

## Lt. Col. Harold William "Indian Joe" Bauer

### *A Biography by Kent B. Brown DMD, Bauer's nephew*

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On March 27, 1884, Anna Margaret Hoff was born a German-Russian in Frank, Russia. She was the daughter of parents whose people had farmed in the Volga River Valley since migrating from Frankfort, Germany in the 1760's. Catherine the Great of Russia, also a German native, had given farmland and military duty exclusions to her countrymen to lure them to the area, thus assuaging her homesickness. In the late 1800's many had grown disillusioned and sent family members to America as they could afford it.

These emigres then sent money back to pay for other family member's travel as they could afford it. All these people continued to speak their native German.

At the age of 8, Anna Margaret came to America where her family settled on a farm in Geneva, Nebraska. Speaking little English, she let other children do some interpreting for her. They told the teacher that Anna Margaret was German for Martha. From then on, she was Martha Hoff.

In 1905, she married **John Thomas Bauer** of another Volga German family who had known her family in Russia. One entered the US through NYC and the other through Baltimore. Once here, John learned the Morse Code and made a career with the Chicago, Burlington, & Quincy RR. as a station manager. John and Martha, having started quite humbly, raised a family of five fine children. All were instilled with values for hard work and the necessity of a good education. The three boys graduated from the US Naval Academy and the two girls graduated from the Univ. of Nebraska. The Bauers didn't have the money for this, however, so the three oldest agreed that each would work a year to help each other get through school. They would all try to keep at least one enrolled in school at all times. The two oldest boys were only 14 months apart in age and, in the course of natural sibling rivalry, competed and drove each other to excel in many fields. One added a law degree to his engineering skills and became a successful Patent Lawyer in New York City. The other made Marine Aviation his career. This is his story, the story of Harold William Bauer.

Harold William Bauer was born Nov. 20, 1908, the third child in a family of five, in Woodruff, Kan. Young Harold began showing the depth of his character at an early age. At 5, his mother recalled, he and brother Dale returned from a pigeon egg hunt with Harold covered in blood. Harold had fallen down a grain elevator and landed in some barbed wire. The Doctor came and proceeded to clean him up, a process requiring 8 stitches, no anesthetic. Through all of this there was never a whimper from young Harold.

After living in Geneva, the family moved often. The children were born in Arapahoe, Nb. (Lucile, 1906), Woodruff Kan. (Dale, 1907 and Harold, 1908), Atlanta, Nb. (John, 1914), and Atwood, Kan. (Erma 1916). Mr. Bauer, who had started as a "Helper", had learned the Morse code and rose to the level of "Operator." Even though telephones existed, the railroads relied on the telegraph for communication. The family generally lived in quarters above the station, where they became quite used to the constant passage of the trains at all hours of the day and night. In the young days, the yardsmen would, at times, hang Harold and Dale in gunny sacks on the tree limbs to keep them out of trouble.

## High School Football

Promotion to "Station Agent" took the family to Atwood where the inseparable Dale and Harold began their love of football. They were never without one. One night, in the middle of a dream and sound asleep, Harold picked up the football and ran the length of the room smack into the screen. He went sprawling. Dazed, he sat up and said, "If it hadn't been for Bussey, I'da made a touchdown!" Bussey was one of the biggest boys in school.

1918 found the family living in their first real house in Alma, Nebraska. Here the oldest children grew up and graduated from High School. At first the family lived in a rented house on the west side of town before Mr. Bauer bought a home on the east side. This caused quite a stir because the east side football team always played the west side team. It wasn't fair that the west side would lose the Bauer boys right in the middle of the season! The boys played out the season for the west side team. Holdrege, Nb. would precede the Bauer's retirement to Fort Collins, Colorado.

The boys, both excellent athletes, starred in many different sports. Harold played football as a star halfback and was on the track team in the Spring, both for Coach Lewis Schiefferdecker. In the winter he led the Alma Wildcats in basketball under Coach Bill Bogel. In his last three high school years he started on teams that went to the State Basketball tournament. The scores were:

1924--Alma vs. Huntley 11- 8 Class H

1925--Alma vs. ? lost Class B

1926--Alma vs. Bassett 23-26 Class I (Championship finals)

In the 1924 game, Harold didn't score playing as a guard, but brother Dale had five points. In 1926, after the last game, classmate Onnie Ault recalls Harold saying that "I'll wear a basketball uniform again!" Reflecting back after his career in coaching, Mr. Bogel called Harold "probably the best natural athlete I ever saw."

In those days in rural Nebraska children started school whenever the local teacher accepted them. The Bauer children, being accepted early, all graduated from High School at a young age. Harold managed to accumulate 29 A's and 3 B's at Alma H. S.

## US Naval Academy - Annapolis

As graduation neared Harold set his sights on the US Naval Academy and became the only one of the older children to enter college directly after High School. In order to test for the appointment he was excused from school for 10 days. He spent every hour studying text books and old exams. His efforts won him a ranking of 3rd alternate which was eventually enough for him to secure a slot in the entering class at Annapolis. He was thus unable to help Dale and Lucile, but the free education was a blessing. He was nominated by the Hon. A. C. Shallenberger (Neb) and entered the Academy on 22 Jun 1926.

Plebe Bauer started with a full head of steam. That summer he was on the boxing and track teams. As school started in the Fall, he tackled not only his books, but also Plebe football, basketball, and lacrosse. Harold did find life a little harder here, especially on the football field. In one letter home he stated that "I didn't know what football was until I started the season here. It sure is a big, bad, rough game. I twisted an ankle, two knees, a neck, and captured a charley-horse. But I'm still going strong." He won football awards for "Backfield Play" and "Place and drop kicking" and was Captain of the basketball team. At the end of his first year he stood 56th in his class of 528. The USNA year book, The Lucky Bag, is of great interest as it describes each football game, and some basketball games, in

some detail. During his three varsity years, he was mentioned and pictured often. His sophomore year proved that his academic and athletic achievements were no fluke. In each of his first two football games (W. Va. & Drake) he helped the team win by throwing touchdown passes. The 5th game (Penn) is still remembered by sister Erma as she and her parents listened to the game on nationwide radio. It was a 6-6 tie in the 4th quarter, Mom Bauer was screaming into the radio, and Dad Bauer almost swallowed his cigar as they heard the play, described in The Lucky Bag as follows:

"A Navy end-run was underway. The figure carrying the ball ran wide, left his interference, swerved back, paused, and threw the ball. That figure was Art Spring. The ball spun through the air. Far down the field eight eager hands reached desperately for it. It touched fingertips, balanced there, and settled into the arms of Joe Bauer, who left all pursuers and carried it the length of the gridiron for a touchdown. Thus Navy broke the tie and won the game with a single perfectly executed play."

A picture of Joe (Harold) scoring was featured at the head of the page. The football season that year ended with a 33-6 win over Loyola by a "Bauer-led team." The basketball entries that year describe Joe as "a youngster who gave Smitty a scrap all season for the center job, and from whom much is expected in the future."

It is about this time that Harold picked up his nickname and began his road to fame. In his early days at the USNA he picked up his first one. At the urging of the preacher in Alma, he went to chapel regularly. At the Academy, the Chaplain was kindly referred to as "Holy Joe" and Harold soon became "another Holy Joe." Being from the wild, western state of Nebraska, and having a square-jawed, dark complected appearance, he delighted in telling people that he was part Indian. He soon was called "Indian Joe." After his exploits in the Penn game on national radio, papers across the country carried the story and Indian Joe Bauer was widely known. From then on, he went by Joe, even to his family. He played basketball that Winter and lacrosse in the Spring, with his studies not much impaired. He ranked 16th of the remaining 457 members of his second year class at Annapolis.

Joe's Junior year was not much different as he successfully furthered his career and fame. In football he was noted for his all-around abilities. He ran, passed, drop-kicked, quick-kicked, blocked, and recovered fumbles at key moments. By now, brother Dale was a sophomore and joined him as a varsity football player in the Navy backfield. For the next two years they would be the only two brothers in Navy history to play side-by-side. Dale's career was cut short by a broken arm in the victory over Georgetown (1931). June, 1929, found Joe's class with 416 members, of which he ranked 54th.

In his senior year, the football team again had high hopes with many highly regarded players on the team and the usual enthusiastic regiment (student body) behind it. Among the stars would be "Joe Bauer, playing any backfield position as if he were made for it." This would be his third year starting at fullback. As in other years, Joe (#33) did not disappoint anyone. Even though Grantlin Rice's prediction of a perfect season fell through, the Navy men were proud. After football that year, Joe dropped off the basketball team and didn't go out for lacrosse. He realized that his grades were slipping and that his education was of the utmost importance. Thus, he spent less time with the ball and more time with the books in Room 5207, Bancroft Hall. This year he ranked 135th of the graduating 405. Here lies a very important insight to the Bauer ethic. Joe will always be remembered as an outstanding and successful athlete. An article on the great history of the Army-Navy game in the "Saturday Evening Post" (11-26-55) featured him with the likes of Army's Doc Blanchard and the career of Indian Joe Bauer had been followed since the 1927 Penn game.

After his last collegiate game, Joe got a letter from Adm. Delano, Comm. of the Navy, congratulating him on his outstanding career and his "contribution to the cause of good football at the Naval

academy." He also praised him for his great sportsmanship that was frequently shown, even when his team-mates did not share in his desire to give Dartmouth a cheer after the Navy victory.

Still, when the grades were less than the best, he put sports aside to bear down on the most important task. A few years later, when younger brother John was a Plebe, a substitute end on the football team, and a week behind in his studies, Joe had a little talk with him. "Don't be a bilged-out athlete! Get your degree!" John dropped sports, graduated, and became the first member of his class to command a ship (submarine Corps).

## **Marine Corps**

Ensign Harold W. Bauer graduated from the Naval Academy at Annapolis on 5 Jun 1930. He selected the Marine Corps over the Navy (thus changing to 2nd Lieutenant) as he suspected that his chances of playing football would be better. He was right. After completing Student Basic School in Philadelphia, he was assigned as a Company Officer with the 1st Battalion, 6th Marines at Quantico, Va. One of his duties here was to coach and star on the famed Quantico teams of 1931 & 1932. Wearing # 66, he also played on the Corps service team and went to the "President's Cup" games at Griffith Stadium in Wash. DC. These games pitted the best of the Marines against the best of the Navy for a trophy presented by the President of the United States.

He did not leave the academic life behind. In the fall of 1931 he applied for and received permission from the Corps to compete for a Rhodes Scholarship. If he ever did is unknown, but it is obvious that he did not gain one.

In December, 1932 the Superintendent of the Naval Academy requested the services of 2nd Lt. Bauer to act as an assistant basketball coach. He spent two Springs at the USNA as an assistant basketball and lacrosse coach and as a marksmanship instructor. Somehow he found time to sharpen his golf game to a scratch level and was rumored to have beaten Sam Snead in a casual round. He was club champ at least once at Quantico. His father was known, when playing with him, to call friends over from adjacent fairways to meet his famous son. It was also during this tour that "the Coach" met the beautiful Harriette Hemman, whom he married on Dec. 1, 1932. What a couple they were! Sister Erma remembers that they were always the best dancers and at the center of all the social fun--an All-American combination of star athlete and beauty queen.

## **Aviator**

In June, 1933, Joe and Harriette transferred to San Diego and Joe decided that aviation was his calling. His first request for training was denied as Joe had not completed the required sea duty. His next assignment, on the Cruiser "USS San Francisco," qualified him and the Bauers left for Pensacola (Fla.) Naval Air Station Training Center in December, 1934. The training in those days was taken in Curtiss, Boeing, and Grumman bi-planes.

Athletics were still in the picture as Joe stayed active with the Marine football team. In Jan. 35 he received the following from Capt. Zogbaum, Comm. Nav. Air Station, Pensacola, Fl:

### STATION MEMORANDUM No. 564

*SUBJECT: Showing of football team in Miami, Fla.*

*1. The Commandant wishes to express his admiration and thanks for the splendid spirit displayed by the officers and men who comprised the football squad which went to Miami to play the Army.*

2. *Your sportsmanship was of the highest quality and your conduct before, during and after the game was commented upon favorably by those with whom you came in contact.*

3. *The victory, the spirit displayed and your exemplary conduct should be a matter of as great satisfaction to you as individuals as it is to me. My hearty congratulations.*

*TO: 1st. Lt. H.W.Bauer, USMC*

*The Athletic Officer desires to add his congratulations and appreciation for the part that you played not only in the Miami trip, but throughout the season.*

*Lt. Com. W.M. Dillon, USN  
Athletic Officer*

In the hot August of 1935, Joe was visited by his parents and baby sister Erma and Harriette discovered that she was pregnant. Of all Joe's accomplishments, his sports fame, or his national renown, Joe was most elated by the birth of his son, William Dale, on March 3, 1936. On the first day he was bragging over the chin dimple, the dark curly hair, and the complexion that made him look so much like Daddy. Billy was to remain the apple of his father's eye. It was only two months later that the new family of three headed back to Quantico for another tour, this time as an aviator.

The following was written to his sister Erma, the day young Billie was born:

*1401 E. Cervantes  
Pensacola, Fla.  
3/ 3/ 36*

*Aunt Erma-*

*Just a note to let you know that Billy has arrived finally and that Harriette, as well as the Baby, are doing nicely. He was born at 10:10 this morning. Weighed 10 lbs. and is 22 1/2 in. long. His hands and feet are like an elephant's!*

*He looks just like me. Has a dimple in his chin and short curly dark hair. He'll be dark complected, too. Harriette had a fairly easy time, thanks to Dr. Bell. She didn't tear the least bit.*

*Please write to her. She has been so weary and exhausted the past two months. She has undoubtedly neglected all of her correspondence.*

*Be good--  
"Joe"*

*P.S. I ought to finish up down here in about 3 weeks. Am trying to get an extra month due to Baby and Harriette. How's it feel to be an Aunt? It sure feels great to be a daddy--*

The military now had a new fighter plane, the mono-winged Brewster F2a Buffalo, which later proved to be a flying coffin in combat with the Japanese Zeroes. Joe quickly showed his mastery of the air, just as he had done on the ground. Late in 1939, the services began taking delivery of an even better fighter, the Grumman F4F Wildcat.

In June, 1940, the Bauers transferred to San Diego for Joe to take a job as a Fighter Squadron Officer. Capt. Bauer was already known around the Corps for his skill in the cockpit and as a leader of men. He also proved to be an excellent teacher and spent his time flying from the base in San Diego and on carrier exercises on the "Lexington" and the "Saratoga." To this point, life must have been

quite nice for the Bauer family of three. (While at Quantico, he flew in exercises in Puerto Rico and the Caribbean, and air races in Cleveland, Oh. and Miami, Fl.)

## WAR

1941 found war in Europe and things looked ominous in the Pacific. In the Fall, Joe had Erma cancel her plans to join them in San Diego for her Christmas break as he didn't think he or his men would be there. The following would change his life:

*WING MOVEMENT ORDER-CONFIDENTIAL December 3, 1941*

*NUMBER 1--1941*

*1. In accordance with the directive contained in reference (a), Marine Fighting Squadron Two Two One, Maj. Verne J. McCaul, USMC Commanding, will embark in USS Saratoga at San Diego, Cal., on or about December 7, 1941, as directed by the commanding officer of that vessel, for transportation to Pearl Harbor, T.H. Upon arrival VMF 221 will report to the Comm. Off., Marine Aircraft Group 21, 2nd. MAW, Fleet Marine Force, for temporary aviation duty beyond the seas.*

*Lt. Col. W.G. Farrell USMC*

On Dec. 7, 1941, hell broke loose as the Japanese destroyed the major part of our Pearl Harbor Fleet and began the siege that was to give them Wake Island. Luckily, our aircraft carriers were out on maneuvers at the time. Executive Officer Capt. Bauer and his men of Marine Fighting Squadron 221 were immediately ordered on 8 Dec 1941 to sail from San Diego to Pearl on the "Saratoga," with Joe scheduled to become a Squadron Commander. The "Saratoga", on the 7th, had her planes aboard but their guns had not yet been installed. A shipmate (Leroy Preston) recalls that "the ship was literally wall to wall ammo and supplies. 5" shells filled the halls and compartments with only a narrow path to walk between them. Had we been hit, we would still be in the air today! As we approached Wake, the landing nets had been readied when the ship turned and headed for Midway."

When the devastation at Pearl became apparent, the "Saratoga" was sent to the still-under-siege Wake Island. The plan was for Bauer's Brewster fighters to reinforce the dwindling number of VMF 211's Grummans defending the atoll, but when the following was received the relief force on the "Saratoga" was halted short of Wake.

*UNITED STATES PACIFIC FLEET-AIRCRAFT  
BATTLE FORCE CARRIER DIVISION ONE  
USS SARATOGA, Flagship December 15, 1941*

*To: Commanding Officer, VMF 221  
Subj: Temporary Duty*

*1. In accordance with oral instructions received this date from the Commander-in-Chief, Pacific Fleet, Marine Fighting Squadron 221, Maj. McCaul, Commanding, will embark in the USS SARATOGA and the USS TANGIER as directed for transportation to MIDWAY ISLAND, for temporary duty beyond the seas.*

It had been decided that the few American carriers and aircraft available were too valuable to risk in the defense of the Island. The garrison there would be left to its fate: "Saratoga" would reverse

course and deliver VMF 221 to Midway instead. This would soon leave us with Midway and the Marine airfield at Ewa, Oahu, as our only remaining footholds in the Pacific.

Severely depressed at the thought of dying in the defense of a lost cause, Joe wrote his wife:

VMF 221 Care Fleet PO  
Pearl Harbor T. H.  
Dec 24

*Dearest Little Family,*

*I hope you got my last letter, but in case you didn't here comes another one. I don't think there is much doubt that you and Billy will soon be on your own. Please don't take it too hard. Buckle down and face it as inevitable, any way so what? You might as well move to Waco until the war is over, and then do whatever you like. Try to get some sort of a job to keep yourself occupied. Raise Billy to be a man and not a Mama's boy. Make him earn money as soon as he is physically capable. That is very important! Write the Readers Digest and other magazines telling change of address. Clean up the business in Los Angeles and move out with a clean slate. Vmail will be blacked out until the end of the Jap-US war. I haven't opened your Christmas Gift, but will do so when the time comes. Only wish I could be home to enjoy Billy's expressions. God Bless his little heart. I am glad he inherited your good features and not my bad ones. Take care of the insurance, and it will take care of you. If you need legal advice in settling your affairs don't hesitate to get it.*

*Be careful they do not take you for a ride. You have been the most wonderful little wife any man could ask for, and have been forced to put up with a very disagreeable husband. Please forgive all of this as I really love you and Billy with all my heart. Dolly, you have had to put up with a lot of grief in your life due to certain fatal mistakes. Do try to keep Harriette from making similiar ones. I trust she has learned from your experiences though. You have been a big help to us and I want to tell you how much we appreciate all you have done. Pass the word on to Mama and Dad how much I have loved them and how I hope they can iron out their difficulties and spend the rest of their lives in complete happiness.*

*Please keep in close touch with them because they want to watch Billy grow and follow his career. Notify Dale, Jean, Lucile, Tommy, Erma, John, and Peggy that I was thinking of them until the last. War is a hell of a thing to face, but as long as we must face it, we certainly want to do our share. We have but one life to give to our Country and loved ones, etc. The Crosswaits have been just like family to me and I want them to know how awfully much I appreciate all their generous hospitality and services. I only wish I could go to my grave knowing I had lived a more generous and servicable life.*

God bless you all,

signed: Harold W. Bauer

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24 Dec VMF 221

*Dearest-- Just a note to let you know that everything is OK and should remain so for a while at least. The original plan didn't go through for some reason or another so we will take over another task of similar nature. They say swimming is better at our new post and that should help break the monotony as I have always said we deserve the very best. Nothing half way for us. If you have been writing,*

*which I am confident that you have, your letters will catch up with me in a couple or three weeks. It is hard to say how often the mail run will take place, but you have my assurance that you will get your share. By the way, have had my hair cut short. You should see your Daddy, Billy. Will open your presents, wish all of you a Merry Xmas.*

*Yours forever,  
H. W. Bauer*

Bauer and VMF 221 arrived at Midway on Christmas day, 1941. After a few weeks of preparing for battle, Bauer -- now a Major -- was recalled to Hawaii to take command of VMF 212, the squadron destined to be the first Marine Fighter Unit to reach the South Pacific.

After the attack on Pearl Harbor in December, 1941, the Japanese ruled the Pacific Basin. In the air they had planes of superior performance, greater numbers, and more pilots with more training. Their Navy boasted a similar advantage in numbers, training, and support. Their nation was proud, their soldiers zealous, and their military successes seemed unending. Their conquest of the islands in the Pacific continued without defeat to the Southeast. In advancing past the Solomons east of New Guinea into the Coral Sea they met the US Navy and were held off. The Japanese Navy then sent the bulk of its forces toward the island of Midway in the Hawaiian chain. Here they were again repelled, leaving the US and Japanese fleets precariously equal. Air strength was still with the enemy. It would be the Spring of 1942 before the US could gather enough planes and pilots and ground personnel to build a force that could counter the Japanese attackers in a long, arduous war. Until then, the Marines rapidly organized squadrons and set up a command system to try to retake the offensive. Intensive training began at Midway and Ewa Field (pronounced Evva) in order to transform the onslaught of green Lieutenants into combat pilots. Joe was instrumental in these efforts before and after he was transferred to Hawaii for VMF 212 duty.

**The next two months will be in Joe's words from his war diary:**

*"Here we go --*

*On December 1st, 1941, I was enjoying the serenity around and about Southern California, having been ordered there from the Hawaiian area to form a new VF squadron (VMF-221). I was the Executive Officer of this squadron and well pleased with my duties and especially so with my commanding officer, one V. J. McCaul, and the rest of our pilots.*

*True, we never doubted for a minute that we would eventually be at war with somebody, but, somehow we felt that it just couldn't happen till the summer of '42. We also felt quite certain that we were going to be allowed to be with our families for several more months before any emergency might arise to drag us away. The USS Saratoga was scheduled to leave San Diego for Honolulu about 9 Dec. and so far we were not included on her passenger list.*

*About that time, the lid blew off! We received orders to go to Honolulu on 8 Dec. aboard the USS Saratoga. That gave us exactly one week to get our personal affairs squared away, get our squadron gear together, and get packed. It was a very hectic week, I can assure, and as you no doubt remember, was climaxed by the news that Japan make a surprise attack on Oahu.*

*We were now at war with the Axis Powers and no foolin! It was no picnic saying goodbye to the wife and kid feeling all the time that I might very readily never see them again.*

*The USS Saratoga was accompanied by 3 old type Destroyers for our trip to Honolulu and you can believe me when I say they were of little or no comfort to us onboard the Sara. I, for one, expected a big explosion from an enemy torpedo almost continually. We zig-zagged all the way out and were met by a small task force a day or so before arriving -- Now we began to feel a little more safe. The radio aboard the Sara was quite a drawing card. Each news broadcast found a large crowd of wishful thinkers several deep around it. We heard of our ships being torpedoed in the Pacific -- we even heard that the Sara had been sunk.*

### **[Pearl Harbor]**

*We pulled into Pearl Harbor about 16 Dec. and saw the sight of our lives. We were stunned at the severity of the damage accomplished by the Japs. Imagine seeing 6 or 8 Battleships either capsized or sitting neatly on the bottom of the harbor, 2 or 3 cruisers in the same fix, destroyers and other ships destroyed, hangars burned, and airplane remains littered about like a junk heap.*

*Needless to say -- the attack on Pearl Harbor was the trickiest, craftiest, most successful attack in Naval history and should rightfully go down as the most horrible defeat from a materiel point of view that any Navy ever suffered. Of course, we give the Japs credit for their cunning plans, their courage in carrying them out, but we can't help resenting the advantage they took of us. They say all is fair in love and war but I for one want the future generations of Americans to feel proud that their forefathers fought clean from the start and kicked the hell out of the dirty little yellow b\_\_\_\_\_ without striking a single blow below the belt or from behind the other fellow's back.*

*We heard numerous hair raising stories about the attack and these facts will no doubt find their way into book form sooner or later. When we first set foot on dry land we could hear anything we wanted to listen to -- quite a bit of which could be traced to certain individuals imagination. One thing was certain -- the Japs pulled a real surprise and carried it out practically unopposed. Hence the destruction. It is a shame they got away with it -- but why shouldn't they? We were at peace with Japan and they had envoys in Washington for that purpose -- a perfect set up for just what they did. It will prolong the war and no doubt be the underlying cause of early American setbacks in the Pacific.*

### **[Bound for Wake]**

*Other news we received upon landing at Pearl Harbor -- namely, that we were to go to Wake, sorta stunned me. I felt very sorry for the Marines at Wake and wanted to go to their aid but at the same time I could see the futility of it all. Wake would fall to the Japs whenever they wanted to make the necessary effort. It could not be protected by our surface vessels due to its distance from Pearl Harbor. We felt the Wake Garrison should be evacuated rather than send more lambs to the slaughter. Wake or any small Pacific Island cannot accomodate the necessary force for self protection. The capture of Wake proved very costly to the Japs largely due to the state of training of its defenders and their never to be forgotten courage.*

*We left Pearl Harbor aboard the USS Saratoga bound for Wake feeling that we were to be sacrificed but we were determined to do our bit for our country and were proud to be able to serve her even for such a small thing as Wake Island. The general frame of mind then was that we knew it was curtains but we felt a sense of pride in our position for being called on to aid the gallant defenders of Wake and were completely resigned to our fate.*

## **[Midway Duty - Early 1942]**

*Our task force reached the vicinity of Wake just before the final attacks and then quite by surprise we were ordered to abandon the mission. We were then dropped off at Midway, arriving there on Xmas day. Needless to say the Marines and other inhabitants of Midway considered our arrival as the best Xmas present they had ever received. They knew that if two fighters could accomplish what they did at Wake that there was great possibilities for a complete squadron.*

*The accommodations at Midway were scarcely what one might call adequate -- so it was several days before we could say that we were settled. When settled we lived in underground shelters of sturdy construction and were quite comfortable living with from four to six pilots per shelter.*

## **[Food and Water]**

*Our food was never particularly good but our appetites never diminished on that account. The general idea was to eat two meals per day -- one at 0900 and one at 1500. This wasn't a bad set up at all and I don't recall of having heard any complaints. The food itself was adequately composed of starches and this type of menu sticks to the ribs. The water situation wasn't what I'd call encouraging. Fresh water was scarce and had a bad taste due to its storage in wooden tanks and its being transported from one island to the other in metal tanks on barges. Salt water was used for bathing, washing, & flushing of toilets. A heater was finally installed so, before I left, we had hot salt water for showers. (Not too bad for duty in the field!)*

## **[Operations]**

*Operating conditions are ideal. There is unlimited space for flying, no one to interfere, and a grand airdrome to use. We made regular patrol flights during the day and training flights of short duration for tactical & gunnery practice. I would call Midway an ideal spot to train a new squadron and truly hope to get back there if I draw a full complement of airplanes and new pilots.*

*The members of our squadron became very familiar what with eating, sleeping, & living inseparable each day. There were no petty dislikes of any kind. A remarkable set up. We held a few practice air-raids to indoctrinate all hands and the results were very encouraging. We felt that if we ever rec'd as much as six minutes warning we could have our Fighters in the air.*

*We rushed work on airplane shelters and had them quite well protected and dispersed. Camouflage was practically impossible. Any disturbance of the natural landscape or vegetation stood out like a sore thumb. The ground defenses were very good as well as quite adequate. We all had a feeling of security and further felt that the Japs would not be able to capture Midway with less than 2 carriers, 4 cruisers, 8 destroyers, and a landing party of at least 10,000 men. This requires a large number of small boats and several transport and supply vessels.*

*The pilots of our squadron had to consider themselves on the alert from 0530 to 1800. He could not be anyplace where the sirens weren't audible nor could he be at a distance from his airplane that would not allow reaching it in 2 minutes after an alarm was sounded. A mechanic was with the airplane at all times and it was his duty to start the engine & have the pilot's flight gear ready by the time the pilot arrived. This way -- there was no lost time. The engine requires about 2 minutes to warm up sufficiently for take-off.*

*I received two good surprises while on Midway. One was concerning my promotion to Major which I didn't expect until the middle of the year. The other was the word to return to Honolulu. Six of the*

*Fighter pilots and 6 of the Scout Bombing pilots received orders to return so naturally there was considerable conjecture over the reason for this change of station. We even let our imaginations get the better of us and thought that we might be going back to the mainland to form new squadrons. Another view point was that we were needed to fill up a Navy Carrier Squadron. Still another was that we might be going to Singapore or Australia. We were really ready for anything but slightly disappointed when we learned we were slated for Johnson or Palmyra. Johnson is even smaller than Midway and certainly less prepared for occupancy.*

### **[Gooney Birds]**

*I understand there aren't even any Gooney Birds -- which by the way offered untold amusement for us on Midway. These darned birds went through the craziest rituals anyone could imagine. Too bad we couldn't take colored movies of their carryings on. The American public would become hilarious watching them. I have personally stood for several minutes totally absorbed in their antics. As a matter of fact -- all the bird life was a matter of considerable interest. There were quite a few different kinds that frequented the island -- each having its points of interest. The Gooney Bird was especially famous for its comical love making, large quantity present, and their graceful flyings. They would make an almost unlimited supply of "down" for pillows, blankets, mattresses, etc. One has to go a long way to find anything as cute as the newly hatched baby Gooney. It looks like nothing but a ball of fuzz.*

### **[Harassing Attacks]**

*I can't say that we were never under fire at Midway 'cause we were on three separate occasions after the initial attack on December 7th. In each case the attack was initiated by a single enemy submarine at dusk. He would wait until our patrols had landed -- then would surface and fire about 7 or more rounds. Of course he at no time hit anything or even got the aviators excited and he had no sooner fired about 3 rounds until the shore batteries were throwing 5" shells right back in his lap. The batteries thought they got one of the attackers but I seriously doubt it. On yet another occasion soon after we left a sub surfaced just before two Fighters were about to land. They spotted him, drilled him with 50 cal., and dropped their 100# bombs. They also think they might have got that one.*

*Oh yes -- there was one more occasion when a scout bomber pilot thought he saw a submerged sub. He dropped his 500# bomb but it didn't explode.*

*I personally believe that subs are being constructed much more ruggedly than in the last war and that in order to sink one with a depth charge or bomb one must come about twice as close as was necessary in World War I. A lot of aviators have just been kidding themselves if they think they have been sinking subs. I'm thinking their mortality rate is comparatively low. This is a comforting thought what with my Young Brother John going into that branch of the Navy.*

*I often think how far I've been since the war started and the little action I have experienced. Me thinks the day will come when fate will make up for lost time. Just think -- from San Diego to Pearl Harbor to (near) Wake to Midway and back to Pearl Harbor. As I say -- all I have seen are a few insignificant submarine shellings and two large bombs dropped in Honolulu.*

### **[Midway Departure]**

*Oh yes -- I forgot to mention how & when I traveled from Midway to Honolulu. A PB2Y (four engined Navy patrol plane) departed Midway about 0630 on 9 February with 12 pilots aboard. We arrived here about 7 1/2 hours later.*

*These 12 pilots were the nucleus for 2 new squadrons VMSB-232 and VMF-212. The breaking up of our squadron was a very sad event. We had all become quite attached to each other and truly hated the parting. Of course there will soon be more divisions for the forming of new squadrons but that still doesn't help our feelings in the matter.*

*We will hold many a fond memory of Midway and the Gooneys. I can close my eyes now and visualize a nosey group playing pitch, Bob Haynes or Smitty striking down Gooneys with a long rope. Lord -- they would do this hour after hour. We all got the biggest sort of kick out of it.*

*I mean it when I say it was with a sad heart that I looked out the porthole of our PB2Y and watched Midway grow smaller until it finally faded out all together."*

### **For day-by-day details of Summer 1942 see Bauer Diary**

VMF 212 (Avation, Marine, Fighter, MAG 21, Squad 2) was commissioned 1 Mar 1942 at Ewa, Oahu, and Maj. Harold Bauer was its first commanding officer. On 6 Mar, the squadron got word that they might soon move to an island near Fiji and began packing.

This order was later postponed and Joe found time to write.

*Portion Address Censored  
MAG-24 Fleet PO Pearl Harbor  
March 10, 42*

*Dear Folks,*

*M'gosh- I am using half the page just putting on the heading. Anyway, it is the address you folks must use to reach me as long as I am in the Pacific. It looks as though I'll be here a goodly time if I can duck enuff stray Jap bullets. I'm due for a change in climate in the near future, but can't write you about that until I get there. We are not allowed the time, place, or composition of any Naval or Military maneuvers. They figure, and rightly so, that the Japs might get possession of just such a letter.*

*You folks have sent me some very nice letters for which I am duely grateful, I really haven't the command of the English language required to fully express myself in that respect. All that I will say is that it sure does my heart good to know that I have a Mama and Daddy who love me and whom I love so much. I'm looking forward to the time when this affair is over with (of course never forgotten) and we can get together for a big reunion and celebration.*

[Censored out opposite address p. 1]

*... hear from Lucile. I hope she is fine and on the trail of a good position which is worthy of her capabilities. I am very proud of her and love her dearly. I want her to know that. How is Terry? Would like to see that little rascal. T'would be nice to get Terry and Billy together for the summer. It would take more patience than Harriette could muster though I am afraid. Bill alone drives her to distraction. Two just like him would kill her. There is nothing I would rather do though than to get them together and watch over them.*

*The mail service is going to be next to none at all where I am headed, so a letter or two a month is about all I can rightfully ask for and expect to get. Have received some grand letters from Erma, and Dale & Jean. Boy, this war business certainly throws things into a turmoil. Hope Dale has sense enough to stay out of it if he can manage gracefully. Two in one family is enough in the front line for*

*one family. John is probably on his way by now. Hope he gets his sights lined up on some German Raider and can unload about three of those fish where they do the most good.*

*Harriette will keep in touch with you, and I too will write whenever I get the chance. Really am a busy man these days.*

Love, Joe

[Postscript by Dad Bauer followed.]

*PS: The clouds appear to be gathering again in the Pacific, but lets hope McArthur can solve the problems arising over there. Am confidant there will be a big change over there, when we get moved over into the right place with force of equal numbers in kind. Taking the picture all we can hope for is the best, and hope that will be good enough. There is a certain satisfaction in knowing that the Bauer family is doing their share in getting the job done. There is no other news here at home other than that Judy ate up a check mailed us by Lucile.*

Dad.

---

VMF 212  
MAG V4  
Fleet PO  
Pearl Harbor

*Dearest Emo-*

*Rec'd a letter from you only a few days ago that really touched my heart and I'm not kiddin'! Thanks so much for your expression of affection and concern on my behalf. It gives one considerable personal satisfaction to hear such things expressed by a member of ones family.*

*You no doubt are not unaware of my feelings toward you even tho' I've never been so bold as to formally state them. I have always been very proud of your accomplishments but your personality and conduct are the things that stand out and mean so much to me. You're a fine little lady -- a swell personality -- and the grandest sister a fellow could possibly have! SO THERE! and I mean every word of it.*

*I truly hope I have never hurt you in any way and if I have I am deeply sorry. I know I have hurt a lot of people and it must have been a complex of some sort with me. I now repent for a lot of my personal failings -- but it is too late I'm afraid. I have hopes, naturally, of seeing all my family & friends again but of course it is far from being definite. I know I shall always be able to come out on top where ability is the deciding factor and I also can have my share of the luck but sometimes the odds are so strongly against you that ability and luck have to take the back seat. So far we have been outnumbered both in personnel and equipment and have taken it on the chin -- but we are due to have our day and that is what I am living in hopes of.*

*I do not want anyone to worry about me as no amount of worry can change my destiny whatever it may be. We must take things as they come in "this here" war and keep our minds open and our spirits high.*

*"Spirits", by the way, is something we see very little of out here. From Dec 7th till Mar 1st there was none and now a person may get his paws on one quart per week. It really is just as well -- and come right down to it -- I haven't heard many complaints. One Qt. a month has always been my quota anyway. Now don't say - "Oh yeah" - cause really - I'm not an addict at all.*

*Well - Emo - Harriette is expecting & wants you to visit this summer so don't let her down.*

*God bless you -  
Joe  
H. W. Bauer*

The 18th proved mentally devastating to Joe in a personal matter. He left his station at the end of his shift assuming that Ira Kiner, group C.O., would soon take over. He didn't and Joe received 5 days arrest and confinement. He was quite embarrassed and feared for his career, but was more concerned with the feelings of Harriette and his men. He had let them down and Bauers didn't ever do that! After two days, Col. Larkin tore up the papers and Joe returned to his duties working with the new pilots and Brewsters that had just arrived. Everyone was anxious to get out and do something in the war effort.

## **Efate**

On 29 Mar 42, VMF 212's construction echelon, under Capt. J. Little, arrived at Vila, the capital of the island of Efate, New Hebrides in the South Pacific, to construct an airstrip and headquarters (code name Roses). On 10 April, travel orders to "Roses" were again postponed and on 15 Apr VMF 211 left for Palmyra Island. New orders came to be ready to leave on the 29th and, in the mean time, intensive gunnery and flight training continued with another batch of new "babes in arms." The 29th arrived and Joe, comfortable in his room aboard Adm. Halsey's "Enterprise," sailed south as part of a two carrier ("Enterprise" and "Hornet") task force with 3 cruisers, 7 destroyers, and 2 tankers. As always, training continued. They crossed the Equator 5 May and the dateline 8 May (thus 8 May did not exist). They soon disembarked and took the Squadron to Noumea because the field at Efate was not yet acceptable.

On 15 May Joe flew to Efate to get the work moving and scout new runway locations. He and two other pilots finally brought in the first fighters (F4F-3s) on the 27th and the 28th saw a free beer party as the new mess hall was opened for use. 8 Jun brought news of the victory at Midway and the arrival of the remaining 9 fighters of the squadron. By 22 Jun, Joe had the 4500 foot runway "ready for anything." He had replaced the metal Marston Mat with crushed coral, a technique that would greatly speed the construction of the several new bases that Joe would eventually lay out and build. He was fearful at first that Efate would become another Wake situation unless this was done. He was "dead-set against bases or aerodromes that could not be supported by several other aerodromes."

This field, our first stepping stone in the South Pacific, was later named BAUER FIELD. During this period, the Battle of the Coral Sea was on and Efate was described as a seaplane base, 4000 foot runway, with 8 OS2U's and 18 F4F-3's of VMF 212, 4th Marine Div. and half of the 3rd Seabees. 4609 Army and 1209 Navy and Marine personel, much weakened by Malaria. July saw the base a little further north at Espiritu Santo completed to aid in our march to Guadalcanal.

## **Training in Aerial Tactics**

Joe's job that summer was to teach pilots, and to build airstrips, and that he was famous for. Tactically, he taught them to attack head-to-head; the F4F had armor and bulletproof glass, the Zeros

didn't and were easily flamed. He taught them to fight in pairs; this overcame the speed and maneuverability advantage of the Zero. He said "When you see Zeros, dog-fight 'em, for they are paper kites!" and removed their fear of being shot jungle down by letting them know that "before you get your feet wet you're in a rubber boat. When you reach the shore the natives will take care of you, and then, in a couple of days you'll be back here." (Over half of the pilots downed were recovered.) His fourth lesson was to start high, strafe intensely, and dive away, the Zekes controls froze in a dive. Bauer also stressed out-thinking the Japanese. They often seemed mechanical in their flying and unimaginative in their tactics, so Joe urged his men to keep thinking far ahead of their opponents, and to use innovative flying to disrupt an enemy attack. Even though the Zero's two 20 mm. cannons were superior in range and power to the Wildcat's four 50 cal. wing-guns, Joe maintained that a Zero on your tail was not a problem. The Jap will open fire with his twin 7.7 mm. guns to line you up, then cease fire and open up with his 20 mm. cannons. This gave you plenty of time to skid out of the way as the small guns were of little effect. He proved that the Zero was not invincible from behind or head-on.

A favorite trick he perfected was the overhead pass -- a bit of aerial gymnastics which was unexpected by the Japanese and difficult to counter. When he had superior altitude and an opposite course to an enemy plane, he rolled inverted above his target and pulled down vertically into the attack. This way, he could keep his opponent in full view while building speed and centering his sights for a lengthy burst, and the victim had few options for escape. It would prove an especially deadly tactic against sluggish bombers like the Mitsubishi G4M1 Type One (later to be coded Betty).

To teach his methods of combat maneuvering, Bauer often went aloft in a plodding SNJ Trainer, defying his students in their fighters to get on his tail or to keep him in their sights. If a young pilot became discouraged, Joe would take him up and explain each of his moves against another Wildcat. On the ground he constantly lectured on strategy, diagramming different tactical situations and solutions on the blackboard, just as in his coaching days. From his days as an athlete, Bauer knew the value of training, practice, and especially optimism, and he continually built his men's morale and confidence.

Throughout the summer Joe was frequently consulted by various Generals and Admirals and his opinions were highly valued in the Theater's plans and progress. On 18 Jun, he even flew a group of Free French Admirals around the base he was so proud of.

In early July Joe scouted and laid out new airstrips north on Espiritu Santo and word came of some enemy activity in the Solomons. Adm. Nimitz ordered Vice Adm. Ghormley (ComSoPac) to secure the Hawaii-Australia shipping lanes from this Japanese advance. Joe's new fields at Santo ("Buttons") were started and would greatly assist the carrier task forces in the area, especially since, on 5 Jul 42, a scout plane came across a new Japanese airstrip being built on an island to the north much closer than the large enemy base at Rabaul. On 29 Jul Joe received secret orders regarding a coming offensive and on the 31st bombers began coming through "Roses" for refueling and arming on their way to "Buttons." On 3 Aug he asked for some F4F-4s to replace his F4F-3s so his men could reach the new point of concern. He spent the 6th and 7th searching for and finding Lt. Massey, who had ditched on the NW corner of Santo (not Santa Isabel as stated in a radio program).

## **Guadalcanal**

It was decided that on 7 Aug 42 a Marine force must capture and complete construction of the airstrip on this island called Guadalcanal. An intense attack overcame the construction battalion and their protective force, giving us the airfield. The dense jungle and the sea to the north gave us a adequate defense perimeter from 10 Aug to 20 Aug while they had no air support. During this period the planes

had returned to their ships and the ground forces completed the airstrip that we would call Henderson Field. It wasn't much of a place; hot, wet, and muddy, with everyone living in tents. On the 20th the first air fighter squadron arrived to defend the area (VMF 223 with loaner pilots from VMF 212 at Efate) and operated between the bulldozers trying to complete the runway. Lt. Col. Joe Bauer was the Fighter/Commander of VMF 212 and played a continual part of pilot training and supplying of the Guadalcanal effort (Operation Cactus).

The Japanese responded to this intrusion with a massive naval assault on 24 Aug 42 and were met by the carriers "Enterprise" and "Saratoga" and their support fleets. In the naval Battle of the Eastern Solomons, the Japanese were halted with help from the planes at Henderson Field. The enemy realized that our air power was of paramount importance and must be overcome before they could regain area dominance.

Our continual loss of aircraft (and theirs) led to a continual need for reinforcements and replacements for our new positions. Late August and early September brought more planes and crews from VMF 224, VMF 231, the damaged "Saratoga," and spares from the "Enterprise." Most of these were Grumman F4F Wildcats, Douglass SBD Dive Bombers, and Grumman TBF Torpedo Bombers. The enemy countered with Zeros (Zekes), Aichi Dive Bombers (Vals), and Mitsubishi Bombers (Bettys). Their planes were faster and had better range but ours had better armor and were more apt to bring the pilot back. Throughout this time, Joe sent a constant stream of his well trained pilots to the island to gain combat experience.

August saw the construction of three more fields and the constant flow of planes on a "Roses" to "Buttons" to "Cactus" route. His role in this and pilot training led to the following:

### **AIRCRAFT SOUTH PACIFIC FORCE**

21 SEP 1942

*From: Commander Aircraft, South Pacific Force  
To: Commander Marine Air Wing ONE*

*Subject: Lt. Col. Harold W. Bauer, USMC Report of Fitness*

*1. During the period this officer has served under my control in command of VMF 212 his performance of duty has been characterized by general excellence. I can not speak too highly of the splendid cooperation accorded me by this officer in all matters referred to him for assistance. He has been instrumental in the selection of advanced flying fields; he has trained in his organization, at my instigation, pilots of Army and Marine Corps squadrons other than his own; he has done many other things too numerous to mention to support and forward the war effort in this area. In short, he has been a tower of strength and it is with sincere regret that our association is temporarily ended.*

*2. It is requested that a copy of this letter be appended to his current record of fitness.*

*J. S. McCAIN*

Frequent air raids from the north were the rule at Henderson Field on Guadalcanal, but a dedicated network of hidden Australian radio operators in the jungles of Bougainville and other islands to the north almost always gave us advanced warning of incoming raids and their size. This allowed our fighters to scramble and gain the altitude advantage necessary to compete with the superior enemy planes. As a result, even though we were always losing planes, the enemy was losing more.

Mid-September (12-15) brought a second major assault from the north, but this, too, was unsuccessful. Maj. Payne and four other of Joe's students had launched from the "Wasp" to aid this effort in support of the Battle of Bloody Ridge. Things were then quiet for awhile with the usual small raids, allowing the men at Henderson to re-plane and re-man. It was during this time in late September that "the Coach" made his first visit to the small garrison at Guadalcanal in preparation for assuming Fighter/Commander duties there. On 28 Sep 42 word was received that 55 Jap bombers were heading down the "Slot" for Cactus. Joe, having arrived that morning on a DC 3, volunteered to fly one of Galer's empty Wildcats from VMF 224 even though he knew we were outnumbered 2-1. He went up and came back with credit for his first kill -- a twin engine bomber. It took him two passes at the left side of the Jap formation but he got the plane probably piloted by PO 1c Yoshikawa Seihachi. He returned to "Roses" the next day. This effort earned him the following:

**UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS  
HEADQUARTERS, FIRST MARINE AIRCRAFT WING  
c/o FLEET POST OFFICE, SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA**

September 29, 1942

*From: The Commanding General.*

*To: Lieutenant Colonel Harold W. Bauer, U.S. Marine Corps.*

*Subject: Commendation.*

*1. It has been reported to me that you arrived at the air field at the advanced base on Guadalcanal, Solomon Islands, on the morning of 28 September 1942, that you manned a fighter plane for which no pilot was available at about 1315 on the same date when the air raid alarm was sounded, and that you participated in the attack against the enemy raiders, shooting down one two-engine bomber and possibly others.*

*2. This initiative, daring aggressiveness and skillful handling of your weapon is highly commendable and in accordance with the highest traditions of the service.*

*3. A copy of this commendation will be filed with your official record.*

A few days later (Oct 3), after bringing three more pilots to Henderson, Lt. Col. Bauer scrambled with Capt. Marion Carl and what was left of VMF 223 and VMF 224 to repulse a raid by Bettys and 27 Zekes. He had a pretty good day. To quote T. G. Miller--"The star of the day, though, was the visiting Col. Bauer, flying with the 224th. He got four Zekes, which, even considering the relative disadvantage of the belly-tank laden Japanese, was a remarkable performance. But Bauer was a remarkable man. Tall and dark, with a slightly Indian cast of feature that was to give him his nickname of "Indian Joe," he was a famous fighter pilot in the Marine Corps even before the War.

A marvelous leader as well as a great pilot, he was worshipped by the younger men, who referred to him as the "Chief" or the "Coach".

In the initial attack by the Wildcats that day, Bauer smoked the trailing Zero, Sea 1c Ito Kiyoshi, then climbed to nail PO 2c Tomita Masashi. Joe was down to one gun out of six and the rest of his flight "all shoved right away, leaving me to play with the Zeros all by myself." He went after the trio of PO 1c Sugio Shigeo, PO 3c Ohara Giichi, and PO 3c Ikeda Mitsuji. Sugio, a veteran, slid out and Bauer went after the other two, getting them both, before retreating to the clouds to try to fix his guns. He was now an ace.

It is noted in his Medal of Honor Citation that he also left a fifth plane badly damaged that day. This was a completely different engagement and probably should be considered a kill. As Joe was returning from the earlier melee, he happened across Capt. Ken Frazier who had been flying with Capt. Carl's 223rd. Frazier had downed two Zeros before his plane was disabled by a third, causing him to bail out over the ocean. As he floated down, he was startled to find a Zeke trying to blow him out of his chute. "My attacker had followed me down and was strafing me in my parachute. After a few seconds of this, which seemed like a terrifying eternity, a lone F4F, piloted by Lt. Col. H. W. Bauer, closed in on this strafing Zero and drove him off trailing a large column of black smoke, despite the fact that Bauer had only one or two guns operating. I made a successful landing in the ocean several miles from the northeastern tip of Guadalcanal, was picked up by an American destroyer two hours later and returned to Henderson none the worse for wear."

Bauer returned to the field and taxied in with his engine flaming sporadically. When he cut the switch, it continued to burn and had to be smothered with fire extinguishers. Bauer was wild with excitement, yelling to his men about his victories. They laughed to see the Coach so stirred up--he was still wearing his parachute, forgetting to leave it in the plane--but Bauer claimed he'd never been calmer. He was still explaining this when a mechanic came up to him and, with a grin, reported that the engine fire was caused by the Colonel's landing in high blower, with the auxillary fuel pump on. (Both should have been shut off below 15,000 feet.) Bauer didn't excuse himself, but joined in the laughter. As one of his men recalled later, "After a fight he was always a little crazy with the excitement....I never saw a man who loved a fight the way he did." He then jumped into another plane to go back and mark Frazier's position until he could be picked up. This feat was to win him Gen. Geiger's Jap Flag trophy for three kills in a day.

## **The Trophy**

On Oct 5th Gen. Geiger presented Joe with a Japanese battle flag, which Joe promptly donated to his Groups trophy room. Typically, he took no credit for what his men had made possible.

The left picture ran in most national newspapers soon after the action, but the press didn't have the flag picture until 17 Nov. The San Diego paper apparently ran a complete article on Joe's career on 18 Nov.

When the flag picture was obtained, the following was issued:

*from ELEVENTH NAVAL DISTRICT Public Relations Office SDMC-7(42) (San Diego)*

### **FOR IMMEDIATE PUBLICATION**

*American Marine flyers at Guadalcanal recently originated a novel version of the county fair game of "Spill the Milk Bottles and Win a Cigar." In the Marine version, Jap planes were the objects to be hit and a captured Nipponese flag was offered as the prize. The flag was taken from the enemy by Col. Merrit A. Edson and his group of Marine Raiders on Guadalcanal. It was offered to the first flyer to shoot down three Jap planes in combat after the day during which the flag was captured.*

*Lieut. Col. Harold W. Bauer, of Fort Collins, Colo., was the winner of the novel contest when he downed four Jap Zeros in one day. The flag was presented to him by Major Gen. Roy S. Geiger, Commanding General of the Marine Air Forces in the Solomons. Col. Bauer is credited with downing 10 Jap planes up to and including Nov. 17.*

*He presented the prize flag to the Marine Corps Museum, Quantico, Virginia.*

Joe's reply:

*MARINE FIGHTING SQUADRON 212, MARINE AIRCRAFT GROUP 23  
FIRST MARINE AIRCRAFT WING, FLEET MARINE FORCE  
EFATE, NEW HEBRIDES  
October 5, 1942.*

*From: Lieutenant Colonel H. W. Bauer, USMC  
To: Commanding Officer, Marine Aircraft Group 23  
Subject: Jap Battle Flag, presentation of.*

*1. Having been presented with a Jap Battle Flag as a trophy for an individual feat while on temporary duty at Guadalcanal and feeling that it was equally deserved by each and every pilot of the group, it is my desire that it be accepted as a Marine Aircraft Group 23 prize and be forwarded to the Marine Corps Trophy Room, Quantico, Va.*

*H. W. BAUER.*

On the 6th, while returning from an uneventful patrol flight, Joe and his two wingmen decided to practice a little dog-fighting and, in the realistic conditions, one of his men actually fired at him! Luckily, no hits, though.

Joe went back to VMF 212 on Efate on 7 Oct as the Japanese began a huge naval and air build-up for a third try at the recapture of Henderson Field and the newly built runway, Fighter One. He found 37 new planes on the field. Capt. Joe Foss arrived at Cactus on 9 Oct 42 with his VMF 121. This squadron went on to some degree of fame, but while they were under Joe's command he called them a "flying circus," a nickname they proudly kept.

### **The McFarland**

On the 14th, Lt. Col. Bauer's 212th was ordered to ferry some extra SBD dive bombers from Espiritu Santo to Guadalcanal, return to Efate, and then bring their entire squadron of 19 F4Fs in. Fuel and ammunition were dangerously low at Henderson but the converted four-stack destroyer, the "MacFarland," was on the way. Fighting began in earnest on all fronts at this time and Joe's squadron was anxious to join the action. The "Hammondsport" was sent to pick up the entire squadron for the permanent move and the planes would follow soon thereafter.

As the planes were arriving and began landing at Henderson Field on the 16th, Joe saw the first black smoke from the "MacFarland," under attack from nine enemy Aichi bombers on Ironbottom Sound near Lunga Point. Her gunners had downed one plane but she was badly damaged and the fuel barge alongside was burning--27 men were dead on the decks. "His gas tanks almost empty after the trip, Bauer set out alone after the surviving dive-bombers. He caught them only a few hundred feet up and, in full view of a hundred pilots on the fighter strip, shot down four of them in a matter of seconds. It was a stunning accomplishment, even for the Cactus Air Force, and was to win the "Chief" the Congressional Medal of Honor. Bauer capped his performance by landing and giving a rousing talk that restored the morale of his fellow aviators." He stepped out of his Wildcat and told the men he had come to command that "Beginning tomorrow, things are going to be different. We have good planes and we can fly and shoot. We'll blast them out of the sky!" The Jap bombers were in a formation that allowed Joe to merely come in from the rear and drop them one-by-one. Three of his victims were WO Iwami Kinzo, PO 3c Tokuoaka Masahiro, and PO 3c Ozeki Mitsuo. Robert Leckie adds--

"The MacFarland was saved, as well as her precious cargo of ammunition. Rugged Joe Bauer, Indian Joe Bauer, one of the most inspirational of flying leaders, and also the pilot whom all Marines regarded as "the Greatest," had brought off the most astonishing single feat of aerial arms in the annals of Guadalcanal. In the words of his adoring wingman, 'The Chief stitched four of the bastards end to end!'"

Joe took over the Cactus Fighter Command on 16 Oct and told his men to "Be an aggressor. You're out there to shoot down enemy planes. Have complete confidence in you armor and confidence in you ability to shoot down the enemy when you get him in your sights!" Joe, himself, was now meant to be on the ground.

The men of the 212th had barely set up operations when, on 23 Oct 42, Admiral Kusaka sent his largest air attack in weeks-- 16 bombers and 26 fighters. "Lt. Col. Bauer, who had taken over as Fighter/Commander when Col. Wallace left, scrambled everything he had, 24 F4Fs and 4 Army P39s. The result was a classic fighter melee. Joe Bauer, an aggressive, inspiring leader, was willing to meet the Zekes on their own terms. 'When you see Zeros, dogfight 'em!' he ordered." Bauer's pilots fought Zeros all over the sky in a classic dogfight, and the Coach's theory was proved correct: Well-handled Wildcats could defeat Zeros in circling combat. The Americans claimed 20 enemy fighters and two bombers destroyed that day, which was perhaps a bit optimistic but very close to the true figures.

By Oct 25th, the two week assault was over and the Japs wouldn't be the same again. They couldn't get more planes and pilots as rapidly as the Americans. Things got quiet again allowing the Cactus group to re-group and re-arm. The conflicting Navies were now fighting the Battle of Santa Cruz, where we lost the carrier "Hornet." Henderson Field, as always, was remote, muddy, and working continuously to keep planes flyable. The Marines, after all, got only the old planes the Navy didn't want anymore.

By November 10th it was apparent that the men of the VMF 212 were overdue for some rest. The men had been living in the feverish heat of the tropics for six months, much of that time in frequent combat. Now, with fresh Marine fighting squadrons arriving on the island, the 212th was relieved and sent to California via Efate. All except Joe Bauer, who remained behind to handle final details.

The fourth and final major assault began on 12 Nov 42 with 23 ships and troop transports roaring down the "Slot" planning to land on the south shore and mount a land attack through the jungle. The 13th saw continual air and naval battles, with the Japanese falling behind our forces. Around midnight, a courageous naval assault by us broke the attack. The 14th saw the men flying mop-up missions as the enemy limped north with their few remaining ships.

Wanting "one more shot at the bastards," Lt. Col. Bauer joined Capt. Joe Foss and Lt. Boots Furlow on one of the last sorties of the day the battle ended. "Colonel Bauer, the worshipped fighter/commander, was shot down at the end of the day. They had provided high cover for the final attack of the SBD's and TBF's. As the flight left the area, the three F4F's went down to make a strafing run on some surviving transports. Then they ran for home, right down on the water. They should have stayed high, but the Coach, as pugnacious as ever, wanted to get a shot at the enemy and yielding to the temptation would cost him his life. Two Zeros attacked from astern and Bauer turned into them and blew one up while Foss and Furlow went after the other (Joe probably claimed the life of PO 1c Matsumoto Sanae). When they returned, the pair found the Coach swimming out of an oil slick left by his downed aircraft. Foss tried to drop his life raft but it would not release as Bauer pointed away and waved him off. Unable to reach Henderson by radio, the two F4F's rushed back at full throttle. Foss immediately fired up the amphibious rescue plane (a Grumman J2F Duck) but take-off was delayed by a flight of incoming B-26's low on fuel. It was dark by the time he and Maj. Renner

returned to the scene and they could find nothing. "Sometime that night Indian Joe Bauer died. The legend that had grown around him in a few brief weeks had helped his hard-driven pilots to surpass themselves when it was so vital that they do so." Accompanying Foss in the "Duck" that trip was Maj. Joe Renner, a well know utility pilot. Before the war, Bauer, Renner, and their wives often played bridge together in California. They were old friends.

The last assault on Guadalcanal was over and the island was ours. The troops that held the island gave the US the ability to turn the tide against the Japanese and regain the Pacific offensive.

Eight days later, in San Diego, the men of VMF 212 steamed into port. Harriette and sister-in-law Peggy were there to meet the ship. This would be the men's first news that their leader was missing and Peggy Bauer relates that the sight of all those men crying was the most heart-wrenching experience she has ever had.

The men of VMF 212 counted 92 planes and 2 destroyers as kills while led by Indian Joe Bauer and had four losses. They produced 10 Aces and 1 Medal of Honor recipient. The Unit also won the Presidential Unit Citation for their work at Guadalcanal. The Squadron left California 7 months later for duty on Midway, Espiritu Santo, the Solomans, and then northwest in our conquest of the Pacific Theater. They totaled 132 1/2 kills.

We now know that Joe was gone that night of the 14th but those he left behind would not believe or accept that. The men of Cactus, with the help of the friendly natives of the Russell Islands, spent four days searching Iron Bottom Sound and the surrounding islands for any trace. They couldn't believe he wasn't to be found. R. Loomis relates that "for weeks after that the pilots sat around at night and told stories about the exploits of Indian Joe Bauer, and they probably tell them still." Newspaper articles in the months to come would always add that they still expected him to "walk in" some day. In a letter to Joe's parents, Capt. Joe Foss echoed this feeling.

Brig. Gen. Roy Geiger later wrote a lengthy recommendation that Bauer be awarded the Medal of Honor, citing many examples of his outstanding accomplishments. "No one in the fight against the Japanese in the Soloman Islands deserves a higher award," Geiger asserted, concluding, "No one surpasses him in ability, leadership, courage, or fighting spirit."

Lastly, in response to a White House invitation for Harriette to receive the Medal of Honor from President Roosevelt, she promptly replied, "No, save it for Joe, he'll pick it up in person."

His cause of death will never be known but I think a safe arrival on land or capture by the enemy can be eliminated. Both sides of the fight were known at this time of the battle to strafe downed pilots and disabled boats with their last bullets as they left the area. Japs could easily have seen Joe's plane go down and closed in on him after Foss and Furlow were forced to leave the area. If, by some remote chance, this did not occur, the shark infested water probably was his fate. The records of the Japanese 2nd Destroyer Fleet indicate an American plane being shot down in the area 3 minutes before Foss and Furlow would have returned. The third Zero in the area that was responsible was piloted by Suganami Masaji, who never returned to his base to claim the kill.

In January, 1943 Dad Bauer tried to find out whatever he could about his sons loss. He wrote to Capt. Joe Foss, who was still on Cactus with VMF 211 and received the following letter in return:

*Feb. 14, 1943*

*Dear Mr. and Mrs. Bauer:*

*Today I received your letter of Jan. 19. 1943, regarding your son, Col. Joe. On Nov. 14, 1942, we had a heavy enemy action up the line from Guadalcanal. All day we bombed, torpedoed, and strafed their ships by air. Late in the afternoon we had several of their troop transports dead in the water. About 4 o'clock I received orders to take my flight and escort the dive bombers to that area, and if enemy air activity permitted, I was to strafe transports. Just before I took off, Col. Joe told me that he was going along and see just how my boys worked. He said that I wasn't going to get all the fun alone, so we all took off. Upon arriving there, we found several troop transports dead in the water and smoking. Some warships were cruising among them to pick up survivors and ward off our air attacks. Tom Furlow and I followed the Col. and circled high above. The three of us circled for some time and watched our planes attack and start to leave. All the surrounding air seemed clear from enemy air activity, so down we came and strafed the ships below. We came out right on the water and headed for home. All of a sudden, tracers shot over my head. Upon looking backing back, I saw 2 Jap Zeros diving on us, shooting. At once, Joe turned and headed straight at one. Both he and the Jap were shooting everything. Then--Bang! And the Zero blew up and Joe zoomed up and made a turn toward home. Tom and I chased the other Zero towards Tokyo but couldn't catch him. Upon returning to the scene of Joe's action (12 or 15 miles due north of the Russell Islands) I was unable to spot him. I saw an oil slick about a mile south of the spot where the Zero had gone in, and upon circling it saw Joe swimming with his life jacket on. I went right down to within a few feet of him and he waved with both arms and jumped up out of the water. Then he waived me toward home. He was in good shape-no cuts visible. I tried to give him my boat but it wouldn't come out, so I gave full throttle toward home.*

*I landed and took off at once in a duck with Maj. Joe Renner. We were within about 10 miles of Joe and it got pitch black out so we had to return home. At daybreak, the next morning (Nov 15), we were on the scene of the Col.'s landing, with my flight of 8 and the duck. The only thing in sight was two Jap planes, which we shot down at once. We searched and searched the area, but no sign of a soul. We sent a plane up that landed and talked to the natives on the Russells and told them to be on a sharp lookout for Joe. They found a Sergeant Pilot that had gone down about 5 miles farther out than Joe at the same time. It took him 49 hours to make the trip, so there is no doubt but that the Col. had the stamina and the heart to make such a trip. So, in my way of thinking, one of the following 2 things happened to your son--either the Japs happened upon him and took him prisoner, or the sharks got him. If the Japs have him, he is safe, in my mind, as he wore his Colonel's bars.*

*The above is as complete as the action really was.*

*To me, Marine Corps Aviation's greatest loss in this war was that of your son Joe. He really had a way all his own of getting a tough job done efficiently and speedily, and was admired by all, from the lowest Private to the highest General. I am unable to express my sympathies as they really are. I am certain that wherever Joe is today, he is doing things the best way--the Bauer way.*

*Please make a copy of this letter and send it to Harriette. Tell her that my first stop on returning to the States will be to see her.*

*I am hoping that some day Joe will come back--I'll never lose hope, knowing Joe as I did.*

*Sincerely,  
Joe Foss*

On November 24, 1942 Brig. Gen. Neal Johnson awarded VMF 212 a Unit Commendation for their efforts at Roses with a special commendation for Lt. Col. Bauer "for his superior professional knowledge, skill, cooperation and leadership in command of VMF 212, and in addition as Air Officer

on the staff of Force Headquarters, Base Roses." The commendation was endorsed by Admiral W. F. Halsey who also praised Joe.

*SOUTH PACIFIC FORCE  
Headquarters of the Commander  
January 23, 1943*

*The Comander South Pacific Area and South Pacific Force takes pleasure in commending LIEUTENANT COLONEL HAROLD W. BAUER, UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS for service as set forth in the following:*

**CITATION:**

*"For his skill, professional knowledge and leadership as air officer in headquarters and as a unit commander. Lieutenant Colonel BAUER directed improvements on the airfield and furnished invaluable professional advice for the establishment of additional fields. He also instituted an intensive training program which resulted in superior performance of his command against the enemy in the Solomon Islands operations. This outstanding performance of duty was tirelessly continued until Lieutenant Colonel BAUER was reported as missing in action."*

*W. F. Halsey  
Admiral, U. S. Navy*

Also in January Harriette was busy collecting Joe's property recieved the following:

*UNITED STATES FLEET  
January 16, 1943  
Dear Mrs. Bauer:*

*I have traced Joe's diary from Honolulu, where it was taken up, to the Office of the Major General Commandant. General Mitchell will attempt to have all personal excerpts copied from it and sent to you and the diary will be earmarked as your property after the war. There are so many confidential matters included in it that it can not be released in its entirety until that time.*

*While there is no more news on Joe, I still feel there is the chance that he will turn up or that word may be received of his having been taken prisoner.*

*My very best regards,  
M. B. Gardner.*

President Roosevelt granted Joe the Medal of Honor and, after correspondance, Harriette received this:

*HEADQUARTERS U. S. MARINE CORPS  
Washington  
Jul 30 1943  
My dear Mrs. Bauer:*

*Receipt is acknowledged of your letter of 25 July, and in compliance with your request, the Medal of Honor and Citation awarded your husband, Lieutenant Colonel Harold W. Bauer, U. S. Marine Corps, will be held in this office for him in case he should be available for presentation at some time in the future. However, an official copy of the censored citation is inclosed for your information.*

Sincerely yours,  
Col. John Dixon

(More on this later)

After the war, the Board of Review, American Graves Registration Service, was able to make a thorough search of the South Pacific.

HEADQUARTERS U. S. MARINE CORPS

Washington

14 January, 1946

My dear Mrs. Bauer:

More than three years have now passed since your husband, Lieutenant Colonel Harold W. Bauer, U. S. Marine Corps, was reported missing in action on 14 November, 1942, when he was shot down while leading a fighter escort in an attack mission against Japanese surface vessels in the vicinity of the Russell Islands.

The termination of hostilities has afforded an opportunity to conduct an extensive search of all Japanese prisoner of war camps and records, and to question returned prisoners of war, but all efforts to locate your husband have been unsuccessful. In view of the circumstances surrounding your husband's disappearance and the length of time which has elapsed without word of his whereabouts, the conclusion is inescapable that he lost his life in the British Solomon Islands.

It is with deep regret that I inform you that an official declaration of presumptive death has been made by the Navy Department in the case of your husband. The date of death for administrative purposes is deemed to be 8 January, 1946, which is the date of the final review of his case.

I realize that there is nothing I can say to comfort you, but I hope you will find consolation and pride in the fact that your husband did his part in helping to bring this war to a successful conclusion, and that the knowledge of his patriotism and unselfish contribution toward a better world in the future will sustain you in your grief.

Sincerely yours,  
Lt. Col. D. Routh

When Joe's name appeared on the official casualty list, people from all over were able to finally send their condolences to Harriette. They came from Generals and Senators alike, but the most touching was from Joe's parents.

Wellington, Colo. Jan. 1946

Dear Harriette

No doubt you will be surprised to note that the Post-man is leaving you another letter from Ft Collins, so closely on the heels of the one you just received. On my arrival home last night Dale's carbon was waiting for me. We had just received our notice from the Government declaring Joe officially dead as of Jan 8th, 1946.

The point Dad wants to put across to you, is that Dad is 100% in agreement with Dale's letter, and unless Uncle Bill Crosthait has a substitute more in agreement with your way of thinking, would recommend you accept it, since Dad feels Dale has shot "The works in your behalf."

*Dale's suggestion to trade in the Dodge for a new Plymouth or Chevrolet is a good one, but if what is not in the offing, the Dodge will still take you anywhere you want to go with dependable tires, and let me add, traveling during vacation time will do all of you a world of good. Dad could elaborate at considerable length why, but the time had arrived, Harriette, when you should do considerable of your own thinking, since you are now the head of the family. A responsibility Dad has freverantly hoped all along that you might be spared. Joe is gone and at rest. Mother and Dad as well as all the rest of us would give a pretty penny to know where he is resting, and the thoughts in his mind while he was facing the end. Why don't we all settle for a last cry and start in forgetting as soon as our love for him will permit. dad does not feel it necessary to remind you that once you are dead, you are always dead to those whom were left behind, and any extended grief undergone by the latter is more or less self imposed and positively wasted so far as the departed one is concerned.*

*This Old world has been saturated with extreme sorrow for the past four years, and to a lesser degree before and since the end of World War no. 2. This combined sorrow has been funneled through millions of hearts, the great majority of which feel they have been handed more than their share, with which Dad agrees, but what is the answer? Well, do not try to figure it out, Dad seriously questions whether any human can give an answer.*

*There is an old Slogan "Its always darkest before dawn" so until this slogan is proven false, why don't we accept it as true?*

*As ever  
Mother & Dad*

Joe's official "grave" is at the Manila American Cemetery and Memorial, Fort Bonifacio, Republic of the Philippines, in the form of a memorial plaque.

In May, 1946, the awards that had been held for Joe, were finally presented. He received:

- Letter of Commendation with Commendation Ribbon
- American Defense Service Medal with Base clasp
- Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal
- Victory Medal
- Purple Heart and Certificate
- Medal of Honor

## **MEDAL OF HONOR**

Lt. Colonel Harold W. Bauer was awarded the US Congressional Medal of Honor by Pres. Franklin Roosevelt in 1943. The actual presentation was delayed until 11 May 1946. Accepting the award from Gen. Field Harris were his wife Harriette and his son Billy. The Medal is currently on display at Quantico, Va.

Being the highest honor an American can receive, the US Congressional Medal of Honor is not given without serious thought and deliberation. Lt. Col. Bauer's case bares this out. Once an award is recommended, many endorsements must concur before the award in presented. Here is the course of Joe's after he was declared Missing in Action on 14 Nov 42.

On 6 Dec 42, Gen. L. E. Woods (Cactus based 1st MAW Commander) recommended to the Secretary of the Navy that Joe be given the Medal of Honor in a one page letter describing his tour on Guadalcanal. The endorsements came back as follows:

End. 1--Gen. W.H. Rupertus, Comm. Gen. 1st Mar. Div.--"Forwarded, recommending favorable consideration."

End. 2--Gen. Clayton Vogel, Comm. Gen. 1st Mar. Amphib. Group--"Forwarded, recommend Navy Cross in lieu of MOH."

End. 3--Adm. W.F Halsey, Comm. So. Pac. Area & Force--"Forwarded, recommend the Navy Cross, in absentia."

End. 4--Adm. C.W. Nimitz, Comm. in Chief, Pac Fleet--"Forwarded, concurring with Navy Cross, in absentia."

End. 5--Navy Dept. Board of Decorations and Medals--"Returned, the Navy Cross will be awarded" would have been the reply had the Board not received a second batch of endorsements at the same meeting that day in May, 1943.

When word got around that the endorsements were not going favorably for the highest Honor, those who loved the "Coach" did not sit still. On 22 Mar. 43, General Geiger took up the fight for his prized pilot, the man he was grooming for a Group Command position. He fired off a three page recommendation for the highest honor available, detailing Joe's career, and even wording the citation. The endorsements came back more favorably!

End. 1--A. W. Fitch --Comm. Aircraft, So. Pac. Force--"Forwarded, strongly recommending approval."

End. 2--W.F. Halsey, Comm. So. Pac. Area & Force--"Forwarded, recommending approval, with change from previous recommendation of Navy Cross, in absentia."

End. 3--Navy Dept. Board of Decorations & Medals--"Recommend he be given the Congressional Medal of Honor."

End. 4--Commandant, USMC--"Forwarded, recommend approval."

May 1943--Frank Knox, Secretary of the Navy--"Approved."

A year later, in May 1947, Joe was posthumously promoted to the rank of Colonel but "that act provides that no person shall be entitled to receive any bonus, gratuity, pay or allowances by virtue of such advancement."

In August 1948, VMF 212 was awarded a Battle Efficiency Pennant for its efforts in the war. Colonel Neal Johnson wrote:

As Commanding General, Joint Task Force 9156 in the South Pacific area, I welcomed with pride and great feeling of assurance for my force, the arrival of VMF 212, in June 1942, on a half-finished air strip. VMF 212 was the first combat aviation to become part of my force and the half-finished air-strip was later completed as a huge bomber airdrome and subsequently named "Bauer Field" in honor of that great fighter and hero, Lieutenant Colonel "Joe" Bauer, who had commanded VMF 212 and who gave his life for his country. The record of VMF 212 in the Solomon Islands operations between August and November 1942, may be equalled, but in my opinion, was never exceeded by any land based fighter organization. I consider VMF 212 to be the greatest and most efficient group of fighting men, of any land, sea, or air organization of any of the three services, to ever serve under my command.

The U.S. Naval Academy also made a place for Joe in Memorial Hall in Bancroft Hall, the students barracks. On May 13, 1951, Room 5207 was officially named the BAUER ROOM and was so dedicated with a plaque. Due to the presence of a bulletin board that can't be moved, room 5205 is now the BAUER ROOM.

## THE USS BAUER-DESTROYER ESCORT 1025

Another posthumous honor that was awarded to Joe Bauer was the use of his name on the new 308-foot, 1900 ton escort ship that was launched 4 Jun. 1957 in California. Again, Harriette did the honors with the champagne, accompanied by 3rd year Midshipman William Dale Bauer. The boat slid down a minute early, Harriette smashed the bottle, and Bill said "Look how far out you knocked her, Mom." The invitation and dedication speech follow.

Major General Clayton C. Jerome, USMC  
Speech at the Launching of the USS "Bauer"  
San Francisco, California  
June 4, 1957

*In a matter of minutes, a hull will be launched. At the moment of launching, she will lose her identity as mere hull. Hence forth, she will be known as a proud Destroyer Escort of the United States Navy--the USS "Bauer." She will bear that title from this day on, as she carries out her assigned missions in the in the waters which cover seven tenths of the Earth's surface. That she will carry out all assigned missions in the highest traditions of the Naval Service, I feel, is ordained.*

*By tradition, Destroyers and Destroyer Escorts are named by the United States in honor of members of the Naval Service who have truly distinguished themselves. In this particular instance, the United States Marine Corps is particularly grateful and honored by the United States Navy in naming this fine fighting ship in the memory of one of our most outstanding heroes of World War II, Lt. Col. Harold W. Bauer. A few moments ago I said, quote, "She will carry out all assigned missions in the highest traditions of the Naval Service. I feel it is ordained." I meant exactly that, for, in my book, the Destroyer Force typifies the spirit of our beloved and admired Joe Bauer, and Joe Bauer typifies the spirit of the Destroyer Force. Both have that will to win, no matter what the odds; the job is to be done, let's do it! The Destroyer Force continues on and on, never replacable. Joe Bauer is gone, his absence is irreplaceable to his loved ones, which is as it should be. But to me, it is replacable in part, in the spirit in which his memory will endow this ship.*

*To those of you who sail, serve, and fight, if need be, in the "USS Bauer," I want you, of the Destroyer Force, to always remember an action which took place in Guadalcanal. I will quote of that action from official records and Col. Bauer's Medal of Honor Citation for Gallantry in Action above and beyond the call of duty. I quote, "While leading a reinforcement flight on October 16 from Esprito Santo to Guadalcanal 600 miles away, the Colonel was about to land at Henderson Field when he noticed a squadron of enemy planes attacking the USS McFarland off shore. Though the long flight from Esprito Santo had almost exhausted his fuel and he knew no friendly planes were able to assist him, he immediately proceded alone to attack the enemy and succeeded in destroying four of them before he was forced down by lack of fuel." One lone aviator, attacking singly a squadron of enemy planes who were attacking the Destroyer "McFarland" and shooting down four. Singly coming to the rescue of another is symbolic of the Destroyer Force, and it is symbolic of Joe Bauer, the Guardian of this hull we are about to launch.*

*Harold William Bauer, outstanding athlete at the Naval Academy, a true leader of men, officially credited with eleven individual kills--the squadron he commanded officially credited with 92 enemy aircraft and helped sink two enemy combat ships. Joe, "as we knew him," was forced to ditch his plane over water on November 14, 1942 after downing two of the enemy in an attack 100 miles off Guadalcanal. He was last seen in the water in his Mae West and did not appear seriously hurt. Days of intensive searching by planes and Russell Island natives failed to locate any further trace of him.*

*As this hull is launched minutes from now and becomes the "USS Bauer," I wish to say that with outstanding Captains, Officers, and Crew, as always assigned to the Destroyer Force by the Navy Department--the spirit of Joe Bauer ever present on the bridge, in the engine room, and at the guns--and with Divine Providence riding at the mast head, this will be a great ship, I feel it is ordained.*

This is the letter that Harriette wrote to Mrs. Bauer after the ceremony:

*Wednesday*

*Dear Mama,*

*Have tried to get this off each day but kept thinking the rest of the pictures would come along..so far, no more. I have no more copies of these..two sets..one for you and one for me. I do have several of the newspaper articles and will get them off to all of the family soon. Perhaps they will send more copies.*

*It grieved me that you could not have been with us. It was the most wonderful experience and such a great satisfaction-as you must feel. That beautiful ship named for our Joe. Actually, the first tangible thing in his memory. How proud he would be. Bill was so very proud. He called me again from the air port before taking off to say again how very much it had meant to him and how much he had to live up to.*

*Bethlehem Steel couldn't have been more wonderful..They took care of hotel accomodations..limosine and driver at our disposal..lovely flowers..and I was presented with a beautiful diamond watch. I took it for insurance appraisal yesterday..valued at 1,000 dollars. It is small, round but large full cut diamonds. Of course, it is engraved on the back.."Launching USS Bauer, 4 June, 1957"..something to hand down to my first grand-daughter! Oh Mama, it was so wonderful. There is so much to tell, I could go on for days. The ship broke loose 1 minute before she was supposed to. Fortunately, Mr. Ingersoll told me I would hear the plate snap as the last hole was burned through. He said, "however you won't have to worry about that as I'll have a minutes notice." As I said, she broke loose, I heard the snap and turned just in time..gave her all I had. Mr. I. was so pleased and Gen. Jerome said.."just like Joe..couldn't wait to get going!" Had such a nice letter from Mr. Ingersoll in which, the last paragraph certainly pleased me.. quote "Once again I wish to say that in all my experience with sponsors, I have never had one who was quite the equal of your own good self and, I am sure, that if a ship ever had an auspicious launching the USS BAUER is that ship."*

*My Texas friends were right at my side and I don't know what I would have done without them. Bill was so dear too. He kept me going as it were. I was determined not to break down..but..would have had it not been for him. He was quoted in one of the SF papers which you will read. When the champagne is broken, all is tense..one could have heard a pin drop. Many tears are shed at launchings and I can see why. The sight of a ship..so gracefully sliding down in the water is truly something.*

*Everyone was so sweet to me.. had many flowers, telegrams from all over, letters from Peggy, Lucile, Erma and many others. Dave and Charlotte called long distance to the hotel after launching. My Waco friends, instead of going away gifts, took up a collection so I had some extra cash to spend..\$150 in all. This was presented the night before I left. This group are my closest friends-5 couples.*

*The night after launching, the Ingersolls took a shine to these Texans and refused to leave us after the reception. Instead, took our immediate party to Trader Vics for a terrific dinner. After dinner he told Bill, his date and Bobby and Carol Crosthwait to go out on the town. He sent them in one of the limosines and told the chauffeur to stay with them all night if need be. He then handed Bill some*

money..5 twenty dollar bills. Needless to say, they did the town and the next AM, the car was waiting to take Bill to the air port...they didn't get in until 5 and plane left at 9.

Mama, this is a garbled mess. I simply couldn't wait another day to get this off. Besides, have an infection in my best typing finger! Should have made carbon copies since I went into such detail. Hon, when Lucile and Tommy have read this, please ask them to start it around. When Peggy and Johnny read it, please send it to Charlotte and Dave.

Bill is in South America. He will return 5 Aug. Don't know if he will come home first or go on to Honolulu. He has a very nice invitation to visit there while on leave. Hope he can be home at least a week! However, I want him to have fun. Only young once, I always say!

Take care, Mama--Love to all--  
Harriette

The USS BAUER was commissioned for duty on November 21, 1957 and her first commander was Lt. Commander L. D. Cummins.

The airfield at Efate has been called Bauer Field ever since the war but Col. R. J. Lynch, Mr. E. H. Reid, and Mr. S. D. Slaughter joined forces to have a Memorial Plaque erected there. On the 3 Jul 1971 the following plaque was unveiled:

BAUER FIELD  
Efate, New Hebrides  
This Airfield is named in Honor of  
LTCOL HAROLD W. BAUER, USMC  
Lost in action 14 November 1942.

During the period of 10 May to 14 November 1942, LtCol. Harold "Joe" Bauer served as Squadron Commander of Marine Fighter Squadron 212 based on this Field. On 16 October 1942, Colonel Bauer performed a feat which is considered by many to be the most remarkable individual accomplishment by any airman in the Solomons campaign. Responding to a call for support from besieged Guadalcanal, although low on fuel after the 600 mile flight from the New Hebrides, Colonel Bauer engaged a squadron of enemy planes that were attacking the USS McFarland. He succeeded in destroying four of them before lack of gasoline forced him to land. One month later Colonel Bauer was lost in action in the Battle of Guadalcanal after downing his 10th and 11th enemy planes. For his extraordinary heroism and conspicuous courage while serving as Squadron Commander of Fighter Squadron 212, he was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor.

## THE PLANES HE FLEW

### GRUMMAN F4F-3, F4F-4 WILDCATS

The Grumman Aircraft Co. began design of a new breed of fighter aircraft in 1937 when it realized that the bi-planes were a thing of the past. The Navy agreed and was ordering the Brewster F2a Buffalo but wanted Grumman to build them something better. In October, 1938, they placed an order for the first F4F-3. They liked the single 1056 hp. engined, square winged monoplane. Top speed was 335 mph, it maneuvered nicely, and could land on carriers. It had four 50 mm. guns (later six) in the

wings, 200 lb. bomb capacity, an armored cockpit, and self-sealing fuel tanks. It had a range of 845 miles and could reach an altitude of 34,900 ft. By Dec. 1941, 1971 planes had been built. The F4F-4 was built with folding wings for carrier storage. In Jan. 1942, General Motors took over the building of the Wildcats under the name of Eastern Aircraft Corps., while Grumman went on to design and build the F6F Hellcat fighter. A total of 7898 Wildcats were built in the war effort, with the GM issues called the FM1 and the FM2 Wildcats.

Some good footage of the Wildcats can be seen in the 1976 movie "Midway" with Fonda, Heston, and Ford. Midway was the battle right before Guadalcanal and the movie seems historically and aviationally very accurate. SBD's and TBF's are also shown.

Although the F4F was our best plane in the early years of the war, it was inferior to the Japanese Zero. Our pilots successes stemmed from superior tactics and better back-up. The Wildcats were eventually replaced by the F4u and the F41a Corsairs seen in "Black Sheep Squadron." Pappy Boyington led this group, VMF 214, a sister squadron of Joe's VMF 212.

## **PREVIOUS PLANES FLOWN**

While at Pensacola Naval Air Station Flight Training, Joe probably learned his skills in the following planes from 1934 to 1936:

NY-2 Seaplane, 250 hp. Wright Whirlwind engine.  
Stearman NK  
O2U Vought Corsair--450 hp. Wasp engine.  
SU Vought Corsair--620 hp. Hornet engine.  
TM4-Hornet powered Martin Torpedo plane  
Twin engine Douglas and Martin Patrol bombers  
O3U's with hood for night flying

after training:

Curtiss and Boeing Bi-planes  
Gruman F3F fighter  
(all the above were bi-planes)  
F2a Brewster Buffalo mono-wing fighter  
F4F-4 Grumman Wildcat  
The F4F-4 that Joe went down in was Serial # 03454

## **COURSES STUDIED WHILE AT THE NAVAL ACADEMY:**

Engineering and aeronautics years 1,2,3,4  
Mathematics 1,2,3  
Elec. Eng. & Physics 1,2,3,4  
English 1,2, 4  
Languages 1,2,3,4  
Ordnance & Gunnery 3,4  
Navigation 3,4  
Hygiene 4  
Seamanship and Flight Tactics 3,4

The students were also rated for Aptitude for Service every year.

During his first two summers, Joe spent much less time aboard training ships than did his classmates. I can only assume that his coaches in various sports (especially football) might have arranged this.

## DATES AND POSTS IN SERVICE

The following addendum is from material received from the National Personnel Record Center (St. Louis). It is mostly detail, but I feel it adds a certain completeness to the story. Day by day, this is Indian Joe Bauer:

Jul 30-Jul 31--Marine Barracks, Navy Yard, Phila. Pa., Student Basic School.

Aug 31-Nov 31--Marine Barracks, Quantico, Va.--Company Officer, 74th Co., 1st. Btn, 6th Marines.

Dec 31-Jan 32--Quantico-Company Officer-Company " D", 1st Btn., 1st Marines.

Jan 32-Jun 32--USS Reina Mercedes-Annapolis--Asst. Basketball and Lacrosse Coach-USNA.

Jun 32-Dec 32--Quantico-Post Service Btn.-Asst. Post Athletic

Officer--(sick, Wash. Nav. Hosp.--11/25-12/21-- broken nose).

Jan 33-Jun 33--USS Reina Mercedes-Annapolis--Asst. Basketball and Lacrosse Coach-USNA.

Jun 33-Dec 33--USMC Base, San Diego, Cal.--Rifle Range Detachment and Recruitment Detachment, then Instructor and Officer School, then Officer-in-charge, Recruiting and Receiving Barracks. (sick, Naval Hosp., San Diego. 12/11-1/3, broken nose).

Jan 34-Sep 34--Marine Detachment USS San Francisco (based San Diego)-Detachment Officer.

Sep 34-Nov 34--San Diego--Company Officer and Instructor.

Jan. 25, 1935--COMMISSIONED 1st LIEUTENANT.

Dec 34-Apr 36--Pensacola Naval Air Station (Fla.)-Student Naval Aviator, then Naval Aviator (Feb 36). Next detachment delayed from 4/13 to 5/11--BILLY BORN!

May 36-May 40--Quantico--Squad. Material Officer, Squad. Flight Off., Squad. Exec. Off., Inspector of Naval Material., with temporary duty at Edgemont Arsenal, Md., Parris Island, SC., San Diego, Cal., (fleet exercises USS Saratoga-carrier landing qualification), Miami, Fla., Culebra, PR., Cleveland, OH., (Air Races) San Juan, PR., and St. Thomas, VI.

Aug. 5, 1937--COMMISSIONED CAPTAIN

Jun 40-Dec 40--San Diego--Squad. Off., Engineering Officer-Fighting Squad. 2, 2nd MAG-exercises on the USS Saratoga and the USS Lexington.

Jan 41-Feb 41--2nd MAG-Navy Yard, Pearl Harbor--Squad Flt. Off.

Feb 41-Jul 41--2nd MAG-Ewa, Oahu-Squad. Flt. Off., group redesignated as Marine Fighting Squadron 2, then redesignated as MFS 221, MAG 21. 2nd MAW, 2nd Marine Division.

Jul 41-Dec 41--San Diego NAS-Flight Officer, then Exec. Off. of MFS 221, MAG 21, 2nd MAW, 2nd Marine Division.

Dec 41-Feb 42--Midway Island--Squadron Executive Officer.

Jan. 6, 1942--COMMISSIONED MAJOR

Feb 42 --Joined MFS 211, Ewa, as Squad. Commander.

Mar 42-Apr 42--Commanded MFS 212, MAG 24, 2nd MAW at Ewa--Squad redesignated as VMF 212, MAG 21, 2nd MAW.

May 42 --Joined Rear Echelon after sailing Pearl Harbor to New Caledonia on USS Enterprise.

Jun 42-Sep 42--Base Buttons--Commanding Officer--location: Beyond the seas. VMF 212 now in 1st MAW.

Aug. 11, 1942--COMMISSIONED LT. COLONEL.

Sep 42-Nov 42--Base Cactus--Special Aviation Temporary Duty--

Nov. 14, 1942 Missing in Action.

Dec. 14, 1942--Detached from VMF 212 rolls to Prisoner of War and Missing Persons, HQMC, Washington, DC.

Jan. 8, 1946--Status changed to Killed in Action by reason of findings of the Secretary of the Navy.

A recent pamphlet published by the Marine Corps Historical Assn. at the Washington DC Navy Yard finally exposes a fact that I had realized while doing this project but had decided not to expound upon. Careful reading of this story will account for only 10 official kills, this seems to be the truth. The count of 11 comes from the report to the Medal Selection Committee from Gen. Geiger when he contested the Navy Cross award (see pp. 38-9). He wrote the final Citation and in his recommendation he mentioned 11 kills. He, like most others, gave Joe credit for the fifth kill on Oct 3, 1942 (see p. 21). The Citation wording could also have Joe shooting down both Zeros on his final day--this was not the case.

"Time of the Aces: Marine Pilots in the Solomons, 1942-1944" Marines in World War II Commemorative Series by Commander Peter B. Mersky note: While this fact was true, he also reported that Joe was part Indian! Such is research--

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