

# Medal of Honor Recipients

**P**riate First Class Luther Skaggs, Jr.'s Medal of Honor citation reads as follows: "For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty while serving as squad leader with a mortar section of a rifle company in the 3d Battalion, 3d Marines, 3d Marine Division, during action against enemy Japanese forces on the Asan-Adelup beachhead, Guam, Marianas Islands, 21-22 July 1944. When the section leader became a casualty under a heavy mortar barrage shortly after landing, Private First Class Skaggs promptly assumed command and led the section through intense fire for a distance of 200 yards to a position from which to deliver effective coverage of the assault on a strategic cliff. Valiantly defending this vital position against strong enemy counterattacks during the night, Private First Class Skaggs was critically wounded when a Japanese grenade



lodged in his foxhole and exploded, shattering the lower part of one leg. Quick to act, he applied an improvised tourniquet and, while propped up in his foxhole, gallantly returned the enemy's fire with his rifle and hand grenades for a period of 8 hours, later crawling unassisted to the rear to continue the fight until the Japanese had been annihilated. Uncomplaining and calm throughout this critical period, Private First Class Skaggs served as a heroic example of courage and fortitude to other wounded men and, by his courageous leadership and inspiring devotion to duty, upheld the high traditions of the United States naval service."

**P**riate First Class Leonard Foster Mason's Medal of Honor citation reads as follows: "For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty as an automatic rifleman serving with the Second Battalion, Third Marines, Third Marine Division, in action against enemy Japanese forces on the Asan-Adelup Beachhead, Guam, Marianas Islands, on 22 July 1944. Suddenly taken under fire by two enemy machine guns not more than 15 yards away while clearing out hostile positions holding up the advance of his platoon through a narrow gully, Private First Class Mason, alone and entirely on his own initiative, climbed out of the gully and moved parallel to it toward the rear of the enemy position.

Although fired upon immediately by hostile riflemen from a higher position and wounded repeatedly in the arm and shoulder, Private First Class Mason grimly pressed forward and had just reached his objective when hit again by a burst of enemy machine-gun fire, causing a critical wound to which he later succumbed. With valiant disregard for his own peril, he persevered, clearing out the hostile position, killing five Japanese, wounding another and then rejoining his platoon to report the results of his action before consenting to be evacuated. His exceptionally heroic act in the face of almost certain death enabled his platoon to accomplish its mission and reflects the highest credit upon Private First Class Mason and the United States naval service. He gallantly gave his life for his country."



Not until later that afternoon was the 1st Battalion sent another doctor.

On the right of the landing waves, Major Bernard W. Green's 1st Battalion, 4th Marines, ran head-on into a particularly critical hill mass (Hill 40) near Bangi Point, which had been thoroughly worked over by the Navy. Hill 40's unexpectedly heated defense indicated that the Japanese recognized its importance, commanding the beaches where troops

and supplies were coming ashore. It took tanks and the support of the 3d Battalion to claim the position.

Before dark on W-Day, the 2d Battalion, 22d Marines, could see the 4th Marines across a deep gully. The latter held a thin, twisted line extending 1,600 yards from the beach to Harmon Road. The 22d Marines held the rest of a beachhead 4,500 yards long and 2,000 yards deep.

At nightfall of W-Day, General

Shepherd summed up to General Geiger: "Own casualties about 350. Enemy unknown. Critical shortages of fuel and ammunition all types. Think we can handle it. Will continue as planned tomorrow."

Helping to ensure that the Marines would stay on shore once they landed was a host of unheralded support troops who had been struggling since daylight to manage the flow of vital supplies to the beaches. Now, as W-



# The Taking of Chonito Ridge

**T**he following is a dispatch written by Marine Combat Correspondent Private First Class Cyril J. O'Brien in the field after the combat action he describes in his story. It was released for publication in the United States sometime after the event (always after families were notified of the wounding or death of the Marines mentioned.) This story is reprinted from the carbon copy of the file which he retained of the stories he filed from the Pacific

Guam July 24 (Delayed) —The first frontal attack on steep Chonito Ridge was made one hour after the Marine landing.

An infantry squad, led by Second Lieutenant James A. Gallo, 24, 172 Broadway, Haverstraw, N.Y., approached to within ten yards of the tip. The crest bloomed with machine gun fire. In the face of it the Marine company tried its first assault. The company was thrown back before it had advanced forty yards.

For fifty hours the company remained on the naked slope, trying again and again to storm the Jap entrenchments hardly one hundred yards away. Battered almost to annihilation, the tenacious Marines finally saw another company take the ridge from the rear.

Failing in the first rush the company had formed a flimsy defense line not fifty yards from the enemy. Cover was scant. Some Marines had only tufts of grass to shield them. The Japs were rolling grenades down the crest, and blasting the Marines with knee mortars from over the summit.

Under the cover of dusk the company commander led a second attack. As the Marines rose machine gun fire swept into them. The commander, and three Marines reached the crest. The last fifty feet were almost vertical. The attackers grasped roots and dug their feet into the soft earth to keep from falling down the incline.

The commander went over the ridge. He never came back. The remaining three Marines were ripped by cross fire. One saved himself by jumping into an enemy fox hole.

Beaten again, the company retired to a small ravine, and remained there all night. One Marine, shot through both legs, was asking for morphine. Another's thigh was ripped by shell fragments. A PFC, his dry tongue swollen, tried to whisper the range of an enemy sniper.

At eleven in the morning of the 22d, with little more than a third of their original number, the company rushed the hillside again.

Lieutenant Gallo led an assault on the left flank of the hill, but he was thrown back. Sergeant Charles V. Bomar, 33, 4002 Gulf St., Houston, Tex., with nine Marines attempted to take the right ground of the slope. Five were killed as they left the ravine. The sergeant and three others reached the top of the slope.

The Japs again rolled grenades down the incline. One exploded under the chest of a Marine nearby, blowing off

his head. Another grenade bounced off the helmet of the sergeant. It was a dud.

The Marines charged into the Jap entrenchment. The sergeant killed a Jap machine gunner with the butt of his carbine. The assistant gunner exploded a grenade against his body. The blast threw the Marines out of the hole. They jumped into vacated enemy foxholes. A lieutenant who had come to join them was shot between the eyes by a sniper. The sergeant killed the sniper with his carbine.

Unable to hold their positions, the sergeant and his companies returned to the shelter of the ravine. With the shattered remnants of the company they waited for nearly another 24 hours, until darting Marines on the top of the ridge showed Chonito had been taken from the rear.

Field commanders soon came to appreciate the effect these so-called "Joe Blow" stories had on the morale of their men. The stories were printed in hometown newspapers and were clipped and sent to the troops in the Pacific, who could then see that their efforts were being publicized and appreciated at home.







Department of Defense Photo (USMC)91176

*A Japanese cave position on the reverse slope of Chonito Ridge offered protection for the enemy from the prelanding bombardment and enabled them to reoccupy prepared positions from which they could oppose the advance of the 3d Marines.*

Day's darkness approached, the 4th Ammunition Company, a black Marine unit, guarded the brigade's ammunition depot ashore. During their sleepless night, these Marines killed 14 demolition-laden infiltrators approaching the dump.

Faulty communications delayed the order to land the Army's 305th Regimental Combat Team (Colonel Vincent J. Tanzola), elements of the assault force, for hours. Slated for a morning landing, the 2d Battalion of Lieutenant Colonel Robert D. Adair did not get ashore until well after nightfall. As no amtracs were then available, the soldiers had to walk in from the reef. Some soldiers slipped under water into shellholes and had to swim for their lives in a full tide. The rest of the 305th had arrived on the beach, all wet, some seasick, by 0600 on W plus-1.

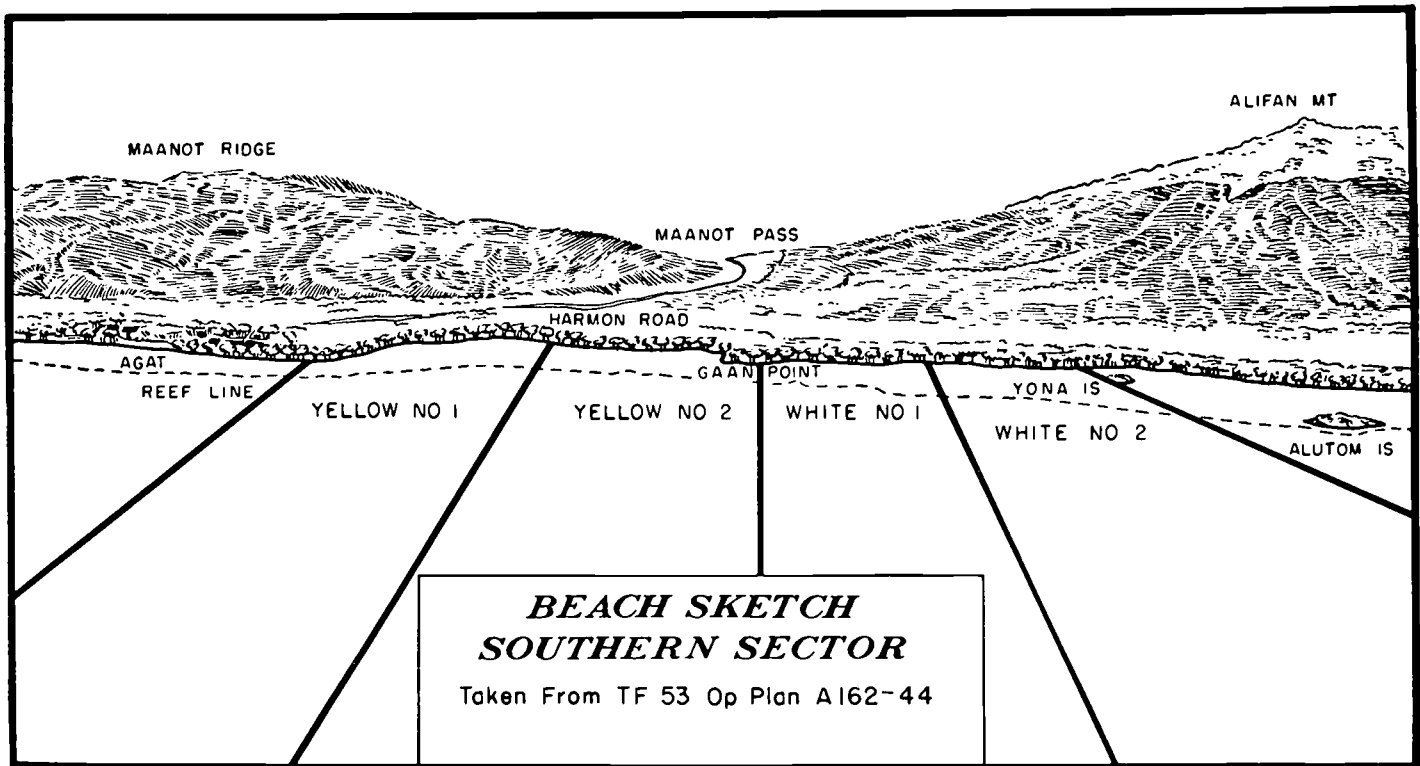
### *Colonel Suenaga Attacks*

Colonel Tsunetaro Suenaga, commanding officer of the 38th Regiment, from his command post on Mount Alifan, had seen the Americans overwhelm his forces below. Desperate to strike back, he telephoned General Takashina at 1730 to get permission for an all-out assault to drive the Marines into the sea. He had already ordered his remaining units to assemble for the counterattack. The 29th Division commander was not at first receptive. Losses would be too high and the 38th Regiment would serve better defending the high ground and thereby threatening the American advance. Reluctantly, however, Takashina gave his permission, and ordered the survivors to fall back on Mount Alifan if the attack failed, which he was certain it would. Eventually

Colonel Suenaga was forced to share the general's pessimism, for he burned his regiment's colors to prevent their capture.

At the focal point of the enemy's attack from the south, Hill 40, the brunt of the fighting fell upon First Lieutenant Martin J. "Stormy" Sexton's Company K, 3d Battalion, 4th Marines. The enemy's 3d Battalion, 38th Regiment coming north from reserve positions was still relatively intact. In the face of Japanese assaults, the company held, but just barely. Sexton recalls Lieutenant Colonel Shapley's assessment of the night's fighting: "If the Japanese had been able to recapture Hill 40, they could have kicked our asses off the Agat beaches."

Major Anthony N. "Cold Steel" Walker, S-3 (operations officer) of the 3d Battalion, recalled that the



Japanese, an estimated 750 men, hit the company at about 2130, with the main effort coming to the left or east of the hill. He remembered:

Finding a gap in our lines and overrunning the machine gun which covered the gap the enemy broke through and advanced toward the beaches. Some elements turned to their left and struck Hill 40 from the rear. K Company with about 200 men fought them all night long from Hill 40 and a small hill to the rear and northeast of Hill 40. When daylight came the Marines counterattacked with two squads from L Company . . . and two tanks . . . and closed the gap. A number of men from Company K died that night but all 750 Japanese soldiers were killed. The hill . . . represents in miniature or symbolically the whole hard-fought American victory on Guam.

Along the rest of the Marine front, and in the reserve areas, the fighting was hot and heavy as the rest of the 38th attacked. Colonel Suenaga

pushed his troops to attack again and again, in many cases only to see them mowed down in the light of American flares. No novice to Japanese tactics, General Shepherd had anticipated this first night's attack and was ready.

Enemy reconnaissance patrols were numerous around 2130, trying to draw fire and determine Marine positions. Colonel Suenaga was out in front of the center thrust which began at 2330 after a brisk mortar flurry on the right flank of the 4th Marines. The Japanese came on in full force, yelling, charging with their rifles carried at high port, and throwing grenades. The Marines watched the dark shadows moving across the skyline under light of star shells from the ships. Men lined up hand grenades, watched, waited, and then reacted. The Japanese were all around, attempting to bayonet Marines in their foxholes. They even infiltrated down to pack-howitzer positions in the rear of the front lines. It was the same for the 22d Marines. A whole company of Japanese closed to the vicinity of the regimental command post. The defense here was held

largely by a reconnaissance platoon headed by Lieutenant Dennis Chavez, Jr., who personally killed five of the infiltrators at point blank range with a Thompson sub-machine gun.

Four enemy tanks in that same attack lumbered down Harmon Road. There they met a bazooka man from the 4th Marines, Private First Class Bruno Oribiletti. He knocked out the first two enemy tanks and Marine Sherman tanks of Lieutenant James R. Williams' 4th Tank Company platoon finished off the rest. Oribiletti was killed; he was posthumously awarded the Navy Cross for his bravery. Enemy troops of the 38th also stumbled into the barely set up perimeter of the newly arrived 305th Infantry and paid heavily for it.

After one day and night of furious battle the 38th ceased to exist. Colonel Suenaga, wounded in the first night's counterattack, continued to flail at the Marines until he, too, was cut down. Takashina ordered the shattered remnants of the regiment north to join the reserves he would need to defend the high ground around Fonte Ridge above the Asan-Adelup beachhead. The general would leave his

troops on Orote to fend for themselves.

### Fonte Ridge

The two days of fierce fighting on the left of the 3d Division's beachhead in the area that was now dubbed Bundschu Ridge cost the 3d Marines 615 men killed, wounded, and missing. The 21st Marines in the center held up its advance on 22 July until the 3d Marines could get moving, but the men in their exposed positions along the top of the ridge, seized so rapidly on W-Day, were hammered by Japanese mortar fire, so much so that Colonel Butler

received permission to replace the 2d Battalion by the 1st, which had been in division reserve. The 9th Marines met relatively little resistance as it overran many abandoned Japanese positions in its drive toward the former American naval base at Piti on the shore of Apra Harbor. The 3d Battalion, after a heavy barrage of naval gunfire and bombs, assaulted Cabras Island in mid-afternoon, landing from LVTs to find its major obstacle dense brambles with hundreds of mines.

General Turnage, assessing the situation as he saw it on the eve of 22

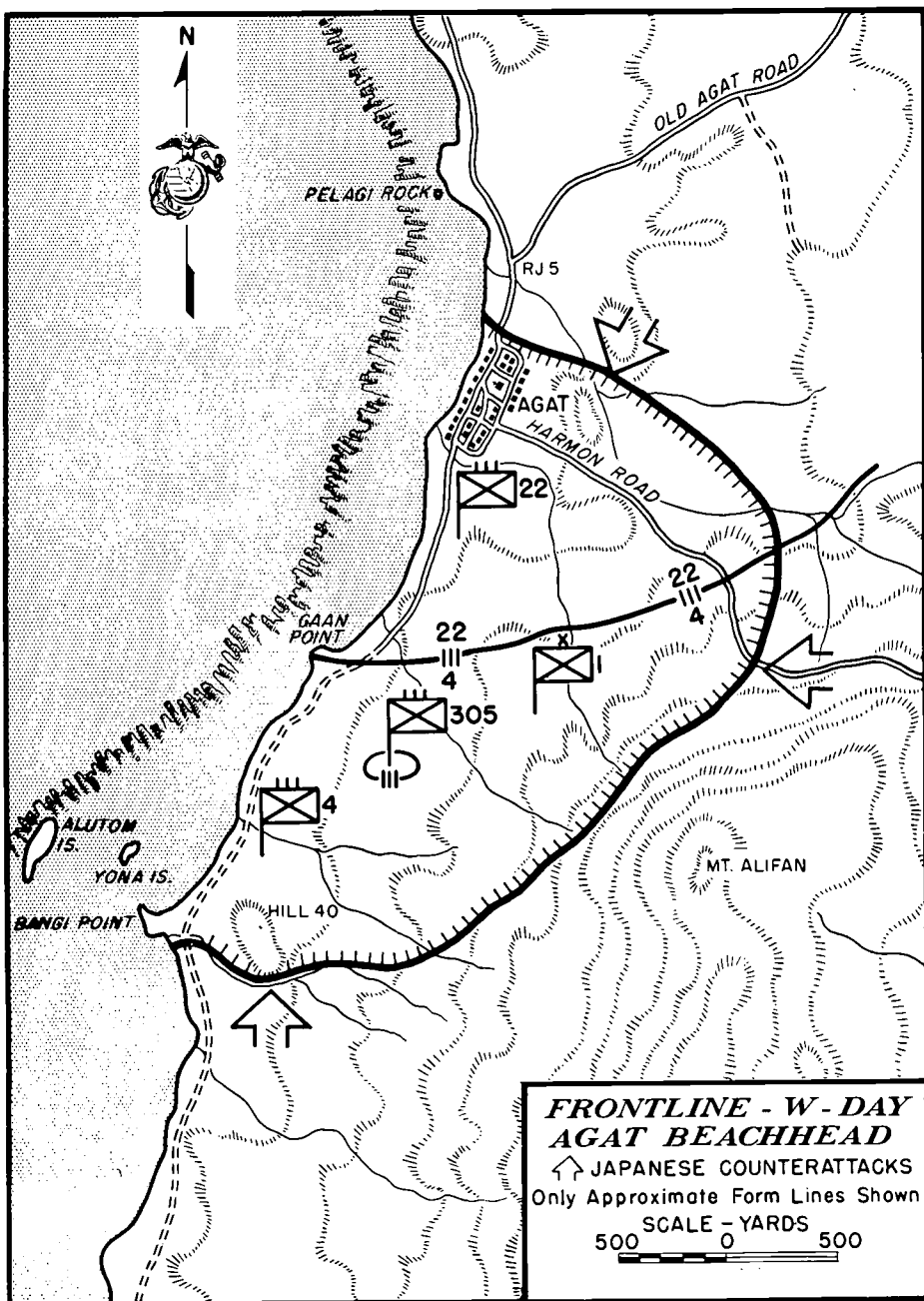
July reported to General Geiger:

Enemy resistance increased considerably today on Div left and center. All Bn's of 3rd CT [combat team] have been committed in continuous attack since landing. 21st CT less 1 Bn in Div Res has been committed continuously with all units in assault. One of the assault Bn's of 21st CT is being relieved on line by Div Res Bn today. Former is approx 40 percent depleted. Since further advance will continue to thin our lines it is now apparent that an additional CT is needed. 9th CT is fully committed to the capture of Piti and Cabras. Accordingly it is urgently recommended that an additional CT be attached this Div at the earliest practicable date.

Turnage did not get the additional regiment he sought. The night of W plus 1 was relatively quiet in the 3d Division's sector except for the 1st Battalion, 21st Marines, which repulsed a Japanese counterattack replete with a preliminary mortar barrage followed by a bayonet charge.

On the 23d, III Amphibious Corps Commander, General Geiger, well aware that the majority of Japanese troops had not yet been encountered, told the 3d Division that it was "essential that close contact between adjacent units be established by later afternoon and maintained throughout the night" unless otherwise directed. Despite the order to close up and keep contact, the 3d Division was spread too thinly to hold what it had seized in that day's advance. When it halted to set up for the night, it was found that the distance between units had widened. When night fell, the frontline troops essentially held strongpoints with gaps between them covered by interlocking bands of fire.

The 3d Marines reached the high ground of Bundschu Ridge on the







Department of Defense Photo (USMC) 87239

*Mount Alifan looms over the men of the 4th Marines as they move through the foothills to the attack. In the background, a plane being used for observation keeps track of the front lines for controlling the fire of ships' guns and supporting artillery.*

23d and searched out the remaining Japanese stragglers. It was obvious that the enemy had withdrawn from the immediate area and equally plain that the Japanese hadn't gone far. When patrols from the 21st Marines tried to link up with the 3d Marines, they were driven back by the fire of cleverly hidden machine guns, all but impossible to spot in the welter of undergrowth and rock-strewn ravines. All across the ridges that the Marines held, there were stretches of deadly open ground completely blanketed by enemy fire from still higher positions. On the night of the 23d, the 9th Marines made good progress moving through more open territory which was dotted by hills, each of which was a potential enemy bastion. A patrol sent south along the shoreline to contact the 1st Brigade took fire from the hills to its left and ran into an American artillery and naval gunfire concentration directed at Oroté's defenders. The patrol was given permission to turn back.

On the 24th, the 3d and 21st Marines finally made contact on the heights, but the linkup was illusory. There were no solid frontlines, only strongpoints. No one could be certain that the Japanese had all been accounted for in the areas that had been probed, attacked, and now seemed secure. Every rifleman was well aware that more of the same lay ahead; he could see his next objectives looming to the front, across the

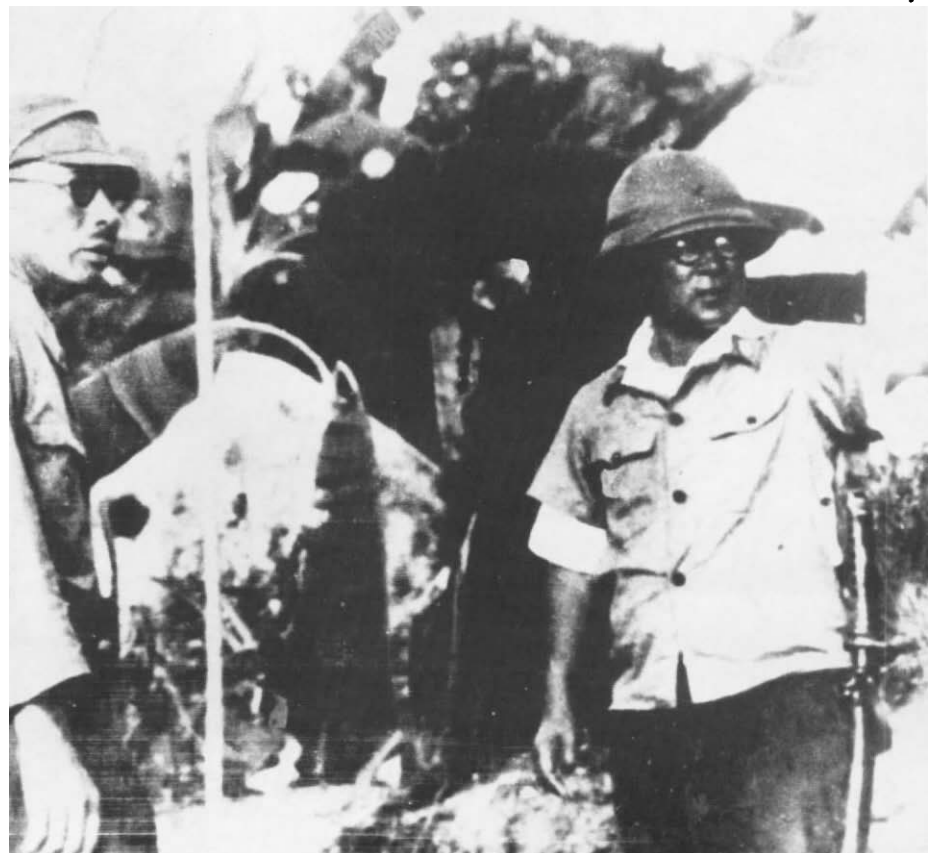
all-out counterattack, just as the Marines, north and south, were getting ready to drive to the force beachhead line (FBHL), the objective which would secure the high ground and link up the two beachheads.

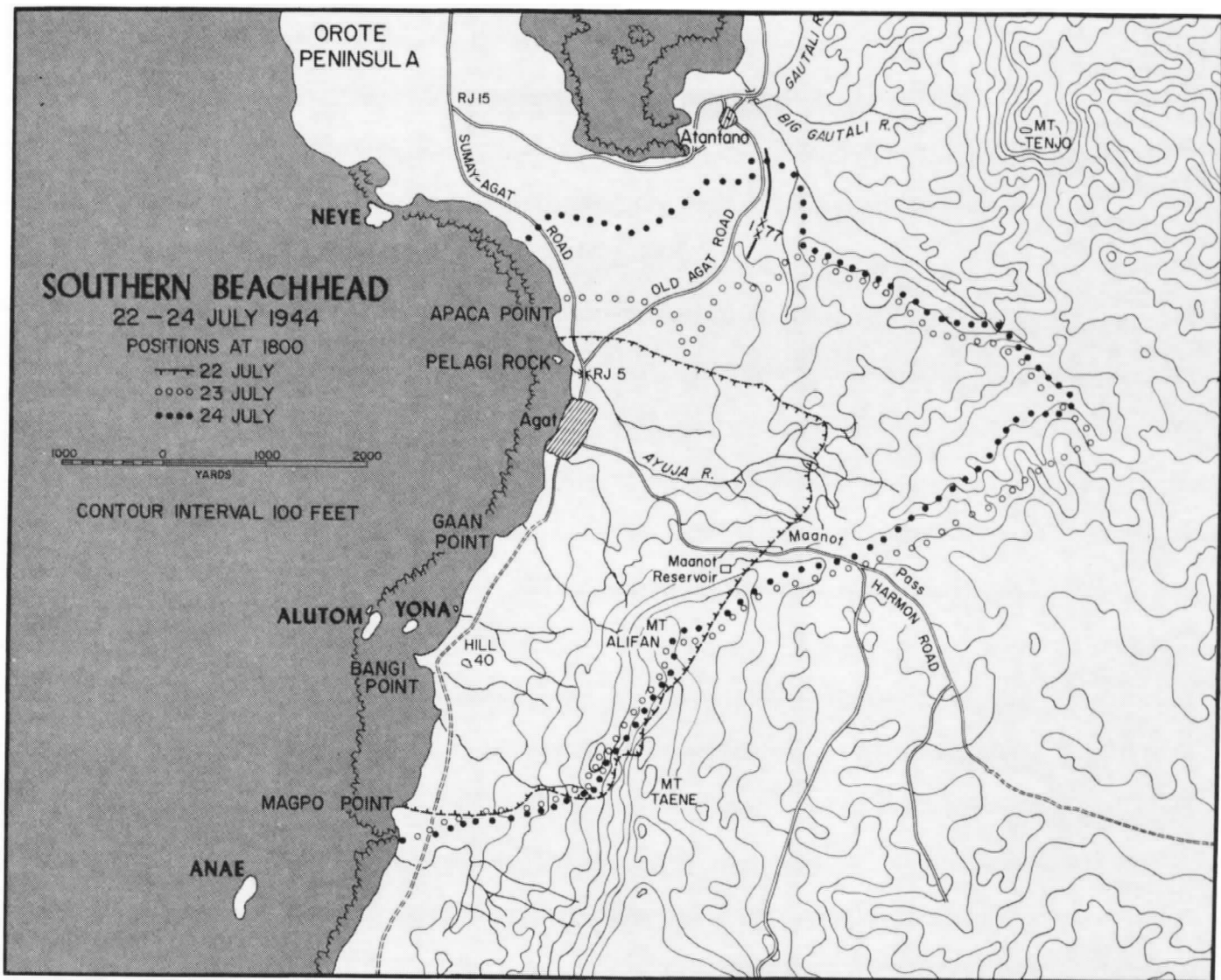
Since the American landings, Takashina had been bringing troops into the rugged hills along the Mount Tenjo Road, calling in his reserves from scattered positions all over the island. By 25 July, he had more than 5,000 men, principally of the 48th Independent Mixed Brigade and the 10th Independent Mixed Regiment, assembled and ready to attack.

The fighting on the 25th was as intense as that on any day since the landing. The 2d Battalion, 9th Marines (Lieutenant Colonel Robert E. Cushman, Jr., who was to become the 25th Commandant of the Marine Corps in 1972), was attached to the 3d Marines to bring a relatively intact unit into the fight for the Fonte heights and to give the badly battered

Mount Tenjo Road, which crossed the high ground that framed the beachhead. Already the division had suffered more than 2,000 casualties, the majority in infantry units. And yet the Japanese, who had lost as many and more men in the north alone, were showing no signs of abandoning their fierce defense. General Takashina was, in fact, husbanding his forces, preparing for an

*Prior to the anticipated American landing on 21 July 1944, LtGen Takeshi Takashina, right, commanding general of the 29th Infantry Division, inspects defenses on Agat Beach, with Col Tsunetaro Suenaga, who commanded the 38th Infantry.*





1st Battalion, 3d Marines, a chance to rest and recoup. By nightfall, Cushman's men had driven a salient into the Japanese lines, seizing the Mount Tenjo Road, 400 yards short of the Fonte objective on the left and 250 yards short on the right.

During the day's relentless and increasingly heavy firefights, the 2d and 3d Battalions of the 3d Marines had blasted and burned their way through a barrier of enemy cave defenses and linked up with Cushman's outfit on the left. About 1900, Company G of the 9th Marines pulled back some 100 yards to a position just forward of the road, giving it better observation and field of fire. Company F had reached and occupied a rocky prominence some 150 yards ahead of Companies G and E, in the center of the salient. It pulled

*During the Japanese counterattack on the night of 21-22 July, this Japanese light tank was destroyed at the Company B, 4th Marines, roadblock. Note the rubble of the ground thrown up by U.S. artillery, aerial, and ships' gunfire bombardments.*





### 3<sup>D</sup> MARINE DIVISION PROGRESS

22-26 JULY 1944

POSITIONS AT 1800

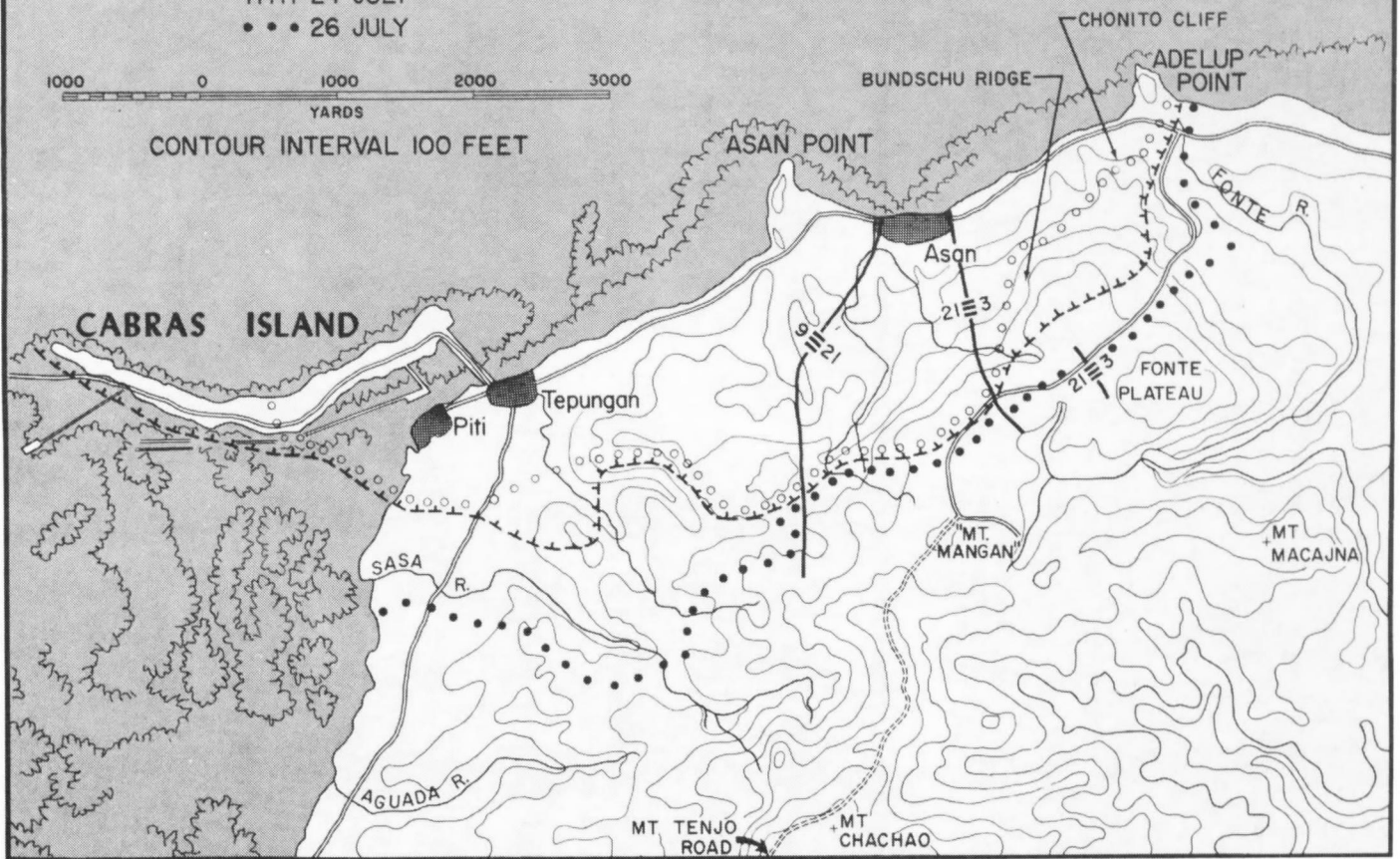
○ ○ ○ 22 JULY

TTTTT 24 JULY

● ● ● 26 JULY

1000 0 1000 2000 3000  
YARDS

CONTOUR INTERVAL 100 FEET



*In the aftermath of the Japanese counterattack, bodies of the attackers were strewn on a hillside typical of the terrain over which much of the battle was fought.*

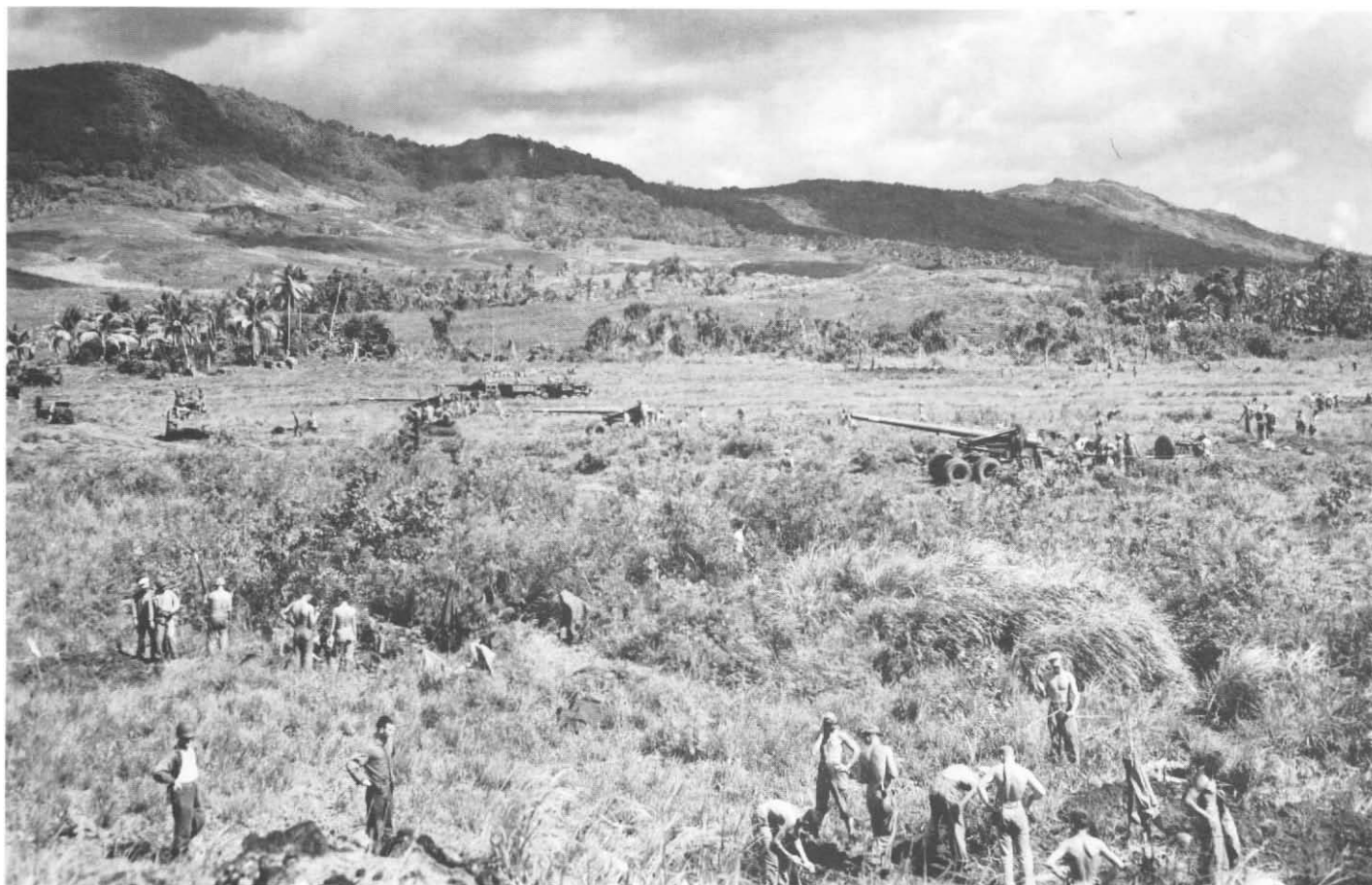
Department of Defense Photo (USMC) 91435



back a little for better defense, and held. Thus the scene was set for the pitched battle of Fonte Ridge, fought at hand-grenade range and in which casualties on both sides were largely caused by small arms fire at point-blank distances. It was in this action that leadership, doggedness, and organizational skill under fire merited the award of the Medal of Honor to the Commanding Officer of Company F, Captain Louis H. Wilson, Jr., who became the 26th Commandant of the Marine Corps in 1976, following in the footsteps of his former battalion commander.

Captain Wilson was wounded three times leading his own attacks in the intense crux of this Fonte action, and as his citation relates: "Fighting fiercely in hand-to-hand encounters, he led his men in furiously





Department of Defense Photo (USMC) 93106

*Long Toms of Battery A, 7th 155mm Gun Battalion, III Corps Artillery, were set up in the open 500 yards from White Beach 2 in the shadow of the mountain range secured by the 4th Marines and the Army's 305th Infantry after heavy fighting.*

waged battle for approximately 10 hours, tenaciously holding his line and repelling the fanatically renewed counterthrusts until he succeeded in crushing the last efforts of the hard-pressed Japanese . . . ."

Captain Wilson organized and led the 17-man patrol which climbed the slope in the face of the same continued enemy fire to seize the critical high ground at Fonte and keep it.

A half century later, Colonel Fraser E. West recalled the engagement at Fonte as bitter, close, and brisk. As a young officer, he commanded Company G, and reinforced Wilson's unit. West joined on Company F's flank, then reconnoitered to spot enemy positions and shared the night in a common CP with Captain Wilson.

In late afternoon of the 25th, a platoon of four tanks of Company C, 3d Tank Battalion, had made its way up to the Mount Tenjo Road and gone into position facing the most evident Japanese strongpoints. At the

height of the battle by Wilson's and West's companies to hold their positions, First Lieutenant Wilcie A. O'Bannon, executive officer of Company F, managed to get down slope from his exposed position and bring up two of these tanks. By use of telephones mounted in the rear of the tanks to communicate with the Marines inside, Lieutenant O'Bannon was able to describe targets for the tankers, as he positioned them in support of Wilson's and West's Marines. West recalled the tanks came up with a precious cargo of ammunition. He and volunteers stuffed grenades in pockets, hung bandoleers over their shoulders, pocketed clips, carried grenade boxes on their shoulders, and delivered them all as they would birthday presents along the line to Companies G and F and a remaining platoon of Company E. Major West was also able to use a tank radio circuit to call in naval gunfire, and guarantee that the terrain

before him would be lit all night by star shells and punished by high explosive naval gunfire.

On the morning of 26 July, 600 Japanese lay dead in front of the 2d Battalion, 9th Marines positions. But the battle was not over. General Turnage ordered the military crest of the reverse slope taken. There would be other Japanese counterattacks, fighting would again be hand-to-hand, but by 28 July, the capture of Fonte was in question no longer. Companies E, F, and G took their objectives on the crest. Lieutenant Colonel Cushman's battalion in four murderous days had lost 62 men killed and 179 wounded.

It was not any easier for the 21st Marines with its hard fighting in the morning of the 25th. Only by midafternoon did that regiment clear the front in the center of the line. The 2d Battalion, 21st Marines, had to deal with a similar pocket of die-hards as that which had held up the

# General Robert E. Cushman

**A**s a 29-year-old lieutenant colonel commanding the 2d Battalion, 9th Marines, 3d Marine Division, on Guam, Robert E. Cushman, Jr., was awarded the Navy Cross for extraordinary heroism during the period 21 July to 30 August 1944. The medal citation states in part:

When his battalion was ordered to seize and hold a strongly organized and defended enemy strong-point which had been holding up the advance for some days, Lieutenant Colonel Cushman directed the attacks of his battalion and the repulse of numerous Japanese counterattacks, fearlessly exposing himself to heavy hostile rifle, machine gun and mortar fire in order to remain in

the front lines and obtain first hand knowledge of the enemy situation. Following three days of bitter fighting culminating in a heavy Japanese counterattack which pushed back the flank of his battalion, he personally led a platoon into the gap and, placing it for defense, repelled the hostile force. By his inspiring leadership, courage and devotion to duty, he contributed materially to the success of the mission with the annihilation of one enemy battalion and the rout of another . . . .

General Cushman became the 25th Commandant of the Marine Corps on 1 January 1972. Interestingly enough, he was succeeded four years later by General Louis H. Wilson, Jr., who command-



ed a company in Cushman's 2d Battalion, 9th Marines, on Guam.

2d Battalion, 9th Marines, on Fonte. Holed up in commanding cave positions in the eastern draw of the Asan River, just up from the beachhead, the Japanese were wiped out only after repeated Marine attacks and close-in fighting. The official history of the campaign noted that "every foot of ground that fell to Lieutenant Colonel [Eustace R.] Smoak's Marines was paid for in heavy casualties, and every man available was needed in the assault . . . ."

The 9th Marines under Colonel Craig made good progress on the 25th from its morning jump-off and reached the day's objective, a line running generally along the course of a local river (the Sasa) by 0915. The 9th Marines had taken even more ground than was planned. General Turnage was then able to reposition the 9th Marines for the harder fighting on the beleaguered left. The 2d Battalion pulled out of position to reinforce the 3d Marines and the remaining two battalions spread out a little further in position.

The determined counterattack that hit the 3d Marines on the night of 25-26 July was matched in intensity

all across the 3d Division's front. It wasn't long before there were enemy troops roaming the rear areas as they slipped around the Marine perimeters and dodged down stream valleys and ravines leading to the beaches.

Major Aplington, whose 1st Battalion, 3d Marines, now constituted the only division infantry reserve, held positions in the hills on the left in what had been a relatively quiet sector. Not for long, he recalled:

With the dark came heavy rain. Up on the line Marines huddled under ponchos in their wet foxholes trying to figure out the meaning of the obvious activity on the part of the opposing Japanese. Around midnight there was enemy probing of the lines of the 21st [Marines], and slopping over into those of the 9th [Marines]. . . . All was quiet in our circle of hills and we received no notification when the probing increased in intensity or at 0400 when the enemy opened . . . his attack . . . . My first inkling came at about 0430 when my three companies on

the hills erupted into fire and called for mortar support. I talked to the company commanders and asked what was going on to be told that there were Japanese all around them . . . the Japanese had been close. Three of my dead had been killed by bayonet thrusts.

In the 1st Battalion, 9th Marines, sector, Private Dale Fetzer, a dog handler assigned with his black Labrador Retriever alerted Company C. The dog, Skipper, who had been asleep in front of his handler's foxhole suddenly bolted upright, alerting Fetzer. Skipper's nose was pointed up and directly toward Mount Tenjo. "Get the lieutenant!" called handler Fetzer, "They're coming."

At about 0400, the Japanese troops poured down the slopes in a frenzied *banzai* attack. Japanese troops had been sighted drinking during the afternoon in the higher hills, and some of these attackers appeared drunk. Marine artillery fire had immediately driven them to cover then, but they apparently continued to prepare for the attack.

In the area of the 21st Marines,



along a low ridge not far from the critical Mount Tenjo Road, the human wave struck hard against the 3d Battalion and the Japanese actually seized a machine gun which was quickly recaptured by the Marines. The 3d Division was holding a front of some 9,000 yards at the time, and it was thinnest from the right of the 21st Marines to the left of the 9th Marines. Much of that line was only outposted. The 3d Battalion, 21st Marines, held throughout. Some of the raiders got through the weakly manned gap between the battalions. They charged harum-scarum for the tanks, artillery, and ammunition and supply dumps. The attack seemed scattered, however, and unorganized. The fighting was fierce, nonetheless, and it shattered the hastily erected Marine roadblock between the battalions.

Some of the attackers got through the lines all along the front. A group of about 50 reached the division hospital. Doctors evacuated the badly wounded, but the walking wounded joined with cooks, bakers, stretcher bearers, and corpsmen to form the line that fought off the attackers. One of the patients, Private First Class Michael Ryan, "grabbed up the blanket covering me and ran out of the building without another stitch on." He had to run with a wounded foot through crossfire to reach some safety.

Lieutenant Colonel George O. Van Orden (3d Division infantry training officer), on orders from General Turnage, assembled two companies of the 3d Pioneer Battalion to eliminate this threat. In three hours the pioneers killed 33 of the assailants and lost three of their own men. The 3d

Medical Battalion had 20 of its men wounded, but only one patient was hit and he was one of the defenders.

For many men in the furious and confused melees that broke out all over the Marine positions, the experience of Corporal Charles E. Moore of the 2d Platoon, Company E, 2d Battalion, 3d Marines, wasn't unique. His outfit held a position about a quarter mile from Fonte Plateau. He recalled:

We set up where a road made a sharp turn overlooking a draw. It was the last stand of the second platoon. There were three attacks that night and by the third there was nobody left to fight, so they broke through. They came in droves throwing hand grenades and hacked up some of our platoon. In the

## 'Daring Tactics' Gave Capt Wilson Medal of Honor

Captain Louis Hugh Wilson, Jr.'s Medal of Honor citation reads as follows: "For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty as commanding officer of a rifle company attached to the 2d Battalion, 9th Marines, 3d Marine Division, in action against enemy Japanese forces at Fonte Hill, Guam, 25-26 July 1944. Ordered to take that portion of the hill within his zone of action, Captain Wilson initiated his attack in midafternoon, pushed up the rugged, open terrain against terrific machine gun and rifle fire for 300 yards and successfully captured the objective. Promptly assuming command of other disorganized units and motorized equipment in addition to his own company and one reinforcing platoon, he organized his night defenses in the face of continuous hostile fire and, although wounded three times during this 5-hour period, completed his disposition of men and guns before retiring to the company command post for medical attention. Shortly thereafter,

when the enemy launched the first of a series of savage counterattacks lasting all night, he voluntarily rejoined his besieged units and repeatedly exposed himself to the merciless hail of shrapnel and bullets, dashing 50 yards into the open on one occasion to rescue a wounded Marine laying helpless beyond the front lines. Fighting fiercely in hand-to-hand encounters, he led his men in furiously waged battle for approximately 10 hours, tenaciously holding his line and repelling the fanatically renewed counter-thrusts until he succeeded in crushing the last efforts of the hard-pressed Japanese early the following morning. Then organizing a 17-man patrol, he immediately advanced upon a strategic slope essential to the security of his position and, boldly defying intense mortar, machine gun and rifle fire which struck down 13 of his men, drove relentlessly forward with the remnants of his patrol to seize the vital ground. By his indomitable leadership, daring combat tactics, and valor in the face of overwhelming odds, Captain Wilson suc-

ceeded in capturing and holding the strategic high ground in his regimental sector, thereby contributing essentially to the success of his regimental mission and to the annihilation of 350 Japanese troops. His inspiring conduct throughout the critical periods of this decisive action sustains and enhances the highest traditions of the United States naval service."





# The Colt .45-Caliber M1911A1 Pistol

The Colt M1911A1 pistol was standard issue to Many Marine officers, noncommissioned officers, and specialists not armed with either the M1 carbine or rifle during World War II. From 1911, this pistol served its Marine owners as well as members of the other U.S. services armed with it.

The first M1911 pistols were issued to the Marine Corps in 1912, and shortly afterwards the Corps was able to field this pistol exclusively. Although Colt manufactured more than 55,000 pistols by the time the United States entered World War I, not enough were on hand to preclude arming some units of the American Expeditionary Force with revolvers. Subsequently, more than a half million M1911s were produced before 1926, when the M1911 was modified and the revised pistol now dubbed the M1911A1.

These modifications included a shorter, and serrated, trigger; wider sights; a contoured handgrip; and a longer grip safety. Approximately 1.8 million of the newer M1911A1s were produced and the M1911s also were upgraded to meet these new specifications during World War

II. The advent of World War II also meant further changes for the pistol. Among these was altering the finish from the common shiny blue-black to a dull gray, in the process called "Parkerization," which was designed to give the pistol a nonreflective matte surface. Wartime M1911A1s also sported checkered plastic grips instead of molded rubber.

Colt could not keep up with wartime demand, and the following firms were licensed to produce the M1911A1: Remington Arms Company, North American Arms Company Limited, Remington-Rand Company, Ithaca Gun Company, Union Switch and Signal Company, and Singer Sewing Machine Company. One curious note is that the Remington-Rand Company actually outproduced Colt during the wartime years by approximately 500,000 pistols.

During the war, in its table of equipment, a Marine division rated 1,707 pistols, but the actual number it had was in general substantially higher; a tribute to the popularity of the M1911A1. A number of Marine aviators, given the option, chose the .45-caliber Colt over the .38-caliber Smith & Wesson "Victory" revolver.

—Second Lieutenant G. M. Anthony, USMC

morning, I had only ten rounds of ammunition left, half the clip for my BAR. I was holding those rounds if I needed them to make a break for it. I had no choice. Everybody was quiet, either dead or wounded. The Japanese came in to take out their dead and wounded, and stepped on the edge of my fox-hole. I didn't breath. They were milling around there until dawn then they were gone.

As Lieutenant Colonel Cushman, evaluating the action later, said:

With the seizure of Fonte Hill, the capture of the beach-head was completed. In the large picture, the defeat of the large counterattack on the 26th by the many battalions of the 3d Division who fought valiantly through the bloody night finished the Jap on Guam . . . . What made the fighting for Fonte important was the fact that [the advance to the north end of the island] could not take place until it was seized.

The enemy attack failed in the south also, and in the south it was just as much touch and go at times. The Japanese sailors on Orote were just as determined as the soldiers at Fonte to drive the Americans from Guam.

## Orote

The 22d Marines had driven up the coast from Agat in a series of

hard-fought clashes with stubborn enemy defenders. The 4th Marines had swept up the slopes of Mount Alifan and secured the high ground overlooking the beachhead. By the 25th, the brigade was in line across the mouth of Orote Peninsula facing a formidable defensive line in depth, anchored in swamps and low hillocks, concealed by heavy under-

*Sherman mediums from the 3d Tank Battalion lumber up the long incline from the Asan beachhead towards the scene of battle around Fonte and X-Ray Ridges.*

Department of Defense Photo (USMC) 93640





growth, and bristling with automatic weapons.

The 77th Infantry Division had taken over the rest of the southern beachhead, relieving the 4th Marines of its patrolling duties to the south and in the hills to the west. The division's artillery and a good part of the III Corps' big guns hammered the Japanese on Orote without letup. Just in case of enemy air attack, the beach defenses from Agat to Bangi Point were manned by the 9th Defense Battalion. There were not too many Japanese planes in the sky, and so the anti-aircraft artillerymen could con-

centrate on firing across the water into the southern flank of the enemy's Orote positions. On Cabras Island, the 14th Defense Battalion moved into position where it could equally provide direct flanking fire on the peninsula's northern coast and stand ready to elevate its guns to fire at enemy planes in the skies above.

The 5,000 Japanese defenders on Orote took part in General Takashina's all-out counterattack and it began in the early morning hours of 26 July. The attackers stormed vigorously out of the concealing mangrove swamp and the response was just as

spirited. Here, as in the north, there was evidence that some of the attackers had fortified themselves with *sake* and there were senseless actions by officers who attacked the Marine tanks armed only with their *samurai* swords. There were deadly and professional attacks as well, with Marines bayoneted in their foxholes. There was one attendant communications breakdown obliging Captain Robert Frank, commanding officer of Company L, 22d Marines, to remain on the front relaying artillery spots to the regimental S-2 and thence to brigade artillery.

## War Dogs on Guam

In the late summer of 1942, the Marine Corps decided to experiment with the use of dogs in war, which may have been a new departure for the Corps, but not a new idea in warfare. Since ancient times, dogs have served fighting men in various ways. The Romans, for instance, used heavy mastiffs with armored collars to attack the legs of their enemies, thus forcing them to lower their shields.

On Guam, First Lieutenant William R. Putney commanded the 1st Dog Platoon and was the veterinarian for all war dogs on Guam. First Lieutenant William T. Taylor commanded the 2d Platoon. Both landed on the Asan-Adelup beach on Guam, while the 1st Platoon under Gunnery Sergeant L. C. Christmore landed with the 1st Provisional Brigade at Agat.

Sixty dogs, 90 handlers, 10 NCO assistants, two war dog corpsmen, and three kennelmen were distributed among the regimental and division headquarters of the 3d Marine Division. Lieutenant Putney commanded the 36 handlers and 24 dogs out of division headquarters. Overall, some 350 war dogs served in the Guam operation.

Handlers were trained dog specialists and skilled scouts as well. Man and dog searched out the enemy, awaited his coming, and caught him by surprise around the Marine perimeter or while on patrol. In addition, they found snipers, routed stragglers, searched out caves and pillboxes, ran messages, and protected the Marines' foxholes as they would private homes. The dogs ate, slept, walked, and otherwise lived with their masters.

The presence of dogs on the line could promise the Marines there a night's sleep, for they alerted their handlers when the enemy came near.

Early on in the Guam operations, some dogs were wounded or killed by machine gun and rifle fire, and incoming mortars were as devastating to the dogs as they were to the Marines. When the dogs were wounded, the

Marines made a point of getting them to the rear, to the veterinarian, as quickly as possible. In the liberation of Guam, 20 dogs were wounded and 25 killed.

From the end of the campaign to the end of the war in the Pacific, Guam served as a staging area for war dogs, of which 465 served in combat operations. Of the Marine Corps war dogs, 85 percent were Doberman Pinschers, and the rest mainly German Shepherds.

At the end of the Pacific War, the Marine Corps had 510 war dogs. Of this number, 491 were deprogrammed, a process that could take a year, and returned to their owners, given to their handlers, or returned to the Army, which had provided 41 to the Corps. Only four dogs could not be returned to their masters because, even after extensive retraining, they proved "incorrigible" and were considered to be unsafe for civilian life.





*Stretchers for wounded Marines lie scattered among the bodies of Japanese dead in the wake of the attack on the 3d Division hospital the evening of 25-26 July. Doctors, corpsmen, and wounded Marines joined in the fight to repulse the enemy.*

The artillery response was intense and effective. The fire was "drawn in closer and closer toward our front lines; 26,000 shells were thrown into the pocket [of attackers] between midnight and 3 a.m." The screaming attacks came at 1230, then again at 0130, and at 0300. At daylight the muddy ground in front of the Marine positions was slick with blood. More than 400 Japanese bodies were sprawled in the driving rain.

General Shepherd, secure in the knowledge that his frontline troops, 4th Marines on the left, 22d Marines on the right, had withstood the night's *banzai* attacks in good order, directed an attack to be launched at 0730. But first there would be another artillery preparation. At daybreak it opened with the 77th Infantry Division's 105s and 155s, the brigade's 75s, the defense battalions 90s, and whatever guns the 12th Marines could spare. It was one of the more intense preparations of the campaign. Major Charles L. Davis, S-3 of 77th Division Artillery, recalled how, on the request of General Shepherd, he had turned the

heavy 155mm battalion and two 105mm battalions around to face Orote to soften the Japanese positions. The 155s and 105s battered well-prepared positions, and ripped the covering, protection, and camouflage from bunkers and trenches. Pieces of men soon hung in trees. Marines saw that this fire counted and made it a point to return to congratulate and thank the 77th's artillery section leaders.

The advance, when it came, only went 100 yards before it was addressed by a blistering front of machine gun and small arms fire. Enemy artillery fire came falling almost simultaneously with the cessation of American support, leaving the Marines to think the fire was from their own guns, a favorite Japanese ruse. For a moment there, the Japanese return fire on the 22d Marines disorganized its forward move. It was about 0815 before the attack was on again in full force, spearheaded by Marine and Army tanks.

Immediately to the front of the 22d Marines was the infernal mangrove

swamp from where the *banzai* attack had been mounted the night before. It was still manned heavily by Japanese, was dense, and the only means of penetrating it was by a 200-yard-long corridor along the regimental boundary which was covered by Japanese enfilade fire and could only be navigated with the cover of tanks. The armor gunners and commanders directed their fire just over the head of prone Marines and into the gunports of enemy pillboxes. By 1245, Colonel Schneider's regiment had worked its way through all bottlenecks past the mangrove swamps, destroying bunkers with demolitions and flamethrowers. The 4th's assault battalions kept pace with this advance, finding somewhat easier terrain but just as determined defenders. By evening the brigade had advanced 1,500 yards from its jump-off line. Both regiments, weary, wary, and waiting, dug in with an all-around defense.

Again, there was a heavy pre-attack barrage on the 27th and the Marines were stopped again before they'd gone 100 yards. The 3d Bat-