

War Era Story Project 2012

Submitted by: William L. Sherry

Current home town: Columbus

Age: Not given

Prelude to War

by Lester Sherry

Approaching the period of the war was not a frightening time. We farm folks were still very much in the depression era. My life was rural, and survival through the depression was the order of the period. My father did not serve in the army in WWI because farming was not well advanced in 1917 and he was needed to produce food. The only part of my early life that was not rigid and disciplined was marksmanship with a BB gun, advancing to a rifle and shotgun. Dad was never more than average as a shooter. From my first BB gun on, encouragement turned me into the family's meat supplier. At an early age, a rifle was handed to me to shoot the winter beef cow and the porkers. Comparing the past with the present leads me to conclude that my lifetime spanned the golden age. Some of my shootings of the time would, in all probability, not be tolerated now. It even appears that dad might have aided and abetted.

The community was losing population, as some families moved away or combined with relatives to reduce expenses. Living in an environment of many houses vacant with orchards of fruit going to waste, I, as a hungry lad, found fulfillment prowling around. Hunting and trapping at an early age, supplemented by working for neighbors, had made me self-supporting, but shooting was seemingly my only freedom. I would have joined the National Guard, but that was opposed by my family. The National Guard appeared to be causing problems and could not be very well controlled by the Sheriff and deputy, who were our only community peace officers. That may have led to the Guard's removal from rural communities after the war.

We substituted Citizens Military Training Camps (CMTTC) at Camp Attabery, Indiana, and it was a better choice. It was one month a year, and I attended three years. My age at this time allowed me to become the first member of the CCC to go from my county. I count this as a plus toward what is needed to prepare young people for military service. Spending one year away from home in a different environment along with later volunteering for the draft helped, as did spending a year at Camp Shelby, Mississippi, where a variety of military knowledge was gained. My tour gave me confidence as sharpshooter in rifle training, truck driving the army way, scouting and finding my way around with a compass.

We had just re-elected our "I hate war; If I am elected president no American boys will die on foreign soil" president. This was talk that breeds war. It was January 1940, so volunteering for the draft found me with twenty other Paulding County volunteers headed for Toledo, Ohio to be on our way into the U.S. army. After all the examinations and clothing issues were accomplished, they sent us to Camp Shelby, Mississippi for basic training. The Ohio National Guard had preceded us there and was ready to be fleshed out as a complete unit. The 148th Infantry was one third of the 37th Division. It was a

breakdown from the old square division, revamped to be more self-contained. We would be a Regiment that had all the supporting units, artillery, medics, supply, anti-tank, etc. under one command. The advantage being that any needed unit was immediately available.

The year at Camp Shelby represented a radical cut in pay, from a profitable business as a stationary hay bailer to a \$21 a month army private in the 37th Division. My lot was to become a member of anti-tank company, which started with the Defiance National Guard for a base. We were being equipped and trained to fight off enemy tanks. A year of military training can get boring. To break the monotony of constant drill and lectures, my wandering led me to Staff Sergeant Nelson Ball. He was a likable and pleasant noncom. Nelson Ball was in charge of the motor pool and needed conscientious drivers. One day I felt in a mood for change and talked to Nelson. Telling him that I had driven a semi, hauling hay and straw brought out his need for drivers. My explaining that my knowledge of mechanics wouldn't qualify me for the job didn't deter him. He said to come over in the morning and we will see if you like this kind of work. He took charge of transferring me one. It took a day or two for it to be approved. However, Jim was on the ball and encouraged the move.

Being a temporary as needed sub, fit my needs very well. Night driving with no lights and a sleeping load of soldiers is most certainly not for everyone. It was a new way of life, a really different environment, with so much more freedom. Like most good things, it had its faults and it was nice to know that the way was not blocked to get out of it. Long weary drives at night take their toll on army drivers.

It was never so apparent that I was accepted as a truck driver by the group as when I attended my first reunion of the company several years later. The drivers and Sgt. Ball were the first to break the ice.

November 7th found the 37th division prepared for the rigors of what was to come. We were instructed to move to Indiantown Gap, Pennsylvania. It was a long weary nighttime move with no headlights. Tiny blue lights and slow speed became the dreary order. One really learned the army truck driver's ordeal driving all night while the rest of the group slept in the back. Arriving at our designation with no major mishap the schedule was to wait for the captured Italian luxury liner Normandy, which was fitted as a troop ship, to take us to England to be part of the invasion of Europe. The Normandy ship caught fire and capsized in the harbor thus blocking that plan.

The need for more firepower in the Pacific Theater suddenly seemed to get the army's attention. The "flaming assholes" as we sometimes referred to ourselves, because of the round red centered division patch we wore on our right shoulder, then loaded aboard a troop train for San Francisco, California. A short stay of two weeks found us aboard the SS Calvin Coolidge with a convoy of other ships headed for the Fiji Islands. We successfully ducked Jap submarines to the Fiji Islands. The Coolidge was to unload more troops in New Zealand and New Hebrides. It ended up in a Jap mine field and sank in the harbor.

THE FIJI ISLANDS

At Fiji the training got really serious. Japanese patrol boats were often sighted in the area and the Latoka Fiji area was bombed. Also, the army was getting orders to fill all vacancies and promote acting noncommissioned and regular officers. So it was that while out on a telephone line-building crew in the

middle of Vita Laveau Island our supply Jeep driver handed me a note from First Sergeant Jim Bowman. "Corporal Sherry, report back to the company for Corporal of the Guard tonight." It had never been the army's way to promote from Private bypassing Private First Class, a twenty-one dollar job to fifty-four dollars of luxury. Unexpected and unwanted with action expected, it was still an order and must be obeyed. After the night of guard, which, by the way, was pay night, the assignment was reconnaissance squad leader. Having good knowledge of map reading and compass work made the assignment bearable. Then too, scouting was less rigid so the adjustment did not seem bothersome.

The 37th Division remained on a base near Suva, Vita Lavea until the Marines made their spectacular drive on Henderson Airfield; a near complete facility that would have put the South Pacific theatre in a real bind. We loaded aboard the Liberty Ship, American Legion, for the trip to Guadalcanal. By the time we got there, the island was pronounced secure. The Japanese had tried to reinforce the position but their barges loaded with soldiers were intercepted in Taluga Bay by the U.S. Navy. In this battle, the so-called Mosquito Boats showed real promise. Their speed baffled the Japanese Navy and sank the enemy flotilla. The loss forced the enemy to abandon the island. There were Japanese soldiers left on the island but they avoided combat. It was a great place to practice scouting. The Japanese had the advantage of air force and did not hesitate to use it. We came under bombing raids by about 150 Jap bombers nightly. The situation was most unpleasant. Morale was said to erode with Tokyo Rose, really her entertaining program could not compete with the news that a fighter plane strike in California was holding up much needed air support. We lived and died with the bombings. Henderson Field was kept so torn up that it was a rarity to get a fighter up to oppose them.

An airstrip was being constructed on nearby Rendova Island so part of our unit moved to protect it. The bombing came in just as severe as Guadalcanal. Encouragement started appearing in the form of badly shot up Navy air force fighter planes. They were taking on the Japanese air force. It became evident the enemy Zeros were no match for our planes. Their sheer numbers constituted the problem. One plane against twenty enemy craft is not very good odds. Our planes stayed in the shootout until in many cases you could not lay a hand on the plane any place and not cover a bullet hole. It not being safe to try landing such craft on the aircraft carrier led to their being directed to Rendova. Occasionally the pilot would be wounded even though he was surrounded with armor. They somehow landed safely on the long runway.

The real problem in the area was Munda Airfield on the Island New Georgia, the next Japanese occupied island of the Soloman Islands. A campaign to alleviate that nuisance led to our being sent to New Georgia. The big push was made by an amphibious landing on New Georgia. The initial landing was with Landing Craft Infantry (LCI), it was dangerous to be trying to get supplies unloaded with Japanese Zero fighter planes strafing the beach. They certainly had the advantage, as they were only about ten minutes from Munda Airfield. However, because they flew so close to the treetops, in many cases, all they hit was the jungle beyond us. While we unloaded, a patrol was sent to assess the situation in the area. They didn't get far until we heard what was in store for us: the sharp sound of a Jap machine gun and rifle fire. It was answered by the patrol. Contact was broken when my neighbor, Wayne Johnson, who volunteered for the draft with me, was wounded. Thus, while we were still unloading, I saw Wayne

headed for a hospital in New Caladonia with a severe bullet wound to the foot. Our lot was to be pitted against the best Japan had: a regiment of Imperial Marines.

After the supplies were all stashed away, I started looking for my platoon. A call revealed my unit officer, who had been a vicious bayonet instructor in training, cowering in the bottom of a foxhole, so terrified that he could hardly speak. He asked what was going on. I told him that a sniper or two was trying to get within range, but was not very close. Our seemingly very brave Lieutenant was a bundle of nerves and a lesson that a 90-day wonder is not yet a seasoned soldier, ready for battle.

The 148th Infantry was handicapped when its third battalion was assigned the task of accompanying a Marine unit, commanded by Col. Baxter, on a mission to cut off Jap supplies to the island. Our situation became almost fatal when our regimental commander made a bad blunder. We had a bulldozer and were opening a jeep trail through the jungle. When Japanese snipers began wounding the operators of the bulldozer, a squad was assigned to each side of the bulldozer to protect the driver. On the left, I was next to the machine with Steve Kovac, Sgt. Joe Steele and the rest of the squad extending further into the jungle. The plan did not fool the Japanese snipers long. Two shots were fired from our front. With the first shot, all of us but Steve hit the ground. Joe and I both yelled "Down Steve, down!" The second report was answered "Got me" by the pleasant and fun loving Steve. As this was our first experience with combat casualties Joe and I, maybe unwisely, jumped to his side and carried him back to the medics. He was still alive, but didn't regain consciousness; a very good friend was now no longer with us. The event cancelled the trail making, but the Jeeps kept bringing up supplies to us until it was almost impossible. They were a daring group of drivers who were forced to use a guard with an automatic rifle to answer the snipers. Running the race with sniper fire had the Jeeps badly shot up before the operation was stopped.

We had advanced to a hilltop where Munda Airfield could be seen. The two battalions were in a position to strike and awaited the order to strike. At this time, our stupid Colonel broke his long silence with headquarters with, "Permission to take Munda Airfield". The explosive answer was, "Where the HELL are you?" General Beaughtler's command was, "You are surrounded, send a combat patrol to the rear to find out how bad." Col. Baxter had all his line troops deployed to the front. His only available source was Anti-Tank, which had most of its training on anti-tank gunnery, so the platoon that he sent was the one that I was in. We carried bolt action 30.06 WWI rifles instead of Gaurands. We deployed, spreading out about ten feet apart. After advancing about 150 yards to a low ridge, we began hearing foreign voices. We froze in place, wondering silently what to do next. Not being satisfied with not being able to see ahead I crawled to the top of the ridge into the webs of a large Banyan tree and began observing to my front. Almost immediately, I noticed a movement to my right which was advancing slowly and cautiously to my front. At first it was only twigs and leaves then a helmet with netting slowly creeping upward. The soldier seemed to be alone. Perhaps it was a Jap spotter looking for a place to observe and direct weapon fire on our position. My old rifle's sights were on it from the beginning and my thoughts were of a chance to avenge Steve. As the enemy was becoming more of a target he finally positioned himself behind a very thin fernlike plant about 300 feet away and was parting the leaves for a better view. My 1903 Springfield never wavered from the middle of his chest. The trigger slack responded and Steve was avenged.

But it did not end there. A moaning sound commenced from behind the tree beyond the ridge, then sharp commands. That didn't bode well for the patrol. We took the full brunt of what was meant for headquarters. Not realizing the damage that was being inflicted, my thoughts at the time were, "thrilling." All thirty-some, except me, ended up dead or in the hospital. The shrapnel that did them in was mostly diverted by the Banyan tree and I received only one scratch. It was the result of a fine piece of shrapnel that hit my left hand between the knuckles. It being only a minor cut that drew just a little blood, I doused it with a little iodine that I carried and was able to ignore it.

A lull in the shelling gave me the chance to look back and note that I was alone. As no enemy was apparent, it seemed that to beat a retreat or advance to the rear was in order. At just that moment, Frank Harmon appeared on my right with a B.A.R. Frank, one of the truck drivers, began emptying twenty round clips into a target that I could not see. That he was effective was soon evident. A mortar shell exploded close in front of him and his face became a bloody mass. Rushing over, I was glad to see that he could walk. We quickly made our way to the first aid station. The first aid station was so very busy with the thirty-five odd of my platoon that my little scratch of the affair was not reported.

It would be nice to know what motivated Frank to appear like that but I never had a chance to ask. Frank came home, luckily, but died before I felt able to attend a unit reunion. Mentally I wanted to forget the war to my sorrow. The secret is buried with him. Perhaps it was to aid a fellow driver. The group was so closely knit that that was surely a possibility.

Headquarters informed me that the rest of the platoon was either wounded or dead and that supplies were needed at the front. So, I was put on the task of carrying ammunition from the supply dump to the front, which was really the rear as we were in a life or death struggle to break out of the trap. Joining that detail, it was a pitiful sight to see the many casualties laid out along the trail, suffering and waiting. They mounted to over two hundred. There had been no water to drink for three days. Along the trail, you saw many vines that had been cut so that the juice could be sucked out. The gear that I carried for battle included an extra canteen of water and compresses. The compresses were good to stop bleeding. The medics would replace them as they were used. The water did me little good, as it went to relieve others. The 37th Division commander General Beauptler more than did his job in realizing our condition by ordering a battalion of the 145th regiment to attack the Jap rear. Luckily after a week of hard fighting with the aid of the 145th we gained our freedom. The suffering without water was severe. The breakout left us with our mouths open because our tongues were swollen. To be given water with the admonishment to not drink too much seemed unnecessary as we couldn't get it past our tongues. It took quite a spell for the cool water to relieve the swollen tongue enough that a little trickle got through. Oh, Wonderful water!

We were pulled back, given a rare and welcome hot meal that morning. The unit was reassembled with me in a rifle company, and the next day sent back to the front. Our plight during the awful ordeal seemed so stupid that I vowed to transfer to any other part of the army that became available. My desire would soon become reality with the call for volunteers for a dangerous mission. The 148th was rewarded by having their blundering Col. Baxter sent home by Gen. Beauptler.

The main duty that I had been assigned was as a scout, but events evolved it into more of a jack-of-all-trades consisting mostly of patrolling. A memorable patrol happened with us pinned down by Jap machine guns on a ridge. Captain Ferris, a man despised by much of his command, asked if I would go along on a patrol to try to relieve the situation. We picked up four others and circled to the rear of the Jap position. The Captain was bravely in the lead. A successful patrol... I saw the head of a shouting enemy, with a bead on the bottom of his helmet; the trigger slack was drawn. Just then, confusion reigned. The Captain, ten feet ahead, sang out, "We're Americans, you are Fijians." The enemy instantly vanished and shouted orders to wheel those guns around. Flattened down on the ground with twigs and bark flying, it was gratifying to know that they couldn't get their weapons lowered enough to do more damage. When their belts of ammo ran out, they took off. No one was hit; we reformed our unit - a successful patrol? Well, at any rate, our side did take the hill. Those four guns could have been a delaying action to prepare better positions to the rear.

Mention of Captain Ferris needs clarification at this time. Back in Fiji, many personnel changes were made, one being that our Captain Schultz was promoted to Major. A Lt. Ferris came up as our Captain Ferris. He was a pleasant and smiling person most of the time. He was an American Indian with a large family in Louisiana. A letter from home transformed him into a Mr. Hyde. As I stayed distant from officers and didn't run into any flak from them, my opinion was not swayed to dislike him. Attempting to defuse the, "I'm gonna shoot that S.O.B." by saying, "He's just doing his job." didn't work. I was informed at a unit reunion much later that some time after I left the outfit, he picked up his wash basin to throw out the wash water and saw a hand grenade ready to explode. He picked it up and tossed it into the bushes. For his own safety, he was transferred. Some of this resentment could have occurred because First Lt. John Bittinger, the rightful replacement, was passed over. He was loved by the enlisted men. Bittinger stayed and was discharged with the same rating that he was activated with.

Shortly after the Ferris patrol, while scouting ahead, I ran up against a cave-in with steep walls inclined back, which barred the way. It was about a hundred feet across and a large tree stood in the center of the nearly round depression. To get to the other side, I used a pole ladder. The climb down was challenging. On the north side, I found a hole about seven feet high, with two tunnels leading into darkness. There were several cots with dead Japs in them. They hadn't been dead very long, but there was no evidence as to the cause of their death. There was a door nearby that led to a supply center. A high pile of new blankets with the Imperial Marine insignia on the edge prompted me to take down the top one and replace my old worn and threadbare job. If we hadn't been moving out, all of that pile would have disappeared. The islands were hot during the day, but cooled to quite chilly by morning. The blanket was so appreciated that I sent it home after the war and we used it for many years.

Another unusual event occurred as a patrol was crossing an apparently abandoned Jap Bivouac. They were blasting at anything that moved. We froze as screams of "Hong Kong" "Shanghai" etc. were heard. Two big bony hands on long bony arms popped up in front of us. It was a rare occurrence that he survived to emerge intact. A tall slender youth escaped the usual blasting. He tried to communicate, but all we could do was to send him back to headquarters. Debriefing proved him to be a 15 year old Chinese lad who had been forced to do Jap officers' laundry, cleaning, repair, etc.

The tough part of the battle for New Georgia was beginning to shape up. The determined Imperial Marines took a stand that was holding. Artillery duels seemed to go nowhere. The Air Force was called in and was able to silence their shelling, but a very determined enemy wasn't easing up. They took all of the bombing and strafing in stride and dealt us a host of casualties. Their charges were into very accurate shooting. Piling up, wave after wave, eventually led to a gruesome end of some of Japan's best military fighters.

During the bitter artillery shelling, three new recruits were assigned to my position on the front. As it was late afternoon, we dug a presentable emplacement in the shape of a cross. When the usual evening shelling began, it was evident that they were grossly unprepared for the ordeal. Good sound sleep is hard to come by in those circumstances, so I asked them to do a two-hour watch each, and to wake me for the early morning shift. Falling soundly asleep wasn't a problem. It didn't take fear long to cause them to wake me. I told them that there wasn't much danger unless flares lit up the sky. Then I would be needed to slow a charge. Otherwise, it was all right to sleep. They surely got not a wink of sleep all night and when I awoke late the next morning, they were gone. It would be nice to think that they got more experience before being subjected to the real frightening parts of war. Training for war is not intolerable and shouldn't adversely change one's life, providing that common sense is used.

A chilling experience in New Georgia was awakening on a very dark night and hearing a horrendous torture being played. It most likely was taped. To say the least the screaming and moaning was nerve shattering. Tokyo Rose was entertaining compared to this, she only disturbed those not in the actual midst of it.

Slowly, the conflict drew to a stubborn end as the do-or-die enemy weakened until their charges became easier to contain. Those soldiers were trained to win. Surrender wasn't in their vocabulary. So, they did their thing; either suicide or to mingle with the natives, or to escape some other way. One had a chance to evaluate the future. The long way to Japan and the many such struggles were overshadowed by the thought of the ordeal that would take place invading the homeland of such a determined people. Why are humans so attached to warlords?

We were down to about one third of what we had started the campaign with, so we were moved back to Guadalcanal. There, wounded, but returnable hospital cases, and new recruits were building up our fighting strength for more of the same.

From the Fijis to Asia

World War II started for the U.S. with a horrible defeat in the Hawaiian Islands. This was followed by an even more humiliating defeat at Bataan, in Manila Bay, Philippines. When General King surrendered to the Japanese, 75,000 American and Philippine troops become the most ghastly of human slaves. Many of these American slaves were subjected to a death march that ended their days on earth as worked and starved to death slaves at the bridge over the River Kwai. They joined Australian, British and Thai among others, in trying to keep supplies going to Mandalay to supply the needs of the Japanese army. The need to stop these supply lines to front line troops of the Japs promoted the idea of behind the units to disrupt the movement of material to the front. British General Orde Charles Wingate built a force of

British and Burmese commandos that were able to penetrate deep into the Burman territory and destroy or disrupt the movement of the war material needed to press the Jap advantage. An alternate route that helped to bring in much needed supplies came across Manchuria and down the sparsely settled western Chinese border to Kunming, in Yunnan Province.

Because General Stillwell needed a short range unit to halt all the war material that was holding up the two Chinese armies that he commanded in northern Burma he ask for and was granted such a force by President Roosevelt. THE ORDER WENT OUT FOR VOLUNTEERS FOR A DANGEROUS AND HAZARDOUS MISSION. A company was formed from specially trained troops that had been in training in the Caribbean Island. A second company volunteered from the troops in the U.S. The third was filled when volunteers who already had combat service were asked for, from the South Pacific. The last group became the C company of the soon to be known Merrill's Marauders or officially as composite unit 5307. In most reports and writings that have come to my attention, this group has been somewhat downplayed. The "big I and little you" seems to come mainly from member writers of A and B Companies as well as Mars unit. They write from rather shallow experience and make much by portraying individual experiences. The extremely irking belief that Company C was held in reserve in the taking of Myitkina by some reports is false.

True to my vow I asked to go. Captain Ferris called me in and tried to get me to withdraw. He had an offer that many would have given great consideration. The staff Sgt. Phillip Einhorn had been killed by a land mine and I was offered the position, two jumps in rank. I feel that I let him know that my reason for leaving was not his fault and that it offered a chance to travel and adventure. He mentioned that officers were getting rid of screwballs by volunteering them into the call. It turned out he did the same; a very unreliable fellow in my squad turned up to go. Second thought would be that the individual saw a chance for new pasture. He was left in the rear echelon, and didn't get to Burma. The battalion of so-called battle hardened troops was loaded on to a ship. We had a stop at French New Caledonia, where I got a pass to Noumea to visit Wayne Johnson at the hospital.

New Caledonia was used like Australia by the British as a prison in earlier times. Additional members joined and we next made port at Brisbane. This stop was momentous; although we stayed aboard we had a great welcome. The harbor is very near a high incline and homes built on it in tiers sprouted folks waving cloths from bottom to top. It was most impressive. They seemed to be letting us know how nice it was that we were allies. This went on until we pulled out, possibly two or three hours. Perth on the southwest corner of Australia afforded us an opportunity to take on supplies for the long trip across the Indian Ocean to India. It was here that a march through the city alerted the officers that they had some real personnel problems. The joyous crowd was passing out refreshments that caused the officials to wonder how some came aboard drunk.

When we got underway the officers didn't stay aloof as I had expected, but began mingling with us during the day. One First Lt. Ted Hughes spent considerable time talking with me. He was pleasant and we talked about the book I was reading. My "leave them alone" attitude of officers didn't seem to work with him. He wanted to be friendly and there wasn't a reason not to return the favor. The trip across the Indian Ocean is a long journey. As our talks progressed it was easy to think of him as Ted one of the

boys. It would have been impossible to think that one actually get that familiar it was so much different. Looking back the only officer that came close to being similar was Capt. Ferris but during his rages over a letter from home his face would be very red. So it was only natural to believe he kept a bottle of strong refreshments. In my book he was brave and courageous. Lt. Hughes never varied from pleasant and we spent quite a lot of time together. He seemed most concerned about the kind of group we were and asked me what I thought. He seemed to have reservations about the type of soldiers that drank too much. I told him that my old unit was well supplied with them and in my experience they usually did well in action. He may have known but seemed pleased that it was expressed. I wondered at the time if he had had any combat experience.

This was an officer's dream situation: get in, get a chest full of metals, and promotions galore. My being informed recently that he did have combat experience and went on to higher ranks only drew the feeling that he deserved all that came his way.

5307 Composite Unit

The 5307 began assembling in mysterious India. It was there that we learned that all our training would be done by the British Army. I spent an amazing two weeks in modernizing Bombay. This occurred because the medics on the naval ship that transported us determined that the cold I contracted en route would require a stop in an Indian Hospital. The less humid environment put me in top shape pronto. The English soldiers who would return me to the camp were good eggs. They told me that there was no reason to hurry back. They said that I should visit Bombay while I could, that nothing much was going on and that this was a chance for sightseeing. That kind of talk wasn't hard for me to take, as all my army time was spent in taking pleasure in sightseeing wherever we were stationed.

India's most advanced city was a mind-boggling experience. An early morning walk revealed lorries loading corpses from the streets where they had died. The homeless were plentiful and the streets their home until a starving death caught up with them. The U.S. isn't the only place with homeless. They stacked those bundles of rags, skin and bones on carts and hauled them out of town. Then, too, there was a board that they carried on their shoulders. Their mission: collecting the human waste for fertilizer for the rice fields. With open sewage flowing down the street and it being used for a toilet, you can conclude that it was an unhealthy environment. We of a more sanitary system are not immune to the diseases that the Indian people seem to be able to tolerate. We can hope that conditions are better for them these fifty years later.

The big handicap that they encounter appears to be religion. With holy cows roaming the city, making their beds in the streets, parks or anyplace big enough to lie on should be trouble enough. Not so, animals and in cases even insects are sacred. A visitor sees begging as the main occupation but we feel, and that is what feeds the lorry loads of corpses. Religion is a deterrent in many ways. In India, as well as the rest of the world, intolerance to the views of others in religion is a prime cause of wars. Despots thrive on manning their project's religious wars. In India complicated with Hindu, Islam, Christianity, Sikhism, Buddhism, Jainism and many others, such as Farsis, trouble is ever present.

There are pleasant places, such as the Hanging Gardens, that one hates to leave. Attending a Moslem wedding too is another place of pleasure. Really, the good and bad strike a balance. Begging seemed to be a profession with a caste of them and seemed an honorable one. All seemed to be women or girls. When I mentioned it the Lammies told me what to say. You would guess it wouldn't be very proper but with patience wearing out it was worth a try. A pair of young women was very persistent and I was out of change. I tried the expression; the dirty look they gave me made me realize it was far below their dignity. It stopped their begging cold. Latter a girl 10 or 12 started hanging on me begging for all it was worth. When I tried the expression again, with a knowing smile she said, "Dive me two annas." Not caring to proceed with the deal her insistence wilted when the extent of her territory was reached.

When I entered a bank to get change for a larger bill, I checked the small coins I had seen street people exchange for a meal that looked like wet mash chicken feed. The piece was called a "pice" and was worth one twelfth of a cent. It's hard to get accustomed to thousands living on one sixth of a cent. The beggars were living on a much higher level. In the change, the bank would allow only 12, so a new idea came into the picture. The "un-needy cling" type were greeted with a big smile and a reach into a side pocket and with a little fumbling around a pice was offered like a hand full of change. It got the same reception as the expression and allowed me to proceed. Maybe sightseeing like guests and fish start to stink after three days.

It was time to get to work. The ride to camp seemed just the opposite of the city. The rural India was as sparse as the city was crowded. Rural folks protected themselves from wild animals by piling thorn brush around there sleeping quarters. Their cooking and heating fuel was dried cow dung and your nose warned you that you approached. The trip took us to a desolate part of a desert, about 200 miles northwest of Bombay. It was a tent camp along the Betwa River, a clear swift stream.

Our group had grown by two more battalions by the time I got there. They were billed as jungle trained but had not endured combat. Horses and mules were arriving from the U.S. So there would be lots of work for the horsemen, whom we designated as "mule-skinners". Their job would be demanding; consider a Brooklyn native assigned a stubborn six-foot high ornery mule to train in leading and pack saddling. Yes, it was a big order.

Our camp was all prepared and readied for us by the British. We would live in tents with another tent pitched about a foot above the one we used, it was to reduce the heat. For our health, it required consumption of a cup of rum a week. One sip and mine went to make friends with the "screw-balls". Also we got a bottle of Australian beer a week. This was much more tolerable than any I have ever tasted since, but not good enough for me to want more than allotted. Our training was as commandos with Colonel Wingate, whose forces had been behind Japanese lines in the Mandalay area of Burma. It was during this time of training that an American dubbed us Merrill's Marauders. Since it sounded better than 3507 Composite Unit, it evolved into our name.

Being under the command of Col. Orde Wingate of commando fame was a shakeup from the Ohio 37th Division. Survival in the jungles his way was two columns to a company each with its own heavy weapons, so that a real individually operated unit was only dependent on the ability of its commander.

We were three battalions. Each battalion was divided into two columns trained to act independently, if needed. Thus, six hits could be made at once. The first and second battalions were fresh from the U.S. area. All were perhaps "so-called" volunteers. The third battalion (the old South Pacific group) named the columns Orange and Khaki. The Khaki Unit was commanded by the aforementioned and now promoted to Captain Ted Hughes where I was assigned to a 60 MM. mortar squad. The loose assignment included machine gun. Our personal weapon was our choice. After trying several, my preference would have been the old reliable shotgun of boyhood days. The climate of Burma didn't bode well for the shells and they tended to jam. In the end, it was the sturdy old Guarand and a 45-cal. revolver that prevailed. Extra equipment would add a compass and set of maps of the area

Our ability to be self-sustaining was enhanced by frequent trips, and being dropped off at intervals in groups of 5 or 6 and left to find our way back to camp. These 10 to 12 mile excursions reminded me of boyhood hunting days; most of the unit seemed to regard them in that manner. There were stories of wild boar encounters, which could be thrilling. Deer were extremely thick, and had become inbred into little critters of about 10 to 15 lbs. The most touching tale of experiences was told by Sgt. Robert Norling. It is likely that I choose it because he was a pre-army friend from distant home. His adventure started with; "Boys never kill a baboon." He then related how on his tour they saw a family of baboons on a ledge of a cliff. Shooting the big one in the middle of the group started a wailing and crying from the others that was heart-rending. The ending was "Boys NEVER kill a baboon."

During the stay, we had visits from two prominent Englishmen. First Col. Orde Wingate a pioneer in behind enemy lines penetrations supplied by air drops. It was certainly possible to perfect in the situation where the ever necessary supplies were conveyed by personnel with little or no weaponry experience. It was cheering to know that our mission would be tolerable even if rugged. The Colonel would not be a winner in a fashion show as he showed up in fatigues and looked much as a regular non-commissioned soldier. Contrast this with the second, spit and polish, Rear High Admiral Lord Lewis Mountbattan the top cheese of the Allied China, Burma, India Theater. Unlike Wingate he was tall and a graceful actor.

An unfortunate occurrence that eventually led to my being designated a machine-gunner came about when a group, out celebrating before the mission, imbibed a little too heavily on rice whiskey. They took pleasure in hi-jacking an Indian locomotive and touring the area. The trains stopped at each village, so it wasn't as dangerous as it sounds. As this didn't set well with the authorities, the group was fingered by the railroad brass. Sergeant Dotson was a member of the weapons section and a darned good machine gunner, at that. They stripped him of his non-com rating, reduced him to Private, and moved him to the intelligence and reconnaissance section. If the punishment did fit the crime, I know their heroic conduct in Burma was compensation. It led to the "loose cannon" feeling that I had encountered in the South Pacific. The machine gun group being broken up, my lot reverted to patrols carrying wounded for the medics and burials of deceased. Someone had to do it and my early life left me better prepared for it than the younger fellows.

The only unpleasantness of the officer relations on the ship was a desire for reporting happenings but it didn't take. A real need to inform did start to be voiced. A Lt. Brown was appearing to be obnoxious to

enlisted personnel. There was too much talk like, "I'm gonna shoot that S.O.B. first chance I get." Fearing one of them might actually try was worrisome. Reporting that Lt. Brown is not in the good graces of too many, for his own good, led to his immediate disappearance.

A big job was getting to the jump-off place. This would be a huge assignment for the antiquated Indian transportation department. The trains' speed often rivaled that of a bicycle. Our destination was to the far northeast of India. We did not find getting to Calcutta too much of an ordeal. The transfer to slow boats for a trip north up the Ganges River to Bhagalpur led to a transfer to another railroad but the transfer didn't stop there. It's a long trip to Assam, India and ordinarily not so much need. A narrower gage track led to another transfer and a still narrower gage to a final destination at last Ledo, Assam.

There are power struggles in the army as we were about to experience. We must have looked like saviors to General (Vinegar Joe) Stillwell. He seemed to like what he saw or desperately needed our unit and much to the irritation of Colonel Wingate, won out in getting us for short-range penetration. He was saddled with slow moving Chinese troops, and badly in need of our type of unit to relieve the pressure on his front, so that progress could be made. Our role would be to disrupt the Japanese supply line to the front, so that his Chinese troops could advance and allow the new Burma Road to be built into China. This would get badly needed supplies for them and end the expensive air supplying of that nation. The only supplies that could get to China were those the American air force was able to fly over the so called " hump"; actually the Chin Hills. Many transport planes were being lost in this dangerous maneuver. It did supply China enough that they didn't have to surrender. The need for more than could be delivered in this manner was most obvious.

It is my opinion that General Joe Stillwell was a great brave and courageous soldier. Earlier on, he had been trying to help the British hold the line in the Mandalay area. The Japs showed them a thing or two, by keeping them bottled up and with no help available, a nasty retreat was in order. Unlike Gen. McArthur when a plane was sent in to rescue him he put some of his staff aboard and stayed with the remnant through a horrible ordeal. With enemy both behind and ahead of them it took a cool head indeed to penetrate the jungle to India. His idea was that you fought for your country, not for money or medals. We would soon learn that he expected no less from us.

The British shunned action in Burma after that and stayed safely in India but still had to cope with two Jap divisions intent on taking New Delhi, India. As the battle was under favorable conditions for the Brits, it ended in a complete Jap failure. That is not to say we were not worried that our supply would become impossible.

We were on the move, but wait a dog-gone minute; what's a new two lane modern highway doing in this God forsaken jungle in mountains similar to our Rockies if not worse? We started the trek at about a 15 miles per day rate for several days. The mystery unraveled as we began to see black American engineer troops. There were two regiments of them building this roadway on the cliffs of seemingly impossible terrain. They were, simply put, fantastic. The feeling was mutual they were running into Jap harassment problems and really welcomed us. I mean we were really welcomed. Every evening for

several days as we passed through their operation, we were served the finest banquet and entertainment that I could have ever imagined. Unfortunately, good things do end, especially in war.

We plunged into deep jungle on a trail through the trees, about wide enough for a Jeep to squeeze through. And wonder of wonders one did approach from the front. As it came nearer the silence was being broken by, "Hello Joe" and I joined in for it was no other than General Vinegar Joe Stillwell unbelievably in person. Wow! Now what would a General be doing here? A day or two later we came across a Jap outpost all dead; that had to be the answer. He hadn't wanted them to warn of our coming, so he took a squad to eliminate them.

The trail to Walabum was naturally of an eerie nature. It led through intermittent areas of jungle, forest, and eight-foot tall elephant grass. The usual "doom" rumors had the effect of keeping alertness alive. They were augmented when a patrol, taking a side fork, was fired upon by a Jap roadblock. It was recalled and we soon came upon a small stream. It was the Mogaung River and Walabum lay just on the other side of it. Walabum was a native village and a staging area for the trucks to load battle supplies for the holding action against the three Chinese divisions attempting to break through to china.

We were on the high bank and looked downward and over a paddy field to see and hear trucks roar toward their front lines. Two Japs carrying a wounded fellow were killed as our 81mm mortars zeroed in on the road and began shelling the village and trucks. It was the only road to the Japanese front and it was vital to them. The trucks roared out of the village. A challenge was made by their "behind the lines" truck drivers and other personnel untrained for combat. Hastily mustered together and armed, they conducted a sorry Bonsai charge across an open paddy field. We were on the high back of the stream in a fine position for a duck shoot and that's pretty much what it became as wave after wave charged. The paddy field became a dying field, but our damage was only a little bloodshed, as a rifle not properly held nicked the hand of the offender. Possibly, the Japs didn't give their rear echelon any training for such emergencies. Another disturbance was caused by a lone machine gun squad arriving unnoticed near our perimeter and firing a belt of ammunition harmlessly. It was driven away by hand grenades, rifle, and machine gun fire with ineffective mortar adding to the din. The enemy loss was estimated between 600 and 800.

We got our first airdrop the second day there. The drops consisted of ammunition first, horse feed second, and lastly army K-rations a rather sorry meal to endure day after day. You soon reached a point that most of it was thrown away.

The other side was in a bind. War takes supplies, lots of them. Something had to be done about this problem and soon. We didn't have to wait long to get their answer. They may have felt that only a very large force would dare attempt to destroy their only route to the front. To dislodge us the enemy had to pull back their front lines. The situation changed with battle hardened troops and it was time to leave the area. C battalion was the rear echelon. No sooner had we replaced our used paraphernalia than we started experiencing artillery action from four 75mm anti-aircraft weapons. As the shelling got zeroed in and somewhat better, scrappers started hitting the perimeter it was time to get on with the departure. The 'head for the mountains' exodus had one little hitch. Khaki column would be the rear guard.

The Chinese loaded for bear began swarming on the paddy field that had been our drop area. They hadn't been informed of our existence. A stop had to be called until their line troops could be told why they were so successful. Khaki took to the jungle at a 90-degree angle from the trail that they were expected to take. It was rapidly turning into one of those very dark nights. The Jap artillery had moved again to the south of the paddy field and just the other side the stream the shells were bursting full force on our recent position. Just before complete darkness and during a break, while taking 5 or 6 canteens to the stream for drinking water, I became aware of Japs across the stream setting up a weapon that appeared to be a mortar. This prompted a repeat, "absolutely no noise." Continuing our trail led us to the point directly in front of the 75s. The Japs firing orders were coming in as clear as if we were right there and muzzle flashes lit it up like day. We stayed in the area for a long 5 to 10 minutes. It would seem there might have been discussion to wipe them out, but if so, it was rejected. We had to kill time until morning. This was the celebration of my 30th birthday, March 7, 1944. The column started a slow movement back toward the paddy field we had left. The groping in the dark was not without event. A tripwire to a hand grenade, set to discourage followers, detonated but miraculously no one was hit by the shrapnel. The shelling didn't let up until nearly dawn. Morning found us cleared to pass through to follow the rest of the outfit. The Chinese were all smiles shouting, "Ding How," "Hob A Haw" and "Momma Fu Fu." Which probably meant something like Hello, and when we repeated it their answer meant something like tolerable good or not good, not bad. It was a birthday that lives clearly in my memory.

Our arrangement created a deceiving and confusing problem for the enemy in that we could be six different units. Each column could act independently of the rest. This caused the Japs to greatly overestimate our numbers. Unless you had some experience as a mountain climber, it would be hard to imagine the type of trails the Marauders scanned. Many cliffs were so steep and narrow that we unloaded the pack animals and carried their loads ourselves. The horses and mules were hard pressed to make it. Several horses jumping and plunging went over the edge screaming until they hit bottom. The mules did not jump or plunge but moved one foot at a time and to my knowledge none were lost that way. Neither breed could avoid the shelling so their numbers diminished in accordance with ours. They got preference over us. The order of importance of the drop deliveries was ammo, horse feed, then K rations.

The success of Walabum was so elating that a plan was conceived to let first battalion take the honors at Shadazup, some near 30 miles further along. The second and third would leapfrog beyond to Inkangawtauang. The first battalion met resistance of delaying action with mounting casualties. The second and third were met on the way by a native group of Kachins. A force armed by the British with Bren Guns. Their leader, an Englishman, offered to lead us. This was a great lift, as these folks knew the area and were excellent scouts. There existed the possibility that the Japs knew or guessed that we split into two groups. When we arrived at our destination the second battalion sent a combat patrol across the stream to deny the Japs use of the road. Not so fast, the enemy was there with reinforcements and trapped the patrol. While we were trying to get out, an air strike was ordered. The planes got there before the patrol had been rescued. They were flying overhead, begging permission to strafe. The answer had to be, "No." The appearance of aircraft seemed to ease the patrol; on the third pass, the

aircraft got their request, and we got a rain of shell links almost like the real thing. The appearance of the aircraft stopped the clobbering that the third battalion was getting from the shelling, and the air strike probably gave the enemy second thoughts, because we were able to get going again.

We left in a hurry with intent to strike Kamaing the next objective. About half way there, patrols were being hit with vengeance, and it appeared that a battle was brewing. It was time to head for the hills again. Kamaing could wait. We headed off to the west.

What was going on? Where were the Chinese? Did we have to battle the huge Japanese war machine alone? The Japs, who had been occupied by the Chinese, were now free to deal with us. Remnants of 3000 against 60,000 are sorry odds but we would have to face them. The Marauders were conceived in October 1943 and by the end of March 1944, we were a weary bunch. It would be fight or suffer the consequences. We couldn't think of going for what they dish out. In our weakened condition, a battle held poor odds. The 60,000 Japs got relief forces. Our 3000 had dwindled through sickness and wounds. When they left no replacement was ever sent.

Arriving at Nhpum Ga, a defensive hilltop looked like what we needed to defend ourselves. The perimeter held a spring for water and had good slope for fields of fire. B battalion would defend and C would take a badly needed airdrop. A paddy field was selected and a crude landing strip somewhat leveled, so that small planes could take out casualties. Khaki column was sent out the back trail to note the progress. At a village we learned that there were many Japanese troops very near. We turned on a trail to the north and since no trail would lead us back, we took to the jungle in a triangular pattern and hit the trail very near B battalion. We gave them with the grim news. Our road block that had held until we all got clear was called back. Khaki column would be needed at the paddy field. A road leading north was begging to be blocked. An unusually large 40 forty-man unit was selected and as usual, I was one. Most of the past blocks came in leaner. We knew there was likelihood of trouble and dug in good defensive positions.

An hour or so before dark a Jap unit of around a company approached and we made our presence known as some of them were hit. They rapidly surrounded us and a violent skirmish ensued. In a lull we replenished those that had run low on ammunition and asked that it be cooled as much as possible. A plan was agreed to, that after dark we would crawl through their lines, every man for himself. This was a sad departure from ordinary but help was unlikely. We waited until the last dusky light when it became evident that they were moving out. Luckily, we withdrew without a scratch. We had the airdrop and set about the drive to relieve the now surrounded B battalion.

To aid the 81mm mortars, two mountain howitzers that could be dismantled and carried on horseback, were dropped and quickly put to use. They soon silenced the Jap artillery. The battle was grim, a seesaw tussle with us trying to establish positions on a slope top. The enemy always ended the day in to good a position for us to hold. The 75's and 81mm mortars would shell most of the night and we would try again in the morning.

On the ninth day, a shell landed real close. It was, "Sherry, bring your gun over here." The missile had made a direct hit on a machine gun I heaved it over the front and set up. Before turning it over to the

gunner I felt a body in the hole. Heaving it out and wrapping wounds of the rest of the crew kept the medics and me busy for a spell. They were all hit with shrapnel and three of the worst cases were pretty serious. Until the medics got around they were quiet and in shock. A small tube of morphine injected relieved the pain and as usual their thoughts were "I'm on the way home." Getting back to the hole, I asked who had been killed.

It was a horrible shock to me to learn that it was Sgt. Robert Norling. We had lived 5 miles apart in sparsely populated Paulding County, Ohio. He was a National Guard. The 27 of us that volunteered for the draft all started army life with A company. Our get-togethers lasted even after the 37th division was changed from square to triangle to make a stronger force. I was moved to Anti-Tank Company and was happy to see that our friendship continued. It is most depressing when an old timer is killed, but triply so when it is a close friend. Something was wrong. All the shelling at the time was by our side. Commander Hughes was near as he had made the change. I told him it wasn't a Jap shell that had hit the hole. He knew how badly it hurt. He told me that before he called me, he checked the mortars settings, and had to conclude that it was caused by a faulty charged propellant. So be it.

We did not have occasion to fire a shot that evening and the next morning it appeared the shelling would stop at the end of the present grid run. I was part of a patrol that moved to the top of the hill and was in position to make it tough for any enemy return to the area. What's holding them up? There were ideal conditions with scarcely a leaf left on the trees and most of the twigs and all the underbrush flattened. To my left, a lone Jap was approaching. He wore only a shirt, trousers and sneakers. He was rocking a human arm as if it was a baby and singing or muttering to it as he passed in front of us. As we expected a hotter reception, none of us felt inclined to kill him and divulge our position. For all I know, he's still rocking that arm. It was reported by one who wasn't there that we killed such a man. When no action was forthcoming and we were joined by others, we proceeded down the trail and into the positions of B battalion. So that they could take their many wounded down to be sent out to hospitals. The badly mauled unit was in too poor shape to be sent on the next and most strenuous trek.

So it appears that the squad of Sgt. Norling completed their task. It was over the Japs had had enough and left. Where's justice? The squad that took the blunt of the struggle was done in by friendly fire.

Another quirk of the struggle was a flame-thrower. It seemed a dangerous venture in the environment of so much small trash on the ground. Not being close, one assumes they made or had a clear place to use it. The snap, crackle, pop, of the burning naphtha was so noisy that it showed up all over the area. The results of the two times that it flared was that most every weapon on the Jap side fired a barrage that revealed to us some targets to shoot at.

Taking B battalion's place was a lesson of endurance. The position a member of the squad and I adopted was a luxury. On the side of a steep ridge, it was dug six or seven feet deep with a ledge in the back where a rifleman could stand up and observe. It was lined with nylon parachute material with a partly covered top. They certainly weren't wasting much of the ten days they endured. I was awakened one night as my partner heard noises below the position. It sounded somewhat like Jap chatter. We felt that it needed to be addressed in some manner. Picking up a grenade, I asked him to throw it where the

most noise came from. The explosion raised a horrible screaming sound that didn't stop until it got out of range. It was a herd of jungle pigs, a specie of 20 to 30 lbs. The twitter up and down the line revealed the others' amusement.

The mystery of why the Chinese didn't help may have been that they couldn't move as fast as the mobile Japanese. The ninety or more miles from their front would take much longer, what with the hand carrying all their equipment. We may be taking credit for their final arrival that drew the enemy away from the encirclement. The Chinese, in spite of Stillwell's praise, certainly had limitations. Stillwell seemed to think they were obeying orders from Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek that delayed them. We should give them the benefit of doubt. For all the nasty writing about them, I felt the ones we encountered did a good job with what they had to do with.

As contrast, the A battalion didn't get around in time to be of much help to us. It wound up that B battalion was almost annihilated and A was only moderately better off. A sad part was that while we licked our wounds the brass was contriving a wild scheme to take the Jap airport at Myitkynia, so the Ledo road could be built to truck supplies to China. We would play a role in the affair. To make matters worse the monsoon season was starting. The passes were wet and slippery. The plan as no others, to my knowledge, mention was that khaki would be a patrol for a Chinese regiment. This combo would leave the horses and mules with the rest of the battalion and strike out in an easterly direction over very high mountains toward a Jap supply center to attempt to draw the enemy from the airport. The rest, with Chinese support, would try to sneak in, take the airport, and hold on for reinforcements that were promised to be delivered by gliders.

Surprisingly the plan worked as expected. My unit had traveled rapidly and the Americans tried to surround the objectives, but the wily inhabitants always got away from the Chinese blitz. When we were well beyond the airport with resistance increasing, some ten days later, a call came. "We took the airport without a shot being fired but won't be able to hold it without help. We immediately left the Chinese to continue while we force-marched for the prize. It was a very hard assignment in such leach infested swampy terrain. We beat the Japs there but only a little. The monsoon had arrived with real vengeance. Nothing was dry. Even in a pup tent you got soaked, it was either raining or the sun beamed hot and steamy. However, it was mostly rain of an unbelievable heavy nature.

The airport was available so a call went out for anyone who felt unwell to report to medics. I wasn't feeling well and did have a fever but attributed it to the strenuous ordeal and expected to be all right soon. I was reluctant to leave with the danger of an increase of fighting expected. The next day the condition worsened instead of improving. It seemed that I might become a liability if nothing was done. Reporting to Dr. Hopkins, I was criticized for not getting in sooner. The Japs as expected began shelling the airstrip. There could be no evacuations until they were pushed out of range and planes could land again. To conserve my strength the Doctor's horse was to be my transport for each advance. It took around ten days to move the Japanese out of effective range and we were in business.

The airport was about five miles away, and with no suitable way to get there I was asked to be a guard for a mule train to the airport. It was wearing and the muleskinners offered to let me ride on a mule but

I didn't believe it would be safe. When we arrived at the strip a plane was coming in. There was a gang of sick soldiers to take out and they all seemed stronger than I was. A shady bush beside the strip looked better than possibilities to get aboard. I made myself as comfortable as possible, while the planes came and went loaded with scrambling more able casualties. As evening came on the crowd dwindled until an easy boarding appeared evident. This plane was only about half loaded and help was available to help me get up the some five feet to the floor.

As we passed over Mogaung Jap anti-aircraft had our range. The bottom of the plane took a real beating. It was strange with the flack hitting the bottom of the plane that the occupants were diving for the floor. When we landed, we got a cold shower before loading on a truck and waiting in line to be admitted. My temperature at admission was 105.

Although my treatment had been quinine until this time, the illness was diagnosed as a disease called Asiatic Thypus, unknown to American doctors. It would take a book to tell of the hospital stay that lasted one year, suffice it to say that a letter was sent home that I wasn't expected to live. Diseases in order were Asiatic Typhus, Malaria and Dengue fever. Hospitals were Dibgarha in Assam, India Evacuation Center in Calcutta, Kartoum in Sudan, Africa, Coral Gables in Florida and Moore General in Swannoa, North Carolina. The war gave me my first trip around the earth and a world of rugged experience. If my life could be relived and with the Japanese threat I would do the same again. China went the other road, the people were treated worse than dogs, and I don't mean American dogs.

Perhaps it would be proper to tell of another friendly fire victim. This one happened on one of the many patrols that came my way. This patrol was attempting to close the escape of an enemy. We got to the trail that they were expected to escape on. The shelling was intense. At least one was over the mark and about half of an 81mm mortar shell hit this fellow a grazing blow to the side of his head. It chopped the skull away until about an inch of his brain was exposed. Another soldier and I took off our fatigue jackets, buttoned them up wrong side out, and with two poles made a stretcher and carried him back to Dr. Hopkins. Sterilizing the area and stretching a plastic cap over the wound might have saved his life, if he could have gotten to a hospital quickly. Unfortunately, we did not get to a suitable area where small planes could land. I was on the litter-carrying detail for many miles and about a week before we lost him. There were so many more such workouts. However, these two mentioned are the only ones that I was aware of being of our mistakes.