

## War Era Story Project 2012

Submitted by: Thomas W. McLaughlin

Current home town: Norwalk, Ohio

Age: Not given

Clinton McLaughlin (my father) was the highest decorated WWII veteran from Huron County. He was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross (DSC), a Bronze Star (with V) and three Purple Hearts. He was also one of the most decorated WWII veterans from Ohio, as the DSC is second only to the Congressional Medal of Honor as the county's highest award for military combat heroism. To the best of my knowledge, there were 27 Medal of Honor recipients from Ohio during WWII. He has been inducted into the Military Hall of Fame (2002).

He began military service as a private in the Ohio National Guard in 1938, and rose to the rank of First Lieutenant by 1945. His promotions from Sargent to Second Lieutenant, and then to First Lieutenant, were both "battlefield" commissions. He spent over three years in the South Pacific.

### Clinton S. McLaughlin

Home of record: Ohio

#### AWARDS AND CITATIONS



#### Distinguished Service Cross

See more recipients of this award

*Awarded for actions during the World War II*

The President of the United States of America, authorized by Act of Congress, July 9, 1918, takes pleasure in presenting the Distinguished Service Cross to Second Lieutenant Clinton S. McLaughlin, United States Army, for extraordinary heroism in connection with military operations against an armed enemy, in action against enemy Japanese forces from 9 to 13 March 1944, on Hill 700 at Bougainville, Solomon Islands. Lieutenant McLaughlin commanded a platoon, which under his courageous leadership, defended a key sector of the American perimeter against repeated mass enemy attacks. Aware of the critical tactical situation which would develop if the Japanese extended their limited penetration of the lines, he moved from pillbox to pillbox under the direct observation and fire of the enemy, skillfully posting reinforcements for maximum resistance of enemy pressure and shifting fields of fire which blocked hostile routes of approach. Two days later, the Japanese worked their way to within a few feet of his forward positions under the cover of darkness. Offsetting the surprise element of the assault by his calmness, and alert tactical skill, Lieutenant McLaughlin directed the fierce action of his men with complete disregard for personal danger and stemmed the attack. By this same aggressive leadership and a determined fighting spirit, which he inspired in his men by personal example of bravery, the Japanese again were repulsed in their third and final assault on his sector. Second Lieutenant McLaughlin's intrepid actions, personal bravery and zealous devotion to duty exemplify the highest traditions of the military forces of the United States and reflect great credit upon himself, his unit, and the United States Army.

**General Orders:** Headquarters, U.S. Army Forces in the South Pacific Area, General Orders No. 899 (1944)

**Action Date:** March 9 - 13, 1944

**Service:** Army

**Rank:** Second Lieutenant

*Image source: Military Times Hall of Valor website*

During the early morning hours of March 11, the Japs slithered forward and artfully occupied an empty pillbox on the forward slope of Hill 700. With their reverse slope positions in front of Hill 700 as a stepping stone, they launched a new assault at dawn. The 23d Infantry of the Imperial 6th Division attacked along the front from Hill 700 to Cannon Ridge. They came on in waves, one whole battalion attacking on a platoon front. Brandishing their prized sabers, screeching "Chusuto!" (Damn them!), the Jap officers climbed up the slope and rushed forward in an admirable display of blind courage. The men screamed in reply "Yaruzo!" (Let's do it!) and then "Yarimosu!" (We will do it!). As they closed with the American doughboys, the leaders cried "San Nen Kire!" or "Cut a thousand men!" These battle cries sounded like so much whistling in the dark to the GIs, whose own battle cry of "Kill the Bastards!" was felt and not heard. Mowed down by heavy fire from the dug-in infantry, the Japs kept tumbling over the bodies of their comrades, unwaveringly advancing toward the spitting guns. The battle on Hill 700 and Cannon Hill was at such a short range that infantry weapons alone had to repulse the assault waves. The artillery hammered supply dumps and rear trails. The attack on Cannon Hill was bloodily stopped, and by 0800 the dazed remnants of a Nip battalion had withdrawn, leaving hundreds of their dead comrades stacked up in front of the 145th line.

In the heart of the Japanese assault Lt. Clinton S. McLaughlin, Company G's commander, was a ball of fire. Dashing from pillbox to pillbox in the heat of the battle, encouraging and coaching his embattled men, Mac stopped only occasionally to return the fire of a few persistent Nipponese whose bullets tore his clothes to shreds, spattered his canteen, and painfully wounded him twice. When the Japanese had gotten within a few feet of the platoon's most forward position McLaughlin jumped into the lead emplacement, which had already been outflanked by the Nips. Then he and S/Sgt. John H. Kunkel, firing point-blank at the invaders, killed enough of them to dissipate their threat. The pile of bodies in front of their position numbered over 185. Both Mac and Kunkel were later awarded the DSC.



... Men were physically exhausted from the continuous three-day fight



... Litter bearers hand-carried the wounded over a back mountain trail

Source: Unknown

This describes the enemy on the eve of their attack. There troops had made themselves world famous in 1937 by “their Rape of Nanking”. They were the best Japan could offer.

All was in readiness on the evening of 7 March, the Iwasa Unit behind Hill 1111, the Magata Unit behind Mount Nampei, the Muda Unit at Peko village on the East-West Trail, and the special artillery unit in place near Hill 600. How much the Japanese soldiers had been emboldened by the rhetoric of General Hyakutake’s earlier exhortation is not known, but it obviously was intended to bolster the morale of the attackers. His message was clear:

The time has come to manifest our knighthood with the pure brilliance of the sword. It is our duty to erase the mortification of our brothers at Guadalcanal. Attack! Assault! Destroy everything! Cut, slash and mow them down. May the color of the red emblem of our arms be deepened with the blood of the American rascals. Our cry of victory at Torokina Bay will be shouted resoundingly to our native land.

We are invincible! Always attack. Security is the greatest enemy. Always be alert. Execute silently. Always be clear.<sup>26</sup>

Not to be outdone, General Kanda in his order of the day of 24 February exhorted his troops:

To avenge our mortification since Guadalcanal  
Will be our duty true and supreme.  
Strike, strike, then strike again  
Until our enemy is humbled forevermore!  
Brighten with the blood of the American devils  
The color of the renowned insignia on our arms.  
The cry of our victory at Torokina Bay  
Shall resound to the shores of our beloved Nippon.  
We are invincible!  
No foe can equal our might;  
To attain our aims we must always attack  
And our enemies we must smite.  
Danger comes soonest when it is despised,  
Caution and prudence will bring no grief.  
Serve in silence and bear all pain.  
The shame of our souls will give us strength  
To preserve our nation and our glory.<sup>27</sup>

*Source: Unknown*