

A Story of Faith and Courage

[Summary prepared by Thomas Lee Palmer – 2020]

J. Duffy Palmer and Belton Palmer – U.S. Marines in World War II

1945 – Island of Iwo Jima, Japan



Belton and Duffy

*“The **Battle of Iwo Jima** (19 February – 26 March 1945) was a major battle in which the United States Marine Corps landed on and eventually captured the island of Iwo Jima from the Imperial Japanese Army (IJA) during World War II. The American invasion, designated **Operation Detachment**, had the goal of capturing the entire island, including the three Japanese-controlled airfields (including the South Field and the Central Field), to provide a staging area for attacks on the Japanese main islands. This five-week battle comprised some of the fiercest and bloodiest fighting of the Pacific War of World War II”*



Raising the American Flag on the island of Iwo Jima - 23 February 1945

This story of faith and courage is told in the words of J. Duffy Palmer

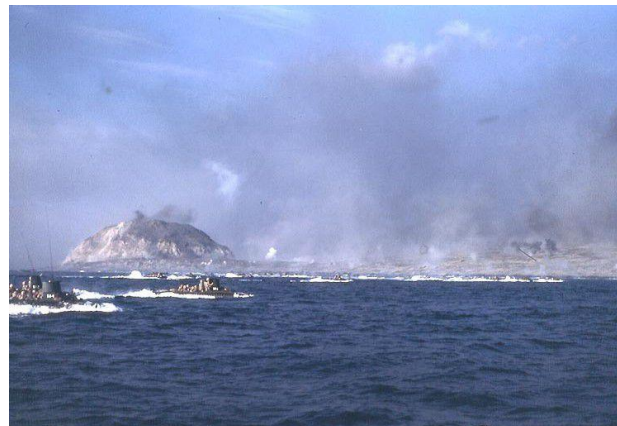
(In February 1945 when Duffy and Belton landed on Iwo Jima, Duffy was almost 24 and Belton 22)

“My parents instilled in me a great love for the country. I know of no one more patriotic than my mother and father, I guess especially Mother. She was a real lover of this land and instilled that same love in the children. War was in Europe, the world in turmoil. December 7, 1941 the Japanese Government bombed Pearl Harbor in our Hawaiian Islands and then the turmoil was really compounded. I guess I was the worst-of-the-worst. I had always had a love of the country; I wanted to get in at once. By now it was certain that the United States was in it. How could any red blooded American boy stay out of the conflict? But I was married. This really put my mind and emotions in a tail spin. I knew I had a responsibility to Josie, I knew I wanted to join the services.

By spring, April or May [1942] we were aware that a child was to come to us. I was aware that I should support and sustain in a livelihood my wife and expected child. I would lay awake, wondering how I could cover both responsibilities, the one to family, dear wife and expected child, and the other to the country I loved. The war was not going well for the United States. I was sure if I just could get in we could turn the things around and I could be of service in whipping the enemy. I called my younger brother (Belton) in Tucson, Arizona and asked if he would like to join me in this adventure. [When Duffy and Belton enlisted, my father, Gus, also wanted to enlist, but they would not allow him to do so because he worked for the railroad and that was a critical war supporting industry.] We were told when we enlisted [in the Marines] that Belton would be sent one place, I would be sent to another. If we wanted to stay together, go in, when the transfers came out, shout like crazy and they would put us back together. We were able to stay in the same unit until February 1945 or the end of our active duty. [During 1942 to 1944 they experienced deployment to different locations – from Hawaii to Alaska, and also got a leave to go home briefly.]

January 1, 1945, we were loaded aboard transport ships and headed out across the ocean. Two days out we found we were going to land on Iwo Jima, and went into much preparation for that landing. We landed for supplies in the Marianas, and I had to go into Saipan with a group for the supplies and then back to the ship and on to the planned destination. We came to the rendezvous point and there were many ships. On the 18th of February we are not far from Iwo. We can see and hear the planes as they bomb the Island, and we can see the large battleships pounding the shore of the island. I do not see how anything can live under the heavy shelling that the island is getting. Yet we knew the enemy will be on hand to greet us as we hit the island the next day. We had the blessing of being on the first wave of marines to land on the island. We were to land on the narrow part of the island, just left of a sunken ship that is on the beach. We started for the island in the morning of February 19th. Anyone that has been there can guess the tension that we felt. True Fear! We wanted to fight for the freedom of our great country, yet we all knew that many will never leave the sand of Iwo Jima

alive. We try to put on a real brave face for one another, yet we know we are going to be in a state of a fight soon. As we near the island we begin to take fire from the artillery on the island. Our ships are still bombarding the island, and our planes are still dropping their loads of bombs on the enemy positions along the airports and other dug-in positions.



Iwo Jima

As we get close the enemy fire gets closer to us. We can see the shells landing very close to our landing barges. I shout to my men to get down and to keep their heads below the top of the landing barge. These are young men. We had one 16 year old from Memphis Tenn. We had one older fellow named Anderson. A boot, but 29 years old and all mouth. When I shouted for the men to get down, he laughed and said, "What's the matter Sarge, are you scared?" I replied, "You bet I am and you better be if you want to live." About that time an enemy martyr hit the corner of our craft, and we had no problem having Anderson keeping his head down for the rest of the ride into the island. The reality of the situation had set in and all knew this was not an exercise but the real thing and that our lives were all on the line.



Island of Iwo Jima



Approaching island of Iwo Jima

How does one describe Iwo Jima Island? Volcanic ash that is fine as fiddle dust! We started out of the landing barge and soon found out that the island could be a very hard target to take. Steep incline from the ocean up to the top of the island and the footing was very hard. Enemy fire coming from every direction. Men being wounded and killed on every side. We were under heavy fire and had to organize the attack we were making regardless of the heavy fire. I took two squads of my men to fight up the island and left Belton and his squad in reserve. As we started up the steep slope we knew it was going to be a real task. We would take two steps up and slide down one. The sand was deep and very hard to climb in. It was not long after I got out in front of the men and began to give direction that I became the target for mortar fire, machine gun fire and it seemed a target for every sort of thing one could imagine in war.



It seemed that everywhere I moved the enemy followed just an inch or two away. I had a Corporal Dirkin in charge of one of the squads. Dirkin was a strange young man at best. He was the most nervous man I have ever known, and this without the danger of his life being snuffed out at any time. As he moved with his men along with me, he became very anxious and asked if he could go back into reserves. He said, "Those Japs are after you and when they get you I don't want them to get me." I was sure he felt I was trying to protect Belton, and indeed I was. So I brought Belton up and sent Dirkin back in reserves. As we moved along I would signal Belton that all was well with me, and he would return the signal. When we finally reached the top of the island we were introduced to a new enemy weapon. We called it a flying telephone pole. It was a large mortar. It made a terrible noise as it came in towards us. One landed just a little away from me. It kicked up such a lot of dirt that it covered me up. I could not signal Belton for a while because I was digging out of the sand that covered me. Belton asked if anyone had seen me. He was told that a mortar had landed near me and they thought it had gotten me, for my rifle was laying out in the open. The rifle had been knocked from my hand by the impact of the explosion. I finally climbed out from under the dirt, looked at once to see Belton and was able to signal him that I was OK. This was always a wonderful thing to see the signal from each of us that we had not been killed or wounded.

Our company's duty was to cut the island in two then to go north to the air fields and, if possible, take the air fields. Late afternoon of the first day we cut the lines of the enemy into north and south portions and were then to move north. We dug-in for the night. We were told not to get out of our fox holes during the night, so they could not see us and kill us. Also we did not want to be shot by our own men. During the invasion we had a number of Bonsai attacks. In these attacks, the enemy would come at us with all the force possible, bayonet on and charging. They did not seem to care if they were killed. They would just keep coming regardless of how many we were downing. It was a horrible sight to see human beings falling like flies all around. One large man kept coming, he looked like the largest person I had ever seen. I don't know how many bullets hit him, it was many, but he just kept coming toward us. Finally he fell dead about three or four feet from our position. On some of these charges the enemy would get behind our lines and then shoot us from the back. Sometimes the enemy would infiltrate the lines during the night and then shoot at us from the back the next day. Sometimes their sharp shooters would hide in a hole, or in a tree and pick our men off and we had to locate and dispose of the sniper. This was a very frightening thing and none of us liked that too much, and it was a constant concern. For instance, one day as we moved up I stood in a fork of a trail and had to relieve myself. All was OK for me. Just a bit later Sergeant White, a good friend of mine stood in the same place and the enemy put a hole right between his eyes. Why him? Why not me? I felt then and still do that the Lord had something for me to do, and thus my life was preserved. Similar things happened over and over. I was truly blessed. Belton and I would dig in the same fox hole each night and we kept the Lord busy answering our prayers. I am sure He had no time for others.

One night we were in our positions. Orders came for us to go and remove some markers from the bushes and trees. The enemy used rags etc. for markers. They could tell just where we were from the markers. This enabled them to open up with artillery,

mortar and machine gun fire with deadly accuracy. The unit to our left was pinned down by such heavy fire and could not excavate themselves from their situation. Thus we were given the order. I went to the fox holes of the men under me, asking for someone to volunteer for the job. I intended to send someone whether they wanted to go or not. As I looked into the eyes of the men, I just did not have the heart to send them into that fire. I returned to our fox hole and asked Belton if he would go with me. He said he would. We prayed for divine protection. A strange thing happened. As we came up out of the hole, all the firing stopped on both sides. The first time that had happened since we landed on the island some days ago. Belton and I went to the place where the markers were and cut them down. We returned to the safety of our hole and just as we reentered the fox hole, all the firing started once more. We knew our prayers were once again answered by a kind and caring Heavenly Father.

On another night after we dug in as usual, Belton and I were praying and our little friend, "CORPORAL DIRKIN," The shaky one jumped in our hole. We were praying and he begged our forgiveness for bothering our prayer. When he jumped into our fox hole he said, "Will you please teach me how to pray. I have never prayed in my life." We explained the way the LDS have been taught to pray. Not as man, but as the Lord taught us to pray as individuals. Not the memorized prayers of someone else, but the prayers of our heart to the Lord for the blessings we desire. He then said, "But I do not know what words to say." We outlined what we thought he might say and words he might use. Again we emphasized that he should use his own words from his heart to the Lord, for his needs. Next morning we began our attack and Dirkin was laying prone on the ground and firing at the enemy. A mortar landed between his arm and face, it did not go off, no explosion! Dirkin jumped up and yelled, "He does! He does!" over and over again. I grabbed him and pulled him down. I asked what he was talking about. He said, "I was praying for the first time in my life just as that shell landed by me! God does hear and answer prayers! He really does!" Some of the Marines laughed and said it was just another "JAP DUD." But, you could not convince Dirkin or me that the Lord had not heard the humble prayer of the frightened marine. He truly did!

Nights were the tough times. We could not see, but we could hear. Sometimes we probably did not hear what we thought we heard. It was very hard to sleep or to make any sense out of war. Why must men kill one another? What is the purpose in all this? Why should people be enemies? Many questions arose. Why should we be over here in the islands of the Pacific when we could be home with our families, making a living and enjoying the blessings of peace?

I had not slept since we hit the island. Belton kept after me to sleep at night and he would watch. He was tired too, but he had been able to catch a wink or two. On one evening, we were dug in and we could see nothing. The advantage of this night's fox hole was that we had a low limb of a tree about six to eight inches above the top of the hole. Belton said, "Duffy, please get some rest, I will watch." I replied that I would try. I settled down in the hole and tried to sleep. Almost as soon as I had settled down in the hole, Belton began to doze. I could see his head droop and soon I could tell he was asleep. I eased back up and began to watch out into the darkness. Not too long after this I saw a shadow. I tried to make out what or who it was. Our men were told not to get out of the hole and move around. Yet, there was a man with a rifle in hand and a fixed bayonet. I puzzled over this for some time. I knew if it was the enemy he could

drop a grenade into any number of the fox holes. I also knew that if it was one of our men, he should not be there. I was frightened and did not know what to do. I prayed so hard and asked the Lord what should be done about this situation. I sure did not want to shoot one of our own men, and I did not want to kill anyone. How I prayed for direction. I was sure that if it was the enemy I had no time to waste. And I knew if it was one of our men and someone else saw him they might shoot him. The memory of the horrible feeling I had at that time still stays with me. After sometime, I do not know how long, I made the decision. If it was our man, he had no business out there jeopardizing others. If it were the enemy, I had the duty to protect our men. That decision caused me to spend the longest night of my life. I measured the distant as carefully as I could where the man was in relation to the men of my outfit. The decision made, I carefully aimed and squeezed off one round! I spent the rest of the night crying, knowing I must have killed one of my friends or some other American Marine. As the shot was fired, Belton jumped up and asked what was going on. I told him to be very quiet, there may be more people out there that we had to be careful about. I told him what I had seen and what I had done. We consoled each other all night long, worrying about what we would find the next day. Morning came very slowly. My fear grew with each passing minute. When it was light enough to see, we crept out of the security of the hole and learned what true relief was. It is sad to take the life of any human being. But to know that the fellow was not one of our own, was a great blessing. I wondered what his family was like. Did he, like me, have a family, wife, children and parents? How sad! I still feel the sorrow, and the relief of that morning.

The Japanese broke through our lines that evening. The next morning they were shooting us in the back. Because my platoon had gone through that area the day before, we were ordered back to see if we could clear the enemies snippers from our backs. We were on a little higher ground looking at the beach. We saw several enemy soldiers going into a pill box. We called for a Japanese interpreter from headquarters. It rained on us a day or two there on Iwo Jima. One day, three or four days into the operation, I looked up and saw the "FLAG OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA" flying on the Mt. Surabotchi!



What a thrill it was to see the flag. What joy it gave and great encouragement to all of us. Here I was a big "TOUGH MARINE SERGEANT." Yet when I saw that

beautiful symbol of freedom, I cried like a baby. How very beautiful it was and to me still is. How could any American desecrate the flag? Those posting the colors on the hill knew what they were doing, but we did not. I feel the real drama of that posting of the colors was down there where we did not know and yet saw the flag and were not afraid to show the emotion of love for the flag. How I wish every American could always have those feelings for the flag that I experienced that day. I feel those same feelings when I see the flag, not so intense perhaps, but I still cannot stand to see the flag abused by any one for any reason.

I mentioned those flying telephone poles. Sergeant Wilde, an inactive young man, was in position one day when one of these bombs, mortars or whatever they were, landed on or near him and blew him about 50 feet. Killed in defense of the liberties of his country! My friend, gone to a better place than Iwo Jima!

One day we were working along the road by the air field. Mortars came near us. We ran for cover and could find none. It seemed they were chasing us. As we ran, we could hear them coming. We would hit the deck and they would go off just behind us, just where we came from. On one of these mad dashes we rolled into a hole and there to our amazement was Harry Bailey from Winslow, Arizona. We had known him and been neighbors to his family for some time. It was his mother that I left money with to send flowers to Josie on special occasions, knowing I could not do it where I was. Harry and I were thrilled to see one another. We reported on our families at home and then went our separate ways. After the Island was secured sometime later, Harry was killed by a mine left by the enemy. How very sad! Killed after the fighting was over.

There are many things that happen and most of them flood my mind as I remember those days of battle. Day after day, wondering if you would live until the next day? Will my men hold up? Are we doing all we should do to capture instead of killing?

On the morning of February 26, 1945, we were just beginning our charge and we were pinned down by heavy machine gun fire from a ridge above. The enemy had us in their sights and in cross fire. We did not make much headway and we wondered how we could ever move up and have any of us come out of it alive. Lt. Ronon came to my hole. He ordered me to take the pill box that was doing all the damage. I said to him, "Lt. Ronon, it is impossible to move the men into that heavy fire. We must find a way to silence the machine guns and the other weapons before we try to move up in front of that blazing machine gun or guns." I then heard a command that I never thought I would ever really hear, though I heard it many times in life. I never thought it was a real command that I would ever be in a place where I would have to obey. The command was; "Sergeant Palmer, I said take the pill box. It is not yours to wonder why, it is for you to do or die!" What a horrible feeling came over me. I looked at the men under me and wondered how in the world I could take them into that fire. I sent the word that I was going forward to see what could be done, that they did not have to follow me if they did not want to go. I moved up about 25 yards. Every one of those young men came right along with me. I stayed there for a moment and covered myself and had the men cover themselves the very best they could. I knew that I must do something. I told the men to stay where they were until I told them to come up. I jumped up and began to run. I don't know just how far I had run. I did not or could not find a hole or any cover to get into. The fire from the enemy guns were chasing me every step of the way. I finally found a bomb crater and jumped into it. Immediately the machine guns of the enemy soldier

begin to go back and forth across the top of the hole. I knew I had to signal my men or they would be right up there in that mess with me. By now the little mortars called knee mortars (I am not sure of the spelling of the name) they began to fire at the hole I was in. It was a terrible situation. I tried to figure just how I could signal the men in the rear not to come up. It seemed impossible. I was sure that I had to do something. I sure did not want any more of the platoon up there. There was no cover and no way for them to protect themselves. I finally figured that when the machine gun went one way across the hole, I would raise up and signal them and then fall down again into the bomb crater. As it went to the left I raised up and tried to signal. As I did, the machine gun bullets came crashing into my neck, down through the collar bone, down through the chest, lungs and out my back! I was hit badly and was sure it was serious. I found I was paralyzed and could not move my left side at all! I was more or less face down in the hole. I tried to call to the men and I found that my voice would not work. I began to pray as I have never prayed before or since. I begged the Lord to spare my life. I could feel the blood draining out of my body. I could feel a sickening feeling in my stomach. I was sure that the only way I was ever going to get out of this place was to have the Lord take care of me, now as in the past. I did everything I could to move. I could feel the mortars bursting over me and pieces of them tearing into my combat pack that was on my back. I could do nothing to stop this, try as I could, I could not move. I could feel my life leaving me. I tried and tried to call to someone, anyone, and could not make a sound. I prayed all the harder. I promised the Lord that if he would spare my life and let me return to my wife and child, maybe children now, since Josie was expecting another child when we hit the island. I would do all I could do to further the work of the Lord here on the earth. I begged, pleaded and did everything I knew how to do. Finally, exerting all my efforts, I pleaded once more and said, "Lord please save my life! Please Lord, not now! Please Lord how I want to live, please!" As these words were formed, I exerted all my effort to say them. I made a little sound, as I did, I felt the sweet assurance within myself that I was going to make it through this mess. Though I did not know how in the world it would ever happen. I could do nothing for myself. I knew my pack was ripped into pieces and I could not move to get anything even to take sulfa or bandage or stop the bleeding. I could not do anything or move to get any relief. I just laid there bleeding, now in and out of any knowledge of what was going on. I would come to, then out again. I have no idea of how long I would be out or how long I would lay there praying before I would go out again. I just knew the Lord had made it known that somehow, some way I would make it back to my family. That the Lord expected me to keep my covenant to do all I could to further his kingdom here on the earth.

I do not know how long it was before I was aware that someone was in the hole with me. Soon I heard someone say, "How are you?" I recognized the voice to be that of my brother Belton. I said, "I am fine." He replied, "Yes, you look like it." He found the only things in my pack were my Book of Mormon and the consecrated oil that I packed with me. He administered to me there in the hole with machine gun bullets sailing overhead and mortars bursting all around the hole. He then took a sulfa pill. We called them Horse pills, they were so big. I told him I could not swallow those. He said, "You have to! Now take these." He forced my mouth open and shoved the pills in and put the canteen of water in my mouth. It was either swallow the pills or drown. He tried to stop the bleeding and shoved a lot of gauze into the hole in the back and patched the

entrance hole. I, in fact, do not know all that was done, except what has been told to me since that time. After working with me the best he could, he jumped from the hole and ran to the lines. Belton asked for increased fire on the gun emplacements that were giving us such a bad time. He also asked for a corpsman. He and a navy corpsman came back to where I was. The fire was still very heavy and there was no let up. They worked on me for a long time. The bleeding from the exit wound was profuse. When I breathed the blood and air squirted blood all over. He was sure than the bullets had gone through my lungs. Belton went back to the lines and asked for the navy and the tank to open up on the enemy so they could bring me out. He returned again through the heavy fire and said, "Come on Duffy, we have to run out of here. You are too heavy [220 lbs] and we cannot carry you." I said, "I can't run. I can't move!" We prayed and prayed for some time. They got on each side of me and somehow we ran out and back to the lines. They sat me down behind a sand dune. As they laid me down, I told Belton to get back to the unit. They needed him. He left, reluctantly, and I thought he went back to the unit. Later I found out that a mortar had landed and killed the Corpsman. I found out later that Belton was injured and evacuated from the Island the same day as I was.



A memory that is still so plain in my mind is when the litter bearers were carrying me on the stretcher to the ship for evacuation. I came to and looked out as they jogged along and saw the flag of the UNITED STATES OF AMERICA still flying on Mt. Surabotchi. What a beautiful sight to my dazed, troubled, and worried mind. But when I saw OLD GLORY FLYING HIGH I was thrilled. I wondered at that time if I would ever see the flag again.

I do not remember getting to the beach. I do not remember a trip to the hospital ship. The next thing I remember was that I was in a ship, a doctor dressing my wounds and telling me that I was not in good condition. He shoved gauze and other material into the large exit wound and dressed the neck entrance wound. After the wounds were patched up, plasma placed into both arms (for the bleeding had not stopped) the doctor

came over to me and handed me a glass of brown liquid. He said, "Here, drink this. It will help you from going into shock." I asked him what the substance was. I was told that it was Rum. I said to the doctor, "I don't need it!" He said, "You are near death. If you go into shock we don't have a chance to save you. This will help you not to go into shock." I said to the doctor, "I don't need the Rum. The Lord has seen me this far, He will see me the rest of the way, I don't want the Rum!" The doctor slammed the glass of Rum down and screamed, "All my life I have heard of the big tough marines. They fight all the wars. The army and the navy do nothing just the marines. They always take all the credit. Now we have one of the toughest of all, not only is he a big tough Marine Sergeant, but he is favored of the Lord! He don't need it, God is going to take care of him! The Lord don't love you others for you took Rum!" He raved on and on and said he would not be responsible for me. My mind and my heart knew that I made the right decision. I prayed for relief from this screaming doctor.

When daylight came, we found that six of those that had taken the Rum died. If I had taken some of it I feel sure that I would have been the seventh casualty. I knew the promise of the Lord if we could refrain from such things. Now I knew that the Lord and His promises were absolutely true; I had a knowledge and it was and is a great blessing to me. I do not know how many days it took to get to Guam on the hospital ship. I came into the hospital at Guam and soon doctors and others were there and placing plasma in both arms. They were taking care of the wounds with new bandages and all that had to be done. I was still in and out of the knowledge of what was going around me for the most part. It was strange then, and still is now, that these things were happening to me. I was there and not able to do anything for myself. The doctors would come in every once in a while and check on the progress. We were aware that some were taken out with faces covered with the sheets, we were sure what that meant. How sad to see those young men, cut off in the prime of life and would not be able to see their families and enjoy life. I prayed constantly that the Lord would let me return to my dear Josie and our child or perhaps children by this time. A day or so after I came to, I heard someone say, "Do you have any Mormon boys in this ward?" I wanted to scream and tell them that I was here and that I was a "MORMON BOY." I did not think anyone would know. It was strange to hear the little nurse say, "Yes, I am sure there is at least one, for when I checked him in a day or two ago, I saw on his dog tags the "LDS" and I am sure he would like to see you. A large Marine came over and looked down at me and said, "I understand you are a Mormon. I am Reed A. Johnson from Salt Lake City, Utah. Are you Mormon?" I began to cry and sobbed, "Yes, yes, I am a Mormon." He asked, "Is there anything I can do for you?" I told him I would like to have a blessing. I do not know if anyone can understand what a thrill it was for me to see this man and have him declare he was a Mormon. He said he would be back that afternoon with another Mormon man and give me a blessing. I was so very thrilled and was in need of the comforting influence of the blessing of the Priesthood. I was still very weak and much immobile and needed a blessing that the Lord promised those who held the Priesthood. That afternoon, Brother Johnson and LDS Chaplain Jackson came in and administered to me. What a thrill to have the hands of worthy members of the Lords' Priesthood lay on my head and promise me a full recovery. It is a feeling that I cannot adequately describe. I just do not have the words to do so. Just after I was administered too, I

began to feel life. My left side began to feel as though something was different. In a day or two I could move it a bit. Soon I was able to get up and care for my needs.

Several days after the blessing the doctor came in and looked at the records at the foot of my bed. He began to cuss the nurses out and I was amazed at what he was saying. He said, "Why have these records not been changed. Get the right records on this bed." The nurse assured him that those were the right records. The doctor said, "These are not the right records! The fellow that these records are for went out of here several days ago. Now get them up to date. He died and we want these records right!" The nurse replied, "Doctor, these are Sergeant Palmer's records. This is Sergeant Palmer!" The doctor came over to me and asked, "What is your name?" I told him. He had the strangest look on his face. He hollered at the nurse, "For hell sake. I have sent the report that this man is dead. Get busy and stop that report." What a shock that was. We found out later that the notice had been stopped and thus Josie was not notified of my death.

Sometime after this I found that my brother Belton was in Guam. He was in a different hospital than the one I was in. I found out sometime later that the Red Cross had inquired of the hospital I was in of my condition. They took the word to Belton that I had passed away. The true report of my condition was soon sent to him. we were boarded on a Red Cross plane and flown to Pearl Harbor. I was placed in Pearl Harbor Hospital #111. I was there until May something. During the flight from Guam to Pearl Harbor we were flying over Truck Island. I was laying down with a window to my right. For about four hours the Japanese planes buzzed us. We were told that they had shot down a Red Cross plane just a day or two before this with General Harmon on it. We were deeply concerned. We kept the lights off the plane and we were able to watch as the enemy buzzed us. They would come right at us and just before we were hit they would duck over or under us and frighten the britches off of everyone, well I did not have any britches on, so not mine. We stopped at Midway for refueling and then on to Honolulu."

[Duffy and Belton both made a full recovery and were reunited with their families – the news of the end of World War II – September 2, 1945 – was received with joy by these two brothers who put their lives at risk for the freedom of this nation.]

Uncle Duffy has been a mentor, a hero, a teacher, an exemplar, a confidant, a dear friend, and a blessing to me throughout my life.

Thomas Lee Palmer

The following information was provided to me by Uncle Duffy's son, Jim, in January 2020. [On January 1, 2020, I accompanied our son, Steven, and his son, Sam, to visit Steve Serchuk, a neighbor who had restored a 1945 Army Jeep and had some questions of Steven. Steve is a retired Air Force pilot. While there we enjoyed a wonderful visit with Steve and his wife, Nancy – both are real history and firearms buffs. They had a particular interest in World War II due to Steve's father's service in that war.

He said his dad would not talk much about it even though Steve pumped him with questions. He mentioned Iwo Jima and I told him that I had two uncles who were on Iwo Jima. I told him that I would send him a copy of their story. After returning to Flagstaff I sent by email attachment the above summary of the experiences of Uncles Duffy and Belton. Steve's response was, *"I finished reading your uncle's story last night. Truly amazing and worthy of a WW2 movie. Would you mind if I forward the information to some friends who may be able to research their military history with the USMC?"* Steve asked if I had their unit number, ship they were on, etc. I told him I did not, but that I would ask his son if they had that information. Steve also said this story should be in World War II memorial data base - <https://www.wwiimemorial.com/home.aspx>.]

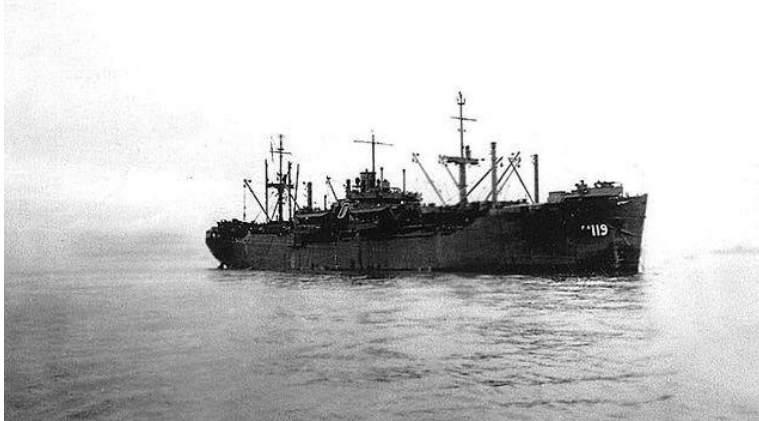
Jim Palmer provided me with the following additional information that he obtained from Karen's husband, Rob Young (an Air Force historian):

J. Duffy Palmer – World War II

He served in the Fifth Marine Division, 27th Regiment, 2nd Battalion, Company D

J. Duffy Palmer departed Hawaii on the USS Highlands 76 years ago this month. She sailed with her task group on 27 January 1945 via Eniwetok for Saipan, where she arrived on 11 February. Five days later she sailed for Iwo Jima and commenced unloading on the beaches the morning of 19 February. Also when you are reading about 2/27 you will see the officers Duffy served under...they were: Commander- 27th Regiment Col Thomas A. Wornham, Maj John W. Antonelli - 2nd Battalion commander (2/27) 2Lt James Patrick Ronan, 2/27/Company D commander Ronan was killed on 7 Mar 1945 by a "Japanese rifleman" On February 19, 1945, 242 members of company D, 2/27 landed on Iwo Jima. On 23 March, their mission complete, 101 men, less than half, walked off the island to board the ship for their return to Hawaii; the rest of D Company were either killed or evacuated due to wounds. That 59% casualty rate included both of my uncles, Duffy and Belton

(USS Highlands (APA-119) Jim asked that I resend the info I found on Dad's Marine Corps experience....here are two photos of his troopship USS Highlands...the lower photo is from the Iwo landing I hope this helps.)



Dad's 2/27 landed on Red Beach 1, they crossed the neck of the island below Mt Suribachi and headed northeast up past Airfield 1. They were up near Airfield 2 when dad was shot on D-Day +7 (Feb 26th)



Iwo Jima Map 2: American Landing Zones and Japanese Defence Sectors

Upon receiving this information, Steve said, "I have no recorded history of my father's service in WW2 other than his unit's service book . . . Truly amazing documentation of your uncle's service during WW2. I forwarded all the information to some friends at both Marine Corps University and USMC Museum." We are blessed that Uncle Duffy and Uncle Belton wrote their story.