

# Charlie Reynolds and the “Ishikawa Fuzz”

By Dick Culver

You'd have to have been stationed on Okinawa in 1962 to fully appreciate the following story. While the names of most places have remained (essentially) the same, some of the spelling has been sorted out over the years, but here I will use the spelling we used at the time in telling of the story. Any variation will be noted in the text.

It was the spring of 1962 and those of us chosen to represent our various Regiments, were firing across the Marine Corps Match Course every Monday through Friday in practice for the match that would decide the regimental and individual winners of the Far Eastern Division Match. The individual medal winners would be sent TAD (Temporary Additional Duty) stateside to fire in the Marine Corps Matches.

The individual medal winners (both rifle and pistol) in the Marine Corps Match are then normally chosen to join the Marine Corps Rifle and Pistol Team forming at Quantico. The summer consists of constant practice, and match competition to season the new shooters to the match routine and perhaps more to the point, constant competitive pressure under match conditions tends to make sight alignment and trigger squeeze second nature, something that I found came in mightily handy in combat. As the summer progresses, the constant exposure to some of the best marksmen (and now-a-days, women) prepares the team members for the final competitive test of the shooting season, that of the National Rifle and Pistol Matches. These matches have been held at Camp Perry, Ohio since 1903, if you allow for a few breaks for WWII and Korea. The “Nationals” as they are called, pit each armed service, and their Reserve and National Guard Components against one another. Not to be outdone, there is also some stiff competition from the civilian side of the house with each state entering a team, along with a number of extremely hard-holding individuals who give the military a run for their money.

In the Marine Corps each year, we publish a bulletin (it used to be in the 8591 series) soliciting participation from each (any?) individual who has fired at least Sharpshooter with the rifle during his last qualification on the range. The Marine Corps order is specific and unless overriding operational needs can be produced, each qualifying applicant must be granted his opportunity for honor and glory. Officers are not so lucky, as they are appointed by each Battalion and Regiment to represent the Regimental Team. He (or *she* now-a-days) must meet the Rifle Sharpshooter qualification requirement (no qualification requirement with the pistol), but since Marine Corps orders require that each Regiment (and separate battalion) field a team, there is little or no way off the list once you are captured.

Match rules specify that each Regimental (*and* Separate Battalion – Engineers, Recon, Tanks, etc.) must have a team that consists of at least one Officer, one (totally) “new man” who had never fired in the Division Matches before, and two other folks who can be old time shooters. The composition of this line-up is specified to ensure that the Officer Corps becomes acquainted with the competition-in-arms program (this worked well until the Vietnam War kicked off a rash of Warrant Officer [former enlisted of course] that skewed the program a bit). Back in 1962 however, this did not apply! The so-called “new enlisted man” insured a yearly infusion of “new blood” into the program to keep the Competition-in-Arms from becoming a collection of old goats and range rats! The program as set up worked very

well indeed, and many of our Distinguished Shooters over the last century have gone on to become quite famous and highly decorated in the combat arena<sup>1</sup>.

I have gone through the evolution of personnel selection for the Marine Corps Matches to let you understand the final portion of this sea story. On to the story –

Since the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion of the 9<sup>th</sup> Marines was stationed at Camp Hansen, I simply continued to occupy my assigned BOQ room even though the matches were being held at Camp Schwab that year (some miles to the North). Those that came in from other locations from many Far Eastern Commands, were assigned local quarters for the matches. If you happened to be stationed at Schwab, your daily trip was negligible, but if you happened to be stationed at Sukiran (later spelled Zukiran, now included under the umbrella of Camp Foster) you had a long drive indeed, considering the first round cracked down range at first light.

### **Enter Charlie Reynolds:**

Now Charlie was an aviator and was stationed in Japan. The 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Air Wing was also required to enter a team, and because of Charlie's skill with a rifle, he was sent down to "The Rock" as the OIC of the Wing Team. Most of the "imported shooters" allowed themselves to be billeted at Camp Schwab, but for some unknown reason (probably to take advantage of some fine liberty opportunities) Charlie made liaison with one of his old "wingie" buddies stationed at the Marine Corps Air Station, Futenma (essentially a helicopter installation to support the deploying Infantry Battalions – we unwashed "grunts" used to spell it Futema). Since his buddy was deploying with one of the Infantry outfits, he loaned Charlie his BOQ room *AND* his car (a junker as most were in those days).

Now the Air Station was even further south than Sukiran/Foster, which made for a *VERY* long drive to get to Schwab in time to crack the first round down range at "zero dark thirty." Further complicating things was the fact that the road system was extremely primitive in those days, and at best they were narrow two-lane affairs. High speed runs were hazardous, but the extremely early hour was in Charlie's favor. ...Or would have been if it hadn't been for one lonely, extremely bored Okinawan Cop who was stationed in the Ishikawa Beach area.

Ishikawa Beach is *now* a thriving resort area along the road from Futenma to Camp Schwab, but was relatively sparsely inhabited over 43-years ago. By the time Charlie had his "fivver" wound up heading for the range, Ishikwaka represented a relatively straight piece of road leading to Schwab. One morning, the aforementioned Dink Police Officer in question, noted a round-eye attempting to set some sort of new speed record driving through his assigned stretch of road. A short chase ensued and Charlie pulled over. The dutiful cop wrote out a ticket for the offending Marine lieutenant, Charlie signed it, stuffed it in the glove box and lit his afterburners once more for the Schwab Range.

If this had been a one-time thing, it would have no doubt gone unnoticed, but it became something of a game and gave the Ishikwaka Fuzz a meaning to his dreary existence! Virtually every morning this lone traffic cop would lay in wait for Charlie, and over a period of about 4-weeks, he was never disappointed. Charlie, never being one to let minor stuff bother him, would sign the daily ticket, stuff it in the glove box and kick in his afterburners again. As far as I know, Charlie was never late which has to say something for his driving skills, or perhaps aviation reflexes. His accumulating police record certainly didn't seem to worry him,

as he was his usual jovial self every day. Charlie had a large repertoire of jokes and funny sayings that kept us all amused. None of us were aware of Charlie's brushes with the local gendarme.

As luck would have it, Charlie "placed" in the rifle in the matches, resulting in his selection to fire in the Marine Corps Match back in the States. Charlie of course, packed his utilities and liberty clothes, spiffed up his old friend's BOQ room, made sure the car he had borrowed was appropriately cleaned out, topped it off with gas and had plenty of oil. Since his buddy was still deployed there was no personal change of command effected on either the room or the car. The only thing Charlie *hadn't* cleaned out was the glove box in the car. When Charlie departed he left a nice note thanking his buddy for the use of the room and vehicle, but didn't mention the fact that the vehicle had continually been used to flagrantly violate the Ryukyuan traffic regulations for over a month.

I only heard the results of this little debacle a couple of years later, having taken a hiatus from the shooting arena for several years, and being stationed in the 8<sup>th</sup> Marine Corps District Headquarters in New Orleans, had little or no contact with the Wing. Eventually however, there was a story floating around that indicated a temporary rift in friendly relations that had occurred between Charlie Reynolds and his old buddy stationed at the Futenma Marine Air Facility. Apparently this had something to do with a recently returned helicopter pilot being actively pursued by the Dink Police who noted that the Marine Corps' total disregard for Okinawan laws was hardly conducive to harmonious relations between the conquerors and the conquered. In short they wanted a large piece of one Marine Lieutenant's fanny, and apparently they didn't much care who it was, but they had signed tickets that matched the license number of the automobile in question.

How this dilemma was finally solved never became totally clear, but a certain personal iciness in an interpersonal relationship between two former friends precluded any further loaning of lodging facilities and personal transportation for several years. Did Charlie's buddy become the subject of any NJP as a result of Charlie's shenanigans? I rather doubt it, as in 1962 the local residents of Okinawa were still remembered as a part of Japan, the rotten SOBs who had chosen to bomb Pearl Harbor... What goes around, sometimes comes around, don'tcha' see? Heh, heh, heh...

'Till we meet again Charlie...

Semper Fi,

**Dick**

<sup>1</sup> At least two Marine Corps Commandants have been Distinguished Shooters. Tommy Holcomb was one of the Corps' earliest Distinguished Marksmen and served as the "Inspector of Marksmanship" for the Corps. He was a member of the Marine Corps Rifle Teams of 1901, 1902, 1903, 1907, 1908, and 1911, and was a shooting member of the Palma Rifle Team in 1902 and 1903. As a Major, Holcomb won a Navy Cross and four Silver Stars in the Belleau Wood and later actions, being mentioned three times in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Division Dispatches. The French Government conferred on him the Cross of the Legion of Honor, and three times awarded him the Croix de Guerre with Palm.

Colonel Dave Shoup, the defacto commander ashore at Tarawa won a Medal of Honor for his exploits, and following the war chose to fire in the Division Matches to become a Distinguished Pistol Shot. Shoup's main assistant ashore was a Marine Major named Jim Crowe (who wore a most spectacular red handlebar moustache) was a double distinguished shooter, and was awarded the Navy Cross for his actions on Tarawa. Like the redoubtable Colonel Bill Lee, Crowe had been a Marine Corps heavyweight boxing champion. Both Shoup and Crowe played themselves in the movie "The Sands of Iwo Jima"...

Red Mike Edson, CO of the 1<sup>st</sup> Raider Battalion was a Distinguished Marksman who captained several USMC Rifle Teams at Camp Perry prior to WWII. He had a Navy Cross from Nicaragua, and won another on Guadalcanal. His defense of Bloody Ridge (Edson's Ridge) resulted in his being awarded the Medal of Honor.

Chesty Puller's Gunnery Sergeant in Nicaragua was a certain Bill Lee who won three (3) Navy Crosses prior to WWII. Bill eventually made Bird Colonel and had been the heavy weight champion of the fleet as a Gunnery Sergeant while stationed on a coal burning battleship.

Major General W.H.Rupertus, the author of the Rifleman's Creed still taught in Boot Camp, was a Double Distinguished shooter. He was awarded the Navy Cross for his actions on Guadalcanal and was in charge of the Marines on Peleliu

Brigadier General LWT Waller, Jr. was awarded the Navy Cross for his actions at Belleau Wood as the CO of the 6<sup>th</sup> Machine Gun Battalion. General Waller had won his Distinguished Rifle Badge in 1913, and captained several United States International Teams following WWI.

Carlos Hathcock, noted Distinguished Marksman and winner of the Wimbledon Cup (the long range Championship of the United States) went on to become one of the Corp's most noted snipers with 93 confirmed kills. It is rumored that he accounted for the demise of more than three hundred of the enemy in two tours in Vietnam.

Colonel Wesley Fox, also a Medal of Honor recipient during Vietnam, shot with me at the Eastern Division Matches at Camp Lejeune in 1965 as a Master Sergeant.

The thrust of my dissertation concerning Marine Corps Rifle (and Pistol) Competition is that the ability to shoot one's service arms does *not* place individuals wearing the appropriate badges in the "pansy" category. As I once told my roommate during the Division Matches when he mentioned what a great "sport" rifle shooting was. I told him that I never looked through my rifle sights that I didn't see some dink's head sitting on my front sight blade! He said something to the effect that I was one sick puppy, but I make no apologies...