

Company F, 184th Infantry
A.P.O. #7, c/o Postmaster
San Francisco, California

This is not an official record but a story written in memory of those who gave so much to their country. One that we of Company F wish to keep.

The record made by this company is an enviable one and we are proud of the part we have played in defeating the Japanese under the most difficult conditions imaginable.

It has been my good fortune to command this company through the last month of the Leyte Campaign and the entire Okinawa Campaign.

My one ambition from the time I enlisted as a private has been to command a rifle company. No other group of men have closer contact with the enemy in time of war. These are the men who must close with the foe before he is defeated. There is no other group of men anywhere who understand better the true meaning of the phrase, "My Buddy". Company F is one of the best and I'm proud to say that I was a part of that unit.

During the campaign we had a little over 300 men assigned to the company. Only one officer and thirteen enlisted men were fortunate enough to go all the way without being evacuated for one reason or another. Of these, 47 were killed, 170 were wounded, and 120 others were evacuated because of combat fatigue, sickness, or injury. Yes, the price was high and for those men, we ask that God watch over you, always.

JOHN W. BROKAW
Capt., Infantry,
Commanding

Our Job on Okinawa

On the 12th of February 1945 the 184th Infantry was released from its combat status on Leyte. Everyone was tired from 114 days of combat. We welcomed the rehabilitation period.

It was a brief one however. We got new men to fill in the gaps sustained from the grueling campaign and gave them a short period of training. And on March 12th we were once again combat loaded.

It was Easter Sunday, April 1st, and we landed on Okinawa. The 17th Infantry and the 32nd Infantry were in the assault with our battalion leading the 184th Infantry. We hit Beach Orange I in mid afternoon and pushed to the edge of Kadena Airfield before dark.

On April 2nd we pushed on through Shinabuku to a point just south of Kishaba. The island was cut and we were going south. The Marines were 2000 yards behind.

The 4th saw our battalion in the assault for the first time with Co's E and F abreast. It was just south of Unjo that we had our first casualties, Corbin, Drechsler, and a few others. Then later, Kolbe, Eshelman, Wallace, Morrow, and Borrecco and before dawn the next day the total was twenty-one. We continued the assault the next day and covered three hard miles. We had earned a rest and the next day Co. G relieved us. It was short lived however. By ten in the morning we were getting ready to go back on the line to relieve Easy. That was the day Delfanti got hit. You'll never forget him.

Castle Rock was outflanked and we rolled on. The first Battalion to our right rear. I'll never forget that day as long as I live. Jackson took his platoon out along that razor-back ridge and "Shack" was supporting the attack with his 60's. They were landing 15 yds over the top of the ridge to our front. We could almost read the lot number as they came down. In return though we lost James, Martin, Wright, and several others.

We kept going and rolled on down to Minami-Ubaru before running into any more trouble. Uriola, Bridges, and Tomlinson at one crack and then Harnett, Aldish, Furlong, Casteel, and several others made matters worse. We were really beginning to pay for ground gained.

The eighth found us still pushing. Our objective was OP Hill, the key to the Tomb Hill area. Spaulding and Helcomb led their squads brilliantly. How they covered that ground without loss of life is still a mystery to me. We took the objective and had a field day killing Japs. We began to pay ourselves late in the afternoon. In addition to Weis, Lyle Anderson, and several others we lost in the morning, Helcomb was wounded.

Again we thought we were going to get a rest. E and G took Tomb Hill and we drew the assignment of that small hill just beyond. The first platoon led by Van Hulle accomplished the job in a beautiful tank-infantry attack.

This regiment has never seen anything like it. They ran across fifty yards of open ground underneath their own tank fire to completely surprise their foe. For awhile it was like shooting ducks on a pond. Van Hulle and Mathews got the Silver Star for leading this attack.

We went on and took several other terrain features but the power was gone. Too many men had been lost. Spaulding and Shaffer gave their lives taking this ground. Two platoons fought Japs, rain, mud, and fatigue to get their bodies out so that they might be properly buried.

The Army held up and we got a much needed rest and replacements before shoving off again for Hill 178.

The period from April 19th to April 24th is one that none of us will ever forget. Every foot of ground was heavily contested. Jap artillery was never better. They gave us a terrific beating, but we kept going. We got to the bottom of 178 and the Japs pulled out and the 17th walked up on it the next day without having a shot fired at them. But losing Glenn, Mathews, and Booth was hard to take.

From the 26th to the 5th of May we drew down the reserve slot. On the 6th we started up again and were on Tare Hill when the 96th Division relieved us and we went into Corps reserve.

But all good things must come to an end and on the 21st of May, we started out on the end run that broke the Yonabaru-Naha Line. It was to be a night attack through Yonabaru and to the top of Chestnut Hill. We had many new men and I know what could happen on such a mission but we could not stop until we hit the top regardless of the cost. Everyman knew what his job was and was in high spirits but I spent most of the night praying that we might reach Chestnut Hill. From there on I know we could slug it out, but until that time, Company F would be fighting alone. Nobody could help us.

That night the 3rd platoon and a portion of the weapons platoon sneaked to the outskirts of Yonabaru to secure the line of departure. Co G went straight through town and secured a hill that was on our right. We followed and turned left through town. Our prayers were answered. We got through town without any real trouble. By dawn we were in a position to make a dash for Chestnut Hill.

Elfest led and did a beautiful job going up. Rain and mud made it rough going. We reached the top just in time. The Japs were caught flat footed eating breakfast. It didn't take long for them to realize their mistake and they came at us. It was too late and they couldn't kick us off. We fought that day and night and by the next morning declared the ground ours. But Nance, Elfest, Grieve, Bobbitt, Saucedo, and many others were lost.

During one of the counterattacks that night we successfully demonstrated that the flame thrower was a good weapon on the defense. We scorched quite a few.

The 23rd we found ourselves in battalion reserve. Easy was to take Locust Ridge. It proved a toughnut to crack and they were thrown off in bad shape. Once again we were called on. We took off again and were thoroughly P.O'd because we had to do a job that someone else couldn't do. Our avenue of approach was even worse and the element of surprise would we lost.

We took Locust and held it. By dark we were pretty well set up. We had three counterattacks that night by a numerically superior force. Again the flame thrower proved its value. Parts of the line was engaged in hand to hand combat. Milsaps killed one with a shovel. It was a long night but finally dawn came and there were dead Japs everywhere. However, there were still some alive and firing back. The third platoon suffered heavily mopping up the area. Every member of Carroll's squad became casualties.

The job took all day and we got ready for another rough night. The Japs brought up a 75 and used it at a range of 100 yards but they were discouraged and didn't give us too much trouble.

Co G did a beautiful job taking Balsam Hill the next morning and again we went into regimental reserve and we did nothing but patrol work in the rear area.

On June 3rd Kinyone went into a cave and was ambushed by Japs inside. Nine days later I went into the cave and found him alive. The Japs had thrown a grenade at him and he fell into an underground canal. It saved his life but he was hopelessly lost.

We followed the 1st and 3rd battalions to Shinzato and Tamagusuku. The Chinen Peninsula was cut off and the 32nd mopped it up. We started going West and reached the estuary near Toyama. The Japs were still running. We passed through the 3rd and went to Gushikan where the regiment was relieved by the 32nd.

On the 19th of June the regiment was again committed with the 1st and 3rd on line. But Co F was ordered to fill in a gap between Baker and the 96th. Actually that night we only gave the regiment depth. The 150 yards between the assault units was covered by fire. Hill 153 was ours. Apparently regiment got tired of trying to get the 96th to move with them and made a final dash to the beach nearly 3000 yards away. Only pockets of Japs remained on Okinawa.

June 25th found us policing up and burying the Jap dead. Eighty two days of hell but Okinawa was ours and Co F had maintained an enviable record. All objectives taken and none lost.

JOHN W. BROKAW
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