



GEM STATE GEMS

Gem State Branch 382
Fleet Reserve Association

www.fra382.org
fra-nwregion.org
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January 2024

News from the Branch

President:

HAPPY NEW YEAR

Welcome to 2024. We have great hope for the new year. We still have some projects on the docket. We are continuing in our efforts to increase our membership and increase participation of our present members.

I would like to start the new year with an invitation to our Shipmates of Branch # 382 who live in the local area but don't attend meetings to give us a try. Attend a meeting (2nd Saturday of each month at 1000,0930 for coffee and donuts) the address is 1012 11th Ave N. in Nampa. Also, please join us for coffee each Wednesday at 1400. We meet at Lucky Perk at the southeast corner of Linder and Cherry Lane in Meridian.

2023 ended on a good note with the delivery of "CHRISTMAS" to two families from Gowen Field. This included a Christmas dinner, presents for each member of the family, and a food pounding of staple pantry items. The branch has assisted our Auxiliary in this endeavor for a number of years and hope to continue in the future.

January 6th at 0900 we will be taking down the decorations at the Veterans Home and Step-Down Unit (3rd floor) of the VA Hospital.

We are looking forward to hosting our Northwest Regional President at our January 13th meeting. Please join us to hear an update of the happenings at the national level.

Nominations and elections are coming up in a couple of months, be thinking of who you would nominate to lead and guide the branch in the 2024-2025

association year. It shouldn't always be the same few. New faces bring new ideas which bring new direction and inspirations.

For those who were not in attendance at our December meeting, our 2nd Vice President Shipmate Sutherland stepped down to be able to spend more time with his family and do a little traveling. We wish him well. His work, knowledge, and dedication will be greatly missed.

I want to welcome our newest members Bill and Candee Bartholomew to our ranks. We are glad you have joined us. Please let us mentor you into the FRA and Branch # 382.

As we start a new year remember those who are on the binnacle list and those who may need a helping hand. Be safe and may God bless you and yours in the coming year.

In Loyalty, Protection & Service,
Bill Hall,
President Branch 382
(208) 695-1664

News from the Branch 1st Vice President:

2023 is in the rear-view mirror and we are looking forward to a prosperous new year with lots of great new opportunities. If you follow college football, I hope your team won. Now is the time to focus on basketball.

Over the last year, our Branch has slowly continued to decline in membership. On a positive note, our membership contest last fall was successful. Don Franklin won the contest. At our December meeting, we initiated two new members into the Branch who had been recruited by Don. They joined us at the Christmas Party at Bob's in Nampa. Don was declared the official

winner of the contest at the Dinner and presented with a \$50.00 check.

While the contest has concluded, do not cease your efforts in recruiting new members. Our Branch needs new blood.

Our Branch is involved in many community activities. More younger members will help to lighten the load on those members who always show up when there is work to be done. This last weekend, members showed up to take down the decorations at the State Veterans Home and the VA Hospital. We decorate these two facilities every year. We also participate in raising and lowering the flags at the Idaho State Veteran's Cemetery each year in conjunction with Veterans Day Activities. On Memorial Day we participate in the laying of wreaths at the Idaho State Veterans Cemetery. While all of these activities are a service to our communities, they are also an opportunity for camaraderie.

Last year, the branch participated in three parades, one each in Nampa, Caldwell and Boise. In addition to riding on the float, volunteers are needed to assemble the float and take it down after the parades. If you haven't participated in a parade in the past, you are encouraged to participate in upcoming parades. This is again an opportunity for camaraderie. It is also an opportunity to interact with members of the community and recruit new members.

In Loyalty, Protection and Service
Stephen Loop
1st Vice President, Branch 382

Branch and Unit Events:

January

01 – New Year's Day
03 – Coffee at Meridian Lucky Perk (2 PM)
06 – Remove Christmas Decorations (9 AM)
10 – Coffee at Meridian Lucky Perk (2 PM)
13 – Branch Meeting (10 AM)
15 – Martin Luther King Jr.'s Birthday
17 – Coffee at Meridian Lucky Perk (2 PM)
22 – Chinese New Year
24 – Coffee at Meridian Lucky Perk (2 PM)
31 – Coffee at Meridian Lucky Perk (2 PM)

February

Black History Month
02 – Groundhog Day
03 – Four Chaplains Day
04 – USO Birthday (83 Years)
06 – Kilroy Coffee Klatch Warhawk Museum (10 AM)
07 – Coffee at Meridian Lucky Perk (2 PM)
10 – Branch Meeting (10 AM)
12 – 19 – National Salute to Veteran Patients
14 – Valentine's Day
14 – Coffee at Meridian Lucky Perk (2 PM)
19 – President's Day
19 – Coast Guard Reserve Birthday (85 Years)
21 – Coffee at Meridian Lucky Perk (2 PM)
28 – Coffee at Meridian Lucky Perk (2 PM)

Branch Birthdays:

January

01 – James Streicher
05 – Robert Bowman
06 – Russell Starnes
14 – Fernando Pitones, Sr.
31 – Joe Putman

February

01 – Jon Eisfelder
02 – Kevin Lee
05 – Dale Odom
09 – Richard Harding
10 – Charles Crooks
16 – Thomas Flanik
23 – Bradley Breau; Gary Kelley
26 – Richard Scott
27 – Robert Baker

Membership Milestones:

Ralph Bouden – 25 Years

Welcome to our newest members – Candace and William Bartholomew

This Day in U.S. Navy History:

January 01, 1962 - The Navy SEAL teams were established with Teams One and Two, formed with personnel from Underwater Demolition Teams.

January 16, 1991 - Operation Desert Storm begins to liberate Kuwait from Iraq. After three months, Iraq requests a cease fire, which is formalized by the United Nations in April.

January 18, 1885 - A Marine guard from the screw gunboat Alliance lands at Colon, Panama, (then in Colombia) to guard the railroad and to protect American lives and property during a period of political unrest.

January 20, 1909 - Ship Fitter First Class George H. Wheeler and Boatswains Mate William H. Gowan display bravery and extraordinary heroism while fighting a fire and keeping it from spreading in Coquimbo, Chile. For their actions on this occasion, both men are awarded the Medal of Honor.

January 23, 1968 - USS Pueblo (AGER-2) is seized by North Korean forces in Sea of Japan. The crew is released on Dec. 23, 1968.

January 25, 1963 - The 1st Seabee Technical Assistance Team arrives in Vietnam. By the end of 1964, 14 teams are operating or have completed their six-month tours.

January 26, 1913 - The body of John Paul Jones is laid in its final resting place in the chapel of the Naval Academy, Annapolis, Md.

January 27, 1973 - The Paris Peace Accords are signed, ending U.S. participation in the Vietnam War.

January 30, 1963 - While Landsman Richard Stout is a member of the crew of USS Isaac Smith, which is operating on the Stono River, S.C., Confederate forces ambush and capture the ship. For his brave conduct during this action, in which he is badly wounded, Landsman Stout is awarded the Medal of Honor.

January 31, 1981 - The era of enlisted naval aviators comes to a close when the last enlisted pilot, Master Chief Robert K. Jones, retires after 38 years of naval service.

In honor of the Marine Corps 248th Birthday, the newsletter will be running a multiple part story about the Battle of Guadalcanal

Guadalcanal campaign

Tokyo Express

By 23 August, Kawaguchi's 35th Infantry Brigade reached Truk and was loaded onto slow transport ships for the rest of the trip to Guadalcanal. The damage done to Tanaka's convoy during the Battle of the Eastern Solomons caused the Japanese to reconsider trying to deliver more troops to Guadalcanal by slow transport. Instead, the ships carrying Kawaguchi's soldiers were sent to Rabaul. From there, the Japanese planned to deliver Kawaguchi's men to Guadalcanal by destroyers staging through a Japanese naval base in the Shortland Islands. The Japanese destroyers were usually able to make round trips down "The Slot" (New Georgia Sound) to Guadalcanal and back in a single night throughout the campaign, minimizing their exposure to Allied air attack. The runs became known as the "Tokyo Express" to Allied forces and were labeled "rat transportation" by the Japanese. While troops could be transported in this manner, most of the heavy equipment and supplies, such as heavy artillery, vehicles, and much food and ammunition, could not. In addition, this activity tied up destroyers the IJN desperately needed to escort their convoys. Either inability or unwillingness prevented Allied naval commanders from frequently challenging Japanese naval forces at night, so the Japanese controlled the seas around the Solomon Islands during nighttime. However, any Japanese ship

within range (200 miles) of the aircraft at Henderson Field in daylight was at great risk from air attack. This tactical situation existed for the next several months of the campaign.

Between 29 August and 4 September, Japanese light cruisers, destroyers, and patrol boats were able to land almost 5,000 troops at Taivu Point, including most of the 35th Infantry Brigade, much of the Aoba (4th) Regiment, and the rest of Ichiki's regiment. General Kawaguchi, who landed at Taivu Point on 31 August Express run, was placed in command of all Japanese forces on Guadalcanal. A barge convoy took another 1,000 soldiers of Kawaguchi's brigade, under the command of Colonel Akinosuke Oka, to Kamimbo, west of the Lunga perimeter.

Battle of Edson's Ridge

On 7 September, Kawaguchi issued his attack plan to "rout and annihilate the enemy in the vicinity of the Guadalcanal Island airfield". Kawaguchi's attack plan called for his forces, split into three divisions, to approach the Lunga perimeter inland, culminating with a surprise night attack. Oka's forces would attack the perimeter from the west while Ichiki's Second Echelon, renamed the Kuma Battalion, would attack from the east. The main attack would be by Kawaguchi's "Center Body", numbering 3,000 men in three battalions, from the jungle south of the Lunga perimeter. By 7 September, most of Kawaguchi's troops had departed Taivu to begin marching towards Lunga Point along the coastline. About 250 Japanese troops remained behind to guard the brigade's supply base at Taivu.

Meanwhile, native scouts under the direction of Martin Clemens, a coastwatcher officer in the British Solomon Islands Protectorate Defence Force and the British district officer for Guadalcanal, brought reports to the U.S. Marines of Japanese troops at Taivu near the village of Tasimboko. Edson planned a raid on the Japanese troop concentration at Taivu. On 8 September, after being dropped off near Taivu by boat, Edson's men captured Tasimboko as the Japanese defenders retreated into the jungle. In Tasimboko, Edson's troops discovered Kawaguchi's main supply depot, including large stockpiles of food, ammunition, medical supplies, and a powerful shortwave radio. After destroying everything in sight, except for some documents and equipment carried back with them, the Marines returned to the Lunga perimeter. The mounds of supplies along with intelligence gathered from the captured documents informed the Marines that at least 3,000 Japanese troops were on the island and apparently planning an attack.

Edson, along with Colonel Gerald C. Thomas, Vandegrift's operations officer, correctly believed that the Japanese attack would come at Lunga Ridge, a narrow, grassy, 1,000-yard-long coral ridge that ran parallel to the Lunga River located just south of Henderson Field. The ridge offered a natural avenue of approach to the airfield, commanded the surrounding area, and was almost undefended. On 11 September, the 840 men of Edson's battalion were deployed onto and around the ridge.

On the night of 12 September, Kawaguchi's 1st Battalion attacked the Raiders between the Lunga River and ridge, forcing one Marine company to fall back to the ridge before the Japanese halted their attack for the night. The next night Kawaguchi faced Edson's 840 Raiders with 3,000 troops of his brigade plus an assortment of light artillery. The Japanese attack began just after nightfall, with Kawaguchi's 1st battalion assaulting Edson's right flank just to the west

of the ridge. After breaking through the Marine lines the battalion's assault was eventually stopped by Marine units guarding the northern part of the ridge.

Two companies from Kawaguchi's 2nd Battalion charged up the southern edge of the ridge and pushed Edson's troops back to Hill 123 on the center part of the ridge. Throughout the night Marines at this position, who were supported by artillery, defeated wave after wave of frontal Japanese attacks, some of which resulted in hand-to-hand fighting. Japanese units that infiltrated past the ridge to the edge of the airfield were also repulsed. Attacks by the Kuma Battalion and Oka's unit at other locations on the Lunga perimeter were also defeated. On 14 September Kawaguchi led the survivors of his shattered brigade on a five-day march west to the Matanikau Valley to join with Oka's unit.[94] In total Kawaguchi's forces lost about 850 killed and the Marines 104.

On 15 September at Rabaul, Hyakutake learned of Kawaguchi's defeat and forwarded the news to Imperial General Headquarters in Japan. In an emergency session the top Japanese IJA and IJN command staffs concluded that "Guadalcanal might develop into the decisive battle of the war". The results of the battle now began to have a telling strategic impact on Japanese operations in other areas of the Pacific. Hyakutake realized that he could not send sufficient troops and materiel to defeat the Allied forces on Guadalcanal and at the same time support the major ongoing Japanese offensive on the Kokoda Track in New Guinea. Hyakutake, with the concurrence of General Headquarters, ordered his troops on New Guinea, who were within 30 miles of their objective of Port Moresby, to withdraw until the "Guadalcanal matter" was resolved. Hyakutake prepared to send more troops to Guadalcanal for another attempt to recapture Henderson Field.

Allied reinforcement

As the Japanese regrouped west of the Matanikau, the U.S. forces concentrated on shoring up and strengthening their Lunga defenses. On 14 September Vandegrift moved another battalion, the 3rd Battalion, 2nd Marine Regiment from Tulagi to Guadalcanal. On 18 September an Allied naval convoy delivered 4,157 men from the 3rd Provisional Marine Brigade (the 7th Marine Regiment plus a battalion from the 11th Marine Regiment and some additional support units), 137 vehicles, tents, aviation fuel, ammunition, rations, and engineering equipment to Guadalcanal. These crucial reinforcements allowed Vandegrift, beginning on 19 September, to establish an unbroken line of defense around the Lunga perimeter. While covering this convoy the aircraft carrier USS Wasp was scuttled after being hit by torpedoes from the Japanese submarine I-19 southeast of Guadalcanal. This left only one Allied aircraft carrier (USS Hornet) in operation in the South Pacific Area. Vandegrift also made some changes in the senior leadership of his combat units, transferring off the island several officers who did not meet his performance standards and promoting junior officers who had proven themselves to take their place. One of these was the recently promoted Colonel Merritt Edson, who was placed in command of the 5th Marine Regiment.

A lull occurred in the air war over Guadalcanal, with no Japanese air raids between 14 and 27 September because of bad weather, during which both sides reinforced their respective air units. The Japanese delivered 85 fighters and bombers to their air units at Rabaul while the U.S. brought 23 fighters and attack aircraft to Henderson Field. On 20 September the Japanese had 117 total aircraft at Rabaul while the Allies tallied 71 aircraft at Henderson Field. The air

war resumed with a Japanese air raid on Guadalcanal on 27 September which was contested by U.S. Navy and Marine fighters from Henderson Field.

The Japanese immediately began to prepare for their next attempt to recapture Henderson Field. The 3rd Battalion, 4th (Aoba) Infantry Regiment had landed at Kamimbo Bay on the western end of Guadalcanal on 11 September, too late to join Kawaguchi's attack but had joined Oka's forces near the Matanikau. Tokyo Express runs by destroyers on 14, 20, 21 and 24 September brought food and ammunition as well as 280 men from the 1st Battalion, Aoba Regiment, to Kamimbo Bay. Meanwhile, the Japanese 2nd and 38th Infantry Divisions were transported from the Dutch East Indies to Rabaul beginning on 13 September. The Japanese planned to transport a total of 17,500 troops from these two divisions to Guadalcanal to take part in the next major attack on the Lunga perimeter by late October.

Actions along the Matanikau

Vandegrift and his staff were aware that Kawaguchi's troops had retreated to the area west of the Matanikau and that numerous groups of Japanese stragglers were scattered throughout the area between the Lunga perimeter and the Matanikau River. Vandegrift therefore decided to conduct another series of small unit operations around the Matanikau Valley. The purpose of these operations was to mop up the scattered groups of Japanese troops east of the Matanikau and to keep the main body of Japanese soldiers off-balance to prevent them from consolidating their positions so close to the main Marine defenses at Lunga Point.

A U.S. Marine operation on Japanese forces west of the Matanikau was conducted between 23 and 27 September by elements of three U.S. Marine battalions. The attack was repulsed by Kawaguchi's troops under Akinosuke Oka's local command. During the action three Marine companies were surrounded by Japanese forces near Point Cruz west of the Matanikau, took heavy losses, and barely escaped with assistance from the destroyer USS Monssen and landing craft crewed by U.S. Coast Guard personnel. One of those was piloted by Douglas Munro, who was killed as he maneuvered his craft to protect the escaping Marines and became the only Coast Guardsman to be awarded the Medal of Honor.

Between 6 and 9 October a larger force of Marines successfully crossed the Matanikau River, attacked newly landed Japanese forces from the 2nd Infantry Division under the command of Generals Masao Maruyama and Yumio Nasu, and inflicted heavy losses on the Japanese 4th Infantry Regiment. The action forced the Japanese to retreat from their positions east of the Matanikau and hindered Japanese preparations for their planned major offensive on the U.S. Lunga defenses. Between 9 and 11 October the U.S. 1st Battalion 2nd Marines raided two small Japanese outposts about 30 miles (48 km) east of the Lunga perimeter at Gurabusu and Koilotumaria near Aola Bay. The raids killed 35 Japanese at a cost of 17 Marines and 3 U.S. Navy personnel killed.

Battle of Cape Esperance

Throughout the last week of September and the first week of October, Tokyo Express runs delivered troops from the Japanese 2nd Infantry Division to Guadalcanal. The Japanese Navy promised to support the Army's planned offensive by delivering the necessary troops,

equipment, and supplies to the island, and also by stepping up air attacks on Henderson Field and sending warships to bombard the airfield.

In the meantime, Millard F. Harmon, commander of U.S. Army forces in the South Pacific, convinced Ghormley that U.S. Marine forces on Guadalcanal needed to be reinforced immediately if the Allies were to successfully defend the island from the next expected Japanese offensive. Thus, on 8 October, the 2,837 men of the 164th Infantry Regiment from the Americal Division boarded ships at New Caledonia for the trip to Guadalcanal with a projected arrival date of 13 October. To protect the transports carrying the 164th to Guadalcanal, Ghormley ordered Task Force 64, consisting of four cruisers and five destroyers under U.S. Rear Admiral Norman Scott, to intercept and combat any Japanese ships that approached Guadalcanal and threatened the arrival of the transport convoy.

Mikawa's 8th Fleet staff scheduled a large and important Express run for the night of 11 October. Two seaplane tenders and six destroyers were to deliver 728 soldiers plus artillery and ammunition to Guadalcanal. At the same time, but in a separate operation, three heavy cruisers and two destroyers under the command of Rear Admiral Aritomo Gotō were to bombard Henderson Field with special explosive shells with the object of destroying the CAF and the airfield's facilities. Because U.S. Navy warships had yet to attempt to interdict any Tokyo Express missions to Guadalcanal, the Japanese were not expecting any opposition from Allied naval surface forces that night.

Just before midnight, Scott's warships detected Gotō's force on radar near the entrance to the strait between Savo Island and Guadalcanal. Scott's force was in a position to cross the T on Gotō's unsuspecting formation. Opening fire, Scott's warships sank a cruiser and a destroyer, heavily damaged another cruiser, mortally wounded Gotō, and forced the rest of Gotō's warships to abandon the bombardment mission and retreat. During the exchange of gunfire, one of Scott's destroyers was sunk, and one cruiser and another destroyer were heavily damaged. In the meantime, the Japanese supply convoy successfully completed unloading at Guadalcanal and began its return journey without being discovered by Scott's force.

Later, on the morning of 12 October, four Japanese destroyers from the supply convoy turned back to assist Gotō's retreating, damaged warships. Air attacks by CAF aircraft from Henderson Field sank two of these destroyers later that day. The convoy of U.S. Army troops reached Guadalcanal as scheduled on 13 October and successfully delivered its cargo and passengers to the island.