



Memoir stories of

# William Henry Newell (Bill)



WWII Military service  
with the 2nd Marines 1941 to 1944  
& 6th Marines --1945



Pacific Campaign

3 battle stars & 3 presidential unit citations

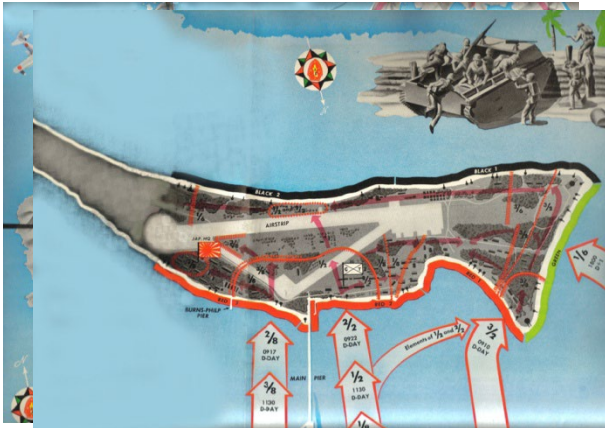


# "The Lighter Side"

My Father never spoke of the war and it wasn't until my Husband, who is a Military collector and enthusiast, started asking him questions, did I learn about his time spent in the Military during World War II. As you read through, you will see they are based mostly on the lighthearted, unique, very interesting and I think worth telling, experiences that he encountered while travelling from island to island, battle to battle, in the Marine Corps. Only when asked, will he speak of and enjoy telling, the lighter side of his encounters, as he skims over the heavier details of the actual battles. Although these stories appear as though he had it easy and it was a fun adventure, He did experience situations of "kill or be killed", walked through the mud and blood, breathed the stench of dead bodies, and watched as many of his buddies were shot down beside him. He was very lucky to be in the right place at the right time and understandably doesn't want to re-live the horrors by repeating them in the stories he tells. I believe he had a Guardian Angel watching over him. He has always been lighthearted, with a positive attitude and finds it easy to make people laugh. When asked about the war he chooses to tell only the stories I have written here. The Lighter Side.

With his permission, I am sharing these stories, as my Father shared them with me.

## His Battle Islands



Guadalcanal - Tulagi

Tarawa Atoll - Betio



Saipan



Okinawa

## ENLISTMENT

As our history tells us, on the 7th of December 1941, the Japanese attacked the U.S. Pacific fleet at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, initiating a state of war between our two nations. Dad enlisted 10 days after the attack on Pearl Harbor, at age 19. He spent his boot camp in San Diego, California. In his adolescent years his father had a friend who was the National Pistol Champion of Police and he had taken Dad many times to the pistol range where Dad learned to become a pretty good marksman himself. In boot camp when they put everyone on the firing line to shoot at the targets, you know, the kind that outline a human figure, well Dad shot out 2 eyes, a nose, a mouth, and a row of buttons down the front. When they brought the targets forward to check their work the CO shouted "OK, Who's the smart ass?". From that point on Dad had a reputation of being a jokester. He said it was humor that kept him from losing his mind through the war, although today he says he thinks that he lost it somewhere between then and now anyway. At 91, January 12th 2013, his wit and sense of humor is still as sharp as it ever was.

When they announced that he would be going to the Pacific to fight the Japanese, he decided that if he was going into battle, he wanted something between him and the enemy. He didn't want to walk to his demise, so he signed up for everything with wheels or tracks, as it were. Because he had previous experience as a "Cat" (Caterpillar Tractor) driver, he was assigned to the tank division, special weapons.

## FIRST ENGAGEMENT -- Guadalcanal - Tulagi

August 7th 1942 -- He was attached to C company, 2<sup>nd</sup> tank battalion (special weapons), 2 Marine division (attached to 1<sup>st</sup> Marine division). Anchored off Guadalcanal, the Marines sent in a division of Infantry to do some reconnaissance. They reported back that they hadn't seen any Japanese, so 2 of the Companies (Dad's and another) were reassigned and moved on to the islands of Tulagi, Gavutu, & Tanambogo.

Heading to Tulagi the first night, and his first visual introduction to the war, they saw from their ship, a sea battle, (August 8–9, 1942, it was the first major naval engagement of the Guadalcanal campaign, known as the battle of Savo Island). They watched as 3 Northern force cruisers – Vincennes, Astoria, and Quincey and an



Tank landing on Tulagi

Australian cruiser HMAS Canberra, were lost, and one of the Japanese destroyers was beached. Vice Admiral Mikawa's task force in charge of attacking our Allied fleet, immediately retired following the battle without attempting to destroy our Allied transport ships supporting the landings. It was a lucky break for Dad and C Company watching the battle or they would have been next. Mikawa's failure to destroy the Allied invasion transports when he had the chance, however, would prove to be a crucial strategic mistake for the Japanese as it allowed us (the Allies) to maintain our foothold on Guadalcanal and eventually emerge victorious from the campaign.

Later the next morning, the 2nd Battalion, 2nd Marines (2/2), landed as reinforcements on Tulagi. On Tulagi's shore the first of two light tanks that they landed got stuck between the coconut palms, which gave the Japanese the opportunity to attack and fill the turret with grenades, they lost 1 tank and crew. Dad's tank made it through. The Japs continued on with their Banzai opposition. The Marines answered the Jap fire and kept going. No Japanese would surrender, instead they went into their honeycomb of caves hallowed in to the Tulagi bluffs and carried on a hopeless but relentless counter-fire. At one point they had heard about an event where some of their fellow Marines had overcome a group of Japs. As these men were coming forward with their hands up, appearing to surrender, the one in front dropped to his knees with a machine gun strapped to his back, then the guy behind dropped to his knees and grabbed the gun and started firing. After hearing this, they determined that they would never take any prisoners. The individual Japanese fighting positions were eventually destroyed. Significant Japanese resistance ended by the afternoon, although a few stragglers were found and killed over the next few days.

In the town of Tulagi (Which was the capital of the Solomon Island Protectorate) they blasted the Bank of Tulagi and took all the Japanese currency, which really didn't have any worth. But once arriving in New Zealand, Dad found that the bar owners took them in lieu of payment because of their souvenir status. Which made their paychecks stretch much farther. These 3 island battles lasted approximately 3 days and all 3 islands were eventually cleared out.

Because of the Naval disaster of Savo Island, it was determined that the naval forces would have to withdraw temporarily for supplies, gasoline and ammunition. Also with the high bluffs and the dense coastal ring of jungle, it was determined that the tanks would be of little help there, that new and extensive training in jungle tank warfare was desirable. So the tanks were also pulled out and Dad's company was told they were going to the New Hebrides to take and hold an old Japanese air field on the island of Espiritu-Santos.

The landings on both Tulagi and Guadalcanal initiated a six-month long Guadalcanal campaign and a series of combined-arms battles between Allied and Japanese forces in the Solomon Islands area. A French Mandated Island, Espiritu-Santos in the New Hebrides, was selected to be the headquarters and main base of operations to support the effort to take Guadalcanal over the next 6 months.

## ESPIRITU SANTOS, NEW HEBRIDES

While on route to the New Hebrides, Dad took a Book from the ships library written by a Dr. Lambert titled "A Yankee Doctor in Paradise". Military Intelligence had told the Marines that there were no snakes in the New Hebrides, but the book explained that the largest Python that had ever been captured came from the Island of Espiritu-Santos in the New Hebrides. Dad's thought, "so much for Military intelligence"! He also read that they had wild boar on the islands and decided if he could get the chance while there that he would like to go on a wild boar hunt.



They arrived at the old Japanese air strip on the island and after 3 days, they demolished the air strip with the tanks so that the Japanese couldn't sneak in behind them and use the strip. They went back to the main bay and set up their permanent camp. The night after they left the air field, Dad had heard that a Jap sub surfaced and blasted the spot where they had been (the Japanese intelligence was a little too late. "It was comforting",

he figured, " that their Military intelligence was no better than ours!"). Dad and 2 other guys were first ashore to guard the tanks and equipment that was unloaded from the ship, not knowing if the Japanese were near and would attack these islands next.

They had arrived during the dry season, which meant it only rained once a day at 1:00 p.m. for a short period, so each day everyone would quickly undress and take a shower. He said, "Apparently with the heat and humidity everyone felt they needed one!" "The trick was you had to be quick or go around with sticky soap all over until the next day's rain."

A few days after setting camp, Dad came up with an idea, and took his opportunity to Boar hunt, by discussing needing a map of the island with his CO. He had map training in the states during boot camp. So he convinced his CO that if the Japanese were to come to the island, that they needed to know of a stronghold they could retreat to for a better fighting advantage. The map they had was only of the coast line and didn't even show the bay correctly, which helped convinced the CO that Dad had a good idea. So the CO gave him permission and a 3 day requirement to get it done.

Scouting out the area, he met a "Dr Aseri " (a 6 foot 9 inch native of the Fiji Islands), who was a Native Medical Practitioner in charge of the French Hospital, schooled in the island diseases. Dr. Aseri told him that if he ever had the time to talk to him, to come to the hospital which was the building behind the Burns Philips Trading post. The doctor was well loved by all the tribes on the island for saving so many lives. So the day before leaving on his map journey, Dad spent the day with "Dr Aseri" getting to know about the island. The doctor spent some time teaching the "pigeon English" that the natives spoke, along with the proper tribal etiquette. He advised Dad that he would be the 6<sup>th</sup> white man the natives had ever seen and made him aware that they were previously "headhunters" and they could easily revert back. Martin & Osa Johnson (American adventurers & documentary filmmakers) being the first 2 who narrowly escaped with their lives, a Catholic missionary, one unidentified person that they did eat, and a French plantation owner. "Dr Aseri" gave him 2 letters of introduction; one for "Chief Moli" of the tribe he would encounter, and one for the plantation owner that would supply him with a guide.

The next day he walked 6 miles up the coast to a coconut plantation. Since it takes 6 years to make coconuts



New Hebrides Natives

grow, the plantation owner (a Frenchman), in order to make a living until the coconuts came in, came up with another idea to survive. He had 3 boats so he recruited natives and trained them to dive to get pearls. Because of the ocean breezes up higher, there were not so many mosquitoes, therefore not so many Native illnesses. So, the Frenchman got to know and picked the natives higher up, inland. They weren't very successful at acquiring many pearls, but found white shells that were used to make buttons. So he sold these to his French connections and it turned out to be very lucrative for him. He paid the natives well, so the natives had a great respect for him also. The Plantation owner gave Dad a guide to take him around the island and be his interpreter. Not knowing that the guide's tribe was at war with the tribe Dad would eventually meet, for fear of reprisal, this native wasn't much help. Dad said he pretty much did his own interpreting.

As he started on his trip to make maps, they came to a clearing and were met by what seemed to be little kids, but they were actually pigmy natives (approx. 20 of them), with bows and arrows, that surrounded them. Recognizing the guide from the other tribe, they were on guard and seemed a little hostile. Dad mentioned "Dr Aseri" had sent him (in the "pigeon English" that the doctor had taught him), and showed them the letter. One of the natives that was able to read it, went and brought "Chief Moli" to Dad. As the Chief approached, Dad, not sure what to do, saluted in Marine fashion then stuck out his hand to shake. Moli understood the respect and beamed with a smile ear to ear and shook Dads hand. Remembering his etiquette that he needed to offer a gift, he got out a tin of cigarettes (50 to each tin) and held it out to "Chief Moli". The Chief accepted and immediately lit one up, and as far as Dad knew the Chief smoked one right after the other until the 2nd day when they were all gone. He got out another tin and asked if it was ok to give each native one cigarette. He offered to light the Chief's cigarette with his cigarette lighter. Having to improvise using medical alcohol in the lighter because the soldiers were not able to get lighter fluid, the Natives thought he was magic. You cannot see Medical alcohol burn, the flame is clear. The chief stuck his finger into the flame, not convinced it was fire and let out a "yip". Then, before he lit each cigarette for each native, they stuck their finger into the flame and burnt their finger as the chief had done, all 30 or so of them with the same "yip".



They led Dad to their camp and put him and his guide in a hut and said "You Stay". After at least an hour they appeared with large wooden platters filled with a feast of wild boar, all the native fruits of the island and yams that they farmed. They laid it in front of him. Again remembering his etiquette, which was never refuse a gift or they would take it as a personal insult to the tribe and thinking that the trays were strictly for him and his guide, they ate and ate as much as they could so as not to insult the Chief. The guide finally stopped eating, but Dad said he was afraid that he might insult them and kept on going. He finally reached a point where he thought "the hell with it, they can kill and eat me, because I just cannot eat another bite". He put his hands up and said "no more". They all cheered, took the trays and began to pass them around to take their share. He had been eating the rest of the tribe's meal. They only got to have what was left after their guest was finished. He said it was the best meal he had ever had with all the tropical fruits and yams. But he was almost sick from over eating and still felt poorly the next day.

At sunrise the next morning, Dad was awakened by the Chief shaking him saying "you come", took him approx. 200 yards away from camp and told Dad "you sit". It made Dad a little nervous. With the thick dense forest you could not hear or see the camp and he thought that the Chief might be planning to make him the next meal. But apparently "Chief Moli" had a guilty conscious for having one of his native "traders" flogged for lying when he said he saw , a "big canoe" that came up from under water. Each tribe had a few men that they called "traders" who would go to the coast and trade goods for necessities. It was pretty obvious that the trader had seen a submarine, but the Chief didn't believe him and wanted an explanation. Dad not speaking the language and not knowing much about submarines, attempted his explanation by drawing pictures in the sand. After finally accepting the explanation, the Chief with tears in his eyes got up and walked back to camp, Dad followed.

He gave Dad 5 or 6 natives to take him up the volcano, where Dad found a good location for a stronghold and took his coordinates to make the map. Coming back, a wild boar attacked them and Dad shot it, and they took

it back to camp. They gutted then cooked it in the ground for several hours and Dad kept the ivory tusks from the wild boar. He had fulfilled his desire to go wild boar hunting and enjoyed another feast.

The last morning he was there, he explained to "Chief Moli" that he needed to return to his Chief. Chief Moli had one of the traders tell him of a canoe (outrigger that held 6 men) that was down at the plantation, that they were giving him as a gift. He said it was full sized and beautifully made with ebony and inlaid with Ivory and Mother of pearl. He again didn't want to insult the Chief, but tried to explain that his Chief would not let him take the little canoe onto the big canoe when they left. He would be happy to use it until he left, and then return it to the tribe. Chief Moli finally accepted his explanation and stuck his hand out to shake it goodbye. All the tribes men lined up from tallest (approx 5 foot), to the shortest to shake his hand. Dad being 6'2" with blond hair and blue eyes, this was pretty exciting for them. He went down the line and shook all the hands and the first tribes men ran behind Dad and got in line again to have their hand shook again. About half way through the second go round he heard some commotion behind him and turned to see what it was. "Chief Moli" was lying on the ground laughing hysterically. He said their laugh was so strange he didn't recognize at first that it was laughter. When the Chief saw that Dad had noticed him laughing he jumped up (not wanting to insult Dad either), stuck out his hand, and in his "pigeon English" said, "you shok em all, you go now, you want." Dad as a parting gift handed the Chief another tin of cigarettes.

Dad headed back to his camp, along the way he took time to sit and draw out the map with the coordinates he had written, and with map in hand finished his duty a day late, but no one noticed. Although the experience was interesting and successful, Dad said that he was unnerved a few times, not sure if they were going to revert back to Cannibalism and make a meal of him.

He wrote a letter to his parents and relayed his experience, as much as he could, to them. Mail was censored so as not to give away any Military information in case the enemy would get their hands on it. My grandparents had a copy of the letter published in their local paper, from there it somehow made it to National papers. In the letter he mentions Dr. Lamberts book and also, Martin & Osa Johnson. They had written many books and in particular, had written one called "Cannibal-land" in the New Hebrides. This is where the Johnsons had met up with Chief Moli. In Dad's letter, these were the clues to his folks as to where he was.

One day back at camp, along the beach, they spotted and old 4 stack destroyer (the kind used in WWI) that had come into the bay. It looked very strange and then Dad

THE ANTELOPE VALLEY LEDGER-GAZETTE

Letters From Service Men

South Seas  
January 14, 1945

Dear Folks:

The last few weeks in the islands have been more interesting than usual and there is a little more to tell. I don't remember whether I told you about Dr. Asseri or not, in my last letter. Anyway he is native of Fiji and in charge of the French hospital on this island now. He speaks perfect English and even has an English accent. He is a very interesting man to talk to and I have spent as much time as he could spare talking with him about the islands. He has quite a bit of political drag down here and through him I have made some fine connections and spent some grand liberties. I have met some very interesting people including plantation owners, members of a royal family and an old chief of one of the native tribes back in hand. Incidentally I was the sixteenth white man that the old chief had ever seen. The chief's wife were Martin Johnson and his wife.

I managed to get three days off and made this trip inland last week. The English plantation owner loaned me one of his native boys as a guide. The boy could speak a little pidgin English, and acted as interpreter. I had a letter of introduction (in pidgin) to the chief, written by Dr. Asseri. I want to save it for a souvenir but can't send it home because the letter head has the name of the island on it. I know you'll get a kick out of it so I'm copying it here.

Dear Moli,

This fella Mr. Newell is very good friend belong me. Him he want him walk about along bush belong look look all place. Me want him you belong give him some me two boys belong take him along bush. You fella he look out him good and bye bye him come back same two or three days he here. You give him house belong sleep and give Kalkai all about if him he want him. Bye bye me look you and me make him good all

Good bye Moli me remember me too along teacher along Narango Mo audrafae along Nalovi. Friend belong you

Doctor belong Fiji

Narango pronounced Narango is the name of the village. Moli is the chief, and teacher is a white missionary who wasn't there at the time. Bush as the jungle, incidentally did good wild boar hunting and a lot of wild game chickens. I brought back some ivory bone tusks and we had a feast of roast pig on a spit, yams, pineapple, broiled fish, yams and coconut milk. The chief gave me the "house belong sleep" but half the tribe moved in with him. They don't know what privacy means and would have been hurt had I asked them to leave.

My guide, Mallo, belonged to another tribe that was not too friendly with the Narango tribe and I had to do most of my own talking with the chief. We got along pretty well and, as far as I know, I didn't make any social blunders. You usually let you know if you do. One of the first things I did was to make the chief a gift of two tins of cigarettes. He smoked one right after the other and the only time I saw him - I did to do a cigarette was when he was eating. After the gift of cigarettes he gave me two little boys, about eight years old, who were to bring me anything I asked for, providing I could make them understand what it was that I wanted.

The chief saw to it that I did not, at any time, get close to any of the native girls. Either it was an old tabu or he had heard of the Marines reputation. I never did find out which.

I had to spend almost two days traveling so I didn't get to stay as long as I would like to have however I couldn't have enjoyed more had I stayed a month. When it was time to leave I went for came to the hut carrying all sorts of trinkets - bracelets and necklaces, made of shell and seeds, more food to take with me, and several other little gifts. I said good bye to Moli and we shook hands. I turned around to go and there was the whole tribe standing in a semi-circle with their hands stuck out toward me. I had to shake hands with them all before I could leave. I started at one end and went down the line feeling very much like a candidate for some political office. The ones I had shaken hands with would run past me and fall in on the other end of the line where I would have to shake their hand again. That would would have gone on indefinitely had the chief not come and told me that I had "shaken all one time plenty" and could leave now if I wished. I thanked him and Mallo and

I started. I let Mallo carry my rifle for a ways and he knocked down two river ducks on the fly, at about 30 yards. After that I was afraid to shoot for fear of exposing myself as a poor shot.

There is much more that I would like to be able to tell you about the trip and the islands and their people but it will have to wait "til I get back." If you are interested in that, there is a book (A Yankee Doctor in Paradise by Dr. Lambert) that describes all the South Pacific islands and the people. You sure you'll like it. I borrowed the book from Dr. Asseri. Dr. Lambert was one of his teachers in the medical college at Savaii. That's about all I have time for now as there is some work to be done.

All my love, your son,  
(Pvt. Wm. H. Newell) Bill

Dad's Letter in the Newspaper realized

that all its stacks were missing. Apparently the ship had tried to sneak through a couple of Jap cruisers at night. When the ship got right in the middle between the Japs, they fired from both sides of their ship at each of the Jap cruisers. The Japs, who couldn't see what they were firing at, and not being able to lower their guns enough, fired back. Asking around, the story was, the Japs managed to knock off the stacks as their projectiles crossed over the destroyer, before hitting their own cruisers, while the Allied destroyer scurried on through and out of range. He would have liked to have gotten a photo of this but no one was allowed to bring cameras when the Marines left the San Diego training base.

Dad had said that what he learned early on to get by in the military was, you needed to make friends with a "medic" and a "cook", and he added, "be able to improvise". After a few months on the island the wet season started (This island received 97" of rain in 9 months), so he called on his friend "the medic" and commandeered a medical stretcher. He took two bustle boxes from the tank (used for additional ammunition and they also stored cigarettes and other goodies there!) and suspended the stretcher on them, keeping him off the muddy wet ground while sleeping. He said, "Now that's improvising!".

Months of eating Spam and the dreaded "C" rations and remembering the feasts he had had with the natives, triggered another improvisation. He and some of his buddies decided to try fishing in a nearby river without



New Hebrides hanging fruits

any fishing gear. With nothing working, they finally decided to throw hand grenades into the water and guess what? "The fish came floating up to the top". They scooped up as many as they could carry and took them back to camp where he met, made friends, and convinced the cook Bummy (short for Bumgartner), to cook and serve the fish. Bummy agreed as long as they helped clean them. Along with the fish, several tents had banana bunches and other native tropical fruits hanging from them that the Marines had gathered or traded for "C" rations with the local natives. They put together their own feast. So all in all, between the wild boar, fish, yams, and tropical fruits, he ate well while in the New Hebrides.

His Company was there approximately 6 months as support of the effort to secure Guadalcanal, before being sent to New Zealand.

## NEW ZEALAND

February, 1943 -- New Zealand was the choice for the 2nd Marines to receive rest, relaxation, re-grouping, re-outfitting and retraining. He was there for a total of 9 months. Special weapons and Second tank battalion settled down at Tahiti Bay.

The Marines frolicked, most of them had little work to do so they received maximum liberty. On one Payday, Dad tried his luck in a poker game and "cleaned out" all the guys down 1 row of tents. Money in hand he went on a 10 day furlough. On the Train to Palmerston North he got acquainted with gentlemen of a Men's club and was invited to meet with them in a bar every evening for drinks. Each one would take turns taking him home for dinner. New Zealanders were appreciative of the American forces keeping the war away from their island. To them the Marines were heroes.



On the next to the last day of his furlough he was invited to a horserace (Their biggest race of year). He said after watching 4 races he was invited to place a wager. He had watched the horses come out of the stables and picked the horse that had a real jockey (the rest had young kids riding them). He bought several tickets in the 10 LB line (their money was English pounds, not dollars). His horse came in 37 to one as winner. Dad said their money being large bills (twice the size of ours) he had to buy another suitcase to cart all the money back to camp.

He joined up with his friend Bummy, the cook. Bummy convinced him that volunteering for cook duty gave him more chances to take leave. The cooks worked one day on then got a day off, where everyone else received 1 day off a week. So volunteer he did! With all his free time he did a lot of fishing in the summer and fall, and by winter they had excellent food consisting of mutton, steaks, eggs and lots of milk.



It appeared that all the Marines had a strange and compulsive desire for Milk. In their first days in New Zealand the Marines almost drank their creameries dry. There were Milk Bars in every town that profited greatly while the Marines were there. It was said that the New Zealanders rationed their own milk to be able to supply the Marines the whole time they were there. To this day, Dad still has a glass of milk with all his meals.

The Golden Gate Milk Bar, New Zealand

The transition from play to work was gradual. The Marines sensed that the vacation from war was over, their training and practices intensified.

In their brief stay in New Zealand they became not just Marines but "Second division Marines", which to them meant "The Second Division Marines was the best damned outfit in the war -- bar none." This Quote and the mess hall photo came from the book "Follow Me" -- The story of the Second Marine Division during WWII.

Dad recalls when the photo in the Mess hall was taken and I have identified him in the photo.



Mess Hall in New Zealand

## TARAWA

On October 28th 1943, the Marines began loading the transports for the next battle destination. Leaving the cooks duty and back into his unit of tanks, Dad's next stop was the Fiji Islands where they made a practice landing. Then onto Tarawa.

For those that follow the history of WWII, the Pacific Theatre campaigns, Tarawa was known as the bloodiest battle in Marine Corps history and the dreadful carnage that took place cannot be described gruesome enough to give anyone the real idea of what happened there.

In his first wave of assault, the tank lighter that Dad was on was shot out from under him, he swam back to the ship and was quickly assigned to a new tank. Once on shore his destination was inland toward the air field. There's no further discussion regarding what happened between landing until reaching the airfield, all he says is "I don't want to talk about it!"



Tank Lighter Landing

After reaching the airfield, they noticed a Jap plane coming in behind one of our planes trying to shoot it out of the air. They aimed the tank's turret gun up at the plane and fired. Seconds later the Jap plane, with black smoke billowing, came down. They all thought they had hit the plane and when things settled down and they could, they painted the "zero" plane-kill on their tank. When their CO found out about it, he gave them hell and told them it was impossible to make that shot, and made them take the "zero" off the tank. Later on Okinawa, they saw on the news reels, the actual event of the planes flying over their tank, but what they hadn't seen was one of our planes, behind the Jap plane, that fired 2 seconds before they had fired, which knocked the Jap out of the air.



Seabees on Tarawa

Dad said he had also gained a great respect for the Seabees and their "Cats" that day. He saw them advance on dugouts full of Japs, and with their blades up deflecting the barrage of bullets, they continued scooping up the dirt and burying them in their holes.

3,166 Marine Officers & Men became casualties on Tarawa in 3 days. General Holland M. Smith, commander of the V Amphibious Corps who had toured the beaches after the battle, likened the losses to Pickett's Charge at Gettysburg.

## HAWAII

After Tarawa was secured, they were all sent to the big island of Hawaii for RR and retraining. Dad's Company of the light Stuart tanks they had been using were replaced with heavier Sherman tanks.

Gathered together, The Captain, addressing everyone, said he had good news and bad news. The good news was, "we made it here", The Bad news was, "we lost all of our cooks". "I need volunteers". Dad with his previous experience in New Zealand, stepped forward. They were on the second largest cattle ranch in the nation, (Parker Ranch) and Dad loved steak! He was not going to miss out on this treat!



Up-grade to Sherman Tanks

In the cooks area he was banging on an overused oven with a hammer trying to get it to work. While swearing profusely at the stove, 3 star General Smith (Howlin' Mad Smith was the nickname he had earned) came up behind him and said "problem Marine?". Without looking Dad said "hell yes" and proceeded to rant on about the poor condition of their equipment and how did anyone expect them to produce meals with it. The General replied "How many do you need?", Dad replied "6". The General replied "you'll have them tomorrow morning". At that point Dad turned to see who in the hell was speaking. He said he almost broke his leg trying to get up to salute when he realized who it was. The General grinned and said "at ease". The next morning there were 6 new stoves.

Their recoup and retraining lasted approximately 6 months on Hawaii, then they were loaded up for their next battle.

## SAIPAN



Gen. Holland M. Smith

Now into the Sherman medium tanks, they headed to Saipan. D-day on Saipan was in June 1944. This is where commanding Gen. Holland M. Smith (top dog of the battle) got his nick name of "Howlin' Mad Smith". He apparently wasn't happy with the Army and how they were handling the fight and fired the Army General and sent him back to the states.

Dad's company arrived just in time for the initial assault of the battle to be over and they were the last ashore. So this meant that they got the support duty of "clean up". The Clean up duty was no minor task. As like Tulagi and Tarawa, the Japs had entrenched themselves into the cliffs and mountains and had hidden in the thick bush intent on not giving up. So the clean up meant sweeping through every inch of land and pulling out every last Jap. He explained that it wasn't too hard to find them because you could smell them, even before spotting them. Apparently when the leather they were wearing got wet, it had a very strong distinctive odor and they encountered a lot of wet weather on all of the islands.

Travelling along a gully, Dad and the group of men he was with, saw 3 Jap soldiers jump into a small cave. The Marines had been given a crash course in Japanese, learning phrases like "come out", "we'll give you food and water", "you will be safe". So Dad in his best Japanese, started yelling into the cave. He said the next thing he knew there was this crusty ol' Sergeant that came up behind him, tapped him on the shoulder and said "You're going about that the wrong way". The Sergeant stepped forward and shouted "Hirohito eats shit", thinking that this would get their goat and they would come out to defend their ruler. Instead a few seconds later they heard one of the Japs return a shout with, "Roosevelt eats Spam"! They all had a good laugh. Then realizing that these guys weren't going to give up, they were able to get one of the tanks over the top of the cave to seal the cave opening with dirt, and buried them alive.

Most of their clean-up was on foot, routing through fox holes, entrenchments and caves. At one point they were pinned down, lying flat in a gully, watching the tracer rounds fly above their heads. Bummy, Dad's cook friend, decided to take a smoke break, but without a lighter, decided that he would try to light his cigarette with one of the tracer rounds flying overhead, holding his hand with the cigarette up to catch the flame off a round. The absurdity of it all broke the seriousness of the predicament they were in and gave them the where-with-all to get moving out of harm's way.

As they continued on, marching through the thick shrubs, they heard a familiar sound and knew there was a Jap in front of them. The Jap had one of the old "Potato masher" hand grenades, and they heard the "click" of it being hit against the Jap's helmet. Dad said that was the fastest he had ever moved in his life. They all ran for the nearest hole and dove head first through the gravel to avoid the blast. After removing the threat, he returned to the transport and medic station, where they proceeded to pull gravel out of his skin and clean up his wounds. Months later at home, after the war, he had gone fishing with his Dad and noticed that he had bits of metal coming out of his fingertips. He determined that it was probably shrapnel from the grenade. The medics had cleaned up his front side but had not considered checking anywhere else thinking that his wounds were only from hitting the gravel face first.

Although we were much better prepared for this battle than we were for Tarawa there were just as many casualties, just over a longer period of time. It took 25 days to secure Saipan, 6,100 Marines were killed, wounded or missing in action.

## ON LEAVE -- GUAM TO THE U.S.

Dad's CO gave him permission to take leave and go home. October, 1944, he landed on Guam to catch a transport home. During the few days on Guam while Dad and several others were waiting for a transport back to the States, they used this free time and broke out available sports equipment. To keep active they formed teams and competed. The area they could use for their games was a sand swale (small valley) shaped in an oval, and in tradition of naming their bowl, (Rose Bowl, Gator bowl, etc.) Dad suggested the name "Toilet Bowl" and everyone was in agreement. So they played their games in the "Toilet Bowl."



Mom &

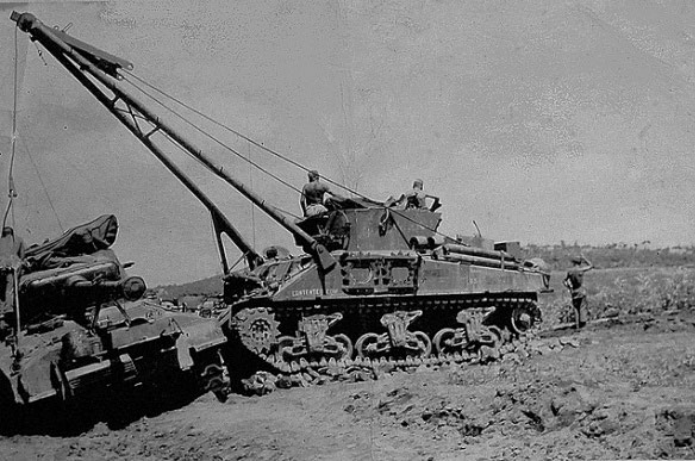
Dad

He had earned enough battle time to take a 6 month leave. So he went home and got married to my Mother, "the gal he'd left behind". After his leave time was up he returned to the base in Oceanside, Camp Pendleton, and started re-training again.

## OKINAWA

April -1945 Okinawa – This time as he returned to duty, he was attached to B Company, 6<sup>th</sup> Marines, 2nd tank (special weapons) Battalion. Heading to Okinawa, this was the largest number of troops ever carried to a target in the long Pacific drive. There were hundreds of ships heading toward the island and the Japs aware of this had begun the supreme and sacrificial defense of the homeland. Their first air raid on the approaching ships was not a bombing or torpedo run but were Kamikaze pilots flying a one-way mission. On board his transport there was a plane coming towards them and one of the gunners with his finger held tight on the trigger of his 50 cal. machine gun, hit the pilot and continued firing. The pilot being pushed back by the force of the bullets and his hand on the stick control was aiming directly toward them. Dad screamed out "stop firing!!!". As soon as the gunner stopped, the pilot fell forward on the stick and drove the plane into the water just short of the ship. A pretty close call.

Upon arriving in the late afternoon, Dad said they were dumped on the island, waiting for their tanks. They had no weapons with them, after all they were supposed to have tanks. As night fell they dug in and spent the night in their fox holes. Unfortunately it started to rain which became a downpour, filling up their foxholes. Needless to say they spent the night laying in a puddle of water. They could hear planes landing and taking off and realized that they were about ½ mile from where there was a Jap air field. As the light of dawn came they looked out to sea and didn't see the fleet, they had been left alone, without any gear or weapons. They ended up walking about 3 miles to where the tanks were. Dad said this was the first time during the war that he had gotten really scared.



M-32 Tank Retriever

machine guns blasting, and all the noises associated with an ongoing battle, his exhausted group decided they needed to get some sleep. The best location for protection, which would also help muffle the noise, would be to use the caves that had been previously evacuated. Dad picked a cave with a small opening and that appeared to be well protected. Upon entering, he noticed a number of vessels set on make shift shelving. Determining that this cave must have been a burial tomb with the cremation remains of Japanese families, they proceeded to remove the vessels setting them aside, from the cave. It was an unnerving thought sleeping with these remains. Once finished using the cave they respectfully replaced the vessels.

In practice the US Military used the many battalions of tank destroyers as assault guns, attaching them to infantry divisions. The strategy for the tanks were to keep them about a mile behind the Infantry. This was necessary to keep the large amount of fuel for refueling the tanks and additional ammunition out of the direct line of fire.

When not engaged in battle, Dad had the opportunity to pass out cigarettes that he had stored in his bustle boxes from his tank to our troops along the front lines. At that time he was exceeding popular for the much needed cigarette break, but thinks that today it would be a different story. He acquired Emphysema and he says he wouldn't wish that, or any of the other things that smoking causes, on anyone.

With the battle on Okinawa mostly under control, the men were able to catch up on events by seeing official newsreels. They got the news that Ernie Pyle the famous newspaper man who had been at D-day landing in Europe, where he gained his fame, lost his life on the small island of Iejima, northwest off of Okinawa. Another newsreel that particularly interested him was of the battle on Tarawa and the airfield incident where he thought their tank had taken out a Jap plane. He now understood why his CO made them remove the "zero" from the tank! The battle on Okinawa lasted 82 days. 2,938 Marines were killed, with a total of all US soldiers killed being 12,520.

He was there a little over 3 months when he got the letter from my Mom telling him she was pregnant. He showed this to his CO and was allowed to take leave.

## HOME

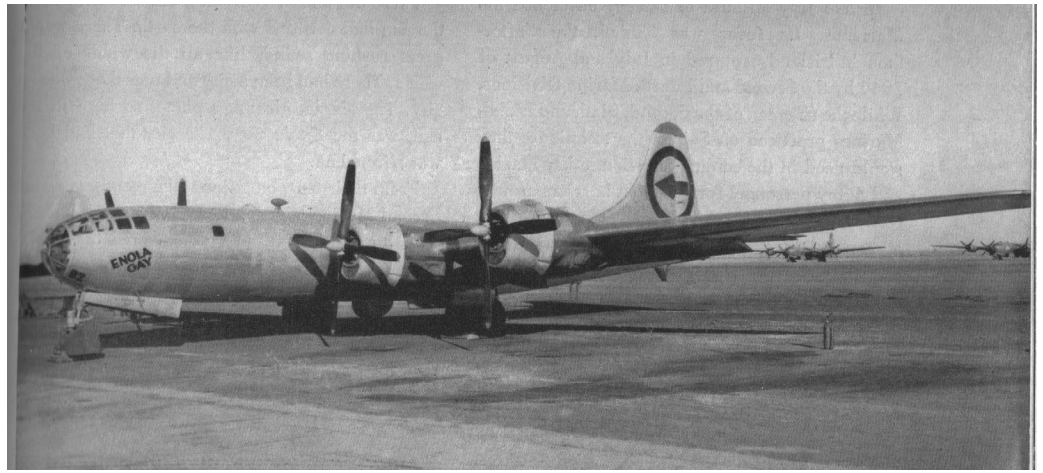
Again going through Guam to catch a cruiser home, he went to the field where they had been playing their sports game and found out that everyone was still using the name "Toilet Bowl". It had stuck!

He was put on a special tank that they named "Baker Doctor", It had the turret removed and a heavy-duty winch installed with and A frame or crane to allow the vehicle's crew to perform heavy lifting tasks used to rescue or retrieve defunct tanks. Most of the defunct tanks had their tracks blown off. So they retrieved the defunct tanks and took them back to where they could be repaired and put back into service. Dad said some of the tanks still had Marines in them, some dead, some alive.

At night with the continuation of Artillery booming, machine guns blasting, and all the noises associated with an ongoing battle, his exhausted group decided they needed to get some sleep. The best location for protection, which would also help muffle the noise, would be to use the caves that had been previously evacuated. Dad picked a cave with a small opening and that appeared to be well protected. Upon entering, he noticed a number of vessels set on make shift shelving. Determining that this cave must have been a burial tomb with the cremation remains of Japanese families, they proceeded to remove the vessels setting them aside, from the cave. It was an unnerving thought sleeping with these remains. Once finished using the cave they respectfully replaced the vessels.

While he was waiting to leave, another Marine said there was some plane over on the field refueling, that everyone was making a fuss about and that he should go see.

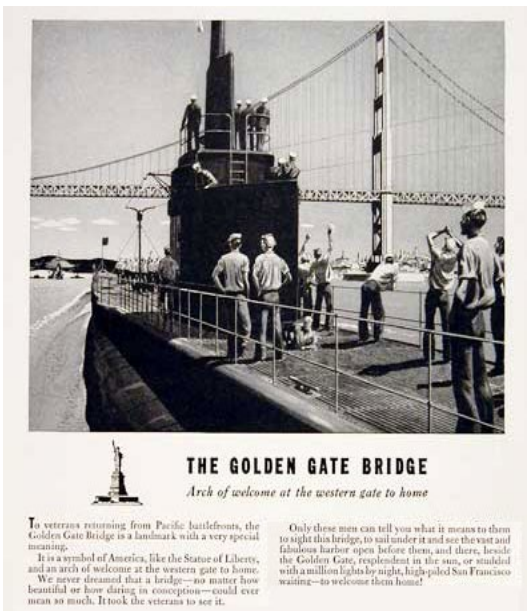
He says he remembers a very large plane with an unusual name on the nose of the plane (Enola Gay) and wasn't sure what the fuss was all about.



Enola Gay

He had no idea that this was the plane that was to drop the first atomic bomb a couple of days later (August 6th 1945) on the Japanese mainland.

It took a little time to catch a destroyer escort back to the mainland. They made a stop in Hawaii where he heard the Atomic bombs had been dropped on Japan and the war was over. And after leaving there, they encountered a huge storm. The escort being not very big would roll up and down through the waves and throw the water over the bow to the fan tail. There was nowhere on this ship where he could keep dry. The one meal that they were able to get to the Mess hall to eat taught them to hold onto their trays after one of them slid the entire length of the table onto the deck. After eating Dad said "We should be getting close to land by now".



1945 Ad -- Veterans Returning Home

Back up on deck, one of the other guys shouted "there it is!". Dad said He saw the San Francisco Golden Gate Bridge overhead and he started to cry which made him feel like a jerk but as he turned to look at the other guys they all had tears in their eyes too!

Once setting foot on shore the Salvation Army had greeted them with hot coffee, he knew he was home.

He called my Mom to let her know he was back and see how close she was to delivering. Arriving back in San Diego he arranged for leave and needing to get to my Mom, He arrived at the hospital 45 minutes after my brother was born, October 10th, 1945.

He had earned enough battle points to get out of the Military twice, and thought about joining again just so he could quit again. He was mustered out 10 days later. He pretty much had had his fill of war and after signing the last document, ended it with an

"A-MEN".

## MY CONCLUSION

Because of my husband inquiring about his service, I have learned so much about the man that raised me that I wouldn't have otherwise, because of his reluctance to talk about the war. I also have a greater understanding for what our country and its people fought for and why. I would have missed out on so much. I guess the lesson learned from this is that we should never lose sight of where we came from. Our country should continue to teach our history in its classrooms, we need to keep our heritage and patriotism alive, and we should continue to talk to our parents, no matter how old we are, regarding who we are and where we came from. The pride I feel, being his daughter, is overwhelming. My father never considered himself a hero. He said that the ones that lost their lives were the heroes. I agree with them being heroes but I also believe that just because he didn't lose his life, doesn't mean that he didn't serve his country any less. He volunteered to go serve and fight for his country, he was there and he fought the battles. He was just one of the lucky ones that had a guardian angel watching over him. In my eyes, all those that fought the fight and came home are also heroes. And, any of our Military men that serve our country should be honored and respected as such, then and now. Love you Dad, you are my Hero!!

Jacquelyn



Dad & Me

