

**BEYOND VALOR**  
**A War Story**  
**By Charles W. Tatum**

**LOOKING FOR COPORAL JOE KANE**

**First Lt. Stanley M. Holmes was the platoon leader of the 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon of B Company, 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 27<sup>th</sup> Marines. Platoon Sgt. John W. (Slim) Rutherford was second in command.**

**I received a picture from former Pvt. Jim M. Martin, Jr. of Brookings, South Dakota. The picture was given to him by former Cpl. Joseph T. Kane of White Plains, New York. The picture shows nine members of the 2<sup>nd</sup> section of the 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon of B Company. Taken in April of 1944 at Camp Pendleton, California, it is now over 60 years old.**

**The picture was apparently taken while on a field problem. The Marines in the picture have on dungarees and they have their weapons with them. The men in the picture are a cross-section of the men that responded to the Nation's call to arms. They came from every walk of life, from all parts of the United States. They had different religions but they shared the same God and country. These men all came together for training at Camp Pendleton where they would train to become fighting Marines. No one in the picture knew at the time that they would be in the first wave of Marines to attack the Japanese-held island of Iwo Jima. There's no way any of them could have known what their future would be.**

**By turning the picture over we can jump ahead 10 months to February 19, 1945 and find out what the gods of war had in store for this Marine rifle section. The caption at the top of the picture, taken April 1944 at Camp Pendleton, reads as follows:**

**“In Memory of the Men of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Squad, 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon, “B” Company, 27<sup>th</sup> Marines, Fifth Division, and our revered platoon leader, 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Stanley M. Holmes.”**

**It then gives the names of the men in the picture:**

**Standing left to right:**

<b>Cpl. Edward Mikolic</b>	<b>Killed in Action</b>
<b>Pfc. Owen Krauch</b>	<b>Wounded in Action</b>
<b>Pfc. Leonard W. Adcock</b>	<b>Wounded in Action</b>
<b>Pfc. Joseph E. Murray</b>	<b>Killed in Action (Sunshine)</b>

**Kneeling left to right:**

<b>Sgt. Jewell H. Spears</b>	<b>Killed in Action</b>
<b>Pfc. Joe B. Martinez</b>	<b>Wounded in Action</b>
<b>Cpl. Joseph T. Kane</b>	<b>Wounded in Action</b>
<b>Pfc. Archie O.V. Massey</b>	<b>Killed in Action</b>
<b>Pfc. Ivan O. Chambers</b>	<b>Killed in Action</b>

**Not shown in photo:**

<b>Pfc. Woodrow Erskin</b>	<b>Killed in Action</b>
<b>Pfc. Rudy F. Fortune</b>	<b>Wounded in Action</b>
<b>1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Stanley M. Holmes</b>	<b>Killed in Action</b>
<b>Phm/3 Aaron Cohen</b>	<b>Killed in Action</b>
<b>Plt. Sgt. John W. Rutherford</b>	

**The photo memory was supplied by Joseph T. Kane, 17 Leith Place, White Plains, New York. It tells it like it was for the foot Marines on Iwo Jima. In this platoon, apparently only Sgt. Rutherford went unscathed on to the island of Iwo Jima. Later Sgt. Rutherford, according to Joe Kane, was relieved of duty because he was suffering from combat fatigue or some sort of breakdown brought on by the grievous loss of lives in his platoon.**

**I remembered Joe Kane from the days back at Pendleton and Camp Tarawa. A Marine Company has close to 250 Marines in it, but after a year of so of training and living in close quarters, you get to know nearly everyone in the company on a first-name basis.**

**When I received the picture from James Martin, Jr. I knew that it had a story to it and that Cpl. Joe Kane would be able to tell me that story. So on day I just picked up my telephone and called him. We spent a while talking about the Marines from B Company that we were privileged to serve with, and as luck would have it, Joe Kane was able to**

**supply additional information about 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Stanley M. Holmes. I have incorporated it into Joe's story.**

**Joe was a member of the former 4<sup>th</sup> Paratrooper Battalion and it was this rigorous training that put him in good shape for climbing up the black sand terraces on the beach at Iwo Jima.**

**Cpl. Joe Kane and his squad of Marines hit the beach at 0903 hours and commenced the struggle to make it up the terraces and onto B Company's first objective. The naval ships had stopped their firing and the airplanes were no longer active. A deathly silence swept over the beaches and the island. Only the sound of the incoming landing craft motors was heard above the sound of the Pacific Ocean as it's waves slapped the black sand of the beach.**

**The deep sand just seemed to suck their bodies deeper and deeper into the trap that the sand had become. The weight of the attacking Marines' heavy personal equipment and their weapons served to exhaust and sap their strength. Still, they struggled on and up the steep terraces.**

**Suddenly the stillness was broken and the calm was replaced with all the firepower that the defenders could muster. All hell broke loose and the Marines of B Company, 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion were subject to a full-scale bombardment the likes of which had never been seen in combat. The intensity and quantity of the Japanese firepower took its toll on Marines from all the battalions that were on that beach.**

**Joe Kane was kind enough to share with me his recollections of the horrors his outfit endured on the beach at Iwo Jima on February 19, 1945. When the Para-Marines of the 4<sup>th</sup> Battalion were disbanded in late 1943, Cpl. Joe Kane and his outfit were transferred to B Company, 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion, 27<sup>th</sup> Marines at Camp Pendleton, Oceanside, California.**

**From the first load of boots from San Diego, the then Pfc. Joe Kane received Pvt. Joe B. Martinez and assigned him the duties of the B.A.R. man (Browning Automatic Rifle). Darrell Ellize, who was from Mississippi and Archie Masses, who was from Laurel, Massachusetts, were designated as riflemen. Pfc. Joe Kane was the leader of the first fire group, 2<sup>nd</sup> squad of B Company. The other fire group leaders were Joe B. Murray (2<sup>nd</sup> group) and Edward Mikolic (3<sup>rd</sup> group). The other members of the section were Krauch, Chavez, Adcock, Chambers, Cobson and Erskine.**

**When the training at Pendleton was over, the Marines of B Company were granted a 15-day leave. Joe Kane spent 4 days traveling back to New York on a train, only to receive a telegram from the Marine Corps telling him to return at once to Camp Pendleton. The division was shipping out. Total time at home . . . 12 hours! Total time on the train . . . 8 days! The return trip, however, was enhanced by a lovely girl who boarded the train in Cleveland. Pfc. Kane had no trouble staying awake the rest of the trip back to San Diego. He just barely made the boat.**

**Joe's recollections of Camp Tarawa were the same as most everyone's: dusty, wet, rainy, dry and Christmas of 1944, which was particularly depressing and dismal because it rained all day. The training was over and we knew that we would soon be shipping out. Some of the units of the 5<sup>th</sup> Division had already been shipped to Hilo. This was a sobering thought and detracted a great deal from the Christmas spirit.**

**During the war, it wasn't unusual to meet people you knew in strange places. On the way to combat and while on a short shore leave in Honolulu, Joe met up with a friend and high school chum from the 4<sup>th</sup> Division, Tom Swarthout. Tom had already seen action against the Japanese on Roi Namur, Saipan and Tinian.**

**Kane's name was on a lot of doors in Honolulu. That's because Kane (pronounced Kah ney) is the Hawaiian word for men. Now wouldn't you knot it, just as Joe Kane was entering the door with this name on it, his friend from the 4<sup>th</sup> was leaving the Kane's room. An even more entertaining coincidence is that Tom Swarthout had just finished telling the Marine with him that he had a friend from school named Kane.**

**This chance encounter was fortunate for Kane, as his chum was able to pass on some clues for survival in combat. For instance, how to rig your hand grenade pins so they didn't come loose and create an incident that you would be the victim of.**

Once on the high seas, the guessing was rampant as to where the 5<sup>th</sup> Division was headed. Joe Kane's bet on Chi Chi Jima was close, but no banana! Other guesses ranged from Japan to Formosa and one long shot was the Island of Truk. The speculation didn't last long, though. Col. John A. Butler announced that Iwo Jima was the target for the 5<sup>th</sup>.

At Saipan, Cpl. Kane and his outfit transferred to the LST 10 (also known as the USS Rust Bucket!) for the 700-mile ocean trip to their date with destiny.

Joe Kane's letter goes on:

“The night before the landing, I was standing up by the radio shack on the LST and head Tokyo Rose bragging how the Marines has been ‘thrown back into the ocean’. They were the frogmen and underwater demolition teams who did a fantastic job for us. That night they got us up about 0300 hours (3 a.m.) for steak and eggs and distributed a small bottle of ‘medicinal’ brandy to each of the men. I never got a chance to drink mine.”

“I think the most awesome sight I saw that night and the one that will stay with me always occurred when we were on the deck of the LST waiting to go down to the tank deck. A beam of the early morning sunlight lit up the top of Mount Suribachi. The rest of the ocean was as dark as pitch, and that mountain just stuck up there like a giant, almost surrealistic, terribly frightening omen of what was to come. I will never forget that sight.”

**“We made our way down to the tank deck where the exhaust fumes were overpowering, climbed into our assigned Amtrak and finally crawled out to the ramp and down into the water. We were in the first wave, and circled awhile before lining up on a picket boat and heading for shore which was then nothing but a cloud of smoke. Only Suribachi stood out on the way in.”**

**“Our Amtrak passed directly under the bow of the Battleship New York. There must have been 30 to 40 sailors crowded around the bow, yelling and waving, and we did the same. The sound was so overpowering though not a word was heard on either side. When we were about 1,000 yards off shore we were ordered to hunker down, unlock our rifles and take off the plastic covers we’d put on them to keep them dry.”**

**“I was in the back of the Amtrak by the rear door and could see the shoreline approaching better than most in our tank. I could see the black sand, the terraces and happiest of all, no sign of Jap fire! Just then the tank hit the first small terrace by the water’s edge. It recoiled and just as it did, the driver dropped the rear door. I fell out on my butt, got up and climbed that first small terrace. It was then that I discovered that my feet were sinking into that stinking sand, and realized how much of a problem it was going to be to run in that heavy stuff.”**



**“The first person I saw ashore was a rifleman from our platoon named Kirkpatrick, on one knee and firing at something off to my left. I later learned that it was a half-buried Jap who, I am sure now, was thoroughly dead by the time we got ashore. Then I saw Lt. Holmes a few yards to my front and right, just walking toward that huge terrace, across open sand. His head was thrust down and forward, as if he were walking into a storm and both arms were outstretched, parallel to the ground with the hands motioning us forward. That was the last time I saw him. He was killed by shrapnel from a Jap mortar or artillery round a few minutes later!”**

**“The hardest part, our course, was climbing the monstrous pile of sand above the main beach. By the time I got there I could hardly breathe. The Japs by this time were throwing in a lot of heavy stuff. I finally got into the long stretch of open sand below Motoyama No. 1 and was lying right behind Joe Murray. We waved and yelled at each other, and that was the last I saw of him, too.”**

**“We continued to play cat and mouse with the Jap mortars. They dropped four in a row in a parallel pattern, then moved the range down toward the beach for another quartet. They did this four times and then started all over again. I finally figured this out and was able to move after each fourth shell. That is until I was lying there watching the sequences and suddenly felt as if my right leg had been torn off. I was afraid to look. Turns out it was a piece of shrapnel from an airburst. Jap AA guns, firing parallel to the ground get guys like me. That was one angle I didn’t figure!”**

**“A little later Martinez and Massey came up to tell me that Ellize has been hit on the beach (in the wrist). I later found out that Cohen, the corpsman, had stopped to give aid when another shell struck, killing Cohen and wounding Ellize again, in the leg.”**

**“Massey was killed a short time later by a sniper. I discovered much later that all that time I had been lying next to an unexploded 16 inch Naval shell! Just then Fortune came by. He’d been hit in the arm, and for quite awhile we couldn’t decide to get back and find an aid station (by then it was hot all over) or just stay where we were. We finally reached one huge shell hole, dove into the bottom of it and were going to stay there for awhile before moving on.”**

**“Suddenly I had a premonition, told Fortune to follow me, and we dug into the side of the shell hole, just under the lip. In seconds a shell exploded in the bottom of the hole, picked us up and dropped us like rag dolls! Obviously my premonition paid off! We finally made it to a battalion aid station on the beach (really just a large shell crater). It had been hit moments before by a Jap mortar. Fortunately, it was a dud.”**

**“On the way in we passed bodies strewn all over. We passed one pile of about a dozen, gathered in a circle, with their feet pointing inward like the spokes on a large wagon wheel. I thought I saw our battalion top kick, Sgt. Major Mills and figured he was a goner. I must have been wrong because a couple of months later, when I was in the**

**Navy Hospital at Aiea Heights, Sgt. Mills in the flesh, walked through the door! The only difference I could see was that he was slimmer.”**

**“We finally got off Iwo about 7 p.m. and then I ran into another 2<sup>nd</sup> Squad man, Dewey Dodson, who was hit early. We then spent nearly a month at an Army hospital on Guam before they shipped us to Aiea. I finally returned to B Company in late May and there was a lot of unfamiliar faces. If I remember right, only five or six out of the entire company of some 244 men weren’t hit. When I came back, I took over the 3<sup>rd</sup> Squad, 1<sup>st</sup> Platoon, as acting Sergeant (all the privileges, but no pay). I must admit that even Camp Tarawa looked good.”**

**Cpl. Joseph Kane and his squad were hit hard on that first day, but the men who survived the first day had the second day to contend with and thirty-one more before they could say that Iwo Jima was ours to keep.**

**Cpl. Kane helped to train the replacements for B Company and led his new squad to Sasebo, on the Japanese island of Kyushu. He served in the occupation of that island, helped blow up a lot of Japanese war machinery and went to Tushima to accept the surrender of a Japanese general! He had the time in and the points to be mustered out and he was on the first U.S. bound transport. He left Sasebo on the 5<sup>th</sup> of December 1945 and arrived in San Diego on the 19<sup>th</sup> of December.**

**Joe Kane’s letter tells of his last days in the United States Marine Corps:**

**“We were welcomed by a high school band playing such things as ‘California Here I Come’ and ‘Give My Regards to Broadway’. The night before we arrived all of us stayed up on the deck to see the sunrise over the hills behind San Diego, a welcome sight to say the least!”**

**“Trucks were there to take us back to the same barracks at Pendleton where it all began, and on New Year’s Eve they put us aboard troop trains headed for Bainbridge, Maryland, the Navy station where all of the east coast Marines were discharged. I was discharged on January 7, 1946, arrived home the same day and took the commuter train from Grand Central Station to White Plains. There I climbed aboard the usual bus to my home, carrying a sea bag, a Jap rifle, and two Samurai swords. I think my fellow passengers were a bit apprehensive about me carrying all that weaponry, the more so because I was an ex-Marine. Seems odd to day that, because I’ve never really felt ‘EX’!”**

**Back at White Plains, New York Joe was welcomed as a returning hero. In short order he took up his life in White Plains right where he had left it in 1943 to join the Corps. His discharge on the 14<sup>th</sup> of January had put him just 7 days short of three years in the service of his country.**

**The war, and serving in the Corps had interrupted Joe Kane’s education. After graduating from high school in White Plains he had enrolled at Villanova, where he spent a year before heeding the call to arms. He played on the freshman football team at Villanova. It seems**

he had considered banking as a career before the allure of adventure in the Marine Corps had captured him.

Joe Kane had a lot of time to make up for and in 1946 he hit the books again, this time at the University of Syracuse, with a major in journalism. I guess banking seemed too tame after the adrenalin high of war. At Syracuse he was a member of Kappa Sigma fraternity and in 1949, after graduation, he put his newly acquired journalism skills to work joining a newspaper in New York and later in Connecticut.

1955 was a big year for the former corporal of Marines. He married the former Mary T. Watters. Their marriage lasted 32 years until he was widowed in 1987. Joe and Mary were blessed with four children, Tracy Ann Hayes of Norwell, Massachusetts, Megan F. Sell, of San Francisco, California, and Tara Marie and Thomas J. Kane, who still live at home with their father.

In 1955 Joe Kane joined the Port Authority in New York. His tours of duty in civilian life included Director of Publication for the REA Express and Director of Corporate Communications for the U.S. Freight Company.

Joe Kane started his own business, Kane Communications, in 1979. The firm specializes in public relations for the maritime industry. Former Corporal Kane is active in the 5<sup>th</sup> Marine Division Association and his hobby is playing golf. I am in his debt for his efforts in helping me finish writing this book. His research was the key to the full story on

**his platoon leader, 1<sup>st</sup> Lt. Stanley Holmes. The picture of his squad at Camp Pendleton was a great addition. I thank him for his letter and for allowing me to see his personal recollections of events before, during and after Iwo Jima.**