



**Jerry C. Levin**  
World War II  
U.S. Army Pacific and Asiatic  
77th Infantry Division  
305 Infantry Regiment  
3rd Battalion Anti-tank Platoon  
Staff Sergeant

**Jerry C. Levin**

**Veterans  
History  
Project  
Transcript**

**Interview conducted  
September 16, 2010**

**Niles Public Library  
Niles Public Library District  
Niles, Illinois**



The two pictures below are scanned from Mr. Levin's personal copy of the 77th Infantry Division's history, Ours To Hold It High. They were taken during the fighting on Guam. Mr. Levin is in the top picture on the left in the gunner's position with the anti-tank gun.



Top: A 305th Infantry AT gun and crew in position on a ridge overlooking Harmon Road. Bottom: Men of Company B, 305th Infantry, hike up to the front.

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Rank: **Staff Sergeant**

Branch of Service: **U. S. Army**

77th Infantry Division  
305 Infantry Regiment  
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Theater: **World War II – Pacific and Asiatic**

Interview Date: September 16, 2010, 1:30-3:00 p.m. Place: Board Room

Equipment: Philips Digital Pocket Memo Recorder Interviewer: Neil O'Shea

*Mr. Levin's preliminary comments about memories of the war*

Everything is a memory up here. And it's funny, I could never understand, I see myself in that particular circumstance, but I'm standing outside of it looking, and there I am.

Have you ever had, if you recall, even, like your wedding--

Yes.

Let's say, your wedding now, what do you get a picture of, yourself and your wife, right? And where are you thinking about it, you're outside of that picture.

Yes, like a photograph, yes.

*This Veterans History Project interview is being conducted on Thursday, September the 16th, in the year 2010, here at the Niles Public Library. We're sitting in the boardroom. My name is Neil O'Shea. And I'm privileged to be speaking with Mr. Jerry Levin. Mr. Levin was born on March the 31st in 1925. He served in the United States Army in the Pacific. He has kindly consented to be interviewed for this project. And I must say we're especially grateful that Mr. Levin has gone to quite a bit of effort here to organize his library of experiences and memorabilia. And here at this big round table, Mr. Levin is sitting behind a beautiful framed plaque with all his many medals testifying to his service to his country in the Pacific. And there are pictures of himself with other soldiers, and a mug, and articles from the battlefield, and a Japanese sword, and two binders, so Mr. Levin is well prepared. And it will be wonderful to hear his story.*

*So, Mr. Levin, do you remember Pearl Harbor Day? (Interviewer's words)*

Yes, (veteran's remarks)

*You were aware that there was perhaps a war in the offing?*

As aware as any teenager might be.

*Yes. So do you recall when you entered the Service?*

Yes. I went to basic training in the Signal Corps and Camp Van Dorn over in Mississippi.

*Before entering the Service, had you just graduated from high school?*

Well, I had just graduated and went into Loyola Pre-med. The draft, just then they were starting to push on the offensive, so they started to draft heavily. Prior to that, I went to enlist in the Marines. But I had flat feet, and they wouldn't take me, so I ended up in the Army Infantry.

*But the Army would take flat feet?*

Oh, Yes.

*And why had you been interested in the Marines?*

They had pretty uniforms.

*Pretty uniforms. Wow. So had you graduated in midyear?*

In February, 1943, and then they picked me up in September, 1943.

*And they picked you up in September, Yes, and then, you mentioned, your basic training was down?*

Camp Van Dorn over in Mississippi.

*Was your family upset or worried about you, or anybody else at home?*

They never manifested it in any way, like crying. I shook hands at the railroad station with my brother who was, oddly enough, it's ironic, I was expecting that anything could happen at any time, he was killed in a high school football game. And I shook hands with him at the train station, and that was the last time I saw him.

*So you were the oldest son?*

Yes.

*So was that your first time away from home?*

Pretty much.



*That must have been an interesting experience being in another part of the country with folks from all over the place?*

Oh, it was an eye opener, and the esprit de corps with whomever you met, everyone had the same idea. Someone had done something wrong to our country and it had to be corrected.

*So there was a great sense of patriotism.*

No doubt about it.

*So you didn't find basic training too difficult or--?*

No. There was always a comrade doing something with you, crawling under barbed wire, machine gun fire over your head. Jumping in a hole and having a tank run over it, with another guy. He didn't panic and I didn't panic. And we talked about college. He had gone to college for a brief period. The tank rolled over us and, after they rolled over, we got out.

All the basic stuff. But then that division, they started for a push, and they broke up that division. Half of them went to Germany and half went to the Pacific.

*So was the 77<sup>th</sup>, this illustrious division that you wound up with, all of the 77th was in the Pacific?*

All the 77th was in the Pacific.

*Did you have any feelings about going to Europe versus going to the Pacific?*

Well, I was not keenly aware of politics, but I knew there was something going on that was horrific. And I didn't know much about the Pacific except what movies I saw with Robert Ryan and showing the Japs as very cruel people. So I'd think about it and say, "How the heck am I going to deal with that?" And, yes, there were fears and thoughts.

*So, after your basic training, were you sent then to another spot?*

Camp Pickett, Virginia. Where they filled in all the replacements for the 77th Division, figured out who could go and who couldn't go.

*So, at that time, you knew that you were going to be in the infantry?*

Yes, but one thing I must say, I was privileged to get into an anti-tank platoon, to which the line companies were attached, had heavier weapons such as an armor piercing, 50 caliber machine gun, a bazooka, satchel charges to throw under the treads of tanks, your rifles, your grenades, the ammunition, anti-personnel shells, and so forth and so on. And that put me at the call of the line companies. And they're the people that look for someone to kill, and someone would look to kill them. And if they ran into a tank or needed a heavy weapon, they would call up the anti-tank squad. And they'd come with the weapons that could help them. So that difference was a big

difference. Fifty yards away from anything in the line company was a big buffer. So that was very good. I did face a number of issues and so forth, but that gave me, the buffer probably saved my life in a sense.

*Did you have to receive specialized training to be in that sort of anti-tank platoon?*

Yes. That was in Hawaii.

You catch your boat from the West Coast and out under the Golden Gate Bridge. Beautiful sight. I'd never seen anything like that.

But with trepidation, because you're going into the wide Pacific and to war.

*Did you still have a couple of buddies with you?*

Phil Hensley was my closest buddy, but there were a group of about six men that were close. And to this day, we've often got together. Now, nobody's left except one sergeant and myself.

*So then from Hawaii then, you headed for, was it the Philippines, or Guam, or--*

We zigzagged to Hawaii, took us about two weeks. Put us in jungle training and then, from there, shipped us out, to possibly land in Saipan. But then things got under control, so they swung us around to land with the Marines in Guam, and that was the first action. We participated in the retaking of Guam. We had a saying, "Here today, Guam tomorrow."

*So at Guam, did the Marines go in first then and then the--*

No, we went in with the Marines. It was so bad that we had to circle until about three or four in the morning. So when we got there, there were dead guys all over the place, Japanese and Americans, and it kind of took the wind out of your sails when you saw that.

*That was the first time you'd seen dead soldiers?*

Yes.

*Would your anti-tank unit ever be called in to help the Marines?*

Often, if the Marines needed armor, like a tank, they had their own. They had their own landing crafts, their own medical signal, and artillery tank support. And if, for instance, an Army outfit needed a tank and they weren't using it, they could call them, and they'd work together. After you're on the ground, everyone's the same, trying to do what they have to do when it ought to be done, whether they like it or not. There's coordination between units that helped, and, if you run up against the pillbox, and you need a flamethrower, and you don't have any, you'd call and see if the Marines had anything available and so forth. We got along with them pretty well.

*And then from Guam, you--*

Well, Guam wasn't finished. Guam, everything was new to me. We were on a hill in the morning and hadn't seen anybody. We dug in a Japanese trench. And it was so damn cold, I don't know whether I was shaking from fear that someone would jump into there, or from the cold. Woke up in the morning. Things seemed all right. And the guys were sitting around on the hill until one guy got hit with shrapnel that exploded in the groin. Then everybody learned you don't stand around waiting for something to happen.

Then we started to go down a road and the whole column was stopped, because the machine gun was at the end of the column. And it fired some guy in the face, and they stopped the whole column. And the officer said, "Hey, there are some shacks over there. You three guys, go over and take a look." So, we approached it through a sugarcane field that had been flattened. And we came into some straw huts, like on stilts. There's like an icebox with meat hanging from a hook, a Japanese helmet like someone had just taken off out of there. Flies were on the damn thing. It's funny what you look at. So we started going in. And we went into a grass hut, for what reason I don't know, to check it out. And under a blanket in the hut, there was movement. So the three of us were standing there with the guns ready. And we looked at each other, and then someone lifted the blanket, they were under a blanket-like cover, and lifted a pistol, and then there was firing like mad. And we left that little hut, and the blood started pouring down between the slats of this bamboo-like floor. When I saw that, I started to get pretty nauseous. And that affected me. And we came back to the lieutenant, and he talked to us, and then the column moved on. But that was a real eye-opener, and something you're not used to, seeing blood going all over, people moving and yelling.

*Yes.*

And I was wondering what my part was in there. To this day, I was wondering if I shot into that mass of people or not. I hope I didn't. I hope the other two guys did.

*Were those Japanese soldiers then, do you think, hiding in there?*

Yes. They had helmets all over the place. They had a record machine that played some American songs. It was such a weird setting that it stuck in my brain. Bright sunlight and bright red blood flowing out. And I turned pale, and soon it quelled, and it became just a memory bank. And it's up there always (*pointing to brain*).

*To this day.*

There's nothing heroic about it. It's just that we were there. And this is what you were supposed to do. And the column went on, and we sat down on the road because the column stopped again. And there was a dead Jap across the road about three or four yards. A pig is eating his dead toe. A frog is sitting on top of his eyeball. Flies all over. And I thought, well, it is a good time for me to open a can of egg yolk. I opened the damn can, and the flies decided they're going to sit on my spoon, and I had to shoo them away. And I ate my egg yolk, and I got the worst damn dysentery you ever had. Shit all over,

Some toilet paper they gave us, like chocolate bars. I didn't smoke. I traded it for moldy chocolate bars. And so that is part of the life of an infantry. It's not always killing. It's often seeing dead stuff, and malaria, dengue fever, dysentery, the whole nine yards. You're a foreigner in that land. Run out of Atabrine tablets, run out of water, and no hot coffee at night. Nobody turns on the light. Nobody sings songs. No news in the middle of nowhere. And the rain was always there.

Which reminds me, they put the gun, 37 millimeter anti-tank, on the horseshoe bend in the road. And in the middle of the horseshoe was a hill. We were on top of it. If anything came down that hill, we had an armor piercing .50 caliber up there. And I sat in a foxhole about six feet by two feet with a parapet on it. And it rained. It rained, I don't know how many days on Guam. It seemed like almost every day. And it was cold rain at night. I sat in the water up to my belly button. Another guy was behind me, the ugliest man I ever saw in my life. And we sat close together for body warmth. And I had to take a pee, but nobody gets out of the hole. It attracts movement, and you're gone. So I peed, and it felt good, because I felt the warm pee around my groin. The guy in back of me with his legs around me, he peed, too. And his warm pee felt good, too, on my back. That's infantry. Didn't see a tank, didn't fire a shot, but the living was abominable. And I just remember it. I didn't think much more about it, right, wrong, or what. It was what it was. And that was mostly a part of Guam.

There were other anecdotes. We got lost. Everything is mud! A tripod, fifty-five pounds. A breech block, fifty-seven pounds. A barrel, fifty-five pounds. Three canisters, packed in rosin, steel balls for anti-personnel shots, anti-armor piercing shells, three of them in the back, a couple of hand grenades, your poncho, a day's supplies of Cracker Jack boxes, two canteens of water, your rifle, a couple of bandoliers. And we couldn't keep up with the line companies we were assigned to, so we got lost. We came across, a squad of Marines bedded down. They had their weapons. And they looked at us, and we looked at them. And we weren't going anywhere. We didn't know where to go. The guy, the Marines, said, "You want to get in with us?" We said, "Sure." So we set up a .50 caliber machine gun, set up the 37 mm anti-tank gun. The Marines were happy to have the fire power. They said, "They're coming across this rice or cane field from over there. And they're just going to come at us. And we're glad to have you here." They were just kids like us. And they were happy. And here comes a runner. He says, "Where the hell have you guys been?" "Well, we couldn't keep up with L Company." And he says, "The captain wants you up over here." So, the Marines sadly saw us pack our gear and move out. But we had a nice relationship, because, when push came to shove, everyone was doing the same thing.

So, that was mostly Guam. I probably forgot to tell you a number of incidents. They're all pictorially in the "Brief" here (referring to a section in the 77th Division history Ours To Hold It High: The History of the 77<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division in World War II (1947) By Men Who Were There, which begins "This is the story of a proud and efficient fighting team. It trained, it fought and it decisively defeated the Japanese on Guam, Leyte, Kerama Retto, Ie Shima and Okinawa." The history's "Brief" for Guam, and the Division's chronology can be found in the Appendix which follows this transcript).

But Guam was an important thing to get. That was our Central Pacific, the Marianas, to get an airstrip, and from there to get another airstrip, and another airstrip, and so forth and so on. Anyway, that's some of the anecdotes about that.



*So you recovered from the dysentery?*

Yes. The dysentery, the best thing about it, is if you can stay hydrated. As a physician in Who's Who of Pediatrics, I can say, all you got to do, even if you give a dropperful of liquid to keep up with your losses. How do you get cured? You shit everything out. All the bugs go out. It's nature's way of taking all the bad stuff out. But you got to stay hydrated. When you get dehydrated, that's when you die.

*Did they give you a little rest after Guam, or anything, or--*

Yes, after Guam. They decided to send us to New Caledonia. They took us by way of Eniwetok and Kwajalein and I dove off the bow of the ship. I was crazy. I don't know how far down I went. Beautiful water. They were atolls. This is why I spent a hundred thirty days at sea. From Eniwetok we then went to Manus Island in the Admiralty Islands just off of New Guinea where there were outriggers. And the natives wore red hair and pink eyes. And they let us off on Manus Island. We had a can of beer, played a game of volleyball, called us back to the ships, and got us going back to Leyte where they were going to have the invasion. So, instead of a longer rest, they resupplied and headed back to the invasion of Ormoc Bay. I didn't spend much time in the Philippines because, right off the boat, we went inland, and there was a lot of action. And I got shot, and they sent me back to New Guinea.

*You were hit with a Japanese bullet?*

Rifle, Yes.

I heard a crack. If the guy went higher, I would have had no kids, because it would have hit me in the groin.

It was a long haul back. There's eight men when you're wounded, four come to carry you and four come to protect the guys carrying you. They didn't care about red crosses. So, they had a target of eight guys. They finally got me into a coconut grove where we were in control. They got me back out into a road with four guys; put the litter down on the road, and a guy was coming like hell with a three-quarter ton truck. Stopped the truck. It is filled with water cans. They said, "Take this guy to a MASH unit." And they put me on the water cans, which was a hell of a ride!

Bumping all over the place. Little did I know that I was also coming down with malaria, because we had no Atabrine, we had no clear water. And they took me back to a MASH unit. it was a macabre scene. I don't think that MASH 4177, like portrayed in the TV series, can ever show what goes on in there. Guys' legs coming off, pieces all over the place. And they make it romantic, and the surgeons are going ha ha ha, and having coffee with the big blonde on TV. Or showing Sinatra and Wayne killing everybody around, and staying at home and going to the Hollywood Café in the morning. What a bunch of bullshit! So they took the innocent lambs, and they put them in, and the innocent lambs fortunately had a feeling for their countrymen. You had to take it away from these bad guys.

*The malaria and then the leg wound—*

I went into a coma for a while.

*Yes, that had to hit you,*

Well, I was getting an alcohol bath one day in a Quonset hut that was filled with guys. And I lost a week. I finally woke up. It's another macabre story, even in the hospital. There are several types, four main types of malaria. Falciparum is a nonrecurring type. They hide in the liver so you can't give a transfusion, because you might be getting malaria. But falciparum, you can develop a coma and go out. If you make out after the coma, that's good. Then there's plasmodium malariae, and vivax malariae, and malaria malariae. There's subtypes. And I had no Atabrine. And so I went into a coma. I woke up in a Quonset hut. Nobody else was in there. They isolated me. Big, empty thing. I wake up, no clothes on, mosquito netting up. And I got such awful cramps. And I yelled and swore. No nurse, nobody. So there was a bed next to mine. I lifted the mosquito netting. I was as weak as hell. I had an IV running. I got a toe on a bedpan, and held myself up as best as I could, and aimed to take a crap in the bedpan. And in walks a cute little nurse. Well, I let her go. "Son of a bitch, where the hell have you been!" Here I am taking a shit, coming out of me, and embarrassed as hell, and weak as hell. And, so, I let it rip. So, even in illness, there is a bunch of stuff.

Well, I came back. I spent about two months in New Guinea getting better. Throwing beer cans at a screen with Frank Sinatra on it and John Wayne.

*Did the other men feel the same way, too, I suppose?*

They threw the cans, too, at the two of them, pretending they're great military, doing marvelous pictures for everybody to show them how it was. Did they show me shitting in a bedpan with a nurse walking in?

*Yes.*

Did they get the stink of my shit?

*Do you think the generals knew that these kind of films were not necessarily that positive for the men?*

The generals.

Read Vonnegut's thing (reference to Chicago Tribune article, 9/16/10 on Kurt Vonnegut)  
"War is made by old men for young children."

And the old men, what do they do? They tell you where to go. They tell you what to do. They put you in harm's way. Do you think that in Division Headquarters, which is fifteen miles away from anything a line company does, for Christ's sake, you don't see them up there! When they do come up there, you look at some of Mauldin's cartoons.

The generals standing there. One of them got killed, Buckner, I think.

*Yes. Okinawa,*

They stand up like and two guys are telling the general in Mauldin's cartoon, Willie and Joe, they're lying as flat as they can, they say, "General," they say, "Why don't you sit down or something? You're drawing fire!" But, you know, they come up to see what's it like, like Percy (former Senator Illinois who traveled to Viet Nam during the war.) went to see what the one war was like. "Oh, I was in Vietnam. I took a look there, boy, oh, boy, oh, are you brave!" You go back, just like the survivor things, if they say, "I quit surviving. I want the cameramen to give me his hamburger." Surviving is sticking to what you have to in face of all the danger, not running away, and that's about all I did. There's no big heroics. Phil Hensley got a silver star. He was a magnificent Oregonian fellow who did a lot of nice stuff. Next star up is the Medal of Honor, which you got to be witnessed. Some guys have guts like that. I couldn't. After I was shot, I lost that. Well, I never had it in the first place. Phil was a magnificent soldier.

*You weren't dying to get back into the front line when you were in such pain.*

Well, Ie Shima it was a pretty pitched battle with banzai attacks. We are ahead of ourselves. But I remember there were narrow, in villages, brick walls like cinder block, maybe about six feet high in a narrow pathway. And they sent us four guys down to pick up the officer's, a body of an officer, and the whole squad was dead. In their place, one on each side of the officer. And the officer was dead with his bullet and his brains in a helmet. So, we put him on a stretcher. And I had an eerie feeling there was some Jap gunners at the head of the row, perpendicular, right in the face of that. And the two guys there, must have been a hand grenade or something. They were there arm in arm, and the bottom half of their bodies gone. They were sitting by a machine gun. And I couldn't get it out of my mind that someone was watching the whole thing. We carried this guy's body, and he kept slipping off because I had a spasm in my shoulder. They said, "Levin, for Christ's sake." They said, "Pick up your end. The guy's slipping off." I said, "I can't!" You know, I remember these stupid things, just plain fear. We get to the top of our position. Everyone comes over to see the dead officer. And the machine gun opens up and knocks one guy's arm off. And the guy's lying, everyone's scattered, and then it was like chaos.

I jumped in the hole. And, Jesus, this other guy was lying out there screaming. I said, "God, someone ought to take him up!" I had the right idea, but I says, "Phil, I can't do it." He says, "I'll get him." He walked out there in the middle of the fire and brought the guy in to safety. Got nothing for it. He did something else that was quite spectacular, but that was on Okinawa. But that's the kind of partner I had, intrepid,

*Intrepid.*

And didn't, he just did the right thing, he didn't care about medals or anything. One sweet guy. Never heard him swear like I do.

Afterwards, Leyte was captured, what do you think they had me do? Digging a garbage pit. A garbage pit, twelve by twelve by twelve by eight feet, right outside the padre's tent. With every shovelful, I swore like a Comanche, and an Irishman came out, like O'Shea.

*Yes.*

Flynn, I think his last name was. He says, "The padre, he hears all you fellows swearing. Can't you cut it out, now, you boys?"

I said, "Sure. Sure." So, he went back up there, and I started swearing again. Then the next thing they needed, a twelve hole latrine. Who do you think dug it? I dug it! They needed water trucks to be loaded. I became pretty strong. They wanted me to go in the boxing team at one time.

But those were the things that are part of war. You're not always firing. Most of the time, you're suffering, and then when it's over, a few nice things come into play. Some better food, quietude, a dry pair of socks, and a uniform, you know. They deloused us, and they gave us new fatigues, I wouldn't like my grandkids in it. And, yet, there are people out there even today. Politicians have a great responsibility. That's something they can do good, talking maybe.

*Yes.*

*How do you negotiate in hostile world?*

I don't know. I don't know. All I can say is like a Boy Scout motto, be prepared. Incidentally, I was also an Eagle Scout.

So I'm commenting on our society. Well, that is the way it is. I've come from another time. And I feel they could pick up some of those things and stop being so bearded, so smelly, and so cocky about what they want from life. Well, I'd better shut up.

*No, no, no.*

I'm getting philosophical.

*No, it fleshes out the interview. So, Ie Shima.*

*Ie Shima, just off?*

This cup will tell you where the 77th was (picture of mug appears in Appendix)

*Yes.*

It was Guam, Leyte, Kerama Retto, Okinawa, and Ie Shima. Ie Shima had a landing field, but we had the air covered, so they couldn't get any planes up. So they took their bombs They dug them into the sides of roads and a little metal tip showing. And it was the line companies that came across them and tied a little white triangular ribbon around them. I admire those guys because



they're looking for all the stuff. By the time you get there, there's the ribbon. We had our gun on wheels, the 37 millimeter gun. And then machine gun fire opened, and a tank blew up across a field, and the bullets were hitting our jeep. So I dove around behind one of the rear wheels. And a great sergeant, Stump, he's gone now, from Pennsylvania, he jumped behind the other. And we were talking about this when I last saw him. And we had a jeep with about three wounded on it. And they were backing up on the road to turn around to take these guys out. And there was a guy in back of the jeep. And he says, "Okay, okay, hold it! Hold it!" because there was a soft shoulder to the road. The jeep rolled onto one of these mines and blew up. And a guy's boot came off or his leg, I don't know. It started to happen all around again. Chaos. And I was talking to Stump. And he says, "Yes, I remember that." I said, "I was in the front two wheels and you were in the rear two wheels." We couldn't move our gun up, which was a good thing, because the company went ahead. And across the field, they had a banzai attack. And they could not count the Japs. They decided they'd better count a pancreas because legs were all over. The Japanese soon gave that up. On Okinawa, they got smart. No more of that running at you, and screaming, and swearing. And we had even a guy who was my quartermaster, he says, "Tonight's the night," he was Irish, too, "you're going to die." But they had machine guns on each flank. And almost nothing happened to the company. And all the Japs died. It was pathetic. But they stopped at Okinawa. They really got the smarts.

*Yes.*

They said we're going to bloody you. Maybe we'll get better peace terms.

*Yes.*

And in Manila, they purposely killed a hundred thousand innocent people just out of meanness because they knew the war was over. All kinds of stuff. How innocent we were. You know we were on Cebu, getting ready to arm to go into Japan and replacing whatever we had. And then they dropped the bomb. Out of the woods came five thousand, a regiment of Japanese we didn't even know they were there. They came with their arms, there's a picture in here of all of these guys lined up. They surrendered. They wanted to go home, too. And I couldn't imagine such kind of bomb. I said, "Jeeze, boy, that must be some bomb!" Who the hell knew from the atomic bomb!

*So there must have been some feeling of relief then with the--*

There was joy, exhilaration, drunkenness. Everyone was ecstatic. "It's over. You're going home!" And as Aunt Emma said, "There's no place like home!" But those two years, three birthdays across there, changed everything. I came back. My brother was killed in a high school football game. My dog was killed in an accident. The girl who helped my mother died, a lovely person. My sweet grandmother died. Got a Dear John from my girlfriend. For crying out! I came back, and they said, "You want to go to a medical school. You better sign up now." So went right from there right to Loyola.

*Were you able to use the GI Bill then?*

Yes, that was very fine.

*Yes.*

Got my tuition paid at Illinois, went to Illinois Med School.

*Did you have an idea that you might be a doctor while you were in the Army?*

Yes. Aboard ship, they had an appendicitis. I asked the guy if I could watch. And it was nicely done.

And I came back and was accepted. The place was loaded with GIs, loaded.

*So, after Ie Shima?*

Ie Shima, then there was Okinawa.

*Then there was Okinawa? So were you in the push south, also, on Okinawa?*

Yes. We landed. We went south, and the Marines went north. Casualties were very light for Marines. They said, "Jeez, this is a picnic." Then they sent guns south, and it was a juggernaut. They had every cave with entrances all over. They had one hill backed by two other hills, so the flanks and the rear were taken care of. They had these escarpments where they had their-- they buried their dead in the cave openings. And they would close them off, put an artillery piece in there, open it, fire before you could get any triangulation on it, closed it. And they had big guns. And we had a bombardment from the Navy, bombardment from Long Toms artillery. The noise was horrendous. And then nobody could take the dead away. And the mud was there. You couldn't drag people out. It stunk. And they were fierce. And, finally, at Shuri Castle, the unit got a presidential citation for taking that. It was the center of the line. So it was the living conditions, plus an enemy that was fierce and smart. And they had tanks. It was a tank school, Okinawa.

*So, your unit was called on quite a bit then, whenever they--*

Yes, well. First of all, some of the guys were called up. Bob Tokar, I wasn't with him at that time. He's still alive, and he's a great comrade of mine. He went back to Okinawa for a visit. They treated him beautifully. But it spoiled it. It's all a city. It's all built up. It's hard to imagine the battlefield. And it changes your perspective. It's all a massive-- just like Japan recovered from everything, too. But he was up front there. As Infantry, you lose your status. Nobody needs an anti-tank gun up there. They needed people to hold the line. He was there, and he gets a call from the lieutenant who was back at headquarters. Where is that? If it is a hundred yards, you're much safer than where line companies are. And he hung around there. He was a brown-nosing type of guy, lack of warmth. Put a gun out of. The sergeant came and said, "You guys are not staying here. This is not a good position in the open with mortars into the jungle that they are throwing them out." So he changed our position. That was a great sergeant. He would tell the three stripes up and two stripes down that was dumb. He'd tell them what he wanted. And he'd

go and he would change it, if he had to, to make it work. So getting back to-- the officer was back. That's the kind of guy he was. He says, "How's it going up there, Bob?" He says, "Why don't you come down here and see?" He said, "I could court-martial you for that." He said, "Go ahead and I'll tell them what you did during the war!"

K Company had a magnificent officer. What a line company! His men loved him. He would be up with glasses. They'd say, "Captain! Jesus, get down!" And he says, "Well, someone's got to see what the hell they're doing."

And we were for them. That's when I got shot at Ormoc Bay. They were out of ammunition. They had some firepower. Ran out of ammunition, and they wanted water and ammunition, and so we took it up to K Company and got back okay. And then the sergeant said, "You've got to go back to K Company." I swore my head off. And he let me swear. And I went back to K Company. On the way back was when I got shot.

And Phil started to cry. I said, "Take care of my rifle, Phil." And when they sent me back, I asked to go back from New Guinea to my company. And the officer who was sending me said, "I can send you to the quartermaster if you want." I said, "Look, they get me in quartermaster and, all of a sudden, things go wrong, they'll look and see I was Infantry, and they'll send me on with a bunch of guys I don't know." I said, "Send me back to my old outfit. I know the people there and trust them." And, sure enough, Phil was getting a haircut under a coconut tree. And I came in. They didn't expect me back. I said, "Hi, Phil." He said, "Well, what do you know?" And he's a big, sensitive, big guy. Well, I've got pictures of him in here.

*Yes.*

After the war, we remained fast friends. All of these guys are all in here.

*So you received a Bronze Star for that.*

Yes. For guiding the squad. It's written up there.

*Yes, but then--*

They gave those out like water. I mean, you know, all you had to do is get shot or be in an action. The guy at the top, he said, "You want a Bronze Star?" I said, "Sure," because you get points to go home. So, I got a Bronze Star. The way things are the guys that really deserved it are the guys that didn't get much metal. But they were in a line company. A BAR guy, Ed Puhala, you see the picture, he was killed on Okinawa. Battle after battle, no special medal, because he was doing his job. Our job was anti-tank and bringing stuff up to K Company. Coming back again and doing it, that was like not our job. So, they passed out bronze stars. Most of the medals, except one like Phil where he ran out and directed tank fire on these artillery pieces, got on top of the tank, much like the most decorated Audie Murphy, in the face of everything, he's running around there. He's running. And we got to take our mess kit off. He had a bullet that went through the. It was spent in his mess kit. But he was intrepid. And he was quite an alert guy and fast on his feet. And he directed tank fire. And I got the picture of him. All of them are-- you don't have to do anything

with them. But I'm describing types of people that were out there that really had their wits about them and some special qualities.

*And you were promoted to staff sergeant.*

Because everyone else left and was killed.

They sent me to Japan. There you go. Who was going to come back from that? They were going to fight us with bamboo sticks. They had hordes of kamikaze planes. One of the things we did on Aka-shima, why were we sent there, because it was a little like the Hardy Boys. The Hardy Boys had the secret airfield. This was the Hardy Boys. The Japs from intelligence had suicide bombs that were driven by a suicide pilot. They were going to sink the American Navy. They ran them up on railroad tracks into a cave covered with brush, but they were found out. So, we went to Aka-shima, and bomb squads blew them up. There's pictures of the kamikaze. They're just big torpedoes.

*So after Okinawa is finally taken, it's at horrific cost.*

Yes, horrific cost.

*Horrific cost. Then--*

Back to Cebu

The bomb.

*Bomb one, and then bomb two, and then they--*

But we didn't know bomb two. We knew bomb one. I didn't know there were two bombs. It probably was the second one, because whoever had radio, an officer and so forth, we didn't get newspapers or anything, someone must have had a radio set. And they announced that the war was over. That must have been the second bomb.

*Did you get any, were you able to get letters from home or at all?*

Yes. The V-mail.

And, eventually, when we went to occupation in Hokkaido, I got a salami that was all white. We peeled it off, made a stew.

*So you went to Japan then? From, Cebu you went to the northern island of Hokkaido?*

Yes.



They were afraid. The Russkies would come up the Bering Strait. The Japanese were very fearful of them. But you have no idea how nice they were. They were saluting me with a staff sergeant thing on my helmet. I went to--I've got pictures of us in a little town.

*So then after Hokkaido, then you--*

Came home.

*Discharged?*

Yes.

*Yes.*

And we went to--

*You came home by boat, I suppose?*

We went to Sapporo. Saw beautiful mountain off of Tokyo.

*Yes.*

And went through to Yokohama. Sapporo was a lovely town. And then got on a boat. Must have been five thousand other guys. But the deck, it was warm. It was still, we came back close to Hawaii. Anyway, the sun was shining. On the deck, they were playing a song, "drinking rum and Coca-Cola, working for the Yankee dollar." And what do you know, we had rum, and we had Coke. You got a little lightheaded. And you're so happy. You're going home. The sun was shining, guys' shirts were off. Safety and lack of fear.

Probably one of the primeval things in man's motivation is fear. It even overrides love. It overrides everything.

*Did you lose a lot of weight while you were in?*

Oh, Yes. I got a picture. I skinnied down. I was, I think, 140 or something. Then in medical school, I was 212. So I put it back.

*Yes.*

Yes, that was happiness. And even when you got back, we landed in California, everyone kissed the ground.

We got into a line. And they had steak. First of all, we got off the boat. There was the Red Cross. We didn't think much of them.

*Why?*

And that's all I needed was milk! I had such cramps, I couldn't believe. And Phil and I were separating, and he started crying. And I had to go to the washroom. But then I saw him shortly afterwards. I went out to Oregon to visit. It was a great, great scene there. And we went in line there. They had steak and French fries. And all the troops in their boots and stuff coming through. And guess who they had serving us? German war prisoners. One fellow was there, and the guy said, "Throw on another steak for me." Plain line guy, gruff and tough. He said, "I can only give you one." He took this guy, dragged him over the counter. He said, "You, whatever expletives, you give me two steaks or you're dead!" The guy gave him two steaks, but the hubris was still there.

You'd think that they won the goddamn war. And that's why they bombed, Churchill bombed Dresden. Kurt Vonnegut may not like it. And who does like it to see people suffocated? The heat of the bomb didn't kill them. It drew the air out. And he got, Vonnegut got a buck fifty for every body he went in and took out. And he hated war. I don't blame him. But, at the same time, if you didn't, they took all of Europe before anybody said something, Churchill. Chamberlain said, "You know, maybe we ought to join them." Lindbergh said, "Let's join them." And the guy that owns the-- Kennedy. "Oh, Yes, I'm ambassador of Germany. He's a nice guy, that guy." "Yes," Churchill said, "Well, he may be nice, but when we go with him, he will wring our necks like chickens." And he made the statement that everybody woke up to. Look what-- they firebombed England. And they're squawking because they bombed Dresden. Churchill said, "You mark this. This is what you get, and you try it again, and we're going to do it again." And suddenly they're our best friends. And MacArthur made the Japanese our best friends. Well, look at those guys. But MacArthur went nuts. He wanted to attack the Russkies. Oh, gee. I don't know. All this stuff!

*So coming back to, so adjustment, you came back home, and a lot of familiar faces and family are changing.*

We all gathered at the Aragon Ballroom where Dick Jurgens sang and his big band, "Does your mother know you're out, Cecelia? Does she know that I'm about to steal ya?" Beautiful music. All the guys from all over came back as a meeting place trying to get a dance with a girl, trying to make some time. And for a while, everybody did it, and then they started to run their different ways.

*So you were released from the Service then in January of '46?*

Yes.

*And then you start pre-med at Loyola ...*

Yes, that February.

*Oh. You didn't waste any time.*

No. What was I going to do, run around and do what?

Yes.

I met my wife, she was in the neighborhood.

*Neighborhood girl?*

Her brother was in the Service and the Air Force.

*Had she gone to Roosevelt, also?*

No, she went to Von Steuben.

So I went with her while I was studying. And we went together a long time until her mother said, "Well." So when I was sure I was going to pass medical school, after the junior year, we had to take a comprehensive exam. The first two years, everything. And then mostly clinical, the senior comps. That was hard but easier than the real scientific part the first two years. Then I went to residency at Cook County a couple years. Children's Memorial a couple of years.

*And that lady is your wife?*

Yes.

*So there's, usually, you know, two questions they usually ask us to wind up the interview with.*

Yes. Fire away.

*Or, actually, three.*

And if you want to censor me, go ahead.

*One of the standard questions is how do you think your military service and your experiences affected your life?*

Well, I still swear a great deal when I want to express myself and make it succinct.

Yes.

And so how did it affect my life? Well, there isn't a day that something pops up.

*That doesn't take you back, Yes.*

Immediately. It could be almost anything. It's just like a guy smells a perfume and he thinks of a girl.

Yes.

Shopping, I get lost in these damn places looking for what I want. And someone will say, "Follow me." Well, I'm telling you, that's an Infantry command. "Raise up your arm, follow me." There was a lovely chap, a second lieutenant from I Company. And we were attached to I Company. He got in a position where the Japanese surrounded his platoon. And they were in the trees, they were in the holes, they were throwing grenades. They'd click them on their helmets and throw them in. They had rifles and machine guns. And they were caught. And I didn't see this. I was bedding down for the night. There was a big, wide track that a truck or something had made. Full of mud. I didn't have to dig anything. I lay down. It was wet and everything. And here were the guys on a jeep, one guy with a bandage, another guy, an arm had been hit. And he was explaining to the intelligence officer. He said, "What happened up there?" He says, and the lieutenant from I Company, a nice, redheaded guy, he knew he had to get out of there, and he got up, and he said "Follow me." And they ripped across his chest with a machine gun."

*Follow me.*

Follow me. And I can't get out of the habit of thinking of this. He was a kid. He was twenty. I was eighteen. And so he was an officer.

It's still around. I can recall vividly everything, because I was very impressionable. I wasn't used to this. And I'm not like a five-year-old from the Muslim group where they're happy to die. I'm not anti, because I know there's good people amongst them. It's so hard to not to profile.

*Yes.*

Roosevelt did it, took our Japanese-American citizens. They had the best regiment in Germany, the best regiment just to show that they were good Americans. So, there is a lot of stuff I can't account for in my mind.

*Mr. Levin, how do you think your military experiences influenced your thinking about war?*

You have a right to defend yourself. We have a war on drugs, a war on crime, a war on immigration, a war on terrorists. It's killing. I mean, you give it all kinds of names. Oh, we're doing something, brushing up here, taking them out there. It ends up it's killing. There are killing fields. Kill, kill, kill. Is there another way? Well, I hope Obama succeeds. He's a thinking guy. Maybe he's on the right track. I wish him well. But you'd better be prepared, because these guys mean business. So there's that mixed feeling, you know. It's so hard to come to a conclusion that you should be doing profiling on good people. Well, I think Teddy Roosevelt said it. Speak softly if you have a big stick.

Where do you think we would be, I question you, without our power structure? Do you think they would let us alone?

*Well, it's amazing. When you think the United States was able to project its power across two oceans and knock out two formidable enemies. It's amazing, I mean, what your generation accomplished.*



Well, there was motivation. Everyone lined up to get in. You don't find that. You find, now, a few good men.

Yes.

Now, Keillor, that guy that writes from Prairie Farm Station--.

*Oh, Garrison Keillor, Yes.*

He wrote an article. He said, I was driving over in a plane and I saw the oil fields. What an ugly sight to see all that oil down there! And then I said to myself, why you're in one of the aircraft that's using that oil. It's spewing its stuff all over the place. He said I got so confused and frustrated, when I went home, I got a big jug of chocolate ice cream and raspberries, and ate it all up. I don't see any eggbeaters out there. I see shiny cars, SUVs guzzling gas. When do we come to our senses? Greed. I want it. I got to have it. I don't care if you got it or not. I'm going to top you-ism. And TV shows showing the distaff side of jerks. And all of these Hollywoods saying, "Oh, we're doing great service!". And I think I'm right, cynical as I am. Including myself, I'm driving an Avalon; I should be driving a kiddy car or doing something for it.

Yes.

Well, I did a few things. I went to Bolivia. I went to the clinics of Lake County. I served people with a chip on their shoulder. Tried to be the physician and not judgmental, but I found it was an exercise in futility, that I didn't accomplish much.

*The-- so, you came out, and then you went into the education track and the professional track?*

Yes.

*Did that still give you time or were you interested in like the VFW or some of the veterans groups?*

I was in medical school. And they came. They wanted to draft me for Korea. I said, "I didn't sign up for anything and, on top of it, I'm in medical school." So they let me alone. A friend of mine served twice. He served in World War II and they got him back in Korea. He was in the Navy. But he had to bring the guys to the landing places.

*We had one vet here. He decided, when he got out of the Army, he'd go into ROTC for college. So he was down at Knox College in ROTC. And, so, he was off to Korea.*

I was in ROTC in high school.

*Oh, you were?*

Yes.

Ah.

I became an officer. But we had a drill squad that was quite good, white belts.

All of the guys I was with, Pennsylvanians, a couple of guys from Virginia, Kentucky, Oregon, and Minnesota, they were all outdoorsmen. Fishing, hunting, and used the food that they got. Rabbits, they made rabbit stew. They got birds and pheasants. So they were outdoorsmen. And I was happy, and they were a little older than I was, the average age was three to five years older, so if I was eighteen, they were twenty-one to twenty-three, more mature, I was glad to be amongst people who felt comfortable in the field.

*So Mr. Hensley--*

Hensley, Yes.

*And Mr. Phil Hensley and Mr. Tokar--*

Yes.

*You kept up with them over the years?*

Yes. Hensley is gone now. He had diabetes. I was out there in Oregon State for quite a while. And they cut off his toes. Then they cut off his shin. And then he said, "That's it." And he had dialysis for a long time. One sweet guy. I'll show you pictures. You'll get an idea. And you don't even have to include them, but you might, just for your own edification.

*Yes. I would, Yes. So at this stage, we've reached the end of the interview. Is there anything you'd like to add?*

*The following indented remarks were provided by Mr. Levin in writing after reviewing the first draft of his transcript and he requested their insertion here.*

I recall an action on Guam that would illustrate how memories are kept, stored and recalled.

I was attached to a line company – Company "L" I had a 50 caliber machine gun with armor-piercing ammunition. They called on me to disable a Jap light tank. I crept up, flat as I could, pulling the gun on some bamboo poles,

The area that I approached was a sugar cane field – a fifty yard length (that's about two high school swimming pools) and 25 yards wide. The sugar cane was cut and the field was flat. My advance was a path next to a tall uncut sugar cane grove. The path led me directly into a dead American infantryman – a bullet hole through his helmet with his brains leaking out. I paused there – horrified – and started wondering, "How could this be happening on such a nice sunny day?"

Bullets began a clicking-like noise as they passed above me along the cane stalks. I thought of Tom Sawyer strolling along a white picket fence, running a stick on the slats.

I saw the Jap tank. It was covered and like a bamboo hut. I assembled the gun. The bamboo hut took off. I never got to fire and relief ensued.

When I travel anywhere- Vermont, etc; and see a white picket fence I picture that fallen G.I. and the hole in his head. We are now buddies – I don't even know his name. I think of him on certain days and involuntarily by white picket fences.

How does war affect you?

When Okinawa was secured I went to graves registration with Phil Hensley, my close comrade. Phil's post-war brother-in-law was killed.

All we saw was a bulldozer digging a long trench, dropping a white sack with body inside and/or parts, covered with earth and an identifying wood cross hammered in place. We never did find his grave. Periodically, that appears in my mind's eye.

On Guam it rained for 24 hours, 21 out of 30 days I never saw dead young. It was raining. Ten infantry men laid on their backs, covered by their ponchos – all still. I kept thinking you're resting beneath your ponchos. Get up and walk! Could I be one of them?

When it rains and makes a light patter on an umbrella, a windshield, etc. I picture the ten dead, lying on the mud covered by their ponchos without their mothers.

Does war affect an 18 year old?

Yes, his comrades know that reality. They also know that reality. They also that it had to be done.

They did what had to be done  
When it had to be done  
Whether they liked it or not.

*Let me just ask, this is a kind of a provocative question or a couple of them, did you watch that HBO series this spring on the Marines in the Pacific?*

Bullshit.

*Yes. Even some of the Marines said that.*

Yes. Here they are there. Smartass guys. Shows them making love to everybody in New Zealand. But we never were sent back to Hawaii. If someone got knocked off, a replacement came. If someone lost their stripes, you were the next guy up. What was that, they were going to take us to Manus Island for a beer and a volleyball game? The Army, you had to have Mr. Citizen

Soldier, the Pacific was massive. There was trouble. New Guinea, there was trouble. There was trouble in Burma. These divisions were out there. Who the hell was it? It wasn't the Marine barracks that were attacked at Pearl Harbor. It was Army. You needed Army. Lots of divisions. It was division against division. It wasn't a bunch of wild Indians running in and then running back and saying they conquered an island! They liked big numbers to show how many they killed. As far as I am concerned, that picture was not good. And they were quipping how if they can't do good on D-Day, give us a call. You got outfits that would take and tear apart the Marines. You had paratroopers. You had Green Berets. You had Rangers. You had firepower from Germans. You had to take Germany first. That was the big one with firepower smarts. The Japanese were a mean bunch.. But that picture stunk.

Now, I would say, also, the criticism of *Finding Private Ryan*, the invasion showed what it was like.. They made a beautiful picture about that. But that was horrible. So then this guy Ryan lost two brothers. They were going to save him. Who do you think they sent on the mission? Would you send a captain in charge of a squad? Two or three of the guys got killed. You send a tech sergeant, a five striper in charge of a squad to go through all the German lines, and to find this one guy. And not only that, but the captain wears two stripes on his helmet. You never walked up to a guy and saluted him. A sniper would knock you and him silly. You never even faced him to talk to him or eyeballed him. You didn't even pretend you were looking at him, you could talk to him on the side, because you're going to draw fire. They sent a captain out there. There was a defect in the whole thing.

Yes.

Hollywood eventually wins. They have to put in a slight love thing. They screw it up.

*One of the Marines here, he objected strongly to that, and he wrote a letter to the producer. He wrote it to Tom Hanks. And the guy called him back on Memorial Day and he spent twenty minutes talking to him on the phone. But this Marine said, "The next time you write something about this particular outfit, you know, let's honor them as they should be." Strong letter.*

Well, we were a good division that got along. Part of it was the rapport that our squad made bedding down with the Marines.

We wished them good luck and we left. And we did our part as an Army division. On the hundred thousand that were on line and the hundred thousand enemy, including the Koreans, and the Okinawans, and the Japanese, you couldn't take the bodies out. It stunk to hell. There were five Army divisions and two Marine divisions.

*This is on Okinawa?*

Now take away the Army and where do you think you would be? Did you see the distances in the Pacific?

Vast.



The Army was on Peleliu. They made a big thing of Peleliu. The Army was there. Did you ever hear anything about it? No. They were on Yap. They were in Corregidor.. They were in the Bataan March. You don't have to give them credit. America likes heroes so they make these false gods.

*Yes.*

They were good outfits, well trained, and just like the Army. After they put their feet on the soil, they're the same damn thing. They carry a gun looking to kill a guy.

*Yes.*

That's my take on it, so. And I wouldn't down the Marines, because we got along with them.

*Yes.*

If you read these "BRIEFs, they will tell you why Guam, why Ie Shima, why Okinawa, all in one page.

(referring to his book Ours To Hold It High: The History of the 77<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division in World War II (1947

*As your unit was being committed to these battles, did you all know, did you have the equivalent of that brief in your mind that had been communicated to you what the sense of what you were doing here was?*

As a foot soldier, all I knew is they were looking for landing strips where big bombers could go off and bomb the living daylights out of it.

*Yes.*

Fire bombing. Of course, that works in Japan. They're all straw and bamboo.

*Yes.*

And the B-17s and the B-29s, whatever it is. So we knew that our purpose was to get a landing field. And the Japs didn't want to give it up, so they were defending landing fields. That's all I knew. I knew the guy in front of me.

*Yes.*

*Yes. There was a lot of rain on Okinawa.*

That's the Infantry's thing! Rain. Mud.

*Yes.*

Rain. Mud. Rain. Mud. Constant. And then you dry off in your own sweat. My feet were black. You think you took your shoes off. Where are you going for a walk? In the garden? They stayed in the boots.

I read John Gunther's *Inside Asia*.

*Yes. He was a marvelous travel writer.*

Yes, and he wrote, he said, "You better wake up." He went to Japanese maneuvers with their hob boots and a long march. They were jogging, and one guy fell. And they trampled him to death. And he said, "They got something here." You know, we let the whole damn Jap Navy come down the pike, the whole Navy, and they took every island and Manchuria, and China. God Almighty, they took everything they could see, every island, Burma, Yap, Peleliu, Guam.

*They were rampaging.*

So who the hell was watching it? And they park all the battleships together. You know, Roosevelt about the Japanese citizens. Hey, and we're worried about profiling! The most beloved leftist there was. I cried when he died. He was a father figure. But then, in retrospect, I'm looking at this. Where was the guy? He was talking to the Japanese ambassador, and they were coming, and they knock off Pearl Harbor.

And all he did with his hubris and fine speaking ability, he had a lot of good other ideas, "a day in infamy." "We will win." Well, you let it happen. And you got the gall to get up there and say, "Tom Thumb, I stuck my finger in the pie. What a good boy am I!" Well, he led us through it. He had me bawling. But, in retrospect, with his cockiness, and he thought he could take Stalin and wipe him around his little finger. And not to let his Vice-President know he's got a bomb! What kind of guy was he?

*Yes. Well, Truman made the decision, though.*

Truman was artillery. Mores from World War I.

*From World War I, yes.*

You know the anecdote about him?

*I don't know that one.*

He was artillery. He was a captain in World War I, pretty good rank. He bombarded the Germans. He said, "Okay, they're going to rebombard, and come back, and attack us. Move the guns." Couldn't move them. They were stuck in the mud. He said, "We can always get other guns, but we can't get good artillery men." Took his whole unit and marched away. Pragmatic. Went to war, knew a couple of things. Politician, but one thing about him, he recognized Israel.

The buck did stop there. He did say what he was going to do. Did he have faults? I suppose so. But, right now, I think his name ought to live pretty good.

*Yes. His-- I think his stock is still, is rising at this time. There's an ebb and flow sometimes with these--*

Oh, sure.

*historical figures.*

These people aren't all bad or all good.

*Yes.*

But our heroes are our heroes.

*Well, it seems like World War II was a complicated, unforgettable,*

*All over the place.*

*Yes.*

It was worldwide.

*Yes.*

It was in the desert, El Alamein. There wasn't a place on the earth that someone wasn't having a hard time. And then the people here got tired of it. When I came back, the shouting was over. That's it. We don't want to hear about the war. So, I made my own memorial, and then I take it.

*Well, thank you very much, Mr. Levin, for a very generous and detailed interview.*

Okay.

*I hope some of the young people read this.*

I had an interview by a young chap who needed it for high school, a neighbor of my son, and his interview is in here. (*The student, Sean Lee, wrote a moving poem entitled American Veteran which is included in the Appendix.*)

*Oh, great.*

A young boy, and I told him, "I'll tell your son in my library, what's what." I told his father, "there's going to be some swearing." And he said, "Do whatever you have to." And I told the kid, I said, "I'm going to tell you how it is from my viewpoint." And he wrote a beautiful book.

*Okay, I think we're recording again, now, one more story that comes to mind.*

Yes. There's a part in this book, *Friend or Foe*, and it describes a guy who is fearful of someone coming into his foxhole. We didn't have foxholes. We had gravelike things, two by six, and a parapet. The dread, I believe, of any soldier, is someone, throwing a grenade in their hole, or jumping in, and stabbing him to death. And my fear was, how could I fight a guy for my life? I didn't know how that would be. We were in the open on Okinawa, heading toward the last hills. And we had a gun set up, 37 millimeter, on the open field. And it had a shield on it. It was like farmland, and it had a little pile of rocks. And this nice kid from a southern place, he was eighteen. By that time, I was twenty and in charge of the gun. And he says, "Hey, there's some guy walking up and back. And he's throwing grenades at us." And I said, "I heard him hitting the tank shield." He said, "What should we do?" "Well," I said, "He was on these rocks, patrolling up and back with leaves in his helmet. Looked like a tree." And I said, "Next time he goes across, it's dark purple behind him, and he stands out like a tree." And he hit the grenade on his helmet.

*Hitting the grenade on the helmet, that loosened the pin or set the fuse?*

That's how it detonated. "Next time he stops to the right, just line your gun up on the shield, and we will fire." And he stops. And I said, "Okay." And we fired. And the tree fell down.

So in that same night, the flares were up from the Navy to see if any enemy was moving. And you stood still. The flares were going out. They were Naval flares or artillery flares. You daren't move or get out of your hole. I had my rifle in my hand. And out of the hundred and eighty degrees, I see a body outside about six feet away in an adjacent hole. I didn't know who the hell it was. And I turned, and I had my hand on the trigger, and I was about to fire, because I didn't know what body was out there. These flares were starting to dim. And the guy says, "Don't shoot. It's me." How the hell do I know who "me" is? I said, "What the f---are you doing out of your hole?" He said, "I couldn't stand it. I didn't want to be in there if a guy jumped in and started fighting with me or threw in a grenade. I thought I'd be better off outside of the hole." I said, "For Christ sake, if you're going to do something like that, let the next guy know what the hell you're doing!" And so if I'd of killed one of our own soldiers, and it could easily have happened, that would have been it!

And in the morning, the kid said, "Let's go out and see what happened to that guy." I said, "I don't want to put that in my memory bank. I'm not going." He hops out. He said, "Holy cri, his chest was all blown up! What a thing! He must have taken a grenade and blown himself up in the vision of being fired on and knowing he was in dire trouble." So, I didn't put that in my memory bank. But the rest of that is in there. And I'm glad I didn't.

*There were some instances of, what you do call that, friendly fire, where I've heard some horrible stories where the new guy is being shown around. They come back, and there's a new guy on the line, and he doesn't say the password, and then--*

We had a guy. They transferred him to quartermaster. They had an officer and two sergeants go out as a recon for the night. They said, "When we come back, we will flash a blue light." They



flashed a blue light, and this guy killed all three of them.. The other guy, they sent him back to the division to quartermaster because someone would have killed him. In World War I, the lost battalion of the 77<sup>th</sup> Division was almost decimated by their own bombardment coming back, back, almost up to them. Well, that's one thing about artillery and mortars. There's nothing you can do. You got to just suffer.

I recommend the movie *The Thin Red Line* with Nolte. It was interesting about the fighting on Guadalcanal.

*Thank you.*

## Reader's Note:

The following 17 pages of scanned items illustrate Mr. Levin's wartime service in the U. S Army's 77<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division during World War II in the Pacific.

The reader will find:

relevant excerpts of text and photos, identified by Mr. Levin as describing and depicting actual combat situations in which he found himself. They have been scanned from the 77<sup>th</sup> Division's history with chronology and maps, from Washington, D.C. : Infantry Journal Press, ©1947

pictures taken during Mr. Levin's assignment to occupation duty on the northern Japanese island of Hokkaido

photos of comrades, medals, and memorabilia mentioned in the interview

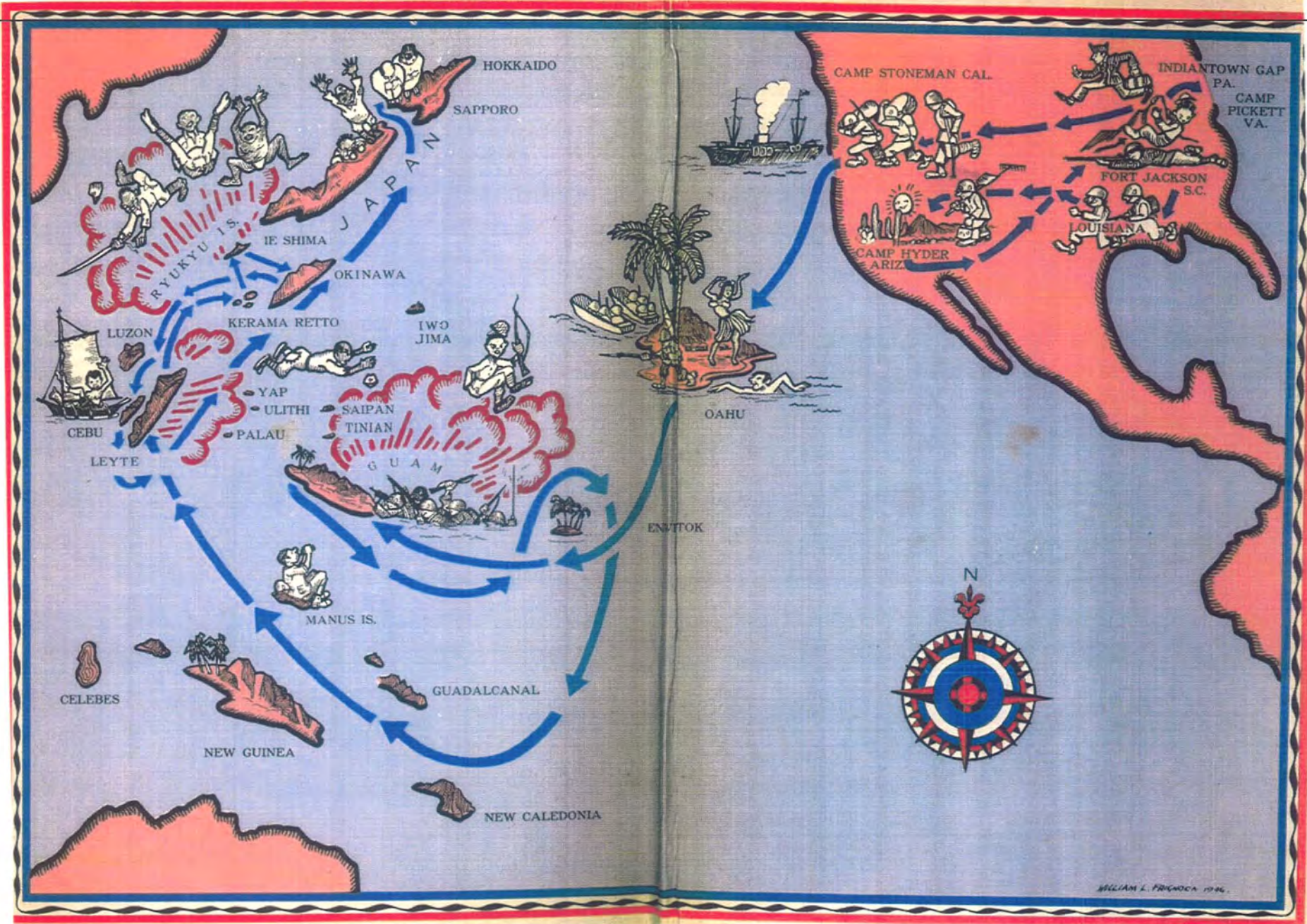
scans of Mr. Levin's Army record, including the Bronze Star Citation

and the moving poem, *American Veteran* by high school student Sean Lee who had interviewed Mr. Levin for a class project.

**The Reader should also continue on** to read the supplementary booklet of 29 additional pages scanned from Ours To Hold It High : the history of the 77th Infantry Division in World War II. These passages provide additional background on the military strategies and objectives served by the 77<sup>th</sup> Division in the Pacific. Mr. Levin selected these pages as confirming and amplifying many of his recollections of the jungle combat he experienced.



The map below has been scanned from Mr. Levin's copy of Ours To Hold It High: the History of The 77th Infantry Division in World War II. The blue arrows show the famed division's hard-won progress in the Pacific through Guam, Leyte, Kerama Retto, Ie Shima and, finally, Okinawa, the last battle.





# Helpful chronology of the 77th Division in the Pacific, taken from Ours To Hold It High

## Chronology

### IMPORTANT DATES IN THE HISTORY OF THE 77TH

- 10 February 1942—Major General Robert L. Eichelberger appointed Commander of the 77th Infantry Division to be reactivated at Fort Jackson, South Carolina in March 1942.
- 18 February-5 March 1942—Officers and enlisted men who were to form the 77th's cadre arrived at Fort Jackson.
- 25 March 1942—77th Division reactivated at Fort Jackson, South Carolina under command of Major General Robert L. Eichelberger.
- 8 June 1942—Field Marshal Sir John Dill, head of British Joint Staff Mission, General George C. Marshall, Chief of Staff of the U. S. Army, Vice Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten, British Chief of Combined Operations, and Major General Mark W. Clark, Chief of Staff of the U. S. Army Ground Forces, reviewed troops of the 77th in a mass review of over 40,000 men at Fort Jackson.
- 9 June 1942—Brigadier General Roscoe B. Woodruff, former Assistant Division Commander, assumed command of the Division.
- 24 June 1942—Prime Minister Winston Churchill of Great Britain, accompanied by Secretary of War Henry L. Stimson, General George C. Marshall, Field Marshal Sir John Dill, Lieutenant General Lesley J. McNair, Commanding General of the U. S. Army Ground Forces, Sir Alan Brooke, Chief of British Imperial General Staff, and others, inspected troops of the 77th Division.
- 7 August 1942—Under Secretary of War Robert P. Patterson, former member of the 77th, inspected troops of the division.
- 30 September 1942—In a surprise visit, President Franklin D. Roosevelt inspected 77th Division troops.
- January 1943—The Division entrained for maneuvers in Louisiana.
- 16 January-15 April 1943—Division participated in Louisiana maneuvers.
- 22 May 1943—Major General Woodruff left the 77th for another command.
- 27 May 1943—Major General Andrew D. Bruce assumed command of the Division at Camp Hyder, Arizona.
- 5 July 1943—Brigadier General Edwin H. Randle became Assistant Division Commander.
- July 1943—The Division participated in desert maneuvers in Eastern California.
- 26 August 1943—First issue of the Division newspaper, "The Liberty Torch" was published at Camp Hyder, Arizona by the Division Special Service Office.
- 27 August 1943—Division was visited by Lieutenant General Lesley J. McNair, Commanding General of the U. S. Army Ground Forces and members of his staff.
- October 1943—Division moved to the East setting up Headquarters in Camp Pickett, Virginia; 306th RCT went to mountain training in Elkins, West Virginia; 305th RCT and 307th RCT went to Indiantown Gap, Pennsylvania.
- December 1943-January 1944—Units of the Division participated in amphibious training at Camp Bradford, Virginia.
- 9-14 March 1944—The 77th Division departed Camp Pickett, Virginia for the San Francisco Port of Embarkation.
- 23-25 March 1944—The 77th sailed for Hawaii.

## CHRONOLOGY

### GUAM

- 1 July 1944—The 305th RCT and Advance Command Post departed Honolulu for Eniwetok Atoll as the first step in the Guam operation.
- 9 July 1944—Remainder of the Division departed Honolulu for Eniwetok Atoll.
- 18 July 1944—The 305th RCT attached to the First Provisional Marine Brigade sailed with the III Amphibious Corps for Guam.
- 21 July 1944—D-Day: Elements of the 305th landed, starting at H plus 6, or approximately 1300, and completed landing by 0400 of the following day.
- 23-25 July 1944—Remainder of Division landed.
- 28 July 1944—The important observation point, Mount Tenjo, was captured by "A" Company, 305th Infantry.
- 31 July 1944—The Division crossed to the east side of the island and prepared to turn north in pursuit of the fleeing Japs.
- 2 August 1944—Barrigada was captured.
- 6 August 1944—Colonel Douglas McNair, popular Chief of Staff of the Division, was killed in action.
- 7 August 1944—Yigo was captured and the Division was prepared to move on Mount Santa Rosa and drive to the sea.
- 8 August 1944—With the capture of Lulog by the 306th and of Mount Santa Rosa by the 307th, effective resistance in the 77th's area was declared at an end.
- 10 August 1944—Guam was declared secure but mopping up continued.
- 12 August 1944—The Division was visited by Fleet Admiral Chester W. Nimitz.
- 3 November 1944—The 77th departed Guam for rehabilitation in New Caledonia.
- 15 November 1944—The convoy transporting the Division turned west and north to Manus Island in the Admiralties, after orders were received of a change in destination.

### LEYTE

- 17 November 1944—The 77th Division departed Manus Island after replenishing naval supplies, for Leyte, Philippine Islands.
- 23 November 1944—The Division commenced landing at Leyte in the vicinity of Tarragona and Dulag.
- 24 November-5 December 1944—Division activities were confined to establishment of bivouac areas, of beach defenses, intensive patrolling in assigned areas, and attachment of elements of the Division to the 7th Infantry Division and the 11th Airborne Division to assist in their operations.
- 6 December 1944—The 77th loaded for the amphibious landing to be made on the west coast of Leyte.
- 7 December 1944—On the third anniversary of "Pearl Harbor", the 77th went ashore in the vicinity of Ipil on the west coast of Leyte and within a period of two hours had performed a landing behind the enemy lines that was perhaps a unique achievement in amphibious warfare.
- 8 December 1944—Ipil was captured.
- 9 December 1944—Camp Downes was captured and preparation for the attack on Ormoc was completed.
- 10 December 1944—After a bitterly-contested house-to-house fight the city of Ormoc was captured.

## Helpful chronology of the 77th Division in the Pacific, 2nd page

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### OURS TO HOLD IT HIGH

- 16 December 1944—An envelopment to the left from their positions north of Ormoc was begun by the 306th and 307th with the objective of capturing Valencia and cutting off the Japanese along Highway 2.
- 18 December 1944—Valencia was captured by the 307th and the strong Japanese defense forces were made to flee to the east, while the other two regiments continued to clean up pockets of resistance along Highway 2 to the south.
- 27 December 1944—Physical contact was established by the 3rd Battalion, 306th Regiment with the 1st Cavalry Division of the Tenth Corps, and the sustained drive north from Ormoc in order to effect this junction was at an end. On this same day the capture of Libungao Road Junction was accomplished in bitter fighting.
- 25 December 1944—After a change in plans necessitated by the poor condition of bridges on the Libungao-Palompon Road, the 1st Battalion, 305th, successfully completed an amphibious landing just north of Palompon and captured the port. On this day the island of Leyte was declared secure by General MacArthur.
- 25-31 December 1944—A juncture was effected at the end of the period by two battalions of the 305th, which had been pushing toward one another from opposite ends, to secure the Libungao-Palompon Road.
- 31 December-5 February 1945—Continuous patrol action was carried on throughout this period, which resulted in the killing of many hundreds more Japanese; and X Corps assumed responsibility for the 77th Division sector in northwest Leyte.
- 9 February 1945—By this date all units had closed in the staging area near Tarragona on the eastern shore of Leyte, and the 77th's participation in the Leyte operations was at an end.

### OKINAWA GUNTO

- 9 March 1945—All units were loaded aboard shipping off Tarragona beaches prepared to participate in rehearsal operations for the planned landings in Kerama Retto, Ryukyu Islands.
- 14-16 March 1945—Rehearsals were conducted in Leyte Gulf.
- 20 March 1945—The Tractor Flotilla, composed of landing ships, departed Leyte for Kerama Retto.
- 22 March 1945—The Transport Group departed from Leyte.
- 26 March 1945—The 77th made simultaneous landings on four islands of the Kerama Retto, six days before the main landings on Okinawa, 20 miles to the east.
- 31 March 1945—With the landing on Keise Shima and the emplacement of two 155mm Gun Battalions, which were to aid in the landing operations on Okinawa, the conquest of the Kerama Retto was complete, after five days of amphibious operations during which 15 separate landings were made.
- 16 April 1945—Landings were made on beaches on the western end of Ie Shima by the 305th and 306th RCTs.
- 18 April 1945—Ernie Pyle, popular war correspondent, was killed while visiting 77th Division fighting men.

### CHRONOLOGY

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- 21 April 1945—The American flag was raised atop Iegusugu Yama by members of the 306th.
- 28 April 1945—By this date all troops of the 77th, except small garrison forces in Kerama Retto and on Ie Shima, were shuttled to Okinawa and ready for further combat.
- 30 April 1945—Relief of the 96th Division was completed by elements of the 77th Division.
- 5 May 1945—After seven days of the fiercest hand-to-hand fighting, including a major counterattack by the enemy, the battle for the "Escarpment" was won and 77th Division units were beyond this highly important piece of ground.
- 17 May 1945—Attack in the dark: The Division attacked at 0415 with good results, and, in addition, Chocolate Drop Hill was finally secured.
- 31 May 1945—All organized resistance in the Division zone was ended with the breaking of the Shuri Line and the advance to the Corps boundary.
- 21-23 June 1945—Elements of the 305th, under 96th Division control, participated in reducing the last organized resistance in the Okinawa campaign in the capture of Hills 79 and 85.
- 26 June 1945—Elements of the Division began departure for rehabilitation area.

### CEBU AND HOKKAIDO

- 17 July 1945—The Division arrived on the Island of Cebu with the mission of rehabilitating, re-equipping and planning for a part in the November invasion of Kyushu.
- 26 August 1945—Japanese soldiers began surrendering to the 77th by the hundreds. By early September, 5300 Japs had been taken prisoner.
- 9 September 1945—A Motorized Combat Task Force of the 77th participated in a parade celebrating V-J Day on the Island of Cebu.
- 25 September 1945—The 77th Division convoy sailed from Cebu for Hokkaido.
- 4 October 1945—First 77th Division troops landed on Hokkaido.
- 28 February 1946—Major General A. D. Bruce departed to assume command of the 7th Infantry Division in Korea. Brigadier General Edwin H. Randle, Assistant Division Commander, assumed command of the 77th.
- 28 February-15 March 1946—Low point men of the 77th began leaving the Division for assignment with other units destined to occupy Japan for a longer period.
- 15 March 1946—The 77th Division was inactivated in Hokkaido.

According to the 77<sup>th</sup> Division's history, Mr. Levin's 3d Battalion received a Presidential Citation for its actions on Okinawa.

*3d Battalion, 305th Infantry Regiment:* "For breaking through the vaunted Shuri Defense Line on Okinawa, Ryukyu Islands, on 15 to 17 May 1945, and contributing ultimately to the Japanese evacuation of Shuri Castle and the entire Shuri Defense Line."



Mr. Levin referred to this "Brief" from the 77th Division's history as being instructive during his description of the fighting on Guam.

## PART II

### The Liberation of Guam

*BRIEF:* On 21 July 1944 the 305th Regimental Combat Team of the 77th Division landed with the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade in the assault on Guam. The remainder of the Division, after a hurried voyage from Oahu via Eniwetok, went ashore during the next three days and carried on its share of the task of liberating the first populated United States possession to be wrested from the Japanese.

The first mission given the Division was to hold and expand the southern beachhead line. This, coupled with aggressive combat patrolling, reconnaissance of southern Guam, and the capture of Mount Tenjo occupied the troops until 30 July. On the 31st the Division struck east across the island. Despite the absence of roads and despite great supply difficulties, the regiments quickly seized positions in readiness for the main attack to the north.

At Barrigada on 2 and 3 August the 305th and 307th Infantry Regiments encountered and defeated determined Japanese forces. This was followed by an energetic pursuit through dense and almost trackless jungle.

The Japanese made their final stand at Yigo in northern Guam on 7 August. The combined fire power of the infantry and the artillery blasted them out. After that it was mopping up, dirty, bitter, and dangerous, but against a disorganized enemy.

The 77th killed 2,741 Japanese and took 36 prisoners on Guam, liberated thousands of native Chamorros, and learned what jungle fighting was like. It cost the Division 265 killed, 876 wounded, and two missing.

After the fighting the 77th spent two rainy, uncomfortable months in primitive Camp McNair on the hills above Agat. There, operations against Yap, Ulithi, and Leyte were planned: but only the last was ever executed. From Guam the Division loaded-out for the rest camps of New Caledonia, but en route was diverted to Leyte, Philippine Islands.

The 77th's campaign on Guam consisted of many small unit actions. Therefore, these are described in detail, a method which cannot be accommodated in the descriptions of subsequent campaigns. It is believed essential to include these descriptions in order to depict more accurately what the individual soldier witnessed throughout the Pacific War.

The two pictures below are scanned from Mr. Levin's personal copy of the 77th Infantry Division's history, Ours To Hold It High. They were taken during the fighting on Guam. Mr. Levin is in the top picture on the left in the gunner's position with the anti-tank gun.



Top: A 305th Infantry AT gun and crew in position on a ridge overlooking Harmon Road. Bottom: Men of Company B, 305th Infantry, hike up to the front.





**Sergeant Vena, a friend of Mr. Levin's, and, according to Sgt. Tokar, possessed of the genes from a Roman Legionnaire. Picture was taken on Guam.**





**Mr. Levin and Phil Hensley  
in Saporro on the Japanese island of  
Hokkaido after the emperor's surren-  
der.**



**Mr. Levin came by this sword when his unit duty was assigned occupation duties on the  
Northern Japanese island of Hokkaido.**



Snapshots, scanned, of pleasant interactions with Japanese populace of Sapporo where Mr. Levin and his friend, Phil Hensley, and other members from the 77th were posted after the surrender.



oh yes! John George



Typical



YONEKO MAMA CHIKO



AFTERNOON TEA.



Nov. 16 - 1945 "De WOLVES"

SAPPORO - JAPAN  
10/45



Shave and hair cut 3 ¥ Yen



**World War II Pacific field glasses  
in Mr. Levin's collection**



**Mr. Levin's commemorative mug  
of the proud 77th Infantry Division,  
reflecting its New York origin  
and noting its famous battles in  
two world wars.**



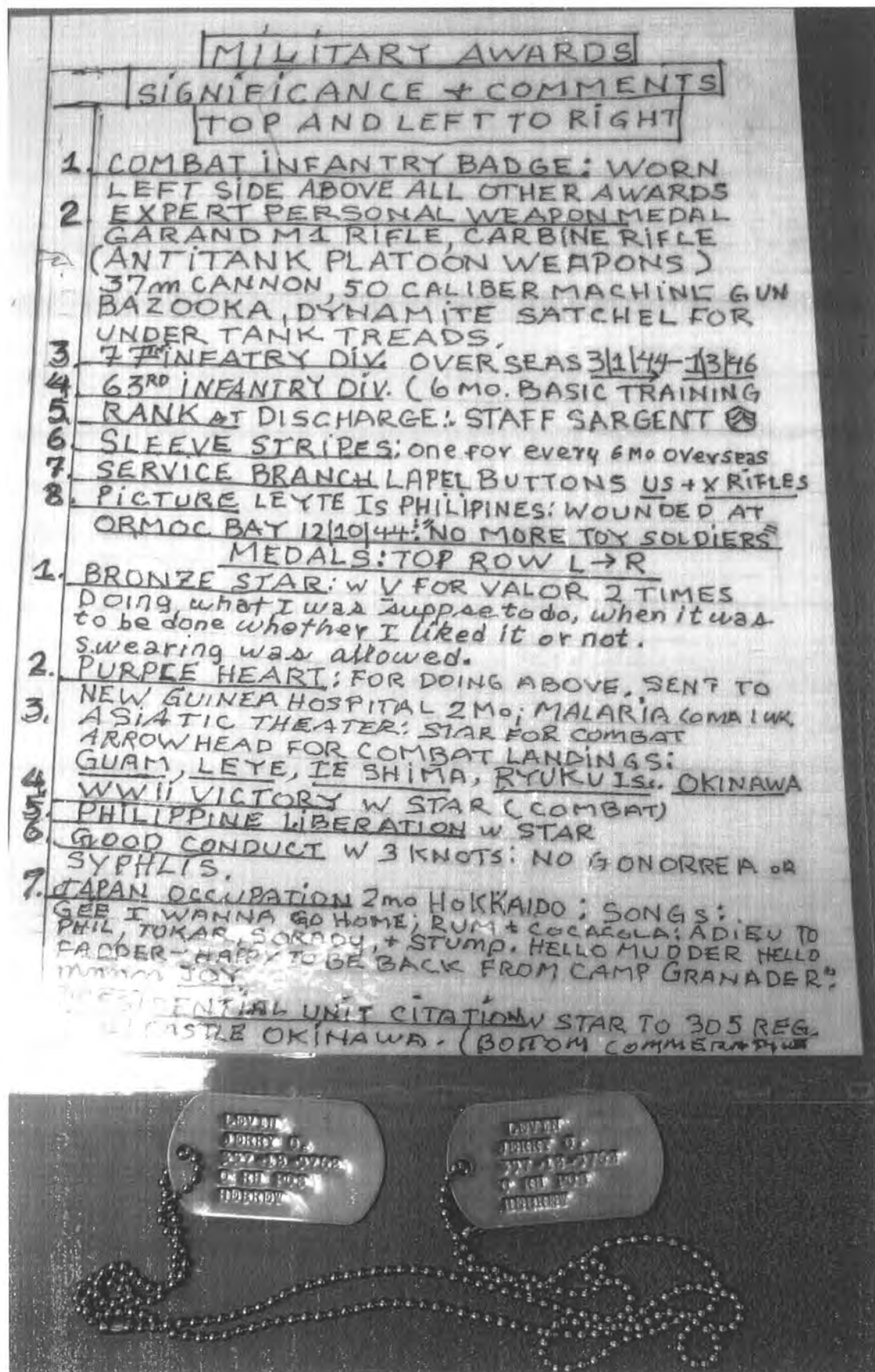
**Mr. Levin's canteen  
with his engravings,  
noting events in his  
military service.**





Scanned photograph of Mr. Levin's framed medals.  
His guide to identifying the medals and understanding their significance follows on the next page.

Mr. Levin's guide to his framed Military Awards. His dog tags appear at the bottom of the page.





Staff Sergeant Levin's Bronze Star Citation signed by Major General Bruce.

HEADQUARTERS 77TH INFANTRY DIVISION  
A. P. O. #77

GO #17, 14 January 1946

BRONZE STAR MEDAL

CITATION

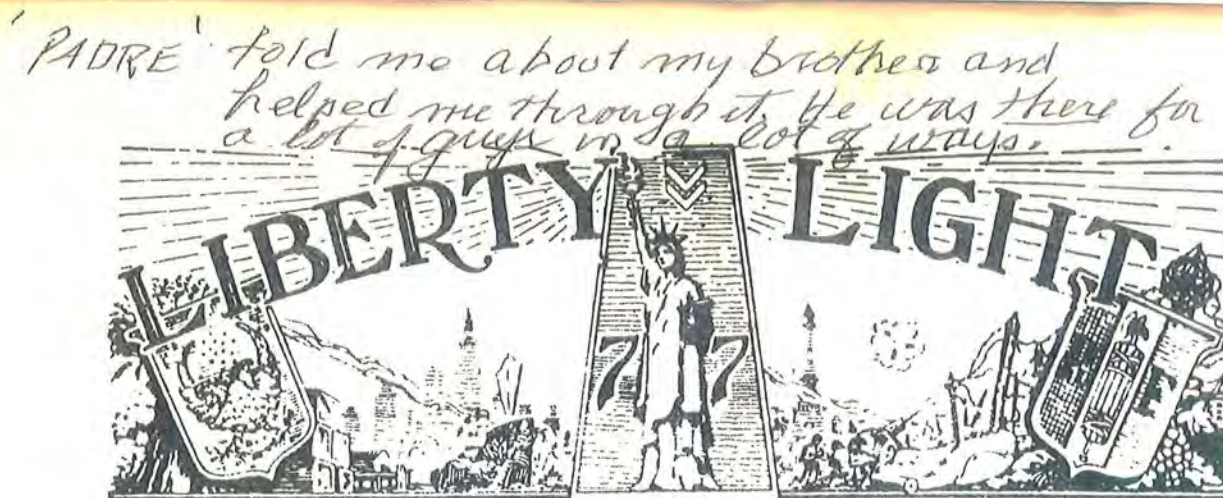
Corporal JERRY C. LEVIN, (Army Serial No. 36686477), Infantry, Army of the United States. For meritorious service in connection with military operations against the enemy at Ipil, Leyte, P.I., 8 December 1944. Corporal LEVIN volunteered to lead a party of three men to a forward company with needed ammunition. The route was known to contain snipers and enemy installations, and was covered with kunai grass, shell holes, and rugged undergrowth. Darkness had already fallen when the party started. Upon reaching a position approximately 700 yards from the company command post the group was fired upon by enemy riflemen, wounding Corporal LEVIN in the leg. Using his jungle kit he administered first aid to himself, continued on and the ammunition supply of Company K was replenished in time. Corporal LEVIN's devotion to duty, and courage won for him the admiration and respect of the men in his company.



A. D. BRUCE  
Major General, U.S. Army  
Commanding



Mr. Levin's handwritten "Padre" notation about the Catholic Chaplain for the 305th, Father Donnelly appears below. His obituary would appear in the Division's Spring, 1989, newsletter which also carried details of an upcoming reunion.



VOL. XVII

SPRING 1989

No. 1

#### OBITUARY

RT. REV. MONSIGNOR THOMAS J. DONNELLY

On Sunday, March 26th (Easter Sunday) the Donnelly family lost a loving brother, uncle and brother-in-law; the 77th Division Association lost a devoted member and loyal friend; the world lost a great, concerned humanitarian.

Monsignor Donnelly was diagnosed as a terminal cancer patient in early January of the current year and was informed that his case was inoperable.

He freely accepted his fate and asked to be sent home to his Jefferson Valley residence where he made all arrangements for his interment.

Monday evening, March 27 he could be viewed at Saint Joseph Church in Carmel, N.Y. where he was assisting each Sunday since his retirement.

On Tuesday, March 28th he was laid out at the Church of the Holy Name in New Rochelle, N.Y. where a requiem Mass was celebrated by eleven priests and the Honor Guard, buddies and a full Church.

There were floral tributes from the 77th Division Association and the Women's Auxiliary. In addition, flowers were sent by General Landrum, Maury Zamore and Bill McGinley, all residents of Honolulu. Delivery of these flowers was arranged by Eleanor Lazzarotto.

On Wednesday morning a funeral Mass with more than 35 priests and John Cardinal O'Connor as principal celebrant was celebrated. Interment was at the Gates of Heaven Cemetery in Valhalla, N.Y.

Monsignor Donnelly was born in the Bronx 77 years ago, ordained into the priesthood in 1937 and served for 52 years as a priest in several parishes in Harlem and the Bronx before being assigned as Pastor for the Church of the Holy Name in New Rochelle, N.Y. for a period of twelve years.

During his tenure as a priest he made many friends as attested to by the more than a thousand cards and Mass Cards he received after being sent home from the hospital.

Monsignor Donnelly served as wartime Catholic Chaplain during World War II for the 305th Infantry, 77th Division, from the period of reactivation in March, 1942 to its deactivation in October, 1945. From November, 1945 to March, 1989 he served as Division Association Chaplain; at the same time, from November, 1945 to June, 1972 he served as Chaplain for the 305th Infantry Association.



# Mr. Levin's Separation Qualification Record

Page one details his Military Occupational Record and his responsibilities as Gun Commander.



## SEPARATION QUALIFICATION RECORD

SAVE THIS FORM. IT WILL NOT BE REPLACED IF LOST

This record of job assignments and special training received in the Army is furnished to the soldier when he leaves the service. In its preparation, information is taken from available Army records and supplemented by personal interview. The information about civilian education and work experience is based on the individual's own statements. The veteran may present this document to former employers, prospective employers, representatives of schools or colleges, or use it in any other way that may prove beneficial to him.

1. LAST NAME—FIRST NAME—MIDDLE INITIAL			MILITARY OCCUPATIONAL ASSIGNMENTS		
LEVIN JERRY C			10. MONTHS	11. GRADE	12. MILITARY OCCUPATIONAL SPECIALTY
2. ARMY SERIAL No.	3. GRADE	4. SOCIAL SECURITY No.	3	Pvt	S.C. Basic 521
	S Sgt	Unknown	6	Cpl	Anti-Tank Gunner 610
			2	S/Bgt	Gun Commander 610
5. PERMANENT MAILING ADDRESS (Street, City, County, State)					
Drake Ave., Chicago, Illinois					
6. DATE OF ENTRY INTO ACTIVE SERVICE	7. DATE OF SEPARATION	8. DATE OF BIRTH			
13 Sep 43	13 Jan 46	31 Mar 25			
9. PLACE OF SEPARATION					
Cp Grant, Illinois					


### SUMMARY OF MILITARY OCCUPATIONS

13. TITLE—DESCRIPTION—RELATED CIVILIAN OCCUPATION

**GUN COMMANDER:** Was responsible for the control and employment of a 37mm gun crew. Selected locations where guns were to be emplaced and checked to see that there was a sufficient amount of ammunition on hand. Issued all firing orders and was responsible for the maintenance of weapons and automotive equipment.



Second page of Mr. Levin's Separation Qualification Record, detailing his one year of studies in Pre-Med at Loyola, prior to his entering the U. S. Army.

3. MILITARY EDUCATION			
14. NAME OR TYPE OF SCHOOL—COURSE OR CURRICULUM—DURATION—DESCRIPTION			
			
CIVILIAN EDUCATION			
15. HIGHEST GRADE COMPLETED	16. DEGREES OR DIPLOMAS	17. YEAR LEFT SCHOOL	OTHER TRAINING OR SCHOOLING
13		1943	
18. NAME AND ADDRESS OF LAST SCHOOL ATTENDED		20. COURSE—NAME AND ADDRESS OF SCHOOL—DATE	
Loyola University, Chicago, Ill			
19. MAJOR COURSES OF STUDY		21. DURATION	
Pre-Med			
CIVILIAN OCCUPATIONS			
22. TITLE—NAME AND ADDRESS OF EMPLOYER—INCLUSIVE DATES—DESCRIPTION			
Student College X-02: Graduated from Roosevelt Sr. High School, Chicago Illinois and attended Loyola, University for one year. Was taking a pre-medical course consisting of comparative anatomy, animal biology 1 & 2, two English courses, and college algebra.			
ADDITIONAL INFORMATION			
23. REMARKS			
24. SIGNATURE	25. SIGNATURE OF SEPARATION CLASSIFICATION OFFICER		26. NAME OF OFFICER (Typed or Stamped)
	Clyde W. Mills		CLYDE W MILLS CAPT AC



**Jerry (Levin) and Phil (Hensley) enjoying the outdoors of a different kind in a different way after the war and celebrating their friendship. Mr. Levin visited his friend and gifted soldier at his family's home in Oregon.**



**Mr. Hensley won a Silver Star on Okinawa during the assault on Shuri Castle.**



**Sean Lee, a high school junior who prepared an outstanding report on Mr. Levin's wartime experiences, was moved to write this poem.**

## American Veteran

by Sean Lee

You were young  
In spirit, body, and mind  
You marched off  
And disappeared in the horizon  
Unsure  
Unaware  
Of what each step brought you closer to

War was just a game  
Death was just a myth  
Life was eternal  
And would forever remain  
Unchanging, day in and day out

Until you stepped into the light

It blinded you at first  
Imprinting in your brain  
Images of the unknown

Death  
Destruction  
Suffering

An all too real  
Horror film  
Playing on end inside your mind

In two weeks  
A lifetime's worth of  
Lessons  
Learned the hard way

War hardens you  
Engulfing you in its  
Overwhelming, constant  
Terror  
The essence of having to wonder  
Whether you will live to see tomorrow  
Or Not

Detachment  
From the world as you know it  
Takes its toll on you  
Withering down your body  
Aging you in a matter of years  
That was then

You grew

To save yourself  
From the realization  
That youth was over  
And your adulthood had begun  
With a jolt

War has left an irremovable  
Scar  
That now defines  
Who you are  
And who you were

You were a soldier

You are a veteran

An American  
Forever

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Sean Lee".



The title page of Mr. Levin's copy of the division history appears to the right. Published in 1947, it runs 586 pages. There are scores of passages and photos describing battles and combat situations which Mr. Levin experienced. The scanned portions which follow were highlighted by Mr. Levin as highly relevant for understanding his interview which had taken place earlier. There are 29 pages in this booklet.

The book's moving dedication appears below.

### To Those Who Did Not Return

*They shall not grow old as we that are left grow old:  
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn,  
To the going down of sun and in the morning  
We shall remember them.*

LAWRENCE BRYAN

# Ours To Hold It High

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## *The History of the 77th Infantry Division in World War II*

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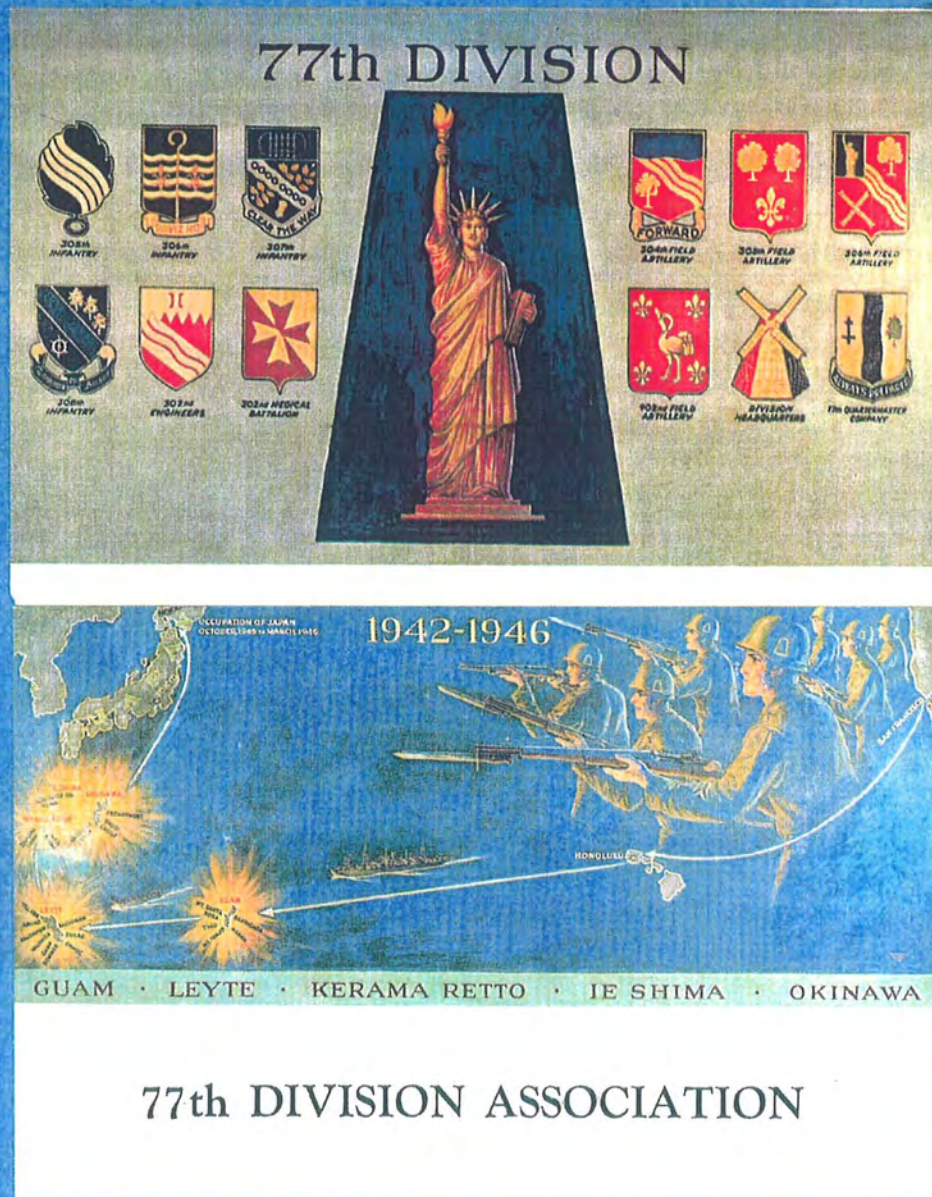


By  
MEN WHO WERE THERE

WASHINGTON  
INFANTRY JOURNAL PRESS

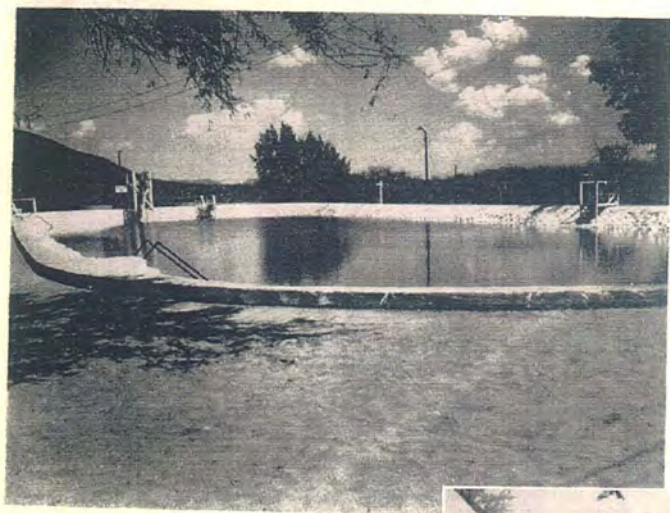


77th Division's units and their insignias as published by the  
77th Infantry Division Association





Each regimental combat team stateside received three weeks each of mountain training, amphibious training, and marksmanship training and combat exercises in preparation for the war in the Pacific.



Top: Troops empty Hyder Opry House after General Bruce's speech. Center: A mirage that came true. The pool at Agua Caliente constructed by our Engineers. Right: GI autograph hounds corral actor-singer Allan Jones after his Opry House performance.



Top: Even the jeep found the going rough during amphibious training at Camp Bradford, Virginia, in the winter of 1943-44. Center: The waves were rough but grips were sure. Climbing aboard a transport via rope ladder during amphibious training off Solomon's Island in Maryland. Left: Bunk fatigue aboard a President type ship on its way to a dry run off Solomon's Island.

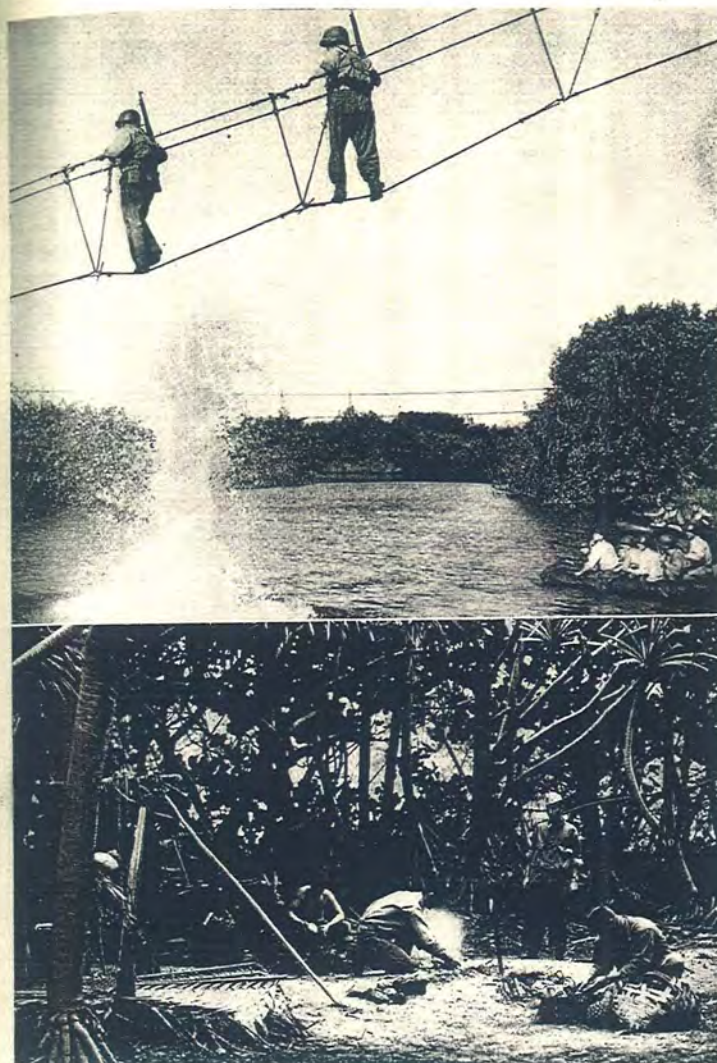


After sailing from San Francisco for Hawaii, Mr. Levin's 305th regiment received jungle training on Oahu. Major General Andrew D. Bruce, commanding officer of the 77th Division, had flown ahead and was waiting for his men on the dock.



Top: Last-minute eye-sharpening on Oahu before the invasion of Guam. Bottom: A patrol of would-be Jap slayers head for shore during amphibious training in "Pineapple Land" in the summer of 1944.

## Jungle training on Oahu



Top: Two riflemen cross a stream via a shaky rope bridge as a dynamite charge sends a shower of water up to increase their discomfort. Bottom: Boys from the city learn to prepare a tropical dinner in the event they become lost in the jungle. Both photos are typical of the tasks performed by men of the 77th during their two-week course at the Unit Jungle Training Center on Oahu.



Page below provides excellent explanation of the American strategy to reverse Japanese gains in the Pacific, leading to the then likely goal of invading the Japanese mainland.



## CHAPTER 6

### Objective Guam

THE INVASION of the Marianas in June and July of 1944 brought to a climax a twenty-month advance across nearly 3,000 miles of Pacific waters by amphibious forces of the United States. For the first time American forces now would possess bases from which an attack on the Japanese homeland could be made. On 23 February a strong task force, including hundreds of carrier-based aircraft, attacked Saipan and near-by Tinian; a small raid was made on Guam. During the following months air attacks against these islands intensified. On 11 June the carrier-based aircraft of a large task force attacked Guam, Rota, Tinian and Saipan. On the 13th battleships and cruisers steamed in and shelled Saipan and Tinian.

As these blows developed, the pattern of American conquest in the Central Pacific became clear. United States forces, in possession of most of the Gilberts and Marshalls, would by-pass the Carolines and strike directly at the island chain which, beginning with Guam, stretches to Japan itself.

The largest and most southern of the Marianas, Guam was indeed a prize. The island afforded a harbor for small and medium vessels; the Japanese had built a mile-long air strip and there were other sites for large fields. From these, planes would be able to attack enemy supply lines west and south of Guam, and the new B-29s could reach the heart of Japan.

Guam had been a United States possession prior to its capture by the Japanese on 12 December 1941. The pride of the American people was touched when the enemy overwhelmed the few score Marines, who put up what resistance they could. The Japanese took over the naval installations, the cable facilities, and the barracks. They recruited slave labor from the natives and dealt cruelly with those who dared to resist. They used the island as a base for further penetration to the south and east. Guam became a major bastion in the Japanese inner fortress.

The island of Guam lies 3,320 airline miles from Pearl Harbor, 1,499 miles from Manila, and 1,595 miles from Tokyo. Truk in the Carolines is only 562 miles to the southeast. Guam is 34.5 miles in length and varies from 5 to 9 miles in width, with an area of 228 square miles. The southern and central portions are chiefly rolling hills, culminating in a few rugged mountains. The occasional villages, plantations and clearings are surrounded by dense woods and jungle. The northern part of the island is heavily jungled. An unbroken fringing reef surrounds the entire island.



The 305th Regiment lands on Guam and Mr. Levin will experience combat for the first time.



Orote Peninsula: A 77th attack leaves hundreds of dead Japs in its wake.

## PART II

### The Liberation of Guam

**BRIEF:** On 21 July 1944 the 305th Regimental Combat Team of the 77th Division landed with the 1st Provisional Marine Brigade in the assault on Guam. The remainder of the Division, after a hurried voyage from Oahu via Eniwetok, went ashore during the next three days and carried on its share of the task of liberating the first populated United States possession to be wrested from the Japanese.

The first mission given the Division was to hold and expand the southern beachhead line. This, coupled with aggressive combat patrolling, reconnaissance of southern Guam, and the capture of Mount Tenjo occupied the troops until 30 July. On the 31st the Division struck east across the island. Despite the absence of roads and despite great supply difficulties, the regiments quickly seized positions in readiness for the main attack to the north.

At Barrigada on 2 and 3 August the 305th and 307th Infantry Regiments encountered and defeated determined Japanese forces. This was followed by an energetic pursuit through dense and almost trackless jungle.

The Japanese made their final stand at Yigo in northern Guam on 7 August. The combined fire power of the infantry and the artillery blasted them out. After that it was mopping up, dirty, bitter, and dangerous, but against a disorganized enemy.

The 77th killed 2,741 Japanese and took 36 prisoners on Guam, liberated thousands of native Chamorros, and learned what jungle fighting was like. It cost the Division 265 killed, 876 wounded, and two missing.

After the fighting the 77th spent two rainy, uncomfortable months in primitive Camp McNair on the hills above Agat. There, operations against Yap, Ulithi, and Leyte were planned: but only the last was ever executed. From Guam the Division loaded-out for the rest camps of New Caledonia, but en route was diverted to Leyte, Philippine Islands.

The 77th's campaign on Guam consisted of many small unit actions. Therefore, these are described in detail, a method which cannot be accommodated in the descriptions of subsequent campaigns. It is believed essential to include these descriptions in order to depict more accurately what the individual soldier witnessed throughout the Pacific War.



Picture of beach landing on Guam and description of 77th's important contribution to occupation of Guam, a strategic objective.



Hitting the beach behind the enemy's lines

## CHAPTER 12

### Camp McNair and Harmon Road

ALTHOUGH Guam had been declared secure on 10 August the 77th's job had not ended. Patrolling jungle areas and clearing caves of Japanese continued for several weeks. Hungry, sick and virtually defenseless, the Japanese showed remarkable tenacity. The 306th Infantry remained in the Yigo-Santa Rosa area for two weeks and added a large number of Japanese to its total killed. Just 10 minutes before the 3d Battalion left for its semi-permanent camp near Agat, several enemy soldiers were killed nearby.

On Guam the Division killed 2,741 Japanese and captured 36 prisoners. Final estimates of Japanese on the island were 18,500, about the same as the first pre-battle estimates. To accomplish this extermination the following ammunition was expended:

- 3,600,000 rounds of .30 caliber rifle
- 750,000 rounds of .30 caliber carbine
- 475,000 rounds of .45 caliber
- 46,000 hand grenades
- 24,716 rounds of artillery ammunition

The division lost 248 killed and 663 wounded. Eleven Japanese died for each American killed and 3 Japanese died for each American battle casualty.

By late August the entire Division, including attached troops, assembled in a large bivouac area on the hills east of Agat. It was named Camp McNair in honor of the former Chief of Staff. The battle-weary soldiers found little rest, comfort, or recreation there.

The Division had left a rear detachment, commanded by Major Warren Dodge, on Oahu. With it were many vehicles, heavy engineer equipment, tentage, extra clothing, and all the supplies and impedimenta needed for a semi-permanent camp. This detachment was not sent to Guam because the 77th was originally scheduled to be moved from Guam to Guadalcanal as soon as the battle ended. The rear echelon was sent first to Guadalcanal and then to New Caledonia where later plans had called for the Division to be rehabilitated. Months later it caught up with the troops on Leyte, Philippine Islands. The Division was not moved from Guam and it could not occupy areas needed for the base development, so it was parked in the hills.

Troops spread out over the ridges, pitched pup tents and built native type shacks of bamboo and palm. Almost everything had to be improvised. The rainy season was on and nothing was ever really dry.



Mr. Levin calls attention to this passage on p. 84, written by W.F. Connolly, which describes the difficulty of an infantryman moving forward in the Pacific jungle.

even for the hardy jeeps. As one infantryman, W. F. Connolly, wrote later:

The distance across the island is not far, as the crow flies, but unluckily we can't fly. The nearest I came to flying was while descending the slippery side of a mountain in a sitting position. After advancing a few yards you find that the handle of the machine gun on your shoulder, your pack and shovel, canteens, knife, and machete all stick out at right angles and are as tenacious in their grip on the surrounding underbrush as a dozen grappling hooks. Straining, sweating and swearing avails you nothing so you decide on a full-bodied lunge—success crowns your efforts as all the entangling encumbrances decide to give up the struggle simultaneously. Just before you hit the ground a low swinging vine breaks your fall by looping itself under your chin, almost decapitating you and snapping your helmet 15 yards to the rear, narrowly missing your lieutenant's head. He glares at you as though he suspected you threw it. What a suspicious nature. You untangle your equipment, retrieve your helmet, and move on. The flies, the mosquitos have discovered your route of march and have called up all the reinforcements including the underfed and undernourished who regard us as nothing but walking blood banks. We continue to push on . . .

Mr. Levin also commends this excerpt on pp. 89-90 for its description of the advancing infantryman who is thirsty and hungry and tired and the need to improvise, making use of the enemy's food.

As usual, the infantrymen were unaware of the fact that they were now in pursuit, and of other tactical aspects of the advance but they were very much aware of their hunger, thirst, and general weariness. As usual, they pushed on and, as usual they worked out their field expedients. Lacking pure water, they drank coconut milk. Halazone tablets made the brackish water of the creeks at least drinkable. if not

pleasant. The canned salmon abandoned by the retreating Japanese helped keep them going.

Rear elements of the 305th, passing through Yona during the day made a lucky find. In some huts were cigarettes, *sake*, and—reportedly—some Canadian Club. The *sake* was not very palatable, but the thirsty men quickly worked out a good recipe: they mixed a pint of it with three packages of synthetic lemon powder and two lumps of sugar from their K rations and had what tasted like a wartime Tom Collins. Strawberry gumdrops tasted good, but the canned octopus was not very popular. Carrying out the idea of pursuit, as soon as the news of the capture of the Agaña-Pago road was flashed to Division Headquarters, artillery, tanks and supplies were started by the roundabout Agat-Agaña route through the 3d Marine Division sector. The military police of both divisions working side by side at each key point kept vehicles moving in accordance with agreed priorities. Lieutenant Colonel Henry O'Brien, Division Quartermaster, personally led the first convoy of supply trucks eastward from Agaña to meet the advancing troops and establish advance supply dumps.



The 77th's expectations of a restful voyage and landing on a peaceful island change with the radio order of November 11.



## CHAPTER 13

### No Rest for the Weary

THE SQUADRON of transports which sailed from Guam for New Caledonia on 3 November 1944 was filled with officers and men of the 77th Infantry Division, happy in anticipation of a restful voyage which would end at a peaceful island free of Japanese. All began to catch up on sleep, relax from the tensions of combat, and enjoy the good fresh food. Days and nights became increasingly warmer. The Equator was crossed and, on some of the transports appropriate initiation ceremonies were conducted making "hardshells" out of "polliwogs" and introducing them to Old King Neptune.

Then, on 11 November, four days out from New Caledonia, radio orders were received directing the convoy to turn northwest, and put in at Manus, in the Admiralty Islands. This apparent change in plan coupled with the news reports of the rather slow progress on Leyte stimulated speculation. The betting odds favored an immediate return of the Division to action. Manus was reached on 17 November and the large convoy dropped anchor in spacious Seeadler Harbor where it remained until the 19th. The troops watched the very black natives with their bleached, reddish hair maneuver tricky outrigger canoes among the ships of the squadron. Most of the men had an opportunity to spend part of a day on a recreation island where beer and bathing were available. Some of the officers visited the Navy Club and enjoyed brief but intense relaxation. On the 19th, the convoy departed from Manus for the east coast of Leyte, Philippine Islands.

During the remainder of the voyage, General Bruce and his staff worked on plans, and the few maps of Leyte which were at their disposal, in an effort to anticipate every feasible employment of the Division. The plans for participation in the Leyte operation which had been drawn up on Guam still seemed to meet almost every possible contingency.



Mr. Levin's 305th Infantry Regiment participated in the the invasion of Leyte. He commends the "Briefs" for useful summaries of the battles in the Pacific where he 77th Infantry Division saw action. Pages 138-9 below have been scanned from the Division's History, Ours to Hold it High.



*Hitting the beach behind the enemy's lines*

## PART III

### The Liberation of Leyte

*BRIEF:* Arriving on the east coast of Leyte on Thanksgiving Day—23 November 1944—the 77th Division was first assigned various widely scattered tasks; then hastily assembled to break the stalemate in the Leyte operation by a landing on the west coast just south of Ormoc on 7 December.

The landing behind the Japanese lines was a complete surprise, and the subsequent capture of Ormoc and the Ormoc Valley campaign broke the Japanese resistance on the island. After landing at Deposito, the Division drove north and on 11 December captured Ormoc. Following a bitter fight at Cogon, the Division, with a two pronged, wide envelopment cut the main north and south road, captured the Valencia airfield and drove on to the Libungao road junction, just north of which contact was made with the 1st Cavalry Division on 21 December.

The Division then turned west with Palompon as its next objective. That town, however, was captured from the sea on Christmas Day by an LVT Task Force built around the 1st Battalion, 305th Infantry. The capture of Palompon officially closed the Leyte campaign, but the Palompon road remained yet to be cleared by the Division which killed fighting bands of Japanese in northeast Leyte until 5 February. It was then withdrawn to the east coast to prepare for the Kerama Retto-Ie Shima-Okinawa operations.

The 77th Division killed 19,459 Japanese on Leyte and took 124 prisoners at a cost of 425 killed and 1,549 wounded. The Ormoc landing and the campaign thereafter have been characterized by both friends and enemies as a divisional epic and the decisive factor in the Leyte campaign, which in turn contributed materially to weakening the enemy strength on Luzon.

Mr. Levin in the 77th is pictured going ashore on Leyte. He will be shot and wounded after landing near Ormoc (pp.212-3).



Mr. Levin's notes that in the foreground below "#1 left (is) Little Joe, #3 (is) he, and #5 right (is) Phil .



Top: Troops wade knee-deep through surf to board landing craft which took them around the end of Leyte to Ormoc. Bottom: End of the line. Doughboys trudge through enemy-held sands.



Top: LSMs stream into the invasion beaches, with men and machines aboard. Bottom: Division Artillery, already ashore, pours shells into Ormoc, key city of Leyte.



A member of the 3rd Battalion in the 305th Regiment, Mr. Levin was wounded on December 13, 1944. The account below in the division's history describes the action that day. Mr. Levin was awarded the Bronze Star.

spite of heavy small arms fire against the howitzer, the crew was able to complete its mission and remove the piece from its exposed position without a single casualty.

13 December. The attack was launched at 1830 preceded by a thirty minute artillery preparation massed on the Cogon position. Participating in the preparation were the 902d Field Artillery Battalion, 305th Field Artillery Battalion, two batteries of the 304th Field Artillery Battalion, and one battery of the 306th Field Artillery Battalion (155mm howitzers) which were firing from positions only 200 yards in rear of the front lines. The attack was launched by the 305th with its 3d Battalion on the right of Highway 2 and the other two battalions on the left. Companies E and L were detached from their battalions and formed into a special attack unit under Colonel Paul L. Freeman, General Staff Corps, a War Department observer attached to the Division, for a direct assault on the block house once the north bank of the river was captured.

The 3d Battalion moved out in column of companies with Company I leading, followed by Company K. They moved up a deep draw which paralleled the river for a distance and then turned north. At 0925 the battalion, under cover of artillery and mortar concentrations, reached the ridge line north of the river bank, about 500 yards east of the concrete building. Company K moved up with one platoon on each flank of Company I to consolidate on top of the ridge. Just as the two platoons came abreast of Company I, the first of five counterattacks struck the battalion. All of the counterattacks which continued through the afternoon, were repulsed with heavy losses to the enemy, but the battalion also suffered severely.

The platoon of Company K on the left of the hill encountered a storm of fire which reduced it from 52 men to 11 in a matter of minutes. The platoon pulled back and the counterattack was finally stopped by mortar and machine gun fire. The platoon on the right started north and immediately ran into a counterattack. The initial fire knocked about a third of it out of action, and it withdrew over a small ridge. For the time being, the situation was a stalemate. The Japanese were on one side of a little knife ridge and the troops of the 3d Battalion on the other. Every time either would attempt to push forward, they met heavy fire as they reached the crest.

In the meantime, on the left, the 3d Platoon of Company K replaced the 1st. It tried crossing the front of the hill to help the 2d Platoon on the right and met another counterattack. The platoons of Company

K were then pulled back and organized defenses for the night. Company I continued to hold the hill.

During the day the heat, humidity, uphill fighting, and the constant fever pitch of the men caused scores to keel over from heat exhaustion. They were evacuated to the aid station in a draw several hundred yards to the rear, splashed with cold water and laid in the shade. After resting awhile, they doggedly returned to the lines to continue the fight. Lieutenant Colonel Edward Chalgren, Jr., the battalion commander, said that the men were soaking wet from sweat all of the time. He spoke in the highest terms of their steadfast determination to keep fighting no matter what their condition.

At 1700, Captain Louis Hinson, commanding Company L, noticed a group of individuals on the west bank of the draw to the left of Company I. Knowing that no men from Company K were there, he asked the battalion commander for permission to place fire in the draw. Lieutenant Colonel Chalgren had sent a patrol to the draw some time earlier and withheld permission until he made sure the patrol had returned. Captain Hinson again called, this time with the positive statement, "Those are Japs in the draw, I can see them in the S-2 scope." Finally, certain that the patrol was clear, Lieutenant Colonel Chalgren permitted Company L to fire. Machine guns raked the draw from top to bottom. At first, Captain Hinson could not use the mortars because of the proximity of friendly troops, but as the Japanese fled up the draw the mortars opened fire. In addition, 37mm guns, one .50 caliber machine gun, two light and four heavy .30 caliber machine guns were used. The Japanese left 350 dead in the gully. The counterattack for which they had been forming never materialized. It was later determined that there had been an enemy reinforced battalion in front of the 3d Battalion, 305th Infantry, and that the counterattacks had been launched from the Japanese Command Post.

The position of this enemy battalion was originally discovered by a low-flying liaison pilot from the 305th Field Artillery Battalion. It consisted of a series of foxholes and emplacements on a plateau about 700 yards in front of the 3d Battalion. The position was completely hidden from ground observation. The air observer fired a number of battalion concentrations which destroyed its camouflage and disclosed its extent. Time fire was then adjusted on the enemy in the holes and trenches, and a series of concentrations were fired at irregular intervals over a thirty-six hour period. When the 3d Battalion finally captured this position, it reported that the artillery fire had torn to pieces hundreds of Japanese.

The 2d Battalion of the 305th crossed its line of departure at

Second paragraph below details way Mr. Levin was carried in stretcher after being hit.

were determined to get it and this time three "bazookas," one .50 caliber and two .30 caliber machine guns plus about ten automatic rifles were trained on the road as the motor was heard coming closer and closer. Throughout the regimental area all ears were turned toward the approaching vehicle and not another sound was heard. As it rounded a bend and reached the edge of Company L's position Technical Sergeant Jack T. Martin shouted, "Let him have it." The quiet was shattered by four simultaneous hits from the "bazookas" and steady streams of fire from the automatic weapons. The entire area was lighted as the vehicle burst into flames with a deafening roar. Investigation showed that it was not a tank but a truck load of Japanese soldiers. Not one escaped from the truck.

The regiment had had to carry its wounded with it as it advanced. It took eight men for each casualty; four litter bearers and four men to guard them. The Japanese always considered the wounded and litter bearers fair prey and the red cross flag and brassard were no protection.

General Bruce and Lieutenant Colonel Charles L. Davis, S-3 of the Division Artillery, flew in a liaison plane during the early morning to San Jose to coordinate air strikes and the artillery fires of Corps and Division artillery in softening up Valencia preparatory to the attack of the 307th Infantry. Because of the large number of enemy troops reported in the Valencia area by guerrillas, it was planned to blast that region with air bombardment and heavy artillery fires prior to the attack. Commencing in the morning the 155mm guns of the 226th Field Artillery Battalion at Daro placed heavy fire on the village and the vicinity of the air strip. This fire continued until called off at about 1230 to permit an air strike on the village from 1240 to 1330, which was highly effective. Then the "Long Toms" and division medium artillery opened fire again. Artillery observers reported 2,000 of the enemy fleeing to the east.

At 1415, the 307th Infantry attacked in wedge formation astride the San Jose-Valencia road. The 2d Battalion was leading with the 3d echeloned to its right rear and the 1st to its left rear. The Japanese resisted strongly as the regiment left San Jose and approached the air strip. Some of the enemy troops were paratroopers who were in excellent physical condition and well equipped. At 1640 leading elements of the regiment were within a thousand yards of Valencia and on the southwest corner of the air strip, where preparations were made to remain for the night.

Patrols of the 77th Reconnaissance Troop operating on the right of the Division encountered an estimated 200 of the enemy near Dunghol and Patag and were forced to withdraw and join the 305th near



Picture below depicts wounded soldier being taken on stretcher back for treatment. Mr. Levin was himself carried on a stretcher about this time during the same advance. (pp. 214-215).



Top: Medics hightail it with wounded infantryman aboard their litter. Bottom: Doughfeet keep heads and butts low as they advance against the retreating enemy.



Top: A Jap coastal vessel still aflame in Ormoc Bay. Bottom: Ormoc itself is mute evidence of the tremendous destruction wrought by pre-invasion bombings and the Division's attack.



**The passage below from the division's history clearly describes a typical "Banzai" attack on the 305th during their successful operation on Leyte on December 21.**

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**OURS TO HOLD IT HIGH**

small counterattacks met the same fate. During the advance more than thirty enemy trucks were captured and many were immediately put to use by the regiment. Large ammunition and supply dumps were captured. The regiment advanced 2,000 yards during the day and killed 1,497 Japanese, but was still being bitterly opposed by a stubborn enemy as the advance was halted for the day 1,000 yards short of the road junction.

The 305th Infantry remained during the day covering Valencia and the Valencia airfield, and kept the provisional armored column in readiness for an immediate move to the west toward Palompon.

In a continued effort to hold the initiative at all costs and to prevent the enemy from stopping the Division steam roller drive, the Division Commander issued orders to prepare for a pursuit on 21 December by direct pressure along Highway 2, and an encircling movement to Palompon. The 306th Infantry was to capture the Libungao road junction, advance north to meet the 1st Cavalry Division of the X Corps, and on order be prepared to support the armored column with one battalion. The 307th was to establish a defensive position at the road junction and support the 306th in its attack to the north. The 305th was to have one additional battalion prepared to follow the armored column in trucks and its remaining battalion also prepared to support that force on order.

During the night 20-21 December, artillery ammunition in sufficient quantity having at long last arrived, the most intensive intermittent artillery bombardment of the Division's action on Leyte was fired. One half of a unit of fire was expended.

21 December. Enemy activity at the river about 0400 led the 1st Battalion, 306th Infantry to suspect that the enemy was preparing to counterattack. The surmise was justified, for at 0403, the Japanese dropped a mortar and artillery concentration on the battalion which killed two officers and four enlisted men, and wounded seven others. At 0500, the fire lifted and about 500 of the enemy launched an attack from the west and south. Thirty-seven of the enemy penetrated the position before they were killed. The counterattack then swung to the south but artillery fire broke it up. The Japanese followed their usual form, yelling "Banzai," screaming wildly, and cursing in garbled English. This stupid procedure, as always, failed to frighten the troops into headlong flight or hypnotize them into torpid insensibility, but rather it helped to locate the attack, orient all weapons against it, and always ended in the extermination of almost the entire howling mob of fanatics. From very early childhood, Japanese boys had been indoctrinated

**COGON, VALENCIA, TAGBONG RIVER, LIBUNGAO**

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with the belief that their greatest happiness would be to die for their Emperor. Though not so intended, "banzai" attacks were almost always a sure way to attain that glorious end. Often "banzai" attackers found that generous draughts of *sake* fortified their devotion.

In the morning, 400 dead Japanese were counted around the position, but the battalion was very short of ammunition; it had expended more than half a unit of fire during the night. There remained only two boxes of ammunition for each machine gun, and a total of only 17 rounds of 81mm and 15 rounds of 60mm mortar ammunition.

At 0800 the Battalion Commander, Major Claude D. Barton, received orders to continue the attack. It was to be launched at 1000, preceded by a ten-minute artillery preparation fired by six batteries. Company E was attached to the battalion and joined, bringing with it all the ammunition the rest of the regiment could possibly spare. The scheme of maneuver was for two companies to attack abreast, Company B on the right and Company E on the left, crossing the river south of the bridge. Major Barton requested permission to delay the attack so that the ammunition which Company E had brought might be distributed. The attack was set for 1250, with the artillery preparation starting at 1240.

Following the preparation, the battalion jumped off; Company C crossed the river, swung through the native village and covered the high ground to the north. Company E was held up by fire at the road but Company B crossed the river and captured the high ground to the northwest.

At 1330, orders were received to push on to the Pagsangahan River. Company commanders were called to the Battalion Command Post at the bridge to receive orders. The attack was to be made astride the road, Company E on the right, Company C on the left, Company A echeloned to the left rear of Company C. Company B, on the high ground to the north of the road, was to turn down the ridge line toward the road and place itself in rear of Company E.

Somehow the orders to Company B were misconstrued and that unit withdrew from the hill to the river, leaving behind a covering force of about one platoon. The Japanese selected that moment to counterattack, and the remainder of Company B was driven off the hill. This prevented the attack to the west.

The mistake cost the battalion a day and a half of fighting. Major Barton decided that the battalion must retake the high ground before any further advance would be possible. At 1600, Company A attacked, moved across the river and assaulted the lower slopes and nose of the hill. The attack was successful and the company destroyed about two



The "Brief" below summarizes purpose, conduct and success of the 77th's taking of Kerama Retto in preparation for the invasion of Okinawa.



Geruma Shima, March 31, 1945: Old Glory flies for the first time over a Japanese home island.

#### PART IV Kerama Retto

*BRIEF:* While still engaged in mopping up northwest Leyte the 77th Division was ordered to prepare for landings in the Kerama Retto, a group of small rocky islands less than 20 miles west of Okinawa. These islands were to be seized for a protected anchorage and seaplane base which would subsequently be used by the U. S. Navy during the assault on Okinawa.

After hurried preparations and rehearsals the Division sailed for the Ryukyus and arrived off Kerama Retto at dawn on 26 March, 1945. The landings were a complete surprise to the Japs who had equipped the island group as a hideout for suicide boats but had not prepared it for defense.

With a smoothness born of practice and experience five battalion landing teams hit five separate islands almost simultaneously. Resistance was sporadic and occasionally bitter but not effective. Geruma, Hokaji, and Yakabi were captured quickly. On Aka and Zamami fighting continued to the 27th.

On 27 and 28 March landings were made on other islands. On Tokashiki hundreds of civilian suicides were found but the fighting was negligible during the two-day search of this mountainous island.

The 77th remained in the Retto despite increasing Jap air attacks. On 31 March the four low, sandy islands called Keise Shima, just off Naha Harbor, were seized and two battalions of 155mm guns were emplaced thereon to support Tenth Army's landings on Okinawa the next day.

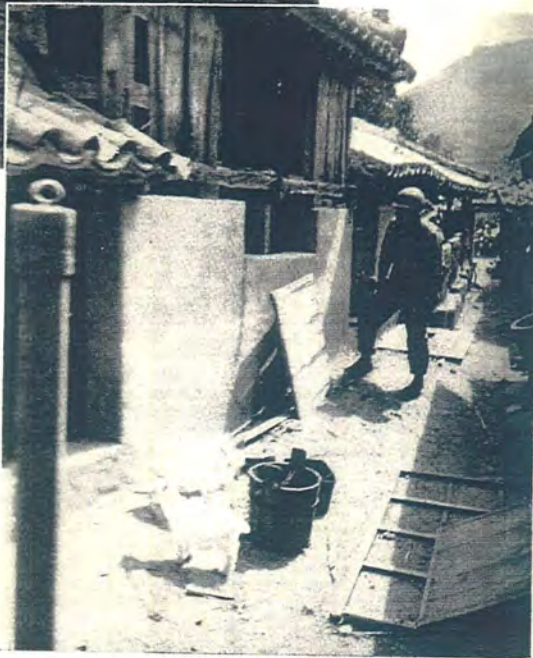
At a cost of 78 killed and 177 wounded, the 77th made 15 assault landings, killed 530 Japs, captured 121, and seized a well protected anchorage and seaplane base for the American assault forces. There was an additional dividend. More than 350 Jap suicide boats and their fanatical pilots were destroyed or captured in their hidden base without once having an opportunity to cause damage. Inasmuch as the enemy plans called for these craft to sortie against U. S. transport shipping off Okinawa, our surprise landings undoubtedly prevented subsequent damage to the American fleet.



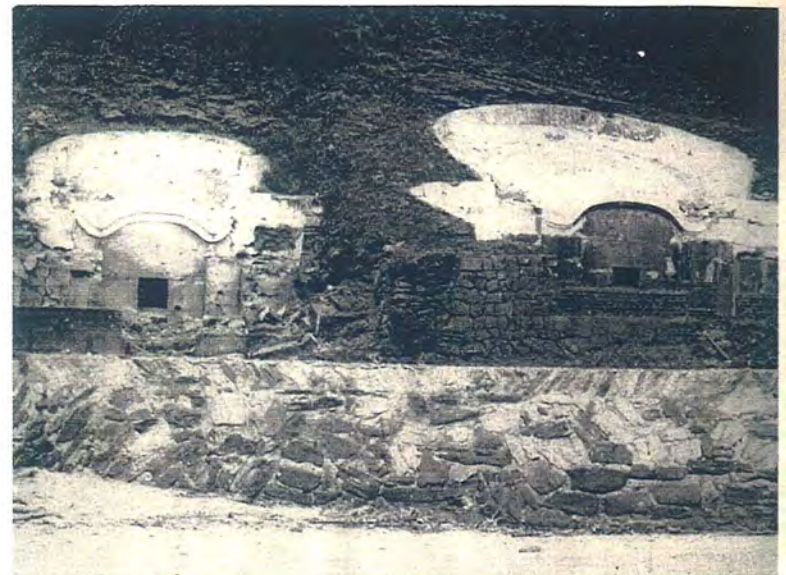
Photographs of scenes described by Mr. Levin during his interview recollections of the action on Kerama Retto.



**“The Narrows”**



Top: Troops advance cautiously through Zamami Town: Bottom: This 77th Doughboy took no chances but found nothing but a few goats in Zamami Town. The Jap soldiers and civilians had fled to the hills.



Top: A dead Jap gets scarcely a glance from Americans as they advance along a trail in the Keramas. Bottom: Civilian burial tombs, where bones of deceased are kept in urns.

During the night the Japs launched nine separate Banzai attacks against Company C and an attached section of Company D. These attacks by approximately 100 Japs armed with sabers, rifles and pistols and supported by mortar and automatic weapons, were all repulsed. In all more than 113 Japs were killed during the night. The fighting was marked by intense hand-to-hand combat, and one machine gun position changed hands five times. Of the 17 Company D men, seven were killed and nine wounded. The following description of this night fighting was written by Corporal James Goble, correspondent for *Yank*:

The battalion chased the Japs through Zamami Town, already flattened by pre-invasion bombardment, into the terraced hills beyond. And now the men of Companies C and D waited in the underbrush for dawn.

The wind frequently rustled the limbs of bushes, and the men peered into the darkness trying to determine if the noise was made by Japs. "This is a helluva place for a perimeter," grunted Pfc. Bob B. Merrill to another man in his foxhole, Pvt. Frank C. Woolstrum. They could barely see each

### **The Division received high praise for its performance in taking Kerama Retto.**

The following message came on 31 March to the Commanding General 77th Division:

"My congratulations on the speedy and effective manner in which you accomplished assigned tasks in Kerama Retto. The present readiness of the 77th Division to go again is characteristic of its spirit and comes up to the expectations I have learned to have for that fighting organization. Signed NIMITZ."

### **Excellent account of foxhole fighting under enemy assault, illustrating Mr. Levin's own experience.**

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OURS TO HOLD IT HIGH

other. "I got a feeling it won't be long until something happens," answered Woolstrum. The crackling underbrush and the blackness had everyone on edge. They could neither hear nor see any advancing Jap. There were only about 200 Jap soldiers on the island. However, there were about 300 Korean laborers, all of them armed and in Jap uniforms. So far there hadn't been a single Jap counterattack or Banzai charge. Now was the time for one, and the underbrush was the place—provided the Japs could find it. They did. The rustling became louder. Woolstrum looked down a shallow gully and saw man-sized shadows moving forward only 15 yards away. He opened fire with a carbine. Then other Japs broke out of the underbrush and charged the foxholes. Some yelled "Banzai." One screamed, "Look out American bastards, we're coming after you."

The men in the foxholes had no chance to use the machine guns about them. The Japs were too close. The Americans opened fire with carbines, as had Woolstrum, and with rifles and pistols. There were about 120 Japs but in the foxholes on the outer edge there were only 14 Americans. Behind them, however, were more men, but those on the tip would have to bear the brunt of the attack.

One Jap jumped into the foxhole occupied by Merrill and Woolstrum. The Jap slashed at Merrill with a saber. Merrill grabbed a foxhole shovel and began beating and slashing the Jap with it. The Jap didn't live very long.

Then another Jap jumped into the foxhole. He, too, swung at Merrill with a saber. The flat of the blade caught Merrill in the face and stunned him. Woolstrum held his fire. He couldn't tell which man was which. The Jap climbed out of the foxhole. Merrill staggered after him, but fell on his face before he could take many steps. The Jap didn't get far either. Pfc. Leon Blackwell in another foxhole got him with one shot.

In still another foxhole, Sgt. Joseph Woolwich saw Merrill but couldn't tell who he was. Woolwich swung his .45 around and called "Who's there?" Merrill knew what was coming. "No, no, no" he screamed. Then realizing that any Jap could yell the same words he cried, "It's Merrill, an American." Woolwich held his fire and Merrill got the hell out of sight.

In other foxholes men were fighting the Japs in hand-to-hand combat. The Japs used sabers and pistols, their favorite weapons for a banzai attack.

Pfc. Woodrow H. Montgomery was one of the few men who got a machine gun into operation. It accounted for several Japs. In the same hole with him, Sgt. Hurley Gilley got two Japs with a pistol. He got one of them as the Jap started to slash at Pvt. Robert E. Lacey with a saber. Gilley who had seen action on Guam and Leyte, described the charge, after it was over as "the worst fighting I was ever in."

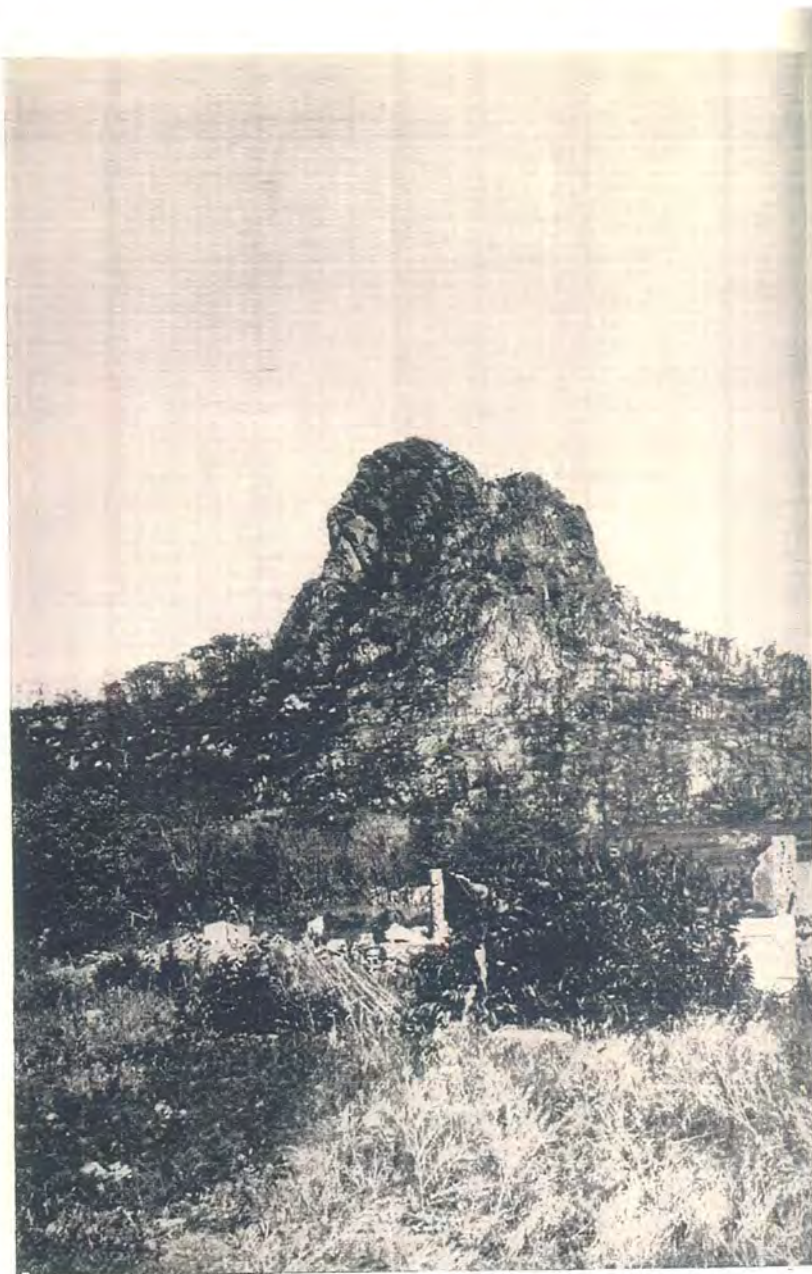
T/Sgt. Theodore S. Rycharski was one of the men farther back from the perimeter's tip. Next morning he and six other enlisted men were to be commissioned 2nd Lts. for outstanding duty on Leyte, but Rycharski had no time to think about that. Jap after Jap ran toward him. One by one they fell, hit by bullets from Rycharski's carbine.

Then as suddenly as they had charged, the Japs retreated into the underbrush. They didn't stay there, however. They made eight more attacks before dawn. On five occasions the Americans were forced back, but the lost ground always was regained. Next morning the bodies of 60 dead Japs

were found around the outpost. Our losses were only a fraction of that number."



3 miles west of Okinawa, the 77th takes the important island of Ie Shima where the famed war correspondent, Ernie Pyle would die.



Iegusugu Yama—otherwise known as "The Pinnacle"—the Japs' last stronghold on Ie Shima.

## PART V

### Ie Shima: Important Little Island

*BRIEF:* Ie Shima, a flat-topped, two-by-five mile island which is dominated by one rocky peak, lies less than three miles west of central Okinawa. On its plateau the Japs had constructed a good, three-strip airfield. The 77th Division which was then floating around dodging Jap suicide planes was ordered to assault Ie Shima on the 16th of April.

The Commanding General of the 77th decided to attack Ie Shima from the western end where the Japanese defenders considered landings to be impracticable. The Division Artillery, less the 304th Field Artillery Battalion, was landed and emplaced on Minna Shima, an undefended sandbar about 6,500 yards southeast of Ie, on 15 April.

The 305th Infantry and the 306th Combat Team struck Ie from the southwest on the morning of 16 April. Initial resistance was light and more than half of the island was quickly overrun. But the island was found to be heavily mined and resistance increased as troops neared the town and the mountain.

Two battalions of the 307th Infantry landed south of Ie Town on the morning of the 17th. A bitter and prolonged battle developed as our forces tried to enter the town. The enemy in thoroughly prepared positions and reinforced by hundreds of fighting civilians fought for every building and every rock. Counterattacks were frequent and suicidal in nature.

During the period 17 through 21 April the Division slowly forged a ring of men and weapons around the town and the mountain. Then they inched forward through the rubble. It was costly, desperate work. Finally the 306th took Iegusugu Yama, and the 305th and 307th cleaned out the town.

When, on 25 and 26 April the bulk of the Division moved to Okinawa, 4,794 Japs had been killed and 149 prisoners taken on Ie. The 77th's losses were 239 killed, 897 wounded, and 19 missing. Among the killed was Ernie Pyle, well known war correspondent.

Although overshadowed by the larger campaign on Okinawa, Ie Shima was an important battle in its own right. The airfield captured here was quickly developed into a huge B-29 Bomber base from which American planes blasted Japan and swept the China Sea.

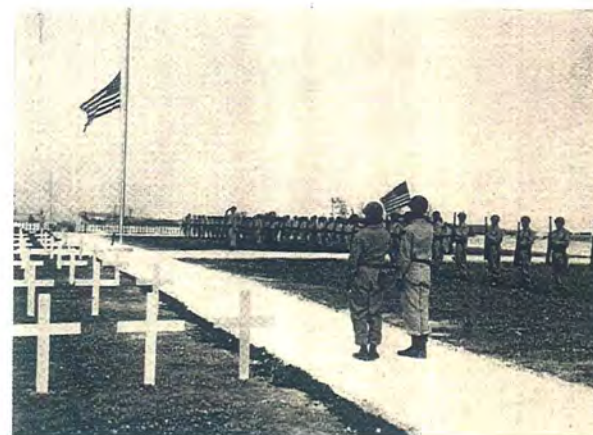


During the preparation for the Ie Shima landings, a Kamikaze pilot dove into the attack transport ship, the Henrico, killing many including, Colonel Vincent J. Tanzola, who 305<sup>th</sup> in combat on Guam and Leyte, plus the regimental executive, operations, and personnel officers and a number of key enlisted men of the headquarters detachment.



Top: Our convoy on the move after standing by during the day's fighting on Ie. Center: Col. Vincent J. Tanzola, CO, 305th Infantry, victim of a "Kamikaze" in the ill-fated Henrico. Bottom: An LST opens her portals to allow a LVT to enter off Ie Shima.

On April 18, 1945, a Japanese machine gun fired on the jeep in which Ernie Pyle was riding on Ie Shima. Pyle and the others hit the dirt by the side of the road. When Pyle raised his head to check on the others, he was hit in the head and died instantly. In 1949, he was later reburied in Punchbowl Cemetery in Honolulu.



Top: Three buglers sound Taps as the 77th Division's plaque honoring the ground on which famous war correspondent Ernie Pyle was killed, is unveiled on Ie Shima. Bottom: Last homage is paid to those who gave their lives in the battle for Ie Shima.



Mr. Levin's 305th Regiment moves up on Ie Shima.



Top: General Burnell, CG, 77th Division Artillery, questions a GI on the sands of Ie Shima.  
Bottom: Detachment of 292d Air Liaison Group directing planes from a forward position.



Top: Drums of oil are unloaded among Japanese equipment from an LST onto Ie Shima, April 19, 1945.  
Bottom: Company A, 305th Infantry, moves up to support the 307th during an attack on Iegusugu.



## The 77th's experience on Ie Shima.



Top: A Jap pillbox goes up in flames. Bottom: Troops advance over a flat area of Ie.



Top: An amphibious tank after it had detonated one of the Japs' many 500-pound mines on Ie Shima. Bottom: A demolition team, later wiped out by the explosion of a mine, at work removing two of the deadly bombs.



The April 1st invasion of Okinawa, Operation Iceberg, marked the final battle of the war. Fighting bravely and effectively, the 305th Combat Team “had the last try at the enemy.”



Three 77th Division Infantrymen take cover behind coral while they fire down on Japanese positions on Okinawa.

## PART VI

### Okinawa: Final Blow to Dai Nippon

*BRIEF:* The 77th Infantry Division's participation in the battle of Okinawa called for the utmost of effort, fortitude and endurance from all personnel. They were tired when they entered the line on the 29th of April, just three days after the conclusion of the Ie Shima battle. They took over positions just north of the “escarpment” near Urasoe Mura, north of Shima, from the even more weary men of the 96th Division.

Between the 29th of April and the 5th of May, the 307th Combat Team took the “escarpment,” which was a bitter battle, and mopped up, which was even more bitter. This was a war of scaling ladders, cargo nets, satchel charges, grenades and flaming gasoline.

The Japs threw a counteroffensive on the 4th–6th of May, the brunt of which was caught and stopped by the 306th Combat Team on the left of the 307th. Then the Japs, still strong, went on the defensive.

For almost a month the 77th slowly pushed south. The Japs were thoroughly prepared with an underground defense in depth. They had ample weapons and ammunition. The terrain was difficult and confusing. The weather and mud favored the defense of this area just north of Shuri, which was the core of the enemy hold on Okinawa. Somehow, with the regiments taking towns in costly, slow but skillful attacks, the job was done. It took 32 days to advance about 3,500 yards on approximately a 1,000-yard front. En route, 14,000 Japs were killed. But Shuri fell and the remaining enemy gathered farther south.

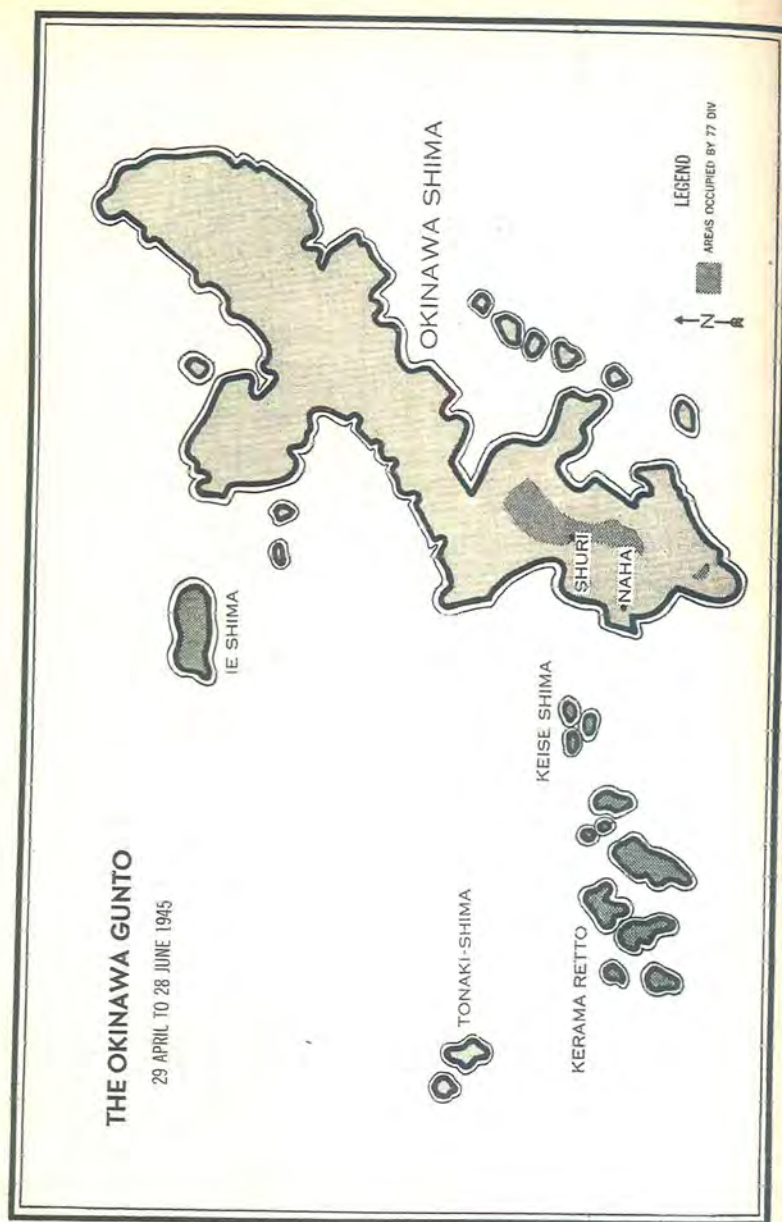
The 305th Combat Team had the last try at the enemy. Attached to the 96th Division on 18–22 June, it executed several skillfully coordinated local attacks to clear the Yuza “escarpment” and Hills 79 and 85, the last organized resistance on Okinawa.

Fighting on Okinawa cost the 77th 837 killed, missing, or dead of wounds, and 3,076 wounded. But the Division assessed the Japs a fee of 16,127 killed and 58 prisoners in return, or 18 Japs killed for each American dead or missing.

Even as the island was declared secure on the 26th of June, the 77th loaded for a move to the Philippines to stage there for the next operation.



After Ie Shima, the 77th Division was called on to replace the 96th on the push south down to Shuri Castle to complete the conquest of Okinawa.



## CHAPTER 24

### The Escarpment

THREE DAYS after the finish of the mop-up in Ie Shima, the 77th Division was in line on Okinawa. This was the 29th of April and the weary 77th had been ordered to replace the more weary 96th Division pushing south down the backbone of the island.

The movement to Okinawa had been accomplished in less than three days, mainly by LSTs. The trip was short, and there had been no time for any shipboard orientation other than limited time for planning. However, something had been done in anticipation. Although the Division had been given primary missions of cleaning up the Kerama Retto and Ie Shima, it also made plans for possible employment on the main island of Okinawa. These plans had been formed while the 77th was in the staging area on Leyte, and had been amplified as the Division finished the Kerama Retto and Ie Shima. Hundreds of aerial photographs had been interpreted, terrain studies made, and estimates of enemy strength and order of battle summaries made available to all troops. The G-3 section had, in addition to its regular plans for commitment, made a careful and continuous study of the situation on Okinawa. As a result, when the warning order came for the participation on the main island, the limited time available was devoted to a final reconnaissance and study of the positions to be occupied on the battle line. The G-4 group had a workable plan ready when the time came. A traffic circulation plan was established for the movement of cargo and personnel from the beaches to the designated assembly areas. Supply distribution points were established close to the front lines. Cargo had been diverted to Okinawa as early as the 19th of April.

The actual warning order for the commitment of the Division on Okinawa had been received while the Ie fight was in progress. Quarters parties and reconnaissance elements under Brigadier General Rav L. Burnell had landed on Okinawa on the 20th of April. They selected beach areas, supply routes and a rear area bivouac. The 77th was to once again become part of XXIV Corps, which also included the 7th and 96th Infantry Divisions.

When, on the morning of the 27th of April, General Bruce and his staff landed on Okinawa, they went directly to XXIV Corps CP and from there, forward to the 96th Division CP at Futema to make arrangements for the relief. By the time the General arrived at his own rear area command post, the 307th Combat Team was already moving south to initiate that relief. It was temporarily attached to the 96th Division.



Photos of the blasting of Shuri Castle, scenes witnessed by Mr. Levin.



Top: An M18 blasts away at enemy positions in Shuri. Bottom: The destroyed city of Shuri.



Top: Ruins are all that remain of the once-imposing chapel in Shuri after the battle. Bottom: Long Toms assist the infantryman's advance on Okinawa from Keisei Shima.



**The 77th battles southward on Okinawa.  
The intrepid lineman is John Marshall, and a GI hears of Germany's surrender.**



*Top: A lineman exposes himself to enemy fire as he repairs telephone wires. Bottom: A bulldozer of the 302d Engineer Combat Battalion pulls a truck through a bad stretch of road north of Shuri.*



*Top: The Doughboy finds no time for wild celebration as he listens to news of Germany's surrender. Bottom: The Infantry moves on to another objective.*



Mr. Levin may be in the upper right photo during the action on Okinawa.



Top: An American soldier leads homeless Japanese children to the safety of American lines. Bottom: Two wounded men walk back to an aid station for further treatment.



Top: A flame-throwing tank burns out a Jap cave on Hill 178. Bottom: A demolitions squad prepares to blow a Jap cave.



## The 307th Infantry scales the Escarpment near Shuri.



Top: Infantrymen of the 307th use rope ladders to scale the Escarpment.  
Bottom: The Escarpment after a severe artillery and bomb concentration.



Top: Shuri Castle, a month-long obstacle—before. Bottom: Shuri Castle—after.



According to the 77<sup>th</sup> Division's history, Mr. Levin's 3d Battalion received a Presidential Citation for its actions on Okinawa . The citation is quoted to the right.

*3d Battalion, 305th Infantry Regiment: "For breaking through the vaunted Shuri Defense Line on Okinawa, Ryukyu Islands, on 15 to 17 May 1945, and contributing ultimately to the Japanese evacuation of Shuri Castle and the entire Shuri Defense Line."*



Top: An M18 blasts away at enemy positions in Shuri. Bottom: The destroyed city of Shuri.



Top: Shuri Castle, a month-long obstacle—before. Bottom: Shuri Castle—after.



After Okinawa, the 77th was sent to the island of Cebu in the Philippines. After taking the surrender of 5,543 Japanese troops, the 77th took up occupation duties on the northerly Japanese island of Hokkaido.



*Japanese soldiers await action of American victors to whom they have just been surrendered on the island of Cebu.*

## PART VII

### Mopping Up After the War

**BRIEF:** The Division returned to the Philippine Islands early in June 1945 with the mission of hastily rehabilitating, re-equipping and planning for a part in the November invasion of Kyushu. As usual, the 77th had to build its own rest camp, this time near Danao on the east coast of Cebu. By exerting effort and ingenuity the troops worked themselves out of the mud and into reasonably comfortable quarters.

An extensive recreation program was instituted which included games, swimming, sailboat racing, nightly movies, and dances. The Red Cross and local societies assisted. Into the midst of the program fell the news of peace. The 77th did not indulge in riotous celebration. The men remembered Okinawa, considered what Kyushu would have been, and were quietly thankful.

From 26 August through September the Division without incident took the surrender of 5,543 Japanese troops on Cebu.

The 77th was ordered to prepare for occupation duties in North Honshu or Hokkaido. Winter clothing was issued and plans were made to operate under cold weather conditions. General Randle and a small advance party departed on 16 September.

The Division, combat loaded, left Cebu on 26 September and arrived off Hakodate, Hokkaido early on 4 October. The Division Artillery headquarters and the 306th Combat Team landed there. The remainder of the Division sailed to Otaru and disembarked on the 5th and 6th of October. Division Headquarters, Division Troops, and the 307th Combat Team occupied the Sapporo area. The 305th Combat Team proceeded by rail and road to the inter-mountain city of Asahigawa.

This was an orderly, peaceful occupation. The Japanese caused no trouble either initially or subsequently. The Japanese Army and Naval Forces had been almost entirely demobilized prior to the occupation so the 77th merely collected and disposed of the military equipment. The only difficulties developed in quieting and repatriating thousands of Chinese and Korean laborers and prisoners. From Hokkaido the combat veterans of the 77th returned home via the "point system." New officers and men took their places and carried on their duties. During the long, cold, snowy winter they worked and played as well disciplined occupation troops in this strange land.

The 77th closed out its military affairs, transferred its property, personnel and responsibilities to other units, and was inactivated in Hokkaido on 15 March 1946. It had served four years, fought about 200 days in three campaigns, had killed 43,651 Japanese and had suffered almost 14,000 casualties. Its work was done.