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MAJOR GENERAL WILLIAM JORDAN VERBECK

JANUARY 20, 1904 — NOVEMBER 4, 1965

Bill

A noble, bred-in-the-bone, American, one of the great captains of the American army, grudgingly surrendered to death on November fourth.

Yet even to this last overwhelming enemy, William Jordan Verbeck allowed no clear decisive victory. For three years, we grievously stood the helpless watch, overwhelmed by the tenacity of the warrior as he wrestled in the agony of his last fight. In his life, he was exceptional; in his death, he was inspirational.

We, who loved him unreservedly, are borne up and comforted by the inquenchable faith that the hands of Heaven have embraced him into that higher, nobler realm where his pain and anguish are no more.

It is said that Sir Winston Churchill, when once asked why he did not withdraw and rest upon his laurels, replied: "I leave when the pub closes". William Verbeck knew that "the pub" was closing as long ago as last January. A few days later, he wrote: "I was informed on the 19th that I could last for five more months. If I do not lose ground, I shall show up on Oahu. Be seeing you. Loyally, Bill." The five months were extended to nine, almost ten, and we are want to reflect upon this stretching of the rubber of life as being almost the doing of Bill himself, alone.

"Never give in!", he said to his Gimlets on Mindoro as they readied for Mindanao, "Never, never, never." This was the credo which served him more than passing well in a long career of distinction, which kept him here among us for some thirty six months after the dreadful diagnosis that "the big C" had his name, rank and serial number. That dauntlessness we knew so well reflected itself, from his deathbed, in the resilience with which he battled for life.

Once, in a seeming lull in the last fight, he found the heart and will to encourage us with: "Unfix bayonets, boys; we don't need to charge." For him, it was but another campaign and he gave it his usual extraordinary ferocity of purpose.

Now, only legend remains; and Bill Verbeck's legend is as secure as that of any hero who fought and triumphed over evil.

Brave soldier - Respected leader - Devoted friend - Gay companion - Graceful host - Bill Verbeck was all of these.

Here was a man born to battle and great events as ordinary men are born to ledgers, adding machines, and Rotary luncheons. Here was a master of the engines and techniques of war, yet so human and humane that he could be overcome with emotion and tears in the presence of valor or courage, even just plain thoughtfulness, in others.

He served his country with dedication, devotion, imagination. He followed his own personal star: "Duty, Honor, Country" was the guide line by which he measured his career. Duty was an obsession, unsurpassed by that of any patriot whose name glows from the pages of history. Dedication to peace and liberty was his basic theme, exemplified by a fierce opposition to the forces of tyranny and injustice.

Detached from the business ethos, he was committed to soldiering, devoted thereto, but never enslaved by it. He was an archetypical avatar of the vivacious, fascinating military man risen to eminence among the leaders of the service he adopted. Serene in the exercise of power, he was intent on its use only for the ends of human freedom. Overflowing with an almost careless confidence, when life was filled with trouble, he exuded a faith that action and passion could overcome it.

He was complex in the respect that he was torn by fierce hates and fiercer loyalties. Of the friendships, they ranged the world, from Wall Street bankers to Davao bartenders, for he loved people. His bitterest anger was directed against fanatics of the far left or far right who would do his country harm. With equal fervor, he hated all phonies, of whatever stripe.

We respected him, admired him, loved him - and such was his magic that men were proud even to have been his adversary. Forgive us this personalization of a eulogy. One story bears out the point that he was respected by the foe. We would repeat that which many of you



heard us say on the convention rostrum 15 months ago. For many of us, there was that dreadful fear that Boston would be Bill's last reunion - and it was. Hence, to him, a presentation, which we were privileged to make in the Association's behalf, with words along the lines of:

"My mind hearkens back tonight to the many times I heard General Jimmy Lester tell this story I beg to share with you. It was the story of his one and only conversation with General Yamashita, the 'Butcher of the Philippines'. Between sessions of Yamashita's trial in Manila, of which Lester was a court member, our Jimmy found an opportune moment in which to speak to the Butcher and ask of him a pregnant question: 'When did Japan lose the war?' And Yamashita's answer: 'The War of Japan was lost in the Campaign of the Philippines, and the Campaign of the Philippines was lost in the Battle of Leyte, and the Battle of Leyte was lost in the skirmish on Breakneck Ridge, and the skirmish on Breakneck Ridge was lost to your Colonel Verbeck'."

This was much that was contagious about Bill Verbeck and Yamashita, like others, was a carrier. There was an aura of the beau sabreur about Bill. He was born to the limelight and trained for greatness. Had we lived together centuries ago, he would have been the one of us who would have charged about the world - a knight errant slaying dragons.

One side of his life may not be properly emphasized in the elegies and paeans of today. It relates to his days, the bright ones and then the dark ones, with the lovely lady who was his devoted companion, and more, was the force that sustained him in his hours of pain. Important was the part she played in balancing his lion's heart. Deep was his love for her, so deep as to prompt him to write not too long ago: "You know this may seem like attempted heroics, but my only worry, when the people here are not very optimistic, is Peggy. The whole world can do very nicely without me, but I like to think that she needs me."

To his men, he was a hero, perhaps because he felt so humble in the presence of those who followed his orders, bid his command. His loyalty to his men was boundless, as was theirs to him. They were simpatico. His interest in his men went beyond mere professional help; he nursed them through their aches, pains, problems, troubles. He would have made a terrific Chaplain. Men felt impelled to pour out their hearts to him. They knew they could trust him absolutely.

He well knew that fighting is travail, that soldiering is a lonely trade, that warriors as a breed, for all their superficial arrogance, are tremulous men who welter in an agony of self-doubt. Such understanding stood him in good stead in working with the warriors who were his. These warriors admired him for his generalship, his competence, his keen military sense, his uncanny intuition, his restless energy, his honesty, his fairness; but they loved him for his gentleness. First above all, it was the gentleness that enshrined him forever in their hearts.

Absurdly, we had grown to think of him as going on forever, because he embodied certain qualities that put us in mind of permanence. His last fight was a holding action and so great was his muster of courage and fortitude that, in our hearts, we were coming to think of him as invincible. And now we have been brought to the abrupt realization that continuation was but a wish.

Bill has departed - but in his very departure he could still evoke high emotions. Some of his bearers, ramrod stiff generals, classmates all, were seen to fight back tears as we stood by his last resting place in final tribute. Taro Leafers too, civilians once again, who took the time to journey from all corners to make with him the last walk, were seen to fight complete and public breakdown, as "the pub" closed.

And now he has gone to labor in the larger vineyard of eternal life.

The men who loved him, leaned on him, and learned from him, drink to his memory. Farewell, Bill.....farewell.

K.R.



Gen. Verbeck, War Hero, Dies

Maj. Gen. William J. Verbeck, native of Manlius, died Thursday in Walter Reed Hospital in Washington, D. C. He resided at 2320 N. Florida St., in Arlington, Va.

He was a member of a distinguished military family, one whose name dots the history of The Manlius School and military service in the state and nation. He attended the Manlius School commencement last June and participated in the Old Boys' reunion.

Gen. Verbeck was the son of the late Brig. Gen. William Verbeck, who was head of The Manlius School from 1888 until his death in 1930.

Maj. Gen. Verbeck retired June 30, 1963, after 41 years of outstanding Army service. At the time he retired he was commanding general of the XIII Army Corps and Ft. Devens, Mass.

He was born in Manlius on Jan. 20, 1904, and was graduated from the Military Academy at West Point and was commissioned a second lieutenant of infantry on June 14, 1927.

Prior to World War II, Gen. Verbeck handled several infantry assignments, including duty with the Philippine Scouts (Moro) at Zamboanga Philippine Islands, and put in a tour of duty as professor of military science and tactics at The Manlius School. He served with the U. S. Embassy in Tokyo, Japan.

Gen Verbeck attended The Infantry School in 1933-34 and then assumed command of Co. D, 18th Infantry Regiment at Camp Dix, N. J., and Governor's Island, N.Y.

From November, 1941 to June, 1944, he served in Alaska, and for one year was commander of the Alaskan Scouts



In July, 1944, he was assigned to X Corps in New Guinea. Later he was reassigned to the 21st Infantry Regiment as commanding officer. Subsequently he was chief of staff of the 24th Infantry Division and served in the campaigns in Leyte, Mindoro, Luzon and Mindanao in the Philippines.

In September, 1945, Gen. Verbeck was commanding officer of troops for a year at the U. S. Military Academy. Then he attended the War College from which he graduated in June, 1947.

Thereafter he was assigned until December, 1948, on the Department of Army General Staff. After that he was appointed chief of the Army section, U. S. military mission in Brazil. In May, 1951, he was assigned as senior assistant to the Joint Chiefs of Staff representative to the National Security Council. He served in that

capacity until reassigned to Korea in November, 1952. In Korea he was senior advisor to the G3, Republic of Korea Army. Subsequent assignments included those as commanding officer of the United Nations Command prisoner of war camp No. 8, and with headquarters of the 2nd Logistical

quarters of the 2nd Logistical Upon completion of Korean service, Gen. Verbeck again served on the Department of the Army General Staff and in the Office of the Joint Chiefs of Staff until November, 1954, when he became Chief of the Pennsylvania Military District.

In November, 1955, he was reassigned to Fort Brooke, Puerto Rico, as commanding general of the U. S. Army Forces, Antilles. He served there until February, 1957, when he became Chief of the Joint Brazil-United States Military Commission, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

Early in 1959, Gen Verbeck, reassigned to Washington, D. C., where he served on the Council of Army Review Boards.

On Sept. 1, 1959, he assumed command of the XIII United States Army Corps and Fort Devens and continued in that capacity until he retired.

Gen. Verbeck held 19 major decorations. They were: Distinguished Service Medal, Silver Star with oak leaf cluster, Legion of Merit with oak leaf cluster, Bronze Star Medal with valor device and two oak leaf clusters, Army Commendation Medal and Purple Heart with oak leaf cluster.

Also American Defense Service Medal, Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal with six battle stars, American Campaign Medal, World War II Victory Medal, National Defense Service Medal, Korean Service Medal with three battle stars, Philippine Liberation Ribbon and United Nations Service Medal.

Also, Combat Infantryman Badge, Distinguished Unit Emblem, Presidential Unit Citation Badge (Republic of Korea), The

General Staff of Defense Identification Badge.

Gen. Verbeck gained fame as a fierce front line fighter during World War II.

The Legion of Merit he received in 1944 was in recognition of the role he played in the expulsion of the Japanese from the Aleutian Islands.

Prior to the occupation of Amchitka by American forces, Gen. Verbeck, on his own initiative, knowing the lack of information concerning this terrain, personally led a reconnaissance party over the island at a time when it was not known whether it was occupied by the enemy.

The subsequent occupation of this island was greatly assisted by the advance information he obtained.

During the battle of Attu, Gen. Verbeck displayed "marked energy, initiative and personal courage by accompanying the advanced elements under heavy fire," a citation said. "Through outstanding ability, resourcefulness and initiative he made an important contribution to the engagement and expulsion of the enemy from the Aleutian Islands."

Gen. Verbeck was often praised during the Alaskan campaign because he used his knowledge and familiarity with the language and customs of the Japanese to trick and outwit the enemy.

Gen. Verbeck is survived by his wife, Margaret McDowell Verbeck, and two sons, William McDowell Verbeck, and Charles Henry Verbeck, both of Arlington, and several nieces and nephews.

Serfices will be at 1 p.m. Monday in the Fort Myer Chapel in Fort Myer, Va., with interment in Arlington National Cemetery. The family requested that in lieu of flowers, memorial contributions might be made to the American Cancer Society.



One summer day in '45, two infantry privates ended an intimate five-year association with an army that had learned to regard them with at least as much suspicion as they felt toward it. Bill Mauldin's Willie and Joe were close to Bill Verbeck's heart, even though they fought another war in other lands. We're impish enough to suggest that the three had a small something in common. Because Bill so loved these characters and all that they laughingly stood for, we asked a few of our Joe's, as well as a few others who, like Bill, understood the Joe's, to approach their typewriters and to peck out a few "happy" words about this man whose loss we mourn. We suggested "happy" words, the conviction being well-rooted that Bill himself would have wanted it this way. Thus, we include a few of the light-hearted items, on the sunny side of man, the side which Bill, and Willie and Joe, understood so well.

Maj. Gen. FREDERICK A. IRVING and CLIFFORD G. HANLIN meet for a moment in front of the Ft. Meyer Chapel.



This is the Editor answering the question: "What do you like to remember about Bill Verbeck?" For us, it was his love-of-fun. For example, sick though he was, he managed to have this unsigned, neatly-typed note in our mail box on the morning of last April Fool's Day: "It has been announced that Professor Bryon Burbage of Princeton's Institute for Advanced Study has completed an extensive 3-year research project on the growth of behavior patterns in the human male. Dr. Burbage will be remembered for his work on iceberg structure during World War I. One of his more interesting discoveries, which has now been made public, is the fact that man is born with a keen sense of curiosity which continues to grow with his physical stature. In fact, man's sense of curiosity sometimes reaches such proportions that he is compelled to start reading any article, regardless of how ridiculous it is, and to continue to read it to the very end; as you are doing now. April Fool!"

The riderless horse, preparatory to moving into line in the funeral cortege - in front of the Ft. Myer Chapel.



When Maj.Gen. ROSCOE B. WOODRUFF had recovered from the initial shock of our telephoned report that Bill had passed on, he reflected, sadly, that the one worry Bill had given him was that he was "forever at the front where the heavy stuff was flying - the man was absolutely fearless."

Your Editor begs leave to include one more story. Years ago, it had been planned to take one of those quickie 2 or 3 day holidays. Ed Henry, Bill, and yours truly were each anxious to get away from the hurly-burly of the routine way of life for a few hours. At H hour, a business call to Guatemala loomed in the offing. Admittedly, we never did go, but it was one of those times where we had to have the bags packed and our hand on the "Ready" for a matter of days, wherefore, with the greatest of reluctance, we signalled Bill and Ed that we were "En route to Guatemala" and cancelled out. Bill never let us forget the "ingenuity" of our excuse. Sometime later, we elected to bow out of military service after some 25 years. Bill paid us the great honor of flying over to Springfield to make a presentation. His design was to surprise us by his coming, which, assuredly, he did. More, it was a double surprise, because he managed to persuade Ed to fly over with him. Riding in from the airport, he told us: "I told Ed that if you weren't here, I was going to plant the _____ medal on a pole in your front yard and hang a sign on it reading 'Gone to Guatemala'." Bill's last letter to us, just a few days before his passing, was one in answer to one where we explained the reasoning that we had had to apply in making the last minute decision not to go to Hawaii. We also explained that we were not writing him more frequently "in a bona fide effort to stay off your back". Bill somehow found the strength to answer with: "Dear Ken, Get back on my back! I like it. I knew you wouldn't get to Hawaii, the racial trouble in Springfield might have fizzled with you away. Remember Guatemala! Thanks for your thoughtful letter. Best wishes. Faithfully, Bill." Bill Verbeck simply would not give up in the business of making fun.

Maj.Gen. FREDERICK A. and Vivian IRVING approaching the Ft. Myer Chapel for the service.



Maj.Gen. ROSCOE B. WOODRUFF writes: I recall one very distinct and characteristic incident about Bill. The day after the Mindanao landing, he visited Division CP. A Japanese sniper, hidden in a culvert beside the road, selected Bill as his target. The shot hit along the back, barely missing the backbone. Bill was hurried to the Sick Bay of one of the transports for treatment. When I returned to the CP, a bit later, and heard of the affair, I went to the ship to see how the patient was coming. He was conscious but still groggy from anesthetic. Was he worried about how serious his wound was, or what the ultimate result would be? Not at all. He was afraid he would be evacuated from his outfit.....See what I mean by "characteristic"?

M.D. AITKEN (1st Bn. 21st '43-'45) of 6102 Pinto Place, Springfield, Va., writes so beautifully that it would be sinful to edit him in any way. Here's his full letter, just as he wrote it - and without the usual quotation marks.

Sitting here in front of the typewriter, a flood of memories of Bill Verbeck pass before me. It's a tough assignment to try and come up with an incident or incidents that are representative or characteristic of the way the man lived. He did live a full life - had a few disappointments like all the rest of us, but, generally speaking, lived it up while he was with us. This is not a particularly reverent thought, but while sitting in the Ft. Myer Chapel, choked up like everyone else, I caught a brief flash of the old boy sitting up there with that pixieish expression on his face, trying to figure a way to pull one of his endless series of practical jokes on us!

I think it was September '54, when I was called to Washington for a couple of weeks. I stopped in to see Bill and Peggy one Saturday afternoon. Bill and I were sitting in his study having a beer and reminiscing. He got that expression on his face, turned around, and dialed a number on the phone. Without identifying who he was calling, he said: "Say, this is Bill Verbeck, and I wonder if you could help me with a little problem - This broken bum just wandered in off the street claiming he's an ex-Gimlet, and I can't get rid of him Oh good, thanks." He was talking in a low conspiratorial tone, and must have been very convincing. In less than ten minutes, the door burst open, and in came Nick Sloan with a very antagonistic expression on his face!

The art work in the halls of the Pentagon leaves a lot to be desired. Many of us have deplored this fact for a good many years. There are paintings, sketches, and other products of GI artistic expression which are largely unimaginative - and dull. About 12 years ago, Bill decided to do something about it. He was in the Office of the Joint Chiefs at the time. It was a job which frequently kept him in the Pentagon far past normal duty hours. On one of these late duty sessions, he smuggled in several of his own artistic efforts, which were very good, and replaced some of the more grotesque numbers with

his own. History does not relate how he disposed of the replaced paintings, but with Bill's ingenuity, I'm sure he had no trouble finding a bare men's room or other suitable home for them. For all I know, Bill's paintings hang in the hallowed Pentagon halls to this day.

Back in May '44, the 1st Bn. of the 21st had been cut off at Mintal, Mindanao, for a couple of weeks. We couldn't move up and couldn't pull back. We didn't know it at the time, but the reason for our predicament was that we were faced by four Jap battalions, which had thrown a perimeter around ours! We managed occasionally to get a patrol out late at night with our wounded, and the same patrol would bring back ammunition and rations upon return, if lucky. It was relaxing, in a way, because, in a situation like that, you would get relief from the frequent and harassing visits from Regiment, Division and Corps. Early one morning, soon after daylight, we were suffering through our morning "Banzai" attack. Nick Sloan had gone out on the perimeter to check the previous night's losses. He hadn't made it back before the attack. I had just asked the radio operator to try to locate him. As I turned around to try the field phone, I caught a glimpse of two figures crawling toward the CP, with the tracers from a Jap MG streaming over their heads. Not knowing whether the figures were ours or theirs, I had my mouth open to alert the CP guard, when one of the figures raised his head slightly. I recognized Bill's face through the rain and muck. They crawled on in to the CP, and Bill directed me to assemble the Company Commanders and Nick as soon as possible. I passed the word and found a hole for Bill and his runner. Within a few minutes, the clan started to gather. As I remember it now, there was Phil Irons from "A" Co., Ted Crouch from "B" Co. (he was killed a few days later), Charlie Counts from "C" Co., Warren McNamara from "D", and Jim Doyel from Hqs. When we were all flattened out in a circle around Bill, he told us to break out our cups and poured us each a slug of GI alky from one of his canteens, and some coke from the other one. Then, with this utterly innocent expression on his face and the barest sign of a twinkle in his eyes, he said, "Now, what's the situation?"

A hundred other incidents flicker through my mind, but I won't clutter up the record with them.

The grave site, with the Chicago Chapter's floral piece, a representation of Old Glory, on the left, and the Association's floral piece, a representation of the Taro Leaf, on the right.



Words of praise for Bill arrived - and continue to arrive - from all corners. From MILTON SKELLY: "The name of Bill Verbeck was a legend, a focus of admiring respect and affection of his comrades, colleagues, superiors and subordinates". From EDMUND F. HENRY: "As that thirteenth round of the salute reverberated and taps began, I knew that each man there present felt that he was in a select group of those who knew and admired and loved Bill". From JOSEPH I. PEYTON: "I never want another friend like Bill, because, when he goes, there is too much pain in it". From JAMES Y. WILSON: "He was a great soldier and leader such as made our beloved Division great". From Fr. CHRISTOPHER J. BERLO: "He was indeed a soldier's soldier; we are not likely to see his like again". From JOHN W. THORNBURG: "My whole family was deeply grieved". From ROBERT L. KILGO: "Everyone privileged to know this truly great man will feel a keen sense of loss in his passing." From C. RUCKER FORD: "Truly, I will never know a more courageous person, or finer man". From hundreds more, there was an outpouring of love and affection, of mourning and grief. Never in the Association's history has a loss been as deeply felt, as completely expressed. Only problems of time and space deny us the wish to include them all.

ED HENRY, (Div.Hq. '42-'46), of 21 Park St., Attleboro, Mass., has this particularly fond memory of Bill. It seems that Bill had a Brazilian parrot, named "Parkins", of whom he was inordinately fond. Parkins was the name of an English butler that frequently appeared in New Yorker cartoons, and Bill liked the character. Bill brought Parkins from Brazil when he returned from his Rio tour in '51. He had a hard time getting Parkins through Customs, but he managed it. It had something to do with the necessity of a certificate that Parkins had no parrot's diseases. Parkins thereafter followed the Verbecks on all their duty tours. Ed visited Bill and Peggy in '57 at Casa Blanca, the pretentious residence of the Caribbean Commanding General in San Juan, Puerto Rico. It happens to be the oldest residence in the Western Hemisphere, and dates back to the early 1500s, the foundations having been laid by Ponce de Leon. Bill and Peggy always had lunch at 12:00 noon. Bill's headquarters, Fort Brooke, was only a two-minute walk away. Customarily, Bill would come home at five minutes to noon, set Parkins' cage on the edge of a balcony railing, reach for his harmonica, and run off a few tunes for Parkins, who would show a quizzical interest, but disturbingly little musical appreciation. Next, Bill would grab a bowl of suds and a bubble pipe and blow bubbles which would float slowly, slowly, down into the tropical garden below the balcony. Meanwhile, Bill would comment either to Parkins, Peggy, or Ed and, in fact, would invite bets as to how far a certain bubble might drop before it was impaled on a palm frond. Ed pointed out to him the rumors that might pass around Fort Brooke and worse, might drift back to the Pentagon, if it became known that the Commanding General of the Antilles Command came home every noon to play the harmonica for his parrot and to blow bubbles out into his tropical garden. As Ed fondly recalls, "Bill simply effervesced with fun. He insisted upon at least one good belly laugh every hour. This was his 1200 laugh."

Standing by the grave site following the final tribute are Maj.Gen. FREDERICK A. IRVING (from the rear), CHARLES R. JAMESON, JR., M.D. AITKEN, and JAMES M. O'DONNELL. Others in attendance, and regretfully not captured by any lens, were Maj.Gen. RALPH W. ZWICKER, Col. NICHOLAS E. SLOAN, Col. ROBERT H. MALONE, EDMUND F. HENRY, SAMUEL Y. GILNER, LAFAYETTE A. COCHRAN, WILLIAM SANDERSON, WARREN M. McNAMARA, JOHN D. MAYER, FRANCIS DICE, GEORGE H. STANLEY, and HERBERT MORAN.



A group - Taro Leafers all - about to enter the Ft. Myer Chapel for the service - from left to right, Mrs. VICTOR (Rita) BACKER, Maj.Gen. FREDERICK A. IRVING, WILLIAM H. MULDOON, JAMES M. O'DONNELL, PATRICK A. CIANGI (from the rear), GERALD R. STEVENSON, the Editor, and THOMAS H. COMPERE.



The Treasurer of the Association writes: Bill was proud of the friendships that sustained him. Standing at a bar after a day's work was done, he once recited the Hilaire Belloc lines:

"From quiet homes and first beginning,
Out to the undiscovered ends,
There's nothing worth the wear of winning,
But laughter and the love of friends."

Bill knew laughter and friendship in full measure.

SAM GILNER (13th F '42-'45), of 290 Middletown Road, Nanuet, N.Y., writes this of Bill: It was at the Philadelphia reunion. Sue, Sammy and I were sitting at a table when Bill, sandwich and coffee in hand, joined us. Sammy, age 7, was quite proud of this and started to ask questions about life at West Point. For the next hour, Bill talked to Sammy as though this was the reason that he had come to the reunion. He was a remarkable man in many ways, but his gracious manner with a seven year old boy will always be remembered. When word was received that Bill had to undergo Walter Reed surgery, we told Sammy. It didn't seem to register with him, but in a few minutes, without a word, he went into the den and got an envelope to mail Bill a get-well letter. Since this was the first time that Sammy had ever done this, we asked him why, and his reply was, "He was nice to me in Philadelphia". Bill will be remembered by this family for many reasons, but first and foremost it will be because he was just plain Bill.

BILL SANDERSON was a Verbeck guest at Ft. Devens for a '62 Armed Forces Day observance. Adds Sanderson: Bill was the host for some several thousand guests. He had set up a tent on his parade ground, thoroughly staffed with aids, WACs, field phones and all of the countermeasures which only a General can command. It was 10 a.m. The two Bills decided to inspect the set up, only to be greeted by a delightful WAC major with "Coffee, General?" Bill's reply was by way of another question, "What, coffee before beer?"

Col. NICHOLAS E. SLOAN (21st 4/42 - 11/45) of 1807 Susquehannock, McLean, Va., for whom Bill had a particularly warm spot in his crowded heart, writes: The Gimlets were engaged in a bitterly contested battle for Breakneck Ridge when Col. Verbeck assumed command. He spent all of the daylight hours of the first and second days visiting battalions. On the second day, about thirty minutes before everyone crawled into their foxholes for the night, Col. Verbeck told Newt Browning, S-1, that he wanted to hold a staff meeting. Newt quickly rounded up the staff: Fritz Weber, Regimental Exec., "Little Chum" Leatherman, S-2, Nick Sloan, S-3, Wade Seyle, Asst. S-3, Frank Bussell, S-4, Burt Coers, Surgeon, Karl Ufer, Chaplain, Bill Byrd, Commo Officer, and Henry Smith, I&R Platoon Leader. We waited patiently with notebook and pencil for the first staff meeting with the new CO. All hoped for a short meeting. Darkness was fast approaching and we didn't want to be moving around in the dark getting to our foxholes. Bill finally appeared with a large manila folder under his arms. He didn't want to hold the meeting in the dug-in CP tent and moved the staff out upon the grassy slope several yards from the CP. He then opened up the manila folder, took out a fifth of whiskey, twisted the cork from the bottle with his teeth, took a long look at the cork and threw it into the tall Cogan grass with a comment, "We won't need that anymore." With that, he took the first drink and passed it to the nearest man. For the next two hours, Bill entertained the staff with stories and harmonica music. Numerous snickers could be heard all through the perimeter. Within 24 hours every GI in the Regiment had heard about the new CO, his jokes, and his harmonica.

Those who made the trek to Arlington for that tragic weekend found themselves in something of a cul-de-sac. Truly we were hemmed in; the only exit was forward. We would carry on. Those present, shown here at the Holiday Inn Motel included: in the doorway, WILLIAM V. DAVIDSON, otherwise left to right, JAMES M. O'DONNELL, the Editor, JOHN B. FARRELL, THOMAS H. COMPERE, JOSEPH I. PEYTON, and GERALD R. STEVENSON.



Kudos to VICTOR BACKER, who engineered the Association's floral piece in New York and, with Rita, hand carried it to Arlington. Kudos, too, to PATRICK CIANGI, who did likewise for the Chicago Chapter and carried it by plane all the way from the Loop. Vic and Pat each would have it no other way.

JAMES M. O'DONNELL is partial to the "phoney telephone" story. Bill had an extra telephone set, authentic in every way, save for the fact that it had no attached wires. When Bill had new and unsuspecting guests coming, he'd place the innocent little phone on a table in a living room corner. In the course of the evening, he'd arrange to have his real phone ring in. He'd excuse himself and go to the other room, ostensibly to answer his call. In a moment, he'd return, and say to his guest: "Jim, it's for you - why don't you take it on that phone right there?", pointing to the phoney phone in the corner. His patsy, enthralled by the considerateness of his host, would wind his way to the corner, and bring the head piece to his ear and mouth, completely oblivious to the head of ridicule he was about to bring down upon himself. Before the patsy could remonstrate with his host that he was getting "no voice", Bill would be leading the remaining guests, fortunate enough to be in-the-know, in a loud, resounding cheer, having origination, historically-speaking, somewhere in the Bronx. Bill never tired of the fun.

There was a certain cunning, says JOSEPH I. PEYTON, in the manner in which Bill, in his banquet-type speeches, whether before Rotary or Kiwanis or Lions clubs, or Chambers of Commerce, or military groups, or veterans organizations, or a gathering of doctors or lawyers or clergymen, would bring his listeners quietly and slyly around to the U.S. Army and, more particularly, the 24th Infantry Division. Adds Joe: I was a kind of fly-on-the-wall at some 12 or 14 affairs where Bill was the speaker-of-the-evening. In every single instance, Bill found the opportunity-better, made the opportunity - to tell his audience of the glories of his old outfit. There were times, in certain groups, finalizes Joe, when I wondered if anyone within hearing of his voice had ever even heard of the Division. One thing I do know; there are a lot of Rotarians and their ilk around the country who have heard about the 24th, at least once. Bill's devotion to the Taro Leaf was an obsession - but what a magnificent one.

THOMAS H. COMPERE remembers Bill at one of our Chicago reunions. Bill had quietly withdrawn to his room upstairs, donned a complete sailor's garb (acquired by some never-explained means), and was on his way back down to the party when intercepted - and recognized - by Tom. The ready-recognition was a deflating thing. The jig was up; if Tom had recognized him, so would everyone else. Bill turned around, went back upstairs, and returned to normalcy. Bill couldn't - and didn't-expect every bit of his fun-making to go over the rainbow, but his batting average was the best in the league and he was ever in training. As Bill would say, "You can't win 'em all."

Thoughtfulness is the key word for this paragraph. No Taro Leaf of ours ever went to post which didn't prompt, within days, if not hours, some kindly Verbeck acknowledgement. Telephone call, cable, post card, letter or token gift; Bill would each time find a way of saying "Thanks". So skillfully would he vary the routine that at no time could we anticipate the form of the next sure-to-follow response. Small wonder, therefore, that some of our patter might have seemed to be directed to an audience of one. At times, it was, for no one more enjoyed the Tom Swifties, the Burma Shave jingles, the puns, the utter foolishness. In the fun department, Bill was a heavy contributor.

Maj.Gen. FREDERICK A. IRVING would have it no other way than that we would share a couple of Bill's letters to him, written in '54, while Fred was Superintendent of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point and Bill was in Korea. In Fred's own words, "The contents reflect his character and personality". Indeed they do, so much so that they call for no other comment - they themselves say it all.

The first one, written on 2/14/54, reads:
"Dear General Irving:

"The enclosed translation is that of an article from a Kobe, Japan newspaper. When I was in Japan a short time ago, on rest and recuperation, I had a dinner with surviving officers of the Jap 1st Div. Colonel Okabayashi, C/S Jap 1st Div., told me some very interesting things about the battle north of Limon.

Between 4 Nov. and 19 Nov. 1944, the strengths of the Division were:

	4 Nov.	19 Nov.
1st Recn. Rgt,	350	81
1st Rgt.	2500	253
49th Rgt.	2500	364
57th Rgt.	2500	192

"When your two flank attacks struck around Limon, the Division Commander prepared himself for suicide * but was dissuaded.

"If you ever desire to write to General Kataoka, I'll translate and address the letter for you. They were all interested in you and I told them about you.....

"Please give my best wishes to Mrs. Irving.

Sincerely,
W.J.Verbeck"

The accompanying translation was from the 2/1/54 issue of Kobe Shimbun:

JAPANESE TROOPS WERE BRAVE

AMERICAN REGIMENTAL COMMANDER'S
FIERCE BATTLE IN PHILIPPINE ISLANDS

Once Enemy Officer Sends Battle History
to Gen. Kataoka

A Regimental Commander of U.S. forces who once opposed him in battle to the death amid violent rains and storms of shells in the Philippines presented his former enemy, Lieut. Gen. Teda Kataoka, Commander of our own First Division, a history of the regiment. Written after the battle, the history told how the Americans admired the fighting energy of the Japanese troops. Words of friendship, freely given, are carried by air from the skies over Korea.

The Commander of our First Division, Lieut.Gen. Teda Kataoka, aged 61, now living in the town of Toyooka, a member of the foreign ministry, with the First Division, which comprised 10,200 men, moved from Manchuria to Leyte in late Oct. 1944 to reinforce the Japanese 16th Div. At this time, the American forces, with the objective of the complete recapture of the Philippines, delivered a crushing blow to our fleet which had been scattered since the Battle of Macassar. American Troops landed on Leyte in great strength on 20 Oct. At about the same time, the easterly-sailing 1st Div., debarking at Ormoc (on Western Leyte), turned north and marched to Limon, 18 kilometers distant. There they fought the greatest desperate decisive battle. There they came to grips with the Americans who had gained control of the sea and air and they maneuvered to the extent of their ability. Their weight of steel was unleashed in the fire of their tanks and cannon. In this manner, Gen. Kataoka pointed a word picture of his own position there.

An account of the combat situation of this period was recently given to Gen.Kataoka by an

American staff officer, Maj. Stimpson, saying: "We recognized that it was the most desperate fighting in the Philippine Campaign". (Note. Stimpson, during the Battle of Breakneck Ridge, was Aide-de-Camp to Gen. Irving, C.G. 24th Div.)

By mid-November, the U.S. 24th Div. was moving west and they killed an officer messenger from the 16th Japanese Div. This person carried in his hand orders and maps by which U.S. troops learned that the First Japanese Division had landed and was about to join battle with them.

The First Div. was among the most powerful of all Japanese units. "The Imperial Warrior Division" as it was known, fought with great bravery, but it was impossible to impede the advance of General Krueger's army in the Ormoc corridor. By the end of November, U.S. troops (21st Infantry Regt.) had captured Limon and made a difficult juncture with other troops who had come up from the south (Ormoc). The exhaustion of the First Division, which had resisted till the last, is shown in that all the troops Gen. Kataoka could then assemble numbered only 500 survivors.

They departed from Leyte on 21 December.

It was concerning participation in the desperate battle of Limon (Breakneck Ridge) that Col. Verbeck, the most illustrious Regimental Commander in the 24th Division, living in South America after the War, sent the history, "A Regiment in Action", a few years ago, to the Demobilization Bureau in Tokyo. It was dispatched to Gen. Kataoka in Toyooka.

In his words: "Truly, the bravery of Gen. Kataoka's Division in combat was such that they did not fall back even a step. Although, our enemy, we admired the way they stood like a wall of steel. Since then, I have ceased to think of them with hostility and tend to forget the past", he warmly wrote in a letter.

After that, Col. Verbeck was transferred to the battlefield of Korea. On a visit to Tokyo for a week's rest, he contacted Col. Okabayashi, now Chief, Personal Affairs Bureau of the Aigo Bank of Tokyo, Daito Ward, Kuromon place, Tokyo, who was Chief of Staff of the old First Division. After a meeting, a reunion was held. Then he flew back to Korea.

Gen. Kataoka said to him: "The mutual feeling of those who were associated in bitter combat makes us hold a deep respect for you. By all means, when next you visit Japan, please visit my home in Toyooka and we'll have a meeting at Kasaki Hot Springs".

(Ed. note: At that point in the translation of the article making reference to Bill as "the most illustrious Regimental Commander", he (Bill) placed an asterisk and married it to a footnote below wherein he wrote (* Don't believe this. This is Jap politeness in action")

The second Verbeck-to-Irving letter, dated 3/22/54, was in follow-up of the first, and reads:

"Dear General Irving:

"On the third of March, I went with Lieutenant General Tadasu Kataoka, former Commander of the Japanese 1st Division, his Chief of Staff, Col. Okabayashi, and about 15 surviving officers and men and a lot of families of the dead, to the Yasukuni Shrine, Tokyo, and paid my respects to the dead of the Enemy 1st Division.

"I herein translate a letter that arrived here the day before yesterday from Kataoka.

'Because Hon. Col. Verbeck went to the Yasukuni Shrine, we living veterans of the First Division reverently offer our thanks. Also, we are deeply honored that you, in order to keep your appointment

with me at the exact promised date and hour, especially came from Korea - express on a bomber airplane.

'Although, after a lapse of almost ten years since the battle, you who have not forgotten the Battle of Limon, should display friendship to us who were your enemies and go to the Yasukuni Shrine together with us, is to present day Japan and the Japanese people a special favor that we receive with great respect and thanks and deep gratitude. And I think that the gods who guard the Yasukuni Shrine are delighted at your act.

'The respect that you demonstrated as we met face to face, you as a defender of security and myself a ruined man, is a thing that will forever impress me deeply. Especially your posture at the time we separated at the Sanno Hotel when you honored me with a military salute is a thing I will not forget as long as I am alive. It will always remain in my memory to respect the glory of the members of the First Division.

'This treatment that you have given us, besides profiting my veterans of the 1st Div., you talked and listened to those of them that were there with us and all of them who were assembled learned of your character and culture and were deeply impressed.

'The fact that you and my humble self faced each other and paid our respects at Yasukuni Shrine was in the newspapers and was published all over the country. I have received many letters from the families of the deceased (of my division) and they tell me that your act has made them feel as though the ashes of their loved ones have been returned to them. I will never forget that this gesture of yours has brought back to the mothers and fathers and widows of our dead soldiers the meaning of the loftiness of the bravery and loyalty of their loved ones.

'At this time the mutual security agreement has been signed and a U.S. advisory group will be dispatched to Japan. I hope your present return to the U.S. means that you who understand the heart of the Japanese people will become a member of this group.

'I rejoice with you in the day that you reunite with your Hon. wife, your son who is at the military academy, and your son who is studying Japanese at Harvard University.

'Please deliver my sincere and deep respects to his Excellency, General Irving, your 24th Division Commander. Please inform him of my great admiration for him as a tactician, strategist and soldier.

'And at last, I wish you promotion and good health.

KATAOKA, TADASU
March 10, 1954.'

"I sent him your picture, taken out of the Official Register, Officers and Cadets 1953. He had asked me to send him one. It was the best I could do. Enclosed is a newspaper photo of the general shaking hands with me at Yasukuni. In background is Colonel Okabayashi, C/S Jap 1st Div.

"If you wish to write to him, his address is:

Lt.Gen. (or Mr.) Tadasu Kataoka
Toyo Oka City
Hyogo-ken, Japan

(air mail 25¢)

"He is 63 and would treasure a letter from you. I don't know whether or not you would care to write however. He can read English fairly well.

"I hope this does not bore you. Peggy sends her best to you and to Mrs. Irving.

"Respectfully,
"W.J.Verbeck"

(Ed. note: Regretfully, the newspaper clipping, including the picture of Bill and Lt.Gen. Kataoka and Col. Okabayashi, defied reproduction. Ergo our failure to use them. - Note the ever-courteous Bill addressing General Irving, for whom he had such unbounded admiration and respect. - Note, too, that little extra gesture of good intention, in reminding the good General that postage for an air mail letter from West Point to Tokyo would go to "25¢".)

Maj. Gen. FREDERICK A. IRVING responded with: I remember Bill best for his exemplary performance, when he was in command of the 21st during the attack on Breakneck Ridge. The Japs on Leyte had landed a fresh division, the 1st, which came squarely up against Bill. It was hard going for awhile, but Bill was consistently cheerful, optimistic and energetic. After we captured the ridge, the 32nd Division relieved us. We conducted one of their reconnaissance parties up to the ridge. Bill had reported: "We have wiped out all Japs in front of us; you'll find a dead Jap in every foxhole". We soon saw that he was right. There was a dead Jap in every foxhole, and there were scores more who had been denied the luxury and were just scattered about. Here was a magnificent soldier. Everything he did or said reflected his great personality and character.

CLIFFORD G. HANLIN was lying in his hospital bed, with Surgery moments away. When he would return to that bed, it would be sans left foot. His bedside telephone tingled. He answered, detecting a hardly audible whisper, 900 miles away. There would never be another whisper like this one. Let C.G. describe it in his way: "He had called to give me words of encouragement. Words of encouragement, mind you, from east to west, when all of the encouragement should have been from west to east. Tears rolled down my cheeks, for I knew that this man had not been able to talk for the last nine days. Here he was, under what could only have been the most pained effort, spurring me on. I'll not repeat his precise phrasing; suffice to say, it was pungent - typically Verbeckian. It did more for me than any drug ever could have done. This precious man, with full knowledge of the lateness of his own hour, by some miracle had found the strength and will to boost me up. How could I have gone on with my own ordeal anything less than totally unafraid? Bill, possibly distressed that, because of the very softness of his whisperings, he may have failed in what he had tried so desperately to do, would not know that the very opposite was the fact. I knew him so well that I understood him - perfectly. It was part of that Verbeck magic. Verbeck thoughts didn't always have to be spoken. His men knew him well enough to respond to the thoughts, spoken or no. This was one of those times."

At the 24th gathering point - the Arlington, Va., Holiday Inn Motel. Rt. Rev. Msgr. CHARLES J. BRADY and PAUL A. HARRIS, JR. In the assembly hours before the final tributes and in the "break camp" hours therefollowing, there were smiles, and there was laughter. It was the consensus that Bill Verbeck would have insisted that it be so.



Another ED HENRY favorite: Just before Bill went to Korea, he and Peggy and Parkins were our house guests here in Attleboro. Taro Leafers assembled from far and wide as they did over and over again when the call went out: "Party tonight - yes, the Verbecks." Bob Duff and Spike O'Donnell were in from Ill., Bucky Ford and Bill Muldoon tripped down from Boston, Bill Davidson up from Jersey, Ken Ross over from Springfield. Bill proposed a ceremony; we'd hoist my Nip flag. O'Donnell was elected for the "honors" and shinnied up my flagpole for the hanging, whereupon the 24th'ers assembled, on the sidewalk, with a little overflow into the street, saluted the flag with words of derision, best here omitted. Onetime Speaker of the House Joe Martin was my across-the-street neighbor. To my everlasting satisfaction, Joe was not at home, but his sister Nettie was. Nettie, alarmed by the flag of Nippon flying over Grove Street, was quick to believe that it was war anew. Nettie rushed to the phone and notified our local police. The inevitable cruiser was next on the scene. You guessed it: Bill assuaged their fears and calm was restored to Grove Street once more.

Maj. Gen. RALPH W. ZWICKER, (Div.Hqs.), 6131 Beachway Drive, Falls Church, Va., writes: I find it difficult to be selective when it comes to Bill Verbeck stories. First to mind is a dinner dance of our National War College class where Bill's great verve for living and love of fun manifested itself by his sudden injection into the formal party of a rare bit of Verbeckism as he threw, from a balcony onto the banquet floor, a life-like dummy with a knife protruding from its back. Then I recall his real disappointment at my failure, when we were serving together in the Pentagon, to recognize a real eye injury. I was passing off his bandaged appearance at my office door as just another gag. I was wrong this time. And I like to recall our 35th class reunion - in '62. During a dignified dedication of our class tree, Bill was our speaker and, in a few well chosen words, rose to the occasion and expressed beautifully the matter of devotion to country and Alma Mater. This was the real Bill. Every class, every group, should have a Bill Verbeck. Thank fortune, we had ours.

Col. NICHOLAS E. SLOAN has treasured, over the years, this bit of Verbeck poetry. Nick clues us in with the fact that it was written after the Gimlets had taken Calipan. They liked it so well that they dared Bill to send it in to Division as his report of the campaign. Never one to be fluffed, Bill did, although, as Nick says, "It took the commo boys the better part of one night to encode it." Nick adds: "We heard later that they thought it was great." The poem, titled "Mindoro Campaign", goes:

When to Gusay we went hiking
Toward the rain belt we were striking,
And the caratella carts were quite a few.
But the streams were high and muddy,
And let me tell you, buddy -
That the blasted bridges made the doughboys
blue.

Well, we climbed the blasted mountain,
While the clouds burst like a fountain,
And the mortar ammunition sure was tough.
So the ponies fell behind us
And the task force couldn't find us,
Believe me, 10 KM per day was quite enough.

Now, an old man and his daughter
Led the Jappies to their slaughter,
And they wandered into camp without a qualm.
So entirely unsuspecting
In a close group all collecting,
While our men were hiding, waiting, cool
and clam.

With all guns and weapons blazing,
The slaughter was amazing
And we fired enough munitions for a day.
When the nips stopped kicking,
For gadgets we went picking -
But you ought to see the one that got away.

The Regimental Surgeon
Without a bit of urgin'
Climbed a nipa shack and in it found an egg.
But when Verbeck started dining,
The Bullets they came whining
And it made the frightened couple shake a leg.

Tojo took it on the lam,
From the town of Calipan,
And we occupied the place in time for dinner.
Now we'll sit right here and squat
'Cause the weather's getting hot
From the looks of things we're sure to get
no thinner.

The caisson has just been drawn to a halt along the road, from which position, the casket would be carried by the bearers up a slight rise in the picture's foreground to the grave site.



Arlington, Virginia
November 10th

Dear Ken,

Please thank the members of
The 24th Infantry Division Association
for the lovely Taro Leaf flower
design which they sent to Bill. He
tried so hard to win this - his
last battle. It is difficult for
me to realize that he will not
return from this one.

He loved all of you - his
friends. He loved life and I
think lived it to its fullest.
But most of all he loved his
country and would volunteer
for anything to protect it.

It was such a comfort
to me to have so many of
you from far and near pay
your respects to him last

Monday. Sincerely,
Peggy Verbeck