FORWARD

This is a diary of a young soldier in World War II. Corporal Smith served with the 532nd Engineer Regiment and in this diary he describes some of the events that took place during his service. We received a copy of this diary from Lawrence Smith; his accompanying letter follows.

NEW GUINEA
Cpl Alfred (Al) L. Smith (deceased)
37157254 #APO 704 San Francisco
532nd Engineer Amphibious Regiment. Co. A Boat Battalion. His Boat was #129, "Old Faithful". There were three people in the Crew: Coxswain, Seaman & Engineer man. "Al" never mentioned their names in his Diary - Nassau Bay was his battle ground. The names that were mentioned are TERRY, MIKE, BERT ART, LOYD & AL.

Al would have been 85 this year (1989?). He was sent back to the states with malaria. Later a the Tucson V.A. Hospital, they removed one lung. He had emphysema in the other. He had to fight to get 100% disability from the V.A. He passed away in 1968 after being "in and out of the V.A. Hospital". His Widow, Leora rewrote his Diary into a story (spelling & English corrections, etc.)

Lawrence Smith
1047 W. Simmons
Tucson, AZ 85705

CHAPTER I

AUSTRALIA

Out in front of us were some of the prettiest green hills we had ever laid eyes on. The horizon out there was full of them for as far each way as we could see. The water was dotted with little islands.

No, we were not dreaming this time. We were getting our first view of Australia—the land down under that we had heard about, studied about in school, yet never expected to see.

We were tired, sea-worn and salty, and all trying to crowd the deck rails-at once, all eager to feast our eyes on something real once again—something besides the grimy, green and foaming Pacific ocean that we had just spent the past 21 days on.

An hour later our ship was sliding slowly into a bay and as we rounded a bluff we could see a long pier with several other ships tied up. Then we could see the town down close to the water. We heard the large chain clang and rattle up on our ship's bow. They were dropping anchor out in the bay about a mile from the pier. It was a disappointed feeling for all of us as that meant we would not be going ashore and would have to spend one more night aboard ship.

We were awakened next morning by the familiar quiver of the ship being underway. She was slowly pulling up along side the pier when we looked out. An hour later we were coming down the gang plank each soldier carrying all of his own equipment which seemed twice as heavy as when we came aboard 21 days before in the United States.

U.S. Army trucks, driven by colored U. S. Army boys, were backing out onto the pier and we were all loaded quickly into these. Then began our

first ride on Australian soil. These colored boys seemed to drive terribly fast through town-too fast for comfort, and to our amazement, on the left side of the street right through the main part of a good sized and pretty town. We had a motorcycle patrol so we paid no attention to stop-signs or red lights.

Everything was strange to us—buildings were all strange, quaint with houses built up on props. The entire surroundings reminded-us we were foreigners and in a foreign land. I guess we all felt it keenly. There was an enormous growth of vegetation everywhere; house yards were full of flowers, shrubs and trees—all of which were strange to us; we could identify none of them, yet it was all very pretty. Australian people lined the streets and watched us as we passed through their town. I don't know if they were just curious to see a new arrival of fresh Yank troops or frightened by our speeding, roaring trucks. Anyway, it was just a matter of a few minutes until the town was behind us and we were speeding along a rough, narrow country road. Fifteen minutes later we came to a halt in a patch of tall grass in very swampy ground where they were starting to set up a lot of army tents. We knew what that meant. We were to finish setting these up and move in, which we did. then lay down and rested for the remainder of the day and night.

We talked to a lot of Australian workers at this place. We found it somewhat difficult at first to understand them. However, their language is the same as ours. They were very friendly and we liked them.

CHAPTER II

STRANGE VASTNESS

We were in a new and strange land, yet always felt the presence of war as we knew we were at least 8000 miles closer to the front lines than before we left the States. There seemed to be a lull or hush over the people in-this part of Australia. We couldn't tell whether it was fear of Jap attacks or just tired and worn from war worries. We didn't care which. We all felt bewildered and travel worn; we didn't care much whether the enemy lines were 2 miles or 800 miles away; we wanted to sleep, which we did—we slept like school kids for the first night. When daylight came it was raining. I for one was coming down with a cold and coughing myself silly.

We learned a lot about Australia in the next two days from a couple of elderly Australian civilians who seemed to find a lot of pleasure in talking to us. We were surprised to hear that Australia is about the size of our United States in area. It measures 2,400 miles east and west and 2,000 miles north and south. It is an old continent yet one of the newest countries in this old world. Not much over 140 years ago it was a great empty piece of vastness, inhabited by only a few hundred thousand natives called aborigines (abos for short). They lived about the same as people of the Stone-age. Since that time Australia has become a land of fine, modern cities, and war material factories and the famous Australian fighting men, "The Aussie." It is one of the world's greatest democracies and a great plains country filled with millions of sheep and cattle, gold mines, forests and deserts. It lies below the equator, while our U.S. is above it, which causes the seasons to be reversed. When it is winter in the U.S. it is summer in Australia and vice versa.

About 1200 miles east of Australia is the international date line, running north and south, which is just the opposite side of the world from the Greenwich line running through England not far from London. When it is today in Australia or west of the date line, it is yesterday east of this line in

the U. S. and South America. When we are in Sydney, we are 18 hours ahead of San Francisco time. For instance, when it is noon Wednesday in Sydney, it is 6:00 P.M. Tuesday in San Francisco and 9:00 P.M. in New York.

Gold is the main reason for Australia to,—have developed. It was first found in 1861 and in the next 7 years the -population was- doubled. - At the famous Golden Mile in Kalgoorlie in the western part they reported pieces of gold as large as one's fist!

Australia has 3 million square miles of land—about as much as the U.S., yet only have 9 million people. Only the parts along the coast are fertile and good for farming, all the cities and population are located on the coast lines. About half of this country is dry and only about one-fourth of that is good for pasture. About one-third of the country is good for cattle and sheep grazing and about one-fifth is good for farming—along the northeast coast in the state of Queensland it is tropical as it lies north of the tropic of Capricorn.

Just to give an impression of Australia's vastness - there is a sign post in Melbourne which read

Cairus.....2,614 miles
Brisbaine . . . .1,349 miles
Sydney.....682 miles

From Darwin in the north to Tasmania, the Island state, just across the Pass Strait from Melbourne is 2,200 miles, and from Brisbane on the east coast to Perth on the Indian Ocean is 2 000 miles or more. People form the impression by this largeness of the land that Australians live mostly an farms or on sheep and cattle ranches, but they don't. Most of them live in the cities on the coast. One-third of all the population in the two largest cities, Sydney and Melbourne. Most of them make their living in industry.

They have fairly strict blue-laws and don't go in for drinking or woo-pitching and no bars or dance-halls or movies open on Sunday. They are

quite a bunch of tea drinkers. Where we use one-half pound of tea per person, they use seven pounds. While we use 160 pounds of wheat and flour per person, they use 203. We are the coffee drinkers though. We use 13 pounds of coffee per person-to their one half pound. We use 9-1/2 quarts of ice cream to their 4 per person. We use 16-1/2 pounds of butter to their 30-1/2 pounds per person. We use 63 pounds of beef to their 112 pounds per person. We use 7 pounds of mutton and lamb to their 81 pounds per person and we use 55 pounds of pork to their 19 pounds per person.

The Australian's every day speech is about the slangiest of all brands of English. If an American doesn't know all of this slang, it is somewhat difficult to understand what he is talking about. I will give a few of their choicest slang words that they use regularly:

Drogo (rookie)
Cliver (another Babe)
Sheila (a Babe)
Sninny (another Babe)
ShivoO (a party)
Chivny (back talk)
Imshi (scram)
Plonk (cheap wine)
Shikkered (drunk)
Smooge (to Pitch woo)
Stankered (knocked out)
Boko (nose)
Shout (to buy drinks for the house)
Zack (a six pence)
Ding dong (swell)
Yakka (hard work)
Bonzer (great super)
Cobber (Pal)
Cow (it stinks)

Wowser (stuffed shirt, sour puss)
Gee-gees (race horses)
Moke (a plug or nag)
Brumby (a bronco)
Billy (tin can for tea)
Swaggie (a tramp)
Drop-the bundle (to give up)
Ta (thanks)
Whacks (Dutch treat)
Deener (a shilling)
Beano (a gala affair)
Dinkum oil (gospel truth)
Foes (the blues)
Nips (japs)
Sarvo (this afternoon)
Jerries (Germans)
Pommies (The British)
Dinner (lunch)
Tea (supper)
Supper (late snack)
Smokea (time out for smoking)
Pudding (dessert)
Abo (aborigine)
gin (squaw)
Wook (the sticks)
bluey (nickname for a man with red hair)
Wacko (exclamation expressing anticipation)
Barrack (to root)
Barracker (loud sports fan)
Grafter (good worker)
crook (to feel lousy)
Fair cow (a louse or heel)
ta-ta (bood-bye)
Cooee (Yoo-hoo)
Shandy (mixture of lemonade and light ale)

Trouble and strife (the wife)
Poke Borek (to insult)
rubadedub (bar or saloon)
Burgoo (stew)
to skite (to boast)
Cockeye (delight) (molasses)
Stager (one who fakes an injury or shows off)
face wash (wash cloth)
Push (mob or gang)
lolly shop (candy shop)
Collins St. squatter (drug store cowboy)
Willy Willy (dry storm, tornado)
tram (street car)
Petrol (gas)
bushman (backwoodsman, not an “abo)
Jackaroo (a tenderfoot on a sheepranch)
squatter (sheep or cattle- rancher)
never never (the dry country out back)
Diggers (Australians)
bush (the part of Australia not in town or city, the sticks)
stockman (a cowboy)
John (a cop)
Cow cocky (a dairy farmer)
Cocky (farmer)
bloody beaut (swell)

CHAPTER III

CAMP

We only stayed in this first camp two days. We were told by our officers to have all our personal things packed and ready to march out in one hour's time. We marched about a mile to a railroad where there was an Australian passenger train waiting on the siding. All we knew was that we were heading north into the extreme northern and tropical part of the country. This train ride was eventless and very tiresome. However, a few days later our train unloaded us in a small tropical town at 2:30 A.M. in a pouring down rain. There were no lights to be seen as there was at this time great danger of air attacks by the Japanese who were close by in New Guinea. An army unit was there with trucks to meet us. They also had a tent setup as a kitchen to give us breakfast.

We were a bewildered bunch of boys. A few who were not accustomed to lightning were frightened by the sharp flashing and constant roaring of thunder. We could hear a steady roar of water off to the left or our train as if there might be a terribly swollen stream close by, but no one bothered to ask about it; no one cared, as we could smell the pancakes and coffee cooking in the tent, and we were a hungry bunch; our one and only ambition then was to get all of those cakes that would be humanly possible.

A soldier asked one of the colored truck-drivers how soon he thought it would stop raining. He answered in a high pitched voice: "Reckon it ain't gonna quit, Boss; see all dat lightning back over yonda. Reckon when daylight comes it be rainin like H... That was a lot of encouragement, but we decided we guessed we could take it at least we couldn't get any wetter—our shoes were full of water and we were drenched to the skin. It was still dark as pitch and still pouring down rain when we finally arrived at a place about twenty miles from this town.

We were in tall timber when our trucks came to a halt. We all just sat still and no one had anything to say. We just sat there bewildered until it started to get daylight. Then we heard our captain's order for everyone to get out of the trucks and line up in formation facing the timber. We wondered what timber as there was timber on all sides. He looked around, laughed a little, then said, "Just get in formation and ready to march." We marched only about 50 yards and were given "Column right" which turned us off the road and right into the timber and tall thick Kuna grass. We halted just inside the timber, were told this spot was to be our camp.

It felt great to slip out of our wet field packs and lay our equipment down. We dropped them in five inches of water and all lay down in the mud and rain to await orders. Some of the boys even went to sleep face up in the rain. Some cracked jokes that sounded dry and out of order. Some tried to smoke but gave up the idea as it was raining too hard to strike a match or keep cigarettes dry. I'm sure the morale of our regiment was at its lowest point at this time, even lower than a few weeks later when were in combat in New Guinea.

It rained all day while we set up our tents and got our equipment arranged in as much order as possible. We stripped off all our wet clothes and spent the rest of the day in our tents. We were terribly tired.

Three weeks later this camp looked like a different place. We had worked hard putting in roads, culverts, bridges etc. to make it a permanent tent camp. We even piped water a distance of 2 miles from up in the mountains to use in our bath houses which all in all made a quite comfortable camp.

This locality was thickly inhabited by wild life when we moved in, wild-hogs, wallabys and a hundred different kinds of noisy birds. Almost anytime we got outside of camp a short distance we could see a wallaby (small kangaroo) hopping off through the Kuna grass. We got quite a thrill. out of all the strangeness and strange things at first, but finally grew accus-

tomed to it all. Our first sergeant told us we were foreigners here but by the time we would get back to the states we would be foreigners back there. I guess he was right.

CHAPTER IV

GUARD

We worked hard building anti-air craft gun emplacements in the cliff walls surrounding our camp. We had them camouflaged so they could not be seen from the air. We completely covered them over with netting made from jungle vines of different types. I believe about the hardest day's work I ever did was helping carry these heavy guns up to their emplacement, a piece at a time. We had so many of these placed around at different points in the hills and over-looking the ocean that it would of been impossible for the Jap invaders, if they decided to attack 'us, to do us any damage either from the sea or from the air. It would have been suicide for them to have even tried an invasion at this point. There were rumors around town that a big Jap invasion was about to take place in northern Australia. Most civilians had moved out of the northern towns and into the cities farther south.

We soon had our first alert. There was a report of Jap activities being sighted on the sea just off our shore as if an invasion of our place was brewing. Our entire battalion was called out heavily armed for guard duty that night. Everyone was a bit excited and jumpy that night. We placed our machine guns systematically along the shore lines. Then another line of heavier machine guns up higher in the bluffs and another line on top of the cliffs. Our infantry rifle and machine guns were back about 100 yards in the timber where a road went through. They were to defend the highway in case any of the Jap boats made a landing and the troops got past us on the beach-head guns.

No one got drowsy that night. We were 611 so dead certain we were going to be invaded we spent the night straining our eyes out seaward and listening for the dreaded and expected drone of enemy engines. We imagined we saw faint light flashes at times. We imagined we saw dark quiet objects at times like both small and huge vessels lurking just out of range. Our

eyes and ears played tricks on us all through the night. We were just plain jumpy and slightly trigger happy. We were almost hoping something would happen to break the tense quiet monotony. Nothing happened though. The intended Jap attack did not materialize. The sun came up the following morning on a calm, clear and empty sea. We got the "all clear" signal and the alert was over. However, we kept our beach-head emplacements for farther use. We had many alerts, just like this one during our days in this camp.

Since we were an amphibian outfit we were getting uneasy. With all of this land maneuvers, camp building, etc. we were beginning to wonder if we were being changed from a boat Bn. to a shore Bn. Back in the states during training we spent most of our time training with our little landing boat's but we had not had a boat assigned to us since we arrived in Australia.

CHAPTER V

OLD FAITHFUL

One morning about four weeks after arriving in this camp our captain called a special formation and announced that there was a bunch of landing boats waiting for us in town. They had assigned different boat numbers to different crews.

Number 129 was for our crew. That afternoon we were all taken to town to get our boats. When we got in town we were loaded into a boat and hauled up a long winding channel. We rounded several bends before we came to a place where there were hundreds of shiny new landing boats tied up to the roots of heavy jungle growth. Each crew was straining their eyes reading the numbers on their bows hoping to see their own number. They went aboard their boats as their numbers were reached. We were watching for No. 129; she was the third from the last one we reached, but there she was, sitting in the glaring Australian sun, her ocean blue paint shown like it might still be wet.

We felt like explorers in a new land as we went aboard and began to look her over. Our Seaman lay right down for an afternoon nap while the Coxswain inspected her from bow to stern and I checked the diesel engine all over. We started her engine, tested our pressures, gauges, pumps, and bilge pumps. We never missed a thing. We knew this was to be the boat we were going in combat with and it was entirely up to just us three to have everything in A-1 shape and working accurately. We sensed a thrill when we thought of the near future when the time would come for us to head her in toward an enemy share against machine gun fire.

After our check-up was completed, we pronounced “Old Faithful” O.K. and reported her to our officer in charge as O.K; untied her and drove her down out of the channel and out on the bay outside the town. We cut her

engine and just drifted until the rest of the boats arrived to form a convoy back up the coast to our camp. It seemed like old times back in States to be again in convoy with so many big engines singing merrily and their bows cutting the ocean water. It was a thrill, all new boats with the sweetest big diesel engines in the world. "Old Faithful" was in the lead, leading the convoy in a V formation—her motor was running so free and easy we couldn't hardly resist the temptation to open her up in spite of the fact that we were not to turn our new engines over 1200 revolutions for a while. Our Seaman slept most of the way back to camp. The Coxswain and I took turns at the helm and thusly became acquainted with our new possession, **"**Old Faithful."

We gave her the name "Old Faithful" about two weeks before we ever saw her. Our first Sergeant told us we were going to get our new boats soon and each crew was to name their own. Our Seaman didn't care what we called ours, he said, "Just call it "Butch" or anything. 11 The Coxswain wanted to name it after his girl friend but that would never do. explained to him, we may get her in terrible tough places and be forced to leave her or get her shot all to pieces, so we discarded the idea of naming her after our girl friends. We thought of all kinds of fancy names, such as, "Coconut grove", "Southern Beaut", "Banana leaf", "Southern Cross", "South Sea Rover", "Tropical Moon", "Beach Crasher", etc. but we finally decided on just plain "Old Faithful. So we had our company 4painter put "Old Faithful" across her bow, then we christened her with a 6ottle of old dirty salt water.

CHAPTER VI

WET DAYS

The arrival of our companies boats had a lot to do with changing our daily routine around camp. No one rested any more as our nights were turned into days. We kept our boats anchored out in a shallow bay when we were not using. them. At nights we went out on the sea for maneuvers. The sea was usually very rough here and for about 3 month we never even got dry until we were wet again. We maneuvered with both American and Australian infantry troops in some of the most rugged and strenuous commando training.

Our outfit was getting good. We could handle our boats on any kind or sea or most any type of beach. We were making successful landings through high surf and getting them back off the beach in pitch black nights without ever breaking or upsetting a boat. On days off we took our dirty clothes back in the hills to a clear mountain stream and sometimes washed clothes all day and lay on the banks of the stream and rested. We were beginning to get a little restless; like all combat outfits we were anxious to either get in combat and get it over or go home. We couldn't stand the drudgery of staying in one camp too long.

Rumors began to float around camp that-we were moving north to New Guinea. All kinds of rumors. Anyway, the day arrived at last for us to head north. Our company chose ten boat crews to go on ahead as an advanced observation party. "Old Faithful" and our crew was one of the ten in this party, which meant, I presume, that we were considered one of the ten best boat crews in the regiment, or one of the worst—I don't know which. We were glad anyway for the chance to move on. Whether it was for better or worse we didn't care much. There were at least new horizons to look into and adventure**.**

As we crossed the coral sea heading north we looked at the horizon ahead with a short of chilled feeling. We all knew there were enemy planes, ships and ground troops on most any island we would land on. However, we knew we were doing to New Guinea and that was full of Japs from one end to the other. No one seemed to be excited about it though and seemed to be craving action. We expected to sight Jap planes overhead at any time and never once relaxed on this trip.

CHAPTER VII

HELL IN DISGUISE

On the evening of our third day on the coral sea we sighted land ahead dark green hills. The sun was just about to set down into the dense growth and jungle of New Guinea. It was a very pretty sight. Our ships were sliding slowly in towards land—as we drew closer we could see we were heading for a channel which turned out to be a pass between a group of islands and the mainland of New Guinea. This channel was very narrow so we could watch the shore line on both sides. Coal-black fuzzy-wuzzy natives were watching us and we could see an occasional grass hut along the shore line. Pulled up on the beach were their long native canoes which they had carved out of gum loos.

We all knew that there were no Japs here, and had little to fear, except air-raids, and the natives in this part were all civilized. We were told some could speak English as good as we could. This first sight of New Guinea was so pretty it seemed like Hell in disguise. It seemed so quiet and peaceful there in the setting sun, one couldn't hardly realize the dangers that could be hidden in the surrounding hills.

It was terribly hot here, but was just about sundown as our ship slid into a long deep bay on the east point of New Guinea. Our ship did not dock but dropped anchor out in the bay about 1/4 mile from shore. Trolla boats manned by Australian civilians pulled up along side of us immediately to take us ashore as it was unsafe here in war-zone to stay aboard ship. Each of us took one barracks bag, our field pack, rifle, and cot, which made quite a load for each guy. we tugged and struggled and some how got aboard the trolla boats with our equipment.

CHAPTER VIII

SOLID GROUND ONCE MORE

Did I say solid?

We were unloaded an a dirty, stinking, muddy shore. It was pitch dark by this time and no lights were allowed-not even to light a cigarette. It was clouded over and starting to rain. The Australians told us not to worry about our equipment getting wet as it would likely never get dry again as long as we were in New Guinea.

We crawled into Australian made trucks and were hauled back and up into the jungle, over a winding and muddy trail. In the low-lands close to the bay were tall coconut palms planted in rows. We were told they belonged to a company in the U.S. As we got higher up into the jungle the rain increased. It was raining steady like a June Kansas cloudburst. Flood water was gushing down the ditches beside our trail in torrents making more noise then our laboring truck engine which had its muffler torn off. Lightning flashed so close and often that it lit the dense coconut grove about us like day.

Our truck finally came to a groaning halt at a point which seemed to be on the edge of a cliff. One of our disgruntled- boys hollered out, “Just back ‘er up to the edge and shove us off.” During flashes of lightning we could make out the outline of huge thatch covered sheds, erected New Guinea native style. We learned later they were put up by natives for just this purpose, as receiving centers for incoming troops. We were told to pile off the truck and drag our equipment inside one of these and bed down for the night. Water was running through this grass covered shed about seven inches deep and mud was about that much deeper, which left us mire to the knees at every step.

About 30 of us crowded into this small shed and spread out our cots, kicked out of our wet clothes, piled everything beside our cat except our rifle (We took that to bed with us.) and stretched out to sleep the remainder of the night. I must have went to sleep two seconds after stretching out as the next thing I knew I heard hundreds of different kinds of jungle birds squawking and chattering. The sun was already up and starting its daily scorching, burning journey across the New Guinea sky. I could smell something cooking which seemed to be the greatest attraction at that time.

Terry, my closest friend and right by my side, was awake also. He was wide eyed looking up into the grass roof of our shed. We glanced at each other, neither of us spoke lest we should waken all the rest. I wondered what he was thinking and what his opinion of the whole affair was. Possibly he was thinking of his girl back in western Nebraska, 7000 miles away or possibly of his folks, and possibly of the Jap forces just a short ways away.

Day light seemed to chance everything. Everything suddenly seemed to be gloriously beautiful. There were birds of every color. The coconut grove below was gorgeous in the morning sun. I couldn't help but think of how our heavenly Father had sent his only son Jesus Christ into a darkened and troubled world of bewildered and lost people. I thought of the night before how we seemed to be cast into the very deepest and darkest depths of hell, forsaken by both God and man. This morning I felt ashamed for even feeling forsaken. The sun was up. A light seemed to have come to the world, a lasting light. I thanked God for everything that morning, for the Christian training I had had back in Kansas, for my good Christian parents and most of all for the light He had sent into the world, for His love, care and guidance through dark and trying moments, and asked His forgiveness for being so unfaithful and depressed during dark and bad times.

Seemed like God made a promise to me that morning that he would guide me always. Seemed like I could hear Him say, "Oh ye of little Faith." I decided not to worry any more about things that were beyond my power;

do my job well and trust in Christ as my Savior. I wished everyone sleeping there could wake up with the same saved and uplifted feeling that I had. How wonderful the little hill we were on would of been with God on the throne for us all.

I believe Terry was going through the same thoughts and experiences with me. I asked *him* if he thought held ever amount to anything. He looked at me and said, “If I do, it’s a cinch I’ll never look like anything. We two slipped into our pants and stepped quietly out from among the sleeping commandos for our First glimpse on our first morning in New Guinea. The air was heavy and sultry, the sun was very burning hot even though it hadn’t been up over an hour. We wondered what it would be like at noon.

CHAPTER IX

STRANGE MEN

We were called out to breakfast—our first Australian prepared breakfast. We were all hungry as bears and it really tasted good even though it was simple.

We knew we were not going to remain here as our officers did not call us out to set up tents. None of us asked any questions or asked for anything to do, but just looked around and took in all of the strange surroundings. Over in the jungle to the east we could hear a lot of jabbering and laughing (strange language). Terry and I went towards the sound. We came to another clearing in the jungle and got our first close up view of New Guinea natives. There was a group of about 30 building grass top sheds like the one we slept in. They were working under the supervision of an Australian major. Their only clothes were a rag around their waist; they were barefooted and bareheaded. They were building the frame work of poles tied together with soft strings of bark of some kind. Our first impression of these people was that they were a bunch of monkeys as they would jabber and scamper around on these buildings. They laughed a lot and seemed so happy and contented. Most of these were well developed and healthy looking. I guess because they had army food to eat and had army medical care for them and their families. They were all men and each had an ornament in his fuzzy hair. They each had a fuzzy mop of hair that stood up and. matted together like a sponge about the size of a half-bushel. There was a sickening odor about them as they worked in the hot tropical sun.

Soon our bunch of boys were all there watching them work—which to us was a circus. These native boys all liked cigarettes and would climb a coconut tree for one cigarette. The Australian officer in charge said we could watch all we liked but not to interfere with their work. At quitting

time that evening we watched them load laughing and and jabbering into an Australian truck and were hauled by an Aussie driver back to their village, back in the jungle or down on the water front.

We stayed the next night in the same sleeping quarters we had the night before. Early the following morning trucks hauled us back down off the hill into the muddy bottom jungles around the bay where we immediately set up a little camp for ourselves of six-man tents. This place was a regular mud hole. Our officers issued an order that no man steps outside his tent without his helmet on to protect him from falling coconuts, also we were to wear a shirt or jacket at all times and sleep under mosquito net to guard against the many insects of the jungle.

The next morning all boat crews were ordered out to the big shop anchored in the bay. We were to unload our boats off the large ship. When we arrived at the ship the ship's crew had our boat "Old Faithful" already lowered and afloat. We three crew members immediately took her over. We started her engine and pulled away from the ship a short distance and dropped anchor to await orders.

All ten of our landing boats spent the next four days working hard and long hours unloading our supplies off the ship. We hauled our entire stock of supplies over to a dock where we stacked them up to reload again onto our amphibious boats and large rafts which we were to tow behind each of our ten boats an our trip Op the northeast-coast of New Guinea.

At this time large ships could not venture any farther up the coast. It was getting too near enemy territory to risk larger vessels and larger loads. We spent two days loading our boats and tow rafts for our journey.

Duringour stay here we heard all kinds of rumors of Japs preparing to attack us, etc. Each evening over a small radio we would hear Madam Tojo broadcasting from Tokyo; shespoke in plain English and talked of places back home in America to crack the morale of the American troops.

She even named the streets and places in American cities. She told us she hated to see us wiped out like flies in a trap. She told us she would like to see us out of this camp that we were in within seventy-two hours as large forces of Jap planes would bomb it all to pieces in 72 hours. This all made us a little jittery. We were all a little secretly anxious to get out of there even though we knew we were going up closer for invasion purposes.

CHAPTER X

DISTINATION UNKNOWN

At about 12 o'clock noon we had our amphibian boats all loaded and each with a huge heavy laden raft behind in tow; one boat had the kitchen raft behind to drag up the coast. It had a canvas shade up over it so the kitchen crew could go could go about their work while we were traveling. Each boat had two crews aboard so one crew could sleep or rest while the other was on duty operating the boat. We were 1st boat crew on "Old Faithful" and the other crew was 2nd crew. "Old Faithful" was assigned to us and she was our responsibility, yet we certainly were glad to turn her over to the 2nd crew and a chance to rest at times. The Aussies and natives all waved bye-bye at us as boats started churning the water and each fell into her place in line of convoy and headed out of the bay and to parts unknown.

CHAPTER XI

SWING IN AND DROP ANCHOR

We traveled out of the long bay that afternoon. At the entrance of the bay where we were to swing left on a northwesterly direction there were a lot of reefs and foul water so we did not attempt to clear this point that night; instead we received an order from our officer in charge to swing into a cove and drop anchor for the night. We were glad to hear that as none of us fancied the idea of going through the reefs and out on the main body of the Bismark sea after dark, especially since we knew the sea would be terribly rough after we passed the reefs point and out of the protection of the bay.

As we pulled into this cove strange things were happening ashore. We saw black fuzzy wuzzy natives, men, women and children all running back and forth yelling to one another in their language as if they were terribly upset and excited about something. We heard pigs squealing. Some of the men were getting into their canoes, they left the canoe paddles in the bottom of canoe and pushed their boats along with their spears. It had not occurred to us that it was us coming into the cove that had so greatly excited them. We did not go ashore but dropped anchor and prepared for the night paying no more attention to the excited natives.

After we had been anchored about an hour and had chow over and it was dark, we heard a rippling sound along side our boat. We could make out the outline of a canoe and two natives standing upright in it, not more than 30 ft. from our boat. We greeted them and learned that the one could understand English and speak a little. He said he thought we were “Japan man” and was going to come into village. He said “all women, kids go bush,” and pointed back up into the jungle. They even caught their pigs and carried them off. He asked, “You no come village?” We told him we were just camping for the night and would not come ashore but would be

gone at daylight in the morning. He said, “Me go bring people back in village. Me chief.” But he didn’t go bring his people back. He and the other fellow never even went ashore but scouted around our boats all night watching us. When daylight came we noticed there were about 30 canoes, each with two natives, all on the water but at a greater distance. All the village’s warriors must have been on guard all night. We could notice dogs coming out on the beach then going back into the jungle as if someone very close were talking to them and trying to keep them out of sight. We felt the tribe of women, kids and old men were all watching us through the thicket.

We had breakfast and pulled up anchor early, and as we pulled out of the cove we noticed the beach became alive with the natives moving back into their village.

CHAPTER XII

ALL THIS AND HEAVEN TOO

We headed our convoy of heavy laden invasion boats northwest up the northeast coast of New Guinea. We all fully realized that were highly trained commando troops and going directly into the war zone for one purpose. All seemed eager to push forward. Each individual in the ten boat crews knew he could depend on each other as we had all passed severe nerve and mental tests. It was explained to us why we had taken these tests and were beginning to realize their value as it would have been suicide for us all to go into such ordeals that lay ahead with men in our group who might become panic stricken.

We all fully understood by now that our officers during training had picked us as men who were stable, cool and panic free; that they had chosen us as the proper men to pilot these invasion boats loaded with Uncle Sam's valuable landing troops and equipment. Sixty percent of our Boat Bn. crews were men from the mid-western states. (I had been a ranch foreman in Wyoming for ten years prior to service.) Most all the rest were chosen from similar civilian activities. So we understood we had not been chosen for this work for our past experience with boats or water; most of us had none. We also understood we had not been chosen because we were "tough guys" as we were all quite the contrary. A few so called "tough guys" or self-called "tough guys" from large cities were in our outfit at first in training but were put in the shore Bn. quickly as work Bn's. Eighty percent of our men came from good solid Christian homes. No religious fanatics. So we all had the greatest of confidence and faith in each other and loved each other nearly as brothers.

Nothing much happened this day of our journey. About four o'clock in the afternoon we were traveling only about a half-mile off the shore line; we noticed the dense jungle had given way to open jungle free rolling hills

which greatly resembled cattle country in Wyoming or Montana. The ocean water was very clear and smooth here and very shallow. We could see the bottom which looked like snow-white slate. Suddenly as if everyone got the inspiration at the same time everyone was gazing at the hills. "Greely", from another boat, called over to us and yelled, "Just think, we have all this and heaven too. It seemed as though we were on a pleasure cruise in the tropical waters. We thought of how in peace times people pay big money to take the same trip we were taking only under different circumstances. For about two hours along this beautiful shore line we all greatly enjoyed the remainder of the afternoon.

At sundown our officer in charge pulled his boat up along side of ours and informed us that we were soon to land for the night; that we were to locate a large bay with a deep cove where there was a large Anglo Saxon Mission. This proved to be somewhat difficult in locating in the dark, but after making proper contact with the Australian guards there we finally had our boats all anchored in a quiet deep bay. We slept through the tropical night without even going ashore.

CHAPTER XIII

UNDER A TROPICAL MOON

We awakened early, in time to see a beautiful New Guinea sunrise. On the shore was a tall coconut grove with a large village of grass covered native hutches. Everything looked clean and well kept. Upon a high hill overlooking the Bismarck Sea was a large building which we knew was the Mission. We had been looking for. The shore was lined with all sizes of native children curiously watching us. We could smell breakfast cooking in our kitchen barge, which seemed to be the greatest attraction for us at that time. Our outfit's small utility boat came up alongside each of our boats and took us to the kitchen barge. We were all very hungry and breakfast tasted so good we wondered if our cooks were getting better or if we were just getting more used to the rough way of living.

Our officer in charge informed us that we would stay at this place all day and through the next night, and said we could all go ashore until noon.

This was no army base the Anglo-Saxon missionary told us; so they lived on and carried on their work with little fear of air raids, etc. This missionary was one of the most remarkable people that I have ever met. He spoke the language of his native tribe and his tribe of black fuzzy-wuzzys could speak very good English, that is, the younger ones. The older ones could understand very little English. He taught them many professions, such as, music, radio, agriculture, etc. He really had a highly civilized tribe of natives although they lived in wet dirt floor grass covered hutches and ware the regular Jungle natives' clothes. Grass skirts for the women and girls with nothing above the waist and just a rag skirt around the men. They were all a healthy and well developed group of natives, which showed they had had good medical care.

One little boy about 10 yrs. old asked us if we knew Joe Louis back in the States. They were all greatly interested in him as if they thought he were the leading man over in the United States. Charlie Chaplin was another of their favorites. We learned later that the Missionary had a camera reel of Charlie Chaplin which they all liked so well. Some of these native boys brought large bunches of bananas down from the hills and presented them to us to take along on our boats.

About 10 o'clock A.M. our commanding officer called us all together to tell us the missionary had invited us up to his mission to spend the evening. He advised us to work on our boats right after noon, get them Fueled up and inspected for the long run ahead the next day.

Early that evening before sundown we got in military formation and marched up to his mission. It was nice up there. He had nice green crass lawns, and beautiful flower gardens. He had large vegetable gardens and farther back he had fields of hay and grain. Cattle and sheep roamed the

grassland hills. All work was taken care of by natives. For Machinery they had one very old farm-all tractor and an old1928 model Chevrolet truck. His native boys took great pride in keeping both these machines as near like new as possible. Little native boys treated us as greatly honored guests. They got chairs for us in the open air theatre where their master was to show us picture reels of his works in New Guinea. They brought cold drinks of water to us on large trays. They also had another cold drink made from some sort of native tree bark—very few of us cared anything for it. It was bitter and brownish-green in color and too thick to be a good drink. However, these native boys considered it a very rare treat. It seemed they had to go very far back in the jungle to get the certain kind of bark.

The old missionary began his evening's entertainment by telling of their experiences with Japanese; how they never had been invaded yet had been living in fear for months. Their greatest fear had been of Jap troops land-

ing there and making a base out of the place, taking over all their food supplies and making slaves of the native people. He seemed to have a secure feeling in the fact that American troops were beginning to arrive.

He had been with this tribe forty years; had known most of the older natives since they were young and had known the younger ones since they had come into this world. He said he knew we all wondered why he would stay at a place like that so long and devote his entire life to it. His natives all loved him and almost worshiped him, yet he taught them Bible stories and taught them to worship our Heavenly Father and to trust in Jesus Christ as their own and only personal Savior. They were truly a Christian tribe. They seemed too innocent and free from sin.

One couldn't help but feel a little ashamed to see these little black people of the New Guinea jungle living such clean, descent and useful lives, while back in the States the younger generation was growing up on bright lights, gaiety, "wine, women and songs". How young folks teen-age form a line to wait their turn to buy tickets to get in street theatres where they then sit for hours and psychologically indulge in someone else's imagination of crime, underworld activities and all other vice and evil doings of be world today. I-almost-found-myself envying these people who I had always been taught to believe were uncivilized and cannibal type of people. Here in this little far away corner of the world they had an empire—a world of their own. They gave nothing to the rest of the world and asked nothing in return.

I have wished a lot of times since that I had taken notes of things our entertainer said that night. He told us of many different tribes of natives up the coast, how the tribes fought each other and where many different missions were-; how Japs farther up had killed missionaries and mission nurses and made slaves of the tribesmen. Every different tribe, even though they were only ten miles apart, had different languages and are different in appearance.

We were shown photo reels of different tribes and what we should expect of the natives farther up the coast. Farther up, we were told, we would find natives who had gone back to headhunting and natives who were pro-Japanese. He told us how he built all his large structures there with native help only, and used all Japanese cement to build them, (In peace time, of course.); how Japanese vessels brought all material he had used. Last, but not least, he showed a reel of Charlie Chaplin for the kiddies. They went wild over it, jabbering in their native tongue and all crowding in to be sure he missed nothing. At about 9:30 P.M. our host told us the natives were having a celebration down in the village and that we were welcome to go down and watch.

It was clear and moonlight out. We could hear the high pitched chanting and beating of tom-toms. The sound was coming from down in the village close to where our boats were anchored in the bay. We all went down immediately. They were back in the coconut grove behind the village. The men and boys only were doing the moon-light dancing and the weird chanting; each was beating on a tom-tom. Women, girls and children were sitting in a huge circle around the dancers. They jabbered among themselves, laughed a lot and cheered the dancers on.

At first sight of this carrying on my impression was that they had gone on the warpath and were resenting our being there, but we were told different. They were happy and it was a ceremony of welcome and sort of religious affair. During a rest of the dancers, an Australian old man who helped around the mission said something in native tongue. Whatever he said caused all the young girls to jump up giggling and retreat quickly into the jungle. I asked a little black guy close to me what the Australian had said that caused the young girls to do the quick disappearing act. He said he was going to have them sing and the girls were bashful. With a little insisting by the older women and men the girls came back into the clearing and sang very beautiful*ly* a great number of American songs in perfect English and with perfect harmony.

As the evening wore on we could feel more and more the friendliness of this tribe of people. We could feel more and more their crude ways and efforts in showing they were being friendly. Later in the evening they sang farewell songs, among them, “God Be With You Till we Meet Again. “Our parting with this warm and friendly tribe was somewhat pathetic and sad that night under the beautiful Tropical moon as we all knew that we would never set foot on their soil again, and we would be gone before daybreak on the following morning. We all knew our orders were to pull up anchor and shove out to sea and on up the coast two hours before daylight the next morning.

CHAPTER XIV

UP THE COAST

We went aboard our boats and slept until 3:30 A.M. We were awakened by the guard on duty; had breakfast and pulled up anchor all inside of 30 minutes and were forming our convoy; at 4:00 o'clock we were in our proper places in convoy and heading out to a dark sea.

We traveled all that day and up till about mid-night the next night. We pulled into a long deep channel. The water was deep and the canyon walls were very high. In the darkness it reminded me of driving in Big Thompson Canyon west of Loveland, Colorado. It seemed like we went back in this channel about three miles. I would like to see it -in daylight some time just to see what it really looked like.

We camped back in this channel through the daylight of the next day. We were told we were getting too close to enemy territory to travel any more in day time. At daybreak the next morning a mean, hateful looking bunch of natives paddled out with their tree trunk canoes and surrounded us. We could not make them smile. They just frowned and watched us. Back in the jungle we could hear a male voice singing very loud in native tongue. He sang all day and was still singing when we left that night. We never found out the meaning of the singing but I feel yet our being there was the sole reason for him singing. These natives had red mud rubbed deep into their hair and really looked hideous. We were almost afraid to sleep that day with them surrounding us the way they were. We had to sleep though as we were to be on the move at dark again that evening.

Our officer in charge informed us that these natives at this particular place were not to be trusted, that some of them were Pro-Japanese at heart and therefore we could not expect them to be too happy about our being there. We posted a few guards to watch while we slept and slept soundly through

the entire day there in that strange deep canyon and sultry, hot tropical jungle.

We were awakened early that evening for a good warm meal at our kitchen barge and as soon as it began to get dark we were in convoy again and sliding out of the mysterious dark and winding canyon. It was a dark New Guinea night with the hint of rain in the air. We rounded our last bend in the canyon walls and could feel the familiar pitching of our boat which told us vie were out of the canyon and facing the open sea once more, There was a stiff breeze coming in from the sea, driving a fine mist of rain.

No one mentioned it but every crew member in our little convoy knew we were facing a tough and stormy sea that night. We received the order of full-throttle ahead. The ten large 225 h.p. Diesel engines in our ten invasion boats began to sing merrily. We could feel that familiar and secure feeling of power as our boats lifted their bows and lurched forward-into the dark night. Our orders said we were to reach a large bay where a U.S. infantry were camping. They had gotten to this point not by sea but had come over the Owen Stanley range of mountains. They were the closest outpost to the Jap front at this time.

We reached this large bay shortly before daylight, made proper contact with the guards on shore by blinker system and landed. There was a lot of Australian and American troops here, also great droves of natives, both men and women. These natives were very well civilized, could speak very good English and were working right along with the shore Bn. troops here. Australian officers even had scout patrol squads formed with native boys. When it became daylight we noticed the masts of large ships sticking up out of the water in the bay. Some were Jap ships and some were American-ships that had been sunk by air raids a few weeks earlier. One American ship, they said, had, been sunk intentionally - to stop fire that a bomb had set. We were told that Jap planes from a short distance up the coast were coming over and bombing this place about twice a day. The bay sure looked like it too as the shoreline was almost bare from constant shelling and bombing-r-first from the Americans pounding the Japs out; now the

Japs trying to pound them out.

We were told to beach our boats as soon as possible as soon as an alert was sounded so if they were sunk they would be in shallow water and could be raised again.

We lost our first man here at this place. We were camped in the jungle in tents. About 10 o'clock in the evening two Jap planes came over flying very high. They dropped their bombs wild—several fell in and around where we were camped. Three of our boys were wounded and one killed. We were in holes but the bomb that did the dirty work hit in the tall trees and scattered (what we call a daisy cutter). These frequent attacks scared us half to death as this was our first experience of the actual thing. This wasn't training any more but they were throwing the real thing at us and we were helpless to fight back. We learned we were to be attached to this infantry outfit in combat soon. We learned this place was to be our main supply base during our combat campaign farther up the coast. We also learned we were to establish a jumping off base farther up the coast and only 38 miles below the closest Jap out-post.

We camped here about four days. We were a sadder but wiser group when we left. We were all awakened to the fact that we were in enemy territory now and our only way out was to fight our way out. We knew we didn't have our foxholes deep enough and vowed our next ones would be six feet deep instead of 2-1/2 feet. Our boy who had been killed was in a fox-hole flat on his stomach when he was hit by shrapnel. I personally made up my mind definitely that from here on my fox-holes would all be 6 ft. deep and have a covering of logs and sand over the top.

Having our first boy killed seemed to bring a cloud of seriousness over our outfit. It effected each individual differently. One of our sergeants was unnerved to the extent that for a short time he was a mental patient under the care of the medics. One of our boys who had always been so bold and up front in everything seemed to be struck speechless as from our first

encounter on he scarcely ever talked but always a good soldier. Most of our outfit seemed about 5 years older right after this first bombing but not upset in other ways.

We formed convoy again early in the evening of our fourth day here and shoved out to sea again. It was just our luck; just as we were clearing the bay, for the alert signal back on shore to sound off. Up the coast about 10 miles we could see a lot of bursts of flame both on the coast and high in the sky. Search lights up and down the coast were all playing around in the dark sky. We knew the coast artillery as at work. We cut our engines and drifted, then we could hear the roar of the guns and bursting of flack in the sky, and as it came closer down the coast we could see in the beams of search lights three Jap planes high in the sky. They were soon over us and the artillery on the beach we had just left were in action. It looked like flack was bursting all over the planes but I guess it must have been underneath. I expected to see these three planes fall into the sea any minute but they stayed right on their course, never dropped their bombs or did any destruction in any way.

They were likely just scout planes out testing the strength of the coast artillery at different points on the coast and flying high enough to be out of danger. If that were the case, they certainly found out because they were throwing everything at them that they had and to us it looked like there was an ack ack gun every 50 feet up the New Guinea coast.

In about twenty minutes they sounded the all clear signal on the shore so we started our engines, formed convoy again and proceeded on our course up the coast. Our orders read that we were to travel full throttle ten hours which would put us well up into no-man's-land and just 35 miles from the Japs first camp which meant that where we were to land there may be Jap scouts and patrols. We were to get landed and have our boats and ourselves well hidden before the sun came up. We even had a drawing of how the place was supposed to look that we were supposed to pull into. In the drawing there were three high mountains which at a certain

Place from the seat lined up perfectly giving the impression of a large canyon between the 2nd mountain and the mainland on the left. Our chart said we would find a deep winding channel between the 2nd and 3rd of these three mountains that went back into the jungle about two miles.

It rained about all night on this trip which caused us a lot of worry. Our boat was in the lead being used as the navigation boat. It was dark and we were running by instruments alone. We wondered all night how we would ever be able to pull into a strange dark channel if it kept on raining. We also knew if it cleared off the moon would be out about the time we arrived there.

The second crew on our boat—all three—slept the entire trip. They had agreed we stay on duty on the trip; they would go on duty when we got there and clean up and service the boat while we slept. About four o'clock in the morning the clouds broke away as if acting on orders from high powers and in plain sight just as our drawing showed were the three mysterious mountains, looming high above the rest of the horizon. We awakened the three other crewmembers, inspected our machine guns, Tommy guns, rifles and pistols. I buckled our coxswains pistol belt on him as he stood at the helm and laid a loaded Tommy gun by his side. We all unconsciously adjusted our-life belts. We were jumpy and knew not who to expect.

CHAPTER XV

INTO NO MANS LAND

We were slowing down now and heading in towards the three mountains. We slid past the first two and turned our bow towards a terribly forbidding looking dark spot between the second and third mountains. It was beginning to get daylight as the last of our secret little convoy was swallowed up into the protection of the jungle covered hidden channel. The channel was only about 40 feet wide but the water was very deep. Huge dense jungle trees covered with thick vines came together over our heads so we could not see the sky at all and no one from the sky could see us. We were glad of that.

We were all tense and 3 little excited and were in our gun positions. I was froze onto my machine gun belt and like all the other gunners piercing the darkness with my eyes, expecting any minute to see movement or hear gun fire from the jungle. Nothing happened though as we slid far back into this channel. We felt certain we had gotten in unobserved by the Jap out-post guards. The sun was coming up when we reached a point where our commander said we were to tie our boats up to the trees or brush. We could not see the sun and were completely hidden from view from the sky.

Our officer in charge called us all together and gave his orders: This was to be our base and jumping off place to invade a Jap base only 38 miles farther up the coast. We were to stay armed at all times. No one was to fire a shot unless we saw Japs or anything wrong, then we were to fire three shots fast in succession as a warning to the rest. One member of the boat crew was to stay on the boat at all times as a guard. No one was to go out on the beach or appear in sight of the open sea or the sky at any time during daylight.

All crews who were on duty through the night on our run were ordered to sleep and the 2nd crew for each boat were ordered to set up tents back in the jungle a short distance. We had six-man tents so two boat crews could use the same tent.

It was stiffling hot and very humid here as we were some less than ten degrees off the equator. The jungle was noisy with hundreds of different bright colored jungle birds that squawked and chattered at us as if they were scolding and wanting to drive us away. Monkeys of all sizes chattered and scampered to get out of sight.

We prepared our own breakfast from C J and K rations and went to sleep for the day. It *was* nearly sundown when we awakened. The boys who had been working through the day had tents set up and had found a fresh water stream and carried in a supply of fresh water. We carried our personal supply into our tent. We each dug a deep fox-hole beside our cot in the tents so in case of air attacks we could just roll out of bed and into the hole. Two of the boys dug into old graves. We did not find out whether they were native or Jap graves. Anyway they covered them back up and dug in a different spot.

This place had formerly been a Jap camp which they had left of their own Free will. They had been occupying old native grass huts. They had a long string made from jungle vines strung out all through the jungle with old tin cans hung on it in a way that they would rattle in case anything touched the vine or rope. They had small individual wells dug and had large holes along the ocean front covered with vines where they had had gun emplacements. We were very careful about touching anything—it all looked like booby traps to us.

We had our choice either sleep in our boat or in the tents so our entire crew stayed in the boat our first night there. None of us could quite see it that only one stay on the boat as a guard. We talked until about 11 o'clock

then went to sleep. It seemed like I had been asleep about two hours when I was awakened suddenly. Our seaman had whispered my name. He was close to me and breathing hard as if he there excited. I heard the same thing that had excited him, as soon as I awoke. Our coxswain was waking up too. We could hear someone climbing on the bow of our boat and walking in the jungle-. Japs! We all knew at once. They were on top of our boat and our hearts nearly stooped as we thought of our machine guns up there and loaded. Why were vie so careless? Why didn't one of us stay up there by the guns? We were sunk. We expected any moment to hear a command in Japanese to surrender or for them to open fire with our own guns. We lay still, our hearts pounding like hammers for five minutes. I reached very quietly for my Tommy gun. Then the Coxswain whispered, "I've got my Tommy." I said, "I have too, let's look out." So we did and to our surprise the bow of our boat was covered with monkeys. They scampered as soon as we raised the canvas. I don't know where they went for that was the last we ever saw any monkeys in New Guinea. I guess they all went to the hills and stayed as long as we were there.

Another night while sleeping in our boat at this same place we were awakened by something moving around slowly in the water. We turned our flashlights full in the face of a large crocodile. He disappeared as soon as possible but we were always careful about swimming in the channel after.

There was a native village on farther up the channel. Some of us went on up in a small utility motor boat in search of fresh water. The village was completely surrounded and covered over with dense jungle and banana bushes. We stopped and looked around, Some of the natives could talk English and were from a mission close by that had been raided by Japs. Some of the people who operated the mission were killed.

This tribe were the blackest people I ever saw and none too well developed. Some of the children had very thin legs and arms and very large protruding stomachs, large starey eyes and a few had a skin disease, which caused the skin to scale.

These natives very greatly impressed me that they were Christian people in their own ignorant way. They believed in God and knew the Bible stories they had been taught by missionaries but were not too far advanced. Their education and knowledge was just about as far along as an average nine-year-old in America. One thing about them though was they seemed to know no sin. They had their own rules and laws; for instance, their marriage laws were very strict. A young man of marrying age kept a covering over his hair and uncovered it only when he was alone or after he married his girl.

If a woman is a widow, for six weeks she paints her entire body with red mud unless she has a child or children then she is considered a half-widow and paints only half of her body. This is practiced more among the older ones of the tribe than the younger ones.

One day while we were working on our boat near a small fresh water stream we saw a native woman come down to the stream alone. She looked like she was to give birth to a child. We noticed her go into the tall bamboos and stayed about an hour then come back out to the stream. She kept this up all day until mid-afternoon. We noticed she was washing something in the stream. She then sat down in plain sight on the beach in a shady spot and examined and played -with something until- nearly dark. She sat there until nearly dark then picked it up and started back toward the village. As she passed by where we were we noticed she had a nice big newborn baby. That night a male voice sang very loud in their native language. It sounded like he *was* up high on a cliff and about one-fourth mile away. He must have been the child's father. Anyway we connected the singing with the birth of the baby. He sang all night and was getting very hoarse when he became silent when the sun arose.

There was another tribe living in a grass covered village about four miles up another stream in a different direction. They were a very different type tribe of black people. We took a ride up this stream in the small utility boat

and accidentally ran into this village. We tied our boat up and walked up a little hill From the top of this hill we could see into a clearing where their village sat. We heard children screaming and crying off to the left and a naked boy about five or six years old came up a little trail toward the village. He was crying and bleeding from the ears and nose. A woman went out to meet him and took him into a hut. Then here came another one and another woman went out to meet him. We went down closer to see what was going on.

We saw an interesting sight. There were a group of men painted up in war paint. They were gathered around a large rock where a man decorated with bones in his nose and ears was performing some kind of a ceremony with the little boys. The old wizard also had bones stuck through the flesh of his breasts. We discovered they were putting holes through the little boys' ears and noses so they could decorate themselves with bones like the grownups. These little fellows seemed to take it awful hard and screamed and fought. The grownups had to catch them and drag them up to the piercing block. felt sorry for the little guys and suddenly I felt a sudden desire to shoot the big bulky wizard with the horns on his head or toss him a hand-grenade.

We were so interested in what was doing on we never noticed we were being surrounded. All of a sudden we discovered painted men on all sides of us. They looked anything but friendly. They began jabbering and closing-in. It seemed they were a tribe that could speak no English. The only thing we could think of to do was to run. We all three must have gotten the same thought at the same time for we all broke back down the trail. The jungle men must have been startled by us breaking right at them for they backed up and let us by. They had spears but did not throw them. We did not think it necessary to stay and find out what their real intentions were.

We never even looked back and I know I was doing 15 or 20 feet every jump down the last stretch to our boat.

Back in camp we did not tell any of the rest of the boys about our adventure. We decided though that this tribe were a friendly tribe for they came down stream in their canoes every day and always waved a friendly greeting at us as they passed by our boats. Usually the women would be paddling the canoe and the men just sat and watched as they slid by, as they went back up stream toward evening—they had food, which they had gathered during the day.

We spent two weeks here in this camp staying hid in th6 jungle during the daylight and at nights we would go back down the coast with our convoy of boats and haul infantrymen and supplies back. At the end of two weeks we had an entire division of infantry and artillery hidden away here at our invasion base. During this time the rest of our regiment of boat crews and their new invasion boats had arrived also from Australia.

Japanese planes flew over every day and-night, some very low, but it was plain they were not aware of us being in our secret hiding place. Some were so low we could have shot them down with our rifles, yet we remained quiet.

Our regimental commander called us all together and explained the combat plans to us. He told us when D-Day (our day of attack) would be and how we would carry it out. We were to land on the bay thirty-eight miles up the coast where thought of all possibilities of drifting away off our course and into reef infested waters. I could almost feel our heavy loaded boat being dashed onto the rocks at a high sea. At this point there were a lot of small islands resembling high mountain peaks reaching right up out of the sea about 1000 feet high. We all knew on a stormy night like this the sea was piling up against them in waves 50 to 100 feet high**.** Whenever it lightning we could see the treacherous reefs all around us. Each time they were in a different direction, which told us our boat, was whirling round and round**.**

It was raining harder, they were signaling again from the shore. Rain was coming down in sheets and we could not make out the light message. This

was a night that caused even a Christian to forget his faith and beliefs and start believing in the devils and demons of the deep as the old salt seamen put it. It really seemed as though old King Neptune was on the throne and had his devils and henchmen out patrolling his domain just daring us to trespass on his sea.

A patrol boat came out from shore and told us to move on that the two boats on the beach were beached and would not get off to make this convoy. The patrol boat went back.

We started our engines and as we turned our boat into the storm we found our course on our compass and opened the throttle. Green sea and spray came over our bows in great. gushes as our boat bucked and pitched into the violent sea. We noticed when it lightning we had a foot of water in the bottom of our heavy laden boat. Our bilge pumps were belching and gushing water out the side for all they were worth. We even used our hand pumps to help get rid of the seawater that was piling into our boat. Our coxswain was standing at the helm drenched, water running down his face as if he were a statue. During flashes of lightning his face looked pale and ashen color, his jaws were set and there was no expression in his face. Also during flashes of lightning we noticed a tall reef dead ahead in our path about a mile away which told us we had drifted away off our course while —we were waiting for the other boats. We knew our compass course was no good. We could not recognize the reef; we were lost.

I cannot explain our feeling when we realized we were lost. A sixth sense seemed to keep whispering in my ears, “It’s no use, soldiers. You’re lost with thirty heavy laden boats behind you, all trusting entirely to you to pilot them safely through the dangerous reefs and foul waters on this stormy night.”

I stepped up beside our coxswain and said, “We ‘re lost, aren’t we?” He agreed that we were. Just then he heard a wild violent rushing sound to our part side and saw bright phosphorous in the water not more than a hun-

dred feet from our boat. We were pitching and rocking as if we were in surf water broad-sided. The coxswain swung her hard to starboard and opened the-throttle wide. We were about to crack up on a long shoal of reefs we suddenly realized. Our seaman began flashing the danger signal to those behind to turn and pull away but was too late for the two boats closest to us. We heard them crash over the surf and onto the rocks. We heard men screaming as if they were in a burning building. Our first thought was that they were all killed in the crash or drowned by the heavy sea dashing in on them, but they were flashing us the S.O.S. signal. We knew someone was alive.

Our officer in charge gave orders for all the boats to test the sea for depth and, if possible, to drop anchor. It turned out to be only about 140 feet deep so, we all dropped anchor to lay and wait for daylight. We knew we could not get close enough to these wrecked crews to help them without being dashed against the rocks ourselves. As soon as we were sure our anchors had a good bite on the bottom we decided to sleep.

In the morning the sun came up but the sea was still very rough. We could see the two boats wrecked over on the rocks. Water was dashing over them; they had been dashed over one ran of reefs and were well landed on a flat beach of a small island. The crews had left the boats and climbed to higher ground, where they here cooking breakfast from C rations they had carried from their boats. They sent us a flag message that no one was killed. We could not approach them in the high surf so we went on back to the bay we had left the night before to turn the job of rescuing them over to the shore battalion.

The next night was not a stormy one so we got our loads up to our base O.K. The two wrecked boats and their crews stayed on the reef two full weeks before rescue squads could reach them. They got out of two hard weeks of combat but I guess they would have been happier a1ong with the rest of us.

CHAPTER XVII

D DAY AND H HOUR

D-day, Our day for the attack on Nassau Bay, finally arrived. Everyone seemed a bit tense all day as *we* went about our work of loading our boats. It was the first time in our military career that we were loading for the real thing. We worked our machine guns over good and tested them to make sure they were in smoothest working condition, also our pistols, Tommy guns and rifles. We filled sacks with sand and piled them about four deep around our gun turrets.

Our boat was loaded with infantrymen and their equipment. I looked each one over carefully and wondered what his fate would be, wondered if held get hit before he got ashore or what. They all seemed to lie thinking the same thing. Most of them seemed a little pale but not nervous. They were all huskies and a nice looking outfit—were all fresh troops and had not been in combat yet.

There was a terrible looking cloud coming up from the north. It looked different than any we had seen in New Guinea yet. It was white with black and green edges. It seemed like our D-day had even up-set the elements. For a moment I had the feeling that a greater power than us was taking a hand and was forbidding us to come out on the sea that night.

Our time to fall into convoy had arrived. As we each fell into place and began to move out towards the mouth of the bay, the cloud was on us and a fine mist was beginning to spray into our faces. I could sense trouble from every angle was in store for us that night.

We slid out between the mountains and opened throttles in a straight course out to sea. The storm was increasing the farther away from shore we got. When we reached a point about three miles off shore it was raining violently and the wind seemed to be trying to pile the sea all up in one

pile. Even though we were running in very close formation we could not see the boats nearest us except when it would lightning, and that was very often; almost continually.

Sometimes the boat directly ahead would be away up about 30 feet high on top of a wave then away down in a deep trough about 30 feet below us. Cold chills ran up my spine as I thought of the possibility of two waves coming together and swallowing up a boat while it was in a deep trough or a boat just getting lost. I guess we were not supposed to even think of things like that though as nothing like that happened. We changed our course to a northwesterly direction and up the coast of New Guinea. We were in our first invasion. Everything s seemed so strange. We had been taught from children up to love thy neighbor as thyself, but it was true, here we were out on a terrible stormy sea in a drenching rain slipping up on our enemy.

We didn't even seem like ourselves. At heart we really felt like fighting men. We had a hell-bent mission to fulfill. It had to be carried out regardless of how many men we had to kill to fulfill it or how many of us had to be killed. Orders were orders. We had to land our boats at midnight on the bay where the Jap camp was. We did not know how many there were there or what kind of equipment they would have. We did know though that an Australian officer had gone up to the Jap camp afoot with a group of New Guinea natives to cut the Japs communication lines and get rid of their out-post guards. We heard later that the natives cut the throats of their out-post guards just before mid-night and about a half-hour before we landed.

We plowed our boats through the violent foaming sea on our northwesterly course until we were finally halted by our lead boat. The navigation officer passed the word around that we were just off the Jap camp that we were to invade. We all got our final orders and prepared for the landing. Our load of infantry troops began to stir restlessly in the front of our boat. They began adjusting their field packs and examining their rifles. They were all

standing up and piercing the darkness with their eyes. We were still far enough out to see the shoreline in the dark. Loyd and I examined our machine guns in the dark and rain.

We could keenly feel now that in a very short time we would be using our guns and for the first time it would not be in training. Our coxswain automatically adjusted his pistol belt and pulled closer to his side as he stood like a statue at the helm waiting the order to fall in boat formation and head in to the forbidden shore.

Suddenly I was terribly afraid. I'm glad it was dark so no one could see how I was shaking. When the lightning flashed on our coxswain's face he looked pale and haggard. I felt he was suffering the same experience that I was. I file sure he would sure he would feel better if I got over beside him and talked a little. I knew I would feel better if I talked with him a little before we went on the beach. I didn't know what to say, so I broke the ice by saying, "Aren't you glad you're not a rich man back in the states worrying yourself silly over, finances?" He said he'd be willing to try it right now. Just then we got orders to head for the beach.

I wondered to myself "Is God with us on such a mission or had we got, so far out of <u>His</u> hands that he was a thousand miles a way. I thought of Balaam on the burro when the angel got in his path, then when the angel saw how determined he was to follow his sinfulness he stepped aside and told him to go ahead. I thought maybe God was doing us that way. I felt that the storm on the very hour we were invading resembled the angel that tried to stop Balaam. Yet when God saw our determination, he decided we were beyond saving and was stepping aside to let us pass never to know us again. I wondered "Could it even be possible that Jesus would be present riding this large group of landing boats with us… I thought of how He bore his cross at one time. He was present on that occasion, so why couldn't He be present on this one.

Yes, Jesus was present on these boats even though we were on the horrible mission that we were. He was right there. I could feel His presence in the wind and the violent sea spray that kept dashing in our faces. I was not afraid any more. I was not sinking but sudd6nly felt as though He put out his hand like he did to Peter when he was sinking in the sea. I thanked God for sending us a Savior, a light to follow. All fear had left me. I prayed then that He would save the other boys also from the terrible burning fear as He had done me. I knew very plainly now that I could take whatever was in store for us on this dark forbidding beach that we were to take possession of in a very short time.

Our boats were now plowing the sea water in a line abreast heading for the New Guinea shore. During lightning flashes we could see the shoreline. In the darkness and rain we could see no sign of life ahead. All was quiet on the share and the sea was making so much noise we were sure the Japs ahead could not hear us coming in on them from off the sea. We knew too they would not be expecting us to attempt a landing in such a terrific storm. Things seemed to be in our favor even though we had taken such a beating from the stormy sea.

We were getting very near the beach. I wondered how soon the Japs would open fire. We could see and hear the high surf water ahead of us as the sea was pounding the rocks and beach. A landing seemed impossible in that high surf. Orders were orders though; we were going to land. Our boats bounced through the surf and ground heavily on the rock and sand beach. A landing seemed impossible in that high surf. Orders were Orders though; we were going to land.

Our boats bounced through the surf and ground heavily on the rock and sand beach. A second later the heavy pounding sea hit us again and jammed our, boat into the rocks, gashing a big hole right in her middle. No Japs had opened fire yet. We were greatly surprised about that. Our boats were all being dashed onto the beach and cracking up. We saw there was

no way of getting boats back off the beach in the terrible storm so we had to join the infantry boys and prepare to stay right there until more boats could land later. We very quickly unloaded our wrecked boats and took to the safety of the jungle.

There were boys everywhere in the jungle. Someone brushed past my elbows every second yet it was so dark I knew not whether it was Japs or Americans. As yet there had been no shots fired. We all began to dig in just inside the jungle. I was lost from my boat crew but was with Mike, a close friend, a gunner and engineer on one of the other boats. He was with me when we began to dig. The earth here was soft sand and dug easily. We dug down about four feet and made a hole about five feet in diameter.

It quit storming and raining which made visibility more plain. We could see people moving around. About 3:30 A.M, it seemed to be breaking day as it seemed very light. Japs opened up in the jungle where were with machine guns from close range. Their guns were set up and in action no more than 20 feet from the hole we were in. We knew we could drop hand grenades over there and maybe silence their guns but how we hated to give our position away. We knew our outfit was disorganized and we were to depend on our own initiative.

We decided it would be light in a short while and we had better move back farther away from the enemy machine guns before we did any firing. We took our rifles and pistols and began to crawl. We crawled about 50 yards and came to a hole about the size of the one we had just left. Another of our friends was in it alone. Rifle and machine gun fire was increasing as it drew lighter. We were almost in line with machine gun fire. We could hear bullets cutting through the trees and bushes. Just as I dropped into the hole. I heard Mike groan cry out. He fell into the hole beside me with a foot shot up. He was trembling all over; said he was hit, but he had not looked at his foot yet. He seemed to think he was hit in his back instead of his foot. His leg bone just above the ankle was shot clear in two. He must have fainted for he lay quiet in the bottom of our hole for

about a half-hour.

By this time the Japs had formed a line of fire on our east and south. We were firing back mostly blind firing as we could not see them but knew about where their machine guns were. We kept our heads down as stray bullets kicked sand into our hole about every minute. Our infantry was forming a line of fire and we suddenly discovered that we were directly between our own infantry and the Jap's line of fire. We seemed to be closer to the Japs then the Americans. They battled fiercely for about an hour over our heads. Five Japs jumped up out of a hole no more than ten feet from ours and ran of to one side, where they dropped down behind a coconut log. Art and I were firing all the time at them with rifles, but apparently made no direct hits. Mike was coming to now and was rolling over and groaning. He began begging for water. I believe he was out of his head for he said he was going down to Dr. Allen's tent for medical attention. He must have thought he was back at Our camp.

Japs were closing in very close to us on the south side. There seemed to be a rifle squad crawling on their stomachs no more than 18 or 20 feet away. While we were busy with them, Mike somehow got out of our hole and was hit with grenade no more than eight feet from our hole. We dragged him back in. He was hit bad. He seemed to have small holes all through his chest and face. He seemed to be dying. We didn't have much time to examine him as the Japs were crowding us, We had thrown all our hand grenades at too long a range. We wished we had them now. We could sure fix these eight or nine Japs who were crawling up on us. They had a sniper who was covering their progress. Every time we raised up to fire he fired point blank into the top of our hole. We knew he wasn't in a tall tree or he could get us anyway. We finally located him by a puff of smoke on a large boulder about 80 yards away. I opened fire on the top of the boulder while Art stood up right and fired on the ones crawling up in the grass. We fired in this manner for, I guess, a half hour.

We were out of ammunition. I decided to get Mike's cartridge belt. When I turned back into the bottom of our hole, he was gone. He must have crawled out while we were firing.

We had to leave our hole and get back to where the infantry were. We were sunk if we stayed here without ammunition. We had spent the past few hours ducking back and forth in our hole.

Everytime Mike would groan, Japs and Americans both fired at us. Now we were out of ammunition and didn't know what to do. We saw an American helmet raising up from behind the log where the five Japs had dropped. It was one of our boat bn. boys. He had been hit in his face and neck. He did not get clear up but dropped back down. Some more Japs ran out from even back of us between our infantry and us and dropped in another hole. Two of our boys raised up with large knives and a battle was on. There were two Americans and about four Japs all in the same hole. When the struggle was over our two boys ran back into the bungle towards our infantry. One of them was shot down. Two of the Japs were killed, one with his head nearly amputated by Bert's knife.

About seven o'clock that morning there was a lull in the firing. We used the opportunity to crawl back to our infantry. We knew me were taking a chance on being shot by our own men but we knew we were leaving that hole.

We got back to our infantry line without being hit. The officer in charge immediately took us over. He put us in a rifle squad. We all began pounding the Jap line hard and pushing forward. By ten O'clock we had gained about 100 yards. Our scouts had seen large numbers of Jap reinforcements coming up. We were already out numbered one to seven, we estimated. We knew they would push us out of there and into the sea before night unless we could make a desperate push and gain the left flank which would give us an opening into the hills. Japs had taken over some of our wrecked boats and were using them for pill boxes.

At about twelve o'clock the, Japs must have gotten their reinforcements for they began to pound us terribly. We came to some of our boys who were shot up something terribly. Laying over a fallen log we found Mike's body. Some Jap had finished him with bayonets. I had gone all the way through training and came over seas with him. He and I had spent two different three-day passes in Boston together. Now it didn't seem possible that this mangled and cut up body was his.

We knew the Japs would take this ground over very shortly. Art and I began to dig to bury Mike so he wouldn't be there when they took over. We had to lay on our sides to dig. We worked fast and I sweated more than I ever did before. They carried five more bodies over to where we were - all our boat battalion boys. So we dug six holes, side by side. As far as I know these boys are still buried there.

The newly reinforced Japs, as we had expected, came in strong and pushed us up into the hills. At mid-night the next night another force of our outfit made a landing on the same place where our boats were wrecked. I was never so glad to see anyone in my life as I was to see all those American landing boats coming onto the beach with a whole regiment of infantry troops. While they were unloading we slipped down on the beach and got aboard the closest boat. It felt so <u>good</u> to be on a good boat again. It wasn't storming now so they were all going to get off of the beach without any trouble.

I guess the infantry on the beach was glad they were getting rid of us and we knew we were glad to be leaving that death hole. We knew that the next night we would have another boat issued to us and we would be out on the sea again on a mission. We preferred that as we were trained for that instead of laying in the jungle with the infantry. We hadn't realized that we were so tired until we had the chance to let up and relax. We just laid down and "died". I was sound asleep a minute after I laid down. They awakened us about. four hours later when we were tied up to the tree roots in the jungle back at our base.

CHAPTER XIX

GRIM FACES

After resting for a few hours our company was called out for a formation and talk by our captain. He was glad to see us back and sad for the loss of the few good boys we lost in our first landing. The crews of us who lost our boats were issued new boats so our crew was to run in that night's mission. Our officers decided that we would land the next morning at dawn instead of in the dark at mid-night. Our outfit was losing too many boats in the high surf by landing in the night. We loaded our boats just before dark then were told to get some sleep before we shoved off at 11:30.

We were ordered not to talk to the infantry boys aboard our boat about conditions up on the bay where they were fighting and where we had just come from that morning. All we could tell them was we were going to land them on a beach where there were already American troops and that, we were not going to invade a new beach. They all seemed greatly releived about that.

It clouded up just as we were leaving our base that night and rained on us all the distance up the coast. We had thirty-five lending boats running in this mission, mostly loaded with infantry men and their equipment. We approached the bay where we were to land right after daylight. A terrific battle was in progress. As we came in sight of the beach we could see the air was bright with tracers shooting back and forth and mortar shells were bursting. At first we didn't know which were the Americans and which were the Japs. They were waving flags for us to land at three different places, on both flanks and in the center. With telescopes we discovered that on both flanks they were Japs trying to trick us by getting us to land directly in the muzzles of their machine guns. We landed in the center where our boys were.

No sooner had our boats come to a stop on the beach and our ramps dropped and the infantry boys we were landing were all under cover in the jungle. An officer came out of the brush and ordered us to stay on the beach to take an wounded soldiers. It was a pitiful sight that morning.

Clouds were low and heavy with a steady drizzle of rain. We could see stretcher-bearers coming stoop-shouldered with their loads out of the jungle and down the beaches from both sides. The bearers were starey eyed and pale. Their faces were almost the color of ashes. They all had dark bags under their eyes and deep hard lines in their faces. No one smiled or even said hello to us. It seemed as through we were hauling as many wounded off the beach as we brought new troops on.

When our boat was loaded we backed off and headed out to sea full throttle for about a mile then cut our engine to wait for the rest of the boats. We just watched the battle back on the beach. The Americans were doing a good job of holding them back from getting close enough to fire on the landing boats still on the beach. Our load of wounded boys all seemed to be resting comfortably. There were members of the medical corps aboard so we did not help with the wounded. As the rest of the boats were coming out to join us we heard plane motors. Our hearts stood still as we saw six low flying planes coming in from the sea directly towards us. Art started our engine as Loyd and I jumped to our machine guns.

The planes saw us about the same time we saw them for they swung to the left immediately and avoided flying over us. We saw then they were American planes. There was a rule over there that no allied plane was to fly directly over allied crafts on the water. My heart was pounding like a .50 cal. machine gun as they went past. They went on towards the beach. All six flew clear around the beach and dropped a lot of bombs on the Japs on both flanks. The explosions were so terrific it looked like the whole jungle was blown away. These same six planes made a number of rounds then strafing the Japs with machine gun fire each time. I guess the

Japs all got in their holes for we saw no more fighting back on the beach that morning as we moved out onto the sea on our way back to our base. We were jumpy and alert all the trip back as we expected any minute to see Jap Zeros. We saw none that morning though I guess they were not out on account of the cloudy weather.

The next night was our crew night off and crew no. 2's turn to take our boat so we had a chance for 24 hours rest. We were all up early the next morning to watch the boats come in. We thanked God for each one as we saw their numbers. We knew who the crewmembers were of each one as they came in - almost last was out boat plowing the water with her bow high in the air. We all went down to the beach to watch them unload the wounded men. Some were shot up terribly—one in particular was hit thirteen times. His bullet wounds gaped open large enough to stick a lead pencil in each one but they were not bleeding much. He said he wasn't suffering any but was awful tired and wanted so bad to sleep. He said he wished more than anything else to lay down and sleep for eight hours.

We tool our boat again the next night… I and what a night! We have only the Lord to thank for us being here today to tell about it. We had word from our scouts before we started on this mission that Japs were trying to land a large convoy of landing boats on the same beach we were to land on**,** that there was a terrible battle all that day and our air corps was there blasting them also. We had not heard the results yet when we shoved off with our loaded boats at 11:30. This was a very pretty tropical night and would of been so pleasant under any other circumstances, but everyone was tense again—seemed like we could sense something terrible that was inevitable and bound to happen.

We arrived at the beach at dawn. I can never forget that morning. The beach looked so different. All the palm trees and coconut trees taiere blasted to the ground. There were wrecked Jap landing boats and baroes, dead bodies mashed up on the sand and a terrible smell of burnt powder. The air was heavy with gun smoke. They were battling farther back from

the shoreline and tired grim faced boys of the medics were carrying wounded infantry boys out to our boats as the last time we landed.

Somehow that morning I was more nervous about air than the machine gun fire on the shore. We got off the beach without any mishaps and were just getting under way headed out to sea when suddenly our boat began to fly to pieces in splinters, then zooml A Zero roared over our heads, then another and another—eight in all dived on us from out of the sun each straffing us as he had us in his sights. They circled and came over again and again making four circles straffing us each time. I guess they would of finished us if it hadn't been For American fighter planes coming on the scene at the right time. We used our machine guns on the Zeros each time they came over but never shot a one of them down even though it looked like our tracers went directly through them each time.

Our boat was shot so full of holes we had to use our engine bilge pumps and hand pumps to keep from sinking. We were lucky in not getting our engine hit. Some of the boats had oil pipes and feed lines shot in two and some had crewmembers hit. Three boats were shot up so bad they turned and headed for shore and just barely made it.

I had a terrific headache and was so sick to my stomach (so were the other two members of our crew) that we took turns at the helm and the bilge pumps and somehow (I can't recall just how) we made it back to our base. We all three went to see our company doctor and found out we were coming down with malaria fever. My head felt as big as a barn and was swimming, our eyes felt like coals of fire and we were all so dizzy we could hardly stand. The doctor had us all feeling O.K. again in a couple of days and back to duty.

We carried on in the same manner making a landing each night for about two weeks then we started using this beach where we had been battling for over two weeks as our base. We had the Japs whipped off of it and the fighting was doing on about fifteen miles farther up the coast.

Our first night that we were off duty on this new camping place, about 50 of us tried to sleep under one large tent. it was pouring down rain and the tent leaked. I don't believe there was a one kept dry all through the night. All the dead bodies had been buried but there was that terrible smell of dead bodies all about the place. I guess part of the smell came from dead birds and other animals that had been killed by bomb explosions.

CHAPTER XX

JAP ARTILLERY

This new camp we just occupied turned out to be a terrible place. I would rather be out on a land commission then stay in camp for the Japs had the range on this place with their heavy artillery guns and all the while they kept sending big shells over on us. Some of them lit in the water, some on back in the hills and some right in our camp. They kept us busy getting in and out of our fox-holes. The infantry were working hard to get the location of one big navy gun they captured in the Philippines. It was a mystery all the time. They would never fire it at night which made it impossible to locate it but in day time they used it continually.

One night our company received a message from an artillery outfit farther up the coast that they were being shot to pieces in daytime. They were asking our outfit to send them five boats to move them before sun-up as the Japs had the correct range on them and had dropped shells on them all that day. Our boat was one chosen for this job. We were to run in a regular Formation first with a convoy of boats and pick this artillery unit up after our mid-night landing.

We were not under fire this landing and nothing eventful happened, at least we didn't notice anything. We were too much worried about completing our mission. We had to carry out. . . . . We knew this place. We had to go to rescue the artillery guns was directly in range of the Jap artillery. We knew they were not liable to fire at night, yet we knew there could be a first time for everything. We had received our orders of how to reach this spot.

So as soon as we were unloaded we took off along with three other boats, on our rescue mission. Our boat was leading. We headed out onto the sea and back down the coast". We could hear constant blasting of heavy artillery over in the jungle as we skimmed the water not far off the shore-

line. As we neared our destination we flashed a letter towards the little bay and received an immediate answer. They flashed us a message to come in slowly as there were treacherous reefs to content with.

We put our seaman on the bow to watch for them and in the darkness we could see them only about four feet above the water surface. We slid slowly in to the shore line directly to where the light was flashing. The water was too deep to shove our boat onto the ground so it would stick there so we let our ramp down on the bank the best we could, which proved almost fatal to us when they began to load their artillery guns on. They backed a big gun in with a tractor and as the tractor backed up on our ramp to shove the gun farther back into our boat the extra weight crowded us down enough to let water gush into the open front end. It seemed like the entire Bismark sea was coming in at once. We began yelling at the guy on the tractor to pull off. His tractor was making more noise than we could..

Finally he saw too what was happening; threw in forward gear and pulled off. We pulled up our ramp and backed off with our boat half full of water. I can't see how it stayed out of our engine as it was waist deep in front of our bulkhead. We were thankful for one thing then, that was that we did not sink as we all felt dead certain we were going to. We worked for a full half-hour getting all of that sea water pumped out before we could pull across the bay and land the big gun in a new place. Our four boats made three trips across the bay in moving this artillery outfit. All the while we had the feeling we were being watched by Japs.

Our artillery farther back of us was firing steadily directly over us. Their guns would boom sounding like the entire mountains were being blasted down. Then we would hear the explosion of the shells away over in the hills west of us. We wondered if every shell we heard explode was exploding on Japs. We knew our infantry patrols were up in there close where they were landing, sending reports back.

I would not want to trade places with those infantry patrols at all. They got caught several times by our artillery shells falling short and bursting directly on them, causing heavy causalities. They took New Guinea native guides with them on these excursions. It seemed like a native could smell a Jap. Several times they met up with Jap patrols. These Japs would be dressed in green, just the color of the jungle and lying still in the tall growth. There would be no sound yet these natives would suddenly stop and refuse to go on. They would say, "Smell Jap-man., "Close.", "Go no more". It did no good to try to persuade him or force him. It was then up to the sergeant of the patrol to hunt for the hidden Japs. Sometimes they revealed their own position by firing, but usually they had to be almost stepped on before they would come into action.

I am getting somewhat off my story here.

Our night was fairly well spent by the time we had this shot-up artillery unit safely landed and hidden in a new place. We had thirty miles to cover yet back to our base and it was beginning to break day. We were tired and very unnerved after our night's work. We knew the Jap planes would be out at daylight.

I could hardly stay awake. I knew I should stay alert and close to my machine gun. We had sand bags stacked all around our gun turrets about two feet high as a guard against strafing. We did not miss our guess any that morning. It had been daylight about an hour. Suddenly splinters began to fly off of our boat then a Zero zoomed over us. We got on our guns and got them in action. Six Zeros dived on us and strafed us one at a time. Our four boats were firing our eight guns. Our tracers seemed to go directly through the Zeros—yet we could not shoot a one down or even cause them to waver off their course.

We decided then that unless we hit the pilot it was impossible to bring one down with our 30 cal. guns. As these planes dived on us the second time I noticed my sand bags cutting away. Sand was hitting me in the face, chest

and stomach. I was sure I was hit with machine gun lead but didn't have time to look.

While the Zeros were circling to make their third attack I noticed our coxswain at the helm. His lower jaw was dropped and his face was white and expressionless. His short stubby hair was standing straight out in every direction. He looked like any one but himself. I know I looked the same to him. Neither one of us said a word. Water was bushing in the bottom of our boat, was already up above our bilge boards and the boards were afloat. It always excited me worse to see the bilge boards begin to float than it did to be under fire. I crawled out of my gun turret and began to look the pumps over. They were working good and to full capacity yet we were filling up with water.

We peeled off from the other three boats and headed for shore. The Zeros dived on us again. I was not in my gun turret this time and am glad I wasn't as they shot the mountings away and let the gun drop to the bottom of the boat. I looked at our coxswain. He was standing with two spokes of the helm in his hands. Our seaman was not hit but his sand bags were all shot away, too. He was having trouble with his gun. It was hot and I believe he had a ruptured shell lodged in the chamber. We were out of action all the way around and seemed miles off the coast. Our heavy diesel engine was running wide open and our boat was vibrating terribly.

I cannot explain how my feelings ran right then. Really it seemed like everything had failed. There seemed no way out or any earthly way possible of ever getting to shore again. We all got the same thought at the same time, I guess, for we all started to fumble with our life belts and took back at the other boats. We saw the Zeros dive on them again. We saw the steady stream of tracer fire going up from the boats but no effect on the planes.

Our boat had a lot of water in it and filling up fast. 'We looked at the rough ocean water. It looked awful deep and seemed to be a terrible place to meet our ends.

Suddenly, as if awakening from a terrible dream, I could see the entire picture of how we were going to get to shore safely. I grinned at our coxswain. His face suddenly lit up and he throwed his head back and just laughed as he held up the two spokes of his helm that he was still holding. We didn't even look to see if we were going to-be attacked again. We didn't care.

In my own mind there is not a trace of doubt that Jesus came aboard our little crippled and shot-up boat. I could feel his presence closer even than if he were another member of our crew. He did not come to save our boat, it was us that he came to save—that was very evident. The depressed feeling among us three disappeared. Our boat wasn't filling up as fast as it seemed at first. I could see very plainly how we could guide our boat by holding the cab and by using the hand pumps along with the mechanical pumps it seemed we should be able to reach the closest shore.

We landed with a sinking boat on a bay where we had landed infantry men a few days before. They were still mopping up the last of a Jap outfit there. This place not 50 yards from where we landed our boat we found a Jap boy in a bush. He had been dead three days we decided. Bodies don't last long in the heat of New Guinea. Some of the boys were busy burying fallen Japs. We left our wrecked boat and decided to look around behind the American lines. We followed a path up into the jungle hills. It was where the Japs had had their camp. They had deep dug-outs in the side of' the hills facing the sea. Their gun emplacements, dug-outs, fox-holes, rest places and look-out points were all close together, yet you could not see more than one place at a time as the Jungle was very dense here. We did not find anymore dead Japs here but we could sure smell something dead.

There was evidence that there had been Japanese women in this camp. We found many things that would be used by women only, though I can't see who would take women to a dirty, stagnant place as that was. There was thousands of dollars worth of Jap equipment laying around everywhere.

We stayed on this bay all that day. During the noon the infantry boys brought in a Jap prisoner. He was wearing..... thes and had an ankle wound. He was depressed and sick. He would not try to talk. I guess he could not understand English.

American landing boats from another regiment landed here at mid-night that night. We went aboard one for a ride back to our outfit.