

CAMP BISHAGAWA & Old CAMP KINSER OKINAWA 1958 – 1959

1. We were only at Pendleton a month when we shipped out for the Far East on September 15, 1958, aboard the U.S.S. General A. E. Anderson, T-AP 111. This P-2 ship was commissioned October 5, 1943 and had three battle ribbons for service in the American, European and Pacific Theaters. In WWII she was configured to carry 5,300 troops, and had sufficient power and armament to eliminate the need of operating with a convoy. She had a length of 623 feet, a beam of 76 feet, a weight of 19,700 long tons and a cruising speed of 19 knots. Even at this size, she shuddered in the typhoon we went through north of Midway.

Before “Secure Deck” was announced, I was forward watching the entire bow plunge below the water line, with over spray drenching everyone, even 623’ to the stern! This was my first trip across the Pacific, and it was only when we got to Yokohama, and I looked up from the pier and saw how high the bow was, that I realized what I had witnessed. I had missed this perspective in San Diego because the “Cattle Cars” had delivered us directly to a boarding point at mid ship.

Anyway, when the “secure” announcement was made, I moved aft above deck. The last sight I saw before going below was a sailor in a yellow rain suit strapped to the manual steering wheel. I asked someone what he was doing and was told: “He is the emergency back up in case we loose steam steering. It will be his job to keep us headed into the storm so we don’t capsize”. Oh, good for him! A new friend and former Anderson crew member tells me when the screws come out of the water and start fanning and vibrating in the air you know the bow is a few fathoms under. We were birthed aft and I heard the screws doing this all night.

Later, as we sailed up Tokyo Bay, there was a British heavy cruiser anchored not far away and some Marine shouted out “F**k the Queen”. What a scene! Next, was seeing Japan for the first time. Wow! The next morning I had guard duty 4 to 8 and saw the famous “Land of the Rising Sun” in all it’s glory, as the 12,389’ snow-capped peak of Mt. Fuji turned pink in the sunrise. As we sailed south to Okinawa later that day, I will never forget all the small islands with my first sight of smoking volcanoes. These memories are priceless to me.

I still have the Souvenir Edition of the ships newsletter “Crows Nest” which advised: “This cruise, Voyage no.122, will be the last for the ANDERSON. At the completion of her present journey, which will take her to Japan, Okinawa, Formosa and Korea, the ANDERSON will return to the United States for deactivation, leaving behind her an envious record of service.”

2. Domain of the Golden Dragon. I have never been south of the equator but it was neat to get this certificate for my first crossing of the International Date Line.

3. This was our greeting upon arrival to the little Island of Okinawa, the welcome sign on the dock at Naha.

4. Seven lieutenants from 3/3 stationed at Camp Bishagawa, Okinawa on board USS Thetis Bay (LPH-6), following a training exercise in Japan in the spring of 1959. (Clockwise from bottom left) Lts John Bowles IV, Phil Carletti, Ron Hankin, Robert Modrzejewski, Culler, Belizzi and Howard Lee. Later, as Captains, two of them Modrzejewski (seated on the top right his with his left arm down) and Lee (seated center bottom), would be awarded the Medal of Honor for actions in Vietnam occurring less than one month apart in 1966. Photo Courtesy of Lt Colonel James Ingram USMC (Ret) and *Leatherneck* magazine.

**India Company, 3rd Battalion, 3rd Marines 3rd Marine Division, (FMF)
1957 – 1958**

5. This company photo immediately preceded our tour. Tom Gray (deceased) is the Guidon and Jack Helms is third row from the top, 6 in from the left. Taken at Sukiran, shortly after their unit arrived on Okinawa and a month or so before they moved to Bishagawa. About 7 months into their tour they were deployed to Lebanon for a month and returned to Subic Bay, Philippines to build Camp Driftwood. They remained on 4-hour standby in this tent camp pending further problems in Lebanon. After a month they returned to Bishagawa for the remainder of their tour.

**India Company, 3rd Battalion, 3rd Marines, 3rd Marine Division, (FMF)
1958 – 1959**

6. This Company photo was taken at Camp Bishagawa, Okinawa in 1958. I am in the top row sixth from the left. To my right is Cpl. Al Loreth, our 3.5 rocket section leader. Al remained in the Corps for 26 years with three tours in Vietnam, and was one of the most Marines' Marine I ever met. He is now a retired Master Sergeant; living in Colorado Springs, CO. Al was an important influence on me even though he did not know it at the time. We are now in regular contact and you can read his "Sea Stories" in my Friends section.

7. Weapons Platoon, Camp Bishagawa, Okinawa. Every time I look at this photo, I am surprised we did not take the BFA's off the machine guns. They look so "Hollywood" this way! I am in the top row, second from the left. Cpl. Al Loreth is in the front row, second from the right. My two best friends, Milford M. "Mick" Putterbaugh is just behind Al in the second row, second from the right; and Stephen L. Niebur is in the third row, third from the right. Read more about them in my Friends section.

8. Looking up the entrance hill to Camp Bishagawa in 1947 – 1948. In those days they spelled it Bishigawa with an "i" instead of an "a". On my Okinawa page there are links to several stories of old Okinawa and Bishigawa, along with a current update. Dave Law, a former member of the USAF Air Defense Control Center at Kadena, was instrumental in helping organize these references. Dave lived near Kadena Circle and was an S2 Inspector with the US Army. He made frequent visits to the Yomitan radar station near Bishagawa.

9. This is what the main road entrance signs looked like in 1958. The Marine is Master Gunnery Sergeant Jim Bogue, USMC (Ret) 1958 – 1983. He was then a PFC and a jeep driver at Battalion Headquarters.

10. The Camp Bishagawa main gate at the top of the hill. Note the Marine MP in a helmet and the Okinawan Security guard in a pith helmet. Great photo courtesy of Jack Helms.

11. Here is a view up to the entrance. I had long wondered if Bishagawa was still there. Check the link on the Okinawa page for a 2004 update. One thing you will learn is old Bishagawa is now an Air Force sentry dog training area. I will never forget walking by a dependant swimming pool at KAB and reading a sign on the entrance that read "No Dogs or Marines allowed". And now, to top that, they have let our base "Go to the dogs"! Photo courtesy of Dave Law 623rd AC&W.

12. Looking through the fence to where our camp once was. You came up a hill from the main road and then down this slight grade into a "plain" surrounded by small hills. Our camp was built in this "bowl". Again check the 2004 Bishagawa update. Photo courtesy of Dave Law 623rd AC&W.

13. I once had a sign that said “Blessed are they who run around in circles for they shall be known as Wheels.” When Jack Helms was with I/3/3 they had a colorful guidon dedicated to the Philleaux. Their joke was the Philleaux was supposed to be a bird that flew in ever decreasing circles at an ever increasing rate of speed until it flew up its own asshole.

Another story is the French are supposed to have presented the Philleaux to I/3/3 either during or at the end of WW1. The rocking chair symbolized the unit had fought so long and hard they should rest and relax and not have to sit on the ground. At least that is what the 1st/Sgt. told Guidon Tom Gray when he started carrying the Company Colors.

14. Arriving at our area of Camp Bishagawa with the I/3/3 office straight ahead. I clearly remember thinking this is sure a nice staging area, I wonder where the base is. Still makes me laugh. I was an 0331 so I knew my destiny. All the way over on the ship all I heard was: I’m a cook; I’m in the air wing; I’m in artillery; I’m in the motor pool etc. etc. etc. On arrival the Company Gunnery Sergeant fell us out and announced “There has been some MOS confusion”. All my friends were looking around and smiling at me, like see, I told you so. Then the Gunny says “All of you who have an MOS other than 0300 take one pace forward...Hugh” “You are now all 0300, take one pace back...Hugh” So now we were ALL officially in the infantry with I/3/3. Now I smiled back!

15. A closer shot of the I/3/3 office. In the background you can also see the roof of our first “digs”, which Al Loreth now informs me was an old Kadena Air Force Base storage building. Those of you who ever went to Kadena Air Base or Sukiran know the Air Force and the Army did not live in storage buildings!

16. A shot from “School Hill” over looking Camp Bishagawa. My note on the back of the photo says “T-130 our hut.” At this point we had already lived in the large storage building and a “hut” to the left of this one. This was our last “home” before we moved to Camp Kinser. Jack Helms home, T-120 is the first hut on the right.

17. A face on view of our last quarters. I somehow never noticed the garbage in our “front yard.”

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15 18. How well do you remember your first shower at Bishagawa? NO HOT WATER! Our first surprise was, this IS the base, and now this! Almost a year of ice cold showers before Kinser. I am not sure which was worse, the cold water, or the naked 100-yard run in the cold, rainy winter.

19. The latrine was another nice view from our front door. Remember the “Base Legend” that Habu snakes lived in these pits and had crawled up the ass of some poor Marine. I now think this was a way to keep the small place available for a whole Company – no lingering.

20. “Fall Out” for Inspection Arms. Weapons inspection was a big deal and we all feared a loss of liberty for smallest piece of dirt. And Rust! The only thing worse than a speck of rust would have been syphilis. Many of us used to carry a small paintbrush for dusting off particles right up to the last minute. Also, soling the butt plate on the deck was a “no, no”, especially if it was wet. No point in losing a weekend pass for a dirty butt plate. When I had a rifle, I used to rest mine on my boot until the last minute and then hold it off the deck at order arms until inspected. By this time I was in weapons and carried a .45 so cleaning a rifle was no longer my problem. Note the India Company office in the background. Photo courtesy of Jack Helms.

21. “Move Out” was a common command and here is a great shot of India Company in formation along our short Company Street. We used to run 3.5 rocket drill on the hill up behind the basket ball court to the right. The main entrance road was straight ahead where the “Cattle Cars” lined up for pick-up. A formation like this would either be going to the Northern Training Area (NTA), or

White Beach for embarkation on an amphibious exercise. The field transport packs and duffel bags suggest a longer tour than NTA -- in this case the destination was Lebanon. Photo courtesy of Jack Helms.

During the "Cold War", the 3rdMarDiv was the "Tip of the Spear" in Asia. We were the ready force, set to go anywhere, any time. In 1959, North Vietnam initiated its long-term campaign of political subversion and armed action aimed at destroying the government of South Vietnam. The goal was to unify Vietnam under the leadership of Ho Chi Minh. To achieve this end, the North Vietnamese directed Communist guerrillas in the South to spark unrest. They then started a logistical line of communication and supply through neighboring Laos. This was soon labeled the Ho Chi Minh Trail. To ease threats to this system, the North Vietnamese exacerbated existing political tensions in Laos, by supporting the indigenous Pathet Lao Communists, who were attempting to overthrow the pro-Western Royal Laotian Government.

The United States was determined to oppose these actions. The means adopted was a show of force by the Seventh Fleet. During September 1959, we deployed to the South China Sea on the USS Bexar with a multiship, carrier task force as a deterrent to further Communist guerrilla attacks on pro-American forces in Laos. The Pathet Lao and North Vietnamese supporting forces withdrew and our presence delayed the ultimate Confrontation in Vietnam. Back on Okinawa, we spent the balance of our tour on 4 hour alert. This required everything be packed in our sea bags for storage with a field transport pack hung on our rack, ready for immediate departure. The worst part was the "Cinderella" liberty. No more over nights – back by midnight!

22. Jack Helms and an M-48 tank taken at Sukiran before his transfer to Bishagawa. I remember hitching a ride on one of these beauties at Pendleton and what still sticks in my mind was how smooth the ride was. With that much weight it felt like a limousine.

23. Jack Helms with his 60mm mortar. In 1957 this light mortar was still a part of a Company level weapons platoon. Later they moved to H&S Company with the other supporting firepower.

24. What we looked like at the "Slop chute". I can't remember now but I think a Lucky Lager 3.2 beer was about a dime. This was taken at Olongapo, Subic Bay Philippines on a break from building the Tent City.

25. Notice the sign over the door 60-mm Mortar Sect and 3.5 Rocket Sect. This hut was the first hut on the right as you entered our company area. They had a good view of the parade field just in back. Screen door and shutters too. On Okinawa the shutters were not for looks and during a typhoon they were closed with good reason. Photo courtesy of Jack Helms.

26. Off to town! Jack Helms (L) with friends. Great view of the parade ground to the rear. Battalion Headquarters was up on the hill in the distance. These guys were probably headed to Kadena Circle or other exciting points and activities. In looking back this was the greatest time of my young life and the only thing I regret now was: *I didn't know it then!*

27. Taxi to town! Kadena Circle was only a mile away. Larry Woodfield, a Bishagawa friend, has a son in law in the USMC. His wife was on Okinawa in 2002 doing some work for the US military and Larry asked her to give him some feedback on the Island, especially our old "Stomping ground". She tells me through Larry that Kadena Circle is now a large city and the whole place is an Interstate traffic jam. Worst of all the cab drivers in Kadena Circle had never heard of Camp Bishagawa.

28. A street scene in Kadena Circle. Bars, bars, bars and more bars. Also, hock shops, restaurants and movie theaters too. Was there anything else. The girls! And oh yes, those infamous Okinawan drug stores with the large glass jar containing a Habu snake.

29. A couple of young girls from Kadena Circle. And just think, like us, they would now be in their late sixties or early seventies. We were only in our late teens and early twenties, and these gals look a little older.

30. Virtually every Saturday we had a Battalion formation and parade. For some reason on this particular day we did not have even ranks so Loreth told me to "fall out". I got my camera and took a whole series of photos. The following story is courtesy of Al Loreth who also remembers the infamous "March the prisoners on the field"! Names changed to X and XX for obvious reasons.

"Do you remember a Marine named X? He got the clap every time he went out in town. He went before a retention board who recommended he not be discharged. We had a Battalion formation; Lt. Colonel Silverthorn was commanding. The Battalion Adjutant called out, "March the prisoner on the field", The Company Commanders ordered, "About Face, Parade Rest." Drummers from the only Battalion Drum and Bugle Corps in the Marine Corps, then slowly beat their drums as MPs marched X in front of the Adjutant. We all then hung our heads, chin to chest as the Adjutant read the decision from the retention board. Then he announced the Commanding General had overridden the boards recommendation stating essentially that X was a worm with unclean health habits and that he was being given an undesirable discharge.

At another Saturday formation another Marine was marched on the field in the same manner as above. He was ordered to wear a khaki shirt with the top part of his PFC stripes partially cut from the shirt. After the sentence for his reduction to Pvt. was read, the Adjutant stepped forward and disdainfully ripped the chevrons from the Marine's sleeves. I made up my mind that I could not handle that kind of humiliation and vowed I would never let it happen to me." Me too Al! I will never forget those Saturday mornings and I am sure their purpose was instilling that resolve.

31. This photo was taken in Kadena Circle sometime in 1959, in preparation for a painting I had done of myself. The artist used this photo as a guide and my Mom really enjoyed the painting.

32. This photo is courtesy of Steve Niebur. This is the best close up photo I have of me on Okinawa. It was a B&W snap shot that has now been expertly color enhanced by Bill Pattison's son-in-law Augustus Guillen. It was taken outside our hut at Bishagawa sometime in 1959. The laundry girls really did a great job on the starched utilities. We never looked this good at Pendleton!

33. Me, a little out of focus. You can see the back of our rifle platoon huts on the hill behind me.

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17 34. Me in my Battle Jacket outside our second hut after the large storage shed digs. PFC Richard Stasinski took the photo. I know because the next photo in my scrapbook is of him standing in the same place. I still have the jacket and it hangs right here in my office along with my dress blues.

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19 35. Mick Putterbaugh in the door of the Camp Bishagawa PX in 1958. I took this of him going in and he took the next picture of me as we left.

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21 36. Mick Putterbaugh, was one of my best friends in the USMC. He and I went on to serve another whole tour with Golf (G) Company, 2nd Battalion, 5th Marines, 1st Marine Division, at Camp Margarita, Camp Pendleton, CA. Mick now lives in Florida and we maintain contact.

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- 23 37. Another photo of Mick Putterbaugh in front of our huts across from the India company office. Steve Niebur was kind enough to provide this and the next three photos.
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- 25 38. Richard Stasinski. I knew "Ski" was from the Chicago area but I was never able to find him because I had been spelling his name "Stazinski." All it took was a magnifying glass and a look at this nametag. I found him in five minutes on the Internet and gave him a call. We had a nice conversation.
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- 27 39. Jim Myers was another great guy! He had been in the Army Airborne before the Marine Corps and used to tell me about Stand up, Hook up, Check Equipment, Stand in the Door, and Jump!
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- 29 40. Mick Putterbaugh, Leroy Ghekiere and Steve Niebur on our way to Korea in 1959. I can't remember if our field jackets were 782 gear or our own stuff. I wish I still had mine!
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- 31 41. Remember the way we cleaned our mess gear at Bishagawa. Dump, wash once, wash twice, rinse all in garbage pales. Our mess gear hung on the end of our racks. I don't ever recall wiping it off before we went to chow, although I guess it never got very dirty hanging there. And then there was a sound heard only at Bishagawa. You could not see anybody, but there they were, a whole company marching in pitch dark to morning chow. Clang clank, clang clank, clang clank. 100 plus mess gear on coat hangers.
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- 33 42. By early 1959, I had saved enough money for a Hong Kong leave. Mick Putterbaugh has commended me for saving enough money to go. I still have my original orders and the requirement was you had to have at least \$9.00 a day to qualify. I probably had a total of \$50.00 for the whole trip! Here I am standing in the entrance to the Clover Hotel in Kowloon. Hong Kong Island is only a short ferry ride away. I was back on business in the early 1990's and the Clover Hotel no longer exists. I stayed in the Hyatt Regency, and as President of Gray Line I had a complete tour courtesy of Gray Line of Hong Kong. And \$50.00 bought dinner – one dinner!
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- 35 43. Here a few of us are looking though the "goodies" I brought back. Until I dug out this snapshot, I had forgotten how tight our quarters were, especially with the kerosene stove right in the middle of the hut.
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- 37 44. Looking up at Suicide Cliff. I remembered seeing Okinawan civilians jumping to their death on the "Victory at Sea" WWII documentary. It was one thing to see this on TV at home in New Jersey. To be there and see these jagged volcanic cliffs and the actual human remains was a different impression and a poignant scene.
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- 39 45. Me at the base of Suicide Cliff. It is a formal shrine now but in those days the bones were just lying all over the place. I am holding two skulls and another one is on the cinder block wall.
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- 41 46. There were many of these tombs all over the island. Okinawan's had an annual evening ritual to honor their dead. That night I had 8 to 12 guard duty and my post was near all the activity. The procession, with its torches and chanting, was very interesting.
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- 43 47. Me on liberty, on one of the main road bridges beyond the entrance to Camp Bishagawa. All along here was the main invasion point during WWII. A group of us went snorkeling there and the entire bottom was still covered with rounds fired during the battle. There was no other wreckage because salvage operations were constantly underway using underwater acetylene torches. Every so often you would hear a tremendous explosion and then the base newspaper would report that another crew of "locals" had cut through a water proof ammunition magazine and blown themselves sky high.

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45 48. Mick Putterbaugh asked me if I ever went to the Tea House August Moon. Yes I did!

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47 49. A "Salty" group whom apparently does not care they are smoking in front of a fuel tank, which says "No Smoking." Second from the left is Romero and third from the left is Holmes. On the far right it looks like Mick Putterbaugh, but neither he nor I can tell for sure. This was taken at Camp Kinser as we were preparing to leave for the U. S. in Dec 59. We had moved to Kinser late in our tour. My nostalgia will, however, always be connected to Bishagawa -- that is were I "grew up"! But Kinser did have a real mess hall, a library, a great EM club, an indoor movie and hot showers.

48

49 50. PFC Swan, our Company driver. Can you imagine that duty? Driving around the Company CO! I wonder how you got that MOS? Putterbaugh tells me Swan was a good driver but after a "fender bender" he was afraid he was going to be "Run up"! He most likely was not.

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51 51. PFC Bill Pattison shows off his "Salty" Sea Bag. In February of 2005 I got an e-mail from Bill who had just found his photo on my site while doing a routine Google search. We now correspond regularly by e-mail and phone. No wonder we had mosquitoes, notice the screens falling off. By the way Bill's son-in-law, Augustus Guillen did a great job of color enhancing this old B&W snapshot! When I saw it I asked him if he would also do mine shown above.

52

53 52. Romero and Holmes showing off long Johns? I guess they plan on wearing them back in the states? I never remember Okinawa getting cold enough for long underwear!!

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55 53. Corporal "Red" Murphy at Camp Kinser departure inspection. On our first training exercise to the NTA from Bishagawa, he had been in a tree as a lookout and when he jumped out he caught his scrotum on a sharp branch, ripping it open. Almost lost his Balls. He was on light duty for a long time.

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57 54. More departure inspection. The PFC in the foreground got encephalitis at Bishagawa and was in the Navy hospital at Naha for months. When he came back he had lost so much weight it scared the shit out of all of us and made us believers in the nightly mosquito net ritual.

58

59 55. Another photo courtesy of Steve Niebur with an automatic photo date of Dec 59. This was taken just short of arriving in San Diego. The crossing took about two weeks and my record book entry states: 19 Nov 59 embarked on board USNS Gen. D. I. Sultan (TAP 120) at Naha, Okinawa and departed there from on 20 Nov 1959. Arrived and disembarked at San Diego, California, on 3 Dec 1959. I am on the right, LCpl William L. Kuntz Jr., in the middle, and PFC Leroy F. Ghekiere on the left. Pretty salty after fourteen months on Okinawa.

Some final thoughts on Camp Bishagawa: Living in a Quonset hut, cold showers, mosquitoes, the Northern Training Area, Kadena Circle, hiyako boyson, short time, fried rice from town, short arm inspections, powdered milk, 3.2 beer, snails, immersion burners, outdoor theatre – more mosquitoes-- hearing KAB F-101 Voodoo's "hoop" and hit after burner as we answered roll call, wishing I had a house boy, my laundry number K-92, the .45 ACP firing range just over the hill, Saturday parades, the constant tweaking of a junk on the bunk for some IG we never really saw, PT at 5:30 AM and a wish to be young enough to do it all over again.

Some final thoughts on Okinawa: First and foremost the Girls, ALL the girls! Second, how nice the people were. I never had an Okinawan do anything but be nice to me. My memory is of a very polite people to whom we were many times not so polite. Of course, this was only thirteen years after WW II, so with the exception of school children, everyone with whom we were in contact had been witness to, and survived one of the fiercest battles in history. The Japanese had also victimized the population

before we got there, so this would have made them somewhat submissive, but I will always remember them as a very hard working and polite people.

I was too young to appreciate the opportunity and the beauty of this little island! I wish I had spent more time exploring than sitting in a bar. I did go to Suicide Cliff and several other locations but if I had it to do over, I would do some research and hire a guide to explore the island. It could have been very rewarding. In the far north there were still Japanese who had remained behind after the war. They had married into the Okinawan population and were basically farmers. I had long talk with one guy who showed me photos of himself in his WW II uniform and the wife he had left behind in Japan.

On a business trip in the early 1990's I had been to Tokyo, Beijing, Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan. During the return flight to Japan, from Taiwan, I tried to guess which side of the plane would offer a view of Okinawa. I picked a window seat on the right. It was a beautiful clear day and the Captain later announced "Ladies and gentlemen, those of you on the **left** side have a perfect view of the island of Okinawa". The flight was full and I could not climb over everyone, so I **may** have missed my last opportunity to see the most important milestone location of my young life!