



# Celebrating, “Double Ten”

By General Wallace Greene, USMC (Ret'd)

*October 10—the tenth day of the tenth month in “Double Ten”—an important holiday for Nationalist Chinese because it marks the birth of the Republic under Dr. Sun Yat-sen in 1926. In 1937, although the city of Shanghai lay besieged and surrounded by Japanese forces, the Chinese who lived within were determined as never before to celebrate “Double Ten” in open and visible defiance of the enemy. The situation presented a problem to the international forces who were garrisoning and defending Shanghai. The Fourth Marines were a part of the occupation troops and this is the story of how “Double Ten” was celebrated in their sector as seen through the eyes of an infantry company on the perimeter.*

**I**t all started at 1:00 in the morning—1:10 in fact—when Private Ballinger looked over the iron rail near Post No. 2 on Soochow Creek and found a dead Chinese floating in a back eddy of the river. That wasn't too unusual, but to have it happen so early on this particular morning served to be an omen of things to come. For this was “Double Ten”—the big Chinese holiday.

Ballinger thought about this as he looked down on the dead face slowly swirling 'round and 'round, and then, almost regretfully, as if he were about to start a chain of unknown events, he turned and called out “Corporal of the Guard, Post Number 2.”

Cpl Schlitter, of “E” Company, 2nd Battalion, Fourth Marines, entertained no foreboding. In fact, he was a little disgusted. “Just another stiff,” he said laconically as he watched the pajama-clad body of the coolie finally extricate itself from the lazy whirlpool and drift off slowly—almost nonchalantly—away from the wall and down river into the darkness.

Schlitter gazed across the water. He couldn't see much—there were a few lamps in the night and he knew that the Japanese were there because they had just taken over Chapei—driving the Chinese soldiers out and to the west and then setting up their own machine guns. Like us,

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they had put up wire—mostly concertina on their bank—and probably some Corporal of the Guard like Schlitter—but with slant eyes—was looking across, wondering what the U. S. Marines were doing.

"Stay awake, Ballinger, so you don't get your own damn throat cut!"

Schlitter turned and looked at the building across the street which he had just left. It was a big concrete thing—the Fou Foong Flour Mill—six or eight stories high and surrounded by a wall topped with barbed wire. We had an OP on top. The millers had left—they were too close to the Japanese for comfort—and "E" Company had moved in the

day before, relieving "F" Company for a week of alternating duty on the Creek. Nothing new about that, but living there on the dusty ground floor wasn't any fun—and there was no liberty.

Schlitter wasted a fleeting thought; "What do you suppose that White Russian girl at the Green Jade night club was doing this week without him? She was probably making out O.K.!"

He shrugged his shoulders, spat on the cobblestones, and crossed the street, through the gate and into the mill compound.

Just as he did, he heard the cry, "Sergeant of the

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Guard!" It came from across the courtyard and sounded like the captain's voice.

Sgt Girard passed him, running. "Come on, Schlitter. The captain sounds like he's in trouble!"

The two of them sped towards a low shed, which they could barely see in the darkness. The small building was actually a portable covered head, containing a plank seat and night buckets which were emptied every morning. A Chinese version of what a nice toilet should be!

Early in the 12 to 4 mid watch, the company commander had rolled off his cot, buckled on his pistol belt, picked up the oak stave (the end of an issue cot, which everyone venturing outside carried as basic protection) and set out to inspect sentries. Passing into the courtyard, he visited the head. As he entered the open door, a dark shape standing on the plank seat silently and suddenly launched itself against him. Automatically, he reacted by stepping back and bringing his club down with a tremendous two-handed smash. The attacker fell to the pavement. The captain drew his pistol. "Sergeant of the Guard!" That was why Girard and Schlitter were running to help him.

They rolled the man over. He was moaning, and Girard flashed his light on him. It was a Shanghai Municipal Police constable! What a hell of a way to start "Double Ten!"

The field telephone was ringing. It was Post No. 4. Trouble!

"Captain!"

Gunny Kuhns was cranking up the motorcycle. The captain jumped into the sidecar and the machine bounced away into the street.

Post No. 4 was only a mile away and it took but a few minutes for the motorcycle to bump down Mokanshan Road to where it ended on the creek. There, the two Marines found a gathering crowd of Chinese. As they stepped from their motorcycle, Pfc Duncan, who had Post No. 4, reached them. Together, they parted the crowd and found the cause of the excitement. A Japanese motorcycle courier in uniform lay sprawled on the dirty stones. Speeding down the road, he had encountered a steel wire strung across the road. The wire had neatly sliced off his head! His cycle had slid across the street. His dispatch case was nowhere to be seen.

Just then, two cars drove up. One was the Marine pickup from the Fou Foong command post. The Sergeant of the Guard, Girard again, was aboard with one fire team. The other car, a sedan, had a Chinese driver with two Japanese in the back seat, dressed in civilian clothes. What were they doing here? This was against the Settlement rules.

The captain walked over toward their car. As he approached, they abruptly drove off, swinging wildly around the corner onto Robinson Road and away.

"After them!" yelled the captain to the gunny and Sergeant of the Guard. All hands quickly reboarded their vehicles. With the motorcycle leading, the two machines commenced the chase. It was a wild one, straight west

along Robinson Road, horns blowing, lights flashing, scattering terrified Chinese pedestrians and rickshas in all directions—past sentry posts and barbed wire, past Chinese policemen, a sharp turn onto Penang Road, and the sedan slammed on its brakes in front of a low, stone building.

The two Japanese and the Chinese driver abandoned their car and fled inside the building. Not a minute too soon, as the Marine vehicles screeched to a halt. All hands debarked and rushed toward the building.

The fire teams covered the entrance. The captain, the gunny and the Sergeant of the Guard plunged into the building with pistols drawn and one submachine gun at the ready.

Inside looked like a police station or guard room. The quarry were there all right, along with two other Japanese in civilian clothes. All five suspects were thrown up against the wall and were being searched when Pvt Popravak of the fire team outside came tearing in.

"Captain, we're in the wrong place. We're outside the Settlement Boundary. We're in Japanese territory!"

"My God!" said the captain, instantly thinking that here were the makings of another international incident, and for the second time he spouted, "Let's go!" Whereupon, all hands left the search, rushed back to their vehicles and careened off on a speedy return to home territory. They made it to the boundary fence and dashed through the open iron gate which they hadn't seen during the chase. Clang! and the gate was shut and locked.



October 10, 1937 - The U. S. Marine Sector with Soochow Creek and the Fou Foong Flour Mill in the background, Shanghai, China.

They had barged into a headquarters of the Japanese Special Forces—an undercover military outfit operating in plain clothes—specialists in terror, apparently cruising in the Marine sector, looking for trouble on "Double Ten."

The vehicles returned to Post No. 4. Things had been pretty well cleaned up by the local police. Pfc Duncan was on the telephone. He motioned to the captain, "It's for you."

"This is the captain. What is it?"

"This is Fou Foong C. P. A Chinese informer has just reported a serious incident under way on Penang Road, near its intersection with Ferry Road. Japanese and a large crowd of Chinese are involved."

"Gunny," yelled the captain, "we're off again—more trouble—this time at Penang and Ferry. Tell Sergeant Girard to have the fire team load the machine gun from Post 4 into the back of the pickup, with belts, and to join us as soon as possible at Penang and Ferry. Tell them to be ready when they arrive!"

Penang and Ferry Roads were lined with Chinese shops. The usual jabbering crowd had gathered. The motorcycle, almost immediately followed by the pickup, slithered through the crowd. A sedan with a Chinese driver was pulled up alongside the curb in front of a big Chinese tailor shop. The proprietor was being beaten by three Japanese in civilian clothes. They were trying to force him to haul down a huge Chinese flag which he was flying on a pole over his shop in celebration of "Double Ten."

The three Japanese ran back to their car and clambered into the back seat. They shouted something to the driver, but in the excitement he couldn't get his car started. The pickup moved into position in front of the automobile, machine gun pointing Japwards. The fire team had jumped out and were boxing in the car.

The captain and the gunny walked over to the auto with drawn pistols and flung open the rear door.

"Get out!"

No move. Only silence and smiling white teeth.

"Get out!"

Just then a Marine staff car appeared. It stopped near the motorcycle, and the colonel, the regimental commander, stepped out. He was on his early-morning rounds. As usual, he was spick and span, with shining boots, nicely adjusted Sam Browne belt, swagger stick under his arm—and as always, cool, calm and collected.

"What's going on here?" he asked the captain.

The captain explained.

"Tell them once more to get out."

No move.

The colonel stepped past the captain and, motioning with his stick, repeated "Get out!"

Nothing happened.

With that, the colonel dropped his swagger stick, reached into the car, and grabbed the nearest Japanese by the neck and collar and commenced to drag the man out. As he did, the Japanese in the middle slid a pistol from under the seat, and in bringing it up, hit the first man and dropped the weapon to the floor.

The Marines in the fire team saw the situation. They smashed the car windows with their rifle butts and clubbed the three men out of the car.

They came out fighting. A general melee resulted, with Japanese, American Marines and weapons all over the place. The old gunny picked up a rifle and, watching his chance, stepped in and methodically cold-caulked each Japanese in turn. There they lay on the cobblestones, finally quiet.

The colonel took a final look, felt assured, picked up a cigarette in its holder and got back into his sedan, saying as he did so, "Take charge, Captain!"

The three Japanese soon came around. They were loaded into the truck and were off to the brig. The last the captain and the gunny saw of them, they were laughing and unbowed! So much for the Japanese Special Forces. They were tough and it was "Double Ten!"

All this made breakfast late, but there was hot chow for everyone when they at last returned to the CP at the mill. There were many stories to tell and quite a few bruises to attend to, but the day was not over.

In the Marine Sector—"C"—Stone Bridge crossed Soochow Creek. Both ends of the bridge were blocked with concertina. At the Marine end there was a machine gun nest at ground level and a sentry post—No. 17—with telephone.

About 10:00, Pvt Tipton called in from Post 17. He reported "A car with two Japanese in uniform—one an officer—has just parked in front of a Chinese house across the street from Stone Bridge. The two men have gone into the house."

More trouble!

The captain and the gunny got under way again in the company motorcycle. Once more they were followed by a fire team in the pickup.

They found a crowd gathering at Stone Bridge. The Japanese car stood by the curb—empty.

The fire team covered the exits to the house. The captain, with pistol drawn, and the gunny with his Thompson at the ready, went inside. At the end of the hall there was a small, sparsely-furnished room. There, at a table, a Chinese was sitting with his back to the Marines. In front of him was a

pile of money. Across the table, and facing the hall, were two Japanese soldiers. One was a captain, the other a sergeant. Both were in uniform and armed. They were surprised to see the Marine, but made no move.

"You are under arrest!" announced the Marine captain.

The Japanese captain plainly understood, but only smiled and said in very good English, "You can't arrest me. I am a member of the Japanese Landing Force. I am old enough to be your father. Look at my white hair. You cannot arrest me, my son."

"Put your hands over your head and stand up," said the Marine captain.

There was no move to comply. The Marine slowly repeated his order. The two captains eyed each other in a level gaze but the Japanese gave no indication of complying with the order.

The Marine carefully and deliberately fired one round from his pistol. It went by the Japanese captain's head by inches and lodged in the wall beyond. The shutters rattled.

"Get up. The next shots will kill you both." Gunny Kuhns rattled his magazine.

The Japanese captain slowly raised his hands and stood up. He said something to the sergeant. The noncom followed suit.

The Marine captain stepped forward around the table and took the Japanese pistols from their holsters. "March them out, Gunny." They passed out of the house into the street, to the apparent edification of the Chinese crowd. A great loss of "face!"

The fire team was reassembled to man the Marine motorcycle and Japanese car. The two Japanese were loaded into the pickup and the cortege drew off, headed for the regimental brig.

Chow was late again, but the afternoon wore into evening without further incident. Night came and settled gently over Soochow Creek and the mill on its bank. Lights went on in the Chinese hovels and the bell from the Buddhist Temple could be heard in the chill. It was almost time to relieve sentries.

A violent explosion!

"General quarters!"

There was the sound of racing feet and the cries of fire team leaders as they took post around the mill.

Again the captain and the gunny raced through the mill gate.

Tonquin Road ran down the west side of the mill. The street had already been cordoned off by fire teams. The men were busily screening and searching the few Chinese in the street.

A coolie was lying half propped against the wall. His dirty rag of a shirt was flung open and as the captain bent over him he could see the razor-thin slits topped with drops of blood where flying slivers of steel had penetrated the chest and stomach. The man was done for; he was dying. He opened his eyes. "Bring Chiu Ling," said the captain. The company's number one boy and interpreter came running.

"Ask him what happened."

"He say, Master, that Japanese send him here with bomb to throw over wall. He no see barbed wire on top, so bomb roll back in street and go bang."

This was the final salute, courtesy of the Japanese Special Forces, in celebration of "Double Ten."

It was midnight.

Another day in the life of Company "E", Fourth U.S. Marines, Shanghai, China, was about to start....

