This MARINE killed 200 Japs



A Marine is hard to kill when he's mad, even when he's blinded and his machine gun blasted to junk, within spitting distance of Japs. Pvt. Albert A. Schmidt, 22, of Philadelphia, lived to tell how he killed 200 Japs while manning a machine gun on a Guadalcanal river bank, Aug. 21, holding them off with his automatic after the machine gun was hit by a grenade. Here's his story, as told from a hospital bed at San Diego to Marine Pvt. Bart Copeland.

I WAS WITH two buddies, Johnny Rivers of Philadelphia and Lee Diamond of New York, the squad leader, watching for a Jap attack from across the river. Our outfit had been waiting for two weeks and we were pretty sure something was about to break. We figured the outfit was outnumbered about 10 to 1 and didn't intend to be caught napping.

About 1 a.m. on August 21 the three of us in the machine gun nest spotted a black mass moving across the stream. Rivers started firing while I fed, and Japs started falling in the river. Then a machine gun slug from the other bank caught Johnny in the face.

I grabbed the gun and Diamond took over the feeding job. We were in a tough spot, as the next Yank machine gun nest 150 yards downstream had been silenced and the only other defense was anti-aircraft fire upstream.

The Japs kept sending units of 35 to 50 men into the river. Diamond got a slug in the arm, which left me the double job of feeding and firing.

One of our amphibian tractors had broken down earlier in our stay on the island and had been abandoned temporarily in midstream. It was in dark shadows from the treetops and I couldn't see it from where I was. The Japs succeeded in setting up the machine guns inside the metal shell of the "amphib." That gun tried to get me repeatedly but somehow it didn't.

Some of the Japs must have gone up-river, crossed and backtracked to climb up coconut trees near our nest. Bullets started zooming down at us as if they were fired from treetops.

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Pvt. Schmidt, on left, talks it over with Cpl. Diamond.

Before long the water jacket on the machine gun was shot full of holes and the water started spurting around my lap and chest. The gun was blistering hot and I thought to myself it wouldn't be long before it jammed.

Meanwhile Diamond had picked up his Reising automatic and was trying to work it with one hand. I thought I heard the movement of feet on the river bank just outside our barricade of sand bags. Diamond sprayed the river bank with lead and the movement stopped.

I had just mowed down a particularly big party when all hell broke loose in our hole. What must have been a hand grenade hit the left stirrup of the machine gun and blasted it into junk.

The heavy bolt handle, I was told later, was knocked off, miraculously missing my face and grazing the upper part of my shoulder. My helmet was knocked off. Something struck me in the face. Everything got dark. I put my hand to my face and eyes and felt blood and raw flesh.

While we lay there motionless, the Japs in the trees sent a steady downpour of bullets that chipped up dirt all around us, ripped through our sandbags and splattered soil into my wounds. It seemed as if my head would split open with pain.

I was working around to get my automatic. Diamond saw me and said:

"Don't shoot, Smitty! Don't shoot yourself!"

I laughed.

"Don't think I'll do that," I replied. "The first Jap that jumps in here will be on the receiving end of this .45."

"But you can't see."

"Tell me which way he's coming—I'll try to get him."

We lay there for hours. Once a lieutenant jumped in and gave me a shot in the arm. An hour or so later a Navy Hospital Corpsman, Whitey Jacobs of Boston, dashed to us through a rain of bullets. He gave us some water and promised help as soon as possible. Then he was off to help somebody else. He was one of the pluckiest fellows on the island.

It must have been eight or nine o'clock in the morning when two lieutenants helped us out of that hole. The firing had died down. The Japs had failed to break through and had paid heavily. The fellows told me that alone I had mowed down more than 200 of them and elsewhere my outfit had given a good account of itself.

The Japs that outnumbered us so badly were supposed to be their finest. Many of their dead wore medals.

One of our Marines almost went crazy when he discovered what was in the pocket of one of the Japs he had shot. It was a set of American dog-tags.

They identified his brother—a Marine at Wake Island.

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