

Peninsula Diary Mayo Hayes O'Donnell

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### **Marine Writes From Korea**

"Christmas in Korea" might be the title for today's Diary, for we are going to tell you a story as it has been told to us through frequent letters from a young man who is very near and dear to us. Michael has been a Marine stationed in western Korea since last February, having enlisted in that service on Sept. 3, 1951, soon after his graduation from high school.

"Well we have most everything ready for winter," he began a letter in October. "The doors on our tents had to be weatherproofed and we put up two stoves and patched the holes. We also had to board up the bottom part of the tent and pack it with dirt so rain and snow won't come in from underneath. Seems as though we just can't get finished squaring things away."

"I've got a new 'washie boy.'" He is 18 years old and is going to school to learn English so he can be an interpreter for the Marine teams. His name is Kwan and he lived in Cumchon about 10 miles from our C.P. My little friend is working to get enough money to go to school so he can write our language. He speaks English very well and has been teaching me all about the history of Korea. He likes my leather jacket and wants to get one like it. If you can buy one and send it to me I'll send you the money next pay day!

"Kwan wears a size about 34 or 36. If you could do it I know he would appreciate and be very grateful. I see so many kids over here who need warm clothes for this winter and I would like to help them all but it is just too impossible."

A few days later the Marine wrote about the winter cold and the latest issue of clothing: "Weather is starting to get a little colder now. We have received a stove and our cold weather sleeping bags. Pretty soon I'll be walking around with Thermo boots, knee deep in snow. Thank God for the Thermo boots, more commonly known here as "Mickey Mouse" boots. They are really a life saver. Well this looks like I'll be having my first white Christmas and my first year away from home, but it will be one I'll never forget."

On November 10, Michael was anticipating some official duties when he wrote: "It looks like we are going to have a big celebration today as it is the Marine Corps' birthday. We are officially 177 years old, the oldest

military outfit in the United States. They have made a big cake for the whole battalion and will have a cake cutting ceremony at 11 o'clock.

This bit of gossip seemed interesting: "Some of our friends from the British Commonwealth Division came down to see us the other day. I sure get a kick out of the way they talk. We usually have a long conversation over the switchboard when we are not busy, so they decided to come down and meet us. They are really a nice bunch of guys."

And then a bit of philosophizing: "I wish I could be home for Thanksgiving but it seems I'm indispensable at the present. I would like to be home for all occasions for that matter, but there are a few people who persist in trying to stop such things for everyone and I'm just one of the few that are trying to discourage them. Maybe some guys don't know what they are fighting for over here but I think I have a good reason. I'd rather be over here than making a beach landing on Monterey Bay or digging a bunker in your back yard. Like the old saying goes I'm fighting for 'blueberry pie and T-bone steaks.'"

From western Korea comes this news of what "Our Boys – the Marines – had for their Thanksgiving dinner: "Well, my Thanksgiving turned out pretty well. We had just about all the turkey and cranberry sauce we could eat. We also had some delicious pumpkin pie and ice cream and a little fruit cake on the side. Just like Grandma's only not quite so tasty. The cooks we have just don't seem to have that old-fashioned touch of home-style cooking.

A bit later in November, Michael wrote: "It has really been snowing lately and the mornings are very cold. I took several pictures of everything covered with snow and they should be good, as everything is so very beautiful.

"You should see everyone running around with big parkas on and our heavy rubber boots. We all look like a clan of Eskimos."