

Permission granted by The Trowel by Robert Huke, from The Grand Lodge of Masons in Massachusetts.

A PUBLIC HOUSING project in Taunton is the least attractive and fitting tribute to one of America's heroes of World War II. Ever since its postwar construction the housing units have been the scene of family disputes, riots, thievery, and fires. Most of the inhabitants wouldn't know Paul Delmont Bunker if he knocked on their doors. And, most likely, they could care less who he was and what he did for the country that offers them life, liberty, and the pursuit of opportunity whereby some roll up their sleeves and work while others simply complain and ask, "What's in it for me?"

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May 6 marks the 46th anniversary of the surrender of Fort Corregidor by Gen. Jonathan Wainwright to the armed forces of the Imperial Japanese Empire. "The Rock," as Corregidor is affectionately called by those who have served in the military, is one of two island fortresses guarding the entrance to Manila Bay in the Philippines. The other island, the smaller of the two, is Fort Hughes. Those two islands share some pages of American and Philippine history that have been written in blood, sweat, and tears, costing both defenders and conquerors thousands of lives.

Paul Delmont Bunker was born in Posen, MI. May 7, 1881, the son of Washington Foss Bunker and Amelia Ann Kunze Bunker. When he was only a youngster the family moved to Taunton, where Washington was soon appointed a police officer. Paul attended Taunton High School where he distinguished himself as an outstanding student and football player. When finishing



Col. Paul D. Bunker

PAUL DELMONT BUNKER

his junior year of high school he was appointed by Cong. William C. Lovering of Taunton to the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. Football at the turn of the century was played without head helmets, and with only a hard-rubber nose protector (often used to break the nose) and leg protectors.

Entering West Point as a plebe in the class of 1903, Bunker developed into a muscular and handsome young man, proving to be an outstanding athlete and student. The Master of the Sword had to widen the parallel bars to accommodate Bunker's massive shoulders that held their shape until the fall of Corregidor. The story is told at West Point (but never completely admitted by cadets at the time) that Bunker slipped out of the academy one night to a nearby site where it was related he gave a healthy beating to world heavyweight boxing champion Jack Johnson.

What kind of football player was Bunker? In his third year at West Point he was selected by Walter Camp to the first All-American team as a tackle. In 1902, as a first-year cadet, he was chosen by Camp to the first team All-American as a halfback — the first West Pointer to be chosen in successive years on Camp's teams. From 1899 until his death in 1925, Camp was the recognized authority on American college football. He was succeeded by Grantland Rice who selected the teams through 1947.

The 1902 Army-Navy football game was one of the bitterest ever fought between the two service academies. The Navy line included William "Bull" Halsey who would later gain fame as an Admiral in the Pacific during World War II. The Army quarterback was Charles D. Daly who had been chosen by Camp to his All-American teams of 1898 through 1900 when Daly was the signal caller for Harvard College. He received his appointment to West Point from Cong. John F. ("Honey") Fitzgerald of Boston, maternal grandfather to President John F. Kennedy.

Among the many cadets impressed by Bunker's athletic

prowess was Douglas MacArthur, team manager and roommate of Bunker. They were lifelong friends and wherever MacArthur was assigned to command, Paul Bunker was nearby as commander of the coast artillery. That friendship survived until Bunker's death in Karenko Prison on the island of Formosa (now Taiwan). "I could shut my eyes and see again that blond head racing, tearing, plunging — 210 pounds of irresistible power," wrote MacArthur.

Following his June 1903 graduation, Bunker returned to Taunton to visit his home. His application for degrees in King David Lodge was received July 8, 1903, and one month later he was a candidate. He Entered Aug. 12, Passed on the afternoon of Aug. 26, and was Raised that same evening. It must have been a memorable day for Wor. John H. Eldridge and his officers.

Bunker was more than simply a good athlete; he was a man who was aware of destiny and something must have told him he would be a part of America's history. Somebody once claimed Bunker was destined for history. But destiny is a choice and Paul Bunker never flinched from his military responsibility. He kept daily diaries, some copies of which may be seen in the Old Colony Historical Society, Taunton; the originals are at West Point. He had a knowledge of the arts and sciences and the theater, and was a good researcher and writer. Several volumes on Bunker genealogy, as well as the flora and fauna of the Philippines, are among his collection at the Boston Public Library.

In 1910 he was stationed at Portsmouth, NH, where he won first prize (\$60) in a military literary contest. The subject was, "What measures taken in the time of peace will assure the most results in time of war through joint action of the army and navy?" Had some of his suggestions been heeded the results at

Corregidor might have been different. His big artillery guns pointed on Topside at the fort were pointed toward the sea and could not swivel toward land. The Japanese approached from the island.

In a letter dated 16 December 1936 to King David Lodge, Bunker informs them of a package he has sent from the Philippines to the Lodge, containing a gavel. "I still claim that I hail from 'Ta'ntin, Good Lord' and some of my fondest memories cluster around the unequalled ritual of King David (Lodge). I have visited many other Lodges but none can compare to your work."

The gavel was made from wood taken from an old monastery built in the Philippines before the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth. Most natives estimated the beam from which the gavel was made to be 250 years old, thus making that gavel now (1987) at least 300 years old. The wood is called molave and the scientific name, "... if anybody is interested, is *Vitex pariflora*, belonging to the teak family." The gavel is used by King David Lodge on important occasions, the last being when M. W. J. Philip made a fraternal visit in September 1983. The original gavel from Bro. Bunker is preserved in the archives of the lodge, along with many others dating from the charter year 1798.

At the outbreak of World War II Bunker was still a colonel stationed at Fort Mills (Corregidor) with the 59th Coast

Artillery, from where the letter and gavel were sent to King David Lodge. He was commander at Topside (big guns at Corregidor). Most of the men had volunteered for duty in the Philippines and they found themselves (under the command of Bunker) led by a Prussian-type militarist who wore Gen. John J. Pershing choke collar and proper dress at all times — even to the regimental cummerbund for dinner. He waxed his mustache and always appeared to be at attention, even while walking. It was because he was such an outspoken man that he never advanced in rank.

His diary tells of the departure in the dark of night of Gen. Douglas MacArthur, his wife, and son in a PT boat commanded by Lt. John Bulkeley. Bunker noted in the diary, March 10, 1942, that he (MacArthur) has gone but we must "now convince our men that he has not deserted, but has gone into a job where he can do something real toward helping us. It would be bad for our men's morale if they put the wrong interpretation on his leaving." That same day Bunker had a surprise visit from his son-in-law, Maj. Brooks Maury. They talked about their wives and Bunker's four grandchildren. Maury would later meet death aboard a Japanese prison ship bound for Tokyo but torpedoed by an American submarine, Dec. 15, 1944 (that submarine now lies at Fall River). Two other Taunton men were on that same ship.

Bataan surrendered April 8-9, 1942, and Maj. Maury was among the 1,000 prisoners who survived the Death March. Three days later the Japanese artillery bombarded Corregidor

An American Hero ...

By Robert W. Williams III

BUNKER *continued*

In November 1945 Col. Delbert Ausmus, also of the Coast Artillery Corps, went to Washington, D.C., and presented the Secretary of War with a small piece of the original Corregidor flag. He reported that as he lay in the hospital at Bilibid Prison he noticed Col. Bunker beside him. Bunker sensed he would not survive the war, whereupon he removed the patch of the flag from his shirt and divided it into two pieces, giving Col. Ausmus one. Today that patch may be seen, framed and hanging in the museum of the U.S. Military Academy. Col. Bunker's body had been cremated and on 23 March 1948 his ashes were returned and scattered over the plains of West Point for God, Country, and the Corps.

When the American flag was again raised at Ft. Corregidor on March 2, 1945, a total of 5,160 of the Japanese defenders had either perished or committed suicide. An estimated one million Philipinos were either killed or died during World War II. American, Philippino, and Japanese soldiers and families have since made pilgrimages to the island that is now overgrown, with its guns cut to pieces by the torches of scrap dealers. A lack of funds prohibits caring for the monument to World War II, where a roll call of honor rests on Topside, listing the many campaigns with the Japanese Empire.

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and celebrated Hirohito's birthday on April 29 with the heaviest shelling of all. "I lost out having batter cakes for breakfast because the Jap shells hit too close to our outdoor stoves ... and all the cooks beat it. ..." Bunker's artillery crew returned fire until the guns became too hot.

On May 4, with the Japanese swarming over the island, Gen. George F. Moore instructed Col. Bunker to lower the Stars and Stripes on Topside. He raised a white flag of surrender and secretly tore off a piece of the American flag that he had intended to keep and present to the Secretary of War when he returned to the states. In a quiet moment he placed the strip inside a patch he had sewn to the inner side of the left pocket of his cotton shirt. He burned the rest of the flag so it could not be claimed as a prize for Gen. Homma.

After being held at Corregidor, Bunker and other officers were marched to Manila. At age 62 he collapsed during the 30-mile march and was confined to a hospital where he learned he had lost 44 pounds since the war began. He was later taken to Tarlac, a prison for senior officers. Among them was Gen. Wainwright who had assumed command of the island when MacArthur left for Australia. Notes in Bunker's diary tell of his concern for his wife Landon. "I haven't so many of them (days) left at my age and I begrudge every one that continues my separation from Landon."

Sent to Karenko Prison on Formosa, he laid out parade grounds marked with rocks. Despite the loss of weight Bunker was "... always cheerful, hopeful, and working for his fellow prisoners," one soldier wrote. On March 1, 1943, he wrote his last entry in the diary, noting a feverish night, choking, and knowing his end was near. He died ten days later.

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