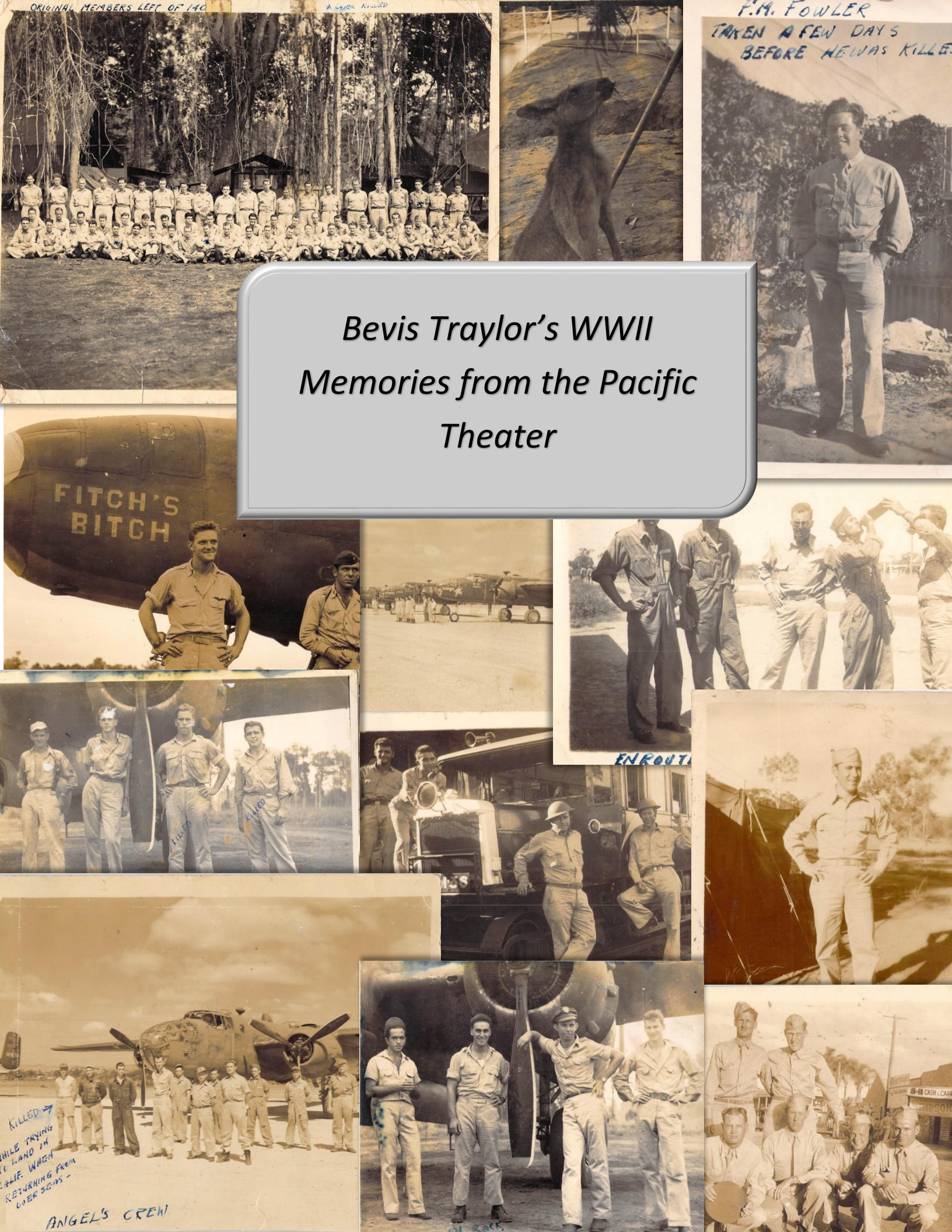

Bevis Traylor's WWII Memories from the Pacific Theater

FORWORD

In this journal I have listed some of my personal experiences while serving in the southwest pacific theater during World War Two. I participated in five campaigns most of which took place either in or near New Guinea. In my intent to be as accurate as possible, I have contacted some of the other members of the squadron to verify any facts that were vague to me.

I was a member of the 13th. Bomb Squadron of the 3rd. Bomb group of the 5th. Air Force, which was known as the "Grim Reapers". Other squadron in the 3rd. group were the 8th., 89th., and the 90th. The combat record of the 3rd group was very good and we were awarded the Presidential Unit Citation based on our performance during the Paupuan Campaign. Gen McArthur honored the 3rd group when it was asked to be the first air group to land in Japan at the end of the war. The entire combat record of the group is on file at the Pentagon.

The 13th squadron sailed aboard the USS Ancon from San Francisco on Jan. 31, 1942, and landed at Brisbane Australia on Feb. 25, 1942. We then traveled by train to Charters Towers in northern Australia. We found the facilities at Charters Towers under construction when we arrived. We had to bide our time until we received our airplanes several weeks later.

The 3rd group had been equipped with Douglas A20s in the states. These planes were shipped aboard a separate convoy and arrived in Australia several weeks after the personnel landed. But the 13th and the 90th squadrons somehow managed to acquire some new North American B25s which the Dutch had stored at Canberra, Australia.

After a few weeks of training in the B25s, the air crew members were able to handle the B25s with little or no difficulties. These bomb squadrons operated out of Charters Towers for a few months before moving to Port Moresby in British New Guinea. I remained with the squadron throughout the New Guinea campaigns. I was rotated back to the states just before the invasion of the Phillipines and a month after My brother, Ernest had been rotated.

It is my intent to pay tribute to those brave comrades of mine who paid the supreme sacrifice and, therefore, are not able to tell their own story. I personally do not take any credit for the success of the unit, but since I was present during most of the New Guinea campaigns, I would like to share these experiences with others.

PREPARING FOR WAR

After being sworn in and joining the 13th. squadron, I was issued the usual uniforms, personal items and assigned to a bunk. I was treated the same as any other recruit, this meant I received my share of the not so glamerous duties such as KP duty, barracks and latrine duty, Eventhough I had wanted to become an aircraft mechanic, it became obvious to me that the first sergeant wanted me to work in the personnel section. This was because I could type. My first sergeant helped to convince me by keeping me on a ditch digging detail in the hot south Georgia July sun. He kept me there long enough to convince me that any assignment inside would be a vast improvement.

My first inside assignment was to my brother, Ernest's Personnel department, but I remained in this assignment for only a few weeks, then I became needed in the flight operations department and therefore was assigned to Mitchell Yelverton. I learned that there were openings in all departments in the fall of 1941 because the 27th. Bomb Group had been reassigned to Clark Field in the Philippine Island, and that this bomb group was to be up to full strength before shipping out. I would have gone with the 27th Bomb Group except I only had four months active duty and the Army Air Corps at that time felt it was essential that one have at least six months duty prior to going overseas.

In 1941 it was obvious to everyone that we would be drawn into the war already going on in Europe. Therefore, training of all military personnel was intensified. Mameuvers were being held all over the nation. Our group trained every day and then was sent to Barksdale Field in Shrevesport, La. in August of 1941. There I met General Eisenhower face to face on the side walk. I was impressed by his snappy salute. Eisenhower was commanding the maneuver and he had come to Barksdale to observe our group perform a live bombing demonstration.

We went next to Pope Field at Ft, Bragg, N.C. While we were at Ft. Bragg we were attacked by paratroopers from the opposing army. We repulsed them with stick because we did not have guns. The umpires agreed that we won. We learned which colored parachutes were attached to food and cigarettes. We helped ourselves which really upset the paratroopers. We returned to Savannah on Dec. 1, 1941.

Upon our return to Savannah, half the squadron was given 15 day furloughs which began Dec. 5, 1941, while the other half were to leave on Dec. 20, 1941. My brother and I went on furlough together and arrived at our home on Dec. 6th. War was declared on Dec. 7th. and we were ordered by wire to return to our base immediately. We returned to our base on Dec. 9th. As soon as we were back on the base we began to prepare to move to Daniel Field in Augusta, Ga. as a partial disbursement. We spent the remainder

of December at Daniel Field. All planes of the group did submarine patrol duty off the southeast coast of the United States until we were ordered overseas. Our squadron returned to Savannah in time to prepare to go overseas.

We boarded a troop train on Jan. 19, 1942, and arrived in Oakland, Ca, on Jan. 23, 1942. We were housed in an unfinished and unheated International Harvester warehouse. As a results of the cold and damp conditions we had to wear several layers of clothes and a rain coat at all times. During our stay in Oakland, some of us had the nerve to sneak out of the warehouse, where we were restricted, and hitch a ride into San Francisco. We became better acquainted with some of the night spots on Market Street. I was thrown out of a Chinese Club because one of my comrades was not nice enough to suit the bouncers.

When we left Oakland, we were loaded on trucks at night and taken to the San Francisco docks. There we stood all night in the rain. Our troop ship, the USS Ancon was docked within a few feet of us. This was an indication of the poor leadership we had on this particular night. Finally we were allowed to board the troop ship early in the morning of Jan. 31, 1942. We were not told where we were going, but when we were issued summer uniforms we had some idea about the direction.

The ship pulled away from the dock around noon on Jan. 31, 1942. As we sailed out of San Francisco Bay and headed for the open Pacific Ocean we had a very good view of the Golden Gate Bridge. I am sure most of us wondered if we would ever see this bridge again. The sight of this bridge was constantly on my mind during the entire thirty three months before I saw it again. I am convinced that this vision helped my determination to survive. There were many times when the image of the bridge seemed to be the only encouragement we had.

LIFE ABOARD A TROOP SHIP

It is rather difficult for one to believe what life is like aboard a troop ship. The living conditions are terrible. Our voyage lasted twenty five days. The men slept on canvas bunks, four bunks high suspended between pipe racks. There was only about six inchese separating the bunks which means two men were almost as close as they would be if they were sleeping together in a double bed. The passage way between the bunks was no more than three feet wide. The living quarters were below deck in the cargo area referred to as the "holds". There was no ventilation in the holds and the heat was almost unbearable. To make matters worse, the waters at the mouth of the San Francisco Bay is unusually rough. Sailors will swear that these waters are among the roughest in the world. As a results, a large number of men were sea sick by the time we reached the open water of the Pacific. The combination of the heat, no ventilation and the sea sickness created a condition that was almost unbearable.

The sea sickness lasted several days for some men and much longer for others. Tempers flared and fist fights were common. My bunk was the top one of four which gave me a bird's eye view of the action below. Then drinking water became scarce and had to be rationed. Each man received one canteen of water per day. When men become extremely thirsty they become desperate and even animal-like in their behavior. Most of us wore our .45 cal. guns to protect our water supply. We were served two meals - breakfast and dinner which was not enough food for some men. As a result, the ship's canteen did a booming business as long as the money lasted.

Military people gamble any time they have a free moment. Consequently, only a very few men had money when we reached Australia. While on the ship most of us were looking forward ~~to~~ pay day. I agreed to work on KP for the entire trip. I had no problem with hunger. Any man on KP should have plenty to eat.

A few men remained sick for ten days or longer. They did not dare go to the mess hall because the odor there only made them sicker. My brother, Ernest, was among the sicker men, and I was determined to do what I could to help him survive. I was able to smuggle some food to the sick men when I came off KP duty. One day I was able to get some fresh oranges and some cookies. A guard was always on duty in the passage way leading from the mess hall to the holds. The guard caught me red handed with the food and immediately took me to the ship commander who was a rather stern Colonel. When I first arrived in the Colonel's plush state room, I was "chewed" out sternly. I told him of the sick men and explained that I was interested in getting them better. I also pointed out that one of the men was my brother. The Colonel's attitude changed very quickly. He and the ship medical officer visited the hold and was appalled when the saw the conditions in these living quarters. The Colonel sent for the ship's chef. The chef was instructed to prepare any food these sick men could eat. The chef was told to personally see that I got the food and I was told to be certain the these men got food. In a short time these men were well enough to go top side and enjoy the fresh air and sunshine for the first time since we left San Francisco.

After about two weeks at sea it became apparent that the convoy was traveling in circles. The squadron radio chief, Don Pryor, and I were on deck and used the shadow of a coke bottle to verify that we were in fact going around in a circle. We later learned that the reason that the convoy was circlying was that our destination had been changed from Java to Australia.. It was too dangerous for the convoy to stop for any length of time because the large pack of Japanese submarines would have had a field day. The enemy subs created many alerts for the entire convoy. Fortunatley we only lost one freighter. This ship was struck by a torpedo and became disabled and stopped dead in the water. The enemy came in for the kill like a bunch of vulchers. The convoy was escorted by two destroyers and one cruiser. Their primary responsibility was to the troop ships and for this reason they could only stand by and observe the freighter being sunk. I saw a torpedo pass within a few feet of our ship.

After some two weeks at sea, the men became better adjusted to the conditions.The sea sickness had subsided which improved the conditions in the holds. We learned the pacific ocean is one of the most beautiful bodies of water in the world. It is unusually beautiful on a moonlit night. Flying fish are also abundant in the south pacific. These fish create phosphorus sparks at night as they fly in and out of the water when they are disturbed by the ship. Despite some improvements, it still remained very hot in the holds. Many men took blankets and slept on the deck. I tried it only once. We were sound asleep when a sudden rain storm struck. We were almost drowned.

In the evening of Feb. 24, 1942, our 24th day on board the ship, the commander spoke to us over the ship's loud speaker. We were told that by daybreak the next morning we would be able to see the eastern shore of Australia. He gave us a stern lecture regarding our behaviour when we did get to Australia. All of us received booklets describing Australia in a general way. All of us were elated that the voyage would soon be over. We were also pleased that we were not going to land on some obscure island.

Practically every man on board tried to get on the deck before daybreak the next day which was Feb. 25, 1942. We were able to make out the faint outline of land as soon as it was daylight. A pilot boat came along side our ship and put a pilot aboard our ship. He came aboard our ship because it was the flag ship of the convoy and did lead the way into the Brisbane river. As the ship moved slowly up the river, we were greeted by most of the people who lived on or near the river. They shouted a walcome to us and waived both U.S. and Australian flags. It was a good feeling knowing that we were apparently welcome.

Australian soldiers met us at the dock and took us to camp inside the Ascot Race Track, a horse racing track. We slept in Australian army tents on straw mattresses.We made these mattresses by using straw provided to us to stuff inside our mattress covers. It was better than the bunks on the troop ship but not a great deal better. At least, the bed didn't toss and roll with the tide.

AN INTRODUCTION TO AUSTRALIA

The booklet given to us aboard the ship described Australia as a country where the people spoke English but I began to wonder about this statement when I tried to have a conversation with the Australian soldier who drove us from the troop ship to camp. The first thing we did was to exchange our pocket change which is an old military custome when soldiers from different countries meet. I was unable to count his money and he could not count mine. Later he showed the amount of coins needed to buy a glass of "grog" which I later learned was the slang for alcohol and in Australia beer is the primary type of alcohol consumed. I saw small babies accompany their parents into bars and at the same time I saw seventy year old people in the bar. The soldier referred to his truck as a "lorry".

Within a few days after arriving in Brisbane, I was able to borrow some money which gave me an opportunity to go into town. We were camped inside the Ascot horse race track which was located some 25 miles outside the city. We were required to take a street car into town. The Australians referred to street cars as "trams". I soon learned that I could communicate much better with the young girls than with the older natives. The streets were filled with young women who obviously came to town for the same reason that we did, so we had no problem getting dates. It was just a matter of stopping the girls and making an introduction. My friend was a little "picky" but we soon did find two that suited us both. Most of the Australian young men were already fighting with the English in North Africa. It was apparent that the young women that had been left behind were in need of the company of young men and we were happy to oblige.

On my first date in Australia, I learned that when an Australian says that they have not had "tea" it means that they have not had a meal. Our dates reminded us almost immediately that they needed to have "tea", and we obliged. At this time we learned of another strange custom. The girls insisted on paying the bill! Of course we did not allow them to pay the bill and was reminded rather strongly later by the Australian men that we had ruined a very good thing which they had enjoyed for quiet a long time.

The bomb shelters and the parks were filled with Australian girls and "yanks" which they callled U.S. men. Some of my friends rented cars, had a few drinks of "grog", ran all over town while using the right side of the street while they sould have been driving on the left side of the street as is the custom in Australia. As a direct results of such disregard for the safety of others, many of the cars were damaged in accident. It was only a matter of time until we were unable to rent cars. The Brisbane auto repair shops became very busy and we "yanks" either walked or took the "trams".

On march 7, 1942, we departed Brisbane aboard a slow, coal burning passenger train. We were taken to Charters Towers in northern Queensland some 2,000 miles north of Brisbane. This trip took three days. We slept anywhere we could. In a seat if we were lucky; otherwise, we slept in the floor or in a luggage rack. Our meals were served in the various train stations along the way. I believe Australian women volunteered to serve us. The meals were usually cold and not the kind of food we were accustomed to eating and as a ressults, most of us ate sparingly. The train passed through large pineapple farms or plantations. The workers in the pineapple field gathered some over-ripe pineapples and as the train slowed down, the pine-apples were tossed through the open windows into the train. The pineapples were very tasty and very well received. The inside of the train was a mess but we enjoyed the fruit anyway.

Charters Towers was kept alive by the cattle ranchers who usually came into town on Saturdays. Cattle ranches were called "stations" by the Australians. We learned that the "stations" were generally much larger than the ranches in the U.S. This was due to the poor grazing provided by the barren and dry land. It was easy to pin point the ranches from the air at an altitude of 10,000 feet. The corrals were nearly always square enclosures which stood out from the air.

In downtowm Charters Towers there were hotels on pratically every corner. The hotels were almost alike in that the rooms were on the second floor with bars on the ground floor. The hotels looked much like our hotels in the old west which were depicted in the old western movies. We discovered that practially every Australian drinks beer much the same as we drink coke. The bars usually had a separate area for men and women. The women have a semi-private area set aside for their use. The Australians prefer their beer warm which was distateful to us but the bar owners soon learned to chill their beer because the "yank's" money was very important to them.

When we first arrived at the Charters Towers Air Base we had no airplanes nor were the runways completed. We were kept busy by preparing for the arrival of the planes. But not too busy so that we didn't have some time off. On our time off my tent mates and I usually took a jeep the back way through holes in the fence to an ice house where we could get ice cold beer. The beer came in imperal quarts. There were five straw wrapped bottles in a burlap bag. Late in the evening we gathered in a drainage ditch, sat on the cool sand and sipped beer and each of us tried to out-lie the others concerning our exploits of the female population. These gatherings are among my most treasured memories of the war. There were no enemy planes to interrupt us and no duties to preform. Five comrads enjoying life as best we could under the circumstances. Moments that came later are best forgotten. In a short time there only two of us left.

A CHICKEN DINNER

During the early months of our stay in Australia we were fed canned beef at practically every meal.The Australian Soldiers referred to this food as "bully beef". Apparently there was a surplus of beef in Australia because we never seemed to run out of "bully beef." We longed for a more tasty dish such as fresh fish or fresh chicken. Some of the men had been to Mackay which was a popular resort town located some 250 miles southeast of Charters Towers . While these men were there they learned where live chikens could be bought. Our mess sergeant contacted my brother, Ernest "Rabbit", who was the first sergeant, to ask permission to purchase some chickens from a special mess fund commonly referred to as the "slush" fund. Ernest discussed this matter with our squadron commander, Captain Theodore Fitch, who thought this was an excellent idea.

Captain Fitch recruited Sergeant Clifford "Fat Cat" Baird to fill in as his co-pilot for the trip. Captain Fitch named his B-25 "Fitch's Bitch" and had this name prominantly painted on the side of the cockpit. This mission of mercy took off around noon one fine day. The trip would consume about an hour. When they arrived at the airport they quickly made contact with the man with the chickens and arranged to have the chickens delivered to the airplane. In the meantime these warriors of mercy went directly to the nearest bar to have a cool drink. After some time had elapsed and several drinks had been consumed, our heros returned to the airport and loaded the chickens into the bomb bay. The weather was nice and the beach was beautiful. Captain Fitch took off and "buzzed" the beach from an altitude of 10 ft. When this escapade proved to be fun, they had a good laugh, and was encouraged to see what additional fun they could have. His comrades (cont'd on next page)

thought this was a good idea and encouraged him to do some additional daring flying for the benefit of Australian population who were a bit appalled at such foolish flying. Several low passes were made over town when Captain Fitch observed the long bridge leading east away from town, accross a river and the intercoastal waterway that reached almost all the way to the beach. He mentioned that he thought it would be a great idea if they flew uner the bridge. His companions thought that this was the best idea of all and insisted that Fitch give it a go. Fitch's Bitch made a wide circle, picked up speed and went under the bridge in a flash. The citizens of Mackay saw everything and was impressed in a way that our heros did not think of. They notified their mayor who got a complete description of the plane. It had the upper portion of its tail painted red and below the red paint was a larger "F" which we all knew stood for the first letter in the last name of the pilot. In this case it stood for "Fitch".

The mayor called our group commander, Colonel Davies who greeted our heros when they landed at Charters Towers. Captain Fitch took a royal chewing and while this procedure was under way the chickens were unloaded in the presence of Colonel Davies who by now began to wonder what the real purpose of this was all about. Captain Fitch and his co-conspirators gave the colonel this wild story how a good meal of fresh chicken would improve the moral of the men which he bought. They invited the Colonel to dinnder and he gladly accepted. The report I got he ate as much or more than anyone. I never heard any additional complaints from the Colonel regarding the "Chicken Mission."

SCRATCH ONE RADIO ANTENNA

The air combat crews were required to be ready to take off with little prior notice. There were times when the planes and the crews were ready but for some unknown reason they were not ordered to take off. The crews were required to stand by near the airplanes so that they could take off with very little delay. The waiting was boring and in fact at times it was outright painful. If a job had to be done, the air crews wanted to get on with it. These men would do a variety of things to pass the time. Each man was required to carry a knife for his use if and when he was shot down. The knife was referred to as a "survival" item. The men would throw the knives at a target placed on a tree and some of them became very proficient at this game. Of course the interest increased when money was at stake. One day at Charters Towers several men gathered near a large tree which was near the squadron radio shack. There was an antenna that was about 30 feet in the air and running some 300 feet from the shack. Our commanding officer, Major Evanoff,received a challenge that he could not resist.

Major Evanoff was referred to as the "Mad Russian". I don't know if he was Russian or not but he was an excellent officer but not a very good pilot. Major Evanoff said that he could use a wing of his B-25 to clip the antenna wire. There were some three crews gathered which would be at least 30 men and a heated discussion began. The sides were fairly even. Some bet he could while others said that he could not accomplish this feat. Evanoff took on all betters. He must have bet more than 100 pounds in Australian money. Major Evanoff's co-pilot refused to go along with Evanoff. Mozell "Doc" Shelnutt, who was the maintenance crew chief, volunteered to fly as the co-pilot. The bomber taxied to the runway and took off.

We gathered on the opposite side of a large tree and away from the antenna and the path of the airplane. Major Evanoff flew to the north for a few miles and turned back toward the radio shack. He was apparently flying a full throttle when he flew over us the first time. He was getting the feel of the situation before making his final run. He dipped his right wing within 100 feet of the antenna but very close to the top of the tree. The plane made a wide circle and came bearing down on the target. When we saw the plane this time it was flying side-ways with the right wind nearest the ground. We heard and felt a "swoosh" and then a "Zing" when the right wing struck the antenna wire. We also saw a bit of dust when the right wing tip struck the ground. Luckily the wing only barely scraped the ground. The plane contunied south and then turned west to land on the north-south runway. We watched the plane very closely to see if it was having any difficulty which would indicate severe wing damage.

When Evanoff and Shelnut returned to their revetment they received a loud reception. Evanoff went around and collected his money. We were warned by Evanoff that if the group commander came around to find out why a fully loaded airplane was flying in the area when everyone was supposed to be on stand by alert, we were to remain silent. Fortunately the colonel never showed up. He apparently thought that the airplane was being tested and was not a part of the stand by alert.

Sgt. Don Pryor, the radio chief, came out to see why his radios were not working and found the antenna down. He was very excited at first but when he learned that the commanding officer was the culpret, he had little to say. He then got his crew out and they began immediately to replace the antenna.

KANGAROO EXPERIENCE

Australia in known throughout the world as the land of the Kangaroo. They are understandably proud that the Kangaroo has given them some favorable publicity and for this reason the animal is protected by very strong laws. The Australian authorities will not tolerate any abuse of the Kangaroo. We were aware of these regulations and despite the regulatins many americans often took pot shots whenever they had the opportunity. I am not aware that anyone actually killed a Kangaroo but I know that they tried and so did I.

The flight line at Charters Towers was about a mile from the squadron camp site. We had some fairly good dirt roads from the camp to the flight line. One day I was riding in a weapons carrier, which is much like a pickup truck, and as we drove through a wooded area a female Kangaroo jumped out of her hiding place and into the right door of the vehicle in which we were riding. We immediately stopped and went to examine the floundering Kangarro in the brush nearby. We soon learned that the animal was dead and to our surprise a young Kangaroo came out of the mother's pouch. It was so young that it did not yet have any hair. It was about the size of an average cat.

We took the baby animal to our operations shack. Most of us had not seen a baby Kangaroo before. The word soon got around and everyone came to see the baby. To my surprise Seargent Firman Adams, our stern line chief and his side kick, Seargent Henry Simpers, adopted the baby Kangaroo and fed it with a medicine dropper. It lived for more than two weeks before it finally died. The mother and baby Kangaroos were casualties of war just the same as men who died.

One day when things were quiet at the operations shack, Mitchell Yelverton, my co-worker, and I took a jeep and drove into the semi-desert that surrounded our base at Charters Towers. There was a limited amount of rain fall in the area and therefore there was very little vegetation in the open range type land. If we avoided the deep ditch, we could drive a jeep practically any place. We took along a tommy gun,(A Thompson Sub-Machine Gun) some spare barrells and a couple of cases of ammunition. We lowered the windshield and one drove while the other one rode "Shot Gun". We were actually looking for Kangaroo. We had heard others discussing how difficult it was to hit a leaping Kangaroo. We thought we were much better marksmen and wanted to test our hunting skills.

The driver would head the jeep toward a clump of dead grass or a clump of dried bushes which were the places that the Kangaroo could hide. Now and then we would scare up one of the animals. The "Shot Gun" man would fire away and miss the leaping Kangaroo every time. We burned out a few barrells and used a great deal of ammunition and never came close to a single Kangaroo. They could jump at least thirty feet and do a 90 degree turn each time they hit the ground. We would fire east and they would already be in the air headed either north or south. The Australian authorities had no reason whatsoever to be concerned about their Kangaroo population while Mitchell Yelverton and I were hunting them.

We eventually ran into a wire fence which was unusual and an indication that there was a ranch nearby. The Australians called these places "Stations and/or Station Houses." We decided to follow the fence to see where it took us. We soon saw a group of buildings in a grove and we headed for the house. We drove

through the gate and stopped near the house. We saw some six horses that were saddled and tied near the house. We met a rancher, his wife and daughter and several cow hands. We soon learned that these people had not met an American and had not seen a jeep either. We took everyone for a ride in the jeep and was offered a ride an any horse. We declined to ride a horse. These ranchers said that they saw and heard our airplanes all day every day but had not had an opportunity to meet any of us before.

We were told that there was a river nearby where they went swimming and fishing. They invited us to come out any week end and visit with them and enjoy the river. We fully intended to accept this generous offer but we were soon transferred to New Guinea permantely and never did have a chance to visit this family again. They did give us some cool water to drink and to refill our desert bags which we carried on the front of our jeep. These bags constantly seeped water. The evaporation of the water actually cooled the water as we drove.

Australia produced a great deal of wool and leather. We were able to buy boots and tailor made uniforms at a reasonable price. Guy Clanton was always a neat dresser and had all of his uniforms tailored to fit. He had three uniforms tailor-made from the fine wool found in several tailor shops in Charters Towers. He also had some of the best boots he could find. He was very proud of his uniforms and kept them neatly folded and put away until he was ready to go into town.

The squadron began to increase the number of missions flown almost immediately after the Phillipine expedition. This was their baptism which gave them some valuable experience and also built up their confidence. We added some airplanes and even borrowed some Australian aircrew members to add to our crews when we were not able to get additional replacements from the states. They continued to stage out of Port Moresby for all missions. The Japanese had air superiority over all of New Guinea. Our planes had no fighter escort at this time and were almost always attacked when they went on any mission. Our aerial gunners were good and shot down some enemy fighters but the Japanese Zeros could and did out maneuver the B-25's any time they attacked. Our losses were not light even though McArthur's headquarters would imply that our losses were "light" many times when in fact they were heavy.

I could detect a change in the attitude of the air crews. They began to show signs of being discouraged when some of their comrades were shot down on most of the missions. Clanton would tell me that he felt his time was growing nearer. I tried to encourage him but he only laughed and said I will know and will tell you when.

One day in June or July 1942, I knew that the squadron had orders to attack Lea Airdrome in New Guinea and had prepared a roster of the crew who were to participate. Guy Clanton and his crew were included. When I arrived at my tent in the camp area I was greeted by Clanton who was dressed in one of his best uniforms. He had stacked his other unifroms on his bunk. He insisted that I try on the uniforms which I did and they fit perfectly. I also tried on his boots which also fit. He then told me that all of his uniforms and boots were mine and that he had bought them and therefore he wanted me to have them rather than have them sent to his mother. He gave me a bundle of letters and other documents tied together and told me that these items were the only items that he wanted his mother to have. When I tried to reassure him that he would return after the mission he said "I have told you I would know when the time comes and I can assure you that my time is tomorrow." "I am going into town to see my girl friend.I will be gone tomorrow morning before you wake up. "Good bye my friend."

Clanton's plane did not return. The other planes saw this plane under attack by Zeros and observed it go down in the Coral Sea south of Lea. They also observed at least one parachute. I continued to have hope for a few weeks. One afternoon a staff car stopped in front of the operations shack and a sergeant came in to ask me to come outside where I was greeted by a captain who had a heavy bandage on one side of his head and over one eye. He asked me if I wasn't a friend of Clanton and I told him I was. He said "I'm sorry but he will not come back, he was killed before we went down. I got out of the plane but had to go out the top hatch which caused me to strike one of the stablizers which gave me this head injury. I am now on my way to the states. Good bye." I did not know the captain's name since he had been in the squadron for a very short time. This was either his first or second mission and he was the co-pilot. I thanked him and wished him well.

Billy Mutch was the navigator on Clanton's crew. He was an enlisted man while all other navigators were officers. Mutch was a former maritime navigator and was well qualified. He would have been given a commission should he have survived. It was a very difficult time for the three remaining tent mates. I could not bear to touch the uniforms. I finally convinced my brother, the first seargent, to remove them.

Within a few days Charley Fann became ill with dengue fever and went into the hospital leaving "Pop" Eason and I in the tent. The loneliness was terrible. I soon moved out because I was asked to move into an abandoned farm house where we had set up air operations.

A SPECIAL GIFT

Raymond Strickland came from Ohio. I believe his home town was Youngstown but I am not certain that this is correct. Raymond did not care to discuss his personal life and for this reason, I did not quizz him about his background. He had accepted me as his friend without knowing anything concerning my background. I felt I could accept his friendship without knowing his background. Raymond joined the squadron at Charters Towers some three to four months after we arrived at this air base in Northern Queensland located inland some fifty miles west of Townsville.

Strickland had an outstanding personality who always had a smile on his face. He never knew a stranger. Most of the time the smile on his face was the type little boys have when they have just taken a cookie from the cookie jar without permission. I believe he arose each morning with the idea that he would have a good time and make a special effort to share his good times with others. He was assigned to an aircraft maintenance crew. He was a mechanic's helper and was training to become a qualified air mechanic which would entitle him to receive additional pay.

I was first introduced to Strickland by one of my co-workers, "Tom" Sawyer. Sawyer and Strickland met while on board the troop ship that brought them to Australia. It was a sad day when these two got KP duty together. They made life miserable for the mess sergeant. The mess sergeant would complain to my brother, the first sergeant, who would usually give these men an additional week on KP duty. They once served some five weeks before my brother got wise to their scheme. He gave them camp duty which included such dirty jobs as cleaning the latrine. The latrine was located in an isolated area for obvious reasons. After a period of time it was necessary to burn the waste in the trench located underneath the "holes". One day these men put a little too much gasoline in the trench and when it was ignited one perfectly good out door privy was blown sky high.

In November 1942, we were to move to New Guinea. We had been operating out of bases near Port Moresby since April of 1942 on a part time basis. Since the Japanese had air superiority in all of New Guinea, it was too risky to permantly base our planes there. We had gradually built up our fighter strength and by November, 1942, it was felt that we could and should move closer to the action which we did.

Our B-25s were operating without fighter escort. These planes were no real match for the Jap Zero fighters. Our air combat crews had learned the hard way - in actual combat- but they were no real match for the Jap fighters. As a direct results of this mismatch, our combat losses were heavy. The air combat crews were quickly depleted making it necessary to get replacements from any available source. We were not receiving any replacements from the states making it necessary to look among the personnel on hand. Raymond Strickland had been waiting for this opportunity for a long time. He was an ideal canidate for a combat crew replacement. He was the lowest ranking member of his maintenance crew and very anxious to become a member of a air combat crew. He was selected to become an aerial photographer.

Raymond was given a "crash" course in how to operate the aerial cameras and put on combat duty. His real training was accomplished "on the job" which meant that he began to fly on missions almost immediately. Strickland seemed to be pleased with his new duties. As usual, he would tell us about some close calls they had but it was all funny to him. He was smiling on the outside but I am not certain that he had the same feeling inside. Later developments would prove that I was correct in my assumptions. He was putting on an act to hide his real feelings.

All members of the air combat crews were issued some special equipment. They received a pair of fur lined Australian flying boots and a fancy shoulder holster to secure their issue .45 cal automatic pistol. The boots were needed when the planes reached an altitude of 15,000 feet and the shoulder holster kept the gun secure if and when it was necessary to bail out.

Strickland seemed very anxious to get his boots and holster. One would have suspected that his primary interest in getting this new assignment was that he would receive the equipment. The equipment had become a status symbol among these men. Raymond made it a point to show me his boots and holster as soon as he received them. However, he did not wear them. He had managed to get a used shoulder holster but he continued to wear his regular shoes. I learned later why he saved and cherished the new equipment.

All of us were encouraged to purchase life insurance. It seemed almost automatic that one would sign up for life insurance considering our exposure. This was not so as far as Raymond was concerned. My brother, "Rabbit" received a memo from the group personnel sergeant that Raymond had not signed up for life insurance which prompted Ernest to call Raymond in to ask him why he did not have this coverage. Strickland stated that he did not have a "suitable" beneficiary. It was learned that his mother had been dead for many years and that his relationship with his father left a lot to be desired. Raymond's statement was that he had a sister who married next to the "sorriest man in Ohio". When he was asked who was the sorriest man, he said "my father". Strickland applied for insurance after my brother encouraged him several times. Unfortunately, it was learned later that my brother had been named the beneficiary. After a long and heated discussion, his sister was named beneficiary and the subject was finally put to rest.

In the meantime our bombers had become very active and were gradually putting the pressure on the enemy. We finally got some protection when fighter escorts were provided. The 39th Fighter Squadron who flew P-38s were assigned to escort the 13th. Squadron. We now had the initative and were on the way north in the direction of Japan. The missions became more numerous and the enemy was becoming more desperate or determined to stop us if possible.

It only took a few missions for a member of the air combat crew to learn where the "hot spots" were along the coasts of both New Guinea and New Brittian. Some Japanese bases had some heavy and accurate anti-aircraft fire. When the squadron received orders to bomb one of these bases one could tell that the combat crews had an anxious feeling about such missions. Wewak, Hansa Bay and others were known to be dangerous enemy bases.

The squadron was advised in the afternoon what the next day's mission was, type of bombs and fuses to be used, take off time, code name for the day, time over the target, secondary target and other details of the mission. This was necessary so that the ground crews could have everything ready when it was time to take off. I have known when mechanics and other crews worked all night to make certain that everything was ready for take off. The combat crews had time to think about the mission too.

Raymond Strickland came by my tent one night prior to a mission and insisted that I go with him to my brothers tent. (My brother and I were not allowed to live in the same tent). When we arrived at my brother's tent I noticed that Raymond had his new boots and shoulder holster. He tossed these items on my brother's bunk and told us that he wanted us to have these items.When we asked him what this was all about he said that he was going on the mission the next day and that he knew he would not return. We tried to convince him that he had no way of knowing what his fate was, he became a little impatient with us. He sounded very convincing and insisted that we flip a coin to see which item we each got. I got the boots. Raymond told us that he had nothing of greater value any where in the world and that he wanted us to have these items in return for our friendship. He soon disappeared in the dark headed in the direction of his tent.

Some how I was not surprised the next day when I checked in our returning planes and found Strickland's among the missing. I believe he went down over Hansa Bay. The other crew members confirmed that the plane had gone down over the target.

The most treasured possession that I brought back from over-seas was a pair of shinning Australian flying boots. I had a small problem at Ft. McDowell California when I was told that I could not keep these boots because they were not an official US issue. I explained with great emphasis just how I came to have these boots. I also explained that I was prepared to go to any means to retain the boots. I advised these men which included a Captain,that I would take my case to the commaning officer of the fort if necessary. I was finally allowed to bring the boots with me.

I wore these boots for many years. They were repaired many times. Finally the shoe repairman told me that he could no longer repair the boots because he simply had nothing to repair. I then told him how I had gotten the boots. I also told him that I could not dispose of the boots. He agreed to take care of this matter for me. As I left this shoe shop I felt that my last real contact with my friend was severed. It was indeed one of the saddest days of my life. Thank you Raymond for a very SPECIAL GIFT!!!

"PAPPY" GUNN -- A LEGEND

"Pappy" Paul Gunn showed up in our chow line one day in the spring of 1942. I am not sure where he came from but I believe he came from Brisbane where he had reported to the commanding general of the Fifth Air Force, Gen. George C. Kinney. We later learned that he was a captain eventhough he seldom displayed any evidence of rank. He had been an enlisted pilot in the navy but had retired several years earlier and was the maintenance chief of a small air line in the Phillipines prior to the war. In fact, his wife and children had been interned soon after Manila was occupied. General Brereton, commander of all Army Air Forces in the Phillipines had met Gunn and was aware of his ability as a pilot and a mechanic and swore him as a captain as soon as the war was declared. "Pappy's" small airline was also taken over by the Army Air Force.

Our group had a few B-25s and had flown some missions before Gunn joined us. He had somehow gained possession of a B-25 which he had flown from Brisbane. "Pappy" and his crew set up headquarters in a "hanger" in a wooded area in back of our operations shack. The hanger was a frame with a camouflage net thrown over the frame. I was allowed to visit this hanger now and then provided I did not get in the way or ask any foolish questions. I could tell that the men were tearing away the nose section of this bomber which would eleminate the bombardier's compartment. They later began to experiment with mounting .50 cal. guns in the nose, beside the cockpit and underneath the wings. There were twelve guns firing forward. It was obvious that this was the beginning of a revolutionary bomber, and the birth of a skip bomber.

"Pappy" had gotten one enlisted man permantly assigned to him. He was sergeant Evans. He was a quiet, reserved man who worked as hard as "Pappy" did. He often flew as co-pilot for Gunn which was contrary to regulations but rules and regulations were set for others as far as "Pappy" was concerned. The final work on the skip bomber was done at Brisbane where the facilities were much better than we had at Charters Towers. They even installed a 75MM cannon in the nose of a B-25 which "Pappy" fired for the first time. Gunn and Evans probably fired the first .50 cal. machine guns from a skip bomber as well.

Skip bombing tactics were used exclusively by the B-25s and the A-20s assigned to the Fifth Air Force. Medium level and high level bombing was done by the groups flying B-17s and B-24s. Skip bombing was a fairly simple procedure. The pilot fired the guns and also dropped the bombs. When the plane approached the target it was only a few feet off the water or ground. The twelve forward firing guns were fired on the target. This very heavy fire power caused the enemy gunners to take cover. When the plane was a few feet from the target the bombs were released. The bombs had a five second delayed fuse which gave the plane time to clear the target before the bombs exploded. Our group had their first impressive success in the Battle of The Bismark Sea. The entire Japanese convoy was sunk and most of the enemy troops perished. Following this battle the Japanese did not again try any large scale landing on the north coast of New Guinea. This then was the beginning of the end because we began to take the initiative and begin the long journey to victory in Japan. Therefore, I firmly believe that skip bombing had a great effect on the outcome of the war and since "Pappy" Gunn was primarily responsible, he should be given the credit.

"Pappy" Gunn approached his work like a man possessed. He was determined to do everything in his power to help win the war so that he could be reunited with his family in Manila. He worked long hours seven days a week. He would try anything once. Many times when he wanted to try out some of his experimental handiwork he and Evans would go alone and since he didn't believe in wasting ammunition, he would hunt an enemy target. It is a wonder he survived because the Japs loved a straggler or a lone airplane so that they could practice their skills. Gunn did get his hand slammed into the side of the airplane where it was pinned. He flew back to the base somehow where the metal had to be cut away before he could free his hand. He almost lost a finger before he sought medical attention. He made no friend of the medical officer who treated him because "Pappy" referred to the doctor as a "horse doctor."

General Kinney was very impressed with "Pappys" success with the skip bombers and arranged for him to go to the states so that he could convince the brass at the Pentagon to encourage the airplane manufacturers to incorporate this idea when the planes were built. I feel sure that General Kinney knew that "Pappy" Gunn could sell his ideas to anyone. His stay in Washington was short. He went directly to California to both Douglas and North American plants and supervised the work on the B-25s and A-20s destined for the southwest pacific theater. All replacement airplanes that we received after "Pappy"s visit came equipped the way Gunn had recommended. "Pappy" did not remain very long in the states because he wanted to personally help win the war and then too "Pappy"never did like dress uniforms, ties and fancy resturants where he had to be on his good behavior..

"Pappy' continued to work on ideas and mechanical changes that improved the over-all performance of the Fifth Air Force. He had become a legend in the entire southwest pacific theater. The Third Bomb Group had the lowest casualty rate of any bomb group in the Fifth Air Force. The combination of good and seasoned mechanics and air crews along with the outstanding record accomplished by using skip bombing set a standard for all the other groups attached to the Fifth Air Force. The other groups came to us for advice.

The New Guinea campaigns ended in the fall of 1944. The group moved to the Phillipines in September of 1944. "Pappy" was back in the islands but it would be sometime before he was able to rejoin his family.

A CLOSE CALL - APRIL 12, 1943

The Japanese were concerned that we were putting the pressure on them and actually taking the initiative and had them on the defensive in the spring of 1943. The Battle of the Bismark Sea was the turning point. This battle occured on March 2-6, 1943. The enemy losses were unusaully heavy and did in fact cause them to be concerned about their position in the southwest pacific. They apparently decided that they should conduct an all out attack on our bases in the Port Moresby area. They were primarily concerned with the skip bombers because they were more effective than the other bombers. The 13th squadron was operating out of Fourteen Mile Field or Lilokia as the natives called the base. The flight line was located near the river while the camp site was a mile or so away accross the river. The combat crews were attending an intelligence meeting at the operations shack on the morning of April 12, 1943.

These meetings were held to keep everyone updated on the current conditions from the entire theater. The intelligence officer usually conducted the meetings and was assisted by the Australian intelligence officer who kept us up to date as to the Australian army's position. The meeting was in progress at 11:00 AM when the red alert was sounded. We had no radar at this time and had to rely on Australian scouts who were positioned in the mountains and actually saw the enemy planes approaching the base. They would alert us by radio and we in turn signalled a red alert by firing 40mm anti-aircraft guns three times to alert the entire base. Everyone knew what the three shots stood for. I went outside and observed what appeared to be long strings of worms in the eastern sky. It wasn't too long until the "worms" turned out to be a large formation of Japanese Betty bombers that were headed in our direction.

The planes headed directly for our field which was unusual since they usually headed for Three Mile Field where there was more airplanes and more activity. As the enemy planes neared the field we could see a single P-38 darting in and out of the Jap formation and most of the time when he went through the formation an enemy plane would break away smoking and sometime there would be an orange ball of fire indicating that an enemy plane had exploded when a bullet struck a fuel tank. I was wrapped up in this fighter pilots determination and complete disregard for his safety that I delayed too long to get into my fox hole for when I got there it was filled to the top. By this time the enemy bombers were almost over the field. I could only lie flat in a slight depression in the woods.

In a matter of seconds the bombs came raining down. The world actually exploded. The lead bombardier dropped his bombs and the other bombardiers simply released their entire load at once. The official records indicate that a total of one hundred enemy airplanes, bombers and fighters were involved. It is my opinion that at least one hundred bombers dropped their load on our field. Bombs were bursting in the trees over my head, behind us in the jungles and everywhere. I was covered with dirt from exploding bombs. Captain White, the Australian liaison officer that was attached to us, dug the dirt away from my body sufficiently so that I could free myself. I have always believed that this man saved my life.The Japanese used black powder in their bombs which set off extremely heavy black smoke. Our entire area was covered in smoke for several minutes after the last bomb exploded. Several of our airplanes were set on fire which also added to the smoke. The squadron was to go out the following day an a mission. The crews were loading 500 lb. bombs on the planes. These bombs began to explode which added to the confusion.

As soon as the Japanese bombs had exploded and I had freed myself, I began to move away from the burning airplanes. There were shouts of warning that the bombs in or near our own planes were about to explode. I then moved away from the planes and toward the river. As I was passing an anit-aircraft gun emplacement one of our bombs exploded which prompted me to jump into the gun emplacement and directly on the back of another man from my unit. I remained in the emplacement until I felt it was save to move. I went to the river bank and waited until I was picked up to be taken into our squadron camp some two miles away.

My brother, Ernest "Rabit" Traylor was waiting in the camp area and checked each person as they unloaded the trucks. I was so dirty that he did not recognize me until I spoke to him. He immediately took me directly to the showere and had me wask the crud away so that we could tell if I had been wounded. We could find no wounds. I had a rather serious loss of hearing as a direct results of the bomb explosions. We went to see the flight surgeon who refused to examine me or to make a report of the incident. He stated the others with a similiar complaint would also ask him to do the same for them and that he simply did not have time for this because a large percent of the squadron was at the field at the time of the bombing.

Fortunately no one in our squadron was killed. There were several who received wounds that were visible and practically all who had the same hearing problem as I. One man from another unit was passing our area received a direct hit by a bomb. I do not need to describe what happened to his body. It has been very difficult for me or anyone to understand why our life was spared. I have always felt since that day , April 12, 1943, I have been living on borrowed time. Almighty God must have had a plan for me and I am very grateful that he did.

I later learned that the P-38 pilot who attacked the Jap formation alone was Captain Richard Bong. His entire unit had taken off and headed to Milne Bay on the southeast tip of New Guinea as soon as they were alerted. The enemy formation appeared to be headed in that direction. Somehow Bong had a idea that they were faking and that their real target was Port Moresby. That is the only reason he gave for having turned back rather than go with his unit to Milne Bay. When Captain Bong landed at Seven Mile Field several people asked him if he was the one that attacked the formation and he told them that he was the one. His airplane showed plenty of evidence that he had been in a real battle. He had someone drive him to the mess hall. While he was eating a Brigadire General came to the mess hall and asked the mess sergeant if the "Crazy S.O.B. who attacked the Jap formation was in the mess hall." Before the sergeant could answer, Captain Bong stood and said, "I am the S.O.B.General." No one knows how many enemy planes Captain Bong shot down because he would never give an accurate account because the numbers were not important to him.

There were many stories that came out of the bombing raid. Captain William Smith had a Swiss movement watch that he was very proud of and when he decided to jump into a drainage ditch to escape the bombs, he pulled his watch off, put it into his pocket and jumped into the water. He has not lived that incident down to date.

Military people always have dogs around it seem. One air crew had one that lived in the revetment with the men. They called him, "S.O.B." except they did not use the abbreviation. This dog heard the enemy planes long before the men did and ran to the fox hole before anyone else could get there. They kept an eye on the dog from then on because he was the best warning we had.

TENT STRIKING DETAIL

By mid 1943 our bomb group had become very proficient in skip bombing tactics and had become the established leading bomb group in the southwest pacific. We had taken the initiative from the Japanese and were giving the enemy all he bargained for and more. We not only cleared the sea lanes in the vicinity of New Guinea and nearby islands but we were giving close support to the ground forces. The ground forces were "leap frogging" along the northern shores of New Guinea and were definitely on the way to Japan. As the fighting moved northward, it was necessary for us to move our bases in the same direction. We used five bases in New Guinea. It was necessary that these moves be made with little or no interruption of our combat operations.

My brother, Ernest, was the first Sergeant and did the vast majority of the planning and organization of the moves. Sgt. Bevis Mangum of Cairo, Ga. was usually given the duty to be in charge of the advance detail. Mangum was a "scrounger" which means he had the ability to almost perform miracles. At times he had non military supplies that he could trade for needed items required to establish a new camp. The most popular item was liquor which always got desired results when nothing else would do. Money would purchase very little since those with money had no where to spend it. I know that on one move Mangum got a water pump and had showers working when the squadron arrived at the new base. We were the only unit that had such luxury. We had two sets of tents. One set remained set up at the old base while the advance detail set up another set at the new site. I personally do not feel that the men who made up the advance detail received enough credit for their efforts. It appeared to be so routine that all of us sort of expected things to go smoothy regardless of the circumstances.

We had one B-25 bomber that had been in service for a long time which showed ample signs of numerous combat missions. It had been repaired many times. The skill of our sheet metal men was apparent when one made a close inspection of the numerous patches that covered up the bullet holes in the outer skin of this tired and trusted old aircraft. Our commanding officer, "Jock" Hennebry, took this plane out of the combat ready group. Our engineering department headed by Firman Adams did a complete over-haul on this B-25 including the removal of all armor plating, gun turrents and made a cargo plane which was named "Fat Cat". This title was used often to denote one who has the easy and relaxed life style. This airplane made many very important "missions" to Australia where fresh meat and booze was delivered to our squadron. Some of the booze was used to trade to the Sea Bees and Merhant Marines for items that were not available in New Guinea. through normal military sources.

The advance detail flew by C-47s or DC-3s taking a set of tents, jeeps and trailers for transportation and the necessary tools to get the new camp ready for the rest of the personnel. Mangum took some trading material if any was available. The most important trading item was alcohol. The advance detail did their own cooking which meant that stoves and food were taken along with other supplies . It would usually require three to four cargo planes just to take the equipment. The advance detail had to be on the alert for the enemy at all times. The new camps were always nearer the front lines. The primary purpose of moving was to be nearer the enemy. This group of men were always ready with a good "war" story which they would tell the rest of the men when we got to the new camp. I always believed very few of these stories. These men were admired by the others because it was nice to move out of a tent, take ones personal belongings and move into a tent already set up at the advanced camp. The tents that were left behind had to be taken down or "struck" as the military men call this procedure. That was usually my job. I was usually in charge of the tent striking detail. My brother would usually make sure I got this job.

All military organiziations seem to rise early every morning. While we were in the combat zone, we would be up and on duty at or near day break. The planes would usually take off on a mission at "first light". All airplanes had to be ready to go when the take-off time came. Bombs were loaded, guns loaded with ample ammunition, fuel tanks had to be topped off and all engines checked to be sure they were operating properly. All radios had to be operating because it was essential that all planes could communicate with others in the flight. It took several men to perform all duties mentioned above. All pilots and other air crew members were aware of the importances of these men. Some squadrons lost more planes due to mechanical failure than to enemy action.

We were required to fall out earler on moving day. All men had to help with the moving. Each man was responsible for his own personal "gear". This also included all officers. Enlisted men of the 13th squadron were required to do very little for the officers. Every man had to take his own equipment to the runway where they were loaded onto a C-47 cargo plane. Each man was assigned to a specific plane and was required to be there on time and ready to go aboard the plane. The combat crews usually flew with their own crew. In fact, if we were on "red alert" or even on stand by alert, they were required to be either at air operations or at their airplane. Combat operations were not interrupted when we moved. I had my tent striking detail with me and when all others had left the camp site, we went to work. The camp site had be clean and all equipment, trash and garbage removed. We had to leave the site cleaner than it was when we moved in.

One would be amazed to see what some people will leave behind when they know that someone else will be responsible for cleaning the area. We had a jeep and a trailer for transportation and for hauling equipment. We first struck the tents. They were folded a certain way, tied and loaded into the jeep trailer and two men transported the tents to the cargo planes assigned to us. We also loaded tent poles from each tent.

After all tents were down and removed, we then combed the entire camp site for trash or any other items to be removed. When we were satisfied with the condition of the grounds, we then loaded our own personal equipment on the jeep trailer and left the camp for good. Any time we moved the natives were close at hand to gather any items left behind. They were most anxious to have any item of clothing. I have seen many natives wearing a full uniform. The members of the detail could load the jeep and trailer onto the C-47. Each C-47 had metal ramps so that jeeps and trailers could be pushed aboard the plane. Six men would have no problem loading a jeep and/or trailer.

My most memorable move was the one from Dobodura to Nadzab. The Japanese remained along the coast between the two bases. The C-47 pilots were very aware that there was a definite possibility that they could expect enemy anti-aircraft fire almost any place along the New Guinea coast. I noticed that they took a course some 8 to 10 miles off shore as we headed north. A few months earlier our own unit had been primarily responsible for very heavy damage to the air base and the area around the air base at Wewak. As we approached Wewak we learned that one of our young and inexperienced A-20 groups was attacking the Wewak area. We soon observed anti-aircraft fire to the northwest of our course. When we were adjacent to the harbor and air base we observed A-20s taking turns as they skip-bombed the entire area. One A-20 had gotten into a duel with an anti-aircraft position situated on a small island in the bay some four or five miles off shore. The A-20 had apparently dropped all his bombs and was straffing the gun emplacement. When he came over the target we could see the tracers and as he departed the area we could see the tracers from the enemy guns. This was a bird's eye view of aerial warfare that few people will ever experience.

After we passed over Wewak we felt that we would be safe because there were no enemy bases of any consequence between Wewak and Lae or Nadzab. We had gotten to know the C-47 crew rather well by this time. The load master and the pilots often came back to talk to us during this three hour flight. As we approached Lae we were told that Japanese Zero fighters were in the area of our base at Nadzab.

We turned to the east and out to sea until we reached the mouth of the Markham river. Our base at Nadzab was situated on the Markham river some 30 miles inland from Lae. As we neared the mouth of the river the pilot went down on the "deck" which a very few feet from the water. He shoved the throttles all the way forward and headed for Nadzab. We prayed and became very quiet as we neared our base. The enemy fighters had been driven away by our own fighters. I was happy and relieved when we landed and taxied to the designated area. I was very happy to see familiar faces from the 13th squadron standing by to help us unload. I was even happier when I got to my tent and found that my tent mates had everything set up. I only had to set up my bunk and get ready to relate my story about our trip.

We later moved from Nadzab to Holandia in Dutch New Guinea. Fortunately I did not get the tent striking detail for this move. I remained behind at Nadzab for some two weeks where we continued to operate while the remainder of the squadron moved by barges and landing craft to Hollandia. "Tom Sawyer" and I remained behind and flew to Hollandia with the operations officer.

R&R

While we were stationed in New Guinea we were given ten days R&R (Rest & Recreation) in Australia each year. Arrangements were made through the American Red Cross who leased private homes in Mackay which is a small town in northeast Queensland located on the coast of the Coral Sea. There were double-decker GI bunks in every room except the bath room. We were advised that we should use these facilities because there were not enough hotel rooms for the Americans and the Australian civilians. A large percent of us were able to get a hotel room because of connections with certain hotel people. Our squadron kept a room reserved at the Taylor Hotel.

Some men did not take advantage of these leaves for some unknown reason, but I never missed an opportunity to take mine. In fact, I went once when I shouldn't have because it had not been a year since my last one. My co-worker, tent mate and friend, Robert "Tom" Sawyer and I were able to talk our operations officer into letting us go together. The officer was new and we knew he was an easy touch and besides our co-worker, friend and tent mate Mitchell Yelverton conspired with us and reassured the officer that he could hold down the fort for ten days. So, off we went!

We were required to secure our own transportation and the only reliable transportation was by military aircraft. We usually had no difficulties getting on an airplane when we presented our orders to the pilot or the personnel at the operations shack of the field. The best trip I had was aboard a converted B-17. The entire inside had been altered to accomodate some thirty five passengers. The basic transportation for moving men and equipment was the old reliable C-47 or as it was known in the civilian world a Douglas DC-3. They were reliable but rode like a bucking bronco, especially in rough weather.

The B-17 could fly non-stop from Port Moresby to Mackay due to its larger fuel capacity. Sometimes when not flying in the B-17 we would land in Townsville, Australia. We were met at the air field in Mackay by several FBI agents who wanted to make certain that we did not give away any military secrets while we were on leave. They searched some people at random which included me. I managed to conceal a letter from a friend who had sent the letter to an Australian nurse at the Catholic Hospital at Mackay. We were not pleased at this process because it took too much time away from our visits to the nearest bar or our pursuit of the female population who were just waiting for us and our filthy money.

After our "friendly" visit with the FBI boys, we were taken by truck to our assigned private home. Once more we were reminded that we should not attempt to get a hotel room and that we should use the bunk to which we were assigned. I simply threw a barracks bag with my name on it onto the bunk and headed for the Taylor Hotel where we identified ourselves as being from the 13th squadron. A bartender named "Robbie" took us to a private room which had no number on the door and told us this was the room that he kept reserved for the squadron. He also told us he had plenty of alcohol for us but not for the general public. MPs did come around to all hotels and check to see if there were any Americans registered. They never checked our room because they did not know it existed.

We learned that the girls of Mackay were more fond of enlisted men than they were of officers. One girl told me that some officers felt that just because they were officers, they should have some special privileges with the girls. A certain officer from our squadron borrowed one of my shirts and had the best time of his entire life. We even introduced him to Robbie who let them have booze anytime they wanted it.

I took two trips to Mackay. "Tom" Sawyer and I went together once and Dave Runager and I went on the other. While on the way down with Sawyer, he bet me ten pounds that he would make love with the first female he encountered at the hotel. I quickly took this bet because I felt he was bragging and trying to impress me. We checked into adjoining rooms and within minutes I heard a ruckus in Sawyer's room. Shortly thereafter I was called to the room where I met a rather plump woman who was the hotel maid. She confirmed what had happened and I reluctantly paid my ten pound wager. (A pound was worth about $3.75 in American money at that time.)

The beach at Mackay is very beautiful being rather wide and firm. The Australian authorities fenced off a portion of the beach for the exclusive use of the Americans. MPs guarded the entrance and would not allow an unescorted female enter. Each time I entered I escorted several inside. One day I met a very attractive girl that kinda latched onto me which flattered me that she would choose me over all the others. We had a very good day and as we left she asked me to meet her at the USO downtown that night and I did. When I saw her in a dress she looked much younger than she did at the beach in a bathing suit. I finally learned that she was only fourteen which prompted me to end this short relationship.

Dave Runager and I met an Australian civilian at the hotel bar and learned that he was a graduate of Lousianna State University where he received a degree in Sugar Engineering. We also learned that he was the manager of a sugar refinery and a sugar plantation nearby. He invited us to visit his family and the refinery on the following Saturday. He also agreed.

to come for us at the hotel. It was about the nicest day I had during my entire stay in Australia. The tour of the sugar mill, plantation and the visit with this family was great. We learned that there were several byproducts in the manufacturing of sugar. We learned that rum was a byproduct which our host served us. One of the popular sports in Australia in bowling on the green. Our host took us to a bowling club which was an exclusive social club with a limited membership. We tried our hand at bowling but found that we were not match for the experienced Australians. If we had accepted a drink from everyone who offered to buy , we would have been drunk in thirty minutes after arriving. We met several attractive girls but unfortunately we had to return to New Guinea before we had a chance to get better acquainted.

As I have stated earlier, there was always some bad weather over the Coral Sea. Dave Runager and I were returning together and had gotten to Townsville and was waiting in line to board a plane for Port Moresby. There was a Sunderland Flying Boat in a bay near base operations. This airplane could accomodate a large number of people and was being loaded by the alphabet. The plane reached its capacity only two or three men before reaching Runager and I. In a few minutes the flying boat took off as we watched. It climbed to some 300 feet, winged over and crashed into the water. There were no apparent survivors. I had another close call!

We were soon boarding a new C-47 that had been flown from the states and was destined for New Guinea as a replacement. When we got on board we learned that the two pilots were Flight Officers which is a rank below a Second Lieutenant who had not ?? flown accross the Coral Sea before. We had a terrible flight. The weather was unusually bad and the pilot told us he wasn't sure of his heading. We finally broke out of the clouds and could see land in the distance. Runager and I were asked to come up front to assist the pilots in identifying landmarks. We

were stunned when we recognized the Fly River which was the dividing line between the Japs and the Americans. We also found that we were approaching the Jap side. We advised the pilot to go out to sea and head southeast for an hour which they did. All of us were relieved when the plane touched down at Port moresby.

A VISIT TO BUNA BATTLEFIELD

Buna is located on the northeastern coast of New Guinea. A large Japanese army landed at Buna beach at the beginning of the war. They were there to protect the sea lanes leading from New Brittian to New Guinea. There was little or no troop resistance by the allied forces during the landing and there had been very little activity by the allied ground forces during the early months of the war in the south west Pacific.

During the later part of 1943 we had begun to take the initiative. Our ground forces were strong enough to challenge the enemy in the Buna area. Our own bomber group had moved accross the Owen-Stanley Mountains from near Port Moresby to Dobodura. Dobodura is located some 10 to 12 miles inland from Buna. Our ground forces had successfully cut the Japanese garrison at Buna off from other Japanese forces located along the New Guinea coast. Our American 32nd infantry division was advancing on Buna from the south while the Australian Imperial Forces were advancing from the north. The Australian Imperial Forces were known as the "AIF" which was the elite of the Australian fighting forces. They were regular forces having volunteered and had been fighting in North Africa under Gen. Montgomery. They were a fearless bunch of men.

The enemy had gotten themselves firmly entrenched in an aera on or near the beach. They dug bunkers, lined them with palm logs, and they also placed palm logs atop the bunkers and then they placed metal drum filled with sand on top of the palm logs. Our bombers dropped many tons of bombs on these bunkers. The bomb blasts only tilted the drums leaving the Jap troops unharmed. The enemy held out for months. The time came when the commanders, including Gen. McArthur, decided it was time to take Buna at all costs.

The battle lasted only a few days. The Australians and the Americans went in & physically tore down the bunkers and killed the Japanese one by one. Most enemy troops were killed because there was less than 1 per cent of the Japanese that were captured. They did not want to be captured and we didn't want prisoners.

A few days after the battle at Buna beach was over I had my first opportunity to see Gen. Douglas McArthur. He would always visit the site of a major battle after the fighting was over. By now everyone knows his routine of wading ashore from a landing craft while the movie cameras were grinding away. He waded ashore several times to make certain that a good picture was taken. The Buna battle was a major victory for the allied troops and gave Gen McArthur another opportunity to get some publicity back home by way of the news reels that were shown on practically every movie screen prior to the feature film of the day.

My air operations crew had a jeep assigned to us for our transportation to and from the flight line. We were returning to the flight line from lunch when we ran into the McArthur entourage which consisted of some 25 to 30 people. We first encountered a Major who had an MP band on his arm and was riding a motorcycle. He halted all traffic on the road on which the General was riding. We were told to stand on the shoulder of the road and that as soon as the General approached us we would salute him and remain on the roadway until his vehicle had passed from view. We were not too pleased that we were required to salute because we did not salute our own officers while we were in the combat zone. The Japanese sought out officers and would kill them first. Our officers preferred that we not salute them. We did show them proper respect in all other military functions.

I will say that General McArthur was an imposing individual. There was no doubt as to the idenity of this man when you saw him. He sat alone in the back seat of a command car. He wore the cap with all the "scrambled egg" braid on the visor and was smoking a corn cob pipe. He returned all salutes in a very military manner. There were about four jeeps leading the command car and at least one that followed. There were some four motorcycles that escorted the convoy. As soon as the convoy disappeared, we continued on to our job.

Some of us decided that if it was safe enough for General McArthur to visit the battlefield that we should also make a visit to see if we could pick up some souveiners. Mitchell Yelverton, "Tom"Sawyer and I drove to the battlefield which was about ten miles to the east of our camp site. It is impossible for me to describe accurately what we found when we reached the main battlefield. The Japanese had been confined into a rather small area where most of them were killed. I would estimate that there were several thousands of Japanese bodies left on the battlefield. Fortunately all American bodies had been removed as were the Australian bodies.

As we reached the edge of the main battlefield we encountered a lone Australian soldier. We did have a short conversation with this man. He was not like most Australian soldiers that I had known. He was not friendly at all. In fact, I felt that he was rude. We learned later why this Australian acted the way he did.

The Japanese bodies were stacked upon one another about four deep. They had been dead several days. One can imagine the stench we encountered which prompted me to insist that we turn around and go back to the camp. I was over ruled and we took a short tour of the area. There was a bull dozier operating on the opposite side of the area from where we were. Other than the sound of this tractor's motor, we could hear nothing but the ocean waves breaking on the beach. "Tom" Sawyer was interested in gold teeth and found some which he took back to the camp much to my displeasure. I could find nothing that interested me. Guns and ammunition was scattered every where. I had all the guns I needed. I don't believe Mitchell found anything that he was interested in taking. So we finally got Sawyer to leave.

As we were driving out of the battlefield we met two men from the 90th. squadron. Both men were master sergeants and were assigned to the engineering department. One was the line chief which is the person in charge of all aircraft mechanics. We told them that we had received no sniper fire. We felt that since there were three of us, we were not fired upon. We had learned long before that the Japanese snippers will not fire on three men but will fire on one or two. They reasoned that one man could not kill three men before he was killed himslef. We told the men from the 90th. that they were taking a chance when they went when there were only two of them. The Australian soldier told us that there had been some snipper activity earlier during the day.

We returned to our camp and left the men of the 90th. squadron in the battlefield. We later learned that one of these men was killed and the other was wounded by snipper fire. The wounded man had been hit by a single bullet which struck his testicles.

There were other reports of snipper fire in and around the Buna battlefield. The commander of the 32nd division sent men to the area to seek out the snipper which they did. They took into custody the Australian soldier that we had met. He admitted that he was the guilty party. He was disgruntled and had a score to settle with the Americans. He had returned home from Africa and found that his wife had been keeping company with an American. She was in fact seeking a divorce from this man in order to marry the American. The man was sent back to McArthur's headquarters in mainland Australia. We never heard what was done with this man.

AN OUTSTANDING SHOW

We were stationed at Nadzab, New Guinea for four or five months in 1944. We moved from Dobodura in February of 1944 and remained there until July of 1944. There were five or six runways at Nadzab which were situated in the beautiful Markham valley. The airfields were located on the north side of the Markham River which flowed into the Coral Sea at Lea, New Guinea. There were no trees in the valley. There were mountains which peaked on both sides of the valley. Native grass which was as high as a man's head completely covered the valley on each side of the river. Our camp was located to the north of the fields and the river and just at the base of the mountains. We could see several runways from our camp site.

Early one morning there were several of us standing in chow line waiting our turn to be served breakfast. We heard gun fire coming from a field used by the transport airplanes. We could see several Japanese Zero fighters making straffing runs on the field. We could see tracer bullets stricking the control tower and later learned that all men in the tower were killed. I counted ten enemy fighters as they made several passes over the field. Our anti-aircraft gunners finally woke up and began to fire on the Zeros. One of the Zeros received a direct hit and blew up near the landing field which caused the others to break off and attemp to flee the area. By this time all anti-aircraft guns were firing. The air was filled with anti-aircraft tracers

and exploding shells. The gunners used the tracers to adjust the range and to get a bead on the fleeing fighters. The Zeros made a wide turn from the valley and headed for the mountains. They passed within a mile of our camp. We could see the shells bursting in front and to the rear of the Japs. Our gunners at last got the range and each time a direct hit was made there was an orange ball of fire and tremendious explosion. We were shouting encouragement to the gunners at the top of our lungs. It reminded me of being at an exciting football game back in the states. We observed two Zeros disappear behind the mountains which indicated that eight of the ten were shot down.

We were thrilled that we had done so well during this air raid. We also knew that this kind of a reception should serve as a warning to the Japanese command. This was the beginning of our air superiority and from this day forward we won all battles. Having been on the losing side for almost two years, it was a good feeling to know that we were winning. We had at least seven hundred airplanes at Nadzab. We had bombers, fighters and cargo airplanes. We had B-25s, A-20s, B24s, P-38s, P-47s and C-47s. I do not recall another enemy air raid of any consequence after the Zero attack. We had some isolated "Washing Machine Charley" raids that did no damage. We picked up some formations on radar and scrambled at least a hundred fighters that drove the enemy away long before they reached our area. We all slept well and could see the end and a victory for us.

A RUTHLESS AND DECEITFUL ENEMY

During my tour of duty in the south west Pacific theater I was fortunate because I did not have a personal confrontation with a single Japanese soldier. All of us were armed because there was always a possibility that we would be confronted by the enemy. We received special training and was taught to use most of the basic weapons issued to the infantry eventhough we were members of the Army Air Corps. I carried a "tommy" gun which was a .45 cal. Thompson sub machine gun. I also carried a .45 cal. automatic pistol. I was selected to be among the last people to leave the camp in case the Japanese attacked and over came us. Due to my size I was selected to remain behind. I was supposed to climb a tree and snipe any enemy soldier that came into my range. I had mastered the two weapons I carried. I spent many rounds of ammunition but I could shoot well especially with the pistol. I did not plan to be taken alive by the enemy because I had heard some bad stories about the way they treated prisoners of war.

It was a well known fact concerning how the Japs would use the most deceitful tactics to gain the advantage over their enemy. They would go to any extremes to kill an American soldier eventhough in most cases the Japanese would also perish in the process. They were taught to pay the supreme price in order to take one or more lives with them. They would gladly sacrifice their own life provided they were able to kill an American at the same time. I had an opportunity to observe this tatic first hand while I was stationed at Hollandia Dutch New Guinea. Hollandia was the last New Guinea base we occupied prior to the group moving to the Phillipines and prior to my being rotated back to the states in August of 1944.

The over-all battle plan for New Guinea was fairly simple. We used the "leap frog" approach which meant that there were a series of invasions along the northest coast until we had reached Hollandia which was the northern most base occupied by us prior to moving to the Phillipines. We would take a base along the coast, set up a perimeter defense and simply repulse all Japanese efforts to retake the beachhead which had been established. Having gained

air superiority gave us a positive advantage. Anytime the Japs tried to break through our lines that were protecting the beachhead they were defeated. Our planes would at times take off leaving the landing gear down, fly over the target straffing and bombing the enemy and then returning to the base to be rearmed. Some days the planes would fly 25 sorties a day.

The enemy was cut off from his supply source for months. They became desperate soldiers that were starving, had dysentery and all kind of diseases. Some soldiers had hidden in the rough and rocky mountains to the east of our base. Hollandia was a very large base having some six separate runways and probably 500 aircraft stationed there.

The Americal and the 32nd infantry divisions had the important responsibility to defend the beachhead at Hollandia. The infantry camp was situated near our 3rd Bomb Group's camp. We saw these men moving along the roads every day. One day I was headed to the post office which was located at the southern most area of our beachhead when I saw a infantry patrol traveling south the same direction I was traveling. Suddenly they stopped and were looking to their left up an embankment from the road. I stopped my jeep to see what they were going to do because they had their guns ready as if to fire on the enemy. Suddenly I saw a Japanes soldier run down the embankment toward the American soldiers. It was obvious that this person was Japanese because of the color and type of uniform it was wearing. This soldier had its hands raised and was shouting "Comrade - Comrade" which was the only english that most of the Japanes soldiers knew. This "soldier" tore its blouse from it body. At this time it became very obvious that this person was a female. Her action had caused the Americans to drop their guard. The Americans, about 9 in number, gathered around this female. She quickly pulled two hand grenades from her clothing and pressed them against her breast and exploded them. She was killed immediately as were two American soldiers.

Other soldiers arrived on the scene in a short time and immediately spread out and entered the wooded area from which the woman came. They found five Japanese soldiers which were killed immediately. Later one of the soldiers went with me and showed me where these people had been hiding. They had dug a small cave that was located no more than 100 yards from the road. They lived in this cave the entire time since we invaded the beachhead which happened some six months earlier.

The young infantry patrol showed definite signs of inexperience when they fell for a trick that practically everyone was aware of. It is said that "all is fair in love and war". However, there are certain humane rules that are expected to be followed even in war. It was obvious that the Japanese soldiers were taught that their primary mission was to kill the enemy at all costs and that was their primary reason to be living.

Every American service man was made aware of the Geneva Conference which established certain humane rules that should be applied during a war. We were also told that the Japanese attended the conference following World War I and had agreed to abide by these rules. We learned the hard way that the Japanes did not intend to abide by the conference rules during World War II.

I became aware of how ruthless the Japs were early in the New Guinea campaign. The battle at Gona beach on the east coast of New Guinea was in progress. Two American medics were removing a wounded man from the battlefield. They wore helmets that bore a large white cross which told the world that they were medics and were removing a wounded man from the battlefield and that they should be allowed to perform their duty unmolested as per the provision of the Geneva Conference. As these men walked along the beach they were attacked by several Japanese soldiers and all three men were killed.

Soon after the above incident some men constructed a large sign and erected it in full view on the beach. They printed the words, "KILL THE BASTARDS" in large letters while they told the above story in smaller letters at the bottom of the sign. A picture of this sign appeared on the front cover of Life magazine.

The most dramatic example of Japanese inhuman treatment occurred in the Markham Valley battle. Markham Valley is situated inland from Lae and on either side of the Markham River. American paratroops jumped into the valley around November of 1943. Our airplanes laid down a smoke screen to protect the paratroopers while they descending into the grassy valley. After this battle was won by the Americans we established a very large base in the valley which was called Nadzab.

During this battle an American captain of the paratroopers was captured. The Japanes tried in vain to get some information from the captain and being a good soldier he would only tell them his name, rank and serial number as is required by the Geneva Conference. This attitude irritated the Japs so they began to use tatics that they felt would make this American talk. They began by pulling off all of his finger nails and then all of his toe nails. When this failed to get the results they desired, they then severed his sex organs. They then tied him to a tree where he bled to death. This man must have died a horrible death. The paratroopers that later found their dead captain became enraged. They redoubled their efforts and soon had the upper hand.

These men found a Japanes hospital in the nearby jungles. Some three men entered the hospital and advised the officer in charge that they were surrounded and were in fact prisioners of war. As these men started to go back outside, a Japanese soldier pulled a sub-machine gun from under the cover and killed all three men. The death of their captain coupled with this incident was more than they could stand. All Japanese in the hospital were killed and the grass structure was burned. Probably not the correct way to handle this situation if one intends to follow the rules of the Geneva Conference. However, I have heard an expression of "fight fire with fire". I sometimes wonder if these men were wrong when they resolved this problem in this manner. At the time I felt they were justified.

THE JOURNEY HOME

Jim Honea replaced my brother, Ernest, as First Sgt. in June of 1944. He moved into the tent with us when Fred Hall went home. Jim called by phone and told me I had received my orders to rotate back to the States. I cleaned out my desk at Operations and went to my tent and began packing. The night before I left I visited some friends of mine from Alabama who were in an anti-aircraft battery near the runway. This organization was part of the Alabama and Georgia National Guard before the war known back in Alabama as "white lightning". We had a few swigs and a short going-away party.

"Gentleman Joe" Daniel, Joe Maserio and I were the ones that went home from the 13th Squadron. We were driven to the Cyclops Field where the transport planes were stationed. We arrived at Cyclops before daybreak. The pilots for two C-47s were there. The weather was terrible. There were some 22 men to be flown to Finchaven some 1200 miles south of Hollandia. A Colonel who commanded the transport group came to the field and told us that he felt the weather was too bad for a flight anywhere. We protested and he gathered with the pilots where a lengthy discussion was held. The then told us he would take a poll to determine if we wanted to take a chance and fly to Finchaven. To a man, we voted to go! He rounded up a third pilot and assigned some 7 or 8 of us to a plane to lighten the load. We boarded and took off at first light.

This was by far the roughest flight I ever experienced. It was like riding a bucking bronco for more than four hours or over half way to Finchaven. We flew at about 14,000 feet and I almost froze. We wrapped in the two blankets which we always carried and survived. We finally broke out of the soup some 2-300 miles north of Finchaven.

When we reached Finchaven, I felt secure for the first time. I knew that it was highly unlikely that we would have any air attacks this far from the front line. We were taken to a staging area camp situated on a bay some 5-6 miles from the town of Finchaven and the Coral Sea. The camp was situated in a coconut grove. Men from all over the South Pacific were staying at this camp. All were members of the 5th Air Force. Most of us had been overseas for at least 30 months, some had been there longer.

The Sgt. in charge of the details was from an infantry unit from the Solomon Islands. He didn't like Air Corps people and the feeling was mutual. I got an assignment the very first day to go on a dock detail. We were sent to get food for the mess. Two of us went in search of beer. We knew beer was shipped to the troops very often, but never reached us. We learned that the Merchant Marines took charge of the beer and sold all that they couldn't drink. We soon discovered a huge pile of boxes covered with a tarp. We thought we had discovered beer at last. We pulled the tarp up and discovered at least 100 cases of Wrigley's Spearmint gum - a case contained 24 boxes and weighed about 200 lbs. We managed to get a case on the truck without anyone seeing us. We took a couple of boxes each and then placed the case outside our tent where it was snatched up in short order. It was the first gum we had had since we left the States.

We remained at this camp for a week to ten days. We were each given a complete winter uniform to bring back to the States. When I complained that we were not given a chance to try on the uniforms, I was told that we were not going to wear them. We were to return them to the States. Some unit commander had required his men to bring the uniforms to New Guinea and we were going to return them to California. Fortunately, most of the Commanding Officers I knew displayed better judgment.

I was picked for another dock detail along with about 3 others. We loaded on the back of a GI truck and headed for the docks. The truck made two 90 degree turns and went back near our tents. When we got near the tents, we jumped form the rear of the truck and to our tents. Soon the detail Sgt. and a Colonel showed up and called all men out. We were ordered to stand in formation so that the truck driver could identify the dock detail that never reached the dock. I believe he recognized all of us. I know he recognized me because he winked at me. However, he told the Colonel he could not make a positive identification of any man. The Colonel gave us a blistering lecture and told us that if he learned who we were, we would be confined to the camp and perform some detail for 6 weeks before we could go home.

I was introduced to integration for the first time at this camp. I was in the latrine one morning, when two black GIs came in and sat on either of me. One asked me where I was from and I told him I was from Alabama. He said I'm from Mississippi and this integration is very strange to me. He went all the way to Camp Shelby, Miss., with me.

One night while I was in the chow line, a GI approached me and said "how would you like a woman?" I said, what kind of woman? All of us had been approached by a native on behalf of his wife and I never got that desperate. The man said, it's a U. S. Nurse. You can go down this road to a culvert about 1/4 mile from here and she will meet you. I said, how much? He said 20 pounds which was some $ 65 in U. S. money. I told him that he and his nurse could go to H - - -.

The day to depart New Guinea finally arrived. One evening, the C.O. announced that we should assemble in the mess hall that evening where men from finance would be there to exchange money we held for U. S. dollars. We had both Australian pounds and Dutch guilders. When money was exchanged, I had some $ 500, all in one dollar bills. These bills had been re-taken from the Japanese who had confiscated it in the Philippines. Can you imagine what $ 500 in one dollar bills look like? I filled my "ditty bag" with money!

Early one morning in August of 1945, the loudspeaker came on loud and clear, "Pack your gear and fall out on the main street and prepare to load the troop ship". I had two full barracks bags and my "ditty bag", which contained GI issue of toilet articles and money. I was among the first to arrive on Main Street. When all were assembled, I noticed several men in uniform with no insignia on their uniform coming down the line and were inspecting some personal bags of the men. I saw that they were checking bags at random. I had been through this before when I came from New Guinea to Australia and I knew the men were FBI agents. I felt lucky, but my luck soon ran out when one of the smart alecs said, "Sgt., dump your bags". He checked very item very carefully.

I had hidden my personal diary inside a new shirt. The shirt was doubled perfectly, just like I got it from supply and was in the bottom of a barracks bag. The agent fount it. I protested loud and long when he told me he would take it. We had some harsh words because it covered some 33 months of my life. The diary was some 100 typed pages. Of course, I lost the argument. When I told him I was going to contact my Congressman when I got home, he promised to mail the diary to me. He took my name and address and assured me that I would definitely get the diary back when I got home. I have heard nothing from the great and powerful FBI.

After a few meaningless words from the camp C.O. about how Americans appreciated our efforts, etc., etc., we loaded on trucks and headed for the bay where the troop ship was anchored.

ALL ABOARD FOR THE U.S.A.

I noticed that only 8 men were loaded on each truck as we departed the camp and wandered why so few men. When we reached the bay, I saw several "Ducks" which were amphibious trucks that operated on both land and water. The ducks were all lined up in a coconut grove near the water. The trucks stopped beside a duck and we simply jumped onto the ducks which immediately headed for the water. The troop ship USS Frederick Lykes was anchored about a mile from shore. The ducks could only carry 8 men which accounted for the number of men on each GI truck.

These ducks wallowed around in the water like a bucking bronco. Most of the men on my duck became seasick long before we reached the troop ship. I never became seasick or airsick at all. When we reached the ship, we took turns boarding. Each duck pulled alongside the ship near a makeshift ladder or step affixed to the side of the ship. The water was rough and the duck was like a cork bobbing up and down. When the platform was on the way down, we dropped our bags on it and then jumped on it on the way up. My problem became real when I tried to climb the steps with my two barrack bags - I got about 3/4 of the way up and could go no higher. I almost fell overboard and was thankful when I didn't because I am certain I would not have been rescued had I fallen overboard. Suddenly, a strong hand lifted the bags from my shoulder and a voice said "Follow me, friend". When I got on board, I learned that the strong hand belonged to another man from my squadron, Joe Masiero. I shall always be grateful to Joe. I feel certain he saved my life.

When we arrived in the hold, we found that there were four tiers of bunks. I selected a top bunk to avoid the crowded and confused conditions that were present when I came over on the USS Ancon. I learned later that another man had the top bunk adjacent o mine. All other bunks in these two tiers were vacant. The ship could carry 3000 troops and we had less than 500. A large number of the troops on board were wounded and sick and bedridden. There were some 30 to 40 nurses who had been captured by the Japanese in the Philipines who had been rescued by our troops in New Guinea. These women were in very poor condition but grateful to be alive. They 2ould rush to embrace any man in an American uniform. I avoided them whenever I could. I was assigned guard duty the first night on board. My post was the passage way in the nurses' quarters. I learned later that a friend was the acting First Sgt. on the ship. I got relieved of guard duty after the first night. I was made permanent Charge of Quarters for my hold for the entire voyage.

We had suspected that beer and other items destined for us in the combat zone was being taken by the Merchant Marines. We confirmed that fact the first night aboard the ship. Jim Daniel, the First Sgt., and I, bought a case of 3.2 beer from a Merchant marine. He admitted that the beer had been destined for troops in the combat zones of New Guinea and that he had taken several cases. He charged us $ 25 per case.

The USS Frederick Lykes sailed alone after we passed the Solomon Islands. The ship traveled at top speed since we did not have to coordinate our speed with other ships because there were no other ships. We traveled for some 30 days without any escort at all. We had no submarine attacks or alerts. About 3 days prior to reaching San Francisco, a Navy blimp appeared and escorted us all the way into San Francisco Bay.

The Pacific Ocean is a beautiful body of water. The sun rise and sun set over this body of water is unbelievable. It appears to be a large parking lot paved of gold. We would sit on the deck and enjoy this sight on our return trip. We felt secure long before we reached California. There were some good times. We had a few hands of poker and sipped a few cold ones, thanks to the Merchant Marines! The foot wasn't bad and we had three meals a day - while on the voyage going over, we only had two meals.

THE GOLDEN GATE BRIDGE AT LAST!

The voyage aboard the USS Frederick Lykes was more or less routine compared to the trip over-seas. The trip over aboard the USS Ancon was a nightmare that lasted 25 days. Men were suddenly and rudely thrown together in terrible conditions. We eventually became animal-like in our behavior. We ate only twice a day and received one canteen of water per day. The ship was on a course at or near the equator most of the time after we passed The Christmas Island chain. The stench and heat was unbeareable. I had my .45 automatic near at hand at all times. Men were actually stealing water. The USS Frederick Lykes actually had drinking fountains with ice water in all holds. This was some indication of improvements in the troop transportation that had occured in about 3 years.

When we approached San Francisco Bay, the troop commander came on the loud speaker and gave us a stern lecture on how we were to act when we passed beneath the Golden Gate Bridge. All of us had kept the sight of this bridge in mind for this was a symbol of America that we had kept during our entire stay in the war zone. We were told that we would keep quiet and that demonstrations of any kind would not be tolerated. As we neared the bridge some men suddenly dashed up stairs to the sick bay and began bringing the wounded men on the deck. We got as many as we could lay on the ship's deck. As the ship passed beneath the bridge one could have heard a pin drop and there was not a dry eye in sight. The commander did not show up for obvious reason. I hope he was embarrased.

As we reached the pier a band began playing. It was obvious that this band had played to other ships such as ours. Their lack of enthusiasm was very obvious.

The wounded men were unloaded first. It took a long time for all of these men to be carried ashore. I stood by the rail and saluted each one as they passed. The tears were wiped away and a broad grin appeared on their faces. There was a small exception - some men were blind.

Our turn finally arrived and we were instructed to go down the gang plank and to proceed directly through the pier to a ferry boat tied up on the opposite side of the pier. The ferry boat got under way and we wondered where we were going. We soon learned that our destination was Angel Island located in the bay near Alcatraz.. Ft. McDowell occupies the entire island.

We were hearded into a barracks and were soon given our first meal on US soil. We were fed steaks cooked to order. This was the first steak any of us had had for a long time. I could not eat all of mine and had a guilty feeling when I dumped the left over in the garbage.

Later we wondered around the base and found the PX where we had a beer. We failed to salute a second lt. or two and got a real chewing out too. I found men lined up to use the telephone located near the PX. I waited in line for more than an hour and eventually gave up. Those that got to the phones were calling home and speaking to their parents or wives and the conversations were rather long as one could expect.

I slept well this first night on solid ground. I had become accustomed to sleeping on board the troop ship for more than 20 nights. One experiences a rolling, bumping and jerky sensation on board a sea going ship. I did have a slight problem getting to sleep since the bed remained stationary at all times.

We were awakened early the next morning. A Sgt. came to our barracks and advised us to get allof our personal items from our bags. He gave us a paper bag for storing these items. We were instructed to pile everything we brought off the ship in a pile at the end of the barracks and that we were to only keep the clothes which we were wearing. I questioned the Sgt. regarding the disposition of these items of personal gear including the winter uniforms we were required to bring from New Guinea. He said everything would be burned and especially the winter uniforms. He was shocked when I told him how we were forced to bring these uniforms back to the U.S. He said "why didn't they burn them in New Guinea"? He said that they knew in New Guinea that all equipment brought from the South Pacific was to be burned.

We were marched to the mess hall for breakfast and were told that we must report to an auditorium located near the mess hall as soon as we finished breakfast.

I saw my first WAC when anumber of them marched by the auditorum .. We had been given an orange at the mess hall and when the WACs passed they were belted by several oranges. They broke ranks and scattered in several directions. MPs soon appeared and made a special effort to learn who had thrown the oranges. You probably already know what success these PMs had.

When we entered the auditorium we were given a paper bag and was instructed to completely undress including shoes and socks. We were allowed to empty our pockets into the paper bag. We were then herded onto the main floor of the auditorium and instructed to walk slowly between two rows of seat. Spot lights were mounted on the back of the chairs.Seated behind the spot lights were several medical officers.We were instructed to stop in front of one of these medical officers to allow the man an opportunity to examine our body very closely. I asked one of these men what they were looking for and he said "insects and skin rash". I felt like I believe a leper feels at a moment like this.

After we were thoroughly scrutinized and found not to be infested with strange insects or to have a contagieous skin disease we were directed to the base supply department where we found a number of men and women who actually tailor fit us with new uniforms. The woman who fitted me was Chinese. We were issued winter uniforms since winter uniforms are worn year round on Angle Island.

We spent only two nights at Ft. McDowell. All of us received travel orders that gave us a 21 day delay en route. We were sent to various parts of the country depending on where we were from. I was ordered to report to Miami Beach. Others went to Atlantic City and other places.

A detail was assigned to go ahead to take care of our baggage. Some men volunteered for this duty because they felt that they would have an opportunity to visit a liquor store. Several men gave them money to purchase booze. This detail had more money than they ever had before. Since our baggage went ahead our load was light. I held onto my "Ditty" with 500 one dollar bills.