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THE OPERATIONS OF COMPANY "E", 503D PARACHUTE REGIMENT AT WHEELER POINT, ISLAND OF CORREGIDOR, PHILIPINE ISLANDS 23 FEBRUARY,1945 (LUZON CAMPAIGN)
(Personal Experience of a Company Commander)

Type of operation described: PARACHUTE COMPANY IN THE ATTACK

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*NOTE: Available sources of information failed to give adequate coverage of this operation after the date 22 February 1945. This was the official date of announcement that the island was secure. However, as was typical of Pacific operations, most of the fighting remained to be done. Source A-3 proved to be the only source available for information concerning operations on 23 February,1945.

THE OPERATIONS OF COMPANY "E", 503D PARACHUTE REGIMENT
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INTRODUCTION

Early February 1945 found the 503d Parachute Regimental Combat Team conducting a small unit training program on Mindoro Island, Philipine Islands. This period of training had followed the units' amphibious assault and seizure of Mindoro Island on 15 December 1944. (1)

This training program was halted abruptly on the 3d of February 1945 by orders from 6th Army Headquarters which alerted the Combat Team for a possible mission of seizing Nichols Field, Luzon P.I. (2) Preparations for the operation were started by all units according to standard operating procedures. The morning hours of 5 February brought orders canceling the mission, but in a off again, on again routine, the Combat Team was alerted again on 6 February 1945. The mission: (3) To seize and secure the Jap held Island of Corregidor, and to destroy all enemy forces on the island as part of the greater mission of securing the Manila Bay area of Luzon, P.I. (4) The facilities of the Manila Bay area were useless with Corregidor Island in enemy hands. (5)

THE REGIMENT IS ALERTED

PART I: PREPARATION

Preparation of an airborne operation requires detailed and tireless efforts of all personnel. The preparations for this mission included reconnaisance flights by officers and key non-commissioned officers, meticulous efforts of small units in preparing their ammunition and equipment bundles, flight plans, tactical plane loading plans,

(1,3,4,5) A-2, p. 1; (2) A-1, p. 2.

plane packing plans, and a numerous other details peculiar to airborne units and the approaching mission.

By 12 February 1945 all planning had been completed and all units received the RCT Field Order # 9. (6)

PART II: THE REGIMENTAL PLAN

Using terrain models, aerial photos and sand tables each man of the Combat Team was briefed on his part in the mission.

The preparation phase was closed at 0700 hours 16 February 1945 when the 3d Battalion 503d Parachute Infantry, Battery "C", 462nd FA Battalion, Company "C", 161st A/B Engineers and elements of Regimental Headquarters Company enplaned at Elmore and Hill Airstrips, San Jose,Mindoro Island,P.I., constituting the first lift. This Battalion Combat Team was to drop at 0830 , secure drop zones "A" and "B", support by fire the amphibious landing of the 1st Battalion, 34th Infantry Regiment at South Dock. Upon relief by the 2nd Battalion 503d Parachute Infantry, the 3d Battalion would attack and seize the high ground to the East and Northeast, and gain contact with the 1st Battalion, 34th Infantry. (7)

The regimental plan called for a new lift to leave San Jose at 1100 hours, 16 February. This lift would consist of the 2nd Battalion 503d Parachute Infantry, Battery "B", 462nd FA Battalion, Service Company and elements of Regimental Headquarters Company. This battalion combat team's mission was to drop at 1240 and upon landing relieve the 3rd Battalion of perimeter responsibility. Upon accomplishing relief of the 3rd Battalion, the 2nd Battalion would conduct operations to the North and West. (8)

A third lift had been planned consisting of the 1st Battalion, 503rd Parachute Infantry, Battery "A", 462nd FA Battalion, and the

(6) A-1, p. 2, A-4; (7) A-1, p. 2,A-4; (8) A-1, p. 2, A-4.

remainder of Regimental Headquarters company. This lift was to leave San Jose at 0700, 17 February 1945. Due to high jump casualty rate, and initial successes this unit was landed at Mariveles, Bataan Peninsula, Luzon, P.I. by air and moved from there to Corregidor amphibiously, arriving on Corregidor during the middle of the day the 17th. The mission for this Battalion was to direct its action to the South and Southwest. (9)

THE BATTALION PLAN

Except for a brief statement of specifically detailed missions the battalions were allowed a generally free hand in selecting the method with which to accomplish their assigned missions. The Battalion plans in substance follows:

Company "D",1st LMG Platoon attached. To assume responsibility for the Northeast and Eastern portion of the regimental perimeter. The company would also "mop up" in and around the Regimental perimeter. An inner perimeter was to be formed behind Company "D" by 3rd Battalion, Hqs. Company, and Company "I". (10) Map A.

Company "E",2nd LMG Platoon attached. To assume responsibility for the Northern and Northwestern portion of the perimeter, and be prepared to attack James Ravine on order. (11) Map A.

Company "F", 3rd LMG Platoon attached. To assume responsibility for the Southern and Southwestern portion of the perimeter and upon relief of Company "I" from the perimeter would attack Crockett and Wheeler Battery positions. (12) Map A.

Headquarters and Headquarters Company, to establish a command Post and Battalion Aid Station in the troop areas north of Drop Zone "B". (13) Map A.

81mm Mortar Platoon to set up gun positions within the perimeter in general support of the battalion.

(9) A-1, p. 2, A-4; (10,11,12,13) A-2, p. 10, A-4.

Company "B", 462nd FA Battalion to revert to Regimental control upon landing in direct support of 2nd Battalion.

"D" DAY, "H" HOUR - PLUS

From this point the narrative will concern Company "E", 2nd Battalion, 503rd Parachute Infantry.

Company "E" was loaded aboard its aircraft on Elmore Airstrip, San Jose, Mindoro Island,PI., at 1105, 16th February 1945. At 1244 the lead plane carrying Company "E" personnel was over Wheeler Battery (Map A). (14) This battery position was the "go" point. Seven seconds would be counted and then the men would jump. This seven seconds was necessary to allow for the strong wind blowing out to sea over the "Rock".

The landing experienced by the Company Commander was typical of that experienced by all the men making the drop on Corregidor.

I landed in the ruins of the concrete building at point #1, Map A. The building was three floors high. Upon hitting the top of the building my parachute collapsed and I tumbled through the ruins to the ground floor. The only serious result of the fall was to have seven teeth knocked out or broken off. The loss of the teeth was a fair exchange for possible death had I landed outside of the building. The ground around the building was being swept with intense enemy machine gun fire from pillboxes located at points 3 and 4, Map A. There were about fifty men of Companies "E" and "F" also trapped in the building by the machine gun fire.(15)

Out in the vicinity of point 2, Map A, several men could be seen, attempting to free themselves from their parachute harnesses and avoid the heavy enemy fire. Several of the men in that area did not move, they were still in their harnesses, and very evidently would never know what had hit them. (16)

(14) A-3, p. 11; (15,16) Personal knowledge of author.

Two men ran out from the cover of the building in an effort to help the men in that exposed position. One was killed and one seriously wounded before they had moved fifteen yards.

Almost simultaneously with the efforts of those men, fourteen Japs ran out from the vicinity of point 4, Map A, and attacked the men, around point 2, Map A, with bayonets, even those lying helpless on the ground. Virtually every man in the building opened fire and the Japs were driven off. (17) The attention of one of the men was gained, and told to keep all the men laying flat on the ground until help could be gotten to them. Men in the building were assigned vantage points and told to cover the men trapped in the open area. (18)

By using my SCR 536 I was able to contact Lt. Donald Abbott, Company executive officer, and tell him of the situation existing at this time. It was 1230 hours.

Lt. Abbott had jumped with the 1st lift at 0830 that morning, to establish laison for the company in assuming responsibility of the units position of the perimeter. Lt. Abbott stated that about sixty men had reached the assembly point in the West end of the long troop barracks building, north of drop field "A". He also stated that a whole "stick" of eight men from the third plane carrying men from Company "E" had jumped too soon and had drifted over the cliff edge south of Crockett Battery. (19) I reported to Abbott that there were men in the building with me and that I felt sure that many of the men at point 2, Map A, were from my 60mm Mortar Platoon. This proved to be correct when the men in that area were finally rescued.

Lt. Abbott was ordered to get the artillery to fire point blank at the pillboxes (points 3 and 4) as soon as possible. This was not accomplished until nearly 1400 hours when the welcome

(17,18) Personal knowledge of author; (19) A-1, A-2.

sound of the 75mm pack howitzers was heard, and fire from the pill-boxes abruptly ceased.

Men were hurriedly sent out from the building and began carrying the wounded men up toward the parade grounds. There were eleven dead, and fourteen wounded. There were over twenty enemy dead. (20)

Of the American dead and wounded, eleven were from the 60mm mortar platoon of Company "E", including the platoon sergeant, S/Sgt. Edward Gulsnich. Accounts given by the wounded at a later date, resulted in a posthumous award of the DSC to S/Sgt Gulsnich. These men stated that Gulsnich had been severely wounded during his descent to the ground. The Japs had started attacking the men landing in that area when the jump started at 1244, attempting to spear the jumpers on their bayonets as the men landed. Gulsnich had saved the lives of several men when he single handedly killed fourteen Japs with his TSMG. Gulsnich was finally killed by simultaneous bursts from the machine guns at points 3 and 4. He was attempting to drag a wounded man to the safety of the buildings at point 1, Map A. (21). (This was but one of the uncountable acts of courage and heroism that occured in the Corregidor Operation. It serves also as a background for the fighting to follow).

The time was now 1450 and the men of Company "E" moved up to the company assembly area. Reorganization of the company was started immediately. The reorganization required about forty minutes time. It can best be described by a few statistics, as follows: (22)

Company Strength at "H" Hours	7 off.	132 EM
Company Strength at 1530 Hours	6 off.	95 EM
Total losses, all causes	1 off.	37 EM

The breakdown of effectives, by unit was as follows: (23)

1st Platoon	2 off.	26 EM
2nd Platoon	1 off.	30 EM
3rd Platoon	0 off.	21 EM
60mm Mortar Platoon	1 off.	10 EM
Company Headquarters	2 off.	8 EM
Total	6 off.	95 EM

(20) A-3,p.14; (21,22,23) A-3, annex 1.

Total losses breakdown as follows: (24)

Killed in Action	5 EM	
Wounded in Action	11 EM	1 Off.
Injured in Action	12 EM	
Missing in Action	8 EM	
Total	37 EM	1 Off.

Of the eight men missing all were recovered early in the morning on the 17th of February. They were the men who had drifted over the cliff edge on the 16th. Pfc John F. Romero, later sergeant, had organized these men and they fought their way back up to "Topside" at day break the 17th February. Four of the eight men were evacuated due to wounds received on the 16th and 17th. Thus the company strength stabilized at 6 officers and 99 enlisted men by morning of the 17th. (25)

This was Company E's introduction to the "hard ole Rock".

THE ATTACK ON JAMES RAVINE

After reorganization on the afternoon of the 16th, Company "E" took over its assigned position of the perimeter and prepared defenses for the night. Due to the lateness of the day, Major Caskey, 2nd Battalion Commander, postponed the attack on James Ravine until the next morning. (26)

As the attack on James Ravine is not the main subject of this monograph, I shall narrate the action only in sufficient detail to describe the nature of the fighting in this sector of the island.

The company mission was to attack James Ravine with three objectives in view. First, destroy the enemy in the underground infantry barracks; second, determine the serviceability of the fresh water pumping station, known to have been in use in James Ravine at the time of Corregidor surrender in April 1942; (27) third, locate and destroy an electrical mine control system, believed to be located

(24,25) A-3, annex 1; (26) A-3, p. 17; (27) A-3, p. 18.

in James Ravine.

The mine control system was of paramount importance. Its existence was predicated by the fact that any attempt by naval vessels to pass between Corregidor and Bataan Peninsula was greeted by the explosion of mines in the path of the ships. The premature touching off of these mines indicated a given sector of observation, which the Navy believed to be centered in the vicinity of James Ravine. (28)

James Ravine was a narrow, precipitous defile, averaging about 300 feet in depth. The only feasible areas of movement were the network of roadways that followed the contours of the ravine, gradually leading down to the ravine bottom. The floor of the ravine was widest at the beach, being about 150 feet wide at this point. The floor tapered back about 10 feet in width. The center of the ravine floor was cut by a concrete drainage ditch. At the base of the west wall of the ravine were the entrances to the underground infantry barracks and to a powder magazine. (Map A) The pumping station was located on the beach at point 7, Map A. A concrete pillbox was situated so as to cover the beach and the roadways at point 9, Map A. Estimated enemy strength, from 150 to 300. (Captured documents and P.O.W. interrogation later set the enemy strength at about 500) (29).

The initial attack on the ravine was made with a reinforced platoon at 0800 the 17th of February. The platoon followed the roads on the east side of the ravine. By 0905 the platoon had advanced against heavy sniper fire and machine gun fire to point 9, Map A. The pillbox at this point was reduced by 1000 hours, and the platoon had moved about 50 yards past the pillbox when the

(28) A-3, p. 18; (29) A-3, p. 19.

Japs opened up with four machine guns from the vicinity of point 8, Map A, on the west side of the ravine.

Advance was stopped at this point and went no further on that day. The combined efforts of the 81mm mortar platoon, a section of LMG and a shelling by a destroyer, ~~was~~ were necessary to extricate the platoon from the trap the Japs had sprung on them. It was not until 1610 that afternoon that all the men had been withdrawn from the ravine. (30)

Company "E" again attacked James Ravine at 0730, 18 February, following an air attack by P-47's loaded with Napalm and 1000 pound demolition bombs. One platoon advancing down the road on the west side of the ravine and one platoon down the roads on the east side of the ravine.

The Japs bitterly contested every foot of advance made. 1714 hours found the company had been able to only reach a point on the roadway just above the underground infantry barracks on the west side of the ravine, and had advanced no further than point 9, Map A, on the east side of the ravine. The company broke contact and returned to the regimental perimeter for the night. (31)

At 0900 hours the 19th of February, the company again launched an attack against James Ravine. The plan of attack was the same as on the 18th. There was no other way to attack and maintain the advantage of fighting from high ground. (32)

The lateness of the hours of attack must have confused the Japs, as no resistance was met until the platoons reached the limits of their advance on the eighteenth. Three machine guns were found abandoned, set up in firing position, and amply supplied with ammunition. The advance had been extremely cautious and the time was 1015 hours. (33)

(30) A-3, p. 19; (31,32,33) A-3, p. 20 - 21.

A loud commotion was heard in the bottom of the ravine, followed by a barrage of fire from the platoon at point 9, Map A. Japs were streaming out of the entrance to the underground barracks. It was slaughter. Sixty five Japs were killed before they stopped coming. Apparently they were rushing out to man their defensive positions.(34) Why they had not maintained security is a secret known only to the Japanese.

With fire placed on the entrance to the underground barracks to keep the Nips inside, demolitions were prepared around the tunnel entrance, and placed in the ventilation shafts. Five gallon cans of napalm, which had been carried for the purpose, were put in the ventilator shafts also. The resulting explosions ended, for all time, organized resistance in James Ravine. (35) Fires were still burning inside the barracks, two days later.

The first objective of its mission finally accomplished the company moved to the pumping station, only to find that it had been destroyed beyond all hopes of repair. This information was reported immediately as the operation was existing on the meager supply of water that could be supplied by air. (36)

Squads were now sent out for a systematic search of the ravine for a cave that might contain the electrical mine control system. Great care had to be exercised while moving around on the beach. It had been heavily planted with the Japanese "Horn" type mines.

At 1620 the control system was found in a cave located at point 8, Map A. One man was killed during a brief skirmish inside the cave. Fourteen Japs were killed during this short fire fight. ~~The value of~~ The TSMG was again proven to be a very potent weapon.(37)

The mine control system consisted of about 100 knife switches, connected in series to a power source of six storage batteries, each

(34) A-3, p. 20-21; (35) A-1,A-2,A-3; (36) A-1; (37) A-3.

about the size of G.I. footlockers. Leads from the switches led to a cable about six inches in diameter. This cable led underground and subsequently to the mines off shore. The entire system was destroyed with demolitions. (38)

The three objectives for the company now accomplished, the company returned to the perimeter for the night.

Mopping up, and closing of ~~cover~~ caves occupied the efforts of the company the 20, 21, 22 of February. (39)

The following data can best sum up the six days of action in James Ravine. (40)

Our casualties:	8	KIA
	2	DOW
	11	WIA
	1	Sick,hospitalized.
Enemy casualties:		
	211	KIA (physically counted)
	1	POW (civilian engineer)
	250	(believed to have died in the underground barracks)
~~Cover~~ caves closed:	19	
Pillboxes destroyed:	1	
Weapons captured:	1	20mm AAA
	3	LMG
	2	Heavy MG
Weapons destroyed:	173	Rifles

Lt. Whitson, platoon leader of the 1st platoon, was the only officer lost to enemy action. He had been temporarily blinded by a Jap grenade. Lt Abbott was hospitalized by a severe attack of jaundice.

~~Then~~ The afternoon of the 22nd of February found Company "E" reorganizing for its attack on Wheeler Point. Company strength was now 4 officers and 71 enlisted men. (41)

THE ATTACK ON WHEELER POINT

PART I: PLANNING

Reorganization of the company the afternoon of 22 February 1945 resulted in reconstituting the 2nd and 3rd platoons to a strength of 1 officer and 28 enlisted men (3 - 9 man squads and a platoon sergeant.) (38,39,40, 41) A-3, p. 23 - 25. COMBINED?

A 60 mm mortar platoon was made up of two, four man squads, one radio operator, a platoon sergeant and one officer. Company headquarters consisted of the first sergeant, a radio operator, and one sergeant to act as operations and supply sergeant. (42)

, While the reorganization was being physically made the company commander reported to the Battalion C.P. to receive his order for the attack on Wheeler Point.

Company "E" would relieve Company "C", 1st Battalion, 0730 23 February, at Searchlight Point and destroy the enemy in that area.

After receiving the Battalion Commander's instructions, Lt Lawrence Brown, Bn. S-3, and I moved to the cliff edge overlooking Wheeler Point. (Map A) From this vantage point most of the area between Searchlight and Wheeler Points could be oberved. It was about 1800 hours and the rapidly setting sun cast an ominous mixture of dark shadows and a red glow over the entire area. The scene below the cliff edge sent a cold chill running up and down my back.

The only area for movement was the narrow remains of a bomb cratered roadway about one half the way up the cliff face, and the beach which was only about 50 feet wide at its greatest width. The beach was compartmented by Searchlight, Unknown, and Wheeler Points. The roadway and the beach between the points of land were completely devoid of any cover that was visible in the fast approaching darkness. Enemy emplaced on the points of land could lay fire on every inch of ground between them. This job would be a very "tough nut to crack".

It was now too dark to see the ground clearly so Lt. Brown and I moved back to the C.P. There we began a detailed study of oblique aerial photos taken of this area two days previous. A study of all intelligence data available.

(42) A-3, p. 27.

The study of the photographs indicated fortified caves at points 1,3,4,5,and 6. (Map B) Concrete fortifications at points 8 and 9. (Map B) A fortified tunnel entrance at point 7. (Map B) This tunnel entrance led back to the underground magazine of Crockett and Wheeler Batteries. (Map B) The tunnel was clearly the strongest position. (See relative location in the area on Map B. See cross section diagrams of the position, Diagram I) Thanks must be given to the intense bombing and shelling the island received for clearing away the heavy tropical growth that normally would have hidden most of these positions completely.

S-2 estimates had arrived at an enemy strength of between 175 and 200 in the area from Searchlight to Wheeler Points. Captured documents and P.O.W. interrogation identified the enemy as being part of the Endo Force, the only enemy unit to effect a coordinated attack during the operation. (43) This attack, 300 strong, occured during the early morning hours of 19th February. Was only repulsed and annihilated after several hours of intense fighting. The attack penetrated as far as the 2nd Battalion and Regimental C.P.'s. The Endo Force was composed principally of Imperial Japanese Marines and Naval personnel. Enemy known weapons consisted of machine guns and rifles.

The company was to be supported by one destroyer, a demolition assault team from regimental headquarters company, and by two bazookas and a section on LMGs from a position on the cliff edge above Wheeler Point. Detachment of 592nd JASCO and Detachment of 6th SAP would be in position at the cliff edge also; their mission to direct the naval fire support and any air attacks required. Aircraft on air alert status were maintained over the island at all times. It required never more than five minutes to

(43) A-1, p. 3, A-2, p. 8.

get an air strike on a desired target. (44)

Two LCM's were to be placed oncall for evacuation of wounded and as another means of withdrawal in the event the company was cut off from the rear.

Administrative details were cleared up and at 2030 the company plan of attack was given to the personnel of Company "E". It was in substance as follows:

1. We will pass through and relieve Company "C" at Searchlight Point tomorrow morning at 0730 hours. From there we will attack Wheeler Point, with the mission of destroying the Japs in that area.

2. (a) Japs are between 175 and 200 in strength, are well set-up in caves and concrete positions. The tunnel entrance at Wheeler Point is strongly fortified. Will probably have most of our trouble there. "C" Company hasn't been able to move past Searchlight Point for two days.

   (b) Dog and Fox will be "mopping up" around James and Wheeler Batteries.

   (c) 1st and 3rd are going to make an all out push down the "tail of this damn rock" starting at 1000 hours.

3. (a) Lt. Corder, your platoon plus a section of LMGs will attack along the road. Recommend you use one squad leading, followed by the LMGs. Will need lots of bullets, and probably in "damn" short order. Be prepared to assist Crawfords platoon on the beach by fire.

   (b) Lt. Crawford, your platoon plus a section of LMGs will attack along the beach. I feel that you will be wide open every time you come around one of the points. Therefore you will not, repeat, not move around the points until I give

(44) A-1, A-2.

you the order to do so. As I see it now, Corders platoon will have to advance to each point before he can adequately cover your advance. When you do get the signal, come around fast. (Note: Crawfords combat experience totaled the 7 days we had been on Corregidor, and although to date he had shown a tendency to be premature in his commitments, he was rapidly developing into a fine combat leader. However these additional words of caution were believed necessary to insure against slip-ups.)

(c) Cpl. Hill, I want your crew to follow behind the 2nd platoon on the roadway. Be prepared to assist in the assault of the fortified positions.

(d) Lt Ball, your mortar platoon will follow the demolition squad. You ARE responsible for covering the companies rear, and FOR supporting the attack by fire when called for.

(e) Lt Davis, attach a section of guns to Crawfords platoon and keep one section yourself for direct support of Corders platoon. Maintain your platoon headquarters with Company Headquarters, which will be at the rear of the 2nd platoon.

(f) 1. We will have a destroyer for our artillery support. The usual air alert squadron will be available.

2. Lt. Brown will be upon the cliff edge with two bazookas and a section of LMGs. He can give us some support if the situation gets too bad.

3. JASCO and SAP will be with Lt. Brown.

4. We will assemble on the NW corner of the parade ground at 0600. Will issue ammo, rations and water at that time. Twenty minutes allowed for the issue. Will take five minutes to form our column and move out at 0630. That should get us to Searchlight Point about 0700 hours.

4. (a) Rifle platoons: 1½ units of fire.

(b) LMG's: 2 units of fire.

(c) 60's: 2 units of fire.

(d) Battalion S-4 will have our supplies broken down into unit piles by the time we assemble.

(e) Will only take 1/3 of a "K" ration. S-4 says he'll have all the 10-1 we can eat when we get back tomorrow night.

5. (a) We'll use SCR 536 and messengers in the company net.

(b) SCR 300 used to contact Lt. Brown. He'll have wire laid to Battalion.

(c) I will be with the 2nd platoon in rear of the lead squad.

6. Any questions? Well, thats the "poop", try and get some rest tonight. See you in the A.M. (45)

THE ATTACK ON WHEELER POINT

PART II: SEARCHLIGHT TO UNKNOWN POINT

Good fortune smiled on Company "E" the night of 22-23 February. Only one minor attempt at infiltration was made on the company perimeter. The men got a reasonable nights rest.

Right on schedule the company assembled, picked up their supplies and moved out at 0630 hours on the "nose". 0655 hours found the company closing on Searchlight point.

A hasty conference was held with Lt. John P. Rucker, C.O., of Company "C". At 0705 hours "C" company moved out to join the 1st Battalion at South Dock. (46)

Lt. Rucker had stated that each time he had tried to move around Searchlight Point, the first man around had been killed by the large volumes of fire from Unknown Point. To lend emphasis to this fact was the body of a man who had been killed not fifteen minutes before.

(45) Personal knowledge, A-3 p. 29-30; (46) A-3, p. 31.

The man had looked out around the point too far. Sniper fire, apparently, was extremely accurate. In spite of this the area had to be looked over. (47)

I managed to work my way out toward the tip of Searchlight Point and under the concealment of some small shrubs, had an excellent point of observation. From here I could see that our initial basic plan would work satisfactorily. Working my way back to the roadway, I had a brief conference with the assembled company officers and settled the final details of the plan of attack. (48)

I would take the radio and go back out on the point and direct fire from the destroyer on to Unknown Point. When registered in, I would have the destroyer give Unknown Point a good five minute "pasting" from top to bottom.

Under the cover of the artillery fire, Davis would set up his machine guns and when the artillery lifted, traverse and search the top of Unknown Point until told to lift his fire.

Lt. Corder was to move his platoon around Searchlight Point under cover of the artillery fire, and when it lifted move in on Unknown Point, covered by the machine gun fire. (49)

SAP was contacted on the SCR 300 and a ranging round asked for. Three minutes later the destroyer had fired, the round landing, gun-target line, halfway up the vertical side of Unknown Point. A correction of "Repeat deflection, up 400" was given. The second round hit the roadway, point 2, Map B, dead center. "Repeat deflection, up 400" was given as the correction again. The third round was gun-target line about 50 yards above the roadway on the face of the cliff. Needless to say, that was good enough for me. In fact my mouth was hanging open in amazement. Three rounds, ten minutes time, and a perfect bracket. The Navy can really shoot!

(47,48) A-3, p. 31; (49) A-3, p. 32.

The time was now 0730. (50)

SAP was told to lay it on and almost instantly the destroyer began throwing out five gun salvos with mechanical precision. It was later learned that the destroyer had been compiling firing data with her range control instruments since daylight.

During this time Lt. Crawford had taken his platoon down to the beach.

At 0735 hours the fire was lifted and the machine guns opened up. The entire 2nd platoon had moved fast and was entirely around the point. (51)

The lead squad had reached a position near point 1, Map B, when two wild rifle shots came from the tip of Unknown Point. These shots were followed immediately by a burst of machine gun fire, coming from the vicinity of a smashed up Jap truck at point 2, Map B. The burst was high and did not cause any casualties, but did pin the men down.

Using the SCR 536, the fire of the LMG on Searchlight Point were given the truck as a point target. This fire coupled with two well placed rifle grenades, stopped the enemy fire. Cpl. "Moose" Elder, scout of the lead squad rushed forward and neatly dispatched two Nips with his M1. Elder's move was quickly followed by the remainder of the squad. The LMG fire was lifted, and as the men moved out to the tip of the Unknown Point, a lone Jap committed honorable "Hari-Kari" with a hand grenade. Time was now 0810. (52)

This one platoon had reached Unknown Point. The next move was to advance the platoon on the beach to Unknown Point.

Unknown Point from the level of the roadway down to the beach was vertical on its south side and sloped between 80-90% on its north side. The point was relatively flat from the roadway out to its lip.

(50) A-3, p. 32; (51,52) A-3, p. 33.

A flat surface of between 10 and 20 feet in width extended from the roadway to the tip. In the center of the flat area was an earthen parapet about 25 feet long extending along the long axis of the point. At the extreme end of the point was an open gun pit. Another gun pit had been built under the truck.

The earthen parapet was about 6 feet high and afforded excellent cover for men to operate on its south side. Any movement in the vicinity of the truck drew sniper fire from Wheeler Point.

From the gun pit on the tip of the point it was possible to see and fire directly into the natural cave at point 4, Map B. Also, the opening of the barricaded cave at point 5, Map B, could be seen. It was possible to fire into the cave at only a very sharp angle. The small cave at point 6 could not be seen , nor could it be seen or fired upon by the LMGs still on Searchlight Point. Therefore the section of guns were now brought forward to Unknown Point.

Lt. Crawford was told to start around Searchlight Point and that he would have to cover the cave at point 6 with his own fire. The platoon on the roadway would drop WP grenades in front of the cave to screen observation as his platoon moved around the point. It would also give him a chance to set up a LMG to cover the cave by fire. The platoon on Unknown Point would also keep a high rate of fire on the caves at points 4 and 5. 0820 was given as a coordinating time.

Six W.P. grenades were dropped at 30 second intervals in front of the cave at point 6 and two BAR men kept a steady stream of fire pouring into the cave at point 5. The LMGs had been set up on Unknown Point and were able to depress just enough to fire into the cave at point 4.

Under the cover of this "crazy quilt" pattern of fire Lt. Crawford was able to set up one LMG and start firing into the cave at point 6. The gunner sat in ½ foot of water. The gun was placed on a small hummock of coral. The fire of this gun was effective. Three Japs tried to run out of the cave at point 6 and were immediately cut down. They carried a Nambu Light Machine Gun.

With the enemy opposition eliminated at point 6,Lt. Crawford shifted his machine gun fire to the cave at point 5, Map B. At this point the fire from Unknown Point was lifted, but had to be resumed immediately as the Japs in the cave at point 5 opened fire for the first time. They were firing from small loop holes in the barricade across the front of the cave. This Jap fire prevented any movement by Lt. Crawfords platoon. Therefore the fire from on top of Unknown Point was resumed, and was effective enough to stop the enemy fire from the cave.

Lt. Crawford quickly sent four men up to the cave at point 4, Map B. These men tossed grenades inside the cave and immediately followed the grenades, firing from the hip as they moved in. Very shortly the men reappeared, dragging four rifles and a Browning Automatic Rifle out of the cave. The BAR apparently had been captured in 1942, judging from its "beat up" condition. Lt. Crawford reported that 7 Nips had been killed. (53)

While the four men were working on the cave, Crawford had moved his platoon around Searchlight Point and well up on to the beach. In this position they were out of the line of fire from the cave at point 5. Also they were in a position to flank the cave. At this time a fine display of teamwork occured.

As his machine gunners kept a steady stream of fire pouring into the cave entrance at point 5, Lt. Crawford worked his way up to the cave and tossed in two W.P. grenades. Simultaneously, with

(53) A-3, p. 33.

the detonation of the W. P. grenades, the machine gun crew picked up their gun and raced for the safety of the beach. The success of the maneuver brought cheers from the men on top of Unknown Point.

Reduction of this cave position was accomplished in the following manner.

To accomplish the job of clearing out this cave called for courageous action. Lt. Crawford again led the way.

In order to get effective fire into the cave, which angled back from the cliff face, it was necessary to cross in front of the cave and fire from directly in front of the cave or from the northwest side. Lt. Crawford, using a TSMG, started across the entrance to the cave firing bursts as he moved. In this manner he reached safety on the other side. Although several shots were fired at him from the interior, he was not hit except for one canteen, punctured!

From his vantage point he kept firing into the cave and gradually more men moved out in front of the cave. In this way a terrific volume of fire was built up. The Japs still continued to fire from inside the cave. To add to the consternation of the men fighting the cave position, a shower of hand grenades were thrown out of the cave. The grenades were followed by eleven charging Japs. Only two Japs managed to get over the barricade across the cave entrance alive. The rest were killed while climbing over the barricade. Of the two who managed to survive thus far, one was killed when he grabbed the barrel of a BAR with both hands. It proved to be a very foolhardy step to take. The other Jap was knocked down with a butt stroke by one of the riflemen, and his skull crushed. When the man followed his butt stroke by smashing straight down on the Jap's head with his rifle butt, this Jap proved to be the last Jap alive in the cave.

Examination of the cave, at point 5, Map B, found a total of 47 dead Japs, 41 rifles and a badly damaged heavy machine gun. Our own

casualties were five men slightly nicked by fragments of the Jap grenades. (54)

A trench capable of holding about 12 men had been dug across the interior of this cave. This accounted for the Japs being able to withstand the tremendous volume of fire being put into the cave, and stage their little Banzai attack.

A summary of the situation was sent by radio to Lt. Brown at this time. A total of 59 enemy KIA, our own casualties 5 slightly wounded. The area between Searchlight Point and Unknown Point clear of the enemy. The time was 1105 hours. (55)

Lt. Brown stated that he had been trying to call me for nearly an hour to tell me that the destroyer had developed some kind of trouble and had to leave. Another ship would not arrive until sometime between 1215-1245 hours.

As further advance without the destroyer's support would be foolhardy it was decided to give the men a rest and allow them to eat their "K" ration. It was also a chance to make further detailed, step by step plans for the final assault on Wheeler Point.

THE ATTACK ON WHEELER POINT

PART III: UNKNOWN POINT TO WHEELER POINT.

It can be said that the company's success up to this point created a false degree of over confidence, causing the company commander to overlook an important detail: that of ammunition! The men started out with a unit and a half of fire. Over a half unit of fire had been expended! Failure to check this item thoroughly was a result of fighting in thick jungle. Seldom before had the men used as much as a half unit of fire in a day's fighting. As a result all personnel failed to realize that during the morning we had used as much ammunition as we normally did in a whole day's fighting. This error was

(54) (55) A-3, p. 34.

to be bitterly felt later that day. (56)

Close and detailed study of the intervening 400 yards of space from Unknown Point to Wheeler Point indicated that the same routine should be followed as had been followed during the morning. The platoon on the roadway would have to advance before the platoon on the beach could be moved forward.

The roadway, or what used to be a roadway, was a curved, barren slope of loose sand and boulders and debris. It was entirely covered for a space of 50 yards east of the tunnel entrance at point 7, Map B. At point 10 the road had made a shallow cut. A five to six foot wall of earth existed on the outside edge of the road at this point. This earthen wall was approximately 30 yards in length. It would provide suitable cover from small arms fire from Wheeler Point. On either side of the road cut, the only protection afforded from enemy fire would have to be provided by fire power and an unfailing faith in God.

Another problem was brought into immediate view in studying Wheeler Point. The point leveled out, somewhat as did Unknown Point, however, it formed a knife-like ridge leading out from the face of the cliff into Wheeler Point. It was also about 15 to 20 feet higher than the level of the roadway at the tunnel entrance, point 7, Map B. Moreover the sides of the ridge were almost vertical. A small ledge, wide enough for a man, extended from the roadway up to the pillbox at point 8, Map B.

As the terrain was carefully studied, Lt. Corder briefed each man in the platoon on the terrain to the front. It was felt, however, that one squad would have to be maintained at the tunnel entrance when we reached the tunnel, and casualties be replaced with single men of the other squads as the casualties occurred. There was not room enough to relieve a squad intact should the attack require it.

(56) A-3, Personal Knowledge.

One squad would be held as a reserve and covering force at the road cut.

Supporting weapons were disposed as follows: 60 mortars emplaced behind the earthen parapet at point 2; one LMG in the gun pit on the tip of Unknown Point; and one gun in the gun pit under the wrecked Jap trench. The tunnel entrance at point 7 and the pillboxes at 8-9 would be pounded by the destroyer prior to moving out toward Wheeler Point.

Just at 1215 one of the lookouts in the gun pit at the tip of Unknown Point reported that he could hear movement below him. This was on the northwest side of the point. Pfc Robinson unconsciously looked out over the edge of the cliff and was shot squarely in the center of his forehead, killing him instantly.

It was impossible to place fire on this side of the cliff without completely exposing one's self to the enemy. Lt. Brown was called on the radio and asked if he could discern any movement on that side of the point. He reported that the men on the cliff could see a small opening in the side of the cliff but no movement. However the area around this opening was "posted" with 12 Bazooka rounds, and thoroughly sprayed by machine gun fire. One Jap was seen to roll down the cliff side just below the gun pit. Thus the company received its first KIA of the day's fighting.

At 1225 the replacement destroyer arrived about 2000 yards offshore. Contact was made with SAP, and they were told to register on points 7-8-9, Map B. When ready, they were to fire on the points designated in the order of 9-8-7, the bulk of fires to be placed on point 7, Map B. SAP stated that he could register on points 8-9, but could not see point 7 well enough to be effective. Therefore it was decided to have SAP register points 8-9 and the company would register point 7.

By 1245 the destroyers stated that they had sufficient data, but would have to move out to 4000 yards in order to insure good coverage of point 7. At 2000 yards, Wheeler Point partially masked their fire. Some of the registering rounds had struck Wheeler Point when aimed at the tunnel entrance. The ship would require 10 minutes to get into position. As a result the preparation was to be started at 1255 and end at 1305. (56)

Lt. Corder was instructed to advance two squads as far as the road cut during the naval bombardment of points 7 and 8, advance from there would be covered by LMGs and the covering squad when it had moved to the road cut.

With exacting punctuality the destroyer started shelling the pillbox at point 9. Four salvos completely pulverized this concrete emplacement. The fire was shifted to the concrete emplacement at point 8, but due to a large outcrop of rock on the extreme tip, only one round hit the emplacement, doing little damage. This was a bad omen as it meant the Japs had a strong fortification from which they could place fire on us at will. The destroyer then shifted its fire to the tunnel entrance. Placing a total of 9 salvos on the entrance. Many of the rounds went directly into the tunnel entrance .

As methodical as a clock the naval fire lifted at 1305 and the machine guns started their covering fire. Lt. Corder moved his men forward.

The shelling had had some effect as no enemy fire was received until the leading man reached a point about five yards from the outer wall around the tunnel entrance. (See figures 1 and 2, Diagram No. 1) About that time all "Hell" broke loose.

Nine Japs charged out of the tunnel entrance hurling hand grenades as they charged. A machine gun started firing from the side port of the concrete emplacement at point 8. The men moving in on the tunnel entrance had cautiously been advancing by bounds. Consequently all but one of the men were in the prone position, and only the one man standing up was hit.

Apparently the Japs were blinded somewhat by coming out of the dark tunnel into the bright sunshine. Most of their grenades were thrown over the cliff. Also as they charged straight out of the entrance and ended up at the outer wall, there was a moments confused milling around. The full blast of the machine guns and the lead squads weapons, hit the Japs. All were killed in a moments time.

One LMG was now given the sole mission of firing at the single firing port in the emplacement at point 8. The other LMG was to watch for targets of opportunity, paying particular attention to the ridge above point 8, Map B.

With the lifting of the machine gun fire from the tunnel entrance the Japs inside began to fire rifles at random out of the entrance. By having the riflemen of the 2nd squad, in line, fire into the tunnel entrance the 1st squad worked its way, by crawling, to positions around the outer wall of the entrance. (See figures 1 and 2, Diagram No. 1).

At this point a stalemate was reached, that lasted about 35 minutes. The Jap fire from the tunnel was so intense that it was impossible to gain an opening. Study of Fig. 1, plate 1, will explain this situation. In order to put effective fire into the tunnel a man had to expose his entire body, wherein the Jap had only to expose his head and shoulders to fire across the outer wall. Grenades thrown in the tunnel had no apparent effect, although

an occasional scream could be heard over the sound of firing when W.P. grenades were used. All available W.P. grenades were then passed up, and used, without effecting an advantage that was noticeable.

Our position outside the wall had one advantage, Jap grenades either fell inside the wall or over the cliff side just past the outer wall.

In order to effect a decision of some sort the company commander went forward to the entrance and had the BAR men of the 2nd and 3rd squads as well as the TSMG men of these squads come forward and work into position around the outer wall. The plan to be executed was to have all men throw a hand grenade into the entrance simultaneously and then follow this up by standing up and spraying the tunnel with all the automatic weapons.

The first attempt with this plan was not too successful and one man was killed and two wounded by heavy fire out of the tunnel. (57)

By crawling around and coaching each man in front of the tunnel to throw their grenades just over the wall across the tunnel entrance and to direct their fire low and deep into the tunnel, a second attempt of the plan was set up.

With all men watching for the signal I raised my carbine over my head and the men threw thier grenades almost as one man. At the same time they stood up pouring very heavy fire into the tunnel. Jap fire slackened perceptably, and much shouting and chattering could be heard through the momentary breaks in the firing.

Suddenly the Jap firing stopped. This resulted in a slowing down of our fire. Two men, Pfc W.A.Brown and Pvt. Jandro, moved cautiously toward the entrance, and were almost to the wall across the entrance, when 14 Japs came swarming out of the tunnel, we had been nicely "sucked in".

(57) A-3, Personal knowledge of author.

The Japs grabbed the two men, and a Jap officer started hacking at Pfc. W.A.Brown, with his saber, using ~~with~~ short choppy strokes. The men outside the wall moved in firing from the hip, and engaged the Japs hand to hand. The advantage was ours, in having weapons. The Japs had charged with only hand grenades, and the officer, with his saber, had the only hand weapon. An almost humorous tug of war took place between the men of the 2nd platoon and the Japs for possession of Jandro and Brown. This scrap lasted nearly 10 minutes. It ended when Jandro and Brown were retrieved and the Japs dead or wounded. Brown was seriously wounded (died of wounds on the 25th February), but Jandro wasn't seriously injured, but was considerably battered up by his own helmet which the Japs used as a bludgeon. Most of the other men had recieved a few hard knocks but not serious enough to impair their efficiency.

We were just getting organized again when the Japs opened up with intense rifle fire again from the tunnel entrance. This fire was high for some reason. The men, flushed with their hand to hand skirmish, did not hit the ground and were in an excellent position to meet the next Banzai charge that followed the enemy rifle fire. 17 Japs were killed in this effort.

It was at this time that I noticed Lt. Emory Ball in the firing line and immediately ordered him back to his mortar platoon. (Failure to obey this order given Lt.Ball, at this time, resulted in his useless death about 20 minutes later.)

As Lt. Ball departed to the rear, the Japs mounted another Banzai charge. It was preceded by a shower of hand grenades, most of which went over the heads of the men outside the tunnel and over the cliff. Several however,detonated with some effect.

Seven Japs charged but were killed as soon as they broke out of the tunnel entrance. Several men were hit by small grenade fragments, including the company commander. Two of the men were sent back to the road cut and told to send two more men forward. Unnoticed by the company commander, one of the men to come forward was Lt.Ball.

Silence from within the tunnel followed the last Banzai. The men prepared for another charge. All were beginning to feel the strain of the past 2 hours and a half. Time was now about 1530. (58)

There was about 5 minutes of waiting, punctuated by an occassional shot from the tunnel which was immediately answered by a burst of fire from the men outside the tunnel.

Then the build up started. First there was a few scattered shots, which steadily grew in violence. Pvt. Jandro, of the hand to hand skirmish, was hit five times, and was killed instantly. Lt. Ball was hit twice in the chest and staggered over and fell in front of me. (I will never forget the mixed emotions I felt, seeing one of my men die in front of my eyes as a result of disobedience of my orders.)

Almost on the instant of Lt. Balls death the Japs charged, 22 strong. Two Japs charged with such violence that they leapt over the outer wall and tumbled on over the cliff. Their efforts carried Pvt.Jonas over with them. Jonas,however, managed to grab the stubble of a bush and save himself. Another Jap succeeded in grappling with Pfc Kirkpatrick, who killed the Jap with his trench knife. The rest were killed by small arms fire.

As this attack subsided, Lt. Corder told me that some of the men had no ammunition. Word was passed back to send forward all ammunition that could be gathered up. Two BAR magazines and two bandaliers of rifle ammunition were all that were produced. Lt. Davis sent word forward with the ammunition, saying that his LMG's

had but 50 rounds for one gun and less than 50 rounds for the other. They had even sent down to the section on the beach and gotten all but 125 rounds of their ammunition.

The decision to withdraw was made immediately and the platoon started carrying Brown and Pfc McBride, who had been wounded in the last Banzai charge, back to Unknown Point.

While this was going on two shots from a point above the tunnel entrance hit my radio operator, T/5 George A. Chuses, one hitting him in the hand, the other shot struck the radio putting it out of commission. This was trouble from a new quarter. The LMG section sprayed this area with their remaining ammunition. An uncomfortable silence settled on the area as the ammunition was used up.

Lt. Corder, my radio operator, and the few remaining men in front of the tunnel, were ordered to run for it. The order was promptly complied with.

As the men started to the rear, I fired a clip of ammunition, hoping it might be at least harassing to the Nips smipers, then I cut loose and really ran for safety. I can say, without shame, that I arrived at the road cut to the rear right on the "tails" of the group I had sent back a moment before.

The men watching from Unknown Point later stated that several Japs raised up over the ridge at point 8, Map B, and opened up on us as we crossed the exposed ground between the tunnel and the road cut. I wasn't aware of it at the time. However, T/5 Chuses life was apparently saved by the radio on his back. It now had three holes in it, instead of one.

The time of withdrawal recorded by the 1st Sergeant was 1615. (59). The company had been fighting approximately 9 hours to cover a distance of about 700 yards.

(59) A-3, Personal knowledge of author.

The 3rd platoon had not been employed during the afternoon attack. After the destruction of the pillbox at point 9, Map B, it was deemed unnecessary to commit the platoon. Too, had the enemy attempted to cut off our rear, he would have had the entire company contained in the compartment formed by Unknown and Wheeler Points. There was not room enough for employment on the roadway level to make possible the platoon employment there.

Lt. Brown, seeing the company start to withdraw, had called for an LCM to meet us South of Searchlight Point to pick up our dead and wounded.

The bodies of Lt. Ball and Pvt. Jandro had not been evacuated from Wheeler Point. The danger of losing more men in the process was not deemed worth the risk at that time. Sometimes during the night of 23 - 24 February, the Japs removed their dead as well as the bodies of the two Americans and subsequent patrols did not find a trace of them.

After placing the dead and wounded aboard the LCM some of the more fatigued men were also loaded and instructed to ride ambulance jeeps back to "topside" when they reached South Dock. The remainder of the company worked its way back up to the parade ground and headed back for their perimeter positions.

I believe the intensity of the attack on Wheeler Point can best be understood by what happened as the company filed back across the parade ground toward the Troop Barracks.

Small groups of men stood in tight little knots along the parade ground. As the company passed each group, men would break away and walk up to men in the column, offer a cigarette, a canteen of water, or lift the mans' weapon from his shoulder and

follow along beside the column silently. Some tried to help the tired men along, but were firmly shaken off. It was a proud company! Although tired beyond reason, they held their heads high.

ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

Looking back on the operations of Company "E" on the 23d February 1945, means looking back on the entire span of the assualt on Corregidor Island. It was not a normal operation. From its conception in plan to its closing date of 8 March 1945, it was not a normal operation.

It seems ludicrous today, to realize that the conduct of the operation was to hold a small tight perimeter in the center of "topside", and then each day strike out and retake the ground that had been taken the day before.(60) Yet, this was how it had to be done. Whoever held the "topside" or high ground, controlled the Island. To relenquish the hold on "topside" meant defeat. Such a statement can be no more aptly proven, than by the reason that the Japs, who held the almost impregnable defenses on the outer rim of the island, had, in 20 days, been defeated in detail.

To hold "topside" against the ingenious, tunneling Japs, as well as the outer rim and ravines, would have required a force several times the size of units used.

The operation as a whole was brilliantly concieved and effectively accomplished. It was typical of the startling successes achieved by General MacArthur forces in their drive toward Japan.

The success of the operation clearly demonstrates the effectiveness of men who know their jobs, what tools they have to work with, and possess the skill and courage necessary to close with and defeat the enemy.

(60) A-2, Personnal knowledge.

In ~~compairing~~ comparing the relative cost of an air assault against the relative cost of an amphibious landing against Corregidor, the jump casualties suffered can be more than balanced off by the terrific cost in casualties suffered by the Japanese in their conquest of Corregidor in April 1942. (61)

Many of the basic principles of war were violated during the operation as a whole and in the action at WheelerPoint.

The principle of mass could not be obtained due to the small rugged drop zones, and the limited areas of maneuver after reaching the ground.

Surprise was initially exploited to the maximum. The Japs so failed to anticipate air assualt that they did not react to the situation for nearly an hour after the initial drop. It is without question of doubt in the writers mind that Japs could have prevented the recapture of Corregidor, in at least this first attempt, ~~by stopping the 1st lift~~ Had the Japs attacked the 1st lift when it first landed, with the man power that was found to be on the island at the time of the drop, or soon after the landing of the 1st lift, the Japs wouldhave annihilated the initial landing force.

The enemy's failure to mount a large scale counterattack at this time or later was one reason for his downfall.

The failure of the enemy to effect any large scale coordinated attacks was due to a failure in his basic concept of the defense of the island. The Japs did not tie in their defense sectors with adequate communications. Their communication nets were all laid on the surface, "topside", consequently shelling and bombing destroyed most of it. Actions of the attackers destroyed ~~what~~ the little communications that remained open to the enemy. (62)

Throughout the Corregidor operation, and as emphasized by the attack on Wheeler Point, definite, specific objectives were assigned.

(61) A-11; (62) A-2.

New missions, in no instance, were given to a unit until it had completed the one initially assigned. This procedure, as well as non-interference in the method of accomplishing a mission, led to greater efficiency and initiative on the part of small unit commanders.

The element of maneuver was virtually non-existant. The very nature of the terrain left no choice but direct assault on enemy positions. Full use was made of field expedients, however, to destroy the enemy in his underground positions . The number of enemy killed and buried alive will probably never be determined. Enemy casualties physically accounted for numbered5773. (63) Later, unofficial newspaper accounts boosted the total to about 8000. These reports came from the Engineer units inspecting the underground installations of the "Rock" about a year later. It is interesting to note that 14 months after the fall of Corregidor, a group of 20, well fed and equipped Japs walked out of Wheeler Battery. They were totally blind. This was from a radio newscast heard by the author. (64)

Specific analysis of the attack on Wheeler Point does show that the plan of attack was sound and that the best solution to a difficult situation was accomplished.

The enemy suffered 110 KIA that could be counted physically. (65) How many Japs had been killed and wounded within the tunnel, and the destroyed pillbox on the beach, will undoubtedly never be known. Company E's losses were 3 KIA, 1 DOW, 4 WIA (evacuated) 11 SWIA (not evacuated) (66)

A serious error was made in not making a proper ammunition check when the attack was halted at Unknown Point. This mistake resulted in the company having to withdraw from Wheeler Point at

(63) A-1, A-2; (64) Personal knowledge; (65) A-17,Sec. III; (66) A-3, p. 59.

a time when I believe further efforts for a very short period of time, would definitely have resulted in the destruction of all but a very few of the remaining enemy. In addition the withdrawal would not have been so dangerous had we been able to properly cover the withdrawal with fire.

The use of the LMG as an overhead close support weapon, in spite of all accepted doctrine, proved to be a deciding factor in the troops reaching Wheeler Point over extremely exposed terrain. This was particularly evident in the close support given while attacking Unknown Point at the roadway. It was further exemplified by the 3rd platoon in attacking the cave position at point 5, Map B.

A proper terrain analysis would have prevented the tying up of a JASCO team for an operation that could not have made use of the teams services. A correct analysis would have shown on the evening of the 22nd February, that air attacks on the cliff face would be dangerous to other troops, and would not be of sufficient value to warrant the clearing of a bomb line "topside". (I believe this company commander was carried away with the thought of so much support.)

LESSONS

1. The LMG in the hands of skilled personnel is a weapon that can be used with extreme effectiveness as a close support weapon.

2. Ammunition requirements for a given operation should not be predicated on a previous operation unless it is to be against similar terrain, enemy in strength and dispositions.

3. Men moving forward when under fire suffer less casualties and achieve greater success. The relentlessness of his forward

movement rattles the enemy and his defense becomes progressively weaker and less cohesive. As in the case at Wheeler Point, once the tunnel entrance had been reached, the Japs reverted to his useless tactics of "Banzai". This, as usual, resulted in his complete destruction.

4. Use of bayonets in the hand to hand fighting at Wheeler Point would have prevented any doubt as to the outcome of the skirmish. In both cases cited the attackers were outnumbered. Although the Jap is no match for a paratrooper in this act of close combat, bayonets would have provided a positive margin for success. More emphasis should be placed on this phase of an infantryman's training.

5, The fire control instruments that can be used aboard naval combat vessels insure an accuracy of fire not obtainable by land based mobile artillery.

6. Too great a stock should not be placed in Intelligence enemy strength estimates. When war is being fought in jungle and island areas, many instances would show that Jap commanders themselves did not know their exact troop strength. (estimate on Corregidor, 850. Japs KIA 5773) (67)

7. Shifting of personnel from platoon to platoon within a company is feasible and necessary in an operation of this nature. Lack of replacements and high casualty rates make this expedient necessary to maintain combat efficiency.

8. Squads of 7 to 9 men were extremely effective and easier to control. In limited areas of maneuver and in close terrain, the 10 - 12 man squad is too unwieldy for one man to effectively control.

(67) A-1, A-2.

9. Absolute and close adherence to discipline and orders must be followed at all times to insure proper behavior and efficiency while in combat. Permitting the company officers to wander around even to a limited degree during training periods can cause such a practice to be followed in combat. Failure to obey orders was the direct cause of Lt. Ball's death.

10. The practice of training each parachutist how to handle all types of weapons paid dividends in facilitating the shifting of personnel within the company in order to maintain a cohesive combat unit. On the 16th some men were able to, and did, step in as crew members on the 75 howitzer and performed in an exceedingly satisfactory manner.

11. No defense, however strong, can long repel the efforts of an aggressive, well trained infantryman and his supporting arms.

12. TSMG is unequaled in close combat and is outstanding in its effectiveness in cave and hand to hand combat.