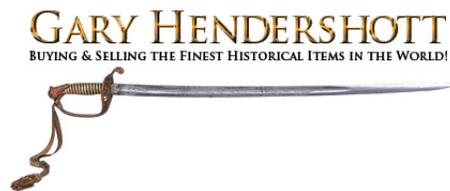


Buck Hendershott World War II battlefield Diary
All Action-Oriented, Eyewitness Accounts of
The Battle of Okinawa April 1st, 1945
United States CB's attached to the 2d Marine Divison

The skipper of the USS Menard made a talk after we left the P. Islands & told us what to expect & made it clear that our mission was to kill Japs & we were going all the way. He told us that each man had his own life in his hands along with a great responsibility. That we were sailing real close by Jap. **Truk and Wake islands which was held by the Japs & could expect almost anything.** We went through abandon ship drills, fire drills & etc. several times. From there on I stayed on deck all I could. The nite of Mar. 31th we got to our destination. We maneuvered around & around the island. April 1st 1945 **At day break we were on deck wondering just what was on that island. No one seemed scared. But still there was something funny about this Okinawa that we were so near to.** We could see towers smoke stacks, trees & every thing was so still & clear. At 8:30 thousands of big guns went into action. **You could see the shells burst on the beach & Youtan airfield & our planes diving and dropping bombs. - At 7:00pm Jap air attack all round us. Monday April 2nd air attack at dawn . Jap suicide plane dropped a bomb off our fantail. Missed & then tried to smash our ship. But missed again & hit on the deck of K.A. #53 right along side of us. 4 dead & 46 wounded. Some of our men went ashore as things were going ahead of schedule & our job was at Youtan air field. We slept in cemetery on Youtan with heavy artillery behind us. I would no sooner get to sleep when a shell from our long toms would go over my head & wake me up. We got off ship at 4:15 P.M. & were on beach at 5:PM. A Rhode Islander & I picked a bomb hole for our fox hole & done a lot of digging in.** The next morning we went to our camp area which was across the airstrip right on the west end of the run way.

Thursday 5th Apr. 3 night raids -Friday 6th 3 day air raids - A.P.A. 201 our ship was hit by Zero at 11:00 noon - Friday nite 3 raids - Saturday 1 air raid & 2 night raids - We Apr. 11th plane crashed near our tent & killed the Flight Surgeon 2nd Marine Div. Thursday 12th. A dog fight between a Jap Zero & a Corsair the Zero came down in flames at the time I was building the General's tent for the 2nd Marine Air Wing. Sat. Apr. 14th a Hell Cat crashed at 5:00 P. M. 100 yds or so from our camp. The plane was in flames the minute it hit the ground. It hit the radar & the pilot was burned up. - Sunday April 15th. At sun down two Zeros came in strafing. One went down in flames ½ mile before it got



to our area. The other came over head & crashed into a ship below us. This raid lasted 3 ½ hours 2 of our planes burned on the ship south of our camp & 2 north.

May 24th. 9:P.M. 5 Jap Bettys tried to land with troops aboard at Youtan air field. The troops were heavy armed with mine explosives. All were shot down but one. This one landed near the tower & they destroyed 6 planes including P54s & the gasoline dump. C.B.s & Marines who were working near at the time killed ones that had the job burning planes. One got into one of our planes & when some guys came in the next morning pulled the pin out of a hand grenade & killed himself & two Marines. 3 of these planes went directly over our camp & one crashed into a gun position at the same place where the Hell Cat crashed a few days before. It fell over a dug out where 7 Marine gun crew were. We worked for 3 hrs. to free them. 2 were dead -- at Youtan they came in every five minutes all nite long. They draped a string of bombs before we could get out of the tent. So I dove in the hole & hit flat on my belly with 3 other guys & on top of me. June 19th we moved C.B.M.U. #617 and Marine air Squadron #31 from Youtan to Chiun air field a Kerr. (Kerama).

Thursday June 21th. 10:00A.M. we were at camp. Dog fight between two Corsairs & Jap plane. They were very low and it took only a few seconds for our Corsair to get him. He burst into flames. Crashed into the water & exploded ____ All organized resistance on Okinawa ceased. Worked on air strip all burning Jap dead & cleaning wreckage. –

Thurs. June 8th Chief McMerriman died at 11:00 P.M. several others sick - Friday 9th 3:00 P.M. Johnny Grey died. Both were buried Sat. 10th at 1:00 P. M. in the Marine Cemetery 1 mile away.

Saturday June 17th Jap plane shot down over of our camp at 2500 feet high. It came down in a dive & “that’s all.” - Night raid Jap bomber shot by big 90 gun which was located almost in our camp. This plane came in once before that at 40,000 feet, the search light picked him up directly over our head but he dove out of the light & at that time the only gun that we had there on Youtan airfield that would reach him was the 90 & it wasn’t accurate at 40,000 ft. He was gone about 3 minutes & slipped in again. This time they had layed a smoke screen but our boys got a hit on him & he went into a dive. He was over our camp area down with all the speed he had. It was so high when it started & got so fast that it vibrated to pieces. Parts were scattered over a radius of at least ¾ mile one engine, a battery, guns & magazines, clips, gasoline tanks, & the six Japs that were in the plane fell in our tents & garage. The bodies were torn to bits. The gasoline tank & a machine gun magazine fell by our fox hole. The parts & bodies flying over our heads made a very funny sound. We had no way knowing just what was going on as what was flying where. The smoke screen made it impossible to see any distance. We knew the whole thing was coming straight at us but we didn’t know how many bombs & etc. the plane



had left to explode. **The gasoline tank hit along side our fox hole. There was 7 of us in the hole at the time. We had been expecting the Nips to use poison gas, so when we smelled the gasoline we thought ---“Well a lot of things. My tent was about 3 long jumps from the fox hole and I ran in the tent & got my gas mask & had it on before I got back to the fox hole. I took pictures of all these Japs my self. One of them fell in our water truck cab bending the steering wheel & windshield to pieces.**