



Stories of the exploits and experiences of members of the Florida Society, Sons of the American Revolution during their military service in every theater of operation.

# We Were There - Serving for You



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*Dedicated to*

**All Florida compatriots who served us whenever  
and wherever they were called upon and who  
preserved our liberties.**

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# World War II

## “Once a Marine....”

I was a second year student at Hampden-Sydney College, an all male small Virginia college, founded before the American Revolution. World War II had been in progress for almost a year and my father had been called out of retirement as a Navy officer.

Early in September we were assembled where normally a chapel was held once a week. This time was different as we were there to hear recruiting officers from the branches of the Armed Forces. At that time, all men drafted went into the Army while the Navy and Marine Corps were all volunteers. Later, after many bull sessions, my class, '45 of Sigma Chi Fraternity brothers decided to join one of the military programs. Four of us joined the Marine Corps, five the Army, four the Navy, and four went into the Navy Flight Program. During the remaining war years, two of us in the Marine Corps were wounded, three in the Army were wounded, and one Navy aviator was killed in combat.

Several weeks after enlisting, I received my orders to the Marine Corps Recruit Depot at Parris Island, South Carolina. We left by train and were joined by many male civilians, soon to be Marines. By early the next day we arrived all dirty and tired in a very small town called “Port Royal”. Across the water, we saw Parris Island, which, for some of us, was to be our new home well beyond the famous Marine Boot Camp.

We spent ten week of initial entry training with two weeks on the Rifle Range where I shot expert and was selected as a Squad Leader. This was thanks to my years as Boy Scout. Upon graduation from Boot Camp, I was one of the few to make PFC and was assigned as a rifle coach and weapons instructor at the Rifle Range Detachment at Parris Island. For a year we worked six days a week from very early in the morning until dusk at night teaching “Boots” marksmanship and automatic weapons orientation. Yes, we were very busy and they brought our lunch to the firing line where we ate. I ended up as the top rifle coach in the qualification of the men I trained.

I felt that the war in the Pacific was passing me by, so I volunteered for the Marine Infantry and was shipped to Camp LeJune, North Carolina for advanced combat training. Two months later I arrived at the Marine Base, San Diego and on the evening of February 19, 1944 stood out into the Pacific. We were on the USS “Sorting” Morton in a small convoy with no warship escort. About a week later, we arrived at the Navy base at Pearl Harbor to take of stores and fuel but no shore leave.

We had been at sea for about five days when all our ships in our convoy went in different directions and were told we would sail alone. We were to land on Guadalcanal. While the Marines took the island, it was not a major Army supply point. About two weeks later in April 1944, we anchored off Guadalcanal and could see Florida and Tulagi Islands in the distance. We then gathered our gear and went topside to form into groups. We then climb down a cargo net with all our gear and either jumped or fell into the Landing Vehicle Personnel (LVP) and took about twenty minutes to hit the beach.

We assembled into a rather large formation and as our name was called, then assembled by trucks. I was assigned to the 22nd Marine Regiment and mounted into a truck to take me to my new home. I was then assigned to the 2nd Platoon of “E” Company, 2nd Battalion of the 22nd Marines or “E-2-22”.

The Platoon Commander, Lt. Richard Pfuhl, called “Heavy”, knew of my instructor weapon training at Parris Island and assigned me as a Browning Automatic Rifle (BAR) man in an Infantry Firing Team. The Marine rifle squad is built around three Firing Teams that each operated with one BAR as the key weapon.

The 22nd Marines were just returning from the operations in the Marshall Islands and had just arrived to Guadalcanal, so were almost as new as we were. However, the 22nd Marines had been in the Pacific since 1942.

Like a few of the islands taken by our forces, on the larger island there were still a few Japs living in these areas. Therefore, while an Army controlled island, we were sent on several day patrols, as part of our training, to find Japs. In late April, we were joined by the 4th Marine Regiment to become part of the 1st Provincial Brigade.

However, most of my reflections are with the platoon and much more with the squad. We became a team and learned more and more what could be expected and how we would react in combat situations. We conducted assault landings and live fire exercise. This was the real world, as our fire wounded two of our friends and this was not combat.

Lt. “Heavy” Pfuhl called the company together and told us that we were going to land at Guam. Guam was a former American island that had been captured by the Japs. We would land with the 3rd Marine Division and the Army 77th Division.

We were transferred to Landing Ships, Tanks (LST) and sailed to Kwajalein Island that our 22nd Marines had captured. Then on April 21, 1944 we arrived on Guam and boarded the Amphibian Tractors (Amphtrac) in the well deck of our LST. We were to land on YELLOW BEACH 1, which was the extreme left flank of our landing site. We got in the cross fire of Jap 70 mm guns and our Amphtrac was hit and destroyed. Some how several of us got to the beach alive. Just before land,



I lost consciousness and was moved on a LCVP to a hospital ship. As a result I ended up in a Navy Hospital on New Caledonia. The Army and Marines took Guam and later the 22nd Marines returned to Guadalcanal to get ready for the next operation.

About a month later I returned to E-2-22 and was made a Fire Team Leader. Our 1st Provisional Brigade was formed into the 6th Marine Division and like the Guam operation; we started more training with extra training on what today is called MOUT (Military Operation on Urbane Terrain). In fact, the Seabees build several combat towns for us to train in. We conducted live fire combined infantry and tank training with Navy gunfire and live fire air support. This was very close to the real world and one of my friends was wounded from friendly fire.

On March 15, 1945, we boarded the USS Wayne and sailed to the Ulith Atoll, where we were transferred by LCVP to an LST for our final trip off of Okinawa.

Our Easy or "E" Company was formed on deck and briefed on Okinawa and the situation with the heavily defended island. We were to land on April 1st, my birthday. We were to land on Green Beach, the extreme left flank of the 10th Army. This Army was made up of an Army Corp and Marine Corps all commanded by an Army General.

We again got into our Amtrack and headed for Green Beach 1. Our landing site was about a thousand yards from Green Beach 2, which was not a good position to be in. We were in for a big surprise and received no enemy fire. There were no Japs defending this part of Okinawa. Then we started receiving our first enemy "action". Lobbing overhead were rather slow moving projectiles that looked a bit like garbage cans. When they hit the deck there was a large explosion. However, we did not receive too many killed or wounded.

Of course it rained, but the next morning we were told that the mission of our division was to capture the northern half of Okinawa. As usual, our Battalion was to lead with Company "E" leading. For the next few days we moved up the left road to northern Okinawa. Daily we sent patrols toward the center of the islands and we had fire fights with some Jap troops. It may have been a bit like Indian fighting in the Old West. We exchanged fire and most of the time won out. We had a few wounded and one killed. The last two days we rode on tanks to the very north end of Okinawa. Here we set up defense position & set up booby traps leading to our foxholes. Often they would go off at night as Japs tried to get into our lines. During the day we went on patrol and did have additional action with several getting wounded including one of my fire team leaders.

We were informed that the Army was having problems in the south where the bulk of the Japs on Okinawa had put up serious defense. We, the 6th Marine Division, along with the 1st Marine Division, would replace Army divisions.

We moved into the southern lines on the 2nd of May and came under heavy Artillery and mortar fire. Now, for the first time our losses were heavy and we started receiving replacements. It rained for days and we lost our understanding of time as action moved so very fast. One night we fought Japs with grenades. Each side was throwing their grenades, but we could not see the results. While some of use got wounded the next day several dead Japs were killed on the bottom of the hill below us. I was sent to the Aid Station, but two days later returned to become Squad Leader.

On the 10th of May our battalion attacked a place call Charlie Hill and the Japs were well protected by tunnels and underground bunkers. We continued to loose fellow Marines, but none in my squad. The next day we were able to move about 1000 yards and linked up with the 29th Marine Regiment, which was part of our 6th Marine Division.

By the end of the 11th day of May, our battalion had secured high ground north of what was to be called SUGAR LOAF Hill. We were to find out that this was the most bitter fighting and decisive fighting on Okinawa. But to us, at that time, was just another objective.

On May 13, we tried again to attack Sugar Loaf Hill and my unit, the lead squad, was behind the lead Sherman tank. Following us were three more Sherman Tanks and the rest of Company "E". We came under heavy artillery fire and the lead tank was destroyed and too many in my company were either killed or wounded. I received my second wound and when I came around I was in a bunk with clean sheets in a Navy Hospital ship. A week later we were moved to a "tent city Army Hospital on Saipan. Over time some of us were moved many times and I ended up at a Naval Hospital at Parris Island. For the next several months I was assigned limited duty there, where I was the NCO in charge of a Special Training Unit allowing me to finish out my career in the Marine Corps.

*By. D. Robert Copeland, Central Florida SAR Chapter Past President. Article Written 10/20/2012*

## Courier Service

While serving with the Army Security Courier Service in NY, NY, I was assigned a classified mission during July 1944 to take seven crates of material overseas. My journey took me from NY by rail to the Army Map Service in DC, then to Pier 19, New York. From there I went by ship aboard the Queen Elizabeth to Glasgow, Scotland, UK. From there I went by train to my destination, Supreme Allied Command HQ, London. When we inventoried the seven crates of classified material during the transfer process, I discovered I was a courier for the invasion maps of Europe.  
*Ralph W. Crews, First Lieutenant (St, Augustine Chapter)*

## American Theater posting

My PEB date was 6 November 1944. I was motivated to join the United States Marine Corps by my desire, like that of my fellow Americans at that time, to go to war and do my part for our country. While in training, I sustained a service related accident that disqualified me for further service. I petitioned the medical authorities to let me stay on. That request was granted. I was subsequently posted in the American Theater as a general office clerk with a Marine Corps Unit supporting the war effort and then to assist in post war causes. *Edward Swift Buckley, IV, PFC United States Marine Corps*

## Circling the Pacific

Compatriot Lawrence Eugene Hurley, Charlotte Chapter President, is a World War II Veteran. He was the 90th FLSSAR member to request membership into the World War II Veterans Corps. He was processed for a Certificate of Patriotism on 23 April 2012. His record of experiences during that war includes the depicted significant event below.



This paper says that Lawrence Eugene Hurley is being shipped overseas on a tanker named SS Manhattan. That surface vessel is carrying 100,000 gallons of High Octane Gasoline, without an escort!

Send out "Das Boots!"

He arrived on an island code named U.S.S. Bobcat and which was a refueling station for LSI's, LSM's, LST's that could not carry enough fuel to reach the combat zone.

In November 1945, he received orders to return to the states by the earliest available transportation. A tanker was in port, due to leave for Pearl Harbor then on to the west coast of the U.S. Orders were cut for him to take passage on this vessel. For four days they headed north to Pearl; everything was copasetic. During the night the ship received orders to head west (to Leyte Gulf). The ship requested permission to stop in American Samoa for fresh water and Hurley arranged to get his orders changed to transportation that would take him east to the states.

Finally he was assigned to the AA Cruiser U.S.S. San Diego. Here he was not the only passenger. After everyone was on board and the ship got underway something was wrong! The sun was over the fantail – we were headed west. Finally arriving in the New Hebrides, a company of Marines came aboard. The following morning as we left, the sun should be directly over the bow, – no, we were heading southeast. We returned to American Samoa and took on another contingent to sailors destined for the states.

Finally, Dec 24, 1945 the ship arrived in San Pedro, California.

## Wallace and the Battle of the Bulge

I was a medic attached to Company B 1<sup>st</sup> Bn 222<sup>nd</sup> Regiment 42<sup>nd</sup> 'Rainbow' Infantry Division (42ID). We landed at Marseilles, France on December 9, 1944. We were transported to an area called CP2 where we were to be in training until the rest of the division caught up with us. Only the three regiments 222<sup>nd</sup>, 232<sup>rd</sup>, and 242<sup>nd</sup> had arrived. While we were at CP2, the Germans started their massive attack in the north. Plans were changed. We were needed at once in the north. We traveled by railroad boxcars and were in Alsace on Christmas Eve. When we arrived, the snow was 12 to 18 inches deep (I did not see the ground for another 30 days). On Christmas Day, we were transported to the French Maginot Line, front line at that time. This was to be a quiet area, the more veteran troops had been moved to the north to aid in the battle there. We lost three men out of our platoon to be shipped north to aid in the battle. We were spread very thin. One regiment of 3500 men had 33 miles to protect. On New Year's Eve, I was standing on the banks of the Rhine River watching Allied airplanes bombing a city to the far north. On New Year's Day, the Germans started their offense called "Nordwind." The Germans knew that everything possible was sent to the Bastogne area and that





our area (Seventh Army) would be weak. Our unit moved constantly from one town to another for about a week. They finally found a place we could settle down, a place called Hunspach. We were in an unfinished bunker (part of the Maginot Line). It had 4x6 door window in front and no door in the back. It was freezing every day. Our kitchen was in the little town about 500 yards to our rear. It was quiet in the area. Every now and then a German shell or mortar would land in the area. We were about 20 yards from the road that went back to the village. That 20 yards was open and visible to the Germans. Once when I was crossing the opening, the Germans tested the accuracy of their machine gun on me. They missed so that I can write this story. That night I burned the red cross off my helmet. All it was doing was making a target for them to shoot at.

Our platoon had its first death at that location. A German mortar landed right at the man's feet.

I could hear a lot of artillery fire over my right shoulder, but I didn't pay much attention to it as I depended on the officers to keep us out of real trouble. A couple days later we were told that we would move-out after dark and there was to be no noise. It seems that the Germans had broken thru the lines to our right and there was only one road we could use to get out. Otherwise we would be surrounded. From there we moved to a town as reserve for a battle that was taking place on the other side of town. The next day we received orders to march to a town about 5 km away, turn right and go down to the forest, form a skirmish line and enter the woods. The snow was still deep. We were delayed in getting to the woods. It seems that the Germans beat us to the woods and had set up three machine gun positions. We got there about midnight. As we marched towards the woods the Germans opened up with their machine guns. We had no place to go. The road going into the woods was slightly down hill and open, we were in our olive colored uniforms and on the snow the GIs made good targets. My platoon leader took six guys and flanked the Germans on our left (their right) and knocked out one German machine gun and the other two gun crews ran away. We had nine killed and seventeen wounded that night. This was on the night of January 25, 1945, the last day of the "Battle of the Bulge."

The next day the 101st Airborne Division relieved our unit. - *Ivan Homer Wallace, Jr. (02/09/1924 - 05/16/2013)*

**Footnote:** Task Force (TF) Linden, as the 222<sup>nd</sup>, 232<sup>nd</sup> and 242<sup>nd</sup> were known, entered combat in the vicinity of Strasbourg, relieving elements of the 36ID on 24 December 1944. Defending a 31-mile sector along the Rhine, north and south of Strasbourg, TF Linden repulsed a number of enemy counterattacks, at Hatten and other locations. On 24 and 25 January 1945, in the Bois D'Oehlungen, and the vicinity of Schweighouse-sur-Moder and Neubourg, the 222<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Regiment repulsed repeated attacks by the German 7<sup>th</sup> Parachute and 47<sup>th</sup> VG Divisions. For this action the 222<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Regiment was awarded the Presidential Unit Citation (2001). After these enemy attacks, TF Linden returned to reserve of the 7<sup>th</sup> Army and trained with the remainder of the 42ID which had arrived in the meantime. On 25 April, the 42ID captured Donauwörth on the Danube, and on 29 April 1945, liberated some 30,000 inmates at Dachau, a Nazi concentration camp along with the 45<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division. The 42ID campaign ended passing through Munich, 30 April 1945, as it cut across the Austrian border located north of Salzburg.

## 'Twas a Dark and Foggy Night

*LiCol Bill Fuller, USA (Ret.)*

Commissioned in 'ack-ack' in December 1943, 'shanghaied' into the infantry in March 1944, overseas orders in September 1944, recruited by the 82<sup>nd</sup> Airborne "All American" Division in England, parachute training and then to France where I was given the command of a platoon of 'good ol' Southern boys' who had seen plenty of action in Africa, Sicily, Italy, Normandy, and Holland. Needless to say, this became a learning time for me as a 21 year old second looney, and by their standards, still wet behind the ears. Now that you all have the lead-in, let's get on with my first night in combat.

At 0130 hrs, December 18, 1944, we were alerted for a move to Belgium. This was to become 'The Battle of the Bulge.' Upon arriving after dark in the town of Werbomont, I was ordered to take my platoon of four squads, each manning a .50 caliber air-cooled machine gun on ground mounts, (Similar to a heavy weapons platoon) and to set up defensive positions on a dirt road overlooking a large valley to the east. It was a very dark night with heavy fog. The fog banks were being lit up by the constant firing of many tanks, ours and theirs, rumbling around down there in the valley. How they knew what or at whom they were firing I haven't the foggiest. Turning off the paved road onto the dirt road which I was quite certain was our assigned area, we were soon stopped by an infantryman (paratrooper) who after the required passwords, etc., informed me that to proceed was considered 'no-man's land.' I told him that I had my orders, so we drove on. After about 300 yards further, traveling with 'cat's eye' blackout lights on our vehicle, we were stopped by another infantryman (paratrooper) who was wide-eyed and informed me that we had just come through 'no-man's land.' I told him of my previous conversation ten minutes earlier, and realized that our proposed machine gun positions were to be set-up between these two infantry units. We back-tracked, unloaded our guns and equipment, and I instructed my platoon sergeant to hold up on digging-in until I returned to battalion HQ to confirm that this was our true assigned position.

After confirming that we were in the right place, my driver and I headed back to my platoon. Unfortunately, we missed the turn for the dirt road. Keep in mind, it was darker than Hades, and the fog so thick you could cut it and we could only use



the jeep's black-out lights. Finally, realizing that we overshot the turn, we stopped to consider our options. Then we heard the unmistakable sound of an approaching tank. There wasn't room on this narrow paved road for both vehicles, so I told my driver to back off the road into the brush so as to let the tank go on through. Much to our amazement, as the tank went past, painted in white on its side was a cross (German). The two of us armed with only a pistol and carbine, a radio and lost, there was nothing to do but wait until it had disappeared in the fog. I briefly considered radioing HQ, but how could I explain where we were and where the tank was? Not wishing to follow the apparently lost tank, we continued in the other direction. Finally, hopelessly disoriented, we took shelter in a barn near the road, curled up in some strewn hay, and fell asleep. Upon awakening a few hours later, to my amazement we had shared our 'sleeping quarters' with approximately 20 other friendly (thank God) troopers, also lost. The fog having cleared somewhat from the breaking daylight, we backtracked, found the dirt road and rejoined my platoon. To this day, I don't know whether my platoon sergeant ever believed our story.

*(Colonel Fuller earned three battle campaign stars in WWII, four battle campaign stars in Korea ('51-'52), and after 23 years active service retired at Homestead AFB, FL as the Exec Officer of the NIKE Hercules Air Defense Missile Group. He moved to Melbourne soon after Hurricane Andrew. He and his wife, Misao, reside in the Lake Washington area.)*

## On a Minesweeper

*by Robbins H Denham, Tampa Chapter*



I joined the US Naval Reserve on May 27, 1945; had Boot Camp in San Diego, CA; served as a mess cook for 3 months; and became a clerk at the Receiving Station San Pedro, CA processing personnel who were being discharged. Then orders came March 20, 1946: "Pack your duffel bag. You are being shipped out tonight." Once aboard late that night we volunteered for various duties and I was assigned to the third division - the engine room. We sailed with the tide shortly thereafter. Dawn found our minesweeper well out into the Pacific heading for Hawaii. "This duty can't be all that bad," I thought.

The USS Crag (AM-214) was an Admirable-class minesweeper built in Tampa and launched March 21, 1943. The hull (184.5 ft long with a beam of 33 ft.) was towed to Charleston Navy Yard where it was completed and outfitted to sweep electric mines, then commissioned August 1, 1945. Powered by two large diesel engines, top speed -14.8 knots, but we cruised at 11-12 knots. The crew numbered 104.

After three days of shore leave in Honolulu, we sailed for Hong Kong with stops for supplies at Eniwetok and Guam. Re-fueling in a rough sea was very interesting! After restocking in Hong Kong we teamed up for two weeks with a destroyer which, by radar, kept us over the 16-miles-long dog-leg mine field in the East Hainan Straits off the coast of China. The mines had been laid by US earlier in the war to force shipping to go around the large island of Hainan in the South China Sea.

Back to Hong Kong for R&R, we then headed home! An harrowing experience was going through a typhoon where the ships bell rang – unattended – in the raging wind and waters. We battened down the ship and ate soup for two days! Our Yeoman AND the Storekeeper were to be discharged in San Francisco. Since I could type, I became Yeoman 3rd following my duties as mess cook of the third division. Two weeks in the San Francisco Navy Yard to replace a burned out major fan motor, etc., gave plenty of time for sightseeing in Frisco.

As we sailed toward Panama I was very busy typing all new forms (NO strike overs!) for personnel records in preparation for the just adopted Navy computerized records. The seas were rough along the coast! The carriage of the mechanical typewriter could not move to the right when the ship listed to starboard! I could type only when level or while listing to port! The passage through the Panama Canal and Caribbean and up to Charleston, SC was very pleasant. I arrived there November 3, 1946, had a leave for Christmas, and went back to Charleston where I was discharged on January 13, 1947.

May 27, 2014, 69 years to the day of my swearing into the USNR, I was on an Honor Flight to Washington, D.C. to visit the World War II Memorial as well as Arlington Cemetery, the Lincoln, the Marine, the US Air Force and the Korean War and the Vietnam War Memorials - all expenses paid. This was the 17th Honor Flight made possible by the great dedication of all the volunteers of the Honor Flight of West Central Florida. Every veteran was treated and honored as a real hero. Each veteran had a guardian – a volunteer who had paid his own way and was constantly at the side of the veteran. My two sons were guardians on this flight! Wheelchairs were provided as needed, or as desired, with three meals and snacks a-plenty to all. It was all very inspirational!

One of many highlights for me was the mail call during the flight back to St. Petersburg. I received many 'thank you' letters. This was followed, upon landing, by the biggest reception I could imagine – hundreds of civilians, a band, military personnel, a Member of Congress, 'The Andrew Sisters' and several color guards including the Tampa Chapter of the SAR Color Guard, followed by fireworks on the parking lot! I'm not a hero by a long shot – but they made me feel like one!

**The Florida Society, Sons of the American Revolution**

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