ledo WALAWBUM inkangawtaung nhpum-ga shaduzup MYITKYINA

The Burman News

Official publication of Merrill's Marauders Association, Inc.

February, 1997

SHARING THE STORY

ONE MAN'S MEMORIES ABOUT WORLD WAR II AND ESPECIALLY F CO/475TH

I was in the 5307th, and 475th Company F/2nd Bn. The fact is that my military service was something I haven't given much thought to for many years as the priorities of making a living and raising a family left little room for it. But so much has happened since then that has appalled me with respect to traditional notions of patriotism; particularly and not the most egregious, the burning and desecration of the American Flag as the symbol of our freedoms for which so many Americans have given up their lives. Even worse were the exploits of "Hanoi Jane" and her ilk. Thus it has become particularly important for me to make a point of my military service of which I am very proud as a legacy to my children so that as Lincoln said, "this country of the people, by the people and for the people shall not perish from this earth."

The fact is, it is not enough to rely on what remains of the personal memories that I have; it is also important to authenticate and put them in the context of the overall military operations about which as an individual soldier, I had little knowledge. In that endeavor, I have contacted the US Army Center of Military History and for my effort was rewarded with a copy of "Merrill's Marauders" (World War 2, the 50th Anniversary Edition) for the period, February to May 1944.

It was with what remained of a thoroughly decimated and exhausted 5307th Composite Unit (Provisional), (Code Name - Galahad), after a brilliant long range campaign behind Japanese lines setting up road blocks, disrupting communications, supply lines and reinforcement capabilities, spearheading the advance of the 22nd and 38th American trained Chinese Divisions, that the airstrip at Myitkyina was captured. It was to preserve this hold on North Burma, when it looked as though in their weakened and depleted condition they were in no position to withstand an expected heavily reinforced Japanese counterattack, that we replacements to the 5307th, just arived at Camp Ramgarh, India from five weeks of inactivity aboard ship and train, from the states, were thrown into the breach.

We hadn't expected our baptism of fire to come as suddenly as it did. Camp Ramgarh was where the above mentioned Chinese Divisions made up of those who had retreated with Gen Stilwell in January 1942 and replacements had been in training for an extended period. Merrill's troops later known to me and all as Merrill's Marauders, the cognomen an admiring newsman gave them, had similarly had an extended period of training at Camp Deogarh, in the Central Province of India, 1,000 miles from what would be their starting point at Ledo, to ready them for their extraordinary exploits in the little known regions of North Burma.

Expectation was that we too would go through some urgently needed additional training. In fact, that had been in the plans. But that was a luxury at the time - with victory hanging in the balance at Myitkyina, that was not an option. When we were sent in, desperate measures that returned Merrill's men to the front from hospitals in India had already been taken. Throwing us into the fray could not be delayed. And it proved to be what finally tipped the scales but not for another two months or so as we mopped up the remnants of what had been an elite corps of the Japanese Army, in the face of last ditch resistance, yard by bloody yard. Fighting would continue until August 3rd, 1944, when the town of Myitkyina itself fell to the Chinese 38th Division and about 200 Marauders of the original 2950 men still in action and the relief American forces.

We replacements participated in the Battle for Myitkyina compared to the full account of all that had preceded it. Nor have I yet read a fully reliable account of our second campaign as the Mars Task Force, 5332 Brigade comparable to the one cited above. The US Army Center of Military History, has referred me to the official opera-

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RANGER COLUMN

The Best Ranger competition will be held as usual, the first week in May. Anyone interested in attending, please let Phil Piazza know. We generally have a good turnout of Marauders, and Phil will have to make reservations for some of the events. We always have a wonderful time and stay at the same hotel so we can get together.

The Ranger Rendezvous will be in July, no firm date as yet. That is when the Hall of Fame members are inducted, and this year Col Lesczynski will change command. For anyone who is interested in going, Phil Piazza will send full particulars.

LETTER to President Piazza

I wanted to thank you again for the invite to your 50th Golden Anniversary. The Marauders are a great group of Rangers and the opportunity for Holly and I to join your ranks was very memorable.

I felt proud and honored to be a part of the program and get my "Ranger Fix" for another six months. Please pass on my thanks to the other Marauders and members of the 475th who lead the way for the Ranger Force.

David L Grange, Major General, GS, Director of Operations, Readiness and Mobilization.

OFFICERS ROW

PRESIDENT - Phil Piazza

The past year has been a very hectic one, as usual, but very rewarding. I made a total of 40 trips this year for meetings, ceremonies, regimental and battalion balls, and to give talks on the Marauders to Military and civilian groups, and college and high school ROTC groups. It is amazing the resurgencee of interest in the period of WWII. I have been up to Camp Merrill a number of times to give talks at Officer's Professional Development classes. MG David Grange, our guest speaker in DC, who gave such a great talk, is still in DC but we are looking forward to his receiving a command. Gen Wayne Downing just retired as CO of all Special Forces, and is living in Colorado.

Last month I attended the dedication of the WWII Ranger Memorial, across from the Infantry Museum. It is a beautiful memorial. Army Secretary Togo West and Gen Wayne Downing were the guest speakers at the ceremony. I would like to take the opportunity to thank the officers of our association for the wonderful job they do. Ray Lyons, our Secretary; Herb Clofine, our Treasurer; Dave Quaid, our Historian Emeritus, still very much involved; even though Bob Passanisi is our new Historian; our Liaison Officer, Dave Richardson, who did such a wonderful job in DC this past year; our Chaplain, Msgr Glavin.

I would also like to thank the members of the Board of Directors for their efforts, and Bob Ketcham our next Reunion Chairman. He has been doing a fine job. I met with him and the Hotel Manager in October and will go down again to Florida in March to finalize the plans. It is a beautiful facility right across from Disney Land, and convenient to many places by foot.

The hotel has been changed to **RAMADA PLAZA HOTEL, GATEWAY. THE TOLL FREE. NUMBER TO CALL IS 800-327-9170.**

I wish you could all have been present when we had the ceremony at the last Rendezvous, when we unveiled the side of our monument at the memorial, honoring our 14 Japanese American Marauders, who served so gallantly with us. Grant Hirabayashi and Roy Matsumoto unveiled the inscription and received a tremendous ovation, so well deserved. These men never did get the recognition that they should have gotten for their efforts, but I am sure that I speak for all of us, that we will be eternally grateful for their efforts.

God Bless, and I hope that you all stay well this coming year, and look forward to seeing you in Florida.

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY - Ray Lyons

Disaster has struck my computer operation. Without going into details, I have lost a lot of material and can only hope that some of you will repeat your letters, etc.

Among missing material is the address and unit data on new member - Raymond Foster, and Frank Russell's new address. He moved from CA back East to either KY or TN, and I do not have that new address either. I remember him saying that he was back with his family in case anyone recalls where he came from.

The special exhibit of Merrill's Marauders material that was put together by David Quaid and exhibited at the most recent reunion will be shown in Boston during the first two weeks of March, then at Milwaukee and finally at the Bank of America Building in San Francisco or the Hoover Library at Stanford University.

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tional records for the the 5307th and 5332nd which are in the Suitland Reference Branch, Textual Reference Division, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington DC 20409, telephone 301-457-7190, which I am planning to access.

That said I must also express my appreciation for the nuggets of personal reminiscences found in the pages of the Burman News. I am absolutely sure, for instance, that the John Fuller, F Company, 5307 and 475th mentioned by William Hill in the February '96 issue, was one of my company commanders. Why some images remain and others do not after all these years, I can not say with all the reshufflings and regroupings of personnel that went on, especially since he wasn't memorable as one of those officers who led his men from the front. Yet I swear I can still see him addressing us after it was safe enough to emerge above ground, his dark eyes and hair beneath a helmet with unhooked chin straps, in insignia free olive drab fatigues (I don't recall wearing camouflaged fatigues at the time) packing a 45 automatic, telling us that we were due a hiatus from enemy engagements but not from further training. Full battlefield security would be maintained not only against the possibility of renewed ground action but also 50 caliber machine guns would be put in place against the chance that there might still be some Zeros around. This would be no true R & R but there was not one among us who was not ready to look this gift horse in the mouth.

Our temporary encampment, Camp Landis, I have since learned, was named in honor of Pvt Robert Landis who had been cut down on the second day out on February 25th by machine gun fire as the lead scout of an I & R Platoon, whose job it was to keep the main body of troops from walking into unsuspected enemy positions, either through advanced warning by way of discovery or if need be by drawing enemy fire onto themselves. It does not surprise me to learn that Lt Fuller woud become a career officer, and had served in Vietnam.

Also I have not the slightest doubt that under the heading "Sharing the Story" in the B/N of May 1996 that Isadore Lurie, and John Gallagher were aboard the General Butner with me when it left Newport News, VA on April 23, 1944. In the main everything they report comports in the big picture with my own memory of the events that brought us to Myitkyina, with Ports of Call at Capetown, Durban and Mombasa and finally Bombay.

As for me, after 13 weeks of basic training in Fort McClellan, Alabama, the garrison life at Fort Leonard Wood MO was short-lived for before we knew it we were off again to the wilds of Louisiana for months of hardening on maneuvers. Coming from New York, I was under the impression that it never snowed in the South for how much farther south could you get than Louisiana. The discovery of waking

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up under a blanket of bone chilling snow was as unexpected as it was unenthralling.

Finally at long last, (I had been counting the days), as if at the commencement to a new future, we boarded another train and headed East. We, of course, had no idea where we would end up, but rumors were rampant. The odds were that we would be running the gauntlet of German submarines to the ETO, the European Theater of Operations. What a prize it would have been to have sunk a troop ship carrying more than 3,000 men. There were posters everywhere reminding us that a "slip of the lip could sink a ship". We arrived at Camp Patrick Henry for an overnight and then it was a hop, skip and jump to Newport News, when all was made ready to receive us aboard the ship that would take us to Bombay, India via the Cape of Good Hope around Africa. Unbeknown to us, we would be heading to the CBI that among the Theaters of Operation held the short end of the stick. We were Roosevelt's good faith gesture that America could be relied upon to help pull Chiang Kai-shek's chestnuts out of the fire.

The USS General Butner was a troop ship under naval command and designed for no other purpose. It was large and well-armed with anti-aircraft pompoms and six inch guns, fore and aft, and a single plane whose purpose I could never fathom, tethered to one of its decks. From time to time, targets were set out and the guns were fired to make sure they were in good working order and their crews well-practiced and battle ready. You had to stuff cotton in your ears or open your mouth as wide as possible to keep the booms from rupturing your ear drums. Because the ship traveled unescorted, it relied principally on speed which at 17 or 18 knots was our best protection, in addition to which it was always changing direction, that is, zigzagging to keep its course from being plotted. We had aboard with us, not only Marines but a contingent of British soldiers. Trying to understand their cockney accent was like being struck deaf and dumb in a foreign language.

It appears from the account of Mr Gallagher that he too was a shipmate of mine. He had been assigned to M Co 3rd Bn whereas Lurie and I were both in F Company, 2nd Battalion though neither name rings a bell with me. As it turns out Gallagher and Lurie disagree about the name of the ship. Mr Gallagher's diary comports with my memory when he recorded its name as the USS General Butner. Mr Lurie believes it was called the USS General Buckner, an understandable mistake since the two names were so similar. But in point of fact, it was the USS General Buckner, no doubt its sister ship whose happy mission it was to return us to the states from Calcutta via the Mediterranean, at the war's end.

Not until we were well out to sea did we leaarn what our final port of call would be and that we would be playing cat and mouse with lurking submarines for about 30 days. It wasn't long before we were responding like old salts to the terminology of naval tradition. So it was scuttlebutt instead of rumor; it was head instead of latrine; there was no greater faux pas one could commit than to call a naval ship, a boat. Furthermore, from the need to move undetected under the cloak of night, at the first sign of nightfall, it was "the smoking lamp is out" and again with the rising of the sun, it became "the smoking lamp is lit", signaling that the nightly "black out" was over. Though it was the navy that was our host, we were not relieved from standing guard or watch. Bells of course, were not rung as they would have been of old, signaling the passage of time for if we had heard them, we would have known that the ship was under threat of imminent attack; but the sound of ship whistles were heard aplenty. Nonetheless, the nautical term bells, was used to designate the passage of time while on watch. Thus with 4 on and 4 off, one bell would refer to one half-hour until 8 bells or half-hours had passed indicating it could be time either to jump into or out of the sack and so on around the clock for one 24 hour period. As I recall I had pulled this duty just once.

Also one of the facts of life aboard a troop ship because of the need to conserve fresh water was showering with seawater. Soap seemed to make no impresssion on it and though it was better than nothing, it always left one feeling grimy and half-done. Another was that if your bunk was anywhere near the stern in heaving waves, the turbine propellers could jar the hell out of you every time it lifted out of the water and fell back again.

It was on our seventh day out of Newport News that I became 22 years of age. The auspices notwithstanding a depression bred kid like myself might otherwise never have had, at least so early in life, aspired to an ocean voyage going halfway around the world. Nevertheless, with time on our hands and no where to spend the proceeds of pay days, and "with

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PASS IN REVIEW

(Deaths reported recently)

Name & Hometown (Where Known), Organization, Where, When Deceased.

HENRY BALDWIN, Rt 3 Box 121, Mt Gilead NC 27306, 5307/3/KCT, 1996

JOHN L FULLER, 504 Michigan Av, Waterville OH 43566, 5307/2/F Co/PL LDR; 475/2/F Co, April 10, 1996

BERNARD JANSKVICH, 410 Eighth St, Wisconsin Rapids WI 54494, 475TH, 1996

JOHNNIE E JOHNSON, 2957 Botany Dr, Jonesboro GA 30236-6830, 706-968-8341, 5307/3/KCT/HW, September 2, 1996 (Sick at reunion, died immediately after returning home).

DR H C PHELPS, 8 John St, Owego NY 13827, 475/2/VET C, November 19, 1996

GEORGE T STORY, 22 Rosewood Rd, Edison NJ 08817, 612; 613/C/4, 1996

LLOYD T WALDEN, 2924 Westknolls Ln, Cincinnati OH 45211, 5307/3/I CO; 475/3/I, November 11, 1996

ROBERT WELLS, 1114 Hunt St, Maumee OH 43537, 5307/1/RCT, November 1, 1996

GEORGE W WRIGHT, 3005 Turnell Warner Rd #5L, Arlington TX 76017, 5307/3/OCT; 31 QM PK TR

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nothing to see but the sea" as a popular refrain of the day had it, more money piled up on army blankets than I or anyone else I vouch, had ever seen before or would ever likely see again in one place, in "no limit" or "pot limit" poker games with fortunes to be made or lost on a turn of the card or a throw of the dice. The USS General Butner had in short order been turned into a floating casino.

Not so much for me as we slipped down through the latitudes; for the primal tug of the sea held my fancy as an experience worth savoring. I spent a lot of time just gazing as it were out over the gunwales from the lower deck and on hot equatorial nights made a litter and slept there. It was confidence inspiring to see how fast the water flowed past the ship's hull as a sign of the power that propelled us. Nothing was further from the truth than the notion that the sea was boring; for one in tune with it found its everchanging moods and phases irresistible. Look there off the port side just as Kipling put it in his "On the Road to Mandalay!". There go - "the flying fish at play"! Where but on the ocean are the sun, the moon and the stars in constant transit and so everpresent as to have suggested the means by which man first began to find a pathway in the pathless? Where else is the call to freedom and adventure stronger? Or the challenge greater to rise above the pettiness of life?

But once we crossed the equator which we did twice, most of the polliwogs did interrupt their gambling to bestir themselves on deck for initiation by King Neptune in his long white beard wearing a crown and carrying his trident, with his Queen and Davy Jones at his side, into the Ancient Order of Shellbacks. It was a time when such fun and gaiety helped to keep the fears at bay that lay in the back of every mind.

And then when we were in southerly latitudes as far as we would go, there came upon us a phase of the sea in its ugliest mood. The change was so swift it was on us before we knew it. The waves had grown into mountains that one second towered above us and in the next had us up as if on a Himalayan peak looking into chasms as equally awesome. I could not now say how long it took before we reached waters of milder disposition, but of this I am sure, that for all those mariners who once braved these waters before the mast, it must have been, for those who did and didn't make it, a time without end. To see the furies in turning the Cape at their worst, even in the best that human ingenuity can contrive, is a chastening experience. And though I knew my end was then likely to be in Davy Jones's Locker, my life nonetheless began to move subliminally without conscious volition in what I am wont to admit were clearly unspoken words of prayer as the tumultuousness engulfing us caused the decks to become as unreliable, as ground giving way in an earthquake.

We were at sea and out of sight of land for 17 days, when early on the morning of May 10th, the whole ship was suddenly agog with excitement as the sound of "Land Ahoy" or its equivalent had us leaping out of our berths and up to the decks as fast as our feet could carry us. When first we looked it was hardly more than a thin line barely distinguishable from the horizon itself, made even less distinguishable in the mists of breaking daylight. But as we drew closer there was no mistaking it as its features became larger and more visible. And then suddenly the shrouds of breaking day gave way to a dazzling morning with the sky bluer than I could ever remember having seen it. As we drew closer yet, there off our port bow dramatically looming before us was Table Mountain within whose falling shadow, like a mantle from its shoulders we would soon be idling engines to take the pilot on board who would guide us to a berth in Cape Town Harbor.

The musicals, "Fancy Free" and "On the Town" capture the zest with which gobs after many days, weeks at sea, look forward to cutting loose on shore leave. Nor did we react any differently when we received word that we were being given 12 hours of liberty though we wore army tans rather any navy whites but for one qualification; namely, that we were perhaps more poised than any tar would have been to hang an extra one on from the sobering thought that it could be our last. In the interim, the ship would be refueling, and putting in a fresh store of food and water. Lurie recalls it as a 12 hour overnight. It may have been and more for that handful of AWOL's we left behind, when at the appointed time we promptly weighed anchor. Eventually, as the scoop had it, the army or navy would finally find one way or another to return them to their outfits where as I understood it, in the performance of their duty there were no retributions.

As for me the impressions I still have of Cape Town though now weathered by time was in general quite favorable then. It was clean and orderly and their shops and residences attractive. Of course, because of segregation, the seamier side of aparteid and its effects on black sensibilities were not much in evidence. But for white people the kind of life they had fashioned for themselves as I recall did not leave me without a twinge of envy. For it looked not so different from what a good life might look like in California or in our own mid-west, in those halcyon days of yore. If pressed to find a fault the only one I would cite would be from the discovery I made whenever I stepped into a pub, of popular reverence for beer served warm. However, we could be accommodated if we wished but it was not unlike getting a special meal prepared to order.

We hove to for reprovisioning twice more, once at Durban, SA on the 13th and then again at Mombasa, Kenya on the 15th, and then without further pause, set sail across the Indian Ocean to arrive in Bombay on May 25th,1944. No one today could know what it was like then before television took all the mystery out of exotic and far away places, to visit the land of the British Raj, with the Hindus, M Ghandi, and J. Hehru, already roiling the pot for independence while their Muslim opposition, Ali Jinnah had his own ideas of independence for Pakistan as a Muslim State; all the while, the Indian Quisling Chandra Bose was busily conspiring to get India to blow up in everybody's face by doing all he could to turn India into a Japanese province.

The Japanese tide after Pearl Harbor had spread over almost all of South East Asia and in the process shut down China's remaining life line to the West, the Burma Road. When Stilwell began his counter offensive the Japanese

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were poised for an attack on India. With four Japanese Divisions poised on the Burma side of the border, a breakthrough in Assam would have sliced India wide open like a ripe watermelon. At that very moment (5/25) I was taking my first look at India from the deck of the USS General Butner, a contingent of about 2800 American soldiers under Brig Gen Frank Merrill had been on a wide ranging "off the map" counterattack since Feb 24th, 1944 in what was Stilwelll's variation of Mac Arthur's "I Shall Return".

We hadn't a clue about where we were going, or what our mission would be or what was in store for us. We expected to be given a period of training to adapt us to the conditions we would be facing in Burma as our predecessors had been and as the 124th Cavalry converted to horseless soldiers would be before they joined us, at Camp Landis, as the 5307th Composite Unit converted to the 475th Infantry Regiment, of the 5332nd Brigade, to be known as the Mars Task Force. In any case, whatever our destiny, as another popular refrain had it, "Whatever will be, will be!" And no one could blame us if we tended to act like a bunch of yokels when for the first time we set eyes on that ancient, mysterious and romanticed subcontinent.

When we first looked over the side of the ship at the dock to which we were moored, what we saw were dhoti clad men sitting around crosslegged as though they were born to it, waiting I would guess for whatever employment they could get as dock hands; while others with a more descernible purpose were threading in and out hawking mangoes, persimmons which I didn't readily take to when I first tried them. Under closer observation as the occasion would soon afford, few could pass oral inspection from having in a most unsightly manner deep red-purple stained their lip, gums, and teeth from the habit of chewing on betel nuts and leaves for a narcotic effect that no doubt also helped deaden hunger pangs. But so prosaic a scene was not the case on the ship's starboard side when we gave audience to what were antics meant to induce merriment. For below us in the noisome waters were pubescent youths slithering about like herrings risking their lives to offer us the entertainment of seeing them scramble and dive after some of the loose change we had in our pockets. Was this not too another example of the stark poverty that haunted so much of the country?

In short order we fell to and marched off the ship straight to the railhead from which we would begin a 1400 mile, 4 day journey clear across India to Camp Ramgarh. It takes just a little figuring to realize that we covered about 350 miles a day which when broken down even further would indicate that going by Indian rail was just a little bit better than walking. And here Lurie's description of our mode of travel is right on the money when he writes "we traveled on the Great India Peninsula Railway in box cars with wooden benches which could be likened to cattle cars". As I recall they were slatted and open like stock cars which with the installation of the wooden benches had been converted to troop carriers. What this meant at the onset considering our average speed was that we had to hold our noses for what seemed an interminable time as we crawled by miles of wretched Bombay hovels along the right of way. Nor could the head of steam this train could get up spare us from the kiln dried air of the countryside. It was so hot and the air so dry that at the snail's pace we moved you could literally gag on the air you breathed.

I would guess that when we were cruising right along, we were doing about 30 or 35 miles per hour, but due to the need to make frequent stops, at what were hardly more than hamlets to replenish the engine boilers with water and to take on a fresh load of wood (yes, wood!) to fuel them, our overall rate of travel fell accordingly. It was at such times we could stretch our legs and look around, that we would usually see the trees near the railroad stop, alive with monkeys and the privileged cows the Hindus reverenced, that even for a passing train were given the right of way. It was at such times too that to keep our tongues from cleaving to the roofs of our mouths that the English custom of drinking tea became the preferred beverage that was served to us.

It would be well to note at this point that prior to the introduction of the 5307th Composite Unit, code name Galahad to which we replacements were assigned, there was not a single organized American unit of ground fighting men in all of Southeast Asia. The only American presence resisting the Japanese tide were a volunteer group of airmen recruited by Air Force General Claire Chennault, who became famous for their exploits as Chennault's Flying Tigers. Other than that there was only the American Lt General Joseph Stilwell, on detached service assigned to stiffen Chiang's capability in resisting Japanese advances in China. It was in January 1942 as the head of the Chinese Divisions assigned to him to defend the Burma Road, that he suffered a humiliating defeat. Then, in what was a remarkable demonstration of stamina and guts, when his troops were scattered in disarray in their attempt to get out of Burma any way they could, Stilwell managed to elude capture and walked out of Burma to safety leading a rag tail bunch of British and Burmese survivors among them Burma

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LOST, STRAYED OR STOLEN

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ANTHONY ADAMS, 11511 AV J, CHICAGO IL 60619 - ATT. NOT KNOWN

FALL IN

Here are latest additions to our assembly. Remember them?

ROBERT J BECK, 5054, KINGSFIELD ST, W BLOOMFIELD MI 48076, 5307, 124/3/KTR

EDWARD SEAGRAVES, 7761 ASHLEY RD, POWELL TN 37849, 615-947-8809, 5307/HQ/ARTY; 613/B BATT

OTTO SCHULTZ, 8790 1/4 WYNGATE, SUNDLAND CA 91040, 5307

CLARENCE SHORT, 9718 MATZON RD, BALTIMORE MD 21220-1722, 475/2/F/3 PL

RAYMOND FOSTER

This group of soldiers who saw action in Asia with Brig. Gen. Frank Merrill's Marauders included Pvt. Frank L. Pruitt of Danville, kneeling at left, first row. This picture was taken December 26, 1944, in Newport News. From Mary Kennedy.

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Surgeon Col. Seagrave's nurses, short on food, water and medicine.

And therefore in a very real way, the counterblow that began two years later in February 1944, was the redemption Stilwell sought, for the bloodied nose he received two years earlier.

The story of how this turn of events came to be, began when British Brigadier Orde C Wingate demonstrated between February and June of 1943 how effective small mobile units supplied only by air drops in operations and in radio contact with each other behind Japanese lines could be. One year later to the month, his tactical concepts would be once again put to the test by the American General Frank Merrill. Finally, as as result of the Quebec (Roosevelt and Churchill) Conference of August 1945, it was decided that as quickly as possible an American Military Unit designed for deep penetrations under tropical jungle conditions would be sent to help throw the Japanese back on their heels in Burma. From then on, it was only three weeks between 9/1/43 when the size and nature of the unit was fixed and 9/21/43 when the first contingent of one battalion recruited from the Caribbean Defense Command and another from Ground Forces in the States would ship out of San Francisco, heading for New Caledonia and Brisbane Australia, where they picked up a third Battalion made up of battle experienced veterans from Guadalcanal and elsewhere in the South and Southwest Pacific. Thus the terms "composite" and "provisional" appended to the 5307th indicates that they were men composed from disparate organizations, as highly trained or highly seasoned as jungle fighters, on a provisional basis, meaning that they were volunteers for one very high risk mission following which they would be retired from active combat.

At the time of our arrival at Camp Ramgarh near the end of May 1944, none of the aforementioned was known to us. As we came into increasing contact with Merrill's men, we soon became familiar from hearsay with place names like Walawbum, Inkangawtaung, Nhpum-Ga, Shaduzup plus others all of which figured heavily in actions against the enemy. The Allied plan was to retake North Burma as a precondition for an American attempt to build a new road from Ledo tht would link up with the Burma Road near Bhamo in Central Burma. The Stilwell push was importantly aided by the supporting roles played by Wingate, hammering the Japanese rear lines well to the south in Central Burma with his British, Kachin and Gurkha troops and with the build up of Chiang's forces for an attack in the southeast just over the border from China in ths Salween River Valley.

The Japanese counted on the Himalayan mountain barriers as their best guarantee against a successful allied assault. Those peaks rising to 20,000 feet in Northern Burma became known to the world as the Hump when American planes flew daringly over them in order to get badly needed war material to China. They not only impassably abut Northern Burma, they also extend in formidable prongs in elevations of 6,000 and 10,000 feet that curve down between China and Burma in the East. The western prong or the Patkai barrier also rising to heights of 10,000 feet is on the Burmese border with India. The Pansau Pass however, of the Patkai Range, at about 4,300 feet made it a feasible entree for the Ledo Road and as a route the Marauders would follow into the rugged hills and beyond. Even here as the official account bears out, the Marauders endlessly complained about whether "Those God-damned hills would ever end."

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Boxed in on three sides by these mountain chains, North Burma is essentially a rugged hill country divided into two compartments by the north-south Kumongs, the Irrawaddy River worms its way through a narrow valley from the Himalayas to Myitkyina. In this valley, Sumprabum was the enemy's main outpost and further south about 35 miles North of Myitkyina was Nsopzup another outpost and important supply base. In the other compartment, waters of the Chindwin River have carved out the fairly extensive lowland plains of the Hukawng Valley in the Hill country to which the Pangsau Pass over the Patkai Range gives access. Once over the Patkai Range, the essential problem was to get over the Kumongs into the upper Irrawaddy plains for an approach to Myitkyina. The best route for doing this was by a natural corridor of the narrow Mogaung Valley. Even so one-fifth of the final leg of 65 miles the Marauders took to Myitkyina was over Kumong's razor edged ridges rising in this area to over 6,000 feet.

Myitkyina was the main prop on which Japanese control of North Burma rested. It was where the waters of the Irrawaddy River became navigable as they flowed the length of the country to Rangoon. It was also the terminus of a single track railroad that connected with Central and Southern Burma. It also had nearby not two and a half miles away an all weather air strip from which Japanese planes harassed American cargo planes flying the Hump and as such would become the prime intitial objective of the Marauder's 3rd Mission, a prize that would be essential for a rapid build-up in men and materials. The capture of the air strip was absolutely essential if the prop was to be knocked out once and for all. But that of course, is putting the cart before the horse. The Japanese 18th Division would first have to be driven from the Hukawng Valley with attacks and road blocks set up near Walawbum; then again from the Mogaung Valley at Shaduzup and Inkangawtaung.

When the Marauders started out on February 24, 1944, Stilwell's 22nd and 38th Chinese Divisions had already driven 60 miles into the Hukawng Valley and were advancing southward against the 7,000 men of the enemy's 18th Division in the vicinity of Maingkwan on the Kamaing Road, the only motor route through the valley. It was the enemy's main supply artery to their base at Kamaing and key to the control of the vallley by either side. As the Chinese were making their main drive down this road, Stilwell planned to coordinate the movements and actions of the 5307th with the main operations of the Chinese by sending the Marauders on wide encircling movements over the hills east of the Chinese forces to cut the enemy's lines of supply to their forward units. If successful, the Marauder's first mission, would hasten their withdrawal south of Walawbum. And so it did, though in the process the Marauders had in return suffered some heavy counterblows.

The second stage was another "off the map" encircling attack that enabled the Chinese to move in and occupy Shadazup; however it was a few miles further south, that the Marauders ran into a buzz saw of reinforced defenses at Inkangatawng. There, they beat a strategic withdrawal and headed North to Nhpum-Ga with new orders to block a threatened Japanese advance in force on Shadazup. The developing battle at Nhpum-Ga turned into a real donny-brook in which the 2nd Battalion began numbering their days when they discovered that they were completely surrounded and that the water hole on which they depended was in enemy hands. Between March 28 and April 7th, despite the air strikes that were called in and the 75mm artillery that were air dropped, the Japanese stranglehold showed no signs of weakening; that is, until the 1st Battalion finally broke through. Two days later on 4/9/44, the Japs threw in the towel and withdrew. Although the Marauders were beaten up pretty badly and shaken, the threatened Japanese attack on Shadazup never took place. Instead, their continued withdrawal had now set the stage for an attack on Myitkyina itself.

At the time, the Marauders had begun their third mission to Myitkyina in late April, the USS Gen. Butner was about 5 days out of Newport News. The Marauders were fighting just north of Inkangatawng at Nhpum-Ga, 20 miles from the enemy base at Kamaing. The British led Kachin and Gurkha troops had taken their forward base in the Irrawaddy Valley at Sumprabum and were moving south toward the other Japanese supply base at Nsopzup. To the Southeast of Myitkyina, the Chinese were preparing a massive offensive from Yunnan in the Salween River Valley. Gen. Wingate's 3rd Indian Division (he had died in a plane crash on March 25th) had cut the enemy supply route well south of the Myitkyina-Kamaing battle area, when they set up a block on March 16th, 80 miles south of Myitkyina on the single railroad into North Burma. This left the Japanese with water transport up the Irrawaddy as their principal means of supply. The Allied offensive was putting a powerful squeeze on the Japanese from all sides.

To take advantage of this, Stilwell was planning another one-two punch with his 22nd Chinese Division, driving down the Mogaung Corridor straight for Kamaing at the same time as he would be sending the Marauders on their 3rd Mission in a wide flanking movement to the east of this main effort. Because the military situation could not brook delay with replacements 3 to 4 weeks away, the strike at Myitkyina would test the limits of their staying powers. For this mission, the 5307th had to be reshuffled and shorn up with Kachins and Chinese units. They had already covered about 500 miles in about 80 days and had lost 700 men in killed, wounded and sick. Of these, 460 were from the 2nd Bn alone from the casualties sustained at Nhpum-Ga. Its two Combat Teams had been seriously disrupted. And so with the addition of 300 Kachin

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LETTER TO EDITOR

EDITOR

Thank you for the Newsletters, I enjoyed them very much. The outfit that I was in, was the 475th, 2nd Bn, F Company, 3rd Platoon. I joined the outfit at Myitkyina. I was a T/5. I stayed with the outfit until I was sent back to the states on December 22, 1945. George Patrick and I were together all the time. Clarence Short, 9718 Matzon Rd, Baltimore MD 21220-1722

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guerrillas, the 2nd Battalion was reorganized as the M Force. The 150th Chinese Regiment was attached to the 1st Bn with its Red and White Combat Teams under General Merrill's Second in Command, Col. Hunter, as the H Force. The 88th Chinese Regiment attached to the 3rd Bn with its Orange and Khaki Combat Teams became the K Force. H Force was chosen to begin the attack on Myitkyina by assaulting and capturing the air strip.

At their starting point in the Mogaung Corridor, it was 65 miles to Myitkyina about one fifth of which was over the razor edged ridges of the Kumongs, at elevations of about 6,000 feet, at a time the rainy season prelims were already making the footholds for men and mules a devilish undertaking. Later in mid-June when it would be raining not continuously but each and every day for a couple to three hours, I can recall slogging through mud knee deep in a patrol chosen to escort General Stilwell in a private's uniform for an inspection of our front lines. The beginning of the wet season was already making the steep slopes so treacherous that the Marauders were obliged to cut footholds for their pack animals in some places and in others unload them and manhandle their loads up precipitous inclines. Even so, 15 mules from the Khaki Combat Team and 5 from the Orange Combat Team lost their footings and with their loads of ammunition and weapons plunged to their death in the valleys far below. How well I recall how high those elevations were when we Marsmen in a far more propitious dry season could look down into the valleys and see our own cargo planes circling far below us.

The Myitkyina Task Force began to move out on April 28th. Two days later the H Force would follow the K Force into the Kumongs. The M Force would be taking another route further south as a block to any Japanese forces that might be advancing from that direction. They ran into their first enemy resistance when the K Force found Japanese in considerable strength at a place called Ritpong. It resulted in a tough delay of five days in which K Force found itself embroiled in several hot and heavy fire fights before they managed to enable the Chinese 88th to envelop Ritpong and to push on through.

During the delay, H Force had caught up with the K Force and on May 10th both were about 35 miles Northwest of Myitkyina where less than 20 miles to the East, Japanese in considerable strength were resisting the British-led Kachins and Gurkha levies in their drive on the enemy supply base at Nsopzup. To screen an American move toward Myitkyina, realizing the American presence in the valley was known to the enemy, K Force had to engage their attention by making a move as in support of the drive on Nsopzup. This feint put them against strong opposition wherein a Chinese flanking move was badly repulsed and wherein K's Orange and Khaki CTs found themselves held to a standstill in a position of considerable risk. But once the H Force had been effectively screened on their way to Myitkyina, K Force having suffered eight killed and 21 wounded (Chinese casualties were heavier), disengaged and followed them South.

When, on May 15th, the H Force had reached the upper Namkwi River, they were within 15 miles of their objective. To protect the element of surprise, they would be beholden to their Kachin Guide who along with others had from the beginning helped guide the Marauders in North Burma's uncharted frontierland. He was now needed more than ever if they were to find their way undetected to the very perimeter of the air strip. Just at this point at 2030 hours, their indispensable guide, Nauiyang Nau was bitten by a poisonous snake and was soon too sick, though he tried, to go on. Captain Laffin and Lt Dunlap immediately slashed the spots where the fangs had penetrated and for two hours sucked poison from the incision. By 0230, Nauiyang Nau mounted on Col Hunter's horse was able to continue leading the column until it reached its destination for the night. On May 16th and only four miles from the air strip, Col Hunter to keep from alerting the enemy used his Kachin guerrillas to round up the inhabitants of Namkwi Village along with two other natives that had seen their column, and confined them within H Force lines because of their doubtful loyalty until the next morning.

The attack on the air strip came of as scheduled at 1000 on May 17th. While the Chinese 150th Regiment was attacking the air strip, the Red and White Combat Teams to control the approaches from the Irrawaddy, went after the ferry point crossing at Pamati and subsequently on May 18th, the Main Ferry at a bend in the river directly below Myitkyina at Zigyon. Throughout the day sporadic fighting went on in widely separated spots around the airfield but by noon the field was in Allied hands.

At this point, it is important to understand how the Allied position began to deteriorate between May 21 and May 23, that enabled the Japanese to go on the offensive. It began when Col Hunter noting that since no Japanese reinforcements appeared at the air strip on May 17th, the City too might be lightly defended. In order to support an immediate attack on Myitkyina, he radioed for help from K and M Forces who at that point were still about two days march form Myitkyina. He knew that it was just a matter of time before the Japanese would be bringing in strong reinforcements given the strategic importance of Myitkyina and that it would be a race as to which side could build up their strength more quickly. On the 18th, Hunter's attack on Myitkyina using the 150th Chinese lamentably failed. When K and M Forces arrived on May 19th by dint of forced marches, K Force (3rd Bn) with the 88th Chinese was ordered to take Charpate to block the Mogaung-Myitkyina Road on the Northwest and the M Force (2nd Bn) was ordered to take Namkwi on the Namkwi River to block reinforcements from the West and Southwest.

Already on the 19th, when the 3rd Bn was hit from the northwest, it was clear that small bands of the enemy was trying to get into Myitkyina. Merrill, with his forces arrayed around Myitkyina in a semi-circle with blocks from the northwest, west, southwest and from the Irrawaddy on the south, planned a second attack, coordinated this time, on the City. And though he fell ill again and had to be evacuated, his Second in Command never brought it off. Despite Marauder's efforts to cover the main approaches, the Japanese

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got strong reinforcements into Myitkyina; an estimated 3000-4000 came from Nsopzop, Mogaung and even from as far away as Bhamo.

In the last ten days of May, the situation became extremely critical. Between May 21st and 23rd, the perception of Allied softness enabled the Japanese to pass over to the offensive. The enemy concentrated his attacks at first on the 3rd Bn guarding the Mogaung-Myitkyina Road at Charpate. On May 24 having taken heavy casualties, the 3rd Bn was ordered to yield Charpate and move back to defend the air strip. The 2nd Bn fared no better at Namkwi and by May 27, the Japanese had retaken two of the towns on the main approaches to Myitkyina. On the 27th, under attack again, the 2nd Bn was so wasted by fatigue, dysentery, malaria and malnu-trition that they were no longer combat effective; men were falling asleep from exhaustion and Col. McGee who lost consciousness 3 times was between relapses directing his men from the aid station. If the Japanese could also recapture the air field, the American and Chinese troops would be left with no way of escape except the jungle trail over which they had come, and in consideration of their condition this was out of the question. The fruits of a brilliant campaign were therefore very much at stake.

For the most part, the 2nd Bn's valiant stand on May 27th was the Marauder's last action at Myitkyina. Only 1310 men reached Myitkyina and of this number 679 were evacuated to rear hospitals between May 17th and June 1st. Allied reinforcements were arriving to carry on the fight (That was us, the 5307th New Galahad). Yet when Myitkyina finally fell on August 3rd, there were still about 200 men of the 1st Bn from Col. Hunter's H Force still in the area.

And so at the time, we green replacements were flown in in early June, the Allied High Command, to prevent utter disaster, in the last ten days of May, had rushed 200 Marauders convalescing in hospitals in India straight to the front to hold the air strip. When we arrived in C-47's, the field was strewn with gliders in all kinds of cockeyed disarray from the landings they made carrying some of our predecessors, an Aviation Engineer unit, on a field full of craters from the shelling it had received. Gun fire on the outskirts of the field could be plainly heard. One of the first things the officer who addressed us said when we were able to assemble on one side of the field was, "You have just earned from the fact that you are now under fire, you first combat star!" I can't say at this point that this intelligence did very much to heighten our appreciation for the glory of it all. Yet it did in a manner of speaking, help to summon up a spirit that went with thinking yourself somehow worthy of it. And then, as if we were once again in basic training, we were reminded to make sure that our guns were both locked and loaded within our own lines to avoid the prospect of becoming an accidental casualty of friendly fire; and as if in proof of the need for taking this precaution seriously, some miscreant right in our midst, at that very moment, did accidentally discharge his M-1 30 caliber rifle. That no one was killed because of this negligence made us all think that perhaps there was someone up there looking out for us after all. But, of course, the main reason for the briefing was to organize us to move down and take over the front lines from what was left of the Marauders. To this day, I am not sure which ones they were; yet from that day to this, I believed they were men from the 3rd Bn.

Merely to make it down there was spine tingling experience for all the way down we had either to crouch or crawl on all fours cradling our weapons through the tropical growth, as if we were on an infiltration course with machine gun bullets being sprayed at us 18 inches above our heads. For to have walked erect would have almost certainly exposed us from the chest up to enemy fire. If that were all, this would hardly be worth recalling. But that wasn't all by a long shot! For what most caused our blood to curdle and our skin to cringe, was having to unavoidably crawl over and around Japanese corpses swollen from putrefaction and swarming all over with black maggots. When with God's Grace we finally made it to the end of the line, we found there waiting for us - its new tenants, a platoon of foxholes obligingly dug for us by its former inhabitants of whom we saw nary a one. This line didn't exactly start at the water's edge of the Irrawaddy. It started in fact on a steep bluff above the river, not unlike the defense position Montcalm thought was impregnable at Quebec atop the cliffs on the St Lawrence River, ostensibly protecting our left flank from attack.

The foxhole that held the

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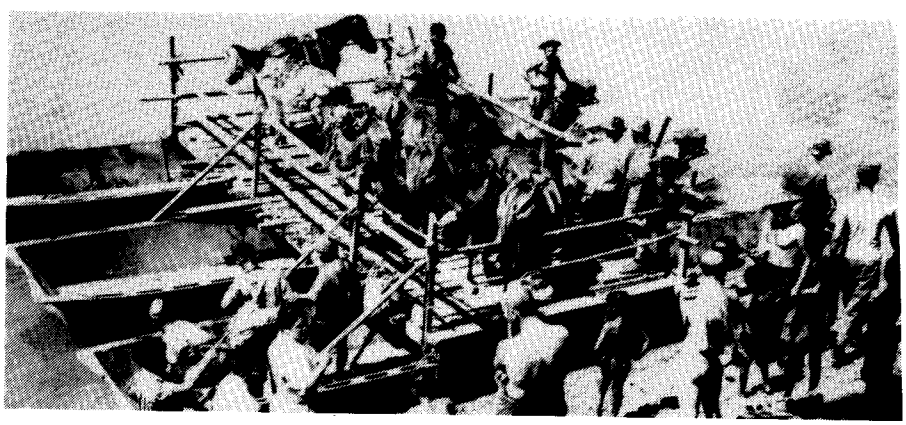

This picture was taken around July 4, 1944. Col. Wiley had called me up to the airstrip and told me to get something together to ferry some small mules and about 15 men who would be coming down to the far side of the river "shortly." He told me not to worry too much about the mules, but get the men across safely. When they got there, we brought the men over first, then went back and loaded the mules. As we were unloading the mules, one of them got a leg caught between two pieces of decking. At the same time, Col. Wiley appeared. The mule was freed with no harm to it. However, I stood at attention for the longest five minutes of my life while Col. Wiley explained to me how priceless these animals were and what a dumb ass second lieutenant I was.

Teddy Pelligrino is at the river side out board, Don Givens is at the shore side motor, the white looking "T" shirt is Stanton Lank. The Burmese kids and Chinese soldiers came and went with the sunrise and sunset.

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extreme left flank position happened to be larger than the others and for a very good reason. For that was where a .30 caliber air cooled machine gun had been posted for a maximum field of fire. What we soon learned however, was that on the night before some Nips or Japs (for those were the terms we much preferred when speaking of the enemy) had been able somehow to crawl up close enough to the foxhole and with one well-placed grenade knocked out the crew. Oddly or not oddly enough depending on how you looked at it, this was when Co F, 3rd Platoon, had its first casualty, not alas as a result of enemy action. In WW I, the term used to describe this kind of casualty, was shell shock. In WW II, we were far more enlightened from all that Herr Dr. Freud had taught us, and so when the final list of casualties for the Marauders was released, it included under Disease not only Amoebic dysentery, typhus, malaria, fevers of unknown origin, but also psychoneurosis of which there were 72. Of course in the same war in the Sicilian Campaign, Lt General George Patton nearly lost his command for being far less genteel about it when he slapped and called one non-wounded psychoneurotic he encountered in an Army Hospital, "a yellow belly". Of course, since then in post war America, more people have lost their lives on the streets of America's cities covering a comparable period than ever died on a WW II battlefield, not least because of the tendency to sugar coat the poison pills of American society with psychoneurotic terminology.

It happened when one soldier suddenly balked at the thought of entering the aforementioned foxhole. As I recall it, I never thought it possible that a rather dark complected face could be drained of all its color. But it was! And as he stood there lividly catatonic, and unable to function militarily, it was clear that he could only become a liability to the rest of the unit. Acccording to the Articles of War, he could have been shot or sent back under arrest for court martial. You can well imagine my surprise when some time later I, feeling not a little resentment, ran across him somehow fully restored, doing something or other as a rear echelon commando.

And, so once again, with all these fresh troops to work with, the shoe shifted to the other foot, as the reinforced 5307th with our Chinese allies began to push the Japs back and away from the air strip. And so early the next morning, word was passed along that at 0500 or 0530 whatever, when it was just about light enough for us to see but still not light enough to be seen too clearly, we would leave the domesticity of our foxholes and go over the top, to use WW I lingo. What we could see with the river on our left was some gently rolling grassy terrain and off to the right between one and three o'clock within effective firing distance some heavily foliaged large trees. What we couldn't see were Nips set up with criss crossing fields of fire in well entrenched concealed positions or snipers that were laying in wait in the foliage of the trees for targets of opportunity. In the course of the next few weeks, we got this order time and again. Rarely would we be able to advance more than a few yards before we found ourselves pinned down and not daring to move a muscle lest we stop a bullet.

For that was what usually cut us short in our tracks. No one in combat with normal sensibilities I vouch will ever forget the instances when one or another of the men in your squad of platoon is suddenly obliterated before your eyes. The first time it happened, it was to Poli on my immediate left when I saw him standing and using a derelict native basha for cover, whole and fit, and full of fight one second, and the next, crumpled up in a heap with half his face shot away. Though it would be a stretch to say we were particularly close, the effect was no less devastating. For what I remember most about Poli was with what good cheer, he undertook the hazard of slipping down the sandy cliffside with a string of canteens over his shoulder for refilling at the river's edge. We knew from what we gathered from those we had relieved that from not too far away on sand spits jutting into the river, snipers had excellent vantage points for picking us off whenever they could catch us with our pants down, so to speak. Whereas I didn't know for sure whether any Marauders had been hit, we knew that they had frequently drawn pot shots from that direction. Notwithstanding, we took the danger under advisement and continued to bathe, do our wash, and even, under a punishing sun, yield to the temptation of going for a swim.

It was possible to turn the Irrawaddy into a watering hole in that same area for a while only because the progress we made could be measured in yards. This was no doubt what trench warfare in WW I was like. We were in a stalemate. Each time we moved out, we'd get pinned down from the murderous crossfire coming from the pill boxes the Nips had built for themselves. We tried everything including the tactic of having the I and R (Intelligence and Reconnaissance) Platoon attempt an enveloping end run along the river under the cliffs. It didn't succeed but it netted us the longest ground gain we had made. It was made possible with the help of very effective supporting fire from our Heavy Weapons Platoon using heavy machine guns that kept the Nips buttoned up in their pill boxes. This action has also remained another memorable one for on that day one of the squad leaders of our platoon, as admirable a soldier as there ever was, was killed. He was out in front as usual, for he was one of those who said, "Do as I do!" not "Do as I say!" And that was what we were doing when we saw him pause and begin to dig in, looking nontheless as though he was thinking of making another bold bid. In less time than it takes an eye to blink, with deepest regret, I saw him slump forward and over the earthern mound he had built from his partially dug foxhole.

Ostensibly, it was 5307 New Galahad that was on the offensive, but once day turned into night, we weren't so sure. The Japs had already shown their proclivities for using stealth to creep up on us at night. It was also under the cover of dark that they were known as well for making their infamous Banzai charges. And so we were given solemn warning once night fell, not to be lured into precipitously firing our weapons, for the muzzle blast would surely give away our positions. Instead, we stocked up with extra hand grenades that we

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put within easy reach. Within our two man foxholes, we took turns; while one man slept, the other kept his eyes open but mainly his ears, alert to the slightest off beat sounds. It was such times as this that the moon and the stars and the constellations in the evening sky couldn't help but absorb my attention. As such I began to use them as a countdown from the terrors that came with the night to those that came with each new day.

And, then one night, it happened before the first week was out. I can not recall exactly at what time it occurred or whether it was a moonlit or a moonless night, for nothing is as clearly remembered as were the terrifying sounds that suddenly rent the night air with that of boots crashing through the underbrush. The shock caused me to suffer a moment of confusion as to whether I should hold to the admonition not to use our guns, and then without another's second delay started to pull the pins from our grenades heaving them straight to our front. This would not be the only time that the Japs Banzaied us nor would we ever again be as terror-stricken as we were then because we learned to trust in the overwhelming fire power that our heavy weapons platoon could unleash.

Again I can't remember how long the attack lasted, but it seemed to subside almost as quickly as it had begun once our guys behind us opened up. Not until the sounds of our guns began to melt away a good while later, did I have one helluva real fright that topped the first by a country mile if that could be imagined. For when Tom Clinard and I who had been looking out for each other's ass and breaking bread together for at least a week turned to see how our buddies were doing on either side, we were aghast to discover that most of them weren't there; they had bolted and run for the rear as fast as their legs could carry them. Had the Japs only realized what a gap their terror tactics had put in our lines, not only could we have had our hides hung out to dry, but the battle to save the air strip and Myitkyina might have ended right there. But fortunately, in the process of turning green troops into veterans, there were no serious repercussions and nothing like that in my experience ever happened again.

What finally broke the stalemate was the decision to use fighter aircraft (P-47's and P-40's) in close-in strafing and bombing runs to knock out the pill box impediments in our way. And so in anticipation of these air attacks, we demarked the position of our own lines to look like a Xmas tree with all the multi-colored air drop silk parachutes we had at our disposal to guide the pilots in on their targets. When we saw those bombs come zinging in over our heads, we didn't yet realize that these guys were good enough to hit a pickle in a barrel. A fact that we soon fully appreciated when we saw the bombs skid past us to hit bulls eyes so close that their explosions invariably sent up geysers of earth and stone that rained back on top of us.

The bombing did no more than break the logjam and get us moving. Not every pill box had been knocked out by a long shot. No matter, what the planes left undone had now to be done the old-fashioned way! Our hope was that the Japs would be too stunned from all the stuff thrown at them to react effectively. That, I hasten to add, was only a hope and not an assurance. The target we had fired on couldn't be anything other than a pill box that had escaped destruction, no doubt because it blended in so well with the ground around it that we were now determined to remedy. With quick and sudden dashes, and taking advantage of the protection the craters the airmen had left behind afforded, we slid down one side of them and up the other, and began to work our way around into a position to knock out whatever fight if any, was still left inside.

Needless to say, what a state of high anxiety we were in, lest the damnable thing suddenly spring to life belching death and destruction. And so before that could happen, we preemptively poured our own version of it into every opening we could spot, to allow Tom and another man on the blind side to get close enough to a step down entrance, to toss in a couple of grenades. The clouds of smoke and debris that issued from the detonations were enough to convince us that the mission was accomplished whereupon we began to dig in again to await further orders.

And then again, I saw the deadly effect that carelessness bred of bravery can bring. This time it was my friend, Tom, sitting exposed on the lip of his foxhole, next over from mine, cleaning his rifle. I was ready to break open a couple of cans of C-rations, when a single shot rang out. He never knew what hit him. A quick examination revealed that the bullet that killed him had struck him dead center between the eyes. There was nothing we could do but bury him right there in the foxhole, stick his rifle on its bayonet into the ground with his dog tags and helmet on it as a temporary grave marker until a proper removal and burial were possible.

And then came the day we got the most positive sign we could get that the Japs were on their last legs, and that the Myitkyina campaign was on the verge of winding down in a decisive victory. We were well up along the river from our starting point four weeks earlier and still pressing the enemy or what was left of him from three sides with the river at his back. And suddenly to our utter astonishment, like a covey of quail just flushed from the tall grass where they had been hiding, about ten or twelve Nips leaped up and scattered in wild flight in the direction of the river. In an instant our weapons flew to our shoulders as we started pumping a hail of shots at them as if they were ducks in a shooting gallery. But if they were clay pigeons, they behaved like none ever before encountered; instead we were completely unable to track them within our sights as they diminished from view with an exhibition of some of the finest broken field running I ever saw on or off the gridiron.

It was clear that they were Samurai not intent upon fighting to the last man nor would they fall on their own hari kiri knives for the glory of dying for their Emperor. To all appearances they weren't even carrying weapons for what good were weapons without ammunition? Or to cut it thinner what good are weapons, if they had also finished off their last bowl of rice? It was by means of the fast flowing currents of the Irrawaddy that they had hoped to make good their escape. How many did is anyone's

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guess. Some undoubtedly did but some didn't when we found them floating on logs down stream and fished them out. And when I encountered them, they were all skin and bones, and notwithstanding, were being dragged along as Prisoners of War rather mercilessly over the roughest part of the ground to Allied Headquarters for interrogation.

However, harsh this treatment and I can offer no excuse for it, it pales along side of the bestialities of the Bataan Death march, and the Japanese treatment of Allied prisoners in their internment camps, not to mention their brutalities against the Chinese population as in the so called infamous Rape of Nanking and elsewhere.

The war against the Japanese in Burma was far more than just a shooting war; it was also a war against tropical heat, the monsoons, the huge mountain barriers we would encounter as the Mars Task Force just as the Marauders had, the river mites that carried a deadly Typhus strain, malaria in its benign and malignant forms, dysentery both amoebic and bacillary, leeches that had to be unburrowed from your skin with lighted cigarets applied to their posteriors, the jungle rot which was the name we applied to the ulcer-like sores that inflicted our lower limbs, the foul water we drank, with the constant threat it presented to our health despite the halazone tablets we used to make it potable.

Nonetheless, I think this is as good a place as any to bring to a close this chapter of my overseas experience of one year, eight months and eleven days. As soon as I can access the kinds of data upon which to give these memories I have with the Mars Task Force the same kind of perspective and the chronology it needs, I will set to work on it as well; also my poor Burma Chinese experiences which began on March 3rd, 1945 when we were flown to Kunming and subsequently trucked to Kweiyang. Because the War didn't end for another six months, had there been a need such as might have arisen if Japan were invaded, we would have undoubtedly been among the first to go. Barring such an eventuality for all intents and purposes, however, as the Mars Task Force, we had seen our last action; for us the shooting war was over.

Ostensibly, we were now in China attached to the Chinese Combat Command to train Chinese troops but of whom in fact, we saw very few.

The biggest dangers we faced in China was banditry which was more of a nuisance than a real threat because we were pulling far more guard duty than would have otherwise been necessary. What in fact we were doing in China was marking time without fully being conscious of the opportunity this afforded us to see China as would-be travellers might have, before the Mao Tze Tung Communists took over. And then it was back to India at Kharagpur close by Calcutta soon to be our second POE as incidental tourists at an equally portentous time, dampened this time however not with the threat of doom so much as by the impatience with which we anticipated passage back to the states. It was December 8th, 1945, when that long awaited day finally arrived. This time we went aboard the USS General Buckner and in only 25 days via the Mediterranean were home.

If any of my former comrades-in-arms from the 475th, or the 124th though their experiences as a unit didn't quite approximate ours, can help by adding their pieces of recall to the jig saw of my own long dormant ones, via the Merrill's Marauders Association or by personal contact, I'd be forever in their debt.

More than for any other reason, I think it of utmost importance to make a record of my service to my country for my children as amateurish and tattered a recollection as it is, in the hope that they might appreciate the mountains we climbed to ensure their freedom, in the hope too, that it will inspire them in their own lives to carry that legacy forward.

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