

Hatch-Cover Correspondent Tells Story of Fog, Cold, Wet Men on Invasion of Jap-held Attu Island

By WILLIAM L. WORDEN
MASSACRE BAY, ATTU ISLAND, May 13 (Delayed) (AP)—This correspondent reached Attu after seven days on a hatch cover. The hatch cover was below decks on a crowded transport ship and was also inhabited by some 20 junior officers and casuals, sleeping side by side on makeshift cots. On that ship, only men with rank of major or better—who arrived very early—had permanent bunks. For the rest, holds were home.

At that, the correspondents were lucky. Most of the hatch cover residents had been there 17 days when the headlands of Attu were sighted.

The headlands were sighted shortly after dawn on a day when everyone aboard the transport was awakened at 3 a. m. The landing forces began to leave the ship in mid-morning. At 9 p. m., the second wave, of which this correspondent was a part, also departed.

The conveyance was a tank lighter on which were already a 10-ton tractor and a 5000-pound field gun, plus miscellaneous gear and about 25 other men. The lighter had been imperfectly loaded and had a definite list to starboard; but it did not quite ship water.

From the transport, the lighter, with the assistance of a hand pump to keep it afloat, followed other landing boats for two hours while the shore-bound convoy was gathered in under the stern of a destroyer operating as a guide ship. At this time, the fog was so thick that a boat a hundred yards away was invisible. There was no indication as to the direction of shore.

The destroyer's fog horn and one small light guided more than 50 small boats for miles into the dock-infested bay, stopped only when water became too shallow for it to go closer. Then a last long hoot of the whistle sent the boats on their own toward the beach, which was still invisible. A blinding guide light ashore came on, but served only to indicate direction and illuminated nothing beyond dozens of milling boats.

Our lighter came up astern of another boat which did not get out of the way. Backing with full speed, the heavily-loaded lighter missed the second boat by inches; while from the craft a coxswain shouted, "Look out, rocks ahead."

The water under our snub bow was full of men. Life jackets floated singly, and men without life jackets beat against the sides of boats, trying to clamber into them. Our craft grounded with a crunch against an unseen rock below the surface. However, the deck of the lighter held, the tractor shifted only slightly as men with heavy packs struggled to get them off their shoulders to be ready to swim if necessary.

Eventually, the lighter succeeded in backing off the rock and missing half sunken boats around it. The nose touched shore, the ramp went down and the tractor snorted into water-hip deep on men beside it. The lighter lurched twice as tractor and gun moved off, then righted itself while the men still aboard jumped through the surf, some falling headlong, some making land with water only to their knees.

The beach was littered with soaking men just pulled from the surf. They were being stripped and wrapped in dry blankets at improvised medical stations, while their clothing was put near fires to dry. One huge technical sergeant, pulled from the water half drowned, shook off doctors, went looking up and down the beach for his men—though he himself was dripping,

his teeth chattering so that he could hardly ask questions.

For those with no immediate job up the valley, beds were tundra hummocks a few hundred yards from the beach. There was no sign of the enemy except sporadic machine gun fire barely audible above the roar of tractors and shouts of men on the beach.

In the morning, the beach was a hubbub. Boats had continued to operate all night; and new parties ashore immediately went inland to reinforce the front lines. Medium artillery, set up a few feet from the sand, began to pump shells up the valley.

The command post was a gully, the intelligence section at one end, the general's staff at the other. Lt. Col. Glen A. Nelson of Los Angeles, commanding a part of the front line troops, told us the commanding general was already well ahead, looking over the front lines. When the general returned, he held all observers at the command post until an artillery barrage had been completed. This barrage was set up by the guns on the beach, firing directly over our heads, and by warships lying off the beach. The shore guns shook us with the muzzle blasts; but the ship fire was like nothing more than the sound of subway trains going up the valley and (the echo) coming back down the other side. The flashes from the main ship batteries and the sound of them were so far apart that it was difficult to establish any connection.

Troops moved up from the beach in battle skirmish lines, accompanied by medical units and light artillery. The valley at Massacre is wide, and troops were moving all through it.

At a dressing station, a doctor pointed out the first casualty. He had a thigh wound and was thoroughly disgusted. "I had two hand grenades and an M-1 rifle," he said, "but I didn't get a chance to use any of them. That damned sniper got me first. Now I don't suppose I ever will get a chance to shoot any of those guys."

Colonel Wayne C. Zimmerman gave permission to go forward. "There has been a lot of mortar fire on the ridge," he said, "so look out for it."

The ridge was neatly pockmarked with holes about four feet in diameter. The Japanese mortar had started at the forward regimental headquarters and walked its fire down the ridge. But accurate as it was, it had caused only one casualty so far as I could learn.

At the left, a deep river valley cut into the mountains almost at sea level. A similar gully at the right was cut off from a clear view by intervening humps. Ahead, on a snow slope, a company of infantry moved slowly up into the fog.

"They just got one sniper up there," a passing private said. "They think there's another." Somewhat later, there was rifle fire in the fog above and the company came back down. There had been another sniper.

In the valley to the left, a company came on a Japanese captain and two men in a half-finished hut, killed them as they raced toward a machine gun. In the captain's pocket was a note. Interpreted, it read: "Dear wife, this is the last letter I expect to write to you. . . ."

The letter had never been finished.

At regimental headquarters, the general received reports of bad sniping and infiltrating machine gun fire from the forward units. Here the valley on the left of the ridge widened, then divided. The two arms of the Y thus formed moved upward as the beginnings of the passes leading to

Russian Church On Attu



Only building left standing in the town of Attu after the American troops had battered the Japs there, was the Russian Orthodox church, a reminder of the days when Russia owned the Aleutians. Before the Japs invaded Attu, a few score of Aleuts (Russian Eskimos) were its only inhabitants.

Holtz bay and Chichagof harbor. The general ordered an artillery preparation for both valleys from their confluence upwards for several hundred yards.

Behind us, the beach batteries opened up a steady fire; and behind them, the men-of-war lent it authority. The shells from the beach and those from destroyers chucked as they went overhead. A bang, a long-drawn chuckle and another bang, in that order. The fire of the heavier ships was a bright flash, a long wait, a thundering overhead and then destruction.

I had field glasses focused on the edge of a snow field in the pass ahead. There were two round-topped protrubances which might have been huts but looked more like gun positions. A third, smaller one, might have been anything. From a position below the brow of the command post hill, a light battery fired to the right of the snow field at the same time that a heavier shell hit to the left of the left gun emplacement (if that was what it was.) Something long and awkward was blown out of the gun position, flopped once and lay still to the left. From the spot where the small shell had hit at the right, a man jumped out of a hole and began to run. He dropped into the first protection he found, the smaller of the three protrubances, waited there only a few seconds (he looked as if he might have had orders to go on.) And ran to the second position, finally to the third. He then rushed out to the fallen figure, picked up one end of it and began to drag it away.

A shell landed directly on top of him. There was a huge flash, bigger than those which had gone before, a cloud of smoke, big pieces of things or men flying into the air. When the smoke cleared, there was no further sign of the gun position, the running man or the figure he had been dragging.

The barrage continued to work up and down the valley. All evening it worked, systematically pointing fingers first at one possible position, then another, then halfway between the two. After a supper of cold K rations, I bedded down in a small depression on the hilltop. The last thing I remember hearing was the half humorous gurgling of another shell overhead, the hysterical sound of a Japanese machine gun which still had not been silenced.

This morning, I had breakfast with Private First Class Joe Franks, of Ambridge, Penn. Franks had a fire (some Jap machine gun over on one side was making the spot a little warm, but still was not able to come very close.) So Franks had a fire, and I had breakfast out of his bounty of heat and a tin can of C rations. Private Lyle Brown of Culver City, Calif., and I made a trade—the cocoa portion of my ration for the coffee portion of his. Charles (Chuck) Moore, of Nashville, and I discussed how we would like to be in Tennessee; and Corporal Charles Eberhardt, of Berwyn, Ill., said that machine gun over on the hill made him homesick for Cicero, and then as quickly pointed out that he was homesick

all right but only joking about the gun. Robert S. Campbell, of Lodi, Calif., said he used to think that it was cold in the asparagus fields this morning, but that it was never like this. The machine gun was silent a while and then began to talk again; and a company up on the ridge scattered and sought shelter.

A second lieutenant whom I had met the night before came past and admitted that he was the man who kept me up all night with advice to move our sleeping bags somewhere else. "It wasn't safe," he said today. "I kept telling you it wasn't; but you wouldn't listen."

Last night, nothing short of a near miss could possibly have moved me a foot from that soft spot on the ground. But today, I'm not quite so sure.

The artillery from the beach is still going over, whistling and gurgling and chucking. And that Japanese machine gun answers every burst. The fog is still over the hill tops, hiding even the troops moving up. It

RELIEVE BED SORES Ease, soothe chafe. Form medicated coat of protection between skin and chafing bedclothes with Mexana, formerly Mexican Heat Powder.

MEN AND WOMEN IN SERVICE

TULELAKE—Mr. and Mrs. Ralph A. Ganger of the Winema district had an interesting experience the last of the week when in the May 1 issue of Liberty magazine they found under the caption, "Advance Medical Knowledge During War," a picture of their only son, William David Ganger, pharmacist mate, 3/c, from whom they had not heard for several weeks.

The half-page picture related to the use of blood transfusions in the battle zones and the photograph of young Ganger and a second service man was taken during a transfusion given to save the life of a badly wounded man brought to the front line hospital base near Buna in the Solomons. The line at this point was only 500 yards distant from the medical base.

While Ganger's name was not used, comparison of the picture with numerous photographs in the possession of the family proved beyond a doubt that the lad who was sharing his blood was "Billy," as he is known to family and classmates.

Mr. and Mrs. Ganger have known for some time that he was on active duty somewhere in the Pacific but had received no word from him for six weeks.

He is a graduate of the Tulelake high school, later studying for a year at California Polytechnic at San Luis Obispo and one and a half years at Washington State. He has been in the service for a year and is 21 years old.

Corporal Joe Westhusin has notified his foster parents, Mr. and Mrs. Stanley Hull of the Keno road, that he is now in Australia.

Paul Crapo, son of Mr. and Mrs. Leon Crapo, has been promoted to the rank of corporal in the army air corps. He is a Link trainer instructor and is stationed at Minter Field in Bakersfield, Calif.

KEARNS, U.—Pre-Aviation Cadet Herman F. Biber of 715

HOUSE PAVES WAY FOR ANTI POLL TAX VOTE

WASHINGTON, May 24 (AP)—The house opened the way today for a vote tomorrow on anti-poll tax legislation by discharging its rules committee from further consideration of the measure.

The house action came despite a declaration by Rep. Fox (D-Ga.) that the legislation is "a bid for negro support" and the assertion that "if the new deal persists in heaping indignities on the states that have kept it alive, there's no telling what might happen."

The legislation would make it unlawful to levy a poll tax as a prerequisite to voting in any election in which a federal office is at stake. Seven southern states, Virginia, Arkansas, Georgia, South Carolina, Mississippi, Alabama and Texas, now charge poll taxes.

Congregational Church In Oregon Supports Self

NEW YORK, May 24 (AP)—The Congregational Conference of Oregon, comprising 48 churches, will become self-supporting and self-directing on June 1, it was announced Saturday by the board of home missions of the Congregational Christian churches.

Heretofore the financial support of the conference has been underwritten by the board.

Francis street, Klamath Falls, is now stationed at this army air forces basic training center, it is announced by Col. Converse R. Lewis, commander.

Private Biber is the son of Mrs. Anna Biber of 315 Roosevelt street, Klamath Falls, and prior to his enlistment for aviation cadet training attended Klamath Union high school, where he played football and baseball.

FORT DES MOINES, Ia.—Aux. Borgny Romtved of Bonanza, Ore., was a member of women's army auxiliary corps unit which left first WAAC training center here recently for duty with the army at Ft. McCain, Minn. WAAC units now are at work with the army in more than 20 states and overseas.

Arrivals at the infantry replacement training center for basic training at Camp Roberts, Calif., include Private Richard T. Sinclair of Klamath Falls. Private Sinclair's parents are Mr. and Mrs. E. B. Sinclair of 4641 South 8th street.

OUT OF THE WOODS

The Cossack Country . . . It has taken me a month of Sundays to read to the last of the 1300-odd pages of the double-novel, *The Silent Don*, by Mikhail Sholokov. The reading was in no sense entertainment but a grim and depressing job. This is because the book is a real-life story of one of the places that appear so often these days in the Russian communiques as nameless "villages" or "inhabited localities." The place in the novel is the Don river village, Tatarsk. The main characters in the book are the village people. It tells their tragedy from 1914 to the end of the civil wars in the soviet union in the mid-twenties.

The *Silent Don* is of current interest, for the towns and cities the action covers have been in the war news throughout the victory drive of the red army. And the novel reveals, in terms of individual common men and women, the real fighting strength of that army. It is a moral strength of plain people.

Refugees' Return . . .

As the nazis retreat, they scorch the earth. Thousands of towns of the rich-soiled Cossack country and the Ukraine have gone up in smoke, and thousands more will burn. And they will leave their black wake of devastation in the occupied countries as they are driven back. The whole horror of the prospect is too vast to imagine. But it may be realized in the Sholokov picture of the return of one Cossack family to its farm home in Tatarsk village, after war.

"The war from which Panteleimon had fled had itself come to his home, leaving behind it the hideous traces of its destruction. . . . The hut stood whole. But almost all of its windows were broken out, the door had been torn from its hinges, the walls were pitted with bullets. One corner of the stable had been carried away by a shell; a second had dug a shallow crater next to the well, smashing the frame and breaking the well-crane in two. . . . In the cattle yard they had thrown down the fences and had dug trenches to the depth of a man's height. To avoid extra work they had taken a granary wall to pieces and had used the beams as flooring for the trenches; they had to set fire to the wattle fences and had made a mess of the outdoor kitchen stove. . . . That is a mild example of a comparatively fortunate family. Yet the cost of restoration, in

time, labor and for materials, was great. The granary was a necessity to the operation of the farm.

Only stumps of buildings are left in the retreat of the Germans. The peace will find millions of families in Europe facing, not partial destruction, but utter desolation on their homesteads. Farms cannot be worked from hole in the ground. They must be made habitable before they can be restored to production.

Lumber in the Peace . . .

Even England is preparing the greatest building program in its history as a post-war project. Large bomb-destroyed areas of cities must be rebuilt, thousands of bomb-shaken homes must be repaired. The United Kingdom was the major export market for lumber from the Douglas fir region in the years preceding the war. It was mainly supplied by British Columbia. We may expect a greater demand on our mills in the future.

Lumber from Russia and from the Baltic and Scandinavian countries used to flow into England. In post-war reconstruction it will be needed largely at home. And in that period our forest products will be in urgent demand all over Europe except in its lumbering areas. China? And Japan, after our bombers have done their work? The immense building-market that is facing us at home?

The answers all sum up to an epic of post-war construction all over the world. The mind cannot take in the prospect. Anyhow, in my case I've been able to get a glimpse of it only in terms of one family in one village as pictured in *The Silent Don*.

Man Survives Big Electrical Jolt

PORTLAND, May 24 (AP)—Edward L. Sadler, 41, who survived a 57,500-volt shock, was in a hospital today in a critical condition from burns.

He brushed a high tension wire while painting an electric company switch structure and was catapulted 20 feet to the ground, his clothes afire.

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Chichagof Harbor Scene of Jap Base



This is Chichagof Harbor, only previously chartered bay on Attu Island and one of the points where Japs established a base. Village of Attu is seen at lower right.

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