

A MARINE GOES TO WAR
in the
Battle of Iwo Jima

SEMPER



FIDELIS

Second Lt. Craig B. Leman, USMCR
1943-1946

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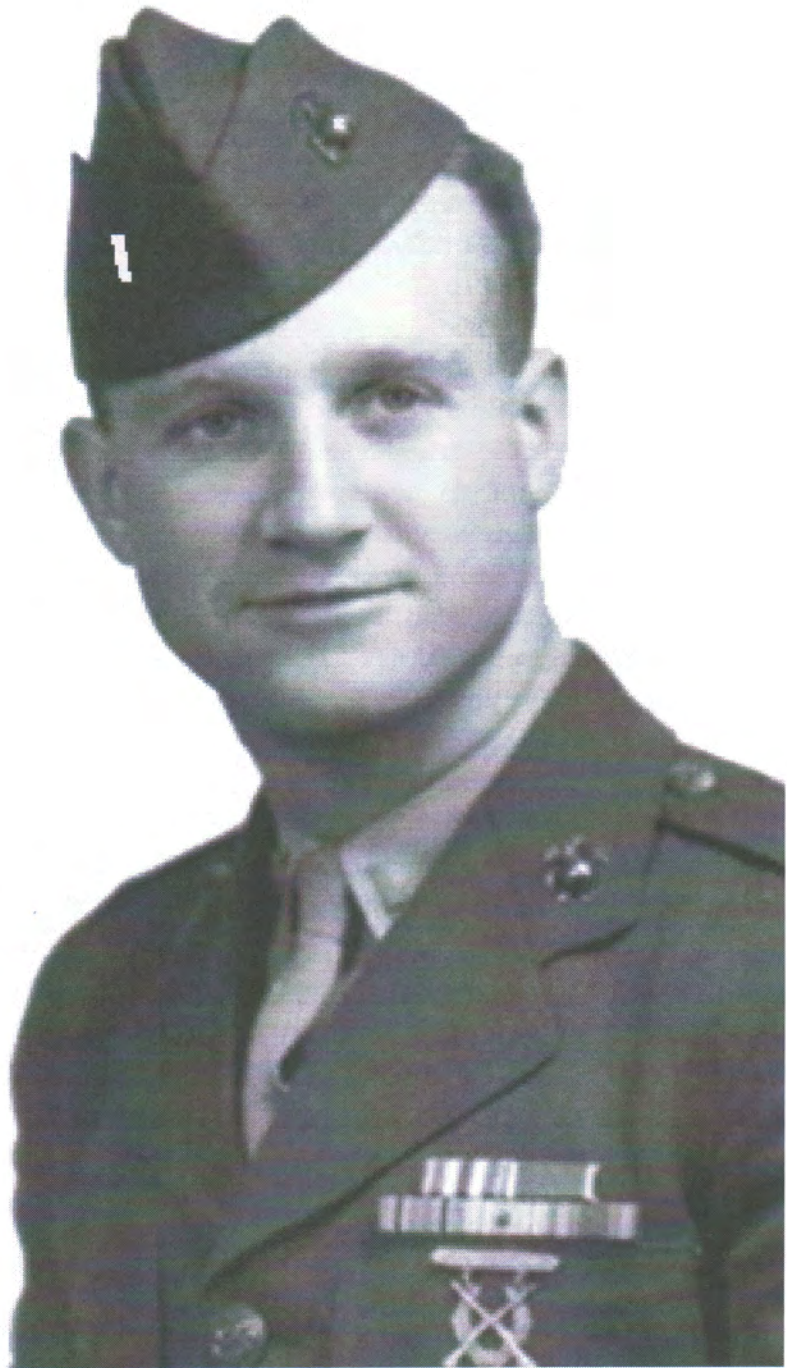


Fidelis

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The photograph of Camp Tarawa and all photos from the Iwo Jima operation are from the collections of the National Archives and were taken by military photographers.



Second Lieutenant Craig B. Leman, USMCR, 1946.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The first version of this short memoir, *Recollections of Craig B. Leman*, was submitted to the Oral History Project, U. S. Marine Corps at Parker Ranch in World War II. May 15, 2000.

Lois Hyndman, widow of my classmate at SOCS, John Hyndman, who survived and recovered from a serious head injury at Iwo, wrote a splendid chronicle of John's Marine Corps career and suggested that I contact an Iwo Jima veteran, Marvin Veonee, who had edited her memoir of John.

I sent Marvin a copy of the memoir, and he suggested we expand it and print the memoir in a little book that I could give to family and shipmates and also donate to military and university repositories that collect WWII memoirs. Marvin served on naval gunfire team 11 with the 1st Battalion, 28th Marines supporting the battalion with gunfire during the day and star shells at night. During the last ten years, he has generously and patiently helped many of us Iwo survivors write up our experiences.. I thank Marvin for his expert editorial assistance.

*Craig B. Leman
Corvallis Oregon
September 2011*

Note: MV after a citation indicates that it was written by Marvin Veronee, CL= Craig Leman.

Prologue

I was born in Chicago, Illinois on March 12, 1923, an only child. My father worked for a bank; my mother was a piano teacher. I graduated from high school in 1940 and attended The University of Chicago. Although I was headed for the pre-medical track, I felt that I should put that on hold while I fought in the war. After considering the other services, I chose to volunteer for officer training in the U. S. Marine Corps, as I felt it was an honorable service, that the duty would be challenging and rigorous and full of hardship and danger, and that I wanted to do my part and be with the troops who had to do the toughest job. I felt that I would be a better Marine at twenty than at eighteen, and I thought the war might last ten years or longer.

I enlisted in June, 1942 and continued in college for the next year. In July 1943, I was called to active duty in a V-12 unit at Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois, where I served until January 1944. During this time, I had a constant feeling of guilt as I thought of my fellow Americans who were fighting in the Solomons, in New Guinea, in Africa, and then Sicily, while I was studying on a college campus in a comfortable protected environment. We had a self-derogatory song:

Take down your service flag, Mother;

Your son's in the Navy V-12.

The Army is noted for courage,

The Navy is noted for guts;

But we can tell our grandchildren

We sat through this war on our butts.

(Refrain)

V-12, V-12, Victory in 12 years or Fight, Fight, Fight!

V-12, V-12, Victory in 12 years or Fight!

Etc., etc. Wish I could remember all the verses.

I thought of resigning from the V-12 program and asking for active duty in the Pacific, but my friends and family encouraged me to stay with the program, assuring me that there would still be plenty of combat when I graduated. The pictures of the invasion of Tarawa

in particular made me want to be with the front-line troops. I did my best to prepare for it by continuous physical training, concentrating on running, wrestling, and swimming. In a "strength" test based on push-ups, pull-ups, jumping jacks, etc., I came in first in the combined Navy-Marine unit. I climbed walls and trees and ran through thickets to prepare myself for the rigors of warfare in the Pacific; my model was Lt. William Hawkins who won the Congressional Medal of Honor at Tarawa for his single-handed onslaught against the Japanese fortifications. My physical gifts were not very imposing compared to many of my comrades who included All-Americans and national champions in various sports, but I was determined to make the most of them.

My main college sport had been swimming, and I ran relays on the track team as well. The University of Chicago was still in the Big Ten, as was Northwestern. At Northwestern I went out for wrestling. There were some first-class wrestlers from Nebraska and Oklahoma A. and M. on the squad, and I learned a lot from them in grueling encounters in practice. I earned the 155 pound slot on the varsity wrestling team.

Boot Camp

Two days before the start of the season I received orders to report at Parris Island, S. C. for recruit training. We went alphabetically; the list ended between Alvin and Marvin Grubaugh, identical twins from Nebraska who had never been separated before. They pleaded with the Captain to be allowed to stay together; he refused. I never heard whether either or both survived the War.

My boot camp experience was unique; my platoon was composed half of officer candidates, half regular enlistees. I was proud to qualify as an Expert Rifleman.¹ After boot camp I spent two months at Parris Island as an Assistant Drill Instructor. At this stage of the war, the planners had to cope with an expansion in the Fleet Marine Force coupled with a high casualty rate of junior officers. Instead

¹Marine boots spent many hours on the rifle range under the critical eye of instructors. At the end of the training, they shot for a score that would qualify them as Marksmen (Score 260-291), Sharpshooters, (292-305) or Experts. (Score 306-340). MV

of awaiting our turn to go to the regular Officer Training School at Quantico, Virginia, some 400 of us were sent in May 1944 to a Special Officer Candidate School at Camp Lejeune, N.C.¹

This class eliminated part of the regular curriculum, such as military law and sea duty; instead, we concentrated on amphibious and infantry tactics. Our instructors had been through earlier campaigns against the Japanese, and we spent the next four months in the field. The training was rigorous and demanding. I was pushed to the limit of my endurance on some of our training missions; many trainees collapsed during our hikes in the brutal heat. A fair number were washed out and sent out to the Fleet Marine Force.² The survivors were commissioned on September 30. Half of us wound up at Iwo; the other half at Okinawa. Most of us were wounded; fifty were killed in action.

With 200 others, I traveled by train for five days from the East Coast to Camp Pendleton, California. Few of us were able to go home on leave before shipping out. It was terribly hot on the train. Some of the men managed to phone their families when the train would pass near their homes -- strictly against security regulations, but humane, as the friends and relatives would greet them at the station. I remember one town in Texas where the train didn't stop, but slowed as it passed through the station. The Marine jumped off the first car to meet his family, walked with them through the station as the train slowly passed, and then boarded the caboose after two minutes with them. He was killed on Iwo. One of my best friends was from New Iberia, Louisiana; the train passed near his house but didn't stop, and I remember trying to console him. He too died on Iwo.

At Camp Pendleton we spent about five weeks living in tents and undergoing further training in the field. We were not given leave, as we were awaiting transportation overseas. My mother rode the train to Los Angeles for a brief visit; my father was unable to take time from work.

¹Camp Lejeune is in the coastal plain of North Carolina and extends from Jacksonville to the Atlantic Ocean on both sides of the New River

²Men who washed out as officer candidates reverted to their rank of Pfc. , MV

Overseas duty

In November 1944, I sailed from San Diego to San Francisco where we spent a night in the Bay. One of my comrades lived in Oakland; he could see his house from the ship, and predicted accurately when his wife would turn out the light to go to bed. Of course she had no idea he was aboard the ship. He too died on Iwo.

Next morning we joined a convoy carrying several thousand Marines for the Fourth Division on Maui and the Fifth at Camp Tarawa.¹ Initially I was sent to Maui, and, after ten days of inactivity, sent to Hilo where I joined a group of replacements organized as Shore Parties. These were mainly draftees -- a mix of young teen-agers and married men in their thirties who seemed quite old and paunchy and out of it. They had been through boot camp and had had very little combat training. Poorly prepared for combat, they were destined to spend a week on the beach-head unloading cargo from landing craft and then be fed as replacements into the decimated front-line units.

I traveled from Maui to Hilo on a small ship and reported to Captain Puckett who was in charge of the Shore Party camp near Hilo, where I was assigned to the 27th Replacement Battalion. The Fifth Division sent for several Lieutenants, and two of my friends became rifle platoon leaders with First Battalion, Twenty-Seventh Marines. Bob Holmes and Dunbar Jones were both killed early in the Iwo campaign. It was damp and rainy most of the time at Hilo from November through December. During the day we took the troops on hikes and training exercises, practiced at the firing range, and tried to teach small unit tactics. We did a lot of boxing.

Evenings I hitch-hiked to Hilo where I spent a lot of time in the public library, reading and listening to the collection of 78 rpm records, which had some priceless performances by pianists like Olga Samaroff-

¹Camp Tarawa was built by the Second Marine Division when they returned from the bloody invasion of the atoll of Tarawa in the Gilbert Islands. The camp was located on part of the Parker Ranch, extending from the foothills of the Kohala Mountains to desert lands in the rain shadow of Mauna Kea. Hilo was about 60 miles away. The Second Division left the camp in May 1944 to invade Saipan. The Fifth Division occupied the camp in September 1944 and trained there for the invasion of Iwo. In April 1945, the Fifth returned to Camp Tarawa and began training for the invasion of Japan. They left in September 1945 for occupation duty in Japan. MV

Stokowski, Alexander Brailowsky, and Rachmaninoff. I believe this library was destroyed in a tidal wave just after the war. I hope the contents were salvaged. I don't remember much else about Hilo except for the docks where we embarked late in December when the Fifth Division came down from Kamuela to sail to Pearl Harbor. We had one amphibious exercise with a landing, but I don't remember much about the details.

At Pearl Harbor we stayed at least a week or two, berthed on the ship. I was on a large troop transport, the *USS Hansford* APA 106 with most of First Battalion, Twenty-Seventh Marines, C.O. Lt. Col. John Butler (KIA March 5). When not on watch or attending training sessions, we could visit Honolulu, where I swam at Waikiki Beach, visited the library, wandered around the city, and, in the evening, went to the Marine Officers Club at Camp Catlin to drink beer and swap stories with my colleagues.

It was a wild macho society -- a noise level from dozens of separate conversations, increasing hourly, punctuated at intervals when someone would climb onto a table, jump and grab an overhead rafter, and start chinning. Everyone else would stop talking and count in unison. The pace would slow as the man neared his limit, and he would be jeered and booed if it were less than fifteen. More than that would call for applause, and then conversations would resume.

Voyage to Combat

After about two weeks at Pearl Harbor, we sailed in convoy for "Island X" and not till then did we know for sure that our destination was Iwo Jima, although most of us were reasonably sure of this. One of our tasks had been censoring mail, and we were not permitted to mention that we were in Hawaii. We were supposed to cut out references to pineapples and grass skirts in the name of security. A major security lapse had occurred already. The Honolulu Advertiser carried a front-page aerial photo of U. S. planes from Saipan bombing Iwo; the shape of the island in the photo matched our training map of "Island X." None of this really mattered since the Japanese, who were certainly not stupid, knew we were coming.

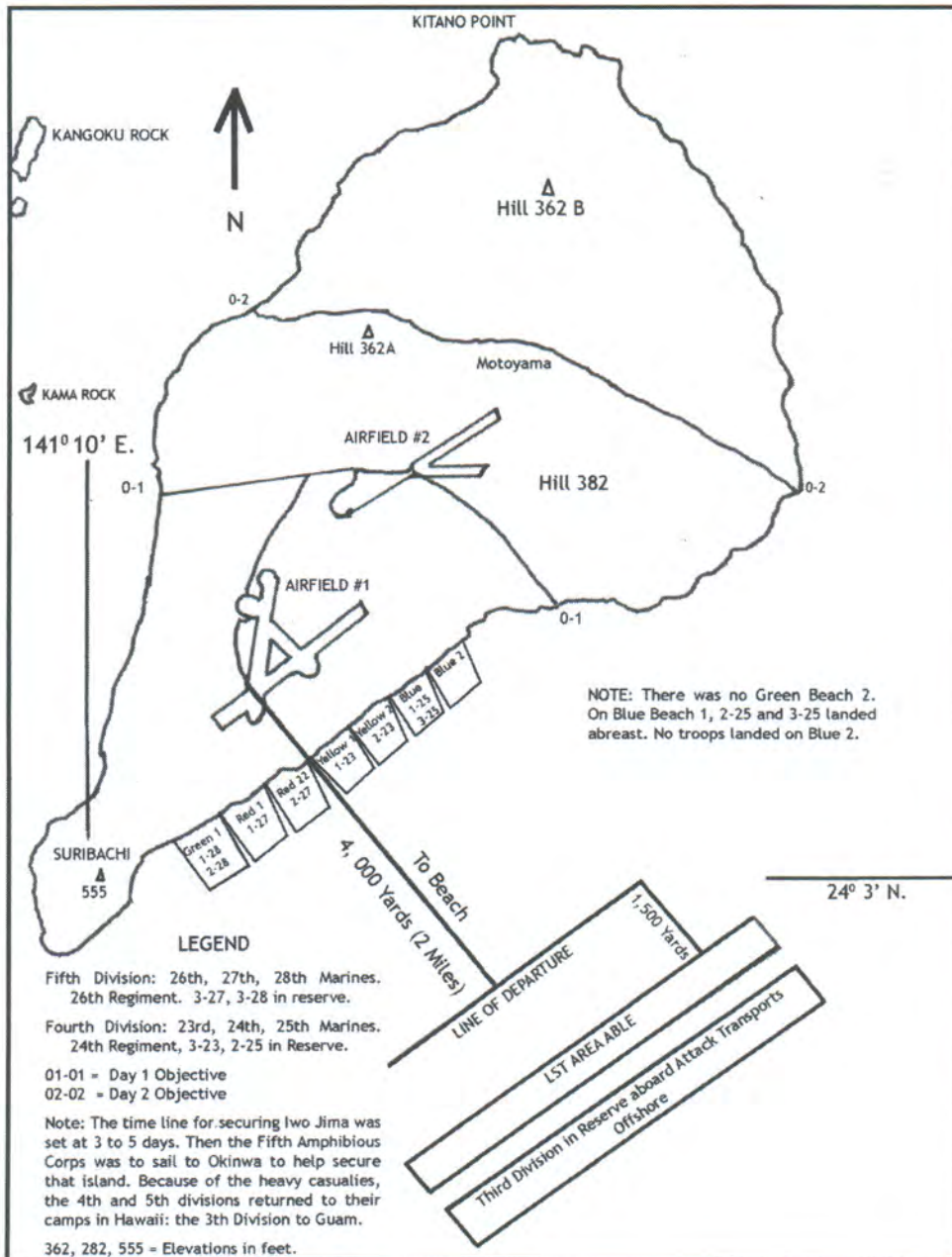
The *Hansford* was a relatively new ship; there were several gunnery practices when small pilotless planes guided by remote control simulated Kamikaze attacks on us while the ship's anti-aircraft crew

blazed away, usually to no effect. I remember the great cheer that went up when finally one of them scored a hit, and the drone went down in flames. We did calisthenics on deck several times daily to keep in shape, went over scores of aerial photos and photos from submarines that came in by courier craft every few days to keep us up to date on progressive changes in the fortifications being built by the Japanese in preparation for us. We had to stand sentry duty in the hold every third day. I spent many hours talking to the specialists among us -- the demolitions men, the artillery forward observers, the air-liaison officers, the communications experts, the surgeons -- trying to learn as much as I could about the complexities of amphibious warfare and weapons. I played a lot of chess and read some books, including *War and Peace*, which did not do much for my morale. I became friendly with the chaplains, and played the small portable pump-organ for the religious services -- Roman Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish.

We stopped for a day at Eniwetok, where we were allowed to swim in the ocean over the side. Three days before the invasion, we stayed overnight off Saipan. The last two days before the landing were marked by frequent briefings, as we were told that the pre-invasion bombardment had not been as successful as hoped, and that resistance would be heavy. We had lots of new photos to study. Most of the men were calm and fatalistic. Some were obviously in a state of near-terror. Only a few seemed enthusiastic about wanting to close with the enemy.

Red Beach 2

I slept little the night before the landing. We got up at about 4 A.M. and had a traditional breakfast of steak and eggs and oranges and then went topside to watch the bombardment. Dawn revealed our battleships and cruisers pounding the island which was enveloped in smoke. Later waves of carrier planes homed in on the beaches and on Suribachi. My outfit was in the eleventh wave, to land on Red Beach 2 at 11 A.M., two hours after the initial landing. We went over the side down the cargo net into an LCVP, a small flat-bottomed Higgins boat with a ramp, about 9 A. M. and cruised around the rough ocean till landing time. Several of the men were seasick, and I recall feeling sad at the sight of regurgitated steak and eggs and oranges, knowing they would be hungry later this day.



The Landing Beaches. 19 February 1945.

This sketch map shows the landing beaches on which the 4th and 5th Marine Divisions landed and the two airfields which were the objective of the invasion. What it doesn't show is the topography of the island. The area from the line 0-1 to the foot of Suribachi was fairly flat with sandy soil much different from the rugged terrain on the north end of the island. Most of the vegetation had been destroyed by months of aerial bombing and the pre-landing naval bombardment.



LCVP s Loaded with Marines Head to an Iwo Beach

The “signpost” in the bow of the LCVP identifies the destination of the craft. The landing officer at the line of departure used it to make sure the craft was in the right wave headed to the right beach.

As we headed in to the beach to land, we began to take fire from shore defenses. We could see the rounds hitting the water around us and hear them overhead. I discovered that the coxswain was taking us in to the wrong beach; after threatening him with my pistol, I was able to get him to change course so we could land where we were supposed to. The boat grounded at the water’s edge, the ramp dropped, and we ran out, formed a line at the water’s edge, and moved inland a few yards as planned. A big Japanese blockhouse on the beach was still smoking; four dead Marines lay in front of it. They had taken it by hand with grenades and a flame-thrower. The front lines were about two hundred yards ahead of us. We found some shallow foxholes, presumably dug by the Japanese, and set up a line for defense in case of counterattack. We found some other members of our shore party and established where the

supply depots would be. Then we began unloading the supplies of food and ammunition that the landing craft were bringing in.

Shore Party

Japanese mortar and artillery fire became quite heavy as the day went on, and we found ourselves pinned down in our foxholes. Fortunately the sand was soft and crumbly; high-trajectory shells tended to go deep and bury themselves before exploding so that



Marine and Japanese Dead.

U.S. Marine and Japanese dead give mute testimony to the fierce fighting by the Marine infantrymen to conquer the island fortress of Iwo Jima.

shrapnel effect was minimized, and a direct hit was necessary for a kill. Unfortunately there were many direct hits, and the sight of blasted, dismembered bodies made a lasting impression, as I had not seen things like that before. I noted large numbers of Marines dead, prone on the volcanic ash, headed for the first airfield, shot through their helmets. I decided that the Japanese were much better

shots than we had been led to believe. Later I thought of this scene whenever I read historical accounts describing opposition to the original landing¹ as “light” and casualties as “low.”



Our Shore Party at Work.

This photo was taken by a Coast Guard Photographer about D+2 (21 February 1945). I am the man, facing left, standing to the left of the man with the carbine strapped over his shoulder. We had formed our shore party squads in a chain to pass ammo from the landing craft to the supply dump ashore. I saw the camera man and turned away, embarrassed to be one of the few people not actually working. CL

We were able to keep going, and my shore party platoon had only a few casualties during my time. For the first night on Iwo, we moved inland to the row of foxholes parallel to the beach. The front-line troops had already secured the beachhead five hundred yards deep right up to the edge of the first airfield (Motoyama I). My men were paired off, two to a hole. All night the Japanese defenders fired away at us with mortars and artillery, traversing up and down our

¹The Japanese intentionally allowed the first waves to get ashore, but from about 0930 on D-Day, enemy fire on the beach was deadly and continued, for several days. MV.



Bad Weather on D+1 and 2 Made Landings Hazardous.

LVCs and Ducks broached in the heavy surf created bottlenecks on the beaches. The work of our shore parties was critical in unloading supplies. It was longshoremen's work

lines with heavy shells. We could hear them coming toward us and then passing by, only to return minutes later repeating the process. The ground shook when they dropped around us, and the cries of the injured were heart-rending. Everyone has his own way of coping with such things. I had decided not to pray because I was fatalistic about whether prayer really helped in diverting a round once fired.

Years later, I read the memoirs of a British Chaplain at the Battle of the Somme who asked the troops to join him in prayer. A soldier looked him in the eye and said "Why should I pray? Bill prayed and got 'is face blown off." At any rate, I feel that at times like that people need all the help they can get, and, if praying helps, people should pray

Next morning I reconnoitered before dawn and was distressed to find all my men sound asleep instead of on watch as they should have been. For the next three days we struggled to unload the landing craft in spite of frequent shelling and some terrible weather, which

caused high surf and beaching and wreckage of many of the landing craft. There were also many casualties from the front lines who passed through the beach en route to the hospital ships off-shore. We had cold, rainy weather for three days, and then the skies cleared.



Wreckage Litters the Beaches from Suribachi to Blue Beach 1.

The Beachmaster assigned to a beach had to organize the movement of supplies and men through this chaos during the first days ashore. The shore parties set up the supply depots above the beach and did the “donkey work” of unloading landing craft and moving supplies inland.. For the first few days all this work had to be done under fire the high land to the north in this photo and from the base of Suribachi to the south.



Wreckage and Supplies Pile up on Iwo's Beaches.

This photo shows the narrow beach and the steep sand terrace that the assault forces had to climb in order to advance on the airports. Supplies piled up on the beaches had to be moved up these terraces for the fighting men as they continued the attack. Marston mats, steel mats that could be hooked together to form a road way, were laid down to keep tanks, trucks, weasels, and men from floundering in the deep sand.

Suddenly we saw our flag atop Mt. Suribachi, less than a mile from our beach. At that point we knew that we were winning and were not going to get kicked off the island. There had been one Japanese air-raid at night, but it was clear that the Japanese would not be able to send in reinforcements to their garrison which was resolved to go down fighting to the end.

Platoon Commander

On March 3 I received orders to go to the front lines. With nine other lieutenants with whom I had trained, I reported, and we were sent to different outfits in the Fifth Division. All ten of us were killed or wounded in the next few days. I was sent to H Company, Third Battalion, 26th Marines. There were at that time two officers



The First Flag Lowered as the “Famous” Flag is Raised.

A small flag was raised over Suribachi by Lt. Schrier’s patrol about 1030 on 23 February. A much larger flag, obtained from an LST on the beach, was raised in the early afternoon. Joe Rosenthal took his famous flag photo seconds before Private Bob Campbell caught the action showing the small flag in the foreground coming down. Both flags are now in the Marine Heritage Museum in Quantico. Official Marine Photograph.

left out of seven. I was made leader of first rifle platoon, down to 22 men from 47, with a Corporal acting as platoon leader. The men were well-trained, magnificent troops who knew their jobs, were loyal to each other, and easy to deal with. Half of them had been parachutists and had fought the Japanese in the Solomon Islands.

When I joined the Battalion, the Commander, Major Richard Fagan, had told me:

I'm sending you to H Company. They have done a marvelous job up there. You've hitched your wagon to a great big star. Now go up there and see if you can do them some good. Next time I see you I hope you're still in one piece.

Fagan had been commander of the First Marine Parachute Battalion in the Solomons and had a reputation as an excellent troop leader when he was sober, which apparently wasn't often enough. Before Iwo he had been Provost Marshal for the Division. On D plus 3 the Third Battalion, 26th Marines, had lost its top-ranking officers and the Sergeant Major in one blast during an attack. Sent up to take over the Battalion, Fagan had shown himself fearless and competent. The men told me he was a fire-eater and mean, but he was not afraid and they were glad he was in charge.

The platoon I joined had been in the lines for three days and had just lost the last of their Sergeants, a splendid Marine named Walter Allen, former parachutist, later to be killed in Korea. An "old man" of perhaps twenty-five, he was called "Pappy" by his men. For attacks, he would place his men carefully in covered protected positions and then move out alone, going carefully from from one rock to another, seeking to identify enemy positions and draw fire himself, so that his troops could spot and bring under fire the hidden enemy positions. Then he would bring them forward when it was safe to do so. Pappy's luck had run out the day before, when he was shot through the chest and evacuated, coughing blood. Fortunately, he got well and returned to duty after Iwo. Needless to say, his men loved and idolized Pappy.

My platoon was dug into some foxholes in rough, rocky country, resting, while another company which had just passed through their lines was attacking. The leader was Al Garcia, a replacement lieutenant



I Company Command Post, 26th Marines

I had trained with. He was working hard, moving his troops forward carefully, under heavy fire from concealed Japanese riflemen and machine gunners. Al was killed later that day. I went up and down our line to meet the men in my platoon and spent some time together with the squad leaders who told me about the outfit and what had happened to half the men who had been killed or wounded. It was warm and sunny. I had a bad sore throat and a cold, and I remember leaving my sopping handkerchief out to dry in the sun while we were getting to know each other. I was impressed with the intelligence and spirit and morale of the leaders, who were all PFCs except for the Corporal; they averaged twenty-one years of age, which was just my age.

Soon we got word from the Captain that we were needed in the front lines again as a gap had developed between two battalions. He chose my platoon to tie them in. We moved forward through some rough shell-pocked terrain and came upon a flat open area about 300 yards across, with a rocky escarpment on either side of it. With an assault squad attached, we had only thirty men-- too few to occupy and hold safely such a broad front. The depleted companies in the rough country on our flanks were unable to extend themselves further, so we had to secure the gap. It was getting late in the day, and we were under continuous fire from both sides, as well as from in front. We dug in, siting our mortars and machine guns, and putting out barbed wire in front of our line. The last of the original lieutenants, John



Steam Heated Foxhole near the “Sulphur Mine”.

The two Marines in the foxhole are training their rifles to the left, perhaps providing covering fire for their comrades.

Phelps, was killed and one of my squad leaders, Ben Parra, wounded as we dug in for the night.

Iwo is a volcanic island, and we found that we were in a hotspot. Two feet down, the earth was so hot that our bodies couldn't stand it, so we had to settle for shallow foxholes that night. A bonus was that we could have hot food by dropping a ration can (punctured so it wouldn't explode) into a hole and dig it up fully cooked five minutes later, the only time I had hot food while I was in combat.¹ Every day we could dig down six inches farther as the heat dissipated, so after five days we had reasonably safe foxholes.

Night fell. We were in two-man foxholes about thirty feet apart. I shared mine with the Company runner, a young Marine named Tony San Guedolce, who kept the field telephone to his ear to keep in touch with the Company Commander some two hundred yards to the rear. We shared two-hour watches. I slept for two hours while he was on watch and manned the phone; I took over when he woke me,

¹The men in the front lines survived on K Rations and C Rations supplemented by a D Ration chocolate bar. Most never saw a field kitchen or a hot meal. MV.



A Runner Using a Two-way Handy-Talkie Radio.

To carry and use this heavy object in combat was a real challenge for a platoon leader.

It was quite dark, except for flares that our mortars fired at intervals of a few minutes; they would go off several hundred feet above us and drop slowly by parachute, illuminating the battlefield fairly well, so that we could search for Japanese infiltrators. I was relieved to see a helmeted head in each of our foxholes. These were experienced troops who knew and relied on each other. I thought back to our first night on the island when my green troops all went to sleep on watch.

The night was uneventful, but dawn brought fairly heavy rifle and machine gun fire from the rocky outcrops in front of us and from our flanks. Several men were hit; a corpsman tending them was hit.



Battalion Aid Station below the Sand Terrace on the Beach.

The Corpsmen on Iwo saved hundreds, more probably thousands of wounded marines. They had to improvise treatment (note the sticks holding bottles of plasma), close wounds, stop bleeding, and evacuate the wounded rapidly to hospital ships or transports with large sick bays.

Stretcher bearers came up for them and were also hit. Providentially, a thick fog enveloped us and we were able to evacuate the wounded. We had given them shots of morphine and dressed their wounds, after pouring sulfa powder into the openings. We received orders that we were to advance after an artillery barrage and tank attack on the enemy-held terrain in front of us. The tanks came up and blasted away at the ridge line in front of us for an hour or two and then drew back. A hail of bullets greeted us as we rose from our foxholes, and we received word that our attack was called off. It was obvious that the Japanese were underground and re-manned their fortifications as soon as the artillery and tank shelling stopped, and we were too few to mount a successful assault against fortifications we couldn't see.



LCVP alongside Hospital Ship. *USS Samaritan*.

The crew of the *Samaritan* prepare to hoist stretchers of seriously wounded marines aboard their hospital ship

We were stalled in this area for the next four days; every day we repeated the process of bombardment, attempted advance, and stalled, after a few casualties. We received a few reinforcements, had some nighttime grenade duels with Japanese infiltrators, and waited for resolution of the impasse. During the fourth night in our heated flat we received orders to make an attack at dawn, with no preliminary bombardment, hoping to catch the enemy by surprise. We passed the word along from foxhole to foxhole and, at first light, we rose quietly from our foxholes and advanced into the rocky highlands in front of us. I carried a small portable two-way radio to stay in touch with the Company Commander. It was eerily quiet till our lead scout spotted a Japanese sentry, sitting apparently asleep on the ridge overlooking our foxholes. He shot the sentry. The noise apparently alerted a large detachment of Japanese soldiers who were in a big cave under the ridge. The cave had at least two openings, and swarms of Japanese poured out of both, firing and throwing grenades at the men in our two

squads who formed lines around each opening. Several of our men were hit; the others fired back and threw grenades at the Japanese. The battle-wise Corporal, Nick Hernandez, took off his helmet and thrust it up over the top of the ridge; it was promptly riddled with bullets. Another seasoned campaigner yelled, "Christ, there's hundreds in there! Why don't they send up a whole company instead of a couple of squads?" We hung on, throwing grenades over the ridge to roll down on the Japanese below; theirs fortunately sailed over us, rolled down, and exploded in the floor of the gully behind us where they couldn't hurt us. By radio I explained our predicament to the Company Commander who promptly sent up a half-track -- an armored truck with tractor-treads that mounted a 75 mm gun. We placed this on the ridge to blast away at the Japanese defenders who were already in trouble from our grenades, and this took care of one entrance.



Flame Throwers in Action on Iwo Jima.

Meantime Fred Sisk, who led the squad attacking the other entrance, had managed to drive the defenders back into the cave, threw grenades after them, and then Don Simpson fired the flame-thrower into the cave to finish them off. In this short, sharp fight, we lost perhaps three wounded, but it seemed clear that we had taken out a large unit of their defense. We received orders to continue the attack.

As we were getting organized, I heard and felt a tremendous explosion. Standing about fifty feet from the cave entrance, I turned toward it and saw a large part of the ridge rise up into the air, spread like a mushroom cloud, and then begin to descend. I hit the deck, cradling my rifle and the radio under my body as the earth began



Bulldozer Blade Mounted on a Tank.

to fall back on us. My back was pelted with clods and rocks. As I felt myself being buried, I tried to rise to my elbows and knees. The rain of debris stopped and I was able to get out. There was a carpet of rocks and earth for yards around the crater where the cave had been, with dead and injured Marines trapped under rocks and partly buried. I had been so close to the explosion that the heaviest fragments had gone out over my head and only the lighter ones had struck me. I got on the radio, asked the Captain to send stretchers, and told him we needed reinforcements, as our weapons were full of earth and wouldn't work. He brought our reserves forward, and we dug out the injured and evacuated them by stretcher. After this disaster, my platoon had eight men left. There were about a dozen men from a platoon of the First Battalion on our right who had survived the explosion.

The Captain committed the reserve platoon, With this force we moved about four hundred yards through the rough terrain knocking out several Japanese riflemen and a machine gun as we went, losing only two casualties till we came to a wooded valley sloping toward the ocean. As we moved into this area, we began to take casualties from small arms fire. Trying to spot the source, I took a round between my left elbow and my chest, barely breaking the skin of both but doing no real damage. Not so lucky was the leader of our assault squad, a former Raider named Clyde Anthony whom we called "Gung Ho." He took a bullet through the hip and was evacuated. We dug in at the foot of a cliff just inside the valley, and took increasingly heavy fire as we dug in. Sisk was shot through the abdomen as he was putting out the barbed wire in front of our lines; he died of his wounds two months later.

We fashioned foxholes as best we could in the rocky ground and slept poorly as Japanese soldiers engaged us with grenades and tried to get through the barbed wire. We received orders to attack in the morning after a brief preliminary mortar barrage. I remember my runner standing and reading his Bible just before we jumped off. We drew heavy rifle and machine gun fire immediately and found ourselves pinned down, unable to see our dug-in adversaries. The Captain sent down an armored bulldozer to clear a path for tanks, but the crew and driver were promptly wounded by accurate enemy fire. The terrain was too rocky and steep for tanks.

I discussed our situation with Nick Hernandez, the surviving Corporal who had introduced me to the platoon. He was a young Mexican-American from L.A. who had been a parachutist in the Solomons and was a magnificent fighter. He had told me "only my faith in God has kept me alive through all this." Seconds later a bullet penetrated his helmet and he was dead.

The Captain told me that orders were for us to keep pressure on the enemy, as the outfits on our flanks were also trying to push ahead. My men, experienced in such matters, told me that the enemy fire was too heavy for an advance. I told them that we had our orders, that I would go first, and they should cover me with fire and follow me. I moved out, crouching and zigzagging toward a bit of cover a few feet ahead. I heard a loud crack, felt a sharp pain in the side of my head and sensed myself blacking out. I realized I had been shot,

decided I was dying, and thought “Poor Mother and Dad” who were losing their only son. Next thing I knew, I found myself on my hands and knees, looking at blood on the rocks in front of me, realized it was dripping from my head, and heard my men yelling at me to take cover. I rolled to my left to get behind a rock where I would not be such a splendid target. My men fired at the enemy positions in front of us so that I could crawl back without being hit again. Our corpsman took off my helmet, stopped the bleeding from the scalp wound with pressure, poured sulfa powder into it, and applied a dressing. My helmet had a hole in it, but I put it back on, got on the radio, and told the Captain what had happened, reiterating that we could not advance against that wall of fire. He told me to keep our positions and engage the enemy with rifle fire, and that I would have to go to the hospital. I told him that I should stay with the unit until I was replaced, and he agreed to that.

Some hours later, Paul Carpenter, the Company’s First Sergeant came forward to replace me; I showed him our positions, thanked him, said good-bye to my men telling them I hoped I would be back with them soon, and walked back to Headquarters where I told the Captain that I wanted to return to the outfit after my wound was treated. He agreed, and sent me back to Battalion Aid Station. That night, because he did not want to take a chance of infection with a head wound, the battalion surgeon sent me to the Fifth Division hospital. I was put in a vehicle with two other casualties -- a combat fatigue case who was ambulatory, but disoriented and in a panic state, and Bill Lowell, a close friend -- a fellow lieutenant who had been shot through the abdomen and was unconscious on a stretcher. We bumped along all the way to the beach where we were told that the hospital ship was full and we would have to go to the Division hospital back near the airfield. By the time we got there Bill was dead.

I was not impressed with the security arrangements at the hospital and refused to surrender my pistol, telling the Corpsmen that we should have some defense against Japanese infiltrators. I was allowed to keep it; it was my father’s Colt 45 M1911 from World War I, and I carried it in a shoulder holster.

A surgeon débrided my wound; at that time I had no idea what was involved, but I became a general surgeon after the war. Proper care -- called débridement -- is to meticulously clean out such a wound, removing foreign bodies and devitalized tissue, and dress the

open wound with gauze. This was done with some local anesthesia, and then I was sent to a large hospital tent and given a cot to sleep on.

Forcing myself to stay awake previous nights had been a torture. Conversely, in the safety of the hospital, I found it impossible to sleep. At about 0100, I got up to smoke a cigarette. As I sat on the edge of my cot, the Navy corpsman on duty came over to give me a light. His face was familiar, and we found we had made the trip to Iwo on the same ship.

I revealed that Bob Holmes, a friend of mine, had led a platoon in his battalion. He told me Holmes was dead, and said, "That guy deserves a Navy Cross. He could have been alive right now in a hospital if he'd wanted to quit the first time they got him. He's the fightin'est man I ever saw, Holmes didn't get hit till late in the day. The company was trying to get across the airfield, and it was tough going. The Jap machine guns covered it nicely, and the Jap 47s knocked out our tanks as soon as they got up on the field. The assault platoons had to snoop-and-poop across, and they caught hell from knee mortars and snipers and every other damned thing. Fifteen minutes after we jumped off, back comes this Holmes, carrying his Tommy gun."

I grinned as I recalled how Bob got his prized Thompson. He got a Navy pilot drunk, and, while the flyer was in a jovial mood, bought his new .38 revolver for ten dollars. The pistol he had traded to a Marine Captain for the submachine gun.

The corpsman continued: "He had a bullet through his calf, and it was really bleeding. I put in powder and bandaged it up and asked him if he could walk back to battalion (aid station) to be evacuated. He looked at me like I was out of my mind. I can't fool around with that stuff; I've got a platoon up there," he said, and before I could answer him, he crawled out of our shell hole and walked away.

"We could see his platoon about a hundred yards ahead, and they were really catching it. Half an hour later, back came Holmes again, only this time he's really hurt. A mortar shell had landed right next to his shell-hole, and the concussion got him. His nose and mouth were bleeding, and he seemed to have trouble breathing. He had some shrapnel nicks in his tail too. I fixed him up as best I could and told him to be quiet until we could get a stretcher party



DEDICATED TO THOSE MEN OF THE SPECIAL OFFICER
CANDIDATES' SCHOOL SEPT. 1944 WHO GAVE THEIR
LIVES IN THE SERVICE OF THEIR COUNTRY
AT IWO JIMA AND OKINAWA

ALLEN, ROBERT WILLIAM
ARMIGER, JOHN OLIVER
BAKER, WILLIAM LEONARD
BITTIG, JOHN ARTHUR
BRUNDAGE, ROBERT PETER
CABRALL, FRANCIS PAUL, JR.
COHEN, ERWIN ROBERT
COOK, THOMAS CLAYTON
CRANE, DUNCAN McLAREN
DAHL, JOHN MANLY
DAVIS, DICK LEON
DeMANGE, EWING ANTOINE
DIEFFENDERFER, JAMES HERBERT
DUNNING, CHARLES WILLIAM
ECKERT, JOHN ANDREW III
EHRISMAN, RICHARD DEAN
EVANGELIST, NICHOLAS CHARLES
FALCON, LAWLESS CONSTANT
FANSLER, JACK WILLARD
FISHER, WILLIAM PARR
FUSSELL, MILTON HOWARD III
GAILLARD, EDWARD McGRADY, JR.
GARCIA, ALBERTO
GINSBURG, DANIEL

HARRINGTON, CHARLES EDWIN, JR.
HARRIS, JAMES DUDLEY
HAWKINS, WILLIAM BLAIR
HENDERSON, EUGENE
HOLMES, ROBERT DUNCAN
HUTCHCROFT, LESTER EARL
JONES, DUNBAR
KALISH, NORBERT
LAMPART, HARRY BOWMAN, JR.
LEACH, EDMUND LYONS
LOUVIERE, CLARENCE JUSTIN, JR.
LOWELL, HARVEY WILLIAM
MASON, QUINTIN
McCREARY, KENNETH GRANT
MILLER, LLOYD LYNN
MUELLER, DONALD EDWARD
MUIR, WILLIAM MATTHEW
MUNROE, RICHARD POUNDSTONE
MURPHY, DEAN GILROY
PACE, SIDNEY BRANSFORD
RAY, STANLEY
SAPERSTEIN, SAMUEL
TODD, GEORGE KENNETH
WOODWORTH, HENRY DRESSES, JR.

that wasn't busy already. He didn't say anything, but half an hour later he just took off after telling me, 'Three strikes and you're out.' He returned to the front line and his platoon, lugging his Tommy gun.

"Three hours later, after we'd crossed the airfield, he got it. A shell landed right beside him, and he never knew what hit him. I saw his body when we moved up to the CP at the end of the day—at least they said it was his body. He was the fightin'est man I ever saw.

"I really feel bad when I think about him getting it the third time. Especially after he said: 'Three strikes and you're out' just like that without laughing or anything. Like he thought his number was up." The corpsman shook his head and turned to go. He didn't say anything more, and I couldn't.

I had nightmares, but was pretty well exhausted and slept well. My head hurt, but the pain was tolerable, and I was glad to be alive. Five Japanese infiltrators came into the area that night; one was killed by a sentry, and the others escaped. I remember one wounded Marine who was unconscious and looked dead; several hours after he went to the surgery tent, he came back, alive and kicking, pink in color instead of gray, and cursing a blue streak. It made a deep impression on me, and I think it was the event that pushed me into a career in surgery. Whenever I went to the surgery tent for débridement, I could see what was going on around me; I felt deep emotions when someone who appeared to be dying was salvaged and given a chance to live.

After a few days I was transferred to an army field hospital on the island, and then, a few days later, taken to the new airfield, which the Seabees had made from the two Japanese airfields. There I saw my first B-29, which had crash-landed on its way back to Guam after being hit by flak over Tokyo. I was amazed at its size. I flew to Guam in a C-47¹ hospital plane and remember the acres of revetments storing dozens of huge B-29s -- quite a sight to behold as we prepared to land. I was sent to Fleet Hospital 111 and assigned to an officer ward. I remember looking in a mirror for the first time and being amazed that I had a black beard. I ran my fingers through it and discovered that,

¹The C-47 was the workhorse of the transport service during WWII. Pilots of the Army Air Corps, the Marine Corps, and the Navy flew this plane into and out of small airports all over the world. Many proclaimed the C-47 and its civilian version, the DC-3, the best plane ever built. It was the backbone of commercial aviation for years after World War II. Some are still flying today. MV



The First B-29 to Land on Iwo Jima. 4 March 1945.

Men of the Third Division surround the huge plane. After refueling, the B-29 returned to base in the Marianas. It was lost over Japan two weeks later with the loss of all hands.

when I removed the black ash from Iwo, the beard was red!! I was glad to shave it off and to take a shower. I also managed to see my wound for the first time, using two mirrors, and I was distressed at its appearance. I asked the doctor when he was going to sew it up. He off handedly replied that it wouldn't need it. I was somewhat distressed, as I didn't want to go through the rest of my life with a bright red, wet gash in my head. He explained that wounds contract as they heal, and the scar would gradually be covered by my hair and become invisible. He was correct.

learned that it is good to explain things to one's patients, to make sure they understand what is happening, and to give them a chance to find out. The morale of the men in that ward was superb; there was always someone worse off, and they helped each other through the rough spots. I have often regretted the increasing trend toward private rooms in hospitals; the spirit that pervaded that ward was a spur to recovery that I have almost never found in civilian hospitals.

After a week or so, I was healed enough to leave the hospital and go to the transient center to await transportation back to my outfit. By this time, the battle for Iwo was nearly over, and, with several dozen other convalescents, I was sent back to Hawaii as a passenger aboard the *HMS Reaper*, a small British aircraft carrier. We were assigned cabins with linens and electric lights, and shared the officers' mess and social hour with our British hosts. The mutton from New Zealand, bananas from the Philippines, rum and stout -- these represented a welcome change from our rations. I found a piano and spent hours at it for the first time in two years.

We made the passage from Guam to Hawaii in just ten days, compared to the five weeks it had taken us to crawl from Pearl to Iwo in convoy. During the time at Pearl, I visited friends who were recovering in the various naval hospitals, swam at Waikiki Beach, and drank at Camp Catlin. I surprised several close friends who had heard I had been killed. I still felt a bit weak and depressed, angry and unhappy over the loss of so many good men. By good fortune I had fallen in with Gerald Averill, a career Marine who was a bit older than me. He was Executive Officer of my company and had been hit before I joined them. He was a solid character, a real Gung-Ho Marine who had come up through the ranks, been a parachutist, had fought in the Solomons, and was a true professional.

We returned to Hilo in the middle of April, rode in trucks across the island, and shared a tent at Camp Tarawa. I remember passing Bordelon Airfield, named in honor of the only enlisted Marine to receive the Medal of Honor at Tarawa. There were just a few of us in the cold wind-swept camp. We hiked around a bit in the pastures to try to get back in shape, read a lot, and slept a lot. The remnants of the Division came back from Iwo about a week later, and I was delighted to recognize some of the men I had fought with. Another officer from the original Company, Tex Beckett, also returned to duty and moved into the tent with Averill and me. Only three men from the original platoon had not been hit; eight others who had been wounded returned to duty, and we began to get replacements to fill out the ranks as we buckled down to train for the invasion of Japan.

We received replacement officers; the Company Commander was promoted, sent to Battalion, and replaced. I suddenly found myself a veteran instead of the new-kid-on-the-block. We began a rigorous training program with long hikes with packs and field maneuvers. It was spring, warm and sunny instead of cold and wet. Soon we were back in shape and feeling good again. My wound drained blood and pus for the next year, as my helmet liner rubbed it, but I put up with it as it caused little discomfort. We wore our hair short, so I was able to keep it clean and dry most of the time. I learned a lot from Averill and Tex who, at times, tended to be a bit patronizing, since I was green and they were both First Lieutenants, parachutists, and veterans of the Solomons.



Camp Tarawa. 1945.

A Company "street" showing typical quarters of men in Camps overseas. The pyramid tents, about 20 x 20 usually housed six enlisted men in each. The foothills of the Kohala Mountains are in the background.

Our regimental area had rows of pyramidal tents. Our latrines were fairly large framed structures with cold water showers nearby. We had outdoor movies nearly every night, with newsreels usually over two months old. We slept on cots with blankets but no sheets. There was an officers' mess with good food. However Aver-

ill and I ate only supper there. We had a can of pineapple juice for breakfast and skipped lunch altogether. We wrote letters home nearly every night, turned in by 9:30 and got up by bugle call at 5:45 for calisthenics and a run before breakfast.

Most of the officers met for drinks late in the afternoon, but Averill and I avoided this although we belonged to the wine mess so we could give our monthly allotment of hard liquor to our men who were allowed to buy beer but not hard liquor. I am afraid most of us smoked cigarettes, as we did through the Iwo campaign. There was a package of four stale cigarettes of brands like Chelsea, Fleetwood, Marvels, and Wings in each K Ration and C Ration. As a depression child, I was averse to throwing things away, and I became hooked -- a habit I would not break for the next twenty-five years.

I visited Kamuela only when we had parades and ceremonies, and I visited Hilo once to accompany a party of enlisted men for two days of liberty. I dined at General Rockey's house there -- the only time I ever saw him. I had hoped to revisit the public library, but I was required to stay at Headquarters to be available to deal with any emergencies that might come up.

I had almost no contact with townspeople or ranch personnel. For recreation I would run across the pastures. We marched to and from the beach twice for overnight stays with marvelous swimming in the ocean off a deserted strip of beach with several small boarded-up vacation cottages and a coral reef with myriads of beautiful little fish we could see with our diving masks. This beach became the site of the Mauna Kea Hotel. The reef is gone.

On a week-end in July another Marine and I hiked straight across country to the top of Mauna Kea. We were blessed with good weather, carried only light packs, rations, and water, and passed through a variety of terrain -- plains, woodland, scrub, and finally tundra. We encountered Hereford cattle, wild pigs, turkeys, goats, and beautiful birds, but no people. We slept out two nights and made it back just in time for Monday morning calisthenics. My field shoes were completely worn out from the volcanic rocks near the barren summit. The altitude made it hard; we were so exhausted that we crawled the last quarter-mile to the top..

Most days we spent on maneuvers in the ranch land between Kamuela and Mauna Kea -- marching, deploying, and simulating

combat. We practiced night warfare and fired our weapons regularly at the range in the desert area between Kamuela and the coast. We knew that we were to invade Japan, but the exact site was not revealed to us. We used live ammunition on some of our maneuvers, and we lost a man in my company to a defective machine gun round that dropped too low during overhead fire. Fagan was determined to show everyone that we were the toughest outfit in the division, so he sent us on long marches that proved too much for some of our men; even some of the officers and the top sergeant had to drop out. Most of us did not grieve when Fagan was replaced after his penchant for bottle-pounding became intolerable to his superiors.

By early August we were in top shape and went to sea for a practice landing on a Maui beach to rehearse our landing for the invasion of Japan. My regiment was given a mission to land two days before the projected invasion to simulate a major attack on a different beach and trick the Japanese into committing their reserve division. Returning next day, we were marching from the coast to Kamuela when we got word that the United States had dropped a bomb with the power of 20,000 tons of TNT that had destroyed a whole Japanese city, and that the war would soon be over. I remember thinking that there must be a mistake, perhaps 20,000 pounds of TNT, but certainly not 20,000 tons. There was no mistake. Over the next few days we continued training, but watched the news.

The end of the War produced jubilation among us. There was a tremendous outburst of drinking and high jinks. One by one the latrines were blown up with TNT pilfered by pranksters among us, till there was only one left, guarded day and night by armed sentries. We soon received orders to close down the camp and embark for Japan. We were trucked to the artillery target range where we formed a skirmish line several miles long with men a few feet apart to sweep the range to find and mark each unexploded shell with a flag. The engineers came along behind us to inactivate or to blow them up. We flushed a few fierce-looking wild boars who ran ahead of us for a bit and then charged through our line to keep their territory.

On the day we departed, we were trucked past Honoka'a with our packs and weapons and then by narrow-gauge railroad along the

coast to Hilo. We rode in open freight cars that normally carried sugar cane across trestles overlooking the ocean -- an unforgettable farewell to the most beautiful and fascinating place I had ever visited. I was glad the war was over, and that we would not have to fight our way ashore, as I felt I had used up my share of good luck at Iwo.

Our trip to Japan was uneventful. We sailed into the fortified harbor of Sasebo on Kyushu September 22 and occupied the bombed-out city for a month, patrolling the area around it, disarming or destroying all Japanese weapons. I visited Nagasaki and was appalled at the extent of the destruction of both cities. I was distressed by the way the air war had affected the Japanese civilian populace and by the realization of what had happened to the thousands of civilians of all ages consumed by the conflagrations from the fire-bombing, as well as those affected by radiation. Yet I could not quarrel with the decision to use the A-bombs, in view of the apparent intent of the Japanese to fight to the death, as they had on Iwo and Okinawa. For many years I have thought about this. I am glad it is behind us, that we have made our peace with the Japanese, and that my daughter Hope taught children in a school in our target city of Kagoshima where I might have been killed -- in which case there would have been no Hope. Ever since it was founded, I have been a member of International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War, trying to make sure that no one ever uses nuclear weapons again.

After a month in Japan, my regiment was detached for duty in Palau where there was a 30,000 man Japanese garrison to be repatriated. To deal with them, our regiment, the 26th Marines, was detached from the rest of the division in Sasebo and shipped to Palau, arriving late in October. A small U.S. Army unit occupied the Northern Palaus in September 1945, but there were problems with renegade Japanese deserters hiding out in the bush and concerns that their main forces might cause worse trouble before they could be repatriated,

Palau is a fairly extensive archipelago of over 2,000 islands scattered over an area of about 20 x 3 miles. The topography is unique. The southernmost island, Peleliu, is coral, the northern isles (Koror, Babelthaup *et al*) are volcanic. The coral islets in between Peliliu and Koror were uninhabited, heavily vegetated, and surrounded by lagoons within the extensive surrounding reefs. The best airfield was Babelthaup. The Japanese regarded Palau as the capital of their Pacific empire and

between WWI and WWII developed Koror into a city of 30,000. The area was heavily fortified. The US took Peleliu in September 1944; our First Marine Division was decimated in the process. The 30,000 armed Japanese troops in the Northern Palaus were neutralized by daily air bombardments; the Palauan civilians were all interned on Babelthaup, starving, since we were blockading and trying to starve the Japanese out.

Our Third Battalion was sent to Koror, the capital, which had been thoroughly bombed out. The interned Japanese Army forces were on Babelthaup, separated from Koror by a quarter mile across a lagoon (the bridge and causeway had been destroyed by bombing).

We left the Japanese on Babelthaup alone and patrolled the other islands, destroying all the defensive installations (coastal defense and anti-aircraft guns of all calibers), hunting down and imprisoning Japanese deserters who were hiding out in remote areas, and capturing smugglers from Babelthaup who were engaged in black market trafficking with some of our troops. In 1991, I returned there to spend three months as their surgeon and to marvel at the changes that had taken place.

As our long-term veterans began to leave for the States, I was promoted to be operations officer for the battalion. I enjoyed the patrols and minor skirmishes in Palau, and applied for a commission in the regular Marine Corps, thinking I might be sent to China. However, after several months of the peacetime Marine Corps, I felt that I would be better off going back to the United States to resume my education and probably go into medicine. I withdrew my application, returned to the U. S. and was discharged from the Marine Corps at Great Lakes, Illinois on March 1, 1946. On the day of my discharge, the physician x-rayed my head, discovered some metal under the area that had been draining, and generously gave up his lunch hour to carve out the foreign bodies with local anesthesia. It has given me no more trouble, and I have been grateful to him ever since.

I returned to The University of Chicago, finished my pre-medical course, fell in love, got married, went to Harvard Medical School on the G. I. Bill, and eventually became a general surgeon. From this perspective, we received excellent medical care at Iwo, considering the difficulties of such a battle and the state of medical knowledge at the time. This was the first major battle in the Pacific

Theater where whole blood for transfusion was available on the battlefield; I saw it given to casualties on the beachhead before they were evacuated to hospital ships. Penicillin and sulfa were the only antibiotics available. We used sulfa for everything, but penicillin was in such short supply that it was reserved only for penetrating wounds of the brain, abdomen, and chest. Vascular surgery such as repair and replacement of blood vessels had not yet been developed. Some of us, who died or lost limbs, could have been salvaged by present-day surgery. We had faith in our medics, who did the best they could for us. The Medical Corps provided good care when we were sick, anti-malaria pills in Palau, and good field sanitation. Halfway through the Iwo campaign they sprayed the island with an insecticide that we hardly noticed but which killed the flies miraculously.

I honor the men I served with and mourn those who didn't come back.

ADDENDUM

When I re-read this narrative in 2011, I realized that most of an essential element of the story is missing: the men I served with, the nearest thing I ever had to brothers. In an effort to atone for this omission, I offer these thumbnail sketches of some of my comrades.

Gerald Averill was four years older than me, born and raised in the Maine woods. Enlisted in 1941. After boot camp at Parris Island, he volunteered for parachute troops, went through OCS at Quantico, served in a Marine parachute unit in the Solomons, and then joined the Fifth Division. As second-in-command of H Company, he was shot through the thigh on Iwo two days before I joined H Company. We met on Guam while recovering from our wounds. It was not a happy occasion. He came up to me and said, "I heard you say you are from H Company; I never saw you before." I replied, "I joined it March 3 to replace Charlie Cona." He shot back, "NOBODY can replace Cona." After that our relationship improved, very gradually. As we met other people from our platoon, Ave mellowed, and we decided to share a tent with **Tex Beckett**, a parachutist from Texas who had survived a knee mortar blast on Iwo and now was leading the assault squad of flamethrowers and demolitions experts.

Ave was short and solid; Tex was tall and solid. Both were First Lieutenants who had fought in the Solomons in 1943 with

the parachute battalions. Since there were no good targets for parachutists in the Marine Theater, the parachute regiment was disbanded and the elite survivors used as cadre for the new infantry divisions. We were friends for life. Tex became a coach, teacher, and rancher. Though I never saw him again, we kept in touch by letters, and I talked to his widow by phone regularly till she died. Averill and I visited each other when we could. He retired as a Lt. Colonel after a splendid career, including a tough hitch during the Korean War, and trained Hmong forces in Laos as a CIA agent during the Vietnam war. We named our sons for each other. Craig Averill was killed in Vietnam, and Craig Averill Leman died of cancer in 1998. Ave is dead.

Corporal Nick Hernandez was the senior survivor in the platoon I joined. Nick was a Mexican-American from LA. a Golden Gloves boxer, another parachutist who had been through the Solomons. We fought together for only five days, but I still remember everything about him, what he did, what he said, and how skillfully he did his job. His best friend and side-kick was **Ben Parra**, an Indian from Arizona, also a parachutist. I spent two hours talking with him and then six more hours while we were trying to plug the hole in our front line. He was shot through the arm as we were digging in, and I never saw him again. Thirty years later I got in touch with him. After over a year in the hospital and another year as a cowpuncher on his reservation, he went to school on the GI bill, became a coach and school teacher, married and raised a family. I remember the eight hours we were together clearly after 66 years. Another man in their fire team, **Tom Williams**, had been hit and evacuated earlier in the campaign. Tom recovered, lives 40 miles from me, and we get together when we can. **Fred Sisk**, another brawny parachutist from Warsaw, Indiana, was an active fire team leader, always in front of his men. He was outstanding during the assault on the cave, heaving grenades and leading the charge. He was shot while out in front of our lines laying barbed wire my last night with the company, and died of wounds two months later.

Don Simpson, another parachutist from Waterville, Ohio, was our flamethrower. He was in the foxhole next to mine while we were in our "heated flat" and passed the word from foxhole to foxhole about our dawn attack. That morning, after flaming the

cave, he was banged up and buried in the explosion that followed. Evacuated and hospitalized, he recovered and rejoined us. **Gene Frost** from Michigan was a Solomons veteran who was always up front. Somehow he made it through the campaign unscathed -- one of the 3 out of 47 who lasted the full 31 days. After Iwo, as we rebuilt the platoon to invade Japan, I chose Frost and Simpson to be squad leaders. They performed splendidly. Late in July I was asked to recommend candidates for officer training. I thought that these two superb Marines (who happened to have wives back in the States) would be excellent officers. I hated to give up two experienced squad leaders, since we were scheduled to lead the attack on Japan, and we needed their skills. I took them aside and told them of this opportunity (which would send them back to Quantico, Virginia and spare them the deadly risks of invading Japan's homeland). They asked for a day to think it over. Next day they told me that they would stay with their squads and go to Japan with the rest of us. We have been lifelong friends. Don and his wife still live on the family farm in Ohio, and we keep in touch by phone. Frost died several years ago.

During the year of intensive training before Iwo, my best friends were **Alan Lowry** from Decatur, Illinois; **Clarence Louviere** from Louisiana, and **Bill Lowell** from Arizona -- classmates in the Special OCS at Camp Lejeune. Just before we sailed for Iwo, we agreed that whoever of us survived would visit the families of those who hadn't to tell them about the events of our last year together, since none of us had been home. Lowry was injured, but survived. Lowell died, after telling me of Louviere's death. On returning to the U. S. after the war, I hitchhiked from the coast to Tucson and then to New Iberia, Louisiana before going home to Chicago, in order to spend a day with Lowell's, and then with Louviere's family, telling them everything I could remember about their sons.

Dick Sandberg, also a platoon leader from Iwo, was my fellow student at The University of Chicago; we took the train to Great Lakes Naval Hospital regularly to visit Captain **Rea Duncan** who was recovering from horrendous wounds from Iwo. He and Sandberg had been in the same hospital in Hawaii. I didn't know Duncan well, but he was Averill's close friend. When he had arrived

at the hospital ship, he was so near death that he was given a shot for pain and sent to the morgue while casualties with better outlooks were rushed to surgery. When someone tried to remove a beautiful wrist watch Duncan's wife had given him, he roused Duncan to an outburst of profane denunciation of the rat who was stealing from a dead man. Hearing Duncan's tirade from the hall of the dead, the surgeon who had examined Duncan on arrival declared that, if he could yell like that, he deserved a shot at surgery. After several years and multiple operations, he recovered, and I enjoyed seeing him at a reunion fifty years later. A religious man might view the thief as an angel in disguise.

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder is a term that had not been invented in 1946, and I coped with my continued anger at the Japanese and my distress at the destruction of so many friends as best I could. The person who did most to cure me of my antipathy toward the Japanese was a fellow physician whom I met in medical school. **David Kliewer** was a Marine Corps aviator captured at Wake Island in 1941, applied to Harvard Med School from prison, and graduated a year ahead of me. Fifteen years after the war we stayed up all night talking about our experiences; his humane, forgiving attitude, after enduring far more suffering at their hands than I had, helped me to overcome the anguish and bitterness that had afflicted me.

These are just a few of the comrades whose memory I honor. Many of my friends are pacifists and find it hard to accept the esteem I have for these warriors. I certainly admire and honor Gandhi, King, Schweitzer and Pauling. But I also honor George Orwell who volunteered to fight against the Fascists in the Spanish War, was shot through the neck, and wrote: "To survive you often have to fight... War is evil, and it is often the lesser evil."

We believed that it was necessary to fight Japan and Germany, and I am still glad that they did not win.

Silver Star

In the summer of 1945 in a ceremony at Camp Tarawa, I was awarded the Silver Star Medal with reading of the following citation to our Battalion. I have always been ambivalent about getting the medal: proud of it, but mindful that I had seen many of my comrades make contributions greater than my own without receiving similar awards. I continue to honor their memory.



UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS

HEADQUARTERS
FLEET MARINE FORCE, PACIFIC
C/O FLEET POST OFFICE, SAN FRANCISCO

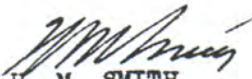
In the name of the President of the United States, the Commanding General, Fleet Marine Force, Pacific, takes pleasure in awarding the **SILVER STAR MEDAL** to

SECOND LIEUTENANT CRAIG B. LEMAN,
UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS RESERVE

for service as set forth in the following

CITATION:

"For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity in action against the enemy on IWO JIMA, VOLCANO ISLANDS, on 8 March, 1945, while serving as a platoon leader with a Marine rifle company. After the tremendous explosion of an enemy position and withering small arms fire from the enemy had caused most of his platoon and the platoon on his right to become casualties, Second Lieutenant LEMAN, fearlessly exposing himself to enemy fire, unhesitatingly began rallying and organizing all available men in the area, eventually gathering remnants of three platoons together, and pressed forward in the attack. He so organized and attacked that the enemy had no opportunity to counterattack in what was then a very weak spot in the lines. Second Lieutenant LEMAN was wounded while attacking, but refused to be evacuated until his units were dug in for the night and under a new leader. His personal courage, bold initiative and leadership in battle were in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service."


H. M. SMITH,
Lieutenant General,
U. S. Marine Corps.

IWO JIMA, 1945.



THE BATTLEGROUND

This aerial photograph taken by Navy photographers shows the tiny island of Iwo Jima, four and a half miles long by two and a half miles wide. The two airfields, Motoyama #1 and Motoyama #2 show clearly in the center and toward the narrow end of the island.