

Henry Baker

Henry Baker- an Alamo Scout during WWII who infiltrated enemy-held Philippine Islands. Formed in 1943 as a reconnaissance and raiding unit, the Scouts were the creation of General Krueger, Commander of the 6th US Army. They came from all branches of the Army, as well as Filipino guerillas.

I attended the Citadel and immediately after graduation went to OCS for 16 weeks at Fort Monroe, VA leaving as a "90 day wonder" 2nd Lieutenant. My first official duty was to deliver a truck load of 40 to a dance at Fort Hunston.

After a few months, British Colonel Douglas Roshier set up a combat school at Ft. Cronkite, in San Francisco composed of 10 Army officers, 10 Navy, and 10 Marine. School was 3-4 weeks where we learned judo, means of killing, swimming thru burning oil, rappelling- basically what the Special Forces do today. I was asked by Colonel Roshier to be an instructor for the 2nd class and was clandestinely shipped to Ft. McClellan, AL along with my Citadel classmate Sid Tyson. Col Roshier picked 13 men from the two classes for the Pacific Theater. We flew to New Guinea as the 5217th Reconnaissance Battalion- Special. At this point, there were "no written orders"- only VOVO (vocal orders commanding officer). We flew on to a secret camp in Australia learning demolitions and studying dialects (a waste of time), everyone spoke English. We were put on a sub and headed to Lazon (north of Leyte). The sub guys didn't like it-they wanted to shoot targets and their only job was to get us ashore. We left with two tons of plastique and bamboo rafts as well as several hundred Thompson guns and MI rifles to arm guerillas. We trained and worked with Robert Latham (out of Corregador), who organized the guerillas. The training took place in the mountains, as the "Japs" were afraid to go there. America invaded Luzon where there were 20,000-30,000 "Japs" in January 1945. We were basically there to gather intelligence- there were no sustained firefights (little ammunition) but Japanese troop trains were blown up. The natives kept us alive "Hello Joe!" I soon quit asking what I was eating. Fruit was a delicacy.

When we returned to the American sector with the 6th Army Special Intelligence I had a new mission- General Romulo's wife and son were left on the island behind enemy lines. The guerillas had built an airstrip where a cub plane could land. We set up signals and were able to evacuate the son, wife, and brother. There was no room for me- I had to walk out. It took six or seven days and I traveled at night. I got a Silver Star. Sidney (Tyson_ and I were then assigned to six weeks training in the Alamo Scouts in New Guinea, where we studied Morse code and commando training. We stayed on as instructors preparing for the invasion of Japan. After the bomb, the Scouts disbanded. We were the first group of Special Forces. It was very selective. From 30-40 men, only six were kept - 1 Officer and 5 enlisted.

We were victims of "glamorous combat".

We returned to San Francisco and from there home. We had all matured and were ready to settle down. I got married in the Fall of 1946 and worked at Prudential Insurance with my Dad.

We WWII vets don't have nightmares or trouble sleeping. I made many friendships in the Scouts -115+. We're all going pretty fast, there are reunions every year. I keep up with them pretty well.