



517th Parachute Regimental Combat Team



PARACHUTE REGIMENTAL COMBAT TEAM

MailCall No. 2335

September 18, 2016

*517th Parachute Infantry Regiment
460th Parachute Field Artillery Battalion
596th Parachute Combat Engineer Company*

MailCall News

There were a group of D-460 troopers that did much the same as the Doolittle flyers did with the Bottle of Booze.

In addition to the bottle each 517 Reunion someone would add something, and one reunion long ago, **First Sgt. Mounts** brought the D-Btry guidon flag.

Well recently **Col. Schnebli's** daughter sent me a suitcase with the bottle and flag. The other two troopers, **Mike Schlacter** and **Jack Cason** are no longer interested or able to continue and i am looking for a final resting place for the Flag.

I am curious if there is a museum that may want it?

If you want to talk about this feel free to call

Steve Armbruster

This bottle will only be opened by one of the last three surviving members of the 460th Parachute Field Artillery, "D" (Dog Battery). In their meeting, they will toast and drink to the memory of their dedicated comrades, the paratroopers of the 460th. During World War 2, these soldiers (from all four corners of the United States of America and Canada) gave unselfishly of themselves in defense of the great country that they loved, the United States of America.





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Hi Steve,

On the current 517th roster, which is very incomplete, there are only 4 members of 460 PFAB, D Battery who may be still alive, who have had some contact with the 517th alumni in the last 10 years or so. But I don't know if Daniel lasello is still reachable. - BB

Last Name	First Name	T-BOLT	MailCall	Co.	WW2	Last Contact	City	ST
Armbruster	Stephen M.	Y	MC	460-D	x	6/22/2015	Hendersonville	NC
Cason	Jack J.	Y	MC	460-D	x	6/23/2015	Union	KY
lasello	Daniel	?		460-D	x		Summit	NJ
Schlacter	Mike H.	?		460-D	x	6/23/2015	Chesaning	MI

I have the sad duty to inform you that one of your former members, **Lt Russell F. Miller** of Company B 1st Battalion aged 94, died on August 24th of this year. He was always very proud of his participation in the unit, and shared his memories of the exploits of his platoon and regiment with anyone who would listen, especially his grandchildren. He served in the Reserve for 20 more years from which he retired with the rank of Lt. Colonel. He was a lifelong friend of **Howard Hensleigh** from his home state, and alma mater, the University of Iowa in Iowa City, where they both continued their education after the war, and acquired their law degrees. He was a man of many talents, and we all miss him very much. Thank you for informing the remaining members of the outfit in his memory. He was cremated, and will be buried at Arlington National Cemetery when they can schedule a date.

His grieving family, wife, son, and 3 daughters, 9 grandchildren and two great grandchildren!

Charlette A. Miller

I saw mail call early in the morning. I was laughing at that joke so much I couldn't shave.the other day I was at Walmart standing in line at the check in counter.the woman ahead of me suddenly turned mentioned something about a Veteran & then gave me a big hug. When I got up to the counter the clerk told me that she had left 20:00 dollars to help me pay my bill.I didn't even get to thank her.I always wear my WWII cap because I have skin cancer on my head. I put medicine on it all the time. I've had 3 operations already.its getting comical about my ears getting closer together.ha -ha! You do a good job BOB, letting us know how the outfit is doing. I'm glad **Lea Hekkella** is doing ok ! – sent from my iPad.

Mel Trenary



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Just wanted to let you know that **PFC Hubert McLamb** is scheduled to be remembered on 18 September on the ABMC Facebook page. McLamb was one of the six 596 Engineers killed clearing mines at the Nice Airport.

Anyone can request this, once every five years. They honored **Pat Michaels** last year or the year before. It's a nice tribute.

Best – **Claire Giblin**



From: CLAUDE KALBUSCH [mailto:ckalbusch128@gmail.com]

Sent: Sunday, September 18, 2016 11:12 AM

To: MailCall@517prct.org

Subject: **Lt John C.CASSELMAN**

Some pictures of the Lt John C.CASSELMAN 's grave took the 09/18/16 at the American military cemetery of Henri-Chapelle. I'm proud to have adopted his grave It's our duty to not forget the sacrifice of those young men who sacrificed their life for our freedom. This time we ask to put some sand in the writings.

LEST WE FORGET

Claude KALBUSCH
4630 SOUMAGNE
BELGIUM



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I wanted to give you a quick update on grandpa. We had a chance to see him on August 29th out on the coast. He was in good health and spirits.

As a follow up to the article I posted re: the local high school athletes visiting my grandfather and other veterans at his retirement center in June, I wanted to add this poem that one of the student athletes from North Shore High School in Ocean Shores, WA sent him afterwards. Unfortunately it was not signed, but it did have a nice foreword:

Dear Norm Ross

In today's world, with all the technology in which to distract ourselves, I find people forget about the soldiers that are responsible for this great nation.

I wrote you this poem to show you that I appreciate your service:

A Soldier's Sojourn Overseas

Thanks to your courage and strength overseas
Here in America I can be free
Thanks to your valor to fight the Axis
No matter where on the atlas
Because of the battles you fought so bravely
While in the United States Army, Marines, or Navy
I can live my life more safely.
Unfortunately I find it crazy,
Your heroism has gone unnoticed
Even to those, whom you are closest
You dropped your life at a moment's notice
With such a clear, pure, and undying motive
To improve your life and that of coming generations
You and your patriotism are a genuine inspiration
Brave soldiers like you are the foundation of this great nation
Your fearlessness on the battlefield deserves appreciation.
Your tireless assaults on the Third Reich
Permits me to do what I would like
Your Contribution to our nation
Allows me rights to an education
A "Thank you" to you and your crew,
I feel is long overdue,
Your mind, your body, and faith are true
I hope one day I can be like you

Scott Ross

Grandson of **Norman L Ross Jr.**
I Co. 3rd Bttn.



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Norman, Scott and Dorothy Ross

September 13, 2016

Dear Bob: I don't know if you have been reading any of Bill O'Reilly's "Killing" books; Killing Lincoln, Killing Reagan, Killing Patton. Now he comes out with a book taking on a whole Nation. "Killing the Rising Sun" opens up the old controversy of whether dropping the atomic bombs was a wise and morally correct decision and should we apologize for doing so. I carried a story in the Thunderbolt during the time I was publishing it during the period 1999-2001. The story conveyed what might have happened if the atomic bombs hadn't been dropped. Two invasions similar to Normandy were planned for November 1945 and March 1946 with a far greater number of deaths anticipated. **Don Lassen**, who published a paper called The Static Line, requested a copy for his use. I also received a letter from Barbara Gavin Fauntleroy, **General Jim Gavin's** daughter, who expressed her views as well as those of her father. The initial story of the role the Enola Gay played in securing Japanese surrender had to be revised because the events depicting the reasons leading to the use of the bombs were not totally factual. I don't remember exactly when Mail Call and the Web Site was set up but it was in this same period (1999-2001.) Have I ever sent this to Ben or you before?

Best Wishes, **Merle Mc Morrow**

No Merle, I have heard similar opinions, but I haven't seen this write-up or this much detail before. I have attached it below. – BB



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PLANS FOR THE INVASION OF JAPAN

WRITTEN DURING MY PRESIDENCY 1999-2001

FOR

THE STATIC LINE

BY MERLE W. MC MORROW

4035 32nd STREET SOUTH

FARGO, NORTH DAKOTA 58104

701-232-1738

517th PARACHUTE REGIMENTAL COMBAT TEAM

AND

10st AIRBORNE DIVISION

Today is the first day of summer. I think back to an earlier period in the summer of 1945. The glorious days of 1943 and 1944 were past and the changes happening in mid-1945 signaled the end of a combat team, as we had known it. Some men had been lost in combat and others wounded so badly that return to the Unit was not possible. Some would transfer to the 82nd Airborne for occupation duty in Berlin. Some would become a part of the 13th Airborne.

Most of us were in our 20's and we had a monumental decision to make that would affect our fixture and may even result in no future at all. If lacking sufficient points to return Stateside for discharge, there were two options open to us. One could transfer to the 82nd Airborne and go to Berlin or secondly, one could remain with the 13th Airborne for redeployment to the Pacific. This most certainly would assure a short furlough in the States and additional combat time in the Pacific.

If the second option was the selection made, you would no longer stand out as a tested and much decorated 517th veteran of the European Theater of Operations. You would be absorbed into a Division; something that had never happened to the 517th at any time in the past. You would lose that distinct feeling of belonging to a unit that was special and unique.

What was being transferred to the 13th Airborne was not the brotherhood of a unit that had trained together, laughed together, fought together, and suffered together. What was being transferred was three numerals which in the past designated a unit that was unique in the annals of military history.

Not until many years after I had completed my military service did I become aware and appreciate how the development of the 517th into a unified organization differed greatly from that of the other units. Most would take basic training with one group; volunteer for the paratroops; be shipped to Ft. Benning for jump school; and then be shipped to an airborne unit somewhere. Our Unit was together from the day we stepped off the train at Toccoa until the signing of the Armistice in the early morning hours of May 7, 1945. We had stayed together for



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the purpose we had been formed and with that purpose accomplished the need to remain a cohesive force ended.

The advent of the atomic age early in August 1945 made obsolete all the plans prepared for the invasion of Japan.

Detailed documents stamped “Top Secret” and now declassified lie in the recesses of the National archives in Washington, DC. Contained in the thousands of yellowing and dusty documents are detailed plans for “Operation Downfall”, the code name for the scheduled American invasion of Japan.

Final planning for the invasion was completed in the summer of 1945. Only ‘a few Americans were made aware of the plans in 1945 and even fewer are aware /today of the elaborate plans prepared for the invasion of the Japanese home islands. Even fewer Americans are aware today of how close America came to launching that invasion. It is frightening to know what the Japanese had in store for the American invasion force had it actually taken place.

Today we have those who argue the decision to drop the atomic bombs was wrong and condemn those who made the decision. Some are in favor of re-writing history as we know took place recently when the Smithsonian Institute installed a plaque relating to the B-29 Enola Gay which dropped the atomic bomb. Some would even have us offer an apology for the action we took to conclude hostilities in the Pacific. More of our historians should be aware of the suicidal defense action Japan was intending to take to repulse our invading force.

Two invasions of Japan were scheduled; one in the southern islands in November 1945 and one the following spring on the Japanese mainland. Airborne troops would be involved in both invasions. Each invasion would be costly in human life for both the Americans and the Japanese.

Two invasions were planned. The first invasion, code named “Operation Olympic”, was scheduled for the early morning hours of November 1, 1945. After an unprecedented naval and aerial bombardment, an amphibious assault by 14 combat divisions of American soldiers and marines would be made on the heavily fortified and defended Kyushu, the southernmost of the Japanese home island. Airborne troops, as part of a reserve force, would be used on November 4, 1945.

The second invasion, code named “Operation Coronet”, would take place on March 1, 1946. This operation would involve at least 22 American combat divisions against one million Japanese defenders.

With the exception of a part of the British Pacific fleet, “Operation Downfall” was to be strictly an American operation. It called for the utilization of the entire United States Marine Corps and the employment of the entire United States Navy in the Pacific. Also the efforts of the



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7th Air Force, the 8th Air Force recently deployed from Europe, the 20th Air Force and the American Far Eastern Air Force would be required. Over 1.5 million combat soldiers, with millions more in support, would be directly involved in these two amphibious assaults. Over 40 percent of all servicemen still in uniform in 1945 (4.5 million) were to be a part of “Operation Downfall”.

The invasion of Japan was to be no easy military undertaking and casualties were expected to be extremely heavy. Admiral William Leahy estimated there would be over 250,000 Americans killed or wounded on Kyushu alone. General Charles Willoughby, MacArthur’s Chief of Intelligence, estimated that the American casualties from the entire operation would be one million men by the fall of 1946. General Willoughby’s own intelligence staff considered this to be a conservative estimate.

During the summer of 1945, America had little time to prepare for such a monumental endeavor, but our top military leaders were almost in unanimous agreement that such an invasion was necessary. While a naval blockade and strategic bombing of Japan was considered to be useful, General Douglas MacArthur considered a naval blockade of Japan ineffective to bring about an unconditional surrender. General George C. Marshall was of the opinion that air power over Japan as it was over Germany would not be sufficient to bring an end to the war. The blockade would weaken the country and the bombing would destroy cities, but whole armies would remain intact. General Eisenhower and General Ira C. Eaker, the Deputy of the Army Air Force agreed. So on May 25, 1945, the Combined Chiefs of Staff, after extensive deliberations, issued to MacArthur, Admiral Chester Nimitz, General “Hap” Arnold, the Top Secret directive to proceed with the invasion of Kyushu. The target date was set, for obvious reasons after the typhoon season, for November 1, 1945.

On July 24th President Truman approved the report of the Combined Chiefs of Staff, which called for the initiation of “Operations Olympic and Coronet”. On July 26th, the United Nations issued the Potsdam Proclamation, which called for Japan to surrender unconditionally or face “total destruction”. Three days later, on July 29th, DOMEI, the Japanese Government’s news agency, broadcast to the world that Japan would ignore the proclamation of Potsdam and would refuse to surrender.

During this same time period, the intelligence section of the Federal Communications Commission monitored internal Japanese radio broadcasts, which disclosed that Japan had closed all its schools to mobilize its school children. It was arming its civilian population and forming it into national civilian defense units. Japan was turning itself into a nation of fortified caves and underground defenses in preparing for the expected invasion of their homeland.

The invasion of Kyushu would come first. It called for a four-pronged assault from the sea. Its purpose was to seize and control the southern one third of that island. That would permit



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the establishment of American naval and air bases there in order to more effectively intensify the bombing of Japanese industry and tighten the naval blockade of the home islands.

Better support for "Operation Coronet", scheduled for the following March, could also be. The preliminary invasion would begin on October 27th when the 40th Infantry Division would land on a series of small islands to the west and southwest of Kyushu. At the same time the 158th Regimental Combat Team would invade and occupy a small island 28 miles to the south of Kyushu. Seaplanes would be based and radar set up on these islands to give advance warnings for the invasion fleet. It would also serve as a fighter direction center for the carrier-based aircraft. It would also provide an emergency anchorage for the invasion fleet should things not go well on the day of the invasion.

The two immense naval forces—the Third and the Fifth would be involved in the invasion. In order to impede the movement of Japanese reinforcements south to Kyushu, the Third Fleet under Admiral "Bull" Halsey would provide strategic support for operations against Honshu and Hokkaido.

The Third Fleet was made up of battleships, heavy cruisers, destroyers, dozens of support ships, and three fast carrier task groups. Hundreds of fighter planes, dive-bombers, and torpedo planes would be launched from these carriers to hit targets all over the island of Honshu. The Fifth Fleet, under the command of Admiral Spruance, would carry the American invasion troops. This Fleet would consist of almost 3,000 ships, including fast carriers with escort carrier task forces, gunfire and covering force for bombardment and fire support, and a joint expeditionary force. This expeditionary force would include thousands of additional landing craft of all types and sizes.

The battleships, heavy cruisers, and destroyers were scheduled to begin their bombardment several days before the invasion. Thousands of tons of high explosives would reign down on Japanese targets. This bombardment would not cease until after the landing craft and invasion forces had been launched.

Thousands of American soldiers and marines would pour ashore on the beaches along the eastern, southeastern, southern, and western coasts of Kyushu. The invasion would take place during the early morning hours of November 1, 1945.

The 25th, 33rd and 41st Infantry Divisions made up the Eastern Force and were scheduled to land near Miyasaki at beaches called Austin, Buick, Cadillac, Chevrolet, Chrysler, and Cord. They were to move inland and capture the city and its nearby airport. .

The 43rd, Americal, and the 1st Cavalry Divisions made up the Southern Force and would land inside Ariske Bay at beaches labeled DeSoto, Duesenberg, Essex, Ford, and Franklin. They were to capture Shibushi and to capture, further inland the city of Kanoya and its airport.



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The V Corps would land the 2nd, 3rd, and 5th Marine Divisions on the western shore of Kyushu at beaches called Pontiac, Reo, Rolls-Royce, Saxon, Star, Studebaker, Stutz, Winton, and Zephyr. Half the force would move inland to capture the city of Sendal and the other half to the port city of Kagoshima.

The reserve force made up of two infantry divisions and airborne troops would be landed on November 4th near Kaimondake near the southern most tip of Kagoshima Bay at beaches designated Locomobile, Lincoln, LaSalle, Hupmobile, Moon, Mercedes, Maxwell, Overland, Oldsmobile, Packard, and Plymouth.

The objective of “Olympic” was to seize and control the island of Kyushu in order to use it for the launching platform for “Coronet”, which was hoped to be the final knockout blow aimed at Tokyo and the Kanto Plain. “Olympic” was not just a plan for invasion, but for conquest and occupation as well. It was expected to take four months to achieve its objective. Three fresh divisions would be landed each month if needed. These additional troops were to be taken from the units scheduled for “Coronet”.

If all went well with “Olympic”, “Coronet” would be launched on March 1, 1946. “Coronet” would be twice the size of “Olympic” with as many as 28 America Divisions to be landed on Honshu, the main Japanese island.

On March 1, 1946, all along the coast east of Tokyo, the American First Army would land five infantry divisions and three Marine Divisions.

At Saggami Bay, just south of Tokyo the entire 8th and 10th Armies would strike north and east to clear the long western shore of Tokyo Bay and attempt to go as far as Yokohoma. The assault troops landing to the south of Tokyo Bay would be the 4th, 6th, 8th, 24th, 31st, 32nd, 37th, 38th, and 87th Infantry Divisions, along with 13th and 20th Armored Divisions.

Following the initial assault, seven more divisions—the 2nd, 28th, 35th, 91st, 95th, and 104th Infantry Divisions and the 11th Airborne Division would be landed. If additional troops would be needed, as expected other divisions redeployed from Europe would be shipped to Japan in what was hoped would be the final push.

The key to victory in Japan rested with the success of “Olympia” at Kyushu. Without the success of the Kyushu campaign, “Coronet” might never be launched. The key to victory in Kyushu rested in our firepower, much of which was to be delivered by carrier-launched aircraft. At the outset of the invasion of Kyushu, waves of Helldivers, Dauntless Dive Bombers, Avengers, Corsairs, and Hellcats would take off to bomb, rocket, and strafe enemy defenses, gun emplacements, and troop concentrations along the beaches. In all, there would be 66 aircraft carriers loaded with 2,649 naval and marine aircraft to be used for close-in air support for the soldiers hitting the beaches.



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These planes were also the fleet's primary protection against Japanese attack from the air. Had "Olympic" begun, these planes would be needed to provide an umbrella of protection for the soldiers and sailors of the invasion. Captured documents and post-interrogation of Japanese military leaders disclosed that our intelligence concerning the number of Japanese planes available for the defense of the home islands was dangerously in error.

In the last months of the war, our military leaders were deathly afraid of the "kamikaze" and with good cause. During Okinawa alone, Japanese aircraft sank 32 ships and damaged 400 others. During the summer months, our top brass had concluded that the Japanese had spent their air force since America bombers and fighters flew unmolested over the shores of Japan on a daily basis.

What our military leaders did not know was that by the end of July 1945, as part of the Japanese overall plan for the defense of their country, they had been saving all aircraft, fuel, and pilots in reserve, and had been feverishly building new planes for the decisive battle for their homeland. The Japanese had abandoned, for the time, their suicide attacks in order to preserve their pilots and planes to hurl against our invasion fleets.

The plan for the final defense of Japan was called Ketsu-Go and a large part of that plan called for the use of Japanese Naval and Air Forces in dense. Japan had been divided into districts and in each of these districts hidden airfields were being built and hangers and aircraft were being dispersed and camouflaged in great numbers. Units were being trained, deployed, and given final instructions. Still other suicide units were being scattered throughout the island of Kyushu and elsewhere. They were put in reserve and would be utilized where most urgently needed. For the first time since the start of the war the Japanese Army and Navy Air Forces were being put under one single unified command.

As part of the "Ketsu-Go", the Japanese were building 20 suicide take-off strips in southern Kyushu with underground hangers for an all-out offensive. In Kyushu alone, the Japanese had 35 camouflaged airfields and 9 seaplane bases. As part of their overall plan On the night before the invasion, 50 seaplane bombers, along with 100 former carrier aircraft and 50 land-based Army planes were to be launched in a direct suicide attack on the American fleet.

The Japanese 5th Naval Air Fleet and the 6th Air Army had 58 more airfields on Korea, Western Honshu, and Shikoku. These also were to be used in massive suicide attacks. Allied intelligence had established that the Japanese had no more than 2,500 aircraft of which they assumed no more than 300 would be used in suicide attacks. However, in August of 1945, and unknown to our intelligence, the Japanese still had 5,651 Army and 7,074 Navy aircraft, for a total of 12,725 planes of all types. During July alone, 1,131 planes were built and almost 100 new underground aircraft plants were in various stages of construction.

Every village had some type of aircraft manufacturing activity. Hidden in mines, railway tunnels, under viaducts and in basements of department stores, work was being done to construct new planes.



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Additionally, the Japanese were building newer and more efficient models of the “Okka”, which was a rocket-propelled bomb. This was similar to the German V-2, but guided to its final destination by a suicide pilot. In March of 1945, the Japanese had ordered 750 of the earlier models of the “Okka” to be produced. These rockets were to be launched from aircraft. By the summer of 1945, the Japanese were building the newer models, which were to be catapulted out of the caves in Kyushu. They were to be directed at the invasion ships, which would only be minutes away.

At Okinawa almost 10,000 sailors died as a result of kamikaze attacks. These attacks were considered to be relatively ineffective because of the 350-mile distance from Kyushu. The experienced pilots flying from Japan became lost, ran out of fuel, or did not have sufficient flying time to pick out a suitable target. Furthermore, early in the Okinawa campaign, the Americans had established a land-based fighter command, which together with the carrier aircraft, provided an effective umbrella of protection against the kamikaze attacks.

During “Olympic” the situation would be reversed. Kamikaze pilots would have little distance to travel, would have considerable staying time over the invasion fleet and would have little difficulty picking out suitable targets. Conversely, the American land based aircraft would have little flying time over Japan before they would be forced to return to their bases on Okinawa and elsewhere to refuel.

Also different from Okinawa would be the Japanese choice of targets. At Okinawa aircraft carriers and destroyers were the principal targets of the kamikaze. The principal targets for the “Olympic” invasion would be the transports carrying the American troops who were to participate in the landing. The Japanese concluded that they could kill far more Americans by sinking one troop ship than they could by sinking 30 destroyers. Their aim was to kill thousands of American troops at sea, thereby removing them from participating in the actual landing. “Ketsu-Go” called for the destruction of 700 to 800 American ships.

When invasion became imminent, “Ketsu-Go” called for a four-fold aerial plan of attack. While American ships were approaching Japan, but still in the open seas, an initial force of 2,000 Army and Navy fighters were to fight to the death in order to control the skies over Kyushu. A second force of 330 specially-trained Navy combat pilots were to take off and attack the main body of the task force to keep it from using its fire support and air cover to adequately protect the troop carrying transports.

While these two forces were engaged, a third force of 825 suicide planes was to hit the American transports in the open sea.

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Initially this column began with what would have happened to members of the 517th PRCT members that transferred into the 13th Airborne Division rather than go to Berlin on occupation duty with the 82nd Airborne Division. The previous five columns attempt to support the dropping of the atomic bombs as the correct decision in light of accepting the loss of 200,000 lives to save millions. Estimates run as high as one million American lives and as many as five million Japanese lives would have been lost if the war had continued through to its conclusion.

As the convoys approached their anchorages, another 2,000 suicide planes were to be detailed in waves of 200 to 300, to be used in hour by hour attacks that would make Okinawa seem tame in comparison.

American troops would be arriving in approximately 180 lightly armed transports and 70 cargo vessels. Given the number of Japanese planes and the short distances to target, certainly a number of the troop transports would have been hit.

By mid-morning of the first day of the invasion, most of the American land-based aircraft would be forced to return to their bases, leaving the defense against the suicide planes to the carrier pilots and the shipboard gunners. Initially these pilots and gunners would have met with considerable success, but after the third, fourth, and fifth waves of Japanese aircraft, a significant number of kamikaze most certainly would have broken through

Carrier pilots crippled by fatigue would have to land time and time again to rearm and refuel. Navy fighters would break down from lack of needed maintenance. Guns would malfunction on both aircraft and combat vessels from the heat of continuous firing, and ammunition expended in such abundance would become scarce. Gun crews would be exhausted by nightfall, but still the waves of kamikazes would continue. With our fleet hovering off the beaches, all remaining Japanese aircraft would be committed to nonstop mass suicide attacks, which the Japanese hoped could be sustained for ten days.

The Japanese planned to coordinate their kamikaze and conventional air strikes with attacks from the 40 remaining conventional submarines from the Japanese Imperial Navy, beginning when the invasion fleet was 180 miles off Kyushu. As our invasion armada grew



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nearer, the rate of submarine attacks would increase. In addition to attacks by the remaining fleet submarines, some of which were to be armed with “Long Lance” torpedoes with a range of 20 miles, the Japanese had more frightening plans for death from the sea.

By the end of the war, the Imperial Japanese Navy still had 23 destroyers and two cruisers, which were operational. These ships were to be used to counterattack the American invasion and a number of the destroyers were to be beached along the invasion beaches at the last minute to be used as anti-invasion gun platforms.

As early as 1944, Japan had established a special naval attack unit, which was the counterpart of the special attack units of the air, to be used in the defense of the homeland. These units were to be saved for the invasion and would make widespread use of the midget submarines, human torpedoes, and exploding motorboats used against the Americans. Once offshore, the invasion fleet would be forced not only to defend against the suicide attacks from the air, but would also be confronted with suicide attacks from the sea.

Attempting to sink our troop-carrying transports would be almost 300 Kairyu suicide submarines. These two-man subs carried a 1,320-pound bomb in their nose and were to be used in close-in ramming attacks. By the end of the war, the Japanese had 215 Kairyu available with 207 more under construction.

The Japanese suicide submarines would be used against the American troop-carrying transports. With a crew of five, the Japanese Koryu suicide submarine, carrying an even larger explosive charge, was to be used against the American vessels. By August 1945, the Japanese had 115 Koryu completed, with 496 under construction.

Especially feared by our Navy were the Kaitens, which were difficult to detect, and were to be used against our invasion fleet just off the beaches. These Kaitens were human torpedoes over 60 feet long, each carrying a warhead of 3,500 and each capable of sinking the largest of American naval vessels. The Japanese had 120 shore-based Kaitens, 78 of which were in the Kyushu area as early as August.

Finally, the Japanese had almost 4,000 Navy Shinyo and Army Liaison motor boats, which also were armed with high explosive warheads, and which were to be used in nighttime attacks against our troop-carrying ships.

The principal goal of the special attack units of the air and of the sea was to shatter the invasion before the landing. By killing the combat troops aboard ships and sinking the attack transports and cargo ships, the Japanese were convinced the Americans would back off or become so demoralized that they would then accept a less than an unconditional surrender and a more honorable and face-saving end for the Japanese.



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In addition to destroying as many of the larger American ships as possible, “Ketsu-Go” also called for the annihilation of the smaller offshore landing craft carrying the troops to the invasion beaches.

The Japanese had devised a network of beach defenses, consisting of electrically detonated mines farthest offshore, three lines of suicide divers, followed by magnetic mines and still other mines planted all over the beaches themselves.

A fanatical part of the last line of maritime defense was the Japanese suicide frogmen called “Fukuryu”. These crouching dragons were divers armed with lung mines, each capable of sinking a landing craft up to 950 tons. These divers, numbering in the thousands, could stay submerged up to ten hours, and were to thrust their explosive charges into the bottom of the landing craft and, in effect, serve as human mines.

As horrible as the defense of Japan would be off the beaches it would be on Japanese soil that the American armed forces would face their most rugged and fanatical defense that had ever been encountered in any of the theaters during the entire war.

Throughout the island hopping Pacific campaign, our troops had always outnumbered the Japanese by two and sometimes three to one. In Japan it would be different. By virtue of a combination of cunning, guesswork, and brilliant military reasoning, a number of Japan's top military leaders were able to astutely deduce, not only when, but also where, the United States would land their invasion forces. The Japanese placed their troops accordingly.

Facing the 14 American Division landing at Kyushu would be 14 Japanese Divisions, 7 independent mixed brigades, 3 tank brigades and thousands of specially trained Naval Landing Forces. On Kyushu the odds would be three to two in favor of the Japanese with 790,000 enemy defenders against 550,000 Americans. This time the bulk of the Japanese defenders would be the poorly trained and ill-equipped labor battalions that the Americans had faced in earlier campaigns. The Japanese defenders would be the hard-core of the Japanese Home Army. These troops were well fed and well equipped and were linked together all over Kyushu by instantaneous communication. They were familiar with the terrain, had stockpiles of arms and ammunition, and had developed an effective system of transportation and resupply that was almost invisible from the air. Many of these Japanese troops were the elite of the Japanese army, and they were swollen with a fanatical fighting spirit that convinced them that they could defeat these American invaders that had come to defile their homeland.

Coming ashore, the American Eastern amphibious assault forces at Miyazaki would face the Japanese 154th Division, which straddled the city, the Japanese 212th Division on the coast immediately to the north, and the 156th Division immediately to the south. Also in place and prepared to launch a counter-attack against our Eastern force were the Japanese 25th and 77th Divisions.



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Awaiting the Southeastern attack force at Ariake Bay was the entire Japanese 86th Division, and at least one independent mixed enemy brigade.

On the western shores of Kyushu, the Marines would face the most brutal opposition. Along the invasion beaches would be 146th, the 206th, and the 303rd Japanese Divisions, along with the 6th Tank Brigade, the 125th Mixed Infantry Brigade and the 4th Artillery Command. Additionally components of the 25th and the 77th Divisions would also be posed to launch counterattacks. If not needed to reinforce the landing beaches, the American Reserve Force would be landed at the base of Kagoshima Bay on November 4th. Here they immediately would be confronted by two mixed infantry brigades, parts of two infantry divisions and thousands of naval landing forces who had undergone combat training to support ground troops in defense.

All along the invasion beaches, our troops would face coastal batteries, anti-landing obstacles, and an elaborate network of heavily fortified pillboxes, bunkers, strongpoints and underground fortresses.

As our soldiers waded ashore, they would do so through intense artillery and mortar fire from pre-registered batteries as they worked their way through the tetrahedral and barbed wire entanglements so arranged to funnel them into muzzles of the Japanese guns.

On the beaches and beyond would be hundreds of Japanese machine gun positions, beach mines, booby traps, trip-wire mines, and sniper units. Suicide units concealed in spider holes would meet the troops as they passed nearby. Just past the beaches and the sea walls would be hundreds of barricades trail blocks and concealed strong points.

In the heat of battle special infiltration forces would be sent to reap havoc in the American lines by cutting communication lines and by indiscriminately firing at our troops attempting to establish a beachhead. Some of the troops would be in American uniforms to confuse our troops, and English speaking Japanese officers were assigned to break in on American radio traffic to call off American artillery fire, to order retreats, and to further confuse our troops.

Still other infiltrators with demolition charges strapped to their chests or backs would attempt to blow up American tanks, artillery pieces and ammunition stores as they were unloaded ashore.

Beyond the beaches were large artillery pieces situated at key points. They were to bring down a devastating curtain of fire on the avenues of approach along the beach. Some of these large guns were mounted on railroad tracks running in and out of caves where they were protected by concrete and steel.

The battle for Japan, itself, would be won by what General Simon Bolivar Buckner had called on Okinawa "Prairie Dog Warfare." This type of fighting was almost unknown to the ground troops in Europe and the Mediterranean. It was peculiar only to the American soldiers and marines whose responsibility it had been to fight and destroy the Japanese on islands all over



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the south and central Pacific. “Prairie Dog Warfare” had been the story of Tarawa, of Saipan, of Iwo Jima and Okinawa. “Prairie Dog Warfare” was battle for yards, feet and sometimes-even inches. It was a brutal, deadly and dangerous form of combat aimed at an underground, heavily fortified, non-retreating enemy. “Prairie Dog Warfare” would be what the invasion of Japan was all about.

In the mountains behind the beaches were elaborate underground networks of caves, bunkers, command posts and hospitals connected by miles of tunnels with dozens of separate entrances and exits. Some of these complexes could hold up to 1,000 enemy troops. A number of these caves were equipped with large steel doors that slid open to allow artillery fire and then would snap shut again. The paths leading up to these underground fortresses were honeycombed with defensive positions and all but a few of the trails would be booby-trapped. Along these manned defensive positions would be machine gun nests and aircraft and naval converted for anti-invasion fire.

In addition to the use of poison gas and bacteriological warfare, the most frightening of all was the prospect of meeting an entire civilian population that had been mobilized to meet our troops on the beaches. Had “Olympic” come about, the Japanese civilian population inflamed by a national slogan, “One Hundred Million will die for the Emperor and the Nation”, was prepared to engage and fight the Americans to the death. Twenty-eight million Japanese had become a part of the “National Volunteer Combat Force” and had undergone training in the techniques of beach defense and guerrilla warfare. These civilians were armed with ancient rifles, lunge mines, satchel charges, Molotov cocktails and one-shot black powder mortars. Still others were armed with swords, long bows, axes and bamboo spears. These civilians units were to be tactically employed in nighttime attacks, hit and run maneuvers, delaying action and massive suicide charges at the weaker American positions. Even without the utilization of Japanese civilians in direct combat, the Japanese and the American casualties during the campaign for Kyushu would have been staggering. At the early stage of the invasion, 1,000 Japanese and American soldiers would be dying every hour. The long and difficult task of capturing Kyushu would have made casualties on both sides enormous and one can only guess at how monumental the casualty would have been had the Americans had to repeat their invasion a second time when they landed at the heavily fortified and defended Tokyo Plain the following March.

The invasion of Japan never became a reality because on August 6, 1945, the entire nature of the war was changed when the atomic bomb was exploded over Hiroshima. On August 9, 1945, a second bomb was dropped on Nagasaki and within days the war with Japan was concluded. Had these bombs not been dropped and had the invasion been launched as scheduled, it is hard not to speculate as to the cost. Thousands of Japanese suicide sailors and airmen would have died in fiery deaths in the defense of their homeland. Thousands of American sailors and airmen defending against these attacks would also have been killed with many more wounded. On the Japanese home islands, the combat casualties would have been at a minimum in the tens of thousands. Every foot of Japanese soil would have been paid for, twice over, by both Japanese and American lives. One can only guess at the number of civilians



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who would have committed suicide in their homes or in futile military attacks. In retrospect, the one million men who were to be the casualties of the invasion, were lucky enough to survive the war safe and unharmed. Intelligence studies and realistic military estimates made over 40 years ago, and not latter day speculation, show quite clearly that the battle for Japan might well have resulted in the biggest blood bath in the history of modern warfare.

If the invasion had come in the fall of 1945, with the American forces locked in combat in the south of Japan, who or what could have prevented the Red Army from marching into the northern half of Japanese home islands. If "Downfall" had been an operational necessity, the existence of a separate North and South Japan might be a modern-day necessity. Japan would be divided right down the middle like Korea is today and like Germany was up until a short time ago. The world was spared the cost of "Downfall," because on September 2, 1945, Japan formally surrendered to the United States and World War II was finally over.

Almost immediately, American soldiers, sailors, airmen and marines in for the duration were now discharged. The aircraft carriers, cruisers, transport ships and LSTs scheduled to carry our invasion troops to Japan, now ferried home American troops in a gigantic troop-lift called "Magic Carpet."

The soldiers and marines that had been committed to invade Japan were now returned home where they were welcomed back to American shores. All over America celebrations were held and families everywhere gathered in thanksgiving to honor these soldiers, sailors, airmen and marines who had been miraculously spared from further combat and were now safely returning home. Had the bombs not been dropped, the war would have continued and men like Bill Sholen who was on a Navy destroyer and tens of thousands like him would have never experienced those celebrations.

In the fall of 1945, with the war now over, few Americans would ever learn of the elaborate top-secret plans that had been prepared in detail for the invasion of Japan. Those few military leaders who had known the details of "Operation Downfall" were now preoccupied with demobilization and other postwar matters, and were no longer concerned with this invasion that never came.

In the fall of 1945, in the aftermath of the two thermonuclear explosions that triggered Japan's surrender, and with the war a fading memory, few people concerned themselves with the invasion plans for Japan that had been rendered obsolete by the atomic age. Following the surrender, the classified documents, maps, diagrams and appendices for "Operation Downfall" were packed away in boxes where they began their long route to the National Archives where they remain today.

But even now more than fifty-four years later, these plans that called for the invasion of Japan paint a vivid description of what might have been one of the most horrible campaigns in the history of modern man. The fact that "Operation Downfall", the story of the invasion of



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Japan, is locked up in our National Archives and not reflected in our history books is something for which all Americans can be thankful.

Nothing has been mentioned in this report about biological and chemical weapons. However, since Japan had not signed the Geneva Convention articles, it is entirely possible they would have ultimately used these weapons of mass destruction. It is known they had 144,000 tons of gas in their stockpile of defensive weapons.

We have those today who argue the decision to drop the atomic bombs was wrong and condemn those who made the decision. However, that decision was responsible for an **INVASION THAT NEVER WAS.**

Epilog: Paul Tibbets, pilot of the B-29 bomber that dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima, Japan, says he never second-guessed his historic role in World War II. He says the mission on August 6, 1945 hastened the end of the war and saved countless lives.

He repeated his feelings recently, when at the age of 84, he spoke at a fundraiser at the Municipal Airport in Great Bend, Kansas. A B-29 Memorial Plaza is planned for the airport. He stated 'that the bomb was the biggest thing in the world to save lives.'

We have revisionists that are continually attempting to change history by elimination or revision of facts. With our generation quickly passing the 80th year of life, soon no one will be able to refute some of the statements made. For that reason your personal histories should be documented and recorded to insure a first-hand account exists as a permanent record for future generations.



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*Barbara Gavin Fauntleroy
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New Canaan, CT 06840*

May 3, 2001

Dear Merle,

Thank you for your very interesting summary of what might have happened had it been necessary to invade Japan, after winning the battle against Germany. As we discussed in Atlanta, I have never had the slightest qualm about our use of the atomic bombs in Japan. I have half a dozen letters from my father which refer to the battles still to be fought in the Pacific and his desire to be part of them. He wasn't a man who loved war (although he loved being with troops), and he talked about those veterans who had survived four combat jumps wondering if their luck would stretch to a fifth. Like any family member, I just wanted him safe at home.

I had no idea that your information was in the National Archives. You have done a great service to those of us who sometimes find ourselves defending the action to those who think it was a mistake. Any action which could shorten the war and reduce or eliminate casualties was a good one. I would like to shake Paul Tibbets' hand.

Thank you, too, for "The Thunderbolt". I always enjoy reading it. That's a great story about the Corcoran jump boots. Please take good care of yourself, and I'll hope to see you next year in Atlanta.

*Warmest regards,
Barbara*



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Administrivia

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- At any time, if you want to be added or removed from the MailCall list, just let me know, or just click on the unsubscribe link on the email.
- Send any news, stories, or feedback to: MailCall@517prct.org
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- I now understand how Ben could get confused about what he already posted and what he didn't. If I miss something, please just send it again.
- Donations for any programs involving the 517th should be sent to our new Association Treasurer: Identify the purpose of any donation (Annual Donations, In Memory of... etc.) and make all checks payable to:

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