

CONTENTS

Foreward	9
Preface	10
Acknowledgments	23
Introduction	25
Chapter 1: The Most Ferocious Enemy in the South Pacific—the Mosquito	28
Chapter 2: The Beginning August 1923-June 1942	36
Chapter 3: South Pacific Cruise June 1942-August 1942	79
Chapter 4: The Birth of Malaria Control	87
Chapter 5: Memories of the Canal	112
Chapter 6: Conversations on the Reality of War	144
Chapter 7: Guadalcanal, The Campaign August 1942-October 1942	170
Chapter 8: Edging Closer to Victory November 1942-January 1943	195
Chapter 9: Like Robinson Crusoe February 1943-May 1943	222
Chapter 10: The Central Solomons June 1943-May 1944	253
Chapter 11: Homeward Bound May 1944-September 1945	277

Chapter 12: The Letter from Nimitz	311
Chapter 13: Life Is Good	
September 1945-December 2000	324
Chapter 14: Looking Back	
August 2000-February 2001	329
Chapter 15: Thoughts on the Literature of	
Guadalcanal and the South Pacific	338
Bibliography	347
Index	352

INTRODUCTION

When the United States entered the war on December 7, 1941, every branch of its military was woefully unprepared for offensive operations anywhere in the world. The Navy and Marines in particular, were being systematically swept from the seas and off island bases all over the Pacific by overwhelming Japanese forces. It would take four years and the combined efforts of the military and American industrial might to prevail in a two-front war. It wasn't until the fall of 1943 that the minimum adequate supplies of food, clothing, guns, artillery, planes, ships, and men started arriving at the front lines in sufficient quantity to even make a difference.

What troops and equipment the military did send to meet the enemy prior to that time was, in many cases, simply what was available—outdated leftovers from the First World War. It was a precarious situation in which everyone had to make do and learn as they went, not only to win a battle here and there, but just to survive against an enemy better trained and equipped. Time was critical to Allied survival and it was the superhuman efforts of those first few men thrown into the front lines that ultimately bought the valuable time needed for the full weight of American industrial superiority to kick into high gear.

The United States Navy, facing the daunting task of rebuilding their shattered Pacific Fleet while at the same time, maintaining vital communications and supply lines with Australia and New Zealand, already knew that the health of their sailors and Marines would be in jeopardy as they moved into the South Pacific. As early as 1940, Navy Medical Corps planners launched an aggressive program designed to protect the health of its servicemen. They recruited and trained new Pharmacist Mates, formed Mobile Field Hospitals to care for expected casualties resulting from coming offensives, and organized malaria control and eradication units to minimize the risk of exposure to deadly jungle diseases. Just as

every unit in the Navy was understaffed and overtaxed, so too were the men of the fledgling malaria control units first sent to the South Pacific. They too were forced to hold a line and buy time while critical shortages in manpower, training, and equipment were satisfied.

The first men who volunteered to “head up into the islands where the action was,” men like Bob Michel and Dave Minton, were no different than the Marines they accompanied. The early members of malaria control units were thrown into battle improperly trained and poorly equipped, lacking the tools or technology that would bring them success. It is safe to say, that like many other military initiatives mounted in 1942, Malaria Control Unit Cactus was initially not that successful on Guadalcanal, nor were other malaria controls units very successful in their efforts early on in the New Hebrides.

However, by the fall of 1943, what the members of the first malaria control units had learned and had the time and resources to put into play would be put to good use throughout the remainder of the war in the Pacific. Once malaria control was relegated the importance it was due and units started to receive needed reinforcements, the equipment they needed—protective clothing, mosquito netting, advanced insecticides, and adequate medical supplies—and given the opportunity to disseminate what they had learned to front line troops and at every airfield, success in the war against disease was transformed from a dream to reality.

All in all, almost 9,000 men were incapacitated by malaria on Guadalcanal alone from August to December of 1942, and the casualty figures kept mounting well into the spring of 1943 after the Army had taken over operations. Just one year later, in the months from June to November, 1943, a mere 194 men were stricken with malaria during the Bougainville campaign.

Casualties due to malarial infection continued to decrease so drastically in subsequent Pacific campaigns right up to the end of the war that its effects were no longer deemed a factor in achieving

military victory. Navy and Army malaria control personnel and dedicated units performed their tasks as well as any combat unit regardless of branch of service. It may never be known for sure just how many servicemen were able to stay active in combat, service, and supply due to their efforts.



Chapter 1

The Most Ferocious Enemy in the South Pacific--the Mosquito

“A mosquito landed at Henderson Field this morning and before we discovered it wasn’t one of our planes, we had already fueled her up!” Unknown Marine, Guadalcanal, 1942

VECTOR BORNE DISEASES, of which there are dozens, are native to over 100 countries worldwide. A vector borne disease is a disease carried by insects that feed on blood. The most common of these vectors, or disease carrying insects, is the mosquito—most specifically the *Anopheles* and the *Aedes aegypti* species. The *Anopheles* is most noted for the spread of malaria; the *Aedes aegypti* for the spread of dengue fever.

Throughout the Pacific, over 75% of islanders live in rural areas and to this day are particularly vulnerable to the vector borne diseases. As isolated as we are in the United States from such perils, 45% of the natives of the Solomon Islands and the New Hebrides, today known as Vanuatu, are at risk. Unbelievably, the leading cause of death in children within this region remains vector borne disease.

In early 1942, there were three primary vector borne diseases that plagued the South Pacific and were of particular concern to military planners and strategists when the decision was made to stop the Japanese advance south and east across the Pacific. It was these three diseases, malaria, dengue fever, and filariasis that became the target of Navy and Army specialists as U.S. troops advanced into the area.

Perhaps the most widely known of the three diseases was and still is, malaria. Malaria is transmitted when the human body is bitten by a mosquito carrying the malarial parasite. The parasite is always transmitted to humans by the *Anopheles* species of mosquito, which most generally feeds at night.

The parasite is deposited by the *Anopheles* into the human blood stream and then makes its way to the liver where it takes up residence and multiplies into approximately 40,000 new parasites within just five days. The parasites travel back through the bloodstream releasing toxins along the way causing high fever, chills, and sweats. Once bitten, it only takes about two weeks for the first attack to take place. Since the parasites reside in the liver, it is not uncommon for the disease to recur months and even years after a person is first infected.

Unlike malaria which is caused by a parasite, dengue fever and dengue hemorrhagic fever are caused by a virus carried by the *Aedes aegypti* species of mosquito. The *Aedes Aegypti* mosquito feeds during the day, hence a day-biter. Dengue fever is also commonly known by natives and visitors to the area as “break bone fever” because of the violent tremors caused by fever. Severe cases diagnosed as hemorrhagic fever, often leads to internal bleeding and bleeding of the gums and nose. Left untreated, advanced cases of dengue fever can result in death.

Filariasis, the third most prevalent vector borne disease common in the South Pacific, is a worm infection. Once bitten by an infected mosquito, a larvae is passed from the mosquito into the victim’s bloodstream traveling to the lymph system where it begins to

develop into a worm. It takes approximately 6-12 months for the larvae to develop into worms. Once fully developed, the female worm then transmits more larvae into the bloodstream, starting the process of development all over again.

The most common example of filariasis infection in the United States is known to the dog lovers among us—heart worm.

The mosquito has been credited with laying whole armies low since the time of Julius Caesar's Roman civil wars. The impending conflict in the South Pacific would prove no different. Left unchecked, the tiny mosquito would prove a more deadly adversary than the full might of the Japanese Army.

Leading the attack, the female *Anopheles farauti* mosquito, indigenous to hundreds of islands in the Solomons and New Hebrides (Vanuatu), would soon play a major role in the outcome of hostilities on Guadalcanal. Taking no sides, malarial parasites rapidly infected both U.S. and Japanese troops in staggering numbers. U.S. troops occupying the islands were especially hard hit. Nine hundred cases of malarial infection were admitted to the hospital during the month of August, escalating to over 1,700 in September, 2,600 in October, 2,400 in November and more than 900 in just the first ten days of December. Total U.S. casualties during this period approximated 8,580 men—a number representative of 40% of all U.S. forces stationed on Guadalcanal during the first six months of occupation. If one were to look at the entire Pacific Theater of operations throughout the duration of the war, malaria was responsible for nearly five times the number of U.S. casualties than those caused by Japanese forces.

While the seriousness of the spread of malaria among U.S. troops on Guadalcanal is not to be diminished, Japanese troops were infected, probably to the man. Though U.S. military investment in ongoing malaria control efforts was puny at best, many of the troops benefited from mosquito nets, quinine, and the quinine synthetic, Atabrine. More importantly, the luxury of setting up camp on high ground and in open spaces close to the beaches,

away from the mosquito's breeding grounds, saved many. The Japanese, on the other hand, constantly pressured by the Cactus Air Force and Marine patrols, were forced to live and fight in low lying jungle areas where the female *Anopheles* bred with impunity. The average Japanese soldier suffered unmercifully as a result of inadequate or nonexistent field hospitals, lack of medical supplies, absolutely no malaria control initiatives, and very few mosquito nets. One Japanese source states that as many as 2/3 of all Japanese fatalities suffered during the six month Guadalcanal campaign were a direct result of disease; malaria, beriberi, dengue fever, and dysentery. The majority of these fatalities was due to malarial infection.

To combat the spread of malaria on Guadalcanal, the 1st Marine Division included a squad sized unit designated Malaria Control Unit Cactus (MCU Cactus). The unit was hastily formed by Lieutenant Commander James Sapero at Mobile Naval Hospital #5 (MOB5) in Noumea, New Caledonia. The original MCU Cactus included Ensign Kenneth Knight—a Navy Entomologist, Dr. Robert Mount and Dr. Freedman, both MDs, and a handful of enlisted Navy Pharmacist Mates. MCU Cactus was subsequently dispatched to Guadalcanal on one of the first supply flights into Henderson Field, arriving within days of August 12th, 1942.

The significance of the Navy's Malaria Control Units seems almost implicit. When analyzing the casualty figures sustained by U.S. forces on Guadalcanal as well as those suffered by all military forces throughout the entire Pacific Theater of Operations, one is quick to understand how woefully understaffed and outgunned Medical Units were. Though significant in afterthought by today's standards, military leaders at the time lacked an understanding of the full impact of tropical disease and the resources they would need to battle them.

Even today, there are somewhere between 300 and 500 million cases of malaria of various strains reported worldwide annually. The prevalence of malaria in the Solomon Islands has not changed

all that much since combatants vacated the area almost fifty years ago, and is even on the rise in some areas.

Though at peace once again with only Japanese tourists and businessmen in the islands today and the victorious Allies gone to their own pursuits, the indigenous enemy of native Solomon Islanders, the female *Anopheles* mosquito, still breeds in the area at will. With all the technological and scientific advances the world has seen since the end of the war, malaria eradication efforts will probably never be 100% successful in erasing the breeding grounds of disease carrying insects. An abundance of rivers, creeks, and lagoons, fed by torrential rains year round, continue to guarantee an environment in which the female *Anopheles* can breed and multiply. If, through some Herculean effort, every river, creek, and lagoon were drained, more puddles would continue to pop up following the rains like a bad case of measles, filling ruts on remote jungle roads whenever a truck or school bus passed by.

Malaria Control Unit Cactus, though well intentioned when it was formed, was doomed from the start to fight a holding action. Military commands, though well aware of the deadly threat to their troops from the mosquito, had no choice but to throw every asset they could muster against the Japanese. It will never be known for sure if any of the troops under siege at Guadalcanal benefited from MCU Cactus's daily patrols through the swamps and lagoons of the island. What is known, however, is that the techniques and equipment MCU Cactus developed in those early months delivered in spades in future Allied assaults throughout the South and Central Pacific. Trained in the use of bug sprays, the effectiveness of mosquito netting, and armed with medicines essential to prevention and treatment of malarial infection, casualties were eventually reduced by almost 98%.

It is surprising, therefore, that almost fifty years later the Malaria Control Unit Cactus has been all but forgotten except to its few surviving members. Lost in the shadow of much larger events being played out at the time, details of malaria control efforts are

rarely mentioned in the vast literature on the South Pacific campaign.

It would eventually take the combined strength of 27,000 U.S. troops to push the Japanese from Guadalcanal and surrounding islands, saving Australia and New Zealand in the process. Until January 1943, however, a mere handful of men were thrown into battle on Guadalcanal against an enemy that accounted for more U.S. casualties than did all Japanese war efforts combined; this, in the campaign that halted Japan's expansion across the Pacific. A handful of men who were ordered to face an enemy that, to this day, still kills as many as three million people worldwide every year.

Robert Michel, PhM3/c, USN Malaria Control Unit Cactus. In order to get malaria, you must be bitten by the female *Anopheles* mosquito which has already bitten someone with malaria. The female *Anopheles* is the only one that transmits the parasite. Dengue Fever, often called breakbone fever, is transmitted by the *Aedes Aegypti* mosquito. These diseases are transmitted from an infected person to the mosquito and on to the next person. So we could have been bitten hundreds of times and not gotten the disease if the mosquito had not bitten an infected person first.

I think I first got malaria about two months after arriving on the Canal, but I can't be sure. I always took the Atabrine just as it was prescribed as a prophylactic along with the quinine if I came down with it. Yes, my eyes turned yellow, just like my skin.

One attack had my temperature up over 104 degrees and I was shaking so bad I couldn't hold anything. When I was finally admitted to the hospital there was an air raid going on my first night there. Marines had set up a 90mm antiaircraft gun emplacement right behind my bunk that was firing at the Japanese planes. I first realized it was there when they fired their first round at the incoming planes. That scared me. I don't think that it was more than twenty-five to thirty feet away from where I was lying

in bed. I thought the damn thing was pointing right at me. I was so sick I didn't even try to get to a foxhole. I was sweating so badly from the malaria that the mattress I was lying on was soaked all the way through. The noise of that gun firing really scared me.

I ended up being kept in the hospital for two or three days, I'm not really sure. I guess, during much of that time, my fever was so high, I must have been in a partial state of delirium.

I don't really know when I finally got rid of the malaria either. I did have a recurrence later while I was stationed on the Florida Islands, but not too bad. I always had a supply of Atabrine and quinine with me to self medicate. I know I still had the bug when I finally got back to the East Coast in 1944. I think I had an attack as late as 1946 but know that I haven't had one since. Even after I got out of the Navy, I kept some quinine with me just in case I would have a recurrence. I must have had recurrences of malaria eight or ten times before it finally wore itself out.

As to why some got it and others did not, I can only give my opinion. At night when you went to bed, you sometimes might also have netting that was suspended over the bed by a wooden frame; that is, if you even had a bed. For the Marine sleeping in a foxhole with no netting, when he was bitten by a female *Anopheles* mosquito, he got malaria. His buddy lying right next to him might not get bitten. Plus, some of the troops there kept their shirts on and their sleeves rolled down and buttoned which reduced the chances of being bitten. It was a coin toss. Dave and I were in the islands for two years and I don't think he ever came down with it.

The only treatment for malaria was quinine and often many of us would give out the quinine instead of the substitute Atabrine as a prophylactic because you didn't turn yellow on the quinine.

Brian Taylor, PhD, Nottingham, UK. Onetime Government Entomologist, Malaria Eradication Programme, Solomon Islands. Malaria Eradication campaigns, as defined by WHO—the World Health Organization—never aimed to eradicate the mosquito vectors but to interrupt transmission, thus preventing

new cases. Efforts to detect human disease carriers and use drugs to eliminate the parasite from them would, it was hoped, break the cycle and, so, eradicate the disease.

On the malaria parasite itself, in the Solomons there were, and still are, three species—*Plasmodium falciparum* (the killer), *Plasmodium vivax* and *Plasmodium malariae* (the form which recurs often years afterwards as relatively mild fever). *P. falciparum*, as noted the only killer, if survived, soon disappears from the sufferer. *P. vivax*, can reappear from a resting stage in the human liver for some 3-4 years after the initial infection. In terms of military impact, only *falciparum* would have a major effect, though the ill-effects of the other two would have been bad for an already stressed and fatigued soldier.

In the Solomons and Vanuatu (the New Hebrides), as in Papua New Guinea, the main vector species was, and still is, *Anopheles farauti*. Not in Vanuatu, two other species, *Anopheles punctulatus* and *Anopheles koliensis* also were malaria vectors. Indeed, *punctulatus* may have been more important on Guadalcanal as it breeds mainly in transient pools—such as the wheel ruts which must have been everywhere during the military activity.

The second, *koliensis*, is a curiosity. Prior to the U.S. forces' activity it was unknown—indeed, the name comes from its discovery at Koli, a village in the U.S. occupation area on Guadalcanal. The reference to dengue is interesting as it was not common, if known, in the Solomons in the postwar era, and the limited evidence suggested that *Aedes aegypti* was never common in the Solomons (especially on Guadalcanal where there was no real port prior to the U.S. Forces establishment of Honiara). Dengue is a disease better known from the (non-malarious) islands eastwards in the Pacific and in Southeast Asia. On the question of who gets malaria, there is certainly a variation in human “attractiveness” for mosquitoes due to a variation in sweat odor and perhaps surface body temperature. For a description of life on the Solomons in 1937-1942 the reader might like to find a copy of Dick Horton's book, **The Happy Isles**.



Chapter 3

South Pacific Cruise June 1942-August 1942

BEFORE WE GO too much further with Bob's story I feel it would be helpful to jump ahead in time and relate a story that was recently told to me by Robert Otto. He was just another young man born and raised in a small town in Ohio who had never traveled outside its limits until he joined the Navy in 1941. Robert was a Boatswains Mate and 20mm gunner who served aboard the destroyer Grayson for the better part of two years. During that time he had seen more of the world than he ever dreamed existed—from Iceland, to the Panama Canal, to San Francisco, to Hawaii, and beyond. His story's relevance will be appreciated as the reader progresses with this narrative. I am not going to quote Robert verbatim, but will paraphrase to make my point.

As Robert tells it, the Grayson was one of the most active destroyers operating in the South Pacific as early as the spring of 1942. The Grayson would pull into so many different islands so

frequently that the crew for the most part never knew where they were or even the name of the island they just left. If they did know the name of the island, they were seldom able to pronounce it. This went on for months and months until one day, Robert was leaving his compartment somewhat in a funk and ran into an old Chief who had been in the Navy for 30 years or more. The Chief stopped Robert and asked him how he was doing, guessing correctly that he might be having somewhat of a down day. In an effort to shore up his spirits, the Chief told him, "Look at it this way, son, when this is all over and you get back home you will be a regular Lowell Thomas when you start telling the folks about all the places you've been. They won't know what you're talking about when you start in on places like Fiji, Bora Bora, Tonga, Efate, Aore, Tahiti, Noumea, Tulagi, Espiritu Santo, Vella Lavella, Kolombangara, and Gavutu. They'll just look at you and you'll knock 'em right over with the stories you'll tell them of all the places you've been that they've never even heard of. You're going to enjoy it. You'll really be something, kid."

In later years, Robert realized just how right the old Chief was, and to this day still gives himself a chuckle over that story just like he did when he told it to me. With that in mind, let's take our South Pacific cruise, shall we?

Robert Michel, PhM3/c, USN Malaria Control Unit Cactus. In June, 1942, we were put aboard a civilian ship, the President Monroe. We couldn't wait to get going, but I think we were more apprehensive than excited about it. We knew we were going overseas but didn't know where or what to expect, except that we were going to be setting up a hospital somewhere.

We figured if we were going to be setting up a hospital, it had to be for wounded men. If it was for wounded men, we knew it wouldn't be too far from where they were wounded. Excited about going overseas would be a valid description, but apprehensive would describe my feelings as well.

That was some trip. We were told this was to be the last sailing of the President Monroe under civilian control. It became obvious very quickly that the owners were saving money any way they could. We got two meals a day and they were the worst—at least they were the worst until we got to the Canal.

Tom Croft, BM3/c Gun Loader Turret 1, USS Monssen DD436. After we left the Coral Sea, we headed right back up to Pearl Harbor and loaded up the ship and headed right out for Midway Island. It was a hard battle. Both the Japs and us lost heavy. The Yorktown sank along with the destroyer Hammann.

After the battle, we headed right back to Pearl again taking on fuel, ammunition, and staples. We headed back to the Southwestern Pacific and our next stop was Guadalcanal.

Vice Admiral Yamamoto, Commander of the Japanese Combined Fleet, firmly believed that Japan could win the war if she did so during the first twelve months of hostilities. In fact, Yamamoto was overheard on many occasions saying that in the first six months after entering the war, he could run wild in the Pacific. After that, he would make no promises. He felt the sleeping giant of American industrial might would have been goaded into wakefulness by then.

True to his word, Yamamoto planned his final, decisive blow against the United States Navy to be delivered by a massed attack on Midway Island, located just 1,100 miles from Hawaii. Once Midway fell, only Hawaii would block Japanese forces from hitting the West Coast itself. By gathering over 162 of his nation's naval ships in harbors all over the Japanese islands, Yamamoto's plans called for a diversionary attack on the Aleutian Islands with his main invasion force hitting Midway itself. If he succeeded, he felt he could draw the U.S. Fleet out into the open for one last surface battle to settle once and for all the issue of supremacy of the Pacific.

Ever the gambler, Yamamoto set sail from Japanese waters on May 27, 1942.

Vice Admiral Nimitz and his Naval strategists had long felt Midway would be Yamamoto's next objective. What proved to be the final ace in Nimitz's hand was the fact that U.S. cryptologists had long since broken the top secret Japanese codes and were listening in on their most intimate conversations. Naval Intelligence confirmed what Nimitz and his staff had already deduced; Midway was the next objective of the Japanese Fleet. Not only did Intelligence provide Nimitz with the Japanese target, they handed him the date and hour of the attack and the strategy laid out for the diversionary attack scheduled to hit the Aleutians. Having seen his opponent's cards, Nimitz was free to ignore the Japanese feint to the north and could concentrate his forces just 300 miles northeast of the island of Midway and wait for Yamamoto to show up.

Ordering around-the-clock repairs to the aircraft carrier Yorktown, which was seriously damaged just three weeks earlier in the Battle of the Coral Sea, Nimitz wanted all of his available aircraft carriers ready to meet the Japanese Fleet. Ready to go were the Hornet and the Enterprise; all he needed now was a fit Yorktown, which ultimately made the rendezvous in fighting trim. On May 31, Nimitz had his forces in place waiting for the Japanese attack he knew was scheduled for June 4. Now, the final advantage would go to the fleet which sighted the enemy first.

On June 3, 1942, a single Catalina bomber on scouting patrol from the airfield on Midway spotted the Japanese Fleet bearing down on the island. B17 bombers were launched from the island's airfield and though they launched the first attack against the Japanese, not one of the bombs they dropped so much as scratched an enemy vessel.

The next morning, Admiral Nagumo, the Japanese Task Force commander, ordered over 108 planes from his four carriers (the Kaga, Kiryu, Soryu, and Akagi) to take off, armed with

fragmentation bombs. Their first target was the island itself and the U.S. airfield located there. He kept his scout planes in the air diligently searching for the American Fleet which he was sure was lurking somewhere nearby.

By the time the first waves of Japanese planes returned from their attack on Midway, Nagumo had still not located a single U.S. Naval vessel. With initial reports coming in that damage inflicted on the airfield at Midway was minimal, Nagumo gambled again. He ordered all of his planes to be armed with high explosive bombs rather than armor piercing munitions (necessary in any attack against enemy surface vessels).

Right about this time, Enterprise and Hornet launched their torpedo bombers in the first wave of the U.S. attack on the Japanese carriers and support ships. In all, over 58 Navy torpedo planes from the two carriers engaged the enemy. All but six planes were destroyed by Japanese fighters or antiaircraft fire. While the surviving torpedo bombers limped back to their carriers, Enterprise and Yorktown launched their dive bombers. Enterprise flyers destroyed the Akagi and knocked the Kaga out of commission for the duration of the war. Not to be shortchanged, Yorktown's dive bombers entered the shooting gallery, hitting the Soryu. The final coup de grace for the Soryu, however, was delivered by a nearby U.S. submarine, the Nautilus, who promptly fired three torpedoes into her burning hulk, sending her to the bottom.

Now the last undamaged Japanese carrier, the Hiryu, retaliated with a vengeance when her planes came screaming down on the Yorktown, setting her ablaze. Hit just three weeks earlier in the Coral Sea, the Yorktown found herself dead in the water, this time incapable of continuing the fight. Planes from the Enterprise and Hornet quickly located the Hiryu and destroyed her, effectively deciding the battle.

The Battle of Midway cost the Japanese 4 aircraft carriers and along with them, the irreplaceable pilots that would be needed in

future actions. The action effectively ended any further Japanese plans to dominate the Eastern Pacific.

On the American side, the Yorktown was lost; however, the U.S. Navy had just walked away with the most decisive victory in the history of naval warfare. The balance of naval power in the Pacific had just been evened and the Japanese were placed on the strategic defensive; a situation which was not to be reversed for the remainder of the war.

With Japanese forces forced to withdraw, the United States, for the first time since Pearl Harbor, was clearly ready to go on the offensive in earnest. It was now just a matter of time and deciding where best to strike.

Robert Michel PhM3/c, USN Malaria Control Unit Cactus. For sleeping, we were assigned cots in the hot hold of the ship. But after one night in the hold I decided to take my hammock up on deck and sling it under a boom that was used for loading and unloading. I spent the rest of the trip sleeping up there on deck under the stars. If the ship rolled or tossed the hammock never moved one way or the other.

After I slung my hammock up there, a lot of the other guys tried to do the same thing. But after a couple hours of frantic activity there wasn't any room left up there for hammocks.

It was a great trip, though. Nothing to do day or night. Lots of poker games going on at all hours. The only problem was, though, that we weren't allowed to be in our hammocks during the day. So we would find places in the ship's superstructure where we could sit or lie down without fear of falling asleep and falling overboard or down onto the steel deck. Because the food was so bad, Dave and I sneaked down to the officers' galley one day and stole two whole baked hams, along with a couple loaves of fresh baked bread. We ran like hell down to our bunk locations and proceeded to make ham sandwiches, which we took up on deck and sold to the poker players.

If we wanted to take a shower on the Monroe, we had to take it with seawater and use what they called salt water soap. It got most of the dirt and perspiration off but left a layer of salt all over your body.

On the way, we docked at American Samoa for a day, but none of us were allowed to go ashore. When we crossed the equator, there was the usual celebration for the first timers. We were duly designated “shell backs.”

On the day the SS President Monroe crossed the equator, like every ship civilian or military that had preceded it for hundreds of years, it was time for those aboard to set aside thoughts of war and pay homage to the mythical King Neptune, legendary god of the Seven Seas. Crew members had probably been storing up the ship’s garbage, and anything else of an equally vile nature, for days. Bob, the rest of MOB5, and all the Marines aboard were about to have some great fun; albeit at their expense.

The ceremony of initiating the “pollywogs” (those who had never crossed the equator), to the society of trusty “shellbacks” (those who had undergone the rites of passage), is one that dates back to unknown pagan religious rituals. On said date and at the prescribed time, the ship’s pollywogs are led by the shellbacks onto the deck of the ship, usually forced to wear humiliating garb of some sort, often swim trunks. The pollywogs are paraded around the ship’s decks in ritualistic fashion. The pollywogs are forced to have their heads shaved, and on some ships, to run a gauntlet of shellbacks who strike them with rolled up socks and towels. The pollywogs are then made to crawl through the stored garbage which has been heaped on the decks for ceremonial purposes. At the end of the gauntlet of abusive shellbacks and reeking garbage is King Neptune himself, sitting on a throne erected for the ceremony. Having suffered indignity and humiliation, the pollywogs are made to kiss the belly of King Neptune. King Neptune invariably is the

man on board with the biggest beer gut of all, whose belly is covered with a vile concoction of oil, grease, and various available condiments. Once “King Neptune” has determined that a pollywog has suffered enough (twisting and writhing on his gut) the pollywog is declared a true “Shellback.”

Once a pollywog undergoes the prescribed rites of passage to the satisfaction of all, he is issued an official “Shellback” identification card. Wise is the new “Shellback” who keeps handy his identification card so that the next time he crosses the equator, he will not have to undergo the initiation ceremony again.

Robert Michel PhM3/c, USN Malaria Control Unit Cactus. We were on our way to Noumea, New Caledonia, where we were to set up a mobile field hospital. I believe it was now May, 1942.

Marine Sergeant, Section Leader 75mm Pack Howitzers, 1/3/11. We left San Francisco on the SS Ericsson. You know what they called that ship, don't you? The “Starvation Ship!”

We went from San Francisco to Hawaii, and from there straight on down to Wellington, New Zealand. When we crossed the equator from north to south, those of us on the ship who hadn't crossed the equator before passed from pollywogs to shellbacks. We waited below decks for a summons to appear before King Neptune. I was just twenty years old and I had just been promoted to sergeant. At that time, a guy waited a long time to get any rank at all. Guys would spend years just waiting to be promoted to PFC. Here I was just two years in and already a sergeant. So anyway, when I got my summons to appear before King Neptune, it read: “To the guy impersonating a sergeant.” I still have my summons in one of my dresser drawers.

INDEX

- 103rd Construction Battalion
268
- 103rd Regiment 251
- 110th Cavalry 61
- 11th Marine Regiment 105
- 12th Naval District 284
- 164th Regiment 182, 183, 188
- 172nd Regiment 191
- 1st Battalion Field Artillery 67
- 1st Marine Division 13, 14, 16-
18, 31, 99, 116, 117, 174,
207, 223, 283, 287, 302, 316,
317, 328
- 221st Field Artillery Battalion
61, 67, 242, 278, 308, 321,
332
- 35th Infantry Regiment, Japanese
171
- 3rd Naval District 294
- 42nd Bomber Group 264
- 43rd Infantry Division 191, 250,
256
- 4th Field Artillery 70
- 52/20 Club 309
- 6th Infantry 61
- 6th Naval Construction Battalion
123, 124
- 75mm Pack Howitzers 70, 86,
103, 105-107, 115, 116, 125,
126, 128, 131, 134, 135, 140,
142, 145, 149, 150, 156-159,
161, 166, 168, 169, 172, 185,
188, 199, 200, 208, 239, 300
- 8th Brigade, New Zealand's 263
- 97th Field Artillery 69, 70, 73,
77, 122, 147, 159, 211, 214,
219, 227, 251, 333
- 9th Infantry Division 61
- A
- adrenaline 163
- Advanced Base 811 264
- Aedes aegypti 28, 29, 33, 35,
94, 97
- Akagi 82, 83
- Aleutian Islands 12, 81
- Americal Division 19, 61, 66,
67, 69, 70, 73, 77, 122, 123,
147, 159, 182, 185, 186, 208,
211, 214, 219, 227, 242, 251,
278, 308
- American Red Cross 205
- Anopheles farauti 30, 35, 123
- Anopheles punctulatus 35
- Aola Bay 136
- Aore 80
- arecoline 236
- Arecu catechu 235
- Asbury Park 293
- Atabrine 30, 33, 34, 99, 122,
129-131, 135, 163, 209
- Australia 12, 25, 33, 66, 69, 71,
76, 77, 94, 100, 102, 108,
113, 114, 121, 156, 176, 180,
189, 191, 202, 207-211, 213,
223, 240, 317, 342
- Australis 71

- B
- Bankhead, Talullah 295
- Bataan Death March 132
- Battle of the Eastern Solomons
16, 20, 171
- benzedrine 163
- Bertalini 58
- Bethesda Naval Hospital 96
- Bloody Mary 272, 341
- Blundon, Commander Joseph
123
- Bora Bora 71, 72, 80, 270, 271
- Boromole Village 232
- Bougainville 19, 26, 203, 226,
241, 242, 257, 263, 264, 278,
321, 345
- Boyington, Pappy 257
- breakbone fever 29, 33
- Brisbane 189, 209
- Brooklyn Naval Hospital 15, 49-
52, 54, 66, 177
- Brower, Staff Sergeant "Pop" 70
- Buttons 23, 193, 212
- Bykowski, Ed 294
- C
- Cactus Air Force 171, 172, 183,
184, 201, 210, 211
- Cannibal Islands 240
- Cape Esperance 136
- Cape Gloucester 17, 18, 176,
320, 321
- Captain Kangaroo 326
- Cartwheel Campaign 265
- CBM538 268
- Cebu 321
- Chiang Kai-Shek 302
- China 17, 18, 48, 51, 74, 75, 87,
168, 209, 284, 302, 303
- cholera, hog 97
- Chosin Reservoir 16, 328
- Cline, William T. 5
- CMTC (Civilian Military
Training Camps) 19, 61
- combat neurosis 154
- Communiqué, Navy Department
64, 108, 111, 119, 173, 184,
187, 193, 196, 198, 202, 205
- ComSoPac 97, 132, 314, 315
- Condition Black 197, 199
- Coral Sea 12, 16, 74, 76-78, 81-
83, 340
- Corregidor 19, 76
- Croft, Tom 16, 20, 62, 74, 75,
81, 196, 200, 201, 223, 312,
331, 334
- Crosby, Bing 206
- Currier, Oscar 70
- D
- dengue fever 28, 29, 31, 94, 95,
155, 177
- Depression, the Great 42
- Dickman, William C. 18, 209,
212, 312, 313
- disease, venereal 91
- Doolittle, Jimmy 16, 75
- draft, military 18
- Dumont TV station 326
- E
- East French Arsenal 302
- Edson, Colonel Merritt 2225

- Empress Augusta Bay 264
 Espiritu Santo 20, 80, 102, 124,
 191-194, 212, 218, 250, 262,
 267, 271, 274
 eucalyptus tree 123
- F
- falciparum, Plasmodium 35, 105
 fever, dengue 28, 29, 31, 94, 95,
 155, 177
 Fighter One 134, 172, 174
 Fiji 19, 69, 76, 80, 94, 95, 102,
 111, 121, 122, 238-242, 278,
 332, 345
 Fijian Battalion 19
 filariasis 29, 30
 Fire over the Islands 231
 First Commando Fiji Guerillas
 240
 Fish, Harry 291
 Florida Islands 34, 210, 218,
 222, 329, 331
 Ford Island 59, 64
 Fort Bragg 70
 Fort Devens 61
 Fort Prebel 61
 Fort Sill 251
 Fort William 61
 Freedman, Dr. 31
 French Foreign Legion 240
 French Health Service 91
- G
- Gambiers 71
 Gavutu 80, 106, 222, 224
 Ghormley, Admiral 94, 95, 98,
 108, 182, 314, 315
- GI Bill 17
 Golden Gate Bridge 16, 70,
 281-283
 Golden Gate International
 Exposition 283
 Goodhue, L. D. 177
 Graves 228, 233, 243, 244
 Great Diamond Island 61
 Great Lakes 62
 Greenland 63
 Gross, Thomas 18, 19, 69, 70,
 73, 77, 122, 147, 159, 211,
 214, 219
 Guadalcanal 10-19, 22, 26, 28,
 30-33, 35, 67, 81, 99, 100,
 103-106, 109, 110, 113-115,
 117, 118, 121-124, 129, 130,
 132, 134, 149, 151, 154-156,
 160, 165, 222, 223, 225, 226,
 230, 231, 239, 241, 247, 251,
 256, 262-264, 286, 287, 289,
 294, 308, 312-316, 321, 329,-
 331, 333-335
 Guam 17, 262, 300
 Guatanamo Bay 53
- H
- Halsey, Admiral 75, 207, 262,
 273, 274, 314, 315
 Hanoi 89
 Harmon, General 182
 Haruna 183, 184
 heart worm 30
 hemorrhagic fever 29
 Henderson Field 14, 21, 28, 31,
 99, 110, 117, 118, 124, 125,
 127, 135, 170, 172, 175, 178,

- Henderson Field (cont.) 180,
 182, 183, 186, 312, 313, 316
 Hickam Field 59
 Hiroshima 297, 302
 Hiryu 83
 Hong Kong 190
 Honiara 35, 129
 Horton, Dick 35
 Hospital Corps Training School
 50, 51
 Howdy Doody Show 326
- I
- Iceland 63, 79
 Imperial Naval Marines, Japa-
 nese 132
 Indochina 89
 Ink Spots, the 50
 insecticide bombs 175
 Iron Bottom Sound 195, 200
 Island Coastwatchers Service
 210
 Isles, The Happy 35
 Iwo Jima 20, 282, 323
- J
- Japanese Greater Co-Prosperity
 Sphere 12
 Japanese Imperial Navy 51
 Joint Chiefs of Staff 207
 Jones, John Paul 45
 Jungle fever 105
- K
- Kanakas 307
 Kaneohe Bay 59, 64
 Kawasaki 76
- KDKA Radio 340
 Keeshan, Bob 324-326
 Kennedy, John F. 45
 Kennedy, Major Donald 210
 King of Bora Bora 270
 King, Dr. Arthur 91, 93, 100,
 176, 185, 191, 193, 312-314,
 317, 333
 Kingston, New York 49, 50
 Kiryu 82
 Knight, Dr. (Ensign) Kenneth
 31, 97, 99, 218, 314, 316,
 323, 336
 Kobe 76
 Koli 35
 koliensis 35
 Kongo 183, 184, 202
 Kukum 135, 136, 208
- L
- Lawlor, Ltjg. William 97
 Leeward Islands 71
 leishmaniasis 5
 Lever Brothers 334
 Lunga Perimeter 10, 183
 Lunga Point 123, 177, 182
- M
- M1 rifle 109
 MacArthur, General Douglas 94,
 108, 202, 207, 296, 345
 MacConnell, Eugene "Scotty"
 49, 52
 MacGregor, Dr. Jimmy 235
 MAG-25 111, 125, 147, 185,
 209, 212, 225, 313, 332

- Malaria Control Unit Roses 99
 Malaria Survey Teams 97
 malariae, Plasmodium 35
 Manhattan 43, 52
 Manila 190
 Mao Tse Tung 302
 Marine Corps Expeditionary
 Battalion 53
 Marine Sergeant 17, 86, 103,
 105, 107, 115, 116, 125, 126,
 128, 131, 134, 135, 140, 142,
 145, 149, 150, 156-159, 161,
 166, 168, 169, 172, 185, 188,
 199, 200, 208, 210, 239, 300-
 302, 305, 312, 320, 331, 334
 Marquesas 71
 Massachusetts National Guard
 61
 Matanikau River 117, 141, 152,
 164, 178, 179, 181
 May, Lewis P. 107, 149, 162,
 189, 224, 241, 334
 McCain, Admiral 110
 McLaughlin, Bill 19, 61, 67,
 121, 242, 278, 308, 312, 321,
 332, 344
 McQueen, Steve 48
 MCU Cactus 14, 15, 23, 31, 32,
 103-105, 120, 175-177, 217,
 218, 222, 225, 267, 274, 313,
 316, 317
 Michel, Edith Rowland 6, 36
 Midway Island 81
 Midway, Battle of 16, 83
 Minton, Dave 15, 16, 20-22, 26,
 52, 92, 93, 99, 103, 110, 116,
 133, 135, 137, 141, 169, 175,
 194, 210, 214, 218, 249, 253,
 256, 259, 260, 266, 277, 280,
 283, 289, 290, 322, 327, 328,
 334, 341
 Mitsubishi 189
 MOB5 (Mobile Hospital #5) 15,
 23, 31, 66, 67, 69, 85, 89, 96,
 98, 103, 120, 319, 320
 Mono 154, 170, 263, 264
 Mount, Dr. Robert 31, 97, 99,
 316, 336
 Munda 15, 200, 201, 210, 211,
 247, 248, 251, 254-257, 263
 Mutiny on the Bounty 15, 270
 Mutual broadcasting 294, 295
- N**
 Nagasaki 297, 302
 Nagoya 76
 Navy Medical Corps 25, 93, 312
 NBC 6, 295, 324-326
 Ndemi 21, 105, 182
 New Britain 12, 176, 202, 226,
 264
 New Caledonia 12, 15, 19, 21,
 86-89, 91, 94-96, 102, 111,
 200, 211-213, 265, 266, 272,
 277, 280, 306, 307, 319, 320,
 333, 344, 345
 New Guinea 12, 35, 76, 211, 218
 New Hebrides 12, 15, 19, 20, 26,
 94-97, 99, 100, 102, 103, 212,
 218, 267, 271-273, 306, 307,
 314-318, 333, 335
 New Hebrides Condominium 105
 New Zealand 12, 13, 15, 25, 86,
 95, 100, 102, 103, 108, 200,

- New Zealand (cont.) 211, 213, 258-267, 291, 313, 317
- Newport, Rhode Island 45, 49
- Nggela Pile 220, 225, 227, 228, 362
- Nggela Sule 225, 228, 266, 329
- Nimitz, Admiral Chester 14, 82, 108, 117, 207, 296, 311, 314-316, 318, 320, 323
- Nittu Maru 75
- North Dakota National Guard 182
- Noumea 21, 80, 86, 87, 89-92, 95-99, 102, 103, 211, 265, 266, 277, 278, 280, 306-308
- O
- Okinawa 282, 323
- Otto, Robert 20, 79, 266, 309, 312, 322, 335
- P
- Pacific Theater 11, 30, 31, 239, 318
- Panama Canal 63, 66, 79, 271
- Papua, New Guinea 35
- Patch, General Alexander 66, 91, 316-318
- Pavuvu 320, 321
- Pearl Harbor 19, 59, 61, 62, 64, 66, 74, 145, 147, 296, 297, 321, 340
- Peleliu 320, 321, 342
- Philippine Islands 5, 19, 345
- Pink House, the 74, 90-92
- Pistol Pete 151, 152, 184
- Plasmodium falciparum 35, 105
- Plasmodium vivax 35, 104
- Point Cruz 136, 181
- pollywog 62, 85, 86
- Pora Pora (see Bora Bora)
- Portsmouth, Virginia 50, 51
- post traumatic stress disorder 155
- prophylactic 33, 34, 96, 130, 330
- PT boats 45, 225
- Puller, Chesty 18
- Purple Heart 164, 200
- Purvis Bay 19, 222, 226, 227, 266-268
- Q
- Quantico 53-56, 58, 296
- quinacrine 130
- quinine 30, 33, 34, 95, 96, 99, 130, 139, 163, 190, 191, 193, 194, 252
- R
- Rabaul 154, 201, 202, 211, 226, 247, 248, 263-265
- Rekata Bay 247, 248
- Rendova 15, 247, 248, 251, 253-255, 263
- Ricciardi, William 17, 92, 102, 107, 115, 128, 136, 146, 150, 151, 162, 168, 169, 186, 224, 312, 340
- Richter, John Francis 18, 131, 133, 160, 176, 209, 322
- Riley, Ely 286
- Robinson, Captain Jim 189
- Roosevelt, President Franklin Delano 42, 288

- Rose Bay 209
 Rotorua 258-259
 Rountree, Chief 105, 218, 244,
 245
 Russell Islands 253, 263
- S
- SS Azalea 269
 SS Coolidge 21, 190-194, 251
 SS Ericsson 102, 103
 SS President Monroe 69, 70, 80,
 81, 85, 120
 Saipan 282, 323, 332
 St. Alban's Hospital 294, 326
 Sakuna, Ratu 240
 Samoa 69, 76, 85, 94, 95, 111,
 134, 178, 344
 San Diego Destroyer Base 67
 San Pedro 62
 Sand Pebbles, The 48
 Sands Street 52
 Santa Isabel 174, 246-248
 Sapero, LtCmdr. James 31, 94-
 100, 121, 122, 273, 312, 313,
 315-320, 323, 336
 Schultz, Bill 19, 93, 272, 275,
 306
 Schwintaurus, "Ski" 256
 SeaBees 20, 95, 121, 123-125,
 148, 160, 167, 176, 264, 267,
 268, 272, 274, 276, 307, 333
 Seattle Naval Hospital 309, 322
 shell shock 154, 155
 Shoho 77
 Shortland 203, 226, 263
 Sikaku 77
 Simpson, Lieutenant 110
- Siota Mission 227, 230, 232, 233
 Slot, the 183
 Social Security Act of 1935 42
 Society Islands 71
 Solomon Islands 12, 21, 28, 31,
 34, 102, 103, 105, 108, 112,
 119, 120, 123, 129, 130, 155,
 158, 196, 202, 213, 220, 222,
 227, 230, 231, 233-235, 237,
 239, 241, 243, 248, 249, 263,
 278, 308, 329, 330, 335
 Soryu 82, 83
 Springfield model 1903 45, 104,
 125, 188
 Stalingrad 13
 Stirling Islands 263, 264
 Sullivan, W. N. 177
 Suva 102, 241
- T
- Tantouta 66, 111, 121
 Task Force 6814 20, 66, 67,
 314
 Taylor, Dr. Brian 21, 123, 129,
 130, 155, 158, 230, 231, 233,
 235, 239, 243, 248, 308, 330
 TB 39, 44, 58
 tertian malaria 104, 105
 tetanus 46, 97
 Thirteenth Air Force 262, 264
 Thomas, Lowell 80
 Tientsin 302
 Tokyo 59, 75, 76, 107, 296, 297
 Tonga 80, 241
 Tonkin Gulf 89
 Tonkinese 89, 113, 341
 Townsville 213

- Treasure Island 283-285
 Treasury Islands 263
 Treponema pertenuis 234
 Truman, Senator Harry S. 288, 297
 Tuamotus 71
 Tulagi 12, 13, 16, 80, 103, 106-109, 111, 114, 119, 120, 129, 196, 199, 202, 210, 218, 219, 222-229, 233, 241, 267, 268, 317, 343
- U
 U.S. Bureau of Medicine 98
 U.S. Naval Academy 45
 U.S. Navy Hospital Corps 50
 U.S. Postal Service 42
 United Church of the Solomons 230
 United Nations 202, 299
 United States Naval Hospital No. 2 103
 USS Aaron Ward 227
 USS Arizona 16, 62-65
 USS California 64
 USS Cassin 64, 65
 USS Crescent City 17, 92, 102, 107, 115, 128, 136, 186, 224, 332
 USS Curtiss 65
 USS Downes 65
 USS Enterprise 75, 76, 82, 83, 171
 USS Fletcher 199
 USS Grayson 20, 79, 266, 309, 322
 USS Hammann 81
 USS Helena 65
 USS Honolulu 65
 USS Hornet 63, 74, 75, 82, 83
 USS Idaho 63
 USS Kanahwa 227
 USS Lexington 77
 USS Maryland 65
 USS McCawley 103, 105, 211
 USS Missouri 63, 296, 297, 333
 USS Monssen 16, 62, 63, 74, 75, 81, 146, 161, 177, 178, 196, 199, 200, 223, 331, 334, 340
 USS Nevada 64
 USS Neville 321
 USS New Mexico 63
 USS Oklahoma 64, 65
 USS Raleigh 65
 USS Shaw 64
 USS Tennessee 65
 USS Utah 65
 USS Vestal 65
 USS Vincennes 294
 USS West Virginia 64
 USS Yorktown 77, 81-84
 Utaha Passage 228
- V
 Vandegrift, General 123, 124, 133, 171, 179-182, 208
 vector borne disease 28, 29, 94
 Vella Lavella 80, 263
 Vichy French 67
 Vietnam 89, 155, 285
 Vila 99
 Vila River 210
 vivax, Plasmodium 35, 104
 V-J Day 296, 298, 299, 309

VMJ-253 110, 147, 185, 209,
212, 213, 225, 332

W

Wainwright, General "Skinny"
76

War Department Circular #178
274, 314, 317, 318

Washing Machine Charlie 148,
149, 154

Washington, D.C. 53, 54

WHO (World Health Organiza-
tion) 34, 130

Windward Islands 71

Winterton, Stewart 18, 134, 147,
148, 157, 161, 178, 186, 209,
331

WNEW 295

Woke, Lt. Paul 97

X

Xanadu 16

Y

Yamamoto 12, 59, 74, 75, 81,
82, 306

Yankee Division 62

Yaws 234, 235

Yokahama Air Group 223

Yokkaichi 76

Yokusuka 76

Z

Z-Day 195

Zuikaku 77