

With Ernie Pyle in the Pacific:

Strange Sounds of War Fill Night on Okinawa

Intermittent Gunfire Breaks Eerie Silence Below Star-Bedecked Sky

By Ernie Pyle

Editor's Note: Ernie Pyle was several dispatches ahead when he met death from a Jap machine gun on Ie island. This newspaper will continue to print these for a few weeks.

OKINAWA (by navy radio).—Our first night on Okinawa was uncanny and full of old familiar sounds—the exciting, sad, weary little sounds of war.

It had been six months since I'd slept on the ground, or heard a rifle shot. With the marines it was about the same.

I was tagging along with a headquarters company of a regiment. We were on a pretty, grassy country. The front lines were about a thousand yards ahead. Other troops were bivouacked all around us.

There were still a few snipers hiding around. An officer was brought in just before dark, shot through the arm. So we were on our toes.

Just at dusk three planes flew slowly overhead in the direction of the beach. We paid no attention, for we thought they were ours. But they weren't.

In a moment all hell cut loose from the beach. Our entire fleet and the guns ashore started throwing stuff into the sky. I've never seen a thicker batch of ack-ack.

As one of the marines said, there were more bullets than there was sky. Those Jap pilots must have thought the world was coming to an end to fly into a lead storm like that only 10 hours after we had landed on Okinawa. All three were shot down.

As deep darkness came on we got into our foxholes and settled down for the night. The countryside became as silent as a graveyard—silent, that is, between shots. The only sounds were war sounds. There were no country sounds at all. The sky was a riot of stars.

Capt. Tom Brown was in the foxhole next to me. As we lay there on our backs, looking up into the starry sky, he said:

"There's the Big Dipper. That's the first time I've seen that since I've been in the Pacific." For, you see, marines of this division have done all their fighting under the Southern Cross, where our Big Dipper doesn't show.

As full darkness came, flares began lighting the country ahead of us over the front lines. They were shot in shells from our battleships, timed to burst above our lines, and float down on parachutes. That was to keep the country lighted up so we could see the Japs if they tried to infiltrate, which is one of their favorite tricks.

The flares were shot up several per minute from dusk until the moon came out full. It was very bright after that and the flares were not needed.

But all night long two or three ships kept up a slow shelling of the far hills where the Japs were supposed to be. It wasn't a bombardment; just two or three shells over us and I found that passing shells have the same ghostly "window shade rattle" on this side of the world as on the other.

My foxhole was only about 20 feet from where two field telephones and two field radios were lying on the ground. All night, officers sat on the ground at these four pieces of communications and directed our troops.

As I lay there listening in the dark, the conversation was startlingly familiar—the words and the thoughts and the actions exactly as I'd known them for so long in the infantry.

All night I could hear these low voices over the phones—voices in the darkness, voices of men running the war at the front.

Not long after dark the rifle shots started. There would be a little flurry far ahead, maybe a dozen shots. Then silence for many minutes.

Then there would be another flurry, way to the left. Then silence. Then the blurt of a machine gun closer, and a few scattered single shots sort of framing it. Then a long silence. Spooky.

All night it went like that. Flares in the sky ahead, the crack of big guns behind us, then of passing shells, a few dark figures coming and going in the night, muted voices at the telephones, the rifle shots, the mosquitoes, the stars, the feel of the damp night air under the wide sky—back again at the kind of life I had known so long.

The old familiar pattern, unchanged by distance or time from war on the other side of the world. A pattern so imbedded in my soul that, coming back into it again, it

seemed to me as I lay there that I'd never known anything else in my life. And there are millions of us.

Spends Night in Gypsy Hideout

The company commander, Capt. Julian Dusenbury, said I could have my choice of two places to spend the first night with his company.

One was with him in his command post. The command post was a big, round Japanese gun emplacement, made of sandbags. The Japs had never occupied it, but they had stuck a log out of it, pointing toward the sea and making it look like a gun to aerial reconnaissance.

Captain Dusenbury and a couple of his officers had spread ponchos on the ground inside the emplacement and had hung their telephone on a nearby tree and were ready for business. There was no roof on the emplacement. It was right on top of a hill and cold and very windy.

My other choice was with a couple of enlisted men who had room for me in a little Gypsy-like hideout they'd made.

It was a tiny, level place about halfway down the hillside, away from the sea. They'd made a roof over it by tying ponchos to trees and had dug up some Japanese straw mats out of a farmhouse to lay on the ground.

I chose the second of these two places, partly because it was warmer, and also because I wanted to be with the men anyhow.

My two "roommates" were Cpl. Martin Clayton Jr. of Dallas, Texas, and Pfc. William Gross of Lansing, Mich.

Clayton is nicknamed "Bird Dog" and nobody ever calls him anything else. He is tall, thin and dark, almost Latin-looking. He sports a puny little mustache he's been trying to grow for weeks and he makes fun of it.

Gross is simply called Gross. He is very quiet, but thoughtful of little things and they both sort of looked after me for several days. These two boys have become very close friends, and after the war they intend to go to UCLA together and finish their education.

The boys said we could all three sleep side by side in the same "bed." So I got out my contribution to the night's beauty rest. And it was a very much appreciated contribution, too. For I had carried a blanket as well as a poncho.

These marines had been sleeping every night on the ground with no cover, except their cold, rubberized ponchos, and they had almost frozen to death. Their packs were so heavy they hadn't been able to bring blankets ashore with them.

Our next door neighbors were about three feet away in a similar level spot on the hillside, and they had roofed it similarly with ponchos. These two men were Sgt. Neil Anderson of Coronado, Calif., and Sgt. George Valido of Tampa, Fla.

So we chummed up and the five of us cooked supper under a tree just in front of our "house." The boys made a fire out of sticks and we put canteen cups and K rations right on the fire.

Other little groups of marines had similar little fires going all over the hillside. As we were eating, another marine came past and gave Bird Dog a big piece of fresh roasted pig they had just cooked, and Bird Dog gave me some. It sure was good after days of K rations.

Several of the boys found their K rations moldy, and mine was too. It was the old-fashioned kind and we finally realized they were 1942 rations and had been stored, probably in Australia, all this time.

Suddenly downhill a few yards, we heard somebody yell and start cussing and then there was a lot of laughter. What had happened was that one marine had heated a K ration can and, because it was pressure packed, it exploded when he pried it open and there were hot egg yolks over him. Usually the boys open a can a little first, and release the pressure before heating, so the can won't explode.

G.I. Songsters Lighten Buddies' Cares

One of the marines who drives me around in a jeep whenever I have to go anywhere is Pfc. Buzz Vitore of the Bronx, New York.

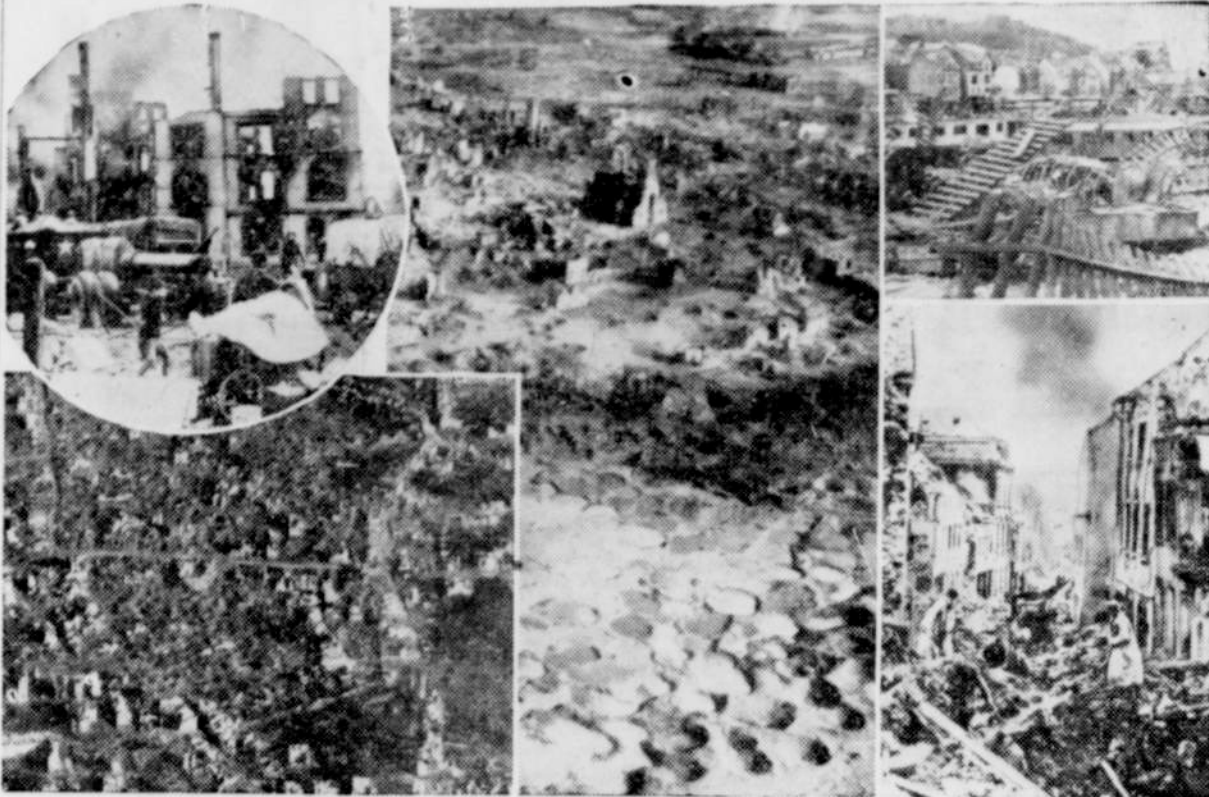
Buzz has other accomplishments besides jeep driving. He is known as the Bing Crosby of the marines. If you shut your eyes and don't listen very hard you can hardly tell the difference.

I first met Buzz on the transport

coming up to Okinawa. He and a friend would give an impromptu and homegrown concert on deck every afternoon.

They would sit on a hatch in the warm tropical sun and pretty soon there would be scores of marines and sailors packed around them, listening in appreciative silence. It made the trip to war almost like a Caribbean luxury cruise.

German Cities in the Path of Allies' Advance



City after city in Germany is being leveled to the ground by the Allied air forces and the advancing artillery and infantry units. Among the cities to which war has been brought home by the advancing victorious Allies are: upper left, Aschaffenburg; lower left, Duren receives its quota, little remaining of city on Roer river after saturation bombing. Center: View of Wesel, focal point of American forces on Rhine. Upper right, Limburg railroad marshalling yards after bombing. Lower right, Eltburg.

War Returns to Okinawa, Japan's Nerve Center



In 1853 the Leatherneck complement of Commodore Perry's squadron accompanied him on a visit to Okinawa. The Devil Dogs, in the current assault, found the long narrow island made up of plateaus and ridges. Most of the population of 443,000 is engaged in a substandard of agriculture. Centuries of being kicked around, in the game of power politics, has produced a mixed race with strains of Malayan, Korean, Chinese and Japanese—a people completely ignorant of the United States. Photos above show the natives after the American invasion.

Meiji Shrine Burned to Ashes



The grand Meiji shrine, near the Imperial palace of Japan in Tokyo where the Emperor often officiated, was among the places hit in a four-hour-long raid by a huge fleet of American superfortresses. The Jap communique, which told of the raid in which Imperial palace buildings were hit, said the sanctuary was burned to ashes.

B-29 Hero Honored by General



Maj. Gen. Willis H. Hale, former commanding general of the army air forces in the Pacific ocean area, pats S/Sgt. H. E. Erwin of Bessemer, Ala., on the arm after presenting him with the congressional medal of honor for picking up a burning bomb over Tokyo and tossing it out of a B-29. Members of the crew whose lives he saved stand by.

Wins Novel Award



Sgt. Josiah E. Greene, Washington, Conn., won first prize in MacMillan contest for his novel, "Not in Our Stars." Back from Italy, he is now a link trainer instructor.

New Baseball Czar



Albert "Happy" Chandler, former U. S. senator from Kentucky, who has been appointed to succeed the late Kenesaw Mountain Landis as baseball's czar.

The Washington MERRY-GO-ROUND

DREW PEARSON

WORLD LEADERS PICTURE
By the thread of one man's life hung personal relationships which affected nations. Prime ministers and potentates, once close to Franklin Roosevelt, now must learn how to get along with an unknown gentleman in the White House. Certain army-navy officials, who always knew how Roosevelt would react on this and that, now must do business with a man they once criticized.

To illustrate how the pendulum of fate has swung, here are some of those who will miss Franklin Roosevelt most:

WINSTON CHURCHILL—was able to call the late President on the telephone at any time night or day. Their relationship was more intimate than with most members of their own cabinets. When Churchill couldn't get Roosevelt, he talked to Harry Hopkins. Their friendship was equally close. Hopkins and Churchill used to stay up late at night sipping brandy long after FDR had gone to bed, and it was those late-hour talks that sometimes worried U. S. army-navy men. For vital policy sometimes was moulded after midnight.

Churchill had planned to hold national elections, probably in June, and Roosevelt's friendship would have been one of his great campaign assets. That asset is now out the window. Instead he must do business with a man he doesn't know and who chairmanned a committee whose members were quite critical of certain British lend-lease and international air policies abroad.

Some political observers believe that makes Churchill's political future very uncertain.

ADMIRAL ERNEST KING—The Commander of the Fleet and Chief of Naval Operations really ran the navy under Roosevelt, and he ran it with a high hand. He ignored the late Secretary Frank Knox whenever he felt like it, knowing he would get a sympathetic ear at the White House. He even overruled Knox on such a trivial matter as a gray-blue summer uniform for the navy, though Knox had decided it would cut too heavily into the consumption of textiles.

Knox's successor, Secretary of the Navy Forrestal, has played in with King. He had to. If King didn't agree with him, the admiral came out bluntly in press conference and said so.

But now there is a new man in the White House who wrote a caustic report bitterly critical of the way the admirals slowed up the war by failure to build adequate landing boats. The new President also did not hesitate to throw his hooks into the navy whenever the brass hats got inefficient, especially on their inexcusable procrastination in building destroyer-escort vessels. So fellow-admirals are watching to see just where King now sits.

GENERAL B. B. SOMERVELL—No army officer clashed with the Truman committee more frequently and more head-on than the tough-talking chief supply officer of the army. Somervell differed with Truman on all sorts of things, and the Truman committee reports are studded with criticism of the army's supply job.

Truman is not a man to nurse personal grudges and won't demote or transfer Somervell. General Marshall always maintained that despite mistakes he was the best man they had. But Somervell will never become chief of staff, or rise any higher in the army.

HARRY HOPKINS—Of all those around Roosevelt, Harry Hopkins will miss him most. There's was a very close personal relationship. Although Harry has been criticized vitriolically, sometimes even by other presidential intimates, FDR never wavered in his devotion. In a way, Harry took the place of Roosevelt's eldest son, Jimmie, whom he once hoped would be his secretary. So Harry will miss his old friend terribly.

The critics will say that Hopkins will miss him because of the glamour, the power and the prestige. But actually there was a love and devotion between the two men which few realized and even fewer understood.

Note—Several years ago, Roosevelt gave Hopkins permission to take notes on their discussions and write his memoirs. "You have no money, Harry," he said, "and you're foolish if you don't take notes on our conversations. Use them later." But Hopkins, always too busy, always engrossed with winning the Chief's next objective, never had time to take notes. He knows more about Roosevelt than any other living man, but most of the secrets will go with Hopkins to the grave.

BERNARD BARUCH—The man who talks with Presidents, no longer has the key to the White House. During the bitter battles between the War Production board civilian group and General Somervell's military clique, Baruch always backed up Somervell. In fact, he was one of Somervell's most vigorous supporters.

Truman, on the other hand, fought in the WPB civilian corner. Also Bernie was for Byrnes, not Truman, at the Chicago convention. So he may not be such a close friend to Presidents any more.