

► *The Marines and his Bible class learn  
how to wrestle with the enemy from*

## DREXEL BIDDLE: GENTLEMAN TOUGH

By J. P. McEvoy

**I**F YOU should go to the big Marine training base at Quantico, Virginia, you would see Colonel Anthony J. Drexel Biddle, a courtly gentleman of 67, personally throttling hundreds of young huskies and being throttled by them, standing on guard by the hour in the dust and the sun as lusty young leathernecks come at him with bayonets and knives which he skillfully parries. Then you could watch him teach the deadly tricks of personal combat — the murderous technique of bayonet fencing and knife fighting, how to cut the opponent's hand and throat with one graceful move, how to slip a bayonet between the enemy's ribs so it won't stick.

Colonel Biddle has studied the refinements of rough and tumble fighting all over the world. Today, though a great-grandfather, he is erect, soldierly and vigorous, with more snap and endurance than many of the burly young recruits, scores of whom he overpowers in daily hand-to-hand training bouts.

The name Anthony J. Drexel

Biddle combines two of the oldest and starchiest Philadelphia families, but there has never been anything starchy or stuff-shirt about "Tony." As a child on the island of Madeira, he was fascinated by Portuguese playmates who carried knives in their belts and were proficient in handling them. Later, he went to school in Switzerland and Heidelberg, and came back to Philadelphia to attend St. Luke's private school, where his Old World manners and European courtliness were misunderstood by his American schoolmates. "I was too polite," says Colonel Biddle, "so I had to learn to fight."

He learned so well he finally became amateur heavyweight champion of the country. And, though of medium height and weighing less than 175 pounds, he held his own in sparring contests with all the heavyweight champions from John L. Sullivan to Gene Tunney.

In 1895, he met seventeen-year-old Cordelia Rundell Bradley, daughter of a Pittsburgh coal magnate, and fell madly in love with

her on sight. He went home and sent her an enormous bulldog — “with its teeth sticking out ferociously” — and a card attached saying, “This is from Tony Biddle, whom you just met.” Biddle arrived immediately after the dog, announced he had come to marry the frightened lass. She reports, “I didn’t dare refuse him.” They have lived happily together for forty-seven years, and have three children. Tony Biddle, Jr., also a famous athlete, was our ambassador to Poland when the German invasion came, and is now doing a delicate State Department job in London with the exiled governments of Nazi-conquered countries.

Young Biddle scandalized Philadelphia society by taking a job as a waterfront reporter on a local newspaper and later building a prize ring behind his house and boxing professional fighters just for the hell of it. He even seconded “Philadelphia Jack” O’Brien when he fought Stanley Ketchel and New York society gasped to read of a Drexel and a Biddle wearing gray shoes and an old sweater, swinging a towel in a prize ring.

Biddle also startled the Philadelphia blue bloods by a public exhibition of strength in which he would drive a two-foot broomstick into the earth, leave a few inches

exposed, and then yank the stick out with his teeth. “The Gentleman with the Iron Jaw” they called him. Then he completely baffled everybody by starting a Bible class in Holy Trinity Episcopal Church, on Rittenhouse Square. Here he preached a muscular Christianity that became so successful with the young folks that Drexel Biddle Bible classes eventually spread to Ireland, England, Scotland, Australia and South Africa. He used athletics on week nights to bait the young men, organizing teams of all kinds — but then would allow only good Bible students on the teams. Later, in the World War, he organized Bible classes back of the lines. “One of my best students,” he boasts, “was a quiet little 138-pound cockney who never said anything worse than ‘gracious!’, but he was the champion bayonet killer of the British Army.”

Colonel Biddle’s original Bible class, started by him nearly forty years ago, still meets every Sunday evening in the parish house in Philadelphia and the Colonel faithfully takes time out each week from teaching Marines how to kill with bayonets and bare hands to revisit his little flock, lead them in prayers and hymns and give them Bible lessons which are picturesque, to say the least.

The night I attended as his guest, I sat in a row of little old ladies. Their eyes shone with excitement and their cheeks glowed like winter apples as Colonel Biddle retold the story of the great General Joshua, and then automatically slid into a gory exposition of how fighters today are trained to cut and stab, kick, gouge and bite, and otherwise make themselves obnoxious to the enemy.

Then Colonel Biddle told the little old ladies and gentlemen of his Philadelphia Bible class about the famous Colonel Bowie, how he lay on his death bed and fought off nine Mexican Indians who were attacking him with tomahawks. Colonel Bowie reached under the pillow for his Bowie knife, which was always at hand, and killed seven of the Indians before he was overcome. "The Bowie knife is a wonderful weapon," Colonel Biddle told his hard-breathing Bible class. "It was born in mortal combat. Once, while fighting a duel, Bowie's sword broke off but he killed his opponent with what was left of the sword. He found he could get along just as well with half a sword, so he made a knife that long and combined, for the first time in history, fencing skill with knife fighting."

The little Bible class shivered

with excitement as Colonel Biddle now warmed up to his subject. "I went out west to the Colonel Bowie country and studied the Bowie knife. Previously, I studied the Spanish knife and every other kind of over-hand and under-hand knife fighting — but none of the knife fighters of these other countries ever learned the hand cut." And here Biddle graphically illustrated what he meant by taking the hymn book and fencing with it, showing how you shouldn't attack your opponent directly with the knife, but slash at his knife hand. "That's the first thing I teach a Marine," said Biddle, "then I teach him how to slash the knife hand and his opponent's throat with one continuous movement, like this."

It was easy to see that Colonel Biddle's Bible class had a unique charm of its own, and why many of its members tottered over every Sunday night to be there. Following his dissertation on knife fighting, the Colonel dipped into the New Testament and retold the story of Christ driving the money changers out of the temple. "Our Savior was a fighter," said Biddle, proudly but reverently. "He didn't call for the guards, he rolled up his sleeves and did the job himself. Personal combat!" And with that,

Biddle was back with the Marines, explaining the subtle refinements of bayonet fighting to his palpitating Bible students. "You hold your gun sideways like this, you see," illustrating with the hymn book, "then the bayonet can be slipped in between the ribs and can be pulled out again without sticking." The little old lady beside me nodded admiringly. It seemed highly logical to her and besides, if Colonel Biddle said so it must be so, for where else could you find such a combination of piety and soldierly ability? And such manners, too, such Old World charm. "What a lovely red dress you are wearing this evening," said Colonel Biddle gallantly to the little old lady sitting beside me, and then passed down the line to distribute more posies to his tremulous flock. "My, he is such a gentleman," cooed the little old lady.

Which may have been one of the reasons Colonel Biddle had such a hard time making up his mind about his vocation in life. At various times, he tried being a scientist, an explorer, a concert singer, a poet and a publisher. He played tennis of tournament caliber, was president of the Philadelphia Fencing Club, an instructor in broadsword, organized the Drexel Biddle Social Workers, and was the first

president of the Baby Welfare Association. In his spare time, he was publisher for his friend, Bob Fitzsimmons, who wrote *Physical Culture and Self-Defense*, and later Biddle himself wrote and published several unsung masterpieces entitled, *The Froggy Fairy Book*, *The Flowers of Life*, and *Shanty Town Sketches*. It was also Biddle who made prizefighting "smart," promoting professional bouts which introduced the evening dress mob to the fight crowd. When the gorgeous Georges Carpentier came over in 1921 to fight Jack Dempsey for the title, it was "Tony" Biddle who boxed him in an exhibition contest. The ring was set up in the Hotel Commodore ballroom and was completely surrounded by top hats and tiaras, white ties and orchids.

At the outbreak of World War I, Biddle organized the Philadelphia Military Training Corps, credited with training more than five thousand young men for military service in camps, which later became the model for Plattsburg. Early in 1917, he quietly enlisted in the Marines as a private and went overseas. He soon won his captaincy, was later promoted to major, and retired in 1919. In 1926, he was recalled to active service by the Marines to train

exhibition personal combat teams invited to perform as part of the Sesquicentennial. Biddle not only taught these teams, but engaged in the hand-to-hand fighting himself.

Among those who were impressed was the Philadelphia Chief of Police, who asked Biddle if he would teach his police force some of the Marine tricks of self-defense. "One policeman a week is being killed in this town," he told Biddle. Biddle took over the job and taught eight thousand policemen how to take a knife or a gun from an armed thug, and a few of the essential subduing and come-along tricks of Judo. The death rate of Philadelphia cops fell appreciably, and then the FBI became interested. Biddle, who loved his work, started teaching the G-men — and he still does — all he knows about handling the most desperate characters. And that is plenty, for Biddle has made a hobby of studying methods of self-defense used by the cleverest police of all nations.

"I spent a month going around the Apache quarters of Paris with one plainclothes detective," says Biddle. "This fellow carried no arms — all he needed to capture the toughest knife-wielding Apache was a short piece of string."

When I looked incredulous, the dignified Colonel Biddle rose from

our table in the middle of the staid and proper Bellevue-Stratford dining room and said, "Come at me with a knife." "You mean here?" "Why not?" said Colonel Biddle. Why not indeed? I picked up a table knife and went for Colonel Biddle. Quick as a cat he was behind me, his napkin tightly twisted around my throat. "That's what I mean," he murmured as my face turned a delicate black.

Later, we were discussing Marine tricks in the lobby. "Here," he said, "is a sure way of defending yourself even if you are on your back and the other fellow is standing over you with a bayonet." Colonel Biddle dropped on the floor in front of the desk and stretched out. "Come," he invited, "stand over me. You've got a bayonet. Stick me and grunt." I didn't grunt. I groaned, for Colonel Biddle hooked one foot behind my left heel and at the same time kicked my left knee viciously. He could easily have broken my leg.

Biddle has always scorned the use of scabbards and insisted that Marines come at him with bare knives. His arms are a mass of scars and his fingers are gnarled and crooked where they have been broken. But it is hardly to be expected that Colonel Biddle, at

sixty-seven, can always get away from bayonets and bare knives in the hands of enthusiastic young Marines. A few weeks ago, he was stabbed in the groin and laid up in the hospital for a week. Now the authorities insist that he use scabbards, which annoys the old boy no end.

For Biddle's most important contribution to Marine fighting is the adaptation of his skill as a fencer to the use of the bayonet. Also, since the Marine has been called upon to serve in many knife-fighting countries (in Asia, Europe, Central America, Africa and South America the knife is the chief fighting weapon), Biddle perfected a technique of using the bayonet as a knife. The practical value of the Biddle training has been officially attested by two Marines who, caught with their bayonets in their belts by a force of twenty machete fighters in Nicaragua, successfully hand-cut their way to safety.

Biddle's officially endorsed *Manual of Instructions on Individual Combat* for the Marines is called *Do or Die*, and is subtitled "Showing Advanced Science in Bayonet, Knife, Ju Jitsu, Savate and Boxing for Those Whose Duties May Lead Them into a Tight Spot." Tucked away under the polite heading of

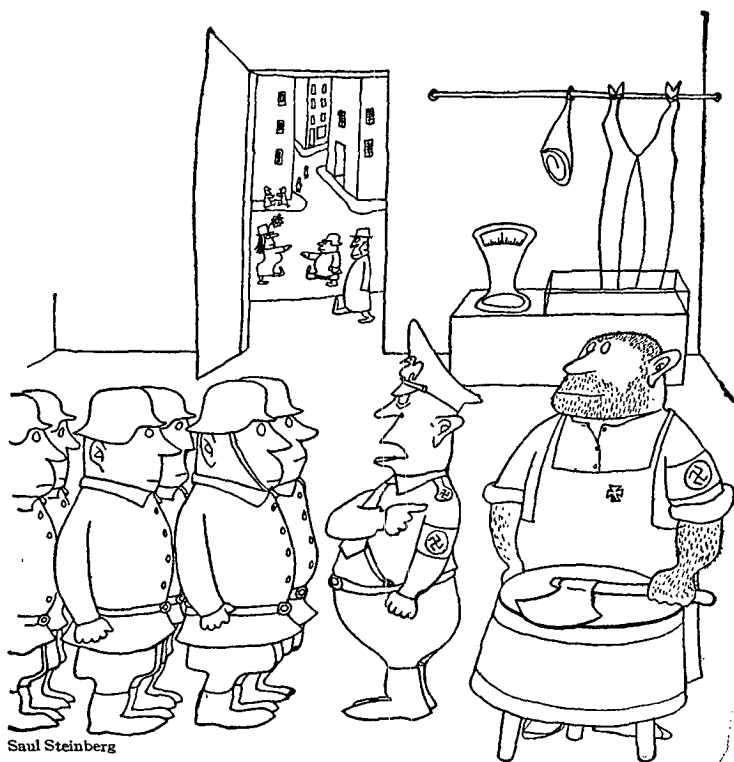
"Defendu," there are cute little tricks called "Eyes Out" and "Break the Windpipe," as well as certain exercises with the foot and knee better imagined than described. "Remember," he purrs in comforting tones on page 67, "you are never defenseless."

You might think there is small use in modern warfare for such intensive training in personal combat, but curiously enough, as modern war becomes more mechanized and impersonal, it also becomes more concentrated, more individualistic. Shock troops attacking on a hundred-mile front break down at the point of attack to individual teams of two men, specially trained to knock out pillboxes. In actual combat, the battalion breaks up into companies over which there is no immediate control and these companies quickly disintegrate into platoons and squads, finally deteriorating into a *melée* of desperate individuals. It is conceded by the Marines themselves that the one individual who has done more than anyone else to teach them how to kill with bayonet, knife or bare hands is Colonel Anthony J. Drexel Biddle.

History has an intriguing way of making a full circle, like a dog biting his tail. The father of the Marine Corps, Major Samuel Nicho-

las, was a fighting Quaker, "full of piety blended with fiery Old Testament love of battle." Back in 1775, he instructed his recruiting officers to accept no candidates for the Marines except those "of dependable and religious nature, combined with proper robustness of body."

One hundred and sixty-seven years later, a pious Episcopalian Bible class teacher and a fighting Philadelphia blue blood is a Colonel on active duty with the Marines, said duty consisting of teaching them how to be the most efficient and expert killers in World War II.



*"Herr Loesch will talk to you about the conduct of German soldiers in occupied countries."*

- *Americans must not underrate the  
Falangist tools of the Axis.*

## FRANCO INVADES LATIN AMERICA

BY BRYCE OLIVER

IT WOULD be frivolous to assume, because all Latin-American nations except Argentina and Chile have now broken with the Axis powers, that the danger of pro-Axis surprises south of the Rio Grande has been canceled out. On the contrary, this is the crisis period toward which long years of totalitarian intrigue and propaganda have been directed. There are forces in the leading southern republics designed and nurtured for the specific purpose of overthrowing governments at a given signal, seizing invasion bridgeheads, and shattering the network of support for the United Nations which has been woven in Washington.

In February, President Alfredo Baldomir of Uruguay was compelled to establish dictatorial rule in order to carry out his government's commitments to the United States in the face of opposition from a pro-fascist minority headed by Senator Luis Alberto de Herrera. In Quito, Ecuador, the police had to be called out to suppress stormy student demonstrations

against settlement of the old boundary dispute with Peru, in Peru's favor — under pressure, as the demonstrators charged, of North America. These are merely examples of the pressures which prevail under the surface unity established by the United States diplomatic victory at the Rio de Janeiro conference.

The phase of the threat which has been largely ignored by Americans stems from Spain, rather than from Germany and Italy. The senior partners, indeed, are content to operate through their Spanish associate, who provides them a more natural and more "spiritual" approach to the mass mind of Spanish America. The German and Italian diplomats and agents now assembled in the more hospitable atmosphere of Argentina left behind them in the other republics a movement more dangerous to the hemisphere than anything they themselves were able to organize among their sympathizers.

That movement is the Latin-American extension of the Spanish