MacARTHUR'S FIREMAN: ROBERT L. EICHELBERGER

by

JOHN F. SHORTAL

© 1986 John F. Shortal

To millions of people the name Douglas MacArthur evokes the image of a brilliant, confident, and supremely successful combat commander. In the 41 years that have elapsed since the last campaign of World War II, his victories have come to be viewed as quick, smooth, and simple operations against an impoverished foe. However, hindsight has obscured the tenacity of the Japanese and the immense difficulties MacArthur encountered in the Southwest Pacific. Not all of his victories were quick and easy; the Japanese did not quit upon request. In three major campaigns—Buna in December 1942, Biak in June 1944, and Manila in January 1945—MacArthur suffered initial setbacks from the Japanese. In each case, he was forced to call in a fireman to rally American troops and salvage desperate tactical situations. MacArthur always used the same fireman to handle his most difficult missions, Lieutenant General Robert Lawrence Eichelberger. In each case, Eichelberger's combination of tactical innovation, commonsense training, and personal leadership produced dramatic results.

MacArthur was a legendary field commander. Robert Eichelberger, on the other hand, did not fit the Hollywood image of a general. He was not young, handsome, or tough-talking. He did not wear specially designed uniforms or use theatrics calculated to impress his troops. Rather, by 1944 he was a 58-year-old man who, although in excellent physical condition, was slightly overweight and concerned about his waistline.[1] What Eichelberger did have going for him was an iron will, a strong concept of duty, a warm sense of humor,[2] and an innovative tactical ability. He never failed to conquer any assigned objective.

The story of MacArthur's problem at Buna is well known. His first offensive of the war was in grave jeopardy in November 1942, when an insufficiently trained American division had been stymied and demoralized by the Japanese. Douglas MacArthur, whose pride had been severely wounded in the recent Philippines campaign, had no other reserves in the theater. Furthermore, the poor performance of this division caused the Australians to question the fighting abilities of American soldiers. To salvage this desperate tactical situation and to breathe new life into the American soldiers at Buna, MacArthur summoned Eichelberger from Australia. On the evening of 30 November 1942, MacArthur issued one of the most famous operations orders in American military history. He said:

> Bob, I'm putting you in command at Buna. Relieve Harding. I am sending you in, Bob, and I want you to remove all officers who won't fight. Relieve Regimental and Battalion commanders; if necessary, put Sergeants in charge of Battalions and Corporals in charge of companies—anyone who will fight. Time is of the essence; the

Japs may land reinforcements any night . . . . I want you to take Buna, or not come back alive.[3]

Thirty-two days later this American division, whose fighting capabilities had been questioned, conquered Buna. The capture of Buna was MacArthur's first ground victory of World War II. It was a closely fought battle in which he was forced to take on an enemy who held all the advantages in equipment, training, and experience. MacArthur had few troops at his disposal, and the much-discussed industrial capacity of the United States had not yet manifested itself in this theater.[4] The margin between victory and defeat at Buna was the dynamic and inspirational leadership of Robert Eichelberger. An eyewitness later described Eichelberger's contribution as follows:

> You were sent at the eleventh hour to salvage an impossible situation without any assistance except your own intelligence and your own force of character . . . . While I was with you I was convinced that if the troops under your command did not go into Buna, you would have unhesitatingly gone in there alone.[5]

Although Buna is the most well-known example of MacArthur's use of Eichelberger's formidable leadership talents, it was not the only one.

MacARTHUR'S SECOND PROBLEM: BIAK

The conclusion of the Buna campaign in January 1943 secured the eastern portion of New Guinea for the Allies. In order to carry the Allied offensive into the Philippines, MacArthur had to isolate the powerful Japanese base at Rabaul and then move up the northern coast of New Guinea. Throughout 1943, MacArthur conducted a series of brilliant operations which cut the Japanese line of communication to Rabaul. This enabled him to neutralize completely the Japanese forces at this location without conducting a bloody frontal assault. However, by January 1944 MacArthur had moved only 240 miles north of Buna and still had 2240 miles to go before reaching Manila.[6] In order to bring the war to a more rapid conclusion, MacArthur decided to conduct a series of deeper amphibious envelopments up the northern coast of New Guinea.[7]

By late May 1944 MacArthur had moved up the northern coast of New Guinea as far as the Island of Biak, which was within bomber range of the Philippines (800 miles), and within fighter range of the Japanese airfields on Palau.[8] MacArthur had cut through the Japanese defenses with skill. The amphibious envelopments at Saidor (2 January), Aitape and Hollandia (22 April), and Wakde (17 May) were great successes. George C. Marshall even called the Hollandia operation a "model of strategic and tactical maneuvers."[9]

At Biak, unfortunately, MacArthur's luck ran out. Biak was important because the Japanese had built three airfields on the island, and MacArthur hoped to use these airfields to launch bombing missions against Japanese bases in the Philippines. Since he expected the task force to have seized and built up at least one airfield by 10 June, he had promised to support Admiral Nimitz's operation at Saipan in the Marianas on 15 June 1944 with aircraft from these airfields.[10]

At 0715 hours on 27 May 1944, Major General Horace Fuller and two regiments (186th and 162nd Infantry) of the 41st Division landed at Biak. The Japanese offered no resistance at the beaches, and the initial landings were a complete success.[11]

Major John F. Shortal is an Assistant Professor in the Department of History, US Military Academy. He is a 1974 graduate of the Academy and he holds an M.S. from the University of Southern California and M.A. and Ph.D. degrees from Temple University. His dissertation topic was "Robert L. Eichelberger: The Evolution of a Combat Commander." Major Shortal is an Infantry officer with Airborne, Ranger, and Air Assault training. He has served in command and staff assignments at Fort Campbell, Fort Carson, and in Korea.

General Fuller's plan called for the 162nd Regiment to move along the beach road, which ran at the base of a steep cliff, to the three airfields. Meanwhile, the 186th Regiment would move on a parallel route through the mountains.[12] In the first two days General Fuller's forces moved quickly, covering eight miles along the beach road, which brought them within 1000 yards of the first airfield (Mokmer Drome).[13] Unfortunately, MacArthur's staff had seriously underestimated the Japanese defensive capability on the island. Instead of the 4380 Japanese troops they had anticipated, more than 11,000 Japanese soldiers were at Biak. In December 1943, the Japanese high command had sent the veteran 222nd Infantry Regiment of the 36th Division to Biak. This unit was commanded by Colonel Naoyuki Kuzume and reinforced with elements of the 221st Infantry and the 2nd Development Unit.[14] Colonel Kuzume was described in an American after-action report as "a soldier of the highest calibre and a tactician compelling respect."[15] For five months he had carefully prepared his defenses.

Colonel Kuzume had astutely assessed the Allied objective as the three airfields along the southern coast of Biak. Therefore, he skillfully emplaced his forces in the coral ridges above the coastal road which ran from Mandom to the Mokmer airfield. He also positioned troops in the compartmented ridge systems 1000 yards north-northwest of the Mokmer airfield. The terrain, including many caves, complemented the interlocking ridge network which not only dominated the coastal road and three airfields, but provided concealed emplacements for the enemy's artillery, mortars, and machine guns.[16]

On 29 May, Colonel Kuzume counterattacked three times with two battalions of infantry supported by tanks and artillery fire against the 162nd Infantry positions. In the four-hour fight, the American forces neutralized eight Japanese tanks and destroyed the better part of a Japanese battalion. However, the Japanese were successful in driving the 162nd Infantry back two miles east of the Mokmer airfield and forcing them onto the defensive.[17] General Fuller requested and received the 163rd Infantry Regiment to reinforce his task force. With this support, General Fuller was again able to mount an offensive and by 8 June had finally seized his first airfield, Mokmer. However, the Air Corps could not use the field because Japanese gunfire completely controlled it.[18]

On 14 June 1944, the tactical situation of General Fuller's Hurricane Task Force was bleak. In 19 days of combat they had succeeded in seizing only a single Japanese airfield, one that could not be used by Allied air forces. Furthermore, Admiral Nimitz's forces would go ashore at Saipan on 15 June without Southwest Pacific air support because the Hurricane Task Force had failed in its principal mission.[19]

The Biak operation had become a personal embarrassment to MacArthur; he had been caught in exaggerations to the Joint Chiefs of Staff and to the American public. On 28 May, after General Fuller's initial success, General MacArthur had announced that the impending fall of Biak "marks the practical end of the New Guinea campaign." On 1 June, MacArthur's communique announced that Japanese resistance "was collapsing." On 3 June, MacArthur's communique optimistically announced that "mopping up was proceeding on Biak."[20] However, at the same time that MacArthur was announcing to the world the imminent successful conclusion of the campaign, the Australian press was relaying a totally different story. Spencer Davis reported in *Australia Newsweek* that "obviously, it would require additional reinforcements to achieve the resounding victory proclaimed ten days ago by General MacArthur."[21]

MacArthur, aware of the discrepancy between the actual tactical situation and his communiques, became increasingly concerned as time went on. On 5 June he told General Krueger (the 6th Army Commander and General Fuller's immediate superior): "I am becoming concerned at the failure to secure the Biak airfields . . . is the advance being pushed with sufficient determination? Our negligible ground losses would seem to indicate a failure to do so." On 14 June,

MacArthur cabled General Krueger: "The situation on Biak is unsatisfactory. The strategic purpose of the operation is being jeopardized by the failure to establish without delay an operating field for aircraft."[22]

During the first two weeks of June 1944, as the tactical situation stagnated, MacArthur continued to press General Krueger for results. General Krueger recalled that he "dispatched several radiograms to the task force commander directing him to speed up the operation. But it was easier to order this than get it done for . . . the troops were faced by great difficulties."[23]

With the tactical situation stalemated, victory having been proclaimed two weeks earlier and the invasion of Saipan scheduled for the next day, MacArthur and Krueger called for their most able field commander to salvage the situation and put out this fire before it consumed their reputations. At 1800 hours on 14 June 1944, General Krueger summoned General Eichelberger to an emergency conference at his headquarters. At this conference General Krueger "explained that after continuous fighting, coupled with extremely unfriendly terrain, intense heat and scarcity of water, the infantry units within the task force were beginning to tire to a critical degree."[24] General Krueger then told Eichelberger to take command at Biak the following morning.

At 0830 hours on 15 June, Eichelberger and a small staff departed for Biak. They arrived at General Fuller's headquarters at 1230 that day.[25] Eichelberger spent the first two and one-half days at the front familiarizing himself with the tactical situation and the fighting capabilities of his own forces. On 16 June he went to the regimental command posts of the 186th and 162nd Infantry Regiments to assess personally the morale and effectiveness of those units. On 17 June, he observed the conduct of the two units under fire.[26] Eichelberger radioed General Krueger: "Today I have been with General Doe and 186 and 162 Infantry. With the possible exception of the first Bn 162 Inf the troops are not nearly as exhausted as I had expected and I believe they can be made to fight with energy."[27]

On 17 June General Krueger, still under pressure from General MacArthur, radioed Eichelberger to "launch your attack . . . promptly and press it home with the utmost vigor."[28] Eichelberger, however, had a plan for defeating the Japanese and was not going to be pressured into prematurely launching his attack because of MacArthur's and Krueger's embarrassment over previous communiques. Therefore, on 17 June Eichelberger sent this succinct message to General Krueger, outlining his plan of attack:

> Having arrived here forty-eight hours ago in almost complete ignorance of the situation, I have spent two days at the front. Tomorrow [Sunday], I have called off all fighting and troops will be reorganized. On Monday, I propose to put three battalions in the rear of the Japanese, and on Tuesday I propose to take the other two airfields.[29]

After clearly informing General Krueger of his plan and his pace, Eichelberger took two additional actions on 17 June. First, he ordered a reinforced rifle company to occupy Hill 320, which was the dominating terrain feature in the area north of the three airfields, thus providing an excellent observation point.[30] Second, Eichelberger issued his instructions for the 19 June attack. He would not try to directly seize the airfields nor conduct a frontal attack against the Japanese positions. Instead, he would envelop the enemy by going around the Japanese southern flank and seizing the ridgeline north of Mokmer airfield from the rear.[31] Eichelberger's objectives were to eliminate the Japanese ability to fire on Mokmer airfield and to obtain favorable terrain from which to launch future advances.[32] Eichelberger later credited the Japanese with giving him the solution for cracking their defenses. He had carefully examined all their operations in World War II and believed that the Japanese tactics in Malaya would provide the method of ending the stalemate on Biak. In Malaya, each time the British forces prepared a defensive line, the Japanese enveloped it. Once the British discovered that the Japanese were in their rear, the whole defensive line

collapsed and the British withdrew to establish another. This process was repeated down the entire peninsula. Eichelberger believed that at Biak the "Japanese troops [would], just like occidental troops, take a very dim and unhappy view of enemy forces in their rear."[33]

On 18 June, Eichelberger repeated a lesson he had learned at Buna and rested his troops before the major attack. As the soldiers rested, Eichelberger gave his subordinate commanders time to reorganize their forces and to ensure that "everybody could find out what they were doing."[34] Eichelberger also sent out patrols to reconnoiter the Japanese positions, and by evening on 18 June his troops were, in the words of an eyewitness, "ready to move hard and fast."[35]

On the morning of 19 June, the 41st Division launched a coordinated attack and moved hard and fast to accomplish Eichelberger's objectives. The 3rd Battalion, 163rd Infantry, and two battalions (2nd and 3rd) of the 186th Infantry Regiment "had enveloped the rear of the Japanese in the west caves and could prevent their reinforcement or escape."[36] Furthermore, this attack secured the Mokmer airfield from hostile ground attack.

Even though the attack on 19 June was a complete success, the situation demanded that Eichelberger continue to press his troops forward. He ordered an attack on 20 June to seize the remaining two airfields, Borokoe and Sorido, and to destroy the Japanese who were emplaced in the west caves (by the 162nd Infantry). By 1030 hours on 20 June, Eichelberger had seized the Borokoe and Sorido airfields.[37] The Hurricane Task Force's original mission had been accomplished. Eichelberger continued to press the attack against the Japanese who were neutralized in caves even though the airfields were secured.

On the night of 21-22 June, the Japanese commander, Colonel Kuzume, recognized defeat. He destroyed the regimental colors and all official documents and then ordered all able-bodied soldiers to attempt a breakout. The Japanese tried three times to break through the lines of the 186th Infantry. At 2100 hours, and then at 2400 hours on 21 June, the Japanese attacked and were repulsed. At 0400 hours on 22 June, the Japanese tried for the final time. All three attacks failed.[38] The last Japanese resistance in the caves was finally mopped up on 27 June.

Eichelberger departed Biak at 0900 hours on 28 June. It had taken him only five days to seize the three Japanese airfields and to break the enemy's main line of defense. It is worth noting that he accomplished this at a cost of only 400 Americans killed, compared to the 4700 Japanese killed in action.[39] Eichelberger credited his success "to profanity, flattery, offers of rewards, threats, and lady luck."[40] The tactical situation had been solved quickly, and MacArthur's reputation had not been tarnished. MacArthur could move on to his cherished operations in the Philippines without concern for Biak. After this operation, MacArthur rewarded Eichelberger with the command of the new Eighth Army.

MacARTHUR'S THIRD PROBLEM: MANILA

MacArthur successfully returned to the Philippines on 20 October 1944 when the Sixth United States Army landed on the island of Leyte. On 9 January 1945, MacArthur landed the same Sixth Army, commanded by Lieutenant General Walter Krueger, at Lingayen Gulf on the main island of Luzon. In 12 months, MacArthur had moved 2000 miles closer to Japan and had commenced the liberation of the Philippines. With the exception of Biak, all these operations had proceeded like clockwork.

The objective of the Sixth Army forces that landed at Lingayen Gulf was the City of Manila, 120 miles to the south. The assault troops at Lingayen Gulf consisted of the I and XIV Corps and the 40th, 37th, 6th, and 43rd Divisions.[41] General Krueger and his forces encountered no opposition on the beaches and little in the initial advance; however, terrain and logistical problems did slow the pace.[42] On 12 January 1945, only three days after Sixth Army had landed on Luzon, General MacArthur summoned

General Krueger to his headquarters to complain of the slow progress. MacArthur believed that since the Sixth Army casualties were light, they had encountered little resistance and could pick up the tempo of their attack. MacArthur was unimpressed with Krueger's arguments for additional troops with which to conduct the dash for Manila.[43]

MacArthur, who felt that the Japanese would not defend Manila, had correctly assessed the intentions of the Japanese commander on Luzon, General Tomoyuki Yamashita. Yamashita, with 275,000 Japanese troops on Luzon, realized that he could not possibly hope to defend the entire island. He knew that he could not confront the overwhelming forces MacArthur could bring to bear against him in the important region of the Central Plains and Manila Bay.[44] Therefore, he planned a fighting withdrawal into the mountainous strongholds in northern Luzon, which would tie up large amounts of allied shipping, troops, and aircraft. He hoped that this defense would delay the inevitable invasion of the Japanese homeland.[45] General Yamashita specifically ordered Lieutenant General Shizuo Yokoyama, the Eighth Division Commander, not to defend Manila but rather to evacuate the city.[46] However, due to bureaucratic disagreements between the Japanese army and navy, Vice Admiral Denshichi Okochi, the naval commander in Manila, decided to conduct a full-scale defense of the city against Yamashita's wishes.[47] Admiral Okochi's decision later caused a great deal of friction between General MacArthur and General Krueger.

By mid-January 1945, as the Sixth Army moved on Manila at a snail's pace, MacArthur grew more and more obsessed with the capture of the city. Manila Bay was of vital importance, but MacArthur's reasons were more than simply logistical and strategic.[48] It was almost as if his personal military reputation depended on liberating the city as quickly as possible. Therefore, throughout the month of January, the slow progress of the Sixth Army was a great irritant to General MacArthur. On 23 January, a newspaper correspondent, Lee Van Atta, informed Eichelberger that "General MacArthur had been laying down the law to Krueger about the slow advance at Lingayen and that he had given him an ultimatum to be in Manila by the 5th of February."[49] On 30 January 1945, General MacArthur personally went to the front to investigate the reason for the Sixth Army's slow advance. According to the official Army historian for this campaign, MacArthur found the pace of the advance "much too leisurely."[50] MacArthur then informed General Krueger that the 37th Division had demonstrated "a noticeable lack of drive and aggressive initiative."[51] General MacArthur in frustration said that the Sixth Army was "mentally incapable but if given tremendous forces they [were] able to advance ponderously and slowly to victory."[52]

This standard of performance was unacceptable to MacArthur and, as had become the routine when his reputation was at stake, he called on Eichelberger. To speed up the pace of operations on Luzon, MacArthur directed Eichelberger to conduct an amphibious landing on 31 January at Nasugbu, 45 miles southwest of Manila. The assault troops for this operation were the 11th Airborne Division, commanded by Major General Joseph Swing, and the 511th Parachute Regimental Combat Team.[53] MacArthur intended the Nasugbu landing to be a "reconnaissance in force to test the enemy defenses in southern Luzon."[54] Eichelberger was directed to land only one regimental combat team (188th Glider Regiment) initially. However, he was given the discretion to land the 187th Glider Regiment and to push north toward Manila if he met no opposition. In addition, Eichelberger had the authority to airdrop the 511th Parachute Regiment to exploit success, if the situation warranted it.[55] General MacArthur hoped that this operation would divert Japanese forces from north of Manila and prohibit them from concentrating all their defenses against the Sixth Army.[56]

At 0815 hours on 13 January 1945, Eichelberger landed his first assault force (the 188th Regimental Combat Team) at Nasugbu

Beach. This regiment encountered light resistance from the Japanese and by 0945 had seized the town of Nasugbu and the Nasugbu airport.[57] At 1030 hours Eichelberger, aboard the USS *Spencer*, made the decision to exploit the initial success of the 188th Regimental Combat Team. He ordered General Swing to land the rest of the 11th Airborne Division and to push on as rapidly as possible toward Manila. By noon the rest of the division had landed and was driving inland.[58]

Eichelberger went ashore at 1300 hours and immediately proceeded to the front to confer with General Swing.[59] Eichelberger, who was not without personal ambition, had as his objective to drive rapidly toward the capture of Manila.[60] Eichelberger later reflected that this operation was successful because "speed was emphasized and contact once gained was maintained until the enemy was either dispersed or annihilated." Eichelberger's tactics, which demanded rapid penetration by his infantry in order to avoid the stalemate that would ensue if the Japanese had time to establish their defenses, had been developed at Buna and Biak, where he had found that the infantry had a tendency to go slow and wait for the artillery to defeat the enemy.[61]

Eichelberger's emphasis on speed was rewarded when lead elements of the 188th Regiment seized the important Palico River bridge, eight miles inland, at 1430. The 11th Airborne Division's after-action report stated that "the Palico River Bridge had been prepared for demolition, but the Japanese were surprised by the rapid advance of our troops, and were caught on the far side of the bridge. Our fire prevented them from reaching the bridge and they withdrew toward Tagaytay Ridge."[62] This bridge was important because it allowed Eichelberger's forces to use the Nasugbu-Tagaytay road, which was an all-weather highway, and considerably shortened their supply line.[63]

After the bridge was seized, Eichelberger ordered General Swing to continue the advance through the night because he believed that the "enemy troops were confused and retreating," and a halt at dark would have permitted them to reorganize.[64] At midnight, the 187th Regiment passed through the 188th and continued the advance toward Manila. The 11th Airborne Division pushed on throughout the night. The following morning Eichelberger went to the front to inspect and exhort his men and soon found himself moving with the lead company in the advance.[65] His emphasis on speed had paid great dividends in his first 28 hours ashore. The 11th Airborne Division not only had established a port and an airfield in this time, but also had penetrated the main line of Japanese resistance and had advanced 19 miles.[66] To exploit this success, Eichelberger alerted the 511th Parachute Regiment to be prepared for an airborne drop in the vicinity of Tagaytay Ridge.[67]

By 2 February 1945, the 11th Airborne Division had fought its way through two Japanese defensive positions and by dusk had reached the third and most powerful Japanese position in the vicinity of Tagaytay Ridge.[68] Tagaytay Ridge was the most important military position held by the Japanese in southern Luzon. It was a formidable obstacle because its 2400-foot height dominated all the terrain in the region. Also, there was a two-lane concrete highway which led from Tagaytay Ridge straight down (30 miles) into Manila.[69] Therefore, as General Eichelberger and General Swing personally moved forward with the lead elements on 2 February, Eichelberger made the decision to envelop the Japanese positions on Tagaytay Ridge by air-dropping the 511th Parachute Regiment behind the Japanese. The Japanese would then be in a crossfire between the US elements.[70]

At 0730 on 3 February 1945, the 188th Regimental Combat Team assaulted the highest hill on Tagaytay Ridge, known as Shorty Hill. At 0815 the 511th Parachute Regiment jumped behind the Japanese position on Tagaytay Ridge.[71] Eichelberger was again under fire as he observed the critical assault from two directions, which finally reduced the Japanese positions on Tagaytay Ridge. By 1300 hours the Japanese positions had been destroyed and the 511th Parachute Regiment had linked up with the 188th Regiment. As soon as Tagaytay Ridge

was secure, patrols were sent down the highway toward Manila.[72]

In accordance with General Eichelberger's tactical emphasis on speed, General Swing loaded the 511th Parachute Regiment on trucks on the night of 3-4 February and ordered them to proceed "toward Manila until resistance was encountered."[73] The rest of the division followed on foot.[74] The Eighth Army after-action report describes the success of this tactic: "So rapid was our advance that the enemy had neither the time nor the presence of mind to detonate mines they had previously prepared along the route of march. Consequently, demolished bridges did not slow our advance until we reached [the town of] Imus."[75]

At 1000 hours on 4 February 1945, Eichelberger had reached Imus and was moving with the forwardmost elements of the 511th Parachute Regiment. The main highway bridge at Imus had been destroyed by the Japanese, and an alternate crossing bridge, 500 yards to the west, was heavily defended. However, the 511th with Eichelberger leading soon found a small crossing site and destroyed the Japanese positions from the rear.[76] Eichelberger's emphasis on speed in this action almost cost him his life, as he recorded in his diary: "[I] moved forward to the south end of the bridge and was pinned down by sniper fire which could not be located."[77]

After this action the 511th Parachute Regiment pushed on toward Manila. Eichelberger again positioned himself at the most dangerous and crucial point of the operation, as evidenced by the following diary entry: "I continued on down the road keeping abreast of the leading elements until [we] reached Las Pinas."[78] The speed of this attack continued to surprise the Japanese. The 11th Airborne after-action report stated that "once again the Japanese were found asleep, and the Las Pinas bridge was secured before the demolitions were set off."[79] The 511th had reached the southern suburbs of Manila and continued their drive until 2130 hours, when they were halted by well-prepared Japanese positions at the Paranque bridge. By 4 February the 11th Airborne had traveled 45 miles and had reached Manila.[80]

During this operation Eichelberger seemed to be everywhere at once. After the 511th Parachute Regiment crossed the Las Pinas bridge, Eichelberger found that the truck shuttling system was not functioning properly; therefore, he "returned to Tagaytay Ridge to do what [he] could about speeding up this advance."[81] The next morning Eichelberger again displayed great personal courage and moved with the advance elements of the 511th Parachute Regiment across the Paranque bridge. However, this was the end of the rapid movement by the Eighth Army. The Americans had reached the Genko-Line which had been designed to protect Manila from an attack from the south.[82] The Genko-Line was held by the Japanese 3rd Naval Battalion. Robert Ross Smith, the US Army official historian for this campaign, described the 3rd Naval Battalion positions as "the strongest in the Manila area, having the virtue of being long established. Reinforced concrete pillboxes abounded at street intersections in the suburban area south of the city limits, many of them covered with dirt long enough to have natural camouflage."[83] Against these positions, the 11th Airborne was able to move only 2000 yards in two days.[84]

On 7 February 1945, Eichelberger received word from MacArthur that the 11th Airborne would soon come under the Sixth Army control. Eichelberger departed Luzon before Manila was captured, on 9 February 1945, in order to prepare for the southern Philippines campaign.[85]

MacArthur had two reasons for ordering Eichelberger to conduct the Nasugbu landing, and Eichelberger had successfully accomplished both of them. The official objective was "to disrupt the Japanese lines of communication [and] create a diversion to support the main landing at Lingayen [by Sixth Army]."[86] However, Eichelberger understood that MacArthur had another motive: "I realize that placing me with a small force south of Manila was the MacArthur way of stirring up Krueger into action and speed. He succeeded when the newspapermen reported that troops that had been able to go only yards a day had begun to

go miles after hearing that I was en route."[87] Eichelberger's estimate of the Sixth Army was verified by an eyewitness; Major General William C. Dunckel wrote Eichelberger: "When you were pushing on Manila so rapidly, I visited Sixth Army Headquarters and found them greatly agitated over the fact that you would be in Manila before they were, and I believe to this day that we could have saved more of Manila if they had given you the means to come in by way of Nasugbu."[88] The result of MacArthur's prodding of General Krueger, Eighth Army's siphoning of Japanese troops from the north of Manila, and General Krueger's jealousy of Eichelberger was that by 4 February 1945 the Sixth Army had two divisions, the 1st Cavalry Division and the 37th Division, on the outskirts of Manila.[89]

In 104 hours, Eichelberger had pushed his troops 45 miles from Nasugbu to Manila. He had once again salvaged the tactical situation for MacArthur.

In the 41 years that have elapsed since World War II, the difficulties encountered by MacArthur in the Southwest Pacific have been glossed over and in some cases all but forgotten. His victories have been made to seem automatic. This is terribly unfair to the soldiers who fought for MacArthur. He had problems in the Southwest Pacific and his victories were far from automatic. In three cases, Buna, Biak, and Manila, his reputation as a brilliant strategist was almost tarnished. In each case he called on Lieutenant General Robert Eichelberger to salvage the situation. Eichelberger never failed him. A combination of innovative tactics, personal courage, and commonsense leadership made Eichelberger an effective, trusted field commander.

NOTES

1. Eichelberger was 6-1 and weighed 190 pounds. R. Eichelberger to E. Eichelberger, 13 January 1944 and 3 April 1945. Contained in the Eichelberger Papers, Duke University, Durham, North Carolina.
2. Fred Brown to R. Eichelberger, 4 August 1961. Eichelberger Papers, Duke University; Jay Luvaas, *Dear Miss Em: General Eichelberger's War in the Pacific, 1942-1945* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1972), p. xiv.
3. Robert Eichelberger and Milton MacKaye, *Our Jungle Road To Tokyo* (Washington: Zenger, 1949), pp. 21-23. The division was the 32nd Infantry.
4. Ibid., pp. 18-19.
5. Luvaas, p. 58; D. Edwards to R. Eichelberger, 11 January 1943; Eichelberger Papers.
6. Eichelberger and MacKaye, p. 101.
7. Ibid.
8. Eichelberger and MacKaye, p. 138; Harold Riegelman, *Caves of Biak: An American Officer's Experience in the Southwest Pacific* (New York: Dial, 1955), p. 137.
9. D. Clayton James, *The Years of MacArthur, Vol. II, 1941-1945* (Boston: Houghton-Mifflin, 1975), p. 453.
10. George Kenney, *General Kenney Reports: A Personal History of the Pacific War* (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearle, 1949), p. 289; James, p. 459; Luvaas, p. 125.
11. R. G. 407-201-2: B. 3028, "G-2 Summary of the Biak Operation: 27 May-29 June 1944," p. 2, Federal Research Center, Suitland, Md., hereinafter cited as "G-2 Summary of Biak."
12. James, p. 458.
13. Spencer Davis, "Slaughter on Biak," *Australia Newsweek*, 12 June 1944; Eichelberger Papers.
14. "G-2 Summary of Biak," pp. 2-4, 7-9; Robert Ross Smith, *Approach to the Philippines* (Washington: Dept. of the Army, Office of the Chief of Military History, 1953), p. 299.
15. "G-2 Summary of Biak," p. 9.
16. Ibid., p. 4.
17. Ibid., p. 5; Davis; Eichelberger Papers.
18. Eichelberger and MacKaye, p. 139; Smith, *Approach*, p. 325.
19. Smith, *Approach*, p. 341.
20. James, p. 459.
21. Davis; Eichelberger Papers.
22. James, pp. 459-60.
23. Walter Krueger, *From Down Under to Nippon* (Washington: Combat Forces Press, 1953), p. 101.
24. Allied Forces, Southwest Pacific Area, "I Corps History of the Biak Operation," p. 3; Eichelberger Diary, 14 June 1944, Eichelberger Papers.
25. Eichelberger Diary, 15 June 1944; Eichelberger Papers.
26. Ibid., 16-17 June 1944.
27. R. Eichelberger to W. Krueger, 16 June 1944; Eichelberger Papers.
28. W. Krueger to R. Eichelberger, 17 June 1944; Eichelberger Papers.
29. Eichelberger and MacKaye, p. 146.
30. Allied Forces, "History of the Biak Operation," pp. 5-6; Eichelberger Papers.
31. Ibid.
32. Smith, *Approach*, pp. 368-69.
33. Eichelberger and MacKaye, p. 146.
34. R. Eichelberger to E. Eichelberger, 19 June 1944, Eichelberger Papers.
35. Riegelman, p. 142.
36. Smith, *Approach*, p. 372.
37. Eichelberger Diary, 19 June 1944; Allied Forces, "History of the Biak Operation," p. 8; Eichelberger Papers.
38. R. G. 407: 341-INF(186)-0.1 B.10641, pp. 25-26, Federal Records Center, Suitland, Md.; Allied Forces, "History of the Biak Operation," p. 12; Eichelberger Papers.
39. James, p. 460.
40. R. Eichelberger to E. Eichelberger, 3 June 1944, in Luvaas, p. 135.
41. Krueger, p. 218.
42. Ibid., p. 225.
43. Ibid., pp. 227-28.
44. Robert Ross Smith, *Triumph in the Philippines* (Washington: Dept. of the Army, Office of the Chief of Military History, 1963), p. 94.

45. James, p. 625.
46. Smith, *Triumph*, pp. 96-97.
47. Ibid., pp. 240-41.
48. James, p. 631.
49. Eichelberger Diary, 23 January 1945; Eichelberger Papers.
50. Smith, *Triumph*, p. 212.
51. Ibid.
52. Eichelberger Diary, 23 March 1945; Eichelberger Papers.
53. "Report of the Commanding General, Eighth Army, on the Nasugbu and Bataan Operations," p. 9. Robert Eichelberger, "The Amphibious Eighth," p. 4, both contained in the Eichelberger Papers.
54. "Report After Action with the Enemy Operation Eikevi, Luzon Campaign, 31 January-30 June 1945," p. 3. R. G. 407: 7.311-0.3 Box 7583, National Records Center, Suitland, Md. Hereinafter cited as "Operation Shoestring."
55. Smith, *Triumph*, p. 14; "C.G. Report on Nasugbu and Bataan," p. 14; Eichelberger Papers.
56. Eichelberger, "Amphibious Eighth," p. 4; Eichelberger Papers.
57. "Operation Shoestring," p. 1.
58. Ibid.; Eichelberger and MacKaye, p. 190.
59. Eichelberger Diary, 31 January 1945; Eichelberger Papers.
60. "Report of C.G. Nasugbu and Bataan," foreword; Eichelberger Papers.
61. Ibid.; R. Eichelberger to E. Eichelberger, 20 June 1944, Luvaas, p. 133.
62. "Operation Shoestring," p. 1.
63. "Report of C.G. Nasugbu and Bataan," pp. 6, 16; Eichelberger Papers.
64. Eichelberger and MacKaye, p. 190.
65. R. Eichelberger to E. Eichelberger, 2 February 1945, Luvaas, p. 208; "Operation Shoestring," p. 2.
66. "Operation Shoestring," p. 2.
67. "Report of the C.G. Nasugbu and Bataan," p. 16; Eichelberger Papers.
68. Ibid.; "Operation Shoestring," p. 2.
69. Eichelberger and MacKaye, p. 194; "C.G. Report on Nasugbu and Bataan," p. 6; Eichelberger Papers.
70. "Operation Shoestring," p. 2.
71. Ibid., p. 3.
72. Edward M. Flanagan, *The Angels: A History of the 11th Airborne Division, 1943-1946* (Washington: Infantry Journal Press, 1948), p. 76; Eichelberger Diary, 3 February 1945, Eichelberger Papers.
73. "Operation Shoestring," p. 3.
74. Ibid.
75. "Report of the C.G. Nasugbu and Bataan, p. 22, Eichelberger Papers.
76. Ibid.; Eichelberger Diary, 4 February 1945, Eichelberger Papers.
77. Eichelberger Diary, 4 February 1945, Eichelberger Papers.
78. Ibid.
79. "Operation Shoestring," p. 4.
80. Ibid.; "C.G. Report Nasugbu and Bataan," p. 22; Eichelberger Papers.
81. Eichelberger Diary, 4 February 1945, Eichelberger Papers.
82. "Operation Shoestring," pp. 4-5; "C.G. Report Nasugbu and Bataan," p. 24; Eichelberger Papers.
83. Smith, *Triumph*, p. 265.
84. Ibid.
85. Eichelberger Diary, 7-9 February 1945, Eichelberger Papers.
86. "Report of C.G. Nasugbu and Bataan," foreword; Eichelberger Papers.
87. Eichelberger Dictations, 4 November 1960; Eichelberger Papers.
88. Major General Bill Dunckel to R. Eichelberger, 3 March 1945; Eichelberger Papers; James, p. 634.
89. James, pp. 632-33.