RAY'S STORY

Written: June 1987 - July 1989
By: Raymond Marshall Miller
Born 1926 - Deceased 1989

FORWARD (By Charles K. Jessup)

Ray passed away at 63 years of age. Cause of death was a malignant brain tumor. Unfortunately Ray never got to complete his story. But he did cover the better part of his first 18 years, all of which is well worth reading and passing on to future generations.

Anyone wishing to contribute any information (experiences you may have shared with him, statistics on him, who his relatives may have been that were left un-mentioned, etc.) about Ray which might help summarize his life from the time he was 18 years old until the time he passed away, please feel free to send it to me. Thank you.

PREFACE

My grandparents were complete strangers to me. I never knew any of them. Even their names. This is what has brought me to write this journal. I want my grandchildren to know about their grandpa and as much as I know about their great grandparents; my mother and father. I am not too sure how to go about this, but it seems I must start some place, so, here I go.

My name is Raymond Marshall Miller I was born on January 20, 1926 outside of Phoenix, Oregon at a house called The Landing Place. The only thing I remember about The Landing Place is that it was a shack covered on the outside with split and flattened tin cans. Very colorful, but looked down on by the neighbors. I don't remember living there, but as of 1975 it was still there. I visited there with my wife Patty. We were just bumming around for a few days that summer. We bought some really fantastic peaches. I am not sure what kind. They were big and cool and juicy and so good. It has become one of my fond memories.

The next time in my life I can remember is when we lived up on Coleman Creek (1933). We had a house with three rooms. A living room/kitchen combination and two bedrooms, one for my mom and dad, one for my brothers Roy and Bernie and me. My older brother Bryson, my sisters Garnet and Jean had already moved out to start their lives. All in Medford, Oregon. My mother had three other children, but they all died in childbirth, or within a few days of birth. As far as I know, none had names. At that time, my dad, William King Miller, was a lineman for COPCO, the California/Oregon Power Company. He used to drive a Model T Ford truck to work in Grants Pass, Oregon everyday. About 50 miles round trip. Quite a long way back in those days.

1933-1937 (7 to 11 years old)

The house we lived in on Coleman Creek was not much of a house. My mom swept the floor every day, maybe more. She was very clean. Anyway, this house had cracks in the floor, maybe a half inch wide, so all the debris went under the house, where we had a dog named Socks who

kept everything clean on the ground. He was later killed and thrown into an abandoned well by a man named Strunk. My brothers and I always hated him and tried to think of ways to get even. We never did. Mr. Strunk had some goats and they were always eating the roof off his house. We always thought it was because he killed Socks that he was getting what he deserved. It was about this time I started school; age seven. We didn't have a kindergarten, so everyone started at seven in the first grade. I remember my first day very well. My teacher's name was Mrs. Fish. Not a very nice lady. I had never seen an indoor toilet before and my first day at school was an adventure indeed. During the first morning, I had to go to the toilet. When I got to the toilet, I didn't know where or what to go in. They had wash basins, urinals, and toilets. I ended up peeing in the brass floor drain. Didn't realize until the next recess, what I had done.

We were very poor back then, in the middle of the Great Depression as it was called. We didn't know we were poor. We always had enough to eat and were warm. When I say we, I mean Roy, Bernie and me.

Mrs. Fish always made me stand up so she could show everybody how clean my clothes were, even if they were patched overalls and shirts made from flour sacks. I hated it. She always made a lot of how you looked. Some kids took a lot of flak because of her. It's strange though. One of my good friends was Ted Fish, her nephew. My best friend, by the way, was Glen Wright. I understand he still lives there. I'll find out one of these days. I guess the rest of my first year was uneventful. In school, that is. That was the year that Bernie and I went cherry picking. There was a man named Andy Calhoun. A friend of my dad's. Everybody was a friend of my dad's. Incidentally, anyway, we always passed Calhoun's cherry orchard going to and from school. Dad always said, "Don't take anything from anybody unless you ask first." If we wanted to get killed, all we had to do was take something that wasn't ours or lie about anything. Everyday going home from school, we would knock on Mr. Calhoun's door and ask if he had any cherries we could pick to eat. He always said we didn't have to ask every time, but we said our dad said we did. By the time he finally got through to us the cherry season was over.

When I was eight, rather on the Christmas (about three weeks) before I was eight, my sister Garnet, who was working in Medford at the time, bought a Radio Flyer wagon for Roy, Bernie and me. It was probably the nicest Christmas present I ever got. Even though I had to share it with my brothers. We always shared without any conflict. One time we scrounged up an old buggy. You know? Like the ones you see in the western movies. We took it all apart, except for the wheels and king beam. That is what ties the front and rear wheels together. So, after we took the body off we nailed a board about a foot wide to the king beam, then tied a rope to each end of the front axles to steer with. Then we would spend a half day or more getting the contraption to the top of a hill on an old road. Roy would hold it back while Bernie and I got on. He would give it a push and jump on. Me steering, Bernie in the middle and Roy in back. Let me tell you, that was one hell of a ride. I'll bet we were going sixty miles an hour, bouncing and swaying and it was all over in 3 or 4 minutes. We would spend every day doing this until the wheels disintegrated. Usually about four days.

After that we would take the iron wheels off an old wheelbarrow. I should say iron rims. Then take a stick about 30" long and nail a cross piece near one end about six inches long so it looked like a cross. Then holding the bottom end of the cross, we pushed the wheelbarrow rim and guided it with the cross stick. Running behind until we were pooped.

Another favorite past time, and one of mine, was swimming. It really wasn't swimming but at the time I thought it was. There was an irrigation ditch running by our house in Phoenix. It was about 15 feet wide and four feet deep. A little way past our house. Maybe a half mile, it crossed a gully, and of course the water crossed in a flume, or a ditch made out of metal, anyway. We would go to the upstream side of the flume and float across and out onto a cement apron. Just beyond the cement apron the water washed away the bottom of the ditch so there was a big deep pool and the water swirled around in a kind of whirlpool. I would come out of the flume and across the apron and into the deep water. Usually the current would carry me across the deep pool to the shallow water on the other side, but sometimes the current would whirl me around into the deep water and since I couldn't swim I would go under. Roy was the only one who could swim, so he always went first and waited to see that the rest of us all got across. If not, he would dive back in and pull one or both of us to the shallow water. I'll bet he saved me from drowning five or six times a day on a summer afternoon.

Going home from swimming on those same summer afternoons we used to stop at a grove of trees. Wild grapes were growing in these trees. The grapes weren't all that great, but the vines were hollow. We would cut off a piece about 6 inches long and smoke it like a cigarette. Further along towards home were several large tomato fields. You could reach up under the vines and find a big red ripe and cold tomato. Boy, were they good. Another thing we did in late summer and early fall was swiping apple juice. There was an apple and pear processing plant in Phoenix called Newberry Packing Co. They had a huge wood vat that they stored apple juice in before making cider. It must have held 10,000 gallons. It was out in the middle of a storage yard and not easily seen. We would get a nail and drive it into the crack between the wooded staves. Pull the nail out and it was followed by a stream of apple juice, which we would catch in whatever was handy. In a few minutes the pulp inside would fill up the hole and stop the flow until the next time we wanted some juice. Luckily we never got killed for doing this.

About this time of year the blackberries were ripe. My mom always canned whatever could be canned. The reason I brought up the blackberries first is because we always picked them barefoot. No fooling, from the time we got out of school in the spring until we started back in the fall, we never wore shoes. This made our feet very calloused on the bottom and with a little care the blackberry thorns never bothered us. As I said, my mom canned everything. My dad would go out into the woods and near a spring, he would build a scaffold about 20 feet up in a tree. Before dark he would take his double barreled shotgun and climb up to the scaffold. He would clamp a five battery flashlight to the bottom of the barrel. He would also place a piece of rock salt near the spring. He would wait until a deer came. When the deer licked the rock salt, you could hear it very easily. Dad would turn on the light. The deer would look up at the light and it would blind the deer. Dad would fire and we would have meat to can for winter. As I said before, we were very poor and it was extremely difficult to provide for a large family during the depression, so we took what we could get, when we could get it.

We had a single shot 22 rifle among other weapons my dad owned. Dad would give Roy three or four 22 shells and send him out to get some silver gray squirrels for supper. Roy always came back with three or four squirrels for supper. I never remember Roy missing a squirrel. Even to this day, I don't know of a better shot. There were lots of Laurel trees around where we lived. Just before dark, hundreds of robins would come to roost in these trees. My dad would go out and

point his shot gun up into the tree and shoot twice without aiming. He would kill as many as two hundred robins. All of us would spend half the night plucking and cleaning them. My mom would make a great big stew or pot pie as she called it, with homemade noodles. It was positively delicious. Mom also canned robins.

Another thing my mom excelled at was baking bread, or any other pastry. I remember the bread, because she always baked a little loaf for me. I can still taste that warm bread with butter on it. We only had butter when we had a cow, which wasn't too often. Aunt Garnet still bakes it once in a while. When we didn't have butter, we had Oleo margarine. Back then, Oleo, as we called it, was white. It came with a little package of coloring. It was up to one of us to mix the coloring into the Oleo. It was a rotten job and the Oleo didn't taste that good anyway. Saturday night was bath night. We had a big wood cook stove and mom would have us bring water from the creek and fill several large pots to heat on the stove, then pour it into a wash tub. Bernie was always first because he was the smallest, Roy and I took turns being second. Speaking of water. We never had any running water or an indoor toilet until I was almost nine.

I was nine before I had my first taste of beef. I had pork and chicken of course. One of our real great treats was store bought bread. It was almost like eating cake. We usually had that once a year. The year I was in the 3rd grade, we lived at a place called Mud Springs. There wasn't anything there except us and another family down the road a half mile. We went to a school on the other side of the mountain called Independence School. I don't remember how far it was, but it seemed like quite a ways. I remember that school was out at three o'clock and if I didn't go straight home, it would be dark when I got there. Early in the school year, it was still pretty warm out and we always stopped at a farm called The White Place. They had a little log house built into the ground. It was called a spring house and was used for keeping food cold. There was a spring coming up right in the middle of the earth floor. It was cold enough to make ice crystals in the milk stored there. A cold cup of icy milk sure hit the spot on a hot afternoon.

As I think about it, it must have been about four miles from home to school. The reason I am trying to remember this is because one day in late fall (maybe November) Mr. Sauer from down the road came and told my dad that a German shepherd dog had gone mad in Medford and was thought to be roaming Dark Hollow. This is where the White place is. We would cross the hill from school and into Dark Hollow, stop at White's for some milk or an apple. I got to fooling around and Roy and Bernie went on without me. When I realized they were gone, I started out alone, going up the side of the hill on a trail through head high brush. As I continued on, I looked back and saw this big dog following me. As of yet, I didn't know about the mad dog. Anyway I stopped to let the dog catch up with me. But when I stopped, it stopped. This went on until I was almost home. The trail came out on the road about 300 yards from our house. I looked back again and the dog was getting much closer and I could see the foam on his mouth and he started to snarl and started to run after me. I started yelling for dad. Just as the dog was ready to catch me, dad stepped out on the porch and shot the dog right over my head. I was so scared, I wouldn't go out after dark for months. Anyway, dad told us not to go near the dead dog. He got a can of kerosene and poured it over the dog right where it lay. Piled some wood on it and set it on fire. He kept putting wood on it until there was nothing left except ashes. Then he spent the next month it seemed, telling us to stay away from any animal that looks or acts strange. Later, we heard that a little girl had been bitten by this dog

and later died of rabies.

I told you about carrying water from the creek for bathing. We also had to carry water for my mom's wash day. Everybody got up at daylight and building a fire on a rock fire pit. Filling two great big tubs with water. One to wash and one to rinse. My mom did it all by hand on a wash board. I still don't know how she did it. It was work a full-grown would protest. There was a hand operated wringer to squeeze the water out of the rinsed clothes and of course this chore always fell to the boys. It was a day we didn't look forward to.

I was telling back a ways about mom canning. Since we didn't have electricity. We didn't have a refrigerator and since we lived out in the mountains, there wasn't any ice man. The only way to keep anything cool was to use a window cooler. This consisted of a box, maybe an apple crate or something similar and attach it to an open window. Drape the outside box with burlap. Then periodically wet the burlap and the air passing over the burlap would cool whatever you had in the box. Not too efficient, but it sure helped keep the butter from melting, and as I said before, butter was a rare thing for us.

After we left Mud Springs came the big event. We moved into Phoenix. My dad rented a house, known as the Johnson place. This is the first place we ever had that had electricity and running water. What an absolutely amazing phenomenon. I must have flushed the toilet twenty times the first day we moved in. Our radio wouldn't work on regular house current because ours worked on a car battery. I suppose it won't mean very much to tell you about the programs we listened to. To all of us they were absolutely spellbinding. The actors and our imaginations were all that was necessary for the best entertainment you could ever imagine. The Johnson place was just across the irrigation ditch I was telling you about, from the school house. It was the first time, we didn't have to go a long way to school. No more getting up before daylight and getting home at dark. We were really living.

I remember one time when we were going to Independence School. Roy did something wrong, I don't remember what, but the teacher was going to spank him. I should point out here, that the school had two rooms. One had from the first to fourth grades. And the other had from the fifth through the eighth. We had two teachers and a handyman. Roy's teacher took him to the furnace room to punish him and he didn't think he deserved it, so he wouldn't let her spank him. She called the handyman and they both tried. It didn't work, so the teacher sent him home. When he got home, dad wanted to know why. He told him and dad made Roy go back to school and let the teacher spank him. She must have saw something funny about the whole incident, because when he got back to school, she really broke up and everything was forgotten.

That brings to mind, my first fight. We had, as all schools do, a class bully. His name was Warren Hays. He would make fun of our clothes, take part of your lunch, or whatever else he could do to make you uncomfortable. One day we were playing on an outdoor basketball court and here comes Warren. He grabbed the ball and pushed me in the face. That was the last straw. I kicked him in the knee and when he bent over to rub it I hit him in the side of the face. Well, we were just starting to get into it and the bell rang. He said, "We will finish this after school." After school, I waited, but he never came. That was my first fight and the last time we had to worry about Warren.

As long as I have you all primed, I better tell you about my first encounter with a girl. We were both seven. We were up in a loft over her folks garage, just doing what kids do, when we ran across a book. The book had some nude pictures in it. We wondered if we looked like the pictures, and took off our clothes to find out. That's about all

that happened. When I got home, my mom asked me what I had been doing. I knew that taking off my clothes as I had and where I had was wrong, so I lied. She whaled the hell out of me. I never knew until years later how she knew. She noticed that my shirt was buttoned wrong and put two and two together. Mothers are pretty smart.

It was about a year after we moved to Phoenix, when we moved again. This time to Talent, Oregon. Another little wide spot in the road just south of Phoenix. We only stayed there a short time and then came the big adventure. I was ten years old. Both my sisters, Garnet and Jean had moved to Reno, Nevada. Both were married. Jean was separated from her husband, Al Davis, who is the father of my niece, Pat. Garnet was married to a man named Emilio Campagnoni, a Brazilian immigrant. He was a nice man and pretty well off. He ran a garbage collection company. Anyway, Garnet and Jean wanted dad to move to Nevada, because there was a lot better chance for him to work at his trade, which, as I said was an electrician and power lineman. We had an old red truck with wooden spokes in the wheels. One day, long before daylight, we left Oregon. Mom and dad and Bernie were in front. Roy and I were in a big cardboard box on top of all our belongings. What an adventure. None of us kids had ever been further away from home than Medford, so this was like a trip to any exciting place I ever dreamed of.

My dad never, ever drove over 35 miles an hour, so the first day we got as far as Dunsmire, CA., about 125 miles. We made camp off the road a little way. We had a tent and a camp stove and bedrolls, so it was just like home. I'll never forget. We had a whole lot of biscuits and beans and it's still one of my favorite meals. The trip was uneventful until we turned east of Red Bluff and started over Mount Lassen. We were about halfway across when an axle on the truck broke. Dad got a pull to a small gas station and store nearby and they had a phone. I should say here, that back then, phones were kind of scarce outside of cities. Dad called Garnet, and her husband ordered an axle out of San Francisco and had it shipped to us by bus. It took five days. We were pretty high up in the mountains and it got pretty cold at night. Cold enough to freeze ice on the water bucket. It really bothered my dad's rheumatism and he was in constant pain, although he tried to hide it. When it came time to install the new axle, we all had to help. Finally, it was done and the next morning we were off again. I guess I didn't mention we only traveled in daylight. No lights on the truck. That day we were traveling on the road between Susanville and Reno and I can't remember ever being so cold before. I can remember having to pee so bad and couldn't get dad's attention to stop. Seems like we went on forever. We finally stopped at the Nevada state line. What a relief. Dad called Garnet and she and Jean met us at the city limits and led us to our new house. A place they had rented for us at 941 Quincy St. I can't recall how long we stayed there, but I finished the fourth grade at Orvis Ring School.

1937 (11 years old)

That was the year we moved to Wadsworth, Nevada, about 30 miles east of Reno. My Uncle Dave Duffy, my Aunt Bertha, and my cousins, Merle, Chet, and Dave all lived there. We stayed with Uncle Dave for about 3 months. Then dad got a job managing a ranch at Fort Churchill called the Toll Ranch. It was called the Toll Ranch because it was an old Overland Stage station and you had to pay a toll to cross the river on their ferry and later on, a bridge.

We had twelve hundred acres and about twelve ranch hands. Mom did all the cooking. We had a guy named Scotty working for us and he had

several ailments. Imagined or real, we never knew. Anyway, Roy and I used to catch rattle snakes. We sold the skins for a dollar a piece. A very good price back then. Scotty always said the rattlesnake oil was good for his aches and pains. He drank the oil and ate the meat. It wasn't long before Roy and I were eating the meat right along with him. It really was very tasty. I still like it now. Whenever I can get it, that is. One time Scotty asked my mom to borrow a frying pan. She hit the roof. Told him he would never use one of her frying pans to cook a damned snake. Most of the men working at the ranch were Italians or Basque, so they all ate old style French bread. The only place that made it was a bakery in Reno. They shipped it out every week on the train. The train came by about a quarter of a mile from our house and the trainmen just threw the bread out on the ground in burlap sacks, or gunny sacks as we called them. Roy and I took turns going down to the crossing and carrying sacks of bread back to the house. We all developed a fondness for French bread and I still have it to this day.

It was during this time at the Toll Ranch that I finally started to grow up. At least, I thought so. One day we were all out at the horse corrals picking the horses for the next day's work. Roy hit one of the horses on the rear with a board and dad thought I did it. Of course, it meant a spanking, as dad would not stand for any abuse to the animals. Anyway he made for me and I ran. I remember him leaning on the corral fence as I was running across the alfalfa field. He said, "Just remember Raymond, I'll be here when you get back." That was all I needed, and of course you can guess what happened to me. It's a lesson I never, ever forgot. Face your problems now. Don't run away, because they will still be there when you get back.

Roy, Bernie and I really enjoyed the time we lived at the ranch, as I said before. The house was an old Overland Stage station. It had two stories. A public room (living room), kitchen, dining room, and three bedrooms downstairs and six rooms upstairs. No bathrooms. A bath house outside next to the pump house. The pump house pumped water with a windmill, or a big old single cylinder gas engine. I wish you could have heard it run. It made the funniest noises. I really can't describe it. Wish I could. We also had a lot of irrigation ditches to water our alfalfa fields. As the summer wore on and the alfalfa got ripe, we shut off the water in the ditches. When we did, it left a lot of fish high and dry in the little pools in the ditches. We would collect all the edible fish for mom and the trash fish, (carp and suckers) we shot to put them out of their misery. At least as many as we could. We never seemed to have enough shells or enough time to do them all.

Almost all of the ranch was used to grow alfalfa. This in turn became hay for sale to other ranches in that part of the state. We did all the work with horses and horse drawn equipment. First, we mowed the alfalfa and let it dry for about three days, then we raked it into rows with a hay rake. Then it was put into piles called shocks, all by hand with a pitchfork. After that dried for about four more days, me or Roy would drive a wagon down between the rows of shocks and the men would pile it on the wagon. It was fairly cool under the shocks and all the animals would crawl under them to get cool. There were rabbits, pheasants, quails, and quite a few rattle snakes. Somebody would pick up a shock with his fork and all kinds of things would fall out before it got to the wagon. No one was ever bitten except old Scotty. He was bitten on the shoulder by a pretty big snake. Since it was pretty close to his heart, we had to take him to the hospital in Youngtown. He was pretty sick for about a week. Anyway, once the wagon was loaded we drove to an area where the hay was put in great big stacks. To make the

big stacks, they had a big tall pole anchored in the ground. Then about half way up this pole, there was another one attached to the first one in a slightly more than horizontal position. This was called a gin pole. There was a pulley at the top of the vertical pole and another on the end of the gin pole. A cable ran through the pulleys. We drove up under the end of the gin pole and hooked the cable to a device like a big net that was laid on the wagon bed before we started loading. As soon as this device called "a Diamond Fork" was hooked up, a team of horses tied to the other end of the cable would raise the hay up almost as high as it would go and another horse would pull it sideways and swing it over the hay stack. Finally, the guy doing the lifting would raise all the way up and a thing called a "trip", hooked to the pulley on the gin pole, released. The hay fell to the top of the stack. Then the process was repeated all over again. We had 900 acres of hay, so we usually ended up with about 80 haystacks. One hell of a summer's work. Of course my brother and I didn't think it was work. We never got paid either. We still had some money from our snake skins.

There was a ranch across the road and the wife of the rancher had a shed fixed up and sold some grocery items. The big thing I remember was the candy and gum. We could get Baby Ruth, Milky Ways, and Three Musketeers for a nickel and the gum was also a nickel. My favorite was one called Black Jack. A licorice flavored gum. I'd put a whole package in my mouth at one time and chew it all day long.

I remember the same summer, dad found some honey bees in one end of our house. One morning he and a couple of the ranch hands got some old rags and tied them around some sticks and started burning them. When they were burning good they rolled them on the ground until the fire went out but they were still smoking real good. Then they held the smoking rags up to the hole where the bees were crawling into the house. The smoke made the bees sleepy so they wouldn't sting too much. Then they started taking the siding off. They took off a square of siding about 10 feet wide and 10 feet high. In between the studs were pounds and pounds of honeycomb, the stuff the honey comes from. We used pans and kettles and wash tubs and everything we had to put all the honey in. After we had all the honey, the men nailed the siding back again. The bees went back to work and we melted the comb to extract the honey. We had honey for the next several years after we moved back to Reno. What a great summer.

Of course everything wasn't always great. My dad had some sort of arthritis or rheumatism. A disease that effects the joints. I had seen it cause him such terrible pain that sometimes in the night he would go outside and cry, because it hurt so bad and he thought we couldn't hear him. Down the road a ways, was a little place called Wabuska. They had some natural hot springs and dad would go there quite often to soak in the hot water, because it gave him a great deal of relief from the pain. I always felt so helpless during those times, because I couldn't help him.

That brings to mind a time when I must have been about four or five. I had these terrible ear aches. During the night I would cry. He would get up and come and get me. Then he would sit in a big easy chair with me laying on his chest. He would light a cigarette and sit and blow the smoke in my ear. After a couple of cigarettes the pain would stop and I would go to sleep. I never really knew what stopped the pain. The warm breath probably. I'm not too sure about the cigarette smoke. I really did think that is what it was for the longest time. Where was I? Oh yeah. The Wabuska hot springs. Even after we moved to Reno again, he would still go to Wabuska. Even though we were only five or six miles from Reno hot springs. He said the water was different. I

know this story is supposed to be about me, but I have to tell you about my mom and dad. They were such great people and I loved them so much. I hope I can, in this journal someplace, show how much they loved us and how much they went without so we could have something.

I have always eaten like a pig and eaten everything in sight. Often times after supper my dad would say he didn't want any dessert so I could have a second helping. The older I get the more I think about that. I know giving someone your pie doesn't seem like much, but it means a whole lot to me. He liked dessert just like we all did. I could go on and on about my parents, but I guess I better get on with my story.

There was a place called Fort Churchill about a mile and a half from the ranch. We used to go up there and dig around for valuable stuff the soldiers may have lost. The fort was built to house cavalry and infantry and to protect travelers traveling across Northern Nevada during the period between 1843 and 1864 when Nevada became a state. I understand that most of it has been restored. I sure did do a lot of dreaming there.

I know we went to school while we were on the ranch, but I am confused as to where and the sequence it falls into this story. I remember one school year at Wadsworth where Uncle Dave and Aunt Bertha lived, but not much detail, except that I didn't like it. We also went one school year to the school at Dayton. It was much better. Right on the river and covered by huge cottonwood trees.

I guess it was near the end of that year when we moved back to Reno. We moved to a house at 1032 West 2nd Street. Dad went to work at a place called Sierra Sign Service. They made and installed neon signs around Northern Nevada. Bernie and I started school at McKinley Park. It was right on the Truckee River. I was there recently (1987) and it is still there, but isn't in use any more. I can't remember what grade I was in. We only finished the school year we had started in Dayton.

I do remember we had to take turns chopping kindling wood for our wood cook stove. Yeah we were back to burning wood again. The wood was put in the cellar to keep it dry. I was cutting kindling one day and not really liking work very well; I was being careless. I was holding the wood down with my foot and chopping away when the axe glanced, went thru my shoe and cut off the ball of my foot. You know? That round part next to your big toe. Boy, the blood spurted clear to the ceiling. I yelled and mom came running. When she saw me she started to scream and say, "Oh my God, you're going to bleed to death." She finally called sister Garnet, who lived a few blocks away. She cam tearing over and they were already to take me to the hospital when dad came home. He just shook his head and wrapped it with cloth and put an ice bag on it and that was that.

1938-1939 (12 to 13 years old)

About that same time, Bryson, my oldest brother went to work for Crescent Creamery Company. He had a home delivery route for milk, cream, butter, and some other dairy products. Right away, we started getting all the things free. Back then, milk came in quart and gallon glass bottles, that I haven't seen in many a year. Milk was ten cents a quart and thirty five cents a gallon delivered. Incidentally, bread was ten cents a loaf. Doesn't seem like much now. Does it? This period was about 1938 I think.

That summer we moved across town to 618 Spokane Street near where dad worked. Of course that fall we started going to Orvis Ring School. That seemed like the place that I started changing. I started raising

hell, fighting, playing hooky, smoking, and every other thing that gave mom and dad ulcers. That time in my life continued for quite some time. I'll tell you about it as we go along. One incident that stuck in my mind all those years concerns my teacher. Her name was Grace Warner and she was teaching the sixth grade as well as being principal. I was being my usual obnoxious self one day and she decided that I should be punished. The usual punishment for boys was getting whacked across the palm of the hand with a ruler. Anyway, I held my hand out and she gave me a good one. I really hurt bad and instead of crying, I laughed. That bought me about five more real fast. The more she whacked the more I laughed. She broke down and cried. I really tried to behave after that and got promoted to Junior High School. I think the only reason I got promoted, was so she could get rid of me. There were, of course, other teachers, but none made any impressions on me.

We were pretty close to the Reno fair grounds. We used to go down there and exercise the horses. I mean leading them around in circles. They paid us fifteen cents an hour. One morning and we had enough for a movie, 10 cents and popcorn, a milk and a hot dog 10 cents. Sure did like those movies. One time at the fair grounds, Bernie and I were crossing the infield. They had electric fences put up temporarily to keep the stock apart. There was an irrigation ditch running down one side with a fence along side of it. You had to jump the ditch and go under the wire. Well, Bernie missed and fell in the ditch. He grabbed the fence to pull himself out and damn near electrocuted himself. I tried to pull him loose and got a big charge too. I finally had to tackle him to get him loose. When you are wet and hold onto an electrically charged wire, even a low voltage fence, you can't let go. I'm telling you, it ain't no fun!

They also had the Reno Rodeo at the fair grounds in June of every year. I sure liked those bucking horses and the bulls. Back then we had western movie cowboys. They mostly sang a lot and always caught the bad guys. They were all our heroes and they would come to the rodeos. Us kids would die to get close to one of them. Kind of like your rock stars of today. Up until that time, my life had been pretty much like any other kid growing up during the depression. However, when I was fourteen, things started to change. I have done a lot of soul searching to decide whether or not to tell you about this period in my life. I still have some misgivings, but I guess I better.

1939-1940 (13 to 14 years old)

After I finished the seventh grade, I never went back to school again. I had some friends that were a little on the wild side. Me too, I guess. The first thing I did was to get a job with Western Union Telegraph delivering telegrams. That was a big deal back then. I made twenty five cents an hour. To deliver the telegrams you walked, which was pretty slow, or you rode a bicycle. I didn't have a bike, so me and another guy stole one. I used it for about a week and one day the police came and arrested me. When mom and dad found out, you would have thought the world had come to an end. They were absolutely honest people and thought I was too, and honest people just didn't do things like that. Anyway, I was put on probation for a year. I don't know what was going through my mind when all this was going on, but it couldn't have been much. Two weeks later me and this same guy stole two cases of Coke off a delivery truck. The driver caught us a half block away and took us home. My dad beat hell out of me and told me I needed some discipline.

In 1940 they had an organization called the Civilian Conservation

Corps or the CCC. You were suppose to be seventeen to join but my dad signed the papers to enlist me. This outfit was just like the Army. You wore uniforms, slept in barracks, ate in a mess hall and had Army officers running the place. The term of enlistment was six months and you served it in a camp that was ran by the Department of Agriculture or the Bureau of Land Management. I was sent to a BLM camp about 70 miles east of Fallon, Nevada. Right out in the middle of the worst desert you ever clapped a eye on. When I said 70 miles from Fallon, I meant that was the nearest place with human habitation. We were paid $30.00 a month. Of the $30.00, twenty-one was sent home to your parents. We got nine dollars to spend on cigarettes and other frivolities. They fed us, furnished our clothes and a place to sleep and took care of us if we got sick or hurt. This camp was made of wooden framed structures with tar paper roofs and walls. They heated our barracks with coal stoves. Two in each barracks. Sixty men to a barracks. We used to take turns staying up at night to put coal in the stoves and to see they didn't burn down the building around our ears.

I went there in October and stayed all winter, and I mean winter. Lots of days it got down to 10 degrees below zero. As we were working out in the brush all the time, the cold was pretty bad. It was a real treat to get kitchen duty because we got to stay in a warm kitchen all day. We got up at six every morning, cleaned our area and made the beds, went to breakfast at 6:30 and got on open trucks to go to the work area which was five to thirty miles from camp. We grubbed brush and dug out areas that showed signs of having water. If water was found, we cemented in small pools to feed grazing cattle and sheep roaming the desert. At lunch time we had sack lunches. Usually baloney and cheese sandwiches, a piece of pie or cake, and an orange. We made coffee over open fires we had going to keep warm. If you have ever eaten a baloney and cheese sandwich straight out of the refrigerator you will have an idea of what our lunch was like. So, in self-defense we used to put the sandwiches on a shovel and hold it over the fire to melt the cheese. Once it was melted it wasn't too bad, except that more often than not, we burned the bread. It was a winter I still remember very often.

We got a pass to go to town once a month. Always on a weekend. Sometimes I could go to Reno, but most of the time we went to Fallon. They ran a truck to Fallon. If you wanted to go anyplace else it was up to you to go there and back on your own. One weekend I decided to go home. Since there was no way to get there except hitchhike, I did. There was very little traffic then. In fact there is very little traffic now (U.S. 50). I went out in front of camp and stood for quite a while. Nobody stopped, so I decided to walk a ways. It was starting to get dark and cold, so I kept walking to keep warm. Before I realized it, I was a long way from camp with no traffic at all. I finally decided to wait until morning. This was about 10:00 at night. I found a spot under some big old sage and grease wood and sat down. As I sat there and cooled off after all that walking, I started to get really cold. This was in March, but plenty cold yet. I got colder and colder and started worrying about freezing to death. I tried to start a fire, but everything was too damp to burn. I ran out of matches and then I finally thought of trying to go back to camp. By then I was so damn cold I couldn't get warmed up at all. I was getting desperate. I finally came to a place where an old creek bed ran by the road. It was about four feet deep. I was trying to find a place to crawl in to get warm. Finally I found a hole in the bank, not quite big enough for me, so I started to dig it out with my hands. After I got a couple of inches off the surface I notice the earth was warmer. It still held the heat from the days sun. I laid down and knocked enough warm dirt down

to cover myself with. I laid there the rest of the night under several inches of dirt. It was really pretty warm. I do remember my teeth chattered for a long time. I am sure that dirt kept me from freezing to death.

In the morning I finally caught a ride. Only it wasn't to Reno, but back to camp, a nice warm breakfast and even warmer bed. Everybody laughed at how dirty I was. I didn't care. I was warm. My brother Roy enlisted and came to camp in January. He didn't like it much and after about six weeks he just went home. I had always thought it was like the Army and you couldn't quit, but Roy did. He said he walked the whole seventy miles to Fallon. It is a long way, but I believe him.

1941 (15 years old)

I got out of the CCC's on the 10th of April and was I ever glad to go home. I had turned fifteen that January.

By that time brother Bryson had started driving truck for an outfit called Beckly Livestock Co. He let me ride with him every time I could catch him. We went to all the Western states on this side of the Rocky mountains. I learned how to drive a truck and that is for sure.

It seems that about the time I got out of the CCC's somebody robbed a grocery store in Fallon. After nearly all summer of investigating the police came and asked my dad where I was. He told them and they said they wanted to see me when I got home. All of this stems from my trouble over the bicycle and the Coke. Anyway my dad thought I was a goner for sure so he took me to Stockton, California and enlisted me in the Army. That was Oct. 2, 1941.

I think you should know that at this time I was a real smart ass. I had been around and as they used to say "heard the owl hoot". I always had something to say about everything. I don't think there was anything I wouldn't do if somebody dared me. So, I firmly believe that if my dad hadn't put me in the Army, I would be in prison today. I also feel
that there are quite a few other scrapes I got into during that time that I'd rather not tell you about. Nothing I could be locked up for, but unfit for tender ears. As I said, I was fifteen.

I was sent to the Presidio of Montery in California. I'm sure you all know it. I stayed there about two weeks and was sent to Camp Roberts at San Miguel, California. That is near Paso Robles. I took part of my basic training there until the middle of November, 1941. Lets go back here just a little way and let me tell you about my continuing education in life. As I said, I was real mouthy and I had an opinion about everything and I thought I was pretty tough. I hadn't ever really lost a fist fight before. We had a sergeant named Schwarts. He was an big guy. But as I said old big mouth Miller always had something to say. One day I was disrupting a class on bayonet drill. He told me several times to shut up. I didn't. He says, "Hey Miller come over here for a minute." We went behind the barracks and he just beat the crap out of me. I never even laid a hand on him. My mouth got a lot smaller after that and I even started learning things. Just after that I was attached to the 27th Infantry division, part of which was on their way to Hawaii. I was assigned to the 108th regiment at Fort McDowell in San Francisco. We were there eight days when we were loaded onto a troop ship, the President Cleveland, and were off to Honolulu. Boy, did I ever get seasick. We were at sea seven days and I thought I would die at least ten times a day. We were two days off Pearl Harbor when the Japs attacked it on Dec 7, 1941. We turned around and started back for San Francisco and during the night we turned again for

Hawaii. This time we landed on the Island of Maui. Everyone expected the Japanese to follow up the air attack with assault landings by infantry. I can't remember how many nights I spent in a gun emplacement on the beach with my heart in my mouth waiting for the Japs to land. Of course they never did, but it took six months for us to realize they weren't going to.

1942 (16 years old)

All of Hawaii was under Martial Law, which means the military was in complete control over the population and civilian government. As you may or may not know, almost all of the Hawaiian population is oriental, so every civilian you saw could be a potential enemy. As I said, we were running scared for months and the civilians didn't help much, although I never met one that wasn't just as patriotic as I was, and just as scared. I even dated a girl there. Her name was Tomio Usueki. A very pretty Japanese girl. Her dad was a dairy farmer and he didn't like me very much. At that time we had a camp out in the lava beds at a place called Kehei. I understand that a road goes thru there now, but in 1942 there sure wasn't. Anyway, we were out there in the cactus and lava and Nyoli trees with big old thorns about one inch long and mosquitos big enough to fly away with a chicken. We stayed in pup tents when the living was good, which wasn't often. Doesn't sound like Hawaii, does it? The big deal for us was going to a movie in Punenne and going by Tomios dad's dairy afterwards to get chocolate milk. Yeah. Big deal.

Of course we didn't know then about the torture and hardship that other servicemen were going thru in the Philippines and Guam and Wake Islands. They really had no chance and that was the worst part. It reminds me of the time I was chased by the mad dog. It is getting dark out, something is hunting you and there is no one to help. I tell you true - it's scary as hell and that is an understatement if I ever said one.

Where was I? Oh yeah. While we were out there in the lava beds I got a sore throat. Since there weren't any facilities to take care of any illness, they sent me to Waikapu station hospital. I had tonsillitis. They kept me a week until my tonsils healed and then they cut them out. I didn't like the pain very much, but it meant I got to stay in the hospital another two weeks. They didn't dare send me back to the unit for fear of me getting an infection. So, we sat around and played poker and ogled the nurses. We ate pretty good too. The nurse that was in charge of our ward was from Ohio. Her name was Virginia Bostock and I fell in love with her, as did everyone else in the ward. She was nice to everyone, but it seemed like she had time for me only. I'm sure everybody felt the same way. It's always surprised me that I could remember her name and not the Doctor or any of the guys at the hospital.

After my vacation in the hospital, I went back to the lava beds. I was there about a week, when all of a sudden I get a three day pass. Well, I have just explained what it was like there, so where the hell was I going to go? Also remember that even though I had graduated from the CCC to the Army, I still only got $30.00 a month. I did have a few bucks from my poker winnings, so I went to Waibibu, which was a kind of hang out for the troops. I stood around on a street corner for a day trying to make out. No luck. I went down to an old hotel called the Maui Grand. It was one of these old places that we have seen in the movies where all the better class people meet. Dark polished teak wood floors. So dark, they almost needed to turn the lights on at noon.

Just a great place. I went into the bar and ordered a rum and coke. I chugged that and had another and another and another. After the 5th or 6th another, I don't remember anything until I felt this terrible pain in my side. I laid there hanging onto the grass to keep from falling off the world and I heard this voice telling me to get my ass off the lawn and come with him. I finally focus my eyes and saw this great big M.P. looking down at me. He reached down and grabbed me, jerked me upright and I threw up all over him. This, needless to say didn't make him too happy. He started slapping my face, and I heard this voice saying, "You stop that you beast." I don't know who was more surprised, me or the M.P. He started giving her a hard time and she said she was with the Red Cross and knows his commanding officer and if he doesn't let me go, she will get his stripes. He evidently believed her and turned me loose. She took me across the lawn to what I found out was a Red Cross Recreation Center. The place where she had taken me away from the M.P. was in the middle of a Croquet Court that all the island biggies used. Whew!!!

She took me, clothes and all and put me in a shower and turned it on cold. As sick as I was, that shower was the worst thing that ever happened to me. She and another girl put me on a truck going back to the lava beds. I spent a lot of time in the lava beds!!

BACK TO 1941 (15 years old)

I gotta regress here. I was putting in one of those closet organizers today and began thinking about nothing and everything and an incident in my life came to me in big flash. I hope I'm not around so you can ask me why.

One time I borrowed a friend's car. A 1936 Ford sedan. I was driving through Sparks, Nevada, down "B" Street about 10 o'clock at night. Kind of like dragging main. You know what that means? Well, your parents can tell you, if you don't. Anyway, I turned around and started back the other way. All of a sudden the red lights start to flash behind me. I pulled over and stopped. The local Sparks cop (they only had one on at night back then) walked up and asked for my license. I gave it to him. He looked at it a while and finally said it wasn't a very good one. I forgot who I bought it from. Then he says, "You made a "U" turn back there, going thirty miles an hour." I said, "Your full of shit. If this car had made a "U" turn going thirty miles an hour, we would still be turning over and over." He says, "A smart ass, huh? You are under arrest." He let my buddy go and he drove off in the car. The cop takes me over to the Sparks jail, books me and throws me in a cell. I asked how long he was going to keep me. He says, "Until the Judge gets here Monday morning." This is Friday night. Oh boy!! Ain't that swell. Some guy in the next cell is yelling. I couldn't tell what. The guy in the other cell was throwing up. They had three cells. This rumpus went on all night. I still had my cigarettes, but no matches. I spent all night trying to get alight. Saturday morning came and I was absolutely starving to death. About eight o'clock, here comes some old woman pushing one of those little carts like you see in the hotels they use for room service. She stops and says, "Well, good morning there young fella. What'll you have for breakfast?" I said, "Anything you got." She whips out this one pound bread pan. It has got cabbage and scrambled eggs and corn meal mush. All mixed together and floating around in lukewarm water. I ate most of it. That was Saturday morning, I had the exact same thing for every meal I ate. Including Sunday.

By Monday, I was ready to leave. At nine on Monday morning, I am

allowed to call home. At ten, my brother Bryson shows up just as I am being arraigned before the judge. The judge says, "How do you plead?" I said not guilty. The judge says we will bind you over for trial. The bail will be $200.00. My brother says, "Judge, he is only 15." The judge says, "You're kidding." Bryson says, "No, I'm not." The Judge says, "Take him home before I lose my temper." End of adventure, except for my usual whipping from dad for screwing up. I really wasn't going 30 miles an hour and that is what hurts.

1942 CONTINUED (16 years old)

Where was I? Oh yeah. Back to the lava beds. When I got back to camp, the 1st Sargent called me in and said, "Miller, you are being transferred to Schofield Barracks on Oahu." I figured it sure can't be any worse than this. So, in a couple of days I shipped out to what I thought was going to be a better life. Ho! Ho! Ho! I should have had some inclination of things to come by the way they sent me to Oahu. It was a thirty foot picket boat. A picket boat is a boat they use to carry mail, check anchorage and carry unwilling passengers. Me for one. I can't remember how far it is from Maui to Oahu, but it took us two days, with a couple of stops. Remember what I said about seasick? This was ten times worse.

Minus most of my stomach and all the food I had eaten in the last week, we arrived at Pearl Harbor. An overnight in the back of a truck brought us to Schofield Barracks. An institution in the books of military history. After another two days of screwing around, I was assigned to the 7th Infantry regiment of the 25th Infantry Division. Quite a famous and honorable organization. Of course I knew about the unit and was very proud to be assigned to it. I ended up in Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion in the Anti-tank platoon. Quite a mouthful huh? Most of the unit stayed in regimental quadrangles. Four, four story buildings facing each other. They were fully self-contained with kitchen and mess halls, medical facilities and all the supplies needed for five thousand men. There were actually 1,200 men in a battalion, four battalions to the regiment, but the support groups brought it up to over 5,000. Of course there wasn't any room for me or the other guys coming in, so we were assigned to tents out in the guava bushes. We spent a lot of time in the guava bushes. We all started on immediate intensive training in preparation to go to the South Pacific. We didn't know that then, but we all had a pretty good idea where we were going. As I mentioned before, all of Hawaii was under Martial law. The military in complete control. We all took turns doing guard duty in Honolulu and the surrounding area. Everyone and everything was subject to apprehension and questioning. By everything, I meant that vehicles and animals, people with lights showing from uncovered windows. There was a curfew from dusk to dawn. I have wondered how many dogs and cats were shot because some itchy fingered soldier got scared. I don't know if it is still there or not, but Dole pineapple Company had a big water tower in Honolulu. There were two machine guns set up on the catwalks going around the tower. Everybody said it was full of pineapple juice. One night, one of guys used a hand drill and drilled a hole in the side of it. It was juice all right. About 500 gallons worth before they got it plugged up. The Honolulu guard duty didn't last too much longer for me. All the guard duty was turned over to other units. The 25th Division started amphibious training in preparation for our incursion into the South Pacific. This period of training began in October 1942. As I get further along in my story, there are likely to be several misspellings of names of places, so don't say, "Boy, he must have been

an ignorant old bastard."

As I said earlier, we were in a tent city further up the hill from Schofield near the bottom of Kolebole pass. Every morning at 5 o'clock we walked across Kolebole pass to a place called Waianoe and Pokai bay. We walked right up to the beach and right into personnel carrying boats called Higgins boats. They were troop landing craft that were used all through the war. The procedure was to get on the boats, move out into the bay and go around in circles all god damn day. You have never, ever seen so many sick GI's in your life. Just before sundown the boats headed for the beach. We unloaded and walked back to camp in the dark. You may ask. What if they had to go to the toilet? Well if they did, they passed around a tin bucket. You went in that and then emptied it in the bay. Don't ask about eating. We all had food, but everyone was too sick to eat.

After about 3 weeks of that, we arrived one morning to find two big ships anchored in the harbor. These ships had rope cargo nets hanging over their sides. We were to spend the next two weeks learning to go up and down cargo nets without getting hurt. It wasn't too bad when the ships were anchored in a sheltered bay, but we learned later on, disembarking from a ship wallowing in a tropical storm was a different thing to contend with. The ship heaved and the landing craft bobbed up and down -- sometimes 8 or 10 feet, and all the while smashing against the side of the ships. As you were about to let go of the net and step into the bottom of the boat, the boat had suddenly fallen 10 feet or risen the same way. You had to learn to judge when to let go. A lot of guys were hurt and some were killed unloading. The one big thing they beat into us was that you never, never, never, started down the net with your steel helmet strap buckled. If you should happen to fall into the water, which happened pretty often. The helmet acted like a noose and the weight of a body falling into the water would break your neck. I never, never, never, buckled my helmet strap. Once in a while somebody fell between the ship and the landing craft. They were smashed to death if the weight of all the gear didn't take them down fast enough. Even then you had to dump all the weight before going so deep you would drown before being able to get to the surface. Lots of fun for everyone.

In between taking amphibious training and twenty and thirty mile hikes, we also took training in jungle warfare, night fighting, infiltration and different methods of killing with your hands. Keep in mind that at that time (1942) we didn't know anything about the marital arts, except judo. No karate, kung fu, or any of Bruce Lee's specialties. I'll get into some of these later on in my truly spellbinding story, of which I am sure you will be truly spellbound. Keeping in mind, of course that I am a real swell guy and a great grandfather as I appear to be. If I don't intersperse this journal with, what I think are bits of humor, I may convey the impression that I had my gut tied in a knot during the whole war. That is not true. Even with all the bad times, I enjoyed every minute of it and wouldn't trade the experience for anything. There are a great many little tidbits that I recall as I go along and will tell you about them as I recall them, even though they may be out of order in my story. Let’s go on.

I'm sure you have all seen movies where the police or some military personnel go through reaction courses, where the bad guys pop up from behind a bush or an open window. We did the same thing while walking down a trail. We had just seconds to aim and fire. If we didn't do it within the time limit, we kept at it until we did. For some guys they were long days. I was lucky I guess. I went through on the second day. Since I finished the reaction course early and they needed someone, I was made an Anti-tank gunman. I learned to aim, fire and maintain a 37

millimeter anti-tank gun. It was a very impressive weapon back then. I was so proud. Remember, I was still only sixteen and it was a big, big deal for me. I was a gunner for about a month, when we went to West Lock in Pearl Harbor and loaded onto a ship, the same one I came from the States on for the South Pacific. It was Thanksgiving Day, 1942. During the war, and especially that early in the war, ships didn't just go from point "A" to point "B". They would zig zag all over the ocean. It was a month before we made landfall at Viti Levu, where Suva the capital of the Fiji Islands is located. By that time, I was getting to be a seasoned sailor. Never got sick once. There were four thousand of us on the sip and we were part of an eight ship convoy, not counting the navy warships that were protecting us. We were all birthed in cargo holds. There were 1,000 guys in each hold and each hold was divided into four decks, or compartments. 250 guys to a compartment. Bunks were canvas stretched over a steel frame. These steel frames were attached to steel poles that were attached to the floor and ceiling, or deck and overhead as they say in seafaring talk. Each pole had 12 bunks. If you happened to have one of the top bunks, it was a long climb to go to bed. If you had one of the lower bunks, someone was always stepping on your hands or head and if you were unlucky enough to have a seasick guy above you, well you can guess what could and often did happen. The bunks were close enough together so that if a fairly large guy turned over, he always bumped the guy over him and usually made the bunk sag enough so that the man below had trouble turning over. Also, no matter what we tried to do to get fresh air into the hold, it always smelled like the bottom of a garbage can. I mean stink!!!

As a method of self-preservation, we, or as many as could, slept on deck. This was pretty nice, except that almost every night we would hit a tropical rain squall and everybody headed below -- all at once. Most of us finally just gave up and laid out in the rain or under a life boat, which was one of the choicest places to bed down. You know, you would think that out in the middle of the ocean there wouldn't be much dirt, but after a night on deck we looked like coal miners. We only had salt water showers and they never seemed to get us clean. Fresh water was for drinking only, and it was turned on only once in the morning and once in the evening. We were allowed to drink all we wanted and then fill up our canteens for the in between times. Of course, we had water, tea, and coffee at meal times. Meal time. That was a dandy. There was a continual chow line going from 4 am to 9 pm. After I got breakfast I played cards in one of the life boats until I was hungry and went and got in line for lunch. The chow line ran all over the ship -- up ladders, down ladders, down hallways, out on deck. Sometimes I got in line to eat and found out it was a line for sick call or something else. When I finally reached the mess hall, I grabbed a tray and they would put whatever they had in it. There was never any fried foods and very seldom anything roasted. It was almost always something that was steamed or boiled. Like stew or spaghetti, etc. I carried it to a table. The table had a little rim around it, so the tray wouldn't slide off during rough weather. There weren't any seats, so we all stood. You won't believe this, but during heavy seas, I have seen some guy's tray slide away and slide back after someone had thrown up in it. There was another part of shipboard life that was really a treat. That was going to the toilet. The toilets were just a big long trough with sea water running through it, instead of a real flush toilet. As you entered the head as they were called, you had to step over a door sill about 6 inches high, so the whale head area was kind of like a pool 6" deep. A good portion of the time, that is exactly what it was. The toilet trough would sometimes plug up and overflow and there would be

water, puke, and crap floating all over the place, and that is the way it stayed until it ran out into the companion way or hall way. When it did, it always ran down a ladder or stairway and some officer would step in it. Then it got fixed. Back to the trough. They must have been 10 or 12 feet long. That is long enough for eight guys to sit side by side at the same time. A favorite trick was for the guy on the upstream side to take a big wad of toilet paper, set it on fire and float it down the trough underneath the other guys. It sure did singe a bunch of rear ends, among other things. It always got a big laugh and often fist fights over burned balls and loss of hair.

Our trip was rather uneventful. Every morning at sunrise and at sunset, we were all herded below to our quarters and locked in. These were the two most dangerous times of day for a submarine attack and they said the reason we were locked below was to keep us out of the way of navy personnel manning their battle stations. We docked at Suva on Christmas day 1942. We weren't allowed ashore, because we had caught head lice. Back then, the treatment for head lice, or any other malady, was fast and furious. They shaved everybody's head, I mean everybody, and dusted the whole ship with DDT. DDT is a dangerous and banned chemical now. Back then they used it for everything. While they were fumigating the ship they finally allowed us ashore as a group. We had a fine walk around Suva. All the people were very happy to see us. They had been so afraid of being taken by the Japanese, we were indeed, a welcome sight. One of the things that fascinated us was the Fiji police. They wore red jumpers like the Canadian Mounties, dark blue shirts and no shoes and they had great big afros. We called then fuzzy wuzzies. Real nice guys. Always smiling, which showed off their half filed teeth. It was their religion we were told. They used to be cannibals. We would stand on the ship and throw lighted cigarettes onto the wooden dock just to see them put them out with their feet. Their feet were so calloused from a life-time of being barefoot, it didn't bother them at all.

1943 (17 years old)

Fijians were fierce fighters and none of the enemy would ever meet them in any kind of fighting if it could be avoided. A little later on, we had a company of Fiji scouts attached to our unit. We were all gathered around one day getting a cup of very rare fresh coffee, when several U.S. Marine Raiders came by. They were invited for coffee and a marine sergeant wanted to know who the gooks were; referring to the Fiji scouts. My Lieutenant told them who the scouts were and that they were the best fighters, trackers and scouts in the world. The marines, typically, said bullshit, that there weren't any better fighter and scouts than marine raiders. The talk went back and forth and the scouts just drank coffee and said nothing. Finally we made a bet that the scouts could infiltrate the marine lines that night without the marines knowing they were there. It was decided that we give the scouts pieces of chalk and they would put an "X" on everything they came in contact with. The stakes were two cases of whiskey; which was also very rare and very expensive.

That night we all got down in our fox holes for the night. The rule in combat was that anything moving around at night was the enemy and was treated accordingly. This area we were in, was more or less a rear area and was not subject to direct assault, so the units had field kitchens set up in the middle of the protective lines or perimeter as it was called. Like a big circle with everyone inside. After dark the scouts left our perimeter and we settled in for the night. Nights were

long. As I said we couldn't get out of our fox holes. If you had to take a crap, you crapped in an old "C" ration can and set it out till morning or dug a small hole in the corner of your fox hole and used that. That was not a real good way, because if it rained during the night and it usually did. The crap in the corner of your fox hole was apt to float and it's bad enough to lay in water all night, but pushing turds away from your face wasn't too much fun. Next morning we all made for the marine perimeter at first light. You absolutely wouldn't believe it. There were little white X's on everything we saw. On helmets still on their heads, rifles, hand guns, inside the ovens on the field stoves, a couple of guys even had chalk marks on their ears. The marines never even knew they had been there. About three weeks later the marines had a unit of Fiji scouts attached to their unit. Live and learn, I always say.

I neglected to tell you that we had landed on Guadalcanal in the Solomon Islands on New Year's Day 1943. We landed at a place called Lunga Beach. We all expected to be involved in heavy fighting. As the landing craft circled while the first wave of the assault force all unloaded, the Navy lay back about six miles and shelled the beaches to soften them up for our landing. There were some enemy aircraft over us, but the navy and Marine fighter aircraft drove them off. Boy, was it ever a sight. It seemed like all the noise in the world. Gradually all the landing craft lined up for our assault. The rule was that when we started in, everybody was to keep this head down below the steel sides of the landing craft. Of course nobody could resist a peek to see that we weren't all alone, or how close to shore we were. The Navy Coxswain driving the boat always told us when to get ready, and we all ran like hell for some kind of cover. Some guys didn't make it out of the water. I can still see dead bodies floating in the surf after all these years. We probably lost about 50 or 100 guys, but we secured the beach and all the other troops landed without a casualty. It really wasn't a bad landing. Not nearly as bad as some of the ones that were still to come.

We always envied the sailors, because we thought they got to go back to the ships at night and have a hot dinner and a dry bed. Most of them, as it turned out, slept in their landing craft and ate the same stuff we did. At that time, field rations, as they were called, consisted of the following: corned beef hash, meat and beans, meat and vegetable stew, with canned dry biscuit to go with it. The biscuit cans also contained either powdered coffee, cocoa, or lemonade, a piece of hard candy and two cigarettes. It was really classy eating. The "C" rations I have just described were left over from World War I. It is true! Every time we opened a new carton we had to look for cans that were spoiled, and about half of them were. You can't imagine how many concoctions a person can dream up out of three kinds of slumgullion.

The lemonade I mentioned was so strong, that we used it as a paint remover. When planes crashed and were beyond salvage, we removed all of the aluminum and titanium parts to make knick-knacks from. All those metals were coated with zinc chromate as a primer for painted surfaces. We would soak those parts in the lemonade concentrate to remove the paint. Then, with whatever hand tools we could find, we made rings and bracelets, letter openers and such. You can imagine what the stuff did to our stomachs.

When we landed on Guadalcanal the Marines, according to them, had the island well secured and were in complete control of the forces. Between January and May 1943, my unit killed 18,000 Japanese soldiers and sailors. We captured about one-third that many. The wounded numbers were not counted to my knowledge, but there were a great many of

them. We never knew what our casualties were. In those days everything was a military secret. A short time after our landing, we moved up to the main line of resistance or M.L.R. The M.L.R. was, at that time, a place called "bloody ridge". It was a big long ridge covered with elephant grass. At least that is what everybody called it. It was head high and would cut you if you bumped it just right. We arrived on the ridge about noon one day and started to set up our perimeter, which is a three quarter circle with everyone inside.

We dug our fox holes about ten feet apart. The holes were long enough to lay down in and deep enough to protect us against any sort of attack. I soon learned that attack meant at least twice a night. I can only remember one daylight fight. As I told you before, anything that moved at night was assumed to be the enemy and was treated accordingly. As night approached, we all tied ourselves together with pieces of string and got in our fox holes. One guy slept and one stayed awake. When it was my turn to stand watch, my buddy pulled my string to wake me up. The reason for the strings was so we didn't have to talk. If you talked, it gave away the location of your fox hole. There were quite a few Japanese infiltrations. They would wait until the darkest part of the night and start infiltrating our perimeter. They couldn't see any better than we could, so they depended on sound to locate us. Someone snoring or rustling around to get more comfortable was used as a guide to find us.

The second night on the line, I'd guess it was around three in the morning, I was laying on my back in about three inches of water and dreading to turn on my side because my body had warmed the water, and the second I turned, it would expose my warm parts to the night air and that would make me feel really cold. Anyway, as I lay there contemplating a turn and looking at the stars in the night sky, all of a sudden quite a few stars just blanked out. It took me a second to realize what was happening. It was someone between me and the stars. As I said before, anything that moved at night was the enemy. I was also scared to death and kept my trench knife in my hand from dark to dawn. Well, when I saw the shadow I just raised up and started stabbing. Whatever I was stabbing grunted for the first three thrusts and then all the sound stopped. I pulled my string to wake up the guy next door to me in case there were others trying to get at us. The rest of the night was uneventful, but I still lay there with my eyes as big as saucers and scared shitless.

When dawn came, sure enough it was an infiltration laying there dead. A great deal of his blood had run into my fox hole and the water was all red and the part of me that was in the water was too. There weren't any clean clothes and no place to take a bath, so I had to stay like that until the next rain, (which was pretty often) to wash it off. Some of the guys thought it was pretty funny, but even to this day, I still think about it. It was the first human being I had killed and I had nightmares about it for years. What happened the next night was kind of funny, though. The very same thing happened again, except when daylight came, the infiltration turned out to be what they called a jungle lizard. They were harmless. About three feet long and looked like an alligator. The natives we used to carry our supplies cooked the lizard and had a great feast. None of us ate any although the carriers wanted me to eat a piece because I had killed it and eating some would bring me good luck. After having eaten rattlesnake as a boy I wasn't opposed to eating it, except that when they (what we laughingly called) cooked it, which meant they singed it on both sides and ate it raw, I just couldn't do it. All the guys ribbed me for weeks. "Hey Miller, you got any lizards left? How about saving me some rare meat from the

next one you get?"

The first week went by with little else happening except for those two nights. Then on about the seventh or eighth day, we were settled in for the night and it seemed like all hell broke loose. Yelling, screaming, banging, whistles blowing and lots of shooting. We were having our first banzai attack. I'm telling you, it was hair-raising. It is so dark you couldn't even see your hands and there was all this great commotion out in the dark. I was about to panic when somebody shot off a flare. A flare is made out of magnesium and has a little parachute attached to it and when it goes off, it's brighter then the sun floating down in the night sky. When the flare went off, the Japs were caught out in the open like ants on a newspaper. We absolutely slaughtered them. The first flare went out and we put another one up immediately. This time the Japs had gotten into the tall grass and a good many were hidden and the first thing we knew they are right on top of us. This was my first hand to hand fighting with bayonets. I really can't remember anything in detail, but I did do damage to two or three, before they gave up and retreated. Keep in mind that all this happened under the light of the flares and lasted about ten minutes and seemed like hours and didn't seem real at all. We lost seven dead and twenty wounded. They said we were very lucky and had done a great job. I can't remember how many of the enemy were killed, but it was a bunch.

I was telling you about not having water to bathe in. To expand on that situation. Drinking water was also sometimes scarce. Why couldn't we drink the rain water you ask? All the water was contaminated once it touched the ground. We used water purification tablets in our water, but it wasn't always enough. You may not believe this, but so help me, it is true. Our native carriers brought our water from a water purification plant near the beach. One time it broke down and we were without clean water for almost a week. It was terribly hot during the day, so we all drank a lot of water and without a fresh supply coming all the time, we got our water wherever we could. And of course that meant ground water. My company had moved off to another position called Grassy Knoll. We were separated from the rest of the unit and were more or less isolated. When the water stopped coming, we stared to look for another source. We weren't allowed to leave our positions, so we took what we could get. There was one big hole right near us caused by a bomb explosion and it was full of water. The only problem was that there were dead enemy soldiers in the water. Two, to be exact. We dragged the bodies out of the water, not without some difficulty, because they were partially decayed. I hope you never have to smell a rotting human. They smell is worse than anything you can imagine. After the bodies were removed, there were still bits and pieces and a lot of maggots left in the water that were impossible to get out. We took off our undershirts and held them over the mouths of our canteens to strain the rot and maggots out and dipped them into the water. Then we put water purification tablets into the canteens and drank the water. Some guys drank it with no problem, some gagged, some threw up. We all drank. We drank it for three days, before our clean water came. About one third of the guys had to be hospitalized because of it.

Not only that, but if you got a small cut, even a pin prick, it became infected within an hour or so and strong and large doses of medicine were required to overcome any infection. At that time we were introduced to Atabrine, an anti-malarial drug. It was an innocent enough looking little yellow pill about the size of an aspirin. They tasted awful. The natives used them to make a dye for their clothes. We traded tee shirts to the natives for fresh fruit and coconuts. The women dyed them and cut holes in them so their breasts hung out. I

don't know why. Maybe so it would be easier to nurse their babies. As it turned out, the Atabrine came a little late for me. I contracted malaria about two months after we landed on Guadalcanal. Even so, the Atabrine lessened the severity of the disease. I was sent to a field hospital for about two weeks and then directly back to my outfit.

At that time our unit was put in reserve, because our manpower was so badly depleted that we had to have replacements before we could be committed to combat again. So, we were sent to Tulagi Island. We were spread around from Tulagi to anit-aircraft emplacements on Tanambago and Gavatu. Neither was as big as a city block. There wasn't a tree of any kind on either island, bombing and naval shelling had taken care of that. Remember how hot it was in the jungle? Try to imagine how hot it was without any shade. There was a Cee-Bee or Naval Constitution Battalion on Gavutu building a water treatment plant and we were sent to help protect them. As if they needed protection. They were all older men. Supposedly too old to be in the military, or to fight, so they volunteered to lend their skills for building airfields, roads or anything else that we needed. All great guys and someone you were glad was on your side. The Cee Bee's had a real kitchen and mess hall set up and since my platoon was assigned to then, we got to eat with them. They had the same rations we had, but they had real cooks. It was heaven.

About this time we started digging new "AA" gun emplacements for some dual barreled 40 mm "AA" guns that were loaned by the Navy. I really hated digging, so when the Cee Bee's asked for a couple of us to work in the kitchen, Miller volunteered. I was put to work as a baker's helper. Remember the "C" rations and the hard biscuits you could throw thru a rock wall? I spent 6 weeks helping to make bread and rolls and pastries. In six weeks, I gained about twenty pounds. All the time we were in the Solomans, it seemed like there was always an air raid or an air battle. It was a fascinating experience being able to watch the dog fights between the enemy Zero's and our P-47's and P-38's. We could see the planes diving and turning and the puffs of smoke when their guns fired, kind of like long rows of dots made of smoke. Very often a plane would explode or catch on fire, or just spiral into the ocean. Almost every small island had a couple of picket boats on station. Picket boats were a kind of high speed boat used for many purposes, but during air battles, they looked for parachuting pilots. The guys on the boats picked up a lot of pilots. At night the Jap bombers came over. Usually, they were twin engine Mitsubishis or Betty's as we called them.

It might be interesting for you to know that all the Japanese car manufacturers which sell cars here today were making war ships, airplanes and bombers during the war. It is ironic. They couldn't beat us at war, so they are slowly but surely buying us.

During the air raids, we would watch the searchlight seek out the enemy planes. They looked like moths caught in the light of a car. The anti-aircraft guns would light up the sky when they fired. The enemy bombers didn't bother us at all. When they dropped their bombs, we just rolled into a hole and waited until they went off. What really scared hell out of us was the shrapnel coming down from our exploding anti-aircraft shells. They sounded like buzzing bees zipping by and there wasn't any place to hide, unless there was something handy to crawl under, which wasn't often. The best thing to do if there wasn't anything to crawl under, was to stand as close to a tree as possible. You remember that I said there weren't any trees on Gavuntas? We did have lots of water, though. And showers. As I said, the Cee Bees were very resourceful people.

It seems that every time we got settled into a place and a routine,

something happened and we were off again. One bright morning, they came for us -- a big old LCT, or landing craft tank. The rest of our company had already been picked up and after we loaded on, we went back to Guadalacanal to a staging area for a push into the Northern Solomans. My outfit was the 1st Battalion 27th Infantry regiment, 25th Infantry Division, closer to home. My unit was an Anti-Tank and reconnaissance platoon, Headquarters Company, 1st Battalion. There was a Headquarters Company, four line company, a motor pool and a medical unit in a battalion. Again, my outfit always, I mean always, got the dirtiest and most dangerous missions assigned. This one was for us to go on a submarine at night to the south coast of New Georgia, which was in the Northern Solomons. Our mission was to land under cover of darkness and secure an area large enough for our engineers to land heavy equipment and to protect them after they landed while they started building some sort of roads through a huge swampy area. The reasoning was that by going through the swamp, we would come up on the enemy's rear and surprise them. Early one afternoon, my platoon and two line company platoons sandwiched onto a submarine. I mean it was crowded. We filled every nook and cranny and spilled over into the officers' quarters. We immediately submerged and started for New Georgia, about 180 miles if I remember correctly. We arrived just after dark and off loaded onto rubber rafts that we had to pump up first. There were gas cylinders attached to the rafts to inflate them, but most of them had lost their charges. We paddled ashore in the dark, expecting all hell to break loose any minute. Nothing happened. We went ashore and set up our perimeters and waited for the engineers to arrive in the morning. At dawn, they came. LCT's, navy destroyers and more infantry on LCI's or landing craft infantry. It looked like the whole army was coming ashore. Not a shot was fired. I don't think there was an enemy soldier within five miles.

We started to move inland before the equipment was unloaded. We found out pretty damn soon, that when they said swamp, they meant swamp. We waded up to our armpits in the damnedest stinking gooey muck you can imagine. It was terribly tiring. I guess we must have made about a mile the first day, I really don't know, but that is what it seemed like. When we stopped for the night, there wasn't any place to get out of the muck, except climb a tree, and some of the guys did that. The jungle was really thick, with vegetation growing all over and around us. Someone finally figured that if we cut branches and poles and laid then on top of the mud, they would support one or two guys if we were careful. It kept us from sinking into the mud okay, but the water still seeped up and kept us wet. Even so, I think I slept sounder that night than any other since I had come to the islands.

At dawn we were at it again. The heavy equipment just couldn't do anything. First, there wasn't any good solid earth to build a road with and second, the swamp was bottomless. One of the tractor drivers almost sank with his tractor. It sank in the muck and he just barely got off. They probed with fifteen foot poles and couldn't find the tractor. They finally decided that road building wasn't going to work. They decided that we would get all our supplies with air drops. At that time, there weren't any helicopters and about 90 percent of air cargo was hauled by DC-3's. They, even now, have some left flying. They are a twin engine Douglas cargo plane. Very noisy and the wings flap like they are going to fall off, but the most dependable airplane ever built. Anyway, I'm sure you have seen air drops in the movies or on TV. The planes were loaded with supplies attached to parachutes. They would fly over our area and drop the supplies at a point we marked with smoke canisters. The planes flew real low so they wouldn't overshoot our positions.

Sometimes they did overshoot and the enemy ended up with our stuff.

About that time our battalion commander's body guard came down with a bad case of malaria. So guess who got the job? Me. It wasn't a job anybody wanted, but he said do it and you did it. I think the part I hated worst, was that along with the body guard job, went a Thompson sub-machine gun. The one we had used round magazines that held fifty rounds of 45 caliber ammunition. They weighed 14 pounds and I had to carry four of them in pouches attached to a shoulder harness. I also had another one in the gun. That plus all my other equipment made for a heavy load. I should point out that when we first started into combat, we were using World War I helmets, the old 5 shot Springfield rifle and Thompson sub-machine guns. They were all good weapons, but obsolete. We were gradually getting new helmets, Garand M-1 eight shot semi-automatic rifles, M-1 Carbines that used either 15 or thirty round clips and a sub-machine gun called a grease gun, an awful looking thing, but a real shooter. You could strap it into the mud and grind it around, fish it out and fire thirty rounds in about 3 seconds. I can't remember the military I.D. number, but I guess it doesn't make any difference.

It seems like I am trying to tell you what a hard time I had during this campaign and the truth is, maybe I did, but I really thought I was some kind of hero defending his country from the dirty filthy enemy. I am trying to be realistic. At that time, we all heard and experienced first hand, the atrocities committed by the Japanese against anyone they came in contact with. As you will see later on, I was brain washed into believing that the Japanese weren't so bad after all. I believe, to this day that the Japanese were and are, contrary to appearance and my own willingness to forgive and forget, an inherently cruel and unfeeling people. Further, I believe that since they couldn't beat us at war, they are buying us. Piece- by-piece and most of it with money and aid we gave to them after the war, just as we did before the war. I have lots of opinions. I did not arrive at my conclusions in haste. It took years and years of contact with all kinds of people from all over the world to bring me to my present state of cynicism. So don't think I am just shooting my mouth off.

Where was I? Oh yeah! I was the colonel's body guard. It, as I said was to protect him from harm. That wasn't an easy job, since there were snipers, and no one could predict when they would start shooting. It had always been an Army regulation that, when reporting to a superior officer, to salute and stand at attention. Well, Jap snipers hidden in the surrounding jungle waited for that to happen and then they'd shoot whoever was being saluted. All officers were called by their first or last names, not saluted and wore no identifying insignia. Anyway, I called my C.O. Joe. He was a real stand-up guy and I admired him a lot. You should take note that I said, "I admired him a lot" and not "liked" or admired a great deal. I spent a great deal of my day within ten feet of him and let me tell you it is almost like being married. You really learn about all there is to know about someone that close. I, of course, overheard almost every conservation he had with anyone, personal, as well as military. The one thing I admired most about Joe, was his firm belief that everybody carried his own weight. For example, usually about an hour before dark, we always stopped and made ready for the night. Eating supper and digging our fox holes and such (excluding the swamp). Joe always dug his own fox hole, or otherwise prepared for the night, so I was free to dig mine and shoot the bull with the other guys. In the early days, so to speak, I was pooped after carrying all that weight all day, so a little time to myself was really appreciated. One evening we were ready to dig in for the night and the routine was

going okay, when this doctor, a captain, says, "Miller, go over there and dig my hole, I've had a hard day and I'm tired." Joe calls this captain over and says, "Listen asshole, Miller worked just as hard as you did and if you want a hole dug. You better get started. Don't even let me hear you ask one of my men to do your work for you." There were a few other well-chosen words passed on to the good doctor, but I guess you get the drift. It seemed like I was always on old Doc's shit list from then on.

As I said before, it is difficult for me to apply dates and times to happenings. It seemed like a long, long time but, I suppose it was about three weeks, or a month before we reached a point just outside of Rondova. Rondova I guess, was the capital of New Georgia, a bunch of tin roofed shacks and lean-to's between the swamp and the ocean. Of course there wasn't much left of it, with all the bombing and shelling going on. We set up our perimeters on a strip of land away from Rondova. On the other side of Rondova was a place called Munda. The C.B.'s were already building an air field there to evacuate the sick and wounded, that up until then had been taken by boat, back to Guadalcanal where a station hospital had been constructed next to Henderson field, the only airfield big enough for transport planes. On the front lines, at that time, we had units called collecting companies that went around to battalion aid stations to collect the wounded and transfer then to an evacuation center. One night, the Japs attacked and clubbed and bayonetted every single person to death. Remember, what I said a while back about Japs being cruel and sadistic? This is just one instance where their actions bear out my story.

I wish I were better with the local geography, so that I could better explain our position to you, but I guess you will have to use your imagination. I will use direction, but please don't hold me to the accuracy.

East, and outside of our perimeter was a strip of dry land, running, as I said, between the ocean and the swamp. Our anti-tank and recon platoon was designated as a wholly reconnaissance platoon since the Japs had very few tanks and the terrain made them, along with ours, almost totally useless. Our mission was to make contact with the enemy, without them seeing us, if possible. We started out one afternoon and staying in the jungle away from the open beaches, we proceeded very slowly toward the enemy lines. After about six or seven miles, the swamp kind of petered out and we went further inland. By that time it was getting dark, so we stopped. I thought for the night, but the Lieutenant says, "Eat up you guys and then strip for action." Strip, meaning to get rid of everything that rattles, or shines. No steel helmets, metal money, keys. etc. I had learned a lot since my first landing. I had my M-1 Carbine, a double edged trench knife, ammo, in cloth bandolier and what we called a "G" string. It was a piece of piano wire about two feet long and tied to a piece of wood on each end for handles. The idea was to make a loop, slip it over an enemy head and jerk the wire tight and strangle whoever was unlucky enough to be under the wire.

I don't think I can describe, how terribly dark it was. I am always amazed that we were able to move in the dark and not make any noise. We were tied together, by holding onto short pieces of rope, otherwise, we would have become hopelessly separated. About midnight, I saw a glow shining up against the branches of the trees just ahead of us. We stopped and tried to figure out what was going on. The lieutenant sent me to the left and another guy to the right, to find out what was happening, and not be detected. At least there was some light from the glow on the trees. I walked at a crouch until it got pretty

light and then got down on my hands and knees and crawled. As I got closer to the source of the light, I could see that it came from a depression in the ground. It turned out to be a huge bomb crater and there were eight Jap soldiers sitting around a fire cooking supper. As I sneaked around for a better look I came up on a piece of log lying at the edge of the crater. I was so busy watching the people in the hole, that it wasn't until the last second that I saw the Jap soldier sitting on the other end of the log I was trying to hide behind. By some miracle, he didn't see me. As I was sliding backwards into the brush, I looked across the crater and saw my buddy on the other side. The Jap guard in front of me saw him too, but wasn't sure what he was seeing. As he was starting to get up for a better look, I came up behind him and slipped my "G" string over his head and gave a great big jerk. He just collapsed without a sound. I tried to get my "G" string loose, but it was stuck on something. I reached up to his neck to pull it loose and discovered that I had, in my fear, pulled so hard that I almost cut his head clear off and that my noose was caught in the large tendon at the back of his neck, the only thing that was holding his head on.

I don't know why it was so important for me to get my "G" string back, but I screwed around for what seemed like ten minutes getting it loose. By that time, I was bloody clear to my elbows. We went back to the platoon and reported what we had seen. The lieutenant decided that they were also a recon patrol. He also decided that since I had killed the guard, we either had to kill or capture the rest of them. He decided that we would try to capture them. It was supposedly known fact that Japs did not surrender. Even so, he said we would try. We crawled around the crater and we all stood up and he called for them to surrender. In English of course. They didn't know what he said and it probably wouldn't have made any difference anyway. They all made for their weapons and we started shooting. Only one survived. The only fear we had, was that the enemy had heard us and knew about our presence. We took care of our prisoner and three guys were assigned to take him back to the unit for interrogation. He wasn't wounded too badly and was able to walk without help. I never saw him again. They always treated prisoners of war better than they treated us, so I suppose he ended up in Iowa or some other place like that.

To make sure that we hadn't been discovered by the enemy, we continued until enemy territory for another two days, without incident. On the morning of the third day we started hearing noises ahead of us. There was a great deal of activity going on. The further we advanced, the louder it became. We were then, just inside the fringe of the jungle and were about to emerge onto the beach of a fairly large inlet. Luckily, the noise had made us extra cautious. I, and another guy were sent ahead to find out what was going on. As I crawled through the last several feet of underbrush, I tried to keep hidden as well as possible. I finally parted the foliage enough to see out. About three hundred yards across the inlet, the Japs were loading men and equipment into landing craft and barges under suspended camouflage nets. It is almost impossible to detect any camouflaged objects from the air. I neglected to tell you at the beginning that we had a radio with us and depending on the frequency we used, we could talk to our unit or to anyone else using our frequency. We called our unit and they in turn called in air craft from Henderson Field. When they arrived in our area, we were to guide them to the target by radio. There were nine planes involved. They were guided over our position and when the flight leader was directly overhead he marked our position and we directed him to the enemy using our position as a guide point. The Japs continued their activities, thinking they couldn't be seen. The planes climbed to about

three or four thousand feet and started their attack drives, three at time, side by side. As they started firing their machine guns, small boats and ammo and I don't know what else started burning and blowing up. As the planes began their pull out, they dropped 250 pound bombs and that really raised hell. Then the second and third waves came down and then started all over again and kept it up until they were out of ammo. After they were through strafing and bombing, I'll bet our platoon could have taken the rest of the enemy prisoner if we had tried.

Anyway, we called back all the information we had and that resulted in the rest of the battalion being able to bypass all the land we had walked across and come in by landing craft. We held our positions until the battalion arrived the next day. After that, we all moved up beyond where the Japs had been evacuating the area. We moved up to an area thought to contain a large enemy force. We set up battle perimeter and were getting fire lanes in the jungle. Fire lanes were lanes cut into the jungle from a central point, kind of like a lady's fan and that would give machine gun and rife fire a clear shot at anything crossing or coming down it. I and several other guys were out near the end of one of the fire lanes cutting brush with machete knives when all of a sudden I hear this yelling and hollering, and somebody shouting banzai! Banzai. We dropped the machete and grabbed our rifles which were never more than an arm’s length away. Just in time. Here comes this crazy bunch of Japs charging out of the jungle yelling and waving bayonets. It scared the shit out of me and I mean shit!! We started to shoot and it gave us a chance to fix bayonets. By that time some more of our guys came running up to help. It was an absolute mad house. Men going back and forth as if they were dancing, until one got the advantage and dispatched the other. Yelling, crying, screaming. Some screamed in anger, some in fright. I was scared and excited at the same time. I began to hope that it would never end. I had such a high!

I had run my bayonet into an enemy's chest and it was stuck and I couldn't get it out. I was still trying when a Jap came at me, ready to run me through. Somebody behind me shot him. He stopped and then, like a frozen statue, fell forward, and as he did his bayonet stuck me in the left shin. He fell, but the bayonet and the rifle stood quivering in my leg. It seemed like a long time, but the rifle fell to the ground and the bayonet came out. Have you ever been kicked in the shins? Most of us have and we all know how much it hurts. Well, this was about ten times worse. There really isn't any way to describe the pain. I sat down behind a termite mound and the battle soon made its way away from me and shortly the enemy retreated. There were casualties on both sides, of course, but we had far fewer wounded and dead that day. A medic came up and looked at my wound. He assumed the bone was broken, but not a cross fracture as I remember. He put suffer powder on it and wrapped a bandage around it and told me to go to Battalion aid. I was able to do that since it was only a short distance.

Remember the doctor I told you about? He says, "Miller, you'd whine about anything, that is nothing to be hospitalized for!" He put more sulfa on it and a new bandage and returned me to duty. I went limping back to the headquarters area and the first guy I run into is the C.O. He asked what happened and I told him. He asked if I could do my job. I said, maybe after a rest. He put me in a hole and told me to stay there until he said to leave. Outside of morphine, the only pain killer we had was a pill called A.P.C. All the services used them as a cure all for everything. Since morphine put you to sleep, I took some A.P.C. tablets. During the night, I must have taken a dozen, but it didn't help the pain. The next morning, the colonel came over and asked how I was. I told him it hurt pretty badly. He helped me stand up, but I could

only stand on one leg. The other was swollen so badly, he had to cut my pant leg. That was no fun either, but it did help the pain when he cut the tight pant leg open. He looked pretty disgusted and walked off. Pretty quick he came back with the doctor. As they were walking up, I was just finishing urinating. The doctor said to the C.O., "Joe his urine is black, he has yellow jaundice." The C.O. says, "Doc, and I use the term loosely, Miller should have been out of here last night. Go sign an evacuation order." In about three hours I was in a M.A.S.H. unit on Guadalcanal where I stayed for three weeks with a badly infected leg and jaundice.

During those three weeks, my outfit went on to secure New Georgia and gear up for another landing. This one was to be Vella La Vella. A small island in the same area. It had been the headquarters for Lever Brothers plantations in the Solomons. Lever Brothers makes soap, such as Palmolive and many other household cleaners. I missed most of that campaign. One day we were down at the landing area unloading landing craft hauling supplies. We were busy loading trucks when these guys came over and told us to clear the beach. Everybody follows orders, so we started to leave. The beach Master stopped us and asked where we were going. We told him. He said, "Wait right here till I get back." These same guys came back and told us to leave again. The lieutenant said he had orders from the Beach Master to wait. These guys get pretty huffy, but we wait. Pretty soon the Beach Master comes back with this wild guy. He goes over to these people and asks who gave the orders to evacuate the beach. This one guy says, "My commanding officer, Major so and so if it's any of your business pop." Pop says, "It's Brigadier General Pop to you, smart ass and where is your C.O." This guy turned kind of green around the gills and said the C.O. was coming in on a landing craft. The General said, "We'll all wait." About twenty minutes later, here comes a landing craft. It slides up on the beach and these guys jump out with all this equipment and immediately start setting it up. The General walks over and asks what they are doing. They said they were making a movie about landings to sell war bonds back home. The General said, "That is okay as long as you don't disrupted the supply landing." "Okay," they said. In about a half hour we see about ten LCI's coming right at where the guys were waiting. They slide up and the ramps drop and here come all these guys yelling and shooting just like they were making the initial assault. It turned out that they were Marines. About a month later one of the guys got a newspaper from home. Guess what the headlines said? Marines take Vella La Vella. What do you think about that?

That is not all. As all the yelling and stuff was going on, here comes this picket boat with a bunch of brass on board. They all jump out and come ashore. There was a bird Colonel leading the group. Our regimental supply officer had a Japanese artillery piece on the beach ready to be loaded and shipped for our regimental museum. This Colonel walks up to the weapon and looks it over pretty closely and calls one of his officers over and tells him to load the gun onto one of their landing craft. The Beach Master told him that it belonged to our outfit. The Colonel says that he is the ranking officer and that his order stands. The Beach Master told him, he was in charge of all beach head operations and that he could not take the gun. The Colonel then gave the Beach Master a direct order to obey his order or suffer the consequences. Several Marines were already man handling the gun toward the boat. Our Brigadier came up and asked what they were doing. One said, "Get the hell out of the way or we'll run over you." He motioned our Lieutenant over and told him to have us arm ourselves. Then he told the marines to stop moving the gun or they would be shot. We didn't

actually point our weapons at them, but they stopped just the same. This Marine Colonel came trotting over and wanted to know why they had stopped loading the gun. One of them pointed at us and said we had stopped them. He starts yelling and cursing and says we better get the hell out of the way or our ass is mud. Our Brigadier reached into his pocket and pulled out his General's star and pinned it on his collar. Then he called the Colonel to attention and said, "You get all your hooligans and all their cameras and whatever you brought with you and get your asses off our beach, or I will have you arrested for stopping the movement of vital war supplies. If you don't believe me just stand there for another sixty seconds." Let me tell you, they moved. Within fifteen minutes they were completely gone.

We sure led a dull life back in the golden days. Two days later we were sent to one of the cargo ships to unload the ship's holds. On one end, there was a refrigerated hold. It was full of cabbage. Tons and tons of it. When they opened the hold, the refrigeration was turned off and along with it, so were the circulating fans. About half of the cabbage was spoiled and even though we didn't know it then, the gas from rotting cabbage can kill you in a confined space. Twelve of us went down to put the crates of cabbage into a cargo net. It was then lifted out into a landing craft. We were down there about a half hour, when one of the guys just fell over. I went over to see what was the matter and that was the last I remembered until I felt somebody put a needle into my rump. We had all passed out, and if they hadn't got us out pretty damn quick, we all would have died.

Nobody ever said why, but immediately after that I had a recurrence of jaundice and it was back to Guadalcanal for me. I was in the hospital another eight days. On the eighth day, everyone was talking about the troop ship anchored off the Canal. I didn't pay much attention until I found out that it was my outfit shipping out. I didn't want to get stuck in some new unit, so I looked up the hospital commander and told him my story. He said, I was about ready for active duty again and assigned me back to my outfit. Two days later I went aboard ship. We sat around another two days and then unloaded at a place called Teneru, about ten miles south of where we had originally landed. We stayed there about six weeks.

While we were there, we were put on half rations. That was to toughen us up for something that was going to happen. GI's are very resourceful people, especially when food or drink is involved. Since our rations were only half of the normal issue, we decided to find other things to eat. Flies and dysentery and any other sort of diseases or parasite that slipped around the Pacific we had, at one time or another. As I said before, we never had any fresh food. The cabbage I told you about was our first and only experience with anything fresh. One day, we were swimming and somebody thought he saw a crocodile and threw a hand grenade into the river. When it went off, all these fish cam floating to the surface. We scooped them up and cleaned them and then built a fire and stuck them on sticks and roasted them. We had no salt or other seasonings although we normally carried all kinds of stuff like that. That fish was fantastic. Well, we started a trend. Now, contrary to popular belief hand grenades do not blow up half of the world when they detonate. I am talking about fragmentation grenades. About five or six guys would wade up the river side-by-side and each would just drop a grenade out in front a little more than an arm’s length and about armpit deep. When the grenade went off, it stung our legs like someone had hit you with a handful of sand. Then eight or ten guys behind us scooped up the dead fish in mosquito nets. In about thirty minutes we had enough fish to feed our whole company. Pretty soon

everybody was doing our fishing bit and the fish were becoming scarce. We decided to try something else.

As I said, these diseases were rampant and sanitation was top most in everybody's mind, so all our toilets were built out over the ocean, when possible. When you have several hundred guys taking a crap in the ocean every day, it draws all kinds of denizens of the sea. As soon as somebody took a crap, these fish ate it and were then christened turd snappers. We would get rubber rafts from the Quartermaster and paddle out beyond the outhouses. We wired two half pound blocks of TNT together and put in an electric blasting cap. We lowered that into the water until it touched bottom, then touched the end of the wire to a battery and exploded the TNT. The fish would came floating to the surface. There was a great variety of fish coming to the surface and we had to ask the natives which ones were poisonous. We shared our fish with them and they always brought us bananas, papaya, mangos and anything else they thought we would eat. Our days in paradise soon ended and the great experiment with half rations was a flop. A flop over swollen bellies. Even during this time we had to dodge the air raids every night, so it wasn't a dull paradise.

We soon found out what we were being conditioned for. We were loaded back on the ship and away we went. We ended up in Brisbane, Australia. We didn't get to sample the good life in Australia we had all heard about. We were unloaded and trucked right through Brisborne to a staging area at an airfield about twenty miles west. Here, we were told that there were Jap aircraft spotter stations in French Indo China (Vietnam) and that every time our airplanes went on raid into the Japanese held territories, which was most of that part of world, they were always met by heavy enemy fighter cover and our bomber losses were blamed on these spotter stations. Our job was to parachute into the central highland and go across country, destroying these stations as we progressed toward the coast. Didn't I tell you what great gravy jobs we always got? We were put aboard twelve planes and flown to Darwin in Northern Australia to refuel.

In route we were told how to put on a parachute and how to stand in the door ready to jump when told to do so. Not one single guy had ever jumped out of an airplane, except maybe to fall out on the ground when the plane was parked. After a meal at Darwin we flew to an island in the Indian Ocean called Cocos Island. Here we refueled again and ate again. From there we flew on to our destination. As I said, when we were over our drop zone the jump master said, "Stand up, hook up." Hook up meant to hook your rip cord to a wire stretched from one end of the plane to the other. It was called a static line. You hooked up and then you were supposed to check the guys equipment in front of you. There was some other stuff, but who cares. Pretty soon, the jump master said, "go", and we started jumping. I'm telling you right now, they had to pry my fingers off the sides of the door. I didn't crap that time. My ass was puckered up too tight for anything to come out. By the time they kicked me out of the plane, me and everyone after me landed about a half mile away from the rest of the outfit. There were 400 of us and as far as I know, no one was injured in the drop. We were immediately separated into companies and started off in different directions, kind of like a fan, but always towards the coast. I don't remember how far it was, but we had a month to do it. I also can't name very many names or places. The outposts we attacked and destroyed were all code names and sometimes, just map coordinates so my story, except for the events, is pretty sketchy.

We landed in a field of tall grass about a quarter mile wide and a mile long. The others landed beyond a line of trees in another open

area. We were damn lucky we didn't drop into the trees, or there would have been a lot of casualties. We had enough rations for three days and along with the other necessities we were carrying it was a heavy load. I mean we were in full field gear with extra ammunition, gas masks, and it seemed, every other piece of equipment the army issued. After our food was gone, we were to live off the country and that meant anything that walked, flew, crawled or swam. There were 140 of us in our group, so it took a lot of living off the country. We soon realized that the extra weight we were carrying was tiring us out quickly and slowing our march to a pace that wouldn't allow our rendezvous on the coast at the arranged time. I never could figure out how they arrived at a time to rendezvous when no one knew what kind of resistance we were going to meet. I do know the army has been known to make a few mistakes in their wisdom. We called them S.N.A.F.U. which stood for "Situation Normal, All Fouled Up."

After the first day, we started discarding unneeded equipment. First the gas masks were taken out of their canvas pouches and thrown away. Next, we took our remaining "C" rations and put them into the gas mask bags. Then we threw away our packs, taking the blanket and rolling it inside the poncho. A poncho is a rubber skirt like rain coat with a hole in the middle to put your head through and had snaps, so two could be put together as a sort of tent. We took all the ammunition out of our cartridge belts and slipped them on our bandolier straps and used the cartridge belts for our canteens and the first aid kits. Usually, we only carried one canteen and one first aid kit. We then had every third man keep his helmet. The rest were thrown away. The helmet that was kept, was traded off to a different man every day and the rest of the time he wore a soft green hat. The reason we kept the helmets was to cook and wash and shave in. I'll tell you, I've had some wild food come out of one those helmets. I'll tell you about that as we go. That was about all we could get rid of, except some of the guys cut the arms our their jackets and the legs from their pants. They claimed it was easier to get the leaches off of them after we had forded some of the rivers and swamps that seemed to make up half the countryside. I didn't do any cutting, because the mosquitos really bothered me. I guess they bothered everybody, but they sure drove me crazy. The insect repellent we had must have helped some, but it wasn't long before it was gone.

I guess I better explain here why we had to live off the country. As I said the mission we were on required a certain amount of secrecy. The only way to replenish our supplies was with an air drop which had to be made in daylight. The parachutes could be seen from a long way off. Even with low level drops, the spotter stations we were after probably would have seen them, as they were at the highest elevation around. So you see, we couldn't take a chance. Living off the country meant eating anything we could find that was edible. Wild animals of every description. Please believe me. We ate cats, rats, snakes, lizards, water buffalo, dogs, chickens, ducks, and everything that grew and was edible. There were many times, I almost threw up what I had just eaten, but, I never actually did. When you are hungry, you will eat anything that you can find. First, you have to know what really being hungry is like, and I am not sure I can describe it so you can really understand. If you were dope addicts, I could say it is as bad as needing a fix. Or if you had a deep wound or a broken leg and nothing for the pain and you would do anything for relief. I think that at times, hunger is worse than that. All the things I said we ate were given to us at one time or another by the natives. Their numbers were reduced a great deal by the Japs taking all the able bodied men for their labor battalions. The Jap patrols made periodic sweeps through the native villages, always picking

up a few more each time. Because of this and the rape and abuse of the women and children, they were hated by everyone they came in contact with. The natives were extremely kind and helpful to us. Of course, all Americans are soft hearted slobs, always feeling sorry for people that don't have anything, or some little boy or girl that reminds them of someone at home. Americans have always been and always will be a soft touch for anybody with a sad story. It always paid off for us, even if we hadn't planned it. I didn't think too much about it then, but later on, as I grew older and even now, I sometimes tremble with pride, because I was a part of that time. Let's leave off the flag waving and get on with it.

Our progress was slow, the terrain, which was straight up and straight down was heavily covered with jungle, so progress was slow. It took us three days from dawn to dusk walking, slipping, sliding, wading, and swimming to reach our first objective. It was a small compound on top of a hill about two hundred feet high. By compound, I mean a small area about a hundred feet square with bamboo walls about eight feet high. It had holes in the wall at head height to see and shoot out of, kind of like the ones I'm sure you have seen in the movies. It had a radio antenna about a hundred feet high. Our job was to destroy all the radio equipment and disperse or kill all the personnel on the site. We formed a fan shape and climbed about half way up the hill. There, we dug in for the night and maintained complete quiet. No talking, no smoking, and we had eaten before we started up. At dawn, we crept the remainder of the way up the stockade. We all got into position and waited for the word "Go". In about ten minutes, hand signals sent us on our way. The main posts of the walls were buried in the ground, but all the rest were tied to horizontal cross pieces with some kind of vine. One swipe with a machete and they just fell on the ground. We were immediately through and lining up on our target. When the Japs saw us, they just put their hands up. None of them were armed. We had them all strip to their underwear and sit on the ground back to back. Two guys were assigned to watch them The rest of us went about our business setting explosive charges. It didn't take long. We went a little way down the trial and took cover in the trees. The charges were set off with an electric detonator like the ones we used on the turd snappers. I didn't think we had set very heavy charges, but when they went off, it absolutely leveled the place. There wasn't one single thing left standing, not even the fence around it. Several fires were burning, but we didn't wait to see anymore. We went back to the bottom of the hill to regroup. The prisoners were a problem. We weren't supposed to take any since they couldn't be expected to travel with us. Our C.O. decided to turn them over to the local natives. They seemed only too glad to take charge of them. We found out later that the same prisoners we had turned over to the natives were a group that had captured and tortured some of their women. According to the story we were told, the natives killed all of them very slowly. I guess they got even with the Japs for a change. All the natives really hated the Japs with a passion.

We had taken all the enemy rations we could carry and, as I said before, we ate a lot of disgusting things on our trip. So the Jap fish and rice weren't too bad. At the time though, we were all pushed out of shape because we had to eat them. All we could carry, though, was about three days' worth, so we figured it wouldn't last too long. We started out again the next morning after almost a whole day to get organized again and a fairly good night's sleep. The next station was supposed to be three or four days to the east of us. It took us six days of pretty hard travel to reach the next one. We had two casualties on the way. One fell into a rocky dry wash and broke his arm. The other was bitten

by something, nobody ever found out what it was. He died. The location of the second station was almost like the first. On top of a hill and surrounded by a bamboo palisade, and as before we took it by surprise too. We couldn't figure out why they weren't waiting for us. They must not have had any communication with the station we knocked out a week before. The enemy never seemed to act with any rhyme or reason. Again, we had no injured and reformed for the next march. This one would last eight days.

I haven't mentioned it before, but this country was absolutely full of every kind of insect, serpent, tigers and some I can't think of or remember. We had insect repellent, but back in those days their effect was very minimal, so we were all in constant misery. Every time we crossed a stream we had to stop and pick the leaches off. Rubbing salt on them would make them drop of, or touching them with the end of a burning cigarette or a stick would make them let go. If you just picked them off, it left the head which just kept burrowing and caused a large ulcerated sore and was extremely painful. We all had one or more before we learned how to get rid of them. Every day, we stopped during daylight to spend time pawing and picking bugs off of one another. Most of them were biting bugs, but some were diggers and because of it, somebody was always puffed up. I tell you, if we had to stay in that country an extra two weeks, we would have had to be carried out. Keep in mind that this was 1943 and there wasn't any westerners that knew very much about Asia or the South Pacific, so all these things were new to us and sometimes pretty scary. Scary because we didn't know anything about the environment we were walking into.

The fourth day out on our third try, we were crossing a small river, maybe fifty feet wide. One of the guys in my squad was attacked by a Crocodile. It bit him on the butt and upper thigh so badly that he bled to death before anyone could help him. Then the very next day, a guy in another company was attacked by a tiger. They killed it, but this guy was hurt pretty bad. Everybody that was hurt badly enough so he couldn't walk, well, you guessed it. We had to carry them. Let me tell you, it was no easy chore and it took a lot of guys working in shifts. We had a doctor and medics, but their skills were limited because of where we were and the lack of medical equipment. Caring for wounded and hurt was taking a major part of our time. About three days after our next raid, we came to a large river. Our C.O. made arrangements for our hurt guys to be taken down river by boat to the coast and evacuated that way. I never saw any of them again. Presumably, they were hospitalized and then sent home.

I guess that no contact with their other station finally sank in with the enemy and they realized something was going wrong. Our C.O. figured the same thing and we stopped our march a half day out and he sent my squad on a recon patrol to find out what was going on. It took us about three hours to get to a point where we could see the radio antenna. When we reached that point, everyone was starting to feel uneasy. No real reason, we thought, but just not quite right. The squad leader said, "Let’s get the hell off of this trail before we go any further." I'll bet we hadn't gone three hundred yards when we heard talking and some activity going on. We all got down and started crawling on our hands and knees. In about a hundred feet we could see the enemy had dug emplacements along each side of the trail we had just left a half hour before. Boy! Talk about intuition. It was a real stroke of luck. We decided to bypass them and look around further down the trail. We didn't see anyone else until we got to the bottom of the hill. We saw several of the enemy installing trip wire and grenade booby traps. No doubt about it. They were expecting us. The

Lieutenant said we'd go around the hill and take a look over there. By the time we got there it was almost dark. We packed it in for the night.

Next morning, we scouted the trail for a couple of miles. It was deserted. We then made a complete circuit of the hill and found nothing else of any interest and returned to the unit. After our report to the C.O., he decided that since the trap on the trail was small, we would bypass it and continue from that side. We arrived there the next afternoon and climbed part way up before nightfall. As with our first station, we were at the palisades an hour after first light. Again, we surprised them, that is, until somebody fell over something to alert them and the shit hit the fan. It didn't take too long to take the emplacement, but we lost three men and seven were wounded. They were also able to radio about our presence; that was the worst part -- their knowing just where we were. The dead were buried and we were off again.

According to our orders, we had one more station to go. As I said before, we shipped out our wounded about three days later. What a relief that was, a big load off everyone's shoulders. And I mean that literally! We were entering a different kind of country, less hills and more swampy. It also got a whole hell of a lot hotter. It seemed that we spent the rest of our time there slogging through gunky water and muck. If anyone got even the slightest scratch, it immediately became a running sore. My feet got so sore and raw from never being dry that none of the sulfa drugs we had were of much use at all. I finally cut my boots all to pieces to make a pair of crude looking sandals. At least my feet got better, and it wasn't long before a lot of the guys were doing it. We still had to contend with arm pits and crotches. I swabbed mine out every day with alcohol and kept the infection down. We also used something call salicylic acid for most skin ailments. It was real powerful stuff. We had one guy with a real hairy chest. He had some ring worm like rash on his chest, so the medic painted them with acid and as a joke painted a big question mark right between his breasts. The hair turned snow white and boy was he pissed. I never did find out if it went away. We didn't have too many things to laugh about right about then, so we made the most of anything that broke the routine. One guy had a leech right behind his testicles and he was lying on the ground with both legs spread out like a woman in labor and there were two medics trying to get it off. I hope you can imagine what it looked like to see some guy spread eagled on the ground and two others seemingly trying to play with him. I swear it was the funniest sight I had seen during the entire war.

We passed on into the delta. We slogged along for another four days before we saw our objective in the distance. It was a knob sticking up out of the flats like a woman's breast. I sure seem to be stuck on body parts here, don't I? We stopped until a plan could be formulated to take the installation by surprise. That was going to be very difficult, since they had already been warned about us. What really amazed our officer, was that no real effort had been made to intercept us. They figured that there surely was a trap set for us and that they knew exactly where we were. So much for the surprise. It was decided that we would have to make our move at night so if we couldn't surprise them, we would at least be partially protected by darkness. The hill was pretty bushy and therefore it would be noisy trying to climb it, especially in the dark. We started out at dusk. It was very slow going, because we were getting into more and more water. Every third man wore a combat flashlight on the back of his ammo belt. A combat flashlight is made with the batteries in a case and the head and lens are at a ninety degree angle to the body and a belt hook attached

to the body. The lens is covered with paint except for a narrow slit so that a minimum amount of light escapes. We walked, waded, swam and crawled until about 3 a.m. when we reached the base of the hill where the transmitter and antenna were. We were about to start up when somebody discovered a booby trap. It was a trip wire attached to a mortar shell. Their C.O. stopped all activity and called us all together and asked everybody what they would do in a situation like this.

(It would seem that a portion of the story from this point on has been left out or lost)

...a short time. Her father, it turned out, was the president of the New Zealand railroad and was working on the docks loading and unloading ships to help the war effort. His son, John, was a miner working on South Island and so was exempt from military service. The other daughter was a nurse at a military hospital. Her name was Daphne. The mother's name was Maureen and reminded me of my own mother. They were a pretty wonderful bunch and I was invited back any time I was able to come. I started going with Pat. She was my age and we really hit it off. There's no point in telling you about our dating I guess. Probably just bore you.

A week later my leave was up and I had to go back to Warkworth. Boy, did I ever hate to go back. The day I reported for duty my C.O. volunteered us to help the farmers harvest their crops. Mostly hay. And since I had spent a lot of time on a hay ranch I thought I would be a lot of help. It turned out to be just a lot of hard work. Loading hay by hand onto horse drawn wagons, hauling it to storage barns and stacking it inside. All the women cooked and hauled food and drink to the fields to feed us. Our kitchens furnished a good part of the food but those ladies sure made it taste better and they sure looked a hell of a lot better than army cooks.

The camp we lived in was made up of two man billets. Little wooden buildings with four walls, a window and a door. They were wooden studs with wood siding nailed onto the outside with no insulation or finished interior. You will see a little later why I am describing our living quarters. It was right after the hay harvest when we started getting badly needed replacements. Our outfit had less than 50% of our regular complement of men. They were men from eighteen to forty. Some were men who wouldn't have even been considered for military service if the United States hadn't been scraping the bottom of the barrel for men. One guy assigned to my platoon was nearly blind without wearing big thick glasses. One had some sort of deformity in his feet. Another couldn't hear well. But we were glad to have them. All guys directly from home. So we questioned the life out of them. One guy came from Phoenix, Oregon where I was born and we hit it off right away.

I was due for another pass to town and was told I couldn't go because I had the duty. Well this guy and I took off for Auckland. About a week later the M.P.s picked us up in town and sent us back to camp. I was in my billet changing my clothes when the door banged open and my battalion C.O., Joe Raneska, came roaring in madder than a snake and yelling at me. He said, "Miller I wouldn't care if you went AWOL. You probably deserved the time. But, when you took a recruit with you that's the last straw! Now you and me are going to fight and I'm going to beat the hell out of you! I give you permission to hit me..." He reached and took off his insignia and I took a swing at him. He hit me

and I went right through those studs I was telling you about, tore off the siding and rolled down a little hill. I was out colder than and iceberg. My roomy said I was out about ten minutes.

When I woke up he was gone. I went into the showers and stuck my head under a cold faucet till I could see straight and then went looking for him. He had a billet just like mine in an apple orchard. I walked up to the door and knocked. When he opened the door I took a swing and he hit me again. I went backward and my head caught in the crotch of an apple tree. Seems like apple trees were my downfall in life. At least I didn't see anything good about them at that time. When I got loose from the tree I made another dive for him and he grabbed me and said "OK Miller. You had enough? You can't whip me and I'm getting tired so let's call it quits." Boy was I ready! I went back to my billet feeling that my honor was vindicated. I still had to help fix the side of my billet. I didn't mind that because everybody had heard how Miller had taken on the Colonel. So I was somewhat of a hero. That all happened on a Friday.

On Monday I was assigned to Machanics Bay. An Army/Navy installation right in downtown Auckland on the waterfront. I had a pass every night so Pat and I got pretty well acquainted. In fact we got so well acquainted that we got engaged. I wrote home and had my mom buy an engagement ring. The reason being that they were so much less expensive in the states than in New Zealand. As it turned out the ring didn't arrive until after we shipped out for New Caledonia about a month later. I always got a little chuckle out of the fact that it cost me more for import duty to get the ring into New Zealand than the ring cost. I'll get to the rest of that story later.

It was a short five day boat ride to Noumea, New Caledonia. We arrived there during the worst rain storm since the great flood. I expected to run into the ark at any moment. We immediately boarded open trucks and proceeded sixty miles out into the boonies. It rained the whole way there. We unloaded in an absolute deluge, set up tents, crawled inside, dried off the best we could, wrapped up in blankets and died. That was about four in the afternoon and I never blinked an eye until the 1st Sergeant woke me up at six the next morning.

The cook had our field kitchens set up and so we were all treated to boiled spam and dehydrated eggs. You noticed I said boiled and not broiled spam? What a treat after New Zealand. I gagged and swallowed it and it tasted like nothing you would believe. For lunch we had boiled Vienna sausage and it was even worse! Can you imagine? Worse!!

After that memorable breakfast we were put to work setting up our tents in two rows facing each other about forty feet apart. The space between was called the company street. We put rocks down in front of each row of tents, which was about as long as a football field, and then painted them white. These things were designed to keep us busy and reduce the boredom that always followed removal from a so called civilized area. It sure worked because they worked the hell out of us and we were too tired to think of anything else. After a short time we began to realize that we were being prepared for a big operation.

One of the replacements we got in my company was a national middle weight lifting champion. He scrounged around and got some weights made out of whatever he could find and then set up a kind of outdoor gym out in the trees. There were several of us that got interested in weight lifting and he agreed to help us learn the right way to do it. This went on for about eight months off and on while we were in camp. That, I thought, wasn't too often. We were always going off somewhere on some sort of mission. In between our excursions and training I got to do quite a bit of weight lifting and related

exercises. It was, by the way, the best thing I ever did for myself. I went from what I thought was a flabby 195 to a hard 190 and broadened out enough to show some style. It never did hurt me as I said. Only helped.

Somebody decided we should go back to Indo China and finish the job we had started. So my battalion was assigned to a British assault ship called the HMS Battle Axe. It wasn't a nice ship but there were a lot of nice guys aboard, all Royal Marines. We'd arm wrestle, roll around on deck, swim and generally just pass the time. I know some of you may have wondered about my tattoos? But no one ever asked... That's where I got my first one. It wasn't much fun but it gave us all a chance to be Macho. Of course that's not what it was called then. One of the cooks aboard fancied himself as an artist. So after a few spliced main braces we got a needle out of a sewing kit, stuck it in a piece of cork insulation, found some blue ink, dipped the needle and began my tattoo. The next day my C.O. found out. He said, "Get to Noumea and have that thing fixed!" I did. That was number one. The R.M. means Royal Marines. Not Ray Miller as most people may believe. The other one was in a tattoo parlor in Brisbane, Australia. I had it retouched in Darwin a little later. That got infected and I spent time in the hospital for that. All in all kind of a waste.

1944 (18 years old)

Where did my story go? Oh ya. GI's aren't allowed to sit around very much so they always have us training at whatever they can find. We were training at night compass and map reading. A tactic that continued from my induction into the Army. All this was to be capped off with an unit wide excursion starting at one end of the island and ending at the other. My group was diverted to help a farmer round up his cattle, putting us four days behind the others. Anyway we were four days late getting in. When we showed up the regiment was all loaded up on trucks and moving out. We just threw our packs and equipment on a truck and climbed in. Three and one half hours later we were loaded onto transports. As usual nobody new anything. 10 days later we landed in New Guinea. No one was too anxious to explore. I'll be damned if they didn't put us all together and tell us that we were going to be fighting retreating enemy troops to divert them from a non-combat zone (ours). Well we engaged them and proceeded to lose 400 guys that day.

Next day we loaded up again and went to sea. Then later we joined a small convoy going our way. All we heard was that we were going to join a much larger convoy in about a week. The week it turned out was two days later and another three days to integrate with it. I thought I had seen a lot of ships in a convoy at other times, but this was fantastic! I don't know how many. Over 2,000 everyone said. Then the word around was that we were invading Luzon in the Philippines, where (the city of) Manila is. We knew it was going to be rough. But lots of us had enough combat points to go home after this landing. It was going to be like a stroll in the park on Sunday.

Thirty miles down the road it was a different story. The Japs had formed a main line of resistance covered by artillery and mortars. We were already short 400 men in the outfit. This was really going to be some party and of course we came riding up on our white horses to rescue the fair maidens. At my age we were heroes and nobody would get hurt. Then the guy next to me had his forehead shot off including both eyes. Another 400 were downed that day. I turned eighteen the next day. Some birthday, huh?

We finally established a line of our own and went from there with

air strikes and combat patrols. Next day they pulled out since we had the superior force at that time. I finally found out why we had been doing all that map reading. My personal unit was an anti-tank and recon platoon and since we didn't know about any enemy tanks that left recon. So here we go. A sergeant, a corporal and the anti-tank squad. We loaded up at about 3:00 pm and some Philippine scouts took us through the lines. We walked all night and at daylight we bedded down in some trees. We slept most of the day. We were way behind the Jap lines. I was ready for the sack again and was making some small talk with the sergeant when two scouts came in. They had seen two Jap tanks about six miles away. They wanted confirmation before calling the artillery. Two other guys and I were assigned to check it out.

We made it about three miles. My partner and number two anti-tank gunner, Joe Mariano, slipped and fell over making the worst rattle you ever heard. To this day I can't figure out why the Jap patrol never heard us cause they were loaded for bear as they passed us while we were all laying in the brush. They stopped and then finally moved out in about 15 minutes. We moved out slowly afterwards. About two hours later we ran into the separated tanks. They were 105mm's under one of those typical south pacific stilt houses. So the scouts thought they were tanks. We moved in to gather some intelligence when it seemed like their whole army moved over our back trails. We were trapped but good! One of the young guys said he had a sister who lived just down the road at right angles to our path. He led off and of course we followed.

It took us all night to reach his sister's house. It turned out to be a brothel. So we had breakfast. Best one I had since leaving New Zealand. Made me think of home (New Zealand did that is). They hid us in a pit under the chicken house. We stayed there all day. Japs were moving all around us the whole time so we were still trapped. That evening we were getting our gear to move back to our unit when we heard a commotion start back the way we originally came. It turned out to be three Jap scouts from a combat patrol who had found out about us. We sneaked off into some saw grass and none too soon. Here they came. Our sergeant pulled his trench knife and stuck the first one and since I was the "expert" with a "G" string I was next. Joe Mariano got the last one with a trench shovel.

We decided to make a circular movement around their main troop body. So we went. It turned out that their main body was a battalion. We couldn't get around them so we retreated back to the whore house. They were glad to see us. As it turned out the only thing that saved us was the fact a lot of Jap troops were deserting and their commanders weren't too concerned about people moving about. You know, I've given the impression maybe that I was some kind of wheel on the patrol? I wasn't! Just another slogger doing what he was told. Although, I did do my job extra well I thought. Ain't that swell? All I ever was was a slogger...back under a chicken house (till near the end). During the night they made a half-baked search for us. Of course they never found us cause I'm here! (Hopefully your moms and dads can fill you in on the parts you don't know about. Uncle B.K. and Steve can fill in the parts that may be dark to you. My main concern at this point is finishing this bomb. Got a ways to go.) Did I say the shack was at a Y in the road? It was. Next morning the Japs had pulled out so we decided to move while the moving was good. When we got back to our lines they were mounting a company size patrol to come look for us. Boy were they ever happy we showed up!

My squad loaded up and moved our anti-tank guns under the shack with line company's on each side, rifle fire and some sporadic auto

weapons fire. Here we were trying to cover a road against infantry and no knowledge of what's before us. About dark now. Here comes a jeep. He goes right by us and over a little hill into a little valley. We hear shooting and pretty soon here comes the jeep back. The guy they were carrying wasn't on it but there was another and he was gut shot... hollering and yelling and groaning. I went out to help hold him down. I just got there and I heard this engine. At the same time my hand touches a grenade on the floor of the jeep. This tank comes up directly behind the jeep and stops. His machine gun turret starts to swivel and I know he's going to fire. I grab the grenade, jump against the tank in a spinning turn and toss the grenade down the open turret. God damn thing almost blew clean off the tracks. What a thrill. I just couldn't hardly stand it. Remember the piano wire back in the jungle? Even better.

It's dark now and we hear more engines so we know we are going to have some fun. Lots of fun. A.T. guns are small bore, 37mm, but large enough for Jap armored weapons. Did I say we were in open rice patties with small trees along the edges? Some maybe 8" but mostly 4" and 6". So here they come. Maybe a dozen all firing right over our heads. The first one stopped behind a couple of those trees I mentioned. First thing I do is fire a round of white phosphorous to get a little light, then started firing high explosives at the trees to get them out of the way. Then to get the tank with armor piercing rounds. I guess I should tell you the different kinds of shells we had for the 37mm AT guns - armor piercing, high explosive, white phosphorous and one called canister which is kind of like a great big shot gun shell that had 128 steel balls embedded in rosin. When the canister shell is fired the rosin melts from traveling down the barrel and the steel balls are released to go their separate ways. Not very nice.

I got the first tank in line. The second pushes him partly off the road into a big ditch. It's really dark now and there is firing all over and the tank is burning something fierce. That's when they decided to have a bonsai attack. They all got out anything that makes noise and started beating on it and firing everything they had. Remember I said they were battalion strength? They were and then some. I started plinking away and got some before their infantry started to overrun us. We hooked up and started for our battalion headquarters. We went at right angles and never made it a quarter mile. The road was blocked. So then we went right into a river. Truck, gun, ammo and some pissed GIs and mad Japs right behind us. We all made the far bank alive. Joe Mariano had been shot in the jaw and we were forced to carry him. Bad stuff. After about three hours we got him to an aid station. They evacuated him to a hospital ship. The rest of us ate and went back to the war. Another vehicle and an hour later and we had our gun back. I counted empty shell casings and found I fired 531 rounds and there were 540 dead enemy. Of course they weren't all mine, except a tank. I always believed that the artillery got most of them after we had marked them with fire. Silver star for me though. It was a pretty blown up area. So I am sure the artillery made a big play in a little struggle.

They replaced our platoon leader about that time. A guy named Jack Upham from Texas. He knew all there was to know about everything and wasn't afraid to tell anybody that would stand still. He didn't like many people and they had better be officers. He was a First Lieutenant bucking for Captain. We got into an argument over some little chicken deal. Before I rotated home my silver star ended up being a recommend rather than an award. Great huh? Anyway when I was in Korea they restored it.

We moved on in about three days. It was nice to be moving again.

As it turned out we didn't move that far. About ten miles to what was the main North South highway. At least we were away from the chicken house. We went to a small town. The town square was like a wagon wheel with the hub being at the exact center. We set up three guns. Every time the Japs came within 600 yards we would open fire. It kept us out of trouble for five days. Then they moved in some smaller stuff and the battle was on. 1st they would blow us out of our socks and then we would return likewise. We had reinforcements and fresh supplies coming in all the time. They made do on what they had and what they could steal. I never figured that one out.

We heard about a big Bonsai attack coming so we moved into the jungle surrounding the area and started cutting fields of fire to keep them from infiltrating and getting behind us. I was stringing out communications wire on a trail from a back board. I looked up just in time to see something coming at me. It was a Jap swinging at me. It turned out to be a pistol butt. He didn't have any ammo. I guess he was trying to smash my skull. He missed and knocked out my front teeth instead. A buddy shot him. Lucky me.

We had fresh bread and pork chops that day. I couldn't even eat the bread with a split lip and broken teeth. We finally cut the Jap supply lines and they moved on North. Oh ya. The big attack never did come. Might as well have though. We had continued skirmishes with small groups deserting, setting booby traps every night and taking them up in the morning. My job mostly. A real pain actually. I'd hang a grenade or 6mm mortar shell on a tree, rig up the safety pin and wait? Hoping of course that the pin didn't come out while I was playing with them.

Here I am! I guess it all finally caught me. I'm about to lose the last pin. At least it's better to go in bed than blown all over some bushes on a jungle trail somewhere. I have no gripes. I had a good one and have some pretty good kids and grandkids. Proud of the whole damn bunch of you I am.

The Japs went on North into the mountains and we followed. The first obstacle we came to was a place called Balete Pass. They were all dug in waiting for us, really the shits. We lost a lot of guys again. This is the place where we parted with Captain Jack Upham. There were (* web version edited per request)
some big caves facing us as we went up. Cap'n Jack, as I said, knew everything. He thought he saw Japs in one cave. He said he was going to shoot. We all ran. I mean really got the hell out over the next ridge. He fired - into a three ton mound of picric acid the Japs used for artillery propellant. Buried him over his nose. Good bye Jack! (* web version edited per request)

It's hard to imagine what we went through with Jack. He volunteered us for every lousy detail he could think of in his quest for promotion. I got an extra good one after he croaked.

(* web version edited per request)

There were wounded Japs beyond the pass. Several of us were ordered to collect the wounded enemy men and bring them in for treatment. Lots of fun. Even with the first one. Must have been a mess sergeant. He weighed as much as I did. We loaded him on a stretcher and started up the hill to the aid station. He kept rolling off. He couldn't walk so I figured he didn't want to go.

We thought we'd let him think it over and so we went and found a small creek and started another search. We really had to be careful because of ambush. So here I am leading the way and scared shitless not

knowing what's around the next corner. We came to a place where there had been a bridge. The bridge was gone and they had put in a culvert and covered it with earth and rocks. We could see someone was in the culvert so this guy decided to talk to them. He slid down and started in and they almost shot his head off. No good. No way we could talk to some guy who was more scared than we were. We saw blood in the water and wondered where it was coming from. This guy wasn't coming out so we decided part of us will get him and the rest of us will see what we will see. There were several good sized rocks where they had dug the dirt and gravel away for their fill material....

(This is as far as Ray got before he passed away).

The following was contributed by Charles K. Jessup

I wish my memory was half as good as Ray's on the day he died. I don't remember any details about when he was married to Aunt Violet. Perhaps they had divorced by the time I was born in 1954. I know there were a couple of times when mom and dad were still married and I was quite young (probably before my youngest sister, Connie, was born) when we must have visited aunt Violet. And I remember how I would fool around with cousins Bryson and Steve.

Then when mom and Ray began seeing each other and they later explained that they planned to get married he was just some guy I really knew nothing about. That must have been around 1971. From that day forward there wasn't one event I can ever recall, concerning Ray and I, that ever gave me any reason to believe that he was anything but a great stepfather and husband to mom. Well I guess the fact that he smoked did bother me to some degree. But I think that hardly counts against Ray taking all his other admirable qualities into consideration.

The reason I bring all this up is because I always found it strange somehow that here I was calling some guy my stepfather who was once married to my long lost aunt Violet. And even now I don't know if Bryson and Steve should be considered to be cousins or stepbrothers. But I suppose it hardly matters except that Ray is one of the few who ever managed to pull off that kind of a feat (marry two sisters from the same family). A rare fellow if you ask me.

Ray helped me qualify for a job as a sheet metal apprentice in Reno, where he and mom lived, sometime around 1974 as I recall. Here I was about to start on a new found career and almost flat broke. While I waited for a single job opening that summer (I had qualified number two out of several hundred applicants) I decided to return to Gresham and earn a living working at the Reynolds Metals plant in Troutdale, OR. Little did I know that I would fall in love with a close friend of my sister's, named Debbie, decide to stay at Reynolds for the next year and a half, and then get dumped for another fellow rather than accept the apprenticeship once it finally became available. It is funny how the cards are dealt and how we lose a few and win a few. But that was just one example of how Ray would go out of his way to help me out. And yet I doubt I ever did half as much for him as he would repeatedly do for me, no questions asked.

Every time I visited mom and Ray he was up to something. He would work his tail off. No way could I ever keep up with him. The guy was a workaholic. And he always worked up a sweat. He could still put us young punks to shame. Whip it out, get the job done, and on to the next chore. One heck of a hardworking man. And I know I'm not the only one who owes him a lot of credit for what he created with his bare hands!

When Sue and I where building our house in Issaquah, WA (east of

Seattle) in late 1986, Ray acted like he had nothing better to do than help us buy a furnace and some duct work and drive up for a few days to install our heating system for us. And later when I needed help with our boat cover out back he came up and helped with that project too. And, as if that wasn't enough, he helped us put in our concrete patio (1000 SF which was no easy task) and, last but not least, he helped me with our back deck. Everyone else might take all his hard work for granted but we all have nobody to thank for these acts of generosity but Ray himself. The real point I'm trying to make is that there seems to be two kinds of people in this world; those who would rather give you their money than their help and those who are willing to give you something more than money... helping you with the hard work. Something money can't ever buy enough of. Ray earned my respect! And my love.

And that guy could read books like nobody I ever saw. He always had his nose in a book. He never acted like he knew it all but somehow I think maybe he did. He was a walking encyclopedia.

The only thing he may have been more serious about was playing poker. I only played with him a few times but each time was a lesson. Not so much because he won more often than he lost. But because he seemed to have learned somewhere along the line (probably in the service) that there is poker for the fun of it and then there is serious poker. Personally I'll take serious over fun any day. And I'd rather play with Ray than most the others I've played with. He was a good old boy.

We shared a lot of great times together but the time I'll remember the most was when we decided to go elk hunting a couple seasons back (must have been 1987). Ray was having heart problems and had to take those little nitro pills. I wasn't sure if he should even be out chasing around the woods with me but nobody else cared to keep me out of trouble but him. Anyway, after a couple hundred miles of driving and a good night's sleep in Enterprise, Oregon we were out in the sticks hot on the trail of a couple large elk (judging from their tracks). The tracks led us across another fresh set of tracks so we split up.

Now I was in much better shape (at least I thought) so I tried to advise him to go easy, and not too far, so I could catch up with him if my trail failed to pan out. I followed my trail for a half hour (on foot mind you) while Ray followed his along a dirt road. That was far enough I decided, so I doubled back to find Ray. I must have walked another hour and a half in the snow along the road following Ray's tracks on and on. I was beginning to hope he'd stop before I died trying to track him down! It had snowed and I was getting real worried that we'd never get back to the van alive at the rate he was going. I guess the only reason I didn't freeze was because I started walking even faster in hopes of catching up with him.

Finally, here he came walking back. "Why the hell did you keep going so far?" I asked. "I don't know. I thought the road would run out sooner than it did I guess." he replied. The end of the road was just around the bend and if it hadn't run out I swear I'd still be chasing after him to this day. And then he proceeds to tell me he missed getting off a shot at a two point bull, that almost ran him down, not more than five minutes after we split up. We had the worst luck I guess.

Anyway, we climbed uphill to the road we dropped down off of and I ended up walking nearly another hour back to the van after sitting the old bear (Ray) down in an abandoned hunting camp near the end of that road. I was so exhausted I could hardly crawl into the van. No sooner had I started the engine then here comes Ray driving up with a couple of new friends just like he'd called a taxi! And here I was worried he was going to die of a heart attack on me instead of the other way around?

The next day we found ourselves driving down a muddy switch back road which dropped down to the Grand Ronde River in north east Oregon. It was so slick and muddy that I couldn't stop the van! The tires were caked in mud like brown greased donuts. Luckily one switch back leveled out enough to get stopped. I had almost wet my pants I was so nervous! So I thought it was best that I get out and relieve myself. That's when I took one look at the tires, one look up the steep road we came down, one look at the canyon below and one look at Ray. "What the heck are we going to do now?!" I asked him. He said, "Drive down the hill I guess. What else?" As if there would be nothing to it. "O.K. Smart guy. You drive. I dare you." So he did. And every time my side was looking out over the cliff I nearly passed out. And every time my side almost scraped against the rocks on the uphill side of the road I nearly cried. And the whole time I begged him to stop but he'd just say, "I can't." And again he was sweating up a storm so I knew we'd be lucky to get down in one piece. But, as Ray said, we're here! And I owe it all to Ray. That was Ray for you. Never hesitating to save your bacon.

I'll never forget what he said to me once about a year later, and I think he really meant it because he always seemed to be serious about such things. He said, "You're the only guy I like to go hunting with." I asked him what he meant by that? And he said, "When you go hunting you go hunting! That's all. Everyone else I ever hunted with seems to mess around a lot. But not you. You take it seriously." I suppose somehow I gained his respect also. I just wish we could have gone hunting one more time before he rode off into the sunset. And you'll never imagine how much I'll cherish the .300 Weatherby Mark V he left behind for me, and which I hope to pass on to another worthy recipient someday. The next one's for you Ray....

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* (web version edited per this request)

07/20/2004

Candace Carrabba wrote:

There is part of Raymond Marshall Miller's internet story in chapter 8 (1944) that is a lie. He describes the death of Captain Jack Upham. That Captain Jack Upham retired a Major and is my father. He is still alive. Mr. Miller apparently had some very sour grapes and enjoyed besmirching Captain Jack Upham's reputation. I have heard many stories about that time and that battle. He was ORDERED by his commander to engage the enemy in some brutal battles. He did NOT volunteer for these missions. Please correct this offensive fiction by eliminating all reference to Captain Jack Upham. I do not care about the rest of his story, which is suspect.

Since you wrote chapter 9 of his story and apparently placed it on the internet I trust that you can update it.

Candace Upham Carrabba
viking9@tca.net

07/21/2004

Chuck Wrote:

Updates made. Not sure he "enjoyed" "besmirching" anyone though. Or that any part of this story qualifies as "fiction". That part of the story was written when Ray was on his death bed and under heavy drugs while most of his brain was ravaged with cancer. The last few months of his life (not to mention his 18th year some 49 years earlier), including what he wrote in that chapter, were no doubt fairly emotional and foggy for him. So, although the story may have been inaccurate in places, it's anyone's guess what was a lie and what was simply poor memory.

Thanks,

Chuck