

DEC 24-1944

1800 to 0600

CHRISTMAS - 1944

Christmas Eve on Guadalcanal will be long remembered. It was a night of reckless celebration that for burlesque humor and mishaps probably has had no equal in U S Army annals.

To start with most of the members of the entire 492nd were intoxicated early in the evening. Just where all the hard liquor came from is still unexplained. Suffice to say it flowed and flowed in quantity.

As usual our gallant stevedores attended the Coral Bowl en mass. On this gala occasion a special stage show was presented followed by a feature film. After the stage show Sergeant Motherway's gang and certain others who were especially inebriated left for camp. The word had gone around that there was plenty of beer in tent # 48. There was a hint of stronger stuff too.

In a matter of seconds a small mob had collected in tent 48. How thirty some odd men managed to crowd into one tent is truly incomprehensible but nevertheless true. It is expected that Sergeant Davis, Supply Sergeant, will salvage the broken down cots any day now, but that is beside the point.

Among those most egregiously drunk were ^{HASH SLINGERS AND ALOISE} Carl Bugala, Alex Pop, Mike benick, Joe Gehrum, Joe Hernandez and Richard McCrady, not to mention Sergeant Motherway himself who carried probably the biggest load of all. In fact Motherway staggered to Mass the next morning with a quart of gin in his pocket. In some strange way two Sea Bees and one Marine attached themselves to the party and remained for the night, singing lusty songs until the break of day.

The party was frequently disturbed in the early evening by visiting Marines offering twenty-five dollars a case for beer. Even Stockdale was trying to purchase beer offering as high as fifteen dollars a case. Later when it was discovered that seven cases of beer had been stolen all strange Marines were regarded with black distrust.

STEW BURNER

^ Joe Lorusso and Ralph Boggs elected to remain sober and spent the

night tucking men into bed. Handsome John Verostko was one of those who received attention. He was found lying naked on the ground in front of tent 42 and was carried into his bed.

Meanwhile the party became more animated, the singing louder. Skinny, long bodied Paul Scherzer and Joe Gehrum performed a glassy eyed and disjointed dance in the limited space available. Gonzales, pint sized, barrel chested Mexican burst into a crying spell because it was Christmas, while his compatriot, muscle-man Hernandez went on the war path and exchanged blows with Johnny Barrera. Balding Alex Popp, robust ex-coal miner from Pennsylvania stopped at least two fights. Innocent bystander, towering Bill Barnes was poked in the nose. It was at this time that slender, fragile Mike Benick passed out - or was slugged.

At two in the morning someone found a sailor asleep on the beach. That is he appeared to be asleep but was more than likely drunk or slugged. He was carried with great solicitude and laid in Freitas' bed for the night. Freitas then slept on the floor, but who cared?

A short distance away hulking, heavy joweled Hukel, whip cracking section leader, was pushed in the face, but hard. Preceded by loud arguments some "A" company man struck and struck again. A kick in the groin all but crippled Hukel. Blood flowed.

But violent things were happening everywhere through the spralling camp. At the Motor Pool Marines stole Jeep # 1, the Colonel's own personal transportation and the newest and best in the lot. In "B" Company every passerby was beaten up. Poor bespectacled Gunch wandered too far, staggered into "B" Company tent # 47. Presently there was the sound of a heavy blow and Gunch's long slender body came violently through the screening - jet propulsion no doubt. Fist fights ranged the length of the area and the ambulance maintained a shuttle service to the Hospital Dispensary.

Our party in tent 47 presently produced a casualty. Red faced,

pugnacious McGrady, who had been arguing violently with little Joe Gehrum appeared suddenly bleeding from a deep gash under his eye. It is presumed he raised a bottle over anxiously to his lips, and missed. No one would want to knife him. Or would they?

However the high point of the evening was Joe Gehrum, little, bashful, well behaved Joe Gehrum who startled everybody. Singing all by himself in a corner he kept time to his own melodies by violently beating the air with his arms, leading himself.

Presently Captain Gould, who was scouring the Company for 17 sober men, or at least "17 men who could walk," was accosted by some wise guy and invited to tent 48 for a drink. It must be confessed most of the men scampered when they saw the dread, towering lean figure of the Company Commander pacing toward the tent. But not Joe Gehrum. The goodie-goodie boy stunned everybody. With glassy eyes he lurched up to the Captain's tall length and exuberantly whacked him on the back a resounding crack that nearly knocked him down.

"Hi ya Pop," he cried in a high unnatural voice. "Hi ya Pop. Stick it here." and he proffered his mit. Spellbound the assembled Bacchanalians watched through the haze of an alcoholic stupor while the Captain solemnly shook Gehrum's hand. Nothing had happened. Even Gehrum expected to depart for the stockade at the very least.

Altogether the party in tent 48 consumed 16 cases of beer, 1 quart of gin and 9 quarts of whiskey, and of this amount Fred Aluise contributed a lions's share, 3 cases of beer and 7 quart of whiskey. Yes, well may Christmas Eve be remembered. There will never be another quite like it.