FROM THE
STANLEY C. JERSEY COLLECTION

MICHAEL J. O'DEA, JR

Guadalcanal Diary

The following are excerpts taken from the Diary of Mike O'Dea covering the period 9/4/42 to 1/5/43 as he put down his thoughts of the ISLANDS. All of us remember but — these notes will no doubt bring back some incidents that time has erased.

SEPTEMBER 4, 1942: Boarded the S.S. Fuller at Espiritu Santo, 20 men and six C.P.O., sailed for Solomon Island. Food very good but sleeping poor. **7th:** Arrived at Guadalcanal at 8:00 a.m., left ship at 11:00 a.m., talked with Marines on Island; spent rest of day looking over Island and setting up camp. Six planes crashed while trying to land on muddy field, one burned completely. **8th:** Reported to Cmdr. Blundon for work. Spent entire day with him covering most of the Island which we hold at this time. No bombing today. (Hold only 5 square miles.) **9th:** Tokyo sent 27 bombers today with a group of fighting planes and gave us the works. In my trench three times today. Met the Captain of Air Corps (from Louisville, Kentucky) **10th:** More Jap bombers over again today. Several bombs hit airport and several hit in Marine Camp, 300 yards from us — killed 17 Marines. Three air raids today. **11th:** We are now getting used to Jap bombing as they came again today. Several Marines killed. **12th:** Bombed again today and also shelled from the sea. Japs advancing toward us from the hills. Front lines only three-quarter miles from our camp. Marines' 75 mm and 105 mm guns, 300 feet from our camp — shooting all day and night. We sat outside our tent tonight watching the fighting progress. Thus far this was our biggest day. No sleep. Visited General Vandergrift today. **13th** Fighting continuing in this area. Six Jap fighting planes came down over us at 6:00 p.m. while eating chow. Two of them made a nosedive directly into our machine guns. Dropped several bombs on the airfield and proceeded out to sea. Tokyo also sent 27 bombers over today. They tried hard to make a big offense against this Island today. Our planes and ships fought them off. **14th:** Bombed again today. **15th:** Ran across a friend of mine from home — Willette — talked with him for a short while — made trip to the General with Cmdr. Blundon. **17th:** Shelled during the night by a Jap Cruiser. No one was hurt. Was forced to jump in trench during night. **18th:** Large convoy arrived with 6,000 Marines and supplies. Twenty ships in convoy. Spent most of day on beach with Cmdr. Blundon. **19th:** Shelled tonight — no one killed of 6th Battalion. **20th:** Jap bombers came over as usual and gave us plenty of trouble. **21st:** Bombed again today. Bomb hit about 25 feet away and shook me up. **22nd:** Several doctors arrived via plane. Made trip around island with doctors and Cmdr. Blundon in Jeep, visited Jap prisoners, 87 on Island at present time. **23rd:** A rather quiet day — no bombing — Marines moving forward. **24th:** One Destroyer and SS Beatlegoose anchored in harbor. Mostly supplies from Hebrides — but no mail. **26th:** Saturday — At last my ship anchored with a little mail from home — 6 letters, 6 newspapers and a picture of Gladys. Approximately 150 men arrived from Buttons. Father Gehring also arrived. Hard rain in evening — quiet night. (The U.S.S. ALCHIBA). **27th:** Sunday — Mass for first time in three weeks. Held in Chaplain's tent. Heavy bombing at 2:00 p.m. 27 Jap planes with Zeros — several Marines killed. Commander and I made survey of damage. We got 23 bombers and one Zero. Two bombers got away. **28th:** Made trip over Island with Cmdr. Blundon and Majors on the General's staff, making survey for General — took pictures of Jap prisoners eating chow, Jap flag and various other pictures. Bombed today at 2:00 p.m. 25 Jap bombers and 20 Zeros. Jap fighters came overhead, one bomb hit 150 feet from Cmdr. Blundon and I — quiet night. **29th:** Air Raid at 10:30 a.m., another at 2:00. We got five Jap Zeros — little damage — no direct hits. **30th:** Spent morning with Cmdr. Blundon, Cmdr. Shass and Cmdr. Koegle of the Naval Aviation. Hard rain from 12:00 to 4:00 p.m. Admiral Nibett arrived in a B-17.

OCTOBER 1: Spent greater part of day with Cmdr. Blundon covering various projects. One plane crashed while landing. Admrl. Nibett left in B-17 — moved to new campsite. Bombed twice during night and forced to go into dug-out for two hours. Christian burned, electrician. **2nd:** Air Raid at 1:00 p.m. no one hurt. Lts. Marcus and Day and 10 of our men from Buttons arrived by ship — very little equipment. Earthquake at 5:20 p.m., Air Raid at 9:30 p.m. **3rd:** Received two V-letters from Hughie dated 8/7/42. Air Raid at noon. Jap plane came down overhead shooting. Air Raid at 6:00 p.m. — no damage. No sleep tonight — in foxhole three hours. One cruiser and 9 Jap destroyers 100 miles out. Planes came over and dropped bombs at 11:30 p.m. We bombed Jap Cruiser. **4th:** Mass at 6:00 a.m. No Air Raid today. 20 B-17's came in after mission in the area, understand two Jap destroyers were sunk by our B-17's. **5th:** Air Raid at 2:00 a.m. Went above front lines at 6:00 a.m. to Communications Tent. Fighting all around. Cmdr. Blundon left for two day trip to Tulagi. **6th:** Went to front lines with Lt. Day and de Simone photographer. Marines ready to make another advance. Visited Jap prisoners. **7th:** Front lines with Lt. Day and Warrant Officer Fletcher, 6:00 a.m. Marines made big advance to route Japs from the hills. **8th:** 59 of our men with Lt. Marcus left for Tulagi. Rain from 8:30 a.m. until 4:00 p.m. Air Raid during night. Jap planes overhead dropping flares and bombs. **9th:** Friday — two ships anchored at Tulagi, 15 miles across channel. 450 of our men, 6th Battalion landed at Tulagi from New Hebrides. Air Raid at noon today — fought planes away — another Air Raid at 3:00 p.m. — no damage. Jap prisoners working at our camp today. They are all small and do not speak English. **10th:** Cmdr. Blundon made trip to Tulagi. The general opinion is that we are just being used for bait in order for our Navy to trap the Jap Navy. **11th:** Sunday Mass at 6:00 a.m. 106 of our boys arrived from Tulagi. Sea battle during night. We lost a cruiser. Japs lost several ships. Air Raid at noon until 3:00 p.m. 36 Jap bombers and 10 fighters came over and dropped bombs. Met Jimmie Roe at our camp — Cub One — talked with him for three hours during Air Raid in foxhole. **12th:** 100 more of our men landed from Tulagi. Traffic on beach heavy. Air Raid today at regular time. **13th:** Air Raids three times today. Hit airport hard and damaged our fuel supply. Shelled from battleship from 1:00 a.m. until daybreak — stayed in foxhole all night — no sleep — one meal today. Two shells hit my foxhole — dirt hit my neck — one killed and seven wounded near my tent. Fired at from hills nearby — this has been our worst day and night. Army landed today. Shelled for four hours tonight. **14th:** Air Raids all day — bombs dropping all around. Shelled for two hours at night. Haven't slept for 48 hours — will try and get a few hours sleep tonight. **15th and 16th:** These last four days can be explained as just plain HELL! Bombed, shelled, and shot at from the hills by Japs during the past 96 hours. Several of my buddies killed. Eight were killed and 10 injured from divebomber about 5:30 p.m. today — unloading gas. Spent until 10:00 p.m. with Dr. Tharp and several of the officers rounding up and taking care of the wounded. **17th:** Admiral Greenman reported to Island for duty. Bombed again today as usual. Conditions don't look so good today. We must have help nearby. **18th:** Bombed by 15 Jap planes today. Several injured — little damage. **19th:** The past few days we have gone through the next thing to HELL! **20th:** Another big raid today. Many Marines killed — heat terrible — really been tough going here of late. **24th:** Bombed again at 11:30 a.m. The 75mm guns from the hill killed one of our men and injured several. Commander and I drove 5 miles ahead of our present front lines — visited General Vandergrifts' Headquarters. **25th:** Sunday — shelled twice today. Jap divebombers kept us in our foxholes most of the day. Three Jap cruisers sank two of our supply ships along the beach. Five men lost — very little sleep tonight. The Japs threw everything at us today except the kitchen sink. **26th:** Battle continues very strong on our front lines last night. Only two miles away from our camp. This fighting has been going on for several days

now. Could hear machine guns sounds all night. Made two trips to front lines today. Saw several hundred dead Japs. It's really a mess up there. It's reported that the Marines got "Pistol Pete"; he has kept us in an uproar — killed several of our men. **27th:** Air Raid at 3:00 a.m. Could hear our machineguns all night. **28th:** Something wrong — no Air Raids today. Two Jap planes came over and dropped supplies to Japs. **29th:** Our planes turned 40 Jap bombers away 15 miles out. (WHOOPPEE) **30th:** Three Jap destroyers tried to land troops today. We sank one the other two got away. Five U.S. destroyers came into the harbor for a few hours. At General Van's Command Post on front lines when the Jap planes came over at 2:00 p.m. **31st:** Spent most of day with Cmdr. Painter of the Admiral's Staff who just arrived making two days survey for Admiral. Air Raid at 11:45 a.m. — no harm done. Pistol Pete started shooting at us from the hills again. They had better hurry and get that Jap. If there is such a thing as HELL ON EARTH we have sure been through it during the past six weeks.

NOVEMBER 1: Sunday Mass at 6:00 a.m. First Sunday with no Air Raids. Big day for all of us today — received our first mail from the States since July. 84 letters for myself. We expect more in a few days. The Japs landed more troops last night 5 miles away. **2nd:** Convoy arrived today — Marines and Soldiers. 8th Marines from Somoa. Lt. Smith and 50 more of our men arrived from Buttons. Marines now have 200 or more natives helping to unload ships. Jap planes turned away. **3rd:** Approximately 7,000 troops landed with large guns. 155 guns and supplies. 12 destroyers, 4 transports and 3 cruisers in harbor — sure looks good. **4th:** Jap bombers came over at 11:45 — 27 bombers and 20 Zeros. Watched raid from beach 4 miles from camp near front lines. Three Jap bombers fell. Most of ships pulled out today. Air Raid twice during night. **5th and 6th:** Quiet days. **7th:** Jap sub torpedoed one of our ships in the habor — one killed, several injured — our two destroyers got the sub. Ship was beached — crew came ashore and pitched camp. Jap Tack Force of 11 destroyers reported on way here. Went to cemetery — one of our boys died with malaria — Admiral Greenman and Cmdr. Compton sick with fever. **8th:** Sunday Mass — rained all day. Malaria and other sickness hitting our camp hard. **9th:** Made four mile trip into hills near front lines. No raids — no ships. **10th:** Air Raid. Chief Haldeman killed on runway by plane. **11th:** Convoy of ships with Marines and supplies anchored in harbor at 6:00. Air Raid of Jap divebombers — our ships knocked down 7 of 10. Another Raid of 27 Jap bombers and 20 Zeros bombed our ships and our beach — one of our men killed, several injured. Ship had a near miss and was damaged. Schneider was killed. **12th:** Showed Lt. Davis who just arrived from Washington our various projects. Air Raid occurred at 10:30 a.m. Convoy of four transports anchored with Soldiers and Marines. While on beach among some 4,000 troops another Air Raid — dove into foxhole. 8 P-38 planes arrived. **13th:** Friday started off with a bang. 12:30 a.m. Jap Navy and our Navy met in the harbor. This sea battle lasted all night — stayed in foxhole all night. Planes came overhead — sea, sky and land was lit up like daytime. On beach at 5:45 a.m. — battle still in progress. Could see 6 ships burning. Admiral Greenman sent 20 some odd lighter boats out to pick up survivors. Some 1,500 men, including Japs were picked up from water and brought ashore during the day. It sure was one grand mess. Mangled bodies, etc. Several ships sunk with all hands lost. Air Raid at 9:30 and 2:00 in afternoon — condition red most of day. Army A-24 Bomber planes arrived. **14th:** Saturday — Shelled from Jap Cruiser for an hour at 12:30 to 1:30. Planes also dropped flares and bombs. One hour sleep tonight. Two hours in foxhole. Air Raid at 8:30 a.m., another at 11:30. More new planes arrived today. Island under general alert from 3:00 p.m. until 12:00 p.m. 15 Jap transports and Jap Navy 50 miles away. Our planes have played Hell with the Jap Task Force. 8 of 12 transports sunk. We have some 75 planes in operation since early

morning. More excitement on this Island than I ever hope to see again. The Japs are determined to take this Island back under any condition. This is now the third day of the sea and air battle and may last a few more days. No sleep for 48 hours and have been on the go at all times -- really tired — sat up and talked with aviators all night — we could see and near large sea battle nearby. **15th:** Sunday. All church services cancelled. At airport 6:00 a.m. shells from Jap guns hit 50 feet away from me. Four Jap ships landing troops on beach. Forced to jump from Jeep several times as large 100 pound shells hit within 75 feet away. More planes arrived — three airports now going to top speed. Never saw so many planes in action. This place has really been a HELL ON EARTH to all of us but we will never let the Japs have it again. Aviators have been doing marvelous job — our B-24 bombers sank 5 Jap ships loaded with troops. Four Jap transport ships and one destroyer burning. One of our planes crashed in the water. Air Raid at 4:00 p.m. but our planes fought off Japs. Our bombers attacked beachhead of Japs. Retired at 8:00 p.m. and had good night's sleep — sea battle raging. **16th:** Ordered to stay near my tent and rested — quiet today. **17th:** 21 B-17 bombers and 12 B-24 bombers landed on airport at 4:30 p.m. and plan to operate out of here. Tomorrow they plan to bomb Bouganville, a Jap held island. **18th:** Bombers returned from raid at 11:15 a.m. Heard President Roosevelt make radio speech to people about the outcome of Guadalcanal sea battle. He praised General Vandergrift and Admiral Callahan. **19th:** Cmdr. Blundon made short speech to men of 6th Battalion at 5:00 p.m. at camp. Mentioned that we would leave for New Caledonia sometime in December for a rest. **20th:** Morning spent in office with Commander on paperwork — quiet day. **21st:** Two supply ships escorted by several ships entered the harbor at 5:30 a.m. Large unloading detail on hand at beach. **22nd:** Sunday — spent morning on beach with Commander instructing the unloading detail. **23rd:** Received two letters dated September 25 and 27. Made trip to beach. **24th:** 6th Battalion took over road construction. Air Raid at 2:30 a.m. — killed and injured several Marines near our camp. **25th:** Called on Mr. Johnson at native camp. Talked with Mr. Johnson, an Englishman, in charge of natives regarding arrival of 400 more. **26th:** Thanksgiving. Air Raid at 3:30 a.m. — very little sleep. **27th:** Air Raid at 4:00 a.m. The Japs won't let us get a good night's sleep. Several Marines killed from bombs near our camp. Left for Florida Island at 5:30 a.m. **28th:** Two Air Raids during the night. Sea battle took place on our beach during night. Our cargo ship was hit by sub. She is burning heavily. U.S.S. Alchiba loaded with ammunition and supplies. **29th:** Sunday. Air Raid as usual — 3:30 a.m. Admiral Greenman taken out by plane on stretcher — very sick man. Left for Buttons. Mass at 6:00 a.m. Father Walls, a missionary who has been on the island for 10 years just returned or escaped from Japs in the hills, told us of his experience on the Island also about the natives. **30th:** Air Raid. At 1:30 a.m. bombs hit near airport. Rain late afternoon through night..

DECEMBER 1: Sirens sounded and we left our beds at midnight. Sea battle raging nearby — we could see and hear the flash and sound of the guns as usual. Several Jap planes came overhead between hours of midnight and 5:30 a.m. — up all night again. **2nd:** No Air Raid, slept all night. Drove 5 miles into woods and picked fruit from an old plantation, bananas, sweet potatos and papaya. **3rd:** Air Raid at 1:30 a.m. Navy battle going on nearby. 18th Naval Construction Battalion arrived at Koie Point with other troops. We now have two of our ships beached along our shore due to torpedo hits from Jap subs. Meals have improved since we can get in more supplies. **4th:** Air Raid 3:30 a.m. — one plane. Rained hard. Results of sea battle in our harbor — 9 Jap ships sunk and damaged — 1 U.S. cruiser lost — 5,000 Japs drowned. Several ships arrived. **5th:** No Air Raids during night. Several cargo and transports arrived today. Visited Jap prison camp and saw many more Jap Sailors, aviators and soldiers just

captured. Interesting but horrible looking. They live like pigs and most of them are sick and injured. It looks as though the Japs or TOJO will lose his whole war in this area if he doesn't stay away. **6th:** Sunday — quiet. Went to native camp to instruct new arrivals about their work. Spent afternoon showing Admiral Fitch various projects around the Island which are under construction. **7th:** Quiet night. Left for Koie Point in boat with officers, Naval and Marine — returned at 2:00 after careful survey of Koie Point 15 miles downstream. Air Raid at 11:30 p.m. Jap sub torpedoed one of our ships while unloading at beach. **8th:** Bade General Vandergrift and his Aides and Marines farewell — new Army General took over command of Island today. Maybe we will join the General and his Division again soon. Several cargo and transport ships in Harbor. **9th:** Cmdr. Blundon ill with malaria. I was placed in charge of natives on Island. About 450 natives now on Island — speak little English — never wear shoes and are almost uncivilized. **10th:** Went for short swim. Most quiet and peaceful yet on Guadalcanal. Scenery really beautiful. **11th:** Part of 18th Construction Battalion arrived from Noumea today — rest to come tomorrow. Heavy rain last night — roads bad — visited Jap prison camp with Colonel Griffin. Air Raid at 1:00 p.m. Jap planes fought off. Saw Jimmy Rae at Beach unloading — no sleep tonight — Jap Navy nearby. **12th:** Our planes attacked 11 Jap destroyers, 50 miles away during the night — sank two, hit four and the rest changed their course. Capt. Shock arrived today to take over command of Naval activities. Balance of 18th Battalion arrived. Several ships in harbor. **13th:** Air Raid at midnight. Our spotlights picked up Jap plane and anticraft fire shot at him — we stayed in foxholes. Air Raid at 10:00 a.m. Air Raid alert at 1:15 p.m. Air Raid at 10:00 p.m. Several Jap planes came overhead and dropped bombs. Lasted for one and a half hours. Our searchlights picked up the planes but the gunners were unable to hit them. **14th and 15th:** Attending conferences with officers going over salvage of ships, etc. and visiting several projects around Island. Air Raid from 10:00 p.m. until 11:45 p.m. Jap planes came over and dropped bombs. **16th:** Visited native camp today. Air Raid 10:00 p.m. to 11:45 p.m. Ensign Polk missing. **17th:** Capt. Carney killed when his plane crashed nearby yesterday. Watch some 6,000 Soldiers of the 125 D come ashore today. **18th:** Visited Naval Headquarters this a.m. Went to Koie Point — resting. **19th:** Received several letters today — sure did pep me up. Several ships arrived in harbor. We will now get more food supplies. Some 600 natives in all on Island turned over to me — really a tough job. **20th:** Sunday, Went to front lines to pick new road and bridge locations — caught in Jap fire several times — really fortunate to get out alive. Dead Japs lying all around — jungle so thick — muddy France would have nothing on this place. Thank the Lord I'm still alive. **21st:** Cmdr. Frye of the 26th Battalion our relief, arrived today. While at Refrigerator Plant with both Commanders at 4:00 p.m. an ammunition truck exploded and killed many and injured more. We were but 100 feet away and it's only through the Grace of God that we are still alive. Two of our men near us were killed. Truck blown to pieces and bodies all around. Arms, legs, and so forth. Horrible sight during a downpour of rain — we did out utmost to help the wounded. Air Raid at midnight. Jap plane dropped eight bombs. **22nd:** Capt. Johnson and his Aide arrived via plane. Looks as though we may have this Island soon. Gunfire from the hills is still continuing and we are always in grave danger. As long as we are on this Island we will be under gunfire. One gets rather used to it. **23rd:** Capt. Johnson and Company left via plane for Tulagi. **24th:** Christmas Eve. Went to church in afternoon. Went to Naval Headquarters in evening to listen to Christmas Carols. We could also hear our guns shooting in the hills. **25th:** Midnight Mass at Naval Headquarters. Went to native camp in afternoon. The Army is taking over natives today. We were shown a movie at our camp "All Through The Night." **26th:** Air Raid during night. 26th Battalion arrived at 5:00 p.m. Heavy downpour of rain. **27th:** Sunday. Mass

— quiet day. **28th:** Cmdr. Blundon received dispatch that we will leave here on January 5 on U.S.S. Liggett. **29th:** Visited various projects with Commander today — 26th Battalion learning about our jobs in order to relieve us on January 2. **30th:** Large convoy arrived today with about 6,000 Soldiers and cargo. **31st:** Regular duties.

JANUARY 1: Air Raid at 8:30 p.m. No planes came over — spent day going over various jobs they are taking over. **2nd:** 26th Battalion took over the work of the 6th Battalion at 7:00 a.m. 6th Battalion will spend next few days preparing to move on January 5. **3rd:** All our work secured — no longer will visit various projects. Natives brought in a little baby girl about 3 years old. She was placed in hospital at Naval Headquarters. Her head and arm cut. Natives claim her parents were killed by Japs in the hills and baby left for dead. **4th:** Up at 4:30 a.m. At 6:00 a.m. the entire Batallion marched to the cemetery dressed in white uniform to pay tribute to our men we are leaving behind. Father Gehrig said a Mass and I served. It was a beautiful but touching ceremony. All Naval personnel present. Life, Newsreel and Navy took pictures of the ceremony. Prepared to leave today. **5th:** Air Raid alert at 12:45 a.m. Boarded U.S.S. Hunter Liggett at noon and our ship set sail for sea at 1:00 p.m. 6th Battalion, nuns, priests and refugees from Bouganville aboard ship. Have no idea the length of our trip. Food grand — it's only through the Grace of God that we left Guadalcanal alive. We are all thankful and pray to God that we may never be sent to such a location in the future.

The 26th Battalion Band was at the beach to see us sail playing patriotic songs. We were leaving an ISLAND of HELL, but had completed our original task of chasing or killing the Japs from this Island. The Island now secure, but of course, we cannot remain to enjoy the freedom of this Island since we have a bigger job ahead of us. After a few weeks' rest we will be after the Japs again, even if we must go as far East as Tokyo. They will never again dominate these Islands after we have once landed.

Permission was received from Michael O'Dea, 8701 Shelbyville Road, Louisville, Kentucky to reprint this article. I feel confident that his recollections will bring back many memories of those days on Guadalcanal. Michael O'Dea served with the 6th. Seabee's. Our thanks go out to you Michael O'Dea.

"GUADALCANAL REVISTED"

TRAVEL DATES: July 28 - August 8, 1980. Departing Los Angeles International Airport the AM of July 28 via Continental Airlines jumbo jet. On Wednesday, July 30 you'll arrive at Henderson Field, Guadalcanal. HOME for the next week is the beautiful ocean front Hotel Mendana just west of Point Cruz. Here you can look down the coastline to Cape Experance, out to Savo Island and accross Iron Bottom Bay with Tulagi and Florida Islands in the distance. Scheduled touring includes: Red Beach area, Tenaru, Bloody Ridge, Kokumbona, Vilu Village (War Relics), Cape Esperance, motorlaunch excursion to Tulagi, a visit to Sgt. Major Sir Jacob Vouza's village and etc. You'll have plenty of time to seek out all the old spots and with guides to assist. Time for sea and/or air excursions most anywher in the Solomons. The "Icing on the Cake" you'll be the "Canal" for a good part of the historic date of August 7th. On the afternoon of the 7th. you will head back via Fiji... lots' better duty today than you remember in those early '42' days.

The back page gives you all the details, includes your enrollment form. Should you have any questions needing an answer before climbing aboard, call Veterans Tours International 1 207 729 0111, ask for Wanda Snyder. I look forward to having you with me on Guadalcana August 7, 1980 38 years to the day, where it all began.....

Al Bonney, Tour Director.