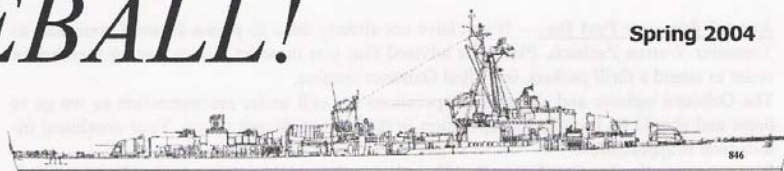


FIREBALL!

Volume 13, No. 2

Spring 2004



The Newsletter of the USS Ozbourn (DD846) Association
Dedicated to perpetuating the memory of a gallant Marine and the history of a fine ship

FROM THE BRIDGE

The reunion is just over and the committee is already working on our seventh, which will be held in the fall of 2005. This issue contains a ballot that will enable you to assist the committee in selecting the site. Please make your selection and return it as indicated. I have attended all six and each was well worth the trip and I know that the next one will also be a success.

As shipmates of the "Oz", we were brothers for that period of our lives. Having an opportunity to spend time with the men we served with should not be easy to pass up. Each year with the help of dedicated members and their computers, more shipmates are located and join the association.

Every reunion allows us the chance to renew old friendships and make new ones. I encourage all of you to make an effort to attend the next one. It is not too early to start planning for the fall of 2005. See you there.

Rudy Boff, President

Joe Ozbourn and the "Fighting Fourth" Invade Saipan and Tinian, Summer, 1944

In the last episode we followed our intrepid gyrenes of the 23rd Marines from Camp Pendleton through the capture of Roi-Namur in the Marshall Islands and then back to their home base at Camp Maui in Hawaii where they went into a rest/re-fit/training mode in preparation for their next deployment.

While the "Fighting Fourth" had been engaged in the Marshalls, the strategic planners had been busy finalizing plans for the next step in the long march to Japan. Up next was Operation Forager, the invasion of the Marianas and the 4th was to be one of the two Marine Divisions involved. This group of islands had been singled out for the next large scale operation in the Pacific primarily because of their relatively close proximity to the home islands of Japan some 1200

miles to the north. Here, the airfields would be constructed for the new long range B-29 bombers that had been designed and built to tear the heart out of the Japanese homeland and bring the war to a close. In addition, this move would greatly aid in severing Japanese lines of communication to their forces still operating to the south and would provide staging areas for the invasion of Japan proper should that eventuality become reality.

Japan had been in control of the Marianas Islands to the north of Guam since 1914, ample time in which to prepare their cunning defenses such as those that allied forces had already encountered in the ferocious battles in the South Pacific. Saipan, the largest of these islands, was roughly 14 miles long by 6 miles wide. The terrain was rugged with sharp ridges, fissure like valleys and numerous caves scattered throughout. Sugar cane constituted the islands main crop and 20,000 civilians, the bulk of them Japanese, tilled the soil and worked the sugar mills. The highest elevation was Mount Tapotchau, at 1554 feet, located in the center of the island. Militarily, the most important objectives were Aslito airfield in the south and Tanapag harbor on the western shore, the site of a naval base with the town of Garapan nearby. To defend the island the Japanese mustered around 30,000 troops, most of them Army, with a sizable detachment of "Imperial Marines" included in this total. The commander of the naval forces was none other than Vice Admiral Chuichi Nagumo, the man who had led the attack on Pearl Harbor, and his plans called for destroying the invasion forces at the beaches while the Imperial Navy's Combined Fleet sought to engage the American Battle Fleet in a decisive battle in the Philippine Sea. The Japanese Army commander had correctly deduced that the main American assault would center on the coastal village of Charan Kanoa in the southwest corner of the island and he sited his artillery accordingly. The beaches and their approaches were all registered for artillery and mortar fire with various colored flags marking ranges between reef and shore. In short, this would be a tough nut to crack and the guys in the 23rd Marines would be in the thick of it.

Meanwhile, back at camp Maui, the R&R that followed the Roi-Namur operation was over, replacements had arrived and training continued unabated with command post exercises, overnight problems and weekly hikes around the super obstacle course of Mt. Haleakala. On the outskirts of the camp a demolitions and live-grenade area, rifle and pistol ranges and

(See Saipan on page 6)

Bulletin Board of General Interest.

1. **Annual dues are Past Due**— If you have not already done so please forward your dues to Treasurer Warren Zschach. Please be advised that you must be a dues paying member in order to attend a thrill packed, fun filled Ozourn reunion.
2. The Ozourn website and ships store operations are still under reconstruction as we go to press and should be back in full operation in the not too distant future. Your continued indulgence is appreciated.
3. In response to the Tin Can Trivia Pop-Quiz in the January issue, Jim Helland came closest to the correct answer with his input of "four stacker head." The photo was in fact the crews head on the Fletcher class destroyer USS Kidd (DD 661). Kidd is berthed at the Louisiana Veterans Memorial in Baton Rouge, LA.
4. An interesting and informative website called "Veterans, Military and War Service Registry" can be found at <http://members.aol.com/veterans/registry.htm>. It is a source of a wide variety of veteran related topics to include records acquisition, buddy locator, photo archive and many other services. Another personnel locator called Military Pals may be found at <http://militarypals.com>. Our thanks to Bill Jones for this information.

Attention all hands: REUNION 2005

Enclosed with this edition you will find a ballot that will enable you to cast your vote for the site of the next reunion to be held in the Fall of 2005. The site selection committee has narrowed the choices to three and now ask for your input so that the final selection can be made. The proposed locations are **Washington, DC; Charleston, SC and Seattle, WA**. This will be the only chance to record your choice so fill out your ballots and return them to **Bob Whitten** posthaste. No hanging chads, please!!

Welcome Aboard

Jacques M. Britton	BTCS (1972-1975)	Served as "B" Division CPO and also CMAA.
William Crayton	SK1 (1971-1975)	
Russell R. Hill	(1956)	

Tin Can Trivia

WW I four-piper destroyer USS Ward (DD 139) fired the opening shot of WW II for American forces when she attacked and sank a Japanese midget submarine in the channel approaches to Pearl Harbor. Her skipper, LCDR W.W. Outerbridge was later transferred and Ward was converted to a high speed transport (APD 16) and went on to amass an enviable combat record in the South West Pacific. On 7 December 1944, three years to the day after her # 3 gun fired the opening shot of the war, Ward was operating in support of landing operations in Ormoc Bay, Leyte in the Philippine Islands when she was crashed by a Kamikaze bomber and set on fire. When the damage could not be controlled the ship was abandoned and subsequently sunk by gunfire from USS O'Brien (DD725). The CO of O'Brien was non other than CDR Outerbridge who had been in command of Ward during the action off Pearl Harbor. Ward had been his first command.

(more Trivia

Photo # NH 61544-A USS Chauncey unloading coal at sea, off the Canary Islands



USS Chauncey (DD 3)

The caption reads: "USS Chauncey enroute to China 1903-04 with 1st Torpedo Flotilla - USS Buffalo convoy.

Chauncey ran out of coal off Ferro, Canary Islands. Boats from Buffalo seen alongside hoisting coal in bags from davit heads.

Talk about a bad day.....!

Note that that they went to China by way of Suez, a voyage of 18,000 miles.

LOA 249 ft. Beam 23.5 ft. Displacement 420t.

Speed (des.) 28.0, Endurance: 2500 mi. at 8 kts.

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MAIL CALL



Received from **Jack Blonsick** (50-51) on 15 February 2004

The longest siege in naval history began on 16 February 1951 in the harbor of Wonsan, Korea. The USS Ozbourn was there. It was also the site of the sinking of the minesweepers USS Partridge and Pledge while sweeping mines in an echelon formation. It was in this harbor that the Ozbourn was hit by North Korean artillery and my left shoe was blown to limp grey leather by shrapnel. This is also the scene where Charlie Akers (CO Ozbourn) became a member of the lost anchor club. A recalled USNR merchant marine LTJG let go the anchor chain while under fire.



Artillery duel underway in Wonsan Harbor 1951

Captain Akers responds: On that eventful date loaded with potential disaster, many of our Ozbourn shipmates reacted immediately and took the correct action including the black gang in answering the bells from the bridge even though they were not in a state of readiness to do so. Maybe some day we can sell the anchor to the North Koreans with the condition that they locate and recover it.

Corrine McCord, widow of Vernon McCord sent in a short note accompanying dues for 2004 and 2005. She says that Vernon would have wanted her to do this as he loved the Navy and the Ozbourn.

Received a note from Honorary Member **Herman Schwab**, USMC in which he reported receipt of the newsletter and expressed his appreciation for his election as an Honorary

Member of the association. Herman went on to say that he has a lot in common with the Navy as his son is a Captain in the Dental Corps, has 26 years service and is stationed at the submarine base at New London, CT. He also sent in a donation to the treasury. Thank you Herman, it was very generous of you and Semper Fi.

The following letter was received from **James H. Hallas** of Portland, CT and reads, in part:

I am a researcher and author of World War II Marine Corps history currently attempting to compile biographies of all WWII USMC Medal of Honor recipients. I came across your name while doing research on Private Joseph William Ozbourn.

I understand that you served on the USS Ozbourn and through your research have contact with at least a couple of the men who were with him on Tinian when he was killed. I'm hoping I can impose on you for some personal information about him, so I can better depict what sort of person he was and the details of his action on Tinian.

There doesn't seem to be much in the official USMC records about him and I feel this should be corrected.

Mr. Hallas is the publisher of the Glastonbury Citizen, a newspaper in Glastonbury, CT. He has published articles in American History Illustrated and Yankee Magazine. He is the author of *Squandered Victory: The American First Army at St. Mihiel* (1995), *Devils Anvil: The Assault on Peleliu* (1994) and *Killing Ground on Okinawa* (1996) among others. Mr. Hallas has donated a copy of the latter book to the USS Ozbourn Association.

For Mr. Hallas: We in the USS Ozbourn Association thank you for your donation and for your interest in the namesake of our old ship. It is a subject that has been long neglected and we will contribute to your project in any way possible.

Frank Spittle's first sea duty

The gray shuttle bus rattled to a stop just inside the main gate at Long Beach Naval Shipyard. Setting my sea bag down behind the driver and with my arm wrapped around the hand pole I asked the driver, "Could you tell me when we get to the Ozbourn?" "Sure, what's the hull number?" he responded.

Checking my orders I took a chance that "hull number" might mean the number following the ship's name printed there and said, "846?"

"Boy, I don't remember seeing those numbers around here."

A faceless voice called from the back, "Maybe it's the tin-can with the bow missing."

"Could be," speculated the driver as we continued through the dock area. Stopping the bus the driver called out, "There she be, Pal. But it don't look like you'll be getting underway any time soon." My seagoing assignment rested high and dry and the bow was missing forward of the second gun mount.

Sailor, Write your Mother, a humorous account of life in the Navy circa 49-50. Order from: **Ocean Breeze Publications, P.O. Box 3421, Laguna Hills, CA 92654.**

Price: \$16.95 (plus \$3 S&H. CA residents add \$1.36 tax)

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In 23 exciting chapters the author brings together humor, wit and memories of many years in the maritime world with "professional maritime language." A tale of intrigue is not only told by "The Assistant" but he describes and explains the functioning of a modern container ship at sea involved with bureaucratic government agencies, and the people in a major shipping company battling for ego satisfying found in the pages of the easy to read Assistant." The transition of "The Navy Captain to Master of a modern salvation add spice. Facing an his leaders and their near comic involving the U.S. Coast Guard and heart make reading time well spend.



recognition. A little bit of us can be and understandable language of "The Assistant" from decorated, educated container ship, his demise and unexpected challenge and assisted by reactions, plus the clever operations the F.B.I. entwined with affairs of the It's more truth than friction.

About the Author.

At sea from age 16 in old buckets, tugboats, fishing boats and a dozen merchant ships he served from Ordinary Seaman to unlimited Master, San Francisco Bar Pilot and river pilot to Sacramento and Stockton. From Ensign USNR (Merchant Marine Naval Reserve) he rose to Captain, USN serving in seven ships; commanding three and retiring as Commanding Officer of a Naval Weapon Station. Awarded three Bronze Stars with combat citations and twenty-one other awards for action and involvement in Pacific and Atlantic fleet operations. A high school drop out raised in the "school of the ship" by a bunch of old salts he obtained a graduate degree of Master in Public Administration. Master Mariner, Ship Captain, Naval Officer, ship pilot, plus years as an instructor in a maritime academy and a Marine Consultant he combined all into sixty years of experience, then finalizing his career as Assistant Marine Superintendent, American President Lines Oakland, California. His next work is a 30 year history of the famous Gearing DD710 class destroyers and "Those Tin-Can Sailors" with tales of their lives, wives, perils and dedication.

John Denham was Skipper of Ozbourn from 1966 to 1968 while the ship was home ported in Yokosuka, Japan and took the ship on deployments to South East Asia and to the Sea of Japan during the USS Pueblo incident. He is a frequent contributor to the Fireball.

Jack Blonsick (50-51) sent us this revealing first person account of his random meeting with a famous personage circa 1950.

The recent death of Madamissimo Kai Shek brought back some memories. We were sent to Kaoshiung, which was where the General and Madamissimo lived after being booted off the mainland by the CHICOMS in 1949. We attended a long luncheon banquet where the food kept coming and the Chinese Admirals and Generals gom bay'd me into a

drunken stupor. Gom Bay is the Chinese way of saying "bottoms up". We returned to the ship and I immediately hit the sack. LTJG John Hadley came by and told Pete Cole and me to get up because we were going to the Generalissimo's house. I got into my rags and off we went. All the generals and admirals were in attendance again. Commodore Roeder was talking to the Madam when she said that she missed celerity in Taiwan. The commodore promised her a crate the following day. While working off a tremendous hangover the

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next day I was ordered to report to the commodore and he detailed me to get a crate of celery and deliver it personally to the Madamissimo. Yeah, right. So the Navy's only commissioned grocery boy went to the mansion with a crate of celery but the Chinese don't let U.S. Navy Ensigns make contact with exalted rulers so I dumped it off with some cook in the kitchen. You do the midshipman thing for four years, study aeronautical engineering at Georgia Tech, graduate, and become a delivery boy. I hope the old crone enjoyed it.



JOOD Blonsick in 1950

This photo arrived captioned: "What—me worry???" I think he was too modest to say, "You're in good hands with Blonsick!!!"
Ed.

WESTPAC 1966-1968 Action on the DMZ

On 25 June 1966 Ozbourm with COMDESDIV 92 embarked, in company with other units of Des.Div. 92, USS Mansfield (DD 728), USS Theodore E. Chandler (DD 717) and USS Hollister (DD 788) departed Long Beach for a two year deployment based on the naval base in Yokosuka, Japan. After arrival at the new home port and a short period of underway training exercises the ship departed for Vietnam in mid-August where numerous missions were conducted in support of the ground operations then in progress.

Returning to Yososuka on 3 November, the ship was then outfitted with Gemini spacecraft recovery equipment and became the back-up recovery unit in the Pacific Ocean. Following the Atlantic recovery of the Gemini, Ozbourm was underway for Hong Kong B.C.C and assumed duties as Station Ship for a period of two weeks. Christmas Eve found the ship back in her adopted home port, Yokosuka.

Upon completion of upkeep and ASW exercises, Ozbourm's initial assignment of 1967 was a screening unit for the USS Enterprise (CVA(N)65) task force. After an upkeep period that included dry docking the ship returned to Yankee Station and the I and II Corps areas where she provided gunfire support on Operation Beacon Hill. On 25 March Ozbourm was taken under fire by hostile coastal defense sites on the

DMZ and subsequently received two direct hits. One projectile, believed to be a 4 inch mortar type penetrated the AS-ROC storage magazine on the 01 deck port side mid-ships and the other entered the gunfire radar control room on the port side under the bridge. Immediately, reports reached the bridge that the magazine was on fire and Main Battery Control reported loss of power and control to all gun mounts. The damage control teams leaped into action and took on



Shell hole in ASROC magazine

the ASROC fire, with two men crawling through dense smoke and burning residue from the burning rocket motors dragging a charged fire hose. They managed to suppress and contain the fire and cooled the other rocket motors. Their actions saved the weapons magazine and quite probably the entire ship as well. As the ship cleared to seaward it was evident to other ships in the area that the

old "OZ" was having a bad day. The rocket motor exhaust had created a tremendous dark cloud of smoke and flame and some observers later reported that the ship had blown up. Two rocket motors were on fire and the area was so hot and the noise so deafening that it took some time before it was possible to determine what degree of control had been accomplished.



Could the squadron insignia have been the aiming point???

When things cooled down it was determined that in addition to the two rocket motors that had burned, two additional missiles had been severely damaged. Further investigation found that the radar control system for the main battery guns was destroyed. Thankfully and surprisingly no personnel casualties were incurred.

The ship then retired to Subic Bay, P.I. for repairs and rejoined the fray in late April 1967.

Photos and background data courtesy of Harry Pogue (66-68)



Department of Defense
 Defense Prisoner of War/Missing Personnel Office
[Click here for DPMO web site links](#)



Korean War Resources

KORWALD Reports (Korean War Aircraft Loss Database)

KORWALD Loss Incident Summary

Date of Loss: 520808
 Tail Number: 125710
 Aircraft Type: AD-4N
 Wing or Group: USS Essex (CVA-9)
 Squadron: VC-35
 Circumstances of Loss: Hit by AAA, lost oil pressure, ditched near Yang-do

Crewmembers Associated With This Loss

Name (Last, First Middle)	Rank	Service	Status	Comments
KILLINGSWORTH, B. B.	AT2	USN	RSC	Rescued by the USS Ozburn (DD-848)
NORTON, J. C.	LT	USN	RSC	Rescued by the USS Ozburn (DD-848)
STEPHENS, Alan J.A.	AT2	USN	RSC	Rescued by USS Ozburn (DD-848)

This report from the KORWALD database documents the loss of an AD-4N Skyraider and recovery of the crew by Ozburn in July 1952. The story of this incident was featured in the July 2002 issue of Fireball entitled "Flight of the Heckler" in which Jim Stephens gives his account of the mission and his subsequent rescue. This report was forwarded to him and his reply follows: "Hello Tom, It just so happens I was telling my son about that incident tonight. I didn't know that such a website existed. I check out your Ozburn website every once in a while. You guys do a great job with it. Again, thanks for the info. Jim Stephens."

Access to the Korean War Aircraft Loss Database may be found at www.dtic.mil/dpmo/pmkor/korwald. Ed.

(Saipan continued from page 1)

machine gun range operated practically non-stop. In addition to all this there was a mortar and artillery impact area, a sea-coast artillery range and the Maalaea Bay area furnished an anti-tank moving target range together with fortified pillboxes and emplacements modeled after the installations that had been found at Tarawa. Knowledge gained in drilling at these facilities would benefit the troops immensely in the savage battles to come.

At one of the training sessions a medical officer sought to alert the men to some of the hazards that could be encountered

on the islands; "In the surf," he went on, "beware of sharks, barracuda, sea snakes, anemones, razor sharp coral, polluted water, poison fish and giant clams that shut on a man like a bear trap. Ashore there is leprosy, typhus, filariasis, yaws, typhoid, dengue fever, dysentery, saber grass, insects, snakes and giant lizards. Eat nothing found there, don't drink the water and don't approach the inhabitants." At the conclusion of the lecture the officer asked for questions. One perceptive young private is said to have asked, "Sir, why don't we let the Japs keep their old island." In the days that lay ahead

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this question must have run through the minds of nearly all the Marines who landed there.

Finally, toward the end of May 1944, the training at Maui came to an end as the marines saddled up and boarded the ships that would transport them to Saipan about 3700 miles to the west. However, they didn't head over the horizon just yet, they just moved the few miles over to Pearl Harbor where the convoy was making up and while there certain training exercises continued. Pvt. Eddie Newman continues the story, "We had all been admonished not to lose any of our equipment or we would go ashore without a replacement. One day while debarking from the ship into small boats I was in the first group to go down the nets and as I stood in the boat the next group came down behind us. One guy had his rifle slung over his shoulder and as he swung around to land in the boat his rifle butt hit me in the head and knocked my helmet over the side. Sgt. Young reported this to the platoon leader who was unsympathetic to my plight. As a result, I went without a helmet until a few days before the landing when some of the guys took pity on me and scrounged up a helmet from somewhere." Del Flier wasn't too enthusiastic about the boat/cargo net drill either. "I hated to go down the net first because the ones coming down later would always jump on top of you."

On 29 May 1944, the convoy including the USS Callaway (APA 35) with our group of marines embarked pointed their prows westward and the two week trip to the Marianas began. APA's were designed for utility not for comfort as the Marines soon found out. All remarked about how hot it was below decks and how they staked out a spot topside where they remained throughout the voyage. Eddie Newman told of how he raided the spud locker, found some onions and soda crackers and then had a feast of raw potato and onion sandwiches. The Marines remembered lounging around topside watching the aircraft and ships on patrol protecting the convoy but Del Flier was assigned to guard duty and described it like this, "One day I was assigned to guard a big steel box on deck that contained coils of moldy ropes. I'm sure that it was just a make work project for me because who would want to steal a bunch of moldy old ropes but I still had to walk around that damned box all night long."

D-Day on Saipan - 15 June 1944 found the invasion force off the southwestern approaches to the beaches where the main assault was to take place. The marines had been re-embarked in amphibious tractors (AMTRACS) and were idling 8,000 yards off shore waiting for H-hour, now set for 0840. The plan of attack called for the two Marine divisions to land abreast, the Second Marine Division to the north and the Fourth to the south. The Second and Third Battalions of the 23rd Marine Regiment were in the first wave and the First Battalion which included Joe Ozbourn, together with Tex Freeman, Delbert Flier, Herman Schwab and Eddie Newman were assigned to the second wave that landed on Beaches Blue 1 and 2 which faced the town of Charan Kanoa. Tex Freeman remembered that the beaches were still under shell-fire from the gunfire support ships and it continued until the assault forces were quite close to the beaches before it lifted.

A protective coral reef, some distance offshore, necessitated the use of AMTRACS exclusively for the assault troops. Unlike the beachfront pillboxes, blockhouses and trenches that had confronted the troops on Roi-Namur it was the artillery and mortars located some distance from the beaches that proved to be the most troublesome. The first wave penetrated about 1,000 yards inland before leaving the AMTRACS and the second wave debarked about 200 yards in from the shoreline.



Amtracs head for the beach as Saipan looms in the distance

The town of Charan Konoa had been passed through by the Third Battalion and was then occupied by the First Battalion and B company found that they had been dropped in a clump of trees that was the remains of a Japanese park that contained small bridges and pathways. It was no stroll in the park however as Japanese artillery and mortar fire increased in intensity directed by spotters in the charred remains of the big sugar mill. The company remained in this location all day and throughout the night as Herman Schwab recalled, "We moved on to the edge of a swampy area in a cane field and it was a stinking hole filled with murky water and infested with big rats." Enemy infantry mounted a counterattack during the night and infiltration attempts were especially successful in



Riflemen and tanks advance through the sugarcane fields

the Lake Susupe swamp area between the flanks of the two Marine Divisions, with a sizable force getting through to Charan Konoa before they were finally eliminated. All night long the shelling continued and casualties mounted as snipers became more active as the battle moved into the second day. "I think that the muddy swamp area probably saved quite a few

(See Saipan on page 8)

(Saipan continued from page 7)

of us," Herman continued, "because some of the shells would land in the mud and when they exploded they didn't expand. We stayed in that mud hole all night long."

On D+3 it was apparent that the core of enemy resistance was badly shattered as the Marines slowly began extending their lines across the southern end of the island and by days end the eastern shore of lower Magicienne Bay could be seen and elements of the Army's 27th Infantry Division had secured parts of Aslito Airfield. Thus, the southeastern part of the island was nearly cut off and the Fourth was in position to sweep northward up the eastern half of the island.



The grunts clean out a sniper nest

From now on it was a long rugged fight up the island. The Japanese Navy had suffered a decisive defeat in the Battle of the Philippine Sea in the so called "Marianas Turkey Shoot" and had been turned back and there was no relief in sight for the defenders. Slowly, the advance to the north gained momentum with the 2nd Marine Division on the western flank, the Army's 27 Inf. Div. in the center and the

"Fighting Fourth" on the right. On 22 June the front was extended to the base of the Kagman Peninsula with the American lines bisecting the island from east to west. The three division attack commenced on June 23 and while there were some set-backs initially the campaign slowly pushed the defenders back toward the northern end of the island. Every step of the way was bitterly contested by the Japanese defenders who waited in cleverly camouflaged positions in a series of seemingly endless hills, caves, ravines and cliffs. As the campaign ground on and the defenders pushed back into ever diminishing pockets of resistance, the banzai charge became the order of the day for the Japanese. One such attack was mounted from Nafutan Point to the east of Aslito Airfield when 500 enemy troops charged a battalion of Army troops and reached the fringes of the airfield before a hastily assembled force of Seabees, engineers and Army Air Force personnel blunted the attack.

The final American push began on July 2 with the Marine Fourth Division together with the 27th Infantry Division advancing northeast while the Second Marine Division moved against the town of Garapan and Tanapag Harbor to the west. On July 6th, the Japanese Army commander General Saito saluted his emperor



Mortar-men in action

and committed hari-kiri, Admiral Nagumo following a short time later. Later that same night 3,000 Japanese soldiers, sailors and civilians gathered for a last frenzied banzai charge. Some armed only with bayonets attached to sticks, sharpened bamboo poles, daggers and swords supplemented those with machine guns and rifles. After consuming thousands of bottles of beer and saki they all prepared to go down in a final fury. At dawn on July 7, three columns of Japanese moved toward the American lines singing a funerary anthem and quickly broke through a gap in the 27th Div. lines. Army and Marine troops suffered horrendous casualties while holding off the banzai charge with some survivors comparing it to Custer's Last Stand. After the attack, Japanese resistance crumbled and finally at noon on July 9, after 25 days of continuous fighting, Old Glory went up on Marpi Point and Saipan was declared secured.

Total American casualties numbered 14,000 for the Saipan campaign. Altogether, the Fourth Marine Division sustained 5,981 casualties in killed, wounded and missing; 27.6 percent of the Division's strength. Of the 30,000 Japanese defenders, a mere 1,000 survived.



The battle won

Japan's inner defensive barrier had been breached and air-bases would soon be operating the giant B-29 bombers against the homeland.

So how did our particular group of Marines in B company fare during the battle on Saipan? Out of the five we have been following only Herman Schwab was wounded and that on the third day of the assault in the area surrounding the sugar mill at Charan Konoa. Hit in the leg, he was evacuated to a hospital ship, patched up and returned to duty with his squad in a weeks time. When they came down out of the hills to go aboard ship, B company had been in the line and mopping up operations for 37 days and they were not through with the Marianas just yet as the very next day they would follow the assault wave over Beach White 2 on Tinian.

Like Saipan, its neighbor to the north, Tinian had been under Japanese control for nearly thirty years and was heavily culti-

(See Saipan on page 9)

(Saipan continued from page 8)

vated, producing vast quantities of sugar cane and other agricultural products to bolster the Japanese economy. But unlike Saipan, the terrain was relatively flat and level, an ideal site for airfields which were desperately needed for the aerial offensive against the Japanese mainland.

In preparation for the American assault that was certain to follow the fall of Saipan, the defenders took advantage of the surrounding coral cliffs rising directly from the sea which present a near impregnable barrier to any invader. Three beach areas existed that would offer a possible point of entry for assault forces, with two located on the southern end of the island. One of these, on the western shore, forms the harbor for Tinian Town with the second on Asiga bay on the east shore. Both of these areas are relatively broad and well suited for amphibious operations. The third break in the cliffs consists of two tiny stretches of sand on the northwest side of the island, directly across the strait from Saipan, three miles to the northeast. The larger beach was about 150 yards wide, the other a mere 75 yards, far too small it seemed to accommodate a major invasion. Because of the nature of the terrain here the Japanese commander of the defense forces made the decision to concentrate his troops, some 9,000 strong, in the center of the island in a mobile counterattack force leaving only one battalion to guard the northwestern beaches.

Recognizing that the Japanese defensive forces were likely to give priority to the defense of the more navigable beaches to the south, American planners devised a plan to take advantage of the situation and put the main invasion effort through the narrow beaches to the northwest. The risks were great but if it worked as planned the bulk of the defenders waiting behind the beaches to the south would be outflanked and the Marines would be ashore before they could react. Another aspect of the plan called for the 2nd Marine Division to conduct an elaborate diversionary operation off the beaches before Tinian Town while the "Fighting Fourth" hit the beaches designated White 1 and White 2 on the other end of the island. The preparatory bombardment of the island by aircraft based on the recently seized Aslito Airfield on Saipan and those from Task Force 58 systematically demolished the existing airfields on Tinian. Artillery batteries, located on Saipan, fired at targets from across the straits separating the two islands. It was here that



The "White" beaches as they look today

napalm incendiary bombs were used for the first time in warfare also with good effect.

H-hour was 0740 on 24 July as the assault waves of amphibious vehicles passed the line of departure and headed for the beaches.

The two regiments of the 4th Division in the assault wave hit the beach on schedule and found that opposition was "light" with only occasional rifle and machine gun fire and some desultory mortar fire. It was nothing like the conditions en-

countered on Saipan and it was now apparent that the pre-invasion strategy had worked. Against light opposition the troops moved inland as more and more men and supplies together with several batteries of artillery poured through the breach. Everywhere the landing went smoothly and the whole Division was ashore by nightfall with very few casualties.

Eddie Newman gives his impression of D-day, "My AM-TRAC broke down and we were floating around out there in the ocean for hours until an Army DUKW came along, rescued us, and took us to the beach. By this time it was getting dark and we couldn't find the rest of our unit so we dug in behind the coral outcroppings there on the beach and waited until daylight. During the night the Japs counterattacked our guys up ahead and there was a lot of shooting and stuff going on but we weren't in on it. We could hear the bullets flying overhead and we stayed put until morning when we finally found our own outfit."

The Japanese counterattack on the night of 24 - 25 July was well organized and carried out in three successive waves and the objective was the total destruction of the beachhead. It failed completely due to the stalwart defensive perimeter established and the sheer guts and stamina of the Marines in the front lines. When it ended, over 1200 of Japan's finest troops had been killed and the heavy fighting was over. Later that day the 2nd Marine Division landed on the eastern side of the island and the two divisions operating in tandem cleaned out the north end of the island and then moved south, clearing small pockets of resistance as they went. On 27 July (D+3), a one mile advance was scored and the following day Airfield No. 2 on Gurguan Point was overrun and two days later Tinian Town fell to the advancing Marines.

It was during these last few days of the campaign that a heroic act of self-sacrifice occurred that became the common link that binds all of us who served in the USS Ozbourn and the Marines of the 23rd Regiment together. The actual date is in question as will be recounted later but eyewitness accounts establish the chain of events as follows. Eddie Newman continues, "We had spent the night at the airfield and the next morning, together with a couple of tanks, we advanced up a rise and into a tree line. Our company was on the extreme left flank of the 4th Marine Division and as we moved forward into the trees we could see a group of pillboxes, probably 4 or 5, spread out through the area. They had twin mounted heavy machine guns that looked like 20mm sticking out through the slits in the pillbox and they were firing at our guys over in Tinian Town. The tanks were ahead of us and as they worked their way up the ridge they would fire a 75mm round into the pillbox as they went by, disabling the guns and killing the occupants and then keep on going. I was the last man in the squad and as we neared the pillboxes we just looked at them as we could see that the guns were all mangled and everything seemed quiet. As we approached the second or third pillbox I think the Jap inside probably thought that we had all passed but I saw him make a movement and I called ahead to Joe 'we have a live one here'. Joe stopped, turned and pulled the pin on a grenade. The pillbox had a scuttle hole on each side and Joe went up one side and I went to the other

(See Tinian on page 10)

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(Tinian continued from page 9)

side. The next thing I knew there was an explosion and I got hit in the right thigh and went down and of course the explosion was right there where Joe was and it killed him." The exact sequence of events is somewhat confused but the survivors all agree that a Japanese grenade had been thrown out of the pillbox and that Joe Ozbourn, who had already pulled the pin on his own grenade, may have been unable to throw it inside the dugout and chose to smother the blast with his body, thus saving the lives of his squad-mates.

Eddie Newman was evacuated, Joe Ozbourn was dead and Tex Freeman and Herman Schwab, still with the squad, moved on clearing out small pockets of resistance. Later that same day Tex Freeman single-handedly cleared out two machine gun nests and was seriously wounded for his trouble. When asked what happened to him he said, "I got shot in the leg." When pressed for details he went on, "I was firing on two machine gun positions from the prone position when I got hit in the leg. I kept telling everybody that I left that leg hanging out of a foxhole for four days so that I could get shot and go home." Tex got to go home with a shot up leg and received the Silver Star Medal for this action.

Earlier in the morning of this same day Delbert Fliear had been severely wounded when a rifle bullet penetrated the rim of his helmet and lodged in his head behind the ear. He carries the slug in his pocket to this day.

The citation accompanying the award of the Medal of Honor

to Joseph Ozbourn puts the date of this action as 30 July. The grave marker, shown above, indicates the date was 28 July, however, Eddie Newman, wounded in the same explosion is certain that it occurred on 31 July. Such is the "fog of war" When Tinian was declared secure on 1 August the "Fighting Fourth" had incurred casualties of 328 killed and 1571 wounded in the eight day campaign. On 14 August the last units of the Division boarded ship for the long trip back to Camp Maui where training would begin for their next invasion, this time it would be Iwo Jima.

In recognition for its work on Saipan and Tinian, the Fourth Marine Division was awarded the coveted Presidential Unit Citation.

For the men of the 2nd squad, Third Platoon, B Company of the 23rd Marines it had been a tough fight. Among many others, Joe Ozbourn was dead, Eddie Newman, Del Fliear, "Tex" Freeman seriously wounded and out of the war. Only Herman Schwab continued to soldier on, this time as a squad leader in the invasion of Iwo Jima where he was wounded for a second time. When the war was finally over, all four survivors returned to civilian life and became productive citizens. All were products of the Great Depression and when their country needed them they answered the call, going in harms way, doing their duty and paying a terrible price while defeating a tenacious and ruthless enemy that wreaked such havoc around the world.

To the Marines of B Company - it was my great pleasure to have made your acquaintance. Semper Fi. The Editor