

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### WHERE IN HELL ARE THE THIRD MARINES?

The depot was in a frenzy. We were high on the sabotage list. Immediately we teamed up one state trooper to one marine, doubling the patrols. Of the original twenty of us still at Burns City, I think every man went to the office and requested duty with the Fleet Marine Force, the combat arm of the Marines. The major was an old war horse and just laughed. "Don't worry, it'll last long enough for you to get your belly full of it," he said. "Besides, you're needed here." Shortly after that, a policy was invoked whereby a man requesting combat duty was given it. By that time they were bringing in 4-F former veterans and other warm bodies to stand guard. There was an exodus from the marine detachment.

McGary, a mortal enemy of the top sergeant, was at the Great Lakes Naval Training Station, awaiting a general court-martial. He'd been drunk on duty and the top had jumped him. He'd had enough of the top sergeant and told him he was going to kill him. He'd grabbed for his .45, but it had worked its way around to the middle of his

back and he couldn't reach it. He chased the top around the courtyard with the top screaming, "Seize that man! Seize that man!" The rest of the original twenty were rolling on the ground, holding our ribs and howling with glee. Finally, a few boots "seized that man." This became a byword with us. For every situation we would shout, "Seize that man!"

I got orders to Camp New River, North Carolina, later named Camp Lejeune. I was told to report to the Third Marines. Bunky and I left the depot the same day and he was exuberant. He chained Henry to a bush and shouted to the farewell party, "There, you sons of bitches, when you get me back to this place Henry will be fifteen feet in the air!" I don't know who inherited Henry but I wish I had him now. They don't make cars like that anymore. I think they broke the mold when they made Bunky, too.

When I got to Camp New River a regiment of marines were just leaving. As I stood there watching them go by, who should I see but that damned drunken Harker, from the J. Fred. He was happy and navigating okay, with the help of the guy in front and back of him. We recognized each other and I yelled, "Harker, what outfit is that?"



He hollered back, "The Thirsty First!"

That was the last time I saw Harker, marching off to war with the First Marines, as looped as ever.

The First Marines! They were the regulars, the professionals. The First, Fifth and Seventh Regiments were the combat-ready vets.

I immediately headed for the offices. I tried every trick in the book to get in the First Marines. I told them my C.O. at Burns City had told me to report to the First Marines, but his secretary must have typed Third on my orders. No dice. The First Marines were formed and that was it.

Okay, then where are the Third Marines? I hunted that camp over from stern to stern and received the same answer a hundred times, "There ain't no Third Marines."

I began to tire of lugging my sea bag from place to place and it was getting late. I moved into an empty Quonset hut that had bunks, mattresses and bedding piled in it. I found a mess hall and got permission to eat there.

The next morning five or six guys came by with their sea bags.



"Hey, Sarge, where in hell are the Third Marines?" one asked.

"Hell, I guess you're lookin' at 'em," I said.

"No shit?"

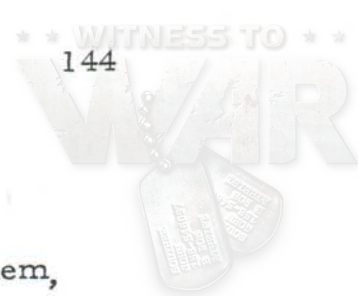
"No shit, I'm the C.O., the property sergeant, the top kick and captain of the head. Come on in and the property sergeant will issue you your bedding."

This kept up until there were forty or fifty men in the huts.

I fell them out every morning for physical drill under arms and policed up the area. This was at regular reveille before dawn. Every time we counted off--so the odd numbers could step forward to avoid beating each other to death with the rifles--those ornery devils would mix up the numbers, and some bastard would fart for his number. Then I would go down the line to locate the culprit. I never did catch that bird. Those guys laughed and kidded me about that for years.

We had weapons school, close order drill and all the normal things except guard duty.

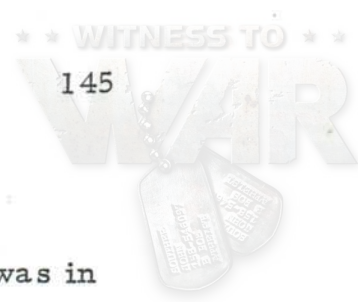




I obtained a bunch of blank liberty cards and signed them, "R. A. Marbaugh, S.I.C.," meaning "Sergeant-in-Charge," which I'd never heard of before. But they were never questioned and we had liberty every night in the neighboring towns.

More and more men arrived and an officer showed up, Sidney McMath. In later years he was a two-term governor of Arkansas. In my mind he looked, acted and was what a marine officer should be. Men and officers came by the truckload after that. The C.O. arrived, Colonel Oscar "Speed" Cauldwell. A veteran of World War I, he was a picture-book full colonel and I'd never be able to say enough about him, so I'll just say now that he was the best I've ever seen, before or since.

The Third Marine Regiment was formed. The honeymoon was over. Speed worked us day and night. Liberty was practically nonexistent. Due to my experience I was assigned to a platoon of 50 caliber water-cooled machine guns, attached in those days to a heavy weapons company. They were heavy, too. Each of the three parts weighed a hundred pounds or more, and they had to be carried and had to keep up with the infantry. My platoon was all big guys. As there was a lack of officers, I was acting platoon leader under Lieutenant



Tony Akstin, who also had other duties in the company. I was in M Company, Third Battalion, Third Marines. Later we joined the Third Division. Three had always been a lucky number for me, and was I glad to see it coming up now.

Major Wade Jackson took over the company after it was well-formed and whipped it into maybe the finest heavy weapons company I've ever seen. Jackson was a square-cut, heavysset Georgian, a professional who had graduated from Basic School, a sort of Marine Corps Annapolis in the old days. He had inexhaustible patience. He was slow to anger but when he did, woe be unto the victim, and we all learned quickly to avoid this. He always seemed to move so slow and deliberate that he even appeared to run slow, but to your amazement he would always be ahead of everyone. He was one of the finest military men I ever met.

During these weeks of intensive training I was kept busy teaching the 50 caliber. I spent a lot of time teaching Captain McMath the 50 caliber and anything else he thought I knew that he didn't. His thirst was knowledge and he was never satisfied until he had milked everyone dry.



After two hot months of drills, marches, weapons practice and physical training, it was time for the Third Marines to leave New River and join the war. As usual, we were rehearsed in every detail to get aboard the train, including how to mount the steps.

The night before we left we were turned loose in camp and had one big party. The camp was all sand, crisscrossed by boardwalks. We all sat out on the boardwalks and got drunker than skunks, officers and men alike. We were still singing merrily when dawn broke.

We were ordered to fall out in winter wool green uniforms. This was in August. Man, it was hot in North Carolina. We were all hung over and sick. We hooked our pack straps together to stay upright, while the officers slowly questioned and inspected to see that all was in readiness.

A captain in charge of our train, Bert Simpson, came along and asked me, "Sergeant, what's your car number?"

I thought he was asking for my serial number and slurred, "21-042-941-620," or something like that.





"For christ's sake, sergeant," he said, "how many cars do you think we have on this train?"

"Oh, I'm shorry, shir, our car number is three."

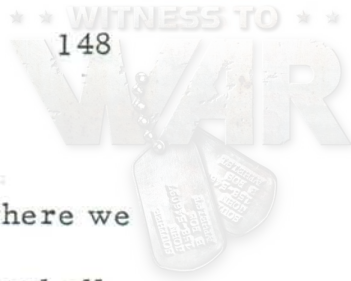
We embarked and immediately shed the hot wool greens and stripped to our skivvies. We stayed that way until we were allowed to break out our khakis. I went to sleep as soon as we boarded.

When I woke up, those Arabs of mine had continued drinking and, lo and behold, we had five new passengers aboard--women, three black and two white. I yelled, "You dirty sons of bitches, if I get caught with them on this car, I'll never get out of the brig!"

We switched around at a little crossroads town, and I booted the women off without being discovered. I don't know how they did it but I heard some cars had women aboard all the way.

No one knew where we were going except west and we didn't always go west. We were continually shuttled from railroad to railroad. Rumor had it that this was to fool any saboteurs, as were the wool uniforms when we left New River. Of course, there was

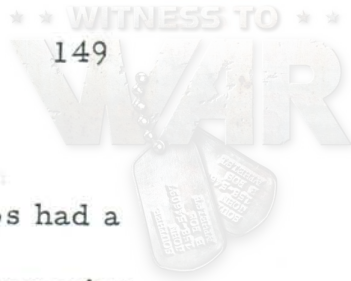




always someone, claiming to have the inside dope, who knew where we were headed. This ranged from Siberia, Alaska, Australia and all points between. You couldn't tell by our gear loaded in New River, because I saw heating stoves, jungle hammocks, mosquito nets and snowshoes. We surely could have frustrated the most artful spy.

We arrived in San Diego and went aboard one of the most beautiful ships I've ever seen, the Matsonia. She was a luxury liner, but not for the enlisted men. We were crammed into every hole big enough to hold a body. Chow was an endless wait and an all day job almost. Water hours were in effect. Fresh water was available only at certain times for drinking. There was none for showers, only salt water. I had some salt water soap but it always left you a little sticky.

We had liberty in San Diego. I really liked the town but then a uniform rated, even in a service town, those days. We all started stocking up on booze. Then on our last day there, some little pipsqueak ensign mustered a gang of M. P.'s at the gangway and took everyone's booze he could find. We were all pretty well stocked by this time, anyway. He would throw the bottles over the side, hitting the steel bulkhead to break them. Many of them didn't break and the

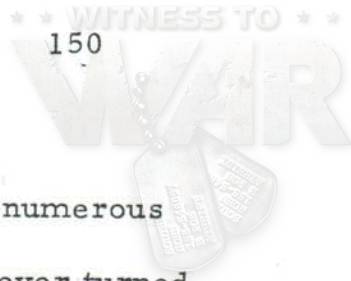


harbor had a hundred floating bottles. I'll bet the beach winos had a field day. Speed Cauldwell came aboard and saw what was happening and chewed that ensign to a nub. That ended the big search.

The Matsonia got underway for parts unknown to anyone at the time. I had a Burns City buddy aboard, Martin, who was rather a refined type. He liked opera and the finer things of life. Particularly irritating to him were the juke boxes that were always blaring, "You Are My Sunshine," "Walking The Floor Over You" and "San Antonio Rose." He and I were at the rail when we pulled out of the harbor. Martin mused, "Well, at least we won't have to listen to that damn 'You Are My Sunshine' anymore."

On the second day out Speed Cauldwell came on the intercom and told us we were going to Tutuila, American Samoa. We settled down to as routine a crossing as is possible in war time. I had "rescued" a little white mouse from a drunken sailor. We named him Oscar. Oscar had his tail stepped on and crushed and a corpsman amputated it and dressed the wound. He became M Company's mascot and could get away with murder.

We had an Army general aboard as a passenger. He had case after case of booze stored in the hold, marked "dental equipment."



Before we got to Samoa the crates were empty. There were numerous investigations and interrogations about this, but nothing was ever turned up. There is no way to hide booze from a sailor or marine.