

A Trooper's History of the 503



503 History

Test Platoon

July 1940 Ft. Benning Georgia

From the 29th Infantry Regiment 50 volunteers were taken and trained as Paratroopers at Lawson Field.

Since Germany, Russia and Japan all had Paratroops the United States began the thought of training Paratroopers in 1940. In July of 1940 they decided to ask for volunteers for Para Training. The test Platoon of 50 Volunteers from the 29th Infantry of Ft Benning Georgia became the first Paratroops of the United States.

They continued to ask for volunteers for parachute training and by mid 1942 had two Regiments of trained Troopers ready for combat.

The 503rd Parachute Regiment was sent to the Pacific Theatre under the Command of General MacArthur. The 503rd Parachute Regiment left San Francisco on Tuesday, October 2, 1942. Commanding the 503 was Colonel George M. Jones. On December 2, 1942 the ship carrying the Regiment docked at Cairns, Australia.

In August of 1943 the 503 left Australia and was shipped to Port Moresby, New Guinea in preparation for their first combat. September 5th 1943 the 503 made the Markham Valley Paratroop jump near the City of Lae on the eastern corner of Papua New Guinea. This was the first combat jump of the Pacific Theatre.

On about September 23rd 1943 our replacements joined the 503 as they were returning from the combat jump. This was at Brisbane, Australia where we were transported by truck to the 503 base.

After joining the 503 we were shipped back to Port Moresby, New Guinea and sent by truck to a jungle for training camp at Bougainville, in Papua New Guinea . Then later returned to Port Moresby New Guinea to relax. We were going everywhere but nowhere!

As I remember early in April of 1944 we were loaded onto boats and sailed to Oro Bay, New Guinea to take part in the Hollandia, New Guinea Operation (Code named Operation Reckless). The First Battalion was picked to help in a "Search and Destroy" mission. Our Company did not participate.

After two months in Hollandia we again began preparing for the taking of

Noemfoor Island, New Guinea. July 3rd and 4th 1944 were the two days the 503rd Parachuted on Kamiri Airfield on Noemfoor island. The strip itself was mostly on a large strip of Coral that runs about the length of the Island on it's west side. As I recall it was like landing on concrete covered over with mud. The island itself was ugly. The strip was jammed with bombed planes and vehicles. The first few days were busy driving the Japanese out and into the mountains. On one occasion as a bullet cut the grass on the right side of my face I realized that these guys were really trying to kill me. That's when I truly realized that war was real and after helping some of my buddies that were shot I immediately became a hardened combat soldier. About three weeks we struggled in rain and mud to clear the area so they could begin work on the strip for our own planes to use. We were in Noemfoor about three months. After that we began to prepare for the Philippine Islands.

During the three months at Noemfoor when things became relaxed and quiet we were treated to a show of the "Bob Hope Troop". It was great to have them perform on a set up stage on an ugly Island. Every GI on Noemfoor seemed to be present. Including I'm sure some Japanese viewers. Eventually some far away shot was heard and the stage became suddenly empty.

On October 15th 1944 the 503 loaded LST's (Landing Ship Troops) on Noemfoor and headed for Leyte Island in the Philippines. The trip took a few days longer than expected because the convoy had to zig-zag from it's course to avoid the Japanese Kamikaze planes trying to sink us. It was scary when the sirens sounded and we were sent down into the holds. We could hear the guns and the roar of the planes and I thought if a plane hits our ship we would all drown like rats. Luckily non of our ships were hit but we were about two days late hitting the beach on Leyte. We landed late in October of 1944.

The 503 was by then a Regimental Combat Team since during the Noemfoor Campaign the 462nd F A (Field Artillery) and the 161st Company of Engineers became part of the 503 Regiment. We were immediately ordered to set up defensive positions along the beach because they had word that a Japanese counter attack was on the way to regain the island. This island was essential to the Japanese as their base island for both their Navy and Air Force. The counter attack never happened because the naval battle on Leyte Gulf all but destroyed the Japanese Navy including the Air Craft Carrier. This left the Japanese pilots no place to land or refuel. Once they were out of fuel they had no place to go but down. (into the ocean)

Since we were dug in along the beach we had a ring side seat to the battle of Leyte Gulf. Three days and two nights of fireworks never seen before. Navy ships and air battles going on without a stop. We saw ships sunk and planes crashing into the ocean during "dog fights" a term used for air battles. When it was over the Japanese Navy and Air Craft Carriers were no longer a great threat to the US Forces that it had been.

Some of my buddies and I finally had time to look over parts of Leyte and since some of the older villagers could speak Spanish I would converse with them. Most of my platoon believed that I could speak Pilipino so I let it go at that. About two months later we were on alert for the Mindoro Operation. This was primarily to be a parachute drop on the San Jose Air Strip but was canceled for lack of planes so we went into Mindoro by sea and hit Mindoro Beach by (LCI) Landing Craft Infantry.

The Mindoro Beach Head on December 15th 1944 was pretty quiet since most of the Japanese had been warned in advance and headed for the mountains. Our troop carriers did not know this so we went in like any other Amphibious Landing. Guns blazing, navy shelling, the whole works but our guy dropped the ramp on our LCI (Landing Craft Infantry) in about five feet of water and the whole platoon went off the ramp into water not sand. To make it worse the guy put the boat in reverse causing an undertow which pulled us back into deeper water. I am not a swimmer and I also was the BAR man (Browning Automatic Rifle) so I was over loaded with a big gun and ammo. This made me think I was a goner. Keeping my gun over my head and digging my toes into the sand I eventually made it to shore. After setting up camp we set a perimeter around and kept a security outpost with guards that were relieved every two hours. This was to make sure we weren't surprised by a bonzai attack. While on Mindoro we had time to make friends with many families. At times we would be invited to a home for dinner. My first Scout George Pierce was infatuated by the Pilipino girls. He returned after the war and married a Pilipino woman.

I had a brace of .38 revolvers that I had traded a brass knuckle trench knife for. One day as I was going to relieve a guard one of my buddies Charlie Stewart began to fool with one of the 2 guns. I warned him to be careful because they had a hair trigger. He replied, "That's OK because I'm a cowboy at heart." He twirled the gun as if to holster it and shot himself in his right calf. I said to him, "See! And you won't even get a purple heart!"

There was a Japanese pilot that like clock work would come over our area every day and strafe us. We could tell it was the same guy because his engine had a kind of cough or miss. We called him three O'clock Charlie. We would hear him coming and someone would yell. "here comes three o'clock Charlie" and we would all take cover. He never hurt anyone and eventually quit coming. Maybe his engine gave out and he ended up in the sea.

The beach at San Jose was the place where ships would unload supplies for the GI's on the island. They asked the 503 Company Officer if we had any truck drivers to volunteer to distribute supplies. I volunteered and drove about one week. I had to drive about forty miles to an infantry regiment on the opposite side from where we were. This served us well because a couple of weeks later George Pierce and I were at the beach watching the trucks get loaded with supplies. We got a bright idea. We walked to a nearby Aussie Camp and asked to borrow a truck. After some discussion and some deals we borrowed a truck. We drove down and got in line for supplies. Soon we backed our truck in and they loaded us up. George put his "X" on the requisition papers and off we went with a truck load of goodies. We unloaded about two thirds of it at our company and gave the rest to the Aussie's.

We had everything from canned chicken to canned fruit, flour, you name it. The next day I got the idea of making apple pies. About five of us dug out a makeshift oven. We gathered wood. We cut two large pans out of a large square apple can. We mixed flower, baking powder and lard. We cooked the apples with plenty of sugar put it all together and mad some pretty good pies. Lt. Ed Flash and Lt. Bill Bailey were walking by and could smell something good so we said, "come over for some coffee and apple pie" They couldn't believe it.

I remember Christmas eve on Mindoro one of the guys brought in a small scraggy tree so we decided to decorate it. Then we had a pretty good banjo player in the company so we all got together and that evening we walked the Company Street singing Christmas carols. (what we could remember of them) I sang "White Christmas". It was fun. It's not always combat when you are in those God forsaken jungles. There is always time for some fun. That or go nuts! Then after a relaxing couple of weeks we were told to prepare for the parachute drop on "The Rock", Corregidor!

There was much discussion on a parachute jump on this one because the parachute drop seemed impossible. This because there was no place large enough for a mass jump. The Japanese had dug tunnels through out the island and had fortified it

much more in the two years since they had taken the island. General MacArthur thought we would lose to many troops trying an amphibious landing. After talking with Colonel Jones and some of the 503 Brass, they decided the 503 should repeat the action they took on Noemfoor. Cut down to one plane at a time and to a ten man stick or less. They would depend on the Air Force and Navy to keep the Japanese holed up in their caves. The 503 could drop on the small topside parade ground and control the high ground. This was still very "iffy" since the topside is so small that the planes even flying at a reduced speed and low altitude would be past the top side in ten seconds. General MacArthur believed the 503 was up to the task and gave the OK for the drop.

As I recall in my old mind about the 9th or 10th of February 1945 we were told to make preparations for the assault on Corregidor. We cleaned and tested our equipment and sharpened trench knives. We packed duffel bags with belongings we were to leave behind. We then set aside the items we would be taking with us and studied maps of the topside of "The Rock" to familiarize ourselves as to where we would gather after landing.

The 3rd Battalion, 462nd Field Artillery and the 161st Engineers were to go on the first wave of planes. The 1st and 2nd Battalion would follow on the second wave. Early on February 16th 1945 the operation began. Dropping ten men sticks at 600 feet did not go to well. The last three of four men on each stick were landing either in Japanese held territory or in the sea. As I stated before the planes were past the top side of the Island before all were out or the wind carried them past the drop zone. They then began to drop eight men at 500 feet. This still didn't work. My Battalion, the 2nd Battalion loaded next and they decided to drop to 400 feet and six man sticks. This worked OK except that at 400 feet the chutes barely opened and you hit the ground hard which contributed to many more casualties like broken legs, ankles and ribs.

I was leading the 2nd stick and had a signal core photographer who had never jumped before with me. I had to push him out in front of me. I saw the green light flash and left a little too soon so he and I landed in a gully before the Drop Zone. I landed in a tree about four feet off the ground and I had trouble popping my release. Suddenly I heard someone coming through the brush. The first thing I thought was, Japanese! I was a B.A.R. man so I Carried a .45 caliber side arm. I drew it out of my holster and prepared to fire when I saw that the person coming through the brush was the signal core photographer I had pushed out in front of me. He pulled me down and we both went up together to the meeting place. I never saw him again after that.

After grouping with the rest of our platoon we headed to our position over Cheney Ravine. We occupied three barracks on Cheney Ravine and immediately began to see activity from caves at the bottom. It was "fire at will", all day long. We lost our squad leader right off to a Japanese sniper. SSgt. Charles E. Hoyt (Happy Hoyt) was the first killed from 2nd Platoon F. Company. A good friend and great Soldier. He was buried in Manila at the WWII Veterans Cemetery.

The first night the Japanese crept up to our positions and began tossing grenades into our building. We had been told not to fire at night because the muzzle flash would give away our position. So I slid over to our balcony and I could hear at least two Japanese below us. So I sprayed the area with my B.A.R. and we heard an agonizing scream. Then we heard some scrambling in the brush but we didn't get anymore grenades thrown at us. The guy was obviously shot. He moaned all night until someone shot him the next morning.

Day two was more of the same except we noticed that they were sending a runner across the ravine from one cave to another. We figured they were runners carrying messages back and forth so we made sure that none made it across. We figured they had no communication and we were right. Their communication system had been destroyed by the shelling.

At approximately 3:00 pm the same day as we kept firing at each other one of the guys spotted someone waving his arm. He had crawled behind a huge rock. We noticed he was wearing a US jump suit and one of our guys thought it might be a trap. A "Jap" wearing a US jumpsuit but the wounded man took off his helmet and we saw he had blonde hair. He was shot pretty bad and we knew he would be killed unless we could get to him and get him help. Lt. Ed Flash and Angelo Kamakumas said, "Cover us and we will go down and get him." They got about half way down and both were hit by gunfire. Kamakumas brought Flash back up. Flash's left arm was shattered. He was returned to the states. He was treated at Army Hospitals but his arm never recovered it's movement. They were giving him a medical discharge but he refused. He said that he was hurt at war and he was staying in. He retired after 20 years as Colonel Ed Flash.

When I first knew "Flash" he was Technician Sgt. Flash. He was our platoon Sergeant. Since we were short on officers he was sent to O.C.S. (Officers Candidate School). We got together several times after the war. Whenever I was in San Antonio, Texas. His daughters called me "Uncle Tony". Ed Flash died in 2012.

Bob O'Connell and I said we would go back down to retrieve the injured soldier but first we made plans. First of all we couldn't carry the guy up the ravine so we ripped up a bed spring off the wall of our barracks. Next we decided the best route down and back carrying a stretcher. We told the guys to cover us as we were not carrying any weapons, just the bed spring stretcher. We stayed along the rocky side of the ravine and got to the wounded trooper. He was pretty badly shot but was conscious. We told him we would get him out and rolled him onto the bed spring. We knew that we would be exposed to fire because we had to cross an open area carrying the wounded man on the stretcher before getting to the safety of the rocky edge. Bob had the front of the spring and I had the rear. We had decided that once we hit the open area we would run like hell to reach the edge of the ravine. I guess the Japanese had that figured out too because they sure opened fire on us. I felt a hot sting on my left side and at the same time Bob fell and said, "I'm hit" and dropped the spring. I yelled at him "Go Bob or we are dead!". He grabbed the spring and while on his back and with one good leg he pulled and I pushed until we got to cover. By then the other guys had come down and helped to get us all to topside.

Bob O'Connell and the wounded guy, whose name I didn't know at the time were taken to the aid station about a quarter mile from where we were. I stayed at our post since my wound didn't feel that bad. Years later I learned the wounded man's name was Leonard LeDoux.

The second night the Japanese hit us with a night attack which we were able to repulse. The next morning George Pierce and Frank Whall counted 42 dead Japanese soldiers.

During the day we sent patrols down to try closing some caves. The 462nd Artillery did a great job of that with their Howitzers

About three o'clock that afternoon I could hardly walk. Our medic "Gooding" looked at my leg and said, "Get to the aid station" I had an infection from my hip to my toes. The Island by then was loaded with flies and stench of dead bodies. It was unbearable. Three days later myself and all the wounded were on a hospital ship and taken to a hospital in Leyte. It took me two weeks to get over that little bullet wound. I returned to Mindoro after the 503 had retaken Corregidor. For that campaign the 503 and all other units received the Presidential Citation. The 503 was also awarded the right to claim their own shoulder patch as a Regimental

Combat Team. The Rock Force Patch. The original Rock Patch was designed by Thomas McNeil of "G" Company while he recuperated in a hospital. From that patch, several variations have been made.

I lost many good friends on Corregidor. After two weeks of day and night combat the "Rock" mission ended with over 6,000 Japanese dead and MacArthur giving his famous speech, "I see the old mast still stands. Have your troops hoist the colors to it's peak and let no enemy ever haul them down." The old mast was referring to an old ship mast made into the flag pole that still holds the American Flag on "The Rock"

Negros Island would turn out to be the last island of combat for the 503 PRCT. We went in early April and would be there until the Japanese surrendered starting the 5th of September.

Our first casualty on Negros for F Company 2nd Battalion was April 9th 1945. I remember it very well because he was my close friend, Sgt. James Jackson. He was shot next to me and fell at my feet. I saw the wound, tried to stop the bleeding and knew he wouldn't survive. He talked for awhile. He couldn't feel his feet. The bullet had gone shoulder to shoulder taking his spinal column. I told him he was just in shock and that he would be OK. But I knew differently. We also lost a radio man I didn't know his name. He was shot thru the back of his neck. The following is how this happened.

Early that morning the 2nd Platoon was notified there was a large Japanese force just about three miles outside of Fabrica. Bill Calhoun was given the location and also assigned a tank to enforce our Platoon and we set out to make contact. Along the way we had to cross a river which was less than a foot deep at that area. We crossed easily but the tank commander refused to cross because of rocks in the river which he thought could knock off a tank tread. Calhoun tried to convince him otherwise but he wouldn't cross so we went on without the tank. About a half mile later we could see where many foot prints went in and out of the river bank. We figured this was the place and when we all reached the top they immediately opened fire. They were more than ready. Most of us kneeled into high Kunai grass but Jackson was standing and looking with binoculars when he got hit. Calhoun radioed the position to HQ. We then took our dead and returned to base camp.

While near Victorius we got to know several of the town people. The main product

in Victorius seemed to be sugar but they also had a large sawmill up in the high country called "Fabrica". This sawmill would play a large part in the 503 battle of Negros.

We remained around Victorius for a few weeks. Then one day Jesse, the Mayor of the city came to the F Company Commander Bill Bailey asking for help. It was harvest time and the Hacienda owners couldn't keep any workers because the Japanese kept coming out of the jungles and raiding the fields for food. Bill Bailey told him we didn't have men to spare. Jesse said even 5 or 6 patrolling would incite workers to return. At that point I suggested that if I could get 3 volunteers I would take the patrol. Jesse told Bailey that we could stay in a small house at his Hacienda and his wife would feed us. Immediately Guy Larry, Jack Hughes and Ignacio Quinones volunteered. I called Ignacio, IQ because of his long name and because the other guys couldn't pronounce it. The patrol went well and after two days I even had a 12 man volunteer squad of Philippino's armed with machetes patrolling with us. The Japanese were scared off and the crops were saved. I must say it was huge. They had fields of sugar cane, pineapple, sweet potato, etc.

About two weeks later we were told that the 2nd Battalion would be going into the high country. They had a small train that traveled up to the end of track at "Fabrica". This would be our home for the next four months. However as we were loading onto the flat cars a group of B-24 bombers passed overhead and for some unknown reason they released four bombs. The bombs exploded two on each side of the flat cars. Everyone dove under the cars for cover. No troopers were hurt but one Pilipino man was carried away screaming in pain. His body must have taken the concussion of a bomb and it seemed as all the joints in his body had been blown out of their sockets. Following that scare we loaded back onto the flat cars and left Fabrica behind.

Before going on about our next four months in the jungles of Negros Island I would like to try to educate you on what a combat soldier experiences in jungle warfare. First of all when you deploy into a jungle you take a step back in time. It's like a different dimension. It's scary, dark, wet, cold and the hair on the back of your neck seems to stand on end. You begin to see trees and plants hundreds of years old but you have to get used to it. You will be fighting in this rain forest. Freezing cold at night. Wet and dirty. Smelly most of the time. You are fighting malaria, dengue fever and jungle rot on your feet. Leeches cling to you as you pass through wet foliage. Not to mention the "Japs". When you get into a combat situation it can go from a few seconds to hours, depending if it's patrol Vs patrol. It can end quickly

but regardless it leaves scars and memories. Our fighting on Negros was done vastly by small arm battles. Squad and platoon size groups patrolling daily searching for enemy encampments and flushing them by small arm fire. The terrain would not lend itself to FA (Field Artillery), trucks or vehicles of any kind. Some may have questions or doubt about something that you may hear a GI say about a certain mission. Where another GI describes the mission in a slightly different variation. I would say to you that they are not lying. Each and every brain is a world of it's own and in a combat situation while we will all agree on the final outcome, some men will see things a little differently than the next two or three soldiers. Each brain records each situation as it see's it and no two brains are alike. What I write from here on are my own recollections of my combat on Negros.

Before dropping us off at the end of the track, F Company had already lost our share of men in combat near and around Victorius while patrolling. An example is where "Jackson" was killed. I will list the friends I lost on Negros at the end of this review but for now I will detail what I recall about our Company during our search and destroy tactics.

From our position at the end of the track I remember that our first Sunday Father Powers had a mass for us. He set up an alter on a large rock and my buddy Bob O'Connell was his alter boy. We had a great gathering where he blessed us all. After mass he stood at a distance and any of us who wanted would walk over for "confession". It gave us all a feeling of relief. It was very nice.

For the next 2 to 3 months it was daily patrols two or three times a day. The terrain and combat casualties began to take their toll. What began as a twelve man squad soon became 6 or 7 men. We lost men to combat, Malaria, Dysentery or plain fatigue. We were getting short on man power but had no replacements. At one point I remember our 2nd Platoon was to take a hill. These were not your typical hills. They were all numbered as hill 23 or 24 etc. but they were well occupied by enemy troops not willing to give them up. We tried for two days but we were out numbered. And besides, they had grenades that they kept tossing down hill at us. Colonel Jones contacted our First Lieutenant Bill Calhoun and stated he would be there first thing in the morning. He was visibly upset that the mission had not been accomplished and he did not understand why. He stated that he wanted a Platoon to go with him to secure the hill. The next morning eight men were there to greet him. He looked at Bill Calhoun and Bill told him "This is all there is" A Platoon consists of three 12 men squads, if possible a light machine gun crew and a Platoon leader. Jones turned and walked away but by that evening we had two squads from the 3rd Battalion and took that hill the following day.

This was pretty much what went on daily. We kept losing our Sergeants so fast that they began making Corporals into Sergeants from what was left. We were what we called "Acting Gadgets". Eventually I became a squad leader. This seemed to become the "norm". As we went deeper into the mountains and rain forests we began overnight travels to get to a hill that the Company Officer (CO) wanted to advance to. This became even more dangerous because as I said we were short of men. This meant taking some men from another squad to make at least twelve men. On one occasion after traveling about six hours we were still a long way from our objective so we found a spot to stay the night. We set up our perimeter in a semi-circle against solid rock formations to protect our back and Kunai grass to our front. We set two men per position and had one man every hour stay awake as security. At any sign of danger we were ready to cover our group with firepower. We slept well until about 3 or 4 a.m. when we were awoken by large explosions. We immediately opened fire and the explosions quit. However, the damage had been done. Two of our guys were dead. Blown up by what we later found out was a mortar shell. The Japanese had come close enough to our positions to toss mortar shells into the air by tying a leather thong to the fin and heaving it high enough for it to hit with the detonator down. We found this out when daylight came and we found one unexploded shell on top a poncho that one of the guys had spread over his position in case it rained. The two dead were "Steve Workman" and "Ralph Iverson". From this we knew the Japanese pretty much knew our moves.

The next two day job we went on ended about the same way. We camped overnight on a high bluff overlooking a ravine. Nothing happened at night but the following morning as we were finishing our coffee and rations my close friend Johnny Peters evidently saw something. He took a few steps toward a small bluff and was shot through the chest. We immediately began to treat him. I talked to him but he couldn't answer. At the same time "Oley", Richard A. Oloff was telling me he saw where the shot came from. I told him to fire a few shots over there and continued helping Johnny. He had a huge hole in his back where the slug exited. We made a rifle stretcher and put him on it belly down. We stuffed two large bandages into the wound along with sulfur powder and sent two guys to get him back to the Company area. We laid him face down so he wouldn't bleed out. I'll tell you more on Johnny at the end.

After sending Johnny back I asked "Oley" to show me where the shot came from. He pointed to a hole on this small bluff. I told him, "You couldn't get a rabbit in there" About then we saw a guy running down the ravine. Two of the guys opened

fire and got him before he went to far. When we left we circled the small bluff and "Oley" was right. It must have been an outpost. It had a hole dug out where you could see that he had spent the night.

There were several more interesting encounters with the enemy. My next is when we surprised a platoon size Japanese camp. They were getting ready to eat so they had their weapons stacked. So when our guys opened fire all they could do was run into the jungle. A guy we called "Tennessee" (I never knew his real name) and I were on the right Flank and noticed a lean-to close to us. We walked toward it and two Japs charged at us. One charged me with a samurai sword and the other charged "Tennessee" with some kind of spear. We shot them both and I took the sword and the pistol he was wearing. Inside the lean-to there were clothes and a footlocker. The footlocker contained letters, pictures and a Japanese flag covered with signatures. It seemed the guy I shot was a captain. I emptied the footlocker. I kept the pistol, holster, sword and flag. I kept these items until I shipped home. I still have them.

I mentioned before that most of the time we were cold and smelly. We would playfully call each other "skunk", "rose" or "orchid". One day we set out on a four man recon patrol. Recon meant not firing our weapons unless absolutely necessary. We were to just spy and locate enemy camps. As it turned out we came to a river. Being Sweaty and stinky we stripped to our boots and shorts and jumped into the river for an hour, I swear. We then washed our clothes and set them out to dry. We spent another half hour waiting for the clothes to dry. To hell with the "Japs". We were relaxing! Then one of the guys says, "Lets get some fish and cook them" We had no string or hooks. This guy said he had two hand grenades. So he tells us he will go up stream and for us to stay down stream. He would toss the grenades into the water and the fish would float down stream. He told us to collect the fish, put them on the shore and then we would have a fish fry. The plan sounded good so we went along with it. He tossed his grenades and soon we were tossing dead and stunned fish to the shore. We were not quite done when we heard a swoosh then another and two artillery shells hit the far bank. Then we hear two more and we ran and dove into the dead trees on shore. We grabbed our weapons and clothes and were gone. I have no idea where those shells came from but needless to say. We had no fish fry.

We would soon return to our Company area and resume patrols from there. One morning in about early August (time never mattered week or month) we got some new replacements along with Lt. Turpin. Turpin had been in a hospital in Victorious

with Malaria. Lt. Turpin was 3rd Platoon leader. Sergeant Baker was 3rd Platoon Sergeant. No sooner had they got off the train when a Pilipino man came running up to us stating that "Japs" were in his home and his wife was in the home alone. We asked how many but the man didn't know because he saw only one. Lt. Turpin said he would take care of it and took the six new guys with him. I questioned the move asking Sergeant Baker about the six replacements going along. He replied, "He is a good 2nd Louie and in charge so let him go." About ten minutes later we heard one shot. Bart Moriscalco and I grabbed our weapons and followed a path to a small hut on stilts. The new guys were huddled behind a fallen tree. One of them was holding the Lieutenant on his lap and not knowing what to do. Bart fired a couple of rounds at the open window while I checked Lt. Turpin. He had a wound to the gut. His eyes were rolled over. He was dead. We made a rifle stretcher and told the new guys to get him back to the Company area. Then while Bart fired, I dashed under the stilts and I fired up thru the floor while Bart dashed under with me. The hut sat right next to a river bank over huge boulders. There were steps going up into the one room home. We no sooner began up the steps when a "Jap" ran and dove over us through a window and into the rocks along the river. Bart was behind me and asked, "Shall I go after him?" I replied, "Hell let him go". He probably broke his neck on those rocks. Let's see if there are more inside." We found no more inside but we heard a small voice from a mud made fire place say, "No shoot Joe, no shoot." It turned out to be a small Pilipino woman who had hidden herself in the oven. From what I heard later some upper brass questioned the death of the Lieutenant so the following morning Sgt. Louie Commander took a patrol to the area and they found the "Jap" dead on the rocks. Allegedly they shipped the head back to HQ Company on a flat car. I never saw it.

The next incident I remember was a Patrol on which we had some of the new guys and a new 2nd Lieutenant in our Platoon. We set out with a twelve man squad for the first time in months. After months of repeat patrols you begin to have a sense of the enemies habits and their method of tactics. About two hours after starting out we came to a small clearing ahead of us with a rise just ahead. Something told me to be alert. I signaled George Pierce over and we both had the same feeling. There was a huge tree just before the rise. George signaled the patrol to stop. In the mean time my first scout had wondered off to our right just in front of the rise. As I got to the tree I saw Foot prints in the mud of a split toe print. I yelled at my first scout, "Hinson, they're here!". No sooner did I say that when they opened up with an automatic weapon striking the tree beside us. George and I shifted to the left and returned fire at the same time calling for "Hinson" to answer. The new Lieutenant (I didn't even know his name) called for us to pull back. I yelled back that my first

scout was still out there. He said, "He's dead. He ran right into that gun." I replied, "Then I will get his body." George responded, "We know what they do to dead soldiers. If possible we will get him out." We got up to the rise to find the enemy had left. Then "Hinson" popped out from the right side after calling to us. It seems he was crawling up on them so he couldn't answer. "George" my 2nd scout then signaled the Lieutenant to come up. I told the Lieutenant he had to learn to read signs in the jungle. Then showed him the gun position they had dug out. By noticing a tripod print I told showed him it was a Japanese outpost. The three marks show it was a machine gun which means it's more than a squad. You can bet that thirty five or forty yards from here we will run into at least a platoon or more and they will be waiting so now it's your call. If we go on we have to split to both sides and advance very slow and careful. He said that we would pull back and call for artillery. George replied, "Look at these high trees! Artillery wouldn't even find them." So we returned with no one hurt and the Lieutenant hopefully learned something.

We need to get rations and ammo by parachute at times by marking an open spot with smoke grenades. One day we were getting supplies and one of our posted guards was surprised by four "Japs". I think they were as surprised as the out post guy. He said they stared at each other not moving before he fired his "Thompson" as they ran into the bush. I guess no one was hurt but "Olie" was a little embarrassed.

I had a collection of gold teeth that I seemed to collect mysteriously. I had one that was a beauty. I drilled a hole on the root end and tied a string to it and used to wear it next to my dog tags. One day we got a Spanish priest that came up from Victorius. He was holding confessions for us and when I went up to him we made the sign of the cross and he noticed the tooth. In Spanish he asked me, "Que es eso?" (What is that) I proudly replied, "that's my gold tooth." He said, "No, that is not nice." I never wore that tooth again.

On September 3rd 1945 we set out on a patrol that I will remember the rest of my life. We were about a half mile into the jungle parallel to the train tracks. It was a hot day about 2:00p.m. We stopped for a break and I told the guys to rest for a while. Bart Moriscalco and I went up ahead as look outs. I took my scout's Thompson instead of the M-1. We saw a Japanese patrol of about eight men coming towards us. I flipped the "tommy" off safety and told Bart, "I'm going up behind that big tree. When I shoot the first guy you start at the back of the column and we may get about four of them before they run into the bush." When the first guy got

close I pulled the bolt back on the "tommy" and as he got to the tree I jammed the barrel right into his gut and squeezed the trigger. I heard the bolt hit but nothing happened. I pulled back again and got the same result, nothing. Then in a flash all the "Japs" disappeared into the jungle. I headed back to Bart. He asked what happened. He said he had the rear guy in his sights when they all disappeared. He couldn't believe it when I told him that my gun jammed. Not once but twice. When we got back to the squad I jumped all over my First Scout for not cleaning his gun. He said, "I checked it before you left the Company area." He took it back from me, pointed it in the air, pulled the bolt back and squeezed the trigger. It fired about six rounds into the air. There was not one shot fired during our encounter with the Japanese patrol. Not by us and not by them. Here is the kicker. We headed back to the Company by walking to the Railroad Tracks. Some of our guys saw us and began yelling, "Hey you guys the war is over!" In my three years I had never had a gun jam on me and I had fired multiple weapons during that time. I have at times wished I could go to Japan to look for that soldier and ask him if he remembers that day. Then again, I would like to ask, is there such a thing as divine intervention!

The war had been over since August 15th but we had no way of knowing. Getting back to the Company HQ we were told to prepare to receive Japanese Troops coming in to surrender. On September 5th they began coming out of the woods. We watched and couldn't believe the number of "Japs" coming out of those woods. We saw some carried out on stretchers. Some walking wounded. But by far the majority were well fed and healthy. My friend Lloyd Herrera was one of the M.P.'s who was General Kono's guards and he told me that General Kono said that he had 8,000 of his command at the prison camp at Victorius.

Soon after that the 503 was disbanded and old guys like me were sent back to the United States. The rest were sent to Japan with the 11th Airborne Division as occupying forces.

As for me, I spent my 19th, 20th, and 21st birthdays in those jungles. I got home December 22nd 1945 and re-enlisted into the 82nd Airborne Division. I got my final discharge in April of 1950.

Anthony D. Lopez
S/Sgt. 2nd Platoon
Co F 503 PRCT

Heroes

I guess as long as there are wars there are those that will be labeled as heroes and I suppose that is as it should be but only if it comes during combat against an enemy. Now days you hear the word "hero" for an athlete who hit's a home run, scores a goal, sinks a basket etc, etc. These people are making millions of dollars to play a game. Where does the "hero" come in?

During WWII the G.I. training for combat was paid \$21.00 a month. To risk his life as an infantry soldier! \$50.00 more a month if you trained to jump out of an airplane into enemy territory.

When in a combat situation you are all fighting for your life. In my opinion, these could all be called "heroes" not just one being singled out. I have been called a hero many times. But I tell them, I am not a hero. I went thru WWII and had my wounds but I came home. I married, raised a family and lived a full life.

My heroes are my friends and brothers who at the age of 18, 19 and 20 years old never had that opportunity. Their lives were taken from them before they were grown up. They were, I guess we all were... just kids. Those that never came home, never saw their families or friends, those in my opinion are the true heroes.

Anthony D. Lopez
S/Sgt. 2nd Platoon
Co F 503 PRCT

We lost 148 KIA (Killed in Action) on Negros Island

Listed are my buddies from F Company KIA on Negros

Don Anderson KIA April 10, 1945
S/Sgt Henry McCrory KIA April 21, 1945
Carl Schneider KIA April 21, 1945
S/Sgt Ben Roote KIA April 22, 1945
Ralph Bright KIA April 22, 1945
T/Sgt Ben Forte KIA April 22, 1945
Virg Surber KIA April 26, 1945
Ace Dibble KIA April 28, 1945
Ralph Iverson KIA April 29, 1945
Dallas Workman KIA April 29, 1945
Lawrence Leonard KIA April 30, 1945
Jose Calderon KIA May 3, 1945
Allen Martin KIA May 3, 1945
1st Lt. Sidney Brock KIA May 21, 1945
2nd Lt. Norm Turpin KIA July 14, 1945
Ray Chapman KIA July 14, 1945
James Jackson KIA April 12, 1945

KIA on Corregidor Island 173

My Buddies KIA on Corregidor

1st Lt. William Campbell

2nd Lt. Emery Ball

S/Sgt. Charles (Happy) Hoyt

S/Sgt. Donald White

PFC. Willie Anderson

PFC. Fred Morgan

PFC. Paul Narrow

PFC. Homer Patterson

PFC. Ruggio Pasquale

PFC. James Craig

PFC. George Mikel

PFC. William (Bill) Lee

Many years after the War at a 503 reunion in Sacramento, California a man came to the table where I was sitting with Guy Lary (503) and Lloyd Herrera (462). He had some pictures to show us. He told us his name was Joe Lee and that he was the older brother to Bill Lee. He further stated that Bill Calhoun had sent him over to speak to me because I had known Bill Lee very well. Guy Lary and I told him that we were indeed very close to Bill Lee. He then showed us some photos where we were all together. Joe Lee was in the Air Force during the war and wanted to know if his brother had been a good soldier. We had a nice visit. We met each others families and he continued to give me a call before each 503 reunion so that we could meet there. Joe and his wife attended the next three 503 reunions until Joe died suddenly of a heart attack while mowing his lawn. His wife called to let us know that just two days before the reunion she and Joe were packed and ready for the trip when he decided to mow the lawn.

My contact with Bill Lee didn't end there. Six years ago I got a phone call from Macon, Georgia. A man asked to speak to Anthony Lopez. I answered, "I'm Anthony". The man replied, "This is Bill Lee calling from Georgia". I kind of said, "Whoa, I know that name." He explained that he was the son of Joe Lee and

nephew of Bill Lee. He had cleaned out his grandmother's attic and found a trunk of old letters and photos from his uncle during WWII. He found a picture of me writing my name and address on a Japanese flag. He traced the name until he found me. He told me he was interested in writing a book about his uncle. He wanted to send me a bunch of pictures to see if I could tell him what islands they were taken on and if possible the dates. I believe I identified all but two islands and also gave him some other names he could call. We kept in touch for three years but I haven't heard from him lately.

PFC William (Bill) Lee's remains were shipped home upon his mother's request and he is interred in his home state of Georgia.