

~~SECRET~~

RBR:

Auth: CG 25 Div  
Init: *6-1-45*  
Date: 06 Feb 45  
~~SECRET~~

OPERATIONS MEMORANDUM)

NUMBER F4)

HEADQUARTERS  
Twenty-Seventh Infantry  
UMINGAN, P I, 6 Feb 45

MAPS: LUZON 1:50000.

1. It is expected that within 48 Hrs 1 of 3 projected Opns will be launched by the 27th Inf.
  - a. Assist the 35th Inf in Atk on LUPAO.
  - b. If the 35th Inf seizes LUPAO prior to our move, pass thru the 35th Inf and Reinf the 161st Inf in a 2-Regt Atk on SAN ISIDRO. If such is the case, the 27th Inf will operate in the hills in the left sector.
  - c. By-pass the 35th Inf, by-pass the 161st Inf, and establish as assembly area N of SANTO NINO on the extreme right (S) of the 25th Div sector.
2. Movement from present positions in UMINGAN will be in order of:
  - 2d Bn (Adv Gd,) Adv Regt CP, 3d Bn.  
(Bns w/attachments.)
3. 1st Bn (w/50 Guerrillas Atchd) is designated as 25th Div Res and will:
  - a. With 1-Co relieve Co F as Div CP Gd.
  - b. With 1-Plat relieve Co G as local security of 90th FA Bn.
  - c. Leave Co A at LA PAZ.
  - d. Upon withdrawal of 3d Bn from present position, block UMINGAN from the N.
  - e. Continue to patrol to the N and E.
4. Road Rcn of hill-mass S and E of SAN ISIDRO (vicinity of MANGOL) authorized for 2d Bn.

LINDEMAN  
Commanding

OFFICIAL: *6-1-45*

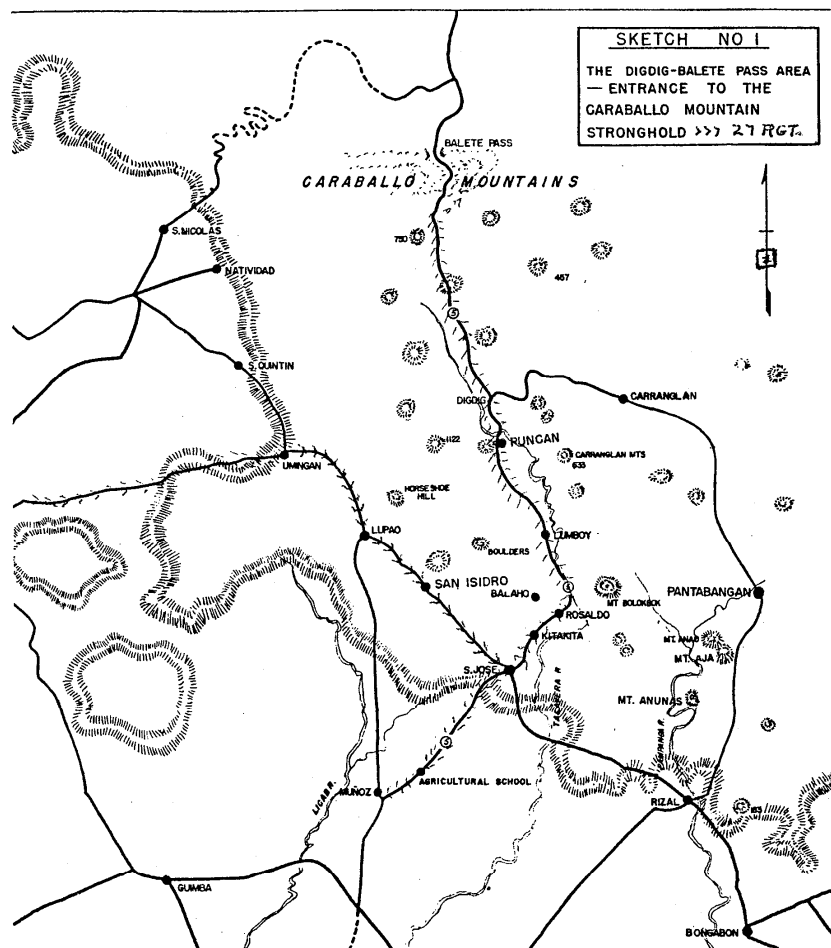
PAINE  
S-3

Dist: Special

~~SECRET~~

C-OM-iii

the vicinity of Cabanatuan. Also, there were bands of suicide infiltration units in the area surrounding San Jose.



Highway 5 was the only road of feasible supply for the retreating enemy or for any offensive operations in that direction by U.S. forces. After the sharp turn east of San Jose, Highway 5 follows the Talavera-Digdig River line along the slopes of the Caraballo Mts. and is the only north-south road connecting the Cagayan Valley with the Central Plains. Initial instructions, from Div. HQ, directed only strong

~~SECRET~~  
Auth: CG 25 Div  
Init: *R.B.J.*  
Date: 06 Feb 45  
SECRET

RBR:

OPERATIONS MEMORANDUM)

NUMBER F5)

HEADQUARTERS  
Twenty-Seventh Infantry  
SAN JOSE 0930 12 Feb 45

MAPS: LUZON 1:50000.

1 *1/27* (Div Res as of 1630, 11 Feb 45):

Move by foot to AGRICULTURAL SCHOOL; billeting party to Rpt to G-1, 25th Div, at school gate at 0900.

2 2/27 (2/AT/27, 2/CN/27, 1-Plat Cml Mortars Atchd):

- a Consolidate positions and send out limited probing patrols.
- b Establish new OP; Rpt location.
- c Consolidate Co G.
- d Fire on targets of opportunity w/Arty and mortars.

3 *3/27* (3/AT/27, 3/CN/27, 1-Plat Cml Mortars, 50 Guerrillas Atchd):

- a By probing patrols determine enemy strength on Hill between Co's F and K. After bombardment of enemy's positions send probing patrols to determine remaining enemy resistance. Weaken enemy resistance by M7 and mortar fire. With smoke screen movement into position of M7's and 4.2" Cml Mortars.
- b Continue to occupy hill held by Co K (Lt Yates') Plat.
- c Move rear Plat of Co K to position occupied by Co K.
- d Organize defense of SAN JOSE using 2-Co's. Maintain River Block at (84.10-06.40.)

4 CN/27:  
Contact CO/3/27 and advise regarding bombardment of hill. Use remainder of Co if desired.

LINDEMAN  
Commanding

OFFICIAL: *Rayne*

PAYNE  
S-3

No Incl.

Dist: Special.

~~SECRET~~

C-OM-iv

~~SECRET~~  
Auth: CG 25 Div  
Init: *1/15/45*  
Date: 12 Feb 45  
S E C R E T

RBR:

OPERATIONS MEMORANDUM)

HEADQUARTERS  
Twenty-Seventh Infantry  
San Jose 1800 12 Feb 45

NUMBER F6)

MAPS: LUZON 1:50000

1 2/27 (2/AT/27, 2/Cn/27, 2-Plat's D/98th Cml Atchd):

- a (1) Patrol E bank of TALAVERA R.
- (2) Patrol to the E and Rear of present CP to LIZZIE and return via Hwy #5.
- b Relieve Co K by 1000, 13 Feb 45.
- c Mop-up possible enemy in supply area on W side of Hwy #5.

2 3/27 (3/AT/27, 3/Cn/27, 50 Guerrillas Atchd):

- a Co K:
- (1) Patrol 1000 Yds N along W side of Hwy #5.
- (2) Upon relief by 2/27 return to SAN JOSE.

3 D/98th Cml:

- a 2-Plat's Atchd 2/27.
- b 1-Plat Regtl Res in SAN JOSE.

LINDEMAN  
Commanding

OFFICIAL:

*Payne*  
PAYNE  
S-5

No Incl.

Dist: CO 2d Bn, CO 3d Bn, CO Co D 98th Cml Bn.

~~SECRET~~

C-OM-V

~~SECRET~~

Auth: CG 25 Div

Init: *RSK*

Date: 13 Feb 45

FIELD ORDER)

NUMBER 7)

HEADQUARTERS

Twenty-Seventh Infantry

San Jose, 13 February 45

MAPS: LUZON 1:50000; AERIAL PHOTO 1:95000.

- 1 a Enemy Situation: See reproduction of captured Jap map.
- b (1) 35 secures line CABU-BONGABON-RIZAL.
- (2) 161 secures line BOULDERS-HORSESHOE HILL-UMINGAN-LA PAZ and protects supply route and installations, maintains OP's on high ground W of Hwy 5, and establishes contact w/32d Div on N.
- (3) 1/27 is Div Res Vic AGRICULTURAL SCHOOL.
- (4) C/775/Tk is Div Res Vic SAN JOSE.
- 2 27 (-1/27) (D/98/Cml Atchd):
  - (1) Continue to exert pressure on Jap forces defending CAGAYAN VALLEY Road.
  - (2) Secure line MT MANGCOLOBON-MT BOLOKBOK.
- 3 a 2/27 (2/AT/27, 2/Cn/27, 2-Plat's/D/98/Cml Atchd):
  - (1) Send probing combat patrols in N within sector, locate enemy positions, and shell w/mortars and Arty, select new positions to the N; and if possible to occupy without a major Atk, move Fwd and organize them.
  - (2) Mop-up enemy stragglers within security patrol sector.
- b 3/27 (-Co K, Regtl Res) (3/AT/27, 3/Cn/27, 50 Guerrillas Atchd):
  - (1) Continue to occupy present positions, defend SAN JOSE, and prevent enemy stragglers from escaping to the N.
  - (2) Mop-up enemy stragglers within security patrol sector.
  - (3) Send daily motor patrol consisting of guerrillas and soldiers to inquire of civilians location of enemy stragglers, and investigate reports.
  - (4) 1-Rifle Plat w/I&R/27 3-day patrol to PAMPANGA R.
- c Mine Plat/AT/27: Furnish local security for 8th FA Bn.
- d AT/27-: Furnish local security for 90th FA Bn.
- e Regtl Res: K/27, Cn/27-, D/98/Cml-.
- f I&R/27 (1-Plat 3/27 Atchd):
  - (1) Rcn to PAMPANGA R and establish block Vic (98.7-19.3.) (3-day mission.)
  - (2) Rcn hill-mass Vic (87.5-21.6;) establish OP if possible.
- 4 No change.
- 5 a Index 1-3 to SOI becomes effective 0001, 15 Feb 45.
- b Regtl CP - SAN JOSE School.

LINDEMAN  
CommandingOFFICIAL: *Payne*PAYNE  
S-3~~SECRET~~

C-21-xi

Dist: Special

probing action designed to cause the enemy to expect the possibility of a general attack to fix his strength near the southern end of the valley. Later a general attack to the north would be ordered; however, the initial mission of the Wolfhounds consisted of a strong threat to the enemy - only. The 2 Btn. was ordered to form the Finding Force for the Rgt.; and, on 10 Feb., the Btn., with Fox Co. leading, moved out to the east.

(Les Johnson) "Sometime, in Feb., we began to enter the Cagayan Valley just north of San Jose. Our platoon, after preliminary arty, crossed an irrigation canal and were to sieze a small hill mass bounded by a river on our right and Hwy. 5 on our left. Summer's squad was on the right and I had Moriss's squad on the left and all were in a skirmish line. My squad was to guide on Summer's. Jenkin's squad was to our rear in support. Nearing the base of one of the hills we began to receive fire but kept on moving. It appeared that someone had accidentally shot Felderhof -

our assistant squad leader. While this was going on I noticed we had lost contact with Summers and that his left man was in effect part of my squad and had become my left hand man. I dropped back and reported and was told to keep moving by Stewart.

We moved on with a vengeance - killing four of the



"Buddies!"

Les Johnson and George Walsh

enemy in the process. When free of enemy fire, Pvt. Williams and I, with the wire man from Hqs. Co. laying wire (Chaldez), started up the "trail to the summit with the rest of the squad on our heels. We

"posted security as it began to get dark and dug in. The rest of the platoon came up after dark. Next day I found out we were on the wrong hill. During the next



couple days the first platoon tried to take the proper hill and got clobbered. KIA were Cook, Gaudia, Jacques, and S/Sgt. Sartori. We got the job of cleaning this thing up and we picked up weapons and the dead. Williams

The Wolfhounds began their drive up Hwy. 5

I handled Sartori. We

got the Chaplain in a visit in his jeep with his assistant and, as we prepared to bury them, the Chaplain's assistant got sick and threw up in the ditch. On the day we got the wrong hill, Capt. Koontz, our CO of Fox Co., was on a personal recon and had gotten himself pinned down off Hwy. 5 and his bodyguard, Big Train Brennan, came back to find anyone from F Co. to help spring him. Brennan ran into my squad and I was not too keen to leave my squad without an order. (A good excuse.) Brennan said I had shit on my neck and, since he was two freight trains bigger than me, I had to agree. Somehow I picked up a man by the name of Mears from either the first, or second platoon, and he and I crawled up the ditch along Hwy. 5. Mears ducked under the fence wire and I followed. As we got thru the wire I looked down a decline and saw two Japs about twenty yards away, each behind a small tree aiming their rifles at Mears and just ready to fire. I emptied a clip from my M1 at them and Mears scrambled back up to the road. I think we got both Japs but didn't hang around for an autopsy. Our distraction was apparently enough to free Capt. Koontz. When I got back to the squad Stewart was there and a little irked with my absence - I was forgiven when he learned the details

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"A FO, Lt. Klebel, or Kleboe, 8th FA, and two enlisted men blundered out to our front and the Lt. got hit in the gut. The EM got out and came running back crying so the co. clerk and myself crawled out and snaked him into a defilade position where we sulfa'd and bandaged him. He was a big man and the clerk (Henry?) and myself attempted to make a litter with our rifles and the Lt.'s jacket so we could move him. We got him to the highway and the clerk wrenched his knee when we were



"fired on and he hit the ditch. We stayed there until things quieted down. It seemed like a safe place. We finally got him on my back and, while the clerk carried the rifles, we got him back to the aid station near the irrigation canal. Through the whole thing the Lt. was worried about his wallet - it was in his jacket all the time."

(Phil File) "The Wolfhounds continued to advance across the Central Luzon Plain. Fortunately, it was the dry season and we were able to travel right across the rice fields. We moved south down Highway 5 to the Central Luzon Agricultural School where was fought what was called "The fifty-eight tank mistake".. Just south of the school, about 500 yds., was the barrio of Munoz. The Alamo Scouts had searched Munoz and declared the barrio clear of any enemy troops. Our First Btn. took up positions and relaxed. As soon as it got dark, the Japs tried to break out to the north. Fifty-eight tanks came through the position. There was one M7 (self-propelled 105mm) with the foot troops and it fought until it was knocked out. The troops were able to delay the Nips until a Black Dragon (8 in. howitzer) btry., moving down the highway, was able to unlimber and start firing at the tanks at point blank range. Because the tanks were between the guns and our own troops the arty was firing unfuzed ammo. At ranges from fifty ft. to 200 yds., the howitzers didn't need to fix fuzes. The 8 in. projectiles were whipping the tanks upside down, going through both sides, knocking turrets completely off, starting fires and generally creating havoc. When daylight came about 300 yds. of highway and adjacent paddies were littered with the smoking hulks of the 58 tanks of the enemy. It looked like some agile arsonist had a field day in Honest John's recycling parts emporium."

The 1 Btn., Wolfhounds, was in reserve, at the Ag School, while the <sup>201</sup> 2 Btn. moved north towards Rosaldo. On 10-11 Feb., Fox Co. reached Rosaldo, about 5 miles northeast of San Jose, and contact was made with an undetermined number of Japs. An attack supported by arty enabled the company to seize the high ground overlooking the Talavera River. From the west, King Co. was assigned the mission of clearing the enemy from north of Hwy. 5 west of the sharp bend at the Talavera River. After this was accomplished F and K Co.s were ordered to attack north and south respectively, and on 14 Feb., the two companies joined. E Co. then relieved F and G relieved K. The 3 Btn. occupied and secured San Jose. The Wolfhounds would exert pressure on enemy forces north of Rosalado and east of Hwy. 5 to prevent withdrawl of enemy elements northwestward. They would, also, be in a position to launch a frontal attack northward. Two other routes were also possible, those being two narrow trails one to the northwest and one to the northeast, into the Caraballo Mts. While the



From Putlan Bridge we could see a fire fight between men of the 27<sup>th</sup> and a pocket of Japs who had been cut off, but were trying to break out of their trap.

While the Wolfhounds two sister regiments cleared the approaches on both flanks, the 27th maintained pressure directly northward.

On 15 Feb., Easy Co. was ordered to patrol as far north as Lumboy. With their right flank screened by Btn. Intel., the combat patrol moved north and contacted an enemy reinforced platoon south of Lumboy. George Co. was then ordered to seize Lumboy Bridge intact and put a block on the highway.

In the next week, 21 Feb., the 1 and 2 Btns. were assigned three objectives, in this immediate phase to attack the Caraballos, and, on 21 Feb., ~~Abk Co. was ordered to attack~~ <sup>Abk Co. was ordered to attack</sup> seize and hold the first two

...instances of Route 5 to reach the Japanese army's last pocket of resistance in the Philippines.

By Tracy L. Derks

**F**ebuary 24, 1945, was a day of foundrylike heat in the Philippines, and the men of Company B, 27th Regiment, were hunkered down on a bare, sun-drenched hillside, fighting for the scrap of dirt stretch-

...tountains of dirt as machine-gun bullets chewed away at the GIs. Less than a mile from the gravel road they were fighting for, these men of the 1st Battalion had walked into a whipsaw of Japanese resistance. Mopping up Japanese General Tomoyuki Yamashita's 14th Area Army in its northern Luzon mountain bastion had turned deadly for the soldiers of the 25th "Tropic Lightning" Infantry Division.

The slope bristled with the enemy's defenses, concentrated around a series of foxholes manned with light and heavy machine guns. These Japanese strongpoints commanded the grassy hillsides along the eastern edges of Route 5, while to the west of the two-lane road, the wooded slopes were laced with intricate defenses. The Japanese meant to contest every step of the 25th Division's advance up Route 5 to Balate Pass, the gateway to the Cagayan Valley and the rear of the Imperial Japanese Army.

The GIs of the 27th Regiment, veterans of Guadalcanal, had no illusions about the cost of taking this high ground. Looking through the shimmering heat toward the flashes of enemy gunfire, the soldiers accepted that they were in a meat grinder, slugging away in a forgotten tropical hell just to keep alive—and to keep their buddies alive. As Private "Ace" Barton of Company B recalled: "You feared not keeping up your end of things worse than you feared death.... There was always some guy that would have the guts to get up and go, and you felt compelled to follow him!"

Staff Sergeant Raymond H. Cooley of Company B was such a man. With his squad pinned down under that curtain of machine-gun fire, Cooley crawled forward and eliminated a machine-gun nest with a well-placed grenade. He then continued his solitary advance, scrambling his way toward a second automatic weapon that was laying down a vicious fire. He dropped grenades down "spiderholes" he came across, easing the pounding his unit was taking with each Japanese soldier he killed.

Spurred by Cooley's attack, men from his platoon charged forward to help as the sergeant neared the remaining machine-gun nest. Cooley readied another grenade, waiting to whip it into the enemy emplacement at the last possible moment. Before he could throw the grenade, six Japanese soldiers scrambled from undetected lairs to attack his squad.

Cooley had no time to find a new target. His men, locked in hand-to-hand combat with the enemy, were all around him. He could not get rid of the grenade without blasting them. Mere seconds before the explosion, Cooley clutched the grenade to his body and turned away from the fight.

The grenade slammed chunks of searing metal into Cooley's belly and ripped off his right hand. His exposed bowels poured out of the wounds in his stomach as blood ran from his destroyed wrist. But his sacrifice saved the squad; not one of Cooley's men was killed in the melee that had cost the sergeant so dearly.

The men of Company B exploited the hole Cooley had punched through the Japanese lines. His squad rolled

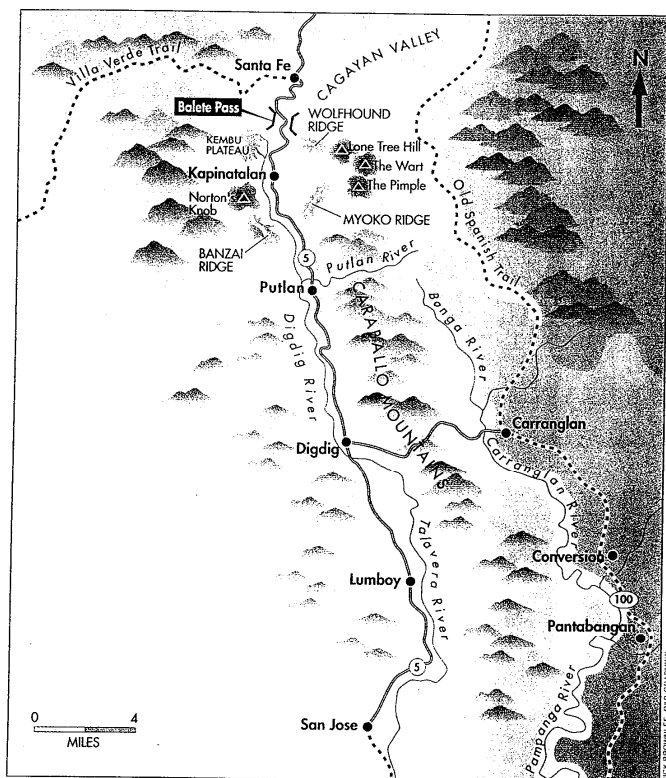


U.S. NAVAL HISTORICAL CENTER



U.S. NAVAL HISTORICAL CENTER

**Left:** Troops of the 25th "Tropic Lightning" Infantry Division move toward Santa Fe, Luzon, on June 1, 1945. By seizing Santa Fe, the 25th cut off Japanese General Tomoyuki Yamashita's supply lines, ending Japanese resistance in the Philippines. **Above:** A soldier of the 161st Regimental Combat Team (RCT), 25th Division, on alert for Japanese troops in the hills of Luzon in March 1945.



While the Tropic Lightning advanced up Route 5 toward Balete Pass and Yamashita's mountain bastion in northern Luzon, the 33rd Division fought a holding action in the western mountains, and the 32nd Division battled its way up the Villa Verde Trail toward Santa Fe.

up the hill and cracked through enemy resistance in the vicinity. Medics moving forward with the battalion managed to save Cooley despite his ghastly wounds. Six months later, Cooley received the Medal of Honor.

The strongpoint that Sergeant Cooley helped to reduce was situated north and west of Lumboy, a barrio straddling Route 5, the major north-south artery for northern Luzon. Route 5 wound over and through the razorback ridges, jungle-choked ravines and craggy summits of the Caraballo Mountains. In late February 1945, the road took on strategic importance when Lt. Gen. Walter Krueger, U.S. Sixth Army commander, began his push against the largest concentration of Japanese remaining on Luzon, the Shobu Group, which was holed up in the Caraballo. This campaign, vital to victory in the Philippines, has been largely overlooked by history, though some of the bloodiest fighting on the islands took place in the mountains of Luzon.

After the Sixth Army landed on Lingayen Gulf beaches in January, General Yamashita withdrew the bulk of his 14th Area Army, a force of more than 170,000 men, into the island's northern mountains. Yamashita, one of the greatest minds in the Japanese military, was willing to concede the Central Plains and the city of Manila in favor of more defensible positions in the mountains. Yamashita was a realist. His plans revolved not around defeating his enemy but instead on holding U.S. forces in the Philippines, thereby buying time for the preparation of defenses on Japan itself.

Yamashita decided the disposition of his army after he had determined that the American forces would concentrate their main attack on Route 5. The road ran from the south, over the mountain range and through a defile called Balete Pass, directly into the rear of his army. Anticipating that move, the general deployed his 10th Division in defensive strongpoints along the mountain-jungle road.

Yamashita would ultimately be proved correct in his prediction of American moves, but only after the Sixth Army had exhausted its other options. General Krueger had only the 33rd, 32nd and 25th divisions with which to reduce Yamashita's stronghold. Krueger had envisioned sending the 33rd into the western region of the mountains, aiming at Yamashita's army headquarters at Baguio. That plan was soon reduced to a holding action because the terrain and the enemy's defenses kept the 33rd Division from achieving decisive results.

Next, the Americans shifted their attention southeast of the Baguio front, attempting to strike over the tortuous Villa Verde Trail to the crossroads town of Santa Fe. Seizure of Santa Fe would have secured the head of the Cagayan Valley and cut Yamashita off from his supply source. However, the battle along the Villa Verde devolved into a series of bloody frontal assaults up hillsides honeycombed with Japanese emplacements. Although Krueger never gave up on the gallant 32nd, he needed faster results, so he turned to the 25th Division.

On February 21, Krueger ordered Maj. Gen. Charles Lowe Mullins Jr., commander of the 25th, to begin a thrust up Route 5. The mission: clear an 11-mile stretch of road from San Jose (the division's jumping-off point at the base of the mountains) to a barrio called Digidig. Krueger hoped the pressure from the 25th would distract the Japanese from their defense of the Villa Verde, where the Sixth Army commander still expected the 32nd to break through and take Santa Fe.

Positioned along the northern rim of the Central Plains, the 25th was stretched on a line running along the foot of the Caraballo from northwest to southeast. The 161st Regiment was ordered to secure the division's left flank—a duty that entailed the GIs' slugging over Japanese-infested mountains to the west of Route 5. The 27th Regimental Combat Team (RCT) was to apply pressure along the center of the division's line, directly up Route 5, tying down any Japanese in the area. The maneuvering force of the division was to be the 35th Regiment, sweeping east and north in a flanking move along the division's right.

After a bloody battle for the Lumboy hill mass, Colonel James L. Dalton, commander of the 161st, had his men in position to start the push. During the battle, the Americans encountered Japanese defensive caves, tunnel networks dug into the mountainsides that permitted enemy forces to strike from the protected positions. In the battle for the hill mass, Dalton's troops flushed out one such cave by using a flame thrower. The flamethrower operator angled his way up to the cave,

then poured in his synthetic hell. Twenty-six Japanese came bolting from the entrance. Waiting riflemen picked them off. A 27th enemy soldier attempted to escape through a back exit, but the flamethrower operator, though out of juice, used his weapon as a club, clouting the would-be escapee to death.

The 27th RCT, in the center, had the unenviable job of engaging the Japanese, keeping them busy but not pushing so hard as to frighten them out of the trap the flanking 35th was attempting to spring. The rifle companies butted their heads against fixed positions, while reconnaissance men like Eugene "Buddy" Parsons penetrated behind enemy lines to discover Japanese strength. Reconnaissance squads were ordered to move into the jungles along Route 5 to search out enemy emplacements and personnel, then return to friendly lines with the information.

Early in the mountain campaign, Parsons was returning from a mission when GIs from his own regiment opened up on the reconnaissance squad. Parsons had radioed his position before trying to cross the 27th's line, but someone had dropped the ball. The line was not notified, and Parsons watched as his best friend went down, killed by American bullets.

Troopers from the 27th faced the Japanese, straddling the road. On the right, Colonel Stanley "Swede" Larsen sent his men dashing up a jungle path called Route 100 to take a series of barrios—Pantabangan, Conversion and Carranglan. The 35th Regiment was to head west and pounce on Digidig from behind, trapping the force the 27th had pinned down on the road.

The regiment captured Carranglan and held it, despite a harrowing nighttime attack by the Japanese on February 26. On the afternoon of March 2, Larsen ordered Companies B, K and L to attack Digidig. Despite stubborn resistance, the Americans secured the barrio by the following morning.

The first portion of the battle for Balete Pass had come off without a hitch. Things had gone so well for the division that on March 2—the day General Douglas MacArthur returned to Corregidor and declared the Philippines operation complete except for mopping up—General Krueger reshuffled the division's zone of operations to include Putlan, a barrio 11,000 yards north of Digidig.

Confronting the 25th Division was a force called the Bambang Branch of the 14th Area Army, commanded by Maj. Gen. Harou Konuma, the handpicked choice of Yamashita. Konuma was not unduly alarmed by his enemy's quick stab into the heart of his defenses. He had the Shobu Group's 10th Division well dug in north of Digidig, and he had taken the precaution of reinforcing it with remnants of the 26th Division. The Japanese web of defenses was well-planned and positioned for optimum strength. General Konuma had issued orders that read: "Positions will not be yielded to the enemy even though you die. Our only path is victory or death; therefore, defend

to the last man. Those who retreat without orders will be decapitated."

The 35th Regiment was again to be the 25th Division's hammer, arcing up the Old Spanish Trail (a continuation of Route 100) and slamming into the Japanese left flank, pushing it against the 27th and 161st regiments and destroying it. The 35th jumped off on March 6. On March 7, elements of the 35th Infantry's 1st Battalion reached the outskirts of Putlan and made ready to take the bridge there.

Mullins had ordered the 35th to seize the Putlan bridge "at all costs." The Japanese commanded the crossing from a ridge on the northern edge of the battlefield. As the 1st Battalion advanced across flat, open terrain, the enemy poured down grenades and small-arms fire. Troops who made it to the bridge were pinned down by a mortar barrage.

Nineteen-year-old machine-gunner Paul Baehr found himself under the bridge when the mortar rounds started thudding in on his position. Along with his ammunition carrier, Baehr had set up his gun to provide covering fire for the men in his company. The Japanese defenders realized the importance of Baehr's position and began zeroing in to silence him.

The shells came closer, and finally the ammunition carrier yelled that the two of them had to get out of

*Infantry of the 161st Regiment cover a Japanese cave near Balete Pass as a phosphorus grenade detonates inside on April 19, 1945. During the fighting on Luzon, the Americans encountered a network of defensive caves that allowed the Japanese to attack from protected positions.*



## Tomoyuki Yamashita, Philippines Commander

He was called the "Tiger of Malaya" for capturing Singapore. He was branded a beast for atrocities committed under his watch in the Philippines. General Tomoyuki Yamashita was both one of Japan's greatest soldiers and the man on whom Filipinos focused their hatred of the Japanese. Yamashita's sense of duty and his brilliance in performing that duty explain the two perceptions of him.

Late in 1941, Yamashita was given the responsibility of seizing Singapore from the British. He landed high up on the Malayan Peninsula and maneuvered through jungles and over mountains to assault Singapore from the land side of the city. The British had believed that such a feat would be unlikely and therefore had not prepared for an attack. Consequently, they were forced to surrender.

After the fall of Singapore, Yamashita was exiled to Manchuria for political reasons. The general spent the next two years in a backwater of the war, emerging only after the American seizure of Saipan doomed his political enemy, Prime Minister Hideki Tojo. Then Yamashita was given the important post of commander of the Philippines.

Yamashita envisioned clashing with the Americans on the Central Plains of Luzon, bringing on the decisive battle of the war. General Douglas MacArthur thwarted this design, however, by going ashore on the island of Leyte. The Japanese were forced to respond on ground of the Americans' choosing. Yamashita wanted to fight only a delaying action on the island, but his superiors ordered him to commit his best forces to battle in the jungles of Leyte.

His finest troops wasted on Leyte, Yamashita had to come up with a different strategy to defend Luzon. Instead of a decisive battle before the gates of Manila, Yamashita now envisioned a delaying action in the mountains. The general anticipated a long campaign that would provide the home islands with time to prepare for the inevitable American invasion. Thus, he was willing to abandon Manila to the Americans for the opportunity to lure them into the mountains. But super patriots of the Imperial Japanese Navy who were not under the general's command defended every street in Manila.

The actions of these Japanese sailors, who disobeyed the orders of a superior officer, led to the destruction of Manila. Yamashita, some say, knew nothing of the butchery inflicted by the navy zealots. Nonetheless, Manila burned.

Yamashita surrendered to American forces in the northern reaches of Luzon. Filipinos clamored for revenge, and Yamashita made the perfect scapegoat. He was executed on February 23, 1946, for atrocities committed in the Philippines. He was both the Tiger of Malaya and, at least to the Filipino people, a beast to be destroyed. T.L.D.

there. Baehr hoisted his weapon over his shoulder and dashed for a crater already full of GIs, his ammunition carrier right behind him. The two GIs' frantic run for cover attracted the attention of Japanese snipers. Baehr dove headfirst into the makeshift foxhole as bullets whizzed around him. A second later his partner was at the rim of the foxhole, but he hesitated before jumping in and was hit in the spine by a Japanese bullet. He died two days later.

The battalion commander sent back a succinct evaluation of the fighting around the bridge—"Rough." The 35th had lost 30 men in the assault and still did not have the bridge. That night the Japanese blew it up.

Purtan was soon cleared. The 25th Division quickly achieved its other objectives, though the 35th Regiment's push up the Old Spanish Trail was halted due to stiffening resistance. Tropic Lightning had again exceeded General Krueger's expectations, and he extended the objectives to include the vital Balete Pass.

Twice the 25th had outmaneuvered entrenched positions. The American command expected more easy victories along Route 5. Accordingly, General Mullins kept the regimental assignments similar to the duties the three combat groups had already performed. Again, Dalton's 161st would attack along the ridges west of Route 5, while the 27th remained close to the road and the 35th tried an end run around Myoko Ridge.

The 25th Division was engaged in a series of preliminary actions for much of the remainder of March.

Those actions would lead to a push for Kapinatalan, the last barrier on Route 5, which the division could use as a jumping-off point for its assault on the pass. The attacks against the Japanese positions met stiffening resistance. The GIs would seize an area after an artillery barrage, move equipment and personnel forward and then discover that the area was still crawling with Japanese. As Major Frank Reutlinger observed, "There were no front lines in that campaign."

In the middle of March, north of Putlan, the assault squad of Company I, 27th Regiment, was sweeping one of the innumerable draws in the area when they came across the bodies of an American officer, a backoaka man and a trooper. Sergeant Ernie Lucas was told by his lieutenant that the Japanese had two machine guns set up in the draw and were shooting anyone who set foot around the bend.

Lucas was told to prepare a satchel charge while the rest of the assault squad inched forward. Jesse Delgado was the first up the draw. He was hit immediately. The lieutenant ran up to rescue him, and the wounded soldier said: "Don't move me. I feel good. Just let me roll." Then he died. Lucas and his squad took out the machine guns and cleared the draw. They were then ordered to flush out another draw a few hundred feet north of their newly won position.

The most fiercely contested position in the middle reaches of the Caraballos was Norton's Knob. The hill, named after the first American soldier killed there, had to be taken so that the 161st RCT

could stay in step with the rest of the division. The 1st Battalion surprised the Japanese on the hill by flanking them on a secondary ridge. The Japanese appreciated the importance of Norton's Knob, and they counter-attacked the hill and the secondary ridge repeatedly on the night of March 21-22. Companies C and L managed to beat them off each time, however. The tired troopers christened the area Banzai Ridge.

One reason the Japanese had been able to hang on so tenaciously to their positions was a lack of American artillery support. The division looked to the 89th and the 90th field artillery battalions for help, but the Americans' big guns could do little to root out the well-dug-in enemy. Then one of Mullins' officers discovered two idle 90mm anti-aircraft guns on the Central Plains. He commandeered them, and the 25th now had weapons to devastate Japanese pillboxes. With their flat trajectory, the 90mm guns could punch out the enemy at ranges of up to 5,000 yards.

The division's maneuverings led to the capture of Kapinatalan on April 21. Then Mullins and his regimental commanders could use the information from captured Japanese maps to plan effective means to clear out the remaining enemy and take Balete Pass. There would be no more wide sweeps around the enemy. The order of the day was head-on, chin-down fighting.

Gains were measured in feet—and lives. The 25th suffered from jungle diseases and bone weariness. The men of the Tropic Lightning Division had been on the

line since January 10, and morale was suffering. B.L. Metz, an artilleryman and a veteran of Pearl Harbor and Guadalcanal, could take the night assaults, the banzai attacks and the constant sniper fire, but the accuracy of the Japanese artillery wore him down. During one barrage he landed in a foxhole with what he thought was a dead man. He pulled the body on top of him for protection. It was only after the barrage lifted that Metz realized that the man was not dead, only unconscious.

Mullins had the 27th Regiment launch a series of attacks along Myoko Ridge, a hill mass that dominated the entire area south of Balete Pass. These assaults, across dismal spots such as "The Wart" and "The Pimple," enabled Mullins to pound the pass from the east. With his goal a tantalizing few miles away, Mullins brought up tanks from the 775th Tank Battalion. The tanks were forced to move along ridges so narrow that portions of their treads hung over the edge of the heights. The tanks provided the Americans with a psychological edge in the fighting. The Japanese were devastated by the appearance of tanks where they were not supposed to be.

While the Japanese tried to cope with the presence of American tanks along Myoko Ridge without the benefit of anti-tank weapons, the commander of the 27th sent out a patrol from Company G—Ray Kues, J.T. Jones and others—to find ground from which to launch an attack on Lone Tree Hill, the major land feature before Balete Pass. What Kues and Jones found was a hole in the Japanese defenses large enough to cram a platoon through. A platoon from Company G then advanced and captured the ground at the base of the hill without being detected. The move was a daring one, for Lone Tree Hill lay 2,000 yards northwest of the division's farthest penetration.

On April 25, the 27th's entire 2nd Battalion launched an assault on Lone Tree Hill. The enemy troops were taken by surprise and died in their spiderholes after offering only scattered resistance. The 27th consolidated its gains by clearing the ground between Lone Tree Hill and Myoko Ridge to provide supply and evacuation routes for the battalion.

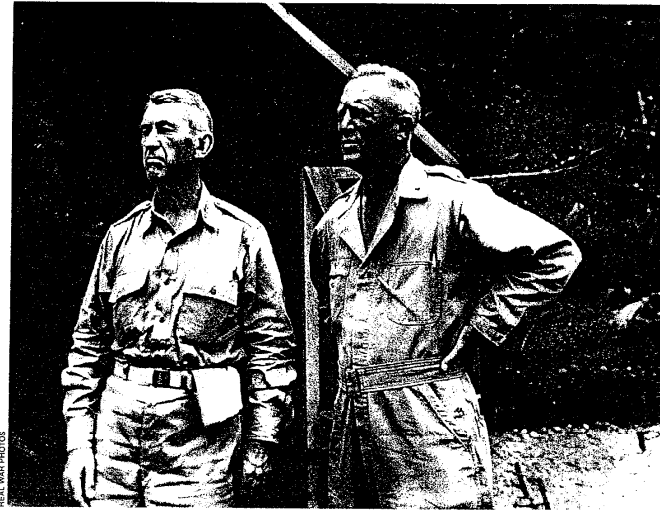
Despite those American maneuvers along the high ground, the Japanese never halted their night attacks. Solitary foraging parties and full-scale attacks kept the men of the 25th edgy during the tropical darkness. Buddy Parsons recalled the scene at the 27th's headquarters when one of Yamashita's soldiers was cornered in the dark hours of early morning. Parsons and other headquarters staff surrounded the hungry soldier, who fired wildly as the Americans closed in. A regimental interpreter was summoned. Parsons watched as the interpreter crawled toward the desperate soldier. The interpreter called out several times and actually had the frightened Japanese soldier calmed down, but when the interpreter went too far too

fast, the soldier fired on him, wounding him in the buttocks. Parsons and the other Americans opened up on the soldier, ending his desperate gamble.

Far more dangerous than the hungry, dispirited raiders were nighttime banzai attacks like the one that Ernie Lucas of Company I, 27th Regiment, experienced during the fighting on Lone Tree Ridge. One moonless night in May, the men of Company I could sense an attack coming, and they had prepared for it by digging in and laying out their weapons of choice. It was close to midnight when the hairs on the back of Lucas' neck began to stand up. He could hear the plink-plink sound of pebbles falling around his foxhole. The Japanese were tossing pebbles at the American positions in an effort to get the GIs to reveal themselves.

"Then I heard a Jap yell 'Banzai,' and all hell broke loose," recalled Lucas. The Americans used their rifles and grenades to hold off the Japanese. When the men

*Below: Sergeant Ernie Lucas' squad of Company I, 27th Regiment, during the Balete Pass campaign. Bottom: Lieutenant General Walter Krueger (left), commander of the U.S. Sixth Army, and Maj. Gen. Charles Love Mullins, Jr., commander of the 25th Division, watch the fighting in Balete Pass on May 11, 1945.*



JANUARY 1998 WORLD WAR II 43

Walter Krueger 60, CO. "Moon" Mullins CO of 25



U.S. ARMY HISTORICAL CENTER

*Troops of the 161st RCT move forward behind an M-4 Sherman tank as they attack entrenched Japanese on a hill near Balete Pass on March 27, 1945. The pass was secured in May, and Santa Fe fell soon after.*

of Company I ran out of fragmentation grenades they switched to phosphorous grenades, frying their foes as they charged the American positions. Even after the fight petered out, none of the men of Company I slept. Occasionally they would roll a phosphorous grenade down the hill, just to make sure. The next morning dead Japanese were spotted no more than six feet from some American foxholes.

As the GIs of the 27th were securing Lone Tree Ridge, the 161st, under its new commander, Colonel Vic Johnson, launched an attack on the Kembu Plateau, a Japanese stronghold on the west side of Route 5, in order to secure the division's left flank. The plateau was easily defended high ground so laced with Japanese strongpoints, supported by effective artillery fire, that it took the 161st four days to clean out the enemy.

With the taking of Lone Tree Ridge, only the long slope of Wolfhound Ridge lay between the 27th and Balete Pass. While the 161st was sealing Japanese tunnels on the Kembu Plateau and the 35th was busy slugging it out directly up Route 5, Ernie Lucas and the men of the 27th were doggedly grinding on toward the pass. A patrol from Company I first reached the pass on May 9. The pass was not secured, however, until elements of the 35th cleared a nearby draw of the last of the Japanese resistance there.

Two days after the pass had been declared secure, Lucas and his squad were pinned down by sniper fire as they crossed the reverse slope of one of the ridges in the area. The men fell to the ground, seeking shelter where they could. When Lucas went to the aid of one of his squad, the sergeant felt a stinging sensation in

his chest. A Japanese bullet had struck him just below the throat and exited from his back, millimeters from his spine. He would not recover from the wound until months after the war had ended.

The taking of Balete Pass opened the Cagayan Valley to the Americans, and the 25th Division soon took Santa Fe, its objective since February. Yamashita was outflanked, his food supply beyond reach. The boys of Tropic Lightning had cut through the Caraballo Mountains against the best that remained of the Japanese army in the Philippines. As they were pulled out to prepare for the first wave of attacks against the Japanese mainland, the men of the 25th could be proud that their victory had broken the back of Japanese resistance on Luzon.

The sacrifice and heroism of the 25th rarely receives more than a footnote in history. Its accomplishment is obscured by MacArthur's pronouncement that the Philippines had been secured as early as March. The 25th had a victory in a war that trumpeted victories, and yet its dead and wounded remain largely forgotten.

*First-time contributor Tracy L. Derks is writing a youth novel about the American Civil War Battle of New Market. For further reading, try: The Approach to the Philippines, by Robert Ross Smith; and The 25th Division and World War II, by Robert F. Kadevitz.*

**IFT** To read more about the fight for Luzon, go to [www.thehistorynet.com](http://www.thehistorynet.com) on the World Wide Web and see "Manila: How Open Was This Open City?" by John W. Whitman, which will appear beginning the week of December 15, 1997.



objectives while C Co. was to seize the third. Second Btn. would then secure 1 Btn.'s supply route.

I Corps issued FO# 12, 21 Feb., assigning the Tropic Lightning the mission of advancing north to secure the line Carranglan-Digdig and so secure and maintain the uninterrupted use of Hwy. 5 from San Jose to Digdig. The 1 Btn., Wolfhounds, moved into an assembly area east of Hwy. 5 and was given its assignment (FO 8, 27 Rgt.), the west Btn., was astride Hwy. 5 some 1800 yds. north of Rosaldo, and the 3 Btn. relieved the 1 Btn., in reserve, at the Ag. School. Div. had discovered two other possible routes north in it's sector of ops. The first was a narrow trail running from Lupao, on Rte. 8 nine miles northwest of San Jose while the second was an ill-defined trail



When the 27<sup>th</sup> reached the end of the concrete road, near barrio Rosaldo running north thru the Carraballos, west to Rte. 5 and joining the first trail near Puncan.

The Wolfhounds began their assault northward, on 23 Feb., and encountered bitter resistance, especially in the high ground abutting the west side of Hwy. 5. It took the Rgt. until 27 Feb. to clear the Lumboy area. For heroism, on 24 Feb., during the Lumboy attack, S/Sgt. Ray Cooley, B/27, was awarded the CMH, but the resistance began to collapse 28 Feb., throughout the area.

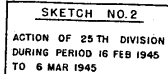
(Raymond H. Cooley, B Co., 27 Rgt., 24 Feb. '45, GO 77, 10 Sept. '45 from his citation. CMH Library, Vol 1, A-L) Cooley was a pltn guide in an assault on a camouflaged entrenchment defended by machine guns, rifles and mortars. When his men were pinned down by two Jap machine

guns he voluntarily advanced under fire to within 20 yds of one of the guns and attacked with a handgrenade. The enemy, tho, threw thegrenade back before it could explode. Arming a second grenade, he held it for several seconds of the fusing period and then hurled it into the Jap position, where it exploded instantaneously, destroying the gun and crew. He then moved towards the remaining guns, throwing grenades into enemy foxholes as he advanced. Inspired by his actions, the first squad of his platoon joined him. After he had armed another grenade and was preparing to throw it into the second machine gun position, six enemy rushed at him. Knowing he could not dispose of the armed grenade without injuring his comrades, because of the intermingling in close combat of the men of his platoon and the enemy in the fight which ensued, he deliberately covered the grenade with his body and was mortally wounded.

(Les Thomas) "It was in this area that we saw the enemy blowing himself up with his own grenades and it was my first exposure to this practice. Putlan turned out to be a long day of infamy! Then the worst thing happened - our beer cache was hit by mortar, or arty fire. I really hated those Japs. There was good cover at Putlan; but, every time a bulldozer pushed a tank into firing position, the Nips would start dropping that bad stuff onto us. We wondered if the road was safer for them?! Hot food was really hard to come by and to make it worse our mess sgt. got hit in the face by a sniper. The bullet passed thru both his jaws and didn't hit any teeth. He said it was a million dollar wound, and further, it had brushed his teeth real good. At Digdig we had to be thankful for the 35 Rgt., Cacti, since they were in a better offensive position than we were."

Between the third, or final objective, for the Wolfhounds, during this phase of the ops, just north of Lumboy, the 161, on the left, or west of Hwy. 5 and the 35 Rgt., on the east, converged toward Digdig. The Wolfhounds met bitter resistance on the west side of Hwy. 5 and

Main Supply Road



hill was taken, the enemy arty dropped heavy concentrations on the Regiment. At night the Japs infiltrated our positions and the pressure from the resistance was incessant. Finally, on 2 Mar., the two Btns. succeeded in taking their final objective. Even so, they were forced to repel several counterattacks. On 27 Feb., the Div. CO ordered King Co., Wolfhounds, in reserve at the Ag School, to proceed to Rizal by motor, then north by foot along the Rizal-Pantagangan Rd. The next day the combined attack from north and south broke up a road block and forced the enemy withdrawl from this sticky position. The 1 and 2 Btns. attacked and captured strongpoints 5 and 6 from which they were in position to assault the final objective.

On 28 Feb., the 3 Btn., Wolfhounds, less King Co., had been ordered out of reserve and attached to the 35 Rgt. to maintain the security of the long MSR\*  
of the long MSR

MOVIE IN THE CARABALLO

Early in Mar. 1945, the Jap Commander on Luzon realized that he could not successfully launch his counter attack against the northern flank of the 6 Army. As an alternative he chose to concentrate his forces for the defense of the approaches to the mountain stronghold in the Caraballo Mt. area and thus secure what was then the breadbasket for the Jap forces in the north - the fertile Cagayan Valley.

A careful study of the terrain and commo net in northern Luzon led the CG, 6 Army, to decide that Balete Pass was the link which, if broken, would open up the chain of strong enemy defenses in the Caraballo Mt.s. The Tropic Lightning, located in the San Jose area was, again, in the logical tactical position to make this drive and was selected to make the attack.

The rapid success of the 25 Div. in its drive to Digdig prompted Gen. Swift, I Corps C.O., to extend the Division's zone of responsibility and, on 2 Mar., he directed the Div. to push six mi. north along Route 5 from Digdig to Putlan. Since mopping-up ops were largely completed by the evening of 5 Mar., in the Puncan-Digdig sector, Mullins planned the same procedure for Putlan. The 161 would attack on the west flank, up Rt. 5, the 27 Rgt. would make a parallel attack east of the highway, and the 35 would stage a wide envelopment.

(Tony Crnko) "After we left Div. reserve, we trucked 31 miles for Pantabangan, on 2 Mar., and set up a Btn. defense. The next day we moved to Caraglin, 20 miles to the northwest. From there we went to Digdig, 5 Mar., by truck. The 6 Mar., we were attacked by 6 Japs which we repulsed - killing a total of thirty for that day. B Adams was WTA during this encounter."



the 25<sup>th</sup> Division really began its drive through the mountains.

Wolfhound ops, during the period 3-5 Mar., consisted of strong patrol actions to clear ravines and isolated pockets of the enemy. During this time, 25-35 Japs a day were disposed of.

(Ernie Lucas) "Our 3 Btn was trucked through the rice paddies to San Jose and given a couple days rest. Item Co. sent word they had seven Nips in a Filipino bomb shelter and we, of the Assault Platoon, were pegged. We loaded up and away we went. There was only one entrance to the shelter - even though it had two rooms. A machine gun was being fired intermittently to keep the Nips pinned inside. Lt. Kaza and Fabio tried to talk the Japs out but, he had no success. We drove a stake on the left side of the gun barrel so it would cover 3/4 of the opening and then we would know just how close we could get without being hit by our own fire. We circled around to the blind side and Kaza popped a WP grenade and tossed it in. When the smoke started



rolling out I shoved in the satchel charge and we beat a hasty retreat. The gunner opened up again until the blast tore the roof off. All the Nips died from concussion.

"Most of the outfits

and the 27<sup>th</sup> slugged its way up Highway 5, in the center, were moving north; but they loaded us up and moved us south-southwest to a bridge near Tarlac, which someone had tried to blow up. We guarded that bridge for two weeks without any trouble. Some nearby outfit had a movie screen up and we took advantage of it when we weren't on guard duty. Some of the guys said two Nips were captured watching the movies; but, I could never confirm this. One day we were paid a visit by either Gen. Swift, or Mullins (can't recall which) but he acted like one of the boys. We

~~SECRET~~

RBR:

Auth: CG 25 Div  
Init: *RBR*  
Date: 05 Mar 45

FIELD ORDER)  
NUMBER 9)

HEADQUARTERS  
Twenty-Seventh Infantry  
San Jose, P I, 5 Mar 45

MAPS: LUZON 1:500000.

- 1 a See Intelligence Annex:
  - b (1) 25th Div continues in Z and secures uninterrupted use of Hwy 5 to PUTLAN.
  - (2) 161st Inf (less 1-Bn) Adv in Z to P/L RED prepared to continue Adv on Div order, destroys Jap forces W of Hwy 5 in Z, and protects W flank of 25th Div.
  - (3) 35th Inf establishes block Vic PUTLAN w/1-Bn utilizing MARINGALO R valley and PUTLAN R valley as axis of Adv, seizes and secures PUTLAN BRIDGE intact; reconnoiters in force up SPANISH TRAIL and trails E and NE of CARRANGLAN to Div Rcn Line, and protects E flank of 25th Div.
  - (4) 25th Rcn Trp secures line UMINGAN - SAN JOSE - RIZAL - BONGABON - CABU by Mtzd patrolling from Vic AGRICULTURAL SCHOOL, establishes contact w/32d Div N of UMINGAN and 632d TD Bn Vic CABU, and protects SE flank of 25th Div
  - (5) 1-Bn 161st Inf in Div Res Vic AGRICULTURAL SCHOOL.
- 2 27th Inf: Adv in Z to P/L RED prepared to continue Adv on Div order; destroy Jap forces E of Hwy 5 in Z; and sweep and maintain Hwy 5 as far Fwd as tactical situation permits. Hwy 5 inclusive to 27th Inf and 161st Inf.
- 3 a 3d Bn (w/3d Plat Cn Co Atchd):
  - (1) Relieve 3d Bn 35th Inf immediately..
  - (2) Commence Rcn and Combat patrolling to N in 27th Z to P/L RED at once. If no resistance is met, occupy P/L RED.
  - b 1st Bn:
    - (1) Relieve 1-Co of 2d Bn 35th Inf on 5 Mar 45; relieve remainder of 2d Bn 35th Inf on 6 Mar 45.
    - (2) Leave 1-Co on high ground at (83.5-24.0) w/mission of patrolling to N and E.
  - c 1-Co 2d Bn: Occupy high ground at (83.5-24.0) to block Hwy-5 and maintain bridge guard at (86.05-15.05.)
  - d Regtl Res Vic PUNCAN:
    - (1) 2d Bn: Move to assembly area on 6 Mar 45 after 1st Bn clears Rd.
    - (2) Cn Co.
    - (3) Co D 98th Cml Bn (-.)
    - (4) AT Co.
    - (5) Assault Gun Plat 775th Tk Bn: Move to PUNCAN 7 Mar 45. Plat Ldr to meet S-3 27th Inf at present location 2d Bn 35th Inf at 1000, 6 Mar 45.

~~SECRET~~

FO9 cont'd

- e Co B 65th Engr Bn: Initiate immediate Rcn for Rds over route of Adv of the 3d Bn.
- x Order of March:  
Units move by Ln to PUNCAN 7 Mar 45, leading unit entering Hwy 5 0800. Time interval: 30 Min:
  - LT Co
  - Regtl CP and Hq Co
  - Co C 25th Medics
  - Co D 98th Cml Bn (-)
  - Cn Co
- 4
  - a DP present location SAN JOSE.
  - b Personnel Section and Fwd Echelon equipment moves immediately to DP, SAN JOSE.
  - c Other Adm details: Same.
- 5
  - a Current SOI 25th Inf Div.
  - b CP's:
    - (1) 27th Inf: Closes SAN JOSE, opens PUNCAN 1200, 7 Mar.
    - (2) Others : Rpt when established or displaced.

LINDEMAN  
Commanding

OFFICIAL: *Payne*

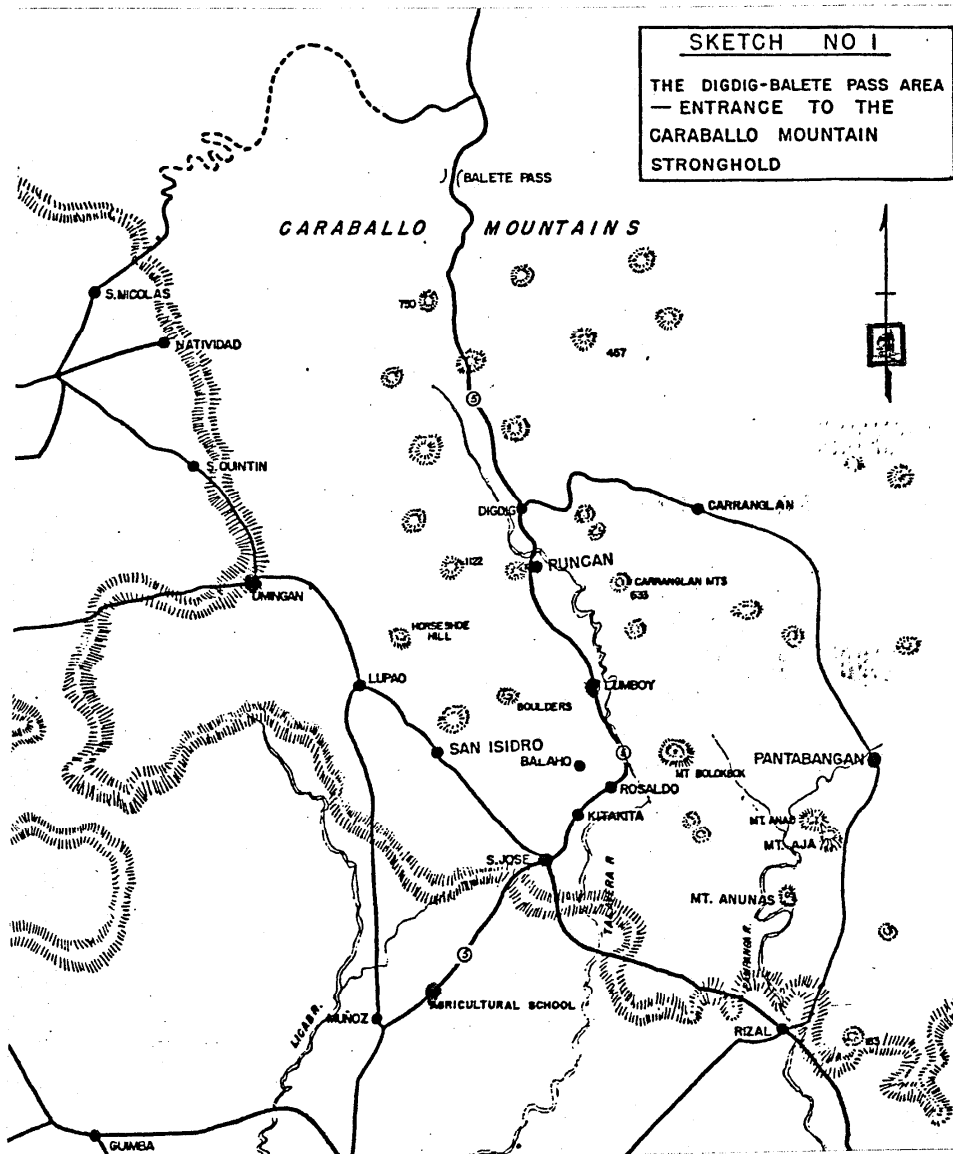
PAYNE  
S-3

Dist: Special.

~~SECRET~~

C-xiv

"bought some rice balls (just like popcorn balls) from the local women and rode some caribou (some tame and some wild). It was a great break from the old routine.



"We returned to San Jose and caught up with the 3 Btn. We moved up Hwy. 5 and then turned right and after circling and crossing a shallow, wide river we got stopped cold. I don't know where we were and Kaza



put the AP guarding a water point the engr.s had set up. There were ~up  
50 - 60 Filipinos around during the day, but, at night they would go  
across the river to a large cave dug in a hill. The small boys would  
put on little goggles and, with skinny spears, gigged what we called  
minnows to eat. We had orders not to fire unless we were certain  
it was Japs we were shooting at, or we were fired upon. We had our  
holes dug on this sand and rock bar and two men who ran the generator  
slept in a trailer. We asked them if they had their protective pos-  
ition dug and they said they didn't need one. About 0100, the next  
morning, we heard cracking of bamboo at the edge of the sand bar,  
about 175 ft. away. It would stop for a while and then start up again  
so we roused the guys in the trailer and told them there was  
something out there and to listen. The noises continued and two of our  
guys had instant foxhole buddies. Suddenly the engineers cut loose  
and, from the painful mooing, we knew what they had shot. At daybreak  
the Filipinos descended with their knives and, in a matter of minutes,  
there was only blood left on the sand. We about died with laughter  
until Kaza jumped in and tore our asses up. We assured him it had not  
been us so everybody was forgiven. In trying to place where we were,  
I recall Kaza saying we were backing up some of the Cacti Rgt.,  
probably near Carranglan on the Pampanga River.

"From there (3 or 5 Mar.?) we moved into Digdig from the east and  
we found a flat bed truck, tinkered with the engine until we got it  
going and then drove around a while until they made us push it over  
a cliff. We set up the perimeter for the night with a road block 50  
yds. out with a 37mm, several machine guns, and BARs back up, we  
settled down for the night. About 2400, eleven Japs were spotted  
crossing by the blown out bridge heading toward the block indian file.  
We could hear the AT crew saying "take the ball round out and put in  
canister"; however, it was defective and stuck in the barrel. By  
this time the Nips were close and their officer asked "You Americans?"

The gun crew said "You G.D. right!" and the block blew the whole bunch away in a matter of seconds. The next morning we thought they might have wanted to surrender - but, why try at night? And, who was going to risk the chance. The next night we moved 100 yds. north and set up another block; but, got only one Jap - carrying a machine gun barrel and two socks full of rice, in his pack. He must have fallen behind his buddies."

The 3 Btn., on 5 Mar., relieved the 3 Btn, 35 Rgt., and initiated aggressive recon north along the sector east of Hwy. 5 - this being the Wolfhounds Zone of Action. A block was established astride the highway and enemy stragglers attempting to break through during the night were unsuccessful. Three thousand yds. north of Digdig another block was established and patrols sent from this point to the north reported negative, or scattered contacts. On 7 Mar., Item Co. sent a strong combat patrol to the north and then followed after it. I Co. contacted a small enemy force in the barrio of Anabat, and after

routing the enemy, a road and river block was set up.

(Lucas) "We started moving up Hwy. 5 again and were about half-way to Putland Valley when Kaza, the old man - who now had command of Item Co., was at a meeting in



and stormed several large caves on the hill side beyond Digdig, came up and said he had a big job for us but he couldn't go along.

If we got into trouble he'd bring I Co. around to give us some help. The job was follow a Nip commo line, that ran west from the highway. Away we went with our scouts about 15 yds. apart and, being in charge, I was third and then Applegate, our BAR man, who had just become

eligible for rotation and was waiting for transportation to the rear. You know what happens in a lot of these situations, so I gave him my M1 and took his BAR. The commo line led into a thick bamboo forest and our 1st scout squated down, motioning me to come forward. As I moved beside him he pointed out a well worn path and we could see where the Nips had made several rooms, like hogans or teepees. We entered the first room and rocks were still warm where they had been fixing their meal and we could see the impressions from their bodies where they had slept the night before. Each room was similar. We moved out ever more alert in case of ambush - looking up every tree and checking every bamboo clump for give away signs. We were trying to be as quiet as possible - continuing for another 3-400 yds. - when the first scout signalled he was exiting the bamboo. We stopped to check things out and when the first scout stepped from the bamboo forest a couple monkeys started screaming and dashing for the nearest trees. It scared the billy hell out of us. We looked up and spotted our own men on Hwy. 5 - they saw us also, and Kaza hollered for us to come up when we could find a place to climb up. The Jap commo line had been cut and we never found any more of it. Oh yes, Applegate got out the next day."

Love Co., protecting the east flank of I CO., encountered no opposition so the high ground overlooking Putlan was reached by I Co. on 10 Mar., and the resistance gave way under light pressure.

(Tony Crnko) "On 8 Mar., we began pushing and advancing about three tough miles per day, thru hills and jungle, and managed to maintain that pace thru the 12th of Mar. Two days later the Jap mortar and arty was getting heavier and, on the 16th, Max Craig and Steingruber were wounded, at Putlan. Three days later we left Putlan for Puncan to set up a Btn. defense - I took a shot at a Jap with my pistol. The following day we moved by truck and then foot to releive How Co. in the foothills."

S E C R E T  
Auth: CG 25 Div  
Init: *[Signature]*  
Date: 11 Mar 45  
S E C R E T

RBR:

OPERATIONS MEMORANDUM)

H E A D Q U A R T E R S  
Twenty-Seventh Infantry  
Vic Funcan PI, 11 Mar 45

NUMBER F8)

MAPS: LUZON 1:50000; PHOTOMAP 1:10000.

- 1 3d Bn:
  - a Relieve 1st Bn 35th Inf.
  - b Move 1-Co N of PUTLAN R w/following missions:
    - (1) Clear out ravines leading to Hwy 5.
    - (2) Patrol toward MINULI.
    - (3) Upon enemy contact patrols will withdraw, and area will be bombarded w/Arty.
  - c Maintain Ln w/2d Bn 161st Inf at all times.
  - d Report location and unit designation of 35th Inf Co that will be guarding left flank.
- 2 2d Bn:

Be prepared to move in rear of 3d Bn on order of CG, 27th Inf.
- 3 1st Bn:

Div Res. Maintain present positions.
- 4 AT Co:

Provide local security for water points.

LINDEMAN  
Commanding

OFFICIAL: *[Signature]*  
PAYNE  
S-5

Dist: Special.

S - E - C - R - E - T

C-OM-vii

made contact in Putlan, and started mopping up the draws on the east side of the Hwy. On 11 Mar., King Co. Passed through L Co. to continue the advance, leaving L Co. the mission of cleaning out the resistance in Draws 1 and 2. A hill 1000 yds. north of Putlan was designated as K Co.'s objective, and resistance was met en route. After leaving a force to contain and eliminate this enemy, K Co. advanced to the immediate



Every draw, and gully along Highway 5 was honeycombed with caves and pillboxes which the 27<sup>th</sup> had to clean out.

south of its objective - where it met heavy resistance. On 13 Mar., L Co. completed the reduction of the stubborn pockets in Draws 1 & 2. The enemy put up bitter resistance at Draw 4 and the hill mass in K Co.'s area.

(Lucas) "The next day, the Assault Platoon flushed out this draw (Draw 4) from top to bottom and found no Japs; however, we found a large bamboo building about 12 ft. wide and 20 ft. long. We didn't know what its purpose was but we burned it down. We moved slowly and, while the 3 Btn. took some high ground, harassing fire continued to come from the



we went on up the hill to where a demolition crew was clearing the way for a tank.

draws.. Wojack and I were blasting the trees they needed out, so they could get a tank through and fire into the draws, with composition "C" and the tank officer and Lt. Kaza were standing four, or five feet from us trying to decide which

first round hit Kaza in the front left shoulder and came out the back <sup>with a bullet in the</sup> 216



Sgt. Moncrief Lt. Geo. Kaza  
KIA at Umingan - KIA at Balete  
Pass

of his right shoulder. I saw him drop and dove on top of him and, locking my arms and legs around him, started rolling off that spot while shots were still being fired. Other were hit, also, and guys started calling for medics. The Nip who shot Kaza was located in a tree in the draw, which put him on the same level with us. He had a straight line of fire onto the ridge. We don't know how many clips he got off before he was nailed. Others were killed and wounded, even our good Padre, Father Scannell (he had come up there with Bill Rutherford), was hit in the hand (He carried a side

arm, - but, that shot ended his combat time.) Lt. Kaza gained consciousness and told us he couldn't move his arms. He told me to take his watch so that his rugged Assault Team would have the time for guard duty that night. I still have it."

(Father John Scannell) "It was about 1200, on St. Patrick's Day, 1945, and there was a small pocket of resistance on the part of the enemy in a small canyon with



"Suddenly a shot rang out, and an officer fell. Moments later there was another shot, and an enlisted man screamed. A medic went to get the screaming dog but was killed, so the wounded man came in alone. It was here that Father Scannell was wounded and the man was found with an M.1 rifle.

"thick trees and vines and other jungle. The C.O. of K Co., Capt. Bob Leonard, was given the mission of cleaning out this area. When this was accomplished he would be relieved and would rejoin the rest of the outfit for a little rest. The campaigning had been very strenuous. I was with Capt. Leonard, at the K Co. C.P., when, following some rifle fire, I heard a shout for litter bearers. I told Capt. Leonard that I was going to run up and see what I could do to help. When I got there the jungle was very heavy - just like that in the Solomons. There was a small, or medium sized tank (M7?) which fired 105 mm shells and was in the timber when I arrived at K Co.'s CP. They were trying to situate it so the tank could rake the entire canyon with point blank fire. It had, however, become wedged between a couple trees and was unable to move. The Assault Platoon was called in and Lt. George Kaza with four enlisted men arrived with axes to cut down the pines. While this was going on Jap sniper fire hit Lt. Kaza and two enlisted men. The Lt. was the most seriously wounded and by the time I arrived the medics had already removed the Lt. (this rule of getting the most seriously wounded first is the procedure of triage). I offered to help carry out the second wounded trooper; but, the medics said they already had him. I said 'Okay, I'll help with the third wounded man.' and, as I gestured with my hand, I caught a bullet through it. I learned the meaning of shock and it's very difficult to describe. It can only be experienced. One of the medics gave me a shot of morphine and, almost at once, I felt relief. Every combat medic should have the DSC. Four were wounded, including myself, and a man on the litter was shot again, one medic (Joe Rossi, of Penn. - I asked him if he was seriously wounded and he assured me he wasn't - I heard the next day he died), one soldier standing beside me, and myself. An officer threw a smoke cannister into the jungle and that was the end of the sniping. Someone helped me walk away from the tank and out of the jungle and down the

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*under Lt. Kaza*  
Epperson, Joplin, Mo., were located. Lt. Epperson was a MAC (Medical Administrative Corps) officer and, though the medics had dressed my wound behind the tank, he re-banded it. Then someone took me in a jeep to where I could pick up my personal gear, including two Jap rifles (which I gave away).. I can't recall the jeep driver but I was taken to another aid station located in a dugout. Three medics were there and I saw Lt. Kaza on a table. I asked George if he would like to make his confession and he said, "I sure would, Father." I asked the medics to kindly leave so we could have total privacy and George made a complete confession. As I was pronouncing absolution and signing him with the Sign of the Cross, a smile came on his face and he became unconscious. I saw that he was dying and, having no use of my right hand, called for the medics to return and help me unscrew the stock of Holy Oil which I always carried. I then anointed him and rendered a special blessing for those departing this life.

"I can still see the smile on George Kaza's face - like he was seeing someone, or something very pleasant in the invisible world. The words of John Henry Cardinal Newman came to me:

"...in spite of this universal world which we see, there is another world, quite as far-spreading, quite as close to us, and more wonderful; another world all around us, though we see it not, and more wonderful than the world we see, for this reason if for no other, that we do not see it. All around us are numberless objects, coming and going, watching, working, or waiting, which we see not: this is the other world, which our eyes reach not unto, - but faith only."

"Lt. Kaza, I was told, died soon afterwards. A driver took me in a jeep about 40 miles back to the Third Field Hospital, at San Jose.

During my five days there they gave me 1½ million units of penicillin every three hours and one of the doctors said that in WW 1 my hand would have been amputated. After five days I was flown to an evac hospital.

hospital at Lingayen Gulf and then to Iloilo for about two weeks in the 126 Gen. Army Hospital. I was then flown to Fitzsimons General Hospital, in Denver. I was home. I left Fitzsimons on 1 Nov., 1945.

"I tried very much to write a letter of consolation to George Kaza's parents, in the Detroit area, but could never get his address. I twice wrote the Adjutant General, in Wash., but was informed each time that they had no information of a Lt. George Kaza."

The loss of these stalwart Wolfhounds was a real blow to the Regiment - especially in the effort of bringing their last campaign, of WW II, to a successful conclusion.

(Lucas) "The captain of I Co. (I think his name was Little) sent for me to come to the CP and, when I got there, he pointed toward a draw, and told me there were three caves down there he wanted closed. Lambert and I went down to the caves. One was a large hospital with bunks built into the sides. There were medical supplies all over the ground and the cave went straight for 50 or 60 ft. and curved to the left. What was around that curve we'll never know - we never looked. We checked the other two over and decided they had just been started since they were only a few ft. into the mountain. I returned to the CP and told the old man what the score was and that just one of the caves needed to be sealed. Lambert watched the curve, with his Thompson Sub-machine Gun, while I planted a 50 lb. satchel charge 30 ft. inside the top of the cave (held up by bamboo) and sealed the cave up. When I reported on the missions completion, the Capt. told me to take the team back to the Btn. CP and await further orders. We were placed on guard duty, on the outer perimeter, and informed they would see us tomorrow. That night Lambert, Lucero and I dug in next to a small stream flowing out of the mountains. After dark, we spotted Nips coming down the mountain rattling their canteens and their tiny pen lights shining. Obviously it was a water stop. At this time our trucks, with 105 Howitzers, began coming in, to set up nearby, and one

stopped at our foxhole and started a conversation with them. They spotted the lights and heard the canteens and wanted to know what outfit it was. We told them we didn't know the unit since they were enemy and, in disbelief, they wanted to know why we didn't blow them away. We advised them we didn't want it known we were moving in and we sure as hell didn't want to give away our position.

"Early next morning I went to the CP and asked about the men who were hit the day before and was told Kaza had died, but there was no word on the others. I was also told the members of the Assault Platoon should make their choice of going into Hq. Co., or returning to their old Units. They were disbanding the AP for want of replacements. Most of my buddies went to Hq. Co. but I elected to go back to my old Item Co. I was up for Staff and had to go first to L Co. for two weeks until the rate came through and then I returned to I Co. as a squad leader. It was good to be back home with my old buddies - or, at least, half of them."

Battling both terrain and determined, albeit scattered, Jap resistance, the 161 Inf. had a harder time moving north, but, nevertheless, its forward elements gained high ground west of Rt. 5, opposite Putlan, by 10 Mar. Two days later one company was on commanding ground west of the highway halfway to Minuli, two miles north of Putlan. By that time, 12 Mar., Rt. 5 was safe for military traffic as far as Putlan. Again the Tropic Lightning had secured its objective more rapidly than expected.

Nothing succeeds like success, so Gen. Swift felt when, on 11 and 13 Mar., he twice extended the 25 Div.'s zone of responsibility to the north. He first directed the Div. to secure Rt. 5 to Kapintalan barrio, 5 mi. beyond Putlan, and then instructed Mullins to drive on through Balete Pass. The Japs Puncan Sector Defense Unit had collapsed rather rapidly; however, the I Corps directive, to seize Balete Pass, was to precipitate a battle that would demonstrate to the 25th that the Jap 10th Div. could fight as well as their 2d Tank Div.

Initially, Gen. Mullins laid plans to execute two separate attacks