

# *The Cliffs of Kobe Sho, August 1955*

Story by Dick Tarlton

In August of 1955, Telfair was assigned to paint white targets on a lonely island northeast of Formosa called Kobe Sho. Navy ships and planes would be using the island for bombing and gunnery practice if we could give them something to aim at. The island had not been visited since the Japanese were there during WWII, and all that was known about it was what could be seen in pictures from flyovers. It turned out that nobody knew anything about Kobe Sho.



The shoreline was so rocky and treacherous that the boats couldn't make the beach. All the paint, brooms and men had to be ferried in by rubber boat (of which we had the sum total of one). UDT got to the island first and found it was covered with thick vine matting about 2 to 3 feet thick, which couldn't be painted, so the only thing left to work on was the cliffs around the shoreline.

The crew members that went ashore ended up hanging from the cliffs by lines, swinging brooms dipped in lime paint, sloshing big white splotches on the rocks. Some of the crew went exploring through the vine entangled jungle and came across a Japanese airplane that evidently had crash landed on the island, trying to make it home to Okinawa.

It took three days to finish painting whatever the crew could get to, and the fourth day was given to beer parties in the boats just off the island. We filled large tubs with ice and water and put about four cases of beer in each tub and gave each boat a tub and 20 men. The boats would just lie off the island, and the crew drank beer, sunned and swam.

I swam onto the island to look around, and it was a real weird sensation. It was like landing in a really primitive world. The tide pools were filled with all kinds of bright colored fish, and the island was covered with crabs, lizards, snakes, and funny looking, friendly birds.

Before leaving the island, our gunners tried their hands at christening the targets. The 5" gun crew put multiple direct hits into the cliff targets, but when we sailed away, you could still see them from miles at sea.