They Were Expendable

By W. L. White

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Impatient lieutenant gets a "coke" from a colonel and night's sleep at civilian's home before bombs shatter Cebu. Postponed funerals of Kelly's heroic fighters interrupted by Jap assault. Watching the enemy capture another outpost.

CHAPTER 21

After reaching shore at Cebu Island, Lieutenant Kelly turned his attention to his casualties.

"I rounded up some native soldiers, who got stretchers, and in these we carried the wounded to the other side of the island where they could be loaded into a launch, putting them in charge of Sheppard, a first-class machinist's mate, to get them to the hospital.

"At this point a banca showed up, and in it was a native doctor, the one we had sent Ensign Richardson ashore for, before dawn, for Reynolds, who by now was en route to the hospital. So I loaded the ship's papers, binoculars, and stuff into this banca, and with them I shoved off for Cebu.

"Halfway over the three planes came back and we tried to hide behind a fish trap—a net with bamboo poles sticking up out of the water. But they weren't strafing now. They were looking for the fourth plane we'd shot down. They scoured the area for twenty minutes. After they left we went on in, and of course I went straight to Army headquarters, and met the colonel in charge—the No. 2 officer of the island. No, he hadn't heard from Bulkeley, but he'd send out a radio message to him for him if he was still alive. And maybe I'd better give my report direct to the general. I wanted to, and also I wanted to find out what had happened to our big American Offensive we had been asked to be part of, and that air umbrella which should have protected us this morning.

"The general had been having a conference at the bar of the American Club, sitting with some other officers and some civilians who were now all having a drink. Now a general is pretty important, and you don't just go barging into his conferences—not if you're a mere naval lieutenant in command of a little 70-foot boat. So, following the lead of this conducting colonel, we stood off a bit and waited until the general gave us the signal to come on in and tie up at his table. He saw us all right, but he didn't give us the signal—just went on talking to the other officers and civilians.

"Now, thinking back, I realize it was a most important conference. But at the time I was excited, because I had just come from my boat in which I'd fought all through the war and with which we'd just helped to sink a Jap cruiser—my boat which was now lying beached across the bay, with one man dead, another dying, and all the rest but three wounded. I suppose I was unstrung. I wanted to have him make my report by radio about the cruiser. And then, although maybe it wasn't my business, I'd have liked to find out about that American offensive he'd invited us to join the night before.

"We kept standing there, the two of us, while I got madder and madder. I see now it was unreasonable, but I couldn't help it then. Finally it embarrassed even the colonel and he invited me to step over by the bar, and have a drink with him. I said no, thanks, I had work to do, but I'd have a Coca-Cola. I stuck around ten more minutes drinking it and then, since the general gave us no signal, I shoved off.

"I arranged to have the boat guarded. Because I wouldn't yet admit that maybe both it and we were expended now. High tide was at 4 o'clock. Couldn't we maybe patch her up, float her over to 'Dad' Cleland's, get torpedoes and a crew from somewhere, and maybe fight her just once again?

"I went over there to where Brantingham and the 35 boat were, taking the stuff I'd salvaged from the boat, and they gave me some lunch as I talked about the fight and what had happened to us, and during it Ensign Richardson telephoned. He said Reynolds had died, and they were burying him and Harris in the American cemetery with a military escort and a priest, at 4 o'clock. I said of course I would go, and would meet Richardson at the bar of the American Club, from which we'd go over together.

"I got there but Richardson didn't show up. I stood around. I was tired and mad and lonesome as hell. Finally a civilian came up—and I got to talking to him. He was a very nice guy—vice-president of the club. I told him our story and he said how sorry he was, and asked if he might go to the funeral. He was the first sympathetic person I'd met.

"Presently a truck arrived, driven by a Filipino soldier with a message for me that the funeral had been postponed until 10 o'clock tomorrow. This American found out I knew nobody in Cebu, hadn't slept, and had no place to go, so he invited me out to his house for dinner and the night. Before I went, I located our three men who were unwounded. I gave them 50 pesos and told them to go ashore and get drunk and forget the whole mess—if they could.

"Then I went out to this sympathetic American stranger's home, which was on the outskirts of a hill overlooking Cebu City and harbor. I went right to bed after supper, but first I turned on the radio by my bed. It said that Bataan had just fallen. Maybe if they could have been told that those seven fat inter-island steamers were on their way loaded with food and quinine, maybe those poor brave, starved, fever-ridden guys could have held the line a little longer. Well, we in the torpedo boats had done what we could. And I wished that Peggy could know that, and that I could thank her for those two codeine tablets, and tell her how they let Reynolds sit out on the deck and really enjoy his last cigarette.

"Right now Peggy was probably standing in the tunnel entrance on Corregidor, where she and I had sat so many evenings, looking across the narrow waters to the tip of Bataan where the Japs now were, and back up from the water in the hills would be bright pin-points of rifle fire, where the Japs were hunting like rats those few brave, silly expendables who still wouldn't admit they were expended, who still had a little fight left and so kept on fighting even after the generals had said it was done. Looking at this, probably she was, and knowing that their turn on the Rock would come soon. Well, we in the MTB's were expended now, but we had done what we could for Bataan. And I wished that the swell brave gang on the Rock could know this. Oh, Christ! Oh, Christ! Finally I got to sleep.

"It was a hell of an explosion which woke me up in the dark, and for a minute I didn't know where I was. Through my window which overlooked the town and the harbor beyond, I could see a fire rising on the outskirts. I looked at my wrist watch. It was 4:25. They were all awake in the house now. Then came an even bigger explosion and a flame ten times as high. My American host came back from the telephone and said that one was the Philippine Refinery; the Japanese were coming and the Americans were blowing up the town. I hustled into my clothes to get back into the city. I wanted to rejoin my three men, but I was stopped on the road by the Army—no traffic, everybody must get out. It was 5:30, and by now one-third of the city was in flames.

"People were streaming out—some Americans, and a few of our Navy. From them during the morning I heard that the Japs had come back and bombed what was left of our 34 boat on the beach. Well, that was over.

"Then I heard that Bulkeley wasn't dead—his boat escaped and was now in Mindanao. That Brantingham had burned his 35 boat sitting there on 'Dad' Cleland's marine railway—at least the Japs wouldn't get it. That Ensign Richardson had assembled what was left of our men, and joined up with our naval forces on Mactan Island, where they would all try to escape to the island of Leyte. It was the last I ever heard of them.

"The Japs had already landed twenty miles down the coast of Cebu—also at two other points.

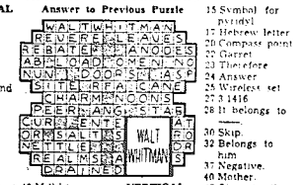
"Well, what can I do?' I asked the Army.

"'Nothing,' they said. 'Maybe you'd like to join the other evacees who are assembling at Camp X'—an Army stronghold inland which was going to hold out all through the war until help came from the States.

"I couldn't make up my mind, so I waited at this American's house for something better to turn up, and meanwhile watched the Japs invasion from the second-

AFRICAN BATTLEFIELD

Answer to Previous Puzzle

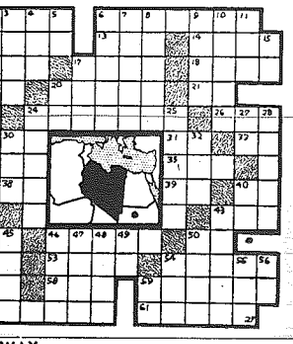


HORIZONTAL

1 Depicted country in Africa.
6 One of its main ports
12 Inferior kind of horse.
13 She.
14 Silk-wire fishline.
16 Narcotic.
17 Roman garment.
18 See.
19 Street (abbr.)
20 Vegetable dish.
21 Cloth measure
22 Tree.
24 One who revels.
26 Roof final.
29 Toward.
30 Him.
31 Exclamation.
33 That one.
34 Floor washing instrument
35 Immense.
36 Within.
38 Plural (abbr.)
39 Exists.
40 Milliliter (abbr.)
41 Against.
43 Compensate.
44 Like.
46 Fruit
50 Pair (abbr.)
51 Lead
53 Thrash.
54 Souplike
57 Wading bird.
58 Rodent
59 Evening meal
60 —— troops invaded this country
61 Command.

VERTICAL

1 Lick up.
2 Pertaining to Ireland
3 Raw
4 Legume
5 Any
6 Oar fulcrum.
7 Royal.
8 Turkish decree
9 Type of molding
10 Kind of thread
11 Little demon.
12 Proceed
15 Symbol for pyridyl
17 Hebrew letter
20 Compass point
22 Garret
23 Therefore
24 Answer
25 Wireless set
27 3 1416
28 It belongs to
30 Skip.
32 Belongs to him
37 Negative.
40 Mother.
42 Opposite the zenith
43 Dried plum.
45 Black-fin snapper.
46 Shed
47 Vegetables.
48 Footway
49 Lieutenant (abbr.).
50 Pool.
51 Long Island (abbr.)
52 Woof yarn.
54 Courtesy title.
55 Through
56 Year (abbr.).
59 Perform.



OUR WAY

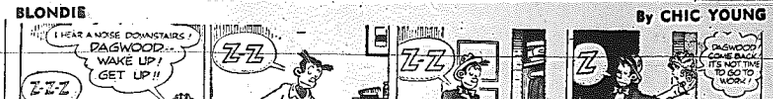
By J. R. WILLIAMS

OUR BOARDING HOUSE

With MAJOR HOOPLE

BLONDIE

By CHIC YOUNG



LI'L ABNER

By AL CAPP

BOOTS AND HER BUDDIES

By MARTIN

WASH TUBBS

By ROY CRANE

THIMBLE THEATER

STARRING POPEYE

RED RYDER

By FRED HARMAN

SUPERMAN

By JERRY SIEGEL and JOE SHUSTER

GASOLINE ALLEY

By FRANK KING

TERRY AND THE PIRATES

By MILTON CANIFF