

A MARINE'S MARINE

Monnett's Carpet Shop is almost as synonymous with Greensboro as was General Greene himself. Started by Charlie Monnett's father, the family business operated from 1950 until 1987, and under Charlie's leadership from 1967-1987.

"I grew up in Pleasant Garden – we had five acres, two milk cows and hundreds of chickens", reflects Monnett. "After finishing Pleasant Garden High School, I attended Guilford College until a Marine recruiter visited the campus in November, 1942."

"He promised I could go in as a private first class. Instead, they sent me to Duke University for two semesters. At Duke I joined 500 other Marines – we wore Marine Corps uniforms, made reveille, drilled, marched, studied map reading, made bed-checks, etc. All the while, I was a buck private!"



CHARLIE MONNETT'S DUKE EXPERIENCE

"Soon we were off to Parris Island, then to Camp Lejeune as officer applicants. Second lieutenants were being killed faster than Quantico could grow new ones, so they enrolled us in a special Officer Candidate School at Lejeune."

"Of our OCS Class of 400, 200 went to Iwo Jima, 200 to Okinawa, 200 of the 400 became casualties."

"My gold bars were less than two weeks old when we troop-trained to San Diego, then sailed for Guadalcanal. The best thing I recall about the 'Canal' was that I had a remarkably good mosquito net."

Second Lieutenant Charlie Monnett landed on Okinawa Easter Sunday, April 1, 1945. Japanese resistance on D-Day was minimal. Monnett was assigned to shore party, transporting and protecting material from ship to shore.

"A platoon leader was killed as soon as we started moving -- I was sent up to take his place. I was one lucky dude, my platoon sergeant had a few years, and he knew all the men – I didn't know any of them from Adam!"

"We set up a perimeter but during the night Japanese soldiers tried to jump into the same foxholes we were in – they didn't make it!"

"A Japanese zero soloed in after we secured the airport. He made a great landing, but should not have gotten out of the airplane."

The action picked up considerably as Monnett's platoon moved further south. He recalls iconic battles at Half Moon, Horseshoe and Sugarloaf. "They had tunnels under lots of the hills, we found an underground hospital, cooking facilities and troop quarters."

During an artillery barrage, Monnett, his platoon sergeant, and several of his men took cover in a huge shell hole. Deciding they shouldn't all be in this same hole, Monnett moved. Moments later, the first hole took a direct hit, killing his platoon sergeant and several other Marines.



SOME OF CHARLIE MONNETT'S DECORATIONS.

"We pushed to the end of the island, where hundreds of enemy soldiers and civilians clustered in a huge cave. We called for their surrender, but the Japanese commanders committed hari-kari instead."

"Masses of civilians, including mothers holding their babies, jumped off steep cliffs into the ocean. Japanese soldiers had forewarned them the Marines would kill the babies and rape the women."

After the Japanese surrender, Monnett became regimental education officer in Tsingtao, China. "I kicked the Japanese out and organized a school at Shantung University. We taught high school, college and correspondence courses for Marines soon to become civilians. I had privates and PhDs for instructors."

Monnett left active duty in 1946 and returned to Duke, where he played tennis and ran cross country track on his way to an economics degree. Monnett and his Greek wife, Diamando, raised three daughters and a son.

In his eighties, Monnett finally has the lap dog he yearned for – and she has trained him well. He calls her Candi, "Because she's sweet as a candy bar!"

While space doesn't permit a list of Monnett's superlatives, his world class collection of authentic Indian artifacts must be mentioned.

His efforts on behalf of the blind are legendary. In 1963, the Lions Club of America presented him an award for obtaining more eye wills than anyone in NC. In 1965 he won the same award for obtaining more eye wills than anyone in the world.

The Monnetts were members of West Market Street Methodist Church. Charlie was a past Chaplain of the Marine Corps League, Detachment 260.



A Marine's Marine, Charlie Monnett – Semper Fidelis! RIP 2012