

'DELIVERANCE'

San Jose, Luzon, Philippine Islands - March, 1945

The artillery fire was murderous and nerve-wracking. Our supply trucks were having difficulty getting food and ammunition to our positions. We were not able to locate the Japanese guns for they never fired at night, opening up on us as the sun came up each morning. If they would only fire one time at night we could see the muzzle flashes and locate their positions! Then our dive-bombers could bomb them into oblivion. Our only supplies came in under the cover of darkness. The slightest movement in our camp brought severe shelling.

The Regimental Commander, Colonel Reece had to take drastic action before the First Regiment, Sixth Infantry Division, could take and occupy San Jose and Munoz, the gateway to Highway 6. This main road had to be secured to cut the Japanese supply line to the north portion of Luzon from Manila. The exact position of the guns **MUST** be pi-pointed or we would be pinned down long past the time allotted to complete our mission of taking the two towns assigned to us. This was unacceptable!

An urgent message was sent to my company, Company B, for 5 volunteers for a suicide spy mission. The 'First' (First Sergeant) did not tell us that it was a 'volunteer' mission or that the projected survival rate would be almost nil. He sent five of us to Col. Reece at Regimental Headquarters. I was the Browning Automatic Rifle man (then the Army's most rapid firing rifle at 550-rounds per minute) for my squad. The BAR was heavy at 21-pounds, compared with the M-1 at 9-pounds. I would have carried it if it had weighed 30-pounds because of the accuracy and security it gave me and my squad against the enemy.

Col. Reece's first question was, "You men volunteered for this mission, right?" "No" was answered by each man as he polled us individually. He explained the mission then asked for anyone who wanted to back away from it to step forward, no record to be made on the service record of the refusal. My assistant BAR man, Private Moore, stepped forward. Col. Reece noted that he was armed with an M-1, asked us to exchange rifles and ammo belts. We were not to engage the enemy unless there was no alternative so the extra firepower was not as important as speed. An expert on radio

equipment joined us with his field radio, as well as, another volunteer to replace Moore.

We were issued C-rations for three days and received a briefing until an hour after sundown. We were driven to our jump-off position about a mile short of the Japanese forward positions. By daybreak we were in our positions to observe the mountainside that was suspected as the source of the artillery fire. As the sun rose we looked for activity of the enemy. We had only a few minutes to wait before we saw the camouflage netting drawn back and the gun tubes protrude a few feet from the caves. The bombardment was especially heavy today, which caused us to wonder what going on back there with our friends.

We marked each gun position on the air photos and tried to radio the positions to headquarters. OUR RADIO WAS NOT WORKING! We could receive some messages very weakly for a few minutes - then nothing. The batteries were dead! We began the long return journey after the darkness settled in like a blanket over central Luzon. The Japanese were moving troops into position around San Jose by the thousands! We could not get through on five different tries that night. We went back to our mountain hide-a-way and waited until dark again. Three more days were spent in hiding with attempts to get through each night. Finally, after five days, the Philippino Guerillas (Third Tigers) were contacted by our Headquarters in an attempt to locate us or our remains.

Telegrams were to be sent out to our families that we were missing in action, though they were never sent from Washington because of a slip-up. I was glad, for once, that the Army did make mistakes. My mother would have had a stroke.

Though we did not realize it, the Tigers had come across our trail that morning. We only made two mistakes - either one could have been fatal - during our clandestine operation: one man lost his compass when he slipped and fell. Fortunately it was a Philippino scout, not a Japanese, who found it. The Japanese knew we were behind their lines because one of our men had panicked and shot a lone Japanese soldier as he passed within a few feet of us on our first attempt to pass through their lines on our second night out. Four tanks and 200-men were dispatched to find and annihilate us. The Tigers thought the Japanese were after them until the message about us was received.

I was never so happy to see a group of soldiers, as I was those Tigers! We were dirty, thirsty, hungry, tired, blistered (feet), and almost hopeless.

The Tigers led us to a village where we were fed, allowed to bathe while the women washed our clothes, and we slept around the clock. Two runners were dispatched with our maps so that dive-bombers could have a field day destroying the artillery. The Naval aviators put on a real show that morning in their Helldivers!

We were escorted through the Japanese lines that night by the Tigers. They knew a way where there were no troops; a five-mile longer route than we had tried in our attempts before. We were welcomed by more Brass than I had ever seen in one place before, from the Division Commander down to the 'Second Louies'. The first person that I asked about was Pvt. Moore and my BAR. We returned to our company about 3AM and learned that a shell had killed my assistant gunner, Moore, and others in my company! Had I been there, I would have been dead! I located my BAR, which jammed because it had sand in the bolt. I had no time to clean it before the assault on San Jose that morning. When the first Japanese tank came out of hiding, I only got off three rounds before it jammed. Fortunately, we were crossing a small stream at the time. I washed the BAR free of sand as I worked the bolt and gave it a good dunking. No sooner had I washed it free of sand than the tank turned toward my company. Forty rounds was all that was required to set him afire and disable him. The other tanks and enemy opposition was overcome by early afternoon.

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(Circa 1989)

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