

**Chapter 05195 1943**

**John Stiles 'Sonny' Van Ness**

**WW2 Marine Corporal**

**Colonel Edson's 5th Marine Regiment,  
1st Marine Raider Battalion**

Fairfield, NJ and Galveston, TX

**Edward Pearce branch #3, generation #7.**

**In-Law**

Sonny is the 1st cousin 1x removed of husband  
of 2nd great granddaughter of Henry Pearce



**SONNY VAN NESS 1925 - 1981**

3/272025


## Relationship: Henry PEARCE to John Stiles 'Sonny' VAN NESS

John Stiles 'Sonny' VAN NESS is the 1st cousin 1x removed of husband of 2nd great granddaughter of Henry PEARCE


Self

 <p><b>Henry PEARCE</b> b: 25 Jul 1725 England d: 08 Jul 1788 Fairfield, NJ</p> <p>1</p>	 <p><b>Elizabeth Lucinda SPEAR</b> b: 06 May 1737 England d: 16 Oct 1814 Fairfield, NJ</p> <p>1</p>
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Son

 <p><b>Edward PEARCE</b> b: 02 Dec 1773 England d: 26 Jul 1834</p> <p>2</p>
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Mother-in-law of 2nd great granddaughter

 <p><b>Sarah Ellen VAN NESS</b> b: 17 Dec 1843 d: 27 May 1908</p> <p>7</p>
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Grandson

 <p><b>Peter PEARCE</b> b: 31 Mar 1819 Fairfield, NJ d: 10 Jun 1879</p> <p>3</p>
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Grandparent of husband of 2nd great granddaughter

 <p><b>Cornelius David VAN NESS</b> b: 03 Aug 1821 Fairfield, NJ d: 03 Oct 1898</p> <p>8</p>
--


Great granddaughter

 <p><b>Mariah Earle PEARCE</b> b: 07 Oct 1844 Fairfield, NJ d: 27 May 1918</p> <p>4</p>
--


Uncle of husband of 2nd great granddaughter

 <p><b>John Stiles 'Stiles' VAN NESS</b> b: 25 Oct 1852 NJ d: 30 Jul 1932</p> <p>9</p>
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2nd great granddaughter

 <p><b>Grace May JACOBUS</b> b: 05 Feb 1874 Montclair, Essex County, NJ d:</p> <p>5</p>
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1st cousin of husband of 2nd great granddaughter

 <p><b>Lloyd Mervin VAN NESS</b> b: 28 Jun 1889 Fairfield, NJ d: 10 May 1967</p> <p>10</p>
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Husband of 2nd great granddaughter

 <p><b>Stiles Burton 'Burt' VAN NESS</b> b: 22 Aug 1869 d: 24 Feb 1917</p> <p>6</p>
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1st cousin 1x removed of husband of 2nd great gr

 <p><b>John Stiles 'Sonny' VAN NESS</b> b: 28 Jan 1925 North Caldwell, NJ d: 22 Aug 1981 <b>Generation #7</b> Galveston, Texas</p> <p>11</p>
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## Relationship: Gerrit Cornelis Van Ness to John Stiles 'Sonny' VAN NESS

John Stiles 'Sonny' VAN NESS is the 9th great grandson of Gerrit Cornelis Van Ness


Self

 <b>Gerrit Cornelis Van Ness</b> b: 1539 d: <b>1</b>	 <b>Catalyntje De Forest</b> b: 1546 d: <b>1</b>
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Son

 <b>Hendrick VAN NESS</b> b: Abt. 1578 Noordeloos, South Holland, Neth d: 16 Apr 1654 New York <b>2</b>
--


4th great grandson

 <b>Thomas Evert VAN NESS</b> b: 15 Feb 1738 Little Falls, NJ d: 1803 <b>7</b>
--


Grandson

 <b>Cornelisse H VAN NESS</b> b: 1604 Vianen, South Holland d: 12 Nov 1684 Greenbush, Albany, NY <b>3</b>
--


5th great grandson

 <b>David VAN NESS</b> b: 16 Feb 1784 d: 16 Feb 1851 <b>8</b>
--


Great grandson

 <b>Hendrick Cornelisse VAN NESS</b> b: Abt. 1638 Vianen, South Holland d: Abt. 1710 Greenbush, NY <b>4</b>
--

6th great grandson

 <b>Cornelius David VAN NESS</b> b: 03 Aug 1821 Fairfield, NJ d: 03 Oct 1898 <b>9</b>
---


2nd great grandson

 <b>Simon Hendrick VAN NESS</b> b: 1666 Greenbush, Rensselaerswyck, N d: 04 Oct 1732 <b>1st family Fairfield</b> Fairfield (Gansegat), NJ <b>5</b>
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7th great grandson

 <b>John Stiles 'Stiles' VAN NESS</b> b: 25 Oct 1852 NJ d: 30 Jul 1932 <b>10</b>
--


3rd great grandson

 <b>Evert Simon VAN NESS</b> b: 1710 Gansegat, NJ d: 1807 Fairfield, NJ <b>6</b>
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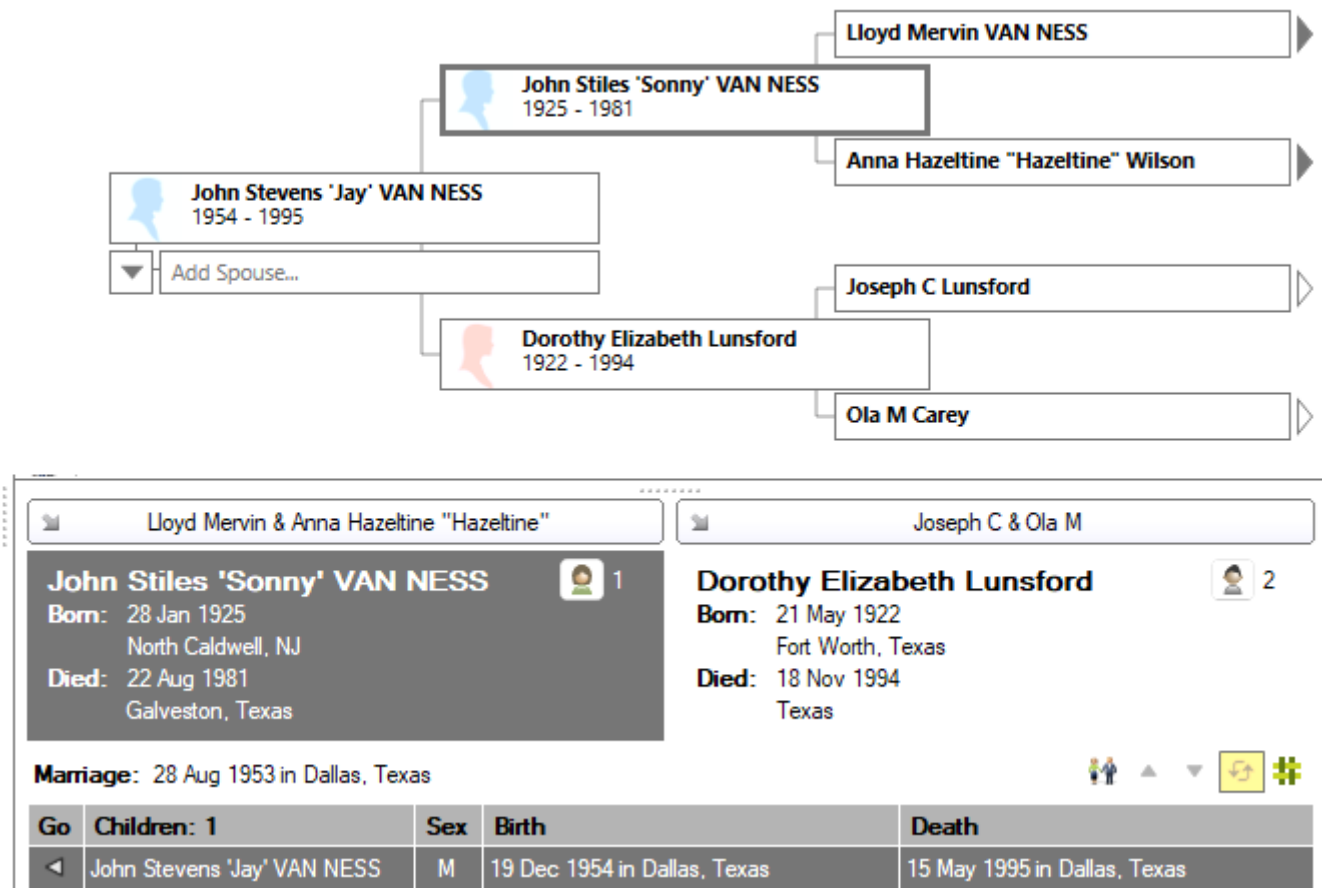
8th great grandson

 <b>Lloyd Mervin VAN NESS</b> b: 28 Jun 1889 Fairfield, NJ d: 10 May 1967 <b>11</b>
---

9th great grandson

 <b>John Stiles 'Sonny' VAN NESS</b> b: 28 Jan 1925 North Caldwell, NJ d: 22 Aug 1981 Galveston, Texas <b>12</b>
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12th generation  
Van Ness



Sonny died age 56.





**SONNY VAN NESS 1925 - 1981**

His 1941 Caldwell HS yearbook says he sang lead tenor in the band, singing Rumba songs.

Sonny Van Ness was just 17 years old when he tried to enlist the day after the Pearl Harbor attack. He left **Caldwell NJ High School** early. After paperwork, He officially enlisted 1/28/1942.

Nine months later. Sonny went from High School to the worst battlefield at the time. **Guadacanal** 10/1942 battle for Henderson Field.

## 1942

STILES VAN NESS was excused from classes Dec. 8, 1941 to enlist in the Marines. On Jan. 28, 1942, his seventeenth birthday, he left for his basic training at Parris Island, South Carolina. While there he won several marksmanship medals and also qualified as a "Raider." March 29, 1942 he sailed with the "First Raider's Battalion" under Col. Edson from San Diego, Cal., and landed in Samoa, for jungle training. In August, his company was sent into Tulagi and in September into Guadalcanal. Here he was used as "Runner" on the front lines; according to reports from some of his "Buddies" who are in hospitals in California, "Van" was well liked by all the fellows and officers. They say that they all marvelled at his enthusiasm and that he seemed to be tireless. In November, he received his P.F.C. rating and last reports from him on Feb. 10, 1943, were that he was in fine health, weighed 185 pounds, and that no one should worry about him.



## SONNY VAN NESS

# John S Van Ness

in the U.S., Marine Corps Muster Rolls,

Detail   Source

Name: John S Van Ness

Rank: Corporal



Muster Date: Oct 1943

Station: First Raider Battalion, First Marine Raider  
Regiment **Edson's Raiders**

**Not to be confused with Merrill's Raiders.**

For 18 months **John Stiles 'Sonny' Van Ness**, 18, has fought with the 5th Marines. When they landed on Guadalcanal, he was one of the tiny group that survived the Japs' withering cross fire on the beaches, battled for **118 days** without replacement.

All this his slender, greying father, **Lloyd**, has had in mind as he works in Curtiss-Wright's plane-propeller plant in Caldwell, N.J.

Last week, Lloyd Van Ness passed his 1,000th consecutive day on the job. He has not taken a Saturday, Sunday or holiday off for nearly 3 years. Said Iron Man Van Ness: "It's easy."

**Time Magazine**, 11/8/1943. 15 cents.



Jap Admiral Koga  
1885 - 1944

Following the death of Admiral Yamamoto on April 18, 1943, Koga succeeded Yamamoto as Chief of the Combined Jap Fleet.

Japan's Koga.

Where is his fleet?



1942 yearbook  
Caldwell NJ High School

**Phyllis Ryerson Van Ness**

Phil

Academic

**Noted For:** Her singing sax. **Secret Ambition:** To see her brother a top-notch Marine. **Usually Seen:** Enjoying herself. **Weakness:** Ken and the Orchestra.

**Her brother is Sonny Van Ness who was fighting at Guadalcanal.**

In the 1950s-60s, Phyllis and her 2 sisters (Helen and Beverly) were Sunday school teachers at the FDRC.

J. Stiles Van Ness played End on the 1941 football team.





## FIGHTER ON HOME FRONT PUTS IN 753 CONSECUTIVE DAYS

Special to the BUFFALO EVENING NEWS.

CALDWELL, N. Y., Jan. 15.—

Honors as the nation's most unique warplant worker today probably could be awarded to grey-haired Lloyd Van Ness, whose son's gallant fight as a marine raider on Guadalcanal has spurred his father on to continue a startling work record begun two years ago.

Lloyd Van Ness, head of the disposal system of the propeller division of the Curtiss-Wright Corporation, has worked 753 consecutive days on the job.

This amazing work record has been set despite the fact that Mr. Van Ness suffers frequent attacks from a severe back injury suffered years ago.

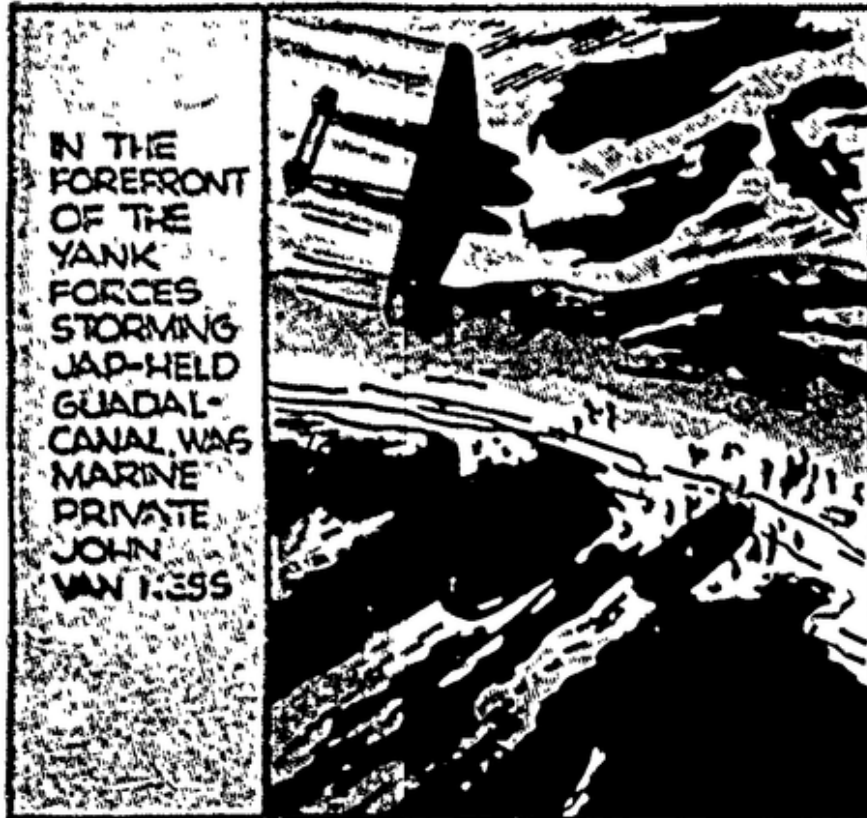
"This is everybody's war," the nemesis of absenteeism declared. "Everybody must work together now or be chained together later. And while my son fights with bullets, I'll do my share at home in the best way I know how."

Inspiration to continue his record—still going on day to day—is the splendid fight his son, John Stiles Van Ness, made on Guadalcanal as a marine raider when he battled Japanese forces for 118 continuous days and nights, the longest sustained combat in American history.

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# HOME-FRONT HEROES

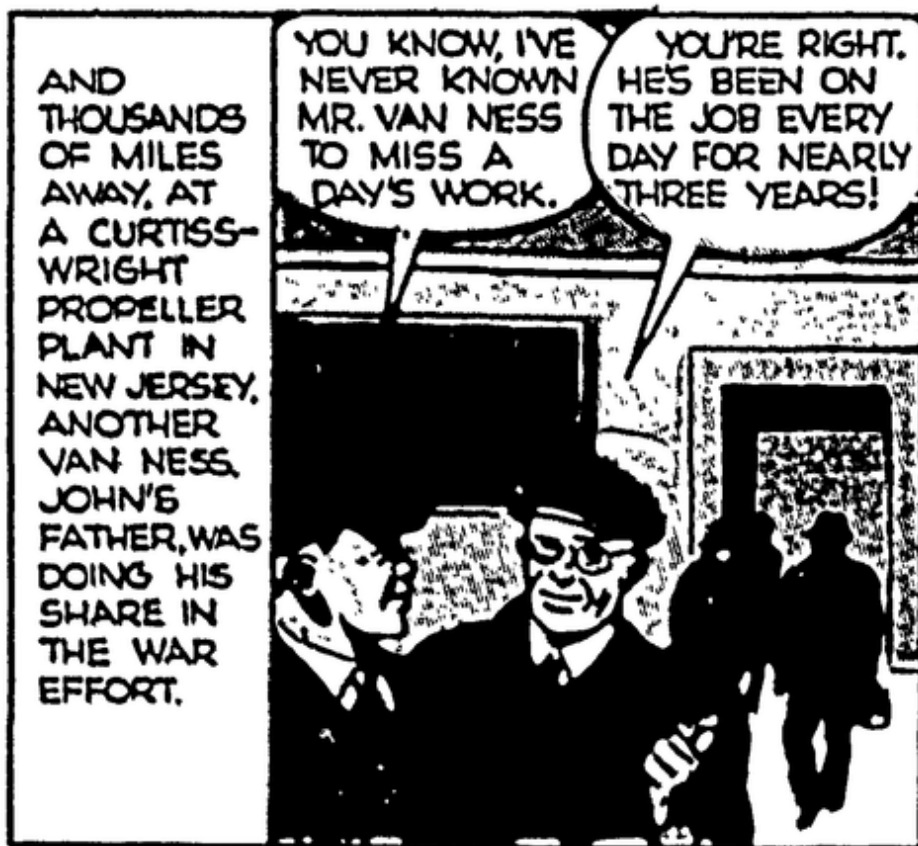


IN THE  
FOREFRONT  
OF THE  
YANK  
FORCES  
STORMING  
JAP-HELD  
GUADAL-  
CANAL, WAS  
MARINE  
PRIVATE  
JOHN  
VAN NESS

**John Stiles  
'Sonny' Van Ness**

**age 18 from  
Fairfield, NJ.**

**Continued**

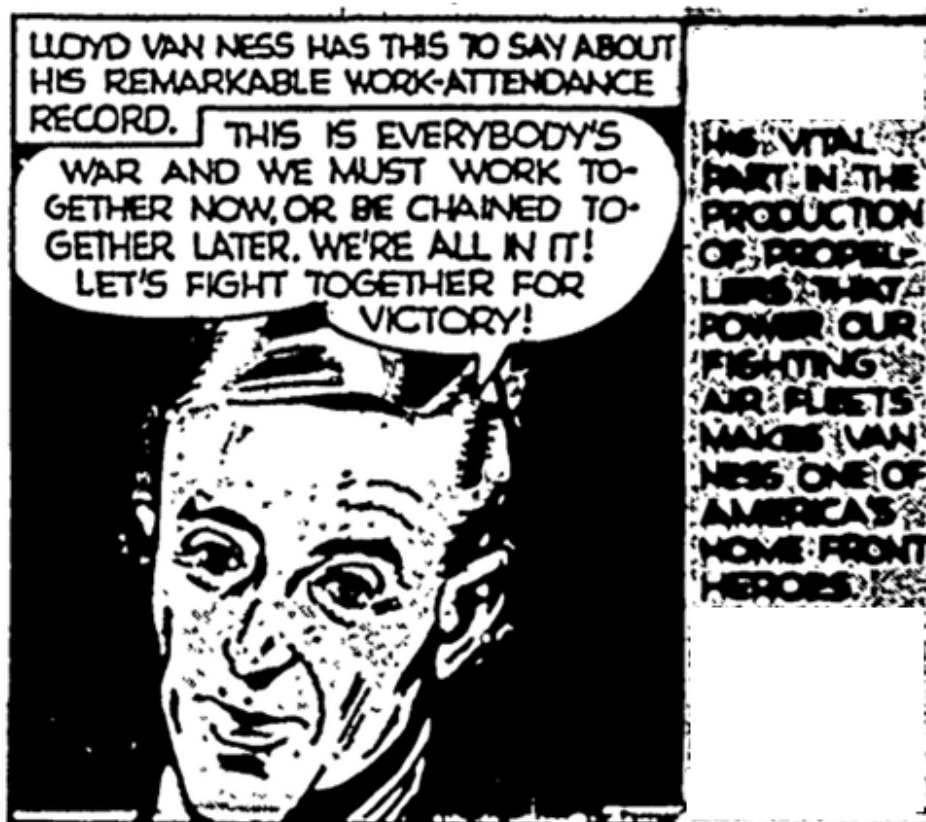


Curtiss-Wright Propeller Plant was at 300 Fairfield Road, Fairfield, NJ.

### Lloyd Mervin VAN NESS

1889—1967 (77)

Lloyd was age 53 in Jan 1943.



He had a hunch back due to a severe car accident around 1911 at the intersection of Passaic Ave and New Dutch Lane in Fairfield, NJ.

Glen knew Lloyd, pushed in a wheel chair by Sonny, at the FDRC church in the 1950s-1960s.





1942 ship that brought Sonny to  
Guadalcanal.

Name:	John S Van Ness
Ship, Station or Activity:	Colhoun <b>USS Colhoun</b>
Ship Number or Designation:	APD-2 <b>(APD-2)</b>
Muster Date:	24 Jul 1942





Into the boats heading for Guadalcanal.





12/1942



These are elements of the 5th Marines arriving in Australia, December 1942. Contrary to the popular image, when the division left the island, they were not in rags. Many mismatched uniforms and definitely suffering from diseases and malnutrition.

By Nov 42 fresh supplies including clothing, had started to arrive to replace their tattered uniforms. Showers, tentage and plenty of food had also started to arrive by November.



Marines of the 2nd Battalion 5th Marines (2/5) landing at Beach Blue on Tulagi, 7 Aug 1942. The battalion followed the 1st Raiders and cleared the northern tip of the island. They are normally misidentified as 1st Raiders in this photo.

I refer to 2/5 the "Red Headed Stepbrother" of the 1st Raiders. In every Guadalcanal Raider battle, 2/5 was right beside them. But received little to no recognition. The 1st Raiders was 1/5 before they were turned into the Raiders so most of these newwar Marines knew each other. See less

Sonny Van Ness was nearby in the 5th Marines, 1st battalion.

He enlisted on his **17th** birthday 1/28/1942. US Marines.

Name	John S Vanness
Gender	Male
Birth Date	28 Jan 1925
Death Date	22 Aug 1981
SSN	143181435
Enlistment Branch	M
Enlistment Date	28 Jan 1942
Discharge Date	8 Mar 1945



1st Marines Division

The Battle of Guadalcanal lasted from 8/7/1942 to 2/9/1943.  
This means that 17 year old Sonny only trained from 1/28/1942 to 8/1942, just 6 months.



Bloody Ridge (Edson's Ridge) view southward Hill 123 with Col Edson CP, Vandergriff CP.





When "Red Mike" Edson & His 800 Men Were Up Against 2,500 Attacking Japanese – "You men have done a great job, and I have just one more thing to ask of you"



When "Red Mike" Edson & His 800 Men Were Up Against 2,500 Attacking Japanese - "You men have done a great job, and I have just one more thing to..."

WARHISTORYONLINE.COM



1942 Japanese soldiers at Guadalcanal.



1942 Japanese soldiers meeting before the attack on Bloody Ridge where our **Sonny Van Ness** age 17 gets ready.





**The enemy 3 days earlier.**





Curtiss-Wright  
Propeller Plant

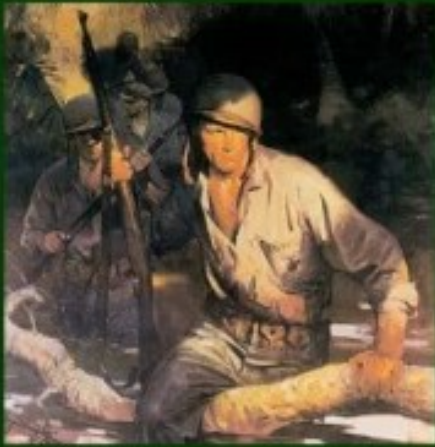


After the war, Glen's father **Al Pierce** briefly worked at the Fairfield NJ plant down the road.



# GUADALCANAL

THE BATTLE FOR HENDERSON FIELD, 1942-1943



The Japanese attacked on a dark moonless midnight hour. There were **2,500** Japanese soldiers and **800** US Marines who fought in the dark jungle.











**Hill 123 at Guadalcanal**







Guadalcanal— Hill 123 (Hill 2)

Sonny Van Ness served in the 1942 Marines with Colonel Edson's '5th Marine Regiment, 1st Marine Raider Battalion' and fought at Guadalcanal, Tulagi and Bougainville battles. Fought at **Edson's Ridge** in Guadalcanal later known as Bloody Ridge or Hill 123 Sept 1942 near Henderson field.

**Battle of Edson Ridge**: In August of 1942, the Americans landed on Guadalcanal and captured a Japanese airfield under construction that would become known as Henderson Field. As it turns out, the Japanese wanted it back and the next few months would see ferocious fighting for that cause. Edson's Raiders had endured much of this combat and on the evening of September 12, were sent to a reserve position near Henderson Field where they were expected to catch a short break and get some rest.

However, an unexpected Japanese attack that evening ruined any such plans as the Raiders of 1st Battalion were once again pitched battle for their lives.

With part of the positions overrun, Col. Edson withdrew his men the next day to a ridgeline approximately 400 yards to the south and gave the order for his Marines to prepare for its defense. It was here on this ridge the Col. Edson gave his Marines the encouragement to simply hold out one more night giving them time to mentally and physically prepare for what was to come.

Sonny was a 'runner' for Colonel Edson.

Successes in the Japanese assault due to the sheer numerical advantage led to some Marine positions being overrun and their flanks dangerously exposed.

One Marine officer who participated recounted it as, "The Japanese attack was almost constant, like a rain that subsides for a moment and then pours the harder... When one wave was mowed down - and I mean mowed down - another followed it into death."

As portions of the Marines begin to withdraw and it seemed like defeat was imminent, they ran into a certain Colonel who was never short of the right words to say as he rallied them to prepare the defense around Hill 123. Is often said of Colonel Edson that his Marines would follow him anywhere, but their only problem would be keeping up.

Throughout the night of September 13, Colonel Edson could always be seen just 20 yards behind the front firing line rallying his Marines and organizing their defense. At times when other Marines could be seen hugging the ground, Col. Edson exposed himself to dangerous fire in order to single-handedly save the battalion.

As the day broke the next morning, Edson's Raiders were still in command of Hill 123 and the Japanese assault was repulsed. The world would often refer to this particular ridge as "Bloody Ridge," but the Marines who fought there would only refer to it as Edson's Ridge seeing as how much their commander was determined to own it.







Sept 1942 Guadalcanal. Sonny was on Edson's Ridge in green area. He was a "runner" for Edson.



US 1942 Edson patrol at Guadalcanal water crossing.



**Bloody Ridge, Guadalcanal**

**Guadalcanal 9/11-12/1942 1st Marine Raiders.  
Sonny Van Ness in Company 'B'.**

**Edson's Ridge**



**"Major General Edson arranged for more artillery support, and got his own force to provide covering fire for the withdrawal of the exposed raiders of Company B.**

**Edson made it known that this was to be the final stand. The word went round: "**Nobody moves, just die in your holes.**" "**





**Edson's Ridge - Hill 123 - Sept 12-14, 1942, Guadalcanal.**





**Painting by Col Donald L. Dickson who was there.**





On 17 September, Vandegrift sent two companies from the 1st Battalion, 1st Marine Regiment (1/1) to pursue the retreating Japanese. The Marines were ambushed by two Japanese companies acting as rear-guards for the withdrawal, and one Marine platoon was pinned down as the rest of the Marines retreated.

The Marine company commander requested permission to attempt to rescue his platoon but was denied by Vandegrift. By nightfall, the Japanese overran and nearly annihilated the platoon, killing 24 Marines.



It was a long way from Caldwell High School.



**Photo of 3 Marines in an Edson's Ridge position.**

## GUDALCANAL 1942. Eleanor Roosevelt visit.



“From Eleanor’s diary: 22 Sept 43- One of the things which I shall never forget on Guadalcanal is my visit to the cemetery. The little church there was built by the natives and given to the sliders; they even made an altar and the altar vessels, carving them beautifully and decorating the church with symbols which have special meanings for them—fishes of various kind which mean long life, eternity, etc.

It was very moving to walk among the graves and realize how united these boys had been in spite of differences in religion and background. The boy's mess-kit or sometimes his helmet hung on the cross which some friend would have carved with the appropriate symbol of the Jewish or Catholic or Protestant faith. Words that came from the heart were carved on the base, such as "He was a grand guy"—"**Best buddy ever.**"“ Guadalcanal Museum.

During the 6-month battle, Japanese had 19,000 killed and Allies (primarily US forces) around **7,100**.



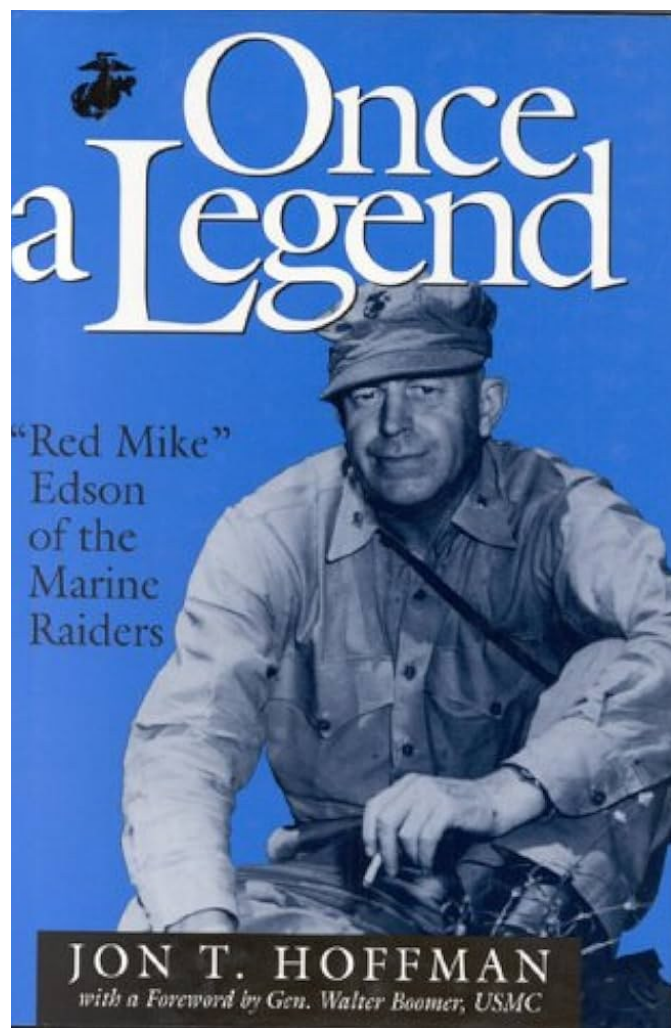
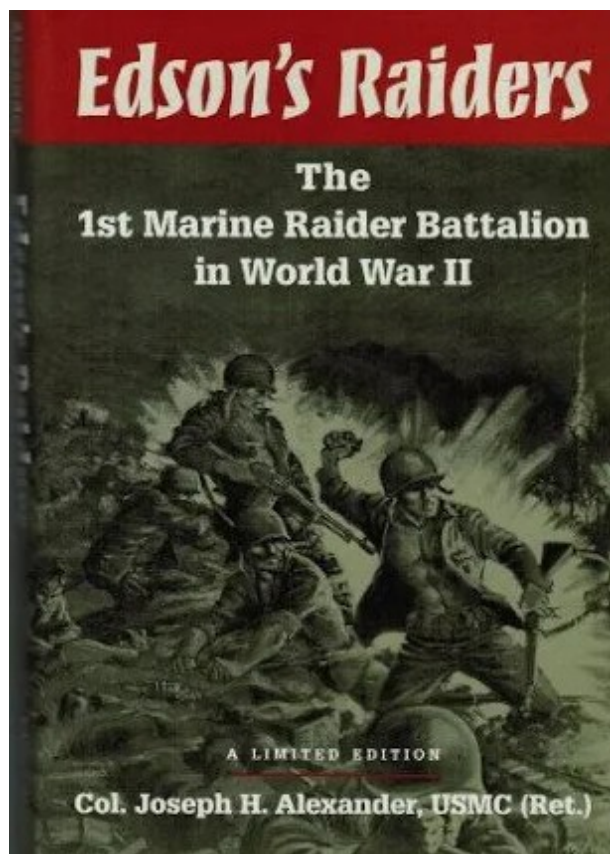


The Battle is over.

“Here are the **5th Marines** (like **Sonny Van Ness**) leaving Guadalcanal on 12/9/1942.

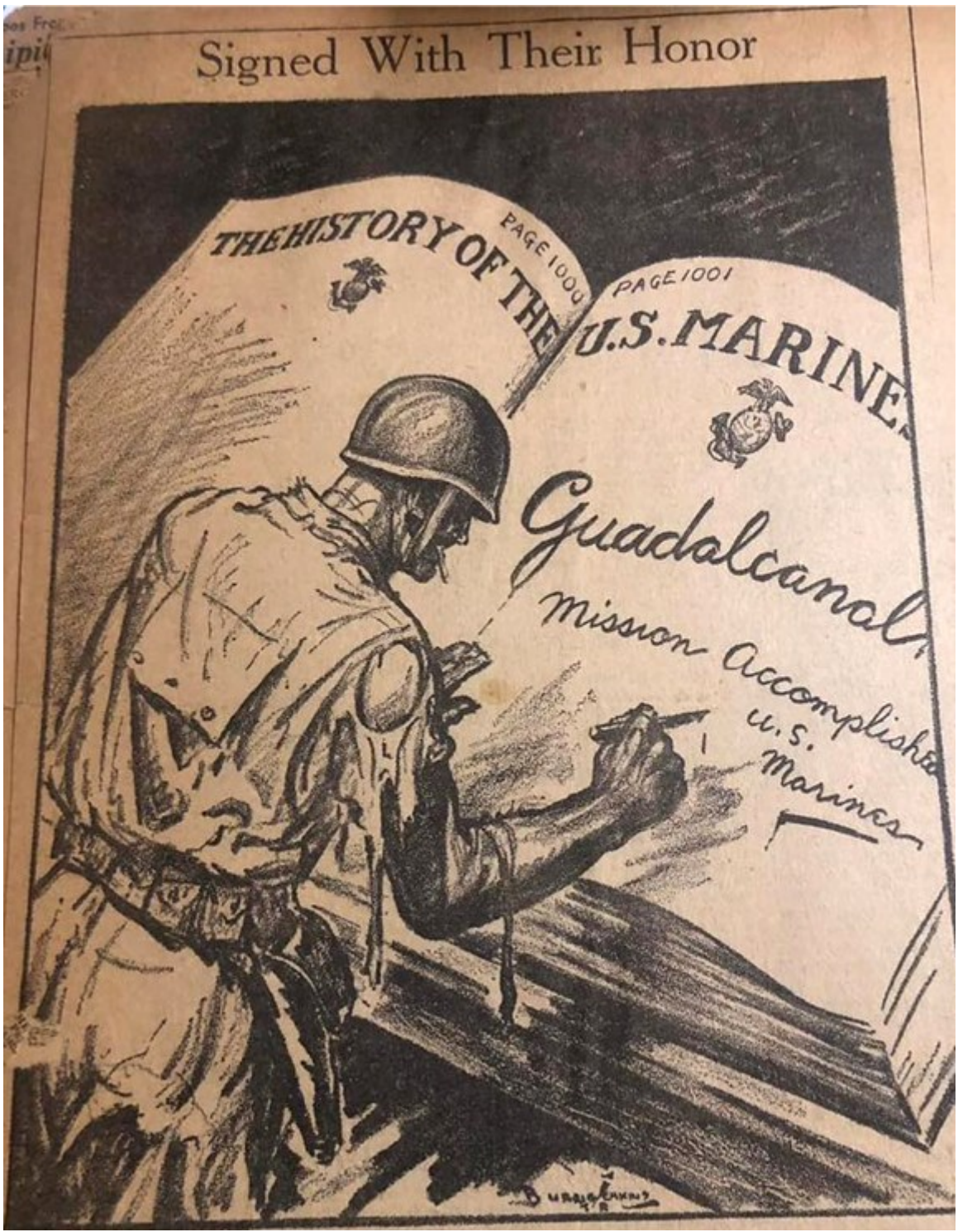
One thing to note, they are not in rags as popular accounts like to portray them. By December, a solid supply line had arrived on the island. The majority had a new issue of clothing. Most wore mismatched items but very serviceable. Almost all however, were suffering from malnutrition, malaria and battle fatigue.”  
(Guadalcanal - Walking a Battlefield site)





Marine Raider insignia





Signed With Their Honor

THE HISTORY OF THE

PAGE 1000

PAGE 1001

U.S. MARINES

Guadalcanal

Mission Accomplished  
U.S. Marines



Card filled out in 1945 after Sonny was discharged.  
Don't know why.

FORM APPROVED  
Budget Bureau No. 33-R012-42

**REGISTRATION CARD** (Men born on or after July 1, 1924, and on or before December 31, 1924)  
(Also for the registration of men as they reach the 18th anniversary of the date of their birth on or after January 1, 1943.)

SERIAL NUMBER	1. NAME (Print)			ORDER NUMBER
W <u>94-B</u>	<u>JOHN</u> <small>(First)</small>	<u>STILES</u> <small>(Middle)</small>	<u>VAN NESS</u> <small>(Last)</small>	<u>12828-B</u>

2. PLACE OF RESIDENCE (Print)  
158 Forest Avenue, West Caldwell Essex N.J.  
(Number and street) (Town, township, village, or city) (County) (State)

[THE PLACE OF RESIDENCE GIVEN ON LINE 2 ABOVE WILL DETERMINE LOCAL BOARD JURISDICTION; LINE 2 OF REGISTRATION CERTIFICATE WILL BE IDENTICAL]

3. MAILING ADDRESS  
Same  
(Mailing address if other than place indicated on line 2. If same, insert word same)

4. TELEPHONE <u>Cald.</u>	5. AGE IN YEARS <u>20</u>	6. PLACE OF BIRTH <u>Caldwell</u>
<u>6- 2498-J</u> <small>(Exchange) (Number)</small>	DATE OF BIRTH <u>1</u> <u>28</u> <u>1925</u> <small>(Mo.) (Day) (Yr.)</small>	<u>N.J.</u> <small>(Town or county) (State or country)</small>

7. NAME AND ADDRESS OF PERSON WHO WILL ALWAYS KNOW YOUR ADDRESS  
Mrs. Edward Howland (sister) 158 Forest Avenue, West Caldwell

8. EMPLOYER'S NAME AND ADDRESS  
Just discharged from Marine Corps

9. PLACE OF EMPLOYMENT OR BUSINESS  
(Number and street or R. F. D. number) (Town) (County) (State)

I AFFIRM THAT I HAVE VERIFIED ABOVE ANSWERS AND THAT THEY ARE TRUE.

DSS Form 1 (Rev. 11-16-42)      c10-21630-4 (OVER)

John Stiles Van Ness  
(Registrant's signature)



Glen remembers Sonny at the FDRC about 1959-1965. He would drive his parents (Lloyd and Hazel Van Ness) to the church. Lloyd used a wheelchair for his frail body due to a car accident in his teens.

So as not to hold everyone up, they would wait in their car for the church people to sit in the pews. While the choir and church goers sang the first song, It seemed that Sonny would wheel in Lloyd thru the right side door. So as not to disturb the service.

The 3 of them would sit near that door,

I remember asking Dave Millison, who was that fellow Sonny. He said that he served in WW2 and had problems adjusting to life.

I suppose like todays PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder) mental health condition that's caused by an extremely stressful or terrifying event like Guadalcanal. Sonny was a smart man working for an engineering firm called **Lummus** in Bloomfield NJ; age 35 in 1960. (Glen Plumstead worked at Lummus 15 years later).

His sisters Helen and Beverly told me that the war affected Sonny.

8/22/1981 died

## **John Van Ness, safety engineer**

**FAIRFIELD** — John Stiles Van Ness, 56, died Saturday at the University of Texas medical branch, Galveston, Tex.

Born in Caldwell, he had lived most of his life in this borough. He was safety engineer for the Lummus Co. of Bloomfield. A Marine Corps veteran of World War II, he was a member of the Veterans of Foreign Wars. He also was in the First Raider Marine Battalion Association. In addition, he was a mem-

ber of the Fairfield Reformed Church.

He is survived by his son, John Stiles III of Dallas, Texas; his mother, Hazel-tine (Wilson) Van Ness of this borough; and three sisters, Mrs. Arthur (Helen) Nelson of North Caldwell, Mrs. Robert (Beverly) Schroder of Cedar Grove, and Mrs. Robert (Phyllis) Brokaw of Roanoke, Va.

Arrangements are by the Norman A. Parker Funeral Home, 47 Main St., Little Falls.

He died from a heart attack at a Galveston Texas hospital. Paterson NJ News, Monday, 8/24/1981. Brought back to NJ.

Rests at the  
**FDRC** cemetery,  
Fairfield, NJ.

Sonny was divorced twice. He and 1st wife Dorothy Elizabeth Lunsford married 8/28/1953 in Dallas Texas. They had a son [John Stevens 'Jay' VAN NESS](#) 12/19/1954—5/15/1995 (40).







Fairfield Dutch Reformed Church, Fairfield, NJ.

I need to check this out.

a division is the parent unit of regiments and battalions. In the 1st Marine Division there were 3 rifle regiments and 1 artillery regiment. Plus several independent battalions such as the 1st Raiders. Each regiments had 3 battalions. The battalions had companies which had platoons and squads. By the way the 1st Raiders were not part of the 5th Marine Regiment. Edson commanded the Raiders and then in Sept left them to assume command of the 5th Marines.