

# Memoirs

William Grisaitis

370th BS

Radio Oper./Waist Gun

Pilot-LalMontagne

Dear Jim

I think that I am the oldest living member of the 307TH B.G.

I will be 97 years old on  
30 October 2013

I am sending you some data on the 30 bombers that we lost during the short time I was with the 307TH B.G. July 1942 to Oct 1943

I flew as a radio operator and gunner on the Lucky Shamrock B-24 so you can see how lucky I was to survive this war. It's like I say "It is not how smart you are or if you are the best shot in the war, to survive in any war - all you need is "LUCK"

Keep up the good work

William Fusater

## AIR FORCE CAREER

28 January 1942. I left my Army buddies in Louisiana and then traveled on a troop train to Jefferson Barracks, Missouri. When I reported to this base, the personnel clerks saw that I had recently transferred from the Army and then wanted me to train and drill their new recruits. I probably could have done that for the rest of this war but I didn't go into the Army Air Corps to become a drill sergeant so I politely declined.

March 1942. When I completed my six weeks of Air Force Basic training, I was reassigned to a Second Air Force School at Pullman, Washington and for the first time traveled on a troop train that were converted cattle cars. This was a new experience for me and also the rest of the G.I.s. Some of them complained about the way we traveled because it seemed that we were being shipped to our destination just like cattle.

I did not complain, because I felt that in the long run, my life was going to be a lot better off, so I just enjoyed this trip looking at the scenery while we traveled across the Northwestern parts of the United States.

When we arrived at our destination, I could hardly believe my eyes when I saw how way my life was going to change because I never dreamt that I was being sent to a college.



College professors taught us radio theory while Army Air Corps Sergeants taught us Morse Code and how to operate the different types of radios installed in our airplanes. While I was there I also drilled and marched with the other military students that went to this college.

1 May 1942. Six weeks later the diploma I received certified that I had successfully completed the Army Radio course of instruction from the Second Air Force Training Exercise at Washington State College, at Pullman, Washington with a grade "A" average.

1 Jun 1942. I was reassigned to Geiger Field, Spokane, Washington. While I was stationed there, I also went to a gunnery school located seven miles away from Geiger Field and which also was appropriately named, "Seven Mile Gunnery School". I had never shot a gun during my lifetime, well maybe a cap gun on the 4th of July. So I guess it was about time that I finally learned how to shoot a real gun. I not only learned how to shoot a shot gun, machine gun and a 45 calibre pistol but also how to take it apart and put it together again blind folded.

They taught me how to shoot a double barreled shot gun at fast moving clay targets that were released from different angles and positions. I soon found out that when I aimed directly at a clay target, my bullet would miss and go behind it. So I learned how to compensate by judging how fast it was going, how far away it was and at what angle it was traveling and then give that clay target sufficient lead by aiming a few feet in front of it to be able to hit and shatter it into small pieces.

I also learned how to properly aim and shoot a 50 caliber machine gun at the bulls eye of a distant target. I quickly learned that when I aimed directly at the bulls eye, that my bullet would drop in front of it. So I learned how to compensate by judging how far away that target was located and then shoot above it in order for me to be able to come anyway near the bulls eye of that target.

I also fired three types of bullets with that machine gun. Red tracers, incendiary and armor piercing. Each one did a different job. The Red tracers helped guide me to the target, the incendiaries start a fire and the armor piercing shoot the airplane down. I then became a sharpshooter, the diploma I received also entitled me to wear the silver wings of an aerial gunner. During this course of instruction, the training Sergeant also gave us some very helpful advice. Don't forget those tracer bullets work both ways, they not help you but also the enemy, because If the enemy is in range so are you.



I also learned how to operate one of the gun turrets that was presently installed on our bombers and a program called IFF - IDENTIFY FRIEND FROM FOE airplanes. They also taught me how to use the three different types of parachutes installed in our airplanes, such as the front pack which we placed on our chest, the seat pack which we could sit on and the back pack which we placed on our shoulders. I also learned how to operate the gun turret that was installed in the tail end of our bombers.

July 1942. I left Geiger Field with a group of G.I.s on a regular troop train for my next reassignment to the 307th Bomb Group at Ephrata, Washington. When I arrived at this base, I was surprised to see that there were no permanent buildings. So it was back to sleeping in a tent that held all five of the enlisted crew members assigned to a bomber. The First and Assistant Radio Operator, First and Assistant Engineer and the Tail Gunner. I was one of the early arrivals. This base was just a staging area while we waited for the rest of the Pilots, Navigators, Bombardiers, Radio Operators, Flight Engineers, and Gunners to join us when they graduate from their respective schools.

There were only three B-24 Liberator bombers on this base, so we took turns flying them to not only get some experience with that bomber but also with each other. All of us were rookies that were going to learn about combat the hard way.

The air strip on which our bombers were parked happened to be on top of a very dusty plateau. The dust that our bombers created while we took off created many problems especially when it appeared on our food, beds, clothes, living areas and worst of all into the motors of our bombers. As a result of all that dust, they flew our bombers to Geiger Field where they installed a protective device over all four of the air intake motors.

The city of Ephrata donated a water truck to help us with this dusty problem. We then used this truck day and night to spray water over the roads, the runway and the parking strips of our bombers. This dusty problem was finally resolved when they sprayed all of these areas with oil.

1 August 1942 - I was promoted from private to Sergeant. It was like a dream come true. I could hardly believe that all at once I had jumped from no stripes to three stripes. I then all at once had become a lot better off financially, because I not only collected my monthly base pay but also my flight pay which was half of my base pay. I then began to save some of that money by putting it into a soldiers deposit fund that paid a whopping four per cent interest.



Wenatchee <sup>BILL</sup> Wash 1942



ME 1942 EPHRATA



JACK FANDLING

There were no night clubs in Ephrata, but they had a saloon where I went a few times with the enlisted members of our crew. I usually drank only one beer because I never formed a taste for that stuff. I also went a few times to see the Grand Coulee Dam, Cascade Mountains and eat at a nice restaurant in the nearby apple city of Wenatchee.

1 September 1942 - I was promoted to the next higher rating of Staff Sergeant. Now I really knew that I had made the right decision to transfer from the Army into the Army Air Corps. During the two years I was in the Army I wore one stripe, with very little prospects of being promoted to the next higher grade, while here I am in the Army Air Corps for only eight months and was a non commissioned officer wearing four stripes of a Staff Sergeant.

28 September 1942. The 307th Bomb Group moved from Ephrata to Sioux City, Iowa. While the majority of the personnel traveled from Ephrata to Sioux City on a troop train, I flew with our crew on one of the three bombers assigned to our Group. We were on our way overseas, but where? I then thought that we probably would be going to Europe, because we were heading in that direction

When we landed at Sioux city, I was pleasantly surprised to see that I was going to sleep in a nice clean barracks, eat in a dining hall and that our bombers were going to take off on a nice clean concrete runway. No more dust because the whole area was covered with grass. At that time, I did not know that I was not permitted to walk on it, until the day I walked on the grass by our barracks instead of the sidewalk and was then chewed out by a lower ranking permanent party airman stationed on this base.

Sioux city was a great city to be stationed, because for a change there were nice restaurants, a night club, a dance hall and movie theaters to go to for entertainment.

Thirty-five brand new B-24 Liberator Bombers were delivered to our base. Now each crews had their own bomber. The 307th Bomb Group consisted of a Headquarters Squadron, 370th Squadron, 371st Squadron, 372nd Squadron and the 424th Squadron. Each squadron was supposed to have twelve crews with bombers to match.

The 370th Squadron of which I was assigned to had eight bombers while the other three had nine. During the year I was with this Bomb Group, we lost thirty of our thirty eight bombers. We lost the first bomber shortly after we received them. This particular loss was a shocking reminder that we might have a rough time flying in these bombers.



Sioux City Iowa



COMING INTO SIOUX CITY



Sioux City Iowa

31 5

Thirty-five brand new B-24 Liberator Bombers were delivered to our base. Now each one of our crews had their own bomber.



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ME WITH OUR NEW B-24 LIBERATOR BOMBER



## FIRST BOMBER - 5 October 1942

Captain Max Sanny, 424th Squadron took off on a routine training mission, then when He was about a hundred miles from Sioux City, the motors on his bomber began to shut off one at a time. He knew that he could not make it back to to Sioux City so he told his crew that he was going to make a wheels up belly landing in a field and that if they wanted to bail out that they could do so. Staff Sergeants Joe G. Herzog, J.S. Hansen, Roy F. Baylor and Sergeants Alfred H. Williams and Paul L. Berry safely parachuted out of that bomber.

Captain Sanny then landed that bomber on a plowed field near Wayne, Nebraska. Sanny and the copilot 2nd Lieutenant William H. Jones were slightly injured while the Navigator 2nd Lt James B. Sleigh and the Bombardier 2nd Lt Howard C. Austin were killed when the top gun turret under which they were standing collapsed and fell on top of them. This turret was located right over the area where I sat while I operated my radio equipment. So this taught me a lesson, that I should never sit there, if in the future, we had to make an emergency landing.

20 October 1942. The 307th Bomb Group left Sioux City for our next destination, Hamilton Field, San Francisco, California. While we were on our way, Lieutenant Lamontagne flew over his home in Los Angeles and then to Sacramento Air Force Depot. While we were at this depot, they installed a electronic device called IFF - Identification friend or foe - into my radio compartment. This item must be turned on each time before we attempt to land at any overseas base because the signal from this equipment was the only way our antiaircraft gunners could identify our bomber as to whether it was a friend or a foe, otherwise if It was not turned on, they would shoot us down.

They also installed a four hundred gallon gasoline tank into each side of the bomb bays of our bomber. Now with those two extra gasoline tanks, I really wondered where our final destination was going to be. While we were at this depot, each one of us were issued a 45 caliber pistol and a long bladed knife. They also told us that we could have any equipment our hearts desired. I often wondered, what I really was going to do with that knife?

24 October 1942. We left this depot and then flew to our next destination Hamilton Field, San Francisco. When we landed on this base, we were informed that while we were on this base, we were restricted and could not leave unless we obtained special permission to do so.



But some of us had other ideas and thought that this might be our only chance to see San Francisco. Which was true for some of them. So we used our obsolete passes and did not have any problems with the Military police at the main gate. I went with the members of our crew to see a floor show at a Chinese night club in San Francisco and also ate a nice meal in Joe Dimaggio's restaurant on Fisherman's wharf.

26 October 1942. The 307th Bomb Group departed from Hamilton Field just before nightfall. When our bomber had safely taken off, that was when our Pilot finally told us that we were going to Hawaii. This sounded like a great place to be going to, but I knew that the real fun place was going to be somewhere else in the South Pacific. All four squadrons assembled in the sky and began to fly in a "V" type flight formation. This was the first time that our bombers flew that way. I then began to feel a little more reassured while I watched this pretty sight.

The stars were out and it was a beautiful moonlight night until about four hours later when the weather began to change from fair to stormy with lightning flashes. Our formation began to break up until we eventually lost sight of each other.

During this flight I was required to send a Morse coded message each hour to Hamilton Field to let them know our exact position and that we were O.K. There was no problem in the beginning, but when we were about 500 miles out at sea, I then for the first time tuned my transmitter for long distance transmission by reeling out a steel wire antenna that had a steel ball attached to the end of it for about 100 feet from our bomber. I then fine tuned that wire so that I probably could of sent a message around the world. For curiosity sake, I tested to see how hot that wire was tuned by touching it with the carbon end of my pencil. When I saw a large spark come out from the end of that pencil, I knew that it was properly tuned but for security sake, I did this only one time.

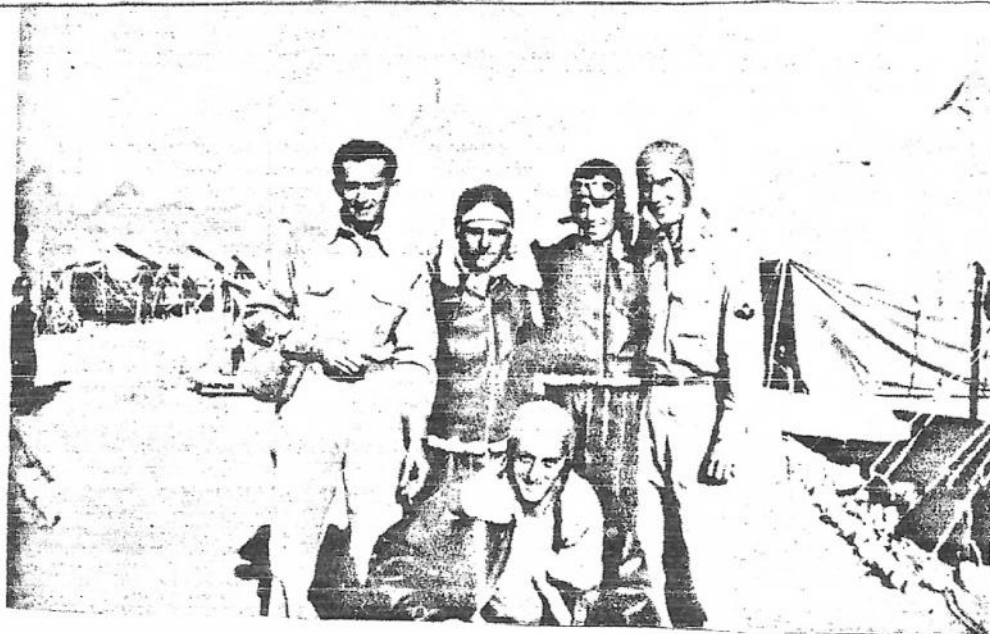
We were about half way to Hawaii when I received a message from Hamilton Field inquiring about the bomber that flew on the right side of ours. I gave this message to our pilot, who read it and then told me to reply back that we had lost sight of that particular bomber during stormy weather and that there were no other bombers in sight.

Our bombers burned about two hundred gallons of gasoline each hour so when we were about half way to Hawaii, our Flight Engineer, T/Sgt Harp, transferred the fuel from our bomb bay tanks into the wing

gas tanks of our bomber. About five hours later, our pilot began to get worried and repeatedly began to ask the Navigator, Lt Johns. Are you sure you know where we are going and also do you know our exact position? Because our bomber was beginning to run low on fuel and there was no land in sight. I then tuned on the radio in my compartment and received Hawaiian music from a radio station in Honolulu Hawaii, so I knew that we were not too far away from land. Our Navigator seemed to know what he was doing because a short time later I saw the familiar Diamond Head Landmark. This flight took us about thirteen and a half hours to fly from San Francisco to Honolulu Hawaii.

SECOND BOMBER - 26 OCTOBER 1942

2ND LT ROBERT H. GUSKEY, 370TH Squadron crashed somewhere in the Pacific Ocean while enroute from Hamilton Field to Hawaii. Besides Lt Guskey, Lt Kenneth E. Kruse, Lt Carl W. Johnson, Lt Kenneth N. Nicholson and Sgts Julius Reise, Louis E. Winkler, Gilbert G. Watson, Leo A. Dennison and Elmo F. Ince went down with that bomber and were never recovered. This bomber flew alongside of ours but then separated when we hit stormy weather.



"5 Tail Gunners at Ephrata, Wash, where it all began. Tent City is where we lived.

Front row - Sgt. Ince, the first one to make the supreme sacrifice. He was on the plane that was lost with the whole crew while on the way from the U.S. to Hawaii. (pg 41 - "Up the Slot")

Back row - left to right - Sgt. Krumm - tail gunner on "Shamrock"; Sgt. Klester - don't know what happened to him, he isn't even mentioned in the book "Up the Slot"; Sgt. Higgenbotham - he never made it back from the 2nd mission to Wake Island. Whole crew was lost. Reference pg 6 "Up the Slot"; Sgt. Madden, pg 176 "Up the Slot". A later picture in the book shows that he aged a little in a short period of time (less than a year later).

When we landed at Hickam Field, I was then driven with the enlisted members of our crew to our barracks. When I arrived there, I could still see the bullet holes that were put there when the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor about one year ago. We stayed there for about two weeks when they moved all four squadrons to different places on these Islands. Group Headquarters stayed at Hickam Field, 371st squadron went to Wheeler Field, 372nd Squadron to Kahuku Air Base, 424th Squadron to Mokeleia and our 370th squadron to Kipapa, which happened to be one of the least desirable spots to be stationed. We lived in small wooden huts that were built in the middle of a pineapple field. The ground was red clay. So you can imagine the problems this clay created for us to not only keep our uniforms clean but also our living areas in a clean and presentable condition. Sometimes when I went to Honolulu, the natives could easily tell where I came from by the red stains on my uniform.

We parked our bombers in "U" shaped revetments that were banked high with this red clay. They built these revetments to make sure our bombers would not sit out in the open like sitting ducks when we were attacked by the Japanese about one year ago.

The Navy Sea Bees had recently built our runway by placing strips of steel matting on top of that clay. I literally sweated out each time our heavily loaded bomber went down that runway in a wavy up and down pattern until it gained enough speed to take off and barely clear the runway at Kipapa Gulch. We usually flew our sea searches in a pie shaped pattern, eight hundred miles out, dog leg left or right fifty miles, then eight hundred miles back while we looked for enemy submarines or ships. These long over water flights were also an excellent way for our Pilots, Navigators, Bombardiers, engineers and radio operators to complete their training.

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FRONT-TSGT HARP ENGINEER-SSGT KRUMM TAIL GUNNER AND SSGT SHEEHAN ASST RADIO OPERATOR-BACK TSGT GRISAITIS RADIO OPERATOR-LT JOHNS NAVIGATOR-SSGT BARRÉTT ENGINEER-LT BATTENFIELD COPILOT BOMBARDIER LT SOMMEVILLE-CAPT LAMONTAGNE PILOT

### PICTURE OF OUR CREW TAKEN BY OUR BOMB SHELTER

1 November 1942. I went for three days to an electronics school at Hickam Field . This was where they taught me how to operate a new piece of equipment called radar that had a range of about twenty-one miles or line of sight. This Radar set was built into a small black box that was about six inches wide and twelve inches long. The screen in this black box had one dark horizontal line that went right down the middle of that screen. The main function of this radar was to locate large metal objects like a submarine or a ship

I could tell by looking at that screen when a small blip appeared on either the left or the right side of that straight line whether that ship or submarine was on either the left or the right side of our bomber.

This radar set was installed into our bomber about one week later. During our next sea search and while I operated that equipment, I noticed that a large blip appeared on the right side of that straight line. I immediately alerted our pilot and told him that there was something ahead of us and that it was on the right side of our bomber. I then proceeded to instruct him in which direction to fly until that blip was

located directly in the middle of that line. He then flew our bomber directly towards that object until we saw five American sailors standing on top of their submarine waving at us with a large American flag. We also waved back at them and then continued our mission.

At that particular time, I did not know that I was being tested to see if I really knew how to operate that equipment.

#### THIRD BOMBER - 30 November 1942

1st Lt Richard K. Bartholomew, 372nd Squadron took off during heavy weather for a sea search from Kahuka, Oahu but did not return. The next they found this bomber where it crashed on a mountain near Wheeler Field and the bodies of all of the crew members .

Besides Bartholomew, 2nd Lt Robert Chafin, 2nd Lt Thomas Templeton, T/Sgt Hersch A. Katz, S/Sgt James Graham, Sgt Edmond Rotillini, Sgt Harvest Siebe, Sgt Stephen Conger and Sgt Wilber Kimball were on this bomber.

#### FOURTH BOMBER - 17 December 1942

1st Lt James H. McClendon, 371st Squadron took off from Wheeler Field when one of the engines on his bomber caught fire shortly after it took off. When that engine exploded, only three crew members managed to escape from that bomber. The copilot Lieutenant Main was on the flight deck and although badly burned, put on his parachute and bailed out through a large hole of that bomber. The bombardier, Lt Wendell Steel and the Flight Engineer SGT Robert Vaughn bailed out through the camera hatch,. Besides Lt McClendon, 2nd Lt Charles B. Miller, 2nd Lt William J Stickle, S/Sgt Harold D. Dilon and S/Sgt Charles C. Hatton went down with that bomber.

20 December 1942. I was told that we were going to go on a Top Secret mission but not when or where it was going to be. I presumed that this was done because they did not want this information to leak out and then publicized before we went on this mission, which could happen if we phoned or wrote home to tell our girl friends or parents.

21 December 1942. I did not know where we were going until the day I was in our bomber when we were getting ready to take off. That was when our Pilot finally told me and the rest of the crew members that we



were going to Midway Island. I then wondered while our bombers flew in that familiar "V" type formation where our final destination was actually going to be when we landed on Midway. The only welcoming committee to greet us on this island were a few Gooney Birds. I noticed that these birds were a little different from the other birds that flew because they had to run until they gained just the right speed before they were able to take off. Somewhat like our bombers. One of the marines also did a fairly good job of imitating their mating dance. I think he was on this island too long.

20 December 1942. During the afternoon briefing, We were informed that we were going to bomb Wake Island on Christmas Day. Our presents were going to be 500 pound demolition and incendiary bombs. Some of them would go off immediately upon impact, while the others would surprise surprise go off at undetermined times. This mission was going to take us about fourteen hours to fly to that Island and back to Midway. So this meant that our bombers would have just enough fuel to take us there and back and that there was no room for any navigational error.

This mission was planned for us to bomb Wake Island on Christmas day at twelve O'clock midnight. It also was timed for us to leave Midway on the 23rd of December, bomb Wake Island on the 25th and then return to Midway on the 24th. This oddity occurred when we flew over the International date line.

23 December 42. We took off from Midway about 5PM, assembled in the sky in that familiar "V" type flight formation with the other bombers and then flew that way until we were about one hour from Wake Island. We then reassembled and flew our bombers to Wake Island in a follow the leader formation. Our bomber was the last one to fly in a position that I called "Tail end Charlie".

I then left my radio operator position and walked slowly between the five hundred pound bombs and the two extra gas tanks in the bomb bay and hoped that our Bombardier would not open those bomb bay doors while I walked to my gunnery position at the right waist window.

When I came to my position, I quickly loaded a belt of 50 caliber bullets into my machine gun, made a sign of the cross, said a silent prayer, hoped for the best and prepared for action when I suddenly felt a hard tap on my shoulder. At that time, my thoughts were completely on being ready for action because we were getting near Wake Island. so I was completely surprised and wondered if something happened?

When I turned around I saw that it was our Assistant radio operator, Sergeant Sheehan. I then asked him, what do you want? He replied, how do you load his gun? I could hardly believe what I heard as I looked at him with dismay and disbelief because I never expected to hear a problem of that type at this particular time.

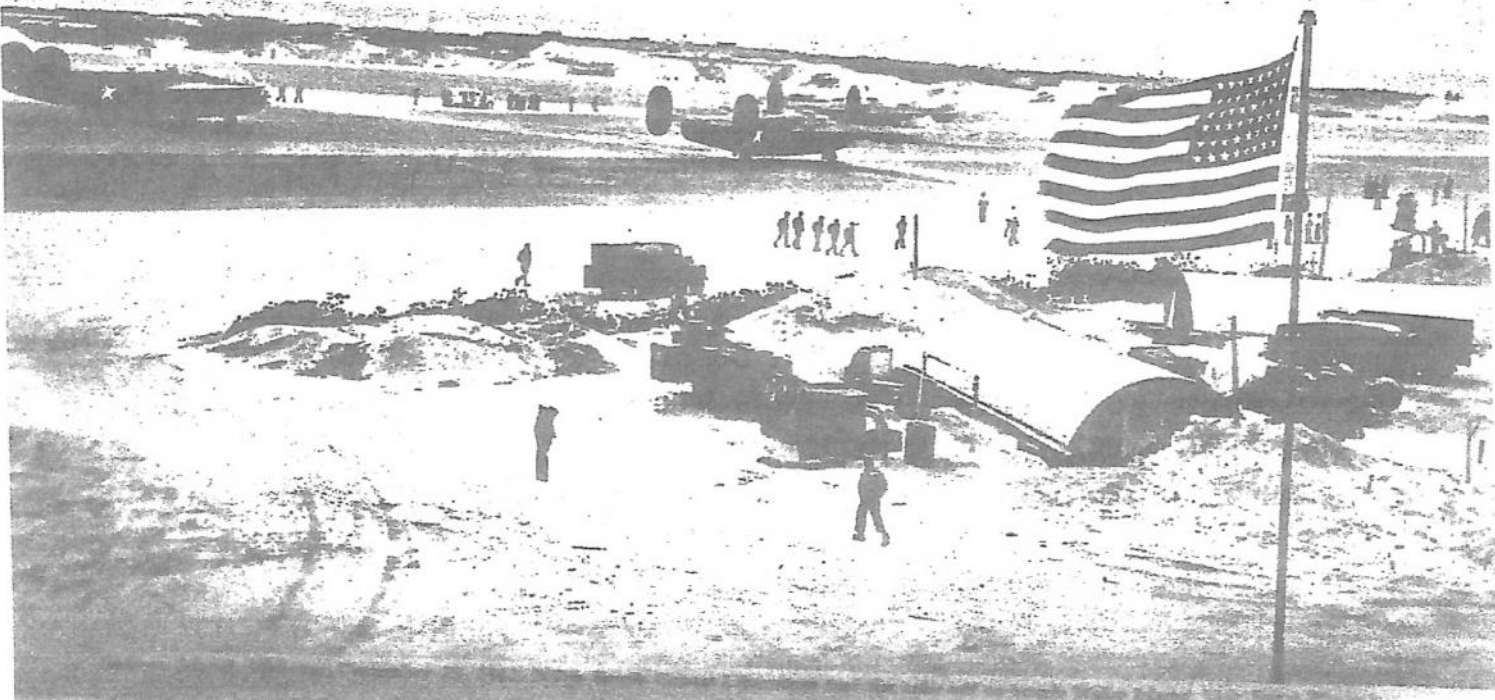
I then went quickly to his gunnery position at the left waist window, loaded up his machine gun and told him, please be careful and don't shoot down our airplane and wondered if he was taught how to shoot a machine gun but not how to load it with a belt of 50 calibre bullets. Anyway I hoped so. I did not feel too secure with Sergeant Sheehan as a gunner and also began to wonder what type of training he received as a radio operator. I never tested or questioned him about his qualifications. because a short time later, he was transferred to fly with a crew on a different bomber.

When I returned to my gunnery position. I watched while the lead bombers dropped their bombs on Wake Island and could see that they had indeed caught the enemy by surprise because there was no anti aircraft or searchlights. I hoped that when it became our turn to bomb them, that we would also receive the same treatment.

Lt LaMontagne flew our bomber directly towards this horseshoe shaped Island until we came very near the place where our bombardier drops his bombs. This is when the bombardier takes control of our bomber to make sure that it flies directly over the target when he drops his bombs.

When the Bombardier opened up the bomb bay doors on our bomber, that was when when the Japanese turned on their search lights. All of a sudden the night had turned from complete darkness into bright daylight. Our bomber was lit up so bright, that I could also see the insides of our bomber. We stood out in the sky like a sore thumb. I then watched as their anti aircraft began to come closer and closer to our bomber while we flew on an even keel until the bombardier released his bombs.

I had strange thoughts and for awhile thought that this was going to be my first and last mission and at the same time experienced a strange feeling that somebody down there was trying to kill me while we continued to fly onwards to the black puffs of smoke from their anti aircraft. I also felt glad that I was not married and that Uncle Sam had spent a lot of money to train me for this job and that it now was payback time.



HERE WE ARE TAKING OFF FROM MIDWAY ISLAND TO BOMB WAKE ISLAND

When our bombardier Lt Sommerville, finally released his bombs, our pilot, LaMontagne immediately regained control of our bomber and flew that four engine bomber as if it were a fighter plane. For a while, I thought that the wings were going to tear off our bomber while it swiftly and violently swayed back and forth during a steep dive until we finally flew safely out of range of their search lights and anti-aircraft.

It would of been nice to fly back to Midway with the other bombers, but that did not happen because there were no bombers in sight. While we flew alone towards Midway, our navigator, Lieutenant Johns, did a super job navigating us safely to Midway when our bomber landed with just a few gallons of gasoline to spare.

This first bombing mission was a successful mission because we did not lose any bombers. It also happened to be one of the longest bombing missions conducted by any bomb group during World War Two.

26 December 1942 - We flew back to Hawaii in that familiar "V" type flight formation. When the mechanics inspected our bomber on the following day, they found two holes on the right wing tips of our bomber and on the same side as my gunnery position. Now I really knew that we were very lucky that we were not shot down and also felt very that their anti-aircraft had missed me by just a few feet.

FIFTH BOMBER - 28 December 1942

Captain Anthony Benvenuto from Group Headquarters flew with a group of volunteers to bring back photographic evidence on how much damage we accomplished during our recent mission on Wake Island. When that crew had successfully completed their mission, a huge tropical storm developed while they ~~were~~ were flying back to Midway. The weather became so bad that the Navigator could not find his way back to Midway.

The radio operator also sent a message to Midway requesting information on how to get there. But when the operators on that island received that message, they were suspicious and thought that it might of come from a Japanese American who spoke English and gave ~~gave~~ them the wrong directions. Then when they realized their mistake, they sent them the correct information, but it was too late because this bomber ran out of fuel and crash landed in the 40 foot waves of the Pacific Ocean. There were no survivors.



Besides Captain Benvenuto, 1st Lt Willard L. Brown, 1st Lt Wallace R. Johnson, S/Sgt Edgar C. Higginbottom Jr, S/Sgt Thomas R. Tedford, came from 370th Squadron.

S/Sgts Charles R. Bates, James R. McCoy, Robert J. Dunkle and Miles H. Whitley, from the 372nd Squadron, M/Sgt Sterling, A. Cox and S/Sgt Willard W. Ditto came from undetermined squadrons.

#### SIXTH BOMBER - 28 December 1942

Captain William R. Hitchcock of the 424th Squadron flew from Hawaii to Canton Island to go on on a bombing mission with the rest of his Squadron. When they refueled their bombers and on the next day took off for their next stop at Funafuti, a huge tropical storm developed. Most of the pilots decided to return to Canton while two of them continued to fly towards Funafuti. One of them found Funafuti, but the other one, piloted by Captain Hitchcock did not because when he decided to return to Canton, his bomber ran out of fuel. However before it ran completely out of gas, he spotted a small merchant ship. He then flew over that ship and decided that he should bail out with his crew while it was still daylight. The sailors on that ship counted as each one of them bailed out of their bomber, noted their approximate positions where they bailed out in the Pacific Ocean and then proceeded to pick them up just before night fell. When all of them were safely on board that ship, that was when they found out how lucky they were, because that ship came to this area only once a year and that it was three months behind schedule. Captain Hitchcock was the only one that was slightly injured when a shark bit him in the buttocks

1 January 1943. New years day began with a bang for all of the crew members that went on the Wake Island Mission when they were awarded

Medals by Admiral Nimitz during a special ceremony at Hickam Field. It was at this ceremony that I was awarded the Air

1 January 1943 - Promoted to Technical Sergeant. To be promoted from a private to a Technical Sergeant in one year, to me, was unbelievable.

5 January 1943. While we were on a search and destroy mission, our pilot asked each one of us to submit a name for our bomber. I thought about the baseball team that I played with just before I joined the Army and submitted "Hornet". I thought that the picture



of an angry hornet would be an ideal emblem to place on the left front side of our bomber. Sergeant Sheehan recommended that it be a four leaf clover. His idea won. From then on our bomber became known as the Lucky Shamrock which indeed proved very lucky for me, but not for him, because about one month later, he was transferred to another crew.



Left to Right - Pilot Lt La Montagne, Copilot Lt Battenfield, Navigator Lt Johns  
Bombardier Lt Sommerville, Engineer T/Sgt Harp, Asst Engineer S/S/sgt Barrett  
Asst Radio Operator S/Sft Embree, Radio Operator T/Sgt Grisaitis, Tail Gunner  
S/Sgt Krumm

**S/SGT EMBREE REPLACED S./SGT SHEEHAN WHO THEN FLEW ON A BOMBER  
WHICH HAPPENED TO BE THE ELEVENTH ONE THAT WE LOST.**

1 FEB 1943

THE 307TH SQUADRON AND THE 424TH SQUADRON RECEIVED ORDERS TO LEAVE HAWAII FOR ASSIGNMENT TO A BASE IN THE SOUTH PACIFIC. THE JAPANESE HAD OCCUPIED QUITE A FEW ISLANDS IN THE SOUTH PACIFIC. AUSTRALIA FACED THE POSSIBILITY OF BEING INVADED AND IF THEY WERE SUCCESSFUL, THEY WOULD BE IN A VERY GOOD POSITION TO OCCUPY THE REST OF THE ISLAND IN THAT AREA.

The first island we stopped at was Canton Island. This small island was the main island that we were able to land on, refuel and continue to our final destination. When we landed on this Island, it was rumored that a Japanese task force was on their way to bomb it. We then flew our usual search and destroy missions for one week with negative results. It was then decided that there was no need for us to continue these searches and that we should proceed to our final destination. However the Island commander did not feel too secure with all of us leaving him alone and tried to have one of our bombers stay but his request was denied. I was happy to leave this one tree island because there was no room for error when our heavily loaded bomber swiftly approached the end of that runway right by the ocean.

#### SEVENTH BOMBER - 8 February 1943

1ST Lt George F. Mozneth Jr of the 372nd Squadron crashed off the shore of Barking Sands Air Base on Kaoui Island while leading a mock attack on Pearl Harbor. Besides Lt Mozneth, Captain John D. N. Hoyt, 2nd Lt Malcolm D. Frankel Jr, 2nd Lt Charles L. Seymour, 2nd Lt James R. Cominger J, Sgt Dalton D. Newman, Sgt William H. Johnson, Pvt Frank M. Favic and S/Sgt Don Harp went down with this bomber. Sgt Don Harp was the twin brother of Sgt Del Harp the flight engineer of our bomber.

11 February 1943. We flew to the Fiji Islands. While we landed there, we did not have any time to go sight seeing. We stayed there for just a few days, which was just long enough for us to refuel our bomber, rest up and get ready for the next flight.

15 February 1943. We flew to our next stop at Espiritu Santos and stayed on this island for about one week. While we were there we flew the usual sea searches with negative results.

21. February 1943. We departed Espiritu Santos and flew towards

our final destination, Henderson Field, Guadalcanal. When we landed on this Island, I noticed that quite a few of the tree tops were missing and that this island had a faint, peculiar musty odor. Dead Japs???

Our Army and Marines had recently retaken Guadalcanal but there still were a few Japanese troops on this island. I also heard a rumor that it was not safe to go to sleep, because while you slept, one of them could sneak up to your tent and cut your throat. I then became a very restless sleeper. So in the meantime don't touch me while I slept, because I might wake up swinging. Our camping area at Henderson Field was situated in a coconut grove located not too far from the Pacific ocean. That nearby beach was a great place for me to go and cool off, swim, clean up and relax after I had returned from one of our combat missions.

I listened to Tokyo Rose with the rest of the G.I's while she played popular dance tunes and at the same time tried to lower our morale by telling us our girl friends and wives were not being true to us while we were overseas, because they were having a good time with other men. She also warned us that we better leave Guadalcanal because if we did not, we would be killed by an invading task force that they intended to send in the very near future. I did not have a wife so this type of news did not bother me at all, while the girl friends I wrote to were just pen pals that I liked to receive letters from. But her threat about retaking this island was something else to think about.

#### EIGHTH BOMBER - 13 February 1943

1st Lt George Traeger of the 424th Squadron. his bomber was hit by anti-aircraft fire, burst into flames and blew up while they were dropping their bombs on Japanese warships that were parked at Bougainville. Besides Lt Traeger, 2nd Lt Theodore Barton, 2nd Lt George G. Radford, 2nd Lt Hiram E. Battersby, T/Sgt Hiram Meigs, S/Sgt William Sterns, S/Sgt Leo Ellis, Sgt Herman Selvig and Sgt Elbert Boyer went down with that bomber. This was their first and last mission.

#### NINTH BOMBER - 13 February 1943

1st Lt Russell Rowe of the 424th Squadron flew over the same target and received the same treatment when his bomber was hit by the same anti aircraft. It also burst into flames, went into a long glide and crash landed into the Pacific Ocean. Besides Lt Rowe, 2nd Lt Dan Beauchere, 2nd Lt Charles Wade, 2nd Lt Paul C. Crane, S/Sgt Kenneth McCarthy,

S/Sgt Elmer J. Beaupre, S/Sgt John Stimadorkis, S/Sgt Jack Collins, S/Sgt Elmer J. Beaupre, S/Sgt John Stimadorkis, SSgt James Magri and a navy photographer were on this bomber. There were no survivors. At least we never found out if they were killed or captured by the Japanese.

#### TENTH BOMBER - 13 February 1943

1st Lt Harold G. McNeese, 424th Squadron flew over the same target and received the same treatment. It appears that enemy fighter planes flew overhead and then radioed to the enemy the exact height of these bombers while they flew over their targets. When their number one engine was hit by their anti aircraft fire, it also burst into flames. Four men in the tail section of this bomber saw what happened to the other two Bombers when they were hit and thought that their bomber would also blow up. So Sergeants Roy Lund, Robert Smith, Lawrence Averitt and Sgt Elton Hart decided to parachute from their crippled bomber. Japanese fighter pilots saw these men while they bailed out. They then flew down and shot these men while they helplessly floated in their parachutes. One of our Navy P-38 fighter pilots who saw what was going on, flew down and heroically tried to rescue them, but was shot down.

Lt McNeese shut off that burning engine and then flew his crippled bomber down to nearly ocean level. This maneuver helped to keep the Japanese fighters from getting underneath his bomber. Then while this bomber was being attacked by enemy fighter planes, the top turret gunner, Sergeant Bill Adams shot one of them down. This helped to discourage the rest of them because they turned tail and left. Lt McNeese continued to fly this badly damaged bomber until he was forced to make a crash landing about twenty miles from Choiseul Island. Lt McNeese and his copilot, Lt Harvey Vanderslice had just enough time to release a life raft before they left their sinking bomber.

The three other men in the tail section of this bomber received numerous cuts and bruises while they rolled over and over during that crash landing. Although they had physical problems, the three of them managed to climb out through the waist window of that bomber and get to the surface while the wing tips were still barely above water.

Sergeants Bill Adams, Donald DeClerque and Wesley Carroll swam and climbed into that life raft with Lt McNeese and Lt Vanderslice



just before their bomber disappeared underneath the ocean waves. These five men decided that they would paddle in this life raft to Guadalcanal which was located about two hundred and fifty miles away from Choiseul. Their survival skills were put to a test for nineteen days while they paddled from one island to another through shark infested waters while they searched for food, water and shelter until they finally stopped in a cove on Santa Isabel Island where they found a few abandoned huts. Then while they were resting in one of these huts, they heard voices of people coming towards them. When these natives saw these sun burnt men, they were frightened and thought that they might be Japanese, but when they began to talk to each other, they were shortly convinced that they were friendly Americans. These friendly natives then fed these five half starved men with some of their food that they were taking to a feast. When they were done eating, the five men split up, some went with these natives in their canoe while the others went in their raft. These natives tied a line from their canoe to their raft and then towed them while they also paddled their raft for about thirty minutes up a river to their village.

They then were fed a simple hot meal of coconut milk and sweet potatoes boiled in salt water. The next day they went with the natives of this village in a large canoe until they reached another village about five hours later to San Christobol Island. This was where they finally were able to contact one of the coast watchers who used his radio to contact our headquarters. The next day, a navy seaplane picked them up and brought them safely back to Guadalcanal. None of us expected to see any of these men alive again, especially when we saw their bomber going down in flames twenty days ago in the heart of enemy territory.

ELEVENTH BOMBER - 13 February 1943

1st Lt Lawrence F. Krebs of the 370th squadron had just completed his first combat mission when a storm developed that completely covered Guadalcanal with fog and clouds. He then contacted the Control tower operator and requested directions on how to get to Henderson Field. However the information he received was 180 degrees out of phase because the operator at that time was too cautious and thought that he received a message from an English speaking Japanese. Lt Krebs then flew his bomber in the opposite direction until he was forced to crash land in the ocean when it ran out of fuel

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The impact was so great that they did not have time to eject a life raft from their bomber because it broke into two pieces and then swiftly sank in the ocean. Eight of these crew members were very lucky to survive this crash landing. Lt Krebs, Lt John M. Nowell, Lt James H. Reed, Lt Jeff D. Newman, S/Sgt Albert S. Hatfield, S/Sgt Melvin Hatfield, S/Sgt Donald R. Gustafson and S/Sgt Robert Sheehan managed to escape from that bomber with only their life vests to keep them afloat. The tail gunner, Staff Sergeant Eugene Garland was the only one that did not survive this crash landing. When daylight came, they were very lucky to find one of the life rafts that had broken loose from their bomber and in the distance they could see an island that was approximately twenty miles away. When they inflated this life raft, they took turns swimming and floating alongside of that life raft that was built to hold only five persons. Progress was slow while one of them paddled that overcrowded life raft and also with the ocean current that was against him. While they paddled their way towards this Island, they saw two large canoes approaching them loaded with natives dressed up in bright colored clothes. Lt Krebs and his crew looked apprehensively at them while the natives did the same until both sides began to communicate with each other in pidgin English. These friendly natives then took them to their village, where they did everything possible to satisfy their needs with food, comfortable places to live in and and even medical care. A few days later, the men that were in the poorest physical condition were picked up and returned to a hospital on Guadalcanal by a Navy seaplane while the rest of them waited one more day to be picked up by that same seaplane.



Front row, left to right: Lt. Jeff D. Newman, Lt. James H. Reed, Capt. Laurence F. Krebs, Lt. John M. Nowell. Back row, left to right: T/Sgt. Albert S. Hatfield, S/Sgt. Eugene Gartland, S/Sgt. Melvin E. Hatfield, S/Sgt. Donald Gustafson. (Picture furnished by Larry Krebs.)

THIS PICTURE WAS TAKEN BEFORE S/SGT SHHEEHAN WAS ASSIGNED TO THIS CREW



S/SGT BELL

## TWELFTH BOMBER - 13 February 1942 -

Captain Ulmer J. Newman, 370th Squadron dropped his bombs on an alternate target when he experienced the same weather conditions as Lt Krebs. But when his bomber began to run out of gas. He thought that instead of risking a water landing that it might be better if all of them parachuted out and that their Mae West vests would keep them afloat until they reached a nearby Island. When Captain Newman bailed out, he found his Navigator Lt Jack Newton and his copilot Lt Eugene Marx floating nearby with a badly dislocated shoulder. These three men were rescued by friendly natives that saw them while they floated with their Mae West Jackets . When they arrived at their village on Mobili Island they saw that their flight engineer. S/Sgt George Gathers had also been rescued. However he had received internal injuries when he parachuted out and then came crashing down to the ground when his parachute hit the top of a large tree. These natives took the two injured men, Eugene Marx and George Gathers to Mr Kennedy, a Coast watcher who was stationed about thirty five miles away on New Georgia Island. A Navy seaplane came a few days later and flew the two injured men to their hospital on Florida Island.

When these natives looked for the other five missing crew members. they found the dead bodies of John Knisley and Wayne Shirey floating in a lagoon supported by their life jackets. A few days later they also found the body of Sergeant Anthony Chudasik in a lagoon who had apparently been shot in the head by the Japanese. These natives gave Sergeant Chudasik a christian burial and then gave his identification tag which we call a dog tag to Captain Newman.

A few days later two young natives found Sergeant Silas Bell and Sergeant Henry Wolf on a nearby small island who then took them in their canoe to their village where they were reunited with Captain Newman and Lieutenant Newton.

This same Navy seaplane came back about one week later to return Captain Newman, Lieutenant Newton, Sergeant Bell and Sergeant Wolfe to Guadalcanal. We never expected to see any of these men alive again especially when we saw them go down in enemy territory and also after being absent for twenty days.

13 February 1943. Captain Dan E. Mac Donald of the 372nd Squadron experienced the same weather conditions as the other pilots



but he had one advantage over them because his take off was later than theirs. Then when his navigator could not find his way back to Guadalcanal, they threw out every heavy moveable object from their bomber so it would fly a little longer and make it a little safer if they had to make an emergency landing. When MacDonald prepared to make a water landing that was when he spotted Henderson Field through a break in the clouds. The next day when he checked with his crew chief, the crew chief told him that he did not have enough fuel to make another pass at Henderson Field.

#### MacDonalds's Toast

I drink to you a toast tonight good fellowship my text.

Here's to all good fellow's in this world or the next.

Not to the fellow who takes your hand in the idling hour you know,

And not to the chap who slaps your back as long as the highballs flow,

But a man who speaks a kindly word when the world is going wrong,

A fellow who grips your hand like hell and tells you life's a song.

Now what if you know its a pack of lies, and what if he knows it too.

There are times in life when a friend who lies is the only friend who's true.

So cavil and rant ye prudes who will of the evils of wine and gin,

But somehow the real, true things we feel leak out when the wine leaks in.

A fool is a fool and a cad is a cad, whichever God means him to be,

But a man who's a man won't forget he's a man tho he's out on a hell of a spree.

So drink this toast to your heart's my friends - from a heart to a heart let it run.

Here[s to good fellow all over the world and God bless everyone.

19 February 1943 - We flew on a daylight mission at an altitude of about 2500 feet with five other bombers to bomb a Japanese airport on Munda Island. During this mission, we met quite a bit of opposition and for awhile I thought that we were going to be shot down when their anti aircraft gunners hit our bomber in five different places. Two of the holes were on the right wing, two on the left wing and one on the vertical stabilizer. However, our bombing results were very good, because I saw a huge fire develop on that runway where our bombardier had dropped his bombs.

22 February 1943 - We made a repeat performance to that same place, but we changed our bombing altitude from 2500 to 5000 feet. However this higher altitude did not work too well, because we experienced the same kind of reception and for awhile I thought that this time they really were going to shoot us down while I watched their anti aircraft come closer and closer to our bomber. I also thought that they were getting a lot better at spotting us, getting our range, and shooting at our bombers.

We then found out that they received advance notice from the spotters ~~that they~~ stationed on some of the small islands that we passed while we flew towards our targets and would then alert their fighters. Their fighter planes would then take off to intercept us and then radio back our exact height, speed and location to their anti aircraft gunners.

Our Group commander decided to change our bombing tactics by having us take off at different time intervals, fly at different altitudes and go from daylight to night time bombing missions.

7 March 1943. We took off on this night time bombing mission with four other bombers to bomb Shortland Harbor and were subjected to Anti Aircraft fire but again were very lucky that they missed our bomber. This was a successful bombing mission because our bombardiers dropped their bombs right on Ballale runway and started a large fire that could be seen for quite a few miles away at sea.

Captain Ralph Andrews, 372nd Squadron bomber crashed near the end of the runway when two engines on the same side of his bomber suddenly began to shut off. A few days before this happened, I talked to the radio operator of this bomber and during our conversation, he told me that he was thinking about getting off flight status because he had a very

bad premonition that something was going to happen to him. I sympathized with Sergeant Padilla and said, I guess we all feel the same way and left it at that. Then while we were talking, the tail gunner mentioned that he had recently transferred from the Army Infantry and that he was an expert rifleman. I sorta felt sorry for him because, I thought that he would soon find out that shooting at aerial targets was going to be a totally different experience than shooting at ground targets. However this did not happen because a few days later they were all killed when their bomber began to have motor problems while it was taking off and then crashed not too far from the end of the runway. Besides Captain Andrews, Russell Dougherty, Lloyd Manogue, Edward Hatt, Victor Lohman, Robert Wadlin, Raymond Mosier, Vernon Hopkins and William Padilla were killed.

20 March. We were briefed that we were going to bomb the South Shores of Bougainville Island, specifically Kahilli Airdrome. After this briefing, The S-2 Section gave each crew member Australian Shillings in case we were shot down and were lucky enough to be picked up by friendly natives, we then would have money to pay for their services.

Our bomber was loaded with fragmentation bombs, that we called Daisy Cutters because they were built to explode at ground level and then spread havoc among whatever troops and buildings happened to be in that area.

When we began to approach Kahilli airdrome, I could see that they had turned on their searchlights and that they were wildly searching the sky looking for our bombers. This was another scary mission, because when the bombardier began to drop his bombs that was when they caught our bomber in their searchlights. Their anti aircraft fire hit our bomber in several places but luckily caused only minor damages.

A lone Japanese bomber frequently came at night to drop his bombs on whomever it may concern because he usually flew at such a high altitude that when he dropped his bombs, they were dropped without any degree of accuracy. There were times when I could hear him coming and thought that he sounded somewhat like a washing machine, so most of us called him "Washing Machine Charlie". While the Marines called him Louie the the Louse and probably some other choice names. I wonder what pet names the Japanese called our bombers?

23 March 1943. We were alerted about 8:30 PM that Japanese bombers were on their way to bomb us on Guadalcanal. I then stood by my tent and watched while our searchlights spotted these bombers coming towards us. Then when I heard our anti aircraft open up with everything they had, that was when I jumped into our fox hole.

A few minutes later, I heard some of these bombs coming down with a swishy swooshy fluttering sound through the trees and then go off with a loud deafening roar not very far from our fox hole. Our foxhole was built mainly to protect us from shrapnel or grass cutter type bombs, but not from a direct hit. Now I knew how they must of felt when we bombed them. This time they did a pretty good job because they not only destroyed our mess hall but also three of our bombers, one of which happened to be our lucky Shamrock.

- 14 ~~13~~th BOMBER - The Lone Wolf
- 15 ~~14~~th BOMBER- The Shamrock
- 16 ~~15~~th BOMBER- The Flying Gator

About two weeks later, we received replacements for these bombers.

All of our bombers were painted with a jungle type camouflage design that supposedly made them a little more difficult for the enemy to see from the air. Two weeks later they had a change of mind and decided that it would be better if they were painted black to make them a little more difficult for them to spot while we flew our missions at night. I liked this idea a lot better,



1 April 1943 - We moved from Henderson Field to nearby Carney Field where the Navy Sea Bees had recently built a runway. This runway sort of reminded me somewhat of the runway that we had at Kipapa. Because when it rained, we experienced the same, if not worse conditions when our heavily loaded bomber went down that steel matted runway in a wavy up and down pattern until it gained enough speed to take off. When that runway dried up, it also created another problem, somewhat, but not as bad as what we experienced at Ephrata. There were times, when I could actually step in mud and at the same time have dust blow in my face.

Our new camping area was located about one hundred yards from the Metaphone river, so I worked with the other G.I.s to clear up a place to pitch our tents. About one month later, a heavy tropical storm came and drenched Guadalcanal with so much water that this river overflowed its banks and swamped our living areas with about ten feet of water. Our camping area was a complete washout so we moved to back to Henderson Field.

18 April 1943 - Our Navy fighter pilots helped to change the course of the war in the South Pacific when one of their P-38 fighter pilots shot down Admiral Yamamoto, Commander in Chief of the Imperial Japanese Navy while he was on a plane flying to Kahilli airport. The Japanese did not know this, but their secret communication code was no longer a secret because the Navy had broken their code and now knew the exact time and place Admiral Yamamoto would be at that particular time.

20 April 1943. When our crew completed fifteen bombing mission, we were granted two weeks of (R&R) rest and recuperation leave at Espiritu Santos. The weather on this island was a lot better than Guadalcanal and it also felt great that I did not have to worry about Washing Machine Charley or going on the next combat mission. While we were on this island, we flew a few search and destroy missions with negative results.

BILL - BELKNAP - KRUMM



ESPIRITU SANTOS

BILL - BELKNAP - KRUMM

22 April 1943. The two squadrons that remained on Hawaii, the 371st and the 372nd flew from Hawaii to Funafuti and on the following day bombed Nauru. Then while they were preparing to bomb Tarawa on the following day, the Japanese beat them to the punch by coming over and bombing them early that morning at 2AM. Five of our ground crew members were killed, twenty two wounded and two of our bombers were destroyed.

17th BOMBER  
18th BOMBER

The mechanics quickly repaired the bombers that were slightly damaged and on the following day, they bombed Tarawa and then watched with satisfaction while their bombs dropped on the same bombers that bombed them a few days ago.

19h BOMBER - 29 April 1943

Lt Robert F. Miller of the 370th Bomb Squadron took off when one of the motors on his bomber began to shut off while the other three began to sputter and could not deliver enough power for him to keep that bomber airborne. This bomber then crashed in that part of the Ocean we call "Iron Bottom Sound" because of the large number of ships sunk in that area near Guadalcanal. In addition to Lt Miller, Bill Hughes, Harold Thayer, Howard Ladd, Prentice Laughlin, Murray Lebowitz, and George Martin were killed. The tail gunner, Sergeant Joseph Michalek, was the only survivor

5 May 1943. A heavy tropical storm came and drenched Guadalcanal with so much water that the Metaphone overflowed its banks and swamped our camping areas with about eight feet of water. We then moved our tents to a higher area. However this flood also made our runway inoperational because it was so soft that our heavily loaded bombers could not take off until it was dried up and repaired.

12 May 1943. We moved back to Henderson Field and for a change, I lived in a nice Quonset hut instead of a tent.

There was no place on Guadalcanal to spend my money, so for entertainment I gambled and played poker or shot dice with the other G.I.s. When I shot a dice game I gave odds like two dollars to one that they would not make a four or a ten, three to two that they would not make a five or nine and even bets that they would not make a six or an eight. Usually these odds would come out in my favor. Then when it became my turn to shoot these dice, I was hot while they were cold for the other guys. The more money I made the higher I bet. I then quit when I won over a thousand dollars. Which at that time was considered to be a lot of money. There were no banks on this island to deposit this money so I carried it around my waist in a money belt. I also thought while I flew during our bombing missions that this money added additional protection for my stomach and that it would be a shame if I got shot down with all of that money.

During this game I became very thirsty and asked Sergeant Madden if I could have a drink from his coke bottle that appeared to be filled with water. He handed that bottle to me and when I took my first swig, that was when I found out that it was not water when it began to burn my throat all the way down to my stomach. One swallow was enough for me. He then laughingly told me that it was pure alcohol. I don't know where or how he got that stuff but I noticed that in about six months his hair had turned completely gray and he aged so quickly that I hardly recognized him. Sergeant Madden is pictured with Captain Gregory's crew which was the twenty First bomber that we lost, but for some unknown reason he was not with them at that time.

Our bomber at that time had a fifty caliber machine gun installed on a round steel circular tube in the belly of our bomber. I know that whenever I operated that gun, it was very difficult for me to manually try and move that machine gun around on that round steel tubing and then fire it with any degree of accuracy because of the heavy winds and turbulence that came from the motors of our bomber. They then decided to replace this inefficient setup with a ball turret.

At that particular time our assistant radio operator, Sergeant Embree, went with our bomber to Hawaii to have that ball turret installed because I was grounded with a rash that I probably got from swimming in that polluted river by our camping area.

The Medics just about covered me from head to foot with a pink

· Calcamine lotion



that took about ten days for that rash to clear up. The natives looked at me in amazement when they saw me as I walked by covered with all of that pink lotion. I also wondered why they always walked in single file with a woman in front. I then found out that if she steps on a land mine than the man at the end of the line was safe.

When i recovered from that rash, I was put back on flying status and then flew with any crew that needed a radio operator. During one of these missions, I had the opportunity to get a good shot at one of the attacking Japanese zero fighter planes that dove down from about two o'clock high and with the sun at his back, which was one of their favorite tactics. I know that when I fired at him, that I hit him because he never did pull out from that dive.

456431 never did feel too comfortable flying combat missions with different crews and was very happy when our bomber finally returned from Hawaii. However, I had a problem with Sgt Embree when we went on our first combat mission with that ball turret. When we came near our target, I left my radio operator position to get to my gunnery position. That was when I saw S/Sgt Embree and and S/Sgt Barrett talking and looking at that ball turret. I wondered what was the problem and why Sergeant Embree was not in that turret. That was when Sergeant Embree turned around looked at me and said that he was not going to go into that ball turret. I thought - why was he telling me this, because he went to Hawaii with our bomber, received instructions on how to operate that ball turret and this also was his gunnery position.

We were getting very near our target and I did not want to alert and disturb our pilot about this unpleasant situation. So I foolishly volunteered to operate that ball turret. I then looked at that ball turret, studied its layout and thought that it would not be too difficult to operate even though I did not have any knowledge about that ball turret.. Both of them watched while I climbed into that ball turret, close the hatch over my head and also while I lowered that ball turret. I tried to show both of them that this turret was safe and easy to operate while I began to rotate it into different positions. However I soon discovered why he possibly did not want to get into that ball turret because I soon began to feel insecure while I sat in that ball turret with no parachute. Also when I looked up, it was a weird experience while I sat in that turret looking up at the underneath of our bomber.



I also hoped that those two slim aluminum rods would be strong enough to keep this heavy ball turret from breaking loose when the heavy winds and turbulence from the motors of our bomber began to hit and strike it head on. Luck was with me during this mission, because we did not see any enemy fighter planes or anti aircraft. When this mission was over, I raised that ball turret up, stepped out, gave Sergeant Embree a short pep talk and then told him, from now on, that this was his job.

12 June 1943 - Our P-40 fighter airplanes flew alongside of us at 2500 feet on this daylight bombing mission until we reached our target at Vella LaVella. When we dropped our bombs, we almost were shot down when their anti-aircraft hit our bomber in a few places but caused very little damage. Then while we were leaving that area, we were attacked by their fighter planes. That was when one of the bullets from one of the attacking planes came very close to killing me when it went right past my head and then right thru a quarter inch of steel plating that was installed diagonally on the left side to protect us at that position.

10 June 1943. We moved from Henderson Field to our former camp at Carney Field. However this time we moved our tents to higher ground and a little further away from that river. I also felt a little safer here than at Henderson Field because we were camped in a heavily wooded area, while at Henderson Field our Quonset hut sat out in the open like a sitting duck.

14 JUN 43 The Japanese Air Force came with about 100 airplanes to bomb us on Guadalcanal. They thought they would surprise us while we were eating our noon meal. However, our radar picked them up while they were flying on their way and then immediately alerted us. The Army Air Corps, Navy, Marines, and New Zealand fighter planes then took off to intercept them. This was an unforgettable experience for me to watch this type of action from ground level when our anti-aircraft gunners began to open up and our fighter planes began to shoot down some of the approaching planes. Each time one of them were shot down in flames, you could hear the the loud cheers of the G.I.s echo up and down Guadalcanal. I also thought, better them than me. At the last count, ninety four Japanese planes were shot down.

We also suffered casualties during this conflict. However, looking at the bright side, we saved seven of the fifteen fighter pilots that the enemy shot down. The Japanese outnumbered us when we first arrived on Guadalcanal, but after this huge loss, there would be fewer Japanese fighter planes for us to tangle with during future missions.

18 June 1943 - Twenty three of our bombers were scheduled to bomb Nauru. Our 370th squadron was selected to lead way. However this mission did not proceed as planned when the first three bombers had trouble taking off. Major Jurkens was the first one to take off with his heavily loaded bomber. He not only created a heavy dust cloud but barely cleared the runway because it still was a little soft after that recent flood. The second pilot tried to take off on two different occasions. But turned back each time when he saw that he might not be able to make a safe take off. The third pilot also took in a cloud of dust but managed to make a safe take off. However, It was obvious that there was something wrong with this runway. So this mission was temporarily aborted while they lightened the loads of some of our bombers by removing five of the 500 pound bombs and draining half of the fuel from their bomb bay tanks. Twelve of our bombers finally took off but only six of us completed this mission because the other six encountered bad weather problems while they flew towards that island.

20th BOMBER - 30 June 43.

1st Lt Nathaniel Guiberson of the 370th Squadron and his whole crew disappeared while searching for Japanese ships and barges during a reconnaissance mission around Guadalcanal. The next day our crew went on a sea search and flew over their exact route but could not find any trace of their bomber.

Besides Lt Guiberson, Richard Foss, Leonard Traff, George Scammon, Seymour Adelman, Robert Furtwangler, James Aver, Robert Ventura, Gordon Bullock and Jack Fanning were on that bomber.

The radio operator on this bomber happened to be my best pal, Staff Sergeant Jack Fanning. We had a pact between us, that if one of us were shot down then the other one would visit his family and tell them how it happened. Two years later, I went to the address he gave me and tried to find his mother at Harrisburg Pennsylvania but was not successful.

JACK PANAMA



21st BOMBER - 1 July 43.

Captain Samuel T. Gregory of the 424th Squadron successfully completed his bombing mission when three of the engines on his bomber began to shut off one at a time and then was forced to make a water landing on one engine. This bomber stayed afloat for about fifteen minutes, which was just long enough for them to eject three life rafts and escape from that sinking bomber. The nine of them tied the three rafts together and then floated until they came to the nearby islands of Rengi and Choiseul.

Two of our Corsair fighter pilots saw them go down with their bomber and reported their position to our Headquarters. They were rescued by a Navy seaplane on the following day. They were very lucky to be rescued because they narrowly escaped capture by a Japanese patrol that was walking about eight miles away towards them..

Besides Captain Gregory, Lt Harry Sterkel, Lt George Nelson, T/Sgt William Hardin, T/Sgt David L. Cox, S/Sgt David Timpe, S/Sgt William Morgan, S/Sgt Arthur McCurry and S/Sgt Baker were on this bomber.



Back row left to right: S/Sgt. David Timpe, S/Sgt. Wilbur Morgan, Sgt. Robert Madden, S/Sgt. Arthur McCurry, T/Sgt. David L. Cox. Front row left to right: Lt. Harry Sterkel, Lt. David Parker, Capt. Samuel T. Gregory, Lt. George Nelson, T/Sgt. William Hardin. (Picture furnished by the author)

### 22nd BOMBER - 1 July 43.

First Lieutenant Don Hathaway of the 424th Squadron was shot down by Japanese Zero Fighter planes right after he had completed his bombing run over Kahilli, Bougainville. Besides Lt Hathaway. Walter Dowie, Herman Levy, George Strzelecki, Glen Bernard, Melvin Robertson, Joseph Lauve, Thomas Curry, Jack Fournier and Francis Murphy went down with that bomber

### 23rd BOMBER - 1 July 43.

Captain Joseph Littlepage of the 370th Squadron received the same treatment as Lt. Hathaway. Both of them were shot down by Japanese fighter planes while they flew alone behind our formation. Besides Littlepage, George Goddard, James Scholl, Barton Conway, Harold Justus, Harold Denison, Cyril Cluff Jr, Clifford Muhlausen, Justus Brady Jr and William Pocledni went down with that bomber.



1 July 1943. The 371st and the 372nd Squadrons left Hawaii to join the rest of our group on Guadalcanal. When they arrived on Guadalcanal, our morale immediately became a lot better because we now were a complete combat group. During the past few months, we usually went on bombing missions with from four to eleven bombers. Now with four complete squadrons we should be able to go with more bombers and show the Japanese what a complete bomber group could do;

8 July 1943. We did not have fighter escort on this mission because we went from daylight to a night time mission. We took off at three PM, flew at 20,000 feet and reached our objective at Kahilli about seven PM. The ack ack was quite thick but did not do any damage. Our bombs also did a pretty good job in starting several large fires.

24th BOMBER - 8 July 43.

First Lieutenant Jack M Cobb from the 370th Bomb Squadron successfully dropped all twelve of his 500 pound bombs over the Kahili runway on Bougainville, but while he flew on the way back, the weather changed so much that he could not find his way back to Henderson Field. He then flew his bomber until it ran out of gas and forced to made a water landing near the northwest tip of Santa Isabel island.

Lt Cobb, the copilot Lt Carl Beisser, Bombardier, Melvin Brown, Radio Operator Oliver Ordway, Assistant radio operator Edward Schank, tail gunner Dale Riley, engineer John Bjorberg and the assistant engineer Harley Hartwig survived, However the Navigator, Lt Calvin Brown was the only one that did not make it out of that bomber. He was crushed when the ball turret that he was standing in front of, came loose during that crash landing. Carl Reisser, Dale Riley and Harley Hartwig went back to that bomber and tried to release him before it sank but were unsuccessful. Melvin Brown, Oliver Ordway and Edward Schank also lost quite a bit of blood from the bad cuts they received on their heads, legs and arms during that crash landing..

When Lt Cobb and Hartwig ejected from their bomber, they inflated the two life rafts that they released from their bomber, while the other crew members took K-rations, medical supplies, and a Gibson Girl emergency radio transmitter from which they could only send messages but would not know if these message were received. They did not know where they were so they paddled for three days exploring the island areas.

10 July 1943. while we were on our way to bomb Bougainville, a crew member from one of our bombers saw the six flares that these downed airmen had fired to attract our attention while we flew over them. The pilot of that bomber, Lieutenant Thomas A. Keane, flashed them a recognition signal, flew down to investigate and dropped them food rations and medical supplies. Friendly natives came to investigate when they also saw those flares and Lieutenant Keane's bomber circling overhead. These natives offered to take this crew to their village, but this offer was refused, because they thought that it would be better to stay where they were until their rescue crews arrived.

The next day while Captain Flahaven was flying on a mission to bomb Kahili he saw flares that these downed crew also fired to attract his attention, He flew down and threw them some food packages but did not linger because of his tight schedule. The natives tried again to convince this crew that they should go with them to their village, but they again refused because they still thought that they would be rescued very soon.

The next day. they became a little discouraged waiting for the rescue crews to arrive and decided to go with them to their village. While the natives paddled them in their canoes for almost an hour to their village, that was when a Navy sea plane with fighter escorts appeared. This seaplane then picked up Lt Cobb and his crew and flew them to a Navy hospital on Florida Island

25th BOMBER - 10 July 43.

Lt. Raymond W. Price of the 424th Squadron experienced the same type of weather conditions as Lt Cobb. When this crew also failed to return from that mission, the next morning two brothers of the missing co-pilot went looking for this crew. Thomas McConnell had two older brothers flying as copilots on bombers with our Group. Both of these brothers, Edward and Fred went looking for their brother in an SBD dive bomber that they had borrowed from a nearby Marine Unit with the purpose of investigating an area where a military unit reported that they had seen a large flash the night before on a nearby mountain slope. When they flew over that area, they saw what looked like a wheel and a strut from a B-24 bomber laying on that mountainside slope.

A search party went the following day and found those items and also the rest of the bomber which could not be seen from the air because it slid under the dense jungle undergrowth. All on board that bomber were

dead. In addition to Lt Price, Arnold Recknagel, James Taylor, Lois Orinuella, Peter Tenarella, William Rothman, Melvan Hazolrigg, Warren Ryan, Dale Potter, Emory Jackaway, and Thomas McConnell were on that bomber.,

Frederick and Edward McConnell became pilots and successfully completed their missions with our group. Fred stayed in the Air Force and later on was killed while he was flying an airplane from Wichita to Garden City, Kansas. McConnell Air Force Base, Kansas was named in their honor.

26th BOMBER - 20 July 43.

Lieutenant Greig S. Ward of the 424th Squadron was shot down by Japanese fighter pilots. During this mission, Crew members from a bomber flown by Lt Thomas Holmes saw that one of the wings on this bomber had burst into flames and then watched as it went nose down and crashed in the ocean. Besides Lt Ward, William Carew, Martin Zimmer, James Boncher, Vernon Askine Jr, William Griffith, Edward Kindavater, Kenneth Casey, Frank Tokarzowski and Donald Mueller were on this bomber.

During this mission Our bomber also was attacked by these fighter planes. I think that I shot one of them down, but did not have the opportunity to follow him while he was going down because I was busy shooting at another one that was attacking our bomber.

21 July 1943 - When our crew completed twenty five missions, we were granted a ten day rest and recuperation {R&R} leave at Auckland, New Zealand. We flew in our bomber from Guadalcanal to Espiritu Santos and then flew in a Navy plane to New Caledonia and then to New Zealand. This plane happened to be a converted B-24 bomber. So it felt strange for me to be sitting in an area that was originally built to hold bombs instead of passengers..

When we arrived in Auckland, New Zealand, I found out that the weather conditions were exactly opposite to what we experience in the United States. July was their winter season so I welcomed this change in the weather, especially after being stationed in the hot tropics for over a year. The rooms in our hotel were not heated, so I just added an extra blanket and did not have any problem going to sleep in this faraway peaceful land.

It just felt great to walk down Queen Street, order a meal in a restaurant or buy a beer in one of their friendly taverns. However, it appeared to me that they were about thirty years behind times. The taverns were off limits for women. They drove their cars on the wrong side of the street and whenever they got angry, they usually described their dislikes by using the word bloody. In America we are able to make fun of our president and not be punished. But this was not how it was in New Zealand, because you better not speak any bloody discouraging words about the King or Queen of England.

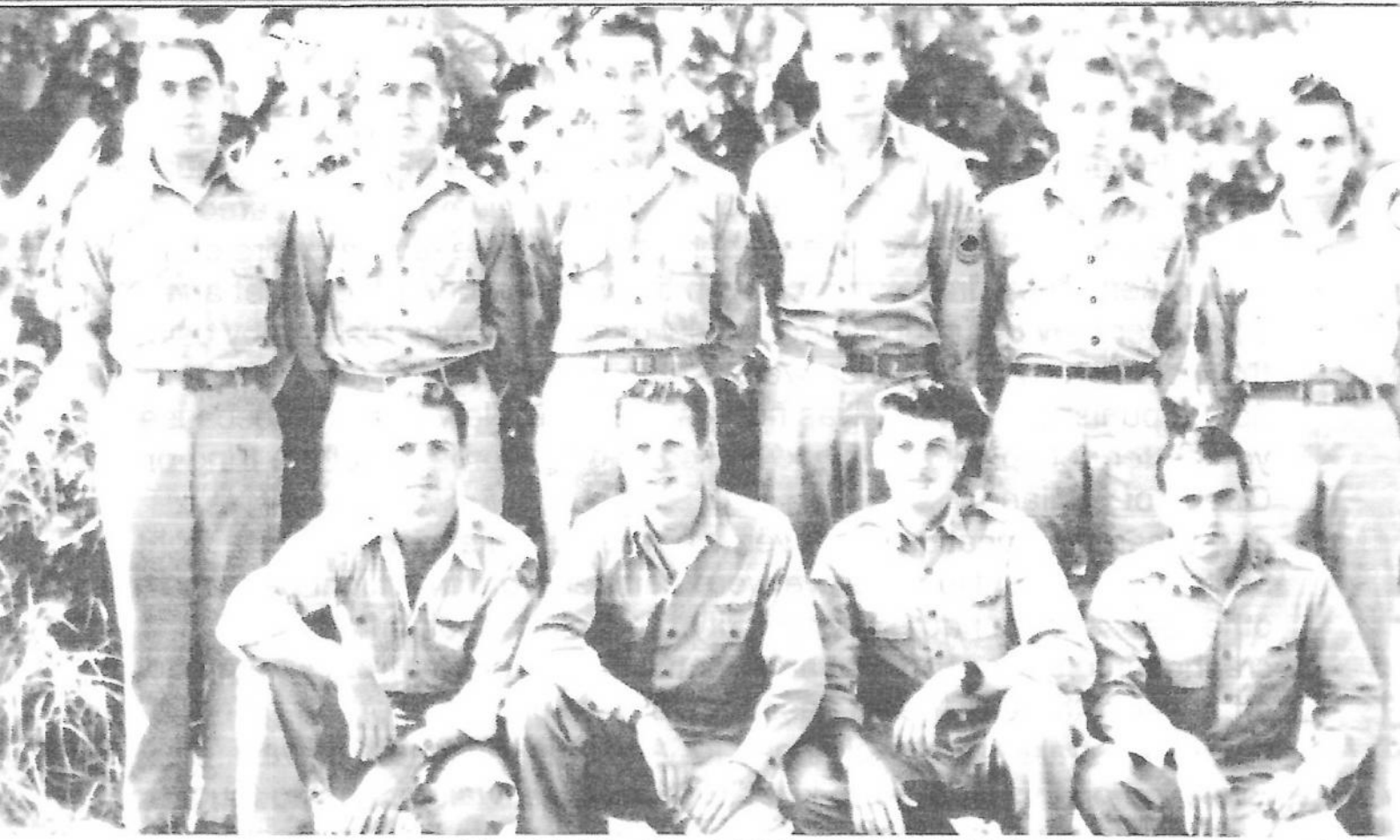
When our vacation was over, we went to the airport to take a flight back to our base, However we were bumped from that flight because other passengers had higher priority. This plane took off and then crashed into a Mangrove swamp that was not very far from where it took off. Twenty three of the 40 passengers were prisoners of war going to Sidney Australia to be exchanged for American prisoners of war. Everyone on this flight were killed. The way this war was being fought, who knows, maybe the Japanese were responsible for this crash? We then spent ten more days in Auckland while we patiently waited for an airplane to take us back to Guadalcanal.

When we returned to our base and when I went to my tent, I found that my bedding, 45 calibre pistol, gas mask and other items had been turned in to base supply. I went to our supply sergeant and asked him why? He then told me, we thought you were on that plane that crashed in New Zealand.

27th BOMBER - 25 July 1943.

Lieutenant Orlin F Wyse of the 370th Bomb Squadron took off during the early morning hours to bomb New Georgia Island but did not rejoin his flight formation. We think that this bomber probably crashed somewhere in the ocean immediately after it took off, because we never heard what happened to him or to any of the other members of this crew, Joe Herzog, Royce Colclosure, Harold Cunningham, Howard Dugan, James Mickler Quentine Wagner, Julio Caparella, Joseph Duke Jr and Dexter Reddick.





Lt. Orlin F. Wyse's crew. Back row: Third from left, T/Sgt. James A. Mickler; fourth from left, T/Sgt. Joe G. Herzog; extreme right, S/Sgt. Royce W. Colclasure. Unable to associate names with individuals for the rest but others on the picture are: Lt. Orlin F. Wyse, Lt. Harold R. Cunningham, Lt. Howard W. Dugan, Lt. Quentine L. Wagner, S/Sgt. Julie L. Caparella, S/Sgt. Joseph L. Duke, Jr., and S/Sgt. Dexter Reddick. (Picture furnished by Douglas Apple.)

The Fifth Bomb Group from New Guinea came to help us out on our next bombing mission. The leading Pilot attempted to land his bomber at Henderson Field, but failed to turn on his IFF equipment that would identify his bomber as to whether it was a friend or a foe. Our army anti aircraft gunners were a little jittery because they were fooled a few days ago by a Japanese bomber that looked like he was going to land but instead continued on and damaged some of our bombers. These same army gunners were not going to be fooled again, so they began to shoot at him and almost shot him down. He then quickly turned around and flew towards the ocean. That was when the Navy gunners also began to fire at him until they finally realized they were shooting at a friendly bomber. They then let him and the rest of the bombers land on Henderson Field.

28th BOMBER - 28 July 1943.

Major M.T. Voss, of the 372nd Squadron took off from Funafuti and bombed Tarawa, but on his the way back he could not find Funafuti due to bad weather problems. He then was forced to make a crash landing in the Pacific Ocean when his bomber ran out of fuel. These four men, Major Voss, Lt Earl W. Peters, Stanley Grenesko and Harold Tieman were

picked up the following day, but the other five, James L. Corbett, Walter J. Knopf, Seymour H. Rosenblum, William Ebel Jr, Gerald W. Conger and George F. Cleaver went down with that bomber.

1 August 1943. Fourteen of our bombers and eight from the Fifth Bomb Group flew on this mission towards Kahilla at 22,000 feet and then dropped three hundred and eight - one hundred pound bombs on their runway. Large fires then began to burn on that runway from the airplanes that they destroyed.

12 August 1943. This mission against Kahilli was even better than the other one when twenty six of our bombers bombed them again at noon and plastered their runway with three hundred and twenty one hundred pound bombs. This time that runway was completely covered with fire and at least 32 planes were destroyed.

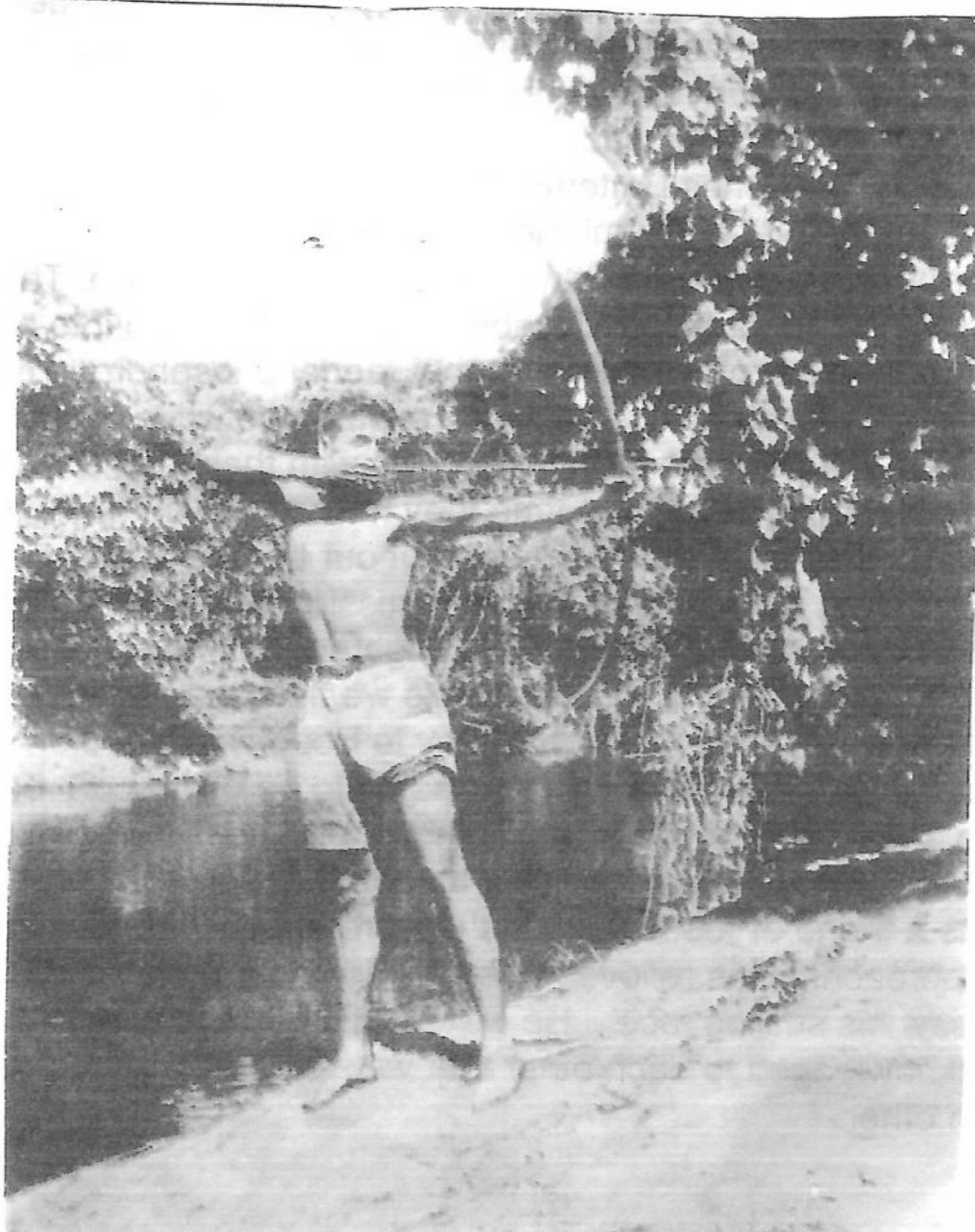
20 August 43 - Our Pilot, Lt LaMontagne was one of the first members of our bomb group to be reassigned to the United States. He was sent to Colorado Springs, Colorado to give the Second Air Force crews the benefits of his combat experiences.

Our co-pilot Lieutenant Amos Battenfield became our pilot.

26 August 1943 -During this mission, the Japanese tried a new tactic to destroy our bombers when we flew on this mission to Kahilla. Their plan was for their fighter planes to fly above our bombers, go into a steep dive and then with a sharp pull out, drop their aerial phosphorous bombs on our bombers. This was a different scary experience while I watched those milky white clouds come streaming down with their long tentacles towards our bomber. However, this time they missed our bomber, but it would of been tragic if they had hit any part of our bomber.

30 Aug. 43 During a briefing for our next mission we were informed that we were going to have Australian P-40 fighter airplanes for escorts and that we were going to pick them up while we flew at an altitude of 5,000 feet. So when we were about half way to Bougainville, I then carefully watched as the fighter pilot designated to be our escort began to fly nose up and directly towards our bomber. I did not like the way he did this because it was difficult to identify the nose of an airplane as to whether it was a friend or foe. So I took the word of our briefing officer and let him approach. I was relieved when he lined up alongside of our bomber and saw his smiling face . He waved at me and I waved back. We sort of acknowledged to each other that we would do our best to look out after each other.

A short time later I watched as one of those fighter planes came plunging straight down not to far from the front of our bomber until it crashed into the ocean. I don't know what happened, but I believe he might of been accidentally shot down by one of our gunners that flew in a bomber a few hundred feet above and ahead of us. Mistakes like this could happen. Anyway, I hope I am wrong because I did not see anyone shoot him down. Also, while we flew towards our target, I watched when a ball turret came loose from one of our bombers that flew directly ahead of us while it tumbled down until it crashed in the ocean. All I could do was pray for Sergeant Holmes while I watched him tumbling down in that ball turret until it crashed into the Pacific ocean. I can truly imagine how he must of felt, because I know what it was like to be sitting in that ball turret without a parachute to save yourself.







Front row, left to right: T/Sgt. James R. Scritchfield, S/Sgt. Ronald Flohr, S/Sgt. William G. Daniels, S/Sgt. Lawrence LaRocque, S/Sgt. Robert Branum, T/Sgt. Victor Kwiat. Back row, left to right: Capt. Dan E. Macdonald, Lt. Arthur Panziera, Lt. William Jones, M/Sgt. Samuel H. Kuhns. (Picture furnished by Dan Macdonald.)

### 29th BOMBER - 30 August 1943.

Lieutenant Harry L. McDonald of the 372nd Squadron was shot down by Japanese Zero fighter planes. The Crew members from a bomber flown by Captain Fawcett happened to see when the left wing on that bomber was missing and while some of the crew members bailed out just before that bomber crashed into the ocean. But true to form, these men were strafed by Japanese fighter planes while they helplessly floated down in their parachutes. Besides Lieutenant McDonald, Fred A. Couse, Edgar M. Haas, Arthur Block, Walter A. Falta, Keith W. Sauer, Ronald W. Bernier, Harold H. Landrock, Roy H. Tuttle, and Frank J. Knight Jr were on this bomber. There were no survivors.

27 Sept 1943 - During this particular mission, I think that we finally put Kahili's airport on Bougainville Island out of commission, at least for awhile, when I saw that our bombardier had dropped all of his one thousand pound bombs on that runway. When we were safely out of sight, I could see smoke and a large fire that came from that area for quite a few miles away at sea.



However, Their anti aircraft gunners had their sights on us and for awhile I thought that this time they were going to shoot us down while I watched their shells coming closer and bursting very near our bomber. A few shell fragments hit the bomb bay doors, but other than a few holes, there was no serious damage to our bomber.

However some of the bombers that flew ahead of us were not so lucky, especially the one flown by Lt Arthur Panziera. The left waist gunner, David L. Cox, was shot in both thighs and the right waist gunner, Bill Hardin was nicked in the chest.

During this mission, our fighters pilots and also the crew members of our bombers shot down five Japanese Zero fighter airplanes. I do not know whether I had shot down one of them at that time, although I did have the opportunity to get a few pretty good shots at one of them while he attacked our bomber. When I was done shooting at that Japanese Zero fighter plane, I did not see him pull out of his dive because at that time I was busy shooting at another one that was attacking our bomber. Then when that pilot saw my tracer bullets coming towards him, he quickly turned around and flew safely away from our bomber.

30th BOMBER - 10 October 43.

Lt. Walter Galyon of the 371st Squadron left our formation right after we bombed Kahili airport on Bougainville to help a crew from the Fifth Bomb Group that was shot down by Japanese fighter planes. Lt Galyon's crew managed to drop them a life, however his bomber was then attacked by the same fighter planes and almost shot down him down. Although his bomber was hit and badly damaged, he flew his bomber down to near ocean level with the idea of keeping the fighter airplanes from attacking him from underneath. This tactic worked. The top gunner also managed to shoot down two of the fighter planes, which was enough to keep the rest of them at a respectful distance. Lt. Galyon then flew his badly damaged bomber until he eventually had to make an emergency landing on Munda island that our armed forces had recently taken from the Japanese. However that landing strip was built for fighter planes and was just a little too short for our Liberator bombers.

During this landing, Lt Galyon and his co-pilot Lt Ira C. Ide were killed. The engineer Sgt William H, Purdin died a few days later from the injuries he received, while the other crew members, Howard J. Holmes,

William M. Delaney, Sol H. Genatt, Harry P. Hall, Anthony D. Frisina, George W. Tompkins and Saint E. Pipp were injured but survived.

30 October 1943 - What a birthday present I received today. I was notified that under our new rotation policy, I was eligible to return to the United States. This good news was based on the number of points that I accumulated during the time I was overseas to be eligible to return to the States. For example, This new rotation policy was based on the number of months a person was overseas in a combat zone, number of combat hours flown and the number of completed missions. A total of six points was enough for a person to become eligible to return to the States. So under this new rotation policy, I had earned more than enough points to return to the good old United States. I really thanked God that I somehow had managed to survive this war. So I would like to add, it is not how smart you are or if you are the best shot in the world but to survive in any war, all you need is LUCK.

When I received my Special orders, I saw that they did not specify or tell me how to get back to the good old USA. So I hitch hiked with rest of our crew on any airplane going in the general direction of the United States. It took us about a week to travel from Guadalcanal to Hawaii. While I went through the processing line, they took just about anything that you had that might relate to what was going on during this war in the South Pacific, however, I concealed the autobiography that I kept on my person and brought it home with me. We then said our goodbyes to each other because each one of us were reassigned to different bases in the United States.

My special orders directed me to report to a base in Salt Lake City Utah. When I arrived there, it appeared to me that they did not know what to do with me. During interviews with personnel specialists, I suggested that I would like to learn a little more about repairing the different types of radios and electronic equipment installed in our airplanes.

When I received my Special Orders I saw that it not only gave me thirty days leave time but also that I was going to go to a radio mechanic school at Truax Field, Madison, Wisconsin.