

PHILIPPINES

THE FLAG GOES UP AGAIN

By Royal Arch Gunnison

RADIOED FROM LEYTE

I GOT back in time to see the first American flag go up in the Philippines. The boys who hit that tough red beach on Leyte Island thirty seconds before H-Hour were determined to get their banner up into the sultry tropical breeze as quickly as it was safe to send a man up a palm to tack on the flag. I felt I had a kind of personal interest in seeing that American flag go back up. A new American flag snapping over these islands meant we were now coming back to the Philippines. But my personal reason for wanting to be on hand dated from a dark, muggy day in January, 1941, when I was a prisoner of the Japs up in Manila and watched the Japs drop the red, white and blue bunting from the flagpole in front of the High Commissioner's office, stomp on it and then toss it into a garage like a bundle of dirty laundry.

On that day I knew that sometime, someday, I would come back here to see the American flag raised again in the Philippines. I just made it. Coming ashore, the coxswain of the small Higgins landing craft in which I was riding decided to put us on the beach alongside a long, high landing craft that had just opened its mouthlike bow to disgorge troops, supplies and tanks across a short stretch of shallow water and up the sharp beach to the battered line of palm trees, twenty-five yards inland.

The firing we had caught some 2,000 yards offshore where the smooth surface of Leyte Gulf showed deep green had stopped. We knew the Nips were waiting for us. They were going to give us the old Bunker Hill business in reverse. We were on the flank of Red Beach, the second wave to hit at this extreme end, and we knew the first had been heavily hit. Our walkie-talkie told us that as we were half-way in. You think of a lot of things in those few minutes before everything starts flinging itself out from a beach as though each red tracer was aimed directly at you.

Salvo from the Hidden Enemy

I felt pretty secure behind the ramp of the Higgins landing boat. Purely psychological, I told myself, but it was comforting, anyway. The boat grounded, and the jolt threw me forward on my knees against another correspondent. I glanced at the big LST just to our right. At that moment, the Japs, not 100 yards away in the deep black of the jungle, let us have it. Those were machine-gun tracers and slugs ricocheting off the higher side of the LST into our boat, low in the water. A split second later, the Jap heavy mortar fire began. The LST received three direct hits.

I saw a part of the superstructure break away in a great slow arch. A body, arms and legs akimbo, disengaged itself from the flying superstructure. I didn't have time to watch what happened to it after it seemed for a second to hang up there in the blue sky like a doll.

All this happened within a few seconds. Our coxswain

suddenly dropped the ramp in front of us, and there, directly before us, was the Philippines beach, loaded with Japs.

Someone shouted, "Raise the ramp! Let's get the hell out of here!" Ensign James, of Admiral Barbey's flagship, bent double just behind me, hollered above the machine-gun fire and the whump and whump of the mortar explosions: "Run for it! You're safer on the beach."

We ran toward the ramp. It took real effort to jump out of the small mouth of that target and wade slowly, waist deep, through the surf, with slugs in the water all around. I thought: This is like trying to run in a dream and not being able to make my legs function! In a minute the tiny group of us found our feet and threw ourselves toward the steep upward slant of the beach. Just a step ahead of me and to my left, three men grabbed for their stomachs and spun around. I found myself flat on my face on the beach. A dozen tiny silver fish blown up on the black sand lay broken all around my head. The machine-gun fire bore down over our heads. I didn't dare lift my head to see who was on my right. I felt someone on my heels. It was reassuring to feel him move.

The mortar shells kept dropping in the water just behind us. The machine-gun fire slackened momentarily. I looked up. Fortunately, we were just beneath the crest of the sharply rising beach. The machine guns couldn't bear on us if we remained where we were, but the mortars could. I glanced back at the LST. The fire had been so concentrated her crew had closed the bow doors. They were stuck in the sand and couldn't move, and they were taking it. Because of the concentrated fire on the LST, we decided we would be able to slip and slither out of range, and in about ten minutes we were able to relax a few seconds on the sand before running for a pile of broken palm trunks.

Just before we made the run for it, Bill Chickering, a correspondent with whom I had been talking aboard ship the night before about being so eager to return to the Philippines, looked up from beneath his helmet, "Hey," he drawled. "How does it feel to be back on Philippine soil?"

There were lots of other places where I'd rather have been at that moment. Some people claim that all invasion beachheads are the same, but here in the Philippines all of us who landed in those first few hours felt we had participated a bit in the realization of a goal. We knew we were landing against the Imperial Japanese Fifteenth Division, "The Butchers of Bataan," and that, in itself, made this landing unique. Our outfit had the opportunity to begin immediately to avenge the atrocities of Bataan and Corregidor, and it gave you something to cheer about when you saw Jap machine-gun nests or pillboxes wiped out with grenades or direct bomb or shell hits.

It wasn't too long before wave after wave packed in behind us. Bulldozers began to push the sand back off the beach into the water to make a (Continued on page 28)

Atop an amtrac, a Yank prepares to toss a rope to some doughboys who find the going not so easy on Leyte Island, where men are men—and mud is mud

Old Glory goes up in the Philippines for the first time in nearly three years. The tall, strong flagpole, with its graceful leafy top, was not imported

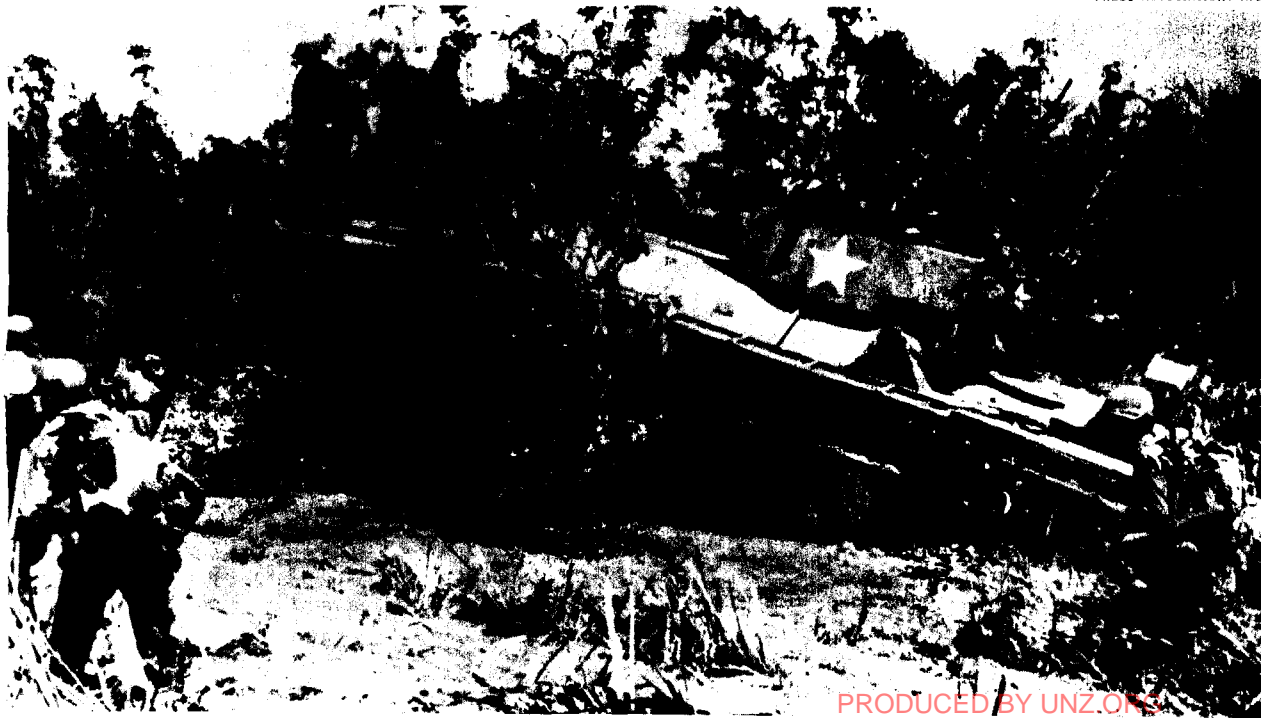
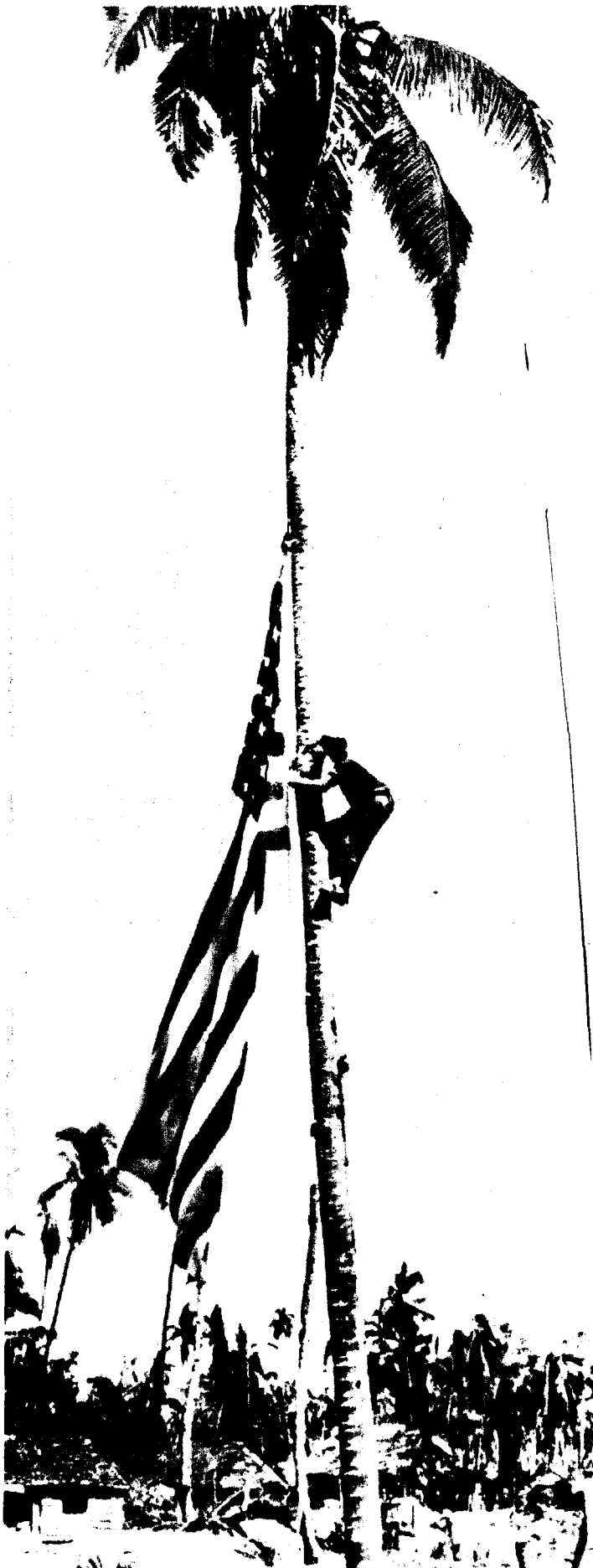
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When General MacArthur left the Philippines he told the world he would be back. Here he is, the victor on Leyte, saying through microphone, "I have returned"

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An infallible warning device guides flame-eaters. The torch is off-angle, says Zadma, when flames spurt from your nostrils and you smell hairs singeing in your nose

or five torches that look like giant button-hooks. In the curved part of the hook, rolls of cotton soaked in gasoline are tied in place. Be sure you tie them securely. Just before you begin your act, soak your torch heads in a little bowl of gasoline, then light one of them. Sometimes one of the burning balls falls off, and you swallow it by mistake. Although the fire goes out in a few seconds, those few seconds always seem a long time.

Now throw back your head and stick one of the burning torches down your throat, taking care not to burn yourself. This takes considerable practice. Your head should be thrown well back, not completely back as you would naturally do when swallowing a sword, but far enough so that you feel your collar pressing into the back of your neck, and there is a slight strain on the throat muscles in front. Insert the torch at an angle of about 75 degrees.

Don't be discouraged if you get burned the first few times you try. Lay in a good supply of cracked ice and fill your mouth up with it after practicing, to take away the pain. The commercial ointments sold to relieve burns don't seem to work well on your insides, and most of them taste horrible. Ice cream is much better.

Icing Their Sizzled Stomachs

When my friend and I first started practicing, we kept going to an open-all-night lunch wagon and buying ice cream by the quart to gargle with after each session. About three o'clock in the morning, the wagon ran out of ice cream, so we started buying the cracked ice the proprietor kept the ice-cream cartons in. The man began to look at us rather curiously after that, although we were paying him as much for his darned cracked ice as we had for the ice cream, and the ice was full of salt that stung. Finally he quietly closed down between two of our trips. We really suffered after that, until the drugstores opened in the morning.

The torch must be put in your mouth at just the right angle and your head held just so, or the flame will hit the roof of your mouth or your face and raise blisters. If you have it a little off-angle, the burning vapors get into the nasal passage, and you get two little spurts of flame from your nostrils. Fortunately, nature has provided a warning device to tell you when this happens. You can smell the hairs on the inside of your nose burning.

When swallowing a burning torch, always keep breathing out slightly. This keeps the gas fumes from getting into your insides, as they tend to explode in there. This tendency of the gas fumes to get caught in a cross-draft inside of you and go wandering around is one of the most annoying aspects of fire-eating. I knew one performer who always introduced his act with a flourish by drinking several glasses of gasoline. One evening the fumes from the gas got into his left lung, and when he tried to swallow a lighted torch, his lung exploded. He didn't die, but he developed a horror of fire-eating and had to make a living burning designs on himself with a blowtorch.

I used to flick the torches to throw off the excess gas after lifting them out of the soaking bowl. This has the bad effect of sprinkling the floor with gasoline, and I did it once while I had a lighted torch in a rack. Instantly the gas on the floor blazed up, setting fire to the soaking bowl and then exploding a large glass preserve jar of gasoline I was using as a main source of supply.

I was so dazzled by the explosion that I could not move for a second or two. Everything near me (including several spectators) was covered with burning gasoline. I pulled off my clothes, and got only a few slight burns. Zip, the Almost Human, who was on the platform with me, grabbed up a large bottle containing a two-headed baby and used that to stamp out the flames. It didn't

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FIRE-EATING IS FUN

BY THE GREAT ZADMA as told to JULE MANNIX

Here's our carnival expert with another of his simple parlor tricks. He says it's fun to eat fire, but not nourishing

THE great secret of fire-eating is not to allow the fumes of the gasoline you are eating to explode in your lungs. In the confined space, the effect is very much like the explosion that takes place in the cylinders of your car, and the sensation is horrible. Once you have learned to avoid this, your only worry is to keep from being burned by the flames coming out of your mouth.

I first learned fire-eating in order to pinch-hit for the regular performer, who had had a backfire. He had been trying to do the Fountain of Fire, which is a very pretty trick but occasionally sets the tent ablaze. The artist takes a mouthful of high-octane gas and blows it up in the air in a steady stream,

at the same time setting fire to it with a torch. If nicely done on the carnival "bally" platform in front of the sideshow tent, it will light up the whole midway and makes a beautiful bally. Sometimes the vapor takes the form of a circle and sails up like a giant smoke ring, still burning, for ten or fifteen feet before it disperses.

The night of the accident, I was standing beside the fire-eater on the bally platform, swallowing a sword to attract a crowd. There was a breeze blowing, which is always bad for fire work, but after I finished, he decided to do the Fountain of Fire.

Making sure that there was no open flame on the platform, he took a mouthful of gasoline from a glass and then threw the glass away to make sure any vapor clinging to it would not ignite. Then he lighted one of his torches and, holding it at arm's length, prepared to puff out the gasoline.

I was watching him rather idly, having seen the effect many times. Suddenly a little trickle of gas leaked out of the corner of his mouth and ran down his chin. Instantly,

a tiny flash of fire from the torch leaped toward it, running through the air as though along an invisible fuse. The little stream blazed up, and the whole mouthful of gas exploded.

I was blinded for a second by the flash. The fire-eater's whole face was burning and he threw himself off the platform and rolled on the ground, trying to put out the fire. The talker and I jumped off the platform and got him to his feet. I expected to see him terribly injured, but although he was moaning with pain, his face looked perfectly all right. But a few hours later, blisters like bunches of grapes appeared all over his cheeks and mouth. Several days later when he could speak, he told me that he had never known such pain. That left the show without a fire-eater, so another young fellow and I started studying the art.

Fire-eating is one of the prettiest tricks there is. It is not extremely hard to learn and many fire-eaters go for a long time without a really bad burn. This is how it is done:

A fire-eater generally performs with four