



CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

AMERICA

I was put in charge of some marines going stateside. The first name on the roster was that crazy Captain Dyer, the air patrol pilot. Even the roster indicated he was a psycho. We were in the same cabin and he was there when I arrived. We shook hands and I said, "What went wrong, partner?"

"Oh, I got so I didn't bounce so well," he said. The first thing that had happened was he had crash-landed on a makeshift strip. Some soldiers had run some telephone wire across the runway, and he went hurtling down the strip with no wings. Next he was shot down on a sand spit in the middle of a river. He was caught in a crossfire between friendly and enemy troops. He was there sixteen hours before rescue. It had been one thing after another but he seemed okay, except for a little preoccupation at times.

The ship was a honey but overcrowded. Aboard were hundreds of Japanese war brides, American service wives and children.



Some of the children were regular little beasties, but all in all it was a smooth crossing. The ship's captain read me off almost every day, because someone was always catching women in the marine compartment, and vice versa. I did everything I could to stop it but I might as well have tried to keep a squirrel on the ground.

One woman aboard had eyes for my roommate. He couldn't stand her and anyway seemed to be very loyal to his wife in Kansas City. He had told me that upon reaching San Francisco he was reserving a compartment on a train. He said if he flew, it would be just his luck for the pilot to run into a mountain.

One day the lady approached him about reserving a train compartment in cahoots, as she was also from K. C. When I came down to the cabin, he was sitting on his bunk, tapping a big knife on his fingertips. He said, "You son of a bitch, you told her I was reserving a compartment, didn't you?"

I said, "Captain, I've never spoken to that woman in my life, and if you're thinking of using that knife, I'll take it away from you and with the thumb and forefinger gently insert it up your rectum."

He studied me awhile and said, "I'll bet you could do it, too," and he put the knife away.

We had one little mishap on the way. Somewhere in the great circle off Alaska, a freak ground swell hit the ship. It was a big one and came right at breakfast time. People, glass, knives, forks, eggs, milk and all were piled at one end of the dining room. There were some minor injuries but nothing serious.

We docked at San Francisco and Dyer and I were picked up by a jeep. We were billeted in a nice hotel instead of a hospital. The hotel was full of marines. The first thing I did was go to a drugstore and buy a corset belt. I was still in pain and walked like an old cow who had spent the winter in a cement stable.

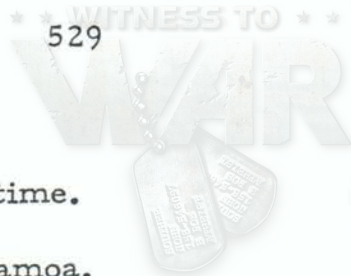
I went back to my room, put the corset on and had Dyer pull it as tight as he could. It felt good. A jeep called for us to take us to the hospital. He parked across the street from the hotel. I stepped off the curb and something snapped in my hip. It was loud enough for Dyer to hear it. I stepped up on the opposite curb and it happened in my other hip. When we reached the hospital, I couldn't believe how much better I could walk. I still was sore but the belt was helping, and the bumpy jeep ride

hadn't caused any pain, the first such ride since Hagaru.

In the hospital I was poked, jabbed, pulled, pushed and given an enema, besides X-rays from stem to stern. This was the first thorough exam I had since getting hit. We went back to the hotel and returned the next morning. The doctor came in and read my report to me. He said he thought my hips had been out of place. He was a joking type and said he couldn't find much wrong with me except six things--heat, mud, and Japanese, snow, cold, and Chinese.

We lived in the hotel better than a week awaiting orders. While there I ran into several of my old buddies. One was Wee Willie. He had reverted to gunnery sergeant. He was there awaiting his third general court martial. He had beaten two. This time he had been assigned to pick up a general's daughter, who was returning on a ship from abroad. Neither showed up and they were found three weeks later in a hotel. Same old Willie, except now he had a wife and three kids at home.

One of my other buddies had an interesting story. He was the one on Samoa who had married the beautiful Samoan girl under Samoan law and had gotten her pregnant before we left. She had called him a liar when he had told her he would be back. I think



he'd fully intended to do so, judging from his attitude at the time. However, the fortunes of the times never took him back to Samoa. This always bothered him.

As time went by, he married in the States. He told his wife the whole story before they were married. He always sent money to the Samoan woman. But his conscience nagged him until he decided to book passage to Samoa and make amends. He sailed to Samoa and found the girl washing clothes in a stream.

"Did she know you?" I asked.

"Hell no, she didn't know me and I didn't know her," he replied. "She was fat as a pig and happy as a jackass in a goober patch. When she smiled her four front teeth were missing. I tell you, she could throw her left tit over her right shoulder and vice versa. She was married and had three other kids besides mine and a real nice fale. I decided to let sleeping dogs lie."

"What about your kid?"

"She was just beautiful, like her mother was, and just as happy."

"Are you still sending money?"



"Oh, yeah, I'll do that for a few years yet."

We sat in silence for a few moments and then he said, "I'll tell you one thing, mate. If you want to remember the old Samoa, don't go back."

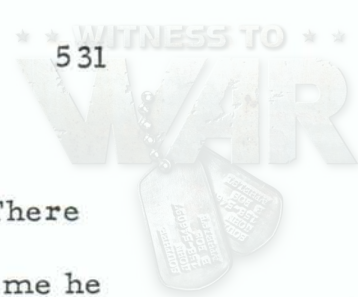
My orders came through for the Second Combat Service Group in Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, the old New River base. I received thirty days delay en route and boarded a train for Iowa.

I had a joyous reunion with my family at the train depot in Boone.

Carm looked like the Queen of Egypt to me. Wade hadn't forgotten me. Lyn had acquired the maturity of a schoolgirl. Out on the farm I passed out the gifts from Japan and everybody exchanged stories of the past few months. I found out Carm had been driving all over the country, without a license.

Then my father-in-law, Carm, the kids and I headed for Minnesota to visit the Bristows.

While we were there, Ralph, Don and I wanted to go ice fishing. Only residents could do this. The game warden was a service buddy of both Bristow and me. Bristow called him to

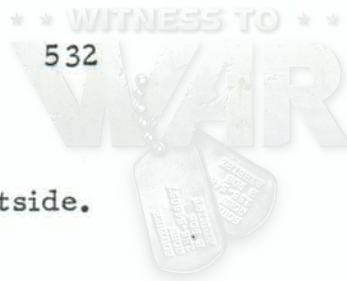


see if there were any special provisions for servicemen. There weren't. I also talked to the warden and he managed to tell me he was going to Minneapolis for three days to a seminar. That was enough for us. We went fishing.

We went to Lizzie Lake, near Pine River. A friend of Bristow's had said we could use his ice fishing shack. It was cold, forty degrees below. The hole in the shack was frozen three feet thick. While we were discussing this, an old bewhiskered character came out of a shack and said, "Use my son's shack, there. He was in it last night and it won't be froze so bad." We easily cleared the hole in that shack.

I had never ice fished before and I was given thorough instructions by Bristow. You drop an artificial lure down the hole and when a fish slides up to inspect it, you gig him with a spear. Ralph and Don went for wood for the five-gallon stove while I took the first turn.

The shack was dark, and with the outside light shining through the ice, it was like being perched over a fish bowl. I could read beer bottle caps in the twenty feet of water. I dropped the bait and a huge pike slid up and I giggered him. I had to tip him this way



and that to get him out of the hole. I threw him on the ice outside. I thought I could like this sport.

When my companions came back with wood, Bristow shouted, "Great balls of fire! What in hell did you catch, a flatboat?"

The old duck in the next shack came boiling out, took one look and said, "I'll be dadburned! I've fished here for twenty years and never saw a fish like that. You're here for five minutes and you get one. The next time that shack is opened, it's gonna cost someone five bucks!"

We caught two more medium-sized pike and then went to the car. There was a house and barn nearby and Bristow knew the owner. We used his scales to weigh my fish. He had been shedding his teeth and only weighed twenty-four pounds. The old character said, "That fish should weigh thirty-five pounds. Say, would you let me take that fish in to the pool room uptown?"

"Sure," I said. That old buzzard shoved two small pike, nuts, bolts, washers and his pocketknife down that fish's throat.

We walked into the pool room after him and the boys were really on him.



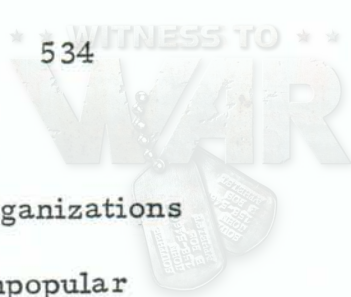
"Some tourist caught it for you. You never caught a fish like that," etc.

The record pike for Lizzie Lake hung above the bar. Mine was five inches longer. I asked the bartender what the record pike weighed. He said, "We don't know. It gains a pound a year and we haven't figured it lately."

The night before we left Minnesota it was nearly fifty below zero. The next morning Bristow said it was no use to try to start my car, as it had set out in the barnyard all night. He said he would get something running and jump it. He was a Plymouth man and always was on me for driving a Ford. He tried his Plymouth, his truck and his tractor and had no luck with them. I decided to give my car a try. It gave one little groan, a spark caught and I kept it going. That stopped all future arguments on the car subject.

Not long after we left, Bristow sold the farm, returned to active duty and went to Japan. Wade Jackson was his C.O. there.

We finally finished our visit in Iowa and stopped at our home in Ohio. The difference in World War II and the Korean War became more evident to me. In World War II you were welcomed home as a hero. People invited you to dinner and bought the drinks. This time I was asked if I had been gone some place. "Haven't seen

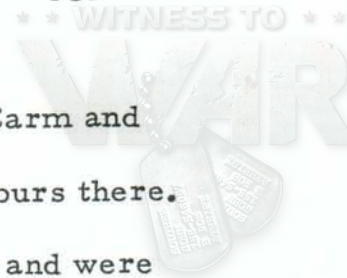


you around, lately," and that sort of thing. A couple of organizations did ask me to give a talk on Korea, but all in all it was an unpopular war and there was little evidence at home that we were even in a war. It wasn't a good feeling to be ignored after an experience like Yudam-ni.

I later ran into Gale Buuck, one of my outspoken lieutenants from the old Fort Wayne reserves. While in Korea he took a hill, lost half his men, was ordered off the hill, and then was ordered to take it again. He wrote an open letter to President Truman. Somehow the Soviet Pravda press got ahold of it, and Buuck was in the soup. He stuck to his guns and, I guess, came out on top. I certainly agreed with his letter.

On to Camp Lejeune. We decided to go as a family. Housing was very critical, but we found a livable apartment in Wrightsville Beach, seventy miles from camp. It was a long drive to and from work, but that was alleviated somewhat by a six-man car pool.

The Second Combat Service Group was a huge outfit in Lejeune. They also had attached units all over the globe. My job was plans and training officer. I was supposed to make riflemen out of all those service troops. In the Corps you are supposed to be a rifleman first and all else is secondary. That had paid off for the engineers at the head of the column on the road from Yudam-ni.



The job was tough but life was bearable, because Carm and the kids really took to the beach. We spent many off-duty hours there. The kids learned to swim like fish, Wade with a life jacket, and were brown as nuts. We had lots of fun. And we had some wacky friends.

One of these was Art, a happy-go-lucky sort who was prone to get into more "Dagwood" situations than you can imagine. One night he and his wife and another couple went to the movies. They bought their tickets, made a dash into the rest rooms, and then went into the movie, already in progress. As they were sidling through a row to get to their seats, Art's wife said, "Your fly is open and your shirttail is sticking out!" Art stuffed in the tail and yanked the zipper up. He also zipped up the lady's hair in the seat ahead. Everything jammed and they had to turn on the lights and get an usher with scissors.

Art brought a friend home for dinner. They came directly from work. The friend was staying only for dinner, as he had a date in Wilmington. They decided the guest would take a shower first. Art's wife went to prepare dinner. Then the plans changed and Art showered first. His wife got dinner on the table and, thinking the second man in the shower was Art, entered the bathroom. The guest was standing in the tub, his back to the door, drying his toes. She reached, grabbed a dangling object, jerked it twice and said, "Ding, ding, dinner's ready." The poor guy slipped and broke two ribs. He later told me it hurt



to laugh, and he really suffered a day or so because he couldn't quit laughing.

I had the '49 Ford, which I used in the car pool. One day Art was on duty at the quartermaster shack where he worked. He saw a car identical to mine parked in his unloading drive. He put a sign on the windshield--"Get this pile of junk out of my driveway." Shortly, a two-star general barged in, waving the note and demanding an explanation. Art had failed to see the two stars on the license plate.

A similar thing happened to another guy. I'm not much of a comic book reader, but I did know the names of the heroes of the era. One morning I needed some trucks to transport troops to the rifle range. I got on the phone and called the camp dispatcher. I said, "Good morning, this is Captain Marbaugh and I need--"

I got that far and the voice on the other end said, "Why, good morning, this is the Green Hornet. What can I do for you?"

I said, "I don't know what's going on down there, but this is Captain R. A. Marbaugh, S-3, Second Combat Service Group, and I want six trucks up here, pronto."



"My god, Captain, I'm sorry," the dispatcher said. "I thought you were that damn Sergeant Schwartz. He's always calling up and claiming to be Superman or someone. I thought it was him and he was Captain Marvel this morning. I'll have your trucks there immediately if not sooner, sir."

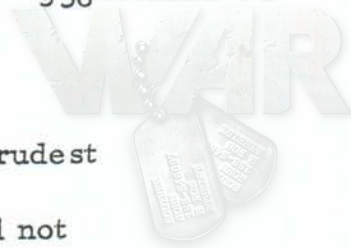
Of course the men in my car pool learned more about each other as we told our stories from past billets. I was glad I didn't think of one story about Bristow and me. One officer in the car told us he had been a game warden at Pendleton during World War II. I asked him how he liked the duty. "Fine," he said.

"Did you ever have any trouble?"

"Not really," he replied, "except there were two bastards I tried to catch for six months or more. We found where they cleaned their deer but they were always gone when we got there. One day the sons of bitches fired a couple of rounds of tracers at me in my Piper Cub. I should've gotten combat pay."

"The dirty bastards," I said and dropped the subject.

I've seen some improbable friendships, but one of the strangest was between two lieutenants at Lejeune, both with the last name Howard. These guys evidently came from extremely



different backgrounds. One was a big man and the crudest, rudest officer I've ever met. At times he was disgusting. He could not be insulted, either. The other was a small, mild, well-mannered gentleman, almost to the point of being effeminate. They purported to hate each other and slurred and insulted each other constantly. Let anyone else say a derogatory word about either, and the other would bristle up and come to his defense aggressively. They went on liberty together and would come back with nothing but criticism for the other's conduct.

One morning, the well-mannered Howard and the rest of us were seated at the breakfast table. The crude Howard entered the room, belched loudly, coughed, sneezed and topped it off with a rasping fart.

The well-mannered Howard broke us all up with, "Gee whiz, can you do anything with your navel?"

What bugged us most at Lejeune was the continual round of officer parties and the protocol. When you reported to the base, you were expected to leave a certain number of calling cards and visit the C. O. at a certain time, and your wife had similar obligations. This stuff had been toned down somewhat before we arrived. The

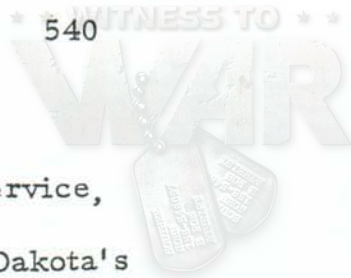


parties were another matter. They were held often and you were expected to attend, regardless of how inconvenient. We had rented a nice duplex house in Topsail Beach, about thirty miles closer to work than Wrightsville. But after work I had to go thirty miles home, get spruced up for the party, go thirty miles to Wilmington for a baby sitter, go thirty miles to the base, attend the party, go home, and by then it was almost time to go back to work and repeat the process. I was promoted to major and that didn't help matters.

Carm didn't drink, so she stood around at the parties holding a drink, occasionally dumping it into a flower pot and saying politely, "Yes, I will have another, thank you."

I approached the Colonel about the long trip to the parties. He said, "Major, on party days I'll let you go home at noon. But you be at the party."

My Chinese gardner friend in Balboa, Panama, had told me once, "He who gets ten men to work is ten times better than he who does the work of ten men." It stuck with me and I always strove to surround myself with good men. A good example at Lejeune was Lieutenant Lloyd Taplett, who ran my office in the S-3 section. He made my job real easy and much of my success there was due to him. I could turn the office over to him and spend



all my time in the field with the troops. After leaving the service, he became a successful business consultant and later South Dakota's Manager of Job Services, and got listed in the Midwest Who's Who, Seventeenth Edition. With help like that any gravel cruncher can look pretty good in the office.

One day I was at my desk and who showed up to report for duty other than my old sergeant who had first welcomed me aboard ship when I was a boot, Smiley Burnett. On his shoulders were the bars of a Marine warrant officer, his life ambition. He was a little stand-offish when he first saw my major's leaves, but I sat him down with a drink and before long had him convinced I hadn't turned into a prick. We reminisced about the old days aboard the J. Fred, exchanged news about the old guys and shed a tear for the J. Fred, which we'd heard had been sunk off Talagi.

Shortly after that we were slated for an A and I inspection. This is when all the Washington brass give you a going over. I was put in charge. I had no experience with parade ground soldiering and knew nothing of an inspection of this size. I dreaded going through all the manuals and all that B.S. Then I happened to think of Burnett. If ever there were a walking manual, he was it.

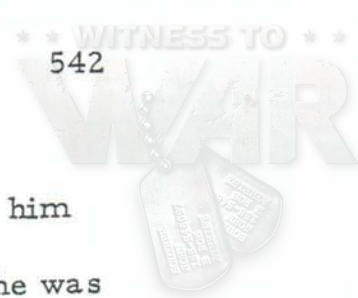


I asked for his help and, after a few derogatory remarks about the dumb Marine Corps brass, he agreed. I started rehearsing the troops under the step-by-step guidance of Burnett. The big day came, we broke out the band and everything went like clockwork. The inspecting officer told me it was the best inspection he had ever held, and the group received a letter of commendation. Burnett found a bottle of the finest whiskey on his desk the next morning.

Once we had the troops on an overnight bivouac. The top sergeant was a guy who was always up thirty minutes ahead of everyone else with his whistle poised, ready to roust everyone out at the proper second. He had spread his pancho on soft dirt beside an uprooted tree. I was always a pre-reveille riser, along with a couple of others. When the top's whistle didn't blow, one of the guys went to where he was bedded down.

He had a tangle of roots on one side of his bunk and a huge mud rattler coiled up asleep on the other. He would move nothing but his eyes. A guy aimed his rifle over the roots and blew the snake's head off. The top broke down in tears. He said he had lain there over an hour afraid to move a muscle.

Another time a kid was in a foxhole in an old fence row. When he was ordered forward from the hole, he went to grasp



a stick to pull himself out. It was a pygmy rattler and it bit him on the hand. We took him and the snake to the hospital and he was back to duty in three days.

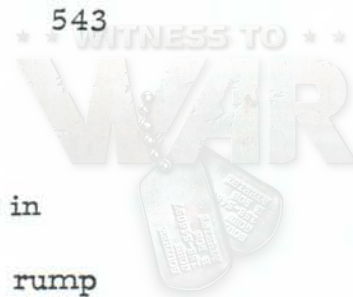
While at Lejeune I got a case of dogworms in my feet and legs. I didn't know what they were and neither did the Navy doctor. They made red tracks under the skin and itched like fury. You can almost see them move. The doctor treated them with a spray that froze them. It even caused frostbite if not used carefully. We would always miss one or two and they would propogate again. This went on for weeks.

An elderly black man always loafed at the filling station where I bought my gasoline. We would talk some and we became quite friendly. One day I had my pant leg up, scratching, and he said, "I see you got dogworms."

"Is that what they are?" I said. "What do you do for them?"

"Use clear fingernail polish on them," he answered.

I did and it killed them. I went to the hospital and the doctor had gotten out his spray can before I told him I was cured. He got out a manual and there it was, a section on dogworms. As we sat



talking, a shapely woman walked past. She was a dependent in for treatment. The doctor gave her a squirt of spray on the rump and she turned around and took a swipe at me, to the great amusement of the doctor. Like I say, wisdom is where you find it.

Once again the Corps was seductive. The work was going well at camp. I used all the teaching principles I had learned in Brigade School and insisted other instructors do the same. The time off was like a seaside vacation for my family. I began considering staying in the Marines long enough to finish out my twenty years. We made plans to enroll Lyn in the first grade at Wilmington.

Suddenly, we were all ordered to participate in a big landing exercise on Vieques, an island near Puerto Rico. It was a three month deal. Where we lived at Topsail Beach was actually an island and was rather isolated. Carm could drive but didn't have a license. I couldn't leave them there, so we loaded up, seashells and all, and headed for Ohio.

When we stopped at a motel late at night in Kentucky, we got a taste of what some Americans still had to put up with in the land of the free. The man behind the counter nodded at Lyn and whispered



to me, "I'm sorry but she can't stay here."

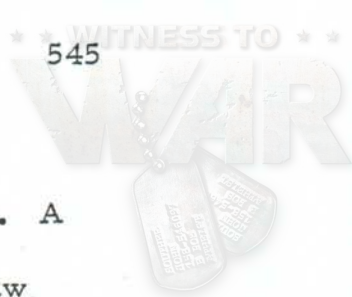
"Why the hell not?" I asked.

"Is she a negro?" he asked.

We laughed and explained that her skin was that brown from the beach. He profusely apologized, "You can understand our position." Go to hell with that "position." If a people can't find lodging, they're not free to travel. I didn't fight two wars as a marine ("first to fight for freedom--") so that kind of horseshit could go on in my country.

We unloaded in Ohio and I returned to Lejeune, once again without my family. I was getting tired of that.

I had the job of loading ships for assaulting a hostile beach. Everything we were not taking for real had to be simulated exactly. If the book said a jeep was to be loaded and it weighed so much, you constructed an object to fit the requirements. We were not taking the full load of ammo and I was brought truckloads of cardboard boxes of the same size and weight as ammo boxes. It was lemon pie meringue powder. There must have been enough to cover the Carribean if dropped in the water and beaten frothy. We never reloaded it at Vieques. This bugged a friend of mine, and he started his own private investigation to find out why the

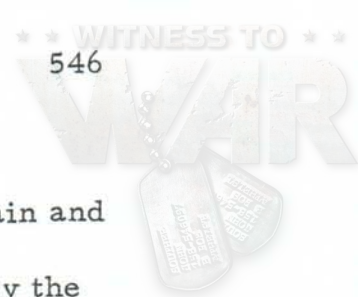


Corps would have and waste so much meringue. Guess why. A procurement officer had purchased it from his brother-in-law, the manufacturer.

Vieques was a pleasant little island. The habitations were on the opposite side of the landing zone. We had a little free time and went over there to a cock fight once. I'll never go to another. Why anyone would want to watch two beautiful birds stab each other to death with the steel gaffs on their spurs is beyond me.

Some of the guys were swimming along a sheer rock cliff one day and bringing up beautiful snail shells the size of your double fist. Also something that looked like a huge crawfish with no claws, which they said was delicious. I borrowed a pair of rubber ear plugs and dove in to get some shells for Carm and maybe a crawfish for supper.

I was stuffing the seashells into my shorts and trying to hold a crawfish under my arm, when I looked up and there was a real brute of a barracuda right in my face. He was eyeing my flashing dogtags. I ceased all motion and slowly began to rise to the surface. The fish rose with me. About three feet from the surface he drifted away. I splashed a lot of water out of the Caribbean getting out of there. Carm got her shells and the crawfish really was delicious.



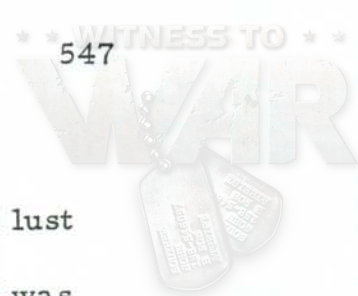
I became acquainted with two men at Vieques, a captain and a staff sergeant, who had been captured in the Phillipines by the Japanese in World War II. They had been captives over four years. Despite their poor physical condition, they had remained in the Corps to finish their retirement. Some of the stories they told me make you wonder how much the human body and mind can take and still survive.

I got a grin out of one story the captain told me. The Japanese had an interpreter who was a pompous little beast and who had memorized all his English from a book. Every morning he would start his speech with, "Ladies or gentlemen (as the case may be)." Then, noting the grins on the prisoners' faces, he would smile a pleased smile and say, "Good, be happy in your work."

The three months went fast on Vieques, and we returned to the States and pulled another landing there.

My time was coming up for release from active duty. I had a big decision to make--stay in or go home.

If any man alive has given more time to thinking of war than I have, he surely hasn't thought of much else. I was eighteen when



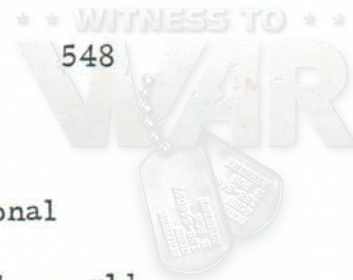
I joined the Marines and I was boiling over with energy and lust for violent adventure. By the time the war came around, I was already considered a professional and had the same ideas as most professionals. War meant honor, glory, medals and promotions. What bloody fools we were!

There were times when I said to myself, "Marbaugh, you son of a bitch, how can you enjoy this shit?" But one of my shortcomings is to get all prickly and fall in when a drum and bugle corps comes by.

I remember looking at a dead Japanese soldier and thinking, "Buddy, I never knew you and you never knew me. Who sent you to kill me and me to kill you and what the hell for?" We might have been bosom buddies if someone hadn't told us not to be.

There were times in the Pacific when I thought if I saw one more dead man or one more man all buggered up, I'd go crazy. Yet, after all this, I heard a U.S. politician in Camp Pendleton refer to the post-war days as "the dark, dreary days of peace."

By the time Korea came along, I had fallen for the drum and bugle corps again and was in the active reserves. I thought I had something to offer the trainees in the reserves and, if I read



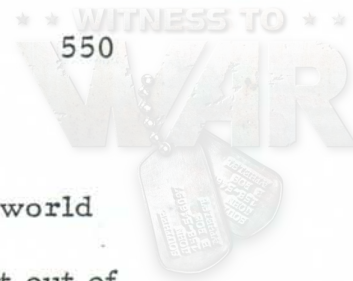
my contract right, I would be activated only in case of national emergency. Suddenly, I found myself on the other side of the world, again killing people I'd never met before. This time it was different. Instead of soldier against soldier, as on Bougainville, innocent civilians were involved. I saw firsthand what had happened at London, Dresden, and Tokyo. The thousands of homeless children wandering about and their bloody, mutilated little bodies, turned my soul inside out. I returned from Korea a bitter man.

There are many hog-stupid things committed by the human race, but first and foremost is war. It's a shame we don't learn from history and do away with it. I've seen much of the world, and people everywhere want the same things--they want some land and protection from robber barons who try to take it--they want to raise their families--they want to live a peaceful, decent life.

Dwight Eisenhower told America, "Beware the military-industrial complex." There's the problem, the bastards who reap super profits from war and the resources seized by war, the triple-cost overruns, the lousy pentagon officials who pour tax dollars into the pockets of the rich for useless equipment in return for consultant positions with the manufacturers after retirement. It's the wasted meringue scam. Bank robbers take guns and steal thousands. These crooks take pens and steal billions.

My generation has begun to die out. But our fools still control Capitol Hill and the Kremlin. And they have groomed a set of shysters in the next generation to fill their shoes. They have deprived masses of their citizens of the comforts and necessities of life, in order to keep the arms race going and make the world's richest tycoons richer. They have built enough nuclear bombs to destroy the earth a thousand times over. America, I'm tired of fattening the coffers of the arms makers and other corporate conglomerates at the expense of human misery all over the globe.

America, I'd like to get down to the business of eliminating poverty, hunger, injustice, and the really important things that plague the world. Take the energy monopoly away from the conglomerates and return energy to the community, using the amazing developments in energy science--solar, wind, water, geothermal, corn alcohol, and fusion power. Spend our taxes and private investments on getting our workers back on the job, instead of pouring aid and military assistance into the foreign dictatorships where peasants mine our ore, stitch our clothes, make our shoes, and make our richest tycoons richer. Make allies by using the greatest weapon, a fair and honest deal.

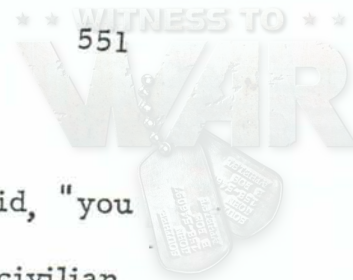


Eisenhower also told America, "The people of the world want peace and one of these days governments had better get out of the way and let them have it." I suppose this will never happen until the common man refuses to be the goat for the military-industrial complexes and their political stooges.

America, you have a decision to make. Be just another greedy, dirty, ugly empire, or be the empire that pounded the sword into a plowshare.

The recruiting officer at Camp Lejeune was a warrant officer whom I had known on Bougainville. I called him and asked him to come to my office. I laid all my cards on the table, my benefits, family situation, and all. I asked him for advice. He said he would give no advice but outlined his own situation. He said, "I retire this coming July with thirty years service. My wife and I have a nice home, paid for, in Puerto Rico and have no financial worries. We have one daughter and she starts college this fall. But I have to be introduced to her when I go home."

It seemed to me I had a choice of being a father and family man or a marine. I applied for my release.



My C. O. called me in for a talk. "Major," he said, "you can't possibly make the money and have all the benefits in civilian life that you do here. You have a high rank, a good record, and will be a colonel before long."

All this I already knew. "Colonel," I said, "I may not be the best ditch digger in the world, but I'm among the top four."

I took my release and later resigned my reserve commission. I don't know whether I made a mistake or not, for I've never looked back.

But I've always swelled up a little when one of my kids would announce, "My dad was a marine."

THE END