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John L. Comstock, Captain, USMCR, 012968

March 18, 1942----February 16, 1946

December 7th, 1941, a senior at Middlebury College, classified 1-A, but deferred to finish school. After the War started I went to Dean Womack and asked him what was the minimum I had to take to graduate, as I knew I would be going in the service. He understood the feeling and made some good suggestions. One was Mapping and Surveying, which helped me get promoted in the Artillery. I was finishing Civilian Pilot Training, which also helped in the Marine Corps, as I was an aerial observer and two months on an aircraft carrier.

I had a pilot's license, but never cared too much about flying. When the Marine Corps recruiting team came up to school, I signed up as I could get a commission in ten weeks and start earning some money to pay off my notes at school. I was sworn in with about four other seniors in the Women's locker room, 3/17/42.

Frank Blizard's draft board was after him and I drove him to Albany to get sworn in, in the Marines.

I left school in April as the College thought I would have to go into the Marines in May. I got a job with Saratoga County pulling Gooseberry Bushes for Blister Rust Control over in the Greenfield Center area. I did a lot of walking, which was good conditioning. Went back to school in May to a Ch Psi dance and to see Dean Womack and ask (with my fingers crossed) if I should come back to school since I had not been called. He said my marks were good and that I was one of the first members of my class to graduate as the Trustees has approved my diploma. He said it would be a lot of work to register me and just make sure I did not show up at graduation. To this I agreed.

Received my diploma by mail.

My family saw me off at the Albany station and I spent a couple of days in New York at the YMCA. Saw "Blythe Spirit" and "Sons of Fun" with Olsen & Johnson. Met Red Erickson at the Astor Bar.

Left New York by train June 15th and was delayed by a train wreck and arrived at 8:00 AM Quantico, Va. to start Officers Candidates Class, 8th OCC. Drew uniforms and they said they did not have my size shoes so I drilled in basketball shoes for two weeks and my feet were a mess.

OCC was very well organized and they kept us on the GO and applied pressure on everyone..

Sgt. Adamitus was our D.I. and he was tough, but realized we needed training and we drilled more than any other platoon. After 10 weeks I was in the best shape I was ever in and weighed 170 lbs. We had several liberties in Washington. It was a very hot summer and there were times I thought I would never get through the day. Several guys passed out on hikes and obstacle course. There were three from Middlebury who did not finish. I got a waiver for Hay Fever and got a good case of Poison Ivy just before our final over night hike, but still went. Our Company Commander was Captain Charles Bailey, who was CO of the 1st Bn. 3rd Marines on Bougainville.

Enjoyed firing on the range. Shot Expert with M-1 and 45 Pistol. Also fired BAR and 30 Cal. machine guns. The day I was to qualify for the M-1 a bee stung me on the right thumb while we were at attention, so I did not move. Later showed my thumb to the Sgt. and he sent me to sick bay and I had to fire for record by myself the next day.

August 22, 1942 received my commission as 2nd Lt. USMCR and we all moved our gear two buildings down the street and became members of the 11th Reserve Officers Class. Felt funny to have someone salute me and not saying Sir to our D.I.'s. There was no bed check when we were PFC's, but as officers we had to be in by 11:00 PM. They worked us just as hard with more book work. Everything very organized and no lost motion.

While on liberty in Washington I met a girl I liked very much, Marge Simpson or Taylor. After I had gone overseas the folks invited her to East Orange, but she sent me a Dear John

letter, while I was in Samoa, and I did not see her till Sept. '45, and that was a strange story. She was a Sec. to an Army General in the Pentagon.

While in ROC I had ear trouble and was in sick bay a lot. From 9/17 to 9/30 I was in the USN Hospital. Decided it was fungus and used alcohol to keep it under control, but had it all the time I was overseas. Even with my lost time they graduated me with my class as my marks were good, but I never drilled a platoon. I did lose my chance for Artillery School.

Tad, Williamson and Philo came to Washington one week-end to see me and I stopped to see Dante Orsini at 8th & I.

October 31, '42 I graduated from ROC. Frank Blizard and I got travel time and 4 days delay to report to New River, N.C. We left Quantico in a car owned by a Capt. that Frank knew and drove to Newark, N.J., where picked up my father and then drove to S. Glens Falls. The next day Frank and I drove to Middlebury to see Frank's girl and I taught him to drive. Was home for a couple of days and took the train to New York where I met Herb Fitch and his wife (married over the week-end), McArdle, and Castiglione. Stopped in Washington to see Marge and then to Wilson, N.C where we hired a cab to drive us to New River. Arrived on a thursday and were greeted with "Don't bother to unpack, you won't be here long".

I was assigned a platoon of boots out of Parris Island with six weeks training and a Sgt and Cpl. I drilled them and gave them hand to hand combat training to keep them busy. We became part of the 1st Replacement Bn. with Capt. Neville as CO and all the other officers were as green as I was. Sunday night we boarded a train and headed for Camp Elliot, San Diego, Calif. Long slow ride, but I kept my men supplied with candy, etc. by playing poker with the officers.

Arrived Camp Elliot 11/13/42. I was hiking officer and took the men on daily hikes, if they were not busy drawing gear and packing to leave.

Saw my uncle Bill several times and he was great. He had been a Marine in China. He had a vension cook out for some of us in his back yard. Bliz and I met two girls from San Diego State and they lived in San Diego and knew how to get around on public transportation. We told them to take us to some of the better places and we went to the Del Coronado and LaJolla, and they were good guides.

Dec.3,'42 loaded and left on the Dutch "Day Star". code name "Hoso Peon". Weather was good and we had a nice trip. Everyone was initiated when we crossed the equator. Played poker and taught map reading classes. Klem, a 18 yr. old hill-billy told me I didn't know how to play poker even though I had been winning. He said I was to easy and should make them pay for their cards when I had a high hand. I listened to him as he had all of the ships money, betdween crap and poker. He asked me if I would hold some money for him, but when I asked how much I said NO. He had \$1,800.00, but did not trust the ship's officers. Next thing I knew he had Johnson, a mild mannered kid, who was a wrestler following him around. I asked him if Johnson was his body guard, and he said No, Johnson was carrying the money. One sharp kid. I told Capt. Neville that if there was chance I would like to get in Artillery.

Arrived Pago Pago, pronounced Pango Pango, American Samoa in about 14 days. The harbour was beautiful, the hills were all shades of green. Some artillery officers came aboard looking for officers with Artillery training, but we were all infantry. Capt. Neville suggested me and I suggested Fitch. McArdle, Fitch, Castiglione and I were transfered to the 1st Separate Pack Howitzer Bn. which was attached to the 3rd Marines. We had 75mm Howitzers with wooden wheels. and our guns were in position to guard the beaches as we were the closest island to the Japs. They sent us to Artilley school at Bn. H&S and we worked hard, but played basketball and went to movies, sitting on coconut logs.

Samoa was hot and it rained off and on every day. The jungle was very thick and we had a road that was like a tunnel going through our area so we could move around without being seen. I think we were about 30 miles from Pago Pago. We had a good Officer's Club and a liquor ration, Johnny Walker was \$2.00 a fifth. I think Johnnie Monks and Ernie Kovacs of Brother Rat spent Xmas day with us in '42. They had stopped for a few drinks and were in the engineering company of the 3rd Marines.

Col. Waller loved basketball and we played in combat boots on coral, and you could not dribble very well. If one of the officers got knocked down the Col. thought it was great. The rule was only one officer could play on a team at a time. We had a separate officers team that was undefeated.

The Samoan national anthem was "You Are My Sunshine". After a movie it would say "The End" and they would call out "Uma Lava", about the only words I learned. We lived in tents and living quarters were called Fales. There was a lot of Moo Moo or elephantitis and quite a few men were sent home.

The natives were very nice and all spoke good English and they had a good school system. They liked to play cards and the women were the businessmen. For the most part they were on the hefty side and both men and women wore wrap arounds that were called Lava Lavas. Samoan Marines wore Lava Lavas with the rank and Marine Corps Emblem and were very proud.

After Artillery School I was sent to "B" Battery as a Forward Observer, Motor Officer and Construction Officer. Capt. Barnes was CO, nice guy (saw him in Mexico, Mo. in 1950). May 13, '43 got a first class case of dysentery and ended up in the Hospital. Fought to get out as the outfit was headed for New Zealand and I did not want to be left behind. May 19th drove all over the Island to get orders transferring me from the Hospital back to "B" Battery. Got cleared just before the USS George Clymer sailed. Feeling better by the time we reached Auckland and the cooler weather (their winter), and the steaks

and milk shakes did wonders.

New Zealand had a lot of strange Maori names. We were near Papatotoe and Manurewa in a place sounding like Pui Nui. Went on liberty every chance I got and stayed at the Star Hotel, which served meals family style with lots of mutton. Ran a ten day droblem in lots of mud up north at Whangarei. Spent a lot time unloading and loading ships. Witnessed an accident where a civilian was killed on a motorcycle between two trucks just in front of us. I lucked out and did not have to be reporting officer. Arrived Auckland 6/3/43 and left 7/30 on the "Hunter Leggett". It was winter in New Zealand, but not too cold as we were in the northern part.

Sailed north and hit a big storm on way to Guadalcanal. We were now "H" Battery 3rd Bn., 12th Marines, Third Marine Division.

Arrived Guadalcanal 8/7/43 and I became Reconnaissance Officer. Made 1st Lt. 4/30/43. The jungle was thick and the island was big and we only occupied a small part of it. Lots of rats, and we had contests to see who could kill the most rats, with extra beer ration as the prize. We were in a coconut grove at Tetre.

Got bombed on a regular basis. We ran problems and spent a lot of time unloading ships. The first time we were bombed my knees were pounding and we whispered so the bombers would not hear us. We got used to it and did not pay much attention, but would clap when a Jap got shot down or picked up in the search lights.

10/15/43 we boarded the "Pres. Adams" and made a pratice landing on Efate, Espirito Santos. Loaded up and headed for Bougainville.

SEE (Third Marine Div. book--Pages 51-135)

While on Guadalcanal some clerk listed me as a Recruiting Officer rather than Reconnaissance Officer. Not much recruiting on Guadalcanal.

Bougainville

November 1, 1943

1st Lt. John L. Comstock, USMCR Reconnaissance Officer
"G" Battery, 12th Marines--Attached to 1st Bn. 3rd Marine
Third Marine Division.

Bougainville is the largest of the Solomon Islands, it is north of Guadalcanal and just south of the Equator. It is a volcanic island about 150 miles long.

No. 1st was a clear day and I remember going over the side and down the nets with a combat pack and carbine and getting in the landing boats. I had four men with me and it was my job to find a place for the 75 mm Pack Howitzers and run a survey to get in position to support the infantry. I had only recently been promoted from Forward Observer.

We circled around and got ready to land at Torokina Point in Princess Augusta Bay, which is half way up the west side of the island.

The Navy was firing everything it had; Destroyers were going in very close and then the Navy and Marine dive bombers were plastering the point. I thought as most of us did, that the operation would be like a practice landing, after all the bombing and shelling. I did not put a clip in my carbine as I thought it would be a piece of cake.

As we came around Purata Island and Torokina Island, which guarded the Bay, all the machine guns on the landing boats opened up, and guns from the islands were firing at us. I still thought we were doing most of the firing and the Navy was anxious to get some firing practice.

I was in the third wave, but the coxswains got fouled up and first three waves landed at about the same time and not always on the right beach. As we neared the beach I figured I had better take a look around to see where we were landing so I would know which direction I should go to find the place for the guns. When I looked over the bow of the landing boat,

I saw boats on both sides had been hit and men in the water. At this point it was no piece of cake and I put a clip in my carine. The coxswains did not want to hit the beach too hard as they wanted to get back off. They dropped us in chest deep water and we waded ashore and got in trench. We landed very near a bunked with a 75mm gun that had hit the landing boats and was doing all the damage. The Naval gun fire and the bombing had not done much damage. The Japs were in well built coconut log and sand bunkers and actually two out of 25 had been damaged and knocked out.

The infantry had not taken much land so there was nothing to do as the guns could not come in and had to be landed up north in the 9th Marines section.

The CO of the 1st Bn. 3rd Marines, Major Leonard Mason dropped in the trench with me and wanted to know where his troops were. I told as best I could as to where each Company had landed and that they had not landed as planned, but were moving forward as in the over all plan. He left me and a few minutes later I heard he had been hit in the legs by machine gun fire.

Capt. Jolly, CO sent a runner to tell me to get the Hell out of where I was as he expected the Japs to push back through to the ocean. In the meantime I could look across Torokino Point and see the ships taking off as the Japs were bombing them. I thought this might be Comstock's last stand. The runner was really scared and my wanted to stay in the trench rather than go across the beach which was receiving machine gun fire. So, I crawled across the beach to make sure the Captain wanted us out of there, and after seeing the Captain I crawled across the beach to get my men and then back.

There was a young wounded Marine on the beach with a body wound and there was nothing I could for him as a Corpsman had put a bandage on him. He did not complain except to say "Gee I wish I wasn't hurt, they got my buddy, I wish I could

go get them! Gee I wish I wasn't hurt." I don't think he had been in the Marine Corps long enough to learn to swear. When I went back, he was gone so I think he had been taken back to the ship.

When I got back with my men to Capt. Jolly, we were behind a Jap bunker and I started to look over the top. A kid who was probably 14 yrs. old and the Captains jeep driver (I had taught him to drive, as motor officer among other duties), pulled me back and about that time machine gun bullets hit the top of the bunker. I thanked him. Then I whispered to him, "When are you going to shoot the Captain?" A few days before he had gotten mad and made a remark and I should have turned him in, but a lot of remarks like that were made, but in combat anyone shooting in the same direction you are shooting is a friend and I never heard of any actual cases of this.

The infantry was cleaning out bunkers and moving forward, but our guns had been landed far down the beach so we went down to where the guns were, dug in and spent a miserable night just off the beach. The Japs bombed us, but most of the fighting was up on Torokina Point where we had landed. There had been no prisoners taken and there had been fighting on Purata Island, which the Raiders had taken. One Battalion of Raiders had gone up the Piva Trail to establish a road block, but the heavy fighting was done by the outfit we were supporting, 1st Bn. 3rd Marines.

Nov..2nd (D+1) we were up at daybreak and went to find some way we could get the guns across a river that ran almost parallel to the beach. I had about five men with me and I found some native boats. Pow-Pows, built to hold a man weighing about 100 lbs. I stripped two together and paddled across the river, but fell in. It was hot so I was stripped to the waist and had no weapon. Got some more Pow-Pows and got my men across and then started down the river alone. I looked up and saw a man on the ocean side of the river and waved to him as I

thought he was a Seabee. Then I realized he was a Jap and I was a sitting duck in the Pow-Pow. I yelled and motioned for him to raise his hands and slapped my hip to make him think I had a 45. I was trying to turn around and keep my eye on him and also looking out for any of his friends. I figured if he raised a rifle I would go over the side and try to swim around a bend. I motioned for him to get in the water and he did come into the water up to his knees. I paddled back to where my men were and took them along the river bank till we could see the Jap, who was now in the water behind a log. One of my wanted to shoot him, but I took his rifle and said if anyone shot him it was going to be me and I wanted him as a prisoner as they needed prisoners. I left some men to keep him covered and look for other Japs. I took Sgt Diaon and PFC Shea with me in couple of Pow-Pows and paddled back down the river to the Jap. As soon as we got within arms length we no longer worried about him as he was not very big and did not have a weapon. I told Dion to search him and I dumped the water out of the boats. While this was going on Shea fell overboard and lost his carbine which was the only weapon the three of us had. The Jap had been hit in the arm, but it was too bad a wound. We sat the Jap up in a Pow-Pow and the three of us swam along beside , figuring we were not as good targets in the water. I went on ahead to make sure no one shot him when we brought him in. When we got to the beach there were Marines and Seabees with rifles and I made them put the rifles down and got some water for the Jap. He wanted to stay close to me and must have looked at me as his savior, which I was. He was scared and exhausted and we had to practically carry him down the beach to Third Marines Head quarters where I turned him over to the Intelligence Officer and told him I would like some souvenirs when he got through (never got a thing). The Jap was an older man and I think he was the Sgt. Major and he had maps and papers on him, which turned out to be very valuable.

I had to get back and try to find a place for our guns.

Bougainville was a big island with thick jungle. There was an active volcano and the first time we had an earthquake we could not figure out what was happening. The earth moved and the big trees were swaying so we hit the deck. We were at the equator, but it was cold at night, especially since we were wet, I still get chills thinking about it. We would listen to Tokyo Rose and she was a good morale factor as she was always good for some laughs and had good music.

The second night ashore I was in a fox hole with two sergeants and the water started coming up and we could not sleep. They were surprised when I broke out a bottle of Johnny Walker that I had carefully packed, and we sipped on that most of the night. The third night I was in a bunker on the beach at my Fire Direction Center when the Japs flew down the beach and bombed us. Some 40mm anti-aircraft guns had moved in near us without our knowledge and really shook us up. I started to think about all the things that had happened to me and began to shake like a leaf, but when things were happening I was too busy to be concerned.

Jack Baird always had trouble with his payroll. His name was Jack Baird, but someone was always changing it to John Baird, or John (none) Baird, or that to John N. Baird.

Surprise! Surprise! About two weeks after I had captured the Jap, I was up front with the 1st Bn. Third Marines, and I ran into the Intelligence Officer. He asked me if I had searched the Jap, and I told him Sgt. Dion was to search him while I dumped the Pow-Pows. He said after they had given the Jap First Aid someone asked if he had been searched. They searched him and found a hand grenade in his pocket.

Nov. 7th things were fairly quiet and my Battery Command Post was on the beach. I had a BC Scope that in WW1 was used to look over the top of a trench. I had it set up and was cleaning it. (This is hard to believe). I looked north to point miles away and saw landing boats coming around a point and headed toward us. They looked like landing boats we used, but then the Japs had captured many of ours. There was no insignia and even with the BC Scope I was not sure. I called Battalion and reported the boats, they put me off and said it was probably a Raider Battalion returning from a raid. I asked them to check with Regiment and got the same reply. I wanted permission to shoot at them. A Seabee outfit was working on the beach and I let them watch the boats come in. They landed on the extreme left flank unopposed, about 200 Japs, and then the Infantry had to go down and clean them out and suffered some casualties. The boats had gone close to some PT Boats that were anchored in the bay.

About Nov. 9th I was sent to register artillery for the 37th Army Division which had taken over the left flank and in registering I dropped a round between me and the front lines knocking out my telephone. I was out about 100 yds in front of the lines. The 37th was an Ohio National Guard unit and a well disciplined outfit, the first night on the line and there was no uncontrolled firing.

About Nov. 20th I was up front for a week with the Bn. Headquarters of 1st Bn. 3rd Marines. Capt Baily (My OC Company CO in Quantico). We were by Piva Forks and though we were near the Equator, in the jungle it was cold and miserable at night. I slept in a fox hole with my radio operator. We were wet all the time. I had my cough and the Doctor would give me a small bottle of brandy to sip on at night so I would not give our position away. Also before dark he would pass out a small ration of medicinal alcohol and grape fruit juice.

Capt. Jolly relieved me and I hiked back through the jungle alone and was lucky to run into the Seabee outfit that had been near us on the beach. They took me in and gave me dry clothes and a cot to sleep on. They were great guys and had given me extra food when I had gone up front. After I had been back at the guns for several days Capt. Jolly called for someone to come up to relieve him. When I heard this I started to pack up. Fitch the Exc. Officer told me I was not going as Jack Baird who was very new was to go. Jolly thought it was quiet and Baird should get some experience. Baird went and he got wounded, saw him after the war was in Kansas City, he was with TWA. Baird's name was "Jack Baird", payroll would end up with him being John (none or N.) Baird.

I had told our Colonel that I had a pilots license and would like to be an air observer. Kimbal, who had been Observer had been sent home from Efate for taking Morphine.

About Dec. 15th I reported for flight duty with the 37th Army Division. Some of the pilots had less experience than I had, and they let me do most of the flying. We were in 45hp 55hp Cubs and could hardly get off the ground with two men and the radio. We flew off the fighter strip on Torokina Point which the Seabees had built in record time. Quite a thrill having a fighter landing at the same time we were landing.

Made about seven flights spotting artillery and looking for Japs.

When I was flying I had little contact with my outfit and one day hitched a ride over to Puruata Island which was PT boat headquarters. Found Bill Bursaw, a fraternity brother and stayed overnight with him on his boat. Lucky de did not have to take off for Buka or Rabaul.

Jan 2nd, 1944 we left on a LST for a slow trip to Guadalcanal. Had an explosion on the first LST and three men were killed. Played bridge all the way back and since I was the poorest player they rotated me, but they all owed me money when we got back.

The Third Marines were the first to land on Bougainville and the first to get back to the Canal.

1/12/44 we arrived back at Guadalcanal at the coconut grove at Tetre. I was in the Third Division Hospital 2/3-2/6 for fungus in my ears. The Doctors experimented on me and used sulfur drugs hydrogen-peroxide and anything else they could find. The only thing that really worked was 95% alcohol and 3% phenol and codine for the pain. Alcohol also worked internally.

We played a lot of cribbage and poker and I won if I needed the money. 1/30/44 I was officially made air observer and started drawing flight pay. I was transferred to H&S and made Asst Bn. Intelligence Officer.

GREEN ISLAND 2/12/44 to 2/24/44

See Next Page

Back to Guadalcanal and Tetre. Miles Elms was a W.O. in Corps Headquarters and he looked me up. He supplied gear and invited me to Corps Headquarters.

The Third Division was to hit Kaeving 4/1/44 and I was to go in on D-1 and help set up artillery on a little island within mortar range of Kaeving. The ships were off shore to be loaded when Elms came by and said the operation had been called off. Good thing as I would not have been around to write about it. The raiders had by-passed Kaeving and taken a small island further north.

3/15/44 I was appointed Tactical and Gunnery Observer.

3/31/44 my Battalion, 3rd Bn. 12th Marines was transferred to the First Separate Pack Howitzed Bn. and attached to the 4th Marines reinforced. The 4th and 22nd Marines made up the First Provisional Brigade under General Shepard. We moved to a new location further north on Guadalcanal and shared the 4th Marines Officers Club. The 4th Marines were made up of the old Raider Battalions and we were proud to be a part of it.

GREEN ISLAND

February 18, 1944

1st Lt. John L. Comstock, Tactical & Gunnery Observer

Asst Bn 2, H&S 3rd Bn. 12th Marines, 3rd Mar. Div.

On Feb. 9th, 1944 I was ordered to report to the Third New Zealand Division for temporary duty for the Green Island operation.

Green Island was a small island north of Bougainville and between Buka and Rabaul. The purpose of taking the Island was to cut off the Jap troops on Bougainville.

On Feb. 13th I was flown with Capt. Goodwin and Lt. Marsten to Bougainville, where we landed on a new air strip and could see all the work the Seabees and Engineers had done since we had left. We were in tents and it was very hot. My ears started to act up and I had to get a Doctor to open my left ear to get alcohol to get at the fungus.

I figured I was lucky to get assigned to a New Zealand operation and looked forward to the operation.

Feb. 18th I took off with Lt. Morris of MAG 24 and flew north over Bougainville and was on station to observe and spot artillery for the New Zealanders.

Everything went better than planned and New Zealanders went in with little opposition. So I had nothing to do. Nice ride up and back.

Feb. 23rd after a scary take off in a transport plane we flew back to Guadalcanal and since it was a beautiful clear day we could see a lot of the ships that had been sunk in the fight for Guadalcanal.

March 15th got my flight orders, but think I had been drawing pay for some time.

Continued training for the next operation.

GUAM

1st Lt. John L. Comstock, USMCR, Tactical & Gunnery Observer
H&S Battery, 1st Separate Pack Howitzer Bn.

4th Marines Reinforced, 1st Provisional Brigade

After Green Island I flew six practice missions on Guadalcanal and on May 2nd flew over to Florida Island and fired machine guns at a towed target from a Dive Bomber.

On May 26th, 1st Lt. Wilson Atkins from the 22nd Marines reinforced and I reported to Tulagi and boarded the USS Chanago, CVE 28, a converted Esso Oiler and a great ship. From there we went to Espirito Santos, Eniwetok, Kwajalein, and Saipan.

We really enjoyed being on the ship; the food was great, clean sheets and all the ice cream we could eat. The flight officers and the ships officers had not seen any mud Marines and wanted to know what it was like in a fox hole and each tried to out do themselves in treating us like kings. I was in an outside cabin with 4 flight officers up forward under the flight deck and catapult, and we could keep the hatch open at night and get a great breeze. The Executive Officer had the cabin opposite ours.

We ate, slept and played volleyball, until the EO decided we should do something to earn our pay. He put us in charge of Anti-sub and the Anti-aircraft watch. We had to climb up the mast, which is a long way up and our job was to see that the men on duty were on the ball and continuously looking for Submarines and Aircraft. These men were trained for this and they could see for miles even without glasses.

One day we spotted a Jap Betty, medium sized bomber and I think they saw it before the radar. There were two junior pilots on station and they were sent to get the Jap. They got it, but were so excited, the conversation that the Captain allowed to be sent over the intercom was rally funny. "There he is, see him, get the SOB, making another pass, you got him, boy that was great". Before the planes landed back on the ship a Jap flag was painted on the bridge. This was #1.

GUAM 2

The pilots had forgotten all instructions on radio procedure and also fire control. That night at debriefing the Commander said he did not want to throw cold water on the fact they had gotten their first Jap plane, but he was glad there were not two planes as it was reported that the guns on both of our planes were burned out as they had been fired with long bursts rather than short ones. It did not stop there as the next night the two pilots reported that only the barrels had been burnt out and could not understand why the Commander was banging his head.

May 28th I had my first flight off a catapult, which was nothing compared to the landing. When you are landing on a carrier it looks like a postage stamp from up in the air. I was told to lean forward and brace myself on my parachute and keep my head down. I felt a jolt and started to straighten up and then there was another jolt and a third jolt, but since this was my first flight I thought it was standard procedure. The next thing I knew, two men in fire suits were pulling me out of the plane. When I looked around I found we were about fifteen feet from the end of the deck. When we hit the deck the first time the tail hook came off and then we cut through the barriers and cut half way through a plane that was parked on the end of the deck. A similar accident had happened on another carrier and the plane had gone up in flames and ten men were lost. Lucky I did not know about it.

~~They had us fly as observers on Anti-Sub patrol. We were in Torpedo Bombers; TBF's and stood in a space behind the pilot, which was very hot. We also had a gunner and radio operator. We would circle the fleet, and the weather was beautiful and it was great flying through the clouds. Missions were about four hours and before we came back to the ship the pilots would unload the depth charges on Guam.~~

The plan was to make the landing on Guam on June 15th, but the 1st Provisional Brigade was reserve for the Saipan operation and things were not going very well on Saipan, so

GUAM 3

Guam was postponed till July 21st.

Our carrier flew missions around the area and hit islands like Rota and acted as cover for the troop ships.

~~The 1st Brigade and the 3rd Division landed on Guam July 21st and I was on station and watched the 1st Brigade land,~~ but could not get radio contact. On the 22nd I registered the guns and fired at three anti-aircraft guns that were shooting at us. Think I got two, but I got a message "We do not have an unlimited supply of ammunition". With all the dodging of anti-aircraft shells, I got completely dehydrated and they had to carry me off the plane. They pumped me up so I could get back flying, but one of the OY pilots had to take my place for a day. Went over to the Kalimin Bay for two days while the Chanago went some place, probably Saipan.

We were flying two shifts a day. I would go up at dawn and Atkins would relieve me in about 4 hours and then I would come back for another 4 hours and he would take the late shift. It was a real workout as it was hot and uncomfortable standing behind the pilot. We were the only plane up there over the ~~1st Brigade area~~ and we had calls from other outfits to register their guns. We fired Army 155's, Destroyers and even a Cruiser. It sure was fun firing so much and they kept us busy looking for targets. Our last flight off the carrier was July 30th.

On July 31st we packed up and flew to Guam, which was about 30 miles away. I had gear for two men on top of me and if we had gone down I had no chance of getting out. Took off the deck in an OY-1, which was a 185 hp Stinson two seater. My pilot wanted to show off so when we cleared the deck he dove to the water and came back just over the water close to the ship so they could not see him, then made a steep climb and dove the deck, coming across the deck at about six feet. Everyone was diving into the nets as they figured he was going to crash. He had been planning this stunt to show he knew how to fly, but I did not appreciate it. Headed for Guam and

GUAM 4.

landed on the air strip on Orote peninsula where they were still fighting.

While on the Chanago a pilot made the 5,000th landing and they had a party and a big cake. I have a picture of the celebration and the pilot has a very unusual look on his face. The next day he went into the ocean within sight of the ship and his plane sank before he could be rescued.

Atkins and I were awarded a letter of Commendation by Admiral Ketham and endorsed by General Shepard.

Was assigned to VMO-1 after we landed on Guam and made about ten flights spotting and registering the guns over the northern end of the island. Aug. 9th 1944 made my last flight.

Reported back to H&S 1st Separate Pack Howitzer Bn. 4th Marines. Aug. 15th was made Battery Commander of of "B" Battery, which was my original Battery on Samoa. Major Armstrong was Bn. CO, our guns were in place, but it was a clean up operation.

One of my corporals accidentally shot himself in the thigh with a 45 pistol and the Major heard about it through Regiment. He gave me hell for not reporting it to him, but I thought the Doctor had told him. A few days later my corpsman was showing how the accident happened and shot himself in the area. I rushed to the Major and was afraid he would blow his top. We then had training for everyone who had a hand gun and there were no more accidents. Most of us had carbines, but I had a 45 pistol with a homemade shoulder holster when I was flying.

We were one of the first off Guam; boarded the "Cape Clear", an Army transport. The 4th Marine Col. told off the Army Transport Officer after he told us we had to assign an officer to each hold and serve two meals a day. The Col. said we assigned corporals that could take charge of holds and we would draw Navy rations aserve three meals a day.

The 4th Marines wanted the artillery to eat first as they felt the artillery had saved their lives with a barrage on Orote peninsula. Left Guam Sept. 3, arrived Guadalcanal Sept. 15th.

9/15/44 we arrived back at Guadalcanal and altogether I spent about 20 months on the blank blank island.

11/1/44 the Sixth Division was formed, which was the last division from the First Brigade plus the 29th Marines. We became "B" Battery 1st Bn., 15th Marines, which was the last regiment formed.

11/13/44 each Artillery Bn. was divided into four batteries on paper and one was assigned to the 4th Bn. 15th Marines. The last Bn. of the last Reg. of the last Division. My battery became "K" Battery 4th Bn. 15th Marines and we got 105mm Howitzers. We moved to the northernmost part of the island in a former Seabee camp. Col. Hemphill was CO. and Col. Lucky was Regimental CO. and at the next camp and I was sometimes drafted to play poker with Col. Lucky.

I bunked with Capt Jack Haynes in a tent that was on a point about 100 ft. from the ocean. Beautiful spot with a nice breeze. Cummings my first bunk mate was sent home and I then had more time overseas than any officer in the Bn. and hoped to be sent home.

Made Captain 11/30/44 and bought drinks at the officer club for three days. Drinks were 15¢ or 30¢, harder to get Coca Cola than liquor. Haynes and I knew someone in about every outfit and made the rounds of all the officer clubs. Saw Frank Blizzard, who was in Heavy Weapons in the 22nd Marines, and Doug MacDonald who was in JASCO; he was a PFC, but acting 1st Sgt. and could get transportation when I could not. MacDonald who was in JASCO, he was a PFC, but acting 1st Sgt. and could get transportation when I could not.

1/23/45 I was made Liaison Officer and Motor Transportation Officer. Also in charge of manifests and loading ship. The Col. said I would probably be going home before the next operation.

Ran a problem with the 29th Marines. Col. Bleasdale lost a Bn. My telephone line was out and a wireman and I were tracing the line and were in a ditch when we hear a General read Bleasdale off as if he were a boot. Good thing they did not see us, but it was dark and we were in a ditch.

Okinawa Landing 4/1/45

1/23/45 I was made Liason Officer and went on problems with the 29th Marines, preparing for Okinawa. I had two years over seas and had hoped to be sent home.

Tad was in the Engineers of the 5th Division and I knew they were in the Iwo landing on 2/19/45 and I was worried about him.

Our outfit boarded ship 3/15/45 and the day before I had been transferred to the rear echelon. I had seen Frank Blizard the week before and he said he would be in the rear echelon as he also had been over there as long as I had. I went down to tell Frank I wasn't going and he said at the last minute he was assigned to go.

I remained behind with about 20 men and we really worked packing our gear to move our camp to Guam. Tried to get the natives to help by giving them old rations, but they were not interested in work.

5/16/45 I was made CO of troops to go to Guam on APA 179. Stopped at Eniwetok and Saipan. Hit all the officers clubs. Clubs opened at 3:00 for beer, 5:00 to 7:00 liquor and gin. We drank the best stuff first and finished up on gin.

Landed on Guam 6/7/45 and worked hard putting up camp for the men returning from Okinawa. I got to know the Division Adjutant and saw the casualty lists and felt lucky not to have been in on the operation. Lt. Wiseman who took my place was killed while up front as Liason Officer.

The Third Division was on Guam and I got to see my Millebury College roommate, Lt. Charles Baird. (Later he became Under Secretary of the Navy). Also saw Dr. Bill Blackmore (spent last night on Guam shooting crap--I won), and my old mess cook.

Got very upset when my name was not on the rotation lists, but finally got flight orders, but had a chance to get on a carrier rather than wait for a plane.

Left Guam on 7/26/45 on a Kaiser Jeep Carrier the USS Bogue. Beautiful trip back. As we said, anything going east was good. Played basketball, but was in lousy shape, over 200 lbs. Bob Herwig was on our team, all-american football player USC. His wife wrote "Forever Amber". We all were very white and tried to get a sun tan and to stop the swearing and foul expressions. Did not have much luck as our vocabulary had been limited and foul.

While on ship I had my wallet stolen with \$360, mostly in new \$20s. Made a quick stop in Hawaii, saw Blizard from a distance, he had flown in. I stayed on ship in order to Court Martial Guffie Lewis who took my wallet, he was caught with new \$20s that were issued on Guam.

8/10/45 they dropped the BOMB, and were we happy. We thought we would be home 30 or 60 days and then back in time for the landing on Japan. 8/11/45 landed in San Francisco broke with no uniforms, but happy. Got uniforms, money and ordered two meals at a time. 8/13/45 East by train on the northern route. 8/15/45 Truman declared V.J. Day and closed the bars. We were mad, 30 Marine Officers, just back in the states and nothing to drink on the train. Most of us had been over there two or more years.

Arrived in Chicago 8/16 and it was dead, as everyone had celebrated the the day before. We tried to make up for it after we left Chicago. Met Herb Kende on the train, he was Art Dealer at Macy's, and he got me tickets to shows. Went to Proincentown with him and we hit a telephone pole.

Dad met me at the Newark station and I sure was glad to see Mom & Dad. Had 30 day leave and ran around like mad. Up to SGF, and spent time in the New York night spots with one of Tad's old girl friends. Had been sending \$100 a month home and tried to spend it.

9/20/45 left Newark and stopped in Washington to see Marge at the Pentagon, she was Sec. to Army Adj. General. Ran into her in the hall. She gave me the keys to her car and had some

things such as ring and letters I had sent her in the glove compartment of the car. She knew every place I had been. She could not have known I was going to stop and see her that day. Said she was married and separated when I was going with her and that she did not marry the guy in the "Dear John" letter and was single now.

Became CO of the guard company at Yorktown, Va. Naval Mine Depot. They made and stored high explosives. Decided to lose some weight and lived on snacks and one meal a day, and lost about 25 lbs by Xmas.

Met Norma Keith Bradshaw, Messick, Va.; she was past Pres. of the student council of William and Mary and a school teacher. She knew everyone and I even ended up in a receiving line with the Pres. of William & Mary. Through her I went to a football game in Richmond and on the way back to Yorktown we were in a head-on collision. I was in the middle of the back seat and she was on the left side of me. I split my head open and she had a bad cut on the left cheek. I hopped out of the car to stop traffic and the traffic really piled up. A girl in the other car was killed and everyone was banged up. The other car came across the line into our lane. The Ambulances had gone the wrong way and we were in the road for a long time. The Navy ambulance arrived and I got them to take Norma Kay with us to Camp Peary, where we were sewed up. I never saw such a good sport as she really had a bad cut and they had an eye doctor sew her up.

We had 10 horses assigned to us and as CO of the guard company the Sgt. reported to me. There was a girl working on the base and I would have a couple of horses waiting when she got out of work. We would ride around the base, which had lots of dirt roads and pine woods. A great place for riding.

Had a good time at Yorktown and the Col. wanted me stay in the Marines, but I decided to get out and put in a letter for inactive duty and also to resign my commission, 9/28/45.

Saw Marge several times, but she was very afraid of

something and since she would tell me I decided to drop it. Have always wondered if it was a communist connection.

9/21/45 I became CO of the Guard Company with 350 men.

12/20/45 I went on terminal leave and took a cold train to Newark, N.J. (57 days leave-with pay)

2/16/46 Went on Inactive Duty.

4/18/46 My resignation was accepted. It is my understanding the Marines only accepted resignations for about three months and that most officers were kept on Inactive Duty

UMA LAVA

Joined the 52/20 Club

I resigned my commission as I did not want to be subject to call. I figured with my experience I would not have any trouble getting a commission, if I could get one in Intelligence it would be better than Infantry or Artillery. During the Korean War I was approached about working for Naval Intelligence with rank of full Lt. We were in Kansas City at the time.

MISCELLANEOUS

I mentioned rats several times. There were a lot of them One night I was sleeping on cot with mosquito net over the cot and a rat jumped on the net and on my face. I grabbed a flashlight and waited for him to come back, but fell asleep and he jumped on my face again. Another time on the "Canal", while on an all night working party, I fell asleep on the ground, waiting for the trucks to return. I heard a "Click" and jumped up to find blood running down my neck as a rat had bitten a hole through my ear lob. We stuck a swab with alcohol through the hole.

There was a PCF Bleckman in OC class who was so unmilitary that the D.I.s went easy on him as they knew he would bust out. To a Marine his rifle is his best friend and you treated it