

Ernie Pyle in the Pacific:

U. S. Builds Up Strength For Knockout in Pacific

Okinawa Landing Like Putting Foot in Enemy's Kitchen Door

By Ernie Pyle

(EDITOR'S NOTE:—Ernie Pyle's columns will continue to appear in this newspaper for a few weeks. Dispatches for these releases have been cleared by the censors and some may be en route from the island where the famous war correspondent met his death.)

OKINAWA.—Our war with Japan has gone well in the last few weeks.

We are firmly on Okinawa, which is like having your foot in the kitchen door.

Our wonderful carrier pilots have whittled down the Jap air force daily. Our anti-aircraft from ships and from shore batteries has plugged Jap fliers for the highest ratio I've ever known from attack.

Our task forces have absolutely butchered the only Jap task force to put to sea in many months. B-29s are hitting Japan with fighter escort from Iwo Jima. Airfields are springing up on Okinawa. We all say we sure are glad we are not in the Japs' shoes.

One main question asked over here now is, "How long will the Japs hold out?" There are all kinds of opinions, but actually nobody knows.

We don't know, because no one in his right mind can pretend to understand the Oriental manner of thinking. They are unpredictable. They are inconsistent. As one officer said, "They are uncannily smart one day, and dumb as hell the next."

Their values are so different from ours. The news broadcasts from Tokyo and Shanghai are an example. These broadcasts are utterly ridiculous.

During our first week on Okinawa they constantly told of savage counterattacks when there weren't any. They told of driving a large part of our landing forces back to the boats and far out to sea, when actually they fired only a few shots onto the beaches.

On D-Day plus four, they broadcast that despite their counterattacks we finally succeeded in landing 6,000 troops. The truth is that by sunset of the first evening we had an incredible number of scores of thousands of Americans on Okinawa!

The crippled Jap air force cannot do us anything but spasmodic harm from now on. And their navy couldn't ever be considered. If you could see the colossal naval power we have here you could hardly believe your eyes. It's one of the most impressive things I've seen in this war.

We have plenty of troops in reserve, and new convoys of supplies have already begun to arrive just as we finished unloading the original massive supply fleet.

Converting Island Into Big Base

On Okinawa the majority of the Japs are on the southern tip, and in considerable strength. The northern area is being combed and a few scattered ones mopped up.

There is tough fighting in the south and it will remain tough to the end. I've heard some officers say the south end of Okinawa may turn into another Iwo Jima. That will mean heavy casualties on our side, but the end of Okinawa is inevitable.

And while the army's 24th corps of infantry is doing that job, the rest of the island apparently is wide open for us to develop and we are doing it with our usual speed.

This island has everything we could want in such an island. There is plenty of room for more airfields, room for roads and vast supply dumps and anchorages for ships. And the civilians from whom we had expected trouble are docile and harmless.

Of course, Japan's vast land armies are still almost intact. But if it does come to the great mass land warfare of continental Europe, we now are able to build up strength for that warfare right on the scene.

There is a fighting spirit among us. People are conjecturing about the possibility of the Pacific war ending sooner than we had ever allowed ourselves to think.

For years it looked endless, but now you hear people talk about being home by Christmas. Some really believe they will. Others have their fingers crossed, but they are more hopeful than ever before.

Instead of a war weariness, there seems to be a new eagerness among

our forces to sweep on and on, and wind the thing up in a hurry.

The bulk of the battle of Okinawa is being fought by the army—my old friends, the doughfoots. This time the marines had it easy, and by the turn of circumstance the army is the one that has the job to do.

But my self-assignment on the Okinawa blitz was to write about the marines and that's what I continue to do. I landed with the marines, crossed the island with them, and have been living with them amidst fleas, mosquitoes, goats and a few Japs, hiding under bushes. So naturally I want to tell you about them.

Marine corps blitzes out here have all been so bitter and the marines have performed so magnificently that I had conjured up a mental picture of a marine that bore a close resemblance to a man from Mars. I was almost afraid of them myself.

Finds Marines Human, After All

I did find the marines confident, but neither cocky nor smart-alecky. I found they have fears, and qualms, and hatred for war the same as anybody else. They want to go home just as badly as any soldiers I've ever met. I found them good, human Americans.

They are proud to be marines. They wouldn't be in any other branch of the service. Yet they are not arrogant about it. And I found they have a healthy respect for the infantry.

One day we were sitting on a hillside talking about the infantry. One marine spoke of a certain army division—a division they had fought beside—and was singing its praises.

"It's as good as any marine division," he said.

"What was that you said?" a listener cut in.

The marine repeated it and emphasized it a little. Another marine stood up and called out, loudly:

"Did you hear what he said? This guy says there's an army division as good as any marine division. He must be crazy. Haw, haw, haw!"

And yet other boys chimed in, arguing very soberly, and sided with the one who had praised the army division.

Before I came into the field, several marine officers asked me to try to sense just what the marine spirit is, just what causes it, and keeps it alive.

In peacetime when the marine corps was a small outfit, with its campaigns highlighted, and everybody was a volunteer, you could understand why marines felt so superior.

But since the war the marine corps has grown into hundreds of thousands of men. It has been diluted, so to speak. Today it is an outfit of ordinary people—some big, some little, some even draftees. It has changed, in fact, until marines look exactly like a company of soldiers in Europe.

Yet that marine corps spirit still remains. I never did find out what perpetuates it. They're not necessarily better trained. They're no better equipped and often not as well supplied as other troops. But a marine still considers himself a better soldier than anybody else, even though nine-tenths of them don't want to be soldiers at all.

The marines are very cognizant of the terrible casualties they've taken in this Pacific war. They're even proud of that too, in a way. Any argument among marine units is settled by which has had the greatest casualties.

Many of them even envisioned the end of the marine corps at Okinawa. If the marine divisions had been beaten up here as they were on Iwo Jima, the boys felt it would have been difficult to find enough men of marine corps caliber to reconstitute all the divisions.

They even had a sadly sardonic song about their approach to Okinawa, the theme of which was, "Good-by, Marines!"

Look Hard for Snakes on Okinawa

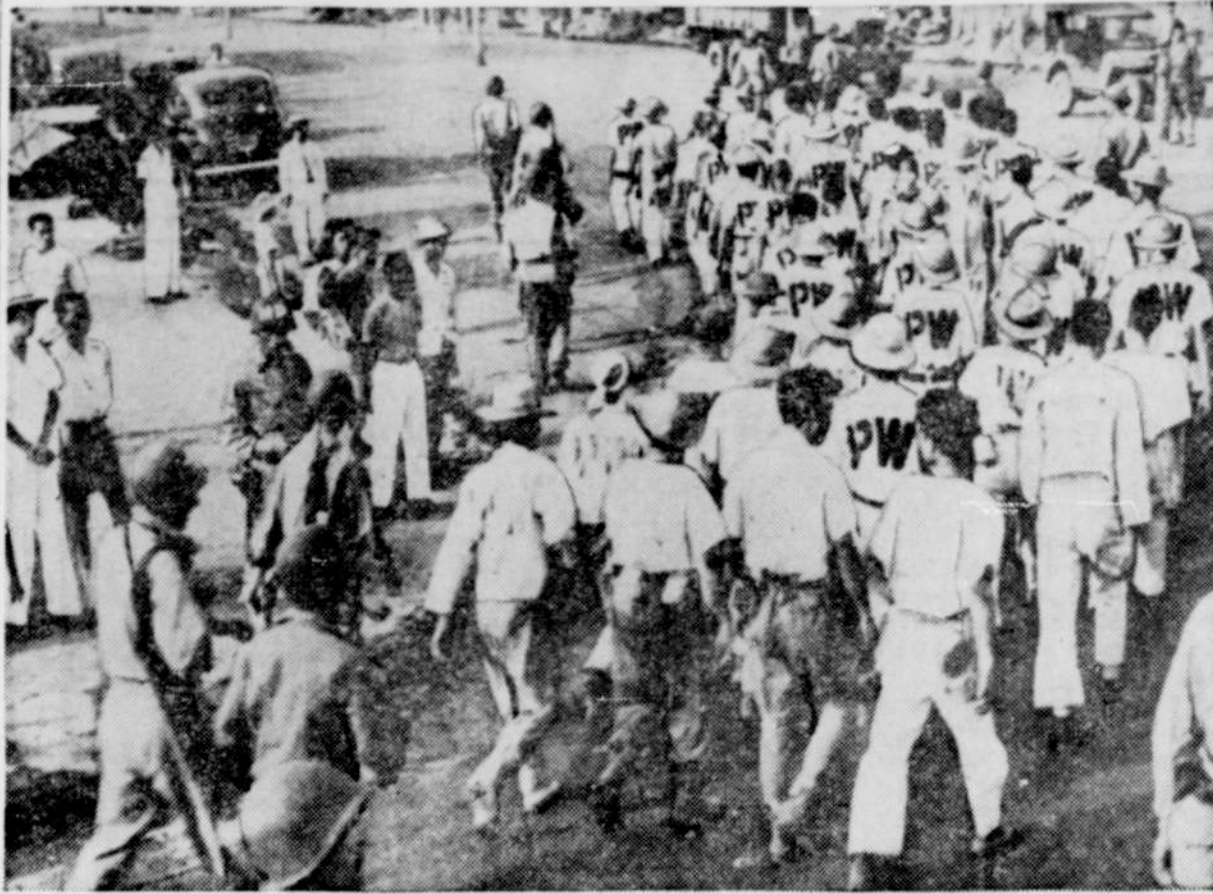
I've mentioned before about our fear of snakes before we got here. All the booklets and literature given us ahead of time about Okinawa dwelt at length on snakes. They told us there were three kinds of poisonous adders.

Well, I've kept a close watch and made a lot of inquiries. And the result is that in the central part of Okinawa where we've been there

are just practically no snakes at all. Our troops have walked, poked, sprawled and slept on nearly every square yard of the ground. And in my regiment, for one, they have seen only two snakes.

One was found dead. The other was killed by a battalion surgeon, coiled into a gallon glass jar and sent to the regimental command post as a souvenir.

Jap PWs Work to Clear and Rebuild Manila



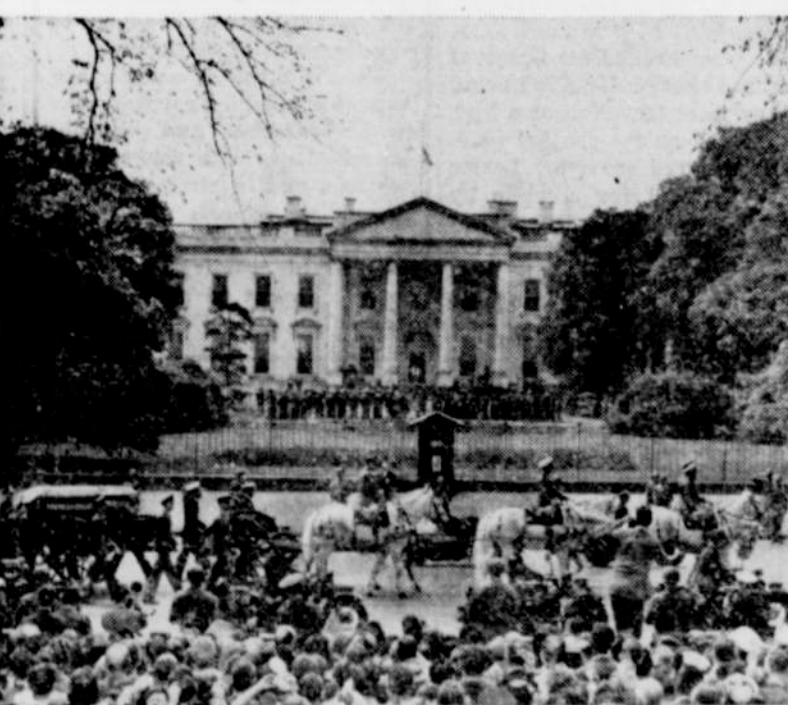
Identified by the letters "PW" printed on their backs, Japanese prisoners of war march down Rizal avenue, Manila, P. I., on their way to their daily work of clearing debris and rubble, helping to rebuild the city which they tried so hard to destroy. American policemen, with rifles ready, escort the Jap workmen to their task.—Soundphoto.

Soldiers Stage Rodeo on German Fighting Front



Taking time out during the march through Germany, personnel of the U. S. army stage a rodeo for the entertainment of fellow G.I.s. Busters and riders from New York City competed with range hands from Texas. Almost every part of the country was represented. Entertainment of this type, officials say, does much to build the morale of the fighting men. This is one of the reasons that the spirits of American soldiers has always been the envy of all countries.

Final Trip to the White House



The caisson carrying the earthly remains of Franklin D. Roosevelt passed the White House when it arrived at the end of the military procession from the Union station. Portion of the vast crowds outside the White House grounds shown in foreground. Services were held in the White House before interment at Hyde Park.

Sergeant Captures Von Papan



Sgt. Herbert A. Stuebner of Chicago, right, once wounded on Guadalcanal, was a member of the detail that captured former chancellor of Germany, Baron Franz von Papan, left. Von Papan was captured in a Ruhr pocket by American troops, and is believed to have been flown to the United States. He was taken by troops of the 194th glider regiment.

'Speedboat Betty'



Speedboat Betty Carstairs, famous for speedboat exploits against Gar Wood, now operating a chain of freighters, has stated that she looks to air for her postwar career.

Winner of Trophy



Ann Curtis, San Francisco swimmer, who has been chosen as the one who, by performance, example and influence as an amateur athlete, did most during 1944 to advance sports.

Lions or Timekeeper, Benchley Tamed 'Em!

At one time Robert Benchley wrote for a magazine which employed a timekeeper whose duty it was to dispatch nasty notes requesting explanations from employees who were absent or tardy. Upon receiving one of these unpleasant missives, Benchley hastened to explain.

"It's true I was five minutes late this morning," said Benchley, "but it was unavoidable. In passing the circus, on my way to work, I was brutally attacked by a dozen escaped lions. Summoning every ounce of strength in my body I fought the angry beasts off alone!" The timekeeper discontinued his practice of sending sharp notes.

Shaw Meant 'I'

George Bernard Shaw has never been accused of being excessively modest. At a gathering one evening, the English writer was introduced to an admiral. Delighted with this opportunity to get first hand information about matters nautical, Shaw deluged the naval man with questions.

"And now, Mr. Shaw," queried the admiral, "will you answer some literary questions for me?"

"I'd be glad to."

"Can you tell me who is the ablest contemporary playwright?"

"Ay, ay, sir," replied G.B.S.

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