

## Joseph Homer Harrison Jr. Purple Heart, Citation Given

GORMAN, Dec. 20 (Spl).—Mrs. Belle Harrison of Gorman has received the Purple Heart and Presidential Unit Citation posthumously awarded to her son, Pfc. Joseph H. Harrison of the Marine Corps' 2<sup>nd</sup> Raider Battalion, who was killed in action on Guadalcanal, Solomon Islands, Nov. 11, 1942.

Joe, whose twin brother, Edward Harrison, is first officer on a Pan-American Airways plane flying out of Brownsville, was born at Port Arthur Feb. 3, 1919. His family moved here a year and a half later and he attended Gorman schools. He learned to fly in 1941 at the Ranger Flying School and spent several months in Canada with the RCAF, but returned to the United States and enlisted in the Marine Corps Jan. 7, 1942. He went overseas in June of last year.

He received the citation as a member of the 1st Marine Division which landed on Guadalcanal Aug. 7-9 and held its important strategic positions until Dec. 9, despite determined and repeated Japanese naval, air and land attacks.

### Circumstances of Loss

PFC Joe Harrison was a member of Carlson's Raiders during the "Long Patrol" – an ambitious operation to harass and disrupt Japanese units during the Guadalcanal campaign. The Marines landed at Aola on 4 November 1942 and began working their way towards the main perimeter at Lunga Point, fighting small skirmishes and ambushes as they went.

On 11 November 1942, as the Raiders advanced on the village of Asamana, a battalion-sized Japanese force opened fire. Corporal John "J D" Bennett's squad was on the point, and caught the brunt of the ambush as one veteran recalled:

*I was in J. D. Bennett's squad. He was blasted across the chest by a Jap machine gun. We entered that open field of kunai grass with some misgivings and just as we finished crossing the open half mile field we approached more heavy jungle. We could hear the enemy clanking on something and jabbering. J.D. ordered us into a scrimmage line and then all hell broke loose. Larry Spillan and Joe Harrison were killed.*

*Man, I never heard so goddamn much firing. I couldn't get close enough to the ground. One fucking machine gun didn't sound too fucking friendly in front of me. Lieutenant Maitland ordered "Okay men, let's get up and charge them...." Sgt. "Bull Dog" Evans said "Okay, Lieutenant, you get up first and we will follow you," but that ended any foolish charge talk. Pete Arias, quoted in "The Raider Patch" (May 1981)*

Survivors were pinned in the field for hours; some managed to make their own way back to safety, while others had to wait for the cover of darkness. Wounded men unable to move were in serious danger, especially when Japanese patrols began combing through the area. Dead Marines were left where they fell until the following morning, when the Raiders finally gained control of the area.

**Burial Information or Disposition**

The seven Raiders killed in the battle of “Bloody Plains” were buried in the field, somewhere in the vicinity of Asamana. No further information was recorded, and the site was never found by post-war searches.