



**WILLIAM B. (Bill) ALLEN  
VETERAN OF THE QUARTER  
4<sup>TH</sup> QTR. 2005**

Our PRJC Veteran of the Quarter is Mr. William B. (Bill) Allen, of Chattanooga, TN.

Mr. Allen was born on 18 Jan 1924 in Chattanooga, TN. After attending elementary and high school in Chattanooga, he entered college and completed the first year. When he went back to begin his second year he found that nearly all of his engineer faculty members were gone because they had taken jobs with the corporations that had contracts with the Defense Department. Therefore, at the age of 17, because he was certain that he would get drafted, he joined the Marines in 1942. He believed he would have more control of his military experience by joining. It was later that he became experientially aware of the motto: “Yours is not to question why, yours is only to do or die.” Although his mother was very reluctant to sign the permission papers, she consented after he told her that by joining the Reserves he would be home for 3 or 4 months longer than if he were drafted. To his surprise, when he delivered the signed papers to the recruiting office he was immediately informed that they “had an outfit leaving at 5:00 PM that day or he could wait until 8:00 AM the next morning. (His first experience with the above-mentioned motto.)

While completing his training, commonly referred to as “boot camp” at Parris Island, SC, Mr. Allen was trying to get sea duty, which required him to qualify as “expert” on the firing range. When the day came for the range test, he overcame some difficulties with his weapon, and still managed to qualify as “expert”. It happened that one of the senior officers over the firing range was on site for a visit. When he saw Mr. Allen’s performance, he ordered him to be assigned as a coach on the Rifle Range. However, this duty didn’t last long as he was soon ordered to report to Camp Pendleton with the 4<sup>th</sup> Marine Division. After 5 months of maneuver training with the Division, the entire unit received orders to report to the war zone in the Pacific. During the 12 months that he was with the 4<sup>th</sup>, he participated in four invasions. During each invasion, Corporal Allen was, along with his fellow Marines, involved in combat with the enemy, and often very intense combat. By “God’s grace”, his life, on several occasions, was miraculously spared. In fact, the primary reason he consents to tell his story is to witness to God’s grace and intervention in his life.

The first invasion was on the ROY & NAMUR (Marshall Islands chain). During his first night on land, while in a foxhole, he found himself to be, needless to say, a bit nervous. At one point, he thought he heard the enemy sneaking up to his foxhole. (Veterans of the enemies’ tactics had warned him.) What he thought was going to be an enemy soldier turned out to be a sand crab. Little did the sand crab know that he came very close to being

blown up by a hand grenade. The biggest challenge, after this particular incident, was to put the pin back into the safety latch of the hand grenade.

On the way to their second invasion in Saipan, on the same day, he was, unexpectedly, a passenger, on three different LSTs (landing ship tanks) vessels “were sunk out from under us.” The reason being, all the vessels, at different times, came under enemy fire and were sunk. In each case, although he didn’t have a life vest, he was able to swim long enough to be picked up by another LCV (land craft vehicle personnel) vessel. After being picked up the third time, he was taken to Pearl Harbor where he, along with the other Marines who went through the hardships with him, were re-issued clothing and necessary equipment. After two days on Pearl Harbor, he was ordered to another ship, which caught up with the original convoy prior to the invasion on Saipan. After the landing, as a Reconnaissance Corporal and a line interpreter, he was given the duty of being a communication runner. There was a gap in the line, and there were no landlines between his unit and their headquarters. On one particular evening, while obtaining necessary information for his unit, he arrived at the headquarters unit around 11:00 PM. Due to his late arrival, their close proximity to the enemy, and the darkness, they required him to spend the night. Feeling exhausted, he spent the evening, not in a foxhole, but on top of the ground, next to a bush. On that evening two Marines, next to him, in a foxhole were killed. Corporal Allen’s life, for reasons only known to God, was again spared.

The 3<sup>rd</sup>. invasion was on the island of Tinian (Northern part of the Marianas). It was routine, because of his required communication duties, for Corporal Allen, on a beach landing, to be one of the first Marines off the vessel. For reasons, unknown to Corporal Allen, his Lieutenant Commander informed him that on this “landing” he wanted him to be close by. (It may have been because he spoke the Japanese language well enough to communicate with enemy prisoners). The person that replaced him was killed as he was walking off the landing vessel. Again, for reasons only known to God, Corporal Allen’s life was spared.

The 4<sup>th</sup> invasion was on the island of Iwo Jima . 51% of the casualties (17,722) that the division took during the 12-month period of combat were during the battle (s) on Iwo Jima. Corporal Allen landed with the 5<sup>th</sup> wave. The fighting was extremely intense. The enemy was dug in and waiting for the Americans. One very significant memory for him took place on the 4<sup>th</sup> day when he witnessed the infamous raising of the American Flag by members of the 38<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment, 5th Marine Division. On the 10<sup>th</sup> day, he was wounded and evacuated on a troop ship that had been converted into a hospital ship. (All of the designated and properly equipped hospital ships were filled with wounded personnel.) After reaching their destination, Guam, they were informed that there was no more room on the island for wounded personnel. Therefore, the ingenious skipper bravely took his ship of wounded personnel to Pearl Harbor. This was ingenious because of his ability to maneuver his ship in a manner that kept the enemy submarines from engaging them with torpedoes.. On their way to Pearl Harbor, Corporal Allen speaks of the eight funeral services that buried many Americans at sea.

The military hospitals in Pearl Harbor were so overwhelmed with wounded personnel that treatment was limited. Consequently, when Corporal Allen was well enough to be moved, he was shipped to San Francisco to receive proper care. Following his recovery period in San Francisco, he was moved on a hospital train to Pensacola, Fl. After additional treatment and recovery there, he was sent home to Chattanooga on convalescent leave. The first Wednesday evening he was home, he went to Church and, providentially, met his wife, Anne. It was “love at first sight”. He met Ann on Wednesday evening and they were engaged the following Sunday. One month after his discharge from the Marines, they were married. This November 2005, they will celebrate their 60<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary.

“Bill” and Ann Allen have been active members of First Presbyterian Church in Chattanooga for approximately 20 years. He still serves as a deacon. He is one of the many WWII Veterans to whom our nation is greatly indebted. Thank you and congratulations to Corporal William (Bill) Allen, PRJC Veteran of the 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter, 2005.