



A lookout on the "Isle of Atonement" somewhere in the Central Pacific.

## Even the Mosquitoes Can't Stand This Army Way Station in Central Pacific

By Sgt. MERLE MILLER  
YANK Staff Correspondent

SOMEWHERE IN THE CENTRAL PACIFIC—Soldiers stationed here call this the "Isle of Atonement," which is an apt enough description, although it may be stretching a point to call such a completely insignificant hunk of white sand and coral an island. Many maps of the Pacific ignore it altogether.

At no point is it more than 15 or 20 feet above sea level, and except for a few sickly bushes, the noisy booby and gooney birds and the ghost-walkers, there is no wild life or vegetation. Rats are numerous, kindly, gray creatures who take a brotherly interest in the welfare and possessions of the GIs. There are no mosquitoes.

Evenings are cool, and the sunsets are said to be the most beautiful in the Pacific. An evening swim is almost compulsory.

The days are hot. When reveille sounds at 6 A.M., the sun is already beating down on the white rock and sand. Rain is scarce. Almost always the temperature is well above 100.

The story is told that the devil was offered this spot in exchange for a half acre of hell. Quite wisely, the men say, he turned it down.

Before the war this Pacific pinpoint was nearly deserted. There were only a few brown-skinned Polynesians here, fishing and swimming.

Now it is an important base in the long jour-

ney "down under," and there are flyers and ground crews. Coast Artillery units, engineers and infantrymen. Guns bristle everywhere. Lookouts and guards, men as well as dogs, are constantly on the job at a score of OPs.

Everything here has been built by GIs and Army Engineers—including a wooden chapel constructed after working hours by a crew of

### This Week's Cover

TROPHIES of the battle that cleared the Japanese from Attu are held by Cpl. Willie Stansbury of Henderson, N. C., and Cpl. John L. Ashby of Saffell, Ark. The bottle contains sake, but the Jap battle flag is interesting to look at. More of Sgt. Georg Meyers' Attu pictures are on pages 2, 3, 4 and 5.



PHOTO CREDITS: Cover, 2, 3, 4 & 5—Sgt. Georg Meyers. 6—Seventh Air Force, Hawaii. 7—U. S. Army. 8—Signal Corps. 10—Upper left, INP. lower, Acme. 11—Left, PA; upper right, INP. 12—Upper left & right, PA; center left, Sgt. Dick Hanley; center right, PRO. Army Air Field, Tullahoma, Tenn.; lower left, Sgt. Al Hine; lower right, AAF. 13—Upper left, PA; upper right, Acme; center left, U. S. Marine Corps; center, Sgt. John Bushemi; lower left, Acme; lower right, INP. 18—Upper left, PRO. Fort Riley, Kans.; upper right, Army Air Field, Presque Isle, Maine; lower left, U. N. Jacobellis; lower right, Base Photo Section, Gowen Field, Idaho. 19—Left, PRO. Fort Sill, Okla.; center, PA; right, Sgt. John Frano; lower left, Signal Section, HQ, Armored Force, Fort Knox, Ky.; lower right, Signal Corps, PRO, Fort Sam Houston, Tex. 20—WW. 21—Upper, Cpl. Ben Schnall; right, 20th Century-Fox. 23—Upper left, PA; lower right, WW.

eight Protestants, six Catholics and a Jewish corporal who was an architect in civil life.

The whole place is camouflaged, and it is only as your plane circles for a landing that you see this is much more than a vacant dot in the vast blue of the Pacific.

Not much happens here. Planes like ours come in from the north and the south, but they never stay long. They are always on their way to or from some place.

There isn't much to do—except work and sleep and eat. From 4 until 6 P.M. you can buy two beers—if any beer is available. Coca-Cola is rationed, two bottles to a man twice a week.

For most GIs every day is the same. They watch and they wait. The Japs, they know, are based not many hundred miles away, and the Nips have been here before in their two-motored bombers, not many but enough to keep you alert.

Pvt. Frank Sikel of Napoleon, N. Dak., is about the busiest man on the island. He is the only barber and runs a modest one-chair shop with a sign inscribed "SIKEL'S—WE TRIM 'EM." Sikel's haircuts are strictly GI, and he dishes out 25 to 30 a day at 30 cents each. He was a farmer back in North Dakota.

Two or three evenings a week, half a dozen men go lobster-hunting. Sgts. Maurice Walsh and Robert Naud, both of the Bronx, N. Y., are the experts. They wear a leather glove on one hand, carry a flashlight in the other and lift the lobsters out of the water with the gauntlet.

Four soldiers run a hog farm on the island. Bringing up hogs in these torrid parts, without clover or grass, is no simple matter. The pigs eat barley, oats and garbage, and, according to Pvt. Clarence Frevert, a farmer from Springfield, Mo., "complain about the chow more than I do." The other soldier-farmers are Pvts. Tilford Mohr of Boulder, Colo., Ira Jackson of Pana, Ill., and Irving Dubin, who was a clerk in Chicago.

Poker, red-dog and blackjack are popular here, and stakes are high. There is always a movie in the evening. You go whether you've seen it before or not.

Radios are rare, and reception of mainland stations is not always clear. Radio Tokyo, on the other hand, comes in loud and blatant. The Japs have claimed capture of this spot at least twice. That's always good for a laugh.

MPs are a conspicuous luxury. No one ever goes AWOL, and since there are no women about, the number of ways you can get in trouble are limited. Liquor is almost nonexistent.

They say the gooney birds start talking to you after three months here. At the end of eight months, you start answering back.

## Hyman's Proposal to Beverly, Queen of Nassau, Had Teeth in It

NASSAU—Girls being sort of scarce on this 2-by-4 island, Pvt. Hyman Schechter of Brooklyn, N. Y., decided to overlook the three front teeth Beverly was missing, and dated her up.

But that big gap in the upper left jaw of his one-and-only bothered Hyman, and he visited the local dentist to arrange for a plaster cast with three shiny teeth attached.

When the tropical moon shone down and a cool breeze stirred the palm trees overhead, Schechter made the presentation.

"Darling," he said to Beverly, "now that you are the only girl in the world for me, I want to make you a present. Open your mouth and shut your eyes."

Knowing Hyman, Beverly hesitated for a moment but finally agreed. Moments later she was sputtering out her thanks for the dental plate.

With her new ivorys, Beverly was soon a social success, and reports reached Hyman that "his girl" was going out with other GIs. He refused to believe this until one night he met Beverly walking down Bay Street with a soldier.

Controlling his wrath, Schechter asked Beverly if he could speak with her privately. She agreed and politely excused herself. In the darkness of a store doorway, Hyman repeated the old "open your mouth and close your eyes" line. Beverly fell for it again, and in a flash Hyman extracted the partial plate, stuck the teeth in his pocket and walked back to his station.

Beverly's current beau is reliably reported to be negotiating with Hyman for the purchase of the teeth.

—Sgt. DAVE FOLDS  
YANK Field Correspondent



## Marine Bond Salesman Wins Prize—A Plane Ride to Hawaii

HAWAII—A lanky blond marine from Texas tried his hand at selling War Bonds at his outlying Pacific base and won a plane ride to Hawaii with his spare-time efforts.

Pfc. William F. Davis, USMC, of Longview, Tex., was allotted 28 men as prospects when the bond drive started at his base. Polishing up his Lone Star drawl, the 20-year-old machine-gunner persuaded all 28 marines to pledge approximately 50 percent of their pay for bonds. It added up to \$1,913 worth.

When the results were announced, Davis led all the rest of the marine salesmen. Starched and slicked, he received the congratulations of a Marine brigadier general, before shoving off in a plane for Pearl Harbor and his first "liberty" in eight months.

—Sgt. GENE WARD  
Marine Corps Correspondent

## Army Separates Father and Son, Reunites Them in Iran Task Force

ANDIMESHK, IRAN—Father and son work together in an Ordnance outfit here. Pvt. Edmund Smires, 43 years old, and Pvt. James Smires, 19, volunteered together in Philadelphia, Pa., and came the long way to Iran, still together.

That wasn't as simple as it looks on paper. Edmund, the father, was driving a truck back home for Standard Oil. A veteran of the last war, he got his discharge in 1919 as a corporal from the 110th Infantry. Pearl Harbor made him see red. It made his son James, then building punch presses for General Electric, see just as red. They went down to the recruiting office together and signed up.

For a while they managed to stay together. Both were assigned to Ordnance and both went to Aberdeen, Md., for basic training in small arms. Small-arms training fitted in well with James' punch-press background, but Pappy Smires didn't like it so well. There were plenty of trucks and there was plenty of work to be done on trucks at Aberdeen. Pvt. Edmund wangled his way into the truck section there. What the hell, he was still in the same camp as his son. What more could a man ask?

But he didn't stay at Aberdeen long. Truck work jelled with his previous experience and he was sent to Camp Bowie, Tex., to a regular Ordnance outfit. He began to worry about whether he was going to be divorced permanently from young James.

He worried more when he was moved to Camp Berkeley, Tex., and worried most of all when his outfit was alerted for overseas duty. At Bowie, the CO had promised to write to the CO at Aberdeen to see what he could do about getting James transferred down there. At Berkeley, the company personnel adjutant wrote another letter, but James was still in Maryland and Pappy was still in Texas.

Pvt. Edmund was in that half-dazed state where you check the contents of your "B" bag and wonder almost aloud, "Guadalcanal, Africa, Alaska, Hawaii or maybe even Bermuda?" when a hand tapped him on the shoulder.

Yep, it was James, just as blond and young and hearty as his father had left him at Aberdeen, come to Berkeley to join the outfit at the last minute.

They sailed together to Iran and now work in the same company. Edmund repairs the trucks that carry supplies to Russia. James, in a supply room, checks out the parts that go to repair those trucks. Put this down as one case where the Army had a heart.

—Sgt. AL HINE  
YANK Staff Correspondent

In Next Week's YANK . . .

### PACIFIC SEAMAN

A close-up story of Bob Christiansen, talker on a heavy cruiser in the U.S. Navy's Pacific Fleet, who has sweated out four major sea engagements against the Japs since Pearl Harbor.

## Snake-Eyes

PANAMA—When a troop of cavalymen fell in for an inspection by high-ranking officers at a jungle outpost here, a latecomer attempting to join the formation was stopped cold by two cartridges right behind the eye from a pistol wielded by Lt. Col. Maurice C. Peter of Springfield, Ill.

The Yanks, standing stiffly at attention, were startled until they learned that the colonel's target was an 11-foot boa constrictor. It had slithered from a tree toward the group of GIs when discouraged by Col. Peter's marksmanship.

—Sgt. ROBERT RYAN  
YANK Staff Correspondent

## Pacific Hero Is Almost Jailed; Moral: Wear Medals in Swimming

NEW YORK—Chivalry is not dead, it seems, but a tech sergeant's fondness for playing Sir Walter Raleigh nearly landed him in the clink here, Silver Star, DFC and all.

T/Sgt. Edward Niemi, 20-year-old veteran of 51 missions over Japanese territory in the South Pacific, arrived home on furlough and called up Rose Di Paro, whom he hadn't seen since they went to grammar school together. They decided to go for a swim at Orchard Beach in the Bronx, and somehow Rose's two sisters, Theresa and Helen, included themselves on the invitation.

At the beach Niemi spread a newspaper out on the sand for the girls to sit on. Theresa was taking a sunbath while the others were in swimming when up marched Patrolman McManus and handed her a summons for littering the beach.

Niemi came out of the water to protest, but in his bathing trunks the 6-foot blond and handsome radioman-gunner looked like just another 4-F to McManus, and he didn't get anywhere.

In Bronx Magistrate's Court the young sergeant caused a stir among the female spectators, who appreciated the fact that he was 6-foot, blond and handsome, which the patrolman hadn't. Besides, this time Niemi was wearing his decorations.

Questioned by Magistrate Robert P. Levis, Niemi explained that he had served in Australia, New Guinea and the Solomons on the Flying Fortress *Talisman*, credited with sinking a Jap cruiser and cargo ship. He wears the Silver Star, Air Medal with Oak Leaf Cluster, and the Dis-



The long and short of it in the ETO. Pvt. Robert B. Perkins, showing his pass to Cpl. Abel Gagneaux, is the shortest soldier in the ETO at 4 feet 9 inches, while Gagneaux is tallest, standing 6 feet 7 inches.

tinguished Flying Cross. Niemi left his job as a clerk in a grocery store to enlist in October 1941.

"I can't fine a man with a record like yours," Magistrate Levis said. "Sentence suspended."

—YANK Staff Writer

## Two Armies Put Him Behind Desk; He Joins Merchant Marine To Fight

ENGLAND—When it comes to eager beavers, Phillip Messenger of Seattle, Wash., probably takes the prize as the eagerest of them all.

Messenger wanted to get in the war and do a bit of fighting long before Pearl Harbor. He crossed the border and joined the Canadian Army. Unfortunately they didn't send him overseas but just tucked him away in an office and forgot him.

One day another regiment was sailing. Messenger lined up with them and got on the transport. For two days he managed to keep out of sight by doing KP, but a transport is a pretty small place in the long run, and they finally caught up with him. He was shoved in the brig for the rest of the voyage.

When he arrived here Messenger was court martialed, but no action was taken because he has shown a "commendable interest" in the war. But if there was no action taken on him, neither could he take any action on the enemy, because they put him back doing office work.

At last the Americans arrived, and Messenger figured he'd be able to get a crack at front-line fighting after all. He arranged for his transfer to the U. S. Army, and then—was assigned to a desk job.

Fed up, he applied for his discharge (he was over 38) and enlisted in the Merchant Marine. This looked like the real thing, so he went out to celebrate. Somewhere en route he lost all his papers and his money. Afraid to face the Merchant Marine people, he went AWOL for a time, until he plucked up enough courage to go around and see them. Much to his relief, all was forgiven.

Right now, Messenger is at sea somewhere, on the front-line duty he wanted so long.

—YANK Field Correspondent

## You Can't Tell About a Storm; Sometimes It Comes in Mighty Handy

SOMEWHERE IN THE NORTH ATLANTIC—A storm can do as much good as it does bad, says one Coast Guard crew recently returned from patrol.

Their cutter was completely surrounded by a U-boat pack which was closing in for the kill. Suddenly a squall whipped up from nowhere and grew into a storm so violent that the subs were forced to the bottom to escape the heavy seas.

On another North Atlantic patrol, a storm blew up lasting for a day and a half, locking the cutter tight in an ice pack. The men could see nothing but ice stretching out on all sides. For a month they were stuck there when suddenly a second storm blew up—the same kind that had trapped them—and slowly broke up the ice. They fought their way through the breaking floes until they reached the open sea again. Then they went back on patrol.

—YANK Coast Guard Correspondent

## Private in New Guinea Jumps To Master Sergeant in 20 Days

NEW GUINEA—You, too, can go from buck private to master sergeant in 20 days. It's a cinch. All you need is "some luck." That's what M/Sgt. Tom Corbally of Great Falls, Mont., says. He ought to know, because he's just done it.

Corbally sweated it out for 18 months as a slick-sleeve, stymied by a T/O that called for no more ratings in his section. But his work for S-3 during the Papuan campaign was so outstanding that he was finally given a pfc. stripe in spite of the T/O.

A week later Tom transferred to S-2, where he was promoted to technician fifth grade. Then came his big break. The S-3 master sergeant became ill and was sent to Australia. Corbally transferred back to his old section and was promoted immediately to master sergeant.

—Cpl. BILL ALCINE  
YANK Staff Correspondent



By Sgt. WALTER BERNSTEIN  
YANK Staff Correspondent

**W**ITH THE 45TH DIVISION IN SICILY—They were given the Gun in Texas. It was delivered right to C Battery of this 45th Division Field Artillery battalion with the compliments of the Erie Ordnance Depot. With the Gun came a field manual and a log book. The manual said it was a caliber 105-mm howitzer. Model M2A1. Serial No. 1008; the log book for recording the number of rounds fired was empty.

Today the log book is full. They took the Gun from Texas to a tomato patch in a valley on the north coast of Sicily, firing as they went. They fired for record in the dust of Camp Barkeley

in Texas and in the snow of Pine Camp, N. Y., and now they are firing for keeps. For three weeks the Gun was not silent for more than six hours at a time. The crew is proud of the Gun. The enemy is afraid of it.

The history of the Gun is not like the story of a Flying Fortress or a British destroyer that battles overwhelming odds, staggers through action after harrowing action and finally goes down in a literal blaze of glory. The Gun has been under fire, but only for a short time, and never dangerously. This does not mean that it was not up there; it means simply that the battery commander knew his stuff. The better the Gun does its work the more chance it has of coming through the war without ever being un-

**The story of a 105-mm howitzer, serial number 1008, and the men who fired it in Texas and Pine Camp and then for keeps in Sicily.**

*When the gun was delivered in Texas, they spent three days wiping off all the cosmoline.*

*After plenty of tough maneuvers in the U. S., the Gun was loaded on a ship bound for the Mediterranean.*

*It landed in Sicily 10 miles away from its truck and crew. Irwin borrowed a jeep and hauled it back.*

