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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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Lutz Team

Terry Santos

February 18, 2020

4th Class Graduate

Theresa Ray

May 4, 2021

Wife of the Late MGen. Irvin G. Ray, Alamo Scout

Pauline Neutonla Tsingine

June 5, 2021

Wife of the Late Byron Tsingine, Alamo Scout

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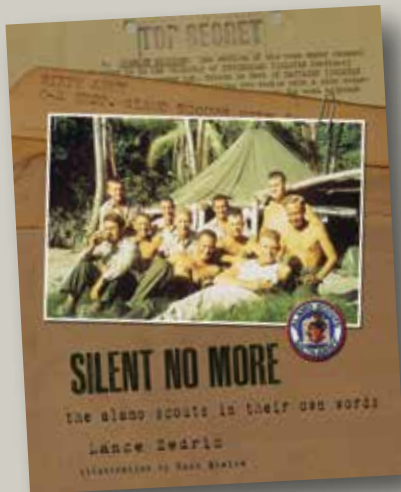
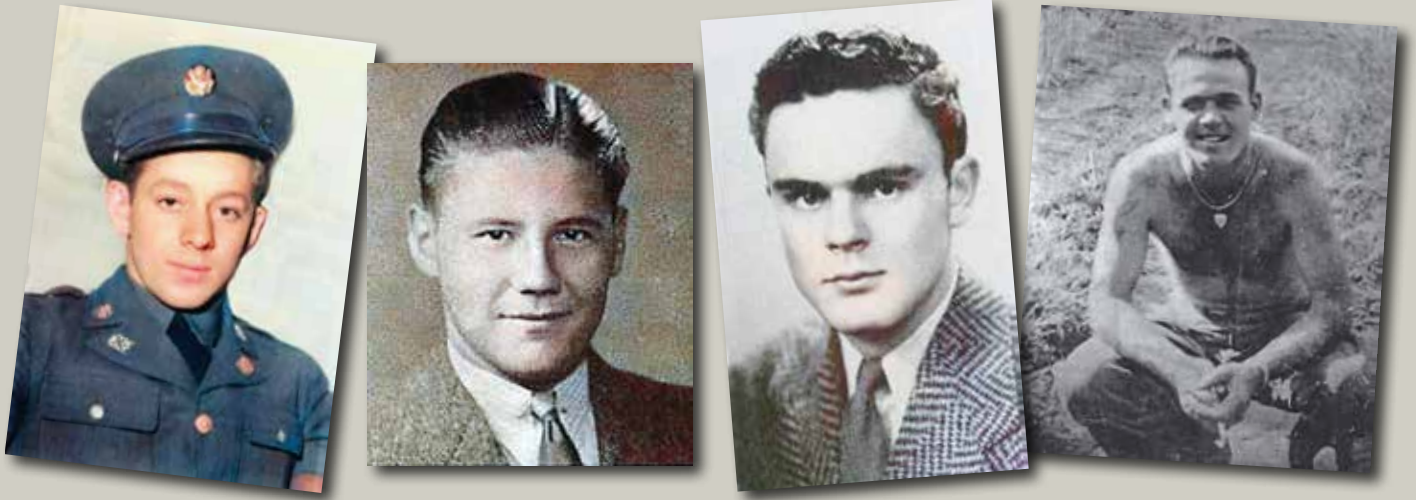
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Have a photo of an Alamo Scout? We'd love to see it!
Scan and email (media@apo44.com) it to the ASHF today!



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.

HEADQUARTERS SIXTH ARMY
Office of the Assistant Chief of Staff, G-2
A.P.O. 442

HVa/rjt

15 December 1944

Subject: Present Disposition Alamo Scout Teams.

To : Chief of Staff.

1. The following is a brief report on the present locations and activities of Alamo Scout teams:

a. Lt. Rounsaville: Returned this Headquarters 9 December from MASBATE where he landed with his team the night of 20 November. His mission was to organize intelligence activities in the MASBATE Guerrilla Regiment under Major Donato. As a result, coastwatcher stations have been established along the eastern coast and on the neighboring islands of TIGAO. A messenger relay system was also developed to get the information to the radio station. Coastwatcher sightings in this area are most important, as it is one of the main enemy convoy routes from LUGON.

b. Lt. Sumner: Landed 8 November vicinity of PALOMPON, LEYTE, and within five days had established radio station a few miles west of ORMOG. He has been forced to move several times because of increased enemy activity and is presently located in the vicinity of MATLANG BAY (see attached map). His primary mission was to organize and evaluate intelligence among guerrilla units of the 96th Regt in this area. Reports received from his station have proven of utmost value. His activities are coordinated with units of Major Nazareno's 96th Regiment.

c. Lt. Thompson: Landed 15 November on PURO ISLAND (middle island of the CAMOTES GROUP). His mission was to establish a coastwatcher station and to obtain information to enable us to destroy the enemy's barge staging area on the northwest end of PACIJAN ISLAND (westernmost island of group). Using information obtained from Thompson, several air strikes have been tied up with considerable success. Thompson was picked up by PT on 8 December, as his radio station had been off the air since 1 December. Upon his return he reported that 50 Japs landed at PURO CITY on the night of 4 Dec killing some 35 civilians and capturing all the team's equipment, all members of the party managed to escape unharmed. After remaining for 24 hours, the Japs left the town. Thompson returned to the island 12 December with additional radio equipment, 75 rifles, ammunition and medical supplies for the guerrilla company on the island. After re-establishing the station Thompson has been instructed to turn it over to the guerrilla unit and return to this Headquarters.

d. Lt. Ilatto: Arrived at GUIAN (SE tip SAMAR) 7 December. His mission was to reconnoiter the southern coast in order to report strength, location and disposition of enemy groups in that area. A radio report

received from him states guerrillas have located and are about to attack 400 Japs at BALANGIGA (central south coast). Ilatto reports the remainder of southern coast is clear of enemy.

e. Lt. Chandler: Landed night 11-12 December on southeast coast BILIRAN ISLAND. His mission was to reconnoiter and report by radio any enemy activity along the south coast of BILIRAN and the northwest coast of LEYTE. As yet no report has been received from him. It is expected that he will remain in this area about 10 days.

2. All of the eight Alamo Scout teams now available have been on missions in this area. It is believed that the experience thus gained in working with Filipino civilians and guerrillas will prove invaluable during the next operation.

H. V. WHITE,
Colonel, G. S. C.,
AC of S, G-2.

And Faith Shall Set You Free

The Alamo Scouts Rescue of Missionaries in New Guinea

By Lance Zedric

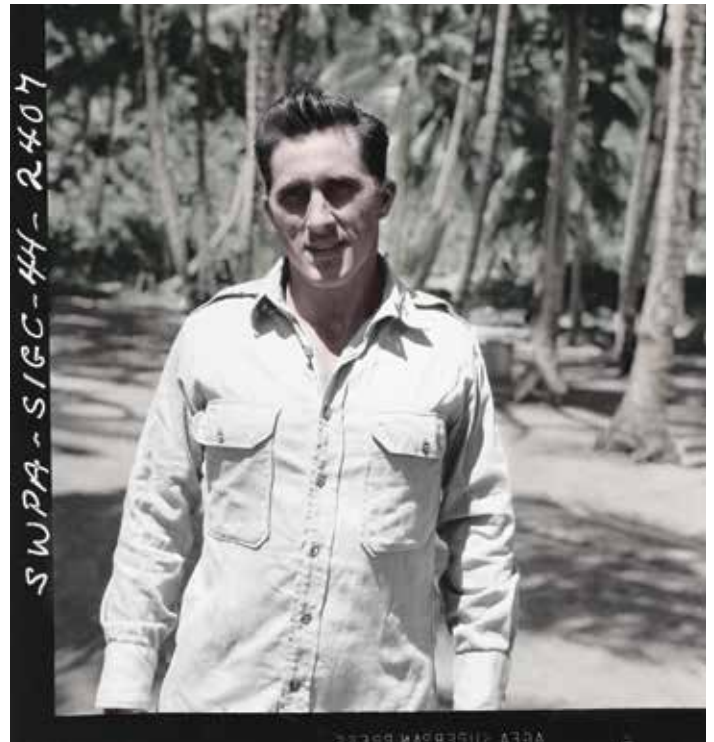
World War II was a total war. Never in history had so many civilians borne the brunt of battle and suffered its horrors along with the combatants. This was especially true in the larger cities of Europe and Asia where great numbers of civilians died in massive air strikes and relentless artillery barrages. 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



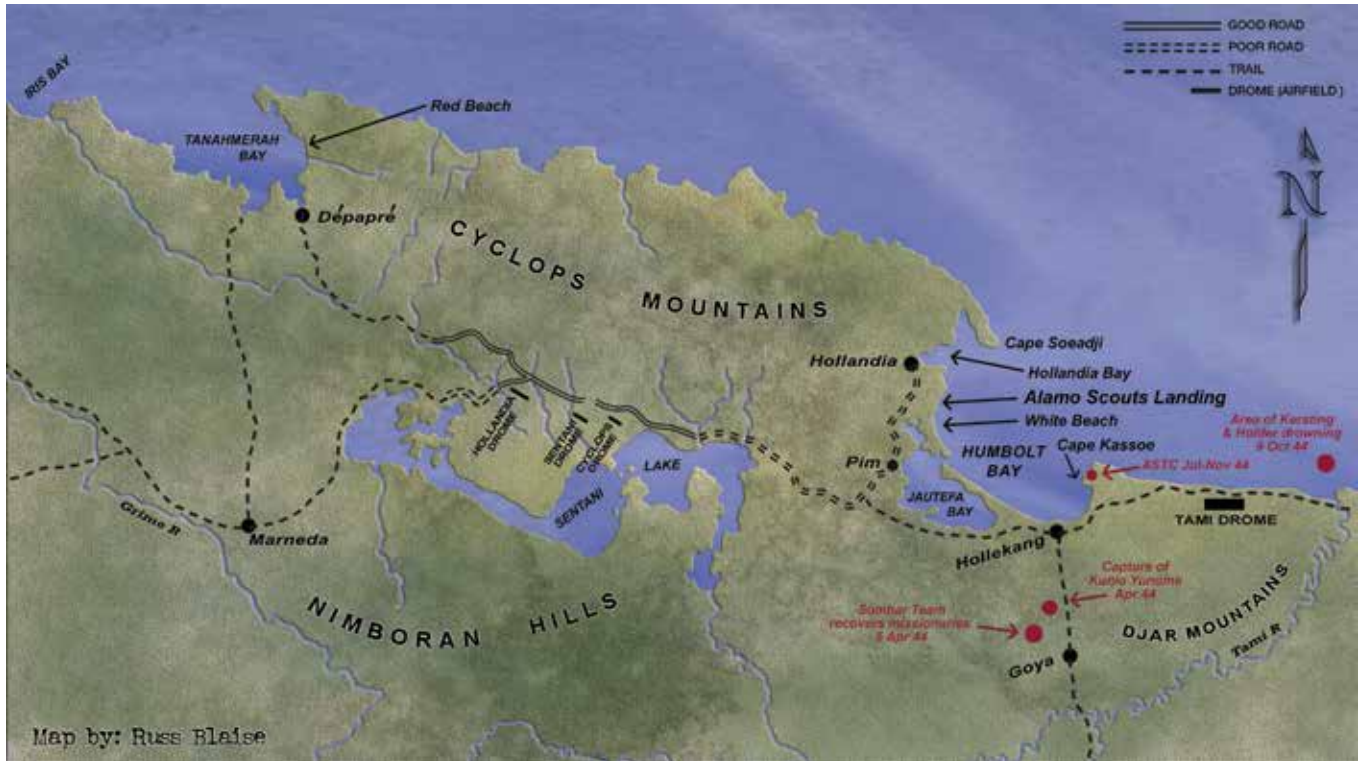
Lt. Michael J. Sombar

the day after Christmas, Michael was born.

For several years, the large family enjoyed life, but in 1926, the 38-year-old Anna died during childbirth leaving James, a truck driver, to raise the family alone. But James traveled to Russia for a brief time and soon remarried before returning and relocating the family to Delaware.

was federalized, and after the war began, he deployed to Australia, graduated OCS, and was commissioned a 2nd lieutenant in the Infantry. In late 1943, he volunteered for the Alamo Scouts, and following graduation from the Alamo Scouts Training Center (ASTC) with the first class in February 1944, was retained and given a team.

Two months passed and Sombar had yet to lead a



In 1936, tragedy struck again when James died in a truck accident leaving Michael and his brother to live with neighbors. Michael soon landed a job delivering milk, but the job offered few challenges, so he traveled to Montana in 1938 to pursue other opportunities. That didn't last, and he soon returned to Delaware and enlisted as a private in the 198th Coast Artillery of the Delaware National Guard. In September 1940, the unit

mission, and although the former high school football star had served as the contact team for BARNES Team during the unit's second mission, he didn't like standing on the sidelines. His opportunity came soon enough when his team and HOBBS Team were attached to I Corps for the landing at Hollandia—codename *OPERATION RECKLESS*, a moniker the aggressive Sombar identified with. But he was unaware that his first combat mission as an Alamo Scout ultimately would be one of mercy.

LANDING: SOMBAR and HOBBS teams landed in broad daylight on 23 April with the fourth wave of the 41st Infantry Division the day after the initial landing and then moved down the beach to Hollekang where they bivouacked for the night. The teams were supposed to land at the Tami River and then to proceed to Tami Drome to establish an observation point where they could observe enemy trails and relay information by radio, but they were stranded on the beach when I CORPS failed to provide a boat to transport them to their objective. Sombar and Hobbs were livid and complained so strongly that a colonel from the 41st threatened to court martial them for insubordination. But when Col. Frederick Bradshaw, an attorney and the Director of Training for the ASTC learned of the charges, the issue was dropped.



Lt. Woodrow Hobbs

After a fitful night's sleep, the teams woke early and prepared to conduct separate patrols. SOMBAR Team, consisting of 1st Sgt. Vergil F. Howell of the Pawnee Tribe from Oklahoma; S/Sgt. Charles Harkins, a hard-nosed noncom from New York City; Sgt. John A. "Red" Roberts, a veteran of the first Alamo Scouts mission on Los Negros Island; Sgt. James Crockett, who was at



Cpl. Willem Lenzing, NEI Army.

Schofield Barracks on Oahu when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor in 1941; Cpl. David Milda, a stealthy Native American Apache from Bapchule, Arizona; and Pfc. Ora M. "Fuzzy" Davis, the pride of Anderson, Indiana and a star on his high school's 1937 state champion basketball and baseball teams, was a tough and seasoned bunch. The teams were augmented by Cpl. Willem Lenzing, a Dutch interpreter from Timor, Sgt. A. Saraun, and Cpl. J. Polii from the Netherlands East Indies (NEI) Army.

"At this point the patrols split up," Sombar wrote in a mission report, "[and we] proceeded from Laho River in the direction of Cape Kassoe one half to three quarters of a mile to the first village."

Like they had been trained, the team fanned out and



Sgt. John A. "Red" Roberts

cautiously approached the village. They soon came upon two thatched huts with a saddled horse standing outside. Sombar peeked inside one hut and saw a Japanese officer sitting on a makeshift bed changing his clothes, so he pulled the pin from a grenade and tossed it through an open window. The blast shredded part of the hut, and Sombar rushed in and found the officer wounded but standing. Sombar reacted quickly and punched him in the jaw knocking him to the floor before finishing him with a single round to the chest from his Thompson machine gun. The team then recovered an American machine gun and returned to Hollekang beach where natives told them that the Japanese were holding more than 100 missionaries near Goya, a small village about six miles inland. There was more work to do.



Cpl. David Milda

"We met up with some natives who told us a story of a hundred or so white people being held by the Japs..." recalled Hobbs. "Lt. Sombar decided to try and find them...This was quite a physical feat. Myself and my team, and the remainder of Sombar's team, remained on the beach to relay and keep radio contact with Sombar's Walkie-Talkie."

*I heard the voice of the Lord saying,
Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?
And I said, Here am I. Send me!"
Isaiah 6:8*

THE RESCUE: Sombar sprang into action and split his weary but motivated team. This type of mission held special meaning and every man volunteered to go, but the extra men would only slow the team down. It had to move fast if the reports about the poor condition of the missionaries were accurate, and Sombar chose Harkins, who was killed in action on Leyte eight months later with the 127th Infantry, Milda, Roberts, Lenzing, Saraun, and Polii to go with him. The team trudged through knee-



Theodore & Hattie Braun in 1936.

deep mud for about three miles and discovered a sick and exhausted missionary who had escaped and was trying to reach the beach. Sombar directed Milda, who would be killed in action on Luzon in January 1945 after returning to his parent unit, to return the man to Allied lines while the rest of team continued on.

“Cpl. Milda lifted him tenderly, braced him, half-carried him back over the tortuous route to the sea,” wrote ASTC adjutant Lewis Hochstrasser in 1944. “The other four pressed on—four hours of slogging, forcing their tired bodies until their muscles screamed for mercy. Mud-caked, with scraggly beards, they entered Goya just before noon...”

At the outskirts of the village, the Scouts met three missionaries who had been separated from the main body of missionaries that had been trying to reach American forces at the beach, which they knew from



Sister Mary Elise Ruholl



a native boy, had filled the harbor with ships and had landed. Dr. Theodore Braun, an American missionary from Iowa, had served as a physician in New Guinea since 1930, and his wife, Hattie, a nurse, had been active there since 1924. Dr. Braun recalled the rescue:

“From the time we were captured till we were caught it was a little over sixteen months...Father Clerkin and Father Hagen and I said, ‘We’ll go out and we’ll try to contact an American patrol.’ ...they went out and it didn’t take very long and they contacted the first Americans... The patrol that got us was Alamo Scouts.”

The missionaries led the patrol back to the village.

“As the Scouts approached the group of native shacks, the missionaries came out to meet them and they were singing—perhaps a hymn of thanksgiving,” wrote Hochstrasser. “One of the nuns put her arms around Mike’s neck and hugged him to her while he gulped in embarrassment, ‘Oh,’ she said, ‘It’s so good to see a real man again!’”

“When the first American soldier arrived in our camp on that memorable afternoon in Koia [Goya], Hollandia, I thought my heart would fly out of my breast for joy,” recalled Sister Mary Elise (Otonia) Ruholl from Effingham, Illinois, who had hugged Sombar.

“We laughed and wept for joy. And the nicest part of it was that everyone, German, American, Austrian and Polish were happy alike. The soldiers appeared like giants to us after we had been accustomed to the dwarf Japs, and believe me, they treated us as royalty.”

CAPTURE: But the Scouts’ work wasn’t finished. The patrol checked each hut and found whom they believed to be a Japanese naval officer.

“The missionaries nodded to a bunk where a man was sleeping,” recalled Sombar. “He was Kenneth Yunone [Kunio Yunome], who thought that he was so far behind his own lines that he was safe.”

Sombar charged his weapon and pointed it in the man’s face. The officer opened his eyes. “All right,” he replied in perfect English, “I won’t try to run away.”

"We surrounded him and he arrogantly asked if we remembered Pearl Harbor," recalled Sombar in an interview in 1944. "We kicked him clear out of the palm house and when he was partly recovered, we asked him if he remembered Doolittle's bombing of Tokyo. He was in Tokyo at that time and told us that the bombing caused considerable damage..."

The prisoner, a civilian interpreter working for the Japanese Navy, had studied English at St. John's College in Canada under an alias and stated that he was suffering from malaria and was too weak to resist.

"I had on my civilian clothes and I had a sword and my cap," chortled Yunome during an interrogation. "I was dressed properly."

"We didn't want to fool with him," said Sombar, "but our orders were to send all prisoners back for questioning, so we had to take him back."

Sombar searched the prisoner and recovered a personal diary written in Japanese characters. He stuffed it into his pocket without giving it a second thought, but a few days later after learning that Yunome was suspected of executing an American flier and three airmen at Wewak, he realized that he had forgotten to turn it in and immediately handed it over to intelligence officers. They later determined that Yunome did not execute the Americans, but that he had beheaded a NEI native working with a Dutch reconnaissance team in October 1943 which led to a conviction for war crimes and the death penalty. Note: (see *A Terrible Swift Sword* for more about Yunome).

COMING HOME: Sombar and his team were exhausted, and many of the missionaries were too sick, weak, and injured to make the brutal six-mile walk through waist-deep mud back to the beach, so Sombar

put his prisoner under guard and slept for the night. At 8 a.m. the next day, he and the patrol, along with the Japanese prisoner and three Polish missionaries, started back to the beach to contact HOBBS Team and elements of the 41st Infantry. Hochstrasser recalled the trip back:



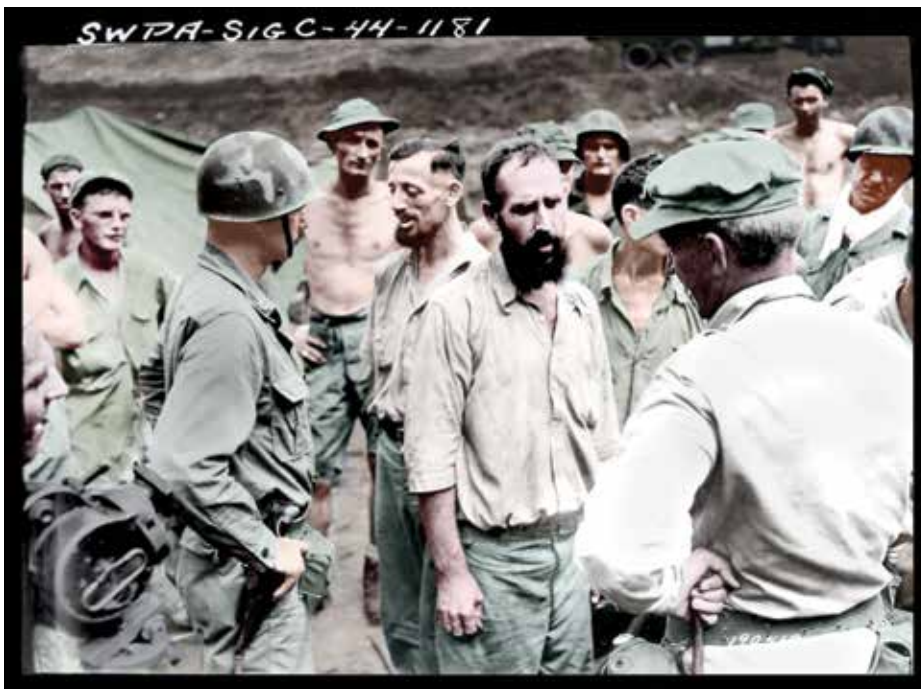
William Siemers

"Six miles through swamp, which sometimes was waist deep, proved too much for one of the missionaries, and he collapsed from exhaustion. His pack was heavy and he could no longer carry it, so Yonomi [sic] was ordered to pick it up. Arrogant, proud of his college education in Winnipeg, Canada, the Jap officer drew to his full height and announced with offended dignity that he was a commissioned officer, that under the terms of the Geneva Convention he was to be treated according to his rank, that they could shoot him before he would pick up the pack. Lieutenant Roberts, then a sergeant, released the safety on his carbine and motioned two of the missionaries between himself and the Jap out of the way. Yonomi [sic] picked up the pack and the party continued."

In the meantime, a battalion from the 41st Division was already en route to evacuate the over 100 foreign missionaries, including 40 nuns consisting of three Poles, one Australian, one Czechoslovakian, and the remainder Germans. This also included 13 Americans.

"The Americans came, and with the Walkie-Talkie, they called more and there was a whole battalion that came up to take us down," said Braun. "There were very few of us that could walk. They had to carry most of them."

American missionary William H. Siemers recalled the day of rescue in his diary:



Father Hagen speaks with LTG Eichelberger after rescue by Alamo Scouts. Army photo.

"Tuesday, April 25, Uncle Sam's boys arrived at our camp. Early that morning three of our group went down to the beach hoping to be able to contact some of the American forces. They were very successful too since there were no Japanese soldiers around, and by 4 p.m. about 200 American soldiers surrounded our camp. What joy!"

"Sombar returned the next day with three white men and one Jap lieutenant prisoner," noted Hobbs. "They had found 120 white missionaries. We returned to headquarters, leaving the evacuation of the missionaries to the infantry battalion. Considering all the circumstances involved, I believe that this act by Sombar and two of his men was one of the most daring and bold stunts made by the Alamo Scouts."

"Hunger and thirst are real life torture experiences which, by the grace of God, some of us prisoners-of-war survived," said Lutheran missionary Andrew E. Mild following his rescue. "We also experienced miraculous events under God's care of us. At all times we felt God's presence and relied on the peace of mind and soul which only he can give. God blessed us..."

That he did.

MISSION ACCOMPLISHED

WAR DEPARTMENT ARMY SERVICE FORCES MEMO ROUTING SLIP				W. D., A. G. O. Form No. 8115 April 5, 1944		TRANSMITTAL SHEET	
To the following in order indicated:				Routing Slip No. 12-671		Date 19 May 1944.	
1	(Director or ASAC)	(Organization)	(Building and room)	(Date)		Munitions (Location)	
2						(Address)	
3						es from Hollandia.	
						ar East, APO 501. 19 May 1944.	
						(Date)	
						Pentagon, 2367.	
						(Telephone extension)	
<p style="text-align: center;">HAR</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Evacuate Hollandia</p> <p style="text-align: center;">FILE</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Date 6/6/44</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Initials 16</p>				<p style="text-align: center;">JFK</p>		<p style="text-align: center;">and Mark</p> <p style="text-align: center;">tent General.</p>	
From	(Name)	(Organization)	(Building and room)	(Date)		(Telephone)	



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

Of all the skills, this was the most important—and dangerous. But no one ever said becoming an Alamo Scout was easy.

TAMI BEACH: Early on Monday morning, 9 October 1944, Major Gibson Niles, the newly-appointed Director of Training for the ASTC, studied the training schedule. Like most days, it included training on the handling of rubber boats and on practice landings either launched from an Army J-boat (a small steel-hulled utility craft) or from a Navy PT boat (patrol torpedo boat) offshore or exfiltrating from the shore to a waiting craft. Niles had an uneasy feeling about today's training at Tami Beach, situated at the mouth

a huge wave overtook them and violently flipped the boat over backwards. The men, laden with cartridge belts, weapons, and other equipment, spilled into the sea. Some frantically grabbed for something to hold onto while others instinctively swam toward shore. Meanwhile, Kersting struggled to free himself from his waterlogged gear as Holder called for help. Tragically, both men drowned.

Fortunately, elements of the 727th Amphibious Tractor Battalion unit were available to help rescue some of the men. "We were the last two units stationed along the coast from Hollandia," added Robert L. Sharp of the 727th. "We pulled some men out of the

surf when the rubber boats were swamped during a practice exercise. Some of the troops drowned when they couldn't shake loose the equipment they had strapped on."

Alamo Scout team leader George Thompson noted the event in his war diary.

"A few days ago, the class here rowed in boats to a beach. When it came time for them to return there was a tremendous surf. Two men were drowned trying to row back out to sea. The class walked home. Since then someone has gone down every day to pick up the boats, but without success. I went down in a launch the afternoon the fellows drowned, and I don't believe I'll ever see such swells again. The waves were easily 15 feet high and were just miles of solid walls of water. At that time, we couldn't get near the shore."

"Major Williams told me that Lt. Kersting and a man named Holder had been drowned while practicing in the surf with rubber boats," wrote ASTC supply officer Mayo Stuntz in his diary.



Rare photo of Alamo Scouts aboard a rubber boat.

of the Tami River that was an outflow to the Pacific. Many old sea hands and natives considered it among the most dangerous in the Southwest Pacific with its deep water, heavy surf breaks, and significant debris, but Niles realized that for the Alamo Scouts to operate in adverse and dangerous conditions, the training had to be realistic. He gave the okay.

Working from a 36-foot J-boat, Kersting boarded the 10-man rubber boat first and took his place at the rear of the craft while Holder and the rest of the men piled in. The instructor released the mooring rope and the men paddled in unison toward the beach. It was a rough trip, but all went as planned. After a brief rest, the team headed back out to sea some 800 yards for pickup. The mounting waves crash against the front of the raft and tossed it repeatedly into the air, but the men had been trained to operate in such conditions. Suddenly,



Heavy debris at Tami Beach, October 1944. Photo courtesy of Irwin W. Carlson, 727th Amphibious Tractor Battalion.

"Neither body had been found up to then. I ate with the men who had been in the boat when it overturned and they told him the surf turned the 10-man rubber boat over backwards, and Lt. Kersting was last seen trying to remove his belt and Holder was calling for help. Another boy was almost lost. We saw a movie but everyone was very subdued. To bed early wondering about the two men and praying to make it easy for the family."

The next day, Holder had still not been found. "Lt. Kersting's body had been recovered," added Stuntz, "but not the other one...I stopped by the hospital where Lt. Kersting's body was waiting for the Graves Registration officer. His bracelet, silver, was on the blanket that he was wrapped in."

Holder's body was recovered the next day and was quickly prepared for burial. He and Kersting were interred at the U.S. Armed Forces Cemetery #1 at Hollandia on 13 October 1944. Holder in Grave #94 and Kersting next to him in Grave #93.

"The funeral was set for 0930," wrote Stuntz that day. "Arrived at GR [Graves Registration] about 0915 and waited for the others who came by boat to Sawhill Jetty. The funerals were hasty but the ministers have many. The salutes by carbines, and the bugle with the echo."

On 15 October, Niles wrote to Kersting and Holder's parents informing each of their son's death (see letter). Back at their respective parent units, each man's property was inventoried.



The contrast between the men even more striking as evidenced by what they left behind. In addition to military clothing, Kersting's footlocker contained

RESTRICTED				6408	
CONFIDENTIAL REPORT OF INTERMENT					
(TM 10-420 AND AR 30-1815)					
Kersting	Eugene	L.	0-436229	1st. Lt.	2nd Bn 149 Inf
(Last name)	(First)	(Initial)	(Serial number)	(Rank)	(Organization)
Tami River DNG		29 Oct. 1944	Drowning, Accidental		
(Place of death)		(Date of death)	(Cause of death)		
0930	13 Oct. 1944	USAF Cem. Hollandia No 1 DNG		73	
(Time and date of burial)		(Name of cemetery)		(Name or coordinates of location)	
93	Cross, Regulation				
(Grave number)	(Row number)	(Plot Number)	(Type of marker—Regulation, V-shaped or other)		
Disposition of identification tags: Buried with body			Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Attached to marker
			Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>	
Report of interment in bottle					
(If no identification tags, what means of identification are buried with the body?)					
Religion: Catholic					
(If no identification tags, but identity definitely established, give particulars)					
Body buried on RIGHT	Holder, Wendell	20523622	S/Sgt.	Hq 38th Recon Gp	94
(Name)	(Serial number)	(Rank)	(Organization)	(Grave number)	
Body buried on LEFT	Conway, Robert J.	0-693657	2nd. Lt.	3rd Bomb Gp	92
(Name)	(Serial number)	(Rank)	(Organization)	(Grave number)	
(Name and address of EMERGENCY ADDRESSEE)			(Name and address of LEGAL NEXT OF KIN)		
List only personal effects FOUND ON BODY and disposition of same:			NONE		

15 October, 1944

Dear Mrs. Kersting,

It is always hard to write to someone whom you do not know, but under such circumstances as the death of your son, it is doubly so. One can merely grope for words, and hope that the choice of them may in some small way soften the grief which such a great loss incurs.

I have had the good fortune to have worked with your son for two weeks during which time I assisted in his training. To say that he was a fine officer is entirely inadequate in describing him. He was so much more than that. His infectious enthusiasm for all phases of his work here was an inspiration and example to all of us. Certainly no one who had an opportunity to work with him could have failed to admire the qualities which made him outstanding.

I am certain that you are not acquainted with the sort of work for which he was preparing, and military necessity precludes any description of it on my part, but I do want you to know that it is of a type which appeals only to the finest and most courageous of individuals. Volunteers only are accepted, and men like your son have played no small part in assuring success against the Japanese.

Part of his training involved the landing of rubber boats in the surf, and it was while engaged in this work that he lost his life in this world. The reason for such a tragic end for one so young and full of promise passes all understanding, yet in giving his life so unselfishly for his country he has made the greatest sacrifice in the cause of freedom that can be asked of any man.

Personal admiration for your son prompted my writing this letter, but I fully realize now how impossible it is for the words of any mortal to ease the pain of such bereavement, or convey the sincere admiration and respect I felt for him. Insufficient as such a gesture on my part may be, I know that all of his classmates and the other members of this organization join me in offering you our deepest sympathy.

Very sincerely,

(signed) GIBSON NILES
Executive Officer, A.S.T.C.

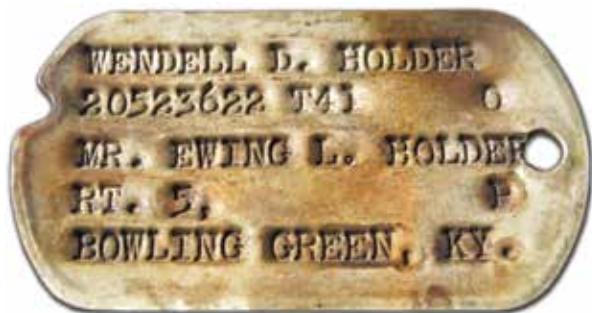
Holder (back right) with family
before leaving for the Pacific.



A letter also sent to
Sgt. Holder's family
in Bowling Green Ky.
in a similar vein.



Maj. Gibson Niles



Identification tag worn by Holder given to Holder's family. ASHF Archive.

numerous personal items, including a valuable watch, a leather wallet, pajamas, framed photos, insurance policies, a money order, miscellaneous belongings, a rosary, the New Testament, and more than a dozen assorted religious and military books. Conversely, Holder's effects consisted of a hunting knife, a cigarette lighter, a fountain pen, a Japanese souvenir, and 53 cents.



COMING HOME: By May 1945, the Alamo Scouts had been in the Philippines for five months and were preparing for the final push on Japan. Back in New Guinea, thousands of Japanese troops had been isolated and posed little strategic threat. It was now time to begin shipping the remains of fallen troops home to



Middle and Bottom: the Lt. George W.G. Boyce and Train #198

be buried on American soil. Ewing and Tommye [sic] Holder and David and Maude Kersting wanted their boys home, but it would take time.

On 15 May, Holder's remains were reburied at the U.S. Armed Forces Cemetery #2 in Finschafen, Dutch New Guinea, but his father, known to all as "Love," passed away without seeing his son again. In February 1948, Holder's remains were disinterred and shipped to a military mausoleum in Manila and later prepared and placed in a casket for the journey home. Kersting's remains were similarly prepared. By 2 June, everything was complete. The remains of both men, along with more than 4,000 others, were put aboard the United States Army Transport (USAT) Lt. George W.G. Boyce for shipment home.



On 7 June 1948, the remains of Kersting and Holder arrived at Oakland Army Base but again were separated with Kersting's remains being sent by train to Columbus, Ohio and Holder's to Memphis for shipment to Kentucky. Kersting's remains arrived on 16 June and Holder's the next day. On 22 June, a military escort delivered Holder's remains to the train station at Bowling Green aboard Train #198 of the Louisville & Nashville Railroad. It was good to be home.

On 24 June, Holder was buried in a private ceremony attended by his mother, brother, and a few friends. About that same time, the family of Eugene Kersting held a similar ceremony. After almost four years, both families finally had closure. But Gibson Niles struggled to find it. The decorated West Pointer retired as a full colonel in 1965 but carried the guilt of the deaths for the rest of his life.

"One training accident has haunted me personally ever since it occurred during the late summer of 1944," he wrote in 1980. "It cost us the lives of two outstanding young men...With many years of hindsight, I personally feel that to have permitted training in the surf at Tami Beach, not

only on that day but at any time, was a serious mistake in judgment. We all should remember these men as well as those who have passed on since our unit was activated. Collectively, they represent a good cross-section of what the Alamo Scouts were all about.”

Like every man who volunteered for the Alamo Scouts, Holder and Kersting knew and accepted the risks that ultimately took their lives. The training and the behind-the-lines work for which they sought was more dangerous by nature, and although they came from different backgrounds and from different stations in life, they were very much alike. A special breed that wanted to be Alamo Scouts and to be counted among the best of the best; brave, bold, and forever united by a sense of brotherhood that lived and died at the tip of the spear.

Note: Niles died on 31 December 2002 at age 86 and was buried in Arlington National Cemetery with full military honors.

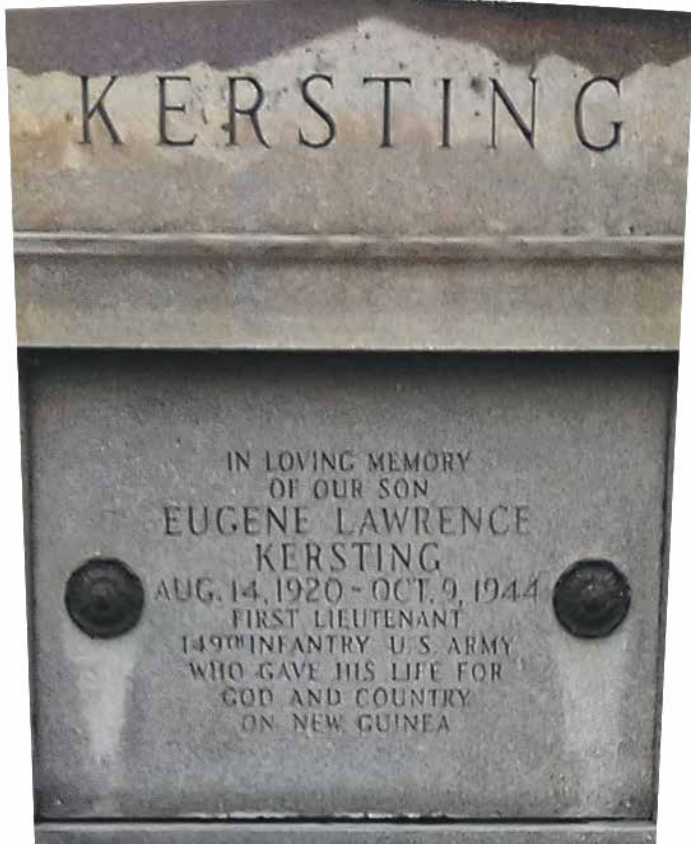


*Colorized photograph of Holder's funeral in 1948.
Courtesy of Irene Holder.*



Sources

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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



Undated photo of Yunome

liked him very much. He was a wonderful specimen of a man... He liked to go to the shows and dances and the girls were fond of him. He had slick black hair and shiny white teeth. I remember the first time I brought him home. I introduced him to my mother and he clicked his heels and bowed at the waist. He couldn't speak English when he came to St. John's, but he was taught. I don't know whether he was a Christian, but he attended chapel with us."

Reports from the faculty were not so glowing. The principal of St. John's stated that Yunome was "sly, conceited and disliked by authorities; superficially bright but not really clever. He took no part in sports but was quick, shrewd and very observant." He also noted that he was "sent to St. John's ostensibly to learn English and spoke it fairly well when he left."

Despite attending college for three-and-a-half years, Yunome did not earn a degree. In 1927, he went to Brazil on hiatus to study coffee production, and following his return to Canada, was permanently withdrawn from college in January 1929 by Mrs. Murdoch for "not paying sufficient attention to his studies" and "running about too much after school hours."

Yunome returned to Japan and toured with a jazz band under the name, "Queenio Kenneth Yunome," and interpreted Japanese for foreign tourists. But he met with limited success and later returned to South America. According to James, Yunome (now going by Antonio Yunome) wrote to him in 1931 explaining that he worked as a butler by day and was studying economics, German, French, and Portuguese at a university at night. He also indicated that he had been very sick with an illness akin to scarlet fever. Yunome's mounting frustration was evident in his letters. "I am trying to live myself and be a man myself," he wrote in broken English. "I want to be a man, and of course gentleman. I want beat up every people [sic] of Brazil. I like to be a kind splendid heart."

Yunome returned to Japan later that year or early the next but did not remain home for long. Immigration records show that for the next eight years he studied agriculture in Buenos Aires and Rio de Janeiro with stops in the United States and Japan often writing to James and Mrs. Murdoch. Allied interrogators characterized Yunome's formative years:

"PW's interrogation revealed a certain ambition for personal advancement, largely frustrated by lack of intellect, and an unpleasant nature combining cunning with cowardice. His 15 years education included three years at an English Language School, Tokyo, and nearly four years at St. John's College, Winnipeg, where he failed to graduate but professed conversion to Christianity. His adoption of the "Christian" name Kenneth was obviously a temporary insincere gesture to curry favor, while his subsequent succession of menial jobs in Brazil, his efforts to dodge conscription and eventual employment by the Navy in a very minor capacity were all indicative of his shiftless nature."

A CHANGE OF COURSE: Yunome returned to Japan in March 1939. Six months later, he joined the Navy as a civilian interpreter and was sent to Canton



Sgt. Leonard Siffleet and two Ambonese soldiers await execution.

and Macao in South China where he served in the *Tokumu Bu*, the South China Naval Special Service Department, until his return to Japan in 1941. In February 1943, he arrived in New Guinea, and two months later was posted to Aitape with the Navy's native affairs detachment consisting of four Japanese civilians (of rank equivalent to sub-lieutenant) and six Formosans of other ranks. It was there that he committed and chronicled the brutal act that resulted in a death sentence.

Interrogators were alerted by the number of aliases Yunome used and that he had served as an English interpreter in China despite his claims that he did not understand English well. Also, they discovered that while in China with the Navy, he served in the *Tokumu Kikan*—a “special services agency” that gathered intelligence and conducted espionage.

WAR CRIME: The Aitape area was of special interest to the Allies, and M Special Unit, a joint Australian, New Zealand, Dutch, and British military intelligence and special reconnaissance group, was sent there during *Operation Whiting*, a NEFIS (Netherlands East Indies Forces Intelligence Service) effort against the Japanese in Dutch New Guinea, to report on enemy shipping and activity. One four-man team led by a Dutch sergeant had been operating in the area for two weeks when detected by the Japanese. After the team leader was killed, Sgt. Leonard Siffleet, an Australian radio operator of Dutch descent, and two Ambonese natives with the Netherlands East Indies (NEI) Army, Privates Raharing and Pattiwal, escaped into the jungle but were soon located and surrounded by some 100 natives. Siffleet smashed the radio and burned all codes and documents but was captured and turned over to the Japanese, who rewarded the natives with occupation money and several lengths of dress material.

The team was jailed in the home of a missionary at Malol, now a Japanese outpost, and interrogated for 2-3 days with Yunome serving as interpreter. On the first day, Siffleet was interrogated for eight hours and beaten, but gave no information. The results of the interrogation were reported to Vice Admiral Michiaki Kamada, commander of 2 Special Naval Base Force and the 8 Naval Developmental Unit at Wewak, who after conferring with a civilian jurist and a staff officer without a trial, found the party guilty of spying and

sentenced each man to death. Kamada wired Capt. Kiyohisa Noto to handle the details, and Noto gave verbal orders to Chief Petty Officer Teruo Watanabe “to kill all prisoners on Aitape at present.” Watanabe then passed the task to Chikao Yusuno, a civilian naval employee and Yunome’s boss, who ordered Yunome to carry out the execution.



Infamous photo of Yunome beheading an Allied soldier. SOMBAR Team of the Alamo Scouts recovered the diary that linked Yunome to the photo.

Since the area was occupied, the Japanese considered anyone working “behind the lines” as spies. At that time, shooting spies was the policy of the Japanese military, but Yunome claimed that Yusuno ordered him and Masayo Mitsubashi, another civilian attached to the Navy, to behead the prisoners instead. Yunome noted the event in his diary:

“24 October - the enemy spies were taken to the seashore. With them went Civil Administration Officer Yasuno, W.O. [warrant officer], Watanabe, I, the servicemen of the branch including certain (named) employees and some 20 marines of the garrison... Watanabe and his friends were guarding

SECRET

SPJGI 51-0-

3 May 1945

SUBJECT: YUNOME, Kunio, Prisoner of War, JA USA 147469

TO: Staff Judge Advocate
U. S. Army Forces, Far East
APO 501, c/o Postmaster, San Francisco, California

1. Allied Translator and Interpreter Section, Southwest Pacific Area, Research Report No. 72 (Suppl 1), 19 March 1945, indicates that prisoner of war Yunome, Kunio, JA USA 147469, is in custody of Allied Forces, Southwest Pacific Area. The report also indicates that Yunome beheaded an allied prisoner of war, 24 October 1943, at Malol Outpost, New Guinea, and that he beheaded an American aviator and ordered the bayonetting of three more American aviators at Kairiru, New Guinea, on 17 November 1943.

2. It is suggested that this office be informed as to the present location of Yunome and of witnesses and original documents necessary for his future prosecution.

3. Inclosed is a copy of letter, this date, to Commander in Chief, Army Forces, Pacific, (Attention: Brig. Gen. C. A. Willoughby, GSC, A. C. of S., G-2), APO 500, c/o Postmaster, San Francisco, California.

FOR THE JUDGE ADVOCATE GENERAL:

MELVIN PURVIS
Colonel, JAGD
Acting Director
War Crimes Office

1 Incl.
Copy ltr as listed
in Para. 3 above.

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ANGEL G. MIRANDA
2ND LT. INF.

the place of execution. Yasuno executed the Australian sergeant with his sword...and then called my name and ordered me to execute one of the Ambonese pointing at him."

WATANABE CONFIRMED THE ACCOUNT:

"I personally conducted the three prisoners from the building in which they were imprisoned to the north beach. Bringing them to a halt approximately 50 metres [sic] from the site of the execution ground, I called them one by one to the spot on the beach where the preparation for the execution had been made. First, I turned the Australian over to Yasuno. After he had finished decapitating, I turned one of the native soldiers over to Yunome. After Yunome finished the decapitating, I handed the other native to Mitsubashi. All three fitted well into the hole. ..."

In his diary entry, Yunome recalled the beheading in glowing terms:

"This afternoon was for me an occasion to be remembered for a lifetime. I myself, with my own Japanese sword beheaded an enemy soldier prisoner. This was a new experience for me. But I screwed myself up to it. Anything can be done if one resolves to do it to the very best of one's ability. And I am convinced that given complete confidence I can carry out any task successfully. I really believe I was magnificent. Amongst the Japanese onlookers there were many who declared their admiration for my skill in making such an excellent stroke."

CAPTURE & TRIAL: Fast forward to 25 April 1944 near the village of Goya near Hollandia. While on a mission to rescue over 100 missionaries that had been held by the Japanese (see *And Faith Shall Set You Free* story p. 1), Alamo Scout Lt. Michael Sombar, along with team members Staff Sgt. Charles Harkins, Sgt. John Roberts, and Dutch interpreter Willem Lenzing, discovered Yunome, whom they believed was a naval officer, sleeping soundly in a palm hut weakened by malaria. The Scout team roughly woke him and took him prisoner. Sombar also took his diary.

"We didn't want to fool with him," said Sombar, "but our orders were to send all prisoners back for

questioning, so we had to take him back."

The team turned Yunome, and later his diary, over to 6th Army for questioning by Nisei interrogators which resulted in his case being referred to the War Crimes Board on 28 July 1944. Meanwhile, Yunome had been sent to Gaythorne POW Camp in Brisbane, Australia and interrogated by ATIS [Allied Translator and Interpreter Section], at which time he gave several conflicting statements that were noted by his interrogators:

"During early interrogation his replies were devious and his attitude non-cooperative," the report

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HEADQUARTERS U.S.A.F.F.E.

CHECK SHEET
Do Not Remove From Attached Sheets.

Note No. File No. **FEGB 383.4** Subject: **ATIS Document No. 13,551, Kunio YUNOME, member of TOKUMU KIKAN**


1. FROM: G-2 TO: War Crimes Board, USAFFE 1 August 1944

1. Attached for your information and records is photograph, copy of ATIS Document No. 13,551, captured at HOLLANDIA, date unknown, picture of Kunio YUNOME, PW 147469. YUNOME is a member of TOKUMU KIKAN (Japanese Intelligence Agency).

2. Translation of the reverse side of photograph reveals date 27 May 1940, SOUTH CHINA NAVAL SPECIAL SERVICE DEPARTMENT (TOKUMU BU).

Incl: ATIS Doc. #13,551

J.N.I.



DECLASSIFIED
Authority **14C 775011**
By **44-NARA** Date **7-9-90**

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RESTRICTED BY ORDER OF
THE SECRETARY OF WAR
ANGEL G. MIRANDA
200 L. J. J. J.
DATE 10/1/97

Allied Translator and Interpretation Service report on Yunome detailing service with Japanese Intelligence.

stated. "In the face of persistent, detailed questioning, however, he had neither the intelligence nor the moral fibre to maintain this attitude. He finally became obsequious in his manner and answered all questions

SECRET

HEADQUARTERS
UNITED STATES ARMY FORCES IN THE FAR EAST
OFFICE OF THE STAFF JUDGE ADVOCATE

A.F.O. 501
21 August 1944

SUBJECT: Review of the Report of War Crimes Investigation Board in the Case of Kunio Yunome (PW JA (USA) 147469).

TO : The Commanding General, United States Army Forces in the Far East, APO 501.

1. CONCLUSIONS OF THE BOARD:

The Board found that Kunio Yunome (PW JA (USA) 147469) did, at Malol, New Guinea, on or about 24 October 1943, decapitate an unidentified Allied prisoner of war.

2. RECOMMENDATION OF THE BOARD:

The Board recommended that this case be referred to a Military Commission for trial but such reference be deferred until such time as it is determined that no additional evidence will be obtained in the New Guinea area now occupied by the enemy.

3. EVIDENCE:

The Board heard testimony of twenty-two witnesses, the preponderance of which relates to atrocities committed by persons other than Yunome, and in many instances is based on hearsay related by natives. This evidence was obtained for use in future cases and was procured because many of the witnesses were leaving the theater and may not be readily accessible in the future.

The competent evidence regarding the atrocity alleged to have been committed by Kunio Yunome (PW JA (USA) 147469) consists of the following:

Major John E. Anderton, M.I., U.S. Army, a qualified expert in Japanese handwriting, testified that a certain book containing Japanese handwriting was the diary of Yunome (Test. page 18), and translated the entry on page 72 (Exhibit A-3, page 8; Test. page 16) as follows:

"(24 Oct. The affair of the prisoners at MALOL outpost.
Cloudy - slight rain.

This afternoon was for me an occasion to be remembered for a lifetime. I myself with my own JAPANESE sword beheaded an enemy soldier prisoner. This was a new experience for me. But I screwed myself up to it. Anything can be done if one resolves to do it to the very best of one's ability. And I felt a complete conviction that I could perform this feat properly. I really believed I was magnificent. Amongst the JAPANESE onlookers there were many who declared their admiration for my skill in making such an excellent stroke."

He compared the handwriting in the diary (Exhibit A-3, page 8) with an authentic sample of Yunome's handwriting (Exhibit A-1, page 6) and with the handwriting on a photograph of Yunome (Exhibit A-2, page 5). In his opinion there was not the slightest doubt that Yunome wrote the entry in the diary (Exhibit A-3, page 8), and the writing on the photograph (Exhibit A-2, page 5; Test. pages 17, 18); and, there was a clear intention on the part of Yunome to emphasize the pronoun, first

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THE SECRETARY OF WAR

1. GEL S. MIRANDA
2. J. L. INF.

1.
RESTRICTED

freely and apparently reliably.”

“I did not execute that Ambonese on my own initiative,” said Yunome at his trial. “I was ordered by Yasuno. It was customary in the Japanese Navy for all civilians to wear a sword...I was not able to express my opinion regarding the execution of these 3 persons...It was not possible for me to [be] replaced by someone else at the execution because it was orders and I could not be replaced...”

Yunome was soon moved to a POW camp in Melbourne. Meanwhile, on 3 May 1945, Col. Melvin Purvis of the U.S. Judge Advocate General Department and Director of the U.S. War Crimes Board, learned that Yunome also had purportedly beheaded an American flier and ordered the bayonetting of three more at Kairiru on 17 November 1943, and requested

Military Tribunals to try Japanese defendants for atrocities. The tribunals were held at various locations throughout Asia, including Morotai, Wewak, Labuan, Rabaul, Darwin, Singapore, Hong Kong, and Manus Island. The trials began in December 1945 and concluded in 1951. The Australian B and C Class trials, which included crimes against prisoners of war and the execution of Allied airmen, were conducted by military courts. Yunome, who was twice interviewed at Murchison Camp in Victoria in early February 1946, would stand trial in Rabaul. He arrived there on 5 June 1946 three weeks before the trial. He would be defended by Japanese Navy Lt. Shimokada and assisted by an interpreter. Finally, his time had come.

Although the Australian court recognized that Yunome was following orders, the prosecution hammered his contention that the executed soldiers

579667
MODELO S.C. 139

REPÚBLICA DOS ESTADOS UNIDOS DO BRASIL
FICHA CONSULAR DE QUALIFICAÇÃO

Esta ficha, expedida em duas vias, será entregue à Polícia Marítima e à Imigração no porto de destino

Nome por extenso **KUNIO YUNOME**
Admitido em território nacional em caráter **Permanente**
(temporário ou permanente)
Nos termos do art. 9º letra - do dec. n. 7967 de 1945
Lugar e data de nascimento **Tóquio, Japão. 15/1/1908**
Nacionalidade **Japonesa** Estado civil **Casado**
Filiação (nome do Pai e da Mãe) **Pai: - Suketaka Yunome**
Mae: - Sue Yunome Profissão **Professor de inglês**
Residência no país de origem **Tóquio - Japão**
NOME IDADE SEXO

FILHOS MENORES DE 18 ANOS


Nota: - Autorizado pelo telegrama nº4 de 1955, da Secretaria de Estado das Relações Exteriores.

Passaporte n. **63797** expedido pelas autoridades de **Ministério dos Neg. Estran. do Japão** na data **10/3/1955**
visado sob n. **267**

ASSINATURA DO PORTADOR:
Kunio Yunome

NOTA - Esta ficha deve ser preenchida à máquina pela autoridade consular, sendo as duas vias em original

Embaixada do Brasil
em Tóquio, Japão.
17 de março de 1955
Arnaldo Leão Marques
SECRETEÁRIO



Yunome's application for permanent residence in Brazil filed in 1955.

information on Yunome's whereabouts and the names of potential witnesses against him. Purvis had gained fame prior to the war for hunting down infamous American gangsters Baby Face Nelson, John Dillinger, and Pretty Boy Floyd, and held keen interest in the case. But Yunome's crimes had been committed against an Australian, and Australia had dibs on his prosecution.

Yunome spent the rest of the war in Australia. In October 1945, the War Crimes Act of 1945 was adopted, which authorized the establishment of Australian

were spies based on their lack of formal uniforms, insignia, and by what he was told. Ultimately, the court deemed the act indefensible since the order to execute without a trial was "obviously illegal" and that the soldiers wore some sort of uniform.

"I thought he [Siffleet] was a spy when I did the execution [of the Ambonese] because I heard that he was a spy from Yasuno," said Yunome at his trial. "...At the time of the interrogation I thought they were POWs and enemies as such,

but after Yasuno told me they were spies, I really thought they were spies at the time of execution."

Despite Yunome's assertion, he would have formed his own opinion during the interrogations at which he served as the interpreter, and he would have seen that Siffleet and his party were wearing uniforms that identified them as soldiers not spies. Yunome also claimed that the contradictory statements he made upon capture were because "he did not understand English very well." This also seemed specious since he had studied English for many years and had worked as a trusted interpreter.

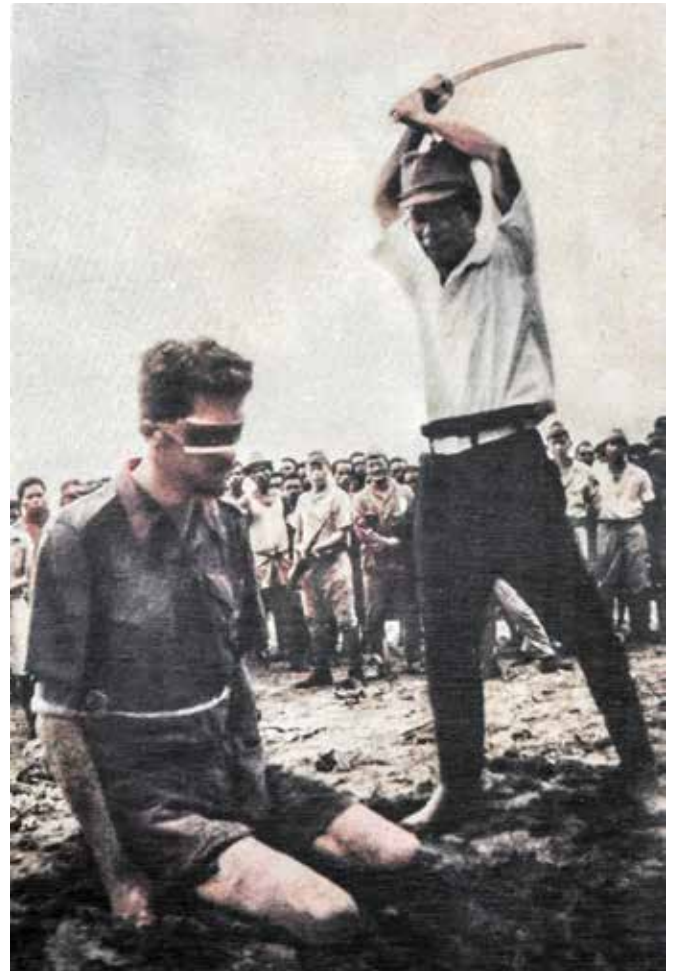
The court summarily dismissed Yunome's defense and deliberated for only 15 minutes before finding him guilty of murder, and for only 12 minutes before returning a death sentence. One week later, Yunome filed a petition against the finding and the verdict, but both were immediately upheld. The sentence was reconfirmed on 12 September 1946, and execution was scheduled for the next year. But fortunately, Noto and Watanabe from Yunome's former unit had been apprehended and were also facing charges for murder. Yunome served as a witness against them, and both were found guilty of war crimes. Noto was sentenced to 20 years and Watanabe to seven.

On 10 July 1947, Yunome filed a second petition against his conviction, and based on his cooperation as a witness, his death sentence was reduced to life. Three months later, Maj. Gen. W.M. Anderson, Adjutant General for the Australian Military Forces, commuted his sentence to 10 years—one of only 11 sentences so commuted. At some unknown point, Yunome was returned to Japan to serve out his sentence, possibly at Sugamo Prison in Tokyo. His release was scheduled for October 1957, but he was released early, which was consistent with the Allied practice of commuting the remaining sentences of "minor" Japanese prisoners following the end of U.S. military occupation in 1952 and the softening of post-war attitudes toward the Japanese.

AFTERMATH: The Brazilian Embassy in Tokyo granted Yunome, who indicated he was now married and stated that he was a professor of English, a permanent immigration visa on 19 March 1955, which suggests, but does not prove, he had been released well before 1955. Yunome left Yokohama aboard the merchant ship *Africa Maru* on 4 April 1955. Traveling alone in third class as a transit passenger, he stopped at Los Angeles two weeks later and arrived at Rio de Janeiro on 19 May 1955 with a new life ahead of him.

Little else is known about the mysterious Kunio Yunome after arriving in South America. If he lived a full, natural life, he would have died sometime in the mid-1980s, outlived by his wartime emperor, Hirohito, who died in 1989 and bore no legal responsibility for the war deaths of some 10 million people throughout Asia. He would have died in relative anonymity, gone

long before the information explosion made it easier to uncover his crime and to shine light on irrefutable, ugly truths—that in war, innocent people die. Good people sometimes do bad things. Men follow orders. And we all shall be known and ultimately judged by our works.



Sergeant Leonard Siffleet's execution in Aitape, 1943

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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



isolating 200,000 IJA (Imperial Japanese Army) troops, as General Douglas MacArthur said, “to wither on the vine.” As the Allied noose tightened, some enemy units became increasingly harsh toward civilians, especially toward the Dutch-Indos, also called Euroasians (those of mixed Dutch and Indonesian descent) living in the Vogelkop or “bird’s head” of western New Guinea south of the major port of Manokwari on the northeast coast. The area had been a hotbed of Dutch resistance since the Japanese occupation of the Dutch East Indies and New Guinea in early 1942. The Japanese distrusted the Indos and interned all civilians in camps due to their suspected connection to Dutch resistance and to guerrilla leaders, including Willemsz Geeroms, whom they had captured and executed, but whose followers were still active. No one was safe.

Following the Japanese invasion of the Dutch East Indies and New Guinea, several Dutch-Indo servicemen escaped to England where the Dutch government in exile was established following the German occupation of Europe and received special training with designs on returning to the southwest Pacific and helping the Allies fight the Japanese. Rapmund, a sergeant at the time, spoke Dutch, Malay, and English and had been fighting the Japanese since the day they kicked in his front door in Malang, East Java, Indonesia in March 1942, where he lived with his family. He narrowly escaped out the back door and eventually made his way to England, where he received special training and was later commissioned. He returned to New Guinea as part of NEFIS under the aegis of NICA and had been a thorn in the side of the Japanese for months. Working with native police boys and Sixth Army since the successful landing at Hollandia, Dutch New Guinea in late April 1944, he had operated from New Guinea’s offshore islands collecting information, conducting raids, and coordinating operations against the Japanese, including working with HOBBS, LITTLEFIELD, FARKAS, and EVANS teams from the Alamo Scouts. He had learned about the Beynon family while working from Roemberpon beginning in

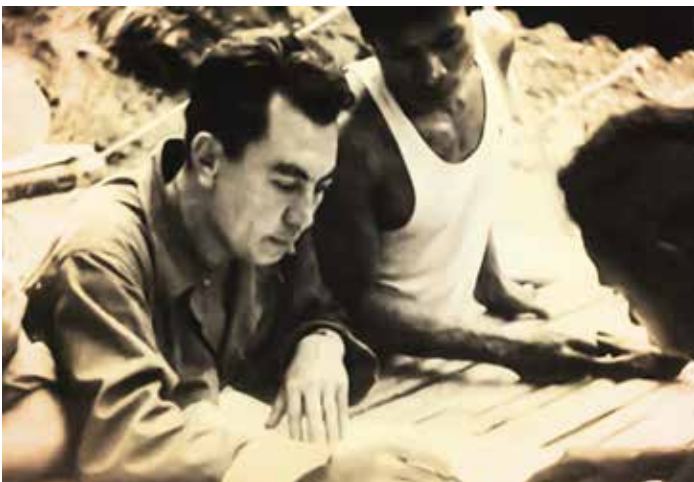


Roemberpon Island

late August following the Allied victory at Biak.

“During the first days of my stay in Roemberpon, Caspers, an ex-colonist, told me about the existence of an internment camp at Oransbari,” wrote Rapmund in 1945. “There, one would likely find some European families. He couldn’t tell me anything about the surveillance. It took some time before I found people who knew the area to successfully gather more detailed information. Eventually, I was able to find a group, and they left for Oransbari on 12 September 1944. I gave Hermanis, a Papuan from Biak whom I found in Jamakani with three other rowers, the assignment to gather information and, if possible, to bring somebody back from the camp within a week because I wanted to take care of the matter as soon as possible as to not lose the value of the information too quickly. Hermanis carried out the assignment very well. He promptly returned after six days on 18 September with Soumokil, an ex-colonist, who gave me all the information I needed. Hermanis first contacted some Papuans in a nearby village, and they in turn, were able to contact Soumokil who, ‘without too much hesitation,’ agreed to come along to Roemberpon. From the information Soumokil gave me, I prepared a plan and presented it to the Alamo Scouts.”

The Alamo Scouts: ROUNSAVILLE and NELLIST Teams had graduated from the fourth class at the ASTC at Hollandia on 9 September 1944 but were the only two teams retained from among the 48 graduates. Their exploits would become legendary in the annals of special operations, but more important, among the men themselves. From the first day in camp, it was clear that the 13 men composing their teams were among the best of the best. The teams were assigned to the Alamo Scouts forward base operating from the Navy PT (patrol torpedo) base at Woendi Island at the northern approach of Geelvink Bay providing them with scouting and patrolling experience and the opportunity to work live missions on PT boats. Following a couple warm-up missions, Sixth Army directed the teams to assist Rapmund in the liberation



Rapmund (left) and Hermanis (right) examine a map of the area.

of the prisoners. ROUNSAVILLE Team was dispatched to Roemberpon on 17 September and NELLIST Team joined them six days later.

"I hadn't been on Roemberpon for long when Lt. Rounsaville, who was stationed with his team of five men at Roemberpon, agreed right away," added Rapmund. "I put together a team of three guides and six soldiers, among whom were Sergeant Papari and five ex-POWs. After this, we had to wait for the PT boats and Lt. Dove, the operations officer of the Scouts at Woendi, who had to approve the plan and had to arrange the use of the PT boats to land us."

"We had Rapmund, a Dutch officer with us," recalled Rounsaville. "We were about a mile off the main [route] then I took two of my boys and the natives and went across and looked that place over for a day. There were 60 Javanese, a governor [Beynon] they called him, and his people. We went on in, and they were hugged up against this river, and there wasn't any sand to ward off any surprise. From the swamp it was just about a mile to the ocean. So, we went in and I gave my report. I recommended that we use two teams, so we'd go back and use two teams."

Lt. John "Jack" Dove had recently taken over as Alamo Scouts Operations Officer on Woendi Island, where he coordinated patrols with the Navy PT boats. He arrived at Roemberpon on 22 September and agreed with Rounsaville's plan but would have it get it cleared through Sixth Army, which had to give the plan serious consideration since the Scouts were not commandos and had not attempted this type of operation. The next day, Sixth Army telegraphed Dove granting permission "provided that Rounsaville Team

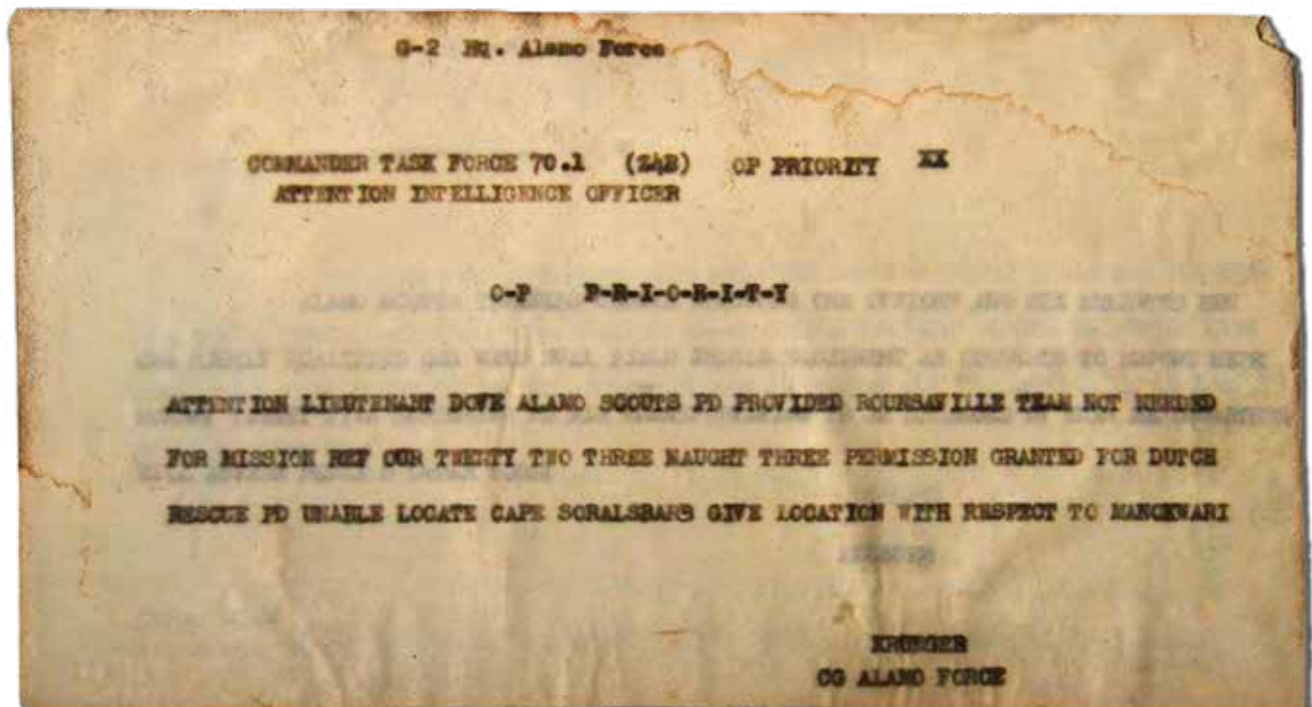


Lt. Jack Dove

was not needed for a mission."

Rounsaville and Nellist hailed from the 11th Airborne Division and were about as tough as they came. Until the war interrupted his plans, Rounsaville had planned to attend law school after graduating from Oklahoma State University, but he fell in love with the Army instead. The quick-talking, quick-thinking, hard-charging first lieutenant from the 187th Parachute Infantry had an infectious sense of humor and was made for war.

Nellist was a polar opposite in personality. Somber, taciturn, but equally deadly. The rugged crackshot



Radio message from General Walter Krueger, commanding general, Sixth Army, to Jack Dove authorizing the Alamo Scouts to conduct the mission at Oransbari.

outdoorsman from northern California was the bane of every deer, squirrel, and duck in the area. Before the war, he studied business administration at Humboldt State College for a year-and-a-half and then took a job making novelties for a local manufacturer, but the serious 23-year-old saw no future in either pursuit since they lacked the excitement and challenges that such men need. Nellist enlisted in the California National Guard in February 1941 and became the California National Guard Rifle Champion. After the war started, he attended Officers Candidate School (OCS), was commissioned, and attended airborne school. He and Rounsaville arrived overseas in early 1944.

ROUNSAVILLE and NELLIST Teams featured a seasoned mix of veterans. ROUNSAVILLE Team was as diverse as there were capable. Sgt. Harold “Hal” Hard from Coldwater, Michigan was the team’s ranking NCO and had been a senior at Michigan State University in April 1942 when he enlisted. At 6’4, Hard contrasted sharply with his teammates, including T/Sgt. Alfred Alfonso (Opu), and Pfc. Francis LaQuier (Little Beaver), Rufo Vaquilar, and Franklin Fox. Alfonso, a Filipino from Hawaii, would later earn three Combat Infantryman Badges for combat service in WWII, Korea, and Vietnam. LaQuier, a paratrooper from the 503rd Parachute Infantry Regiment, was a Native American from the Chippewa Tribe outside Early, Minnesota, while Vaquilar, nicknamed “Pontiac,” a tough 34-year-old, multi-lingual troop from the 1st



Lt. Tom Rounsaville

Filipino Infantry, had been in prison in Pontiac, Illinois for armed robbery at the beginning of the war but was released for war service and later pardoned. Fox, from West Lebanon, Ohio was a 23-year-old from the 33rd Division who had done accounting work before being drafted.

The members of NELLIST Team were no less



Nellist Team. Back row L-R: Galen Kittleson, Thomas Siason, Andy Smith. Front L-R: Wilbert Wismer, William Nellist. Gilbert Cox and Sabas Asis are missing from the photo.

accomplished. In addition to Smith, NELLIST Team boasted a fine collection of soldiers led by Staff Sgt. Thomas Siason and Pfc. Bob Asis from the 1st Filipino Infantry, T/5 Wilbert Wismer, from the 33rd Infantry Division, and Pfc. Gilbert Cox and Galen Kittleson from the 11th Airborne Division.

THE PLAN: Bold. Audacious. And totally unexpected. Two PT boats would drop off Rapmund, the guides, and the Alamo Scout teams on the east coast of the Vogelkop and the party would separate and conduct a simultaneous assault at three different locations. NELLIST Team (less Smith and Asis) would travel to the beach about 4 kilometers from the compound and neutralize a machine gun post manned by four guards while Smith and Asis would attempt to capture a Japanese Kempeitai (military police) officer and one assistant sleeping in a hut near the main prisoner compound. ROUNSAVILLE Team would assault the compound consisting of approximately 20 Japanese and free the Dutch and Javanese prisoners. Once the liberation was complete, the teams would rendezvous at the beach and four PT boats would transport the ex-prisoners and the raiding party to Biak Island.

"Lt. Dove came on Wednesday afternoon (27 September) at about 5 p.m.," said Rapmund. "We went aboard, but everything went wrong because there was a problem with the radio communication and the boats arrived way too late at the



agreed place. We were going to operate four boats; two for the landing and the evacuation, and the other two for cover. In view of this, we agreed at that time that we all would go to Woendi and try again the next day. About 1 p.m. (28 September), we left again, and not long after that we were caught in a severe storm. The storm was so fierce that we arrived at the landing site hours too late. One of the boats got damaged and many of us, even the members of the ship's company, were terribly seasick. Those who were not seasick were dead tired from the tremendous swaying and being bounced up and down by the sea. Finally, we decided to postpone the expedition, which was really too bad."

It's A Go! "On Wednesday, October 4, Lt. Dove finally arrived [at Biak] with two teams of Scouts," recalled Rapmund. "At about 3 p.m., Sgt. Papari, Soumokil, another two guides, and Hermanis and I went on board, and we went full speed and a considerable distance to the coast of Oransbari."

"The Scouts joked about the nervousness of the



Silas Papari

sailors,” said Kittleson, a serious 19-year-old who had already earned a Silver Star for gallantry on Noemfoor Island with the 503rd Parachute Infantry Regiment, and who would later become the only man in U.S. history to participate in four prisoner liberations in two different wars. “Sgt. Andy Smith said, ‘Hell, the bastards aren’t even going to get off the boat!’” added Kittleson. “The trail was difficult to follow, so the natives had to use flashlights to follow it, which of course was very dangerous but necessary. It took us all night up until four thirty in morning to reach the outskirts of camp, then the party split up...”

“Bill Nellist went up to the mouth of the Maori River with Siason, Wismer, Cox, and Kittleson,” explained Rounsaville. “We gave them about a fifteen minute head start to cover the mile or so to the beach before we moved out. Andy Smith and Bob Asis from Nellist’s team came with my team. We dropped them off at their objective, which was a hut with a couple Kempetai men in it, then we moved on to our objective, which was a larger building where the Jap guards were billeted. We immediately noticed a Jap cook starting a fire. We watched him and four others move in and out of the building.”

“It was dark,” said Smith. “We used flashlights to come down on the trail to the Maori River. The guides of course, knew where they were going, but not the Scouts. I was scared. I thought, What in the hell? I’ve been in the Army before and landed at Finschaven and Lae and already had my Combat Infantry Badge and you dumb clunks around here are carrying a flashlight! But we’d been briefed on this mission and we had the plans all drawn up...It took us from maybe 7 o’clock the night until 3 o’clock in the morning. It was muddy all the way; dark jungle, wading around all the way.”

SMITH & ASIS: “Asis and I split off and Rounsaville team took position around this building. It was a large hut, about 30 feet by 20 feet with a grass roof and bamboo slat beds with a dirt floor runway through the middle. It was open on both ends and the grass curtains were up. The plan is that Rounsaville opens fire, and on that bang Nellist opens fire down at the beach. Meanwhile, Asis and I had waded the river and went up right in front of the hut. The door was on one of the ends, and Rapmund had told us that on the left as we go in there are going to be two Japs sleeping, and on the right there’s going to be another two Japs sleeping lengthwise. In the back of the hut there’s going to be a Jap intel officer sleeping...Our plan was that as soon as Rounsaville opens up just across the river and down a few hundred yards, Asis and I would go in. Asis would go to his right and I to my left and I would fire a clip into the first two beds down one end and back the other, then I would drop a clip and put in another. Asis would come up from the other end with his M-1 rifle and do the same thing. We had practiced this for



Andy Smith in uniform in the White Sox organization after the war.

two nights back at rest camp and had actually taped flashlights to our rifle barrels. We turned it on and wherever that spot was we fired. We knew that we’d be in there close with the Japs and that we wouldn’t have time to aim. In front of the door was a big tree and Asis and I were standing behind it.”

“When we heard the signal shot we just walked in,” said Smith, “but there was a desk or something stacked high with books right in front of the door that wasn’t supposed to be there, and we had to go to the left to get in. Asis then had to go back to the right, so, I was shooting before he was. The guide was waiting outside for me to come out with the prisoner. We were going to tie the Jap up and this other guy was going to sit on him while we went and helped Rounsaville. We were just going to lay him out on the trail until we got ready to leave. So, we fired on the men on the sides. To look back it was a little bit hairy. Total damned darkness; we couldn’t see nothing. Scared—so damn scared that I don’t know how I pulled the trigger on my gun...Asis said, ‘Are you ready, Easy?’ I said, ‘Yep.’ Then I went back and pulled the mosquito net off this next guy and he was sitting there in bed looking at me with a bayonet in his hand. But this guy resisted arrest and I had my rifle slung and a .45 pistol on me. But he went for me with the bayonet and missed. I didn’t have to use my knife, but I did. I don’t know why. In fact, I could have shot him just as easily. I had a .45 in my holster. It’s funny, but they had taught me enough Japanese to say, ‘I am an American soldier. Come with me and you won’t be harmed.’ Hell, when the time came, I couldn’t have told him my name! My God, in a

place like that—you know, I had just killed my first Jap. Whew! Hell no, no way could I tell him that! Asis then checked these four to make damn sure they weren't going to wake up and start hurting us, then he pulled the pin on a thermite grenade and threw it against the side of the grass hut. Meanwhile, we began picking out any books, magazines, shoulder patches, maps, insignia, and whatever else that might be of value to headquarters."

ROUNSAVILLE ATTACK: "I started the attack," grinned Rounsaville. "Whenever we emptied one round of gunfire from whatever type of weapons we were



Jungle shack at Oransbari.

carrying, and some carried different types of weapons, we'd throw in grenades. Some carried phosphorous grenades, and usually everyone carried at least one anti-personnel grenade, a fragmentation grenade. Then we threw in a phosphorous grenade, then I took LaQuier and Vaquilar, the Indian and Filipino I had, and we went in and checked for dead. Four people out of twenty got out, but some of them jumped into a foxhole at the back of the house, which we knew was there, but it looked like a sump. It didn't look like a foxhole. We worked them over pretty good in there and one guy ran out the side. It's pretty lively right then and everything is burning. That Jap ran in a circle like a rabbit runs from a dog, and he ran back in. Hard killed him on the way back in. We weren't supposed to take any prisoners—we didn't have any mission to take Jap prisoners. Then I sent Rapmund into the compound to tell them that they had 20 minutes to get their material, and hadn't heard Nellist shoot yet, so I said, 'Well, maybe during all that shooting he didn't hear it.' He didn't hear it as it turned out later, but we're going on up that thing and we heard them open up. 'Goddamn! They must have attacked them!'"

THE RESCUE: "Around the governor and his people was a bamboo stockade," said Rounsaville, "and they had their little gardens in there. We came in around that and alongside it. The Japs were just living here and they'd get the natives to construct a shack made out of bamboo. They had this opening, and old Smith came back over after popping the Kempetai, and he's looking around and found a gramophone, and the record that had been playing was a Bing Crosby record. They also had a brand new M-1 rifle and one of those cloth bandoliers, which is six clips of eight, and a rifle, brand new. We took that with us. Then we took those people out of there. I told Rapmund, 'Tell them we're leaving in 20 minutes and to take whatever they want to carry. If they can carry it, I don't care how big it is. Carry it out of here.' They had these big bundles on their heads and they were taking out all they owned in this world. We took them up there and put them on the PT boats, and Nellist already had his people set up the security on the way to be reinforced, and they had to be reinforced on the coastal track. They had two tracks, the coastal track and the one next to the mountains. Then we went home."

"After we finished our job in the Kempetai shack," said Smith, "we went over to where Rounsaville was just finishing up his crossfire. Some of our stray shots were going through their building, but they were a little bit high. The prisoners had no idea they were going to get released, so the guides and some of Rounsaville's team got them out."

"I remember that night very well," said Suze Beynon. "My father was awakened by Soumokil, who used to live with us in the camp but escaped to get help. Soumokil whispering, 'Beynon, Beynon, quietly wake the children. We are going to get you out of here. Wait for my signal.' My father told us to hide under the bed. Loud explosions followed, and when it became quiet, we were taken from our imprisonment."

"Rounsaville and Vaquilar and one other guy went inside the big hut to make sure everybody was dead," said Smith, "and Asis and I went in with them. The rest of Rounsaville Team met on the south side and helped form up the prisoners for the trip out. In the middle of this building was a runway about 10 feet wide with 10 foot doorways on both ends and a dirt floor. A little table sat in there and had an old phonograph and records piled up. In the Pacific our Red Cross had dropped American records to Tokyo Rose, and she played them. She talked about the Alamo Scouts all the time. We were supposed to be a secret organization but Tokyo Rose knew more about us than I did. Now, there was a record by Bing Crosby, *My Melancholy Baby*, so I played it. Boy, I kicked my feet up. I was sitting there leaning back on the corner of the table with my ankles crossed acting like I was playing the fiddle. All of a sudden, Vaquilar walks out of a room and cuts loose with his Tommy gun. Man, I thought he had gone crazy.

He didn't miss me by a foot-and-a-half or two feet. I said, 'What the hell you shooting at Vaq—the war's over!' He just nodded. Vaquilar was a great Scout, but he'd say about 20 words a month. He just nodded and turned around and walked away. I looked back behind me and there was this Jap standing up on a bed. He had just come out from behind a curtain holding a rifle and a bayonet and he was just sinking lower—he fell over right at my feet. That ended my record playing and cut my fiddling off right now. To me that rifle looked like it was four or five foot long with a six-foot bayonet. And you talk about somebody trembling, I almost got the shakes, but I stood there and watched him fall right down where I had been sitting. And I thought, *Rufo, thank you very, very kindly. I would have had that bayonet between my shoulder blades.*



Gilbert Cox

Just about that time, Rounsaville comes out from another room and said, 'What are you doing, Easy?' And I said, 'Trying to get well—to get my composure back.' And he said, 'You got time to come in here a minute?' And I said, 'Yeah, of course.' The building was burning by this time. That was part of the itinerary; shoot through it, get in there and kill what you see, and the minute it gets too hot, get outside. And if there's anybody alive, get him when he comes out. But we went in and found this Jap lying right in the middle of the floor, and there wasn't as much light as a lamp would make, but you could see him. He was on his knees with his elbows and his wrists and forearms on



Photo recovered from the body of a Japanese soldier at Oransbari. Nellist photo.

the floor, and he had his head down on the floor face down between his hands. Rounsaville says, 'Easy, take a look at this joker.' Rounsaville puts his foot on his hip and pushes him over. He rolls over on his side and pops back up. Now, that's not quite normal. So Rounsaville pushes him over again and he pops back again. Rounsaville said, 'Easy, does this joker look like he's dead?' And I said, 'I don't think he's done for, do you?' And Rounsaville said, 'Easy, I've used every weapon the Army's got except this .45 caliber pistol. If you'll lift that joker's head up and hold it off to the side where I'm not going to hit you, I'll use my .45.' So, I got down there and grabbed this dude under the chin and held his head up. He had crew cut hair but I finally got enough grip on it to hold him up. So Rounsaville takes his old .45 out and splatters him. Man, knocks him right out of my hands. I was still kind of unnerved enough that it didn't bother me, but man I'd have a helluva time walking into a situation like that now—holding somebody up and letting somebody shoot him.

The village was burning by this time and a few miles through the jungle nobody knows if Nellist fired at the same time, but we found out later that he had fired at daybreak. Alfonso and Rounsaville's team with Rapmund and one of the guides, took the lead. But Opu [Alfonso] saw some guy coming out of the brush and stuck his shotgun in his face. The guy said, 'Don't shoot! I'm a Frenchman. I speak English. I want to go with you.' And Opu said, 'Why the hell didn't you say you spoke English!' He said, 'I just did. I got my wife and ten kids here.' He was a prisoner, but when the shooting started, he didn't know what was coming off, so he took his wife and ten kids and got out into the brush. Then he saw us and heard that we were taking



PT boats recover prisoners. Rapmund photo.

the other prisoners to be evacuated. It was about two miles to the beach down this well-worn trail. Asis and I were in the rear, and Rounsaville's team was walking sides, and Opu was in front. We then made contact with Nellist, and he had waved the PT boats in."

NELLIST AT THE BEACH: "We walked a good part of the night getting in there," said Nellist. "Everybody else turned off and went to the prison, including two of my men, Smith and Asis. They had a special job to do for Rounsaville, and the rest of my team continued with a guide south across this Maori River."

"Lt. Nellist, Wismer, Siason, Cox and I were to take the beach guards," added Kittleson. "The attack was to start at daylight or five o'clock. At 5:10 the attack was over, all the Japs were killed, and no prisoners or men were wounded or lost. I was in the party which



A group of liberated Javanese prisoners. Rapmund photo.

took care of the beach guards. We crawled about fifty yards up to a range shack approximately twenty yards away. The Japs got up a few minutes before daylight to cook breakfast and a guard came in from the beach to awaken the other three. When two of them appeared in the doorway Nellist and Cox fired immediately killing the two. The other two escaped out the other side of the building into foxholes, which were dug for protection against bombings. Siason and I located and killed them. We hurriedly searched for souvenirs and proceeded to a pickup point where the other group was already loading prisoners and personnel on the PTs to go back to base."

TO THE BOATS! PTs 74 and 300 from RON 13 and PTs 525 and 526 from RON 36 were waiting when the prisoners arrived at the beach.

"I took half the Scouts and proceeded in advance of the Dutch and Javanese and left half of the Scouts as rear guard," explained Rounsaville. "Our Dutch interpreter was jabbering like an idiot with the rescues so we went down the trail toward Nellist and I dispatched a runner to him with a note for the OK to call the boats, as he had the SRC-300 radio with him. When we arrived at the beach the PTs (4 of them as 2 more had rendezvoused with our 2 boats according to previous plans) were coming in. Dove and four sailors and four Scouts manned four, 7-man rubber boats getting the Dutch and Javanese on board while the remainder of us set up a small protective perimeter 150 yards radius around the mouth of the river. We then went to the beach and left under the protection of PT gun cover, although we had not received any fire or aggressive action."

"We took what we could carry with us, and under the guidance of the Americans, we walked through the jungle still unsure about where we were going," said Beynon. "When we finally reached the beach and we were escorted onto the PT boats, we knew that we were safe. The Americans gave us some candies and we sang some children's songs. I will never forget that moment for the rest of my life."

Mechanic's mate M.L. Smith described the pickup in his diary. "We were sent out to pick up 16 refugees



Prisoners on the way to Biak aboard PT boats following the raid.

(Ex POWs of the Japs), but someone got the wrong signal. There were more than 60. Those people had all kinds of personal gear. They had everything from pots and pans to one who had a sewing machine. The only thing we had on board for the kids was bread and jam. How clean they were. They were careful not to get their hands on their clothes.”

“As for the pickup of the prisoners, we went in very close and some of the guys took little dinghies ashore and picked them up,” noted Everett Nussman, a torpedoman’s mate on PT-300. “Then they put these people on our boat, but they didn’t speak much English, and they were looking for stuff, too. They could have set our torpedoes off. These people had our torpedoes armed and we didn’t even know it. I think they fed them a little bit. We didn’t have that much food on the boat, but I remember a Dutch woman breast feeding her child. We all watched that. The baby had to

have some food—what the heck!”

THE TRIP HOME: “Sixty-six people on four PT

**SEVENTH FLEET
COMMANDER MTB SQUADRONS**

SECRET 051326 OCT. 44 -OP-

PETER TARE INTENTS 6/7 X ALL PAIRS X CALL MARTINI PLUS BOAT NUMBER X
PATROL AREAS AS DESIGNATED COM 7TH FLT SECRET LETTER SERIAL 001589
DATED 24 AUGUST X WOENDI X AREA 19 NORTH CALL 524 X AREA 18 AND SOUTH
19 RADIO 76 X MOROTAI X AREAS 59 AND 60 CALL 148 X RADIO 154 FOR AREA
58 WEST X 170 LEADS AREA 58 EAST X AREA 57 RADIO 187 X RESULTS NIGHT
4/5 X MOROTAI BOATS RECEIVED 3 INCH FIRE FROM GALELA X NO DAMAGE X 2
OTHER BOATS USING NATIVE SPOTTERS STRAFED SMALL GROUPS JAPS IN AREAS
56 AND 57 X NO CONTACTS FOR WOENDI BOATS X SPECIAL ALAMO SCOUT MISSION
TO ORANSBARI SUCCESSFUL 66 DUTCH CITIZENS MAJORITY EURASIANS EVACUATED
AND DELIVERED TO NICA REPRESENTATIVE BIAK X SCOUTS KILLED 18 NIPS
DURING RAID

ACTION

1 TOR: TOD: VIA: Z C-C: CCBP 0101-7 CWO:

FROM: CTG 70.1 ACTION: ALL INTERESTED MTB OPS

INFO:

DATE — TIME MONTH 051326 OCT. 44

CTG. ✓	C. of S.	OPER.	COMM.	INTELL.	SECY					FLAGSHIP
				(A)						CAPT. COMM.

PT Squadron message indicating the successful liberation of the Dutch and Javanese by the Alamo Scouts, Rapmund, and U.S. Navy PT boats.

boats. Hell, you could put 66 on two—80 feet long, three Packard engines!” exclaimed Rounsaville. “...They were sitting up against the cockpit, women and children. One young Dutch girl had a young baby and the woman was nursing the baby, and it embarrassed Vaquilar and he turned his head. That’s the only thing that happened out of the ordinary all the way in was the boat ride back to where we turned these people in.”

“There was one young lady, fair skinned and slick as a button, she began breast feeding her baby about the time we got on the boat,” chuckled Smith. “It was written that all the Scouts blushed and turned away. I doubt that statement. We might have looked blushed, but I don’t think any of us turned away! The prisoners were all seemingly in good shape. When we got them on the boats the Dutch started singing. Rapmund told us it was their national anthem, so we respected it like we wanted them to respect our national anthem. It was good.”

“On board the PT boats the people who had waited in great suspense welcomed us



L-R: Alamo Scouts Hal Hard, Francis LaQuier, and Rufo Vaquilar of ROUNSAVILLE Team congratulate each other after receiving the Bronze Star for the Oransbari mission. Army photo.

with a loud hurray,” described Rapmund. “They went out of their way to give, especially to the children, all kinds of things, even ice cream. They in return sang a Dutch traditional birthday song: *Long Shall They Live*. We reached Bosnik around 11 a.m., and after thanking everybody warmly, we all left ship.”



The Beynon family.

“It was heartwarming to get those people out of there and to safety,” said Dove. “Charley Hill and I and some Navy guys were the contact team. We had four PT boats loaded with people on the return trip to Biak...It was one for the books!”

AFTERMATH: After the raid, Rapmund continued to conduct operations against the Japanese from Roemberpon Island and to recover hundreds of displaced civilians. Following a brief trip to Hollandia, NELLIST and ROUNSAVILLE Teams returned to Roemberpon for a week and then boarded the *USS Wachapreague* bound for the Philippines, where they would do their best work, including the liberation of 511 Allied POWs from Cabanatuan on Luzon in January 1945. The teams were awarded the Bronze Star for their work at Oransbari and Nellist was awarded the Netherlands Bronze Cross for his role in the raid. A few days after the raid, Murlin Spencer, an Associated Press correspondent, released the first of a three-part story on the Alamo Scouts revealing them to the world. The first installment had already been released when news of the raid broke and little else was written about it, but had the Alamo Scouts liberated 66 Americans, including a prominent citizen and his family from an enemy held camp in a daring dawn raid that had all the elements of modern action movie, the story arguably

would have been splashed across every newspaper in America in October 1944. But it wasn't. The family was Dutch-Indo (a mixture of Dutch and Indonesian) and the rest Javanese, and the world was different then. That, and the focus of the war in the Pacific shifted to the Philippines, which was more familiar and relatable.

No members of the Alamo Scouts who participated in the raid are alive today, but some of the prisoners who were liberated and hundreds of their family members are. They live in The Netherlands, Indonesia, Canada, New Guinea, and other places and serve as a testament to the brave men who risked their lives 77 years ago so that they might live.

“In less than thirty minutes, 13 men killed 18 Japs in three locations and released 66 prisoners who couldn't speak English in less than three minutes,” beamed Andy Smith, who would later serve in Korea and in Vietnam after a brief pro baseball career. “A West Point officer told me that

it was the, ‘most nearly perfectly planned, perfectly executed military mission of all time.’ It was our best mission.”

And with over 110 missions behind enemy lines without losing a man killed or captured, that says a lot.

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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.

advanced command post in the Tanauan area and happened to be available.

SUMNER TEAM: Commanded by a lanky fresh-faced 22-year-old from Portland, Oregon, SUMNER Team was composed of graduates of the 3rd Class at the Alamo Scouts Training Center at Finschafen, New Guinea, and was one of four teams retained. All hailed from the 31st Infantry Division. Staff Sgt. Lawrence E. Coleman, a seasoned 22-year-old with a dry sense of humor, came from the 155th Infantry, and was the only sergeant on the team. During high school, Coleman was active in ROTC and was streamlined into the army.

Cpls. William F. Blaise and Robert T. Schermerhorn came from the 124th Infantry. At nearly 25, Blaise had dropped out of high school to help support his family but suffered an appendicitis prior to the war and was denied enlistment by the Navy and Marines. However, the Army took him. Prior to coming to the Pacific, the 24-year-old enlistee from Long Island, New York had served as a drill instructor at Ft. Benning training officer candidates. Schermerhorn was the oldest member of the team at 29. The rugged construction worker was born in Texas but moved to Miami as a boy.

Pfcs. Paul B. Jones, Edward J. Renhols, and Harry D. Weiland rounded out the team. At 5-9 150 pounds from the 167th Infantry, the brawling 24-year-old Jones was tough as nails and generous to a fault. He had worked as a



Colorized photo of SUMNER Team upon graduation from the ASTC on 22 Jun 1944. Back L-R: Robert Sumner, Lawrence Coleman, Harry Weiland, Robert Schermerhorn. Front L-R: Paul Jones, Ed Renhols, William Blaise.

mechanic in his hometown of Birmingham, Alabama before enlisting in November 1940, and was proudly known as a team scrounger who had a nose for food. Renhols, a 22-year-old fellow volunteer from the 167th, hailed from Millvale, Pennsylvania, a small manufacturing town of 7,800 located at the confluence of Girty's run to the Allegheny River. The son of Russian/Polish immigrants, he had worked as a warehouse checker before enlisting in October 1942. Fellow Pennsylvanian Harry "Hack" Weiland was the youngest on the team and had just celebrated his 20th birthday aboard ship en route to the Philippines. Standing over 6'2 at an athletic 180 pounds, Weiland had served

as a messenger for the Citizens Defense Corps in high school but dropped out in March 1943 during his junior year and enlisted. Despite his youth, he was the team's BAR gunner and had a nose for action. A three-man Filipino radio team, led by Lt. Inoconcio F. Cabrido (operator), and consisting of Pvts. Trinidad Sison (mechanic) and Agapito Amano (technician), rounded out the squad.



Pvt. Quantiano Villamer of the 96th Filipino Infantry Regiment (Guerrilla).

THE MISSION: “My mission orders were verbal from Lt. Col. [Frank] Rawolle, Assistant G-2,” recalled Sumner, “He said, ‘We will land your team via PT at such and such a point on western Leyte. You will be carrying a couple tons of weapons and ammo. Distribute these to the units. Go to Ormoc Bay and set up a listening and observation post and report by radio of Jap sightings, reinforcements, landing, and any order of battle info you might acquire... Organize intelligence collection nets among the local civilians and guerrillas. Here is X amount of pesos to pay them. Major [Jose] Nazareno is the battalion commander with whom you will be working and Colonel [Ruperto] Kangleon commands the 96th Regiment, Leyte Area Command. Any questions? You are off at first light tomorrow.’”

The brilliant redhead understood the risks in such a mission, but his team was experienced in that area. They had cut their teeth in the New Guinea jungle and had miraculously survived a daring, daytime mission to recover downed airmen on tiny Pegun Island north of

New Guinea in which the team engaged the enemy in an intense firefight while backing into the sea. Five days into the Leyte Operation, the team traveled by boat to nearby Samar Island and recovered the entire XXIV Corps field order from a downed L-4 aircraft. They were ready.

Late on 4 November, SUMNER Team boarded PT-489 at Tanauan on the east coast and began loading equipment and supplies. The boat was accompanied by PT-490, which had previously supported Scout teams on a long mission to Salebaboe in the Talaud islands, but the mission got off to an inauspicious start. “We loaded all our gear, to include the radio, on a PT for a landing at Palompan on 5 November after dark,” noted Sumner. “But early on 5 November we were messaged via naval radio to scrub the mission and return to Tanauan for further instructions.”

Rawolle was waiting. He informed the team that Palompan was now in enemy hands and that the guerrillas had abandoned it, which was fortunate for the Scouts. Had the team landed as planned, they likely would have been killed or captured. Rawolle instructed the PTs to travel north through the narrow San Juanico Strait separating Leyte from Samar and travel west into Caolargo Bay and north again through the Biliran Strait. Once through the strait, the boats would turn south and skirt the coast about five miles out and land team at Abijao on the west coast some 30 miles farther from their original destination.

THE LANDING: The PTs arrived at 2200, but the recent Battle of Leyte Gulf, the largest naval engagement of the war and arguably of all time, had just occurred, and the PT boat skippers were nervous. “Even with their radars, they had a tendency to see Jap destroyers and cruisers with every sweep of the screen,” said Sumner. “At a range of about two miles we picked up a flashing light just off our starboard bow...we were indeed at the right spot.”

Murphy's Law. After the Scouts contacted the guerrilla party ashore, they dropped a rubber boat into



PT boats departing for a mission at sunset.

the water while the PTs glided in to unload their cargo. Coleman, who had starred as a running back on the football team at Linn High School in Sunflower, Mississippi was said to be "quick as hiccup," but he wasn't quick enough. As Coleman stood on the stern, the skipper of PT-489 brought the boat about and Coleman lost his footing and fell in the water. One of the razor sharp propellers severely cut his hand, and Sumner determined that he needed more sophisticated medical treatment or he might lose his thumb. "He would return to base after we were put ashore and try to join us later," said Sumner. "So, we began our mission less one seasoned sergeant. I missed him badly during the operation. But we had to unload, now!"

At approximately 0100 on 7 November, the last of the supplies were ashore and two Japanese POWs were transported to one of the PTs. While guerrillas secured the supplies, Sumner reported to Major Jose Nazareno and readied the team.

"We were entirely unprepared for the next few hours," wrote Sumner, "which were a combination street dance, fiesta, victory celebration, dining-in, and welcome home. Samples of the local cuisine, bassi and nipa wine, were dispersed with a lavish band. Music by accordion, violin, and a motley collection of horns formed a musical background. The streets of the village were sand, but this hardly put the damper on dancing by some two hundred people, while another two hundred ate and drank...This interlude lasted some two to three hours and included me meeting all of the battalion staff, company commanders and civilian dignitaries of the entire western Leyte area."

After a few hours of much-needed sleep, the team, less Schermerhorn who remained near Abijao as an area contact, was awakened, fed, and led south by the Volunteer Guard (VG) through several villages and



over the mountains to barrio Matag-ob in the lower foothills at the northwestern end of the Ormoc Valley some thirteen miles away from Ormoc. With only a single guerrilla radio operating in the sector, Sixth Army wanted the team to set up a radio station in the vicinity of Ormoc so that guerrilla agents could report directly to it instead sending their information by messenger to a single existing station. The game was on.

ORMOC: Ormoc or "Ogmok," an old Visayan term for lowland or depressed plain, was already an established settlement when Portuguese explorer Ferdinand Magellan claimed the Philippines for Spain in 1521 during his voyage around the world. Jesuit missionaries arrived in 1595, and in 1607, established a mission there. Originally part of Palompan, the Scouts'



A young guerrilla from B Company, 96th Infantry.

initial landing point, Ormoc was declared a distinct and separate municipality in 1834 and numbered 77,000 people by the time of Japanese occupation in late 1941.

When SUMNER Team arrived at Matag-ob at 1600 on 7 November, it immediately opened the radio and recruited 21 paid operatives consisting of former members of the Philippine Scouts or the Constabulary who knew the terrain and who could operate in their assigned areas. The team also interrogated civilians who lived in the occupied areas for information and established a network of paid civilian informants. The team estimated that some 4000 Japanese were in the area, but only 600 in the city proper. The next night, they set up a radio station at Ma-sin less than six miles northwest of the city and began feeding much-needed information to Sixth Army. However, the 10-watt radio would be a constant source of irritation to the Scouts, whose messages were often cut out by eight other 50+ watt stations in the western Leyte net. Despite the problems, they got the job done.

On 10 November, the guerrillas and Alamo Scouts had a sharp clash with a Japanese patrol, which alerted the enemy that American forces were operating in



Sewing machine belonging to the family of a Filipina guerrilla. Courtesy of Eunice Carvajal.

the area and confirmed Sumner's assessment of the guerrillas' need for automatic weapons and other supplies, which he had already conveyed to Sixth Army upon arrival. At 1400 the next day, the supplies arrived.

"Three C-47s dropped 36 parachutes with large bundles of weapons, ammo, clothing, gasoline, coffee, cigarettes, and even a bundle of Stars and Stripes and *Life* magazines," recalled Sumner. "What a haul!"

"We would give the people our parachutes," added Weiland. "A man had a daughter that was getting married and he wanted a white parachute for a wedding dress. So, I just gave it to him. Then this elderly woman who couldn't speak English started measuring me up... two weeks later she brought me some pajamas made from a yellow parachute. They fit me perfect."

"Bob Sumner asked for sewing machine needles in Ormoc," said Mayo Stuntz, the supply officer of the Alamo Scouts Training Center, and later S-4 for the Special Intelligence Sub-Section G-2, which supplied extensive guerrilla supply efforts in the Philippines.



"So, I went to the depot. They had not had many requests, so they had a whole bunch... And I dropped those to Bob on the west coast of Leyte. He was a very popular guy there for a long time."

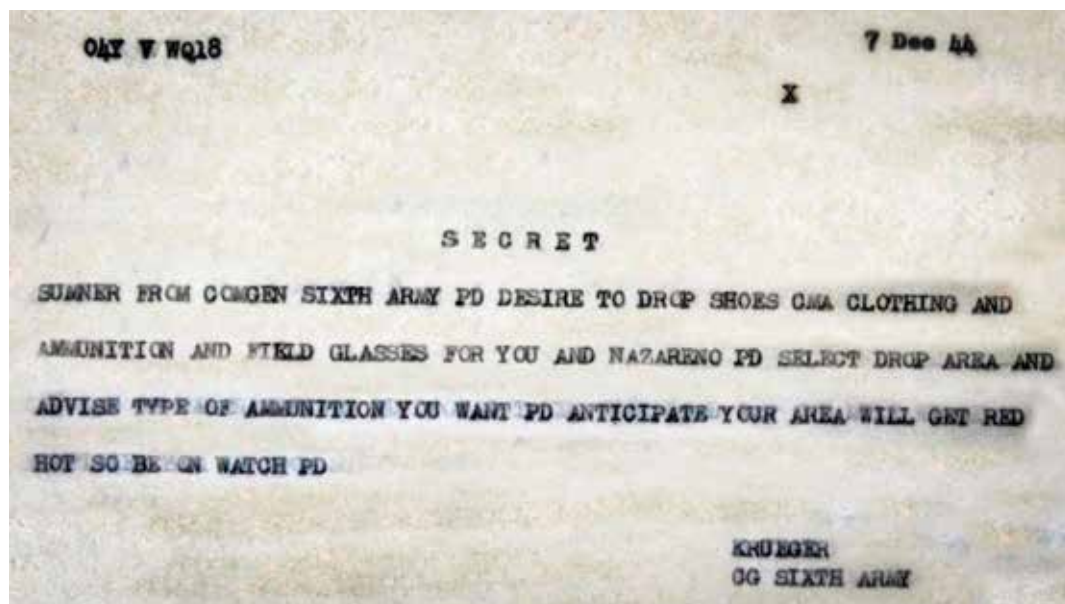
Such actions by the Scout team earned the admiration and gratitude of the local population and did much toward ensuring their safety. In an example of early civil action that would be employed by Special Forces teams years later, the Alamo Scouts won the hearts of the population through small acts of kindness.

On 13 November, the team moved the radio to Puerto Bello, which afforded a clear view of Japanese reinforcement efforts at Ormoc Bay and was close to roads and usable interior trails. Upon arrival, the team secured the first of five downed airmen they would recover during the mission. "I was shot down by enemy ground fire over Leyte," said Lt. Robert Hamburger of the 475th Fighter Group. "Two Filipino nurses took

*Radio Message to Sumner
from Gen. Krueger.*

*"Sumner from Commanding
General Sixth Army. Desire
to drop shoes, clothing and
ammunition and field glasses
for you and Nazareno. Select
drop area and advise type
of ammunition you want.
Anticipate your area will
get red hot so be on watch.*

*--Krueger, Commanding
General, Sixth Army*



care of me, and the Alamo Scouts provided me with a two-way radio to contact my unit for a rescue."

"Sumner sent me and one of the guerrilla lieutenants—a little short guy who always bragged that he ate Japanese liver—to take out five downed U.S. pilots," said Weiland, "and a Jap pilot dropped a Daisy Cutter bomb on the beach where they were assembled...the pilots were okay, but I got wounded."

Two days later, Japanese patrols forced them to return to Masin. On 20 November, with Japanese patrols reaching the foothills of Masin, Sumner moved the team to a large house on Mt. Naguang with an elevation of 1268 feet and established the radio in a shack a hundred feet away sighted for direct communication with Sixth Army across the island. The results were immediate. For the next three weeks, the team collected and reported information from its guerrilla intelligence nets to Sixth Army which resulted in numerous bombing raids. But when the raids failed to achieve results, the Scouts and guerrillas took direct action.

"On one occasion during our Ormoc mission we blew up a fuel dump," explained Weiland. "It was around midnight and Renhols and Jones were along. We went in with a few guerrillas, and I sat up on a bluff while Sumner and Jones went down toward the shore where some Jap barges were and set the charges and took off."

"I had made prior reconnaissance of the warehouses," explained Sumner. "Slipping into the warehouse about 2200, the guards were dispatched quickly and silently... In one of the warehouses...I had my first look at the food storage; fifty kilo bags of rice and stacks of wooden crates of canned goods about eight feet high all in a densely packed area of 30 x 60 feet...I set charges of TNT wrapped in one-pound bundles with minute fuses, and the fuses were tied to quarter-pound blocks of TNT for

use on the crates...As the fuses were ignited, we ran for it out of the buildings and headed for the base platoon...we were about 500 yards away and on high ground rocking explosions began spewing flames hundreds of feet in the air and starting fires too close to us. This was not a ration and ammo storage area...I had unwittingly set fire to a major fuel storage area!"



Harry D. Weiland



Robert Sumner displays a Japanese flag and sword recovered during the mission.

On 7 December, the 77th Infantry Division landed at Ormoc and the Scouts moved to an observation post to watch. Over the next few days, they witnessed several violent counterattacks by the Japanese and were ordered to furnish guerrillas and Scouts to attacking companies. Meanwhile, as the 1st Cavalry Division drove south down the central valley, the Japanese held up in the mountain foothills forcing them to shut down the radio on 11 December. The team reopened the radio for one day on 15 December, but the Japanese attempted to capture it, and the team evacuated the post. To date, the Japanese had moved 34,000 troops and 10,000 tons of material through Ormoc, but the Japanese army wasn't Sumner's only concern.

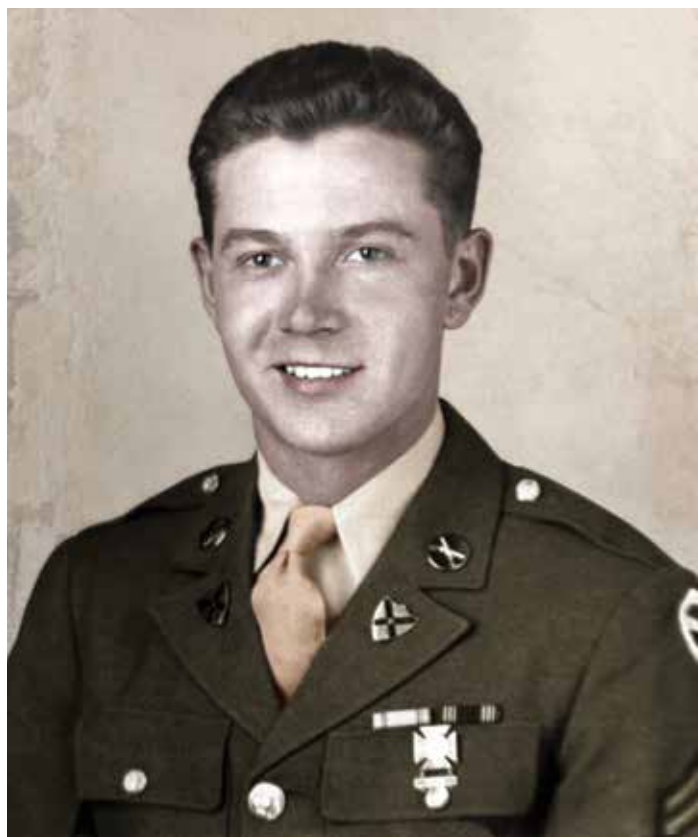
"We found our scope of operations growing constricted," noted Sumner. "The Japs were falling back on us. As our operations were increasingly restricted and our guerrillas were constantly engaged by Jap stragglers... Our intelligence network had been overtaken by events as U.S. units overran specified areas. I considered several ways of leaving the mountains to include an overland trek to the ocean and a banca trip around the peninsula to Ormoc. Reporting to Sixth Army indicated our growing predicament, I was instructed to leave the radio operational with its Filipino crew and a sufficient guerrilla guard detachment for the 77th Division to take over."

Easier said than done. On 16 December, Japanese soldiers captured a civilian who had led the Scouts to Matag-ob, and skinned him alive while the outnumbered and out-gunned team of horrified

Scouts watched from the tree line. That same day in the Mt. Naguong area, the Japanese bayoneted three men, three women, and two children who also had helped the team.

"A Filipino family was helping us out and the Japs got wind of it," said Blaise. "There was nothing we could do to stop them, but we went back and took care of things."

With the U.S. 77th Division at Ormoc, and the XXIV Corps and X Corps only 16 miles apart, the Scout team was increasingly trapped between the advancing U.S. forces and Japanese troops desperate to escape. At one point, they had taken approximately 35 prisoners and faced the real possibility of being mistakenly killed by their own trigger-happy troops who neither knew they were there with prisoners nor likely cared. The



William F. Blaise

decision wasn't easy.

"We eliminated them," recounted Blaise. "I never lost any sleep over anything we did. We did what we had to do, and if that bothers people, too bad. We weren't the ones bayonetting babies. It was war not a tea party."

"Never gave it a second thought," added Weiland. "It was the only option."

WRAPPING IT UP: On 18 December, SUMNER Team reported to Maj. Gen. Andrew Bruce commanding the 77th Division in the Ormoc Valley and presented its findings. They had a lot to tell.

"As the 77th was from the Central Pacific, they didn't know about the Alamo Scouts," beamed Sumner.

"Also, we were wearing our camouflage fatigues, carrying folding stock carbines, and not wearing helmets. Our weapons and gear were in first class condition and we must have presented a strange sight indeed with our band of motley armed cutthroats. General Bruce interrogated me at length about the beach area and terrain at Palompan. In about a half hour he had all the information he wanted and told me he was planning an amphibious landing, an end run, at Palompan. We were thanked and headed back for the mountains. The flanking operation took place on Christmas Day and sealed the fate of the Japs in western Leyte."

On 21 December, SUMNER Team passed through the XXIV Corps lines near Ormoc. The team had spent the previous night in a nearby village to get ready to report to Gen. John R. Hodge. "Our overnight stay allowed us to wash uniforms, clean boots and equipment and get haircuts," said Sumner. "I wanted this team to appear as if we were coming off the parade field, and indeed we did. The team took great pride in my request that we impress the Army that our junket in the west was a piece of cake."

The following day the team traveled by road to the Alamo Scouts Training Center at Abuyog on the east coast, while Sumner flew to Sixth Army Headquarters for debriefing and to write the report. He arrived back at the ASTC at 1700 on 23 December. Mission accomplished.

AFTERMATH: The SUMNER Team 41-day mission in western Leyte was the longest mission performed by the Alamo Scouts to that time and validated the concept of special reconnaissance in the theater. Consisting of men mostly in their early twenties, the team conducted a mission of great importance behind enemy lines involving guerrilla coordination and resupply, direct action, civilian administration, reconnaissance, pilot recovery, and intelligence collection. The team provided consistent, valuable, timely order of battle estimates on enemy troops, observed enemy movement, and more important, paved the way for even longer and more sophisticated operations on Luzon. The best was yet to come.

AWARDS OF THE SILVER STAR

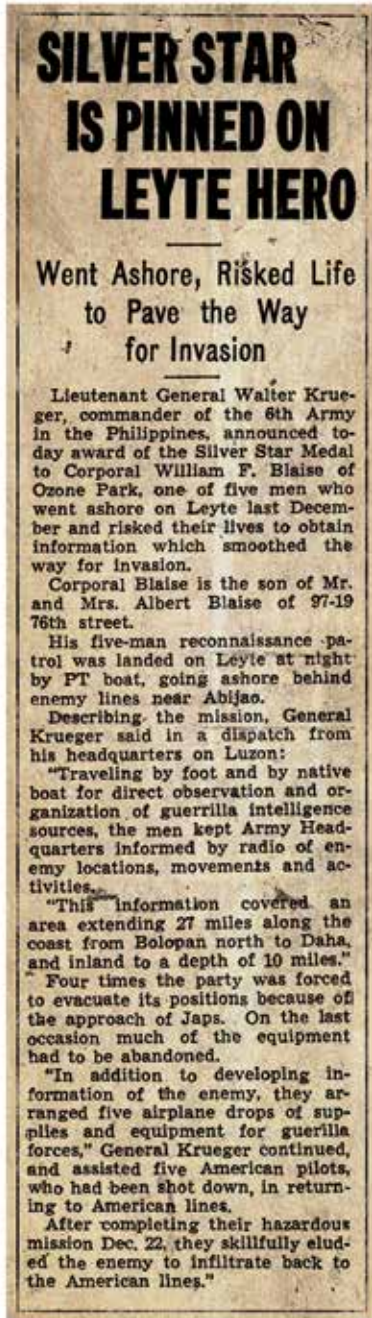
General Orders No. 42 - 10 March 1945

By Direction of the President: a Silver Star is awarded by the Commanding General, Sixth Army, to the following named officer and to each of the following enlisted men for gallantry in action on Leyte Island, Philippine Islands from 6 November to 22 December 1944. Lieutenant Sumner led a five man reconnaissance patrol, landing at night by PT boat, behind enemy lines near Abijao. Traveling by foot and by native boat for direct observation and organization of guerrilla intelligence sources, they kept Army headquarters informed by radio of enemy locations, movements and activities. This information covered an area extending 27 miles along the coast, from Polompan north to Daha, and inland to a dept of 10 miles. On four different occasions the party was forced to make a hasty evacuation of their position because of the proximity of the enemy; it was necessary for them, on the last occasion, to conceal much of their equipment and leave it behind. In addition to developing information of the enemy, they arranged for five airplane drops of supplies and equipment for guerrilla forces and assisted five American pilots, who had been shot down, in returning to American lines. After completing their hazardous mission on 22 December they skillfully eluded the enemy to infiltrate back to American lines:

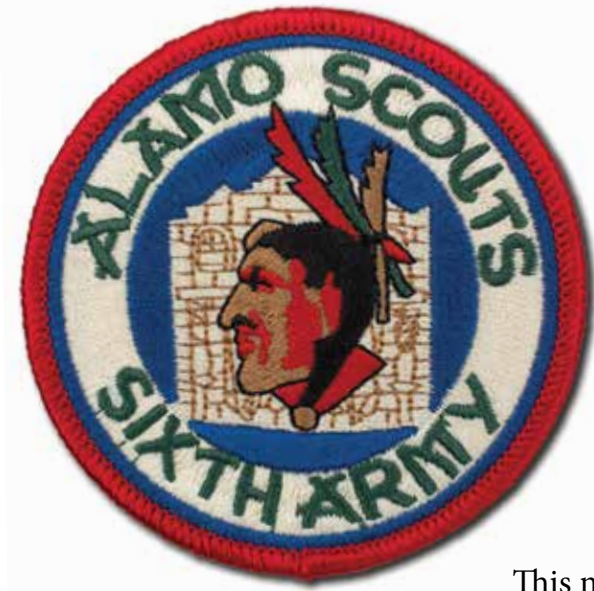
*Corporal WILLIAM F. BLAISE, Infantry, United States Army.
Private First Class PAUL B. JONES, Infantry, United States Army.
Private EDWARD RENHOLS, Infantry, United States Army.
Corporal ROBERT T. SCHERMERHORN, Infantry, United States Army.
First Lieutenant ROBERT S. SUMNER, Infantry, United States Army.
Private First Class HARRY D. WEILAND, Infantry, United States Army.*

Sources

Interviews with Alamo Scouts William Blaise, Mayo Stuntz, Robert Sumner, and Harry Weiland. 1993-2006.
Interviews with Robert Hamburger, 2011.
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Zedric, Lance. *Silent No More: The Alamo Scouts in Their Own Words* (War Room, 2013).



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.

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

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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.

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1-Year Membership - \$25

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The Alamo Scouts Historical Foundation is introducing a “Grand Membership Plan” where all grandchildren, great-grandchildren, etc., of an Alamo Scout, can receive a 20% discount on their 1-year, 3-year, and 5-year ASHF membership.

Grand Membership may be paid by check or by credit card (through PayPal). Please contact Bonnie Glass, ASHF Membership Committee Chair, via email: bonnie.glass@alamoscouts.org or Russ Blaise, ASHF ExecDir: ashf@alamoscouts.org if you have any questions.

1-Year Grand Membership - \$20

5-Year Grand Membership - \$92

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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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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.