

L.T.--SUNOCO. FRIDAY, JUNE 22, 1945 Okinawa Notes

(By Transcription From Manila)

GOOD EVENING EVERYBODY:

To say that distances out here in the Far Pacific are great would be to repeat a bromide you have heard many times. But the distances are even greater than that. The only way really to find this out is to come out here. For instance, this week I have been shuttling back and forth between two groups of islands, the Marianas and the Ryukyus, between Admiral Nimitz headquarters on Guam and the island of Okinawa where the recent desperate fighting has been going on. And has just come to an end. And the distance between the two islands is almost as great as from North America to Europe. Each time I made the flight, one way we spanned the ocean for one thousand four hundred miles.

Okinawa is a lot bigger than you might think, also. It's big enough for a population of six hundred thousand

civilians, and a couple of hundred thousand soldiers locked in that most desperate battle of the Pacific war. Also, big enough for several enormous air fields with plenty of room for a dozen more like them. And with all of that, as you drive around it, Okinawa doesn't seem crowded.

During the days that I was there it had undergone a sudden complete change of climate. From deep mud in which everything bogged down, everything including tanks, trucks, ducks, G.I.S and Japs, the sun blazed down, until now Okinawa is hidden in ~~z~~ clouds of dust. There would be plenty of room if Doolittle came out here with his Eighth Air Force. Before long, I suppose they'll pave the air strips, and the main highways, just as the Navy and Army have done on Guam. Then Okinawa will be green, lush, and beautiful again. I wish I could describe the dust to you. From up on one ridge, just north of where the Japs were making their final stand, I could overlook a big airfield. But I couldn't see it.

It was hidden by a several mile long cloud of coral dust kicked up by the planes going out, or coming in from bombing, strafing and patrol missions.

The traffic, all military, on the new, unpaved roads, is heavier than on the main road between New York and Philadelphia. But the dust is so thick you barely see the outlines of the thousands of jeeps, huge trucks, munitions-carriers, ducks, and half-tracks you are passing. Here, within 300 miles of the main islands of Japan, our G.I.s and Marines have built wide roads that they have marked just as roads are marked back home -- "U.S. Route 2, U.S.Route 14," and so on. You get a shock when you read those signs and then the names of Japanese places under them: Gima, Kawata, and Yonabaru.

Many of the men who drive over the Okinawa roads are wearing special dust goggles. But some, not finding the goggles protection enough, are wearing gas masks. As for airplane motors, they have to be specially cleaned every two days. In spite of this our boys all told me they much prefer Okinawa dust to Okinawa mud.

I was on the island, or watching the fighting from air, at the time when the Japs were making their last stand. The Marines and doughboys were cutting them up into smaller and smaller pickets, with heavy losses on both sides. And, I was there when General Buckner was killed. In fact I had just missed the General at his headquarters that morning, or I undoubtedly would have been with him. Instead, his chief of staff, Brig. Gen. Elwyn Post, asked me to stay there with him, in the shade of a camouflage-canopy, stay and talk and have lunch.

General Buckner's G. 2, in charge of psychological warfare and intelligence, joined us. He told us the Japs were beginning more and more to surrender. Even their officers at last were showing a distaste for the idea of committing suicide, of throwing themselves off cliffs, walking into the sea, and making futile ~~banzai~~ banzai charges. Some were still dying blindly -- and are still dying on Okinawa -- even though organized resistance has been broken. But it's interesting to note - and

this is big news - that during the final hours on Okinawa more than 8,000 of the Japs in those pockets at the south end of the island surrendered.

GENERAL BUCKNER

About the death of General Buckner, of which you heard from the combat correspondents with our troops on Okinawa, fortunately all of these correspondents had gone off to investigate something else that morning. So none were with the General, or they probably would have been killed also.

~~The General's~~ ^{his} number evidently was "up." For the Japs only had one gun, one mortar, still in action. With it they lobbed over one shell, and that shell got the General. Then they sent over six more, doing still more damage. I was with his staff, sharing their C-rations, at the moment their chief was killed. And I had taken off in a Grumman Navy Torpedo Bomber, for a flight over the battle-line, before the word came back to headquarters of what had happened.

The General's office had just been moved. His name, Lieut. General Simon Bolivar Buckner was there on his desk as I stood before it, with his colleagues, Generals Post, Schick, and Dumas of the Army, and

Oliver Smith of the Marines. The office and desk that General Buckner never had a chance to use.)

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To get back for a moment to this impressive matter of distances out here: The NBC in San Francisco, where I am picked up by short wave and then relayed on to you, knew that I was here in the Marianas. We can hold two way conversations, by short wave, with San Francisco, from here. Well, San Francisco got in touch with Guam, and said, "Call Lowell Thomas to the microphone, will you. We'll hold on while you get him!" At the time although I was here in the Marianas, I was a hundred miles away!

Guam, by the way, is no coral atoll. Although we have several hundred thousand people on the island, and three of the most colossal airfields I have ever seen, with long lines of B-29s dispersed around them, there is still room, on Guam alone, for many more air bases, for Spaatz and Doolittle's bombers when they come. Remember what von Rundstedt said about the way

OKINAWA

our Strategic Air Force paralyzed the whole German military effort and made it impossible for the Germans to fight on? Well, it begins to lead us through we can do the same to Japan, now that the Navy, Marines and Army have done such a tremendous job, that is, we can do it when more of our strategic air power arrives out here to give the Japs the same dose that von Rundstedt complained about. The idea right now, is, for us not to relax, but to redouble our efforts, at home, and out here.

So long, and speaking about distance, I'll turn you back now to Radio City 9,000 miles away -- to NBC in New York.

MARSHALL

Good evening Everybody (This given by Dr. Roy Chapman Andrews.)

Chief of Staff General Marshall gives us a heartening promise. He states that victory over Japan will come soon - a speedy knockout.

General Marshall today told a congressional committee that the force we are about to hurl at the Japanese home islands will far exceed that which defeated Nazi Germany. For example, in two years the Allies dropped a million and a half tons of air bombs on the land of the Nazi. General Marshall estimates that in one year, (next year) Japan will be hit by two million, seven hundred thousand tons.

That's the background for the following statement in today's news dispatch from Washington:
"The Army aims at a speedy victory over Japan".

PACIFIC

Today we have a quotation from a high Japanese official named Kuichiro Tozuka. He is the superintendent General of Kyushu, the southernmost island of Japan. ~~He states~~ Tozuka states: "The enemy will certainly land here". He adds that preparations are being made to meet an American invasion of the island of Kyushu.

That is the most precise point to be noted in a general series of reports about invasion jitters in Japan. The Japs appear to be inflicted with the same kind of nervous apprehension that the Germans displayed just before the D-Day invasion of Normandy. They are doing all sorts of agitated guessing about the place where the next blow will fall. -- the most definite surmise being that of the superintendent general of Kyushu. He thinks his bailiwick will get it - and he may be right.

(2) The Japs report two powerful American task forces operating in a manner strongly suggestive of a new and important invasion blow. And from out side the word is that newly conquered Okinawa is being rapidly

transformed into a base from which another big drive will soon be launched. Okinawa is three hundred and twenty-five miles from the coast of Kyushu.

The final mop-up of Okinawa was marked by surrenders - civilians coming in and giving up. Soldiers also - some of these led by surrendering Japanese officers. *as Lowell has just told you.*

ADD PACIFIC

An afternoon bulletin from Okinawa pictures a scene that is certainly surprising -- after the way things have gone previously in the Pacific War. The bulletin tells of long lines of Japanese soldiers waving white flags. They came streaming out of their caves and fortifications and down the rocky ridge on which they had made their bitter last stand.

"The surrender parade lasted all day", says the dispatch. And it adds: "Many of the captives declared they had lost faith in Japan's ability to win the war".

(3) This was, as the news story notes, the first mass capitulation of Japanese troops in the conflict of the Pacific. The number of prisoners captured, as the battle ended on Okinawa, was greater than the previous total of Japs captured on all other fronts.

The trial is expected to begin during the late summer and to be completed by winter.

AIR WAR

With ground fighting on Okinawa at an end, the war in the Pacific is in a naval and air phase. Today B-29s hurled explosives on aircraft plants and a naval ~~arsenal~~ arsenal on Honshu, the main island of Japan. Four hundred and fifty superfortresses were in the assault, which carried the round-the-clock bombing of Japan into its seventeenth consecutive day.

POLAND

The Polish Government-in-Exile announced today that it is going to lodge an international protest against the conviction of twelve of the sixteen Polish leaders who were tried in Moscow -- the twelve were given prison sentences of varying severity. The protests will be made to President Truman and Prime Minister Winston Churchill.

And now, Goodnight.

TRIP TO THE JAPANESE CORRIDOR

GOOD MORNING, EVERYBODY:

(This is Lowell Thomas, still on the other side of the world. I tried many times to get through by short wave from Chungking. But the Chinese International Broadcasting Beam isn't so very international. I doubt if it covers half of China. The head of it, Mike Pung, told me we would get thro easily, to the States. But later I learned that not a word got thro; the station was not powerful enough.

And in hot Chungking, at 6:45 in the morning, that's discouraging.

Well, in the ten days or so that I've spent in China, I visited by air and by jeep the Provinces of Yunnan and Sikang, both about as remote as any parts of vast China; and also the Provinces of Szechwan, Kweichow, and Kwangsi, many parts of which,

so the Chinese tell me, have never yet been seen by Europeans; and where the Chinese of one section know nothing about the people a couple of mountain ranges distant. No railroads. And in many, many parts, no roads for wheeled vehicles of any kind. But nevertheless, with a big population -- and with many mountains intensively cultivated right to their summits.

When I crossed the Himalayas the other day, I foolishly thought I would henceforth be traveling over a great plain, like our Middle West. Instead, I've seen nothing but mountains -- and the weirdest, most precipitous mountains I ever saw, and I'm a mountaineer. Wilder even than our Black Hills, our Rockies, and the grim mountains of the Arizona Desert. My air journeys also have taken me over the upper reaches of four of the great rivers of the world; the Irrawady, the Salween, the Mekong, and the Yangtze, plus many others that rise amid the highest

mountains on earth, and from the lofty central Asian Plateau. We flew over literally hundreds of gorges and canyons that reminded me in some ways of the Grand Canyon of the Colorado, except that these in China are rimmed by high mountains, range upon range that seem to go on and on forever.)

It's the last of my trips on the mainland of Asia, that is, in China proper, that I want to report about this morning, because it has a direct bearing on the war we are now fighting with Japan.

But first, a few words about the situation as it stands at present:

The Japs, as you know, invaded Southern China, and came within a couple of hundred miles of Chungking. They did this for all or part of the following reasons: to include all of China within their sphere, to cause the downfall of Chiang Kai-Shek, to cause him to sue for peace, and as a part of their plan to hold Burma,

or at least hold onto Indo-China, Malaya, and the Dutch East Indies. But they way over extended themselves, as they now know; and with the Japanese homeland in grave danger they are shortening their lines and withdrawing to Central and North China, leaving forces in the South to hold out, if they can.

Today advance elements of the Chinese Armies, two hundred miles due north of the Gulf of Tonkin, have bypassed the Japs who have been left behind at the city of Ishan. About 150 miles northeast of Ishan, the Chinese are now fighting the Japs within twenty-five miles of the important city of Kweilin, an important center on their main north-south supply line which was recently cut, and from which they have pulled out. The Jap here is back to the line from which he started his March offensive, that is, on the East bank of the Tzu River. He may stand here and defend himself, or rather defend Hengyang,

150 miles still farther to the Northeast, because the Canton-Hankow railway has been cut between Hengyang and Hankow, making Hengyang the northern terminus of his railway running inland from Canton.

Jumping farther north - south of the Yellow River where he has been conducting an offensive since March, and where he captured our airbase at Lahokau, hoping to push on westward to the ancient Chinese capitol of Sian, he has been stopped by Chinese ground forces and Chennault's airmen, in deep defiles between eleven thousand foot mountains. The Chinese are even counter-attacking fifty miles to the South at Hsishikou. And that's a new experience for the Japs.

Aside from all this, the Japs are moving large numbers of troops north along the Ping-Han railway. It's all a big withdrawal towards the coastal areas and Peiping. And, they are trying to throw all the guerilla forces, both Nationalist and

Communist, out of the Shantung Peninsula, and they are building up their forces around Shanghai.

Their idea seems to be to get the entire area around Shanghai, and Nanking, firmly in their hands.

The troops that had evacuated Foochow are still moving up the coast. But as long as Formosa is held by the Japs, Foochow would be a difficult place for our people to move into and use as a port. The same holds true of the seaport of Swatow which he has abandoned. And he may be pulling out of Amoy. Meanwhile he has been building up his forces in the Canton-Hongkong area. He also has taken all of his troops out of the large island of Hainan, except a strong holding garrison.

That in brief is the simplest I can do at unraveling the military picture in China, as it is at this moment. But when I conclude in a few minutes, I will try and summarize it still further, in a few sentences.

(The ranking American General in the field in China, is Major General Bob McClure, a stocky, ruddy-faced, tough, hard-bitten veteran of the fighting against the Japs in the Solomons. He knows the Japs. He has licked them. And he doesn't doubt for a moment that he'll lick 'em to a fare-you-well in China. What's more, he has convinced the Chinese of this too.

General McClure asked me to accompany him on a trip, by jeep and by munitions carrier, to one of the wildest parts of China, the mountains of Kwangsi, where a lot of recent fighting has been going on, where the Chinese armies have been giving a better account of themselves. This is the region from which the Japs have been pulling out.

One object of the trip was to take General Ho Yin-Chin, former Minister of War, and now Chief of Staff of the Chinese Armies, down to that corridor. Also General Yu Fei-Peng, Minister of Communications. His aide calls him "the General Somervill of China."

General Yu Fei-Peng is a Chinese notable of large dimensions. If he wore the silk coat of a Mandarin of Old, and if you put him in a Sedan chair, he would look just like an old Chinese print.

It was blazing hot. The road was bumpy and dusty. General Yu, in his jeep, perspired copiously, and fanned himself furiously. Every time the jeeps would pull up because of a road block caused by pack trains, or water buffalo, General Yu's aide would run to the nearest stream or paddy field, and bring back a basin of water wherewith the great man would refresh himself and get ready for the next lap with its clouds of dust and the bumps that were mighty hard on the sacroiliac of General Yu Fei-Peng, and General Ho Yin-Chin, and your humble radio reporter. For days after this trip I found it more comfortable to stand rather than sit down while broadcasting from the radio station in Chungking.

To join General McClure, who was a day ahead of me, I flew from Chungking to Kweiyang, capitol of

the Province of Kweichow. There General Young Sen gave a send-off banquet in honor of the American and Chinese Generals and Colonel's and all the others who were going along. It was a spartan, wartime banquet of only ten courses, including, cold meats of six varieties with walnuts; soup for both the second and seventh courses, the stomachs of pigs and many mysterious delicacies, chicken roasted in the Chinese way; tripe, the best duck with boiled eggs that I ever ate, rice and many vegetables, dates and sweet potatoes for desert, and Chinese wine with every course.

It was what the American G-I calls a "ganbay" dinner, because someone was always shouting "ganbay!"

"GanBay" means, bottoms-up. What a way to get in shape for a long journey by jeep over the world's bumpiest mountain roads! During the banquet we were guarded by many Chinese soldiers, each with his revolver in his hand, at the ready. Eating done

entirely with chop sticks of course. Colonel Lacey Murrow, brother of my London colleague Edward R. Murrow, was my chop stick coach. Colonel Murrow, an army engineer is an "old China hand" and a talented chop stick manipulator.

Before dawn next morning we set forth from the walled city of Kweiyang. With a dozen jeeps and munitions carriers in our convoy, we headed for Mah-Chang-Ping.

Machang where we found a detachment of our American lads living in a Chinese Temple, and then on to Tuyun, Tushan and Mantan. I'm getting a lot of practice pronouncing Chinese names that will come in handy when I return home.

We inspected Chinese infantry and artillery outfits, bombed towns, motor equipment knocked out and strewn for miles; also miles and miles of huts occupied by the hundreds of thousands, millions, I guess, of refugees from the Coast who fled up this road. And

what was more important, the Generals inspected all the demolished bridges that have to be put back in shape in a hurry. And at one point General McClure marched everybody through a long building filled with sick and dying Chinese soldiers -- recruits who never should have been called into service because they were physical wrecks when they were sent into the army. General Yu fanned himself more furiously than ever while we were in that building.

By now we were in the country of the chocolate-drop mountains, thousands of separate peaks like green rice croquettes on a great platter; with paddy fields in between. Until recently Europeans never came here, except an occasional missionary, carried in a sedan chair.

An American aviator recently had a miraculous escape in these mountains; Lt. Col. Wm. E. Blankinship, second in command of a P-51 fighter outfit. The colonel had been strafing the Japs at Liuchow. Out here pursuit planes carry bombs. Blankinship came low

over Liuchow, saw a camouflaged area, and released a bomb. What he had spotted, without knowing it, was an ammunition dump. And the tremendous explosion not only blew up the dump but blew up him, and his plane. A wing was coming off. But it held till the pilot climbed to 2000 feet, and from there he bailed out.

He came down kerplunk in the mud of a rice paddy. Devoured by mosquitoes it was four days before he located an American liaison team in those chocolate-drop mountains. A Signal Corps colonel, N.L. Chamberlain of Grand Rapids, Mich., finally got him to Tushan.)

The story in these mountains is one of Japanese withdrawal, with the Chinese at their heels, harrassing them. But it's an orderly withdrawal.

The Jap campaigns in South China have not been worth the effort to him. He is now concentrating his forces in Central and North China. So far we have not met his main forces in this country; and he is

here in greater strength than he is in Manchuria.

Perhaps the most encouraging thing at present is, that west of Hengyang, at Paodhing, the Jap launched an offensive; and it is the first time that a Japanese offensive has been stopped, in China proper, since this long war started in Asia, since the incident at the Marco Polo Bridge.

And now, before I turn you back to Brooklyn Bridge -- last night, in the open air, on a hill above the Yangtze River, I sat with some American soldiers, looking at an American motion picture. At the very end of the final scene was a reminder of the Seventh War Loan Drive. It's hot out here in China this summer, hot and uncomfortable and a lot of other things for our American boys who are fighting the Japs here on the opposite side of the Globe. Some of them have been out here for two years, or more. They want to go home. If we all subscribe to the present War Loan it will speed the day when they can go home. And now so long, and all the way back to NBC in New York.

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June 25,
1945.