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On a recent sleepless night we got to thinking about some of the Marines and their wives who established temporary homes in New Bern during World War II.

Forgetting the few who were obnoxious, it was pleasant to recall a host of wonderful friends. They are scattered in most instances to distant points now, but we hope that somewhere they have found the happiness they deserved.

None of the service men we encountered in those dark days was finer than Sgt. John Teppe. You probably passed him on the street dozens of times, never knowing that here was heroism at its best.

Just 21 at the time, he didn't look the part of a hero. Mild mannered, almost effeminate in his neatness, the blonde, smooth faced youth wasn't exactly what movies and tv programs picture as the typical fighting leatherneck.

John told us later that he was with the first raiders who landed on Guadalcanal, and the casualty figures he gave us speak for themselves. Of the 1,000 Marines, 950 enlisted men and 50 officers, in the first force, only 40 came off the island alive.

Twenty of these 40 survivors were critically wounded, and one of the worst cases happened to be Teppe. Jap machine gunners had drilled his right leg full of holes from his knee to his hip. Three bayonet stabs in his back barely missed the heart. A scalp wound from another bayonet thrust caused him to lose an awful lot of blood.

Somehow he managed to live through it all. His condition, and that of one of his comrades, was so bad that he couldn't be moved back from the front lines for some time. Eventually he was flown to Melbourne, Australia. Later he was transferred to a hospital in California, and finally returned to Cherry Point.

For bravery at Grassy Knoll, where the Japanese had to be literally blasted from caves, he was awarded the Silver Star. After Bloody Ridge he was given the Oak Leaf Cluster.

When John entered action in the Pacific, he weighed 167 pounds. When he came out of it he weighed 118. For 36 days and nights he and his fellow Marines were subjected to constant bombardment from the sea, from the air, and from the hills.

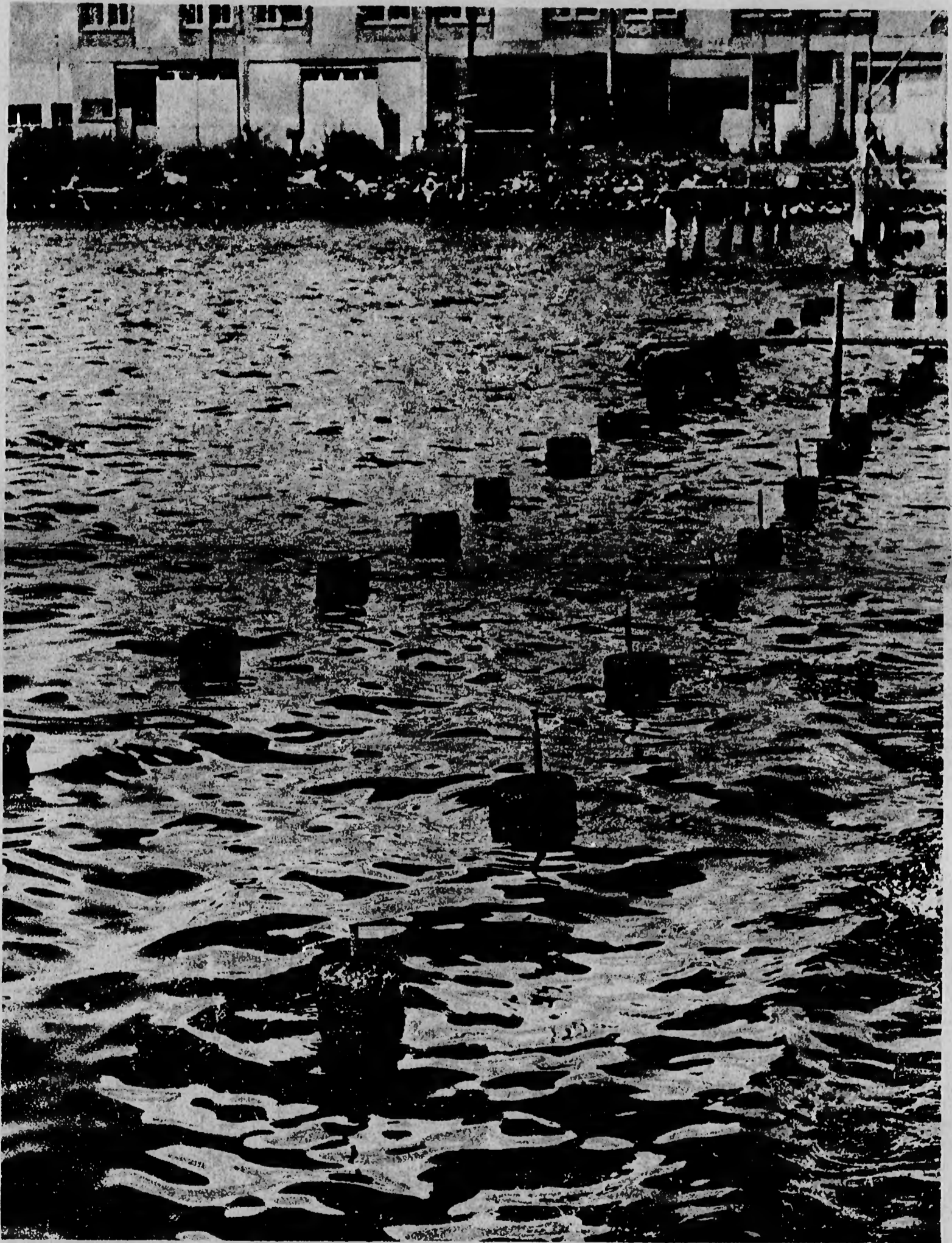
Incidentally, Capt. Jimmy Roosevelt (the President's son) was with the first raiders. Teppe told us he was a great soldier, asking no special favors and taking more than his share of chances.

Another Marine we will never forget was Pfc. Raymond Smith, who hailed from Bedford, Mass. He and his wife, Ida, spent their first months of marriage in New Bern.

A raider with the fourth Marines, he saw action on Guadalcanal, Guam, Pelu Munda and the Mariannas. He received campaign ribbons for four major battles and a Presidential citation.

Through all this bloody fighting, Raymond carried a battered but tuneful accordion, boosting the morale of other boys with songs of the day and the fami-

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A REAL CHALLENGE—New Bernians who dream of a day when the town can live up to its claim as the Land of Enchanting Waters must take into account hundreds of ugly piles like these that mar the Neuse and Trent at our very doorstep. Stubborn remnants of long vanished wharves and docks, they defy the ravages of time. Removing them entirely would be a project requiring much labor and considerable money.

All river towns are faced with the same problem, and few have shown an inclination to solve it. Now that the city has taken steps to end pollution of its two streams, beautification of our water front could attract many a tourist dollar. It may never happen in your lifetime, or anyone's lifetime, but a determined community can make the dream come true.—Photo by Donnie Wray Benner.