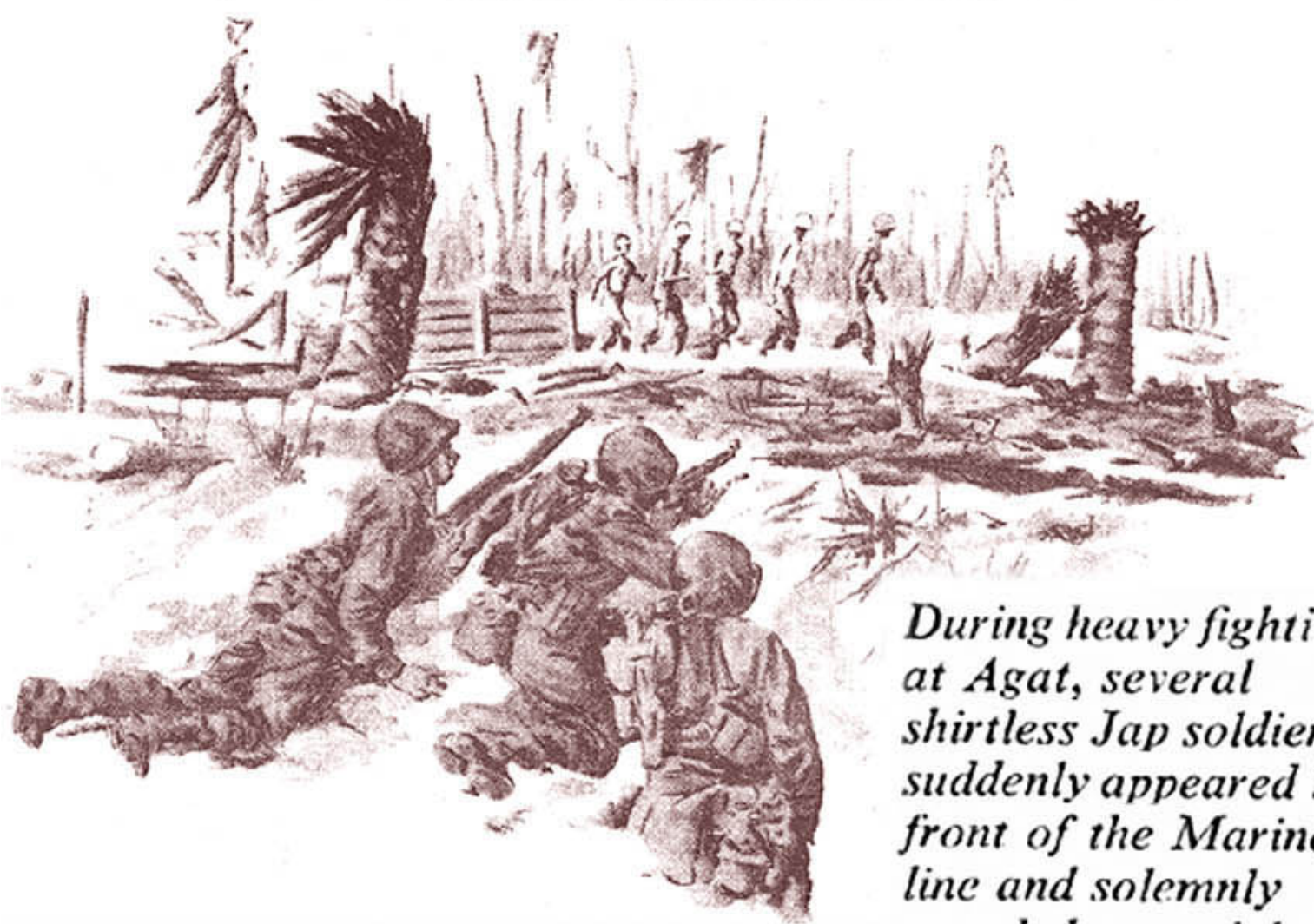


True tales of the fantastic and
funny battle antics of the Japs . . . as witnessed
by our Marines fighting in the Pacific



During heavy fighting at Agat, several shirtless Jap soldiers suddenly appeared in front of the Marine line and solemnly paraded up and down

These Nips are nuts

by

Sgt. Herman Kogan, USMC

WHEREVER they have fought in this war, the Japs have shown an amazing aptitude for the queer and fantastic. They have staged solemn funeral processions in the midst of hot battle. They have blown themselves to bits with hand grenades, have stabbed themselves with daggers, sabers, bayonets, and even with scythes. They have plunged forward in stupidly blind "Banzai" charges. They have danced wildly atop ridges while exposed to American fire. And they have directed artillery action while lounging in hammocks.

Some of these acts are part of their ancient philosophy that it is glorious to die for the Emperor. Some are designed to terrorize and demoralize the foe, so that he will respond with a burst of rifle or machine-gun fire and thus reveal his position. And some are so freakish that they defy explanation.

Whatever the motivation, these strange things have been etched sharply on the minds of Marines who have witnessed them in every campaign of the Pacific war and who have been chilled, angered, puzzled—and even amused—by them.

In the third week of the battle for Saipan, Marines had fought their way to within sight of Makunsha village. Then the Japanese began one of the most furious—and futile—counter-attacks of the campaign.

One of the few who witnessed this Banzai of Banzais was Marine Lieut. Col. Lewis B. Rock, publisher on leave from the Dayton, Ohio, *Journal-Herald*, now serving as assistant operations officer for the Fourth Marine Division.

From his vantage point high on a mountain, he saw thousands of Japs headed for the American defensive positions. At their head were half a dozen soldiers bearing a huge, blood-red naval flag.

"It was like a throwback to medieval battle scenes, gripping and dramatic," said Colonel Rock.

But that which followed in the wake of these front-line soldiers was even more startling. Related Colonel Rock:

"It was an unbelievable spectacle. Following these troops were the enemy's wounded. There were men with bandaged heads, men without arms, men on crutches, the great majority of them unarmed. They were tagging along, sometimes a mile or so behind the fighting troops, to participate in this last Banzai charge, to have the privilege of dying for the Emperor."

Two days later, the ground between Tanapag and Makunsha was covered with the bodies of these Japs who had made the vain assault. And on the Saipan coastline lay the huge red naval battle flag, now a prized Marine trophy.

On a smaller scale, but no less ferocious or crack-brained, was the exploit of a Japanese officer on Guam who led 9 men in a suicidal attack on a forward command post in the Tumon Bay area.

In the light of a full moon, they leaped from the jungle, shrieking and stomping wildly. The soldiers were cut down instantly by Marine grenade and rifle fire. But the officer, clutching a wound with one hand and waving his saber with the other, lurched on. He staggered into a medical aid station and wounded four corpsmen before rifle and pistol fire finally ended his foolish foray.

Such saber rushes, invariably ineffectual, are common in front-line fighting in the Pacific. A Jap troop leader, either to impress his own men or presumably frighten the enemy, has often leaped out of a foxhole and rushed singlehanded against his adversaries.

The Marines who fought on Guam will not soon forget the "Dancing Officer" or the "Trumpet Player."

The first appeared one day on the crest of a hill about 1,400 yards from the American lines.

"There he was," related Corp. Donald S. Griffin, of San Jose, Calif., "jumping up and down, cutting this way and that. Maybe he was exhorting his men, but it's my guess he was going through some sort of ritualistic dance. Or maybe he was trying to impress us with his bravery by doing a dance while exposed to the enemy."

The "Trumpet Player" was a Jap who pulled a similar stunt on Guam, except that he stood on the hill and blew on a long horn, similar to the kind blown at New Year's Eve parties.

SEVERAL other Japs also showed the Marines some fancy didos on Guam. During the heavy fighting on the Agat front, they suddenly ran out of an emplacement. All were shirtless. First they paraded solemnly in single file in front of the Marine line. Then they moved forward 10 paces, backward 10 paces, then forward again. They executed this step several times before they were shot down.

And there was another Jap on Guam with more nerve than sense. Just before the opening of a Banzai attack, this Nip jumped to the crest of a ridge above the Marines.

"One, two, three, you can't catch me!" he shouted.

Two dozen 30-caliber bullets promptly proved him wrong.

nuts

This eccentric could easily have been first cousin to the Jap on Eniwetok who took a shot at Pfc. Richard Kyhill, of Brooklyn, N. Y., and missed. So irate was he at his poor marksmanship that he threw his rifle away and waved his hands in the air.

"He started hollering and screaming," said Kyhill. "He was really sore. And then he started swearing. Bad language always annoys me. So I shot him in the head."

Sometimes these weird things the Japs do verge on the near-heroic, although, in a military sense, they constitute useless expenditure of life.

On Guam, several waves of Japanese infantry charged a squad of huge 34-ton medium tanks. One of the infantrymen drove his bayonet into the periscope of a tank driven by Sgt. Joe Rzesutek, of Oxford, Conn., before he was mowed down. Another jammed a grenade down the barrel of a 75-mm. cannon and held his hand over the cannon barrel so the grenade would not drop out. The explosion blew his hand off.

These are some of the incidents Marines will always remember with a puzzled brow. And there are others.

There is the attack by a band of Japs on one of the Marshall Islands in which each wore an oversized gas mask and uttered hideous cries, as if they hoped to freeze the Marines into terror-stricken inaction.

There is the Jap artillery officer who was discovered lying in a hammock slung high aloft between two trees near Charan Kanoa on Saipan. He was directing artillery fire by radio.

There is the memory of a group of Japs who stormed a hill on Cape Gloucester, shouting, "Gimme back my hill; gimme back my hill!"

And there are the Jap cries and shouts. And trickery that sometimes backfires.

The "crazy howls" were first heard on Guadalcanal. They came at night—shrieks and blood-curdling yells from the darkness of the jungles. They were intended by the Japs to frighten the Marines into a state of complete inability to fight.

THE battle cries of the Japs have become familiar to thousands of Marines, too. "Banzai!" and "Marines, you die!" and "Marines, we kill you!" and "More blood for the Emperor!" are common enough, but on Cape Gloucester, one unit of Japs tried a new one. As they stormed a Marine strong point in a hopeless attack, they yelled, "To hell with Babe Ruth! To hell with Babe Ruth!" This cry, however, was no more profitable for the Japs than the others. The Marines wiped them out.

When they surrender, Japs often do so in curious—and sometimes humorous—ways.

At Alulu Bay, New Britain, Marines were pursuing Japs in flight from Cape Gloucester toward an embarkation point. When the Leathernecks caught up with the enemy, the Japs hurled their rifles in the air and fell to their knees. Some of them bumped their heads on the ground repeatedly. Others smote their palms with their foreheads.

Another prisoner, who bowed and scraped all the way to the Command Post, was engaged in conversation with an interpreter for a long while. It finally developed that all he

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really had to offer was this comment on the arts:

“In Japan I go to movies one and two days a week, sometimes three. Tell me, how are Miss Jean Arthur and Mr. Cary Grant?”

One of the strangest surrenders of a Jap officer occurred on Guadalcanal. After a close battle, Marines discovered five officers, clad in full regalia, ready to commit suicide. Before they could be stopped, the Japs stabbed themselves—according to rank. By the time four of the officers had committed hara-kiri, the fifth man, a warrant officer, had a change of heart. He threw away his dagger, shrugged, thrust his hands in the air, and disconsolately surrendered.

