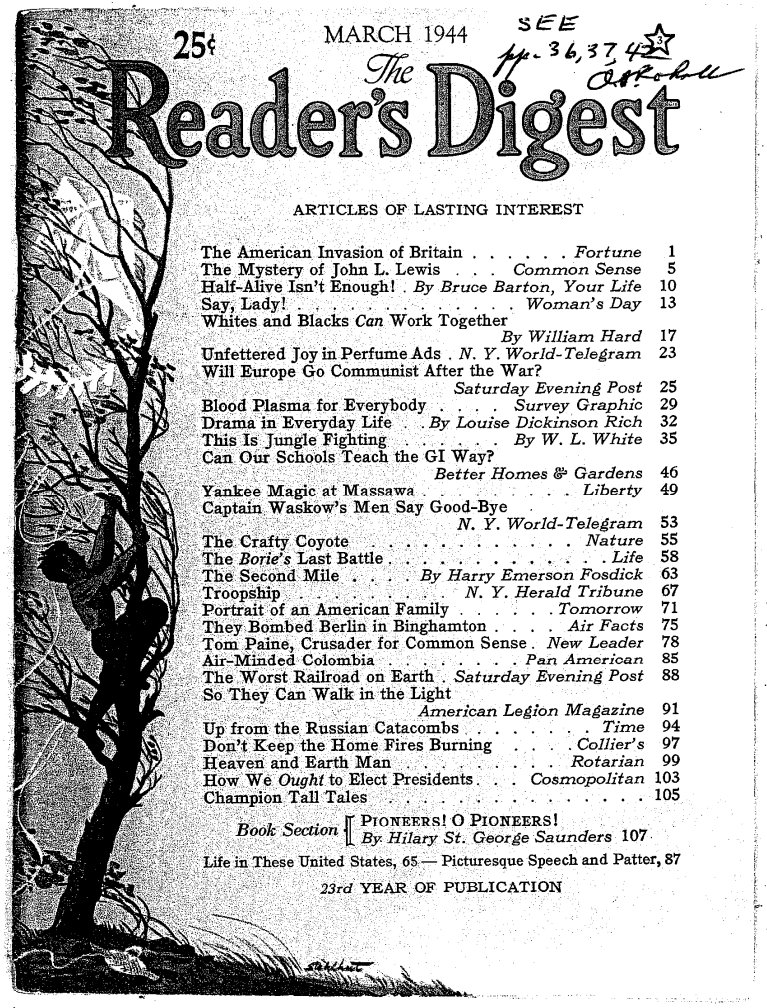


25¢ MARCH 1944

The Reader's Digest

SEE pp. 36, 37, 42 O.S. Roll

ARTICLES OF LASTING INTEREST

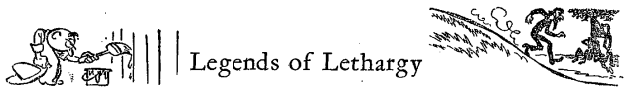
23rd YEAR OF PUBLICATION

many local people, but all the women were wearing bright spring evening dresses, and they all looked gay and pretty. Nancy had not tried a permanent or make-up. Her brown velvet gown made her skin seem duller, her hair drabber, her figure gaunter. But she did look happy, and poised.

Elizabeth and I were sitting with Andy, asking him the sort of things you would ask one who had always been blind and then could see: Were colors what he had thought they would be, and clouds in the sky, and did the flight of birds entrance him? As Nancy crossed the room, he turned to us and said softly, in his clipped British voice, "D'you know, I believe I'm the luckiest chap in the world. Can you fancy a blind man picking out by sheer instinct a woman as beautiful as my wife?"

We were startled, and looked at him in amazement. Fortunately he was gazing across the room at Nancy, with such an expression of complete adoration that we knew he was oblivious to our reaction. And suddenly we too saw what he was seeing — not the plain, square face, the pale eyes and wispy hair, but all the sweetness, all the gentleness, kindness and love that he had known for the 15 years before he had ever seen his wife's face. To him, her features were all those things translated into flesh, and never could any other woman's face compete with hers for loveliness.

Elizabeth and I looked at each other, and around the room at the other women. There wasn't one face that didn't seem to us to be, by comparison, without meaning or beauty.



Legends of Lethargy

» ONE DAY our handyman helped us with some painting. After watching his slow, lefthanded strokes for some time, I asked, "Do you *always* paint with your left hand?"

"Law, ma'am, no!" he drawled. "But *today* I got my hat in the other hand." — Contributed by Jeanette Summerton

» ON THE Carolina Blue Ridge word was passed up the mountainside that there was a letter in the valley post office for Zeke. Days later, Zeke decided to fetch it. He started slowly. It was a sunny morning and several of Zeke's friends were lolling in the shade beneath the balsams where a steep slope forced Zeke into a jog.

Called out one of the hillbillies: "Look at Zeke — too lazy to hold back." — Contributed by Thomas Russell McCrea

» PROPPED against a tree on the bank of a stream were two colored lads holding fishing rods. Finally one nudged his slumbering pal. "Say, Sam," he yawned, "yo' has a fish bitin' at de end of yo' line."

The other boy opened one eye lazily. "Doggone," he sighed unhappily. "Ah knew we picked out de wrong stream!" — Omaha *World Herald*

» A battalion leader on New Georgia tells what it's like to slog through the dim South Pacific jungles fighting Japs you can't see

This Is Jungle Fighting

BY W. L. WHITE

Author of "They Were Expendable," "Queens Die Proudly," and other outstanding wartime narratives

CHARLIE DAVIS is sandy-haired, 26, a Lieutenant Colonel of Infantry, and a winner of the Congressional Medal of Honor down on Guadalcanal. He comes from Alabama, and in the sweet, slow speech of the Deep South he describes Gordo, where he was born and raised, as "a little cotton farmin' town up in the red-dirt country where my daddy owned a nearby farm, kept drugstore or ran the sawmill, but always he had a good bird dawg."

He remembers that when he was "a little fellah, even before startin' school at six, my daddy used to take me fishin' and huntin', even though I had to hustle to keep up, all down through Bear Creek Swamp and along the Sipsey River bottoms."

In the past few months Charlie Davis has done a lot of jungle fighting. It's slow work anywhere, he makes you understand.

"Our infantry outfit," he says, "had already seen action on Guadalcanal when we were ordered on to New Georgia. We'd heard how tough the goin' was for our boys there, quite a few new troops crackin' under the strain, lots of casualties comin' back.

"They seemed glad to see us when the troop-carrying destroyers put us ashore. 'What division you from, bud?' they'd holler from the side of the road as we marched toward the jungle. 'The 25th,' we'd answer, and when we'd say that they didn't try to give us any cock-and-bull stories, or kid us along, like you usually do new troops.

"That night our battalion bivouacked near a parachute drop — a place where a 2000-pound daisy-cutter bomb had cleared a big circle of jungle so it could be used as a target to kick out supplies for the troops. Each man got his C-ration, which is a key-winding can of hash or stew. This was to hold us until the supply parties could be organized. We found that a fightin' man gets along pretty good with only two cans of it a day. He hasn't got time for any more, and anyway excitement makes him forget his meals.

"The next day we moved up on the right flank of the American troops fighting the Japs at Munda airport. We thought we were goin' to get into

that fight, but the regimental commander said no, they had richer things stored up for us. We bivouacked near what had been a Jap anti-aircraft emplacement. Only 500 yards away rifles were crackin' and artillery was thumpin', and we went to sleep wonderin' just what our battalion's slice of this war would be.

"We found out from Colonel George Bush bright an' early in the morning. Bringing maps, he showed us where an old trail started into the jungle. They guessed this trail went to a little place called Zieta. They also guessed the Japs driven from Munda were heading for beaches near there to board rescue boats.

"And our mission? To get through the jungle to this Zieta, and cut the Jap line of retreat. Now, on the map, Zieta was only about *two miles away*. Yet we considered ourselves lucky to get there, fightin' through jungle, in just under *two weeks*.

"They gave us one other bit of help. The Colonel had brought along a woolly-haired native called Joe, wearin' a pair of shorts for a uniform. He was to go with us because once, some years back, he had been to Zieta, though not by way of this trail. He was precious to us; we put him way back at the tail end of the line of march so he wouldn't get shot, because he was the only man of us that would know when we got to where we were s'posed to be going.

"OUR first hurdle was two hills, 500 yards away, with the trail goin' up over the saddle. We were told that we probably wouldn't run into any Japs on the hill, but I'd learned from Guadalcanal that you can't fight the Japs on the assumption that they're not a-goin' to be there, because usually they are. So I made up my mind we weren't goin' to tackle that trail in between those two hills without beatin' the bushes first.

"I sent one company, which I called 'Pat,' around to occupy the left hill, and another company I named 'Mike' to come around in the rear of the right hill. If they didn't flush any Japs, then the trail would be safe for the rest of the battalion.

"Of course each advancing company was to unreel its telephone wire. These field telephones will carry your voice fine, over fallen trees and through streams, for two or three miles. I stayed back at the junction so I would be in touch with both companies. While I waited, I started setting up a base of fire — clearin' emplacements for my mortars so that they could shell the saddle if need be. Emplacing a mortar in the jungle is a job. You've got to clear out trees for yards around, because if the nose of a mortar shell, just gettin' away, should hit a high branch, it will explode and kill its own gun crew.

"The two companies hadn't been out 45 minutes when I heard rifle fire on the left, in Pat's direction. On Mike's side everything was quiet. It's a battalion commander's job to get up quick where the shootin' is, so I started right out, takin' with me a post command group so I could set up for business. As usual, Captain Horton Camp wanted to go along too, so we took him. He's the ideal battalion surgeon — likes to be up where the shootin' is goin' on, to catch 'em while they're fresh and patch 'em up quick.

"We followed Pat's telephone wire and, halfway up the hill, it led us to Pat's captain, Ollie Roholt. He said his right platoon had run into some Japs who had a damn good position with a lot of automatic weapons.

"I ordered the left platoon to work around the hill and attack the Japs in the rear. It wouldn't be a charge or a rush — just a matter of squirming forward, pickin' up the location of the Jap positions by the sound of their .25-caliber fire, and then putting them out of business.

"But while we were layin' all this out, I heard a hell of a bunch of rifle fire comin' from over on the opposite hill, and I knew that now Mike Company had run into trouble. Also I could hear a booming that was too loud for any grenade, so I got Ben Ferguson, the captain of Mike Company, on the phone.

" 'What's goin' on?' I asked him.

" 'We got into 'em,' he says, 'and they're rolling land mines down on us!'

"I told him to clean up that patch of 'em the best he could, and then work his way down the hill and join Pat in the saddle.

"By this time Pat's two platoons had got the Jap positions between them; and pretty soon, by lobbin' grenades, they knocked them all out and joined up. The Japs, pretty well battered, were sprawled all over the ground. We usually try to cover them with a little dirt for sanitary reasons, but there wasn't time.

"MEANWHILE, on the other hill, the Japs were still rolling land mines down on Mike. The mines were about the size of those disks you play shuffleboard with on a steamer deck. They made a terrific explosion, and in addition to killing quite a few from Mike Company, they had knocked about 15 of the men temporarily goofy.

"But in spite of that, Mike did its job and reported that it was startin' down into the saddle. So I told them on the phone, 'You holler "Mike" all together so we can tell where you are, and then we'll holler "Pat." '

"They hollered 'Mike' and we hollered 'Pat' back, but then some Japs between us took a hand in it, and started hollering both 'Pat' and 'Mike.' It made a hell of a conglomeration. Now neither of us knew for sure where the other was and, as it was gettin' dark, I told the boys we'd stay where we were.

"We dug in around the 'military crest' of the hill, which is never the real crest, but is the highest point at which you still are not silhouetted against the sky. I walked around our defense ring, making sure that there were no wide gaps between the foxholes, and that the automatic rifles and machine guns all had fairly good fields of fire chopped out of the jungle. In each hole there are four or five men, and they take turns keepin' watch all night, crouchin' down behind their guns.

"All seemed pretty well set so I crawled into my foxhole, which I couldn't leave until dawn. Our sentries can assume that everything that crackles in the brush is a Jap. This is pretty hard on the boys that have a touch of dysentery.

"The command-post foxhole is of course wired up, and I can get the news from the States. The regimental

command post back behind us has a big radio car which, every evening, tunes in on the news broadcast from San Francisco, and then relays it to me over the field telephone. I write it down, and next mornin' I tell the boys what goes on back home, what it looks like the Errol Flynn jury is goin' to do, or other heart-warmin' items.

"Out there you don't need any alarm clocks or bugles to tell when dawn has come. As soon as the first gray begins to come down through the treetops, the men are up, peering out to see what was makin' the night noises, an' then they're openin' a can of C-ration, which they eat cold.

"They're travelin' light, with nothin' much but a helmet, a rifle, and a spoon. Mess kits are a nuisance and if there's no hot water to wash them in, you're liable to get food poisonin', so you eat from a can and throw it away. At night the men just roll up in a shelter half. They don't put two together to make a tent like the book says, because tents are conspicuous.

"On this particular day we started early down into the saddle, expecting every minute to hit Jap fire. But we joined up with Mike Company without trouble. The Japs had slipped out in the night, leavin' their installations almost intact — lots of little huts made of forked poles with heavy branches over the top, and floors of pliable saplings.

"We found their command post, a two-story hut where their highest rankin' officer hung out, and took it over for battalion headquarters — including his throne, a big comfortable pink chair which looked like lawn furniture they'd swiped from some plantation. I had the field telephone rigged up to it and lolled back to give orders like some emperor. First I rang up the heavy weapons company back at the road junction and told them to come on up the trail and join us. Then I strolled around lookin' at the Jap equipment — radios, maps, rifles, ammunition. Also some pictures showin' how to identify American planes, and some other pictures of geisha girls posin' which didn't help our boys much.

"I was worried about our supply line. Our bulldozer, which always follows back of us buildin' a road, wasn't up to us yet, and all our water and rations had to be packed. Often the engineers can keep their road built right up to our rear. The Japs' road-making equipment doesn't approach ours; all I ever saw was a few old steam rollers.

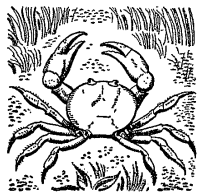
"Early next morning I was on the telephone gettin' everything ready to move ahead. Nearby was a canvas case of signal flares, hangin' on a post. All at once there was a bang that sounded like the end of the world. With one jump I abdicated that Jap throne and lit behind the nearest tree.

"When the smoke cleared we found that a Jap sniper had been tryin' to take a bead on me sittin' on that pink throne, but instead he had smacked the case of flares. What with all the smoke, I guess he figured he'd hit the jackpot for the day with that one round, because there were no more shots.

"SOON we all got rolling. We traveled like a caterpillar. I sent the lead company out, not along the trail but half on each side, cuttin' their

way through the brush for 70 or 80 yards out, combing the place for Jap machine guns. We were gettin' deeper into the jungle — it was higher and heavier, with thick leaves which blotted out the sun. This advance company was our eyes and ears, guardin' us against surprise. It took them most of the day to get ahead about 800 yards, where they halted while the rest of us caught up.

"The lead company of course has the hardest job, because there you are, crashin' and stumblin' through unknown jungle, and you never know behind which log a Jap will be waitin'. It keeps the men under heavy strain, so I rotated the companies as often as I could.



"We bivouacked in the jungle, and I lay in my foxhole listenin' to the noises. There is plenty to hear at night. First you hear all the ordinary swamp noises — crickets and frogs. Then they've got one jungle night bird that's related to the woodpecker: you hear a *rap, rap, rap,* which puts your nerves on edge, because the Japs sometimes communicate by knockin' out a code on bamboo stocks. Then it'll get still again. Soon you'll hear a great crackin' and cracklin' like tanks a-comin', but that'll be an ol' rotten tree fallin' over, only you can't be sure of it at night. And then you'll hear a rustlin', down close to the groun', like a dawg walkin' through dry cornhusks, or like a Jap crawlin' on his belly, an' it's probably just a damn land crab out on the prowl.

"Those land crabs scare hell out of you all night. They're about as big as the base of a telephone, with spidery legs. By day they're a greenish-gray color like rotten flesh. Five or six of 'em, roamin' around camp at night, sound like a whole platoon of Japs belly-squirmin' in on you.

"Maybe you doze off, and one of those crabs gits down in the foxhole with you, grazes the skin of your neck with one of his claws. It feels like some Jap was pokin' round with the tip of his knife to find your windpipe, so you turn loose with a hell of a yell and jump to your feet, sluggin' every which way in the dark.

"Or maybe someone will get nightmares — plenty do after the fightin's been hard the day before. One man will let out a yell and you're sure the Jap army has jumped in his foxhole, or maybe, in his sleep, he'll make a break for it an' start to run. Then his buddy will have to throw a flyin' tackle on him, bring him down, an' haul him back in the hole.

"About two in the morning of this particular night, I heard a yell, and then, in about 15 seconds, four shots. It had the whole line on trigger edge. Of course I couldn't get up to investigate, but next mornin' I found that some fellow in a nightmare had let out a whoop, one of the guards standin' with a rifle had whirled around quick, and as he did it, a vine jerked his rifle half out of his hands. The guard, sure it was a Jap, wrastled his rifle back from the vine and then fired four times at where he thought the Jap was. Remember we were

seasoned, so you can imagine how green troops will bang away all night at every snapping twig.

"Next mornin' word came through from the Colonel that we were to stand aside while another battalion (the second) passed through us and took the lead up the trail. They'd gone out ahead only 200 yards when I heard the first rifle fire. They'd struck Japs holdin' high ground on either side of the trail, and were stopped in their tracks. We spread out as a rear guard, which is good jungle tactics, while they felt 'em out, which is hard to do where vines and trees are so thick you seldom can see ten yards.

"At the end of the day we'd had 35 casualties and hadn't shoved a yard up that trail, and you could see the strain was tellin' on the boys. At least two rains would come along sometime durin' the day or night, and sleep was something you thought lots about, but couldn't get much of.

"The next mornin' I sent K Company from my battalion out on the left, to make a wide turn and come in on the Japs' rear. But they hit so much heavy Jap fire, it didn't look like they had any rear, so by now we knew we'd have to have our artillery soften 'em up, and phoned back.

"The artillery observers were connected by telephone to their batteries five miles behind us, and we pulled back a little, to get clear of the shells. Registering the shells in under jungle conditions is a job. To be safe the observer would put the first one maybe 600 yards away. Listening, we'd hear it land with a dull thud.

"'Right one-zero-zero, short one-zero-zero,' the observer would order, over the phone. Then he'd listen some more. The next round would be nearer and sharper. Then you'd hear one whirrin' overhead just before it exploded, with the noise of splinterin' branches reachin' you afterward. When the bursts crept in to only 150 yards, that was getting dangerous for us. Big rocks and branches would be sailin' around, and there's always a chance of a tree burst — the nose of the shell might hit a high branch and explode in the air, showerin' us with fragments.

"Now and then, due to a change of wind, a round will land in your own lines. On this day one landed right in the middle of a company of the second battalion — killed several men and shook up the rest.

"As soon as the barrage let up, my K Company started in on the Jap left flank, which was tied into a 200-foot wooded hill. Our men attacked, but the Jap positions were too strong. We were driven back with about ten casualties.

"And handlin' wounded men in the jungle is a story in itself. Our medical-aid men never wear a red cross, because we've learned that a Jap reacts to one of these like a bull to a red rag. I never saw a Jap wearin' one, and they don't respect ours. But that's all right; we're not asking anything of 'em.

"Casualties among our aid men are as heavy as they are in any rifle platoon. The aid man crawls out and drags the wounded man back to cover — maybe behind a log. Here he'll take time to sprinkle sulfa on the open part of the wound, do the first bandaging, give the man a shot of morphine, and write out a tag.

"Then he'll call for litter-bearers. They'll roll him on that canvas strip stretched over a steel frame, and they'll start off. It takes eight to get one man out — four to carry him over stumps, logs and through swamp, and four to relieve them. When we run out of medical men, we send cooks, radiomen and mechanics. Americans think enough of their men so they'll take a hell of a chance themselves to save them.

"The litter-bearers take the wounded man a few hundred yards back to the battalion aid station, which might be under a big tree or behind a rock. Here the battalion surgeon redresses his wound and gets him in the best possible shape for the hospital — maybe gives him some blood plasma, and as the level drops in that jar you can just see the color come back to his face.

"At the battalion aid station there's generally some kind of a road back to the base hospital. If he's badly wounded he rides on a stretcher on top of an ambulance jeep; if it's a light wound maybe he and two others can sit up with the driver. But the main thing is if a man gets shot, help usually comes to him quick, and he's sent back fast, which is what happened to these casualties.

"Well, we figured there weren't many Jap positions, but they were well placed, which is what counts. Each one would have a Jap with a machine gun, and two or three riflemen to support him if any of us tried to sneak up behind him. There probably weren't more than 15 Japs on this particular hill, but in such positions they're worth 500 in open country.

"Now it was gettin' on toward dark so we had to dig in on that hillside for the night. Ahead we could hear the Japs chopping fire paths for their weapons and jabberin' to each other. And pretty soon came the usual evenin' rain, just to mess up everything and make us uncomfortable.

"At dawn I got a call from the Colonel with some real news — we were goin' to get tanks! They had bulldozed the road clear up to the forward elements of our line. One engineer sergeant had even flushed a Jap; happened to have his rifle with him on the bulldozer and fired, and we gave him a probable. Also, because of that road, we were blessed with hot doughnuts and coffee, brought up by jeep.

"Pretty soon we could hear the tanks' sirens, which is how they signal each other to turn right or left. That howlin' alone is enough to get a Jap jittery. At last, here they came, smashin' through the underbrush — four of 'em, riding with their hatches up and a man standing upright tellin' the driver how to avoid the bigger trees. They were manned by Marines, and in another minute their commanding officer, Captain Carlson, a tall, blond, nice-lookin' boy, had hopped out, all enthusiastic. While his Marine crews buddied up with our boys, I gave him the lay of the land — where the Jap dispositions were, and how strong. Then they hopped back in, this time buckling down the lids, and rolled on in column.

"Nothing makes more noise than tanks in a jungle. There is the roar

of their motors, the screechin' of their sirens, which sound like a bunch of irritable female banshees, and the tearing of vines and squashin' of underbrush in between the splintering of trees — all these noises are jumbled. We didn't mind, followin' along behind as they snorted around, backin' and turnin' to beat a path through the jungle. For us, bringin' up the rear, it was war Ritz-Carlton style. In 45 minutes we had reached the Jap bivouac area. We were proud to notice that it was already considerably rumpled by our artillery, which we had placed entirely by sound. The Japs had beat it when they heard the tanks, leavin' a litter of guns, ammunition and rations — rice and crackers.

"But only 75 yards beyond, we came to a little jungle stream, ten yards wide and barely waist deep. This was enough to stop the tanks. We had to wade through — not worryin' about crocodiles — and push on without them. On the other side we picked up the trail toward Zieta and, although the afternoon was wearing on, I hoped we could cover a little more ground. But soon we heard a rifle crack, and the boys said, 'Hell, here it is again!'

"The Japs had let our advance guard get through and opened up on the second element. It was gettin' dark fast down in that jungle, and we'd have to dig in and fight at the same time.

"In gettin' that lead platoon back, Captain Ollie Roholt was hit. The slug fractured his arm and went on through to lodge in his leg, but he managed to crawl back on the other arm and leg. Three of his men were hit too, but only one had to be carried.

"It wasn't a nice night for me. There was some firin' from time to time, and as I listened to it I'd think about the men. They'd been fightin' the jungle and the Japs for a week with almost no time out. But I knew they still had the necessary stuff to attack.

"At dawn I sent out a patrol. They carried a phone and moved slowly, dodging from tree to tree. The jungle was now so thick that even at noon you'd think it was dusk. And always those high tree trunks goin' up. It feels like tall buildings closin' in on you, and the pressure seems to mount and mount as the days go by and you never walk out into a clearin'.

"The patrol had been out about half an hour when I heard from them. The voice on the phone was almost a whisper so I knew they were close to Japs.

"'Hey, Davis,' it was sayin', very low. 'We've run onto prepared positions. What orders do you have?'

"Well, I said for them to come on back without bein' picked up if they could. When they got in they reported the Jap positions were 150 yards on up the trail. It looked like they had plenty of stuff, the boys said.

"All we could do was go on in. The Japs let us creep within 15 or 20 yards and then opened up with all they had.

"We attacked with machine guns, rifles and grenades. But the Jap dugouts were down under big tree roots and hell to get at. All day we beat ourselves against a stone wall, and at the end we went back to where we'd dug in the night before. That night we were on the alert against an attack, and just before midnight there

was some shootin' from our forward foxholes. It didn't amount to much, but at dawn one of our boys found a dead Jap, shot between the eyes, only three yards away from his foxhole.

"THAT DAWN, as usual, we were chilly and dirty and uncomfortable. The climate down there is about like late September in Alabama. You sweat plenty by day, but the nights are cool, and the only reason we didn't have blankets was because we couldn't fight and carry them. The boys' beards were pretty long by now, for there'd been no washin' or shavin'. They opened cans of C-ration, which thank God is varied from time to time, and had a cigarette if they could find a dry one. Morale was low. The boys didn't say much, but they had that feelin' of hammerin' against something they couldn't see.

"This time we attacked with two companies abreast, the men crawlin' in a line about five yards apart. They had to squirm over fallen logs and through a tangle of brush and vines. The most they could ever see ahead was 20 yards.

"In this sort of fightin' the men keep workin' forward, tryin' to find a blind side of the Jap position, but then maybe one of 'em will start to crawl over a log and get a slug in his shoulder and they're all pinned down; if they so much as shake the bushes they'll get clipped by a round of fire. When all of your units get in this fix, you can only withdraw them, but this takes science.

"Because while they're pulling back you must leave a skeleton force to protect them. In each squad one automatic rifleman opens up with all he has, to keep the Japs down, while his buddies make their getaway. He gets himself back while the others cover him as best they can. Then you can order the artillery.

"On this day our guns were so far back we couldn't hear them go off. As we heard the first shells land, I went into a huddle with my company commanders. We'd give the Japs 30 minutes of this bombardment. Just before it stopped, we'd start edgin' up close to the Jap line, so we could go right in on 'em before they had a chance to crawl out and look around.

"So we walked in shootin' with everything we had. A man feels better when he's firin', whether he can see just what he's shootin' at or not. But it did no good. We got pinned down again. By now we were so tired that those high trees and tangled vines seemed to be pinning us down in another way. You could hardly stand it.

"The next mornin' the men all had that hangdog look. Here we were in that same old place, goin' out to do that same old job, only each day fewer of us to do it. Hating to go back at it again; knowing we had to. Because from the regimental commander on down, we had our orders — Keep pressing the attack.

"We had launched one attack and were organizing a second when word came that the engineers had bridged that stream and the tanks were a-comin'. Boy, that news was like packages from home!

"Half an hour later the tanks came crashin' along — those same four and the same Marine captain runnin'

their show. Our men were just snortin' to get in there and play around where they'd been pinned down so often, so we all jumped off, with a big roarin' and poppin' of exhaust.

"We hadn't gone more than 40 yards before the Japs opened up on us, but this time it was different. The tanks spiraled in and out of the trees, mashing down Jap positions and spraying machine-gun fire. And pretty soon they opened up with their big 37-mm. guns. But these, instead of bein' loaded with one solid slug, were packed with buckshot, so that the round looked like a huge shotgun shell. When they'd cut one loose, it would blow a hole through that tangle of vines you could toss a grand piano through. They also carried armor-piercing rounds, which would wham right down into the Jap dugouts, and blast away the coral chunks the Japs had piled up over their tree roots.

"Our machine-gun and rifle fire added to the ruckus, which went on until the pillboxes — four or five of them — had been knocked out. Meanwhile Captain Ben Ferguson picked up word of more Jap positions ahead. But it was now late in the afternoon, so we decided to go back to our same foxholes for the night and get an early start with the tanks.

"THE next mornin' when we got up to the battleground, we found no Japs except for a few dead ones sprawled around. Two hundred yards farther on we ran into a still-larger Jap bivouac area, also abandoned. And now we understood something. Hell had been knocked out of this whole area by our artillery, which was why the barrage hadn't helped us in our attack before the tanks came — the range had been just 200 yards too long.

"We'd gone about 800 yards when we came out into an open clearing. It wasn't much of a place — just a few thatched huts on stilts and a big signpost painted in Japanese characters. One of the Japanese-American boys (born in California or Hawaii) that we had along with us in the intelligence service read it off for us, 'This is the end of the trail.' By the way, those Jap-Americans were good, loyal boys.

"But the sweetest words I heard were when Joe, our native, took a look around and then began noddin'. 'This Zieta,' he said.

"The beach was now only 500 yards away, and we put in a road block there, to stop Japs filtering through to the coast from other directions. We put in a good block, and sure enough a whole bunch of Japs presently came along and attacked it, hollerin': 'Americans, surrender! We have you surrounded!' But it didn't do the Japs much good; later we counted at least 30 dead ones.

"Our battalion was due to head up at something called on the map Piru Plantation, a few hundred yards farther up the coast, across a jungle swamp, so next day we started over. At first it didn't seem so bad. We tried to walk along the tops of the tricky mangrove roots, but soon we were slippin' and fallin' into the mud. We had some shorties with us, and one of these little fellows, steppin' down off a log onto where it looked firm, would go in almost to his hips. Then someone would have to jerk him loose, and at the last, hardest yank, he'd come free with a gurgling, sucking noise.

"The leaves high above us were as thick as in the densest jungle, and they not only shut out the light but closed in the smell, so that the whole place was just a big sulphur stink. And the water made echoes. It was like splashin' around in a big gloomy hall.

"But after four hours of it we suddenly walked out onto the plantation edge. Here was neat green grass and rows of fine old coconut trees, and nice, civilized-lookin' white buildings, and the sun dancin' on bright, clean salt water. After weeks in the dusky jungle the sweat washes all your tan away, and leaves you white like a frog's belly. Then you can't soak up enough sun.

"The plantation was deserted, but some fine-lookin' cattle were running loose cropping the grass. We noticed them particularly. Although plenty of rations would soon be dropped by plane, we were hungry for red meat.

"A butcherin' party shot two of the fattest cows. And at this point Horton Camp, our battalion surgeon, took over. He had a barbecue pit dug in good old North Carolina style, and while the beef was cookin' he improvised a barbecue sauce out of bouillon cubes and some ripe tomatoes and big hot red peppers he'd found in the deserted plantation garden. Then he got out his biggest hypodermic needle, loaded it with sauce, and began jabbin' the meat chunks, squirtin' them full of sauce. At last the meat chunks were nicely crusted over. We took our huntin' knives and peeled off big juicy slices — oh, it was wonderful!

"Now at last the men could relax. We sent a few patrols up and down the coast, but mostly we lay around, wearin' only shorts or nothin' at all, soakin' up sunshine. For ten days we had a nice life. Far away, we could hear artillery pounding. But that wasn't our war yet.

"I've told this story to explain why it took us almost two weeks to advance only two miles through the jungle of that island. And there's a lot of these islands still ahead of us."

Orientation

A SOLDIER from Florida was transferred to a Colorado camp. When the first snow fell, he wrote home about the beautiful two inches of snow. Later he wrote his folks about the ten inches of snow that now covered the countryside like a beautiful white blanket.

In about three weeks his parents received another letter: "Remember the snow I told you about in my previous letters? Well, we now have three feet of the damn stuff."

—Contributed by Wilbur G. Erickson