

As we approached the spot where the enemy had penetrated our lines, I saw two Sherman tanks positioned north of the road laying down covering fire for us. I was more than happy to see them. Surely their presence greatly improved our chances of breaking through the roadblock.

When we received the word, we took off at full speed to run the gauntlet of Japanese mortar, machine-gun, and rifle fire in an attempt to rejoin the rest of the regiment at Mokmer Village. I was not one of the largest or strongest men in our outfit, but I could run. I feel certain that on that evening no one ran faster than I did. Nothing slowed me down. I ran at full speed through the brush along the road, leaping over the trunks of fallen trees like a high hurdler in a track meet. As I raced down the last ridge into the perimeter of the 2nd Battalion at Mokmer Village, a feeling of great relief and safety came over me. I don't think I could have felt better or more safe if I had been at home. The saying "everything is relative" took on new meaning for me.

After the last living member of our battalion had reached the coconut grove, four Sherman tanks came down the ridge and parked close to the spot where I was sitting. Each tank had a name stenciled on its side. I can recall two of the names, "Sad Sack" and "Murder Inc." A member of the crew of "Murder Inc." climbed out of his tank, turned to me, and said, "Kind of tough up there today, wasn't it?" I nodded in agreement and said, "Yeah." As we continued our conversation, he told me that a number of Japanese tanks had taken part in the attack on Company K earlier in the day and that three of our tanks had been damaged by enemy artillery fire. The young crew member said that our tanks had fired on the enemy tanks at long range but had done little damage. He said he hoped that the Japanese tanks would attack again tomorrow. "If they do," he said, "they won't escape a second time."

After we had received our rations and the desperately needed water we were ready to bed down. But before we could begin to dig in, we were told that additional men were needed to fill out the perimeter on the ridge above Mokmer Village. Our platoon was chosen to provide the men to fill the gap in that perimeter. The rest of the company would stay in the coconut grove. My morale sank as we climbed the ridge in near darkness. It had been a disastrous day for us. We had been able to evacuate all the wounded, but for the