
Opening Extract from...

The Pacific

Written by Hugh Ambrose

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First Lieutenant Austin Shofner woke up expecting enemy bombers to arrive overhead any second. Just after three a.m. his friend Hugh had burst into the cottage where he was sleeping on the floor and said, "Shof, Shof, wake up. I just got a message in from the CinCPAC saying that war with Japan is to be declared within the hour. I've gone through all the Officer of the Day's instructions, and there isn't a thing in there about what to do when war is declared."[1] With the enemy's strike imminent, Lieutenant Shofner took the next logical step. "Go wake up the old man."

"Oh," Hugh replied, "I couldn't do that." Even groggy with sleep, Shofner understood his reluctance. The chain of command dictated that Lieutenant Hugh Nutter report to his battalion commander, not directly to the regimental commander. Speaking to a colonel in the Marine Corps was like speaking to God. The situation required it though. "You damn fool, get going, pass the buck up." At this Hugh took off running into the darkness surrounding the navy base on the Bataan Peninsula in the Philippines.

Shofner followed quickly, running down to the docks, where the enlisted men were billeted in an old warehouse. He saw Hugh stumble into a hole and fall, but he didn't stop to help. The whistle on the power station sounded. The sentry at the main gate began ringing the old ship's bell. The men were already awake and shouting when Shofner ran into the barracks and ordered them to fall out. The bugler sounded the Call to Arms. Someone ordered the lights kept off, so as not to give the enemy's planes a target.

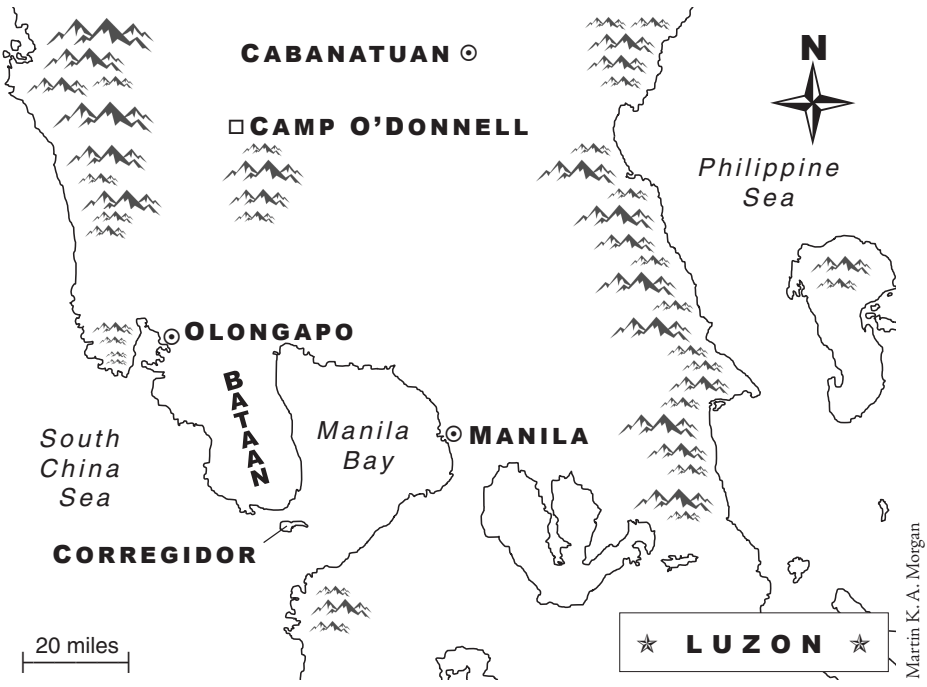
His men needed a few minutes to get dressed and assembled. Shofner ran to find the cooks and get them preparing chow. Then he went to find his battalion commander. Beyond the run-down warehouse where his men bunked, away from the rows of tents pitched on the rifle range where others were billeted, stood the handsome fort built by the Spanish. Its graceful arches had long since been landscaped, so Shofner darted up the road lined by acacia trees to a pathway bordered by brilliant red hibiscus and gardenias.[2] He found some of the senior officers of the Fourth Marine Regiment sitting together.* They had received word from Admiral Hart's headquarters sixty miles away in Manila that the Japanese had bombed Pearl Harbor. Their calmness surprised him.

Shofner should not have been taken aback. Every man in the room had been expecting war with the Empire of Japan. They had thought the war would start somewhere else, most likely in China. Up until a week ago, their regiment had been based in Shanghai. They had watched the emperor's troops steadily advance in China over the past few years as more and more divisions of the Imperial Japanese Army landed. The Japanese government had established a puppet government to rule a vast area in northern China it had renamed Manchukuo.

The Fourth Marines, well short of full strength at about eight hundred men, had been in no position to defend its quarter of Shanghai, much less protect U.S. interests in China. The situation had become so tense the marine officers concocted a plan in case of a sudden attack. They would fight their way toward an area of China not conquered by Japan. If the regiment was stopped, its men would be told essentially to "run for your life."[3] The officers around the table this morning were thankful the U.S. government finally had yielded to the empire's dominance and pulled them out in late November 1941, at what now looked like the last possible moment.

Upon their arrival at Olongapo Naval Base on December 1, the Fourth Marines became part of Admiral Hart's Asiatic Fleet, whose cruisers and destroyers were anchored in Manila Harbor, on the other side of the peninsula from where they were sitting. Along with the fleet, U.S. forces included General Douglas MacArthur's 31,000 U.S. Army troops as well as the 120,000 officers and men of the Philippine National Army. Hart and MacArthur had been preparing for war with the Empire of Japan for years. The emperor must have been nuts to attack the U.S. Pacific Fleet in Pearl Harbor. Now that he had, his ships and planes were sure to be on their way here, to the island of Luzon, which held the capital of the Philippine government

*The reader's convenience, not military practice, guides the nomenclature used here to identify military units.



and the headquarters of the U.S. forces. The enemy's first strike against them, the officers agreed, would likely be by bombers flying off Formosa.*

With all this strategic talk, Shofner could see that no orders were in the offing, so he went back to his men. His headquarters company had assembled on the parade ground along with the men from the infantry companies. The word being passed around was succinct: "japs blew the hell out of Pearl Harbor." He confirmed the news not with fear, but with some relish. Lieutenant Austin "Shifty" Shofner of Shelbyville, Tennessee, had always loved a good fight. Of medium height but robust of build, he loved football, wrestling, and gambling of any kind. He did not think much of the Japanese. He told his men that an attack was expected any moment. Live ammunition would be issued immediately. Next came a sly grin. "Our play days are now over and we can start earning our money."[4]

The marines waited on the parade ground until the battalion commander arrived to address them. All liberties were canceled. The regimental band was being dissolved, as was the small detachment of marines that manned the naval station

*Formosa is now known as Taiwan.

when the Fourth Marines arrived. These men would be formed into rifle platoons, which would then be divided among the rifle companies.[5] Every man was needed because they had to defend not only Olongapo Naval Station, but another, smaller one at Mariveles, on the tip of the Bataan Peninsula. The 1st Battalion drew the job of protecting Mariveles. It would depart immediately.

The departure decreased the regiment by not quite half, leaving it the 2nd Battalion, Shofner's headquarters and service company, and a unit of navy medical personnel. The riflemen got to work creating defensive positions. They dug foxholes, emplaced their cannons, and strung barbed wire to stop a beach assault. They located caches of ammunition in handy places and surrounded them with sandbags. Defending Olongapo also meant protecting the navy's squadron of long-range scout planes, the PBYs. When not on patrol these flying boats swung at their anchors just off the dock. The marines positioned their machine guns to fire at attacking planes. Roadblocks were established around the base, although this was not much of a job since the only civilization nearby was the small town of Olongapo.

The men put their backs into the work. Every marine had seen the Japanese soldiers in action on the other side of street barricades in Shanghai. They had witnessed how brutal and violent they were to unarmed civilians. Most of them had heard what the Japanese had done to the people of Nanking. So they knew what to expect from a Japanese invasion. Shofner felt a twinge of embarrassment that these preparations had waited until now. The biggest exercise undertaken since their arrival had been a hike to a swimming beach. Shofner thought back to the day before, December 7, when he had spent the entire day looking for a spot to show movies. He let those thoughts go. His assignment was to create a bivouac for the battalion away from the naval station. The enemy's bombers were sure to aim for the warehouses and the fort. As noon on the eighth approached, he moved with the alacrity for which he was known. He took his company across the golf course, forded a creek, and began setting up camp in a mangrove swamp.

On the other side of the International Date Line, the afternoon of December 7 found Ensign Vernon "Mike" Micheel of the United States Navy preparing to do battle with the Imperial Japanese Navy. He carried a sheaf of papers in his hands as he walked around the navy's air station in San Diego, known as North Island. Despite the frenzy around him, Mike moved with deliberate haste. He stopped at the different departments on the base: the Time Keeper, the Storeroom Keeper, the Chief Flight Instructor, and so forth, endeavoring to get his paperwork in order.

A few hours before he and the other pilots of his training group, officially known as the Advanced Carrier Training Unit (ACTU), had been told that the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor. Their pilot training was being cut short. They would board USS *Saratoga* immediately and go to war.

The Sara, as her crew called her, could be seen from almost anywhere Mike walked. She was the navy's largest aircraft carrier and towered over North Island, the collection of landing strips and aircraft hangars on the isthmus that formed San Diego Harbor. She was the center of attention, surrounded by cranes and gangways. Several squadrons, which included maintenance personnel as well as the pilots, gunners, and airplanes, were being loaded aboard. Most of these crews had been scheduled to board the Sara today. The big fleet carrier had been refitted in a shipyard up the coast and, strangely, arrived a few minutes before the declaration of war.[6] But new guys like Mike had had no such expectation.

Micheel prepared himself for active duty without the burning desire for revenge on the sneaky enemy to which most everyone around him pledged themselves. He knew he wasn't ready. He had not landed a plane on a carrier. Most of his flight time had been logged in biplanes. He had flown some hours in single-wing metal planes, but he had only just begun to fly the navy's new combat aircraft. Even when the Sara's torpedo defense alarm sounded and an attack appeared imminent, it was not in Mike's nature to let anger or ego overwhelm his assessment.[7]

Mike did not consider himself a natural pilot. He had not grown up making paper planes and following the exploits of pioneers like Charles Lindbergh. In 1940, the twenty-four-year-old dairy farmer went down to the draft board and discovered that he would be drafted in early 1941. If he enlisted, he could choose his service. His experiences in the ROTC, which had helped pay for college, had instilled in him a strong desire to avoid sleeping in a pup tent and eating cold rations. On a tip from a friend, he sought out a navy recruiter. The recruiter assured him that life in the navy was a whole lot better than in the infantry, but then he noticed Mike's college degree. "You know, we've got another place that you would fit, and that would be in the navy air corps. . . . It's the same thing as being on the ship with the regular navy people, but you get paid more."

"Well, that sounds good," Mike replied without enthusiasm. He had ridden on a plane once. "It was all right. But I wasn't thrilled about it." The recruiter, like all good recruiters, promised, "Well, you can get a chance to try it. If you don't like it, you can always switch back to the regular navy."

More than a year later, Mike arrived at North Island with a mission that placed him at the forefront of modern naval warfare. When civilians noticed the gold wings

on his dress uniform, they usually assumed that he was a fighter pilot. The nation's memories of World War I were laced with the stories of fighter pilots dueling with the enemy across the heavens at hundreds of miles an hour. That heady mix of glamour and prestige also had fired the imaginations of the men with whom Mike had gone through flight training. Each cadet strove to be the best because only the best pilots became fighter pilots. When they graduated from the Naval Flight School at Pensacola, the new ensigns listed their preferred duty.

Though he had graduated in the top quarter of his class, and been offered the chance to become an instructor, Ensign Micheel listed dive-bomber as his top choice. While few had heard of it before their training, the dive-bomber was also a carrier-based plane. It served on the front line of America's armed forces. Instead of knocking down the enemy's planes, its mission was to find the enemy's ships and sink them. Mike wanted to fly from a carrier. In his usual quiet way he figured out that the surest way for him to become a carrier pilot was to become a dive-bomber. Many of his fellow classmates had listed fighter pilot as their first choice. Most of them would later find themselves behind the yoke of a four-engine bomber. Although officially ordered to a scouting squadron, he essentially received his first choice. Scouts and bombers flew the same plane and shared the same mission. Mike came to North Island to improve his navigation enough to be a great scout, but also to learn the art of destroying ships, especially enemy carriers.

Now he filed his paperwork and walked to the Bachelor Officers' Quarters to pack his bags without once having attempted the difficult maneuver of dive-bombing. As the sun set, a blackout order added to the confusion and tension. Men who had been on liberty or on leave continued to arrive, full of questions. Micheel and the other new pilots headed for the Sara and the moment they had been working toward. They boarded an aircraft carrier for the first time. Every space was being crammed with every pilot, mechanic, airplane, bullet, and bomb that could be had. Rumors ran wild. The new pilots found their way to officer country, the deck where officers' staterooms were located.

The loading went on through the night, without outside lights. Then dawn broke. The Sara stood out from North Island just before ten a.m. on December 8. The clang of the ship's general quarters alarm sounded minutes later. Before she departed, however, calmer heads had prevailed. Micheel and the other trainees had been ordered off. As the great ship headed for open sea, those watching her from the dock would have assumed the Sara and her escort of three destroyers were headed straight into combat.

Monday's newspapers carried the story of the "Jap attack on Pearl Harbor" as well

as warnings from military and civilian leaders that an attack on the West Coast was likely. It fell to the servicemen of North Island to defend San Diego. The detachment of marines on the base began digging foxholes, setting up their guns, and protecting key buildings with stacks of sandbags. The airmen hardly knew how to prepare. The Sara had taken all of the combat planes assigned to Mike's training unit. All they had to fly were the ancient "Brewster Buffalo" and the SNJ, nicknamed the "Yellow Peril" because of its bright color and the inexperienced students who flew it.

First thing Monday morning, December 8, Sidney Phillips rode his bike down to Bienville Square in the center of town and met his pal William Oliver Brown, as agreed. They walked over to the Federal Building, which housed the recruiting offices of all the service branches. The line of men waiting to enlist in the navy stretched from the navy recruiting office, through the lobby, out the door, down the steps, down St. Georgia Street to the corner, and down St. Louis Street for half a block.[8] Mobile, Alabama, was a navy town. The angry men in the line would have spat out the word "japs" frequently. Not the types to simply take their places behind this crowd, Sid and William, whom everybody called "W.O.," walked up to the head of the line to see what was going on. A Marine Corps recruiter spied the two teenagers, walked over, and asked, "You boys want to kill Japs?"

"Yeah," Sidney said, "that's the idea."

"Well, all you'll do in the navy is swab decks." The recruiter explained that if they wanted to kill "japs" they had to join the marines. "I guarantee you the Marine Corps will put you eyeball to eyeball with them." Neither Sid nor W.O. had ever heard about the marines beyond the name. They were not alone, which explained why the recruiter worked the crowd. The recruiter told them that the marines were part of the navy, in fact "the best part." Then he tried a different tack: mischief. "You can't get in the navy anyway. Your parents are married." Sid laughed out loud. He looked at W.O. and could see he was thinking the same thing. The marines might be their kind of outfit. But neither could sign up on the spot; as seventeen-year-olds, they had to bring the papers home and get their parents' signatures. A cursory fitness test also revealed that Sidney's color perception was impaired. Not to worry, the recruiter said, the color test will likely be changed soon. He told Sid to come back after Christmas. W.O. said he was willing to wait.

Sid went home and found that getting his parents' permission was a bit tougher than he had anticipated. His mother had two brothers in the navy—Joe Tucker was a pilot stationed in Pearl Harbor—and she felt that was enough. His father,

the principal of Murphy High School, expected his son to be drafted soon, however. Young men were already being drafted and on this day President Roosevelt had declared war on Japan officially. But there was something else. The threat was real. Sid's father had served in World War I. He had raised his two children to love their country enough to protect it. When his only son stepped forward, he could not say no.

While his parents' discussion had only just begun, Sid figured his father would bring his mom around in time for him to go with W.O. However, it did not look like Sid's other best friend would be joining them. Eugene Sledge wanted to sign up, too, but his parents forbade him. Eugene had to finish high school. Eugene had a heart murmur. His brother had joined the army. Eugene's dad had lots of reasons. None satisfied his youngest son. Like Sid, Eugene felt a duty to serve. It came in part because of the sneak attack. His sense of duty also came from his family's long tradition of serving in the military. His dad, a doctor, had served in World War I. Both of his grandfathers had fought in the Civil War.

While Eugene and Sidney shared many interests, their passion for Civil War history bonded them. Most weekends found them at one of the battlefields just outside Mobile. Eugene's parents had a car for him, an almost unheard-of luxury, so they could drive over to Fort Blakeley or Spanish Fort. In part, the trips represented an escape from the structured lives they led. The ruins of the forts lay abandoned and ignored, so Sid and his buddy "Ugin" could do as they pleased. They loved to dig in the earthen breastworks for artifacts like minié balls and Confederate belt buckles. Eugene often brought his guns with them and they held target practice. They also read widely about the war and the battle fought there. The Army of the Confederacy had held Fort Blakeley even after the Yankees closed the port of Mobile and conquered Spanish Fort. On the same day General Lee signed the surrender at Appomattox, some twenty thousand men fought the last major battle of the Civil War at Blakeley. The Eighty-second Ohio led the Yankees' charge, which at last flushed the outnumbered and outgunned Confederates from their positions. Sid and Eugene loved tracing each unit's actions, refighting the battle from the mortar pits, rifle pits, and the great redoubts of the artillery.

The war against Japan undoubtedly would become as important as the Civil War. "The dirty japs," as most Americans referred to them, had launched a sneak attack while their ambassadors in D.C. spoke of peace. It was treachery. The desire to be a part of their country's glorious victory burned inside of Sid and Eugene. Like the Rebels at Fort Blakeley, who fought to the death long after the war was lost, they longed to prove their courage for all time. Now, if only they could get their parents' permission.

* * *

While everyone spoke endlessly about Pearl Harbor, Corporal John Basilone was incensed by the Japanese attack on the Philippines. His reaction surprised no one in his company. Although a corporal in the marines, Basilone had served a two-year hitch with the army, most of it in Manila, years ago. He had told so many stories about Manila that his friends had long ago nicknamed him "Manila John."[9] Every marine told sea stories. Stationed in a tent camp on the coast of North Carolina, they had little recreation aside from shooting the breeze. The tattoo on John's right biceps of a beautiful woman elicited comments and questions. He told them that her name was Lolita and he had met her in Manila "quite by chance, during one of those storms which blew up so suddenly."[10] To escape the driving rain he stepped into a small club and there she was.

John had known neither the Filipinos nor their country until Lolita had introduced him. Though poor, the Filipinos—who pronounced the word Pill-ee-peenos—worked hard and took pride in their identity. They had fought a protracted war for their independence and forced the U.S. government to establish a timetable for its withdrawal. With the issue of independence settled before his arrival, John had come to know a woman and a people who loved America. They looked to America for help. The first president of the Philippines had asked General Douglas MacArthur to build the country's army and command it as field marshal. To protect the fledgling democracy until it could defend itself, the U.S. Army maintained a large force there. Even as a lowly private, Basilone understood the biggest threat came from Japan.[11] They had been trying to push America out of the Far East for years.

December 9 brought news of Japanese attacks on other countries and islands in the Pacific. As the scale of their conquest in the Pacific shocked the nation, John told everyone that Manila would not fall.[12] General MacArthur commanded a powerful force from his suite atop the Manila Hotel, where he could look out at the bay on one side and over the city's main thoroughfare, Dewey Boulevard, on the other. Northern Luzon had impressive defenses, the most important of which John had seen one evening on a boat trip with Lolita.[13] She directed their boat out of Manila Bay and around the tip of the Bataan Peninsula into Subic Bay. They motored up along the northern coast of Bataan, in the direction of Olongapo, for dinner at a special restaurant. It had been a memorable night in a lot of ways, but John also recalled passing the island fortress guarding the entrance to Manila Bay: Corregidor, known as "the Rock." Its ancient rock walls, topped by giant coastal artillery, towered above the greatest warships ever built.

By the time his hitch with the army expired, John had decided to go home a single man. Lolita came looking for him right before he shipped out. He had been lucky to miss her, he liked to joke. She brought a machete and cut his seabag in half.[14] Being marines, his friends believed about half of what he told them.[15] But the point of John's stories was never to make himself look good. He liked to laugh and swap stories. A careful listener would have, however, deduced something else. John loved Manila because it had been there that he had come into his own. The adventurous and physically demanding life of a professional soldier had quelled a deep-seated restlessness. Unlike his struggles in civilian life, John had discovered a knack for soldiering.

Manila John's path from the army to the Marine Corps had been neither straight nor easy, but he eventually had made it from Manila to the machine-gun section of Dog Company, 1st Battalion, Seventh Marine Regiment (D/1/7). He faced the war secure in his place in the world. He loved being a marine. He knew his job. Instead of being a cause of concern for his parents, he was sending home $40 a month to his mother.[16] That peace brought out his natural disposition: a cheerful, fun-loving, easygoing spirit that drew others to him.[17] He had his feelings inscribed on his left shoulder. It bore a sword slashing down through a banner proclaiming "Death Before Dishonor."

Lieutenant Shofner's war grew slowly. The enemy bombed the U.S. bases around Luzon for a few days before they began landing troops on December 10. They chose isolated areas and their troops walked ashore. Reports of their movements reached the Fourth Marines almost hourly as the top brass in Manila struggled to devise plans and their various units strove to carry them out. The Fourth continued to man its post at Olongapo despite rumors of other assignments. During the day, the marines prepared to defend the beaches. The air raid alarm sounded often but, so far, nothing. At night, the marines marched back to their camp in the swamp. The blackout was enforced. Food had to be rationed. They ate twice a day or, as the saying went, "breakfast before daylight and dinner after dark."[18] Inside of two weeks, someone surely noted, they had gone from Peking duck to cold C rations. A few days of foul weather made camp miserable, but the storm did bring a respite from reports of fresh attacks.

The twelfth dawned clear, so the marines watched as a few of the PBYs of Navy Patrol Wing Ten landed in the bay. The morning's patrol was over and the seamen had secured their planes when five enemy fighter planes fell upon them. With their heavy machine guns and 20mm cannons, the Japanese planes quickly destroyed

seven flying boats, the entire squadron. Two or three attackers made a run at the marines' base, guns blazing. About forty .30-caliber machine guns returned their fire. No one hit a plane. The .30 caliber had not been designed as an antiaircraft gun, but the marines pulled their triggers anyway. One gunner swung hard to track his target and shot holes in the water tower.

The next day the alarm sounded at ten thirty a.m. for what Shofner thought must be the fiftieth time. As the commanding officer (the CO) of the Headquarters Company, he led it once again across the golf course and into the swamp. He looked up, counted twenty-seven Japanese bombers above him, and heard a noise he had never heard before. The sound of bombs falling toward him was unforgettable. Explosions erupted as the planes disappeared. Shofner returned to the base. A sudden gust of wind, he learned, had driven the bombs past the base and into the town. The village was on fire and the marines went to assist. They found a dozen had been killed and many more wounded. Bombs landed near the regiment's field hospital, although its tents, emblazoned with large red crosses on fields of white, had been set up a mile out of town. The marines decided the emperor's air force had aimed for the hospital and it made them angry.

The attack prompted Shofner's CO to reassess the situation. The regimental commander could not allow his men to be killed before the land campaign began. If the assault came at Olongapo, the defenses were as ready as they could be. But his unit was not going to sit on a target. The Fourth Marines moved their camp a few miles into the hills, where the jungle hid them from bombers. A skeleton crew manned the naval base during the day, but the rest prepared for a battle they knew was coming somewhere, soon. The enemy was on the move. As the battalion's supply officer, Shofner concentrated on moving necessary supplies to the new bivouac. As an officer he did not lift boxes, of course, but he had to decide what could fit on their limited supply of trucks. Marines from the rifle companies, meantime, rounded up all Japanese civilians in Olongapo and turned them over to the army's police force.[19]

When the communication lines to Manila went dead, it was assumed this was the work of saboteurs. News of other enemy landings on Luzon continued to get through to them by runner and radio. The enemy's bombers paid another visit to Olongapo before the night of December 22, when the regiment went on high alert at about one thirty a.m. The first report stated that fifteen transports had landed enemy troops on Lingayen Gulf. Top U.S. commanders always had expected the main assault to cross the beaches of Lingayen. The Fourth Marines were ordered to prepare to move out to repulse it. The next communication reported "87 jap transports." A long, anxious night passed. The regiment stayed put. Shofner assumed it

was because they were only five hundred men. Later he found out the regiment had been put under MacArthur's command. While the Fourth awaited its orders, the enemy's troop transports were spotted in Subic Bay. The marines charged down to defend Olongapo but found an empty ocean.

The Fourth's CO drove to Manila to assess the situation. At six p.m. on December 24, Shofner watched the colonel's car return to their camp at high speed. A battalion officers' conference followed. Colonel Howard told them he had been ordered to withdraw immediately to the small base at Mariveles, on the tip of the Bataan Peninsula. Units of the Imperial Japanese Army had overwhelmed all opposition easily and had advanced to within forty miles of their position. To his officers, he likely also admitted the full scope of the situation. From his conversations with Admiral Hart and later with General MacArthur and his staff, it was clear that the U.S. forces were in disarray. MacArthur's chief of staff, General Richard Sutherland, had told Howard the Japanese "were converging on Manila from three directions."[20] The enemy air force had destroyed most of the thirty-seven new B-17 bombers and the remainder had flown south to Mindanao. Admiral Hart was departing by submarine and taking his remaining fleet south. General MacArthur was abandoning Manila and ordering all of his troops to prepare for a defensive stand on the Bataan Peninsula. MacArthur's headquarters was moving to the island of Corregidor. He ordered the Fourth Marines, after picking up its 1st Battalion in Mariveles, to Corregidor to protect his headquarters. Colonel Howard told his officers to begin packing immediately.

Lieutenant Shofner's job as the battalion's logistics officer demanded his best efforts to get all of the equipment and supplies on the trucks and headed south on the dirt road. The first convoy of trucks left about noon on Christmas Day. Shofner and his friend Lieutenant Nutter led some men back to the naval station. They had a few hours to get the necessities. So far as their personal gear, each marine had a backpack. Beyond that, the colonel had allowed one footlocker for officers. Everything else had to be left behind.

Shofner hated to leave behind the large and diverse collection of personal effects he had stored in the warehouse at the dock. It caught him off guard. As the scion of a well-to-do family, he had become an officer and a gentleman after serving as president of his fraternity (Kappa Alpha), lettering on the varsity football team of the University of Tennessee, and earning a scholarship from the "T" Club as "the athlete with the highest grades." His mountain of baggage included not only an array of military uniforms and sporting equipment of all types, but also a few dozen suits for every occasion—from black tie, to silk, to sharkskin. In Shanghai he had

amassed an impressive array of exquisite Chinese furniture, furnishings, art, and apparel. Some of the silken damasks and jade carvings doubtless were intended as gifts for his girlfriend, his mother, or others in his large family. When he had been posted to Shanghai six months earlier and learned war was imminent, he had been pleased. Shofners had fought in every American war. The idea of retreating, however, had never occurred to him.

He packed his footlocker with necessities, including just one small memorial: a plaque bearing the insignia of the Marine Corps from the Fourth Marine Regiment's Club. As he sped away, he hoped his oriental rugs and ivory statuettes would be found by some local Filipino.

Shofner arrived at Camp Carefree, an army rest camp at the tip of Bataan, that evening and enjoyed a turkey sandwich for his Christmas Day dinner. So far as he could tell, Bataan had not been prepared for a defensive stand. He found an open bunk in the officers' quarters and let exhaustion overtake him. The air raid siren woke him at midnight. Everyone ran outside and lay down in an open field, as ordered. From where he lay, Shofner could see a freighter burning just offshore, and beyond it, the city of Manila lit by a hundred raging fires. MacArthur had ordered the city, known as the Pearl of the Orient, abandoned by his forces. He informed the Imperial Japanese Army it was open to them. They bombed it anyway.

The enemy had gotten the drop on the United States. That much was obvious on Christmas Day. The officers and men of the Fourth Marines committed themselves to hanging on until the United States Navy showed up with reinforcements. Then the bastards would catch hell.

The day after Christmas, Sid, W.O., and some others were sworn in. Just like that they were marines. People had heard about the marines now. The marines who defended Wake Island had repulsed the first attempt by Japan to invade the island a few days after the attack on Pearl Harbor. When asked later to detail his supply needs, the officer in charge had radioed "send us more japs!"* Wake had been overrun on Christmas Eve, but not without the kind of fight Americans had seen lacking elsewhere. Preparing to depart, Sid got together with Eugene. Eugene gave Sid a copy of *Barrack-Room Ballads*, by Rudyard Kipling, as a going-away present. The

*The officer in command of the USMC defense battalion and the USMC fighter squadron, Commander Winfield S. Cunningham, sent a list of his supply and reinforcement needs. Most historians believe the quote above was "padding" added to the message to make it more difficult for the enemy to decode.

book contained a favorite poem, "Gunga Din." Both of them could quote passages from memory, such as the opening stanza:

You may talk o' gin and beer
When you're quartered safe out 'ere . . .
But if it comes to slaughter
You will do your work on water,
An' you'll lick the bloomin' boots of 'im that's got it.
Now in Injia's sunny clime,
Where I used to spend my time
A-servin' of 'Er Majesty the Queen,
Of all them black-faced crew
The finest man I knew
Was our regimental bhisti, *Gunga Din.*
It was "Din! Din! Din!
You limpin' lump o' brick-dust, Gunga Din! . . ."

Sid did not open the book on the steam train to Parris Island, South Carolina. The new life intoxicated him. He and W.O. and a carload of new best friends sang songs. Upon arrival, Sid learned he was not a marine. He was a shitbird. In the estimation of his drill instructor (DI), who delivered his opinion at high volume and at close range, Sid Phillips was not going to ever reach the exalted position of marine. He was his mother's mistake. Then it was time to run: run to get their gear, run to their barracks, run to the parade ground, run, run, run! To Sid's complete surprise, his training focused on earning the privilege of being a United States Marine. Only occasionally did he dig a foxhole, stab a dummy with a bayonet, or learn something related to killing Japanese soldiers. The Marine Corps set a high standard with the rigors of boot camp. The humiliation and the profanity heaped upon all the boots (recruits), as well as the all-encompassing demands placed upon them, went well beyond the other services. Every action would be performed the Marine Corps way using Marine Corps terminology, or else.

Sidney and W.O. and their new friend John Tatum, also from Alabama, had been raised to respect and obey authority. They adjusted to boot camp rather easily. Shorn not just of hair but also of all personal privacy, Sid disliked using the head (toilet) in front of sixty others and lining up to have his penis inspected for gonorrhea. The prospect held out by his instructors, that of becoming the world's best fighting man, seemed worth the punishment. On the first day, each boot had been

issued a rifle, a 1903 bolt-action Springfield, so Sid looked forward to the day when he would be taught to use it. Rifle instruction came last. In the meantime he and his fellow boots drilled ceaselessly, learning to march in lockstep. To survive, they learned their instructor's personal marching cadence. No drill instructors yelled, "March, one, two, three." It demanded too much from the vocal cords. Besides, a DI could really vent his disgust of the shitbirds by shouting something like "HAWrsh! AWN! UP! REEP!"[21]

Corregidor inspired confidence in the men of the Fourth Marines. After arriving by ferry on North Dock, they put their gear on a trolley and began the climb up the steep hill. They had all heard the Rock was an impregnable fortress. Their escort described the great tunnels carved in the rock below them and the huge coastal gun emplacements on the hills above them. The island was shaped like a tadpole; its tail stuck into Manila Harbor, its round head facing the South China Sea. The narrow tail was mostly rocks and beaches. Dominated by Malinta Hill, the tadpole's tail held the docks, power station, and warehouses; this area was called Bottomside. Beyond Malinta Hill, they came to the high hill known as Middleside, where their barracks were located, as well as a hospital and a recreational club. Beyond Middleside was another, steeper hill, called Topside, encompassing most of the wide area of the tadpole's head. On Topside, the lush forest gave way to manicured lawns surrounding stately mansions for officers, a golf course, and a profusion of casemates holding the giant coastal artillery. More than fifty big guns, from three inches to twelve inches in diameter, had been emplaced. The Rock, kept cooler than the mainland by an ocean breeze, had it all.

Having arrived at Middleside Barracks on the evening of December 27, the marines spent two quiet days getting squared away. Organizing the supplies kept Shofner busy. His regiment, which now included its 1st Battalion as well as a detachment of four hundred marines from another base, brought rations to feed its twelve hundred men for at least six months, ammunition for ten days of heavy combat, khaki uniforms to last for two years, and medicine and equipment for a one-hundred-bed hospital. Of course Corregidor had mountains of munitions already stockpiled.

When the air raid sirens went off about noon on December 29, no one paid much attention. The Japanese had never bombed Corregidor. Shofner was standing near the barracks when he saw the formation of planes. The antiaircraft guns began firing. The sun glinted off the metal shapes falling toward him. He ran into

the bombproof barracks. He joined the rest of the regiment, every last man of whom was splayed out on his belly. One bomb came through the roof but exploded on an upper floor; another could be heard crashing through but did not detonate; many others went off nearby. "And thus began," Shofner wrote in his diary, "the worst day I have ever spent."

A bomb had wounded one marine. He was taken to the hospital as everyone else abandoned Middleside Barracks. It had become a giant target and more airplanes were overhead. Shofner met some nurses looking for a doctor; bombs had hit the rear of their barracks. All Shofner could find was a dentist, but he sent him. Another squadron of bombers came over, then another and another. He lost count after a dozen formations had each released a vast amount of high explosives. Most of the time he lay on his back, watching the Rock's antiaircraft (ack-ack) shells explode well short of their targets. He wondered whether the planes were too high, if the aim was off or the proper fuses were missing, or if perhaps the poor shooting was the fault of untrained personnel. He could not tell. The bombs fell without a discernible pattern so one could only hope, intensely. The last echo faded four hours later. The marines sustained four casualties, one of whom later died. The buildings of Middleside, including his barracks, lost the capacity to provide much shelter, much less a sense of security.

Irritated by doubt for the first time, Shofner got to work. His company was ordered to set up camp in James Ravine. That meant setting up a galley to feed the men, laying communications wire, and other preparations. He worked all night. The other units of the regiment moved to their sectors and prepared to defend the beaches of Corregidor. The 1st Battalion took the most vulnerable sector, encompassing Malinta Hill and Bottomside. Shofner's battalion had the easier job of securing Middleside, where he was, and Topside. Since it was unlikely the enemy would try to land anywhere but Bottomside, Shofner's position was considered a reserve one. Still, all hands fell to, spending the balance of each day stringing barbed wire, placing land mines, and digging trenches, antitank traps, and caves for shelter. The air alarm occasionally failed to go off and bombs detonated close to him a few times. As battalion mess officer, he saw to it that each man received two rations per day. Thankfully there was plenty of drinking water and they could bathe in the sea. Learning to keep oneself near shelter and to run for it at the first hint of an aircraft engine took time. In the course of the next ten days, 36 marines were killed and another 140 were wounded.[22]

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