THE COCO PATROL

Operations of a Marine Patrol Along the Coco River in Nicaragua

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(*Continued from August Issue*)

The night was spent at Great Falls. At daybreak, I sent two men to Kuabul with the following message for Sergeant Shconeberger: "Am leaving GREAT FALLS for ranch of Augustino Rivera on CASCA RIO which empties into WASPUC one hour above MUSAWAS. If Suma boy you have knows trail to MUSAWAS you and two squads move there by trail. Send boats with Porter's squad by water to same place. Will meet you MUSAWAS tomorrow. Make all speed possible. Distribute load in boats so all will have equal pull and can make same speed. Send following message to CO EASTERN AREA: 'CP CLOSES KUABUL NOON STOP EDSON AND FIVE GOING GREAT FALLS TO MUSAWAS COMMA TWO SQUADS KUABUL TO MUSAWAS STOP BOATS MOVING VIA PIS PIS CREEK AND WASPUC SAME PLACE STOP MUSAWAS SHOWN ON MAP AS TULULUK STOP FULL DETAILS ON ARRIVAL RADIO AT MUSAWAS.' 0530."

We could carry out the mission assigned us easier and more effectively at Musawas than we could at Kuabul. We would be covering three trails instead of one; we were only a half day's march further removed from the Pis Pis area than at Kuabul; we could move more quickly in any direction; and, perhaps the most important, I hoped to find a greater food supply at Musawas than I had at the two houses which made up the settlement of Kuabul. Because we were subsisting Indian boatmen as well as ourselves, our rations were rapidly disappearing. The squad with which I was making this Neptune—Casca reconnaissance had carried only an emergency ration of a can of beans apiece; for our regular meals we depended on what we could find. Beginning the next day (May 9th) the entire patrol would be completely dependent on the country for food.

The twenty-two mile trail to Rivera's ranch was not an easy one. It led through thickly wooded, uninhabited jungle and, like so many Nicaraguan trails, was all uphill and down. From the time we left Great Falls until we came out on the clearing on Casca River we did not pass a single habitation. The trail led across the headwaters of numerous streams draining into the Waspuc so that there was no respite from the hills. Up one steep mountain side; a few steps over the crest; down the other side which was fully as steep; a few steps through the stream at the bottom of the valley; and then the whole process to be repeated time and again throughout the day. My men were not so used to this kind of work as they would be later; because of constant wetting and drving, their shoes were in poor condition; sand and gravel got into them and, in spite of all precautions, their feet became sore. And light rations with no noon-day meals had their effects. Early in the afternoon, one of them informed me that he could go no further, that it was an utter impossibility. He was, in fact, suffering from incipient malaria. I had already relieved him of his pack and was carrying it along with my own. He could still walk and there was nothing which I could do for him. Even when I told him that he would have to go on with the patrol or shift for himself, he maintained his inability to take another step. At the end of a few minutes, I ordered the remainder of the patrol to pick up their packs and to move off without him. Realizing then that I was not bluffing, he decided that perhaps he, too, could manage to go along. But the rate of march was slowed down for the rest of the day.

We reached Rivera's just before dark. Much to my disappointment we found neither horses nor mules; a thorough search disclosed only a couple of pack bulls. However I found the trail leading to Casa Vieja, twenty-five miles or so to the south. I was told that the two hundred mounted men reported there were Jiron's band and that they had left for the west several days before. Aguerro and his group had not been seen. There was a trail leading part way to Musawas. Trading was done at Pis Pis. If anyone ever wanted to go to the Waspuc River, pitpans and the water route were used although there were a couple of large falls which had to be portaged on the way. The water at this time of year was not deep enough for the bateaux which were with my patrol.

Early the following morning we headed for Musawas. The trail carried us away from the Casca River. When it finally gave out, we headed northeast cross country. The going was slow, but eventually we again came to the river. We made a makeshift raft which was not very satisfactory, but it was better than cutting trail through the bush. About dark, we were lucky enough to find two old pitpans with holes in their bottoms which we patched with pieces of an Indian bark blanket that I was carrying. In these, with holes and pieces of boards as paddles, we reached Musawas shortly after noon on May eleventh: I found the main body of my patrol had carried out the orders issued from Great Falls and had arrived there two days before. They were just beginning to get worried as to the whereabouts of my small reconnaissance party, two days overdue.

Musawas was the largest settlement of the Suma tribe of Indians. These people had been the natural enemies of the Miskitas who defeated them, treated them as slaves and vassals, and driven them into the headquarters of the tributaries of the Coco. They are rapidly becoming extinct. They were not excellent river men like the Miskitas, but I found them to be vastly superior in woodcraft and much more useful in the hills. Musawas itself consisted of a collection of very poor huts; filthy, dirty and squalid compared to the poorest settlement I had found along the Coco. The only exception was the Moravian Mission compound. The chapel and mission house were well-built, wooden frame buildings, with good wooden floors and remarkably clean amongst such squalor. The chapel was used as a barracks and the mission house became patrol headquarters, galley and mess hall. The native missionary was in Cape Gracias; I had seen him when he passed through Waspuc. The Indians, themselves, had entirely disappeared, driven

to the bush by the stories spread by the bandits when they passed through. With one or two exceptions, they remained hidden until our Miskita boatmen left us. It then appeared that their fear and hatred of these few Miskitas had kept them away fully as much as their distrust of us. Two years later, after the Marines were withdrawn to the coast, the outlaws again visited Musawas, killed the missionary by first cutting off his hands and then beheading him, and destroyed the entire village in retaliation for having given us shelter.

Here we found some dried beans, a few cattle and the ever present banana. For ten days we subsisted on the three B's: bananas for fruit, beans for cereal and beef as the pièce de resistance for breakfast; bean soup, broiled beef and bananas for dinner; and a slum made of all three for supper. A little real monkey meat—the sweetest and most tender of any meat I have ever eaten —was added occasionally for variety. The monotony of the ration would not have been so bad if we had had any salt with which to season it, but there was not a grain to be had. When Lieutenant Cook finally arrived with rations from Waspuc, the salt sack had been accidentally left on the river bank when the boats were loaded. One with a vivid imagination can guess with what words of welcome this bit of information was received! It was not until the evening of the twenty-fourth that we had salt added to the ration.

I was determined to push on to the west. My first move was to send Schoneberger with one squad to the Pis Pis with instructions to bring back every pack animal which he could find. I was convinced that, with a few good Indians to cut trail ahead of us, we could move in any direction in that locality at a fair rate of speed whether regular trails existed or not.[11] On the same day (May 12th, 1928) I evacuated three sick enlisted men to Waspuc with orders to Lieutenant Taft to send immediately every man of the *Denver* Detachment and all the rations which he could spare.

Schoneberger returned to Musawas on the fifteenth with one horse, six excellent mules, three pack bulls, and all the necessary aparejo. These had been turned over to us by Sr. Nutieros of Neptune and receipts given to him therefor, drawn on the Area Quartermaster at Puerto Cabezas.[12] Naturally the action taken was reported immediately and in full by radio to the Area Commander.

On the same day, orders were received from Major Utley concerning the future movements of Linscott, Walker, Rose and myself. I was instructed to make delivery of the necessary copies of these orders to the officers concerned, who were then approaching the mines and who had no radios with them. In substance they provided that the total pack train in the area should be divided into approximately three equal groups; one to be retained by Captain Linscott, who was to prepare to advance to the west via Casa Vieja; one to be turned over to Captain Rose, who would garrison the mining area and push his patrols and an outpost along the Matagalpa trail at least as far as Cuvali; and the third group to be turned over to my patrol at Musawas by Captain Walker, who would then proceed by boat to Waspuc and assume command of the Wanks (Coco) Sector. Because of his familiarity with the trail and the mines, Schoneberger was given the task of delivering these orders, and left for the Pis Pis at daybreak on the following morning.

The fifteenth was also a red-letter day in that I received my first drop of Quartermaster Funds and was enabled to pay my Indian boatmen the amount promised them when we left Waspuc; also that afternoon brought the first showers which heralded the beginning of the rainy season.

The boatmen were paid a straight daily wage of fifty cents each; eighty cents per day went to the boat captains. This was slightly below the prevailing wage scale on the river, but was a fair salary as ordinarily they would have received no pay for their idle time but only for those days on which they actually worked. Later on, this wage scale was doubled on the mistaken presumption that they should be paid a salary more nearly commensurate with the standard for similar labor existing at home and along the east coast of Nicaragua. At the time, I did not believe it good policy; nor do I now as I consider it in retrospect. There is no doubt that, according to our ideas, these men earned at least a dollar a day. The labor put out by them was tiring and back-breaking. But they were a simple people; their wants were few and were soon satisfied. So long as one had money enough to buy a few leaves of tobacco, a couple of pieces of cloth for his women and a little salt, there was no need to work because money in itself meant nothing to him. After working for fifteen days, Juan Indian had earned enough to meet his requirements for the next three months, so why should he continue to exert himself? By paying him more than anyone else had ever done, we, in effect, lost a certain amount of prestige; we were giving him something for nothing, a thing which he could not understand. Instead of solving the labor question by making boatmen more plentiful and more willing, this increase in wages had just the opposite effect. I firmly believe that whenever our forces are landed in such countries, one of the first things to be done is to learn the existing prices of local commodities and labor, and that during our entire occupation we should adhere strictly to them.

Captain Walker and his patrol, consisting of about forty men and a pack train of thirty-six mules, arrived at Musawas late in the afternoon of May twentieth. He brought with him a new weapon, some of which had been purchased a couple of years before for the use of Marines assigned to mail guard duty and which was then being strongly advocated as the ideal arm for bush-warfare,—the Thompson Sub-machine Gun. This was turned over to me along with his entire pack train in exchange for my flotilla of boats and their Indian crews with which he started for Waspuc on the twenty-first. The remainder of the *Denver* Detachment who were fit for duty—fourteen of them—were already on their way to join me, bringing additional rations. My patrol was authorized to delay its departure, scheduled for the twenty-first, for Casa Vieja and Bocay pending their arrival.

In the meantime, the hundred twenty-five pound field desk containing the radio was converted into two chests by the simple expedient of sawing it in two, and the

(*Continued on page* 60)

[11]FIELD MESSAGE No. 38. From MUSAWAS to COEA, dated 12 May 28. "Am sending herewith rough sketch showing trails this area as explained to or found by me. There are undoubtedly others not shown and with six good Indians preceding main body to cut trail, troops can move in any direction thru here."

[12]FIELD MESSAGE No. 39. From CO DENVER Detachment at Musawas to Sr. Fernando Nuterios, Pis Pis Mining District, Nic.

THE COCO PATROL

(Continued from page 41)

radio was rebuilt so that it could be transported as a unit load on one animal without being too unwieldy. Also my men were introduced to their new play-mates, the mules, and initial steps taken in the transition from sea-going to bushwhacking.

The pack train brought by Walker was made up of mules purchased from the Bragman's Bluff Lumber Company. They were nearly all imported from the United States; large, heavy animals, admirably suited for the work they had performed on the banana farms of the company where the going was easy and food plentiful, but not adapted to the tough trails and scanty forage of the hills. They had been on the trail almost continuously since the second of May, working through rough country which did not offer a chance for adequate grazing. Although two Jamacian negroes accompanied the train as muleros, they were not, in my opinion, worth the food they ate to say nothing of the salary paid them. In many cases, saddle blankets had been lost or had never been used. The saddles were often placed directly on to the bare backs of the animals. By the time they reached me, nearly every mule had saddle sores, and four animals had to be abandoned for that reason before we left Musawas. Saddle blankets were not available but enough sacks were requisitioned by radio and dropped by plane to provide each animal with some protection. A small supply of creosol had been spotted at

Leon's at the junction of the Waspuc and Pis Pis, and a patrol was sent for that for use in treating the open sores. A request on the Area Quartermaster for "BEE" powder to be used for this purpose brought forth many facetious remarks both within the patrol and at Puerto Cabezas and resulted in additional creosol being dropped in canteen lots.

The detachment from Waspuc arrived on the evening of the twenty-fourth. The total strength of the patrol was then two officers and forty-four enlisted men, including one pharmacists mate, 2nd class. Accompanying this detachment was Arthur Kittle, who resumed his status as guide and interpreter. Instructions were issued and all arrangements made to break camp for Casa Vieja the following morning.

Just about midnight, after my last radio message had been acknowledged by Puerto Cabezas, Corporal Carroll, my operator, turned to me and said, "Mathes (operator at Area Headquarters) says to stand by for an order now being coded which he thinks is for us."

This meant but one thing to me: orders to stay where we were. I knew that Captain Linscott had cleared the mines for Casa Vieja the morning of the twenty-third

and would be about two days ahead of us. Major Utley knew that there was no trail leading from Musawas to Casa Vieja and, from several pertinent questions which he asked concerning our location, the Lakus Trail and others in that vicinity, I felt sure that he was considering leaving my patrol where it was. Also there were orders in Puerto Cabezas detaching me from the *Denver* to the *USS Rochester* upon the arrival of my relief. But—the bandits had gone towards Bocay and the west. I now had the means to follow them. From my point of view, Musawas was just about the least desirable spot in all Nicaragua right then. I could see no prospects of anything happening to relieve the monotony of the place and, if I could avoid it, I had no intention of remaining there.

"Ask Mathes if that means we stay here," I said to Carroll.

"Sounds like it," was the reply.

"Send this message as I give it to you: 'To CO Eastern Area. 8625 CP CLOSES MUSAWAS ZERO FIVE HUNDRED STOP STATION PSW CLOSING IMMEDIATELY PREPARATORY TO MOVE STOP RESUME SCHEDULE EIGHTEEN HUNDRED THIS DATE 0035.' Has Mathes acknowledged that? Fine. Get off the air and stay off. If the Major wants to keep us here he'll have to send us back tomorrow night."

I later learned that my guess was correct and that if I had not acted as I did, we would have received orders which would have kept us at Musawas indefinitely to "block the rivers and trails in that vicinity." Once under way we were not ordered back there, and I never saw the place again.

This first move by pack train was not particularly exciting, but there were several incidents which might be worth the telling. For example: there was the three day hike made by Schoneberger with a fever of a hundred and four; refusing to give up his place in column; never delaying the march; and setting an example of grit and guts that was an inspiration to the rest of the patrol. With men like that, any outfit was bound to succeed! I well remember the day that a sack of rice was packed on a mule alongside a tin of kerosene oil. By the time that mule had rolled down hill a half dozen times and the pack had been pulled off his back as many times again by the overhanging brush, rice and coal oil were thoroughly mixed. Supper that night consisted of boiled rice, coal oil, hard-tack and coffee. Everyone ate the stuff; not because it was good, but because there was nothing else and we were hungry enough to relish anything in the way of food. I would never recommend the mixture as a palatable dish. Then there was the night that we were visited by a swarm of flying ants just as supper was being dished out to the chow line. For ten minutes the air was literally black with them; the kind of flying ants whose wings would drop off as soon as they hit any obstruction, and they fell down to become the ordinary crawling variety until a fresh pair of wings developed. They got into our eyes, our ears, our mouths, down our backs, into our bedding, and, most annoying of all, into our food. The place was alive with them! But it was one night that we had fresh meat, if ants can be called meat, along with our rice or beans or whatever it was. We reached the ruins of the Kuli Bodega just before dark, in a pouring rain. Wood for the galley fire had to be collected in the dark. Nurse it

as we would, it sputtered and smoked and put out so little heat that it was after nine o'clock that we had the first cup of weak, luke warm coffee—the first food since breakfast, seventeen hours before. The trail from Kuli Bodega to Kalasanoki follows the bed of Kuli Creek. It was here that, going back along the trail to learn what was holding up the march, I found the radio mule flat on his back. There he was, held down by the radio he was carrying, with only his four feet above water. By the time we got him back to his normal position, the radio was a complete wash-out. It was not until we had reached Bocay, given it a thorough overhauling and received new batteries from Puerto Cabezas, that it was again in commission. But these incidents, aggravating as they were at the time, were just part of the day's work—something to make the best of and to overcome.

The formation adopted for this move by trail and pack train became more or less the standard for all my patrols in the future. Three squads were designated as the primary combat unit. Duty was rotated daily between advance guard, rear guard and main body. Four men of the advance guard squad—three riflemen and the automatic rifleman—were assigned to the point under the immediate command of the point commander, who was a sergeant or section leader. These men were in single file, staggered on opposite sides of the trail whenever its width, which was seldom, permitted it. Dis-

tances within the point depended on the nature and thickness of the country, usually about ten paces. Following the point, again at a variable distance depending upon the terrain but probably averaging around twenty-five or thirty yards, came the main body in single file and in the order named: remainder of the advance guard squad; the pack train; and four men of the rear guard body. Following the main body at such distance as the nature of the terrain required, came the other four men of the rear guard squad as rear point, under the command of a sergeant or section leader. The second-in-command, Lieutenant Cook, was assigned as point commander, rear-point commander, or with the main body, rotating in these tasks with the section leaders. As patrol commander, I, with a runner, normally marched at the head of the main body. Perhaps I should have used the word "abnormally" because, more often than not, I would be with the point, with the pack train, even with the rear guard; going to that part of the column where I felt my presence was most needed in order to keep it closed up and on the move.

One full squad—the fourth—was permanently assigned with the pack train as muleros. Each man had three or four mules under his supervision. In addition, the cook looked after the mule which carried his pots, pans and galley paraphernalia; Carroll had the radio mule under his charge; and even the pharmacists mate was given a four-legged patient to care for. We were handicapped by the saddles which came with the train from Puerto Cabezas. Those saddles were used on the farms for carrying bananas. They were of the wing or cradle type, with projecting cradles on which the banana stems

could be laid without the use of line to keep them in place. We found that the wings were continually catching on trees and brush along the trail so that even the best cinched pack would be torn loose. This caused most of our loose packs and accounted for many of the saddle sores on the backs of the animals. After ripping them off and slinging the packs to the saddles using line and the diamond hitch only, we had much less trouble. Sergeant MacGregor, who had been born and raised in western Texas and who had had plenty of experience with animals and pack trains before joining the Marine Corps, was made train master. He deserved and received a great deal of credit for the way he made muleros out of Marines, some of whom had never before learned which was the business end of a mule, and for getting the train through in excellent condition.

In case of attack, two squads—the advance guard, including the point, and the squad at the head of the main body—would be immediately committed to the fight. As soon as possible, the squad acting as muleros would turn their animals over to the cook, radio operator and other extra men and, with the four men of the rear guard marching with the main body, would form a combat and manouver group to be used as the situation demanded. The rear point would maintain its position as such unless and until otherwise ordered.

The rate of march depended entirely upon the pack train. I considered that it was essential that the patrol

be kept intact. Had I attempted a regulation march of fifty minutes with a ten minute rest each hour, my patrol, with its inexperienced muleros, would soon have been strung out over several miles of territory. The four men of the rear guard squad marching with the main body, although not attached to the pack train, were instructed to lend every possible assistance and to see that the train kept closed up. Minor adjustments were cared for without halting the patrol but when it was necessary to completely repack the animal, a halt was called by passing the word forward from the rear until the work was finished. At such times, every mulero inspected the animals in his care for loose cinches and badly arranged packs so as to reduce so far as possible the enforced halts. As soon as the train was ready, word was passed forward to the head of the column and the march resumed. For the first few days, this procedure may have cut down the mileage to some extent. As my men became more expert in putting on pack-saddles and securing the packs, it tended to speed up the movement. Eventually we reached the point where there were very few enforced halts; a five minute rest every half hour was sufficient time for the muleros to tighten loose cinches, loose lines and to keep the train on the move. At any rate, this method brought about the desired result: at all times I had a closed-up and compact unit on the trail, all of which was under my control all of the time.

For the first two days out of Musawas, with three Suma Indians armed with machetes ahead of us, we made our own trail. We covered about eight miles on the first day and twelve miles on the second. As I had expected, the going was not bad except along the river bottoms, where the bush was heavy and required plenty of cutting. Along the higher ground, the country was fairly open with underbrush and small growth quite similar to our hardwood covered hills in the States. The second night was spent at Tunkun from which a trail led into Casca and Casa Vieja. We reached that ranch on the morning of the twenty-eighth of May and joined forces with Captain Linscott's 60th Company patrol.

Right here I want to pay tribute to Captain Linscott. He had been given a company composed largely of recruits fresh from Parris Island and with only a smattering of training. Most of these recruits had joined the Corps as privates "to learn the drum and trumpet." By the time Linscott had reached Casa Vieja, he had whipped those musics into good field soldiers. The route he had followed was difficult enough in itself, even with older and more seasoned men, without having to train a lot of field musics on the side. The way he handled that job and those given to him later, earned my respect and admiration from then on.

On the morning of the thirtieth, the combined patrols under the command of Captain Linscott, left Casa Vieja for Bocay. We followed the same trail that the bandits had taken some three weeks before. Linscott's patrol was to lead the way on the first day, with mine in the rear. The morale of my men was at a high pitch. They felt that because they had been in the hills a month longer than the 60th Company, the honor of going first should be theirs. They were up at four o'clock, breakfasted and packed an hour before we were supposed to get under way. I was approached with the suggestion that, since they were all ready, we should shove off at once and let the other patrol catch up when and if it could. The *Denver* Detachment was no longer a sepa-

rate patrol, so naturally that suggestion was not carried out. On the second day out we were given the lead. Before night every man would have been willing to drop back to the rear. Rains of the all day long variety had started. There was an inch or so of slippery, slimy mud on top of a hard dirt bottom so that there was no footing for those in the lead. Men and beast slipped and skidded from side to side, or from top to bottom, of the trail. After thirty or forty men and mules had passed over the ground, the soil was dug up enough to give a firm footing for every one, and the rains had not been of long enough duration to turn the whole thing into a quagmire. And the honor of going first was ours from then on.

Shortly before noon on the first of June, we arrived at the small Indian settlement of Kalasanoki, the first habitation of any kind since leaving Casa Vieja. Here the trail turned almost due south, whereas Bocay, our objective, was some twenty-five miles due north.

An old Miskita Indian, contrary to custom, came out of hiding to watch over his home. He informed us that the trail we had been following led to Jinotega, some ten days' hike away. He said that Jiron and his mounted bandit force had passed through Kalasanoki about three weeks earlier; and that Jiron had with him an American prisoner who was apparently in good health and fairly well treated. (This referred to Marshall, an American mining engineer, who had left the mining area with the outlaws. It was thought that he had been forced to accompany them, probably to be used as a technical advisor for Sandino.) According to rumor, Sandino had directed his chiefs to meet him near Jinotega the latter part of May. This was a very indefinite statement, as the word Jinotega might mean any place within the Department of that name. He also told us that, if there were no outlaws then in Bocay, a group of them would certainly be there on Sunday, June third; and that there was no trail into that place except the one which came up the Coco River from Lakus and Raiti. A thorough reconnaissance convinced us that this last statement was correct. If we wished to get to Bocay, we would have to go by boat or cut our own trail.

We discussed the practicability of passing up Bocay altogether and of following the trail to the south. Two deserters from Aguerro, captured by Linscott at Casa Vieja, had stated, "Bandit headquarters on BOCAY RIVER two or three days above BOCAY."[13] We might be within striking distance if we kept to the trail. But our orders specifically directed us to go to Bocay. The information just quoted had been sent to Area Headquarters and had resulted in no modification of those orders. There were no indications at Kalasanoki that the outlaws were in that vicinity. They had passed through there three weeks before and had not been seen since. The statement made by the deserters might not be true. The constant rains had raised havoc with our food supply and once again we were almost rationless. "Rice, sugar, coffee, salt and flour got their portion of water so the food situation got worse day by day. We have had to throw away some 150 pounds of beans and at least 100 pounds of rice which became wet, sprouted and fermented. Sugar has run away and saltless food is the thing out here."[14] Walker was on his way

[13]FIELD MESSAGE No. 43. From CO DENVER Detachment at Casa Vieja to CO EASTERN AREA, dated 29 May 28.

[14]Personal letter, dated 11 June, 1928, at Bocay.

to Bocay by boat from Waspuc. He would reach Bocay on the fourth and he was supposed to have rations for us with him. It was finally decided that as large a patrol as we could find the means of transporting would go by boat to Bocay, to intercept the bandits expected there on the third and to meet Walker. The majority of the patrol and the pack train would remain temporarily at Kalasanoki. Future action would depend upon such information as we might pick up at Bocay and additional instructions from Area Headquarters.

Three old pitpans, whose total carrying capacity was ten men besides their crews, were found. On the morning of the second of June, Captain Linscott, myself and ten enlisted men started for Bocay. The two largest pitpans led the way. They were manned by our two guides, Arthur Kittle and Augustine Garcia, the old Kalasanoki Indian and his two young sons. The smallest pitpan brought up the rear. Corporal Hickethier (*Denver* Detachment), armed with a pole, was in the bow. I, equipped with a paddle, sat in the stern as boat captain. We carried two passengers. All went well until, some six miles above Bocay, we came to the Samasca Rapids, the third worst of the rapids in the navigable rivers below Santa Cruz. The two leading boats pulled into the shore at the head of the rapid. They landed their passengers and everything aboard and then worked their way down stream through fairly quiet water close to shore. Following their example, I discharged my two passengers and all that we carried, including Hickethier's rifle and ammunition. We then pushed off to follow in their course. Almost immediately, things began to happen! Instead of being in the narrow, quiet channel along the bank, we crossed our signals and were swept into the main channel. There was nothing we could do about it; the thing had happened so quickly. At the first sheer drop, our boat was half filled with water, although still right side up. A moment later, another falls with its waves and rushing water swamped us completely. Down we went, to come up sputtering and striking out for the pitpan which was floating down stream, bottom up. Hickethier reached it first and pulled himself on at the bow. By sheer luck I came up close enough astern to be able to climb aboard at that end. For the next few minutes, we had as exciting a ride as any I can remember. We rode that boat much the same as I imagine one would ride a bucking broncho; gripping it with our knees and hanging on with our hands, constantly fighting to keep it from rolling over and pitching us once more into the maelstrom around us. We crashed into rocks and debris; or we missed them by inches. We were nearly scraped off by the walls of the canyon through which we passed. But luck was with us. We suddenly found ourselves washed into the back eddy of a quiet spot about half way through the long rapid. Except for a thorough ducking, a few scratches, a lost paddle, and a hole in the bow of the boat which was beyond repair, we were none the worse for our experience. Then I learned that Hickethier could not swim a stroke!

We reached Bocay that afternoon and, as usual, found a deserted village. It was a settlement of about fifty thatched, bamboo-walled huts, located on both banks of the Coco and Bocay Rivers. The village as a whole was comparatively clean and a striking contrast to the filth of Musawas.

Alfred Webster, the English patron of the settlement, was at the Cape. We appropriated his house and bodega for the use of our patrol. The house was well built, with two rooms, a front and rear porch, and an adjacent kitchen. The bodega, or store, was next door. I selected a good-looking, four-poster bed with its cowhide springs and turned in that night expecting an excellent sleep. But the lice soon drove me out. I went back into the kitchen, made up my bunk on the dirt floor and went to sleep, only to be rooted out in the middle of the night by a big, black, one-eyed sow who objected to my having usurped her favorite spot. With a little urging, however, that pig got up and not so slowly walked away. For the rest of the night, I slept in peace and comfort.

The following day a few of the natives returned to their homes and Thompson, Webster's nephew, came in from his house a couple of miles down the Coco to inform us of the approach of Walker's patrol. Once again we had an example of the fact that, by avoiding the expected routes of approach, surprise of these people who were reputed to know every movement of regular troops even before they began, was not impossible. The natives had left their village because of Walker's advance up the Coco. They had absolutely no information concerning the movement of Linscott and myself from Casa Vieja.

From Thompson, we learned that the bandits had passed through Bocay on the first of June, the day before we arrived. Enough data were collected to send the following pick-up message to the Commander, Eastern Area, on June fourth.

"Linscott and myself arrived BOCAY from KALASANOKI by boat with small patrol on 2 June, 1928. No bandits here, natives just returning to their huts. Aguerro died at BOCAY about 22 May, 1928. Information here is that Sandino and Jiron joined forces on the BOCAY RIVER, probably in vicinity of CASCA, crossed to the WANKS RIVER between BOCAY and POTECA and were supposed to reach the WANKS on 2/3 June. They are to move up the WANKS in direction of SANTA CRUZ. This is unconfirmed. No trails into BOCAY except from LAKUS. Would like orders to leave here with (pack) train for POTECA which I think I can make in 8 to 10 days. Rations can be forwarded to me there. All OK. /s/ Edson."[15]

I planned to move south from Kalasanoki until I picked up the bandit trail and then follow the route which they used in crossing to the Coco River and Poteca. Even though we might be forced to make our own trail part of the way, I was confident that we could get to Poteca. My men were full of ambition and keyed up to the highest morale. All that they asked was permission to take their pack train, ten days' rations, and to push on. Rains, jungle, lack of trails, meant nothing to them. The bandits had gotten through, so why could not they? The plan was feasible, and it would have worked. Could we have pushed on then, followed by or in conjunction with a boat patrol along the river, I believe that we could have delivered a blow which would have been much more effective than the one we eventually struck in August of that year; that we might have completely disrupted Sandino's forces.

[15]FIELD MESSAGE No. 45. From CO DENVER Detachment at Bocay to CO EASTERN AREA, dated 4 June 28.

We were able eventually to construct a fairly accurate picture of the bandit movements during this period. I shall relate them here because they were typical of Sandino's tactics throughout his career.

After the Pis Pis raid, the main body of outlaws under Jiron, Sanchez, Salgado, Altamirano and Maridiaga rendezvoused at Garrobo, near the headwaters of the Bocay River. Aguerro, with his band of cut-throats, planned to complete his earlier raid of March by sacking Waspuc and then to proceed up the Coco River. There he intended to join the main outlaw force. After the Marobila contact, he moved west by way of Lakus Creek and Raiti to Bocay. Aguerro died of tuberculosis and his group disintegrated. The majority of them returned to their homes in the Poteca sector. In the meantime, Sandino planned to return to his old stamping grounds east of Chipote, using the little known trail which leads through Paso Real de Cua and the Cua Valley. This move was already under way when the bandits met and engaged Captain Hunter's marine patrol at Bocacito, not far from the Cua River, on May thirteenth and fourteenth, 1928.[16] I do not agree with the statement made by Jiron after his capture in 1929 in which he said that the outlaws were aware of Captain Hunter's approach from the west and marched out to meet him.[17] I am inclined to believe that this fight began as a true meeting engagement and that the presence of the Marine patrol was a surprise to the bandits. After this contact, the outlaws again withdrew to Garrobo. Plans were then made for their evacuation to the Poteca area. Such of the loot from the mines as could not be easily transported was cached north of Garrobo until it could be picked up later and transported by boat. (A shipment of this stuff was bombed by Captain Howard and Lieutenant Conway on June fourteenth.) The troop movement was made simultaneously by four columns between the dates of May thirtieth and June third, 1928. Salgado, with a small group of about fifteen men, proceeded by the water route. He passed through Bocay on June first. There he picked up a couple of boat loads of provisions and several Indians to be used as boat crews in the Mastawas —Poteca—Cua sector. Captain Linscott and I missed this group by less than twenty-four hours. The largest outlaw force, that under Jiron, moved north by trail and mule to Casca, then over a good trail which debouched on the Coco River just below the Callejon Rapids and thence up river to Mastawas. If we had immediately turned south to Casca instead of stopping at Kalasanoki, it is quite probable that Linscott and I would have met Jiron's force in the vicinity of that place and before it succeeded in leaving the Bocay Valley. The third group under Sanchez crossed over the longer, more difficult trail from Tunavalon to Mastawas. There he and Jiron joined forces before working their way by easy stages to Wamblan and Poteca. Sandino, with a small, select body guard, chose the most difficult trail of all, chiefly because it was the most concealed and least known. He crossed from Garrobo to the headwaters of the Rio Wamblan and then followed that stream bed to the Coco River. Final disposition of the outlaw troops around Poteca was not made until after the middle of the month of June.

[16]THE LA FLOR ENGAGEMENT; by Captain Victor F. Bleasdale, USMC; p. 29, The Marine Corps Gazette, Vol. XVI, No. 4, Feb., 1932.

[17]ADDENDA to INTELLIGENCE REPORTS, Northern Area, Nicaragua, about 10 February, 1929.

The above is, I believe, a typical example of the bandit movements which followed any combat with Marine forces in Nicaragua. It explains why it was so difficult to obtain decisive results from any single contact. Any engagement was a signal for them to disperse their forces and to move on to new territory. The harder they were hit, the quicker they disappeared and the smaller and more numerous the groups into which their main body was divided.

Walker and Taft arrived at Bocay on the morning of June fourth. Walker had left Waspuc with only enough rations for his own patrol. The food situation was no better but worse, if anything, than before. There were now more mouths to be fed.

The Coco River off Bocay was deep enough, wide enough and straight enough to be used as a landing place for amphibians the year round. On June eighth, they brought Major Utley for a conference with Linscott, Walker, Taft and myself. At the first opportunity, I again asked for authority to move on to Poteca. But it was not to be. The rainy season was already in full swing. The bandits had eluded us and were apparently out of our reach for the present. The Eastern Area was already extended to the point where it was necessary that a halt be called until the system of supply could catch up with its advanced outposts. Orders had been received from Brigade Headquarters to stabilize the Area for the duration of the rainy season with its western limits running roughly due south through Bocay and Cuvali. Radio instructions had been issued that I would turn over the *Denver* Detachment to Lieutenant DeWitt in time to return to Managua on the *Rochester* which was due to arrive at Puerto Cabezas the latter part of June.

To carry out these instructions, Major Utley gave us the following orders. The 59th Company and *Galveston* Detachment, under command of Captain Walker, would garrison the Bocay — Awasbila — Waspuc sector. My patrol would return via the first available river transportation to Puerto Cabezas. There it would refit and then return to the hills under the command of Lieutenant DeWitt. Captain Linscott would bring the combined pack trains from Kalasanoki to Bocay. As soon as Walker was in position to take over the garrison of Bocay, Linscott would evacuate his patrol to Puerto Cabezas via the water route, and would then proceed to command the Pis Pis—Cuvali sector, garrisoned by the 60th Company. The 51st Company would be distributed along the coastal outposts and would garrison the Bluefields area.

In accordance with these instructions, my patrol left Bocay at daybreak on the twelfth of June and reached Waspuc some sixty hours later. On the fifteenth, I turned over command of the patrol to Lieutenant Cook and went to Puerto Cabezas by plane. DeWitt was already at Area Headquarters. I was relieved from duty with the *Denver* Detachment and was given the job of Executive Officer pending the arrival of the *Rochester*. Everything indicated that my duties in the Eastern Area were about to terminate and that any further bandit chasing on my part would be carried on from Matagalpa and Tuma.

But that was before the *Rochester* arrived, bringing Admiral Sellers and General Feland on a tour of inspection! The things they discussed and the decisions they made, resulted in the formation of the Coco Patrol. I was to have a chance to go to Poteca after all.

THE EARLY YEARS OF THE MARINE CORPS

(*Continued from page 32*)

progressed sufficiently to require the presence of Marines first at the Navy Yard in March, 1800, for the purpose of guarding the construction at that place, and later to establish the headquarters of the Corps near the office of the Secretary of the Navy, which had been moved to Washington in June, 1800. Burrows, with his staff and Headquarters troops, arrived at Georgetown and went into camp July 31 on the present site of the Naval Hospital, Washington. The Marines attracted considerable interest in their new location. Barracks were later rented from the War Department and the detachment moved into them on November 11. They returned to their camp, however, in the following spring.

New Commandant

William Ward Burrows, commandant since July 12, 1798, having tendered his resignation, due to ill health, it was accepted as of March 6, 1804, and on the following day he was succeeded by Captain Franklin Wharton, senior officer of the Corps, who at once assumed his duties as Lieutenant Colonel Commandant. During the Naval War with France Wharton had served on the frigate *United States* until August 31, 1800, and then went to duty as commanding officer of Marines at Philadelphia, Pa., where he was stationed at the time of his appointment as head of the Corps. He capably filled the office of Commandant for approximately fourteen years and was well liked not only by the personnel of the Corps but by the people generally. In addition to his duties as Commandant he took an active interest in civic and social matters in Washington and vicinity.

Customs and Discipline of the Early Corps

The severe and rather brutal methods for enforcing discipline as practiced in the navies of that time was adopted by the Marine Corps shortly after its establishment. Commanding officers had large powers in administering punishment, while general courts martial and courts martial were authorized by law. The former was deemed to be convened only by the President, while the commanding officer could convene a court martial of only three officers who performed all the necessary legal functions of the court. Flogging was the most usual form of punishment awarded both by courts and