

1st Prize Winner 11-12 age group

Guadalcanal

By:

Ava Busse, age 11

Columbus, Ohio

It was an early morning, and the fog hovered low to the ground. I was just getting to school to meet my friends for class. When I got to my homeroom, everyone seemed excited, it was December 8, 1941, and the day before the United States entered WW2. I immediately found a sense of pride, and the feeling that my country needed me. Even though I was only 16, I knew I had to join the Marine Corps. I forged enlistment documents, and before I knew it, I was off to basic training.

It seemed like a good idea, until I got there. Our drill sergeant was strict, some guys said that he had to be, others just thought he was just plain mean. Gunny said if you wanted to quit, then put your helmet down. I thought of that once, until I remembered why I had come. To serve my country. Day by day, people were dropping, and I was about to, but I thought better of it.

It had been 12 weeks. 12 whole weeks since I left home, since I left my whole life behind. It was so hot, I felt like I was on fire. We were fighting in the Pacific theater, and floating on Navy ships just waiting for our turn to enter the fight. The only reason I got through basic training was because of my friend, Private Jake Weston, and we were together underway.

It was like Jake saw right through me. As soon as I came into the bunk room, he made it his job to protect me. In the middle of the 12th week, Jake said, "I heard they are shipping us out. I don't know where, but I know they are soon." The thought of getting shipped out sent an electric shock of excitement, and fear through my body.

Jake was right, and before we knew it, we were getting shipped off to an airstrip that the Allies took over just two days before. Jake said that the battle to take over the airstrip, named Henderson Field, was gruesome. I didn't like the idea of being stationed on an airstrip that was just captured two days ago, I could tell that something bad was going to happen. When we got there, there were still some men being led off the pier. It was a terrible sight, dead soldiers everywhere, and even worse, the cries for help from the severely wounded.

We followed our division to camp, and I had this bad feeling in my gut, and I felt like something was going to happen. We settled down, but I couldn't sleep. Jake surprised me as he said, "What's keepin' ya up kid?" The idea of him calling me "kid" wasn't helping. It made me feel like I wasn't supposed to be here. That was because I wasn't supposed to be here. I said, "I can't really get to sleep. I feel like something bad is going to happen. Sorry to wake you." He said, "No, I was already up. I know that feeling, though. I can feel it too, just try to get some sleep, kid."

I awoke with a start at 0200. The noise sounded like a bomb. No, that couldn't be it. The battle ended three days ago. It was probably an unexploded landmine. More sounds came, and a voice was telling us to get up and get ready for what was about to happen. There was commotion everywhere, and I could barely think. A bullet whizzed by, and another, but it was coming right for me. Just when it was about to hit me, when Jake knocked me to the ground. I mumbled a thanks, I knew I should've sounded more grateful, but we didn't have time when a Japanese bomber unleashed a load of missiles down nearby.

Then, out of nowhere, a Japanese unit charged in our direction. It was February 8th, 1943, and men were rushing around everywhere trying to get to some form of cover. Jake said, "HENERY! WHAT ARE YA DOING JUST STANDING OUT THERE! YOU'RE GONNA GET YOURSELF KILL-" He was cut short because just then, a hail of bullets took him down, then a bomb hit, knocking me unconscious.

I awoke with a start in a fluffy white bed, and not a muddy trench. I heard voices talking, and one of them said, "It's okay, I'll tell him." I opened my eyes, and a calm voice said, "Your leg almost got blown off in some of the bombing, but you were lucky." "When will I be going back to my platoon?" I asked. "You aren't, you are going home." Then she left.

"Then what happened papa?" my six year old son said. It has been years since the battle, now known as the battle of Guadalcanal. I have one kid and a wife, Margaret. "Well, I am okay, yes?" I replied. "You know what I learned from that horrid battle, well I learned that freedom is never free, and it always comes at a cost. If those brave men didn't fight and die for our country, for the word, then the world wouldn't be a good place. Everything would be different, the world would be run by evil, and many more people would have died. They made the ultimate sacrifice for our country, and for the world to be safe from the darkness of evil. Had we lost the Battle of Guadalcanal, the Japanese would have maintained control of the airstrip and most likely the Pacific Theater would have been lost." I said. "Oh wow," Robert replied, speechless. "Those brave men, opened the curtain of evil and showed us the light. There would be no world without them." Robert, clearly stunned, didn't know how to reply, so I patted him on the head and sent him to bed.

Sources:

Leckie, Robert. *Challenge for the Pacific* . De Capo Press, 1965.

Hama, Larry. *The Battle of Guadalcanal: Land and Sea Warfare in the South Pacific* . Rosen Pub Group, 2006.

Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopaedia. "Battle of Guadalcanal" *Encyclopedia Britannica* , 15 Oct. 2022, <https://www.britannica.com/event/Battle-of-Guadalcanal> . Accessed 20 October 2022.

American Battle and Monuments Commission. 26 October 2017.

<https://www.abmc.gov/news-events/news/fight-guadalcanal-battles-henderson-field-and-santa-cruz-islands> . Accessed 20 October 2022.