

## Part II New Caledonia, and Guadalcanal

I boarded the U.S.S. President Polk for an unescorted trip to New Caledonia some 700 miles east of Australia. Too fast to be considered a submarine target, the Polk sped through the lovely Pacific Ocean, sometimes zigzagging but usually in an arrow-straight path.

The President Polk had been a passenger liner and even converted to a troop ship it was very nice. It was the largest ship I was ever to be aboard.

I spent most of my time "top-side" watching the sea for hours. Sometimes dolphins played in the bow wave and flying fishes soared alongside us. At night a phosphorescent wake trailed behind us into the starry darkness. I probably had a smile on my face the entire trip.

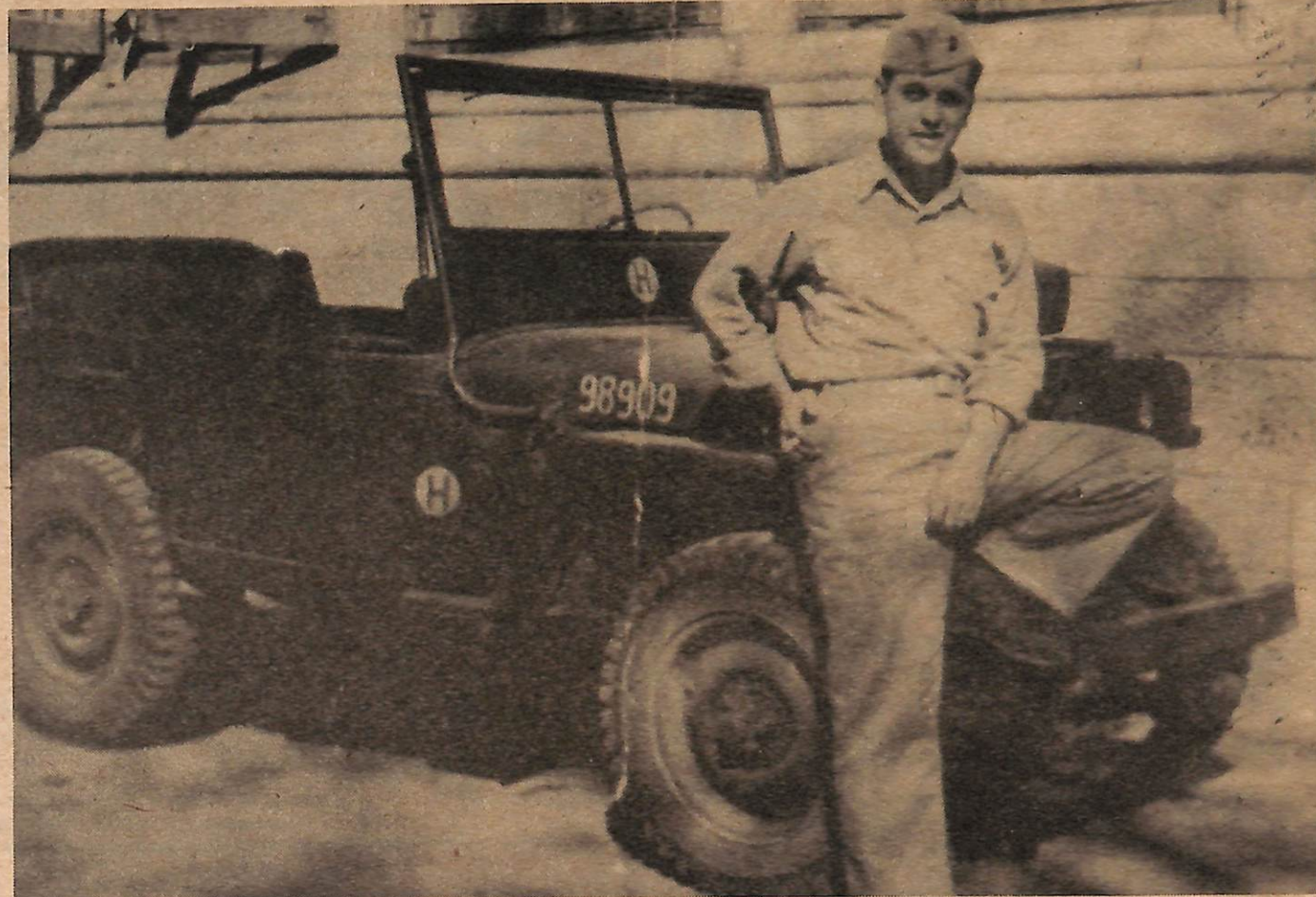
We arrived in New Caledonia in February or March of 1944. Immediately before or very shortly after we arrived, an ammunition ship exploded at the Nickel Docks in Noumea harbor. I never saw the damage and there was no official acknowledgment it ever happened but we heard rumors of tremendous damage and loss of life. Security around the dock area became very strict.

New Caledonia was and is a French colony whose primary worth seemed to be the nickel mines in the interior.

Noumea was a quaintly attractive little town of mostly one story frame buildings, built well off the ground on slender masonry foundation pilings. Nearly all had encircling verandas and large windows fitted with bamboo screens or blinds. Dogs and pigs roamed freely through streets, yards and under the buildings.

### Camp St. Louis

We were located at Camp St. Louis (St. Louie) probably about 20 miles from Noumea in some remote mountains and gorges. Roads were mostly dirt paths bulldozed along bridges and across ravines, with stretches here and there covered with gravel or crushed coral. Small clusters of grass huts crowded between the road and



Ever the Marine, young Davis strikes a cocky pose on the fender of his Jeep.

# Maturing of a Marine

## Charles Davis's Memoirs

the jungled hillsides in a few places.

Natives with very dark skins and fuzzy hair hawked a potent native booze called "gook juice" or "panther piss" to those foolhardy enough to try it. (I saw one man go screaming crazy and leap from a speeding truck after drinking some of the stuff).

The replacement group to which I had earlier been assigned in the States had moved to Samoa to join the 22nd Marines. I was attached to a Marine Raider battalion for continued training until transport to Samoa became available.

In an organization known for its esprit-de-corps, the Raiders stood out as a super gung-ho outfit. Still full of adrenalin from the famous raid on Makin Island by Carlson's Raiders, these men felt and acted as if there was nothing they couldn't do.

I found out the first day I wasn't in as fine a physical condition as I thought! About 10 miles from Camp St. Louis was a rugged place called Mount D'Or. Four to six days each week we walked, jogged and ran the 20 mile round trip over Mount D'Or with 30 pound packs and an M-1 rifle. One day we went up the long sloping side of the mountain and down the precipitous opposite flank. The next day we reversed the direction.

Scrambling up and down rocky ridges, along twisting trails through jungle thickets, wading cold mountain

streams and, especially, climbing the steep face of Mount D'Or was exhausting. We had one five-minute break on the outward leg, another as we returned and a half-hour chow break on the mountain.

At the end of each hike the entire outfit double-timed the last two miles into camp. The first few trips I was among the stragglers who finally stumbled into camp gasping for breath. More than once I fell onto my cot physically sick with exhaustion and too near vomiting to answer chow call.

I improved as time went on but I never once finished with the leaders. At five feet six inches in height and about 135 pounds I was called a "feather merchant."

I developed a fungus on the bottom of my feet from wading the streams and swamps. Thereafter I had to go to sick bay each night for treatment of the little bloody pits that formed under broken blisters. I placed my feet into a solution of copper sulphate while an electric current passed through straps on my legs through my feet to an electrode suspended in the solution. The tingling charge on the raw sores was painful but it helped prepare my feet for the next hike.

The area we were in was made up of parallel ridges separated by deep ravines. The sides were often so steep they could be climbed only by hanging

onto the rocks or vegetation above. Some ridge tops were so sharp there wasn't even a goat path along the top.

I went out with a group of 60 men mortar crews on a practice mission. The crews set up their weapons just off the top of one ridge to fire across a ravine at large square targets erected between two poles on the side of the next ridge.

Now, mortar shells drop in from a high angle so hitting a target on flat terrain is a tough problem, but it is simple compared to hitting the same target on a steep slope!

One crew had fired a number of rounds at their target always hitting well above or below it when an old Chief Marine Gunner walked up. Cursing the men as a bunch of civilians unfit for the Corps, he strode over to their weapon, made a slight adjustment, stripped a few increments off the propellant charge and dropped it into the tube.

With a characteristic hollow "thunk" the shell was on its way and a few seconds later it exploded on the opposite ridge, blasting the target to shreds!

With an aplomb seldom witnessed he turned on his heel and walked away without a word as if he could repeat the feat time after time.

The kids in the crew stood open-mouthed in astonishment, then began to smile at each other in admiration.

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It was sometime before I realized the Chief had observed where the previous shells had fallen and had merely interpolated the prior settings. Still, it was the work of a craftsman! He was the talk of the entire camp that night. I'm sure this tale has been repeated many times by those who saw it.

I was sent to Samoa, then immediately on to the Marshall Islands where the 22nd Marine Regiment was involved in the invasion of Roi and Namur Islands. I was there only a few days for the islands were secure before I went ashore.

### On Guadalcanal

We went to Guadalcanal where I was finally integrated into a real regiment. I became part of Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion, 22nd Marines.

Guadalcanal had been invaded in August, 1942, and was the first Japanese held island to be captured.

Our camp was located at Tassafaronga along the beach some miles west of Henderson Field, across the Tenaru and Matanakao Rivers and just east of the Kolumbona River.

The camp was situated in a narrow band of coconut trees planted in a grid pattern along the beach as a part of a British copra plantation. The strip was only about 300 to 600 feet wide from the sea to the edge of the crushed coral road. Dense jungle crowded in the right against the inland side of the road. At the west end of the camp along the shore there were hulks of two troop barges and a fairly large ship, the Tina Marie, I seem to remember.

They had been beached by the Japanese after being hit by our naval ships and aircraft while trying to reinforce the Japanese garrison during the battle for Guadalcanal.

Many nights when we were not on work details at the docks, I laid on the beach looking at the stars and dreaming while the gentle waves of the channel lap-lopped at the shore.

Many nights we had to make up work parties to go to the docks across from Tulagi.

We were discouraged from going into the jungle alone or in two's or three's. There were stories, allegedly from the few natives, that small bands of Japanese soldiers still roamed in the mountains. A few men went into the nearby jungle anyway, and some once came back with a rusty rifle and some moldy personal effects found on the remains of three or four Japs. These forays stopped after Arliss Franklin, a scout for Charlie Company, found a well-oiled machine gun while on a training hike with his company. Machine guns don't stay well preserved for very long in the jungle unless they are constantly cared for.

Guadalcanal is a big island probably 85 miles long and up to 20 miles wide. I don't know what other outfits did but our battalion was never more than 3 or 4 miles inland from the north shore. There were hundreds of square miles in the mountainous center of the island where only aircraft spotter planes ever roamed, I imagine. I'm confident that small groups of Japanese survived a long time in the interior without being detected.

Food was terrible. Day after day we had dried eggs, pancakes, orange marmalade, a waxy margarine and canned Spam. Meal upon meal was some unimaginative combination of these. Even C-ration hash was a treat.

Movies were rare, too, so Sea-Bees from miles down the beach would sometimes invite 30 or 40 men at a time to their camp for a meal and a recent movie. They fed us on fresh meat and eggs, canned fruit and freshly baked breads and pastries.

Their theater was a big amphitheater they called the "Coral Bowl." We were usually given 2 or 3 beers before loading onto our trucks to return to camp late at night.

Although Marines are a part of the Navy, they often fought with sailors at the least provocation but the Navy Sea-Bees certainly were looked upon as friends.

During this period the 22nd Marine Regiment and the 4th Marine Regiment were under General H.M. (Howlin' Mad) Smith. Our 22nd



Davis

Marine commander was Colonel "Red Dog" Snyder.

The 4th Marines were the old "China Marines" and had been "Horse Marines" I believe. The regiment had been pulled out of Shanghai before Pearl Harbor and had been a part of MacArthur's Bataan defense in the Philippines where the survivors were captured. Our sister regiment was an entirely new 4th Marines, but the tradition of their regiment evoked as much pride as if every man had actually served in China.

My immediate commander was Lt. Jack Vaughn from Albion, Michigan, "Gateway to the South." That is the way he always answered when asked where he came from.

Jack was a very thin wiry young man with very light, almost yellow complexion and sandy hair that was very nearly red. He often wore a mustache. He had studied in Mexico and supported himself by boxing professionally while in college there. He walked with an unusual springy step as if bouncing up onto his toes.

Jack never took the Marine Corps or the war very seriously. He was a very good officer and all of us respected him, but we looked upon him as a buddy who just happened to be our commander, too. Jack became a director in the Peace Corps directly under Sergeant Shriver, President Kennedy's brother-in-law. Somehow it seems to fit our image of him perfectly.

We had a sergeant from Gardiner, Montana. Because Vaughn always said he was from Albion, Michigan, "Gateway to the South," Sgt. \_\_\_\_\_ said he was from Gardiner, Montana, "Gateway to the Yellowstone." I believe the town really did use that motto just as Kokomo (Indiana) calls itself the "City of Firsts."

Platoon Sgt. Kimlin from Poughkeepsie, New York and Pfc. (later Sgt.) R. D. Hager from Nicholasville, Kentucky, had been among the few Marines who participated in the invasion of North Africa before coming to the Pacific. My memory says they landed at

Arzew in Algeria but I'm not certain. At any rate both men were very well liked and were looked upon as "old salts."

The head of our communications section was a tall man with black hair, a heavy 5 o'clock shadow of a beard and a constant frown. His name was Elmo Reich and he came from North Carolina.

At roll call when all other section leaders answered "all present or accounted for, sir," Reich would often answer "two G-- D-- men missin', sir!" to the amusement of the entire company, including the officers.

A number of times he took off alone into the night on the front lines, a telephone wire running through his left hand and the shotgun in his right, looking for a break in the line.

Also attached to our headquarters was a combat correspondent named Ben Masselink. I think Ben was a sergeant but Ben was always a civilian regardless of Marine Corps designations or rules.

He was a tall, skinny, stoop-shouldered young man of maybe, 24. His shoes were seldom tied and he never wore a belt. Instead he tied the two front belt loops of his dungarees together with a string. Many days he didn't bother to shave.

Because of his special assignment, like me he did not have to stand most formations or inspections. He never had routine duty assignments.

After a while the officers and N.C.O.'s gave up on making a Marine out of Ben. For their own protection they tried to ignore his appearance and casual ignoring of the rules. They recognized they could never make Ben fit the Marine Corps mold.

Masselink had gone to Northwestern University's school of journalism while living with some older woman.

While in rear areas, he received packages regularly from his woman friend. They always consisted of cakes or loaves of bread hollowed out to contain a bottle of liquor.

At mail call, Ben's packages brought hoots and laughter but he would only smile and slouch off to his tent, contemplating his package.

The establishment often sent requests or orders to Ben for more stories and materials for articles in the Marine Corps magazine, "Leatherneck."

He once said he had written a many-page story and sent it to Washington headquarters. In the middle of a sentence on the last page, he stopped, adding "continued on page —" but sent no page —.

"I can see those fool people looking everywhere for page — and accusing each other of losing it," he laughed.

In the '50's I read a story in Collier's magazine written by Ben Masselink. The author's profile always carried by Collier's said he lived on an island somewhere in the Caribbean. It fit Ben.

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# Poetry

## Reminisce

As I grow older, and Reminisce  
I can not help, but think of this  
Would I be here, to write this today  
If the Japanese, had had their way  
If they had known, we had the atomic  
might  
On the island of Tinian, ready for  
flight  
The best kept secret, this world has  
known  
Was the atomic bomb, before it was  
shown  
Those two bombs, would never have  
been used  
If Pearl Harbor, had not been abused  
The Japanese killed hundreds of  
Americans that day  
With their sneak attack, on our ships in  
the bay  
The news media has been apologetic,  
for the atomic bomb drops  
I guess it is because, with them the  
dollar is tops  
We of the 509th, apologize to no one  
We were sent there to do a job, and that  
job was well done

So on December 7th, I hope and I pray  
The news media will print, the truth of  
that infamous day.

Ex T/Sgt Darwin C. Lewis  
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## Things that Stir the Soul

There are some things left  
That stir the soul —

Standing at attention  
During Morning Colors —  
Thoughts of Shanghaia  
And China Marines.

Dress blue uniforms  
With gold buttons —  
Chesty Puller,  
In Korea.

The Eagle, Globe and Anchor —  
Cadence, the parade Deck —  
Sharp salutes, and  
Parade Rest, Taps.

And my son, home from  
Marine Corps boot camp.

Bobbie Taylor,  
Elwood, IN

# How Soon They Forget

Ernest C. Tarter

Tired, bedraggled and lonely  
Hearts as heavy as lead,  
The battle they fought is over,  
Many a Comrade lies dead.

Eyes sunken deep and staring,  
Shrunken bodies where hunger  
abounds.

Orders shouted in a foreign language,  
Oh! What frightening sounds.

Pushed with steel-tipped rifles,  
Down roads to God knows where,  
No rest — no food — no water,  
What fate do these men have to bear?

To camps surrounded by barbed wire  
And cruel guards so anxious to kill,  
But spirits are starting a comeback,  
To live, becomes the number one will.

Home-folks are told, "Missing in ac-  
tion."

Some are presumed to be dead,  
Family, friends and the Nation,  
Stand in shock with prayer bowed  
heads.

Dear God, bring home these brave lads,  
Who have fought far over the sea,  
To a home of friends and loved ones,  
For whom they've fought to be safe and  
free.

Ships appear on the horizon  
On home soil these lads will soon land,  
Let's all roll out the red carpet,  
And greet them with a huge brass band.

They have all fought, oh so bravely,  
Let's all do them what we can,  
Let's tend to the sick and wounded,  
Care for them down to the man.

Brave lads this war is over,  
Your future of care is all set,  
Adjust your life back among us  
No need you to worry or fret.

You have fought so gallant for  
freedom,  
To show you just how much we all care,  
The things we amassed in your  
absence,  
We are all so willing to share.

Years push the war to the background,  
But a new war now shall reign  
To remind the Grand Old Nation,  
There's still bodies broken with pain.

So for us, the battle's not over,  
The promises haven't been met,  
We must fight for our daily existence,  
Dear God, how soon they forget.

But let their freedom be threatened,  
Who will answer their call?  
These brave lads they have forgotten,  
In battle would once more bravely fall.

We'd give life to win this battle,  
On this, you surely can bet,  
Although we're so few in number,  
Thank God, we don't soon forget.

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## Lockheed P-38 "Lightning"

In 1936 the program was started with Lockheed Aircraft Corporation to develop the XP-38, powered by one V-1710-C8 and one V-1710-C9, 1000 horsepower engine. In production this became the famous P-38 "Lightning" which was so widely used during World War II for intercepting, escort, fighting, night fighting, reconnaissance, photography, etc. A total of 9924 was built.

The YP-38's and the P-38 began the wartime production program and were then powered by two Allison F2, left and right-hand engines, having 1150 horsepower. Subsequent models were the P-38 F series, using the F5R and L engines, the P-38 G series powered by F10R and L engines, the P-38 H and J series, with F17R and L engines, and finally the P-38 L series, have F-30 engines. All of these were manufactured from 1941 to 1945, and the main advancement in engines was the increase in horsepower and efficiency through beefing up various sections and raising the blower ratios. The F17R and L and the F30R and L had a war emergency horsepower rating of 1600 and were turbo-supercharged as were all previous models. All through the war, engine advancement kept pace with airplane production and at the war's end new and more powerful engines were available for later models of the P-38. However, emphasis was turned to an intensive jet airplane and engine program which shelved further airplane development and finally ended in cancellation of the entire production programs.

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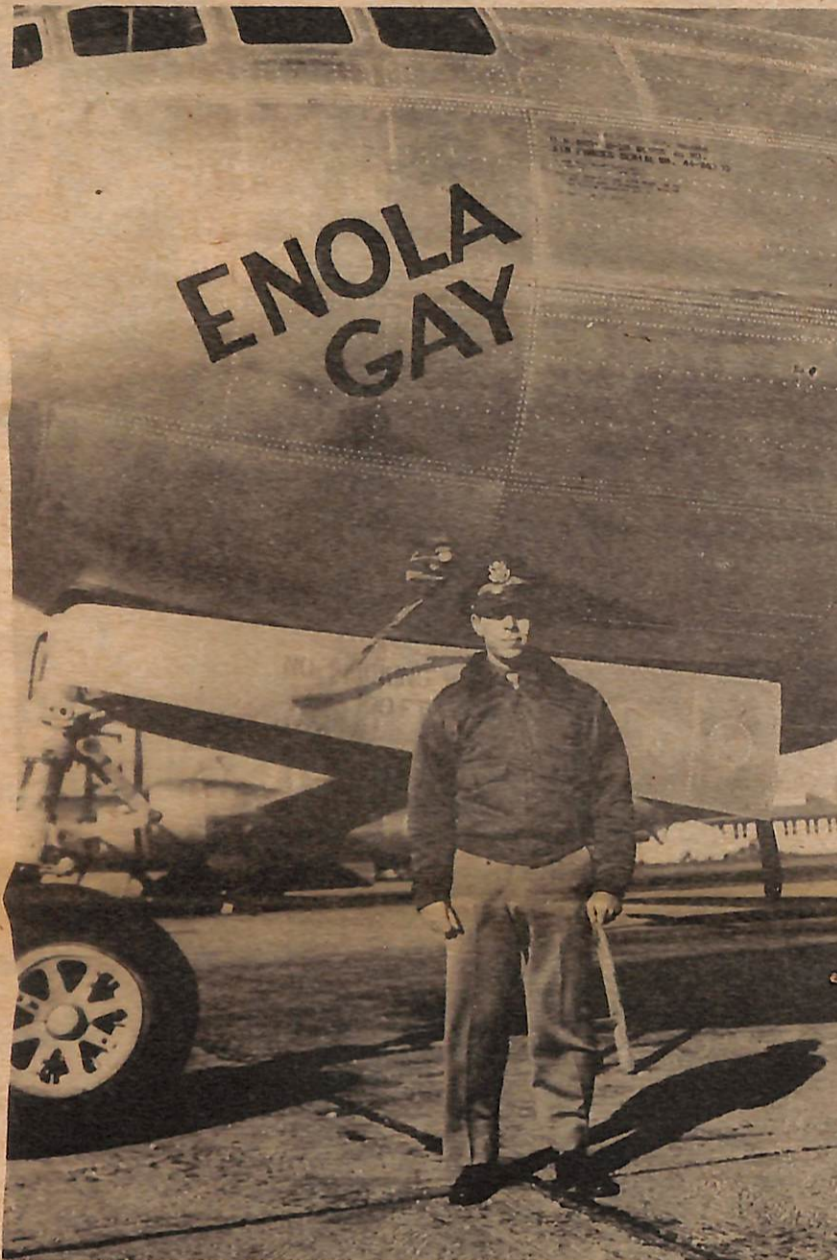
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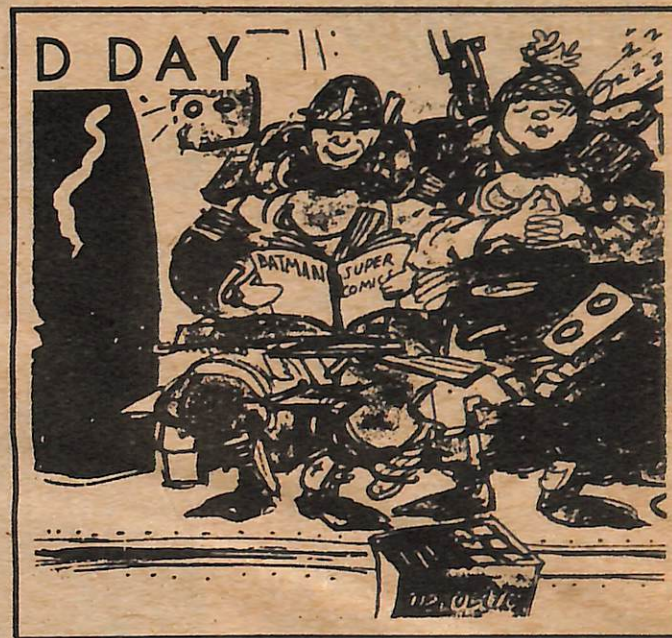
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William McLaughlin

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With a flick of the change lever the BAR could go from single shot like an M-1 to automatic fire like a machine gun, yet it didn't require all that extra gear; ammo chests, spare barrels and tripods, that went with the light machine guns.

Mine was the exception. It would only fire single shot. It hated to fire automatic.

I'd come into the Recon Troop of the Americal Division on Bougainville in mid 1944 after getting busted from my rank of sergeant, chief of section in the Field Artillery. They called it conduct unbecoming a soldier, but I thought of it only as telling off a particularly green and obnoxious second lieutenant. I'd already been a sergeant for 3½ years on active service, so being a private was a new experience. A new carbine had been issued me, light and flexible, and I'd come to like it.

Whenever action slowed down, duties were prescribed to keep the soldiers busy; roadwork, foot drill and schools. A school on the BAR was called for all hands, and Sergeant Artie Moreau of Lowell, Massachusetts was giving it. He didn't know too much about his subject, certainly not enough to make it interesting, and besides that, I'd been machine gun section chief for much of my artillery time. On slow days we used to run schools on the MG's and BAR's, racing to see who was quickest in field stripping and reassembling the pieces blindfolded.

Artie stumbled on the name of a part, and held up the school while searching for it. Bored to death and hanging in the rear of the group I supplied it to get finished. I think it was the recoil spring guide, or something like that. Anyway, he looked at me kind of quizzically, but went on with his school.

Later, sitting in my tent I looked up to see a tall soldier coming toward me holding the BAR. "The sergeant told me to give you this," he said laconically, picking up my little carbine, and that was that.

Well, I found out right away that it would only fire single shot, and complained. It was sent to the Ordnance, repaired, came back and still wouldn't work. Back to the Ordnance,



Bill McLaughlin shows off his BAR rifle.

again and again. Everything was replaced, I believe, but the receiver with the serial number, when we finally shipped out for the Philippines.

Shortly after arriving on Leyte, we made a patrol out through the hills, and marvelled at the open country having spent nearly three years in the jungles of the South Pacific. As the line wound along a trail overlooking a grassy slope stretching down several hundred yards, I said to the lieutenant leading the patrol that I would like to test fire my BAR. He halted us and gave a rest while I looked for a suitable target. Several others asked to test their rifles, too, and were given permission. The most prominent feature in the grassy landscape was a huge rock some 150 yards

down the slope. This became the common target.

Single shots were no problem, but throwing over the change lever, I squeezed off a burst, "bup, bup, bup..." and that was it, another jam. Disgusted I ejected the clip while the lieutenant hollered, "Cease fire, cease fire."

As we stood there clearing our pieces suddenly someone cried out, "Look." And as we did there was the blur of a disappearing Jap bolting off through the brush at the edge of the field. He had evidently been caught in the open when our patrol appeared and had hidden in the only spot available, behind the rock.

What thoughts must have gone through his mind while that concen-

tration of fire opened up on his hiding place? How sure he must have been that he'd been seen, and being pinned down for the final blow.

The BAR went back to Ordnance and never returned to me. I carried an M-1 for the rest of the war and it worked fine.

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# Reunions and the "Big 50"



## Lt. Col. Bill Masciangelo USMC (Retired)

**M**ilitary reunions are on the rise! The number of units and organizations holding reunions are increasing each year. A recent review of military and veteran's publications listed more than 3,000 reunions that are being planned or considered for 1989 alone.

For the reunion planner, this is a mighty task. Local laws, unions, alcohol liability, contracts, cancellation clauses, food and beverage guarantees, and registration procedures can sometimes make or break a reunion. Time, money and effort go into reunion planning, and it is only good business to follow sound practices and successful methods.

There are four categories of military reunions.

First is the large military association or veteran group that holds major conventions each year, which are attended by several thousand members. These are major events normally planned and executed by a professional (paid) staff.

Second is the medium-sized reunion or convention, where attendance is usually around 1,000. These events are the responsibility of local chapter volunteers who plan and execute the program. The success of such reunions varies from year to year, depending on the organizational ability and expertise of the local committee.

Third is the small reunion, attended by anywhere from 25 to 300 members. The majority of all reunions are considered small reunions. These events are usually planned by one or two members and are held in, or near, the hometown of the reunion planner.

Many of you may be thinking about organizing a reunion or wishing someone else would. Maybe this article will help get you started.

When planning a reunion, certain issues must be addressed, such as the who, what, when, where, and why. These include...

### Hotel and City Selection:

Inspection, evaluation and negotiation.

### Logistics and Administration:

Registration, banking, audiovisual, media coverage, suppliers, security, safety, transportation, printing, awards, postage, decorations, signs, tipping, etc.

### Food, Beverage and Entertainment:

Menu, entertainment, VIPs, seating, liquor laws, coffee service, room arrangement, tours, trips, tournaments, and theme ideas.

Planning a reunion may take on the dimension of planning an amphibious operation. Let's begin this series by looking at the characteristics of the



Bill Masciangelo

typical military/veterans reunion group.

### Characteristics:

Attendees pay their own way. Less than 300 members attend. The average reunion lasts 3½ days. Spouses attend. Sightseeing and recreation are very important. Military guests attend. Flag rank officers are asked to speak. There is a memorial service. A banquet (and dinner dance) is held the last evening. There is usually a hospitality suite. Special menus are arranged by the hotel. Low budget is the main concern. Photos are taken. A one- or two-person committee organizes and runs the reunion. There may be special diet and handicap considerations. Reunions are held mostly in the summer months.

For extra assistance in planning a reunion, there are several resources available. The hotel staff, once the hotel is selected, can provide the most guidance and assistance. Independent meeting planners can save you money and help prevent mistakes, but you will pay for their services.

The convention center and visitors bureau in the host city are good sources for assistance and information about the city. Contact them in advance. The local military base commander, if one is nearby, can also provide assistance. This might include the local Reserve unit recruiting station.

Finally, and perhaps most important, read professional publications about meeting planning. A good book is "Professional meeting Management," published by the Professional Convention Management Association in 1985. It may be purchased from the Professional Convention Management Association, 100 Vestavia Office Park, Suite 220, Birmingham, AL 35216, for \$49.95 plus \$3 postage and handling.

Why would you want to have a professionally run event? Because a reunion should be economical and a good value for the dollar. A well-organized event will attract the members you want to attend.

Don't forget, many people attend a reunion during their one and only vacation, or they are living on a fixed retirement income and will not be attracted to an event that is too costly and/or poorly organized. You may get them the first time, but not the second. Also, a well-conceived and professionally run event will earn you the support and interest of the local base and military personnel.

While waiting for next month's article, you might want to begin looking for your retired friends. All the military services provide this assistance, while complying with the Privacy Act.

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# He was betting a half million on it

## Van Watts USS Enterprise

On December 15, 1943, in the Naval officers club, Navy Supply Depot, Gamadodo, Milne Bay, New Guinea, I would be welcomed at the age of 23 into the Navy Supply Corps with many a toast "to the youngest warrant officer" in it.

Thus began a many-faceted career, involving on active duty and the retired list, 52 of the Corps' 200 fabulous years.

While still a chief petty officer, I had been handling funds and otherwise performing the usual duties of an assistant disbursing officer, duties into which — in the rich annals of the Navy Supply Corps — I had been uniquely initiated.

Earlier that year I was Australia for the first time. On August 27, the USS ROCHANBEAU, aboard which a day earlier I had observed my 23rd thday, would disembark at Brisbane the first eschelon of my Naval advance base outfit, CUB SEVEN.

Within hours it would re-embark on orders of MacArthur. Returning abruptly from an inspection of Australia's northern defenses to discover something had gone wrong with his instructions for staging CUB SEVEN's first eschelon, the General had redirected it further up the Queensland coast.

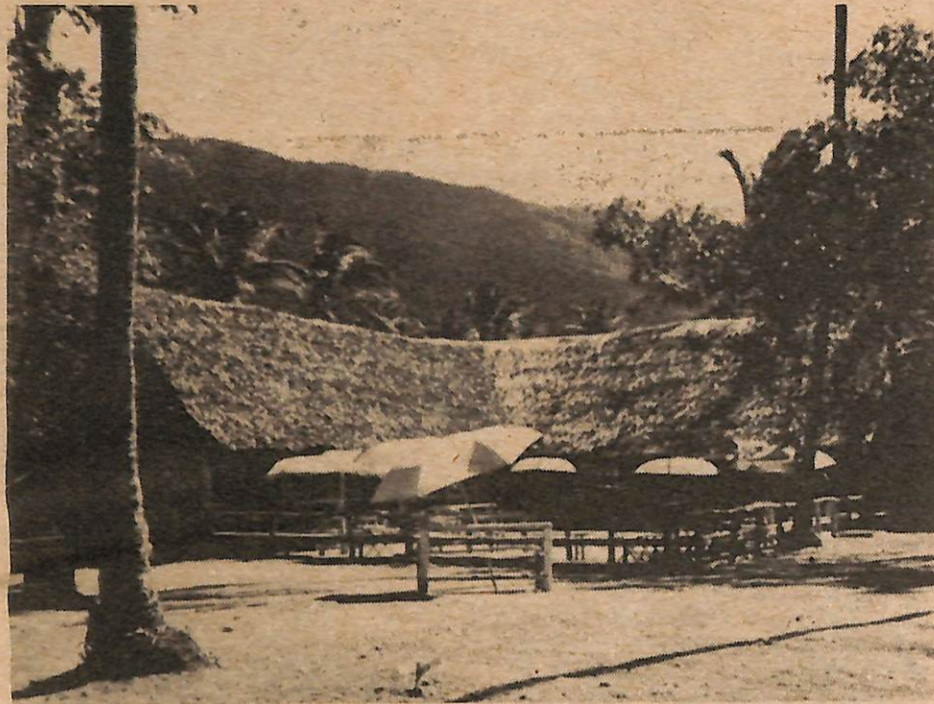
For six weeks, the first eschelon would be encamped at MacKay (pronounced to rhyme with "by"). Then, on October 7, it would be boated out to the U.S. Army Transport, SEA WITCH, for the last leg of its trip to the New Guinea battlefield.

All would be boated out, that is, except "THE LAST YANK" in MacKay.

Someday soon I would be boating and jeeping around Milne Bay, paying the 31 Naval activities which would mushroom around its 60-mile perimeter. But now, it had developed — and rather suddenly it seemed — that there was no means of getting the CUB SEVEN's heavy safe — and payroll — aboard.

MacKay's shallow port could not accommodate at its small pier vessels with the size and draft of the ROCHANBEAU and SEA WITCH. And because no crane was available at the pier itself, a problem arose. On disembarkation, a small escort vessel with a crane equal to the task had happened to be in port. But this vessel had sailed — the only means of re-embarking CUB SEVEN's safe sailing with it.

It was decided to put the safe — and "THE LAST YANK" — on the train for Townsville up the coast. For aboard the SEA WITCH, which also



Navy Supply Depot, Gamadodo, Milne Bay, New Guinea.

had transported from San Francisco the first eschelon's heavy equipment, the CUB's second and third eschelons had arrived in the South Pacific. Members of these eschelons, after a month enroute without pay or leave, had been promised a day ashore.

In Townsville, the safe and its custodian would be put aboard. The safe — and "THE LAST YANK" — would be hoisted aboard in a cargo net to the cheers and handclapping of thousands of unpaid sailors. A memorable moment — this tumultuous welcome aboard the SEA WITCH.

Back in MacKay, CUB SEVEN's first eschelon had been camped at the base of a rocky hill into whose opposite flank had been quarried an immense black hole.

Not a place one would easily forget, the campsite would be vividly and sentimentally remembered. It was both the place from which "THE LAST YANK's" recommendation for promotion to warrant officer had been sent to Washington, and the place from which a safe that would figure uniquely in his initiation as an assistant paymaster had been trucked into town.

There, in pre-dawn hours the SEA WITCH was to sail. An old Welshman had handcranked a rusty rope windlass with which the safe was laboriously hoisted from the truck and lowered onto steel rollers in a railroad box car.

Assisting were six first eschelon men who, at daybreak, would return the camp's utility truck to its Aussie owner. Then they would catch the last boat out to the anchored SEA WITCH. Already preparing to get underway, the transport would sail, leaving

"THE LAST YANK" alone on a foreign beach with a 45, and a half-million dollars.

CUB SEVEN had come to the South Pacific not to care for its own needs only — many small outfits would be arriving in that part of the world without paymasters. "Take all the loot you can carry." was the order which had come down from the Chief of the Supply Corps.

As for the "THE LAST YANK" — he felt neither alone nor lonely. But what boy of 12, writing an essay on "THE WOOL INDUSTRY IN AUSTRALIA" could have imagined that, one day, he would be escorting a safe and a half million dollars through Australia's sheep country.

There was no reason to suppose that the safe's presence in the box car would become known to any ashore other than a few railroad hands.

The train, it turned out, would be only a locomotive pulling a coal car, the box car with the safe and, lastly, three cars loaded with freight. For company "THE LAST YANK" would have an engineer and a fireman.

For 17 hours and 250 miles — paralleling her course along the coast and approximating the pace of the SEA WITCH which, with a five hour

head start, zigzagged northward through submarine-infested waters — "THE LAST YANK" would rumble slowly through the sheep country.

Stops would be made to drop freight at sheep ranches, or stations as they were called. In all 250 miles to Townsville, not one hamlet graced the countryside. Only once, near dusk, would a stop be made for a meal — a robust dinner of potatoes, boiled cabbage, and turnips.

On a great table in the station house's dining room and in full view of the kitchen area where it had been prepared in large shiny kettles, the meal would be served by a stout Cornish cook and her male helper to a dozen railroaders and shepherders and the train's only passenger.

Introduced to all by the engineer, "THE LAST YANK" felt neither alone nor lonely. Oh yes, some Yanks ate mutton — but not "THE LAST YANK".

He could afford to be snooty. In the sealed box car, which never had been out of sight from his perch atop the locomotive and which even now could be seen through a window, he had ample provisions for the long night ahead.

But all would seem to have been worthwhile when, after a virtually sleepless night curled up next to a half million dollars, his journey ended with a standing ovation.

But again — back to MacKay — The nearest thing to a USO had been the Australian Red Cross Canteen. It was there that "THE LAST YANK" left MacKay — he would board that box car with a box lunch prepared by a distant Australian cousin. A cousin — like a grinning Aussie watching the train depart — would never know he had been entrusted with a half million dollars.

As the train slowly pulled out, "THE LAST YANK", seated on the edge of the box car with his legs dangling from its doorway, playfully pretended to catch her kisses in his hat.

Laughed the Aussie, "We can't win a war like that."

"Just maybe we can." — "THE LAST YANK" shouted back — "I'll bet a half million on it."

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# Close call

FROM PAGE 3

weeks was a forerunner of things to come for Americans who would be captured by the Japanese on Corregidor and Bataan in the spring of 1942.

Shortly after being loaded aboard a ship for transfer to a POW camp, Ed was given a horrible beating.

He recalls: "The first blow was to the small of my back and my muscles twitched and I doubled over. Then they struck me on the face and arms with a rifle. I was rolling around on the deck, trying to avoid the blows, and I rolled through an opening in the deck of the ship and fell into the hold."

There Ed lay for several days, barely able to move.

"About the 10th day out," he continues, "we were in the Yokohama Harbor and a Japanese officer came down and started picking out prisoners. I took another beating. The fellow next to me was among five men taken aside and beheaded on deck."

Ed was imprisoned near Shanghai, China. The men lived in horse stables which had been converted into a makeshift barracks. Their diet rarely varied from rice, watery soup, and a few vegetables.

They were beaten and abused on a regular basis.

Ed weighed over 200 pounds when he was captured. He was down to 85 pounds in August 1945 when he was finally released after the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki forced Japan to surrender. He was blind in one eye and beset with malaria and internal parasites when he finally came home.

Fortunately, Ed's father was a physician who gave him excellent treatment, and gradually was able to restore his eyesight. Another physician was found in Duluth, Minnesota, who specialized in oriental diseases. He was able to clear up the parasites.

But the best medicine of all for Ed was his mother's home cooked meals.

There is a touching footnote to Ed Pearsall's gripping story. In June 1988, he and 169 other survivors, relatives, and friends returned to Wake Island to dedicate a monument in honor of the civilians. A memorial to the Marines was put up shortly after the war.

For Ed the most emotional moment of the trip came during the dedication ceremony. Suddenly it began to rain just as it had done 47 years ago.

When the television crew began to cover their cameras, Ed's mind flashed back to that time when he stood as a young Marine preparing to meet his ultimate fate. He had to walk away for a few minutes until he could regain control of himself.

At Wake Island, "Semper Fi," ("Always Faithful") applied equally to every defender. There were no distinctions.



Ed had many memories which flooded his thoughts as he wandered around Wake Island last June.



Pearsall searches for the company safe which he was ordered to bury on December 8, 1941. The safe, which contained \$60,000, was not found. "Big Moe" Currey (left) and Pearsall place a wreath in Hawaii's Punch Bowl Cemetery in memory of their fallen comrades.

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Marlene Dietrich was more than just another pretty pin-up during World War II. A native of Germany, she had come to America in 1930 virtually unknown as an actress.

But success did not wait very long in the shadows. Within weeks of her arrival, her veiled glance, alluring body, and enticing legs had captivated America's movie-going public. She had become part of the theatrical nobility.

The war did not cause Marlene any consternation as to her personal loyalties. "All my love always" was a typical thought from her heart as she signed thousands of autographs for thousands of young Americans on far flung battlefronts.

In 1943 she began to travel abroad to entertain troops near the European battle fronts. At age 42 she carried with her a maternal instinct to be near the young soldiers experiencing the horrors of war. The wounded and paralyzed in military hospitals got her special attention.

As one writer noted: "Dietrich was essentially a woman who mustered the troops. She was irresistible, and almost everybody adored her, except those who were jealous, or blind."

This assessment was borne out in June 1944 when she took a 10 week tour of North Africa and Italy with USO Camp Shows. Many soldiers remembered her as a person of great encouragement to everyone.

In Belgium Marlene held a contest to determine which soldiers had the best looking legs. Later in the show she showed off her famous gams to the resounding cheers of the huge crowd of troops.

On December 17 she showed up at the rest center for the 394th Infantry at Honsfeld, Belgium, then under heavy attack by German forces. It was necessary to hurriedly send her back behind the rapidly crumbling lines, which felt the first blows of the "Battle of the Bulge."

In February 1945 Marlene ignored her own comfort to be with the U.S. Ninth Army near the front lines. She insisted on the ordinary soldiers diet and clothes and was a source of great pride and comfort to the troops.



Marlene Dietrich, dream girl to her "boys."