

The Pacific Odyssey of Capt. William H. Daly and the 147th Field Artillery Regiment, 1941-1946

ROBERT G. WEBB

In the fifteen months before Japan's 7 December 1942 attack on Pearl Harbor, the United States Army called some three hundred thousand National Guardsmen to active duty. Among the 3,717 units activated from throughout the nation was the 147th Field Artillery Regiment of the South Dakota National Guard. Its roster of fifty-seven officers, one warrant officer, and 950 enlisted men included a young college student named William H. Daly. His story is, to a large extent, the story of both his outfit and the thousands of other South Dakotans who fought in World War II.

William H. ("Bill") Daly was born on a small farm near Isabel, South Dakota, on 19 September 1919. His family was poor and moved frequently during his early years, finally settling in Firesteel, South Dakota. Daly completed elementary school and his first three years of secondary school in nearby Timber Lake before going to live with a relative in Linton, North Dakota. His football, basketball, and track participation at Linton High School attracted the attention of William Carberry, athletic director and head football coach at Northern State

Teachers College (NSTC) in Aberdeen, South Dakota. At Carberry's urging, Daly enrolled at NSTC in the fall of 1937 to pursue a teaching degree, majoring in social science and minoring in mathematics and physical education.¹ Tall, well-built, and handsome, Daly was a popular, personable young man. He played varsity football and basketball during the 1937-1938, 1938-1939, and 1939-1940 seasons, lettering in both sports each year. Active in student government, he served as president of the sophomore class and vice-president of the junior class. He also belonged to the "N" Club, the Social Science Club, and the Newman Club. In 1940, he appeared in *Who's Who in American Universities and Colleges*.²

In order to finance his college education, Daly worked at part-time jobs in Aberdeen. Like a number of his male contemporaries at NSTC, he joined the South Dakota National Guard in 1938 for the extra money it brought him. Daly was a twenty-one-year-old corporal in the Headquarters Battery of the 147th Field Artillery Regiment's First Battalion when it was mobilized on 25 November 1940 for a year of training at Fort Ord, California.³ He later recalled that he had expected to "get my year over and come back." Instead, his return to NSTC was delayed for six long years.⁴

With the United States at peace, the training at Fort Ord was leisurely. In June and July 1941, following thirteen weeks of basic training, the 147th participated in field exercises with the Seventh Division at Jolon, some sixty miles away. In August, it made a long motor march to the Fort Lewis, Washington, maneuver area for more field exercises with the Seventh Division.⁵ In the opinion of one officer, the exercises were "all to the good, for the troops became skilled . . . [at living in the field] under all conditions with a minimum amount of suffering"—a skill that would soon prove valuable.⁶

1. Interview of William H. Daly, Aberdeen, S.Dak., by Robert G. Webb, 27 Apr. 1986, Acc. No. NG 86-112, South Dakota National Guard Historical Resource Collection, Beulah Williams Library, Northern State University, Aberdeen, S.Dak. (this collection is hereafter cited SDNG).

2. *Pasque*, 1938, 1939, 1940, 1941; *Exponent*, 19 Nov., 11 Dec. 1940. (The *Pasque* was the NSTC yearbook, and the *Exponent* was the college newspaper.)

3. Statement of Service, 15 Jan. 1943, Box 21, Folder 2, William H. Daly Papers, 1919-1976, SDNG; interview of Daly; Richard Cropp, *The Coyotes: A History of the South Dakota National Guard* (Mitchell, S.Dak.: South Dakota Board of Military Affairs and the National Guard Officers Association, 1962), pp. 149-50; Will G. Robinson, ed., *South Dakota in World War II* ([Pierre, S.Dak.]: World War II History Commission, n.d.), pp. 251, 295.

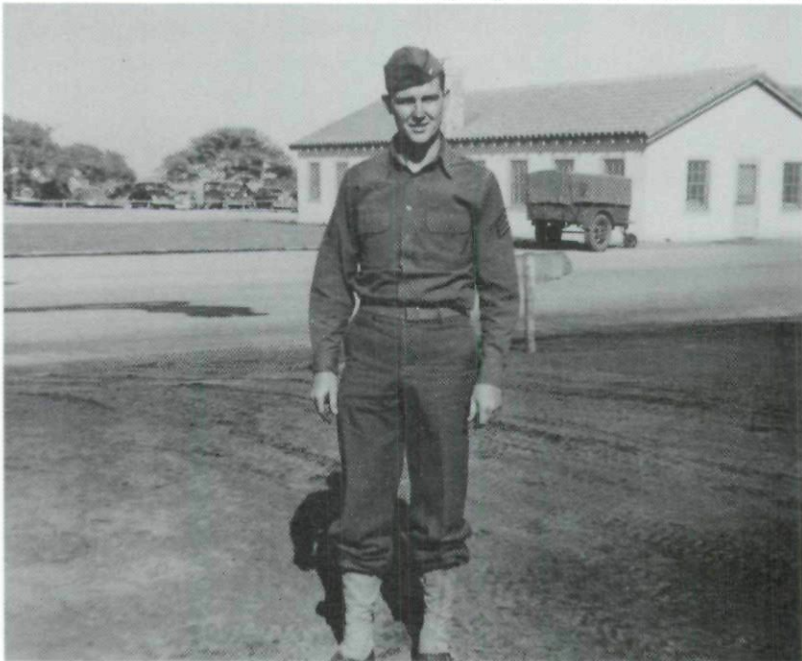
4. Interview of Daly.

5. Robinson, *South Dakota in World War II*, p. 297.

6. Cropp, *Coyotes*, p. 153.

In September, as their year of active duty neared completion, the South Dakotans received word that their term of service was being extended by eighteen months. In October came the news that the 147th would be sent to the Philippine Islands. Regular army officers who had served there soon arrived to lecture on conditions in the islands. They painted an appealing picture, advising the artillerymen to take along fishing tackle, golf clubs, and shotguns, as much sport was to be had. Leaves would also be available in such glamorous spots as Hong Kong and Singapore. "It doesn't sound so bad," wrote Daly in a letter home, "and in fact I'm sort of looking forward to the trip, though I do hate to leave the U. S. A. . . . Seems funny to be going to places that have always just been more or less a name." One ominous detail about this change of station that Daly, by this

William Daly, pictured here at Fort Ord in 1941, had attained the rank of sergeant by the time the 147th Field Artillery Regiment left for service overseas.



time a buck sergeant, did not mention was the prohibition on soldiers' dependents accompanying them to the Philippines.⁷

On 22 November 1941, the 147th Field Artillery Regiment boarded the United States Army Transport *Willard A. Holbrook* in San Francisco and set sail for overseas. "As we passed under the big Golden Gate Bridge," Daly confided to his diary that evening, "and as the twinkling lights of 'Frisco began to recede in the distance, I couldn't help but wonder how long it would be before I would see the 'City of the Golden Gate' again." For Daly and most of the other soldiers aboard the *Holbrook*, nearly four years would elapse before they returned to the United States. Others were destined never to come back.⁸

After stopping briefly in Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, the *Holbrook* sailed on 30 November in a convoy of nine ships that included the cruiser *Pensacola* and the subchaser *Niagara*. By the time war with Japan broke out on 7 December, the convoy had traveled approximately fifteen hundred miles to the southwest. It was immediately ordered to put in at Suva, in the Fiji Islands, where on 13 December it received orders to proceed to Brisbane, Australia. The 147th spent Christmas ashore in Brisbane and on 28 December reboarded the *Holbrook* to sail north inside Australia's Great Barrier Reef under *Pensacola* escort. Daly and his companions hoped that Manila was no longer the *Holbrook's* destination, for the war news made the likelihood of reaching the Philippine Islands safely seem remote.⁹

On 3 January 1942, warships of the United States Asiatic Fleet met the *Holbrook* at Thursday Island in the Torres Strait (that passageway between the northeastern tip of Australia and the south-central coast of New Guinea), and the *Pensacola* turned around and sailed for Pearl Harbor. When the transport and its escorts arrived at Darwin, Australia, at dawn on 6 January, the regiment was ordered to disembark. By the time the travel-weary troops established a camp ashore on 13 January, the *Holbrook* had been their home for fifty-four days—but it had seemed much longer. The camp of the 147th, located in the "bush" some fifteen miles inland from Darwin, had a ceremo-

7. Leonard L. Lerwill, *The Personnel Replacement System in the United States Army*, Department of the Army, Pamphlet No. 20-211 (Washington, D.C., 1954), p. 253; Cropp, *Coyotes*, p. 154; Daly to "Dear Barney," 13 Nov. 1941, Box 21, Folder 4, Daly Papers.

8. Cropp, *Coyotes*, p. 154; William H. Daly Diary, 22 Nov. 1941, Box 21, Folder 1, Daly Papers.

9. Cropp, *Coyotes*, pp. 154-63; U. S., Department of the Army, Office of the Chief of Military History, *United States Army in World War II, The War in the Pacific: The Fall of the Philippines*, by Louis Morton (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1953), pp. 145-48, 153-54.



The men of the 147th were the first Americans to raise the United States flag on Australian soil.

nious beginning. Daly described it in his diary on the evening of 16 January: "Today is quite a memorable day. We had an official flag raising, [the] first of its kind on Australian soil. We, the 147th F. A., were [among] the first American troops to ever set foot in Australia, so we are all a part of quite an historical event."¹⁰

By the time the 147th arrived in Darwin, the military situation in the Pacific theater had deteriorated further, with Japanese forces advancing at an alarming rate in British Malaya, the Dutch East Indies, and the American Philippines. The regiment was immediately attached to the Australian Army's tiny Northern Territory Forces to help strengthen Allied defenses in the Darwin area. On 24 January 1942, the Northern Territory Forces became part of the American-

10. Cropp, *Coyotes*, pp. 161-63; U. S., Department of the Navy, Office of the Chief of Naval Operations, Naval History Division, *Dictionary of American Naval Fighting Ships*, 8 vols. (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1970), 5: 256; Daly Diary, 16 Jan. 1942.

British-Dutch-Australian Command (ABDA Command), the first Allied command of World War II. Its mission was to hold the Malay Barrier (the hastily drawn Allied defense line that included British Malaya, the islands of Sumatra, Java, and Timor in the Dutch East Indies, and northern Australia), operate as far beyond that line as possible to check Japanese advances, and restore communications with the Philippine Islands. ABDA Command had limited resources, however, and could do little to carry out these orders. It was soon disbanded, but the 147th remained attached to Australia's Northern Territory Forces.¹¹

The 147th remained in defensive positions near Darwin for six months, expecting to engage Japanese invasion forces at any time. The invasion never materialized, but on the morning of 19 February 1942, Japanese carrier-based aircraft did launch a major raid on Darwin. Daly observed the raid and recorded his impressions while squatting in a slit trench at the camp outside of town. "We first noticed the planes about 10:30 A.M.," Daly wrote in a small notebook. "At first we thought they were U. S. air reinforcements but they were flying unusually high, and they were silvery, glinting in the sunlight. They were too high for the naked eye to see any insignia. . . . The first 3 flights of 9 bombers each circled around to the south of us." Daly eventually counted about seventy-five bombers, some of which passed overhead en route to Darwin. "Then in the distance," he continued, "we began to hear explosions, the sharp crack of ack-ack guns, the dull ground-shaking boom of the exploding bombs and then we began to realize that this was really it, our first air raid. Now we could see the ack-ack bursting in the air, to leave little puffs of smoke to drift lazily."¹²

This first raid, which lasted for about forty-five minutes, was followed a half hour later by another. According to Daly, "three more flights of 9 each came over. One flight passed directly overhead, lower this time, and you could see the flaming rising sun, the emblem of Japan, on their wing tips. The ack-ack gunners seemed to be getting better but still we could see no hits scored. However they had the range better and the bursts were getting in there fairly close. The raid lasted about fifteen minutes." The Japanese aircraft—

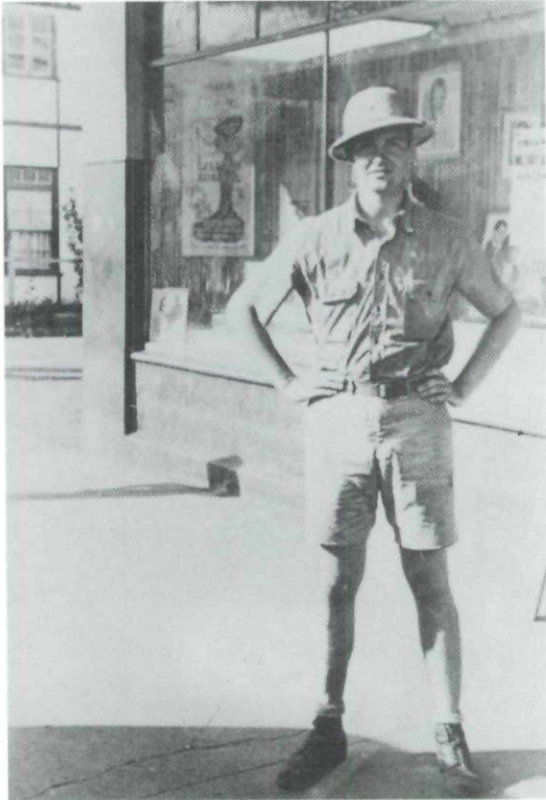
11. Cropp, *Coyotes*, p. 164; *Fall of the Philippines*, pp. 149, 242; U. S., Department of the Army, Office of the Chief of Military History, *United States Army in World War II, Special Studies: Chronology, 1941-1945*, comp. Mary H. Williams (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1960), pp. 11, 15, 18, 26.

12. Cropp, *Coyotes*, pp. 163-77; William H. Daly, "Darwin's First Air Raid—Thurs. Feb. 19," Box 21, Folder 2, Daly Papers.

188 fighters, dive bombers, and torpedo bombers—came from the same carrier task force that had attacked Pearl Harbor just two months before. In addition to destroying large areas of Darwin and many of the facilities at a nearby Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) base, they sank or damaged a number of ships in the harbor.¹³

13. Daly, "Darwin's First Air Raid"; Cropp, *Coyotes*, pp. 168-71; Douglas Lockwood, *Australia's Pearl Harbour: Darwin, 1942* (Melbourne: Cassell Australia Ltd., 1966), pp. 30-43, 138-47; Timothy Hall, *Darwin 1942: Australia's Darkest Hour* (Sydney: Methuen Australia Pty. Ltd., 1980), pp. 67-85.

Daly posed for this snapshot on a street corner in Darwin, a city that suffered repeated Japanese attacks during his six months of duty there.



108 *South Dakota History*

In the following weeks, the Japanese hit Darwin with nine more daylight air raids. Daly was near the town around eleven o'clock on the evening of 31 March, the date the first night raid occurred. Despite the destruction, Daly called it "one of the most spectacularly beautiful sights I've ever witnessed." Back in camp, he described the scene:

First we heard the dull boom of the 'ack-ack' & then the muffled 'whoom' of exploding bombs. Then the searchlights spotted 3 Jap bombers, in perfect formation. They were like 3 gigantic, iridescent stars outlined against the



Capt. Thomas Rozum, whose funeral procession is pictured here, was one of the first battle casualties from the 147th.

sky. Then the ack-ack started bursting into red balls of flame all around them, yet they never broke formation—The search lights followed them all the way out, all you could see was a big blob of light on the planes, you couldn't see the rest of the ray. Just as they were getting out of range . . . one of the Japs wavered a bit, but I couldn't tell for sure whether he had been hit.

Daly concluded, "All in all it was a very pretty sight in a way, but also rather terrifying. It was just like a large scale 4th of July display."¹⁴

Darwin suffered several more daylight raids in the weeks that followed, including the raid of 25 April, which resulted in the first bat-

14. Daly Diary, 31 Mar. 1942.

tle casualties for the 147th. One officer was killed and another fatally wounded when bomb fragments struck the command car they were driving near Darwin's RAAF Field. Daly wrote in his diary that evening: "Bad day today—We went to watch a shoot & during that time the Japs raided Darwin for the first time in over 2 weeks. Capt. [Gerald] Porter [of Flandreau, South Dakota] was killed instantly & Capt. [Thomas] Rozum [of Humboldt, South Dakota] was very seriously injured, an arm nearly blown off. Hard to believe at first. . . . Things can sure happen in a hurry." Captain Rozum died that night and was buried the next afternoon. Daly, who was one of the guards of honor at his funeral, reflected again on the tenuous nature of life in the war zone: "It's really tough to see him go, for I think that I'd just really gotten to know him the past 2 or 3 months. Today was quite an experience. . . . It didn't bother me until they had fired 3 volleys over his grave & we were standing there saluting & they played taps. That's what really got me—right down in my stomach I felt funny & had a big lump in my throat. . . . Kinda hate to think of him being buried way up here in desolate Northern Terr[itory]."¹⁵

By the spring of 1942, the threat of a Japanese invasion of Australia had passed as a result of American victories at the battles of the Coral Sea and Midway Island. With an entire Australian division now located in the Darwin area, there was no longer a need for the 147th in the Northern Territory, and on 29 June the regiment began a two-thousand-mile trek southward to Ballarat on Australia's southeastern coast. Traveling first by truck convoy over the Great North Road to Alice Springs, the regiment reached its destination by train on 8 July. The 147th spent the next three months in Ballarat, where it rested, reequipped, and rearmed, turning in its World War I-vintage 75mm guns for 105mm howitzers. In the opinion of Daly and most of his fellow soldiers, the time spent in this friendly city of some fifty thousand people was the best of the war. Although the regiment trained hard, the men also had plenty of time to relax. Nightly passes, weekend passes, and even seven-day leaves abounded, and the South Dakotans made the most of the entertainment opportunities of both Ballarat and nearby Melbourne, whose population of just over one million made it Australia's second-largest city.¹⁶

In October 1942, the 147th was assigned to the First Corps of the United States Sixth Army and ordered to Camp Cable, thirty-five miles from Brisbane. The regiment thus completed a circle tour of

15. *Ibid.*, 25, 26 Apr. 1942.

16. Cropp, *Coyotes*, pp. 177-79; Daly Diary, 29 June, 4, 8 July 1942.

eastern Australia in ten months. Five days after arriving at Camp Cable, Daly, who had demonstrated leadership abilities at both Fort Ord and Darwin, received a direct commission as a second lieutenant and an assignment to Headquarters Battery of the regiment's Second Battalion as Motor Officer.¹⁷ That evening, he confided to his diary, "Boy, am I happy—about one thirty I went over & took the oath of office & later Lt. [Merl G.] Findley [of Mitchell, South Dakota] pinned my first bars and crossed cannon on. Seems rather odd but at last I am an officer in this man's army."¹⁸

The move to Camp Cable, however, marked the end of the "good old days" for the South Dakotans. First Corps commander Gen. Robert L. Eichelberger was a demanding officer, and the men were soon grumbling about the excesses of the training schedule. Some even expressed the wish to be back in the "bush" at Darwin rather than endure the "spit-and-polish" garrison soldiering Eichelberger demanded. In February 1943, the 147th followed the First Corps to Rockhampton, five hundred miles up the eastern coast of Australia, where General Eichelberger and his staff had already established themselves comfortably. Most of the units assigned to the First Corps had left the area for New Guinea, leaving the 147th to catch the full fury of what appeared to be harassment by the First Corps staff.¹⁹ "There were so many staff wallahs [officers] with nothing legitimate to do," recalled Capt. Richard Cropp of the 147th, "that in order to keep up the appearance of being occupied they spent their full time on the 147th." According to Cropp, staff officers hid behind trees before dawn to observe morning roll call. Their presence in large numbers at training exercises caused training to suffer, as instructors spent an excessive amount of time reporting to these observers. In a good number of instances, thought Cropp, "the inspectors demonstrated that they knew less about war and artillery than did their victims."²⁰ Thus, when the First Battalion of the 147th was assigned in June 1943 to take part in landings on the unoccupied islands of Woodlark and Kiriwina off the northeast coast of New Guinea, "joy in that battalion was unbounded."²¹

17. Cropp, *Coyotes*, p. 179; Special Order No. 79, Headquarters, U. S. Army Services of Supply, Southwest Pacific Area, APO 501, 10 Oct. 1942, and Special Order No. 180, Headquarters, 147th Field Artillery, Camp Cable, APO 923, 21 Oct. 1942, both in Box 21, Folder 2, Daly Papers.

18. Daly Diary, 20 Oct. 1942.

19. Cropp, *Coyotes*, pp. 179-81.

20. *Ibid.*, p. 180.

21. *Ibid.*, p. 181.



Daly sat for this portrait in Melbourne shortly after receiving his commission as a second lieutenant.

The Second Battalion, to which Lieutenant Daly was assigned, continued its artillery training at Rockhampton until July, when it re-joined the First Battalion at the American base at Milne Bay on the eastern tip of New Guinea. In December, the regiment moved up New Guinea's northern coast to the American base at Oro Bay, where, on 31 December 1943, the 147th Field Artillery Regiment disbanded. With the First Battalion redesignated the 260th Field Artillery Battalion and the Second Battalion becoming the 147th Field Artillery Battalion, the two groups went their separate ways.²²

22. Robinson, *South Dakota in World War II*, pp. 312-20. The 147th was the last regiment of field artillery in the United States Army, which had begun to streamline the

By the time of the breakup, the former Second Battalion had already sailed for Woodlark and Kiriwina islands. Battery A, in which Daly now served as a forward observer, landed on Woodlark Island in November 1943, while the battalion's other batteries went on to Kiriwina. Periodic air-raid alerts were issued on both islands, but Japanese planes seldom appeared. The artillerymen lived in tents, endured torrential tropical rains, battled teeming insect life, and kept busy on fatigue details. In more introspective moments, they marveled at the beauty of the two islands, with their white sand beaches, beautiful coral formations, and jungle flora. Woodlark, Daly recalled many years later, was the closest one could get to a "Hollywood version" of a Pacific island. Nor were the men completely without the amenities of civilization, as Daly wrote home in a letter on 2 December 1943: "We actually have electric lights, thanks to the Navy See Bees [*sic*]. Also we use their refrigeration plant. Those boys live okay. I'd never have believed this if I hadn't seen it myself but they have actually built a very pretty Officers Club here on the edge of the jungle—& it has a bar!²³

Daly spent part of Christmas Eve at the officers club, "eating steak sandwiches, playing cribbage, & listening to . . . a couple of good piano players & 2 colored singers." At around ten o'clock, the crowd gathered around the piano to sing Christmas carols. As midnight approached, Daly walked to the Navy chapel, which was "packed to overflowing," for midnight mass. In his 1 January 1944 letter home, Daly remarked that he had seen the New Year in at the club "rather quietly and sedately." Along with several companions, he "played cribbage and had a couple of Tom Collins. . . . At 9:30 they served us some very good steak sandwiches, fried potatoes, tomatoes, & pineapple juice. Tough eh?" A black quartet then sang spirituals, as well as "an original little ditty called 'Gettin Ready for the Colonel to Come'—which was enjoyed a great deal by all of us including the colonel." After the colonel led the midnight singing of "Auld Lang Syne," Daly went "home to bed [only] to be rolled out at 6:00

organization of its infantry divisions in 1941. By cutting each division's infantry regiments from four to three and dividing their two artillery regiments into four separate battalions (three armed with 105mm howitzers and one with 155mm howitzers), the army reduced the divisions' size by nearly one-half. With the end of the regimental organization on 31 December 1943, the Second Battalion inherited the number, colors, and traditions of the 147th Field Artillery Regiment. The First Battalion assumed a new number, the 260th Field Artillery Battalion. Robinson, *South Dakota in World War II*, p. 319.

23. *Ibid.*, p. 318; Daly to "Dear Family," 29 Nov. 1943, and Daly to "Dear Barney," 2 Dec. 1943, both in Box 21, Folder 3, Daly Papers; interview of Daly.

a.m. I had planned on sleeping late as we had the day duty free—peaceful again in a few minutes so back to the old bed sack till 10:30. The only reason I got up then was because I had to distribute some canteen supplies to the men.”²⁴

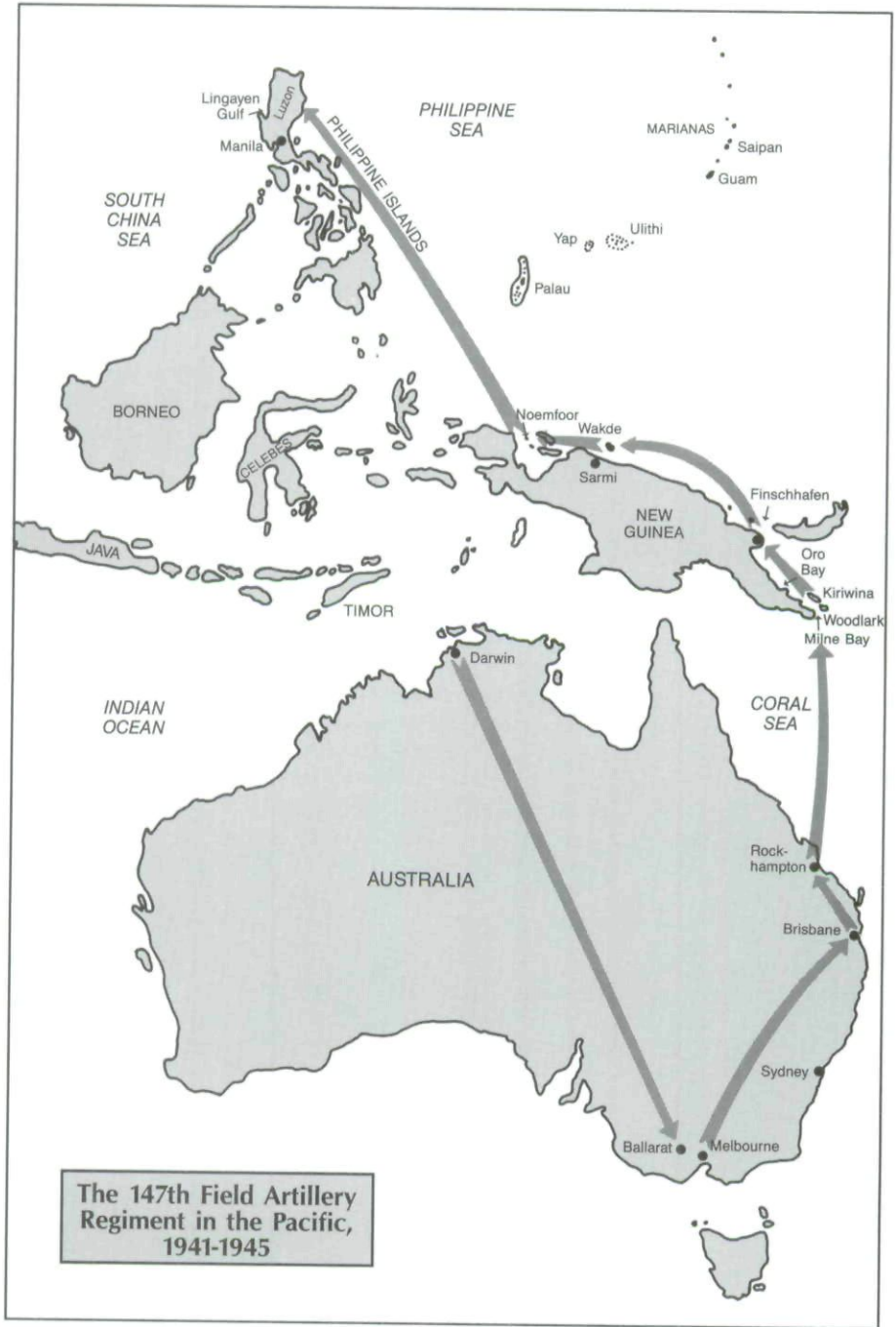
The 147th Field Artillery Battalion remained on Woodlark and Kiriwina islands until April 1944, when it moved to Finschhafen, New Guinea, to spend the next six weeks preparing for its first combat operation.²⁵ On 11 May 1944, the battalion became part of the 158th Regimental Combat Team (RCT), whose other principal component was the 158th Infantry Regiment of the Arizona National Guard. The 147th remained a part of this combat team for the rest of World War

24. Daly to “Dear Family,” 25 Dec. 1943, and Daly to “Dear Family,” 1 Jan. 1944, both in Box 21, Folder 3, Daly Papers.

25. The 147th arrived at Finschhafen to find the 260th Field Artillery Battalion there. Following the breakup of the original regiment the previous December, the 260th had participated in combat operations on New Britain and the invasion of the Admiralty Islands. Until it was deactivated in June 1945, the 260th engaged in trucking duties that assisted in the general operations of the base at Finschhafen. Cropp, *Coyotes*, pp. 182-87; Robinson, *South Dakota in World War II*, pp. 358-71.

This view of Milne Bay in New Guinea hints at the tropical beauty of the South Pacific.





map drawn by Steve Mayer

II, establishing a good working relationship with the Arizona guardsmen.²⁶

On 21 May 1944, the 158th RCT landed near Wakde-Sarmi on the north-central coast of New Guinea. Over the next twenty-four days, the 147th provided fire support for the 158th Infantry in bitter fighting against a determined Japanese force. Daly, now a first lieutenant with Battery A, acted as an artillery forward observer with one of the infantry companies. On 18 June, four days after the 158th had been relieved, Daly composed a long letter to his family describing the rigors of fighting a stubborn Japanese foe in the steaming, insect-infested jungles of New Guinea. Admitting that he had been frightened on more than one occasion, he concluded, "It's times like this when you realize that it's really wonderful to be alive and it's brought swiftly home to you that you have a . . . lot to be thankful for." Daly and the 147th learned much about the art of jungle warfare from the Wakde-Sarmi operation, but in the process the battalion lost thirteen men, five killed and eight wounded. RCT commander Col. Erle O. Sandlin commended the 147th for having carried out its artillery-support mission successfully.²⁷

The 158th RCT embarked on its second combat operation, an invasion of the Japanese-held island of Noemfoor off the northwest coast of New Guinea, on 2 July 1944. As dawn broke, the heaviest naval and air bombardment yet delivered in the southwest Pacific began.²⁸ Daly watched "the awesome and spectacular sight" from the deck of a landing ship tank (LST) and later sent a vivid word picture of the bombardment to his family back home: "It was just approaching that hazy transition from dark to daybreak as I came topside and it was a comfortable feeling to . . . see the varied shapes

26. Cropp, *Coyotes*, p. 183; Robinson, *South Dakota in World War II*, p. 322. The 158th Infantry gained the nickname "Bushmasters" from its service in the Panama Canal Zone between January 1942 and January 1943. In the Panamanian jungle, the men of the 158th became well acquainted with the deadly Bushmaster snake and the machete, which they adopted as symbols for the regimental shoulder patch that was worn throughout the war in the Pacific. Roy Lancaster, *The Story of the Bushmasters* (Detroit, Mich.: Lancaster Publications, n. d.), n. p.

27. Robinson, *South Dakota in World War II*, pp. 322-28; Lancaster, *Story of the Bushmasters*, n. p.; interview of Daly; Special Order No. 143, Headquarters, U. S. Army Forces in the Far East, APO 501, 19 July 1943, Box 21, Folder 2, Daly to "Dear Family," 18 June 1944, Box 21, Folder 3, both in Daly Papers.

28. Robinson, *South Dakota in World War II*, pp. 328-29; Lancaster, *Story of the Bushmasters*, n. p.; U. S., Department of the Army, Office of the Chief of Military History, *United States Army in World War II, The War in the Pacific: The Approach to the Philippines*, by Robert Ross Smith (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1953), pp. 405-7.

and forms of surface craft all around. Suddenly off to the left the first broadside let go—the whole side of the ship seemed to flare up momentarily, then—fascinated—I watched three white tracers float lazily through the dim morning air and then blossom out on the beach. That was the signal for more flame and thunder from all sides." This "wonderful show" evoked feelings of patriotism in Daly, who "sat in a grandstand seat only about a thousand yards away. . . . It gave me a beautiful feeling to see such a display of might and to know this is only a fraction of the power America possesses."²⁹

Daly went on to describe the bombing by the "haughty Queens of the air [that] came nonchalantly soaring in." Through his field glasses, he watched the bombs come "spewing forth" from the open bays "like methodical children scattering corn to the ducks." After a few moments, "the earth seemed to literally rise up in the air," he wrote, "and even the deck plates shuddered under my feet. A few minutes passed and then the routine was repeated." Daly experienced "a sort of fierce exultation in my breast at the sight—a feeling of satisfaction to know that little yellow men are in there taking the brunt of this—a part payment for some of the suffering and agony they have caused. The thought went through my mind—I don't see how any living thing could survive such a display of concentrated fury—and though I'm not really a cold-blooded person; I could not find a bit of pity in my heart for them."³⁰

The fighting on Noemfoor lasted from 2 July to 31 August, with the 147th suffering one battle-related death, three nonbattle deaths, and four men wounded in action.³¹ Daly, again serving as a forward observer with an infantry company of the 158th, received the Bronze Star for gallantry on the night of 11-12 August. When his unit was forced back from a strongly fortified enemy position, Daly, according to his citation, "remained 200 yards forward of the unit perimeter and directed a heavy and accurate barrage on the enemy, so that a counterattack was impossible." Standing fast in the face of heavy enemy fire, he "maintained his position and by morning had effected sufficient softening of the enemy emplacements to permit the infantry to make a successful attack."³² With the end of the

29. Typewritten letter (probably written by Daly sometime in July 1944), Box 21, Folder 4, Daly Papers.

30. *Ibid.*

31. Robinson, *South Dakota in World War II*, pp. 328-34; Lancaster, *Story of the Bushmasters*, n. p.

32. General Order No. 197, Headquarters, Sixth Army, 18 Nov. 1944, Box 21, Folder 2, Daly Papers.

Noemfoor operation, the 147th assembled at a jungle camp on the island's northeast coast and remained there until late December 1944. It then boarded LSTs and traveled in a convoy with members of the 158th RCT to Luzon in the Philippine Islands.³³

Upon landing at Lingayen Gulf on Luzon on 11 January 1945, the 158th RCT proceeded immediately to its assigned task of providing security on the northern flank of the invasion force. The Japanese fought hard from their heavily fortified positions and made nightly attempts to infiltrate the battery positions of the 147th, which had been assigned to provide artillery support for the advanced elements of the combat team. On the evening of 17 January, a small Japanese raiding party successfully slipped through the perimeter defenses of Battery B, killing one artilleryman and wounding another with grenades. An even more serious attack occurred early on the morning of 19 January, when a second raiding party used hand grenades, Molotov cocktails, dynamite, and a flamethrower to strike simultaneously the Battery A command post, switchboard, and executive post. Over in a few minutes, the well-planned attack inflicted heavy damage and killed or wounded nine men. Daly, who had just become Battery A's executive officer, received serious injuries in the left arm and leg from an exploding grenade.³⁴

As he lay on his back in severe pain from the grenade fragments, Daly saw a Japanese soldier looking directly at him from behind an ammunition stack. The enemy soldier then turned and left without firing at Daly, apparently thinking he was dead. A medic appeared shortly and probably saved Daly's life by applying a tourniquet to his left arm, whose main artery had been severed. Some time later, Daly awoke momentarily in a field hospital operating room. Curious about what the doctor working over him was doing and feeling no pain due to shock, Daly raised his head to look at his arm. He caught a brief glimpse of his left elbow, "a kind of mangled mess," before the doctor slammed his head down on the operating table. After a short stay in the field hospital, Daly was evacuated to a hospital ship in Lingayen Gulf. By then, gangrene had set in, and surgeons had to amputate his left arm above the elbow. Daly was eventually transferred to a hospital in New Guinea, where he remained until sailing for the United States in mid-March 1945.³⁵

Daly spent several weeks at the New Guinea hospital deeply depressed over the loss of his arm until a friend brought him the

33. Robinson, *South Dakota in World War II*, pp. 334-36.

34. *Ibid.*, pp. 336-40; Lancaster, *Story of the Bushmasters*, n. p.; interview of Daly.

35. Interview of Daly.

September 1944 issue of *Reader's Digest*. The magazine contained an article by noted aircraft designer Alexander de Seversky, entitled "I Owe My Career to Losing a Leg," and it did wonders for Daly's morale. In February, he wrote optimistically to his family:

Well after I began to count my blessings I began to look around and began to realize that there were a lot of fellows a lot worse off than I. In the next ward is a boy who has lost both eyes and also one who lost both arms. Yesterday the officer next to me censored a letter in which a boy wrote his mother telling her he had lost both his legs so you can see that I, and all of us, have a lot to be thankful for. It's a handicap but its one that can be . . . overcome with practice. I still have my right arm, and after all most of the normal things can be done with one good arm.

Daly cautioned his family against coddling him when he returned home, writing, "I don't want any of you to oversympathize with me—sure its tough at first but we can all get used to it." While admitting that he might need extra help at first, he stated his determination to succeed: "I'm not going to be helpless—if I need help I'll ask for it. I've made up my mind that there still is an awful lot left in life for me . . . and with the help of the Lord, I'm still going to make a success of myself and enjoy life."³⁶

While Daly awaited transportation back to the United States, the 147th continued to support the combat operations of the 158th on Luzon. Following the formal surrender of Japan on 2 September 1945, the 147th served with occupation forces on the Japanese home islands. The battalion was deactivated on 17 January 1946, and its personnel were returned to the United States for discharge. Daly, meanwhile, arrived back in the United States in late March 1945 and was transferred to Bushnell General Hospital in Brigham City, Utah, to participate in the hospital's rehabilitation program. While there, he learned that he had been promoted to the rank of captain shortly after being wounded on Luzon.³⁷

On 18 May 1946, a fully recovered Daly was released from active duty in the United States Army. At the invitation of President N. E. Steele, he returned to Northern State Teachers College that autumn to work as the college's first director of public relations. In addition to recruiting students and directing homecoming activities, Daly attended classes and completed his bachelor's degree in education. Still eligible to play basketball, he made the varsity team during the

36. *Los Angeles Mirror*, 22 July 1954; Daly to "Dear Family," 28 Feb. 1945, Box 21, Folder 3, Daly Papers.

37. Robinson, *South Dakota in World War II*, pp. 340-57; Lancaster, *Story of the Bushmasters*, n. p.; interview of Daly; Special Order No. 43, Headquarters, U. S. Army Forces in the Far East, APO 501, 12 Feb. 1945, Box 21, Folder 2, Daly Papers.

1946-1947 season, but his physical handicap limited his playing ability.³⁸ He remained at the college until 1951, when he moved to Los Angeles, California. There, the "born promoter" whose "energy, enthusiasm, and buoyant spirit" have been called contagious established the highly successful public relations firm of Bill Daly and Associates.³⁹

In a 1954 interview with a *Los Angeles Mirror* staff writer, the thirty-four-year-old Daly reflected on his postwar career. "I have made a lot more of my life as a result of losing my arm than I would have

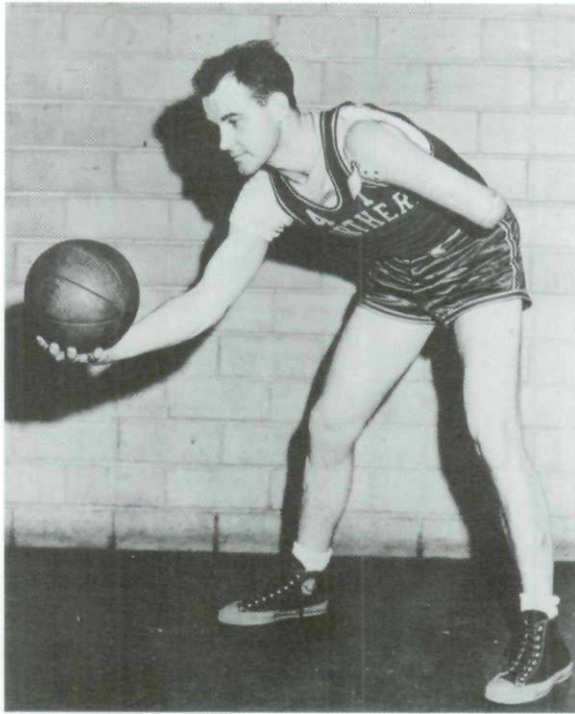


Daly (center) relaxes in the officers club at Bushnell General Hospital in Utah during his rehabilitation.

if I had kept it. If I had kept my arm," he postulated, "I would now be teaching in a small high school, perhaps coaching teams for the school as well. Now, instead, I'm having the time of my life and making a success of public relations." During his forty-odd years in the

38. Special Order No. 38, Army Service Forces, Ninth Service Command, Bushnell General Hospital, Brigham City, Utah, 12 Feb. 1946, Box 21, Folder 2, E. Kenneth Baillie to "Whom It May Concern," 23 June 1949, Box 21, Folder 7, N. E. Steele to "Whom It May Concern," 29 June 1949, Box 21, Folder 7, all in Daly Papers; interview of Daly.

39. E. Kenneth Baillie to "Whom It May Concern"; interview of Daly.



Upon returning to Northern State Teachers College in 1946, Daly worked as director of public relations and played varsity basketball.

field, Daly became well known for successfully promoting the "Lawrence Welk Show" and for organizing and promoting the show's touring version, "The Stars of the Lawrence Welk Show." Daly continued his association with the latter group until illness forced his retirement early in 1992. He died from cancer on 2 September 1992, at the age of seventy-two.⁴⁰

Despite the physical challenge of his wartime wounds, Daly saw life as a precious commodity that was to be cherished and lived to its greatest potential. In 1989, South Dakota governor George S. Mickelson recognized his accomplishments as a Centennial Alumnus of Northern State University, one of only twenty-seven graduates

40. *Los Angeles Mirror*, 22 July 1954; *Sunsations*, 9 Feb. 1989; Kay Tamburrino to author, 10 Sept. 1992.

of the state's higher-education institutions to be so honored during the South Dakota centennial.⁴¹ Daly was proud of this recognition, as he was of his military service. Until he fell ill, he could always be seen wearing his favorite headgear—a Greek fisherman's cap to which he had affixed the crest of the 147th Field Artillery.

41. Mickelson to Daly, 18 Nov. 1988, Box 21, Folder 7, Daly Papers.

Copyright of South Dakota History is the property of South Dakota State Historical Society and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.

All illustrations in this issue are property of the South Dakota State Historical Society except for those on the following pages: pp. 103, 107, 108, 111, 119, 120, from South Dakota National Guard Historical Resource Collection, Beulah Williams Library, Northern State University, Aberdeen, S.Dak.; pp. 125, 126, 128, 130, from Presentation Heights Archives, Aberdeen, S.Dak.; p. 135, from Helen J. Bergh, Aberdeen, S.Dak.; p. 180, from Ken Hirsch, Sioux Falls, S.Dak.