

Publication of the Alamo Scouts Historical Foundation

RECON

MAGAZINE

July/August 2021 Issue

1944



A rare color photo of the Alamo Scouts Training Center (ASTC) Headquarters building at the mouth of the Cadacan river near Abuyog, Leyte. The ASTC was established on 17 Nov 1944 and was the site of the 6th Alamo Scouts training class.



SPECIAL EXPANDED EDITION

The U.S. Sixth Army Special Reconnaissance Unit of World War II



ALAMO SCOUTS HISTORICAL FOUNDATION, INC.

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The Alamo Scouts Historical Foundation

is a 501(c)(3) organization incorporated
in the State of Illinois

Alamo Scouts Association 1980 - 2012

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In Memoriam

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February 18, 2020

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May 4, 2021

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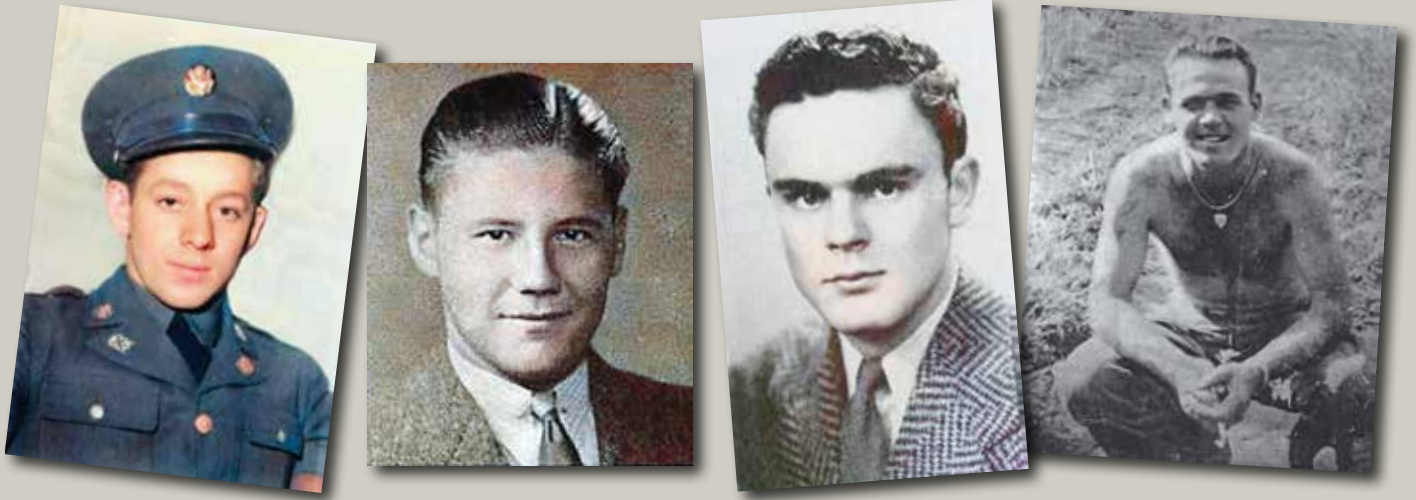
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Have a photo of an Alamo Scout? We'd love to see it!
Scan and email (media@apo44.com) it to the ASHF today!



SILENT NO MORE: The Alamo Scouts in Their Own Words -
The Kindle Edition is available on Amazon for \$6.99. 828 pages.
Unlike the hardcover edition, the 800+ page ebook edition does
not contain photos.

<https://www.amazon.com/Silent-No-More-Alamo-Scouts-ebook/dp/B08KRZHTNH>

Also please join our Facebook group for the latest news and stories:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/alamoscouts/>

It's a closed group so you'll have to ask to join when you get to the page. All posts and comments stay within the group. We found this is the best way to communicate with members and Alamo Scouts enthusiasts. Sending out bulk emails only produce spam. Having a Facebook private closed group eliminates spam and lost emails.

Covid 19

The Alamo Scouts Historical Foundation had such great plans for 2020. We were going to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the end of World War II with two giant issues of RECON magazine. We were going to celebrate the time and the men of the Alamo Scouts like we had never done before; new photos acquired, feature stories written, and a special Alamo Scouts anniversary calendar was in the works. It would have been a year like no other. But along came Covid, and everyone's lives were changed. The routines of daily life were upended; businesses closed, jobs were lost, church services interrupted, and even going to the supermarket was risky. Everything paled in significance to the monster we did not anticipate or understand. At press time, almost 600,000 Americans have died during the pandemic—66,000 less than all the combat deaths in our nation's history. We all struggled to adapt to the new normal and to ride the storm out the best we could until the time was right to begin reclaiming our lives and reestablishing the connections that we for so long embraced. That time is now.



In this, our first post Covid edition of RECON magazine, we focus on a few significant missions performed by the Alamo Scouts in 1944; those which reflect tragedy and loss, liberation and rescue, and ultimately victory and hope; a striking historical corollary plucked from the annals of the Alamo Scouts and applied to the challenges we faced and those that lie ahead. We apologize for the understandable delay in publishing this edition but thank you for your continued support of the ASHF. We, the editors of RECON, look forward to looking back and bringing you the amazing stories of the Alamo Scouts—the best of the best.

Lance & Russ

1944

The Alamo Scouts had been in existence for 34 days when the calendar rolled over to 1944. In that first full year, Alamo Scouts Training Centers (ASTC) were established on Ferguson Island, New Guinea and at Finschaven and Hollandia in Dutch Guinea. Another was erected after the successful landing on Leyte Island in the Philippines. ASTCs trained six classes, graduated approximately 225 trained Alamo Scouts, and retained 13 teams consisting of various compositions of men. The 6-7 man teams conducted a known 43 missions from February-December 1944, and are credited for providing deep reconnaissance,



intelligence collection, conducting civilian rescue and civil affairs operations, guerrilla coordination and resupply, pilot recovery, and more in the Bismarck Archipelago and New Guinea Campaigns and during the Leyte Operation without losing a man killed or captured. The tiny unit also earned 51 Silver Stars, 18 Bronze Stars, 4 Soldier's Medals, and 8 Purple Hearts. By any measure, the Alamo Scouts had proven themselves, but they were getting started.

This edition is a preview only.
Please consider becoming a member to get a
printed copy of the RECON magazine.
Help support the
Alamo Scouts Historical Foundation
with your membership.
Keep their legacy alive!

Alamo Scouts Historical Foundation Membership

The Alamo Scouts Historical Foundation offers three types of memberships to those who wish to support the organization. Annual dues are \$25.00, and will be used to help maintain the Alamo Scouts website; secure memorial plaques for the unit at historical and military institutions; fund special projects; and support ongoing archival research and procurement of historical unit-related memorabilia for educational purposes. Membership also entitles you to a membership card, a newsletter, our new RECON magazine, and attendance to any of the ASHF events. **We offer a 3 and 5 year membership. Get a three-year membership for \$70.00 (\$5.00 savings) or a 5-year membership for \$115.00 (\$10.00 savings).**

Select from the appropriate membership category.

Gold Membership – Alamo Scouts, ASTC Graduates, Staff & Overhead Personnel.

Silver Membership – Spouses & direct relatives of Scouts.

Bronze Membership – All others who wish to support the ASHF.

1-Year Membership - \$25 3-Year Membership - \$70 5-Year Membership - \$115

For all memberships, please provide your full name, mailing address, telephone number, and email address. If applying for Silver Membership and/or the Grand Membership Plan, please indicate the name of and relationship to an Alamo Scout. **Also, print (clearly) how you want your name to appear on your membership card(s).**

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And Faith Shall Set You Free

The Alamo Scouts Rescue of Missionaries in New Guinea

By Lance Zedric

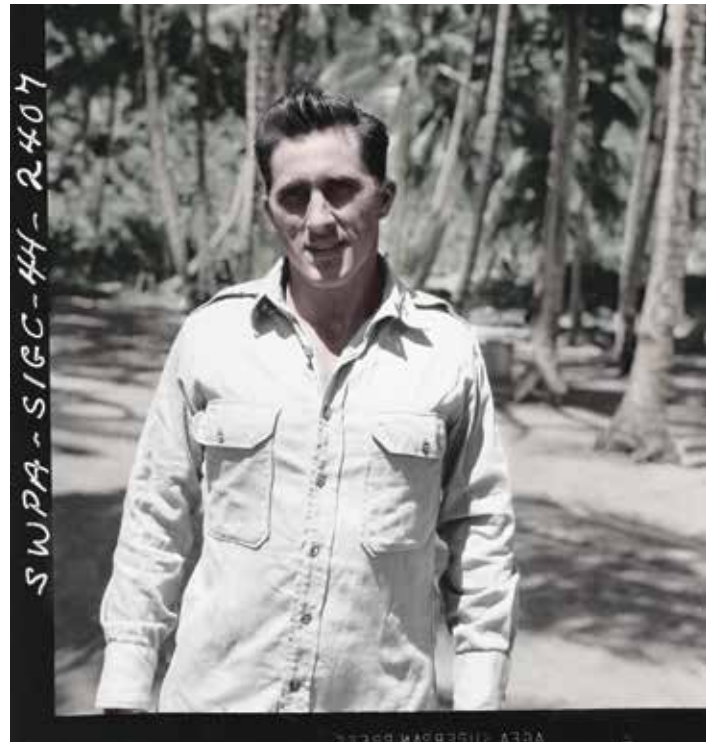
World War II was a total war. Never in history had so many civilians borne the brunt of battle and suffered its horrors along with the combatants. This was especially true in the larger cities of Europe and Asia where great numbers of civilians died in massive air strikes and relentless artillery barrages. But even dedicated missionaries working deep in the remote, steamy jungles of New Guinea were not immune from the ferocity of a modern conflict and the barbarity of a determined enemy. For those wanting to test their spiritual faith through physical hardship and trial by fire, there was no better or worse place to be.

European missionaries began arriving in New Guinea in the middle of the 19th century intent on expanding Christianity into this ancient, untamed wilderness. For the next eighty years, a steady stream of brave men and women representing the Lutheran, Catholic, Methodist, and other churches ventured there in search of new souls and steadily increased their presence and influence. At the beginning of World War II, it is estimated that over 1000 missionaries of all denominations were active throughout all of New Guinea, but when the invading Japanese arrived in late January 1942, they quickly collected the missionaries, many from Germany and the United States, and restricted their movement to ensure that they would not provide information to the Allies. Some were treated relatively well while others were brutalized or killed, but all suffered. Over 330 missionaries died under Japanese occupation, a staggering 33 percent death toll.

With the westward advance of American forces in New Guinea in 1944, Japanese troops were increasingly cut off and forced to retreat inland to avoid annihilation and to find food. Unable or unwilling to care for the sick and hungry missionaries, the Japanese released many to fend for themselves in a brutal environment where survival was difficult even for the strong. Despite the challenges, most missionaries believed that God was still on their side and that they would be delivered. For some, the instrument of their liberation was a brave team of Alamo Scouts.

The following account is the remarkable story of some 120 missionaries who were located and rescued by SOMBAR Team on 25 April 1944, three days after the American landing at Hollandia, a major port city on the northern coast of Dutch New Guinea. The rescue of the missionaries was an important operation and held significant meaning since 70 of their fellow missionaries and refugees had been killed by Allied bombers two months earlier while being transported aboard a Japanese barge. According to many Alamo Scouts, the rescue was one of the most personally rewarding missions performed during the war and best exemplified the power of faith and the resilience of the human spirit.

Alamo Scout team leader Lt. Michael J. Sombar, nicknamed "Iron Mike," had endured a lot in his life and was as tough as they came. The muscular 25-year-old was the son of Russian immigrants James Sombar and Anna Sedorovna (Rimsky). As wealthy landowners living near Kiev, they feared for their lives from communist revolutionaries during the growing unrest in Russia before World War I. In early 1913, the pregnant Anna, and young daughters Anne and Doris, narrowly escaped Russia and emigrated to the U.S. through Ellis Island in New York, while James stayed behind with plans to join them later. In January 1914, Anna gave birth to another daughter, Marian, and a year or two later, James escaped Russia through Vladivostok and arrived in San Francisco. He then settled the family in Roundup, Montana, a cattle, railroad, and mining town with a relatively large Russian population. In 1916, they welcomed the birth of William, and two years later on



Lt. Michael J. Sombar

On Common Ground

By Lance Zedric

At first glance, Staff Sgt. Wendell D. Holder from rural Kentucky and 1st Lt. Eugene L. Kersting from Dayton, Ohio had little in common. The former, a large, strapping Protestant from the western Smokies had worked as a farm laborer while attending high school and had enlisted in the pre-war mounted cavalry to escape poverty. The latter, a devout Catholic and college-educated youngest son of a prominent attorney, was refined and diminutive in stature, and the upward trajectory of his life was reasonably assured in the summer of 1941. But the war changed everything and incrementally brought the men together. Their once divergent paths would cross on a northern shore in New Guinea on a fateful day in October 1944, and they would become inexorably linked by their deaths and forever defined by what they shared.



Wendell Holder



Eugene Kersting

On 17 September 1944, 70 hand-picked volunteers reported to the Alamo Scouts Training Center (ASTC) at Cape Kasso near Hollandia, Dutch New Guinea as part of the 5th Training Class. The 60 enlisted men and 10 officers were selected from among the best soldiers in the 6th Army and had volunteered for the rigorous 6-week course. If they graduated—and if they were retained—they would form into small, elite teams and operate deep behind enemy lines for days, weeks

or months at a time. The first three weeks of training were spent toughening their bodies, refreshing old skills, and acquiring new ones. They would practice advanced scouting and patrolling, communications, hand-to-hand combat, advanced first aid, intelligence collection, receive rudimentary language training, and more. They would learn how to blend into their environment, work with natives, live off the land, and how to approach and depart enemy shores by the sea.



The Tami River, Dutch New Guinea

A Terrible Swift Sword:

The War Crimes Case of Kunio Yunome

By Lance Zedric

"I took an oath that I must always be subordinate to my superiors and whatever orders they give," affirmed naval civilian interpreter Kunio Yunome at his war crimes trial in Rabaul, New Guinea on 28 June 1946 moments before an Australian Military Tribunal sentenced him to death by hanging for murdering an Ambonese native on 24 October 1943. Two years earlier, a team of Alamo Scouts had captured Yunome after the 22 April 1944 Allied landing at Hollandia and had discovered his diary detailing the beheading. The account was corroborated when an American soldier discovered 22 photos on the body of a dead Japanese officer showing Yunome killing the man. The photos also showed the beheading of two other Allied soldiers performed at the same time and location by separate men. The evidence was damning. News of the photos spread and Yunome and the others became the face of Japanese wartime brutality. Later, some 14,000 miles away in Germany, major Nazi war criminals responsible for the death of tens of millions in the war in Europe justified their actions at the Nuremberg Trials with a similar defense that they were "just following orders," and received the same or a lesser sentence. Ultimately, justice would be served. Or would it?

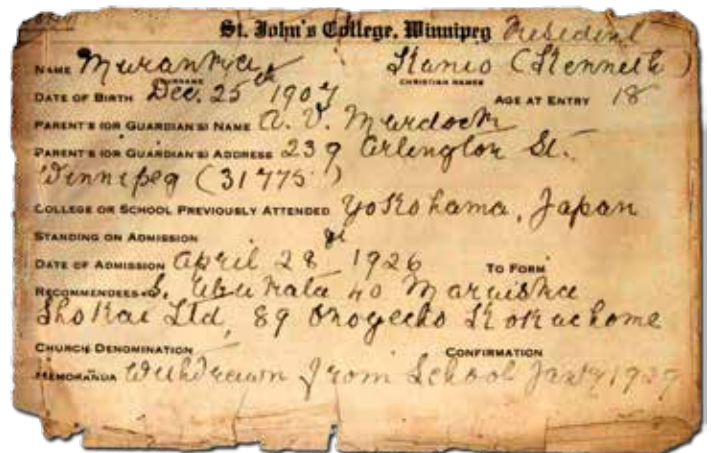


Kunio Yunome

Who was Kunio Yunome and was he fully responsible for the act he committed and deserved of the sentence he received—or was he simply unfortunate to be on the losing side of the war and to face victors' justice from a scale that philosophically and culturally weighed different from his own? In examining interrogation reports, court transcripts, newspaper accounts, personal letters, interviews, travel documents, and his personal diary, more questions arise than answers revealed. But had the Alamo Scouts not captured him and recovered his diary, these

questions and more may not have ever been asked and the events of that day relegated to the "what if" pile of history.

EARLY YEARS: Yunome was born near Tokyo on January 15, 1908 (also reported as 25 December 1907), and according to information obtained during his initial prisoner of war interrogation, studied at the English Language School in Tokyo for three years following primary school. Sometime in early 1926, his father sent him to Winnipeg, Canada because he had a friend in the silk business there, and he stayed at the home of guardians William Murdoch and his elderly mother. On 26 April of that year, he entered local St. John's College to study English and math but was not placed in regular classes due to a lack of proficiency. As one of only two Japanese students, the slight but handsome 5'5, 120-pounder enrolled as "Kunio Muranmce," but was known to classmates as "Kenneth Muranaka."



Yunome's St. John's College photo and identification card. Circa 1926-1928.

"I always thought he was a nice guy," said Canadian classmate Donald James in a 1946 newspaper article. "I

The Perfect Mission: The Alamo Scouts Raid on Oransbari

By Lance Zedric

Shortly before noon on 6 October 1944, Lts. Tom Rounsaville and William Nellist, accompanied by their two teams of Elite Alamo Scouts and Lt. Louis Rapmund, a Dutch agent working for the Netherlands Forces Intelligence Service (NEFIS), trudged into a U.S. Army mess hall on Biak Island north of New Guinea. They were tired and hungry and covered in mud and blood, but the surroundings, the language, and the food were familiar and gave them some measure of comfort in a foreign land ravaged by war. Sixty-six civilian men, women, and children, including the Beynon's, a Dutch-Indo family of 12, a French family of 10, and the rest Javanese, cautiously followed them through the chow line and received that day's typical offering of hamburger gravy over mashed potatoes. Many Javanese had never used silverware and ate with their fingers. It was a messy affair, but that mattered little. Less than eight hours earlier, they had all been prisoners of the Japanese in western New Guinea and were unsure when their next meal was coming—or if it would come at all. But in one of the most daring and remarkable raids of World War II, they were liberated by the Alamo Scouts and Rapmund, and for the first time in two years, the grateful souls would enjoy the sweet taste of freedom.

Corporal Andy Smith of NELLIST Team, a rough-and-tumble baseball catcher from east-central Illinois who had a shot at making the big leagues had the war not interrupted, shoveled down a last bite of potatoes and waved goodbye to the civilians as he and the others hustled to catch a PT boat back to the Alamo Scouts Training Center (ASTC) at Hollandia for a couple days while Rapmund stayed behind and turned in the ex-prisoners to NICA (Netherlands-Indies Civil Administration) officials to be processed and repatriated before rejoining the Scouts back on tiny Roemberpon Island in Geelvink Bay a few miles off the east coast of the Vogelkop from where they had operated prior to the raid. Smith would die 57 years later knowing little more about the people he had helped rescue than he knew in the mess hall that day. For him and the rest of the Alamo Scouts, who at that time were still classified "top secret," the campaign in New Guinea was winding down and the dangerous return to the Philippines lay ahead. There was much work to do and little time to think about sentimental things. But today we have that luxury—to look back and to examine the myriad details surrounding the

mission that many Alamo Scouts believed was their best, and what others believe is the most perfectly planned, most perfectly executed raid in the history of the U.S. military. More important, hundreds of relatives of those rescued a half world away by Alamo Scouts seventy-seven years ago, survive. And to that end, we start at the beginning.

The Japanese military situation in western New Guinea in the fall of 1944 was precarious at best. The Allied forces, spearheaded by the U.S. Sixth Army, had leapt along the northern coast of New Guinea



I N T H E N E W S



Judge Holder of the U.S. Army's Silver Star, with cluster, and a Purple Heart—all from service in the Southwest Pacific during World War II, where he was a member of Alamo Scouts—is Joe Johnson, chief judge of White Mountain Apaches. With the judge is his 6-year-old son, Joe Jr., as the two contemplate the crowd which gathered at Whiteriver last April to hear the council's reports. The judge, a lover of art, studied under the GI Bill for several years at an art school in Las Vegas, N. M.

War and post-war news clippings of Alamo Scouts.

Above: The Arizona Republic, 29 Jun 1952.

Top Right: Corpus Christi Caller-Times, 5 Feb 1942.

Right: The Brownsville Herald, 10 Oct 1944.

Army Can't Wait for Draftee—He Gets KP Before Inducted

CAMP SAN LUIS OBISPO, Calif., Feb. 5. (AP)—Recruiting Sgt. Frank Burkhard was perturbed, if not annoyed, when Frederico Balambao, 20, of Guadalupe, failed to return to be sworn in the day after taking his Army physical examination.

Balambao, beaming and eager, finally made it, a day late.

"Why didn't you return yesterday?" demanded Burkhard.

"I couldn't. I was on KP."

First Sgt. Arthur P. L. Hansen found the recruit wandering around the post and put him to work.

The Alamo Scouts Are Killers

The Alamo Scouts can kill a man with their hands. They know how to live in a jungle.

The Alamo Scouts have been a military secret. Only now is the story told of these intrepid throwback to U. S. frontiersmen of Davy Crockett's day. Now, they are the eyes of Lt. Gen. Walter Krueger's jungle army in the South Pacific.

Murlin Spencer, of The Associated Press, writes the story in a series of three articles that constitute a bright record of daring and skill against the Japanese. The first will be published in The Brownsville Herald Wednesday.

Sumner Team in the Ormoc Valley

Return to the Philippines

By Lance Zedric

Seventy-six years ago on the morning of 20 October 1944, a mighty armada of 701 ships, including 157 warships of the U.S. Seventh Fleet, landed four divisions of the U.S. Sixth Army on the shores of Leyte Island in the central Philippines. It was the largest amphibious operation to date in the Pacific and made good on General Douglas MacArthur's promise that "I Shall Return," made to the Filipino people upon his evacuation from the Philippines in December 1941. On smaller scale, Leyte was the perfect training ground for further developing the Alamo Scouts and refining themselves for the larger campaign to come.

Leyte was not everyone's first choice, but MacArthur lobbied the Joint Chiefs hard and persuaded them to choose it over Formosa (Taiwan) as a staging point for control of the archipelago and for the drive north on Japan. The island, located in the Visayas, one of three principal island groups in Philippines, extends 110 miles from north to south and 15-50 miles in width, featured deep water and good beaches on the east, and provided eastern access to the open waters of the Pacific. It was the center of a network of Japanese bases and airfields in the Philippines, and its rugged terrain, formidable mountains, and many caves were well-suited for defense. Combined with a lack of good secondary roads, the oncoming monsoon season, and the threat of the Japanese Navy lurking, the challenges were serious.

Sixth Army Intelligence estimated that General Shiro Makino's 16th Army of some 20,000 troops occupied Leyte, and that Japanese forces numbered 50,000 in the Visayas, also consisting of neighboring Samar, Panay, Negros, and Bohol islands. Of the 16 million people in the Philippines, 900,000 lived on Leyte, and primarily worked in agriculture and fishing. More important, they had endured brutal occupation under the Japanese and were eager to help.

At dawn on 22 October, Lt. Robert "Red" Sumner and his six-man team of Alamo Scouts stood on the port side deck of the attack transport *USS Crescent City* as it steamed up Leyte Gulf toward San Pedro Bay. The horizon was filled with hundreds of ships. Later that day, the team went ashore at Red Beach and would ultimately play a crucial role in securing victory on the island and perform the longest and

most complex mission conducted by the Alamo Scouts so far. It was their time.

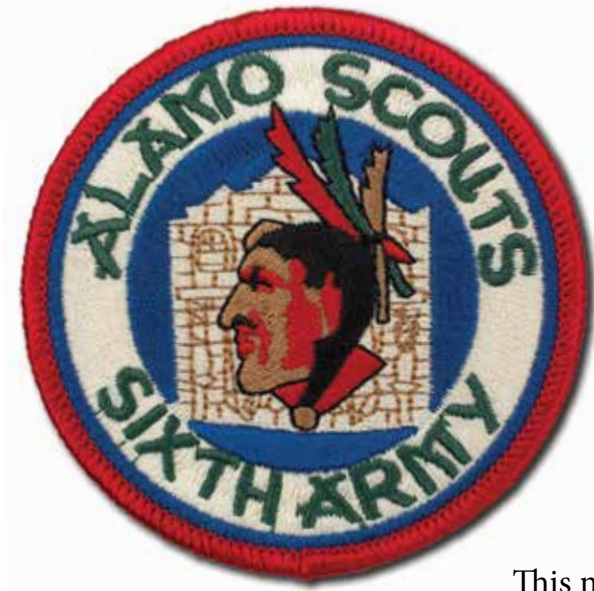
THE SITUATION: The Japanese withdrew into the interior of the island to fight a delaying action rather than meeting the invasion force on the eastern beaches. It was a costly mistake. But not that it mattered. Allied air power neutralized the conventional Japanese air threat within a week, and Sixth Army units were achieving their objectives ahead of schedule. By 1 November, ground forces had reclaimed and secured all port cities except Ormoc City and the vital Ormoc Valley to the northwest. Despite the early Sixth Army success, the Japanese were still pouring tens of thousands of troops and thousands of tons of war materiel into the fight through Ormoc, and although the Japanese realized that defeat was inevitable, they could still take American lives and delay the war. And there's the rub.

Sixth Army needed to know how, when, and where the enemy troops were coming from, and given that Alamo Scouts teams had already performed six distinct and successful missions in the one week on the island, they were the logical choice to find that information. SUMNER Team had moved with Sixth Army to the



U.S. forces wade ashore at Leyte, 20 Oct 1944. U.S. Navy photo.

Alamo Scouts Replica Patches



New version 3.0 replica Alamo Scouts patches are available direct from the Alamo Scouts Historical Foundation. Your purchase of the Alamo Scouts patch will help maintain the Alamo Scouts website and support the ASHF Research Fund to ensure the amazing legacy of the Alamo Scouts.

In Color Actual Size

This new replica patch is 100% embroidered, like the 1944 N.S. Meyer Company made patch that only 440 of them were made.

One Patch @ \$18.00 + \$4.50 shipping (First-Class Mail) and handling (USA) = \$22.50

Two Patches @ \$36.00 + \$4.50 shipping (First-Class Mail) and handling (USA) = \$40.50

Three Patches @ \$54.00 + \$4.50 shipping (First-Class Mail) and handling (USA) = \$58.50

Four Patches @ \$72.00 + \$4.50 shipping (First-Class Mail) and handling (USA) = \$76.50

Five Patches @ \$90.00 + \$4.50 shipping (First-Class Mail) and handling (USA) = \$94.50

Six Patches @ \$108.00 + \$4.50 shipping (First-Class Mail) and handling (USA) = \$112.50

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Four Patches @ \$60.00 + \$4.50 shipping (First-Class Mail) and handling (USA) = \$64.50

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Six Patches @ \$90.00 + \$4.50 shipping (First-Class Mail) and handling (USA) = \$94.50

These are shipping prices within the USA only. Due to issues shipping outside the of USA. We are no longer taking orders for items shipping outside the of USA. Sorry for the inconvenience at this time.

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Hybrid Alamo Scouts insignia taken from the original drawing by Harry Golden, and the H.S. Meyer's patch. Created in Adobe Illustrator by Russ Blaise.