

The events in this document are true. I have purposely not named anyone outside of my family. If any other name is mentioned, it is fictitious.

A Brief Summary of Life in the Marines as Observed by

Warren J. Wulff

1942-1945



Bob, my brother, was sick and he was in and out of the hospital for surgery. One weekend while I was visiting him, his son, Dan, came up with the idea that I should write down a few experiences that happened when I was in the Marines.

Dan loved telling jokes about the Marines and Thank the Lord that the United States had the Army to save us poor bedeviled citizens. In good-natured fun, I would insult the Army back and we would spend hours tormenting each other. Then one day he said, in a serious moment, "I'm serious. You write down humorous and serious incidents that come to mind both good and not too good, and I'll do the same."

Did you get that Dan? I challenge you. You put some incidents that you can remember, and I will do the same.

Now for the real clincher to this gem- we'll call it something very original like "Things I Can't Forget in the Military." I knew it would grab you. Those Marines are tough, in any situation.



Let me introduce me to you, our public. My name is Warren Wulff. I was in the Marine Corps during World War II, with the First Marine Division, First Pioneer Battalion, from December 1942 until the

war ended in 1946.

I was born in Albert Lea, Minnesota in the midst of a nasty, dirty depression. There was no work, no money, no nothing but gossip that Germany was preparing for war. Then the United States started contracting with businesses around the country and the private businesses started hiring help. With employment on the rise, shipyards started building ships and factories started building airplanes, both fighters and bombers, and trucks, etc. All those manufacturers were paying huge wages compared to the way things were a year earlier.

All of the young people left the Midwest to go to these good jobs paying big wages, me included. I went to Oregon and got a job welding in the shipyard. During the depression my father worked for the post office and was getting \$60 a month. I was getting \$60 a week, and nobody thought there would be a shut down in years to come. Most of the young people spent everything and didn't have a cent. Nobody thought of school or savings, me included.

While the economy exploded, the government was not paying its bills, and then they put a lid on the big manufacturers not to hire anybody until they got things slowed up. The bills were so much that we were soon involved in a war. That is when I enlisted in the Marines.

I had got married when first had gone to Oregon. We didn't have any bills, so we weren't hurting. According to the recruiting officer, because I had volunteered, I would get a break, and I could pick the unit I wanted. Which I didn't. Boy, was I stupid, but ha, ha, grin and bear it.

Two weeks later I was aboard a train (no, it wasn't a freight train) on my way to boot camp. I didn't understand what boot camp was, and I asked one of the jokers. He said, "Well, I'll explain it to you," and he kicked me in the back instead of my butt. We had a fist to cuff exercise until the conductor stopped us.

Two and a half days later we pulled into Los Angeles. One of the recruits going to boot had been appointed to buy our dinners and when we got to San Diego if he had any money left we were to split. So he split what he had left and we had a little of our own money. He was the nicest guy I had met up to that point, and I never saw him again. Probably couldn't pass the physical.

The train from San Diego and back to Los Angeles stopped only to let people on and off, and there were two kinds of happiness- those who were going on liberty now, and those who were looking forward to the next liberty two weeks in the future. Liberty is the name of the game.

When the train pulled into San Diego, we didn't know where to go. We were standing on the depot platform waiting for something and we didn't know what. Then all the chaos turned loose. Here came a sergeant major with both arms covered with hash marks, but the scariest part was his big mouth. He called out, "All Marines front and center!" which didn't make any sense to me. Then he gave another shout about "you damn sons of bitches, when I say front and center, I mean front and center! No wonder the train was late, you dumb shit birds probably didn't know what a train was. Why didn't you jab that train crew right where it hurt? Is that what happened?"

Not a sound.

Then big mouth blew his whistle and bellered, "I asked you shit birds a question and I want an answer! Is that clear?"

Not a sound.

He blew his whistle again and bellered, "I want an answer on these questions, let's hear it!"

I still didn't know what he expected of us. He blew that damn whistle again. After all these years, my hearing is bad, but I think it was that whistle that brought on my deafness. Finally there were a few of us that got inspired and we hollered back, "Yes, Sir!" His big, rotund body seemed to shiver, and then he belched out and said, "It's about time. Get on the busses."

When we got on the Marine base in San Diego people in civilian clothes were all over the parade ground. Then all of a sudden that darn whistle kept belching shrill bursts of defiance and here came big mouth, with the base cadre dutifully following behind that rotund pig, and I was so ashamed that I caught a couple of tears before they dropped on that parade ground. I didn't want to catch hell for defacing government property.

Big mouth took a microphone from one of the cadre and he blasted all over the area that because we were such dumb shit birds, we had missed evening chow. Can you imagine? They let the train run 3 minutes late and now everybody wouldn't get anything to eat until tomorrow.

Then he called the Drill Instructor, and over the loudspeaker said, "I am sorry you are going to miss chow, and because I have to give you the dumbest, but I know you'll get the most out of them. Good luck." They saluted and followed each other, which was just for show and for to scare the pants off of us.

Then the Marine D.I. said, "The Marine Corps has a motto, and I think this is the time to learn it. After you know it, any time adversity hits, you remember the motto."

Semper Fidelis- Always Faithful. I'll let you in on a secret. No one ever forgot the motto. Even in the head (toilet) you'd hear, "Semper Fedelis- Always Faithful."



Boot camp was exactly like the name. We caught a lot of booting, and we had to learn discipline. But I blew my effort to become a good Marine. I didn't qualify with my rifle. I didn't even score 10 points. I was ashamed, but they made me fire without my glasses. They had a number 68 target assigned for me, but I couldn't even see the target. I asked the guy that was teaching me how to fire to just point to target 68, and I'd be bound to hit something, but "No, no, no," was all I got. It was going up and down the pits that I couldn't hit the broad side of a barn.

Even the officer in charge called me aside. He asked what my problem was, and I told him they wouldn't let me wear my glasses. He told me that the book said no glasses. I told him they might as well send me home if I couldn't wear glasses. Then he said, "You want to go home," and left. They thought I was a quitter. It made me so mad I told him, "I have as much guts as anybody on this base. Try me." But I was classified as a smart-ass.

I could drill and march with the best of them and I got the front rank in drilling. We'd go on a forced march with me up front and they'd set a wicked pace but half way we would stop to rest and I kept moving around. Then our leader started back, and when nobody noticed that he was not setting the pace they changed pace setters. This new pace setter asked me if I was all right and I told him that I'd told the captain at the rifle range that I was as tough as anybody on base, and nobody can beat me, because I know what I can do. But everyone didn't give me a chance with glasses. So I challenge you. You let me know when there is one mile left and I'll beat you all back.

This last guy that asked me if I was all right was a nice guy and he was in favor of giving me a break, but everything stood the test, and when we hit the one-mile marker I started running. There were a few that followed me, but at the half-mile marker, I increased my speed. Deep inside I was hurting bad. I couldn't get my breath, and my knees felt like water, and I couldn't see, but I beat those so called tough

guys by a hundred yards. There was a football field on the base, so I know it was 100 yards. I didn't dare sit down because my legs had cramps and I couldn't get enough air to breathe. After this hiking I gained a little respect, but it went down in my record book: a smart-ass.

After boot camp we were assigned to a unit of action, and wouldn't you know it, I got assigned to the infantry. The one thing I didn't want, but looking back I can see what they had in mind. Send this smart-ass overseas, and put him in the infantry, since every campaign, there are 80% casualties. Bye, bye, smart-ass.

Being put in the infantry wasn't all bad. It made me think and I came up with a new solution. Everyone in Camp Eliot knew about me not making marksman, and I didn't know too many of the people on the base, so I was sort of a celebrity. They knew me, and I didn't know them. Therefore, I decided don't rock the boat, keep my eyes open and alert to the situation around the base, and when opportunity knocks, open the door.

I had found a book on the base on military procedure, so I read it and believe it or not, this book became the key to unlocking the door. In this book I read that every military personnel had to serve in the mess hall one month a year. And the mess sergeant was in complete charge of operations, even over the officers if the base had an officers' mess hall. My thought was a message from heaven.

Each morning our work day commenced at 8 o'clock. As we were getting our day's work schedule, it was mentioned that they need a couple of mess boys. "Did anyone want to volunteer? Ha, ha. Sounds like a job for you, Wulff."

"Yes, Sir"

"Report to Sarge for mess duty." Another bird like me was appointed for the other opening. Company dismissed.

I told myself to treat this other guy graciously. He probably had ghosts in his closet.

We went to the mess hall and when we walked in, a big, strong, muscled man met us and said, "I wondered when you'd be here. Welcome aboard. I'd like to shake the hand of a hero to me. That is history. How'd you manage not to score? That takes guts. Now they have to rewrite the book."

I didn't tell him I had tried to score and failed. This guy really thought I did it purposely. He shook my hand and said, "What can I do for you?"

Besides being a mess boy, I hadn't had liberty for months, and my wife was coming down here to live until I got sent overseas. He said that was terrific and fit his schedule perfectly. "You get liberty every night from 3:00 p.m. until 6 o'clock in the morning. Excuse me, I have got a call to make. Don't move, I'll be right back."

He was back in a few minutes, and said, "Here is the situation. I called the hotel where my wife and I live, and they had an opening. I took the liberty of renting it for you. I hope I didn't overstep my bounds. Also, you are on liberty from now until tomorrow at 6 in the morning, so change into your dress uniform and come back as soon as you can. I'll drive you into San Diego."

"Semper Fidelis", Always Faithful.

I did learn that patience is the secret to a lot of problems. If you just let some problems stew in the soup a while you may come up with an entirely different solution.

I tried to ignore my plight of not scoring on the range and so many people had gone through that base that a lot of people had forgotten the incident, but once in a while somebody would say, "You're the guy that lowered the standards of the Marine Corps." No sense answering anything, their opinion would always last. So I'd grin and be gone.

This is what the mess sergeant that helped me when I got out of boot camp had thought about my missing: that I was rebelling. And he was cheering me on. Thank the Lord he never found out. He thought I was some sort of martyr, fighting the whole U.S. and he was sympathizing with me. In reality, I was using him and his good, kind-heartedness. There was a real marine. He was willing to give me a break. That is the kind of loyal, real, true person the motto represents.

Semper Fidelis – Always Faithful. Makes you proud that there are still those kind of people around.

Time marches on and soon it was time to go overseas.

At camp Eliot there was a building at the main gate that they called the Hostess House. If you wanted to visit someone on base you'd go to the Hostess House and the hostess would call the barracks and tell the orderly. The orderly would contact the individual and the individual would get permission and go to the Hostess House and see his guest. It was a lot of Mickey Mouse distraction.

When we got on the standby to go overseas, liberty was cancelled, and the base was closed to visitation except for the Hostess House. My wife, Elgy, used to come out on the base bus, come in to the hostess house and call me, then I'd go down there and spend the evening. This was just a routine thing. Then one night, I went to get permission, and the Adjutant was in his office rather than the assistant, and when I asked for permission, I thought he was going to shoot me. He pulled his .45 out of its holster and kept flashing it around. He pointed that gun at me and I got the worst reading off I'd ever had.

Not only did he say, "No," he screamed at me and called me every name in the book. He was insane, just plain crazy. He told me to get the hell out of his office and go to my bunk, and he'd be down and make sure that I'd stay there. I said, "Thank you, sir," and I was moving. The guy was as crazy as a bed bug. What should I do?

I thought about it a bit and decided that if he was going to shoot me, I would need a witness. He had forgotten to ask me what my bunk number was. He could have shot me and blamed it on me, and his word would have stood, so I thought I had better find someone as a witness, in case he did come after me. I went to the Hostess House, and when I walked in, it was filled to the brim with wives and friends, and when they saw me come in, they wanted to know if I had gotten any static. I told them about my meeting, and everyone had the same experience. To make a long story short, 4 days after we had been at sea, the Navy shore patrol was searching the ship for him. They went from stem to stern, and they couldn't find anything of him. Did someone throw him overboard? Did he jump over on his own? On the record, they listed him as missing in action.

Dan, do you have a navy buddy? If you do, get him involved in our little adventure.

I was on the U.S. Lurline, a Matson Line Luxury Liner. Loaded with replacements to reinforce units who had suffered casualties from Guadalcanal, we went to Sydney, Australia. Then we went to New Caledonia, and back to Brisbane, Australia. We returned to New Caledonia, and on the second day after dropping anchor, an empty transport pulled along side. They were to transfer troops from the Lurline to this French transport.

The water was rough. They expected personnel to jump from one gangway to the other, but the two gangways weren't even, and the French transport was bobbing up and down. As it bobbed, there was about a six or seven-foot gap, and the personnel were supposed to jump across, loaded down with heavy

packs and a weapon, and grab the other gangway.

Now they were ready. The number one guy stepped off to grab the gangway, and missed. The two ships crushed him as they came together. That was the last of that experiment. Then we waited two more days until they could get a barge towed in so we could go down one gangway to the barge, and up the other gangway to the transport. Piece of cake, but we had lost a man. Then we pulled away and headed to Melbourne, Australia. By the time we got unloaded, we were 3 weeks late.

News flash- now hiring a Navigator- show me how to get home.

This brings to mind an old Chinese Proverb. If you don't know where you are going, any road will get you there.

While going through the dusty back roads of my mind, trying to remember things, I think I got snookered by the Army - one point for them. If I'd pulled a Semper Fidelis, I'd have been ahead.

We were getting ready for a campaign, and hauling supplies to our supply depot. This was on New Guinea, a tropical island, which was overrun with wild pigs. They resembled the Georgia razorbacks. We had assembled our tents into very nice looking tent city. You could stand any place on the edge, and you could see the neat, clean rows, all in straight lines, and it made me proud.

I was loaded with supplies for our base inventory, and the roads were primitive, so I was going slowly. I came around the corner and there was a roadblock, with a log across the road. The log was about 8 inches in circumference, and stretched across the two-lane road. I berated myself for not being more alert, since this was still Japanese country. All I had as far as weapons was a carbine. Even a pistol would have been more efficient than the carbine. I put the truck in gear, and gently eased around the corner. I didn't see anything, and I went a little bit farther, and then I saw that it was not a log, but a snake. I don't know what kind it was, but size-wise, it was the granddaddy of them all. I backed up and big, brave me, I decided I'd wait until another truck came. Let him be the hero.

I got a little ahead of my story, but the thought popped into my head and I figured I had better get that part in before I forgot it. Back to the facts, Mack.

In Melbourne, I got transferred out of the infantry, and into the Pioneer Battalion, which was a specialist organization. I got in the battalion because I had experience in motor transport and heavy equipment. Also, my welding experience was helpful.

I got called into the Colonels office, and he wanted to know what happened in Boot. He said he had never seen such a messed up Record Book as I had. He said, "I can see somebody thought the rifle was the most important thing in the world. Well, with me you'll prove yourself. I'm taking my staff and company commander and having them question you in the field of their endeavors, so you can tell them how you would have handled the situations. We'll see if your opinion and talents coincide with what we're looking for."

"There are 15 people who will be testing, beginning at 0800 tomorrow. Good luck. We are on everyone's side; this is not a witch-hunt like your record book. That is a disgrace that will be righted," he said, and he shook my hand.

The next day, the fifteen of us gathered for the testing, and there must have been 30 or more officers. Each person asked questions, and we operated equipment, shifted gears without clutching, and backed semi-trailers exactly where they wanted them. All in all, it was a very constructive day.

At the end of the testing, the Colonel walked by, shook my hand, and said, "We'll fix up that record

book, and there won't be any more smart ass remarks. We want you and we are glad you are aboard with us. If for any reason, you have a problem, please come to me and we'll work it out."

"Semper Fidelis"- Always Faithful

I enjoyed New Guinea. It was tropical, heavy, dense jungle, and the heat was tolerable. There was usually a breeze off the sea, and it was warm, not hot, and yet it wasn't cold. Ideal to be exact.

We had erected our tents with brand new pyramid-style canvas, and we were proud of our new tent city. It was a place you could play cards and swap talk, and yet it was quiet, and you could read, write, and meditate in solitude. We had a 100 kW generator, so we nearly had it as nice as we could hope.

If you ever go to New Guinea, be careful about swimming. In the ocean, they have jellyfish that sting like blazes. They had some bigger jellyfish that they claimed could kill a man. I think the name was Man-O-War. They look like a blown up balloon, and from a boat you can see hundreds of these things floating around on the bottom.

When I was there, they still had cannibals in the backcountry. They also had snakes, crocodiles, and birds of all types. There were parrots galore. I could live on those islands. There were huge trees covered with vines, coconut plantations, and all sorts of fresh fruits.

It really is paradise in the South Seas. If I had the money to start up out there, I would never have come back here.

Guards patrolled the area for fire watch, and we weren't absent of the threat of invasion. At ten o'clock, taps sounded, the generator was turned off, and good night wished on everybody. This was the time for those last, raunchy stories.

Then the guard hollered, "Halt!" somebody screamed, and a rifle was fired. A couple more yells, guys were knocked out of their sacks, and the commotion came to a halt. We were all racing to where the noise was loudest. The air was blue with cuss words, and then we got the word. One of those wild pigs went through our tent city, went under a sack, and knocked the guy sleeping in it to the floor. He yelled and screamed, causing the pig to stampede, tipping all the guys in a row. Then they passed the word that everything was fine. The pig got away, no court-martial, and nobody got hurt. The guy that threw the grenade will be awarded the "Quick Hand Thrower Medal," which is only allowed to be worn at night.

The Third Platoon offered a reward if they catch the S.O.B. that stole the roofs from 4 tents.

"Semper Fidelis"- Always Faithful

On New Guinea, they taught us how to climb a cargo net. If you guys think you know it already, try climbing it with a full pack load, and darn rifle, ammo, hand grenades, and steel helmet. If you are standing around waiting your turn, take an old salt's advice:

1. Pee your pants. Let the Navy take care of it.
2. Get out on the rail and balance. As you go by, grab anything hanging, and prepare for the splash of water that they bounce off the ship. Now we are about ready. Did you get hit with that spray when he was clearing the side so nothing would bother you? Oh, I tell you, that Navy, they are so thoughtful. As you passed the ship and he was chasing flies with spray, he was really thinking of you. Now you don't have to explain peeing your pants. See how considerate they are?
3. Now you've done your duty. One more step and you've earned a promotion. This last is the payoff. Don't panic. Come on, I'll help you. Just follow me, here we go. Head for the rail, and ask the coxswain, "Are you interested in souvenirs?" Keep going, don't stop. Get up on the rail stick

out your arm, and anything. Now you're learning! ...Oh, no, man overboard.

4. Don't worry, we're on the net. Climb! Climb faster! That's a boy! Keep moving, there you go, grab the deck.
5. Now run like hell down to the head. The guy overboard is our lieutenant. Good job, run, run, run!

The real way to climb the nets is common sense. The more people on the net, the tighter it is, and the faster you can move. When you are on the net, you are a sitting duck for strafing aircraft. Also, a tight net does not swing around so much. So you try to be the first on the net, either way, up or down. Don't look down, look up.



Most of the islands in the area were governed by Australia. The Australians were called upon to police and see that the economy prospered. They had an organization similar to the Canadian Mounted Police, and their officers were great at jungle warfare. Since the Marines were expected to go on lots of patrols, scout out enemy strongholds, and determine the number of troops, they decided to send 36 men from each company in the battalion to learn Australian backcountry techniques of survival. I happened to be one of the 36 scouts. No big deal, our transport captain just didn't want anybody else driving our truck.

Our 36-man detail bivouacked in the Aussie encampment, and got to know them pretty well. Just like in the American camp, any time a raunchy story was told, everyone stopped silent to hear the punch line. Then everyone would hoot and holler, and without fail, one of the Aussies would say, "You Yanks must have good story writers in the states. I haven't heard a bloody bad story yet."

We did get down to business, though. The instructor told us, "You will be going through your hardest survival test here, because you are here for just a few short weeks, but our training is an ongoing process. If the war goes on for a hundred years, I'll still be here. What about you? You'll be telling dirty stories in some bar."

"We are here protecting airplanes. We have Spitfires for fighting enemy planes, and we have dive-bombers to watch and protect. Our guards are very reliable, but like everything, after a period of time, we as people get lax in our ways, and that is where we are all alike. So that is why training is vital – to keep us alert and watch the guys around us, and ourselves. We are our own worst enemies. Now I want everyone to get some sleep, because tonight you are going to get your first lesson." So we turned in.

At dusk, we all lined up at the truck and got our first briefing. The head instructor told us, "Your first task will be one that everyone can benefit from. You are to go onto the fighter airstrip, and check up on the plane's guard. He should be alert while guarding the plane, and if he is alert, he will see you watching him. That is his duty. If he does see you, there is the possibility that you could get shot. However, we'll worry about that later. If you are doing your duty right, he won't see you." He broke our group up into 6 six-man teams, with each team having its own instructor.

The team instructor picked a location on the airstrip. At 0130 hours, we would meet back where we started. We each had a bag with a compass, an all-purpose knife, a can of

K-rations, and a 5 foot piece of rope. Away we went, following our leader.

It was a black, eerie night, and our instructor was enthused. We were in luck, it was a good night for training. After a half-hour walk, the instructor called a halt, and told us our mission was just over the next rise. "Whoever gets there needs to check the landing gear on the plane. There is a little red pin in the strut. Pull it out and bring it back to the bivouac site. It is to show the officers that we were there. Also, in the cockpit, there is an envelope near the right rudder. Bring back the envelope, and leave this card on the seat so they can see it in the morning." The card said, "Killroy was here." Then he gave us

each another card that said, "I'm Killroy." He continued, "In case the guard catches you show him the card, he will arrest you, but don't panic, and don't say anything. Keep in mind, if you confront the guard don't move. Freeze, and stay as still as you can. It is the movement that will get you in trouble. Move very stealthily, don't breathe, don't clear your throat, and if you feel a mosquito on your nose, let the little buggger sting you. It's not a malaria mosquito, because those don't sting, they bite. See, you learned something already."

"If you encounter a guard, stop immediately. Just freeze. Freeze is the word for our encounters, and no noise is the rule."

We all went in different directions. It reminded me of when I was a kid playing Cowboys & Indians or Hide & Seek. The only difference was that this game could be deadly.

We all headed for the Spitfire. I don't know what everyone else was doing, but when we were being briefed, I had a flash in my head that this could be an exciting little adventure, and these guys were deadly serious. I decided I had better follow the advice of the leader to the letter.

I walked on my toes for a short time, and then I would stop and listen. Once, while I was stopped, I heard the rustle of foliage, and I froze. The noise of moving leaves grew more pronounced, and in that instant, I heard a voice. Son of a bitch. A figure pushed the undergrowth right next to me. It was extremely dark, and all I could see was a dark shadow. I could have reached out and touched him. Just as suddenly as he appeared, he was gone, and I moved on in the same course. I saw another shadow, and realized it was the spitfire. I stopped and gently ran my hand along the side of the plane until I felt the wing. A little while later, I found the sanded foot treads, and I knew I was close to the cockpit. Just then, I felt a small vibration in the plane, and I knew I had company. But was this the guard, or one of my teammates?

This was beginning to be a little scarier than I thought it would be. I was sweating like a pig. When I felt the vibration, I was leaning against the side of the plane, and this helped me rest against the side. It felt really good, because by this point, I was aching all over my body.

After another 10 minutes, I found the foot treads up to the cockpit and crawled up so I could reach inside. I found the envelope, stuck it in my pocket, and gently dropped back down to the ground. I waited for a few minutes and then knew I had to head back for the rendezvous area. I arrived a few minutes late, but some of the teams didn't get back until daylight. Our team was mixed up. Nobody could find the pin, but we did get the envelope, and the guard didn't see any of us.



Our campaign was just off in the near future, two weeks to be exact. We were going to use LST ships for the invasion. It was the first time all our ships were going to be LST. The front opened from a point in the center, with the right side (starboard) and the left side (port), and inside there was a ramp that raised like on an elevator. Everything would be pushed to the top deck. Everything had to be just perfect; otherwise the LST would capsize and sink. We had engineers all over the place.

The idea was that the LST would be beached like a rowboat. The ramp could be lowered to the bottom floor and then raised to the next level and so on. Inside the LST, it was empty in an hour. As soon as it unloaded, it left the campaign. They didn't have enough power to protect it against any resistance.

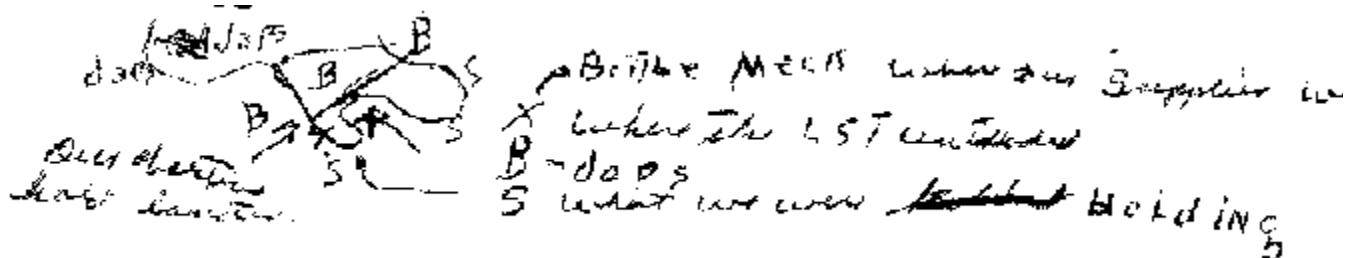
All our equipment was on the beach and we didn't have enough room to park the stuff. We got strafed continually, and our tanks were the last off, and couldn't get around the parked equipment.

The bulldozers were in the back with the tanks. The Japs were having a heyday by strafing, and just

when it looked like we were getting organized, here came another squadron.

I was lucky, I was the second truck off the LST, and I went down the beach and parked the truck. For some reason in the back of my head, I could visualize chaos. I liked my truck and didn't want to see it damaged, so the solution was to stay away from everything, if I could.

Our battalion transport was on the go, and if we had parked where most everything else did, we would have been wiped out.



All our supplies were on the beach, and it was just a pile of junk. The Japs were inland and well fortified. This was just a small area of about 15 miles and if we could hold it, we could cut the distance from one point across the peninsula to the other, about seven miles.

We were doing most of the moving of troops at night, and behind the Japs' line. We couldn't use the lights, and I honestly believe that it was my truck that put caution to the Japs. The muffler got knocked off coming off the LST, and it sounded like a tank. I'd made the trip across so many times and knew it by heart. I made it a point to pass on the word that their driver was the one who couldn't hit the broad side of a barn with a rifle. I didn't even carry a weapon. What was the use? If I fired one shot, the Japs would have blown us to kingdom come.

In fact, when Dan was telling about dismantling a bomb, it made me think about Dan, and I, and Tim. Are the Wulffs crazy? Bob tried to get in the army and couldn't, and finally got in and then the war was over. I joined the marines to be a corpsman, and the marines don't **have** any corpsmen.

I have told you people about these incidents that I went through so many times that I imagine you're sick of them, but I'll repeat them once more, and then that will be it. "Fifty years" - I guess it has earned a rest.

It rained so much that everything was just about impassible.

I forgot to tell you these last few pages I recorded what happened on Cape Gloucester in New Britain, which isn't too far from Gaudalcanal, the Philippine Islands, New Guinea, and it isn't that far to Australia.

Just the facts, Mac:

And the tanks got stuck. And they needed a bulldozer to pull them out. So our Captain picked one guy to operate the bulldozer and three guys to assist the bulldozer operator, hooking chains, etc. I was one of the first guys picked. Not because I was good, but because I was new to the area, and if we needed something we could expedite it handily.

We would fuel and grease the Cat, and I imagine we pulled those chains a hundred miles. The Cat didn't have any armor. So the operator sat there with no protection. The tank crew had tank protection. I don't know how many in a tank crew, but we didn't see a soul. They were all inside the tanks.

Commanders would tell us where to go and the dozer would pull the tank to the location. They'd fire a few rounds and the infantry would push forward. If they found resistance, the tank would fire a few more rounds. This is the way we went across the peninsula. It took five days, but we finally made it. In crossing, we even used the truck. It had a winch on the front, and when we got stuck, we'd drag the cable out and attach it around a tree and let the winch pull us out.

After the island was secured, we got ready for the next campaign. The bulldozer operators got awarded the Silver Star and a promotion in rank to second lieutenant. He earned it, but there were five of us on that safari into hell. Now is the time: "Semper Fidelis" – always faithful.

We left New Britain and went back to our previous rest camp in the Russell Islands, on Pavuvu. We already had replacements waiting for us.

We were briefed on our next campaign, which was Peleliu, in the Palau group of islands.

We were told we would have a reef to cross, and it would be about hip high at low tide. That's not giving much leeway. What happens if you step in a hole? The whole land mass was 11 miles long and 2 ½ miles across. They said we would be there for five days and off we'd come. The army was supposed to relieve us. They said that when we got relieved, we'd leave on the same ships the army came to us in.

I don't know why we'd be briefed before the campaign. If there was a question, they wouldn't explain their theory anyway. The only thing that sounded good was it was 11 miles long. A couple of miles walking, and we could be across the island. I'm reminiscing to myself, thinking on my experience, and what I was thinking 50 years ago. Our orders came from MacArthur. He was army, and we had different tactics than the army. They had big guns, and the range was probably three or four times farther than the range we could get.

MacArthur was Commander-in-Chief of the Pacific, and he loved the Philippines. "I will return." I guess so, at the expense of the Marines, Navy, and believe it or not, the Coast Guard in our armada.

Anyway, D-day was getting close. We loaded the ship and the last vehicle to go aboard was my truck. Our transport Captain was a great officer. He said that I had that truck on New Britain, and we came through the campaign as a winner, so don't change horses when you are winning. Then he slapped me on my back and said, "I've been thinking it over, can you take my sea bag and my personal belongings in your truck? You did it the last time, and I was just wondering."

"Go get it," I told him, and he reached around the back wheel and pulled it out and asked where I wanted to stow it. "In the cab of the truck," I said, "It will get extra love and care. He said he hated carrying the thing around and going up and down the cargo net. I suggested he stay on the ship and he could ride down in the truck when we were unloading.

"I wish I could," he said, "but they've got most of the officers on one ship. That way, if the orders change, we are right there. They don't have to hunt all over this whole armada. Good luck, see you on Peleliu."

We pulled out in the evening on our way to Peleliu. I hunted around and found a lifeboat to sleep under. I put my sea bag on my bunk and then went out on deck. This was a routine thing I did on every ship. Whenever danger approached, they had what they called general quarters, and everyone that was a troop had to go to their compartment and stay there until general quarters was over.

The ship that I was aboard at New Caledonia pulled out to sea and we had general quarters almost immediately. A submarine had been spotted so we had all gone to our quarters. The sailor that locked the compartments got to my quarters before I did, and locked the watertight doors. He saw me there, and

said, "Sorry, but the watertight doors have to remain shut, and after general quarters are over, we will open the doors." So I slept up on deck under a lifeboat.

Every ship I was on, I did the same thing. I never had anybody say anything to me. As the captain said, when you are winning, don't change the routine. At night, I would sleep under the lifeboat and get that sea air. Nobody ever told me different, and I never told anybody. My theory was that the ship wasn't going to tell my secret, and I sure wasn't.

Each morning, I'd get up and walk around the ship, counting the other ships. I found each morning that there would be additional ships in our convoy. Then we'd go to breakfast, and the usual card game would start.

By noon, it was rough, and the ships were pitching and rocking. About three in the afternoon, they announced that we were in the eye of a typhoon and we were changing course. This maneuver would move our invasion a day to two days ahead of our intended landing. We all cheered like crazy. What was a day or two?

Then the loudspeakers blurted out this message: "Now hear this: tomorrow at 0300 morning chow will be served, and at 0400, disembarking will commence. Personnel will disembark on the starboard side. The personnel with equipment will assemble on the port side of hatch #1. I repeat, disembarking commences at 0400 tomorrow. Find your disembarking station today. The disembarking officers will be at stations at 1400.

I was waiting for the disembarking officer at my station when he showed up. He explained that as our piece of equipment came up to just a foot or so above the hatch, they would stop the crane and let us get in, then lower us over the side to an LSM. The operator was to stay in or on their piece of equipment. He suggested that we could climb down to our vehicle and put our personal gear into our vehicle. That way when it came out of the hold, we would be ready to jump in and over the side I'd go and a couple of sailors would unlock the truck and away we'd go.

An LSM could carry 4 vehicles in one load.

I went and got my gear and put it on the floor of the cab. The captain had put his in the cab on the seat, so we were ready to load ourselves. I would pick up 4 or 5 hand grenades, just in case I needed them. They would have them where the guys going ashore would have access to them.

I had a blanket, the smell of the ocean, and I was asleep. I heard noises and it was time to get up. Darn short night. Then I thought I had better have breakfast. In fact, the Marine Corps had a saying, "Never pass a food building, because you never know where you'll be by evening." Also, the navy had really good cooks.

They announced that we would disembark in 10 minutes, then 5, then 4-3-2-1, start to disembark. Good luck. There was my truck, hanging by chains from a big hook. I opened the door, climbed in, and over the side I went.

They placed me in the back of the cargo area. In front they put a D4 (smaller) truck, and then a couple of trailers. They threw it in gear and we left the ship in a cloud of foam.

There were a couple of battle wagons, three or four cruisers, Hundreds of destroyers, mine sweepers, and smaller fighting boats, a couple of aircraft carriers, torpedo, bombers, and everywhere you looked there was black smoke, deafening roars, and in the center of all this, a little yellow sliver of land that was Peleliu. Millions of dollars were spent on the campaign, and you knew when you saw it all, what a waste of the lives and equipment that would be lost. And who knew, maybe it would be yours?

Somebody sure made a mistake when they said it would be hip deep at low tide. It was over our heads.

The second mistake was that they didn't put markers to tell us what beach to land on. There was one big series of caves in this coral cliff. The cliff was 600-700 feet high. They shelled it and bombed it, and tried everything, and nothing happened or worked.

In the mean time, out at sea in this boat, we couldn't find the beach. We had been told where to go, but it just wasn't there. The tide was coming in, and it was getting deeper, and then they closed the landing so we wouldn't have a bigger casualty rating than the Marines had had in the other division.

There was talk someplace that we should scratch the invasion. The Marine Corps passed the word that there was no way we would abandon our buddies. We kept on looking for yellow beach, but we never did find it.

The skipper asked, "What do you usually do in this situation?"

The Marines we had picked up during the night looked blank and said, "You are the senior man." They were looking at me. I said that if I was going to have to make this situation work, they had better back me.

I was all set to drive off, so I suggested we connect the trailers to my truck and connect the truck to the little cat. I figured it had power enough to pull us all ashore. I asked the driver of the cat, "It's a diesel, isn't it?" He nodded his head yes, and I told him to put it in low gear and run it wide open. I wouldn't start my truck with the water so deep, but the cat could pull the truck, and the truck could pull the two trailers.

We hooked them up. Every vehicle had a trailer hitch, so we got everything ready, and I told the skipper to take us in as close to shore as he could, lower the ramp, and we'd head for shore. "Thanks for your hospitality."

Away we went. We had picked up six or seven guys struggling yesterday, and they climbed up in the bed of the truck. I told them they might get wet, but Columbus took a chance, and we were starting a new service.

They hung on, and away we went. By running the diesel full-throttle, we got enough pressure that it blew the water out of the exhaust pipe. Diesels won't drown, because they don't have plugs to falter, they run off compression. It worked, and we slowly came ashore. The diesel never faltered once, and once we were ashore, it purred like a kitten.

At least now we felt like we were home. Our motor transport Captain put his arm on my shoulder and said, "We were worried, but we knew you would make it."

Later in the afternoon, we heard noises and screams, and when we looked, we saw the Japanese tanks coming at us, firing everything they had, and in the back of the tanks was a big group of Japs with bayonets attached to their weapons. Everything was hopeless. We couldn't stop them. We fired everything we had, and I was saving my hand grenades for the last. The screaming was enough to curdle your blood, and then we experienced a miracle. The tanks were slowing, and then stopped. Another ten minutes, and we would all have been annihilated.

At last the upper hand was given to us. We found out shortly that the Jap's tank didn't have enough armor, and our bullets were going right through the tanks. We didn't have to worry about a bayonet charge; they walked headfirst into us.

One guy that was standing around looking said, "I've heard so much bout being Asiatic, and I didn't know what they were talking about, but now I have seen it. Everyone's eyes are as big as saucers, and they all look like they haven't slept for months."

One of the officers told us, "Do not take any souvenirs. Anyone caught doing so would be court-martialed. They were brave people, even though they started this mess. Tomorrow, we will dig a ditch with the bulldozer and put them in it, in respect of their memories. They were tough."

Semper Fidelis - Always Faithful.

That darn cliff was still giving us a bad time. They had levels of different floors, and a big gun that was mounted on tracks so that it could move up and down, back and forth. They had camouflaged doors, and you never knew when or where that big gun would emerge. All of a sudden there would be a hole in the cliff, and "Boom!" The big gun would fire and in a matter of minutes, it would pop out on a lower deck and fire another round. They had every direction wired. It was uncanny how harassing that thing was.

We continued to bomb it with planes, and shell it with the big ships, used flame throwers, and everything under the sun, but we were just stymied.

One night our field telephone rang, and our transport officer had a lengthy conversation. When he hung up, he said, "Well, I hate having to send a man on a mission, but they want a truckload of 8-inch torpedoes, so would anyone like to volunteer. No noise from anyone. I figured that since I had missed out on the first day, I would go.

He sent me to the Artillery Regiment, and said that once I got there, I would pick up a couple of personnel, and they would brief me once I got there. Out of the clear, two of my buddies went to the Captain, and volunteered to go with me. He reminded all of us that the risk was almost life & death, but we told him we understood, and were willing to go.

So away we went. I drove, and my buddies walked. We had an awful time finding the artillery, but we got there. There were four guys waiting for us, one of them an officer. He knew where everything was, which speeded us up a bit. We loaded the truck until it couldn't hold any more, and then headed for the front. It was familiar territory for us, but not for the artillery. They were usually a mile or so back from the front, and would fire over our heads, with the locations given to them by a spotter.

We couldn't use our lights, and there were getting to be so many bomb craters that everyone but me was walking next to the truck, and when they would spot a hole, they would direct me around it. Sometimes a flare would go off, and we would stand still and not make a move. I was looking for landmarks, and began to know where I was. We were at the coral cliff. Next I noticed an artillery gun on wheels, and four guys with it. My buddy said they were going to haul the gun down to the edge of the cliff, and the ammo on my truck was going to be used on the cliff. He suggested we pull the gun to the cliff as well. With the guys assigned to the gun, plus our guys, we pulled the gun to the cliff. When we got close to the guys in their foxholes, their officers would ask them to move, and after we passed, they would get back into their foxholes.

We unloaded the ammo, and then the artillery officer said we were relieved of our mission. The gun was so close to the hill that nobody could see it from the cliff. We checked if everything was okay, and then we went back to our headquarters. We had not gone to the front, we were on the **other side** of the front, and got back at daybreak. Somebody should have gotten the Silver Star, but nobody got any recommendation. Nobody asked us what we did or didn't do. About 10 o'clock, some dive-bombers dropped their loads, and it was reported that the cliff was no more. Nobody knew anything but me, my buddies, and the artillery crew. We lost a night's sleep.

After the downing of the cliff, nobody even asked if Peleliu was in World War II. Casualty-wise, we lost more people than in any of the campaigns up to that time in the Marines.

Semper Fidelis - Always Faithful

By the way, the Army did relieve us from duty. Very nice of them. By the disgruntled looks on their faces, I believe that they thought it was going to be paradise. And it was, because the U.S. Marines had been there, stayed, and then left. Paradise, that is.

We went back to the Russell Islands to regroup. Pavuvu was getting to be our old home.

When we got there, the camp area was filled with replacement personnel. We were of mixed emotions. It brought to mind all of the friends we'd lost and we felt bad for them, but we also felt bad for the future. Sometime, the time would run out, and we were apprehensive that we might get snuffed out before our time to go home.

They had set up time in points. Each campaign you got points and automatically, you could figure it took 9 points to be eligible to go home, but the jab in the butt was the first group. They went home with 3 points from Gaudalcanal. I didn't get any points because we were floating around Australia.

Then the second group went home after New Britain with 6 points. I had 3 points after New Britain, and then after Peleliu, I had 6 points, so the next campaign, I would have 9 points and be coming up to go home. If I could just stay alive, I would be homeward bound. That figured up to be another year. The spread to go home was getting longer and longer. Of course we didn't say anything, we were glad to see our buddies go home. Then you'd think, "another 2 campaigns. One more year and I am homeward bound." Just think if I didn't shave until I went home. I'd be walking on my whiskers. That is a long time. I'd probably get court-martialed for not shaving. Wow! The odds are getting better all of the time!

Semper Fidelis – Always Faithful

We had acquired a crane, and it was fun to operate. We could pick up a load and swing it around and load trucks. We could put a bucket on the crane, and whip the bucket out like fishing on a cane pole. When the bucket was extended out, we'd drop the bucket, nose down, and drop it into whatever we wanted. Then we'd raise the bucket and dump it.

Nobody was ever going to take something like this on a campaign, but it was fun. Our motor transport section would go out and practice, and believe it or not, we all got to be pretty good operators. Then we began to try some different moves. And it got to the point that the Captain was doing it, too. He was a whiz. If we ever trained anybody, he was great.

Our motor transport had all the equipment fixed, and everything worked perfect. We were gearing up for the next campaign. Our Captain called six of us to a meeting and said, "It is getting pretty close to another campaign, so we might just as well be prepared. We'll take our D7 dozer Cat, and it can pull our parts trailer. We're taking our wrecker this time, and I want containers welded to the bed of the truck. Put chains and cables and tools in the containers. You can never know what you'll need, so take everything you've got. Pretend we are on our way tomorrow. Then we'll have it all done, and when the day arrives, we don't have to worry. We're ready."

Each one of the trucks had 2 drivers, except the wrecker. Every truck with 2 drivers was loaded to the gills. Competition made it like a game, and our Captain had promised a few beers to the truck with the most equipment on it.

The captain took me aside and asked me to carry his gear again, since it had worked so well the two

times before. I told him I had room. Then he told me he would be taking the wrecker up to officer country, and we were going to load the wrecker.

I asked him, "Do you want me to go and help?"

"No." he said, "There is another guy and myself to do it. Do you have any boxes welded to the bed?"

"Yes, sir"

"Are they ready to put things in and be locked?"

"Yes, sir."

"Is your gear aboard?"

"Yes, sir."

"Can I take the wrecker now?"

"Yes, sir."

"I'll see you in the morning," he said, waving me over, "and naturally, you don't know anything about our personal belongings."

"Yes, sir," I told him, "I don't even know what you are talking about."

So he drove off like a king. All he needed was a cigar.

The following week, our Captain was at our garage, right after chow. "Well," he said, "mostly I have bad news. I need a work party of two people. Any volunteers?"

Two guys stepped forward, and he sent them to his jeep, where there were a couple of boxes to bring over. "Heavy as hell," he told them, "so be careful." A couple of minutes later, they were back, and he had them put the boxes on the floor. He told us that because we got our work done ahead of time, this was our prize, and thanked us. Then he opened the cases, and they were full of beer for the troops.

He looked at us and said, "I thought you'd want all the details of our next campaign."

Someone called out, "Maybe if we don't know the details, it'll go away."

"Well," he said, "I wish it would, but I doubt it. Here's the facts, Mac: We are going to attack Okinawa. So what's so staggering about that? I can't say it and I can't spell it, but it is in the China Sea. There are 2 Marine divisions, the first and the sixth. They are predicting thousands of suicide planes. The U.S. Army is going to be on our right flank, and the Sixth Division will be on our left flank, after they secure a small island to the north of us."

"The 1st Division's mission is to take the two air fields, and have them secured by the first evening ashore. The army has big guns that can shoot clear across the island, with 8- and 10- inch shells."

"We are testing a new kind of chow. It all comes in cartons, with enough rations to feed six people. We heat the cans over a Sterno flame that comes in the same carton. It is supposed to release a few more men to fill in if there is a vacancy."

Nobody even asked what they thought the casualty count would be. I guess if you are dead, you don't care anyway. I don't remember the date of the invasion, but it was about 3 weeks away.

The Captain told us we would be taking every piece of equipment we had. He and I had picked the personnel to operate each piece of equipment. There were two men to each piece, and some had three men, depending on how big and heavy each piece was. We tried to anticipate what work it would be doing, and if we got behind, we might have to use the equipment 24 hours a day.

I asked him about the crane we had acquired. He said it was on the "go" list. I told him that with the boom it had, we'd need an awful lot of help and another crane to lift the parts into place on our crane. Also, with all of the suicide planes, they'd zero in on a squad of men with no weapons. I didn't think it was worth the trouble. In fact, I reminded him that he had gotten static for requesting to take the wrecker. I could see a hundred and one reasons to have the wrecker going with us, but not the crane. We didn't even have a big enough ship to have a hoist that could lift it over the side. Our hoist was big enough to lift three trucks, fully loaded, but the crane was heavier than that.

"I'll present your case to the colonel," the Captain told me, "I'm on your side."

We had other debates over the equipment, some very practical, others a big joke, like the crane. To me, I was being practical: one more campaign, and I was eligible to go home. I wasn't about to sacrifice the lives of my buddies, either, without talking it over. At least it's on the table and I didn't want to let a mistake take place.

I was even wondering about the different tactics of the Army and the Marines fighting side by side. The tactics of both the Marines and the Army work for each branch, and the branches can make things happen, but if somebody goes in a different direction than you expect, you get chaos.

I had my fingers crossed, but sometimes sitting on the sidelines, you can anticipate moves that don't show up until it is too late. I know this sounds like I'm scared. I'm not, I'm just more careful. This reminds me of boot camp again. If I had used a little simple thing (my glasses) things might have showed up with a complete difference. I'd probably be dead.

Semper Fidelis – Always Faithful

We finally got the word where our ships would be at and when we'd be on our way. It was supposed to be such a mammoth invasion that there wouldn't be such a thing as first wave, second wave, etc. They needed 500 men at 0600 hours, 1000 men at 0700 hours, etc. When they went ashore, the men weren't even with people they new. A little SNAFU already. The last orders I got when I went ashore were to go to the big airport and meet our Motor Transport Section. I had ammo in the truck. There wasn't much of a bed for hauling; all I had was small rounds for rifles and a couple of cases of hand grenades.

The ship I was on had trucks on it, mostly. We had to wait until a truck came out of the hatch. If it wasn't ours, the driver could be found two hatches aft. The gossip had been right about the suicide planes. They were all over, and the ship's crew was really scared. I don't blame them, but any delay would anger guys to the brink of fighting.

I wasn't sure which hold my truck was in, but it was one of the last loaded, so it would be one of the first to be unloaded. I stayed right close, and see another truck coming out, and then one of the soldiers hollered that a wrecker was coming up. That was mine. They got it up to the top deck, and I jumped in and started it up. I was just clearing the deck and going over the side of the ship when there was the awful-est noise I had ever heard.

It came quick, and left quick. Everyone was yelling, and then I saw it. It was a suicide plane, and he had

aimed for my truck and the superstructure of the ship. The sailor running the hoist stopped and asked me if I was okay. He said, "If he had been any closer, you would have been dead." He thought for a second, and said, "I'd have been with you. It was so close I thought he hit you."

"Well, let's get this damn war over with. Good luck, the war must go on."

By the time we finished our conversation, the wreckage had already sunk, and you'd have never known that there had been a crisis a minute ago. The coxswain really went to shore. He saluted me, and was gone.

Then came the battle of nerves. All I had was a verbal order to go to the big airport and wait until someone from the Motor Transport Section came.

I found the big airstrip, so I drove around the area. I found a little shack with papers on a table, and there was a radio with a microphone attached. I assumed the shack must be an operations building of some type. I picked the papers up and put them under the seat of my truck. They were mine, because I was the conqueror of the airfield, and there wasn't anyone around to dispute my words. Here I was with a carbine, a clip of shells, no glasses (they had broken on New Britain), and confidence that I actually thought I could win.

I hollered, "Come and get me. I've been waiting for you!" to no one in particular. What a crazy goon. I drove around the airstrip again, but there was still nothing to see. There was something to do, I could clean up the operations building, and if anybody got there before supper, I could open up a carton of that new chow they were going to test.

I found a makeshift broom and swept the floor. There were a couple of stools or hassocks, but I threw them outside. They were so small that they were uncomfortable. Besides, if I should capture somebody, I was going to sit taller than my enemy. I was the big dog now.

Every few minutes I would take another trip around the airstrip. Still nothing. About 4:00 or 4:30, I took another trip around the area, and then thought maybe I had better go around to the small airstrip for the fighter planes, and maybe somebody would show up there.

As I was driving around the small airstrip, I saw an American Jeep pulled up behind a small, concrete building similar to the one I had cleaned up at the big airstrip. I pulled up behind the Jeep, and I smelled food. I walked up to the Jeep, and somebody said, "You're just in time, how many pancakes can you eat?" This fellow was a second lieutenant with the army. He was waiting for his artillery company to show him where to go. His orders were just like mine, to meet his unit. Just about identical to mine, with the exception that I was supposed to go to the big airstrip.

He told me that the Army was on the right flank of the Marines, and when the Marines hit the beach, they didn't find any resistance, so they just kept on pushing forward and got across the island to the other side. Then they got caught in a trap. The Army had followed their orders and set up a couple of guns, and then the Japs swung back and got in between the Marines and the Army, and there they sat. The Army didn't dare fire because they were shooting at the Marines, and the Marines were shooting at the Army. Another SNAFU.

That louie was a great guy and a great cook. He said when they got up, they had ham and eggs for breakfast, and when he left the chow hall, he picked up a bag of ham. That was what we were eating. Ham goes great with pancakes.

I thanked him for the food and the fellowship. I told him I was the conqueror of the big airstrip, and he was the conqueror of the fighter strip. We both laughed, and I headed back to the big airstrip to see if I

had been invaded yet. I did tell him that if he saw any trucks with a diamond insignia to send them to the big airstrip.

About 6:30 p.m., I heard a horn honk. Hurray, life is still alive someplace. I was still patrolling the area, and I went back to the shack, and there was the captain. He said, "I've been worried about you. Did you have any trouble?"

"No," I said, "Everything is ship-shape." I gave him the papers I found in the operations building, and he told me about a truck we had with a broken axle, that was just sitting there until we could get it fixed. It was on the rear tandem, so if we could get the wheel up, the other wheel would carry it. So off we went to fix it.

So long, airstrip, I really got to know you.

We went up the coast 8-10 miles, and there were our trucks. Every one of them was ship-shape except the one with the broken axle. Everyone seemed happy, and each had a story to tell.

The captain said he would be right back, and changed his mind and said it would keep. It was more important to get the truck fixed so we could drive it to where we needed to be and unload it. So we took a chain and pulled the axle up with the winch on the wrecker, and got the wheel up high enough that the truck could be driven. Then away went the captain with the wrecker.

Semper Fidelis – Always Faithful

Okinawa was just like New Britain. Mud up to your hips, and so darn slippery you couldn't stand. The Army brought in a regiment of engineers, and they knew their stuff. They had big equipment, and by the time they got their equipment unloaded, they were already working to build the new road.

The campaign was already two days old. The Marines were in trouble. They were pinned down and couldn't move. The Japs had closed the trap. The only way they got it squared was to board a troop ship and go around the point and disembark to start all over. With the Marines back at the airstrips, the army could now use their big guns without having to worry about shooting our own troops.

In the meantime, the Army engineers had fixed the airstrips and the Air Force was using the airport. So they were flying all sorts of sorties to Japan.

The captain told me, "I know we are close to finishing this campaign. Another couple of months, and that will be just fine. You are going home just as soon as we have enough personnel to keep us secure. So I'm putting you on limited duty. If a difficult situation arises, you'll get called, but I'm hoping you don't get called. You've done a great job for us." The captain said the colonel had told him he wished rates had been left alone. Then I would have gotten a rate. I'm not complaining, though, those two officers respected me.

Another couple of weeks went past and the captain came and got me. He said we were needed in Nakoa. The first regiment was having a problem. We took a tank of napalm, and planned to dump it in a hilly area, and fire a rifle at it. Hopefully, we would have quite a fire, or possibly an explosion. In fact, the area might be the last pocket of resistance left. The captain was told that as soon as the resistance stopped, he would be relieved. So he should be going home in about a month. I said, "Good for you. I thought you came with the eighth replacement."

Well, here we were. I could see the ridge where the napalm was supposed to go. They had been shooting from the ships, but now they've been softened up, and this is our day. We may go home. The captain said he had been briefed on how to handle this stuff, and that I should stay and just watch. He drove up

the back side of the ridge, and opened up the valve on the napalm. It ran on the ground, and then down the ridge.

While I was watching, I saw a couple of Jeeps, and in a few minutes, when the tank was empty, here came the captain, the colonel, and another officer from the 1st Marine Regiment.

The captain turned to the colonel, and said, "I did what you said." Then the colonel handed me a rifle and said, "Do I have to give you a command?"

"No, sir," I said, "but I don't have any glasses.

"Well," he said, "do you see a stick out there with white paint on the top? Aim at the white spot, and fire." So I did. There was a tremendous boom, and the whole ridge was in flames. I hoped this would wind the campaign up. Then the colonel turned to the other officer and said, "You saw him fire the weapon."

The other officer replied, "Yes, it was a beauty."

Then my colonel said, "Perhaps we should straighten the record book"

"By all means."

Semper Fidelis – Always Faithful

There wasn't any resistance left on the ridge, or any place else on Okinawa, so we were put in a casual company. All we did was sit on the hill and watch and wait for different ships that weren't there yesterday.

A great big airplane buzzed us as we were watching, and we knew that they knew that we knew we were going to go home. We even bet that we would be aboard that plane and off the island by nightfall, but no such luck. The plane wasn't there five minutes before it took off in the same direction it had come from. I don't think I ever saw the colonel or the captain after that, those rascals. They were typical Marines: tough, loyal, confident in themselves, very proud, and if they said something, they would keep their word.

Before we were put in the casual company so that everyone could taunt us, we got put in a whole lot of work details. After a while, it wasn't a joke anymore. Guys would call out, "Boy, you guys are lucky going home." "Don't you feel guilty?" Then some of the guys who had just gotten there got in the act, and that really rubbed us. We earned our points. So I got the guys waiting to go home together, and when we got another work detail, we dragged our feet.

Then everything worked out just perfect. The officers that were left decided they wanted a head (toilet) built in the center, with the tents circled around it. The ground was made of coral, and was like stone. We dug and dug, and we couldn't even get a hole started. Someone suggested we get some explosives. I was appointed to be the speaker for the group, and went to one of the lieutenants and asked him if we could have a couple of sticks. He was a little on the lazy side, so he just wrote a note that we needed some explosives to make a head and signed his name. We took the note and went to regimental headquarters, showed the request to somebody on duty.

We got 4 sticks of dynamite, a couple of blasting caps, fuse wire, and all the stuff we needed, and went back to officers country. Somebody made a smart remark about if we didn't get that head done, everyone would be constipated.

The ground was hard, and as long as we had 4 sticks, we decided that an extra stick wouldn't hurt anything, and if they got dysentery, they wouldn't mind if the hole was extra deep. So we worked on the hole to get 3 sticks in the ground, set the fuses and caps, and were all set for the big bang. Somebody told us you needed at least 4-5 feet of fuse, so we measured out about 6 feet. Plenty of room to run before it blew.

Somebody hollered, "Fire in the hole!" and then we all ran like hell. Time elapsed and nothing happened. We waited what seemed like hours, and then decided we had better pull the fuse. Since I lit it, I was the guy who had to go stop it.

Oh boy, there goes my going home chance. I told the guys, with some reluctance, "Here goes nothing," and I started to pull the fuse. Boom!

Dan tells me now that if you pull something and hear a big noise, that means you're dead. Well, I heard the boom, and I was walking around counting 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5. All of the guys were still alive. How big a hole did we have? We went down about an inch or two. If they had dysentery, the hole would be full after a couple of guys. The real excitement was all over officer country. Every tent was peppered with holes. That third stick was just too much for the tents.

That was the last work detail I ever did in the Marines.

Semper Fidelis – Always Faithful

Three days later our ship came in. This was one time I felt like an old salt. I walked up the gangway, got to the top, saluted the officer of the deck, and said, "Permission to come aboard, sir!"

"Permission granted." Yahoo! I was one step closer to home!

The ship that brought us home was an older model, but the old girl could really roll. I think the skipper was ready to go home, too. When the last man was aboard, the ship's horn blew two hoots. Hoot, hoot, hoot. The third hoot was me. We were moving out. It took a while to build up speed, but when it did, the vibration stayed the same. We didn't have an escort all of the way home.

I said that ship was an older model, and what I meant was that the mess hall had tables bolted to the deck, and steel pipes bolted to the ceiling. When the weather was rough, you wrapped your leg around the pipe, and your arm, and pushed your tray against your stomach to make it firm. You never wanted to spill a drop, because if you did, one of those swabbies would come running with a bucket and a mop, and before you could do anything else, you had to mop the floor and the table. Those swabbies had eyes in the back of their heads. Even if you didn't spill a drop, if you looked like you might, they stood there with the pail and mop. We'd just grin and them and say, "Better luck next time." And we'd hear, "smart-ass," in return.

All through the campaign, I had always found a place on the deck to sleep, but I thought I had better change my M.O. That way, nobody would know me, or where I was even at. So from Okinawa home, I slept in my assigned bunk. Everyone else slept on the deck, so I fooled everyone, except for one of my buddies, my ex-company cook. He had always slept in my tent, and he would get up early and start the day's menus. He stomped around, and once in a while he would bump all the bunks and we never said anything.

It was unusual aboard ship that anyone would shake me and holler at me, and nobody knew that I was sleeping in my assigned bunk, but someone kept shaking me and yelling, and I opened my eyes and saw my buddy hollering at me. I asked him what was going on, and he said, "Get up quick and come topside. Hurry!"

The thought raced through my head that we had a problem. I had a feeling all through my time in the Marine Corps that I would never make it home alive. It had never really bothered me, just whatever will be, will be. But here we were, headed home, on our last leg of the journey, and we were so close. I quickly dressed and met my buddy coming down. When he saw me, he turned and headed back up the stairs, and we both reached the top deck at the same time. He pointed and said, "Look, isn't that the most beautiful site you have ever seen?"

I looked, and I had to admit, it was beautiful. We were pulling into the harbor at San Diego. My buddy was right. It was the most beautiful sight in the world.

Semper Fidelis – Always Faithful

The ship was tied to a pier that was straight east on Broadway. A convoy of trucks came from the main base to pick us up. I wondered if that rotund top sarge was still around. If that big mouth was still here, someone had better warn him that this was a whole different breed of cat than he greeted nearly 3 ½ years ago. Since nobody could retire until the end of the war, he just might be here.

As we pulled into the parade ground, I remembered a newspaper vendor that had a paper rack when we were at boot camp. I don't know if it was the same guy or not, but he was in the same spot, and sounded the same. Anyway, he was standing on his rack and yelling that the war was over. He was selling papers like crazy, and somebody went over and bought a paper and asked him where. He said it wasn't over in any one place, but all over the world. The atom bomb dropped, and the war was nearly over.

That guy must have made a million bucks that day selling papers.

We were quickly briefed, and they said as soon as the meeting was done, they start processing us. They had to check our financial status, we would get a whole new issue of clothes, shoes, etc. We would go to another post and get our leave straightened out, and by next Friday we would be on the way home.

We wouldn't have liberty until after we left on Friday, but we had base liberty, and could just relax and enjoy ourselves for five days. We called everybody on the phone. We didn't miss chow – steak every day. The days went by so fast, it didn't seem like five days. They did a good job of getting us ready, and by 11 a.m. Saturday, we boarded the trucks and they took us to the train depot.

When we got to the depot, there were lines of Marines waiting to buy tickets all across the nation. Finally my turn arrived. I told the woman I wanted a ticket to Portland. Before I could say anything else, she said, "You have to go back to the base. You can't make your connection, you have to go back to the base."

I asked her for a ticket to Los Angeles instead, and she kept insisting that I had to go back to the base. By this time I was really starting to burn. Think about it. Would you be mad? Imagine making it back to the USA by some miracle, with 80% of your buddies having given up their lives so I can argue with a big mouth dictator trying to run my life. I wasn't about to let her tell me where I could or could not go, and I was not going to go back to the base.

It might not have been nice, but I was so darn mad. I told her, "Lady, if you don't sell me a ticket, I am going to knock out all those pretty teeth." I reached over the counter, and she screamed. Another Marine standing next to me said, "She won't sell you a ticket? Well, we'll see about that...Guys! We need help, she won't sell him a ticket!"

Somebody threw an ashtray, and just that fast, we could have had a riot. Fortunately, San Diego police were alert about service complaints, and they moved carefully. The train master had called the police, and he told the police that she wouldn't sell me a ticket, because I was supposed to go back to the base.

The police officer asked me, "Are you one of the returned veterans?"

I said, "Yes, and I am going home for a month. Do you want to see my liberty papers?"

"No," he said, "just wait here a minute."

Then he called the train master over, and the police inspector told the train master, "Do you know what we just averted? These are returning campaign vets, and they have been known to tear up the town. Get them out of here and give him a ticket to Los Angeles for free. Can you imagine what would happen if he headed back to the base and told them all about the treatment he got? Good-bye, somebody. Just give him a ticket, and if we have any more incidents like this, we will arrest **you**. Is that straight?"

Then he turned to me and said, "Will you forgive her if we make it all right for you and buy your ticket to Los Angeles?"

I said, "Great. Thanks a lot." And on my way I went.

Semper Fidelis - Always Faithful

A month later, the war was over.

