything to us as it was McArthur who wanted us out of Japan and the 785th M.P. battalion could care less. Shelton and Kummeth found out that the 96th division was in Mindanao and tried to talk me into going with them to rejoin. By this time I was tired of it all and said good-bye to them and concentrated on a way to go home. That was the last I saw of Shelton for 20 years which is another story. In late December I found a trucking battalion that was headed home and got myself assigned to it. This was not a easy task as the battalion was black, all black. The first soldier thought that it would be funny to show up in Seattle with one white on board and a member of his outfit. I told him that it would be a blast. I never told him my background as I wanted out of this place. My records were very few and about the only thing

they said was that I arrived on Okinawa in September and had been assigned to the 785th M.P. battalion. I never told him anything differently so got busy helping them to inventory what was left of their maintenance battalion. This was accomplished by driving the vehicle up to the cliffs edge just below Naha, taking the number off the vehicle and then driving it over the cliff to the rocks below and marking it off as a total loss and not repairable. No one actually cared what the hell was going on at this time and we started to load up for the trip home. Once at sea I was put on K.P. for 12 hours per day for 14 straight days, but at no time was mistreated.

As we sailed through the harbor at Naha I could only try to remember the good things of what happened to me but my mind was blank. We left on the 27th of December 1945 and arrived in Seattle on 11th of January 1946. 16 days on board a ship loaded with 1000 plus Negroes. What a way to treat a person who enlisted in the Army to kill Japs, wounded twice, two beachheads in 1st wave, spent 4 months in a Army hospital and had to hitchhike his way home. I stood looking at the Island and never did remember what happened on the 2nd,3rd,4th,and 5th of April and no one ever told me. I have been told that it was too much for my mind to remember and that it probably never would be recalled. When we arrived in Seattle I was out of the Army in 3 days. My MOS was changed to 761 (scout) probably on Leyte so they didn't have to make me a Sergeant which I guess was the reason I spent so much time in front of patrols and didn't even know it. GOD BLESS AMERICA. Bullshit!

I heard from my old company commanders and they didn't remember me. My platoon leader who I led on many a patrol didn't remember me. My squad leader was killed in a shutout with the cops in Sacramento, Ca. in the 60's and he hadn't even violated a law, He was screwing around with a Deputy Sheriffs girl friend and got killed for it. I have not cared what anyone thinks for over 50 years. My advice to all you guys not born of wealth is not to believe in politicians if they happen to be white and 18 years old as they are the ones to be sacrificed for the wealthy in power. Unfortunately it's always been that way and will always be that way.

Inasmuch I had never registered for the Draft I finally did 9/7/1948. Hell of a thing that a guy who made two beach heads and shot twice before he was twenty years old had to register for the draft 3 years later. HELL-OF-A-COUNTRY!

On August 13, 1944 I was 18 years old. In January 1946 I was 20. What a hell of a way to spend your youth !

HOME

When we arrived in Seattle we were taken to barracks that had large holes in them and it was snowing hard. We sat there for a week before we got our discharge and train tickets home.

My discharge says Camp Beale, Calif. which was a lie and I didn't argue, just wanted out. We left Seattle on the 19th day of January 1946 and took 3 days to get to San Francisco. From there I took a bus to Napa and a taxi home. I just wasn't the same person who left home 2 1/2 years ago and fought the war to end all wars and had no job and no future. I did get \$20/week for 52 weeks government unemployment. I also had \$400.74 in back pay as they hadn't paid me in over a year. For the 3 days from Seattle to San Francisco I was paid \$7.64 for meals. Can you imagine that, \$7.64 for 3 days food. At least I left a nobody and came back a nobody so nothing ventured nothing gained. I came back with a Combat infantry badge, Purple heart, Two bronze arrowheads for beachheads, 4 battlestars, and a shoulder that hurts most of the time and took away my baseball career as I couldn't throw very good anymore. No one welcomed me home or even knew that I had been gone. Politicians hadn't changed as they were still fornicators and liars and everyone wanted to be a lawyer including some of my buddies.

Got a good welcome from my Dad, Mother and brother. Dad shook my hand, Mother gave me a hug and Fred said Hi! Fred had really gotten big, but in my opinion a complete shithead. He always sleep walked and would scare the hell out of me at night with his strange noises and put me on combat alert. Well I was gone for two and a half years and no one to talk to about what happened to me over that period of time, so what! The first night home I decided to go downtown and Dad loaned me his car. Inasmuch as I had no civilian clothes to wear I had to use my uniform. Got drunker than hell and couldn't even get into a fight. I don't remember how I got back to the house, but dad's car was missing in the morning when he had to go to work. I looked for it all day and finally went to the police station where some of my old High school buddies were working and with their help we found it the next day. Needless to say he never let me use it again. I met up with a guy named Howie Dickinson who was in my division and a complete asshole. Only saw him once and that was enough.

Do to my patriotism I quit high school and never graduated. I decided to go back and get my diploma and after going a month I found out that the school would issue me one because of my wounds and combat experience and they wanted to show their appreciation. I think that they just didn't want me around their young kids. I then entered Junior College to get the money that the VA gave its veterans for education. There was no jobs available at this time because with no war there was nothing to build and a recession was setting in. Had no trouble playing all Junior college sports as enrollment was so low that there wasn't enough people to make a full squad. My folks had bought me a house with the money I was sending home, but when the war ended they sold it as they got scared that it was going to be a loser. I just wished that they had asked me.

About this time I met a guy named Jack Reeves. We drank a lot and had fun. we spent a lot of time to-gather, but Jack decided he wanted to be a Lawyer and that was the last I saw of him. I still had my separation money so bought a car. It was a 1939 Chrysler royal. I really loved that car, had it painted, inside redone and it was my dream boat. During this time I made some new buddies, named Chris Wicks, Johnny Johnson and Cal Loosely. All of these guys were combat veterans and we hit it off good. Also George Reeves, Jacks brother and I became good

friends. George had been a tank commander in Pattons Army and just inside Germany they came up against a Tiger tank and lost. George told me that he was blown out thru the open top and woke up a month later in a hospital in France. With his wounds he was sent back to the states for repair and spent a month in a stateside Hospital. I spent 4 months in a hospital and was sent back to duty. Good thing I wasn't black or I could have yelled discrimination. George was one tough person. He drove taxi cab on the weekends and made his money on Saturday nights behind the cab stand engaging in fist fights for money, winner take all. Never saw George lose one. I also made out by betting around a hundred bucks on him to win. During this time I got into a lot of fights as George was just like Shelton. I got a reputation and stress doing this.

One night we went to a dance sponsored by the moose hall and couldn't find anyone to dance with. George and I went out on the floor and started to dance to-gather. One of the sheriff depts. off duty cops grabbed me and started me for the door. How wrong he was. I knew that he had been a draft dodger and had spent the war being a sheriffs deputy. We knew about the sheriffs dept. how they operated. The other deputy grabbed George and strong-armed him towards the door. George winked at me and when we got to the door we both unloaded on them. As they went down we took their guns away and threw them into a nearby creek and took off. George stayed there and that is when they called for reinforcements and overcame George and took him to the lockup. The next morning his dad went looking for him and found him in Jail. The funny thing is that Clausen, the sheriff, was George's Uncle on his mothers side and even at that it took a lot of talking to get him out. The cops we mauled never filed a complaint as George told them that if they did he would come after them again and that scared the living hell out of them, as they had learned about his reputation and would leave well enough alone. After this I didn't see George much anymore as he got a football scholarship to the University of Nevada to play football and I guess that it was the best thing that could happen to me.

Now my buddies became Chris Wicks, Cal Loosely, Johnny Johnson and Jack Reeves, George's brother. This involved a lot of partying and drinking. During this time I met a beautiful girl by the name of Winifred Elrod. I used to cut college and just cruise around doing nothing. One day I turned a corner by School and almost ran her down. I always when just screwing around ,took my dog with me. She was a beautiful cocker spaniel and loved to set on my lap while I was driving. She would put her paws on the steering wheel and with her doing that it wasn't easy to steer. She was out walking with a girl that I just barely knew, so the first chance I had I asked her who the redhead was that I almost hit. I fell in love for the first time in my life and tried to meet her with no luck at all. She didn't want anything to do with me.

About this time my folks sold their house in Westwood and bought a house on Trancas Blvd. with 10 acres and a new house on it. There was finally room for all of us as I didn't want to go out on my own. Going to school was no fun as I did not remember anyone and everyone was a lot younger than me. A girl I knew threw a party while her folks were out of town and I ran into Winifred again. I went with a girl by the name of Vivian who smoked cigars and drank from a bottle. Viv and I were just friends, even tho I knew that she was screwing every one but me and she was fun to be around. I had gone upstairs to get another bottle (two story house with outside

stairs) and after uncorking it I was walking down the stairs, taking a drink out of the bottle, when I lost my footing and fell all the way down the stairs ass over appetite and as I looked up there was my future wife looking at me. In my foggy state I asked if I could take her home and got a large NO! With that I went back and joined Viv.

There was no way I was going to let this girl out of my life. I kept bugging her until I got a date. From that moment on we were a twosome. We were married , had 4 children, and in 1993 bought a Condo in Peoria, Az. where to-day we still reside in 2006.

