

Liberty

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p. 52

SQUARE-CUT DIAMOND

By Allen Churchill, Y3c



The U. S. Marine Corps is celebrating its 168th anniversary this month, so that makes Lou Diamond, the most famous marine in this or any other war, 200 years old.

Any leatherneck will tell you that Lou has been the best mortarman in the Corps since it was founded by the Continental Congress, November 10, 1775. They claim he was rather old when he enlisted—thirty-two; so by now he must be rounding out his second century.

Nobody is exactly sure about this, however, because Master Gunnery Sgt. Leland Diamond is not a man who likes publicity and he flatly refuses to divulge his correct age to anybody. It is on his service record, of course, but Lou takes great care to make sure this record is kept secret. According to strict Marine standards, Lou was even rather old for combat service in the last war, but his boundless energy and tremendous vocal powers were well known all over France.

Last year, just before his outfit was to embark for Guadalcanal, there was scuttlebutt that the tough old sarge might be left behind because the South Pacific was no place for such a venerable and ancient man, even though he was twice as strong and three times as nasty as the youngest boot in the Corps.

When Diamond heard these rumors, as he hears everything, he acted upon them as he always acts—energetically and in full voice. All the ground he had to cover he covered at a fast trot. All the orders he had to give—and he gives more orders than five generals—he gave in a raucous bellow. The trotting and bellowing began every morning at 5 A. M., and in three days Lou had everybody in the camp worn to a frazzle. But when the transport moved away from the dock, Lou was aboard.

The Diamond legend grew considerably in the South Pacific, where Lou roared his way through the battles of Guadalcanal and Tulagi and did much to back up the Marine Corps' contention that he is far and away the most expert mortar sergeant in any branch of the service.

At Tulagi he demolished fourteen Jap buildings with his trusty 81-mm. Then he turned to the colonel and bet him fifty dollars that he could put a shot down the chimney of the fifteenth. He won.

John Hersey, the war correspondent, saw Diamond in action at Guadalcanal and described him as "a giant with a full gray beard, an admirable paunch, and the bearing of a man daring you to insult him. As we went by, he was, as usual, out of patience. He wanted to keep on firing and he had been told to hold back. 'Wait and wait and wait!' he roared. 'Some people around here'll fall on their — from waiting!'"

SQUARE-CUT DIAMOND

Writing in the Marine magazine, *The Leatherneck*, Frank X. Talbot describes Diamond as an inch or so under six feet, pushing the scales to the vicinity of 200 pounds. Most of the time he is talking or roaring, and when he isn't roaring, his tongue hangs out of the corner of his mouth, relaxed and ready for the next outburst.

In mid-November last year the tension of the Guadalcanal campaign showed signs of wearing on Lou. He was ordered to New Zealand for hospital care. Protesting with wolflike howls, he was dragged into a plane and deposited in a clean hospital bed, where he immediately got into trouble because he refused to permit his beard to be shaved off and because he patted a pretty nurse in the right place. Lou had been there only two days when the hospital superintendent said, "I thought I was head of this hospital until Diamond got here. Now I'm not sure."

When the sergeant was released from the hospital he promptly made tracks for Guadalcanal. When he got there he found the Army in charge, his unit gone, and himself farther than ever from joining them. His curses of rage and frustration tore the air and made the soldiers cringe. Anger spent, Lou then efficiently began thumbing a ride across the Coral Sea to Australia.

Some weeks later his burly figure appeared on the remote Australian field where his company was drilling. It was fifty miles from the nearest port to that field. It was hot and there were no transportation facilities, but Lou had covered the distance on foot. Walking smartly up to the major, he snapped to attention, saluted, and said, "Sir, I'm here."

Diamond gives his mortars more affection than anything in this world. At the Marine base in New River, N. C., he spent many nights sleeping with a ring of 81-mm. mortars around his bunk. He called them his sweethearts, and nobody dared approach them.

The only other things for which the sergeant shows affection are his pets, of which there has been an endless chain. They include Bozo, the ugly bulldog described by Master Gunnery Sgt. Mickey Finn as much prettier than Lou, and a disagreeable goat named Rufus, and a couple of trained chickens whose names are unprintable.

Lou rules his men with an iron hand. They fear him at first, get to like him when they know him, and end by loving him as much as a marine can love anything. Lou treats anyone who has less than ten years of service like the meanest boot. This gripes some of the men who serve with him, but they end by taking it philosophically. "After all," one of them said, "if you can get used to that old bastard's voice, you can get used to anything."

Dear Yank:

In reference to an article in your Yank magazine [in a November issue], I wish to state that I have been insulted by the article on "Square-Cut Diamond," written by Allen Churchill Y3c, and I have written to my lawyer in Toledo, Ohio, to take action on the article. 1) I am not an old bastard. 2) I am not 200 years old. 3) My tongue does not hang out and I did not hike 50 miles to get back to my outfit. 4) And those chickens I had was named "Bud." 5) I had orders to report to the 1st Marine Division on Guadalcanal, which was on the same place and I did leave with a part of the 1st Marine Division. 6) Who gave your outfit permission to use my name? 7) Also I am figuring on a nuisance charge against you. I served in the last war and am trying to do my bit in this one, and I do not like the way your outfit is trying to do.

Parris Island, S. C.

—MASTER GUNNERY SGT. LOU DIAMOND.

Dear Yank:

The article on Lou Diamond was splendid and everyone in our office enjoyed reading it. It was called to the commandant's attention. We thought it an especial tribute, on our anniversary, to have a meeting of the services in your article: a Marine subject in an Army publication, written by a Navy man. Let those who are captious on the co-operation of the services be silent.

Hq. USMC,

Washington, D. C.

—BRIG. GEN. ROBERT L. DENIG.

Director, Division of Public Relations.