

HEY POP!
WHAT DID YOU DO
IN THE MARINES??



To my daughters;
Johanna
Barbara
Mary

Have patience reading this 'scrambled eggs' account
of my 'adventures'.

As they yelled at us when we entered 'Boot Camp':

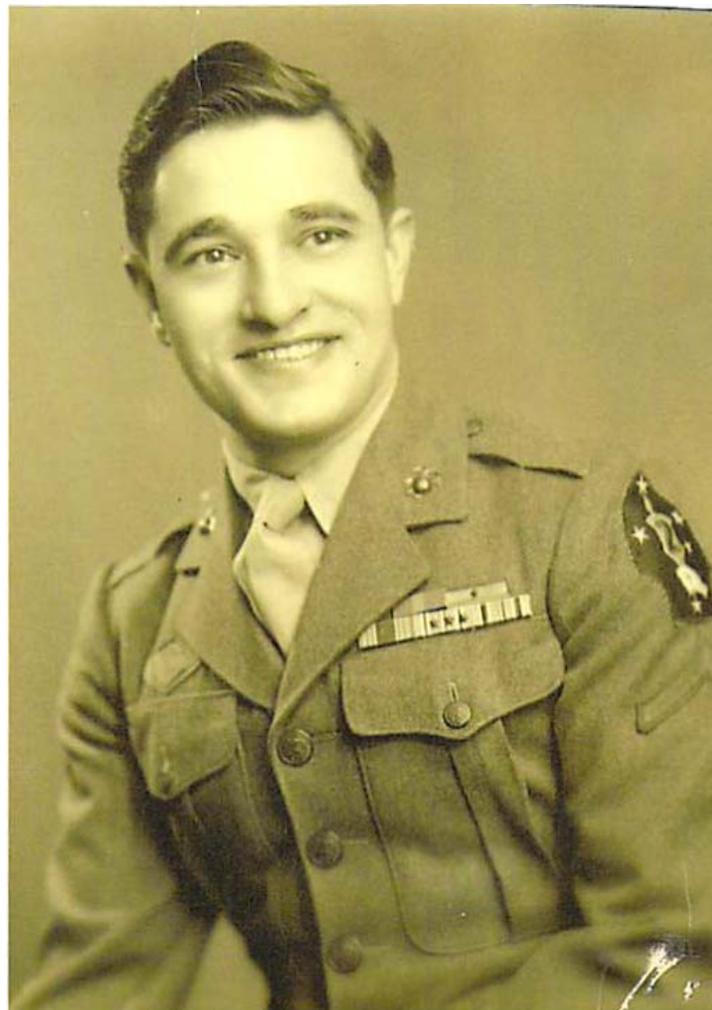
"YOU"LL BE SORRIEEEEEE!

Robert (Bob) Edward Kuklis was a proud member of the “Greatest Generation”. Born in 1919 in NYC, he became a typesetter and printer. He worked at Norden Bombsight, and in 1942, at the age of 22, enlisted in the United States Marine Corp as an Infantryman in the Second Marine Division. He participated in the major battles of Saipan, Tinian, and Okinawa as well as the clean up of Nagasaki, Japan during WWII.

When he returned from the war in 1946, he married the love of his life, Theresa Nesnady and they were married for 69 years. Bob and Theresa lived in Tarrytown NY and moved to Cornwall-on-Hudson in 1960.

As a typesetter and printer, among the places he worked were The Cornwall Press, The Evening News, and the United States Military Academy at West Point as a micro-photographer.

He was a musician, jokester, and honorable man who had a strong work ethic, a loving devotion to his wife and family, and was a proud Marine veteran. He was an avid clockmaker, a photographer, and an exceptional jack-of-all-trades who would help anyone in need.



* PREFACE *

I welcome you to a maize of experiences recalled by an old WWII Marine.

It was written expressivly for my daughters who often wondered what I did, but never asked. Thanks for your patience and understanding.

Some parts were not easy to just sit and type about, which took so long for me put it all on paper.

Also, for my wife, Tessie, who was very patient in taking care of me when I returned. I love you!

Perhaps, some day my grandchildren would also like to read this.

This time, "What Did GRAMPS do in the Marines?", would be the question.

"Pop, What Did You Do in the Marine Corps?"

P.F.C. ROBERT E. KUKLIS(H), U.S.M.C.R., S.N.450485
8/29/'42 - 1/19/'46

Began typing 1/08/'98

Well, to start off, I enlisted in the U.S. Marine Corps August 29, 1942. Uncle Vincent, who was in the U.S. Army at the time, accompanied me when I enlisted. I bet they were wondering what was going on seeing an Army guy with me. I tried to enlist a year before that date, but due to my employment with the Norden Bombsight, I was unsuccessful.

Uncle George enlisted August 28, 1942 in the U.S. Navy in the same building which was 90 Church Street in New York City.

On the way to 'boot camp' I shared a sandwich with another person (his sandwich). His name was Milton Goldman from Brooklyn. As luck would have it, we were bunked in the same hut through boot camp. He would always ask me to read his letters from his mother to him while using a Jewish accent. He would double up laughing and saying, "Sounds just like my mother." It was about a year later that we would meet again in Hawaii waiting to join the Second Marine Division. Of course the first thing I did was to read his mother's letter to him again. He was assigned to the Sixth Marine Regiment and I would not see him again until about 1949 or 1950. I was sitting in a subway train in N.Y.C. and I thought the fellow standing up looked familiar. So I called out with a Jewish accent, "Milton, have you got dry socks on?" He swung around, saw who I was and we had a big hug for each other. We exchanged addresses but never got to see each other again.

I received my 'Boot Camp' training at Parris Island, S.C.. I quickly adjusted to the training schedule as rough as it was. I guess it was my background in years of gymnastics taking and giving commands and also as an instructor. When we were at the rifle range being taught target practice, we were made to get into some weird and painful positions (it seemed) for firing offhand, kneeling and prone positions. When the instructors got our rifles 'zero'd in and deemed us ready to fire for 'record' when the big day arrived. The rifles we used were the Springfield '03, Caliber 30:06. Stupid me, prior to firing for record, we were told NOT to put any oil on the bolts. Well, I used a little on a cloth to wipe the bolt. Our first position was rapid fire in the prone position. The first shot and I got some oil in my eye, so much for accuracy. Anyway, every round went next to the 'bulls eye' for 4 points. The eye became clearer by the time for the next position which was the kneeling one also 'rapid firing.' If I had used my head and timed my shots I would have put them all into the bulls eye. As it was, I got 4's and two 3's. Then we fired offhand (standing up) from 200 yards from the target. I got a perfect score. Then we fired for record using the Colt '45 automatic pistol and

did excellent with that weapon. I was only two points away from scoring as 'Sharpshooter'. (dumb oiling) Later we were shown the M1 rifle, Caliber 30.06 same ammo as the Springfield. The M1 was the type of weapon I carried all through my Marine Corps time. The M1 was issued to us as we left the Brooklyn Navy Yard for overseas.

At the completion of my training, I was assigned to Headquarters Company at Parris Island for one month mess duty. I was given the job cutting and getting the loaves ready for mess call. No running around, just making sure the knife was sharp, the bread was fresh and ready for distribution. No table serving nor cleanup afterwards. I would slice the bread long before mess call, cover the loaves with damp towels and store them back into the racks. What a racket. (like a Prima Donna) all by myself by the entrance to the mess and next to the officers tables.

December 1st. '42 I was then ordered to report for duty at the Brooklyn Navy Yard, N.Y. I stood guard duty at various parts of the Navy Yard and also received training with the 20mm Anti-craft cannon which were of many situated on various buildings. This was my duty station during General Quarters as a weapons operator. Due to my scores on the firing range at Parris Island, I was on the pistol and rifle team at the Yard. I was assigned to a regular guard post at the Sands Street vehicle Gate. Around Easter time a couple of marines were assumed to have gone out the gate on my watch with their vehicle (no privately owned marine vehicle was allowed out this gate) they ended up AWOL and being involved with civil police charges. At the hearing ('Before the Mast') they were given five days bread and water and I was given the same sentence even though I was positive in my statements that they did not go out on my watch. It was later then reduced to Five Days Restriction to the Navy Yard. This mark went into my Record Book (201 file) permanently which resulted in my losing a slot for Corporal in a test I took and passed in Honolulu in '43 and also losing an automatic promotion to the next grade upon my discharge from the Marines. I learned to 'detail strip' the 1919 Colt 45 cal. automatic, and a 30 cal. light machine gun. (air cooled)

During my duty at the Yards, I would drive up to see Tessie and also go by train a couple of times. I sure hated to leave to go back. From the day I met Tess at the Sokol Instructors Camp in '38 there was something that stuck with me. I couldn't get her out of my mind. I guess being naive, I didn't realize I was in love with her. So each time there was a slet, I would look for her. Anyway. it came time that I and others were assigned for overseas duty. It was not easy to leave Tess. I did not know what waited for me in the Pacific and how long I would be away or if I would return. But my love for Tess and her letters helped me through some mighty rough times. Upon my departure, I gave Tess a ring (almost like an engagement ring) and in return she gave me a silver I.D. bracelet and a silver crucifix which I wore from that time until I was discharged from the Marines. The bracelet is fastened to the frame holding my medals and the crucifix is still being worn

around my neck. I sincerely believe it had protected me all through my time in the Pacific and it still does to this day. We became the 25th Replacement Batt. undergoing advanced combat training at Camp Lejuene, N.C.. No fun and games there. One time I had the duty of Sgt. of the Guard and had men assigned to guarding the brig with live ammo. Coming off watch we were too late to get chow due to our relief being late to relieve us. I stood nose to nose with the mess Sgt. arguing that the men have got to be fed according to 'Rules and Regulations'. I won and we got fed. (Boy! Did I bluff the Sgt. with that line of bull, I almost believed it myself)

We were given Leave to go home (forgot how long, but it wasn't more than a week, I'm sure). It gave me more time to see Tess and this time it was harder to part than last time, but those last days together gave me something to remember while I was overseas.

A week after we returned, we shipped out to 'tent city' in California near San Diego. We underwent some more training. We had a damn good Lieutenant as our Platoon Leader named McGreevy. One time the Lt. took us out for a 'Recon' hike along the highway. We checked out a couple of bars on the way and repeated the same thing on the way back. We made sure to stay out of sight during those 'visits'. Upon arriving back at camp, we more or less got back to our area by way of a ravine that ran alongside of our tents. Lt. McGreevy was killed making the beachhead on Saipan. He was assigned to the Sixth Marine Regiment. The same outfit that Milton Goldmann was in.

We shipped out to Honolulu on a transport and the trip was not too rough.

U.S.S. GOLDSBOROUGH (Destroyer Transport APD) WW 11, 1944

How I got acquainted with the U.S.S. Goldsborough was this way:

While the Second Marine Division was regrouping from the Battle of Tarawa on the 'Big Island' Hawaii, the next invasion was being planned for it, which was Saipan. I was training to be a 'Runner' which meant my duties were to carry messages during combat to various Marine units. I had to be familiar with the C.O.'s of other companies, platoons or battalions plus their supposed locations in the field at that time of combat. I had to know semaphore which I had learned to send fifty-five words a minute.

I was in the first platoon, 'B' Company, First Battalion, Second Marine Regiment, Second Marine Division. Lt. Hand was our platoon Leader and Sgt. Bracy was the Plt. Sgt.

Some general or generals came up with the idea to capture Mt. Topotchau, the highest part on the island of Saipan, which was to be our next beachhead and use it for an Observation and Command Post. So the First Battalion, Second Marine Regiment was chosen to capture it FIVE HOURS BEFORE the D Day main assault. A 'preInvasion' assault.

The Battalion was broken down to six hundred 'volunteers' or six companies of one hundred (100) men each. Each company was assigned to a destroyer and B Co. got the U.S.S. Goldsborough. We were all Rifle Companies with the exception

of one company which was heavy weapons (60mm and 80mm mortars) and one Machine gun platoon.

As the new Companies were formed, I was promoted to Fire Team Leader. (Corporal's rating) I had one rifleman, one B.A.R. man (semi-automatic weapon) and one B.A.R. man assistant. (Group Leader was another name for me) My duties also made me an Anti-tank grenadier and I carried five rifle anti-tank grenades or shaped-charge rockets with me along with blank ammo. to fire the grenades, plus a grenade adapter to put on the rifle muzzle. With the rifle in this mode, I could not fire live ammo to protect myself only blanks to propel the rifle grenades. (but I would have my share of grenades)

We practiced launching the rubber 6 man boats in the surf and landing in the surf with full battle gear. There were a few injuries and other serious accidents but they were expected to happen. We were camped on the beach for about three weeks using live grenades against pill boxes, combat Judo and getting familiar with other type of weapons. Most of the weapon training was during the day and the infiltration with the boats were at night. Some fun landing and going through heavy brush plus climbing the hills to dig in. You had to be alert to guard against attacks from wild boars and there were a few of them around. One was killed and brought back to the ship for meat. Forget it! We had to throw it over the side for the sharks. The sharks used to nudge the rubber boats whenever we were in their way or territory, which was scary for we sat or straddled on the side with one leg on the outside of the boat as we paddled. Three men to each side.

The Goldsborough was a destroyer used for transporting Recon. and Assault troops only. It carried a Five inch gun on the stern and 'Y' depth charge mounts. My General Quarter's station was at the 5" gun. It was a APD Class with many years of duty prior to WW11.

We used the ship for all manner of 'landings' in the Hawaiian Islands at night, advanced to high ground and dug fox holes in a perimeter around the peaks. Rubber boats (6 man crews) were used plus the Navy used TBF's to drop us supplies and strafe the areas ahead of us. OK, so much for that. The planes that dropped supplies to us during our training were attached to us from the start in Hawaii until we made our objective on Saipan.

Enroute to Saipan we had a baby flat-top accompanying us and supplied us with Recon photos of the area (Magicienne Bay) where we were supposed to land and 'sneak' to Mt. Tapotchau. Each day the photos showed more concentrations of Japanese troops, artillery and tanks where we were supposed to land. The Japanese thought the main assault was going to be made on that side of the island because there were no coral reefs there. Sooooo, to make a long story short, our 'invasion' was called off. I don't think there would have been any survivors from the operation, plus our orders were to take and hold our objective regardless of our losses. (where would we get the support from??) As it was, it took almost two weeks for Mt. Tapotchau to be taken, for it was honeycombed with machine gun

emplacements and 75's. Mucho funo. Plus, we would have had to cross an area known during the campaign as; 'Death Valley' and 'Purple Heart Ridge'.

Feb. 26, 2000

FINALLY FOUND REFERENCE to this Battle Plan for the 1st Bat. in a book, "Campaign In The Marianas" published by 'The National Historical Society' on pages 40, 41 and 97. (U.S. Army in World War II, The War In The Pacific) Originally I found references to this book in a magazine titled, "Strong Men Armed" (The United States Marines Against Japan) By Robert Leckie

Quote: (from 'Campaign in the Marianas')

"Finally, the 1st Battalion, 2nd Marines, was detached from its parent organization to perform a separate mission. Originally, the battalion was to land from destroyer transports APD's (in rubber boats, 6 men each-my quotes) on Magicienne Bay on the southeast side of the island the night before the main landing on the west coast. It would then move rapidly inland, attempt to seize Mt. Tapotchau before daylight and hold on until relieved by the main elements of the 2nd Marine Division. Later, on 7 May, this order was changed, and the battalion was to be prepared to land on Magicienne Bay or perhaps other beaches after the main landing had been affected and then move west and north to attack enemy positions from the rear. Eventually, the whole scheme was canceled as impractical and involving excessive risks.

The final decision was in all probability the soundest one. To have committed a single battalion armed with nothing heavier than 60-mm mortars against a formidable defenses the Japanese had set up around Magicienne Bay would in all likelihood have proved disastrous. As events turned out, it took the entire 2nd Marine Division ten days to reach Mt. Tapotchau's summit."

End of quote. (in my own personal view, there would have been NO SURVIVORS)

While standing off shore, the smoke from burning sugar cane and a strong putrefying odor came off the island.

We were not included in the main frontal assault, on the other side of Saipan since we were the 'Pre-Invasion Force. So we instead hit the beachhead next afternoon at 1600 (4 pm) without our heavy weapons on the 2nd Division's beaches and the JUNK was still hitting the fan. The heavy weapons were subsequently dropped by parachute from carrier torpedo planes, but because the planes flew at a low altitude the equipment was almost completely destroyed. We advanced under fire to our objective next to the sugar mill at Charan Konoa and dug in. The Japanese had us spotted and laid an artillery barrage on top of our positions. It was hairy and we lost a lot of men. I had dug or made a 'foxhole with rocks' next to the factory chimney which was about fifty feet high and my gut feeling was that there was a Jap. artillery observer hiding up there, but lying on my back, I couldn't see any movement. He was the guy directing the shelling on top of us. The Aid Station was on the beach behind us about ten yards so we did not have far to carry the wounded out to the beach after the barrage let

up. Long after the war I read that there WAS an observer up there and the writer gave him credit for staying there to do his duty. GREAT! That's nice!

After the shelling I went on patrol to scout the forward area with the team, nothing except a disabled U.S. tank abandoned with the hatch open. (#1) almost P.H.

The next day we pulled out and advanced up the island to our next objective which was a hill facing Mt. Tapotchau and dug in. My foxhole was on a ledge in the forward position of the lines, all rock so you couldn't dig in. I had my rifleman with me. Would you believe it, I 'volunteered' with my group for a patrol after we got settled. We came across a cave near our positions and we heard someone saying the "Hail Mary" in Spanish. I wanted to check further since he sounded so close but due to the late hour, we had to return back to our lines before it got dark. (I read years later that this cave yielded a large number of civilians and a Spanish Missionary and he must have been the one saying the prayer). During the night a Jap worked his way to only about five feet below my position under a ledge. We (my rifleman and I) could hear him work the bolt of his rifle and breathe heavy whenever he fired. If he would have come up to our ledge we were ready for him with our knives. Any action on our part would have given our position away and we had no way of knowing if he was part of a patrol. Eventually he took off back down the hill. He must have had eaten beans because he wasn't polite while he was right under us. WHEW!

While during combat when we had a chance to eat our rations, there was an added item to do as we ate and that was to brush the flies off the spoon of 'C' rations we were eating which came off the bodies of the dead Japanese lying around. The sun and heat caused those bodies to swell and burst which was that odor I spoke about while still aboard ship. THAT'S WAR IN REALITY!! That overpowering gagging smell of death will always remain with you the rest of your life. OK, Back to the Goldsborough, I think I got off the track someplace and started to talk about my combat time. I figured I would type these 'incidents' while I was in the mood.

Here's something odd. When we first boarded the ship and walked around the deck, I bumped into a sailor and we both almost jumped out of our skins. We used to work together at Mr. Kalabza's electrotype shop and he also was a Sokol from N.Y. He was a radioman and I would spend some time in the radio shack here and there. OK..'nuff said. This is the most I have ever wrote about of my experiences in the Pacific.

OK, back to 'combat time'. After we left the hill we advanced some distance and then dug in for the night after I assigned some men in fox hole positions. The next day we advanced and came to another hill in front of us which had about three hundred yards of clear area which we had to go across to take the ridge. The ridge had some brush and trees which was a good place for the Japanese to position their machine guns to rake our advance. Our machine guns concentrated their fire into these areas before

we took off. Meanwhile there was an abandoned Jap tank on the side of the field and a Japanese jumped out of the turret and started running up towards the ridge which meant he had 'buddies' there. 'He didn't run too far'. Our Company Commander who was just behind my position was shot in the jaw by a sniper just before we jumped off. I took my team and led the advance on the run across the field and up the hill hitting the deck here and there to spoil the aim anyone off trying to get a bead on us either with mortars or heavy weapons. The group on our left took the lead after us and they ran into a machine gun ambush which was hidden on the ridge. Three men were killed. We then ran to the ridge and jumped into a shell hole just before another machine gun opened up on us. The team on our right was pinned down and the corpsman was killed instantly by a burst into his chest. He wanted to go out to help another marine who we could see was killed by the same machine gun. We tried to stop him but he was one dedicated corpsman. The two machine guns were silenced with further actions. (#2) almost P.H.

We secured the ridge and tied in with other outfits to set up a defensive position across the island. We stayed there for over a week until the right flank divisions could catch up and secure the areas assigned to them. (4th Marine Div. and the 27th Army Division) The 27th Army Div. was very slow in gaining ground and keeping it. Admittedly they and the 4th Marines had some bloody battles to straighten the line. It was at this line that George came to visit me. The first time he came on the line I was in the field hospital with dengue fever. I stayed there two days and then left to go back to rejoin my outfit. Meanwhile, We would go out to patrol the forward areas deep into the brush and tree lines every day. One day while looking towards Japanese positions, the marine in the adjoining foxhole who was part of a 37mm anti-tank team, was lying next to me sharing the same 'sandbag port'. I then felt a slight concussion at the right side of my face and at the same time heard a funny plopping noise. He was shot in the left eye by a sniper. Four more inches to the left and it would have been me. We called for a corpsman but he was beyond help. Just one of many CLOSE calls I had on Saipan.

While on the ridge, my fire team was 'volunteered' for a overnight patrol stationed in the city of Garapan. We took up positions overlooking the shoreline to prevent any Japanese from making a landing behind our lines. Each man was in an individual position hidden in building ruins for more effective field of fire coverage. This was at the same time the fleet and transports pulled away from Saipan because a strong Japanese Battle Force was steaming towards Saipan to retake the Island. Scary not to see any ships out there outside of seeing a couple of destroyers helping us with their fire power when needed. Anyway, just as dawn was breaking, we watched a Navy seaplane taking off. Later I learned it was a PBM that my brother George was on. We did not have any trouble with the Japanese sneaking around to our position because they were caught before they got too far from their beach. A destroyer took good care of them. Four landing barges loaded with Japanese troops were

destroyed. They would have been too many for us to repulse.

Our fleet intercepted the Japanese fleet and the engagement became known as the 'Mariana Turkey Shoot' because so many Japanese planes were shot down plus the enemy lost some important fighting ships.

We were then relieved on the 'line' and made a forced march to another position on the other side of the Island. The march was a BASTARD. Hot and bushed but couldn't stop until we reached our objective. The Senior Medical doctor tried to order our C.O. to give the troops some rest because we were exhausted not only by the heat but from being on 'line' from the beginning of the invasion, plus we were loaded down with all kinds of gear. Later in the campaign, we ended up near Marpi Point where the civilians were committing suicide by jumping off the cliffs into the rocks and water below. Some with their children. Those who didn't jump were pushed off by Japanese troops. The civilians were told that we would kill and eat them. We shot at the Japanese soldiers who were pushing and shooting the civilians. With the help of a Japanese interpreter, many civilians were saved.

Shortly after, Saipan was declared 'Secured' and the main combat was over. After a couple of days we boarded ships to invade Tinian which was the next island to Saipan. This was the island from which the B29s took off from to drop the Atom Bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

There are some 'blank' memories and flash-backs I have, trying to remember my combat experiences on Saipan. I have recollections of talking on a phone connected to a tank and giving them directions as to where a Japanese machine gun emplacement was for them to fire their cannon on. Another memory is where we were on the side of a steep hill digging in. Also erecting my shelter half to make a cover from the rain over my foxhole. (where?? I don't know) I don't think that I should rack my brains trying to remember something that would not be pleasant to think about. Something like that, I guess..... Hell! Anything about combat is unpleasant to think about. Just writing about it makes me feel a little better and maybe that is what I need to do at times when I start thinking and dreaming too much after seeing a 'war movie'. Sure, I talk and 'boast' about how I 'won' the war, but when the talking is over and I start to think of what I said, I feel foolish for talking and boasting of my 'experiences' too much.

While standing off-shore waiting to invade Tinian, we watched the fighter planes making diving runs on Tinian. They would then release what looked like wing tanks which would tumble end over end as they hit the ground. Upon impact they would erupt into long runs of flames. This was our first experience seeing Napalm bombs in action. In fact, this was the first time they were used in combat. They were effective but hideous for the enemy or anyone caught in that maelstrom of fire.

One incident about Tinian, as we were approaching the beachhead we were just abreast the U.S.S. Colorado about two hundred feet away when the Japanese artillery hit the forward gun turrets and other parts of the ship. Many sailors were killed and

injured. We were bracketed with mortar fire but no hits. Got to the beach without damage or injuries. The Colorado spotted where the Japanese guns were and they with another cruiser wrote 'Finis' to them. When we hit the beach I was assigned to stay and guard the equipment on the beach due to my legs and inability to be able to keep up the pace needed at that time. When the fighting was over, I rejoined my platoon to return to Saipan

After Tinian was secured and we returned back to Saipan. My brother, 'Uncle George' was on the beach waiting for us to disembark. He accompanied us back to where we were to set up camp. After we cut down the sugar cane (which there was plenty on the island since it was their main production) we set up our pup tents. My pup tent was on the edge of a cliff and George and I sat up all night talking. Meanwhile the Japanese right below us in the gully was making so much noise talking, we would throw rocks down at them to shut them up.

The following weeks were spent making 'sweeps' across Saipan to flush out the Japanese troops who were bypassed during combat. There were quite a few of them and still full of fight.

After we got settled down I turned myself in to sick bay for my legs which were injured in the beachhead on Saipan. Something I should have done but waited until it all was over. I was hospitalized and on 'no duty' for a couple of weeks. I was then transferred to Headquarters Company, First Battalion as an assistant Battalion Police Sgt. while awaiting further orders to report to the Motor Pool as a driver on account of my legs. The First Battalion Police Sgt. became down with meningitis and was shipped out to Pearl Harbor. I was then promoted to Battalion Police Sgt. But as luck would have it, I was then assigned to a Combat Engineers Battalion. When my transfer came to the Engineers, there was no need for a sergeant in the Engineers and so my stripes stayed behind. Oh well, now you see them and now you don't.

While in the Engineers, George would visit me whenever he had time after his patrol flights. Some times staying overnight with me while I was on generator watch at another Battalion area.

Then around the same time in the Engineers while I was lying on my bunk playing my harmonica, a Gyrene stuck his head into the tent and told me to "knock it off!" I jumped up ready to 'square off' with him and then I saw he was laughing and it was my brother (Uncle Ed) Before I would hug him, I told him to bend over and I gave him a good kick in the butt for joining the Marines. THEN I GAVE HIM A BIG HUG!! He stayed with me for a week and he also came with me on my overnight generator watches. Later he told me that my Company Commander got him a couple of more days with me through his C.O. on Guam. I didn't find this out until many years afterwards when Tess and I visited him and Aunt Jean in Colorado. So you see how much we talked about any of 'Our Experiences in the Pacific'.

I typed this on my Word Processor and will save it and give a copy to each of the daughters as they want to know what went on over there and I kept putting it off.

Some day I will continue from where I left off in this

'story' and write about our advances and casualties. Some day.

Still have to write something about Okinawa and the Kamikaze attacks. Then on to the Occupation of Nagasaki.

OK, Here's more. . . .

Okinawa was our next beachhead and we started to train for that invasion. Lo and behold, I was made a rifle grenadier again. More lugging those heavy tank grenades and other garbage. I didn't say anything that I had that experience during the Mariana Campaign (Saipan & Tinian) so how did I get picked for that role again??? Since that was my only duty and not Fire Team Leader, no advance in rate came with it.

Anyway, one morning when the jeep brought me back from my overnight generator watch at another location on Saipan, I got a big shock. THE WHOLE COMPANY AREA WAS EMPTY. All tents were cleaned out. I went to my tent and that was as clean as a whistle. All my gear was even gone. Rifle and everything.

The jeep driver then took me to Battalion Hdqrs. and they told me to get to the beach and board ship. I learned that the Company had three hours to get packed and move out. I did find all my gear that they packed. Well to make a long story short, we spent a whole day on the beach waiting to board ship after it was loaded. HURRY UP AND WAIT!!

Well we finally were brought out to our ship and climbed up the cargo nets to get aboard. Mucho fun since we had heavy packs and rifle plus other gear.

OK, So on to Okinawa we sailed and arrived there April First, 1945. (which incidentally was also Easter Sunday) We made a landing feint on one side of the island and the main force landed at another part of the island. We watched them hit the beach and walk in without any opposition of any kind. Not even one rifle shot. We couldn't believe our eyes. As luck would have it, if we had made the landing, all hell would have broken loose. But the Japanese planned for our troops to advance to their lines and into their field of fire, so that they could cause more casualties to our troops. THEY WERE RIGHT! From there on, it was fighting for every inch under heavy casualties.

We were relieved to learn that we (Second Division) were in floating reserve and on stand by. THEN the Kamikazes came and came and came. We lost some ships and then our ship was by itself in company with another troop ship. We sailed away from Okinawa towards the Sea of Japan when, the ship's captain announced that the Japanese battle fleet was steaming towards us from

Continued . . . SAIPAN - 2 file

around Okinawa. Oh Boy! Two unarmed troopships against the Japanese. The ship's captain then announced that if we knew any prayers, don't hesitate to say them. (and that is the TRUTH) Anyway, our prayers were heard because our fleet intercepted the Japanese on the other side of Okinawa and we could hear the firing of the guns between the two fleets. Of course, we hauled ass out of there. I don't doubt that our two ships were being used as bait. Hell! No matter, we then set sail back to Saipan to await further orders and where it was safer from the kamikazes. Plus, what could we do without our equipment which was lost from the kamikaze attacks on our ships. During the Iwo Jima campaign, we were also on stand-by to help out. I never knew that my brother Ed. landed there with the Third Marine Division. When Ed. visited me on Saipan, that's when he told me that he was on Iwo Jima. None of us wrote to each other because what could we say since we were all in combat zones and anything we wrote would be censored anyway. We all wrote to our sister Albina who in return sometimes relayed the news to us. I know that Uncle Vince was a tail gunner on a bomber and he fought from Italy up through Africa and Europe.

07/09/2000 (more memories)

While training at night on Hawaii for the invasion of Saipan, we were given carrots to eat to improve our 'night vision'. (we didn't notice any improvement, but I'm sure that our ears became larger) We also got regular pills of atabrine for malaria. That stopped when we started to turn yellow.

09/03/2000

Shortly after we arrived back on Saipan from Okinawa, the Eight Marine Regiment was sent back to Okinawa to help out. (we were lucky again) Their camp was next to our area of the Second Engineer Battalion.

10/04/2000

Addendum to pages 1-10. The following are remarks and additions I wanted to make after I got to page 10. I could not do so because the Word Processor declared, "Memory Full" and it would not accept any corrections, additions or deletions. So I had to start a new file to continue this 'Manuscript'.

Addition to Page 2, (N.Y. Navy Yard.) We were issued 'Reising Guns' upon our arrival and we carried these weapons when on guard duty. They were 45 Cal. semi and automatic weapons holding ten rounds. Since my post was the vehicle gate at Sands Street, I was armed with a 45 Cal. Model 1911 semi-automatic hand gun when on watch.

The 20mm Anti-Aircraft weapons on the various roofs in the yard were protected by challenge posts. The guards would challenge anyone on the roofs and would shoot if the challenge was not answered correctly. This also was the case at different parts of the yards like on the edge of a pier where these weapons were positioned. If a boat approached too close to shore and did not answer a challenge given to them, they were fired upon. One time they almost shot the pilot house off a tug, but no one was hurt. Another time they shot a 50 gal. drum to pieces thinking it was a sub. One post I was assigned to was a caisson

which were two huge doors at the end of a drydock that acted like a dam to keep the water out. The drydocks were used to repair ships that were damaged in battle. The caisson was wide enough to walk on and COLD in winter since it was right on the river. One day the weather was 5° below zero and the watch was only for two hours instead of four hours. No winter fur caps, only the dress cap, dress shoes, regular gloves. My relief did not show up until three hours later. By then I was frost bitten on the face, ears, feet and hands. If I would have had to use my weapon, I could not have done so. When I got back to the guard house it took some time to thaw out plus LOTS of hot coffee. While walking that post, you could look across the yard and see the U.S.S. Iowa under construction. I walked this post about three times then was assigned to the Sands St. vehicle entrance post permanently.

On May Day, '43 we were alerted for possible Communist activity. There were 30 cal. machine guns mounted in various areas, one being at the Sands St. gate on my post. (nothing happened) One of our special orders on the gate was, "No running in the yards" by civilians. With acts of espionage being done daily, we did not know why are they running. The person would be ordered to stop and questioned. If they did not stop after the third verbal warning, then your weapon is brought into use. One time while on the gate I yelled, "HALT!" at a group of three men running. When I approached them, they exclaimed that they were late. "Sorry fellas, you know the rules, Walk!" One wise guy answered, "Think you're tough, huh, How would you like to meet me outside the yard?" I answered him, "OK, name the time, you don't scare me since I was born in the Yorkville section of N.Y.C. and we ate knuckles for pastime". The other guys laughed at him and they went on their way to work. My official response should have been to repeat the order and walk away, but I couldn't resist calling his bluff.

Another time we had to search the yards for a missing prisoner. Searchlights and guns at the ready. One dark place had huge slabs of steel plates leaning on the side of a building like a tent. We shined our lights under the slab and about three or four civilian yard workers came out facing about three of us with weapons at the ready. They sure made tracks back to work saying, "We're not going to do this anymore!" They must have thought we were looking for goof-offs. I bet their shorts needed changing. There was a French Warship (Richelieu) being repaired at the yards and every time it was declared ready for shipping out, a fire broke out in it. This happened three times. So you see there was that reminder that the war was also here in the U.S. and in the yards especially. Other times we would get orders to search cars for missing plans or items taken from warships being repaired. Naturally when five o'clock came around and hundreds of cars would leave the yards, you had your hands full. Other times we would spot check a car here and there especially if the occupants looked nervous or too innocent. Sometimes we would be successful but not too many. Then in comes Naval Intelligence and you make out reports.

The best watch was from 12am to 4am at the gate. This was

when the 'tipsy' sailors would stagger in to weave their way to their ships. We sometimes would help some of them if they were alone and too unsteady to safely find their way back to their ship. When another sailor would come and in better condition, we would ask them to help their buddy through the yards. The yards could be damn dangerous at that hour due to dark areas and material lying around in some work areas. One sailor was a steady 'customer' and one night in his usual wobbly condition he came in and when he passed through the turnstiles, one of the bars came up behind him and broke the bottle he was hiding under his blouse. I think he had tears in his eyes when that happened. Anyway we got him cleaned up and didn't say anything to anyone. After that I called him, 'Bottles' whenever he came on board. He was from a ship being repaired from combat damage. Would you know, some months later when I was on liberty in San Diego prior to shipping out, I was passing this bar about 2am after I left my buddies who were at another bar. (I was cold sober for all I had was soda that night) I drank Rum Cokes that night and I am sure they were all mostly sodas. Anyway, as I passed this bar, some of the lights were out as if it was closing time. I took another closer look through the window at the sailor slouching over the bar and I recognized him as 'Bottles'. Was going to go in but I thought it over and caught the last bus back to camp. I bet he would have fallen off the stool when he saw me. Small world.

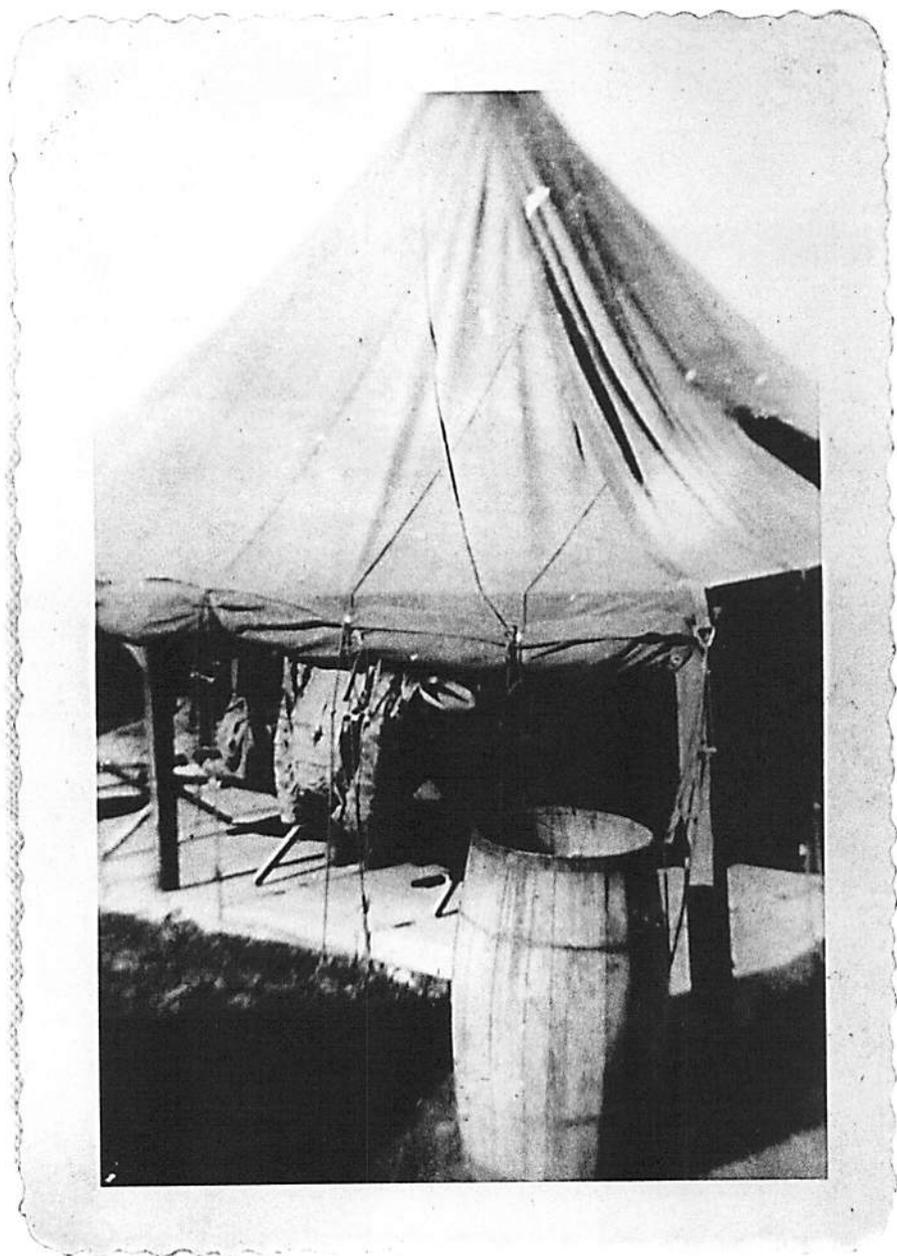
While talking to Uncle Ray about the Navy Yard, I mentioned my being on watch at the Sands St. gate. He said that he was there also as a sailor escort duty. They would escort Naval personnel to their ships if it was necessary. He knew the nick name we had for Sgt. Langdon (the Sgt. at the gate, 'bulldog'). Possibly he was there at the same time as I was, but I never met him until I married Tessie.

addition to page 3

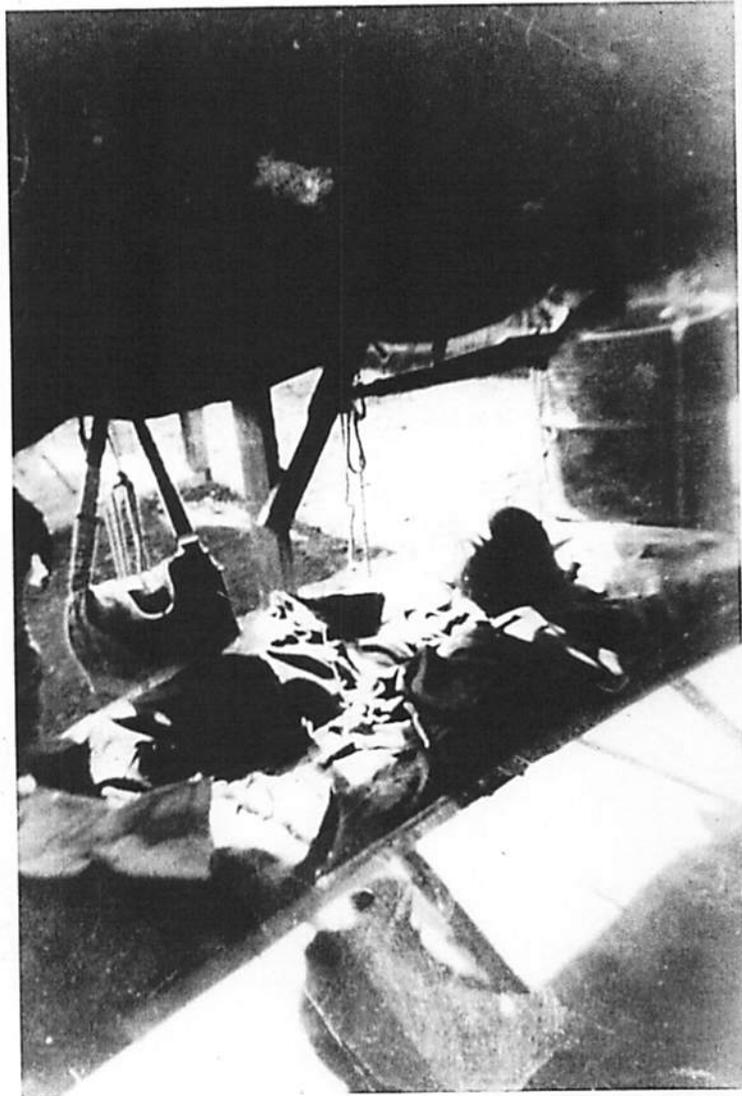
When we were in No. Carolina training and waiting for transfer to the west coast we were given leave. A couple of marines along with me paid another marine to drive us to the R.R. station. It was raining and there were two cars in our group. During the trip, I happened to glance back and saw the car behind us skid on the road and turn over. We stopped and helped the marines. One had a gash on his forehead and I managed to stop the bleeding. The others weren't hurt too bad. We stopped a truck and 'convinced' the driver after some argument to take them to the hospital. We continued on our way and arrived just in time to board the train. I should say, squeezed aboard. My shirt had some blood on it but the rain washed it out by the time we boarded the train, so that was ok. That was the trip I visited Tess.

On the return trip to camp, there was a two hour stopover for my train connection in Washington, D.C.. Boy! I sure was lonesome sitting around without Tess beside me. (the bad part about 'Leaves')

Anyway, as I probably said before, there were no marines absent at the next roll call. The following week, we boarded a troop train for the trip to California. The locomotive was a coal



View of 'transport' pack hanging in tent.
Honolulu, Oahu



My cot with '782' gear displayed. Honolulu, Oahu

burner and the coaches were brand new during the Civil War. It took a week to get to the West Coast. Sometimes we stopped here and there in different states to eat in the station restaurants. There was a 'mess car' in the train and we were fed 'via' our mess kits in between those sometimes stops. We stunk from the coal fumes and cinders from the engine if we had the windows open and we would be allowed to 'wash' now and then. The train stopped in the Mojave Desert and we got off to have sandwiches. They didn't have to worry about anyone 'going over the hill' out there. TOO HOT! Then when the train went over the 'Rockies' it was cold and slow going. The cattle trains had more priority than us so we spent a lot of time watching them pass while we sat on a sidetrack. Boy! Were we important.

So we arrived at 'Tent City' on the west coast to undergo more training for combat. This was when our Lt. took us out on a 'recon patrol' (beer patrol). Anyway, the Colonel had us in formation one morning during the week and said, 'There will be no roll call until next Monday and I expect to see everyone here'. Draw your own conclusions as to what he meant. Well, there was not enough time for me to travel home and return, so that was out of the question. To make it more positive, my name was posted as Charge of Quarters for the battalion on Sat. and Sun. That solved that.

addition to page 4

While on the island of Oahu (Honolulu), We worked with the 'Sea Bees' building large warehouse size quanset huts. I would climb to the top of the steel framing and drop a plumb line. They would then nail a few sheets of siding on each side towards the front. Then I would repeat the same thing at the other end. That way the bldg. would be square front and rear and the siding would not hang out of square on the ends. I was 'invited' to their mess by the guys I worked with. 'GOOD CHOW!' Darn good bunch of people. Those buildings were still standing years later according to Anthony Vyborny (nephew) who was there while in the Navy. On my liberty time I went horse back riding at Diamond Head once or twice. Sometimes I was asked by one of the truck drivers if I wanted to go along on a run to different parts of the island and I never refused. Somehow I got along darn good with that outfit. I never met that particular group later on in combat, although I came in contact with other Sea Bee outfits on the islands.

In regards to training for Saipan while on the beach in Hawaii. (the big Island) We used plenty of hand grenades against various targets, eg. pill boxes, machine gun emplacements and huts. Also trained in the use of 'bangalore torpedoes'. Long pipes containing explosives which can be attached to each other to make them longer. Used to blow up barbed wire. Also trained extensively in Ju Jitsu (Judo), bare bayonets and knife in-fighting. Plenty of 'accidents' were the results of error.

Our main camp was called, "Camp Tarawa" and was up on a mountain next to the volcanoes. Boy, was it cold up there at night. Covered myself with two blankets and a poncho to keep warm. When we took showers after coming back from night training,

you could hear the ice cubes in the pipes.

OK, I guess I caught up on all the stuff I wanted to write about so I'll go on from while I was on Saipan. Oops, I remembered one more thing. When I transferred to the Engineers we still were going on 'mop-up patrols' and on Christmas Eve of '44 we came under a heavy Japanese air attack. Our camp was not too far from the B29 bombers area so we got a lot of shrapnel raining down on top of us. Made some holes in the tents and being in a slit trench didn't help much plus the trenches were full of muddy water. When the AA battery next to us opened up we knew the bombers were over our area, and we could hear our 'night-fighters (P-41's) when they were also overhead. It lasted for about an hour or so. That was the last serious air raid we had. The others were one or two plane acts. One time a couple of enemy planes approached the Island while we were on the chow line. We had a front row seat as we watched two P-38's (fighters) speed towards the Jap planes, then suddenly along comes a P-51 fighter, zips right pass them, downs the two Jap planes and does a 'victory roll' on his way back. The two other planes just turned around and came back probably swearing at the P-51 pilot. By the way, my cousin Evie Carey, wrote that her husband Bob, was a P-51 fighter pilot and that he was also based on Saipan. Due to his being 'busy' and my duties, I was unable to meet to meet him.

Back to our FIRST DAY on Saipan while being under artillery fire by the sugar mill. It was a nightmare hearing the shells coming in and landing on top of our positions and not being able to do anything about them, just flatten lower to the ground and pray. The shrapnel screamed all around you and caused many casualties in our platoon, a few non-coms. I admit, I got the shakes during the shelling but calmed after a few seconds then helped carry the wounded to the aid station on the beach. One of them almost had his arm taken off at the shoulder when the shrapnel sliced through. Had to hold both him and his arm up while walking. During the shelling, one small piece of shrapnel landed on my left hand and burnt it at the base of the thumb. This was the #1 almost Purple Heart. It was not considered a penetrating wound so no P.H. Just put salve on it when I brought the wounded to the Aid Station on the beach behind us.

Another 'Flash'. . . I remember being dug in and in front of our fox holes there was a cave entrance. Some of the guys went on patrol into the cave which they said went down two levels. They came back with a couple of large bottles of Saki. I took a swig and spit it out, it tasted ultra strong and powerful. No way was I going to have any, I wanted to be alert not dead. Where this was I don't know nor do I remember when. I do know that it was on Saipan.

Now to the part where we were on the ridge where Uncle George found me. At times our planes would not see our 'plane panels' and would strafe our lines. One day we watched a plane flying parallel with our fox holes when something dropped from it. One guy said it was probably a gas tank from the wing. I said, "Bull@\$\$#", "That's a bomb, it has fins" and we dived for our foxholes. Twice during our 'stay' on the ridge, we were shelled

by our own artillery. The Commanding Officer of our company said next time it happens, we are turning around and advance in their direction. Another time (on the ridge) the first day, one of our planes came from behind made a bank to the left and released a couple of rockets from the wings. The rockets from the left wing didn't clear the ridge and caused some casualties in the Battalion Command Post. 'What a way to fight a war!'

One night word passed down in the foxholes NOT TO FIRE on the plane that was going to fly over us. It was a Jap bomber and it was right over my foxhole and so low I could have scratched the wheels if I stood up. (the runway was ahead of us just over a hill where a control tower stood) We could have blown that plane out of the air it was so close. (yeah! and we would have been charged for the damage) To this day I cannot understand why that order was given.

This was the ridge where I went on so many patrols to scout the forward positions and note possible enemy machine gun positions that might surprise us when we made our advance.

During the advance up the hill as we approached the top, the machine gun that fired at the team next to us sent a few rounds our way. As I jumped into a shell hole that was so lucky to be there, a slug grazed my left leg making a surface wound on the calf, all I felt was a burning sensation. Since that was ALSO not a penetrating wound, I had sulphur sprinkled on it and again no Purple Heart. #2 P.H. I felt foolish each time I was hit because of the severe casualties around me at those times. Plus, no records were kept of 'little things' like that.

OK, that's out of my system, now let's get on with this story. I am sorry that all this sounds disjointed from my previous accounts but after I finish and close down from typing, I start to remember things long afterwards. So I jot them down and here I am putting them down on paper. Like I mentioned before, blanks in the memory I believe is responsible for these 'after-thoughts'.

After we returned from Okinawa it was back to training and regular routine. The Second Division was up to full strength and in a round-about way getting ready for the invasion of Japan.

Much later I found out from reading the invasion plans, we were to be the spearhead division for the invasion of Nagasaki. More on that later on.

Then came the time when the scuttlebutt started to get heavy. The U.S.S. Indianapolis unloaded some ultra secret gear on Tinian under heavy guard. Tinian was the island next to Saipan which was the base for the B 29 bombers which bombed Japan daily along with the bombers from Saipan. Security was #1 priority. Then the U.S.S. Indianapolis left Tinian for Guam we think. Anyway, all kinds of rumors were flying around, like bees with honey. After awhile we heard that the city of Hiroshima was destroyed with one single bomb. This we couldn't believe. No bomb could be THAT powerful. IT WAS. The bomb was an Atom Bomb which we couldn't understand how it worked. Then came word that Nagasaki was also hit with an Atom bomb. This was all unbelievable to us. (but then again, we weren't scientists)

Atom bombs and Napalm bombs. WOW! What's next to be dropped? Preparations and equipment was being readied for future loading not too many weeks later. In the meantime, the scuttlebutt started again that the U.S.S. Indianapolis was torpedoed and sunk. This rumor turned out to be true. Another happening that took us by surprise.

Well to get on with the story, we eventually boarded ships to invade Japan and sat around for a couple of days before steaming on our way.

11/11/2000 11 am. To those we left behind us on those bloody islands, "You are remembered in my prayers every day, God be with you, may your souls rest in peace".

OK, it is 12/20/2000 and I am back to typing some more stuff. We are now aboard ship heading for Nagasaki and I don't remember much about that trip only that we were relieved that we weren't going to get torpedoed by a Jap sub or stand 'Battle Stations' watch.

We finally arrived at Nagasaki and proceeded into the harbor. The harbor was filled with sunken ships whose masts and superstructures stuck out of the water. Our ship threaded its way carefully to the mooring assigned to it in the harbor. The mountain on one side was terraced with different shades of green from their rice paddies. The only beautiful sight there. Along the piers in that part of the harbor were rows of buildings and sheds probably used for loading ships. I was assigned to ride 'shotgun' with the coxswain of a landing barge. (no ammo, just the bayonet for the rifle) We didn't know the kind of reception we would receive but there wasn't anything to worry about. Everyone looked 'peaceful and friendly'. What a comparison after fighting them for two and one half years. The prisoners of war that came to the hospital ship that was docked at those piers were very thin and haggard. After our ship got orders to land our outfit, I joined them at the warehouses which was a day later.

Nagasaki is split in two by a mountain range. The part with the docks had warehouses and some apartment buildings and was not touched by the 'A' bomb but only damaged by aerial bombing.

There was a Catholic High School for girls in this part of the city and that was where we stayed when we were on our way home.

We boarded trucks and went over the mountain to the other side of Nagasaki. There we saw the devastation the 'A' Bomb made. That part of the city was leveled with a building standing here and there. The Mitsubishi airplane factory was flattened out with only the Mitsubishi sign intact lying on the ground. During the trip we stopped for a couple of hours near a Geisha house. Too many guards around it to kill any ideas some of the guys had. We had some chow (C rations) and then continued to where we will be stationed which turned out to be a P.O.W. camp. The camp was situated at the base of a large dam which if it was bombed would have wiped out the camp completely. The Japanese were pretty devious as usual. There were plenty of anti aircraft weapons along the road we traveled on which were either sabotaged or destroyed by our planes.

The first day we slept in the bunks that looked like storage spaces in the walls and within minutes the lice and bugs practically ate us alive. We all left the building and slept outside which was nothing new after over two years doing that. The next day EVERYTHING was fumigated thoroughly, buildings and whatever we had inside those buildings. The water was shut off and inspected to make sure it was safe to drink which took a couple of days.

Anyway, to make this story shorter after we got the camp squared away, the Missionary priests dug up their vestments and held a High Mass complete with some children singing. It brought tears to your eyes. Very moving! Then some of us formed teams and went back to the dock area and helped rebuild some of the buildings. I had a Japanese electrician to help me since he could read the different signs and knew some of the wiring. HA! We started in one warehouse to restore the electricity and he insisted on pressing his fingers on the posts in the junction boxes while I would turn on the juice at the other end. I warned him that he will be in for a shock if he did it. By way of hand language and some words, we understood each other. "NO, it's OK" he insisted, so I went to the other end and threw the switch. He must have flew ten feet before he landed on the ground. I ran to him and there he was wearing a sheepish grin and motioning that he was OK. He never did that any more.

This lasted for a couple of weeks or so then six of us including the Lt. and Platoon Sgt. were attached to another regiment outside of Nagasaki.

We were billeted in a small bath house consisting of two rooms in front and a bath area in the center of the house. The Lt. and platoon Sgt. had one room and I shared the other room with another person. 'Big Time'. The other people slept in the bath area. All my electrical gear and supplies were in a box like a 'foot-locker' which I needed now and then for repairs and trouble shooting. This I stored in the 'attic'. At times I would work with demolition crews or travel to different areas with other teams. It was surprising to see what awaited us if we had invaded Japan.

The invasion would have been a slaughter on both sides with a very high loss of life. Thank goodness for the Atom Bomb, many, many lives on both sides were saved by its deployment. Not only were there over a million Japanese troops stationed on Kyushu (Southern part of Japan where Nagasaki is located) but the civilians from old to young were also prepared to fight to the bitter end. We came across warehouses containing light planes to be used by the Kamikaze pilots and caves loaded with various arsenal. Knapsacks filled with explosives for youngsters were in evidence. Countless artillery were located around the harbor to repel the invaders. Plus all kinds of bombs were hidden in the hills and countrysides ready to be used against us. As I mentioned before, the Second Marine Division was to be the spearhead of the invasion at Nagasaki. All this was identical to wherever a beachhead was to be made for the invasion of Japan.

All types of explosives, bombs, flares, were gathered and put on a huge pile to be detonated safely. Well, it seemed that

a Japanese member of the work party putting everything on the pile somehow ignited a flare and set the whole works going. Luckily we were about a couple miles away riding in a truck when the explosions occurred. We drove into an abandoned Japanese airfield and parked behind a revetment used to protect planes from strafing etc. The driver and I crawled under the truck and stayed there because of the shrapnel that kept coming down on top of us. A couple of good sized pieces came down on the truck bed and around us. We were under there for a couple of hours. When it started to calm down with only a few pieces coming down, we took off to return to our quarters. We were stopped about a mile from our area and had to wait for another couple of hours more. Finally we got on our way and arrived at our 'home'. What a mess! It was full of holes since we were not too far from the explosions. Anyway, our gear was not harmed in any way.

On some of my 'free time' I would walk around and check the caves that were used as machine shops by the tenement occupants in the area.

One day the Lt. came to me and said the magic words, "Kuklis, get your gear packed. You are going home." He then added, "You got your points the hard way". Meaning that I did not have extra points for dependents, only those for each beachhead I made and 'overseas time' in combat, plus time in service. Hell! By the time he took another breath, I was packed. I checked my electrical equipment out and was all set to go when given the word.

For my 'going away' present, I installed a Japanese wall phone in their room. The kind with a handle to turn for ringing your party. I came across a few of them in my travels. These were the old wooden type you would see in movies about the 'Old West' that mounted on the wall. All the comforts of home. This was either in Sept. or Oct. of '45.

Well, I got word to get my gear and rifle and board a truck to take me back to Nagasaki where I joined other happy jarheads. We were based in a Catholic High School for girls which I wrote about earlier.

After a couple of days we were taken to the port of Nagasaki where I had landed originally and stayed there for awhile getting organized. Many of us had colds since we were not used to the climate there. (the same as New York) Don't forget, two and a half years in the tropics spoiled us. The Battalion Surgeon got us all in one group and announced that since we all were not feeling good, we are going to be kept in Japan until our health improved. You should have heard our reply. He laughed and said he was only kidding. Whew!

Of course, in the Marines, idle hands are not to be tolerated. So, all kinds of details were handed out to keep you busy while waiting for further orders. I was given a Japanese work party to do odd jobs here and there. WOW! When I was Battalion Police Sgt. I had to be on my toes to make sure everyone I assigned work to did not goof off. That was a job in itself. But these guys would disappear right in front of your eyes while watching them.

After a couple of more days later, we boarded a train which took us to Sasebo. This was a large Japanese Naval base and that was our departure point for home.

The first thing after we got settled in our new quarters was to assemble in a courtyard and listen to a Colonel giving us a 'welcoming' speech. Quote, " You people are in the Engineers Company and are subject to different schedules than the Line Companies. You will be on duty six days a week while here, and you will also notice that you will be working while they relaxing". Hearing that didn't make us happy but the general consensus was after thinking it over; 'What was there to keep us BUSY six days a week?' Besides, we are on our way home anyway plus, there were plenty of ways to 'look busy'.

Unknown to us, we were joining the 5th Marine Division that was being transferred back to the states. We found that out that soon enough. The first thing issued to me as an electrician, was an 'Early Chow Time Pass'. This was because we never knew where we would be at times. Of course we made sure that our 'duties' never interfered with chow times.

As part of my duties, (complete with our own vehicle) repair problems somehow were plenty. It was 'Winter weather' there and one Colonel always kept blowing fuses because of all the heaters he had on. Couldn't explain to him about the overload he was causing with all the heaters on, because he would bark orders as soon as anyone would arrive to replace the fuses. So to enjoy the warmth of his quarters, it would take us some time to 'locate and fix' the fuse. The best thing that worked in our favor was that every outlet, switch and light had its own separate fuse. So simple to fix, providing the Colonel never found out.

Somehow, I met a couple of Tech. Sgts. from our own original outfit and they would have me accompany them out into outlying areas to check on substations supplying the electricity into Sasebo. That got me away from the 'Chicken Orders' that went on at the base. A couple of times I would get the duty to stay overnight at one of these substations. Good duty! The Japanese did all the book work of taking care of the readings and whatever else had to be done to run these stations. We just sat around and talked and had some interesting conversations, then grab some 'sack time'. What a feeling to be able to sleep without keeping one eye open for your life, with Japanese in the same room. All the Japanese we had contact with in our duties were friendly and helpful in what we had to repair.

There were opportunities to go duck hunting locally, which I found out when I got back to my area. Forget it! With my dumb luck I would shoot a hole in the bottom of the boat and then get a court-martial for destroying Japanese property.

In time we were issued a Japanese rifle, bayonet and sword to take home. Having a 'low' Serial Number due to my enlistment, I selected the choice ones from the various weapon stacks.

Finally we got word to get our gear together and get ready to board ship. I wrapped the Japanese gear in my shelter half and kept it close to me because there were many 'light fingers' around. As close as I can remember, I think these were shipped

home from Sasebo. The rest of my gear was already packed along with a couple of lensatic compasses I wore during combat. They were the top of the line compasses used on patrol and were issued to Fire Team Leaders. More about them later on in this story. Back on the trucks we went to board ship. When we arrived and saw it, I couldn't believe my eyes. A real rust bucket that was probably built before Columbus was born. A good sneeze would probably have caused the rudder to fall off the stern. I think we tiptoed aboard ship so that we won't put holes in the deck. I don't know where all the troops were put, but it seemed as if they put the whole division aboard. My bunk was one deck below and I did not spend much time there. Mostly I stayed up on deck well bundled up and relaxed watching the ocean or slept. The chow lines were ten miles long it seemed and if you were too far in the rear, you were lucky to get a full tray of food.

After a few days out, the age of the vessel caught up with it. One of the screws froze and went out of commission for the rest of the trip. So guess what? It took longer to get back to the 'States' and the food became less and less to hand out. What the heck! We were going HOME and going without chow at times was nothing new for some of us. Plenty of coffee and at times bread and jelly. If you were at the front of the line, you ate, but forget it if you were otherwise. Also, forget about taking showers, very little water to spare.

Everybody stayed out on deck when we got into sight of the Golden Gate Bridge which was late at night. The warehouses along the docks had painted on them, "WELCOME HOME!" all lit up. What a feeling it was to see your country again and I confess that I shed some happy tears, realizing that I had returned HOME ALIVE!!! We sailed under the bridge and docked near San Diego about midnight in a good rain storm and COLD. We mostly wore thin jackets and disembarked at one pier where some trucks were waiting to take us to a camp. Inside the building there was a person with doughnuts and coffee, but no one stopped for any. Overseas there was a 'doughnut stand' but it would cost a nickel or dime for one. I don't remember anyone going there. From what I can remember, we supplied the dough, I think.

The trip to the camp was long and cold and wet. The trucks had canvas sides and benches for seats and plenty of 'fresh air'. Our foxholes were more comfortable, because they were warm even with the water running into one side and out the other. (but not as 'safe' as where we were now) So there was a difference.

Finally after a long ride on the highway we arrived at our new 'home'. It was out in the boondocks and some distance from San Diego, I guess.

We got settled into tents that had cots waiting for us. How nice! We washed and dried up a little and then sat around shooting the breeze for a time before hitting the sack. It felt good knowing that we were home at last.

The next morning we got up and headed for the showers to wash some of the 'ship grime' off us and change into some clean clothes. Ha! Would you believe we no sooner got changed into

dry gear when we were called into formation. It was then explained to us what to wear to the showers and how to conduct ourselves since we were now stateside and in civilization again. 'Welcome back, combat troops!' We THANK YOU for what you did.

We got someone who was stationed there (who looked like a good Joe) to get a bottle of firewater for us. No trouble, we gave him whatever we had on hand and away he went and came back later with a bottle of Southern Comfort. We never heard of that brand. In fact, we did not know what whiskey tasted like while overseas except when we were in Hawaii which was some time ago. But, remembering occupational duty in Japan, Saki and homemade Japanese beer didn't taste bad either. While we were on detached duty (Nagasaki) living at the Japanese bathhouse, we would during the evenings (unofficially) have Saki with Japanese beer chasers. The Lt. and others would be singing and I would be writing to Tess. One time they convinced me to join them singing since I was writing in air instead of paper at times. That Saki was strong. The farmers at times would give us some Saki for helping them with their houses and some would give us homemade beer. It was not plentiful but whatever we did get, went a long way. Some 'sing-a-longs'. I never did get a big head from that afterwards. OK, let's get to where I left off with my 'memoirs'.

We, about three of us I think, climbed a hill back of the camp and relaxed with the bottle. Came back down the next day with some good sized heads. That cured us of any more 'tasting'.

The next day it was about nine o'clock at night and it was December 31. I was lucky to get a phone call through COLLECT to Tessie. (the line was pretty loooong) and I had to wait for the operator to complete the call. I heard the operator ask if they would accept the collect call to 'Tessie'. Talk about having nervous feet and hands. Finally Tessie answered the phone and they were just celebrating New Year's Eve with Lou and Mary Orgon at Tessie's house. It really felt good to hear her voice again after more than two and a half years absence. Couldn't talk much as there were many other guys waiting to put their calls through and I know how anxious they were.

During our 'stay', we turned all our '782 gear'. This composed whatever was issued to us such as; rifle, bayonet, helmet, etc. The 'K-bar' knife (used in close hand-to-hand fighting and opening 'C' ration cans) It was made like a 'Bowie Knife', very sharp, Also canteens and utensils and other gear such as our top and bottom knapsacks. I kept the lensatic compasses I carried in combat plus my electricians knife and diagonal cutters. All the gear we had just turned in, we had to carry with us since we left our original outfits. Now all we had left was whatever we had in our seabags such as skivvies, utility uniform (battle dress) and summer uniform. After some days, I don't remember how many, we were scheduled to board a train to take us to Bainsbridge, Maryland for discharge procedures. A group of us stood at the tracks and sang Old Lang Syne.(?) We then shook hands and without any embarrassment, hugged each other. We were divided up because some were scheduled to different trains for other destinations to be discharged.

Miracle of miracles, we were assigned to a Pullman car with

our own porter. He was a Negro, on in years and extremely friendly. He showed his DEEP APPRECIATION for what we went through overseas also in the manner how he spoke to us. He helped us in any way he could to make our trip comfortable. We didn't have any 'American' money to tip him at the end of the trip and he got insulted that we would want to do that. So we gave him Japanese money we got as 'souvenirs' during combat on the different beachheads. That he accepted after much persuasion from us. I'll never forget his 'Welcome Home' sincerity and his friendliness towards us from the time we boarded the train to the time we reached the end of the trip. In fact, that was the same feeling throughout the whole train. We had meals served in the dining car at times and for other meals, without the dining car, we were served sandwiches with plenty of coffee with them, plus we could have had coffee any time we wanted. It was always there for us. What duty!!

When we passed through the desert (Mohave?) all you could see were miles and miles of war equipment lined up in long rows. Planes, trucks and tanks. Whew, what a sight to remember.

Well the trip finally came to an end and we arrived at our last stop. From the station we were trucked to the Bainbridge Naval Depot where we would get processed out of the Corps. This time we had clean dungarees and only a seabag to carry plus any other gear (as a tooth brush, etc.) in a hand carrying bag.

We arrived at the base and were assigned to 'barracks' which was our new 'temporary' home. Plenty of room. Boy! These 'Stateside' Marines had it made!

Well, here we go again!! We were called into formation and given a 'pep' talk. #1. Keep your noses clean. #2. Be available at all times to be ready to be processed out. #3. Any deviation from following any orders will result in a one or two Month Mess Duty stint. But one outstanding item is that the chow was perfect. Nothing like the 'C' or 'K' rations we had overseas. This was human food.

Later in time, I sat with a Lt. who interviewed me and during the interview, asked if I wanted to join the Reserves. That I would get to camp out two weeks a year. Not only that, I would get to see my old buddies again. I looked at him and could see that he was a spanking new Lt. I told him that I already had two and a half years of 'camping out' and also that most of my buddies are still over in the Pacific buried under six feet of sand. But, if he would guarantee me back my Sgt. stripes, I'll think it over. But. NO, NO THANKS. I'll pass. I told him by all rights and odds, I am living on borrowed time from the close shaves I've had in combat. I wasn't about to press my luck by going back into the Marine Corps Reserves. (I'm glad I made that decision because I would have ended up in Korea with the First Marine Division fighting at the Chosin Reservoir in 10° below zero, and I know my luck would have run out before that) This I believe to this day.

Then he explained about my G.I. insurance which was for \$10,000 and if I wanted to continue it. (I originally had \$5,000 and increased it to \$10,000 when I went overseas) If he would have gone further into how good it was to keep it, I would have done

so. (I realized that with so many men to interview, his time was limited and also was his knowledge about the G.I. Insurance) This was the general consensus I discussed with among many ex-servicemen later on in years. I think my main concern at that time was to conserve expenses in civilian life. Also, he noted that I was taking Marine Corps corresponding courses for radio the past year or so and that they will be discontinued after I get discharged. I could continue them later in civilian life, at my expense. (I still have my test papers that were graded and returned to me while I was overseas) After some explanation about my back pay and traveling expenses, the Lt. wished me luck in civilian life and the interview was over.

We were measured for new 'Greens and overcoat (winter uniform) that were issued to us along with new skivies and boon-docks (field shoes) Garrison 'leather' dress belt. plus a new sea bag. I kept the old one with the various stencils on it designating the different 'stations' it had to be forwarded to where I had served at.

During the process, we would pass along a long counter manned by marines who looked as if they just completed 'Boot Camp' not too long ago. They would hand out the different new gear being issued to us. I noticed that most us were given an advancement in rank by the stripes given out with their 'Greens'. Lo and behold I was skipped and I asked the reason why. One of them answered that I probably had a mark against me during the first eight months of my enlistment and that prohibited me from the automatic promotion. That was the time frame I was stationed in the Brooklyn Navy Yard and the two marines supposedly that went out on my watch which I explained in this narrative some pages before. That one incident cost me stripes once before. Hey! I was going home, so what's the beef? I can't wear them on civilian clothes.

After a couple of days, our 'greens' were ready for us to wear complete with ribbons and stripes plus an overseas cap to wear. Boy! What a feeling it was when we put the Greens on. Like being on 'Garrison Duty' or 'Stateside Duty' again.

We were told by way of 'scuttlebutt' that we were going to have to do a 'shakedown' inspection. That is EVERYTHING issued to you and going HOME with you will be ALL put on display for inspection. So there went my lensatic compasses and a couple of other things. It never happened and someone gained a lot of 'keepsakes' we all chucked out the back windows.

We were issued our discharge papers and traveling money plus any back pay that was on the books. Besides that, we received a traveling bag, a cigarette lighter and some Marine Corps Reserve lapel pins. Also the 'Ruptured Duck' on the uniform.

Then we went to a large hall with our seabags and were given address tags to fill out and put on them. We thought that they would pull a 'shakedown' with the seabags but it did not happen. On went the tags and they were left there to be shipped to our homes. Back to the barracks we went to get packed and GO HOME.

WE WERE DISCHARGED!

Some of us took the train to New York getting off at Penn Station where we all went our separate ways to go home.

During the trip we discussed about how we felt being civilians again. No more combat, orders, regulations and constant moving from place to place. Then I guess the 'shock' of being civilians again came on us. We all got quiet and got a kind of empty feeling probably thinking what will happen next? It was both a joyous and sad good-byes. We all realized that we would be starting a new life and careers all over again. What laid ahead?

When we arrived at Penn station, it was evening and raining and cold. Remember, this was in January of 1946. We said our good-byes and parted each to his own destination and life.

I shared a cab with another buddy and got out at a Public Service bus station to go home to Little Ferry, N.J..That's where I was going to stay with my sister, Albina and her husband, Tony and also my niece, Albina (Barbara) who was about five or six years old at the time. The buddy I shared the cab with, continued on to Grand Central Station to finish his trip home.

I got on the bus and asked the bus driver to let me out at the traffic circle in Little Ferry, then settled down and had a seat to myself. Little did the other passengers know nor care, how much this trip meant to me.

I was just another passenger to them and another serviceman. If they only knew what I had experienced in the years I last rode this bus. The buddies I lost and cried over. The wounded I helped carry to the Aid Station on the beach. The times a person had to call upon his last strength to keep going. The times I had so narrowly missed being killed or wounded and so much more. No, I just sat there with my memories and the feeling again that we had experienced earlier that day after boarding the train at Bainbridge. 'Loneliness'

After a time, the driver called out, "Little Ferry" and stopped the bus. I got up and retrieved my bag and 'paper work' and thanked the bus driver as I got off the bus. I could swear that he replied, "Thank YOU!". That made me feel good again. I smiled at him and got off.

I walked from the traffic circle in a pouring cold rain and never felt the cold or rain as I got nearer and nearer to home.

"What was I going to say when they answered my knock at the door?" They did not know about what time I was coming home.

It was over two and a half years since I left to go overseas and here I was back home and ready to knock on the door. Well, after some hesitation, I knocked and when Alby opened the door, I said, "I'M BACK!".

IT WAS A HAPPY HOMECOMING!!!

After thoughts:

I hope that I did not give the impression in my 'Narrative' that I had 'won the war' single-handed. Although I had 'experiences', I was just an ordinary 'jarhead' following orders, taking chances here and there plus trying to stay alive.

The real heroes never came home.

Duty Stations I had served at:

- *Marine Corps Recruitment Training Depot, Parris Island, S.C..
- *Post Troops, Headquarters Company, Parris Island, S.C.
- *Brooklyn Navy Yard, (New York Navy Yard) Brooklyn, New York
- *25th Combat Replacement Battalion, New River, N.C.
- *25th Advanced Combat Training Replacement Battalion, Camp Pendelton, California. (tent City)
- *F.M.F. (Fleet Marine Force) Pacific (when you are shipped 'out' for combat, you are part of a fleet and 'on line' duty)
- *Third Marine Amphibious Corps, M.A.C. (Certain Marine Divisions and Naval units overseas are incorporated into a Corps. Otherwise known as a battle group)
- *Temporary duty with Sea Bees on Ohau, Hawaii.
- *Company B, First Battalion, Second Marine Regiment, Second Marine Division, (First Platoon) Camp Tarawa. Island of Hawaii. Training for invasion of Saipan. (we were part of Task Force 58 for the invasion. Adm. Wm. B. Halsey ('Wild Bull') was the Task Force Commander-in-Chief)
- *Saipan, Marianas Islands. Beachhead and occupational duty.
- *Tinian, Marianas, (beachhead).
- *Company A, Second Engineer Battalion, Second Marine Division.
- *Okinawa, Ryukus Islands (beachhead)
- *Saipan, training for Japanese Invasion. (Nagasaki was our invasion beachhead and we were to be in the first landing)
- *Nagasaki, Japan. Occupational and reconstruction duty.
- *Sasebo, Japan. Occupational and reconstruction duty on way home.
- *California, (Stateside) landing port.
- *Bainbridge, Maryland. Naval Depot for discharge.
- *CIVILIAN.

Medals Awarded:

- Marine Corps 'Good Conduct' Medal.
- Marine Corps 'American Theatre' medal.
- U.S. Navy 'Japanese Occupational' Medal.
- U.S. Navy 'Asiatic Pacific' medal with 3 battle stars.
- World War II 'Victory' medal.
- Presidential Unit Citation 'Ribbon'.
- 'Sharpshooter's' medal.
- 'Expert Small Arms' medal.

Additional 'remembered' notes.

We covered our dogtags with tape to prevent them from making noise at night and also from showing flare reflections.

We also sewed a sock over our canteens to prevent any noise at night. Plus, it kept the water a little cooler.

Also, our helmets were composed of two parts. A liner that was like plastic which the 'pot' rested on and the steel part nicknamed the 'pot' which was a little heavy. You got used to the weight after awhile but it was a relief to take it off.

In combat we used the pot to wash ourselves and also to 'refresh' our socks of which I carried a spare pair in my helmet

liner. No room for extra skivvies since the grenades took up all the available space in the pack. Since I did not have room, I had no shaving gear, so I grew a handlebar mustache. George also had one when he visited me on the line. We had a picture taken together by a Navy photographer while I was with him at his plane, but we never got them.

Towards the middle of the campaign on Saipan while on the 'ridge', we were issued rations called, '10-in-one rations. These came in a large carton and the contents were in concentrated form. One time it contained bacon which gave everyone the 'runs' and that did not help matters especially when you are in combat. I guess the reason was that we had to cook the bacon in a pan we found that was used by the Japanese troops. Between the grease which we were not used to in the tropics and the 'cleanliness' of the pan, that must have given us the 'runs'. (gross, but this was a subject I discussed with many veterans who were in combat. "Do you remember where you relieved yourself while you were in your foxholes?" I told them that I could not remember any of those times myself and they, after thinking it over, they could not do so either.) Strange what happens to you under those conditions. So the next time, in the 10-in-ones', we got corn beef which you had to add water to make 10 servings. We mixed the beef in our 'pots' helmet (which we had rinsed out good) and no 'runs' was suffered. This type of ration was given to us only twice on the line as we did not have the equipment or to properly prepare them. ('Sanitized' especially!) Or 'foxhole' time.

Those types of rations were more suitable for those in the rear such as 'Transportation' or 'Artillery' units. Usually we had 'K' rations that came in boxes like cracker jacks, which were easy to carry in combat, as they were light and compact. It contained a small can of 'meat' or cheese, a biscuit and a package of instant coffee plus a candy and I think a couple of cigarettes. The cheese package came in handy to 'plug' you up whenever you had the 'runs'. Then we also had 'C' rations which came in two cans. One can had 'vegetable stew' or some other miserable tasting concoction which tasted half way good when heated. But, it was rare to get an opportunity to heat them. The other can was called 'Light Rations' which contained biscuits (hard as rocks and could have been used for hand grenades), instant coffee or 'cocoa', candy and I think a cigarette. There was a code on the 'light' can which told you if it contained coffee or cocoa. (that's why we always got coffee) When we got some replacements, they wanted the 'C' rations with hot dogs or spaghetti and other meats. They told us that was what they had been eating before joining us. So we broke the sad news to them, "get used to what you're getting now because that's the ONLY MENU being served." There was one ration that had 'Tropical' butter in it. You could have a good hot fire going to heat the rations and then drop the butter in the fire. After the fire died down, the butter was still in one piece. Imagine how it was in the stomach? These 'fires' were RARE, very RARE on the line. (foxholes)

One time we got word on the 'line' that we are going to get

hot chow served to us. So each would take his turn to leave his foxhole and get his chow (not too far) with his mess kit and canteen cup and return. It was hot chow alright. 'C' rations heated up along with a full cup of hot coffee. 'C' rations or not, it tasted good. You know what baby food tastes like out of a jar? Well it tastes MUCH worse than that. Sometimes we ate the candy instead. Our 'thanks' to the mess cooks for that thoughtfulness in bringing that hot chow to us on the line.

OK, so much for that. . . . Now here's a little ditty of ours that we used to sing now and then while in Hawaii..

Song:

We are the boys of the F.M.F. you hear so much about,
The people come and stare at us whenever we go out.
When we go marching and the band begins to P-L-A-Y,
You can hear them shouting; "The RAGGEDY-ASS MARINES ARE ON
PARADE!"

Talking about singing, sometimes the Japanese would get loaded drinking Saki and start yelling and singing. Some racket. Their tunes sounded eerie, like cats fighting. What a head they must have had the next day. At times it meant that they were getting up steam for an attack and when they started to sing, we would get our ammo and grenades ready and go on extra alert. I would double check the barbed wire in front of our positions for any weaknesses. We had empty cans with pebbles in them to make noise, hanging here and there on the wire. So if anyone tried to sneak through, we would hear the cans making noise. There was no firing unless you actually saw the enemy coming towards you over the wire. Some of the guys wanted to milk the goat for milk. One of the guys who was a farmer told them, "Forget it, the animal was a male goat". Another recollection: This was when I was working for the newspaper in White Plains. As I walking to the gas station after work to get my car, I saw an open bed pickup truck going towards Scarsdale loaded with luggage. There on top of the heap was a Marine footlocker with "Lt. Col. Maxie Williams" stenciled on it. That was some surprise and there was no way I could get to my car in time and follow the truck. He was the Captain of our company whom I had mentioned earlier that got shot in the jaw by a sniper before we took off on the advance up the hill. (from '44 to '57)

In the engineers we were trained in demolition, water distillation and flame throwers besides our own specialties. If needed, we could fill in these duties during combat.

Saipan has a large harbor which had a coral reef that restricted some use of it. So it was decided to blow the reef and enlarge the harbor. I rode a couple of trucks loaded with boxes of dynamite to the harbor and put them aboard a naval vessel which Navy 'hard hat' divers then went underwater and placed them in and around the reef. The next day, at the time of detonation, we parked the truck some distance from the harbor and got under it because there was going to be a tremendous explosion and plenty of coral coming down from the sky. A warning was issued for all planes to stay clear of the area. Just when

it was set to go off, we saw a piper cub plane flying in the area. Oh Boy! Well it 'blew' and the plane was lucky that it was able to recover from the blast and flying rocks. Plenty of coral pieces came down on our truck and we were about a mile away from the blast. When everything returned to normal, Saipan became the main port for the submarines. It became a second 'Pearl Harbor'. Also, large vessels were also able to anchor inside the harbor.

Before I write, "FINIS", I want to mention how important it was to us in combat to receive mail from home. A letter was like gold and treated as such. It would be read over and over again, sometimes under the poncho when it was raining. Maybe it would get a little wet or muddy, but it was kept readable.

They were the best moral boosters you could imagine, especially when a letter from Tessie arrived. I am sure this was the same feeling wherever any serviceman was fighting, be it on land or sea.

Well, My daughters, you have just read what I did in the Marine Corps. It took a long time to find out, didn't it?

I AM SURE that this is the end of my story. Relieved? I am, because I don't have to play 'ping pong' with my memory anymore and neither do you as 'the reader', bouncing back and forth with me in my memories.

Dated: 02/03/'01

FINIS



"ONCE A MARINE, ALWAYS A MARINE"

HA! Thought you were finished, didn't you?

Well, I remembered some more memories that I thought I forgot but will put them down before I forget.

Like I mentioned before, while we were in Japan and had to check out some warehouses, that were 'guarded' by a Japanese policeman (I guess that was what they were). You had to have written permission to show that you were authorized to enter. No problem, we would write anything down on a piece of paper and sign it, 'George Lincoln' or any other name, give it to the guard and he would smile and bow. In we went. The warehouses contained all sorts of material and equipment, but we didn't bother with any of it as our mission was to restore electricity to the buildings.

Another time we had to check out and pick up some 'gear' in the outlying area. As we approached the place, we had to cross a small stream using wooden planks thrown across the stream. Since we were using a six wheel truck, the crossing was done 'very carefully'. Well when we crossed over, about two hundred yards in front of us was a steep hill and being rolled down that hill by some Japanese, was a 500 lb. aerial bomb. Forget it! We turned around and got out of there before we became history. The bomb was picked up later after it was guaranteed to be defused. That was some sight to see, this big chunk of metal with fins, bouncing down the hill and the Japanese running after it like a bunch of kids having fun. This also showed how prepared they were for the invasion. They had explosives and all types of weapons hidden in every cave, cranny and nook to use against us by civilians and military. Contrary to what some people say about the use of the Atom Bomb, IT SAVED AN UNTOLD AMOUNT OF LIVES, BOTH AMERICAN AND JAPANESE! This was even acknowledged publicly by an important Japanese politician. Not only lives, but also one, two, or three years of fighting for every inch of the Japanese Islands was also averted.

Another 'woops'. One time, while in the outlying areas of Nagasaki, we were out checking some power lines (two of us plus the Lt.) I was driving the jeep and we were going to be a little late for chow if we didn't call it quits. So back we went and as we got into our area, I drove around a building which contained the 'lavatories'. (nothing but slits in the floor with a raised imprint of a foot on each side of the slit, you used those 'prints' to aim yourself.) Down below was a sloping basement with the deep part at one end of the building where the 'Honey Dippers' would drop their buckets and fill them with the 'goodies'. They would carry two buckets that were on each end of a yoke they wore on their shoulders and then 'fertilize' the fields. They wore WHITE socks and 'slippers' and never get a spot on them all day. (until I came along) Well around this corner I came with the jeep and WHOA! there was a 'Honey Dipper' right there. I swerved the jeep (I wasn't going fast) and thought I would miss him. Nope! The fender just touched one of the buckets and he started to turn around to keep his balance. The buckets acted like counterweights and started to swing out from centrifugal force. I knew what was going to happen and

kept going. No way was I going to stop. In the meantime, the guy was yelling something in Japanese which I don't think he was praising my driving. Anyway, from the noise we heard as I got out of there, we surmised he really got his socks and slippers 'discolored'. If we would have stayed there to watch, we would have been in 'Deep S _ _ ! (more ways than one.)

Another time at another place almost the same thing happened, only this time it was an outside 'slit trench' at the bottom of a mound where you balanced yourself on the edge and do what you had to do. Well it was raining that day and the ground was clay and slippery. Yep! You guessed right! Someone slid backwards into the perfumed mess and it was the 'Gunny' Sgt. Up to his hips and yelling for help to get out. No way grabbing his hands, forget that idea! He said that the first S.O.B. that laughs will get killed. (what was he going to do, throw the 'stuff' at us?) We threw him a rope, (a loonng rope) and hauled him out. We laughed and he started to laugh also. (good thing for us) You know? Relieving yourself under those 'conditions' sure was a challenge!

Another time we were clearing a beach to ready it for an Army ship to beach itself and drop the ramp and unload equipment and men. Our bulldozer was leveling the beach and then hit a mine that was buried under the sand. It blew the blade upwards and luckily the operator wasn't hurt, but he was shaken up. We all ducked from the flying sand and debris. That was it, the beach was 'ready' for the Army. An Army Lt. needed a ride to the railroad station just over the hill a ways, so my Lt. had me take the jeep and deliver him. He kept looking at his watch and telling me to hurry so that he won't miss the train. So off we went, up the hill and lickety split on our way to the station. As we got to the tracks, the train was just starting to pull out of the station. No stopping now! Across the tracks we went in front of the train and it stopped to pick my 'frightened passenger' up. The engineer was praising my driving in Japanese. (I think) He sure was yelling up a storm.

When I returned to the beach we witnessed a real Japanese comic drama. The road I had to drive up was about two blocks long uphill with houses on each side. At the beginning of the road and on the left we saw a house on fire and was going to see what we could do to help. Forget it! This is what followed: We heard a loud banging sound from a fire gong and the Japanese came out of the houses, got into a group facing each other and bowed. Then they went back to their houses and came out wearing ceremonial robes that I guess were their uniforms. Meanwhile the fire is blazing away, for their houses were flimsy wooden dwellings. Again they faced each other and bowed then got a hand pumper out and pulled it to the burning building while singing in cadence. OK, they finally got to the fire which was only about two hundred feet from their houses and they got on each side of the 'fire truck' and pumped the handles up and down to charge the hose with water. Two guys took the hose and nozzle and ran to the burning building. They didn't have much to do because it was almost out by that time. Afterwards they then packed up and returned to where they started off,

bowed to each other again and put the 'engine' back in the building after it was wiped and cleaned. I guess they were the local village 'Fire Brigade'. This was like watching a comedy show on stage. Now I know what they meant in the Marines when they used to say, "Fouled up like a Chinese fire drill". That scene was so comical we were doubled up with laughter. Maybe it was funny to us, but to them it was an age-old ritual or ceremony carried on from years past. (we made sure, 'darn sure' that we didn't have any fires and needed their help) I guess times and methods have changed since then in those small villages. That sure was a sight and scene to remember.

*Another One. . . .

Back at our 'bath house quarters' we rigged up a wind-driven wooden plunger to wash our skivvies, which we would have in a fifty gallon drum that was cut in half. We made a small fire underneath the drum and 'presto!' we had our own 'washing machine' with hot water. It sure helped to keep us supplied with clean skivvies and utilities. Would you know that success has a habit of kicking you in the rear when you get too big-headed? Because one time we put the clothes in to wash, with some water in the drum and the fire going. We got involved in something and forgot to check the drum. No water, clothes were nice and crispy and not from starch. Luckily one member of our team was in Quartermasters and we had no trouble replacing our toasted gear. After that, everyone checked the drum for water while in use.

AND here I am laughing about the Japanese 'Fire Brigade'.

*Still another one, this time, a serious one.

While fighting on Saipan, every time someone was killed or wounded, we had to close up that spot. Pretty soon the lines were getting thin and that meant less rest time between your turn to stay alert during the night. Plus going on patrol every day didn't help. (we used to say when someone was wounded, "Lucky bastard", providing it wasn't too bad). Sometimes they returned to their foxholes to fight again.

One day we came back from patrol dog tired and pooped. I got into my foxhole and went out like a light. While sleeping, they lined up rocket batteries and tanks behind our positions. They were all firing a barrage along with mortars and machine guns, concentrating their fire into the area we will be advancing into. This was in preparation for the advance all divisions were going to make the next day.

When I finally awoke, the cordite was like a fog and heavy to breathe. They thought I was dead, because there was a tank firing their cannon right over me and the concussion would cause me to lift off the ground every time it fired and it never even woke me up. Anyway, I got to see and hear the end of the barrage. It was some sight and deafening, to witness with all that firepower going on all at once.

We did push off the next day - and they were waiting for us.

Another 'last'? item . . .

One time, while I was on generator watch, a couple of men came up from the movie area. They said that the movie was too dim as if there wasn't enough power. I went down to check and they were right. On the way back I checked and saw many tents with high wattage bulbs on the same run going to the projection booth. When I returned to the generator, a colonel was standing there and wanted to know where I was. I explained to the colonel where I was after hearing about the problems in the projection booth. I showed him the main board meters that showed the generator was running normal with 110 volts output. "Not enough, run it faster!" he said. I replied that the generator has a governor on it that limits the RPM's. Then he wanted me to disconnect it. I looked at him thinking he was on the Islands too long. I told him that I would have to contact my outfit for permission, knowing it was against regulations to do what he wanted and that I would be able to pass this hot potato on to them. So I picked up the phone and told them the news. Not even five minutes passed when up roared a jeep with two 'high ranking' Sgts. in it. They stood in front of the colonel who explained what he wanted me to do. Well I had to walk away from them after they lit into the Colonel and read him up and down with no punches pulled. No way was I going to stand there and get caught in the middle. (me, a PFC between a bird colonel and a couple of 'old Corps' six 'stripers', no way) Anyway they showed him where the electricity was being siphoned off before it got to the booths and 'more'. They then left and went back, as did the colonel and all was quiet again. Boy! A bottle of beer would have tasted good then.

Anyway, when the jeep delivered me back to my area, the next morning, I had to walk past the Company Commander's tent. (office) The Captain called me over and congratulated me on the way I handled the situation by calling for 'backup'. (one point for me which might come in handy in case I got on someone's sh-- list)

Sometimes that duty had its good points especially when a USO show was on. (very rare) One time I had the duty and they had a show going on. I used the excuse that I was checking up on how my supply of 'juice' was working and went behind the stage where I met some of the actors. One was Charles Ruggles, pipe in mouth, and we talked for a minute before he went on. He was real down to earth with everyone he came in contact with.

Incidentally, those two 'top' Sgts. were the same ones that I met in Sasebo and had me accompany them out to the outlying areas and power houses. They remembered the 'incident' at the generator and appreciated the fact that they had the opportunity to stand nose to nose with a line Company officer and won. (so you see, that 'point' paid off for me)

One time when George visited me, he accompanied me to the generator watch and stayed over night and we had morning chow together at that mess hall. No problem, I explained to the mess Sgt. that he was my brother and they heaped his plate full.

While in the Engineers, we were trained in different skills

needed in combat. This was to be able to fill in when necessary.

I was taught demolition using dynamite, TNT and plastique, named C-4 plus primer cord used to tie charges together. The primer cord looked like clothes line but was a high explosive 'fuse'. Ignition traveled as fast as a bullet. Two turns around a tree would shatter the trunk.

Then we were trained in water distillation and purification. This class was held at a beach where we would pump water from the ocean and distill it to remove the salt. One time at the class, I noticed something out on the edge of the reef and walked out to see what it was. It was shallow at the time and I was able to get to it. I was surprised to see what was left of a burial at sea wrapped in wire. Very much water soaked and other things. I had another person help me to carry it to shore and the Lt. called Graves and Registration.

Then to keep us busy, we learned how to defuse various types of mines, from personnel to beach mines and booby traps.

Well I guess this wraps up my memories and will stop recalling different pasts.

THIS IS NOW THE END! (I think) Before this becomes a book about nothing.

FLASH! Another 'ADD-ON'. . . . April 10, '01

Sean Huvane, Father Jim's brother, just gave me a book titled; "The Marine Corps Story". It is about the beginning of the Corps and all its involvements in every war and 'Police Actions' from 1775 to 1990.

During my 'glancing' through it, I came across several experiences I had written about in this narrative.

It explained how the Second Marine Division was re-formed prior to the Marianas Campaign. How the squads in the platoon were broken down into 'Fire Teams' of five people including a BAR man. (three teams to a squad) That was when I was promoted to Fire Team Leader and also as a squad leader..

It also had an article about when the U.S.S. Colorado which was hit by Japanese artillery fire when we were passing it on our way to make the beachhead on Tinian.

Also, when I wrote about being next to a factory chimney and undergoing a fierce artillery attack. That was mentioned almost word for word what I had written.

There was also an article about when Napalm was first used in combat, which was on Tinian before our landing on the beaches. Again, almost word for word of how I described our reactions while we were aboard ship watching it being used.

Reading this reassured me that I was not 'stretching' my experiences to the reader while writing about what happened in the Pacific.

Oh, one more item. The book also revealed what was waiting for us if we invaded Japan. Over a million troops, thousands of planes, boats and ammunition. Our Division was going to be the spearhead in the invasion of Nagasaki. The prognosis was two to three years of more fighting if the Atom bomb wasn't dropped. This I also mentioned in my 'narrative'.

Just a little more I want to write about.

*

For quite some time, after I came back and was discharged from the Marines; I often wondered, 'Why was I spared, when those along side of me got killed or wounded'? 'Why was I allowed to come home alive and in one piece'?

While I was working at West Point, my micrographic operations were moved to the Caretaker's cottage in the Post Cemetery. I would often walk through the cemetery visualizing I was in the Marine cemetery on Saipan. To me it was a peace of mind.

While on one of these days as I was returning to the cottage, I met another person who was coming from the section where many Korean veterans were buried.

He explained why he was there and I in turn revealed that I imagined that I was walking through the Marine cemetery on one of the Pacific Islands and 'visiting' my fallen buddies.

We both said the same words at the same time, "Why were we spared?" He came with me to the office and we had a nice chat about our 'experiences'. So you see, there were others like me with the same burden on their mind.

Years later, I found out why I was spared. It was at a Missionary Mass here at home. There was a piece of paper which each person received that said what God has chosen for you to do. This paper was in an envelope and mine had printed, (as close as I can recollect) "Help and give comfort to others".

The Missionaries explained that sometimes these papers would exactly match up with some people.

Yes, it was a match for me. Why? I remembered the letter I received from a neighbor thanking me for being there for their family when they needed help. Then one more letter from another neighbor family member thanking me for being there for the times when

their father needed help and his wife called me to talk to him, because he was quite ill and wouldn't go to the hospital until he talked to me. I went to see him and after we talked, he agreed to go to the hospital via ambulance. He passed away a week later. Then again, for helping their mother after her husband had passed away.

Another time when I was in the hospital recovering from a mild heart attack, I met a person whom I used to work with at the Press. He had the room next to me. His wife told me that he had not long to live but he didn't know it. So I would spend time in his room talking and joking with him. I always left him laughing. I found out that he passed away not long after I went home.

I recalled other instances where I was a comfort to someone in need of solace, so now there was no need to wonder why I was spared. I found out why, thanks to that Mass. Each of us has a special purpose in life to perform whether we know it or not.

My mind is now at rest, for I have found out why I was spared.

Note: Reading a book lately about combat experiences, the author mentioned that many servicemen, while in combat and after being discharged, all had the same 'guilt' feeling, "Why were we spared?"

Being together through thick and thin, then seeing them suddenly killed alongside of you, makes you ask that question of yourself.



United States Marine Corps

*Certificate of
Honorable and Satisfactory Service
in World War II*

This is to Certify that

ROBERT EDWARD KUKLISH

has satisfactorily completed active service and is this date
19 JANUARY 1946
DISCHARGED

Entered the United States Marine Corps

29 August, 1942.

Began Active Service

29 August, 1942.

Upon relief from Active Duty held Rank of

Private First Class.

BAINBRIDGE, MARYLAND
given at _____

G. B. Clark
Signature

dated 19 JANUARY 1946 _____

2ND LIEUTENANT USMCR.
Rank



SAID ROBERT EDWARD KUKLISH....., IS ENTITLED TO ALL THE PRIVILEGES AND BENEFITS OF SECTION 7 OF THE ACT APPROVED 18 AUGUST 1941 (50 app. U.S.C. 357) RELATIVE TO RESTORATION TO HIS POSITION IN EMPLOYMENT AT TIME OF ENTERING ON ACTIVE DUTY AS NOTED HEREIN OR TO A LIKE POSITION, PROVIDED HE MAKES APPLICATION FOR SUCH REEMPLOYMENT WITHIN NINETY DAYS FROM DATE OF THIS CERTIFICATE, IS QUALIFIED TO PERFORM THE DUTIES OF SUCH POSITION AND DISPLAYS THIS CERTIFICATE AS EVIDENCE OF SATISFACTORY SERVICE.

Instructions

This certificate must be issued on discharge or relief from active duty with the regular Marine Corps to each officer or enlisted man who entered on active service subsequent to May 1, 1940, and who satisfactorily completes such active duty. "Satisfactory completion" will normally be accomplished if the individual's service is such that he would be entitled to an honorable discharge or a discharge under honorable conditions if discharged from the service instead of relieved from active duty.

In any case where the immediate commanding officer is aware of facts not in the possession of Headquarters, Marine Corps, at the time the certificate was issued, which raise a doubt in his mind as to the right of the officer to a certificate of satisfactory service, he is authorized to withhold delivery of such certificate, making an appropriate note of the fact in his endorsement on the officer's orders, and return the certificate to the Commandant of the Marine Corps with a full statement of the facts in the case.

In the case of enlisted men an entry will be made in the service-record book under "Other Special Qualifications" that a "certificate of satisfactory service" was issued. If his service is unsatisfactory and no certificate issued, an entry to that effect will be made in the service-record book.

If any special proficiency has been attained, subjects will be listed and the officer issuing the certificate will sign below last entry.



Model 1903, Springfield Rifle, 30.06 Cal., Bolt Action

5 rounds per clip

PARRIS ISLAND
RIFLE RANGE
SEPT. 1942

ROBERT KUKLIS



PARRIS ISLAND
RIFLE RANGE
SEPT. 1942

ROBERT KUKULS



Pearl Harbor
1943

386

Four Kuklis Boys With Uncle Sam

Fifth Doing His Part in 30 Shop

A weary, unshaven Marine poked his head from a foxhole on Saipan when he heard a familiar voice bellowing, "Bob! Bob Kuklis!" Then, with a cry of joy, he leaped out to pump the hand of his brother, George, an aviation machinist's mate, third class.

The meeting took place after an 18 months' separation and was declared by both brothers "the best morale builder ever." A full description of the event was related in a letter to their



Vincent

brother, John, who has been doing his part on the home front in Republic's 30 Shop for more than four years.

George wrote that when his ship reached Saipan early in July, he was determined to find his brother. Small as the island is, George found the task a difficult one. After a day and a half of searching, however, his efforts were rewarded.

Tries Navy Chow

The two boys were able to spend seven hours together and readily admitted that their talk was mostly of home. On the second day, George brought some chow from his ship, which Bob readily dug into for "he hadn't had a decent meal in months."

George, who is 22, enlisted in the Navy on August 28, 1942, while Bob signed up with the Marines the following day.



John

Two other members of the Kuklis family are serving their country in the armed forces. Pfc. Vincent, who was a Shop 20 employee before joining the Army, is now stationed in Corsica and is a veteran of the African campaign. Pvt. Edward followed in Bob's footsteps by enlisting in the Marines two months ago.

'Astorian Finds Brother In Foxhole on Saipan

A weary, unshaven Astoria Marine poked his head from a foxhole on Saipan when he heard a familiar voice bellowing: "Bob! Bob Kuklis!" Then, with a cry of joy, he leaped out to pump the hand of his brother, Aviation Machinist's Mate 3/c George Kuklis.

This meeting, after 18 months, which both brothers described as the best "morale builder," was related in a letter to George's fiancée, Edith Zeman of 81-14 24th avenue.

George wrote that when his ship reached Saipan in the Pacific early in July, he was determined to find his brother. Small as the island is, George found the task a difficult one. After a day and a half, his search was rewarded.

The two brothers were able to spend seven hours together. Their talk, both admitted, was mostly of home.

George had brought along his harmonica and when he learned that Robert had lost his he offered Robert his own instrument. Robert, however, was afraid that he would lose that one, too, but contented himself with playing on



George Kuklis Robert Kuklis

George's harmonica for a short while.

On the second day, George wrote, he brought a lot of "chow" from his ship and Robert dug into it for "he hadn't had a decent meal in months."

George, who is 22, enlisted in the Navy on Aug. 28, 1942. His brother, a private 1/c, is 24, and enlisted the day after George. The boys lived at 25-41 44th street, Astoria.

They have two other brothers in service, Vincent, a private 1/c in the Army, know in Corsica and a veteran of the African campaign, and Edward, who enlisted in the Marines three weeks ago.

When I got permission to leave the line (foxhole) to go with Uncle George back to his plane, we walked down a path towards Garapan (city on Saipan) where the main road was.

I told George to be alert as we're right on the front lines and the japs could be anywhere around you. When we got to the road, we hitched a ride on a jeep going towards the seaplane ramps. We only went a couple of hundred yards when suddenly a shot rang out and a bullet shattered the windshield. The bullet went right pass our heads and the driver slammed to a stop and jumped out, as did we all, and got down on the other side of the jeep away from the direction the shot came from. To the right side of the road was a small building where the jap was who fired the shot. If it had been a sniper, he wouldn't have missed so it was probably a 'scared' Japanese soldier or someone who just wanted to shoot at anybody. I told the driver and George to stay put because there were some Marines already running towards the house to drop some grenades inside. Me? I told them that I was on 'vacation' from my foxhole and that the others won't need me. It was over in minutes and we continued on our way. I warned George not to feel too safe when traveling anywhere on the island and to be ALERT! We still had a lot of Japanese to fight yet, plus plenty of them were by-passed in caves during our advances.

Anyway, on the return trip just on the outskirts of Garapan (city) a Marine who was standing by the side of the road, showed us two graves that were close by and told us that they contained a woman pilot, Amelia Erhart and her navigator and captain, Fred J. Noonan, who were executed by the Japanese as spies on Saipan. I wish I had a camera then. I can still picture seeing those graves.

On his next visit to our foxholes, George brought bread and cold cuts from his ship. BOY! Did we all have a feast then. We walked around like 'Sunday in the park' while eating and here were Marines being killed by snipers every day in our area.

That day, George became an 'Honorary Member' of our platoon.

Sometimes I would sit at the edge of my foxhole and calmly check out the area in front of our lines with binoculars. What a perfect target! So sometimes we would get too complacent in our attitudes or safety. That sniper was good! Everyone he shot, was killed with a head wound. Plus, it was almost soundless for he was some distance away.