

**IWO JIMA
OR
SULPHUR ISLAND**

“LEST WE FORGET” FEB. 19, 1945

PENN H. HOLSAPPLE MARCH 29, 1945

This report is a copy of a personal letter that I wrote to my parents aboard a naval transport two days after the conclusion of the battle for Iwo Jima. I was fortunate to have had the time to record this historical event while the details were still fresh in my mind. Unfortunately, much of history is written long after the event itself so that accuracy is lost by the mental erosion of time.

The battle for Iwo Jima is currently recognized as the bloodiest campaign in Marine Corps history and probably in all of U.S. history as well. There were twenty-seven Congressional Medals of Honor awarded to individuals in this battle, the highest number ever bestowed in a single campaign in U. S. history. As Admiral Nimitz stated shortly after the capture of Iwo Jima, "Uncommon Valor Was a Common Virtue," now preserved for all time at the base of the flag raising statue in our nation's capital.

I only hope that records such as this can be preserved for future generations of Americans to be reminded of the sacrifices that these dedicated and courageous men made to preserve and protect the freedom that too many of our citizens take for granted today. The Armed Forces of the United States during World War II and their fellow workers at home carried this nation to the zenith of its history. It is unlikely that we shall ever reach this unique peak again.

Thanks to Almighty God I was spared and with deep humility I am able to record this event in memory of my comrades in arms who made the supreme sacrifice, life itself, so that others might enjoy the blessings denied to them so early in their lives.

Penn H. Holsapple,
2nd Lt. of Marines
5th Pioneer Battalion
5th Marine Division
On liberty in San Diego,
Summer of '43. Stationed at
Camp Pendelton.



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Dearest Folks:

While the facts are still fresh in my memory I should like to request your indulgence and ask you to bear with me in my account of the battle of Iwo Jima as witnessed by me from the beginning to the end. Because of the limitations imposed by Naval Censorship Regulations I must refrain from mentioning the specific names of ships, numbers, units, etc., which really have little bearing on the personal or human side of this great struggle. I shall also have to ask you to be tolerant and understanding if I seem too dramatic or strong in my descriptions for I have experienced a deep emotional strain that can only leave its impression on one who has participated in actual combat. News releases for the most part are tailored to the tastes of the American public and do not represent the actions of the individual or the part that he plays in combat. This effort will in addition be tainted by my personal feelings and observations, which is only natural for I am limited by my own ability to cover but a small part of the whole.

By the end of January our convoy was ready for the final lap of its journey, most of the month having been consumed with practice landings, maneuvers, and the final acquisition of supplies. Life aboard a transport soon becomes very monotonous because of the many routine duties that are required of everyone. All spare time is consumed by reading or writing, and the Marine's favorite pastime, namely sack drill. The latter, more specifically, is the art of reclining in any space that will permit the full horizontal extension of the body so as to induce sleep or the resemblance thereof. All of the officers were assigned a certain duty and my job was to stand four-hour watches in a troop compartment every sixteen hours. The reason for this watch was to have an officer in every troop compartment at all times in case of a disaster at sea. In case of a torpedoing, bombing or fire he would be on hand to control the men and prevent a panic in moving up the passageways. I found that I had ample opportunity for reading, which I undertook with a vengeance. As for letter writing, I found that with the knowledge that I was going into combat the composition of ideas was extremely difficult. There were so many conflicting emotions in my mind that I was confused and I could not find expression for my thoughts. I soon discovered that I was looking at my life in retrospect as I reviewed over and again the earlier experiences of my existence, particularly those of my childhood.

The trip to our first port of call was uneventful from the standpoint of danger. At this point I had to transfer my men to another ship for the final stage of the journey. It was Sunday and there was a tremendous sea running which multiplied our difficulties tenfold. We

had to climb over the side and down a cargo net into the landing craft tied alongside the ship. The swell was bobbing the craft up and down as well as crushing it against the ship. Each of us was loaded with all our gear which made the descent more perilous and considerably hampered our freedom of movement. Fortunately, all of my men were safely lowered into the boats and we shoved off to tie up alongside the ship that was to take us to Iwo. In the meantime the men and all their gear were drenched by the sea plus a driving rain. To round out our misery some of the men began "puking" all over us, as they could not reach the top of the landing craft. When we finally moved up to our new ship, the sea made the ascent up the rope nets very difficult. Because of seasickness and exhaustion I ordered the men to remove their packs and let them be hoisted up by lowering lines. Only one man at a time could go up the net. As soon as he put his foot on the net, landing craft would rise up on a swell and he would be thrown on his back, or it might go down in the trough, jerking the man violently upward against the side of the ship. If he did not keep climbing under the latter situation the upward motion of the wave again could crush him. After two hours I finally went up the net and learned that all my men had safely climbed aboard with only a few gashes and battered knuckles. I later learned that three men had been killed during this transfer and several men had lost fingers. Blessed Sunday. I shall never forget that day, February 11th. (Transfer effected at Saipan in the Marianas).

Later in the week the ships quietly slipped away to form the convoy that was to take us to Iwo Jima. I was relieved to see a plentiful variety of fighting ships all around us, Carriers to protect us from Jap aircraft, and Destroyers to keep away their subs. My greatest memory during this final phase of our trip was a very painful and distressing one. I had only been fortunate enough to enjoy my first meal aboard our new ship when I came down with a violent case of dysentery. From that moment on my distress became more acute so that during the four days preceding D-day I lived on toast and tea, immediately followed by a dose of paregoric and bismuth. Every time that I indulged in this light repast I was summoned to the head (the Navy's name for the toilet) where I underwent a watery evacuation of the bowels under extreme pressure until my alimentary exit became a fiery source of discomfort and pain. This procedure would be repeated three or four times until the tea and toast had spent itself at which time another dose of medicine was introduced. The cruel irony of my position was the fact that during these last days aboard ship the Navy was outdoing itself with its menus of turkey, steak, roast beef, ice cream, etc., the fattening of the calf before the kill. All of these luxuries I had to forego at a time when I should have been putting on all the extra fat possible for I fully realized that there were some very lean days ahead. In addition, I was constantly engaged in last minute briefing of all the troops and my officers, which was a considerable strain as the result of my weakened condition. I had 14 officers and 250 of my men with me on board ship, the balance were aboard LST's and LSM's and were not scheduled to land until D + 1. Those last four days were a nightmare and I shall never forget them. I tried to retain my smile and enthusiasm despite the torture from down under and I doubt very much if the men were cognizant of my misery. By D-I I had completed all my plans, issued the men their ammo and rations they were to carry, and

thoroughly drilled everyone as to his respective job. We were assigned 8 LCVP's, open landing craft that carry approximately 36 troops plus 3 Naval personnel per boat. Each LCVP (Landing Craft Vehicles Personnel) had an officer as Boat Commander. I held that position in our craft, which was made up of my Headquarters (my runners, liaison, mapping and record sections) and half of my machine gun platoon. Our 8 landing craft were to be loaded late in the morning of D day, proceed to the "line of departure" (approximately 1500 yards from the beach) and go to the beach on call. By the eve of D day the weather had turned chilly for the first time since we came aboard ship.

A few facts about life aboard ship will always remain with me. There are during the day and night many calls piped over the ship's loudspeaker system by the boson's mate. One that will always be remembered: Marine sweepers; man your brooms; clean sweep down fore and aft". With that call certain designated Marines would grab their brooms and commence sweeping down the weather deck. This call would be repeated constantly during the day. Then there was "General Quarters" involving only the Ship's Company when all their personnel would go to their predetermined battle stations. In addition there was "Abandon Ship" drill involving everyone. At all times we wore our rubber lifebelts around our waists, even to meals and while sitting around playing cards. Much of our spare time was devoted to cleaning and nursing our weapons, which from now on were an integral part of our lives. Every man knew his own particular weapon, how to detail strip it, its capabilities and limitations, in other words, it was his most intimate friend and he had to understand it.

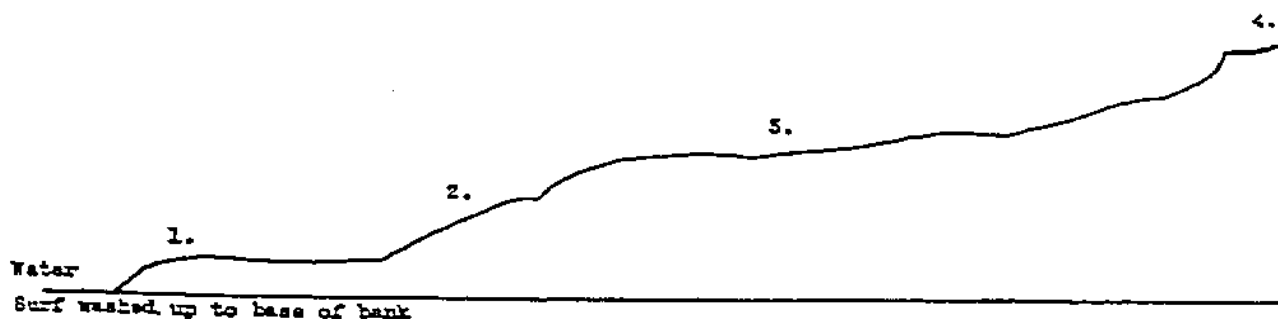
Breakfast on the morning of D-day was a sumptuous feast served long before the light of day which tested my will power to the core. I pocketed a few oranges in the hopes that I might rally in the not-too-distant future and partake of their delicacy on Iwo. On our ship we had a reinforced infantry battalion and the men were in high spirits little knowing of the ordeal that lay ahead of them. This same Battalion was to end the Iwo Jima campaign with seven of its original thirty-two officers. One platoon of 48 men came out on the 34th day with two of its men able to carry on; the balance had been killed or seriously wounded and evacuated from the island. As soon as daylight arrived I went topside to catch my first glimpse of Iwo and watch the preliminary bombardment by the ships and planes. It was a sight that I shall never forget the rest of my life. Navy rocket-firing planes were diving on Mt. Suribachi one on top of the other to neutralize the Jap's fire from the volcano. Their efforts were paying off because I noticed only occasional retaliatory fire and our ships were all laying in close to the shore, about three miles off, indicating that their shore batteries had in all probability been silenced. Battlewagons and cruisers were firing point blank at the island, their tremendous guns making a loud arrumph sound as they fired away. Closest to the island were the destroyers which were pumping their five inch shells in as fast as they could. The beach was completely ringed with our ships and back of the fighting ships were the transports, LST's, LSM's, etc. I have never seen so many ships since I have been in the Marine Corps. The weather was ideal for an amphibious operation, cool and clear, little wind or swell, and from what we could see of the beach there was practically no surf. This last factor alone could have ruined the operation as we later learned for on the five days

succeeding D-day there was such a tremendous surf that it was impossible for us to make a landing that week or any day but D-day. The good Lord was with us that day. The opposition from the shore seemed to be Very light as there was little evidence of counter battery. We later learned the reason for this absence of enemy fire to the seaward. Their pillboxes and blockhouses were so constructed that the gun openings or embrasures faced up and down the beach. Facing the sea these fortifications were covered with at least ten feet of sand so that it was impossible for naval gunfire to sight in on them. Because they held their fire knowing full well that they could do most of their damage to the troops once they were ashore and that they were not powerful enough to engage our ship's guns. These prepared positions covered every square foot of the island so that there was no spot safe from their fire once the men were ashore. They continued in depth so that when one of them was knocked out, and passed, the men immediately came under the fire of another. Never in the history of this war has an area been so thoroughly and heavily fortified. We later found that this condition continued to the extreme northern tip of the island. The pillboxes were set into the ground in such a way that only the gun ports were visible. They were constructed of reinforced concrete, four or five feet thick then covered with sand or rock from two to fifteen feet. The only effective weapon was the flame thrower and demolition charges, which had to be brought up by a man under fire. The flame-thrower is a very cumbersome and awkward weapon consisting primarily of two large cylinders and a short hose with nozzle, weighing about 65 pounds. The man carries it on his back and presents a high silhouette, consequently he is a very vulnerable target. The demolition man carries a satchel charge of very high explosive, which has to be placed against the target. To protect these men as they advance forward are BAR (Browning Automatic Rifle) men and machine gunners who fire a steady burst at the openings to keep them buttoned up and from throwing back answering fire. These are the primary weapons of the infantry supplemented by artillery and mortars to soften up dug-in positions or disperse concentrated troop activities on the part of the enemy. So much for the general picture and I shall return later to discuss more specific details as I encountered them during the operation

The infantry were boated and shoved off with the best wishes of all. In what appeared to be a very short period of time the boats started returning to the ship and I began to realize that at last our time had arrived. The call was piped over the loudspeaker for my company to report at once to their debarkation stations. The landing craft coxswains reported on their return that the infantry had received little opposition on the beach and that they had unloaded their boats without any trouble. To some of the men this word was encouraging but it disturbed me a great deal, for I realized at once that the Japs were again using their old tactics; namely to let the assault infantry pass through without any opposition and when the Shore Party filled up the beach to cut loose with everything they had, thereby cutting us in two and create general confusion. When we arrived at the Line of Departure, I studied the different beaches and I noticed that the beach we were to hit was the only one receiving artillery fire. Many of the shells were landing in the water and geysers of water would go spouting into the air. The Futatsu Rocks about fifty yards offshore marked the left boundary

of our beach and I feel certain that the Japs were using them as an aiming point for their artillery because their barrages would move in a line across the water from those rocks. From our boats we could see the tanks lumbering up the slope toward Airstrip #1 and they appeared to be making very slow progress. Once in a while one of our flame-thrower tanks would fire a blast into a pillbox and that was very comforting to us all. One tank was hit by a salvo from a Jap battery and my stomach turned over thinking of those men inside. Finally, shortly afternoon, we received the word we were to go ashore and our boats lined up ready for the take-off. All the men crouched down on the deck so that their heads were not in evidence with the exception of the coxswain and the Boat Commander. In the latter capacity, I watched the shore carefully and was immediately impressed by the fact that there was no firing at the time and no man was visible anywhere. The ominous silence and absence of anyone on the beach made me very uneasy to say the least. About 200 yards from the shore I gave the men final instructions and described to them the terrain immediately back of the beach and how I wanted them to move across it. Before I go any further on the landing I want to give you a brief description of the beach and terrain adjoining to better understand the problems that confronted us.

Directly back of the water line there was a steep bank about ten feet high and beyond this bank there was a level stretch running the length of the beach about 75 feet wide. Beyond this flat there was a long fairly steep terrace approximately 60 feet high and beyond this the terrain was a gently upward sloping plateau terminating in Airstrip #1 about 550 yards from the beach. Following is a crude cross section of our beach looking south



- 1) Initial supply dumps were set up on top of the bank along flat stretch paralleling beach.
 - 2) Long reverse slope where we had our foxholes.
 - 3) Gentle sloping plateau leading to Airfield #1 and site of main Airfield #1.
 - 4) Airfield #1.
- 2, 3 and 4 Pillboxes, blockhouses throughout this area.

The general profile of the beach along the entire 4th and 5th Marine Division's fronts was fairly uniform terminating in Mt. Suribachi on the south or left flank of the 5th Division and in a rocky promontory on the north. The Japs could deliver perfect enfilade fire on our entire beachfront. Enfilade fire is fire directly down our lines or down the long -axis of our lines, which later explains the reason for our catching so much Jap artillery and mortar fire. In addition the Japs had excellent observation of all our movements, supplies, etc. from both of our flanks. It was a veritable death trap but we had no alternative if we were to land on Iwo Jima. Once the infantry could cross the island and wheel north, we could move our supply dumps inland away from the beach we had a foothold that would be hard to dislodge. So much for the beach set up and the general situation prior to our landing.

Those last 100 yards to the beach are still a mystery to me for all was so quiet and no one was visible anywhere in the beach area. The presence of a wrecked self-propelled gun and several LVT s (amphibious tractors used for hauling both men and supplies ashore) directly in front of me made me come out of my trance with a start.

Our eight boats all hit the beach practically simultaneously, ramps were lowered, and the men poured forth like ants from a disturbed anthill. In their haste to leave the boat that I was in, the men forgot two bundles of sandbags, which I noticed at the last moment. Recalling one of my sergeants we grabbed onto the bundles and headed for the shore, a delay that almost cost us our lives, but saved many more before we were through. The ramps had no sooner been lowered and the men started from the boats when all hell broke loose around us. Artillery and mortar shells came raining down everywhere. My sergeant and I were about 20 feet from our boat when we heard an explosion behind us, and looking back, we saw that our landing craft had taken a direct hit in the middle, killing two of the sailors outright and blowing the third into the water. Just 15 seconds earlier and most of us would have been killed. My heart was now pounding as if it would burst as I tried to hug and crawl up that bank to look over the other side. To the right of me about 50 feet away, I noticed a cut in the bank made by a bulldozer a short time before to permit our tanks progress from the water's edge to the flat above. My runner, a Russian boy by -the name of Szpak, lay down beside me hugging his walkie-talkie radio as a mother would cuddle a child. I told him to help me extricate myself from my pack, which I soon realized was going to prove an unnecessary burden. Free of this added weight I directed him to remain where he was while I reconnoitered the cut in the bank and tried to establish contact with Captain Ellis who had preceded us ashore. When I reached the cut I had excellent observation of the hill beyond and I spotted one of the Captain's runners waving madly to me to come that way. So far I had not tasted or observed any of the horrors of war. To muster up enough courage to cross that flat and proceed up the hill to the Captain's foxhole was very trying with all those shells slamming into us. With a final effort I started across that flat, my stomach in my mouth, minus all saliva, and my feet feeling as if they were anchored with 100 lb. weights. Enroute at the base of the big hill I came to a tank trap and there in the bottom I saw the first chapter of this nightmare. Three Marines lay dead in the bottom, one a young boy, was on his back with his helmet off and the whole side of his face torn away. He seemed so young and boyish

I could hardly believe it possible. Another boy was so badly mangled, his entrails and parts of his limbs scattered about him, that he could only be recognized by pieces of his clothing and equipment. It was so ghastly and horrible that no words can adequately describe such a sight. I continued my dash up the hill, found the Captain's foxhole and literally dove inside. Everyone was hugging old mother earth for all they were worth but the soft sand made it very difficult to keep the walls of the hole from sliding in and enlarging it. A short time later I learned that my runner, Szpak, had been badly hit in the elbow just a few seconds after I had left him. Up until now I had been so thoroughly preoccupied moving about that I had not had time to become really scared or to fully appreciate what was taking place all around me. Pinned down to that hole with shells hitting all about, I began to experience fear instead of just plain nervousness. Hot pieces of shrapnel that were spent would fall on top of us burning our arms and legs. Every time a piece would strike me I broke out into a cold sweat. Never have I felt so helpless or so completely trapped as I did in that hole, suspense that maybe the next mortar shell would hit the spot and blow us to kingdom come. Every so often there would be a lull in their barrages and during these periods I was able to ascertain that all the men had moved off the beach and were now dug in where they belonged. Several hours after our arrival a few Ducks (amphibious vehicles used for hauling ammo primarily) came ashore with much-needed artillery ammo. One of them took a direct hit about 75 yards from our CP (Command Post) and I distinctly saw a man being blown about 40 feet into the air. The next morning I saw the two men who came in on that Duck lying on their backs, arms extended toward the sky, knees doubled up under them. The concussion had killed them outright. After that Duck was hit it burned fiercely and the Japs hit it over and over again. During that night the light of the fire gave the Nip observers an excellent aiming point.

By night time we had lost two of our officers, Walt Burns and Danny Dowd. The former had a very close call and suffered all afternoon from concussion and a bad shrapnel wound in the thigh. It was impossible to evacuate the wounded. Danny was shot in the side at dusk and both were finally evacuated late that night. A good many of our boys were hit during the night and had to lay where they were until morning. We had over 200 stretcher cases down by the water but could not get them out to the ships until morning. Those men just lay there all night under continuous shelling, some of them suffering terribly, and others just bled to death. Many of them were badly shell-shocked and needed plasma, but the doctor and corpsmen were working like mad all over the beach and could not keep up with the casualties, which kept mounting on the beach. Plus the infantry cases coming back from the edge of the airfield. By dark, the evening of D-day we had had four of our men killed and seventeen wounded badly enough to be evacuated. If the men had not done such a magnificent job of moving across that beach and immediately digging in, we would have suffered far more casualties. With all those shells falling on top of us I can never understand how we were able to muster as many men as we did the following day.

That first night was the longest one in my life, as I sweated out every second of it. There were three of us, Sgt. Ted Richeson, Gunnery Sgt. Andy Boquet, and I, in one small hole about the right size to accommodate one comfortably. We all sat facing the middle so

that we had all around observation in case the Nips tried to slip in during the night. With our knees all doubled up and tight against each other and our weapon in our laps we stoically awaited the next day's events. Intermittently during the night all hell would break loose and after each such session all of us were trembling so that you could hear our knees -knocking together. To urinate, a necessity that arose most frequently that night, I had to roll over on my side, scoop out a little sand and relieve myself, scraping back the sand when finished. My dysentery had been very rudely checked when my insides congealed from fright coupled with the fact that eating was something of the past. From now on for a few days our culinary habits were confined to an occasional bar of chocolate just to keep the engine in working order. Defecation was eliminated from my foxhole problems for five days, a stretch that worried me not under present circumstances, but which in peacetime would have sent me screaming to the local pill merchant. To better understand how much a condition could arise as I have just described, it was about two o'clock in the morning when a knee mortar shell hit the edge of our foxhole blasting that damnable volcanic sand into our eyes, ears, nose and throat as well as caving in one side of our hole. When I could see again after the explosion I expected to find my fellow boarders all but dead. Again fate was kind to us and we were all spared. After a night like that I was about ready for the nuthouse, but by daybreak I caught my second wind and was thoroughly relaxed and resigned for anything. At this point none of us felt too sure about ever leaving that spit of sand alive.

LOG TRAIN
2-4

The new day was chiefly conspicuous for the early arrival of badly needed supplies, mostly ammunition. Due to the lack of transportation and intermittent artillery and mortar fire, we were compelled to unload small landing craft and pile the ammo on top of the bank just back of the water. This was not a healthy condition but we were forced into it by the situation, to alleviate which, we dispersed our piles as much as possible and kept them small. Very often while our working parties were unloading, the Japs would lay down another barrage upon us and the men would have to take to their holes. Despite fire, difficult terrain, and heartbreaking conditions in general the ammo piled up in fairly size-able amounts. The infantry ahead of us began to send in frantic requests for all types of ammo, and utilizing two weasels (small amphibious vehicles) our men drove them up to the front lines through mine fields and heavy shelling. Our CP area was improved during the day by the use of sand bags to revet the sliding walls of our foxholes. Much to our annoyance and chagrin we learned that morning that a Jap sniper with a Nambu (light Jap machine gun) had a perfect fire lane across our position. As soon as a group would gather about the CP this die-hard would cut loose in short bursts of three or four at a time. The sound of those bullets passing over so close to us was quite eerie. It almost sounded like a canary as they would go zing, zing, everyone of them a potential harbinger of death. Finally one of them found its mark, passing clean through the thigh of Corp Deliere, the only man in our entire outfit who properly understood the installation and maintenance of our P.A. system (Public Address). As the result of that misfortune we soon learned the inadvisability of bunching up around the CP. By dusk there were innumerable dumps of ammo scattered up and down the beach and that night we prayed that the Jap mortars would not find them with their shells.

One phase of those first few days and nights that I shall never forget was the wonderful support of our Navy and its aviation. During the day from the first show of light until evening the Navy Hellcats dove on Mt. Suribachi with their rockets. Their procession was endless and their efforts were beautifully rewarded by buttoning up the Jap artillery on that mountain so effectively that we received little trouble from that potentially dangerous spot. Helldivers also swooped down dropping clusters of 500 lb. bombs that were extremely efficacious in neutralizing their fire. I shall always remember the fine support of our Navy in those early but so critical days, and their enormous concentrations on Mt. Suribachi were very instrumental in bringing about its capture by our own troops. In addition to the planes we also had the close support of Naval gunfire, particularly the destroyers who would move up to within 300 yards of the shore and fire point blank into the caves along the slopes of the mountain. During the nightly Jap barrages on our positions I shall never forget the comfort and respite afforded us by our large cruisers when they would open up with their big guns. After compressing our bodies into our helmets for five or ten minutes while hot shrapnel fell upon us there would suddenly be a bright flash across the sky followed by a tremendous explosion, which signified that our cruisers were sitting in on the Jap artillery positions. The instant that first flash showed itself the Japs would cease firing for fear of disclosing their positions by the flash of their own guns. Then the cruisers would continue to throw out those shells for about ten minutes giving us enough time to stand up and stretch, relieve ourselves outside of our foxholes, and repair any damage. Once the cruisers ceased fire there would be a deadly silence while we awaited the inevitable resumption of Jap fire. The suspense was very trying and it was almost a relief when the shells started to scream over us again and explosions shook us up. We were geared up now to that inferno of hell and any cessation of activity came as a foreboding that possibly something even worse was in store for us, consequently we almost welcomed the barrage when it would hit us again.

D+4 days was to be a 24 hour stretch that I shall never forget as long as I live. About three o'clock in the morning of this fifth day of the operation, a Jap infiltrated our lines and planted a knee mortar shell right on our largest ammo dump, which was about 150 yards from our C.P. At the time, I was catching some sleep, when all of a sudden the ground under me felt as if it was carrying me up into the air. When I gained my senses I heard the roar of many explosions and noticed that the whole area was lighted up by the show. For better than two hours it was mighty unhealthy for anyone to be above ground as the shells kept bursting in every direction. We were pinned down and helpless just waiting for that hard earned and precious ammo of ours to expend itself at our expense. It was really heartbreaking and I almost felt like weeping because we needed that ammo so badly. In addition, one of our finest officers, Ennis Geraughty, from up state New York and a truly fine American of rare vintage, was hit in the stomach and died almost immediately. His was a loss that can never be replaced and we have all lost a very dear friend. During that day we feverishly battled against a devastating surf to land badly needed supplies. The small landing craft were powerless to stand up against it and only the large LST's, LSM's and LCT's could keep from broaching on that beach. It is an LST that Henry Holsapple had command of. By evening,

C.P. 90000

that beach was littered with wreckage from one end to the other and as I watched the ceaseless crushing action of that surf grinding hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of equipment into small bits all I could think of was my little war bonds steadily shrinking in value. The Dutch trader coming out of me, no doubt. When darkness descended on the beach we were worn out and thoroughly soaked, an excellent background for a little sound sleep. No sooner were we squared away in our holes when all hell broke loose in our area. The Nips started throwing everything at us but the kitchen sink and this change had no sooner been effected when we heard above the din the mournful wail of our air-raid sirens signaling a Red Alert. A few moments later every ship off shore started firing over our heads, tracers streaking through the dark skies in hundreds of separate streams. It was more dazzling than the finest fireworks display and I could not imagine any plane passing through that curtain of steel. When it was all over we emerged unscathed but I later learned that two Jap planes had been shot down. Most of the Jap air attacks had been devoted to our warships protecting the island during the operation and the two planes shot down that night were the only ones to my knowledge that penetrated our Navy's screen.

While still on the subject of the beach, I want to mention a very morbid and ever conspicuous problem that haunted me because of a helplessness to rectify it. As the days wore on, our beach became cluttered with our own dead, some of whom had been there since D-day. Since a division cemetery had not been selected. We picked out a collecting point almost in front of our CP. When the Nip artillery would quiet down our men would take stretchers and bring the corpses back to the collecting point, where they were recorded and covered with ponchos pending burial. We were supposed to receive a disinfectant to spray them with to prevent contamination but by D-5 it had not arrived. The atmosphere was stifling. The bodies had bloated, bursting belts and wristwatch bands, and the maggots were all over them. For some inexplicable reason I wished with all my heart that those cheap sniveling pimps who were out on strike in the United States were under my command for just two hours. I would have ordered them to bury those disintegrating bodies of our own American boys, and by the end of their task, I dare say that they would consider themselves fortunate to work every day the rest of their lives. I often wonder how I shall ever be able to reconcile myself to such traitors without unloosing some violence to avenge those dead boys on that beach.

In one of the small draws leading up from the beach to a pillbox near the top of the first high terrace, were two bodies in such a position that they portrayed a tragic story. They were two or four flamethrower men intent on working their way up that draw to a point where they could shoot their lethal liquid. The first one had reached a spot about one quarter of the way to the pillbox when a sniper had hit the oxygen and fuel tanks, exploding them both. Because of the terrific pressure released, his body was burned clean through. His knees were still doubled up under him, the crawling position he was in at the time he was hit. The second man was considerably farther advanced and from his hold on the nozzle he had been getting all squared away to turn on the spark when another Jap bullet found its mark just in time to frustrate the Marine from accomplishing his mission. An examination of the pillbox

revealed the scorched remains of five of the sons of heaven so that the third flame thrower must have found his mark. This little tragedy was an example of many similar deathly struggles enacted in thousands of places on Iwo every day as we paid dearly for every yard of advance.

After the first week until the ninth of March supplies poured into the beach in ever increasing numbers so that we were working round the clock. Only occasional artillery and mortar fire dropped in to remind us that the war was still on. One of the weirdest weapons encountered during this period was the giant rockets launched by the Japs from the northern end of the island. Their control of these missiles was pitiful, fortunately for us. They would pass over our heads with a terrific fluttering noise that terrified everyone and invariably they would fall into the ocean just offshore from Mt Suribachi. These rockets were about five feet long and contained approximately a thousand pounds of explosive filler. They did not detonate upon striking the ground but had a twenty second delay enabling our men, once they were cognizant of this fact, to move away and take cover. At first our men thought they were duds when they did not explode instantaneously and started to gather around them only to be blown to pieces when they did detonate at the end of twenty seconds. The dirty Nips tricked us very few times on that score but all our lessons were learned at the tragic expense of American lives.

During these days we managed to steal some good rations from the Army Air -Corps who began to land in large numbers. We found cans of delicious boneless turkey, sliced bacon, and some fruit. A strong wind constantly whipped sand and dust into every pore of our bodies and neutralized all attempts at a refined meal. By the time we arrived at the bottom of a cup of coffee there would be a heavy layer of silt which acted as an excellent abrasive on our teeth. Our clothes were so stiff and greasy they would have walked away from us had we ever come out of them. In general, we were so filthy that we were no longer conscious of our condition nor were we in the least bothered by it. Finally, on the ninth of March, the Pioneer Battalion was ordered to evacuate and set up a new bivouac on the west side of the island, immediately behind a beautiful wide beach. We were now moving back of the front lines to a position where we were readily available, I feared, for front line duty. Our division was taking terrific casualties because they had been pouring through our beaches night and day on their way to the hospital ships. When these casualties were brought by ambulance jeeps to the evacuation points on the-beach, they had only received hasty first aid treatment. While waiting for boats the doctors gave them plasma for shock and in many cases, raw blood transfusions. As I watched those boys lying there, many of them slowly dying from deep internal wounds, I marveled at their fortitude. They never cried or whimpered, just lay still with a helpless, forlorn look on their faces. Some of them had only bloody stumps for arms and legs and were bound up with tourniquets. One boy had been badly hit in the abdomen and blood was running out of his mouth, nose and ears. As he looked at me while receiving a blood transfusion I wanted to cry, for the first time on Iwo, in his eyes I could see defeat and a quiet resignation to the inevitable fact that he was going to die. At one time there were so many casualties awaiting transfer that I brought some of my

men down to keep watch over them and keep the flies off their faces. As the result of all these cumulative heartaches I was very happy to leave our original beachhead and move to a new bivouac area, which was later to become the setting for one of the bloodiest melees on the island of Iwo.

All day on the ninth of March we hauled our gear across the island and as soon as we had laid out our new area, we started to dig in, reinforcing our foxholes with plenty of sandbags and overhead cover. By nighttime, we were well entrenched and settled with only an occasional mortar shell dropping about 200 yards away. For the next three days we rustled around looking for new things to cook to break our routine culinary habits, even attempting to make palatable some dehydrated foods we had managed to procure. During the day we tried to clean up, even shave our beards, and generally to restore our self-respect. It was a very welcome interlude that also provided us with an opportunity to write a few letters home. Frankly, I was lulled into the belief that maybe the island would be secured very shortly and that from our present location we would leave for the ships. I prayed night and day that the operation would end but every passing day brought in the same report that the infantry was stopped in its tracks trying to cover the last 600 yards to Kitano Point and that they were suffering terrific casualties. The 5th Division was now alone fighting for the last bit of Jap terrain and their losses had been so high by now that the initiative could no longer be carried by the infantry regiments without the support of new troops.

Therefore, the inevitable was bound to take place and in the late afternoon of March 13th word came down to our bivouac that 5 officers and 45 men were to be ready in one hour to move up to the front lines to take a position in support of an infantry unit on the line in case of a Jap counter-attack during the night. The Captain, Wally Ellis, put me in charge and I departed with 4 other officers and 45 men from A Company. Each of the other Pioneer Companies supplied an equal number and we were carried in trucks to a point about 400 yards behind the lines. The infantry had runners to guide us to our position for the night and instead of being in support as we were told beforehand we now learned that we were to fill a bad gap in the lines where it was expected that the Japs might attempt a final Banzai attack since they were now hopelessly cornered. To add to our difficulties was the fact that it was fast becoming dark and we would have to dig in without being able to survey the terrain about us. It was a criminal and stupid thing from the standpoint of strategy for it would have been far wiser to put us in at daybreak instead of waiting until night. As we moved forward in a single line about 3 paces apart everyone felt uneasy for it was now dusk and snipers were always at their peak at this time of the day. The sporadic crack and whine of bullets over our heads was a constant reminder that death was again hanging in the air.

Finally we made contact with the infantry and started placing our men along the line. At this time I was talking with a small group of officers when a Jap sniper opened up on us, and kicked up dirt all around as we dove into holes. No one was hit but a few minutes later I was returning to my hole when a BAR man not five feet away was hit in the stomach by a sniper, we managed to find stretcher bearers at once to carry him out. He died before

morning. Stumpy Johnson, a hard-rock miner and cowpuncher from Arizona, was my runner and we dug out our hole behind a rock to find that we were in hot ground from the sulphur springs underneath. All that night we roasted our seats trying to keep from being cooked alive. Both of us kept on the alert all night resting on our knees with a 45 in our hand and a good supply of hand grenades as we were afraid of infiltration during the night. I might add, that all night long ships from out at sea, and our own mortars threw bright flares over the lines so that we could see any movement of the enemy. These flares were in the air all night long every single night of the operation, and were very instrumental in preventing the Japs from organizing and executing any large scale night attacks. When they were floating across the sky they would create the weirdest shadows on the ground because of the high jutting rocks which would make our imaginations run rampant. Many times that night Stumpy and I both swore we saw the shadows of moving men but it turned out to be nothing at all. As I looked out over No Man's Island not a sign of a man was to be seen; it was so quiet and eerie that it seemed almost unreal, but I could feel the gaze of other eyes penetrating my own. If a man had stepped out of his hole for just a few seconds up there they would have cut him down like a blade of grass. That night passed along without too many mishaps but the next morning all hell broke loose for us again

As the result of moving into our positions under cover of darkness we were not quite sure of the distance separating us and the Japs. But when daylight came we found ourselves right in their midst. Under a hail of rifle and machine gun fire we started to withdraw our men to a better position about 25 yards to the rear. In executing this withdrawal three of our finest men were killed by snipers, shot squarely between the eyes. McGee, Urquhart and White had all been with us since the day we had activated the Company in Camp Pendleton, and there were no finer, cleaner-cut, or more outstanding men in all this world. When it was all over, many of their buddies in the third platoon just lay down and sobbed like children. It was the worst morning we had experienced so far and personal losses dug into my heart for the first time, leaving a scar that can never heal. All that day we dug in and held on for all we were worth. If a man failed to move fast, to daydream or stick his head up, he was sure to take one between the eyes. The Japs had perfect cross fire all along our lines and their snipers were so beautifully concealed it was impossible to pick them out. The gulch where we were filling the gap in the lines was the roughest piece of terrain I have ever seen. It was a mass of broken rocks, jutting cliffs, and ravines, and dispersed throughout the entire area were innumerable pillboxes, well camouflaged and capable of laying down murderous fire. That evening, while changing positions, two snipers sighted in on me, and for about ten seconds bullets cracked all around me with such sickening rapidity that I shall never know to this day how they failed to hit me.

By night everyone was exhausted, but there could be no real sleep because the Japs kept working up on our positions and lobbing hand grenades. A bitter duel of grenades ensued for the five succeeding nights. Stumpy took up the watch for me after eight so I could catch a little sleep, but shortly before ten, I was awakened by the arrival of one of our own men who had been left behind when we moved up to the front lines. He informed me that the

Captain had the rest of the company in bivouac about 300 yards to the rear and that I was to report back to him, as we were moving into a new sector before daybreak. Very uneasy about moving back at night, I gathered up my gear and took off wondering if this time someone would cork off and let Stumpy and me have it. We were very fortunate on the return trip and since the company had listening posts on duty we collapsed on the hard rocks and fell asleep. We were comparatively safe now.

In what seemed like a few minutes we were awakened, and prepared to move out. Under cover of darkness we moved toward the front lines, two long columns of quiet, grim men who fully realized that many of us were not going to survive this step. March discipline was enforced and nothing could be heard but the occasional nervous cough of one of the men. I kept a forced smile on my face to cheer myself up and I am grateful to Almighty God that my insides were hidden from public scrutiny for they would have betrayed my real emotions. Just as daybreak descended upon us, under the guidance of two infantry runners, we started to fill in along the line. Replacing men who were starry-eyed and emotionless, so worn out that they were indifferent and careless to everything about them, not even caring any longer whether they were hit or not. One boy who was being relieved, carelessly started to amble away to the rear when a sniper shot him squarely in the stomach. With a pitifully but almost relieved smile he said very quietly, "Fire in the hole" and pitched to the ground. A few more minutes and he would have been on the way to the rear and his outfit. When men become exhausted and tired they are careless, and it is in this state, that they take the greatest number of casualties. With extreme caution, we moved our men into the line without a casualty. The fireworks had not started yet because of the poor visibility in the early light.

During the day we consolidated and improved our positions, set up a company CP just back of the gulch in defilade, and also located an excellent OP (observation post) overlooking the entire gulch. From this OP we could see all of our men and the enemy pillboxes, and it was here that the Captain and I spent most of our time. Particularly the former; as I took over the Company CP

For the first time, a few tanks were able to work their way down into the gulch and with their large flame-throwers and 75s they started to work over the pillboxes. Sometimes firing at a point blank range of 50 or 75 yards. Movement of foot troops was almost impossible because of the Japs small arms fire. Even three tanks were knocked out. The roar of the 75s echoing back and forth, the heat and black smoke from the flame throwers, the constant chattering of machine guns, the stench of decaying and burning bodies, all combined to make a travesty of Dante's Inferno. That poor man never really knew what hell was like. Many of our men had been wounded and could not be reached. The Japs got to them during the night and finished them, even donning our uniforms and using our weapons. Many of our men were killed at dusk by these Japs coming toward our lines, our men thinking they were Marines held their fire, only to be cut down when the Japs were close enough to fire upon us. For six days and nights this close in fighting continued with every trick in the book being employed by both sides.

The sickening stench of the dead became so bad that men could no longer eat anything at all. Our tanks trying to maneuver into position to fire on the pillboxes had to often pass over our own dead grinding them up beyond recognition. All of this took place right under our eyes and left the men weak and sick but they continued to fight on.

About the third day in this gulch I went up to a machine gun position to see how we were progressing. The position was surrounded with loose rocks but there were a few openings where Jap snipers had been zeroing in on our men and we had taken some bad casualties. I crawled up to the gun and spent about five minutes looking the situation over and then withdrew. Another observer in the company moved into the spot where I had been and he had not been there 30 seconds when a Jap sniper shot him through the head. I began to wonder just how long my luck was going to hold out, because I was certainly cutting the corners too close for comfort. The boy who was shot pulled through as the bullet smashed through one side of his jaw and out the other. I am thoroughly convinced now that the Japs are damn fine marksmen and I am taking no unnecessary chances on the assumption that they are poor shots. Whoever passed out that word was peddling rotten dope and no Marines who were on Iwo can ever be convinced of its veracity. We had always been told that they were bad shots but such is not the case.

When the men first moved into their positions they lived in a constant state of horror and acted like hunted animals, always alert and taking no chances. As the day wore on, however, they became more and more careless of whistling death. When a sniper opened fire with a rifle or machine gun they no longer hurled themselves to the ground but casually walked to the nearest cover. This state of indifference is the result of physical exhaustion and the subsequent dulling of the senses. When men arrive at this stage and become careless the casualty rate immediately soars upward.

The last two days before we were relieved our casualties mounted rapidly. Finally on the afternoon of the sixth day word came through that we were to be relieved. Utterly exhausted and sick of it all, our men retired one at a time from the lines and moved to a rear area where we were picked up by trucks and carried back to our old bivouac area above the West Beach. Our Pioneers were now test hardened troops and definitely battle wise. They had fought the Nips at close quarter and were now well versed in all the dirty tricks of war, some of which are too horrible to describe in print.

When we arrived back in our old area we immediately stripped down and headed for the ocean to remove the scale and grime from our bodies. The water was cold and being very salty, not exactly conducive to the working up of a good lather but we managed to scrape off the worst of the dirt and returned to our holes greatly refreshed.

I thought that I was hungry when I finished swimming, but once I sat down to our sumptuous feast of canned corn beef canned beans and canned pineapple, I found that my stomach had lost its adaptability for food. After three or four big mouthfuls I felt bloated and full so I quit eating and resorted to coffee drinking. For almost two hours I sipped coffee, an amount equal to 12 normal cups, and smoked almost a pack of cigarettes at the end of which

session I was completely relaxed and ready for rest. I stretched out on the sand in the bottom of our foxhole which we reverted up around the sides with sandbags and proceeded to sleep on and off for the next forty-eight hours. After resting up for a few days I started in to eat again, trying small but frequent snacks instead of three big meals. I managed to send off some letters to tell that I was at least safe and would be doing no more fighting, little realizing what was still in store for me.

The days that followed lulled us all into a false state of security and on March 25th, a Monday, we received word to load up our trucks with all of our company gear as we would be going aboard ship the next day. Most of the 5th Division was already aboard and waiting for us to join them. That night everyone felt a joy and happiness in his heart as he turned in for the last night on Iwo.

About ten o'clock that night the air raid sirens put out their mournful wail and everything immediately blacked out. I found myself wondering whether at this late moment we might be caught in a suicide air attack, just as the fighting was over and we were scheduled to leave that horrible spit of land forever. It was a beautiful moonlight night and we could hear nothing but the roar of our own fighters as they took to the skies and disappeared. Although all organized resistance had ended the day before I still had a squeamish feeling inside of me that we would never be safe nor could we ever relax until that island faded upon the horizon. With certain mental reservations I finally gave up waiting for the Tokyo Air Express and turned in for the night. Bob Hansen, Ken Jordan, and I had left our foxholes and were now sleeping above ground in an old cock tent, the only structure visible in our entire area. Thursday, March 25, 1945 came to a close and I fell into a comfortable slumber.

About five o'clock in the morning I awakened to the sound of distant rifle fire and was rather annoyed to have my sleep interrupted at such an early hour. Thinking that it was a group of trigger-happy doggies at a nearby camp I would have rolled over but the pressure on my kidneys was so great by now that I was forced to evacuate my warm sack on the sand and take a little stroll. Once I was up I became more conscious of the firing and even thought that I detected the sound of an exploding mortar shell. I walked over to Captain Ellis' foxhole where there was a sentry on duty to question him about this noise. He informed me that the firing had been going on for about ten minutes and was increasing in intensity. The Captain and his runner were still half asleep when I started to talk to them and they sat up to start lacing up their boots. I had left my carbine, a 45 automatic, and a salvage BAR, in the tent where I was sleeping so that I had no firearm, not even a knife, in my possession.

At this point Corp. Murnane, a member of the third platoon, came screaming by the CP shouting, "Nips are in the area"! Less than a minute later I heard the sentry call out, "Halt"! He repeated his challenge three or four times and then he took off at a dead run as he had no ammunition. Peering through the darkness I detected about twenty Japs not thirty feet away coming straight toward the CP. I could make out their outlines very plainly now, their odd shaped caps, their rifles with bayonets attached, all walking crouched over in their

characteristic pose, like so many little monkeys. About this time I heard the plaintive cries of one of our men entreating, "No, no, no!" I later learned that a Jap officer found him still asleep and when he awoke, the officer was slashing at him with his samurai sword or sabre. He could not rise to his feet and was being unmercifully butchered. By now bedlam was breaking loose everywhere and I could hear screams and shouts all about me.

The Captain handed me his .45 automatic with six rounds in it and when the Japs were about fifteen feet away I opened fire on them. I was standing on the step into the dugout so that the upper half of my body was above the ground and I had nothing on my head. As soon as I fired about eight rifles went off in my face, their flashes so close that they temporarily blinded me. How they missed me will always remain a mystery to me. One Nip now spotted me and started across the roof of the dugout. With the last round in the .45, I hit him in the forehead and the impact was so great that it blew the top of his skull clean off; pieces of skull plate and hair flying in every direction. Later that morning I found a piece of his brain twenty feet away.

The rest of the Japs momentarily halted and started lobbing hand grenades at us. One of these exploded about four feet from my head. I was down in the hole, only a small fragment hitting me in the back of the head and two more in the back of my right hand. As they closed in, the Captain took his runner's M1 rifle and hit one more before they dropped in another grenade on us. By now they were on us and we had no ammo left to fight back, no weapon of any kind with which to defend ourselves. We decided to play Indian and act as if we were dead, our only hope and a very slim one at that. As they gathered about our hole we waited to be bayoneted or shot thinking that at this last moment we were doomed to meet our Maker. It was very discouraging to realize that this was the day we were to go aboard ship and leave this hellish island and now we doubted if we would ever sail again.

As long as I had a firearm and could fight back I was not afraid but surprisingly calm. This attitude now gave way to plain fear as I lay there in a cold sweat, my teeth chattering, waiting for the inevitable gutting and end to take place. I almost prayed that they would hurry up and get it over with as I was still partially stunned from the grenade. After what seemed to be a lifetime but actually only a few minutes, they departed from around our hole jabbering and screaming like a bunch of monkeys. We continued to remain motionless for fear of others who might be in the area yet, sweating it out for ten minutes until daybreak began to make itself apparent.

As soon as the place lighted up our men came out of their holes and a pitched battle started all around us. The men had really kept their heads, staying in their holes while it was still dark. If they had attempted to come out and fight in the dark we would have suffered tremendous casualties in the scuffle. By now they could see and we soon organized a skirmish line thoroughly searching out the entire area. In an hour's time the last of the Japs had been liquidated and we counted 196 dead Nips.

When daybreak arrived quite a few of the Japs realized that the game was over and committed Hari-Kari. I had heard a great deal about this practice and often questioned the

reports concerning it but now I was a witness to it. One group of five, including three officers, gathered around a small crater hole about twenty feet from our position. They knelt down around the hole, facing the middle, each holding a grenade or placed charge in his right hand and against his stomach. At a given signal they pulled the pins and simultaneously joined their honorable ancestors. Shortly after the explosion I ran over to their position and found all five of them head down in the hole, their right hands neatly sheared off at the wrist and their entrails spread over the ground around them. It was very messy but they were very considerate in the selection of their site because all we had to do was cover the hole instead of digging graves. At least fifty Japs committed Hari-Kari that morning and after fleecing their possessions we could understand a little better the source of this inspiration.

These little animals were almost all "coked up" for the attack that morning. Half of them carried empty hypodermics in their pockets, others had empty or partially empty Saki bottles, and still a few carried opium pipes and small glass bottles filled with opium pellets. From the noise and chatter during the attack there can be no question that they were heavily drugged for their last journey. This artificial stimulation gives them great visions of glory and grandeur.

Just as in the past, we paid very dearly during this operation, losing two of our finest corporals in the company, Arthur Erdman, George Evans. Lt. Harry Martin of Company C, later awarded "Congressional Medal of Honor" posthumously. The most congenial, lovable Hoosier I have ever met, was killed when he attacked five Jap riflemen with only a 45. He killed three of them before another finally shot him through the heart. In all we had 14 men killed and over 40 casualties, many of whom will be hospitalized for a long time. After a cup of dirty but hot coffee I left for the field hospital where I had a tetanus shot and my cuts dressed: while I was at the hospital I saw many of our men receiving blood transfusions. The long tent was a maze of cots and stands with the blood containers suspended above the wounded men.

It was so depressing that I wanted to bawl and I was glad to go back to our bivouac area. In addition to our own casualties the Army Air Corps had suffered heavy losses. The Japs hit them prior to our area and it was from there that I heard the rifle shots. The pilots and ground crews were all living in tents above ground and when the Japs entered their area they walked down the row of tents pulled back the flaps and tossed in grenades. When the men came running out the Japs cut them down with their sabres. Some of those boys were slashed up beyond recognition. It was the most ghastly carnage imaginable.

They were very grateful to us for finally breaking up the Jap Banzai attack and later that morning their CO came down to tell us that he was recommending us to the Commanding General for our actions but nothing ever came of it as far as I can determine. The balance of the morning was spent filling in our foxholes and assembling our gear.

In the early afternoon we shouldered all our packs and commenced a half-mile march to the ocean where we were embarking. I was so tired and weighted down that I thought I could never make it, but we finally reached our destination. After a wait of several hours a

LST loaded us up and took us out to the waiting transport.

At last we had a hot shower and a clean table to sit down to. It was like a dream sitting there in that wardroom but I could not eat a thing, nor had I been able to consume anything all day. I drank about six cups of coffee fully realizing that sleep was going to be impossible anyhow. I rolled and tossed most of the night continually reliving the past 24 hours. In the late afternoon of the following day, March 27th, we set sail, a very pitiful remnant of the once mighty convoy that had brought the Fifth Marine Division to Iwo. As I stood there on the deck and watched Iwo fade away I could not believe that I had survived that place and that I had been so fortunate. Every day I had narrowly missed being killed as did everyone on that island and now I was comparatively safe.

I had so much to be grateful for but my elation at leaving Iwo was always tempered by the memory of the men who would never be coming home again. It was then that I decided in my own mind that those of us who were coming back alive were not the real heroes, that citations to living men were meaningless, because these men in comparison to ourselves had given up the most precious thing in this world, life itself. They are the only, the real heroes of this war, and with reverence towards them I shall always respect the part that they played above everything else.

After a few days my nerves settled down and I started to relax and write a few letters. It was so wonderful to be heading back to our old camp but our feelings were so subdued that we just sat and stared off into space. Censorship prevents me from telling you any more but I have already said enough. I should appreciate your holding on to this letter for me and not allowing outsiders to read it. Once in a while these letters find their way into the papers and an officer might be brought to disciplinary action for some of the above discussions, so I must caution you to confine it to our families and close friends. I hope that by the time you read this letter I shall have forgotten many of its details and that is why I am putting them down while they are still fresh in my mind.

Your very devoted and loving son,

Penn

Executive Officer, Co. A - 5th Pioneer BN

5th Marine Division