

Chris tells of Goettge's death. The secretary met him at the base - in intelligence room - a big, burly, grey haired chap - former star football player

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Guadalcanal, Solomon Islands, August 14, --(delayed)--Col. Frank B. Goettge, Intelligence Officer on the staff of General A. A. Vandergrift, commanding the First Marine Division, has been killed in action.

Col. Goettge was struck down by enemy machinegun fire while leading a night patrol deep into the territory in which the disintegrated Japanese forces on Guadalcanal had retreated. In the same encounter, Lt. Com. Malcolm L. Pratt, MC, USN; Capt. Wilfred Ringer, USMC; and 1st Lt. Ralph Cory, USMCR, are believed to have been killed, along with eighteen enlisted men. Three enlisted men are known to have escaped.

The enlisted men who accompanied the patrol included 1st Sgt. Stephen A. Custer; Pl. Sgt. D. R. Caltrider; Pl. Sgt. Frank L. Few; Sgt. C. C. Arndt; Sgt. D. A. Stauffer; Sgt. R. J. Stanfill; Cpl. Joseph Spaulding; Cpl. Herbert Benson; Cpl. Jack Lyons; Cpl. Joseph Kashuba; Cpl. Stephen Serdula; Cpl. Robert L. Lyons; Cpl. A. L. Gelzer; Cpl. T. E. Raht; Cpl. H. L. Kowal; Cpl. William Bainbridge; Pfc. Blaine G. Walter; Pfc. John L. Delano; Pfc. D. L. Gauntt; Pvt. J. B. Kelly; and Pvt. Robert W. Lovelance. Few, Arndt, and Spaulding managed to make their way back to the main body. Sgt. Arndt and Cpl. Spaulding were sent back during the night to bring help and Pl. Sgt. Few made his way back early in the morning after killing three of the enemy and swimming a mile out into the ocean to escape enemy fire.

The patrol, which consisted entirely of members of the Intelligence units of the First Marine Division and the Fifth Regiment of the First, went out for the purpose of discovering the concentration point of the badly shattered enemy forces, and also to attempt to find out if shore units were making contact with the enemy submarines.

According to the story told by Pl. Sgt. Few, the patrol moved to their beach position in a Higgins boat, arriving at about seven-thirty, p.m. The boat took some time to get away and the men established a beachhead.

"After we had taken up a fairly good defensive position along the beach," Sgt. Few told this correspondent, "Col. Goettge, Capt. Ringer, and 1st Sgt. Custer went on reconnaissance in among the coconut palms. They got in about twenty-five feet when they were fired upon. Captain Ringer came back immediately. About five minutes later Custer also came back; he was wounded in the left side of the face and the right hand. Dr. Pratt fixed him up."

Sgt. Few and Cpl. Spaulding, over the protests of Captain Ringer, who wanted to go himself, moved into the bush to see what had happened to Col. Goettge. Few and Spaulding had not met before and introduced themselves as they crawled into the darkness.

"This is really Errol Flynn stuff," Few quotes Spaulding as saying.

When they reached the Colonel's position, they found he had been shot, and Few made certain he was dead before sending Spaulding back for help in bringing him in.

CONFIDENTIAL
CSDFE 13-50

"A minute after Spaulding left," Few continued, "someone walked in front of me. I thought it was one of our boys come to help and asked for the password. He let out a yell and made a stab at me. I knocked the bayonet down to my right, grabbed it away from him and killed him with it. In the scuffle I was wounded in the right breast and arm.

"I then started back," Few went on, "and Sgt. Arndt started out to meet me. I spotted another Jap standing between the fork of two trees. My own gun would not fire, so I borrowed Arndt's pistol and shot him seven times--the Jap, not Arndt. We then went back to the beach and took up our positions.

About that time, Few related, a machine gun opened up on the left flank and wounded several men. Captain Ringer passed the word to dig in. The men used canteen cups and helmets to dig foxholes. The men fired volley after volley into the invisible enemy and scored hits, since Few reports they could hear the screams of the wounded. The Japanese, too, were causing casualties in the ranks of the relatively unprotected patrol.

Sgt. Arndt was then sent back to the main body, but he had not gone two hundred yards when he began shooting it out with some of the enemy. It was thought he might have been killed, so Cpl. Spaulding was also sent back later on in the night.

"Early in the morning, the tide began to come in and washed out our foxholes," Few said. "Since it was beginning to get light enough to see, Captain Ringer, Caltrider and I started forward. When we had advanced about twenty-five feet, on a line with Col. Goettge's body, I turned and called Sgt. Stauffer up. He moved about five feet when he was shot five times in the back with what I believe were explosive bullets. When they hit him they exploded and set fire to his clothing."

Few's gun was only firing single shot and he had his mouth full of ammunition to keep it free of dirt and sand. He raised up and shot a Jap sniper on his right flank. Meanwhile, however, Captain Ringer was shot and wounded, and Sergeant Caltrider killed. Seeing that further resistance was futile, Few threw his gun into the water, spit out the ammunition and headed out into the ocean.

"I could see the Japs back on the beach using bayonets on our wounded and could clearly see the sunlight glinting on the two-handed Samuri swords. After swimming about four miles I came to a clean, white, sandy beach. I climbed out of the water and ran like hell back to the main body."

The stories told by Arndt and Spaulding are almost as thrilling, although both left the scene of action during the night. Arndt shot it out on the beach and got him man before taking to the water. He swam for some distance clad only in helmet and field shoes. He had his pistol tied to the chin strap of his helmet. Coming in to shore, he spotted two Japanese who evidently were watching for him. Unstrapping his pistol, he took careful aim and knocked down one Jap with a well-placed shot. The other ran off like a scared rabbit. Arndt stole a rowboat from a small Jap camp nearby and got in safely.