

The Last Chapter

We finally arrived on Pavuvu, but strangely enough I cannot recall a single thing about the voyage. Perhaps we could call this a Freudian slip. This was where we were to live and train while we made ready for our next assignment.¹

Pavuvu as I recall it was a typical coral island, and probably could be a pleasant place under the right circumstances. We were housed in the usual six-man tents complete with raised wooden decks. For the first few weeks we had our own company mess, and our cooks did very well by us. They prepared the food carefully, and we enjoyed the results. Like a typical bureaucracy, regiment decided to consolidate the mess halls, and the quality of the meals quickly deteriorated.

Pavuvu was particularly blessed, or perhaps I should say cursed, with land crabs. Land crabs are about the size of Atlantic blue crabs and are born in the ocean. For reasons of their own they leave the ocean and make their homes in burrows on land. They are usually nocturnal, and I have never heard of them inflicting harm on anyone. These peculiar critters were all over the place. Our best estimate of their numbers was about 27 trillion give or take a few. A bunch of guys for some inexplicable reason decided to declare war on the land crabs and began to club as many as they could and gather them into a pile. In short order, they had a very large pile of these creatures, and they began to wonder just what the hell they were going to do with a ton or so of dead land crabs. Someone got the bright idea of cremating them, and so they were doused thoroughly with kerosene and set afire. Of course, this crematorium was right in the area where we all lived. Perhaps you can imagine the stench. Well it was much worse than that, and it lingered for days. Needless to say, after that the land crabs were allowed to multiply in peace.²

Another type of crab would occasionally wander into our area, but they were generally to be found right on the shore. These were tiny hermit crabs usually about an inch long. These crabs did not grow their own shells but would find unoccupied shells of other sea creatures and use them until they outgrew them. I have no idea how large they can grow; the only ones I ever noticed were very small. I had not seen any around our tent until one day I saw a .45 caliber empty shell casing making its way across the wooden floor of our tent. Normally shell casings do not travel much unless they are being ejected out of receiver of a firearm, so I went over to examine this phenomenon more closely. I could hardly credit my eyes when I saw that the motive power was being supplied by a hermit crab. He hung around for a few days, and provided us with a good deal of amusement. He vanished one day, and we couldn't help wondering what the lady crabs thought of his unusual apparel.

When we got to Pavuvu we found that we had a new company commander. The surprise was that he was a former Tech sergeant from the scout company, now Captain Michael J. DeSandis. Mike had been a very fine sergeant, and Captain DeSandis would prove to be a very well liked and respected commanding officer. We were all very surprised to see him because it was almost unheard of for a mustang to be assigned to a company where he had served as an enlisted man. To his great credit, he seemed to have had no problem with the transformation.

¹ Pavuvu was where the Marines would prepare for the assault on Peleliu. In a review of George McMillan's *The Old Breed*, it is called a "stinking, rat-infested little island in the Solomons, fit neither for marine nor Gook" (<http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,801198-1,00.html>). The rats would come out at night in droves and were so bold they would climb into a cot if a marine had taken food to bed.

² McMillan in *The Old Breed*, page 238, quotes a man as saying, "it was the damnedest, most sickening smell. We couldn't come back to our sacks for the whole day, and it a Sunday, a sack day!"

I had been on Pavuvu only a couple of months when I began to lose my appetite and puff up like a Thanksgiving Day parade balloon. Finally, Dan Wetherell decided to take me to sick bay for a check-up. They immediately sent me to the lab for a urinalysis. The lab technician jokingly said that he would see that I got to go home. He had added something to the sample and was holding it over a Bunsen burner as he spoke. A startled expression came over his face. He turned the test tube upside down and nothing came out. The contents had solidified. I asked the significance of the test, and he told me it was a check for albumen. Her also said he had never seen anything like this much albumen in a sample, and I was on my way home.³

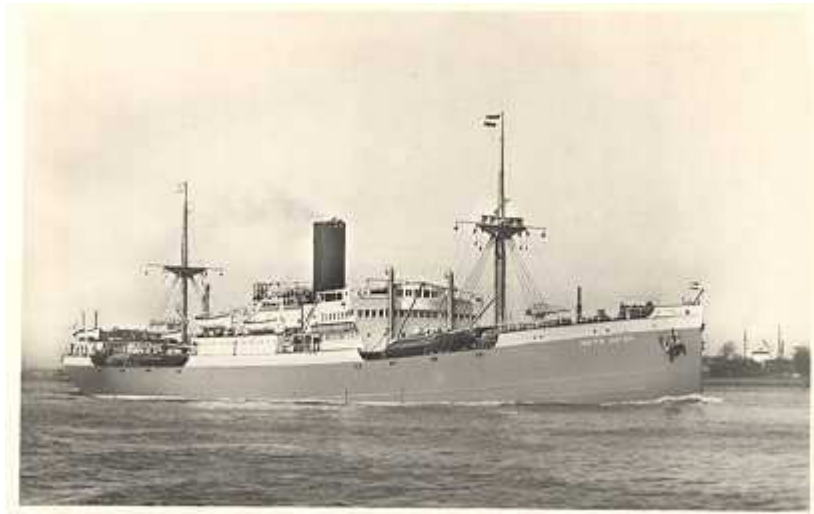
The facilities on Pavuvu were extremely limited, so I was taken on a small boat to a Naval hospital on nearby island. The diagnosis of acute nephritis was confirmed. Apparently, there was no medication that would be effective, and all they could prescribe was complete bed rest and a low protein diet. Within ten days all of the swelling had subsided, and I felt fine and wanted to rejoin my outfit, but they wouldn't even let me get out of bed. A decision was made to transfer me to the main Naval hospital for the area at Espirito Santo in the New Hebrides. They wouldn't even let me walk to the ambulance that was to transport me to the airfield for the flight. The ambulance crew even carried me into the waiting room on a stretcher. Ironically, when it came time to board the aircraft, I was not only required to walk but had to carry my own sea bag. I made no objection because I felt fine.

At Espirito Santo we went through the same routine. A look at my medical record, a few tests, and the same verdict. Complete bed rest and a low protein diet. There are two things that stick in my memory from my brief stay there. One day someone stopped at my bed and began to ask some questions—just name, rank, serial number, etc.—noted it all down and started to move away. I stopped him and asked what this was all about. He replied that he was just gathering information so I would get my Purple Heart. I informed him that I had not been wounded and did not rate a Purple Heart. He erased my name from the list, and I blew my chance to get a medal.

The second event I recall was another poker game. It just shows how desperate one can get for entertainment after a month in a hospital. There was a pot limit poker game going on at one end of the ward, and I got out of bed to go down and watch. I was invited to join the game but declined on the grounds that if the pot grew too large I wouldn't have the money to stay, and I would lose by default. They said that would not be a problem because their rule was that on the last round of bets, bets had to be limited to what one had left. The game at the time was five card stud poker where one card is dealt face down (the hole card) and one face up. Bets are placed with the high hand betting first. Three more cards are dealt with a round of betting after each card. After the fifth card, I had a pair of eights showing and no help in the hole. One hand had an ace, king, queen and jack showing. A ten or any face card in the hole would beat my hand. I had the best hand showing and made a modest bet. He called and raised the limit. The other three players folded. My personal philosophy in poker is someone has to keep the bettor honest, so I put in my last twelve dollars. Since the pot had been forty eight dollars, he had to take back thirty six dollars, and since I had only twelve dollars left this made a total pot of thirty eight plus twenty four, for a total of 72 dollars, more than a month's pay. Turned out he was bluffing, and the pot was mine. He was furious, claimed I should never have called him and didn't know how to play poker. I reminded him that I had won the pot. I took my winnings and went back to bed to read. He perhaps learned that if you're going to bluff, make sure you can afford the loss if it doesn't work

³ He would have been going soon anyway. McMillan in *The Old Breed* explains that men with twenty-four months of service were earmarked to get rotated out. They were exhausted and depleted, and their commanders knew it (p. 250). Balester had been on active duty since December of 1942, and this was April or May of 1944. If you count basic training, he had been in the Marines since February of 1942. At that time, McMillan states, 30% of the Division had been in the same position, "more than twelve months overseas and less than twenty-four."

My stay at Espirito Santo was only a few weeks and unfortunately I all I saw of this fabled island⁴ was the hospital the airfield and the docks. They had arranged transportation for me on an old Dutch freighter called the Kota Inten.⁵ It was a small freighter and only had room for about two passengers but managed to cram in ten. The ship's captain and the officers were Dutch and the rest of the crew was composed of Lascars from the Dutch East Indies. The ship was dirty by American standards, and the crew was a dirty and scruffy looking lot. The ship made a top speed of about ten knots and rolled constantly.



Koda Inten freighter (<http://www.simplonpc.co.uk/RotterdamLloydPCs.html#anchor62216>)

At that speed the trip seemed to last forever. Between my poor health and the rolling of the ship, I was sick to my stomach almost constantly. The only clear memory I have of the trip is that once when I made it up on deck two of the Lascars got into a fight, and before the officers could intervene one stabbed the other in the face with a marlin spike. I gathered from the reaction of the officers that this was a fairly routine occurrence. Eventually we arrived safely in San Francisco, and I was shunted off to Oak Knoll Naval Hospital.

Oak Knoll was really a very pleasant place. The wards were large and airy, and there was plenty of reading material handy. The only problem was, after they consulted my medical record and administered a new battery of tests, I was once again declared a bed patient with a special diet. There was one change. Instead of a low protein diet I was placed on a high protein diet. The special diet was not particularly appetizing, and since the doctors couldn't agree on what I should eat, I compromised. I was always in bed when they brought my tray and would eat what appealed to me. When I had eaten what I wanted from that tray, I got dressed and went to the mess hall and ate what I wanted from that menu.

The first day I went down to the telegraph office and sent a wire to my folks to let them know I was safely back in the States. When I was dictating the message to the attendant I started to spell "Wilkes-Barre" for her. She remarked, "Don't bother. Half the damn Marine Corps is from there."

⁴ Espirito Santo, now Vanuatu, is the setting of the play *South Pacific*. James Michener was stationed there during the war, and it became the setting of his *Tales of the South Pacific*.

⁵ .A cargo-passenger that sailed between Rotterdam and the Dutch East Indies from 1927-57.

The wards were all separate Quonset huts, very long and roomy. There were at least forty beds in each ward and generally only one nurse on duty. I could pretty much come and go as I pleased as long as I was in bed for meals and the doctor's morning rounds. One day when I was out for a stroll I met a Wave who was



Oak Knoll, 1946 <http://www.militarymuseum.org/NavHospOakland.html>

also a bed patient. After that we used to visit each other in our respective wards. Louise had a friend named Betty who she used to spend her liberties with. They were very nice, and I took them once to the top of the Mark for cocktails. I had never known any gay people before and it took me months to realize that Betty was “butch.”

Each ward had a morning room at the front end which had magazines a radio and a few easy chairs. Unfortunately, the radio was monopolized by about ten country music fanatics who would turn it on loud at six every morning and camp in front of it all day. They refused to let anyone turn to any of the entertaining evening shows such as Jack Benny or Bob Hope on the grounds that they were there first. The worst of it was that they would play it so loudly that no one could sleep late.

Dear Mom & Dad

Hello there. Not much new going on around here, but I had a letter from you yesterday and it reminded me I owe you a letter.

I sneaked out of the ward last night and went to a movie. It was pretty good but while I was gone someone called long distance for me and I wasn't in. Was it you by any chance? I thought they would call back but they didn't so I'm left wondering.

Had a package from Aunt Tina today. A big box of Italian cookies. They sure taste swell. I'll write and thank her as soon as I finish this letter.

How is Mr. Godleski. I hope he gets well quickly. I like the Godleski's they ~~are~~ are good neighbors.

Well, I guess that is about all for this time. Adios.

Love
Fred.

No one wanted to make an issue of it. I guess they had a reputation of being tough guys, so I decided to take a hand. I tried to reason with them, but they were determined to continue to hog the radio from morning to night. Late that night after lights out I removed the power tube and put it under my pillow. At six the next morning three of the country boys, if that's what they really were, woke me and demanded that I return the tube. I replied that if they were unwilling to share the radio no one would use it. They made a few threats, but I told them if they gave me any trouble the tube would disappear permanently and replacements were impossible to find. I added that they should return at eight o'clock and we would discuss it some more.

In 1945 in uniform, all cleaned up and happy to be home alive.



Mom, Madge (Ruth) Watrous Balester, died of uterine cancer before Dawne made it to the States.



When they came back at eight o'clock they agreed that in future they would not play the radio loudly before eight in the morning, and they would share the radio during the evening prime time hours. I pointed out that if they broke their word I would smash the tube. I suspect they had discovered I had a lot of support among the rest of the patients. They kept their word, and I suspect they thoroughly enjoyed some of the other shows.

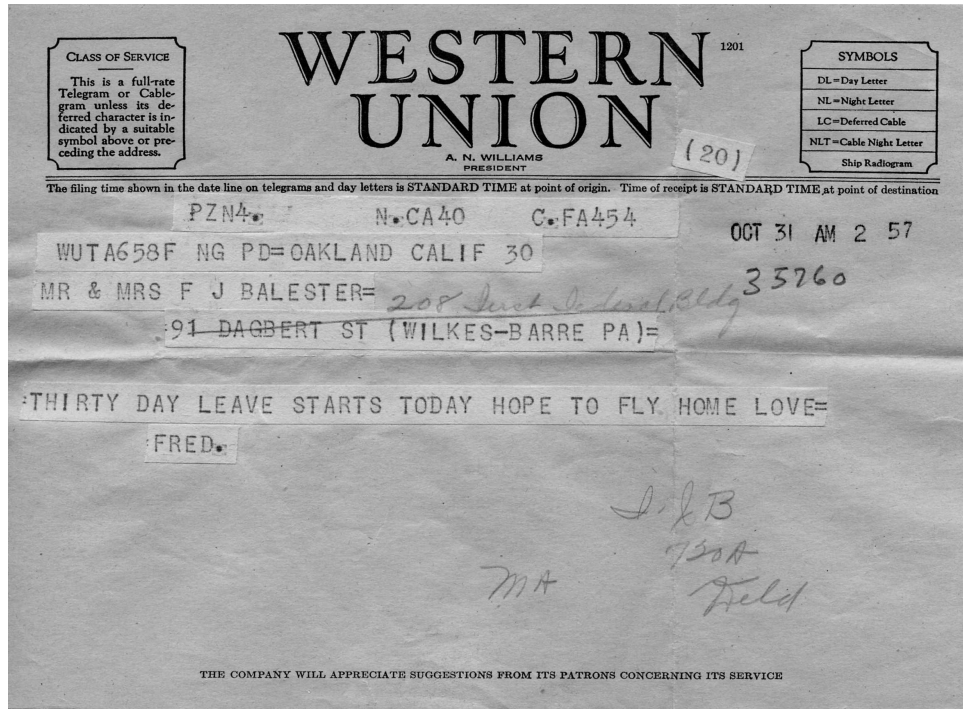
Just across the bay bridge was San Francisco, and I used to go over on the A train as often as I could afford. This is when I began to appreciate what a fine city Frisco was. The people were friendly, and the atmosphere of the city was refreshing. But I sure missed Melbourne and Dawne. I had been at Oak Knoll a couple of months but every time I broached the subject of getting out of the hospital the doctor said I couldn't even get out of bed.

One day I received notice from the Red Cross that my mother was dying and wanted to see me. I showed this to the doctor the next morning and told him that I wanted a thirty-day leave. He said that he couldn't allow it, that I was too sick to make such a trip. I pointed out that I was going home with or without permission, and it would be much harder on my health if I had to go over the hill. The doctor said if I felt that strongly about it he would think it over. In the meantime, I should get out of bed and walk around the ward a little to see how I got on. I didn't tell him that I had been up and about since the first day.

The next day the doctor told me I could go, but it was against his better judgment. I told him the same thing I had been telling him since I got there: that there was nothing wrong with me that a thirty-day leave wouldn't cure. He assured me they would be bringing me back on a stretcher, gave me a long list of foods to avoid, and warned me to be in bed early each night.⁶

The Red Cross arranged for me to fly home on Army Air Corps transports with a high priority, and I arrived at an air base just in time for evening colors. The next morning I was put aboard an Army DC 3 headed for Salt Lake City. There was only room for a few passengers because most of the cabin was taken up by a very large airplane engine.

⁶ The telegram announcing this leave was dated October 31.

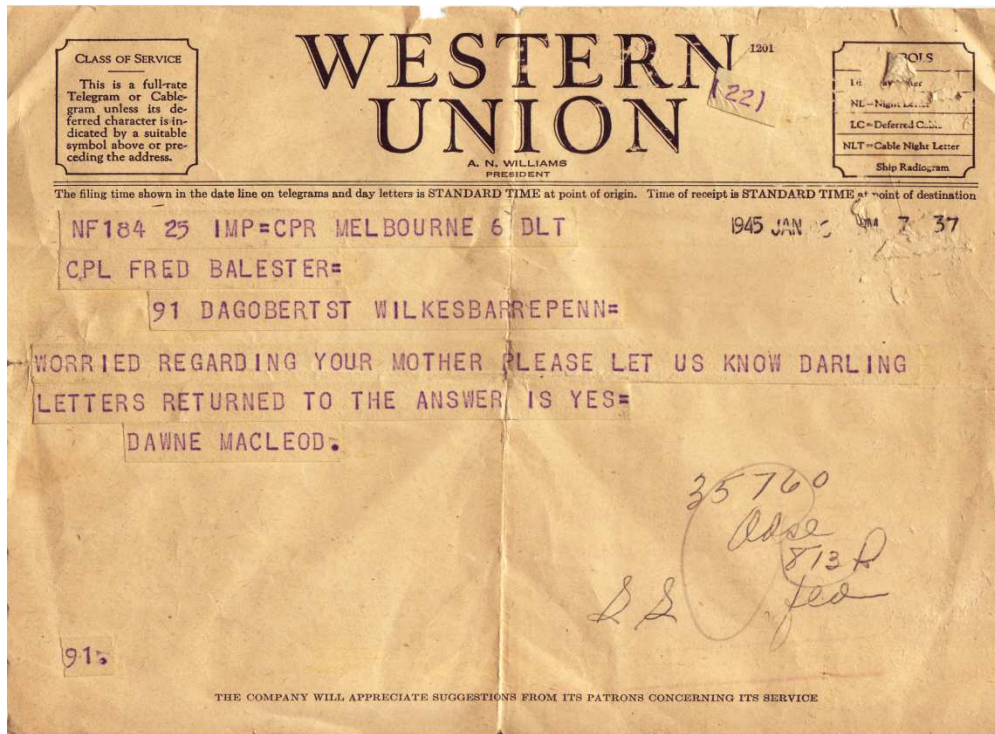


As we were flying over the mountains, the passenger cabin got very cold. The heater for the cabin had decided to malfunction. It was a good thing there were only a few passengers because we were all crowding as far as we could into the crew's compartment to try and keep warm. At Salt Lake City there was a plane ready to go to Detroit, and my priority was high enough to get me a seat on that plane. The passenger I bumped was a very disgruntled Army major who was highly incensed at being bumped by a mere corporal. I don't know why he felt that way. Everyone knows that a Marine corporal outranks an Army major.

Landing at Detroit was hairy. We had to fly over some high tension wires, and I could see that we were coming awfully close to them. The pilot evidently agreed because all of a sudden he hit the throttle, gained altitude, and circled the field for another try. The second try looked a lot better, and we landed OK.

From Detroit I was put on a plane to Philadelphia, which was as close as the Army Air Corps flew to Wilkes-Barre. From there it was a simple matter to hitchhike to the old home town. On the way to Wilkes-Barre, one elderly gentleman, noting my forest green uniform, asked me if I was in the CCC (Civilian Conservation Corps). When I informed him that I was a Marine he was quite surprised: "I thought you fellows always wore blue uniforms!" I assured him that I did not even own a set of dress blues.

My homecoming was a source of great comfort to my mother, who had given up hope of seeing me alive. Fortunately, I looked as fit as a fiddle, in spite of what the doctors had been telling me. I spent a lot of time with my mother, who was bedridden with cancer of the womb. Evenings, I mostly devoted to dating old girl friends and some new ones. The girl I had dated most, and for a short time even went steady with, was happily married and posed no problem. I was always careful to tell all the girls I dated that I was in love with a girl in Australia, and planned to ask her to marry me. Dawne and my mother had been corresponding for some time and mom let me know that she greatly approved of Dawne as a daughter-in-law.



One girl I used to date occasionally and who wrote and kept me up to date on the local gossip called me with a problem. She had been dating a very nice young man and wanted to marry him. She assured me that the feeling was mutual, but he was 4F (could not serve in the armed forces) and refused to marry her until he met me and got my OK. I thought it was a nice gesture. He didn't want to be accused of stealing a guy's gal while he was off serving his country. It was similar to the reason I had not asked Dawne to marry me sooner. I wanted there to be no doubt that it was not out of loneliness. She could be sure that it was love, and there could be no doubt that she was the one I wanted. So I gave them my blessing and then wrote and asked Dawne to marry me.

When my thirty days were almost up, I wired the hospital and got a thirty-day extension. That time also passed quickly, and before I hardly knew it I was headed back to Oak Knoll without benefit of a stretcher. The doctor ordered me to bed at once and ordered about two hundred tests. The next morning he came in looking bewildered and admitted the tests were all negative, and they couldn't find anything wrong. I reminded him that had told him many times that all I needed was a thirty-day leave to cure whatever ailed me.

My friend Louise was no longer a patient at the hospital, and although I was glad that she was cured of whatever had been her problem I had wanted to thank her personally for her kindness. Before I left to fly home, she had asked if I had enough money to see me home. I assured her that I had five dollars, and since I would be in care of the Army Air Corps, they would see that I was fed. She made no comment, but just before I left for the airfield she handed me a single stick of gum and made me promise to chew it just before I got on the plane. When I opened the gum just before enplaning I found a twenty dollar bill inside. It was a very thoughtful gesture, and one of the first things I did when I got home was to wire her twenty dollars to repay the loan. I called her friend Betty, who informed me that Louise had been given a medical discharge and had gone back to Arkansas.

The doctor, still not convinced, ordered a series of blood tests which required me to report to the lab to have blood taken every day for a week. After a few trips to the lab, they said I had good veins to work with and would I allow one of the new corpsmen to try his first blood withdrawal on me. I agreed. He stuck the needle in far enough to just puncture the vein but not far enough into the vein to get the blood into the needle. He then chickened out and withdrew the needle. The result was a good sized pool of blood collected under my skin with no place to go. I often wondered if he ever made it as a lab technician.

After another week of this, I asked the doctor to send me back to active duty if they couldn't find anything wrong. He said he couldn't do that because he knew I was sick. Instead he said he would transfer me to the Philadelphia Naval hospital and let the doctors there worry about me. He also figured I would be a lot happier closer to home. He was right about that.

In the meantime, I had been looking in San Francisco for an engagement ring for Dawne. I knew she would want a sapphire, as it was the Australian custom to have one's birthstone as an engagement ring. I also knew that sapphire could be duplicated by artificial means, but I was determined to get a natural stone. I went into one store where the jeweler said he had a natural stone that he would sell at a low price. It looked beautiful, but the price was too low for even a reconstructed sapphire as they euphemistically called the man-made stones. I borrowed his loupe for a closer look. It was a mined sapphire, I had no doubt. There was a large flaw right in the center of the stone that looked like a crack.

My quest took me to another jewelry store, and when I made my wishes clear the jeweler told me that mined sapphires were rare because of the war. He advised me that if I wanted a genuine mined sapphire, I should wait until I got home and go to a jeweler that I knew and trusted and make sure I told him I wanted a mined sapphire.

Finally I was transferred to the Philadelphia Naval Hospital where it started all over again with the tests. This time there was no nonsense about me being too sick to get out of bed, but they too were determined that I should not go back to active duty. This was much better though because each weekend I could go home and visit my folks.

I made friends with a fellow inmate who was a Navy pilot and we used to go out on liberty together. He was suffering from Hodgkin's disease and was told he did not have much longer to live. He was one of only two enlisted men pilots in the Navy at that time. He was an Aviator first class and had refused a commission or even a promotion to Chief Petty Officer. Whenever we went out and he was asked why he was wearing gold wings he told them that he was the chief steward on a Catalina Flying Boat.

While sitting on my sack one day I began to suspect that I was running a high fever. I went down to the nurses' station and asked for a thermometer to check. Sure enough, the thermometer registered one hundred and four degrees. I handed it back to the nurse. She thought I was kidding and had held it against a radiator. I finally convinced her to take my temperature herself. She hustled me back to my bed and made me get in at once. Soon the chills started, and I knew I was having a return bout with malaria. Strangely enough, this did not go into my medical record because my records were in the hands of the survey board in preparation for my pending discharge. I had malaria twice while in the Corps, and both times my medical record was not available at the hospital; consequently, there is nothing on my records to show that I had it.



Pictures taken to send to her soldier.



Back: *The only man I find to sit on my knee, "Fred the cat"!*



Back: *This was on the far lawn at the back of the house.*

The big day was approaching. The Marines had finally decided that I was no longer vital to the war effort and could be returned to civilian life. But first I would have to turn in my identity card. I believe I mentioned earlier, Marc, that I had never received an identity card and so had none to turn in. Rules are rules, and must be obeyed. Since I didn't have an identity card to turn in, I would have to go down to the Navy yard and have one made. I got all toggged up in my pretty dress greens, complete with chevrons and campaign ribbons and hied me down to the Navy yard.

The Marine guard at the gate asked to see my ID card. I explained the reason I was there, but he was adamant; his orders were no ID card, no entry. You make no progress debating with a private of the watch, so I requested the presence of the officer of the day. He listened to my story sympathetically but agreed with the guard that orders were orders, and nothing could be done. I could see a real live catch 22 developing here. Then I had an inspiration.

"Lieutenant," I asked, "How are those civilians getting in through that other gate? They don't seem to have ID cards." He replied to the effect that they had business inside and were issued temporary permits to enter. I pointed out that in spite of my pretty green uniform, my stripes, and campaign ribbons, as far as he was concerned without an ID card I was not a Marine. I stated I was not a soldier or a sailor dressed like this so by default I must be a civilian.

He agreed that my argument sounded plausible, so he issued me a civilian pass since I had urgent business inside. A lieutenant who could reason and make logical decisions, he should have made general with no trouble. He even directed me to the place where I could have an ID card made up.

I wondered what kind of documentation I would have to produce to have an ID card made up. The photographer asked my name, rank and serial number, and perhaps a few other questions to which I knew the answers; and without further ado he took my picture and in a few minutes presented me with a brand new ID card. I immediately returned to the hospital and turned in my ID card as called for by the rules. For about one hour of my time in the corps I could prove that I was a Marine. My official date of departure was March 9, 1945.



I was given my pay to date, traveling expenses and a disability pension of fifty percent, which I tried to refuse, but they wouldn't give me my discharge until I applied. I have to admit there were times when it came in handy. Instead of the ruptured duck which was given to the Army, and later to all servicemen, we received a little Marine Corps emblem surrounded by a white circle in which was imprinted in tiny letters, "Honorable Discharge," made to wear on a lapel. I also received a white diamond patch to wear on the right shoulder of my uniform blouse to signify discharge.

And thereby hangs a tale.

About six or seven of us recently discharged Marines were sitting at a table in the bus station waiting for buses to our various destinations when a civilian came over and said, "Pardon me, I couldn't help noticing that your shoulder patches indicate that you are from several different divisions, yet you are all wearing the same white diamond patch on your right shoulder. I thought I knew all the Marine Corps insignia but that is a new one on me. Would you mind telling me what it signifies?"

I replied, "Of course not, sir, it merely means that we are all members of the ghost patrol."

"The ghost patrol! What's that?"

I explained, "Well, you see, sir, we were all reported killed in action. When we were discovered alive it was too late to change the records. You know how government red tape is. Since we were killed in action we cannot have social security numbers or collect disability payments. They allowed us to name ourselves beneficiaries of our GI insurance, and we have to live off that for the rest of our lives."

The poor man walked away shaking his head and muttering something uncomplimentary about government red tape. I thought it very revealing as to what people will believe about government bureaucracy.

When I got home it was a Thursday afternoon and that night at dinner my dad asked if I would be coming into work the following morning.⁷ I guess he felt that I had rested enough, loafing around in naval hospitals for the last eight months. I finally agreed to start work on Monday morning.

The "war bride" on the S.S. Monterrey with her good friend Grace Perry, who was on her way to marry U.S. Army serviceman Floyd Weideman.



Dawne aboard ship.



⁷ The family business to which Fred, Jr. would return was Balester Optical, founded in 1934 by his father. After the war, Balester expanded the business from its few local customers, creating demand in New York and throughout Pennsylvania. See Balester Optical at <http://www.balester.com/>.

Marc, before I leave the subject of naval hospitals I should like to comment on the differences between the two I was in. The care and dedication of the staff in each hospital was all one could expect in wartime conditions, but the physical facilities at the two were much different. The Philadelphia hospital was very like any big city general hospital in layout and facilities. very efficient no doubt, but they lacked the breezy open air, California type feeling of Oak Knoll. The best example I can give was the Oak Knoll open air theater. There were frequent shows at this theater, and some very big time entertainment indeed. I saw quite a few variety shows there, and there was also a movie theater on the hospital grounds. While in the Southwest Pacific a few U. S. O. productions caught up with us, mostly in Australia, but we always seemed to be occupied with other matters and always missed them At Oak Knoll, one of the biggest finally caught up with me. Bob Hope, Francis Langford, Jerry Colonna, and troupe put on a great show for the patients at Oak Knoll. It was a great thrill for all of us. I never saw any of this type of entertainment or even movies at Philadelphia. Perhaps I just didn't find them.

On my first liberty from the Philadelphia hospital I had contacted Meyers Jewelry, who I knew from my dad's optical business and were considered reputable as well as friends, about a sapphire ring for Dawne to make our engagement official. I chose a platinum setting with a diamond on either side of the sapphire. The quoted price was \$250, which was a very low price for that piece of jewelry, and I knew they were making little or no profit on the transaction. A few days later, Nate's brother called me and asked if I had told Nate that I wanted a mined sapphire. He told me that Nate was not a gem expert and did not know they had no mined sapphires in stock He apologized, and said he was sending to New York for a selection of mined sapphires for me to choose from.

The next weekend when I got home I saw the stones and selected a pale blue mined sapphire from Ceylon which came complete with a certificate of authenticity. I asked Mr. Meyer how much more I owed him. He refused to discuss it. He said his brother had made a deal and there would be no extra charge. The ring was dispatched to Australia by air mail.⁸

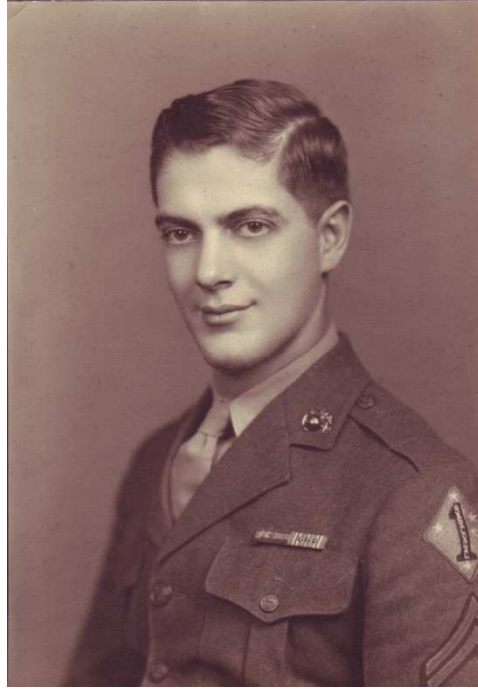
Of course, we had already done what we could do at this end to speed Dawne on her journey. We had sent money for her passage and posted a bond to assure that she would not become a burden on the state. With the war not yet over and all the war brides clamoring to come over, we knew that fiancées would have a long wait.

That about winds it up. You know the rest of the story, Marc. The war finally ended, and Dawne came to America. We were married, had five wonderful children, and lived happily ever after--as the story goes.

Margaret Goldie, Dawne's friend, remembers:

"When I saw Dawne's engagement ring I thought it the most beautiful ring I had ever seen."

⁸ Dawne's telegram of acceptance was dated January, 1945. The European war ended on May 8, 1945, and the war in the Pacific ended in August of that year. Dawne cabled Fred in July of 1946 that she had secured passage to America. She left Australia in October of 1946, arrived in late November, and they married on November 24, 1946. Madge, Fred's mother, died sometime between January and October.



Taken for his girl and Mom after coming back to the States