

James F. Ingargiola
100 Prospect St.
East Bridgewater
Ma, 02333

1

Mine Eyes Did See the Glory

I

Most of us are able to recall many past emotional moments in our lives. Some of these moments stand out in our memory to the extent that when we are sometimes alone our thoughts just can't help going back to that day or time. I have a vivid memory of one of those days that stands out in my own life. The exact date I speak of is August Fifteenth nineteen forty-five. It was ten o'clock at night at our rest camp garrisoned on the Island of Guam, the largest of the Mariana Islands, and it was time for lights out. Our lights were provided by a generator that was given to each company area by the Navy Seabees, the Marine Corps' best friend. When the bugler would blow taps, it would mean lights out, and they would shut the generator down, and if you didn't turn your light off, it went out anyway.

I was in the second platoon of I company, in the third battalion, of the third Marine Regiment, part of the third Marine Division. There are normally three rifle companies, and one headquarter company, each with about 280 men attached to a battalion and as each generator was shut down you could watch the lights go out down the line of many companies like falling dominoes as you lay on your sack. In just a short while, the only lights you have left would be from the stars or the moon.

This particular night was indeed a night to remember. I only wish there were words in the English language that could describe the euphoria we all felt that night. We slept in six man tents, each of us on ordinary army cots with a mosquito net hanging down on all four sides. The lights hadn't been out for more than ten or fifteen minutes when far off in the distance, the dark silence was broken. At first it sounded like a few guys in one distant company must have gotten hold of a little too much wine or something and lost control of themselves. One of my buddies remarked, "Oh! Oh! Somebody is going to end up in the brig tonight." I agreed and turned over to go to sleep when I noticed the noise, not only getting louder, it seemed to be coming closer.

Then from "K-Ken" Company, which was next to ours, they were suddenly shouting so loud we were beginning to make out what they were saying. "Turn on the generator! Turn on the generator!" In just a short while K-Companies lights came on and they began to yell again, "turn on the radio, the war is over, the Japs want to surrender." Then I suddenly realized what all the screaming and commotion was about. When we heard what they were saying, we soon joined the chorus of, "Turn the generator on! Turn the generator on!" As soon as our man got our generator going, we turned on the little radio we had in our tent and heard it for ourselves. The man on the radio said, "In case you may have just tuned in, the Japanese have just notified the Allies that they wish to surrender unconditionally."

When I first understood the yelling from the other companies down the line, I felt a little excitement but with a cautious optimism. At first I wanted to believe it but couldn't help but wonder if this was somebody's idea of a sick joke. Once we heard it on Armed Forces Radio, I began to laugh, cry, run, jump, sit down, and stand up. In other words, I was so excited I didn't know what to do. Years later I was to become a father of six great sons, five beautiful daughters and twenty-three terrific grandchildren. I would not take away any of the excitement when each of them was born. As wonderful and thrilling as they all were, the most memorable day in my life is still August fifteenth nineteen forty-five. The various indescribable emotions that ran through my mind and soul at that moment in time are beyond explanation in any language. Needless to say nobody on Island of Guam got any sleep that night, and if they wanted to sleep, we made darn sure they didn't. They didn't shut the lights off at all that night and it was party time.

I never knew for sure where all the beer and whisky came from that night, but there was plenty of it around. Rumor had it that some of those amazing Seabees, the great Engineers of the US Navy were going around to the Marine camps and dropping it off as part of their way of celebrating. As I said before the Seabees are the Marine's best friend. We had the greatest admiration for the things they did to make life a little easier for us. They could build and fix anything, and they liked us just as much as we admired them. All that night and the next day even the air seemed to be different. There was a new

atmosphere that was also difficult to describe. Guam suddenly had a certain beauty about it that I hadn't noticed before.

The next night after twenty-four hours of celebrating we were all happy for the opportunity to go to bed. As tired as I was, I still had trouble going to sleep because of the giddy feeling I had in my head. I can still remember lying there for a long time thinking about the fact that I would soon be going home, Home, Home to Mom, Pop, and touch football with my friends. As I lay there, I tried to send a message home through mental telepathy. I repeated over and over again, "Mom I'm coming home, Pop I'm coming home." I was not the least bit ashamed of the tears in my eyes as I drifted off to sleep wondering whether or not they were receiving my good news. They were happy tears, and I was going home to where this story really begins, and I just couldn't wait.

Strange as it may seem I guess we can say it all began with a touch football game. It was a Sunday afternoon December 7th 1941. I had been sixteen years old for just two weeks. My friends and I had just finished having our usual game of Sunday afternoon touch football, and I had played so well that day, I couldn't wait to get home and tell my big brother Joe, who was seven years older than I was, all about it,

We lived in a third floor apartment, and I ran all the way home, and bounded up the three flights of stairs all excited and burst through the door and said, "Hey Joe, you should have seen..." Joe quickly put his left hand up, with his palm facing toward me. His right index finger across his lips meaning, "shut up." I learned a long time before that when Joe told me to shut up, I would be wise if I shut up. He was seated at the kitchen table listening to his little radio. I couldn't for the life of me figure out what could be more important than my intercepting a pass and running for a touchdown. Then Joe picked his head up long enough to tell me that the Japanese Navy just bombed Pearl Harbor. Remember I had just turned sixteen so I asked, "What in the world is Pearl Harbor?" When he told me it was a US Naval Base in the Hawaii Islands, I got a lump in my throat understanding why he wanted me to be quiet when I came in the door. Realizing the seriousness of what Joe had told me suddenly made my touchdown of very little importance.

We had a happy home where my mother used to tell us, "If your friends aren't good enough to come home and meet me, they're not good enough." Thus, we had to bring friends home and meet her. This resulted in everyone including the ice man, oil man, the insurance man, and all our friends calling her "Ma" and they loved to come to our house because they always enjoyed themselves there. There was always love, laughter, and music with piano, banjo, guitars, harmonicas, and violins to play or listen to most of the time. In John Hersey's INTO THE VALLEY, he described Captain Rigaud's home to be similar to mine when he wrote, "There used to be music in the house. Rig began to play the violin when he was seven years old. At first it was often painful, when all he could produce was a whine from the open strings and his left arm got so tired from holding it." The same thing happened to my brother Joe when my father was teaching him to play. The rest of the family would be in the kitchen quietly laughing when we would hear pop in the den yelling at him to, "Keep your left arm up." Rigaud also had a sister who played the piano just like my sister Florence did. Beginning December 7th, 1941 things were a little different for a while. There was less laughter and nobody felt like playing any musical instruments. All most of us could think about was the fact that our country has been attacked and we are now at war.

The next day, December 8th, 1941, the whole school met at assembly hall to listen to the radio broadcast of President Franklin D. Roosevelt declaring December 7th, 1941, "A day of infamy." Then Congress made an official declaration of war against the Axis Powers. It was a bone chilling experience for those of us who sensed the full meaning of it all. After school, I had to go down town Brockton where I was able to observe one of the most impressive, and unforgettable sights in my entire life. There was a line of men that began in the recruiting offices of the army and navy located in the post office building. That line stretched out the door, up one city block to Main Street and another block down Main Street. As I walked along the line of men, I noticed that they appeared to be in age from seventeen years old on up to the fifties, and every one of them had what could be described as a grim and determined look on his face. I did not see one smile at all. It would be a vast understatement to say, "These guys are angry." I couldn't help but

think to myself, "Boy, it looks like the Japanese Navy has just woke up the sleeping giant." Seeing those men made me proud to be an American.

I had a job after school washing dishes in a restaurant, and one day a truck driver I knew came in and said, "Well kid, I guess you won't have to worry about going in the army. This war will be over by the time you're old enough to go." "I imagine it will I replied." Little did he or I know how wrong we both were. That in a little over two years it would be far from over, and I would see some of the worst of it.

A few months later my hero and big brother Joe went in the army and never left Massachusetts throughout the whole war. It seems he was a mess sergeant in a military police unit that never left the state. I personally think his commanding officer liked his cooking so much, he decided to keep him on. My other brother, "Charlie" was drafted in late nineteen forty-two and ended up in the Battle of the Bulge. He was actually in the 8th Air force that was stationed in England and was sent in to reinforce one of the Army relief units that eventually broke through the German lines in a rescue operation. My mother and father had been separated since 1937, so in 1942 with both my brothers in the army I felt it necessary leave school and go to work in the shipyard at Hingham, Mass., to help Mom out.

One of our neighbors used to go to the Naval Air Base and bring home two or three Sailors or Marines for Sunday dinner. The whole neighborhood became friendly with two of the Marines named Charlie Reese and Bobby Bouten. Charlie Reese was an Indian from Arizona, while Bobby was a little cocky fellow from down south somewhere. They used to kid with me a lot about joining the Marines, and my mom would say, "Oh no, my son is not going in the Marines." That was in the summer of forty two, and in February forty three, we received word that they both were killed on Guadalcanal by sniper fire.

A good friend of my brother Charlie named Harold "Hackey" Creeden, joined the US Navy right out of high school in nineteen forty-two. Our whole family loved Hackey, and he was just like one of our family. Hackey was on the US Aircraft Carrier Hornet when two Japanese Kamakazi suicide pilots flew their planes straight down into the deck of his ship. He was fished out of the water five hours later. Sometime within the next

year, Hackey was on another ship named the USS Juneau. It was on that ship we lost him with another neighbor named Charlie "Tut" Bertocci and the more well known five Sullivan Brothers. It was a sad time among our family, friends and neighbors. Here it was less than two years into this awful war, and we already knew four people who died in it. Little did I know at that particular time that my best friend Frankie Capozzi was going to die later in the Battle of the Bulge. By the time the war would end, I would be destined to personally know six Gold Star Mothers who had given a son to preserve our freedoms.

Every community had what was called a rationing board that was sanctioned by the US Government. It was their job to give people rationing stamps in order to buy many products. You had to go to the rationing board and fill out a form telling them how many people you had in your household, and how many vehicles you had, how far you had to travel each week, out of necessity, not for fun. That would decide how much fuel you could buy and how many tires you were able to buy in the course of the year. For example each person was only allowed to buy two pair of shoes per year, and ladies nylons were very hard to get even if you had rationing stamps. You were only allowed a small amount of sugar and butter. The stamp told the grocer how much he could sell to you, but you still needed money to pay for the items too. The most difficult thing was tires and gasoline. All those things were rationed in order to make sure the needs of men in the service were taken care of.

It was a time of strong patriotism in America with very few people complaining about not having enough of something because of rationing. It seemed as though most of the people realized the importance of taking care of the GI's. The importance of the people on the home front is better described by Tom Brokaw in his book called, "The Greatest Generation" when he wrote: *Any war has at least two fronts; the front line, where the fighting is done, and the home front, which provides the weapons, and supplies, the transportation, the intelligence, the political and moral support. The home front rarely gets equal credit, but World War 2 required such a massive buildup in such a short time, the home front was as impressive as the fighting in Europe or the Pacific. On factory assembly lines or in shipbuilding yards, in government offices and top secret laboratories, on farms and ranches, the men and women who stayed behind were fully*

immersed in the war effort. They worked long shifts rationed gasoline, ate less meat. They rolled surgical dressings for the Red Cross and collected cigarettes for the boys "over there." They waited for the mail and the dreaded unexpected telegram or a visit from the local pastor. Some of them pressed into duties they had never considered, found new callings in life. It was a radical transformation in America, an evolution still in progress, especially for women."

One woman he singles out is named *Dorothy Haener* who left her mother's farm during the war to work in a Ford Motor plant. She eventually became a union organizer fighting for equal pay for women. Brokaw describes her as *strong willed and out spoken. When after the war she decided to run for the powerful bargaining committee for the United Autoworkers Union, a number of her male friends said it wasn't a place for a woman and she would be too nice. Later some of them apologized for opposing her. She later became chair-person of the Michigan Civil Rights Commission.* Had it not been for her wanting to help do her part on the home front to help win the war she could still be living on her mother's farm.

As I said before, with both of my brothers in the army in 1942 I left school to go to work as a pipe fitter in the Hingham shipyard, building the ships Tom Brokaw spoke of, and at the same time help out financially at home. I recall 1943 as the first year they deducted the income tax in the "pay as you go" system. After taxes and a defense bond I had taken out of my pay, I still was taking home about one hundred and fifty dollars every week and that was considered big money in those days. To help understand the difference, in those days, bread cost about tenor twelve cents a loaf, milk was a few cents more a quart, while the price of kerosene and gasoline were about twelve cents. I can still recall how upset my mother was when the man who delivered the oil told her kerosene was going up from thirteen cents to fourteen cents a gallon. We were turning out one destroyer escort every week at that shipyard for British, French, and US Navies. Most of the people I knew were working in one defense plant or another. My sister was working in the Hanover Fireworks Plant making ammunition, and I remember my brother Charlie's friend Hackey who was in the navy had written to her saying, "Florence, you

keep making them and we'll keep breaking them." Like Dorothy Haener, my sister became involved in the union as a shop steward.

An example of the way Americans produced the materials in an effort to support those fighting the war was found in an article of the STARS AND STRIPES newspaper. It was recorded in a book called WOLRD WAR 2 FRONT PAGES, on November 28th, 1942 that read, "*Henry J. Kaizer, America's shipbuilding wizard, has set another record with the launching of a naval auxiliary craft in two days, twenty three hours and forty minutes after the keel was laid. The previous world record for a ship launching was three days, eight hours.* Again: on Wednesday, December ninth, nineteen forty-two the STARS AND STRIPES headline read, *US OUTPUT SHATTERS RECORD ONE YEAR AFTER.* They went on to say *the first anniversary of the Pearl Harbor has been a time here at home for checking up on our accomplishments the last twelve months.* Here were the production figures they gave for nineteen forty-two, and it was only the beginning.

48,000 airplanes, with emphasis on heavy bombers.

32,000 tanks and self propelled artillery.

17,000 anti-aircraft guns of more than 20 mim.

8,300,000 tons of merchant shipping.

They called it a miracle; I call it American ingenuity at its best.

I felt then, as I do now, that I was either lucky to have been born in America or it was in the province of God that I was born here. I had seen the ingenuity of the American people at its best. I had seen the determination of the men and women of America in their will to survive a horrid war, and it was a glorious thing to see.

CHAPTER TWO

I had worked in the shipyard about a year when my draft number came up. I was given a physical and was accepted into the service. At that point in the war the army had so many men there was no longer an urgent need, so they let you have your choice as to which branch of service you opted to go into. So I stood in line at the Navy's Fargo Building in Boston with those who chose the navy, because I knew my Mother wouldn't be too happy if I joined the Marines. As the line moved on it passed by an office door where sitting behind a desk clad in fancy dress blues, sat a very sharp looking Marine Sergeant. I mean this guy looked like he just stepped out of the poster that advertises for the Marines. He beckoned me and another fellow saying, "Hey guys, come in here a minute." Man did he look sharp in those dress blues.

It didn't take him more than ten minutes of showing us pictures and telling us about the glories of being a Marine that we signed on the dotted line. That and the fact that we were going to be another three hours in that Navy's line helped convince me to join the Marines just so I could get out of there and be home in Brockton before midnight.

Hersey's *INTO THE VALLEY*, describes Captain Rigaud's mother in such a way that she reminded me just how great my own Mom was, but they had some differences also. His Mom was described to be, "of medium height, slender, with cheeks rosier than rouge and a very sweet smile." My Mom was only five feet tall, and weighed about two hundred pounds, and my brother Charlie once said, "Mom when you laugh, so much of you has such a good time." Mom was very fair skinned to the extent she was afraid to go out in the sun. The only time her cheeks were rosy was when my brother Charlie would make her laugh, which was quite often. Those are the differences, but there are many similarities our mothers had, such as their sweet smile, sense of humor, the fact that they were always home, entirely absorbed in rearing of their children. Hersey goes on to write,

“Rigaud’s mother was always confident that her children would do the right thing, as they grew older she left them very much on their own. She was always generous, and if anything alarmed her she hid what she felt. She was a good mother.”

All those things applied to my mother who wouldn’t sit down to eat until we kids had all we wanted, and she would eat what was left which sometimes wasn’t much, and she never complained. The thing she enjoyed doing the most was buying gifts at Christmas time for the poorest family she could find. It was to this warm loving mother that I had the unenviable task of telling that her youngest son had just joined the Marine Corps. I will never forget the look on her face when I broke the news to her. I had a bad feeling as I walked in the door and, she asked, “did they accept you in the navy alright?” My reply was one of the most difficult statements I have ever spoken. “N-N-Nooo Momma I didn’t go in the navy.” I could tell that she had a sense of dread on her face and she didn’t have to say a word. It was all in the pleading look in her eye that was saying, “Well, what then?” I was almost wishing I would choke on my next words, “Mom I-I-I Just joined - the Marines.” Her hands immediately went to her face and as she cried out, “Oh my God; No-No-No,” My brother caught her just in time as her knees began to buckle under her.

After we sat her down in a chair Mom sobbed and cried her eyes out saying, “My baby is in the Marines just like Charlie Reese and his friend Bobby Bouten.” All she could think about was how they recently died as the result of sniper fire with the Marines fighting on Guadalcanal. She later kept talking about my friend Frankie who was already over in England preparing for the D-Day invasion. We didn’t know it at the time, but he was to give his life later in the Battle Of the Bulge. Then it was Hackey and Tut on the Juneau. To say she had taken all this hard was putting it mildly. She was absolutely devastated. She would pick up the newspaper each day with fear and trembling wondering who the next mother is that might have sacrificed another son or daughter for their country. Mom had three sons and a daughter to worry about, and the weight of the whole war seemed to be on the shoulders of all the mothers like mine in America.

Our family and friends spent the next few days trying to convince Mom that every thing was going to be OK because by the time I would get into the fray, it will probably

be over. After a few days Mom was either convinced that everything was going to be OK or she was putting on a good act to make me feel better about the whole situation. My personal guess is it was the latter, or I didn't know my own mother.

Then on February 14, 1944, I had to catch an early train out of Brockton for Paris Island's Marine Corps Boot Camp, for boot training. I was a little bit apprehensive not knowing what to expect. Chalk it up to the old fear of the unknown. Before I left Mom promised me that she would be praying for me and both my brothers every day and, she would be praying for a quick end to that awful war. Much to my surprise my big brother Joe offered to walk me to the railway station. Joe was a very intelligent guy and a great athlete who stood about five eleven and was handsome enough to be a movie star. He didn't drink, smoke, or use bad language, and yes, he did like girls, always treating them with the utmost respect. My brother Joe was as good a role model as any mother would want for her kid. He was my hero as I was growing up, and I was always proud to be around him, but being seven years older than I was, he didn't allow that to happen very often. It seems that he was home from Camp Edwards on a pass every weekend. He once told me that he was beginning to feel a little guilty when the neighbors would stare at him with a look of, "My God are you home again?" I had always been proud to go anywhere with Joe, but this day I sensed something different. I somehow got the strangest feeling that Joe was proud to be walking with me to the station, and I thought to myself, "Boy, this is a switch."

While we were waiting for the train to arrive, Joe did his best to give me, his little brother, some big brother advice. "Take good care of yourself Jim, don't try to be a hero, and keep your nose clean, don't volunteer for anything, and make mom proud of you." I replied, "I will Joe, I promise." Then I noticed his eyes a little moist as he shook my hand and said, "By the way I've got a little going away gift for you." He pulled out from under his big army overcoat a carton of Camel Cigarettes. I was aghast, and after quickly recovering my composure I said, "Joe I didn't know anybody in our family had any idea that I smoked at all, let alone that I smoked Camels." To which he replied, "You can fool some of the people all of the time and all of the people some of the time, but you can't

earlier that he was wounded on Guadalcanal and brought to a hospital ship where they pulled out some shrapnel from different parts of his body. They told him that as far as he was concerned, the war was over, and he would soon be going back to Pearl Harbor.

However, Lou Diamond had other ideas because when the Navy prepared a small craft to go ashore and retrieve more wounded, he somehow found a way to be on board. He said his men needed him, and from what I understand, he was probably right.

In John Hersey's INTO THE VALLEY, he wrote about Lou Diamond when Captain Rigaud was boasting about his having, "the best machinegun platoon in the regiment." He went on to add, "And I guess mortar batteries don't come any better than our battery. Old Lou Diamond runs it - ever heard of him? Too bad his bunch isn't around so you could see for yourself." Someone else said, "Yeah, look where they got old Lou now: down at the beach with the holding attack: heaviest work of the whole darn battle. Hersey had seen Lou Diamond's battery in action and was told it was one of the best in the Corps. Hersey said, "The reason I found out about Lou Diamond was that while visiting Colonel Edson's command in the area of the holding attack the day before, I heard a mortar battery making twice the noise a mortar battery usually makes. The noise was shouting. When I asked whose it was, I was told that the voice belonged to Master Gunnery Sergeant Lou Diamond, who it is said to be approximately two hundred years old." I know Mr. Hersey had seen the same Lou Diamond that I did when I arrived at Paris Island when he said, "Presently I saw him-a giant with a full grey beard, an admirable paunch, and the bearing of a man daring you to insult him." He went on to say, "They told me there was some question whether to take him along on such a hazardous job as the Solomon campaign. He was getting too unwieldy (old) to clamber up and down cargo nets. When he found out they were debating his antiquity, he went out and directed loading operations with such violence that for a time he lost his voice entirely; the next morning he was told he could go along." Lou was an impatient man. When told to cease firing he was heard roaring, "Wait and wait and wait and wait, God, some people around here'll fall on their ass from waiting." That was the Lou Diamond I once met all right, and I can honestly say I am proud to have known him even though it was only for a short while.

They had me listed at five feet six, one hundred and twenty six pounds although I think I was closer to one thirty five, but I wasn't going to argue with them because they were boss. In fact about four weeks later another fellow named Sidney and I were sent by our drill instructor up to sickbay to see a certain doctor because we were both so small. He was only about five feet five, and weighed one hundred and fourteen pounds. When he came out of the doctor's office, he was not too happy and said they were sending him home. When it came my turn the doctor said, "Son I have the authority to send you home but unlike the other fellow I'm going to let the decision be yours. Do you want to go home or stay?" I said "Gee Doc; If you had asked me that four weeks ago I would have jumped at the chance to go home, but I've come this far, and I'm beginning to like it now, so I'll stay. But Doc. Please don't ever let my mother know about this conversation." Sid told me on the way back to our barracks that he was going to be very embarrassed to face every one at home. I did my best to make him feel better about it all, but nothing seemed to work.

I don't know if I would be considered strange or cold hearted, but I never could understand those guys that demonstrated how homesick they were. I was probably homesick for about one hour after I arrived on Paris Island. I have heard more than one person actually sobbing at night after lights out. Looking back on it now I can understand it more. The most important things I left behind were my Sister Florence, my mom and Sunday afternoon touch football. Some of the others left wives and children which must have made them a little more emotional. When I would be separated from the friends in one place and transferred to another, I soon made new friends. I considered that to be a necessary way of life in any branch of the service. It was more difficult for some than it was for others.

The old adage that, "the grass is always greener in the other guy's yard," brings to memory a strange phenomena that seemed to take place in the service. Most of the guys would complain that the last camp or base they were at was much better than the one they were at now. It only seemed that way because each place had its good and bad, and when you arrive at a new base, you can only remember the good things from the last base you were at.

Eventually we were introduced to man who was to be our drill instructor for the next three months. His name was Sergeant Duncan. He was a tough Texan, but very fair. He marched us to our new home barracks with nobody in step to his cadence call of, "one hup-two hup-one hup ya left. When we arrived, he yelled platoon halt- all you guys from Texas-whoa," meaning Texans only understand the word whoa, and not stop.

One day later he had us standing outside and announced, "did anyone here ever graduate from college?" Two men raised their hands, then he told them to stand to one side. After that he asked, "did anyone go to college and not graduate?" There were two more that he pulled out of ranks. He did the same with high school and down to junior high. There was one farm boy from Florida that only went to sixth grade. He had him stand off by himself. When this was done he said, "those who only went to junior high school go around and pick up all the large pieces of paper you can find. If you went to high school and didn't graduate go around and pick up all the small pieces of paper you can find. If you graduated from high school go around and pick up any cigar butts you can find. If you went to college and didn't graduate go around and pick up all the cigarette butts you can find. You college graduates are to pick up all the little match sticks." Then he turned to the fellow who didn't go further than grade school and said and you-stand there and watch how this is done.

The worst thing that happened to me on Paris Island was when we had to put the gloves on and get in the circle of men and box against some one from another platoon. They would try to match you with someone as close to your size as they possibly could but with me that was an impossibility, because there just wasn't anybody near my size and weight in the whole darn Marine Corps, let alone in Paris Island. Every time I got in the ring I turned out to be nothing but a good punching bag for my opponent. The guys in my platoon would be yelling, "Fall down and take a count kid." But their yelling was to no avail, because I was stubborn and just tough enough to take the best punches they had and I wasn't falling down for anybody. My big problem was the fact that when they caught me on the nose, my eyes would water so badly that all I could see was a blurry thing hitting me. They say, "you can't hit what you can't see" and I couldn't see, so I would swing my fist and miss that blurry thing in front of me every time.

The best thing about Paris Island: the food was very good. They fed you family style, and you could eat as much as you wanted. They had a sort of motto that said, "Take all you want, but eat all you take." They also had what was known as mess-men that waited on the tables, and when a platter of food was empty, they would pick it up and bring back a full one. It was in the mess hall that I first heard someone speak with a southern drawl, when one fellow from Kentucky said, "Please pass me thet *nauf*." I looked around the table with no idea what he meant, and trying to guess what a *nauf* was, when the guy next to me poked me in the ribs and whispered, "He means knife."

The only time the Drill Instructors spoke to us in a civil manner was when you got back to the barracks after you ate. When the last man returned he would ask, "Did every one have enough to eat? We don't want anyone complaining that they are hungry an hour from now, so if you are hungry speak up now." There was one seventeen-year old farm boy from Pennsylvania who raised his hand after most the of meals we had. He was at least six feet five inches tall, still growing, and he ate so much that nobody wanted to sit at the same table with him at chow time.

The rifle range was on a different part on the island, so when we went there to learn to use weapons, we had to bring everything we had because we stayed there for a couple of weeks at a time. I had a delightful surprise when I had my first meal at the rifle range. As I sat down at a table in the mess hall, I noticed the bowl of potatoes was empty already, so I asked a mess-man to fill it up. Lo and behold when he ever turned around, it was my old playground instructor from my home town in Brockton, named Pal Astory. He also happened to be a good friend of brother Joe, and we had a great time together but naturally it couldn't last long because he had his thing to do and I had mine. I always felt somewhat bad that we couldn't spend a little more time reminiscing, about the fun we used to have, but that's just the way things were.

We each had our own instructor on the rifle range, and my instructor's name believe it or not was, "Bull Durum." He was old enough to be my father, and he treated me like a son. He called me, "Chick:" a nickname that was often used to describe someone that was unusually young or young looking. The maximum score you could accumulate on the range was three hundred and thirty points, which would mean you got

all bulls eyes with every shot you fired. If you had over three hundred and fifteen points, you received the highest badge which is Expert. From two hundred ninety six to three fifteen you received a sharpshooter badge, and from two eighty to two ninety-five you received a marksman badge. Old Bull Durum was sure disappointed that I missed sharpshooter by the one point, two hundred ninety-five. I thought that he felt worse about it than I did.

After boot camp I was sent to cook and baker's school at Camp Lejune North Carolina where I had it rather easy with no inspections to stand and when not on duty you could stay in bed. In fact I was sorry when that was over because I was then transferred to an infantry company where the twenty and twenty five-mile hikes and inspections were commonplace. We also had to learn how to use many different kinds of weapons such as bazookas, mortars, flame-throwers, machineguns, and we learned how to set a charge of TNT and blow things up.

One day I was assigned to the boondocks, or woods to prepare a meal for the drivers of a convoy of trucks that would be out that way. One of the things I had to do was light a fire to heat the water under three big barrels so they could wash their mess gear after they ate. As I was about to reach for some kindling wood that was in a neat six-foot high pile, I noticed poking out from the pile even with my neck and staring me in the eye was a copperhead snake, one of the most deadly in North America. He was between three and four feet long, and I suddenly found out the full meaning of word terror. It's when you know you are too young to die, but it doesn't matter at all because you are about to die anyway. This was not the way I expected it was going to happen to me.

One of the truck drivers that had driven in just minutes before noticed the look on my face and walked slowly over to see what was wrong with me. He didn't say a word, but when he got close enough he stood at one side of the pile and slowly reached up from underneath grabbing the snake by the neck, then by the tail, snapped it like you would a whip and its head popped right off. It turned out that he was a native of South Carolina and had plenty of experience at that sort of thing. To say I was grateful just doesn't explain it well enough. Although the whole incident took about two minutes, it seemed like hours to me.

I'll never forget a lieutenant that was teaching me to use a flame-thrower. After strapping it on my back, he told me that the first thing you do is make sure the fuel will come through the nozzle by giving it just a little squirt. When I did, the fuel came out Ok, but it also leaked onto my hand. When I mentioned that it was leaking he said, "It's nothing go ahead a fire it." I said, "I still don't like this Sir." Shall we say, he got a little bit huffy about it and whipped it off my back, put it on himself and said, "it's nothing to worry about, watch me do it". I watched him as his whole arm went up in flames. Then it was my turn to whip that thing off his back while others helped him put the fire out on his arm. Fortunately he was out of the hospital the next day and still hurting, but it could have been me. He never said he was sorry or wrong, but he didn't have to. I'm sure he was plenty sorry and he had to know he was wrong.

I had a buddy named was Wilfred Heller from Wheeling West Virginia. It seems as though every time we were together something would go wrong One of the craziest things happened to us one day when we decided to go canoeing on New River. It's a river that has many tributaries, so at one point I said, "Lets go up that one" and he said nodding in the other direction, "No lets go up that one." Can you imagine Siamese twins wanting to go in opposite directions? In a canoe that sort of thing doesn't work either, so naturally we tipped over. I soon learned that New River can't be very new because it would take a long time to create that much mud. I got stuck in that mud half way between my ankles and my knees and couldn't move. I'll never know how Heller was able to do it, but he had the canoe and both oars under one arm and me in the other and somehow trudged out onto dry land. We must have laid on the grass for an hour exhausted and laughing.

Before leaving Carolina I was given a private first class stripe to wear on my sleeve. Boy was I proud to be able to write to my brothers and tell them. They both wrote back saying they had made sergeants. Joe was a master sergeant and Charlie was a tech sergeant. (They always had a way of humbling a guy.)

From there we had what I think must have been one of the longest train rides in history. We traveled south from North Carolina south through Florida, then across every south coast state until we reached Camp Pendleton California. The trip was a sort of

geography lesson. It took a total of ten days with stops in various cities along the way to eat. It took three days just to go through Texas. I was honored to have been on that train with Angelo Bertelli, a real nice guy, other wise known as *The Springfield Rifle* and a great All American, and quarterback of Notre-Dame Football.

After we were in Camp Pendleton for a few weeks, the first sergeant came in and told four of us he had put us up for promotion to corporal. I didn't write to tell my brothers this time. After all they might be captains by now as far as I knew. I did write and tell my mother and my friends knowing they would be happy to hear it. However, they say, "If it isn't one thing its another." That promotion blew up in our face, because that was when my old pal Heller and I made one of our biggest goof ups. It was a rather warm day and we decided to make some lemonade for the guys. All we had was lemon extract with a percentage of alcohol in it. Once again old friend Heller decided it didn't have enough lemon taste and decided to add more extract. I don't know how much he added but it was enough to cause the whole company of 250 Marines to end up three sheets to the wind. We were kind of lucky that we didn't get a court marshal and end up in the brig. There were two reasons for that. The first sergeant let us know what they were. The first he said is, "because in two or three days we are shipping out, and second, you guys can forget your corporal stripes."

The next day everybody was called one by one into the first sergeant's office and told to sit down and sign a paper. When it came my turn, I asked him, "what is it I'm signing?" "You're volunteering to go over seas and fight the enemy." "And if I don't sign it what will happen?" I inquired. Then he really got rude saying, "If you don't sign it, I will personally make your life so miserable that you will probably volunteer to invade Tokyo all by yourself." With that I said, "it's O.K: I only asked. Where is it you wanted me to sign?"

We were well trained and ready, in more ways than one. First of all we were trained to use many varied weapons. Second we were in great physical condition. Third as Erich Maria Remarque put it so aptly in *ALL QUIET ON THE WESTERN FRONT* in the words of Paul Baumer, "For us young men of twenty everything is extraordinary

vague, for Kropp, Muller, Leer, and for me, for all of us whom Kantorek calls the "Iron Youth." All the older men are linked up with their previous life. They have wives,

children, occupations, and interests, they have a background which is so strong that the war cannot obliterate it. We young men of twenty, however, have only our parents, and perhaps a girl - that is not much, for at our age the influence of our parent is at it's weakest and girls have not yet got a hold over us." As much as I hate to admit there is a great deal of truth in Paul Baumer's statement, having seen the worry and sadness on the faces of the older men that was absent from those who were younger and more carefree.

It was about three weeks after D-Day on Normandy Beach, and we watched the news wires closely because many of us knew someone who was in England waiting for that big day. At the same time, we formed the First Marine Replacement Battalion, and on June 27 there were five hundred Marines that embarked on board a Dutch ship named the *Bloom Fountain*. The navy crew that operated the Bloom Fountain was American. One of the crew was a fellow I went to school with named Bobby Langway. He spent as much time as he could educating me on the things he had seen of the war in the Pacific, and many things about the ocean and stars that I never knew before. We didn't know at the time we were going to Guam, and we were destined to take the place of the casualties of the Third Marine Division.

After about one week out to sea the ship steward gave our mess sergeant (I only remember him as "Pinky") a bunch of ham to serve to the men. Pinky was a little leery of it but the steward insisted it was ok, so it was served. Within twelve hours we had about half of the troops come down with a combination of ptomaine poison and seasickness at the same time. Those of us that didn't eat the ham had to go around and confiscate all knives and at the same time make sure no one tried to commit suicide in any way. A couple of guys actually asked me push them over board and kill them because they were so miserably sick. They were too weak to jump or they would have. They were as sick as any one could be, and it was enough to turn the strongest stomach sour.

On July 19th the captain announced that the Third Marine Division has just invaded the Island of Guam, and that was also our destination. Later that evening when I bumped into Bob Langway he told me he knew that all along but didn't dare tell me.

THE STARS AND STRIPES headline that day read, "YANKS INVADE GUAM, THE FIRST U. S. ISLE LOST IN THE WAR.

During the war it was common for ships to travel in an armada with destroyers and cruisers escorting them to their destination. We were an exception. It's no wonder that it took us forty-eight days to reach Guam. If we sailed to Guam in a straight line we would have taken a westerly course for about fifteen days. Instead we sailed across the Pacific Ocean on what they termed a *zigzag course*. The ship's course would be northwest for twenty minutes, then southwest for thirty minutes, then northwest for ten, and southwest for so many minutes. They would change the time and direction like that so the Japanese Submarines wouldn't be able to maintain a constant target as easily as they could if we traveled on a straight line. Somehow that didn't make most of us feel as safe as we would have felt if there were a couple of destroyers on either side of us. I spent many hours on deck watching over the side rail to see if I might spot a Sub, or maybe the wake of a torpedo. We didn't know it at the time, but our navy was keeping the enemy so busy in other places that they didn't have time to be looking for single ships floating around, so we went unnoticed by them or the old zigzag move might have fooled them.

Finally on the morning of August 15th we could see what by this time we knew was Guam with very high cliffs that looked like they were quite steep.

Chapter 3

Beside Wilfred Heller I also became a very close friend with another fellow from Albany New York named Alfred Meyers. We also met at cook and baker's school, and we two were like brothers. We went everywhere and did many things together. He was a great kid and a real friend who laughed at my corny jokes when nobody else would.

We finally arrived on the Island of Guam where we were expected to do our part in trying to win this war. If the others were anything like me, they were nervous not knowing where we were going or what we were going to do next. Sure we tried to act cool about the whole thing, but you could see the nervousness in the eyes. Five hundred Marine replacements each carrying everything we had onto dry land, placed in a disembarking area, where names were called out, and told to pick up and climb onto a row of trucks that were parked nearby. Of all the friends I had gained in the Marine Corps, Al Meyers and I were as close to each other as anyone. When I heard his name called to board one of the trucks, I had a sense that we were about to be split apart because everything was alphabetical and I comes before M. He shook my hand and said, "I hope we'll see each other before too long Jim." I answered slowly and sort of wistfully, "We will Al, We will." It was an open truck he climbed onto and he waved, and as they pulled away Al had tears streaming down his face. It was a scene that has been imbedded in my memory ever since. I liked Al a lot, and I know he liked me, but I didn't realize he liked me that much.

I was still left together with Heller and with a couple hundred others, and we were herded off walking because we only had a few hundred yards to go to reach our destination. We were placed in adjoining companies; I was placed in "I- Item" Company, and Heller went to "K-Ken" Company where we were able to keep in touch from time to time.

As we passed Guam's capital city, AGANA, I got my first glimpse of what war does to people's homes. Not one house was left standing although you could see a wall here or there and smoke still oozing up eerily from an occasional pile of rubble. Every now and then you could see a tree still standing. It would seem odd because near the

beach where the original landing was made, all you could see were tree stumps that you could tell weren't chopped down but looked like the Mighty Green Giant had just torn them apart just leaving a crude stump. You could see the bark of the tree stumps peeled back like torn banana peels. This was our first look at what war is like, and we were all speechless, and as we looked at one another, none of us needed to say one solitary word, because we were probably all thinking the same thing. We thought we were heading for a great adventure, but this is just a glimpse of the reality of what war is really about, and it looked frightening. I got a lump in my throat that I thought was never going to go away.

Heller and I arrived together in the same battalion, but we finally were separated. He ended up in "K-King" Company and I went next door to "I-Item" Company. I got into less trouble after that but he didn't. About five months later Heller was cooking in "K - King" company's galley. We had these field ranges to cook with and we had to use a hand pump to put air them, and between the fuel and air pressure we would ignite them to get enough heat to cook with. It was about four in the morning, and Heller with all his strength pumped his range up early that morning with about triple the amount of pressure necessary and when he lit a match he blew the whole quanset hut up causing a huge fire. He was lucky to escape with his life. He had the whole battalion mad at him because we all had to get up in a hurry and form a bucket brigade. His sense of humor kept him out of a lot of trouble because he did what he normally did; he laughed. As usual those Seabees came through again clearing all the fire debris away and they had a brand new galley built in time for supper.

In Tom Brokaw's THE GREATEST GENERATION I received quite a surprise when I read that the noted columnist Art Buchwald was also a marine during the war. He explained that in Buchwald's autobiography titled *Leaving Home*, he said something that I can surely relate to when he wrote, "*People are constantly amazed when I tell them I was a marine. For some reason I don't look like one-and I certainly don't act like one. But I was and according to God or the tradition of the Marine Corps, I will always be a Marine.*" I have experienced the same response from people over the years, so I know precisely what he means. He also claimed to be the biggest goof up in the Marine Corps. Well he obviously didn't run across my buddy Heller.

When I first arrived in "I-Item" company my new platoon leader, Lieutenant Collier from Baton Rouge Louisiana introduced me to his 2nd platoon. He said, " This guy looks so much like a Jap I think he'll make a good foreword scout. When they see him coming they'll think he's one of their own." I didn't like the way he put it, but sometimes it pays to keep your mouth shut, and this was one of those times. The trouble was he was serious, and I was issued a machete. They made me the platoon scout. The guy who goes out front of everybody else as a point man to see if it's OK for the others to move up. The machete is used to cut your way through the thick jungle ass you go.

I didn't understand it at the time, but I later on found out why most of these guys would treat a new replacement like he has leprosy. You get no help as to where you will sleep or where to place your gear. They couldn't care less if you turned around and went home now. They have all they can do to take care of themselves let alone watch over you too. They feel like baby sitters and they don't have time for that sort of thing. It's because of this, they would leave me out of things like going on patrol to see if they could find any signs Japanese soldiers around.

One day we were located at two hills that were laid out in a near V formation. "I-Item" company was at the top of one hill while "K" company was on the other with many Jap soldiers in between. "K- King" company was running low on grenades and we in "I" company had cases full of them. I don't know how many trips he made but a fellow from "K-King" company named Scraggs, ran across from one hill to the other, through the valley full of Japs carrying two cases of grenades at a time. During his second trip he got hit in the leg but still managed to make it through. Those grenades shortened the skirmish to control that area. They later had to amputate his leg above the knee, and he was later awarded with the Congressional Medal of Honor. Believe it or not when the Japs were finally driven out of the valley, we found the Seabees had already built a road good enough for tanks and trucks to roll on.

We were always told to take prisoners whenever possible, but most of the Japanese were afraid of being taken alive. The first time they did call on me to go out on patrol, I was trying to be very careful not to mess up. As we were working our way through the jungle brush, I spotted a mortar shell lying on the ground. As I was about to

reach down and pick it up, I said, "Hey look, there's a shell that didn't go off." I heard a real loud, "FREEZE." It was my new squad leader, Chuck "Dusty" Rhodes. I froze in my tracks as he said, "don't ever touch anything like that." I guess they were baby sitting me after all. But that was part of the learning process on survival.

One day Lieutenant Collier assembled the second platoon in a tent because it was raining hard and the fighting was somewhat quiet. He had some captured Japanese weapons that he field-stripped down to show us the differences between ours and theirs. One thing was that most of theirs were thirty-one caliber while ours were thirty caliber. This meant they could use our ammo in their guns, but theirs were one caliber too big to fit in our weapons. He also explained the mentality and capability of the Japanese Soldier as being as well trained as any in the world, but he has two weaknesses. First is, he is fighting for Emperor, his ancestors, and must keep from losing face. Second he is brainwashed into thinking we look at Shirley Temple and Babe Ruth the same way he looks at his Emperor. We are fighting for freedom for our families and that should give us something more worth fighting for. They want to die for their Emperor. We want to live for our country.

James Jones wrote in "THE THIN RED LINE," "When the men were in a bivouac area each would begin to tell at least three stories of personal, hair raising escape from death to tell, and at least two stories of personal, Jap killing." He also told of Colonel Tall's recollection: "Marine officers who laughed about the jars of gold their men had collected over the campaign, but he preferred to have nothing to do with that sort of thing." Colonel Tall also began showing everyone the bullet hole in his helmet. It brought back a memory of my squad leader Dusty Rhodes who had a two inch deep crease right on top of his helmet where a Japanese mortar shell landed knocking him down. Fortunately for him it didn't go off.

As a scout for my squad, I began to do my job pretty well. Not because I was good at it because I was plenty scared. When observing what was up ahead of me as I hacked my way through the jungle with my trusty machete, I was all eyes. You would think I had eyes in back of my head. If a mouse moved behind a tree I would have seen it. Its funny how well you can do a job when your life depends on it. In a few weeks, I

began feeling a little more accepted by the rest of the guys. I found my place among them, as though I was one of them and there were times when we would be sitting around hearing war tales of the experiences of one another as they did in *The Thin Red Line*. The oddest thing was when Colonel Tall mentioned that bit about the marine officers laughing about their men collecting gold teeth, because we had two guys in the second platoon that did that very thing. One was an Indian fellow we called, "Chief" and like Charlie Reese, he came from Arizona. The other guy was Joe Harte from up state New York. They told me that a large part of their equipment was a pair of pliers and a little jewelry box with gold teeth in it. I knew that the Japanese people did use a lot of gold in their teeth but I found it hard to believe anyone would do that. The older guys called both of them and asked them to bring their jewelry boxes over to show us new men what they had, and I couldn't believe what I saw. The boxes were at least five inches square and about three-quarters full of gold teeth. One day they got into a fight when they spotted a dead Jap Soldier. They pulled out their pliers and actually dove for him as though they were trying to recover a fumble in a football game. They both arrived at the same time and after fighting for a while and seeing this guy had a mouth full of gold they had a truce and decided to split fifty-fifty.

The soldier named Doll in *THE THIN RED LINE* stole his six gun but I have no idea where Joe Harte and the Indian got theirs but they each had two six guns on their hip like two cowboys. One night they were showing us a Roy Rogers movie and the bad guys were about to ambush Roy, when Joe Harte and the Chief jumped up and emptied their six shooters at the screen while yelling, "watch out Roy, we'll get him for ya." Needless to say they both ended up in the brig for three days bread and water.

We had what we called the honey pit where we dumped the garbage. It was a deep pit the Seabees dug with a bulldozer, and one day as we were returning from a long hike Joe Harte and The Chief spotted two Japanese Soldiers leaning into the honey pit trying to ferret out something worth eating. They slowly and quietly approached them from the opposite side of the pit with both guns drawn. When they got close enough they yelled, "hey". The two Japanese were so startled that when they turned to try running away they both slipped and fell backwards into three weeks worth of garbage. After

carefully fishing them out of there we gave them a nice shower, clean clothes and put them through our chow line before turning them over to headquarters. They were two hungry and happy guys.

The commander of the 3rd Marine regiment was a wiry tough guy about five feet eight inches tall named Colonel Howser. He jumped on top of a Jap tank one day, picked up the hatch, dropped a grenade inside, and after closing the hatch and jumping off to safety knocking the tank out. The company commander of "I-Item" company was Captain Smith. He wasn't just a good man but a great man and a great leader who wouldn't ask anyone to do anything he wasn't capable of doing himself. The only difference between him and Gary Cooper was that he was only about six feet one or two inches tall, and Gary was about six feet six inches tall. He sometimes went on patrols with the men and when we went on a twenty-mile hike, or anywhere else, he would always lead the way. He once told us that he didn't expect anyone to do anything if he didn't think he could do it himself. He had the greatest admiration of all the men of "I" Company, Third Marine Division, and The Third Marine Regiment.

My favorite leader was Sergeant Lanzer, the platoon leader. Three months after the signing of the official end of the war, we had to go on out post on Guam. They estimated that about five hundred Japanese soldiers were still on the island and refused to believe the war was over. Two days before Christmas 1945, they shot and killed a doctor and nurse driving by in a jeep in what we might call today a drive by shooting. Sergeant Lanzer and I had to share a foxhole on Christmas Eve, 1945. If you had to pick someone to play the part of Lanzer in a movie the best actor would be John Wayne. He was a big guy about six four, he was a real smart guy and battle wise, and we all had a lot of confidence in his judgement. One thing he taught me was to take a good look out in front of you before it gets dark because you will swear that tree is walking around out there and you have to convince yourself that trees do not move.

In the *NAKED AND THE DEAD*, Sergeant Croft showed his experience in a similar manner when Mailer wrote, "His ears were keyed to all the sounds of the night, and from long experience he sifted out the ones that were meaningless. If an animal rustled in it's hole, he paid no attention; if crickets chirped, his ear disregarded them.

Now he picked a muffled slithering sound which he knew could be made only by men moving through a thin patch of jungle." That could also be Sergeant Lanzer.

I didn't meet my platoon leader, Lieutenant Collier until I had been there for about two weeks because he had been in the hospital. It seems that he was shot right through the middle early in the conflict, as lieutenant Hearn was in *THE NAKED ANTHE DEAD*. On the day he held the weapon instruction in the tent, he was shooting the breeze with us and said the doctors on the hospital ship were "crazy." The way he described it was, "They tried to tell me I was shot in the front because they said a piece of my belt buckle was inside the wound, but I know that was impossible because if you guys remember, I had my back to the front and was facing you while waving you on. I had a big argument with them. I told them they didn't know what they were talking about because I was facing my own men when I was hit, so I must have been shot in the back. At least the bullet went right through me without touching any intestines so I guess I was pretty lucky at that." Later one of the men told me that, "he, (Collier) was a miserable b_____ on the Canal but he's a nice guy now. You figure it out."

One day we were on patrol. For the first hour or so we didn't see any signs of Japs activity when suddenly I heard shots fired and ducked down behind a tree. It was our guys and we could see the brush moving so three or four of us opened fire at the same time. Something fell and we waited a moment to make sure it was over. Then we slowly and deliberately moved toward the area where we had fired. In the two weeks previous to this incident all I heard from these veterans of Bougainville, New Zealand, and Guadal Canal was about killing, the same as you would hear from two or three hunters talking about the rabbit or the deer they once bagged. As I pushed aside the bush that concealed who or what we had shot at, I saw my first dead Japanese soldier. It wasn't a rabbit-it wasn't a deer. It was a human being. I immediately leaned against a tree and regurgitated my breakfast as Bead did in *THE THIN RED LINE* after killing the Japanese soldier and falling on his knees and vomiting. Up to that point, in the life of most of us, war is an adventure, but from that moment on, it becomes terrible, horror, destructive, dreadful, and worst of all fearful.

A similar incident occurred in ALL QUIET ON THE WESTERN FRONT when Paul found himself alone with a dying French Soldier in a bomb crater. Paul thinks about the man's family; saying to himself, "No doubt his wife still thinks of him; she does not know what happened. He looks as if he would have written to her; - she will still be getting mail from him-To-morrow, in a week's time - perhaps even a stray letter a month hence. She will read it, and in it he will be speaking to her." Later when Paul looked at the pictures of the woman and little girl he found in the dead man's wallet, it made him feel guilty and responsible to the extent that he pledged to take his place. This is seen when he said, "this dead man is bound up with my life, therefore I must do everything, promise everything in order to save myself, I swear blindly that I mean to live only for his sake and his family, with wet lips I try to placate him." He later went on, "I have killed the printer, Gerald Duval. I must be a printer." This is part of the guilt you feel when you realize you are not hunting rabbits or deer but human beings.

Another thing the guys told me was, when they were on Bougainville, that after dark the Japs used to yell things like, "Babe Ruth stupid," or "Shirley Temple eats C ration", thinking we would get angry, but it made us laugh instead. Then they would make noises in the night designed to unnerve you, such as a steady chopping on a coconut tree with a machete all night long probably taking turns and not missing a beat. We didn't laugh at that one. It was nerve racking." We see a good example of this in the NAKED AND THE DEAD when Croft could hear the Japs yelling to his men, "Hey Yank- we you coming to get yank."

Then came what was called the ten-day push on Guam. It was a ten-day sweep from one end of the island to the other by both units from 77th Army and the 3rd Marine division keeping constant sight of the man on your right and to your left. Guam ranges about sixty miles long and from five to ten miles wide. At one end of the island, we came to the cliffs made entirely of coral reef. We wondered why they issued a pair of gloves to each of us, and we soon found out. The coral appeared to look like a dark gray sponge, but the minute you touch it you know there's nothing spongy about that stuff at all. It is rock solid hard and jagged edged enough to cut you to shreds if you fell on it. The cliffs of Guam are well over one hundred feet high, and we had to climb all the way down to

the beach and on the way we had an occasional cave to check out for stray Japs. Some of the other units found Japs in the caves of their area, but we didn't see any, although there were remnants in the caves that showed they were occupied at one time or another.

When we reached the beach at the bottom of the cliff we found it to be one of the most beautiful sandy beaches most of us had ever seen. We spent that night on that beach and the next morning knowing we had to climb back up that high cliff wasn't the most pleasant idea we could think of. It looked twice as high looking up from the beach as it did from the top looking down.

Scaling that cliff that day turned out to be quite a scary adventure for me. It seemed like a piece of cake because there were plenty of places to put your feet going up or down. It was when I approached near the top and reached across grabbing what might have been a small sapling to pull myself up with. I gave a good yank, and the small bush or whatever it was came up out of the ground causing me to topple backwards about to fall a long way down to be smashed among the coral reef below. Before I was able to scream, something stopped me from falling. It was one of the squad leaders named R. W. Clarke who was perched at the top for just that reason and had grabbed one of the straps on my backpack pulling me back to safety. They say big boys don't cry so I was able to hide it from the others, because I was very shaken by that experience.

We also had a truck going around the Island with a Japanese prisoner speaking over a loud speaker telling those in hiding that they had lost the battle, and if they come out, they will be treated fair, but only a few gave up that way. We captured a few but many were killed during what they called the big ten day push.

When we finally arrived back at our tent area, we found out there were two Jap soldiers living in one of the tents for the last ten days. What better place to hide from some one than in their back yard. When Joe Hart and the Indian spotted them they began a chase up over a little hill behind the camp with both six guns blazing just like Roy Rogers. In a short while we heard a, "BOOM" and soon the Indian came back dragging Joe Hart with him. One of the Japs had thrown a grenade at them and Joe got too close. The next day he was back from the hospital with his head all bandaged up.

When things finally got quiet on Guam,

they built us a ball field with all the athletic equipment needed for various sports. I got a baseball glove, hat, and spikes and decided to play on the company softball team. My squad leader Chuck Rhodes was the coach so I had an in so to speak. Another guy in my platoon named Miller was a little shorter than I was but a good athlete he went out for shortstop and I went out for third base. The Captain's tent was down the right field line and he used to watch us practice. He called Chuck Rhodes over one day and said, "Chuck I don't care who you put on the team but I would like to see Miller at short and Ingargiola at third. We two were not the reason we ended up with a good team. I have to give the credit for that to Rhodes and out power hitting left fielder. He was a machine gunner named Henry "Hank" Bower who later ended up playing right field for and eventually managing the NY Yankees of American League Baseball.

One day Hank Bower came over to my tent to tell me they were going to have tryouts for the Third Marine Division baseball Team saying, "get your glove and spikes and lets go try out." I went but I didn't stay very long after seeing the players they had. For example Angelo Bertelli of Notre Dame looked real good around first base. Then I found out the manager and shortstop was Peewee Reese of the Brooklyn Dodgers, and of course there was Hank Bower and some other guys who had played in the minor leagues. So I went back to the Company softball team because I didn't feel as though I was on their level. I kicked myself later when Hank told me that third base was the only position on the team that didn't have a professional, and I probably would have made it.

There was another fellow named John Belini who was the company baker and used to be a Pacific Coast golden gloves boxing champion. They gave him all that he needed to set up a complete out door training gym for boxing. One day I was watching him work out, and he asked, "hey can you box?" "Oh no" I replied. "When I was on Paris Island I got killed every time I put the gloves on. Boxing doesn't seem to be my sport." "How would you like to learn to do it right? - I can teach you."

After a while he convinced me that it would be to my benefit just to learn how even if I never had occasion to use it. So I took lessons from Belini for about a month when he came to me one day and said, "Jim I'd like to see you enter the 3rd Division boxing tournament next week." I said, "No-no, all I wanted to do was learn how, I don't

want to be a boxer.” I let him talk me into it and there I was a week later in front of the whole division boxing. I ended up winning seven straight fights and in the eighth we hammered each other for three two-minute rounds. I figured I lost when the referee raised my hand up high declaring me the winner.

The next morning I still felt as though I had lost. That fellow kicked the living bleep out of me. How could they say I won, I had a swollen lip, a swollen eye, and my jaw was hurting so much I couldn't chew my food. In fact I wasn't able to open my mouth enough to put food in it. I told Belini I quit and he said, “That wouldn't be good because Captain Smith enjoyed last night's fight so much.” So I went to the Captain and told him how I felt. He was very understanding and said if I felt that way it's probably best if I didn't fight anymore. I told you he was fair.

The Seabees built an outdoor movie area for us. It was built on the side of a hill and the seats were made of hundreds of fifty gallon drums laying down side by side creating a sort of amphitheater. There was a large screen for the films and a good size stage where we were occasionally entertained by people like Bob Hope, Donald O'Connor and many others celebrities. (Plus boxing bouts.)

I had a pleasant surprise one morning when I was sent with two other men on back of a truck to Headquarters Company to pick up some fresh supplies. We stayed on the back of the truck while they handed the supplies up to us. Suddenly, one face looked familiar. It was a good friend of my brother Charlie named Armand Chassey. He was a better than average quarterback in football back home and another real nice guy if there ever was one. When you are that far away during wartime it is always good to see someone you know from home. We were both so glad to see each other I jumped down and we shook hands and talked until the truck driver finally said it was time to go.

He had asked me if my family knew where I was and I replied, “No, the way they censor my mail, if it even looks like I gave a hint of anything that they don't like it gets blacked out with a magic marker. He then whispered, ”listen Jim, the next time you write home tell them to call my family and let them know you and I are in the same regiment because they know where I am.” That was how my mom found out where I was and she was thrilled to know I was with Armand. I guess she thought he would watch over her

little boy. I did go and visit Armand at regimental headquarters a few times and we would go out in the field and pass a football around in ninety-eight degree heat.

One time when Heller and I were sitting around shooting the breeze I said to him, “you got to watch out for the bullet with your name on it.” Heller replied, “Aw - there’s only one of those, but it’s the one that says, to whom it may concern that I’m worried about. Then I read in Brokaw’s *Greatest Generation* where Art Buckwald took credit for saying that same thing. Maybe everyone was saying it.

Another thing we spoke about was where we would want to be buried if we got killed over here. Heller said he would want to be buried back home, but I said, “If I die on Guam. Bury me on Guam, and if I die fighting somewhere else bury me there. My mother will know I’m dead and I can’t see sending my body home so she can go through the agony all over again.”

Chapter 4

It was early in the month of January 1945, and we began some special training for our next operation. Another thing they had us do was to take all of our clothes and soak them in some kind of insecticide. They said where we were going, there was some kind of insect that can cause dingo fever, and this stuff would help prevent most of it. This information caused quite a stir among the troops as to where in the world they are sending us now.

Then one day in February, we embarked on board a large troop transport, still not knowing where we were going. They used to play the radio below deck if you wanted to keep up on the latest news, and one day we heard Tokyo Rose saying in her soft, sensual, sweet voice, "Hi boys of the third marine division, what do you think your wives are doing now? Well - if you think she's patiently waiting for you without seeing another man, forget it, she can't wait. She needs to be held by someone and you're not there." Some of us thought she was real funny and laughed at her while the look on some of the other faces was the gritting of teeth in torment and anger. When Tokyo Rose said, "I know where you guys are going. You won't need any warm clothing because it will be plenty hot on the Island of Iwo Jima," all went silent as we stopped and stared at each other. She knew where we were going before we did.

Later they did announce that we were going to Iwo, an island located 750 miles south of Tokyo and we had meetings and church services, followed by more meetings explaining as much as they could about what this island was made of, the layout of the terrain, and information about the enemy from intelligence sources.

On February 19th, 1945 the first wave of Marines went ashore on Iwo and the battle had begun. Our troop ship arrived at Iwo the next day and we were put on stand by waiting off shore for the word to disembark and hit the beach. While we waited we could see the heavy bombardment that Navy Ships and Air Force planes were dishing out on the Japanese Imperial Army, and we were amazed that anyone could live through this without being a nervous wreck for the rest of his life. There was an LST not too far from where we were anchored. We watched them fire volleys of about forty rockets at a time, firing one after the other with a sound like fwoom, fwoom. This is known as carpet

bombing where hundreds of shells cover a large area like a carpet. I thought to myself, "I'm so glad they're on the same side that I am." And the dive bombers were also firing rockets, picking a target and diving down almost to the ground before pulling up.

I had the opportunity to see one of the most heroic things imaginable. There was a sailor who needed an emergency appendectomy on a destroyer about five hundred yards away from our ship and they had no doctor on board. There was a doctor on our ship who volunteered to transfer over to operate on him. They had one huge obstacle to overcome. The ocean swells were gigantic and dangerous. To give an idea how big they were, at one point that destroyer would look like it was sitting on top of a hill, and a minute later it would completely disappear from sight all the way up to the mast. This was because the swells rose up between the ships so high obscuring them from one another. They lowered a small craft over the side and that doctor climbed down the rope ladder into it. With the gigantic swells bringing that small boat up and down and banging into the side of the ship he had to realize that one little mistake or slip and he was gone, either in the water or crushed between the boat and ship. With the aid of some very crafty sailors, he made it over to the destroyer as two thousand of us cheered, "hooray." That doctor deserved the highest medal the Navy has to award because we later received a message from the destroyer that the operation was a success.

A couple of days later they needed volunteers to go ashore and bring back wounded. Somebody volunteered my name, so over the side I went. When we reached the beach, there were so many wounded there we didn't know which ones to take first but it wasn't for us to decide anyway. I must admit I had never seen anything like this on Guam.

I have since decided that one of the most frightening and terrible things about war is the deafening noise. It was louder than Bon Jovie times three. Although the battle had moved inland quite a distance at that time, the Jap artillery still had the range to reach any part of the Island, and they were good at it. I had to fight the tears on the way back to the ship looking at the seriousness of some of the wounds. A hand gone, an arm gone, a foot or a leg. I had never heard of gangrene, but I was soon to find out what it was. I asked the corpsman nurse, "what is that awful smell?" He told me, "That guy has gangrene." When

we got them on board the ship you could still smell that stench from that guy's leg throughout a large section of the ship. We were told he died a few hours later. Before this I considered war a sort of adventure but after what I had seen on Iwo I can only say, GOD HOW I HATED THIS WAR.

In Richard Newcomb's IWO JIMA he wrote, "Planning conditions for Iwo Jima were good. Both assault divisions were in the Hawaiian Islands: the Fourth Division at its permanent camp on the Island of Maui, and the Fifth division at Camp Tarawa on the Island of Hawaii. The Third Division was on Guam, reforming after the bloody battle for that island. The replacements were training "live," hunting Japanese still in hiding, and in October 44, alone bagged 617 of them." He also said, "In command of The Third Division was General Erskine, one of the youngest Generals in the Corps and one of the toughest."

There was a huge controversy over Iwo that is still talked about in military circles to this day. The third Division contained three combat regiments, one headquarter regiment and artillery and tank support groups. Third Division was intended to be support in case the going got too rough. The Ninth and Twenty First Regiments, from the Third Marine Division were sent in to give some relief to the 4th and 5th Divisions who suffered 8,000 casualties. Newcomb wrote, "As far as Iwo Jima goes General Harry Schmidt, was responsible for the largest Marine force ever committed to battle. One night he requested that the Third Regiment be sent in. the next morning after sitting at the beach head for two weeks the Third Regiment was sent home to Guam." He continued, "on Monday General Howlin "Mad" Smith came ashore, and there was a showdown meeting at Schmidt's command post. Smith was his superior – not in the battle but in the Corps. Smith took out a notebook and read from it words to the effect that Admiral Turner would not release the 3rd Regiment unless Smith could certify that the island could not be captured without it. When Smith put it to him that way, Schmidt had to decline. There was no question the island would be taken – two-thirds of it, including the three airfields, were already in Marine hands. The question was, at what cost would it be taken? Admiral Turner's main reason for refusing the new troops appeared to be that the island was already too crowded. One place it wasn't too crowded was at the front. Nearly

10,000 fighting casualties had already been taken from the island- more than three times the troops Schmidt was pleading for. Meanwhile Colonel James Stuart and the Third Marine Regiment sailed away to garrison duty on Guam.”

This explains why, during the two weeks we were sitting off shore a Iwo, there were two times they alerted us to prepare to disembark, only to cancel the order at the last minute.

From the novel IWO, The list of Japanese casualties at Iwo Jima were:

Japanese Prisoners:		Japanese dead
Japanese Marines	216	20,000
Army	<u>867</u>	
Total	=	1,083

Total US Marine casualties

1,986= Battle fatigue -- 16,134 Wounded -- 5,453 Killed

For a total of = 23,573 casualties

Chapter five

Finally, on August 5th, 1945 we heard the news that one Colonel Paul Tibbets of Miami Florida, pilot of the Super Fortress, Enola Gay dropped the first atomic bomb on Heroshima located on the Japanese Island of Honshu. THE STARS AND STRIPS described it as completely obliterating everything for four square miles. Then again on August ninth a second atom bomb was dropped on Nagasaki, located on the southern most Island of Kyushu, in the Japanese Mainland.

We all noticed that the USSR declared war on Japan as soon as we dropped the first one. The guys were all saying that every one likes a winner, meaning the Russians knew which side to snuggle up to. Here was the US trying to get them to attack the Japs from the west into Manchuria for four years and they kept saying no. We drop the big one and they change their mind real quick.

On September 2nd they placed a map on the bulletin board outside the captain's office showing where the next battle would have been if the war hadn't ended when it did. It was to take place on Japan's most southern Island of Kyushu and the Third Marine Regiment (that's us) was scheduled to spearhead the invasion. They had pictures of what the Japs had planned to defend their homeland, and it wouldn't have been very pretty. They not only had Kamakazi planes but hundreds of Kamakazi speedboats designed to drive into troop ships. That would have surely been ugly.

When the war ended they sent you home according to a point system they had set up. It was one point for every month in the service, one for every month over seas, five for every battle and so many points for any medals. One guy was waking around with a sign on his back that read, "DON'T SHOOT 244 POINTS."

After the Japanese surrendered in September, they figured there were still five hundred Japanese soldiers on Guam that refused to surrender because they refused to believe it was over. In fact as I had mentioned earlier the following Christmas Eve we had to spend on an outpost. The last Japanese soldier finally gave himself up about five years ago and that is fifty years after I left Guam. After Christmas was over, they sent another group home by the point system. They called everyone who had fifty points or

more, and I had forty-nine. As a result when New Years day came, I was on a ship that was covered with ice and headed for China where I spent the next three months.

Chapter six

In Hersey's **Hiroshima**, he tells of the day Captain Robert Lewis, co-pilot of the Enola Gay on that Hiroshima mission was once asked, "Did you write something in your log at that time? He replied, "I wrote down the words, 'My God, What have we done?' "

The horrific nature of the atom bomb is beyond anything we here can imagine, but it is not beyond imagination of the people that live in Hiroshima and Nagasaki Japan. The courage, bravery, and determined struggle for survival by the Japanese people that is found in John Hersey's HIROSHIMA, is beyond description. These same people that bombed Pearl Harbor, raped Nanking in their goal to control or destroy China, showed utter cruelty when killing Americans in cold blood during the Bataan death March, and tortured prisoners of war. They didn't treat their own people much better. They encouraged suicide rather than surrender, which resulted in mothers jumping off of cliffs with their children in their arms rather than surrender to those barbaric US Marines. Lieutenant Collier once told us that the Japanese were taught, in order to get into the US Marine Corps you had to kill your mother and father. Hersey wrote, "The Japanese Government did not want to find itself saddled with anything like moral responsibility for heinous act of the victorious United States."

The survivors suffered from more than the bright sun-like flash that destroyed their city. They suffered physically and emotionally for many years hence. Hersey told about a widow and mother of three young children and how she saved them from out of the rubble in the aftermath of the Hiroshima blast. Her name was Mrs. Hatsuyo Nakamura, and Hersey said," She could not know it, but she thus had a bleak period ahead of her. The early post war years were, besides a time especially painful for poor people like her, full of disorder, hunger, greed, thievery, and black markets." The poor victims were not aided by their government except when they wanted to use them as a propaganda tool in an attempt to place guilt on the victors.

Hersey said, "Employers developed a prejudice against the survivors as word got around that they were prone to all sorts of ailments and that even those, like Nakamura , who was not cruelly maimed and had not developed any serious symptoms were

unreliable workers, since most of them seemed to suffer, as she did from the mysterious but real malaise sickness: A nagging weakness and weariness, dizziness now and then, digestive troubles, all aggravated by a feeling of depression, a sense of doom, for it was said that unspeakable diseases might at any time plant nasty flowers in the bodies of their victims, and even in their descendants.”

Nakamura is one of many Japanese people who survived not just for their own preservation but they stood strong to help friends and family to survive.

I finally arrived home on Mother's Day and Mom said it was the greatest mother's day gift any mother could ever want; to have all three sons home from war. I hardly recognized her when I walked in the door because she lost over seventy pounds and was down to one hundred and thirty pounds. What a beautiful sight she was to me. She had tears of joy steaming down her cheeks and she hugged me as though she thought I was going to leave again and never coming back.

We soon had a family reunion where we all got to know each other again and My big brother hero (Joe) asked me to show him my war ribbons so I got them out. There were four ribbons, which just make one row across the pocket of the chest. Charlie had two rows, and when Joe went and got his, we thought that was the funniest thing we had seen in a long time. He had two rows plus one ribbon and he had never left Massachusetts in four years.

While it's true that my eyes had seen horrors of war, they also saw the glories and I'd gladly trade it all if Hackey Creeden, Frankie Capozzi, Charlie Reese, Bobby Boutin, Tut Bertocci, Joe Tropea., and Jake Doderro that we lost were still here. These are some of the experiences that are based on the story of my years during World War II, and as I told my two brothers, they are experiences I wouldn't trade for a million dollars, but I wouldn't want to do it again for a million dollars either.

And now fifty-five years later, on May 19th 2001, at the young age of seventy-five years I will be receiving a BA in English from Bridgewater State College, in Massachusetts. When I do, I will be pointing to the heavens where I know mom be proudly watching, only this time I know my mental telepathy will reach her when I say; “mom

you always said it would be nice to see one of your kids graduate from college. Well, Mom, I did it! - I did it! – I did it! And I know this time you can hear me.

THE END

Epilogue

For the remainder of her life, mom's heart had always ached for those Gold Star mothers who weren't as blessed as she was. She often would remember them when she prayed. They are;

Mrs. Mrs. Germaine Creeden - Mother of Harold (Hacky) Creeden

Mrs. Emma Cappelletti – Mother of Frankie Cappelletti

Mrs. Bertocci – Mother of Charles (Tut) Bertocci

Mrs. Tropea – Mother of Joe Tropea

Mrs. Dodero – Mother of Joe (Jake) Dodero

Mrs. Reese – Mother of Charlie Reese

Mrs. Bouten – Mother of Bobby Bouten

It is to all of these and to MOMMA that I would like to dedicate this story.

