W.O. Holston
826 Sherwood Dr.
Richardson, Texas 75080
Phone: 231-0406

Following pages are photocopies of a diary which was kept by Lt. Vernon A. Mrak of Rock Springs, Wyoming. It covers his briefing notes and details of missions which we flew against the Japanese, most of which were flown in the Dutch East Indies. We as a crew are deeply indebted to Lt. Mrak for his sense of historical significance during that time of our lives. I have attempted to copy the details on the typewriter exactly as they appear in the diary, and, in parenthesis, have added some details from my own faulty memory. He, I, and the majority of the crew were together on these flights with some exceptions.

I flew a practice bombing mission to Rabaul from Nadzab, New Guinea, which apparently he did not fly. He apparently flew with other crews on a mission or two and so did I. About a week after the war was over, I went to Clark AFB as an instructor navigator at 13th AF Headquarters. From there I flew with a captain on several flights ferrying troops to Okinawa and Ie Shima. Then, when The Squadron moved to Clark Field, I rejoined the crew. He noted one patrol mission to China after that time. At about that time, I flew my last mission. It was a patrol mission to "French Indo-China" along the coast from Qui Non southward past Cam Ranh Bay, with a new crew just in from the States. My experiences on that trip convinced me that with the war having ended I had no further interest in flying without Steve or Vernon at the controls. A few days later the pilot of a crew without a navigator asked me to fly back to the States with them, and I jumped at the chance. I left Clark AFB 26 October 1945. After spending two weeks on Guam we landed Mather AFB 11 November 1945

Batteries
1 - 2F4 - 6 v
2 - B30 - 45 V

Tubes
2 - 35 Z 5 G. T.

Please return to
Lt. Vernon A. Mrak
370th B. S., Tent 16-C (Charlie)

1583 Capt. Warren Holts

Capt. Duram S-2
6:45 a. m. Briefing

J. M. S. T.
Jap Merchant Ship Tow
Lab Village
D. Rusbucket
4720 0910
B Pipdream

Playmate 36

Brook Point
Jessilton A R P L
June 9thSaturday
Ship 364-M (Ship referred to B-24 Bomber)
First Pilot - Gibson
Time: 12:10 2 N (Two hrs night time)

Brunei Bay

Bombs 30 - 100 G. P.
Alt 9500 - 162 M/H

Primary - Labaon - Dry Run

Secondary - Brookton

The One that was bombed - No

Flak or enemy interception

(I remember this one very well. It covered warehouses along a dock area of Brunei Bay. I could see the buildings flying apart like match-sticks.)

June 12 T
A2 - Wilcoxen

TARAKAN
Java - Singaradia

S. B. - Siamok

N. B. - Sirieigan (? Blotched)

(Catalina Flying Boat Rescue Ships were designated as "Playmate")

Voice Call ALL MSQ 11

32939 D-Channel

Cat Call "Playmate 42"
Bombs Away 11:45

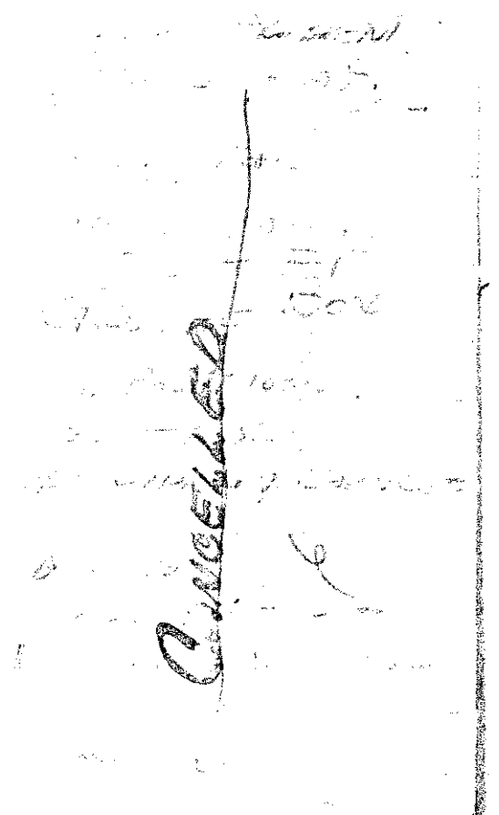
I went back to bomb bays to watch them drop and hit.
Concussion was rather violent at flight alt. 5500'
Bombs fell on Jap gun implacements which were hindering Aussie advances.
Had lunch and are now on the long trek back to the Tonopah Club.
No Flak, No Enemy Interc.

(This was the one where Bob Pinpointed the 500# bomb hit on the Aussie Smoke Shell and blew up the whole mountain! No wonder there was a violent concussion!)

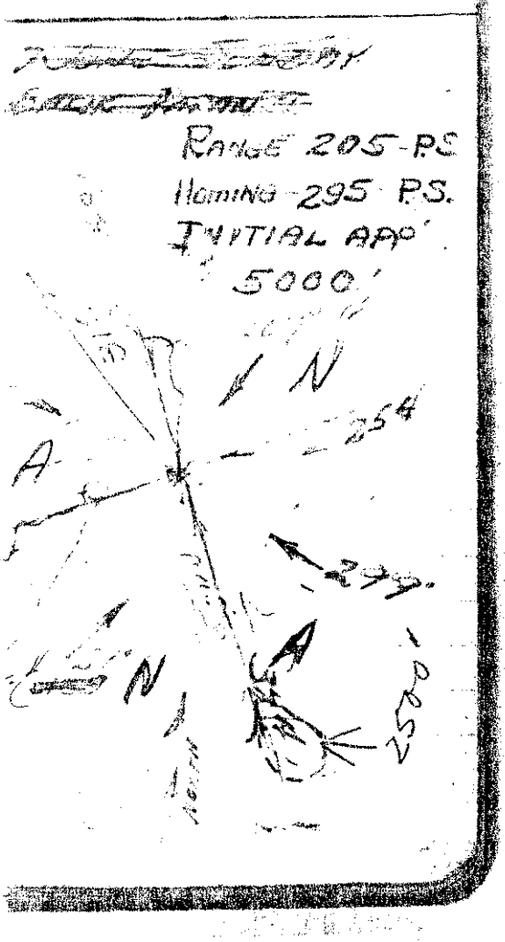
330 P

330 CP

130 PI
130 CPI



(It seems that I reme mber flying a practice bombing mission from Nadzab, New Guinea, to Rabaul. I definitely remember bombing Rabaul, so maybe I flew with another crew on that mission. Over the years I have counted it as my No. 1 mission, and perhaps Vernon wasn't along. Perhaps no one from our crew was along except me, I don't remember the details. W. O. Holston)



(Radio frequencies and approach grid, Probabably for Morotai Island.)

Range 205 P. S.

Homing 295 P. S.

Initial approach 5,000'

(Notes regarding rescue operations)

Sub Voice Frequency
Baler 4475
DOG
C. W.
13 AF MAIN RECO

Copper SUB CALL
VIDIO (HELP SUBS)
BOXCAR Our Call
Goodyear Raft

Yellow Jack - Mae West
Davy Jones - Man with out vest
Evergreen - Sea Marker

VICTO R NINE ZERO ONE SEVEN FOX GEORGE
(V9017FG)

18 June Monday #3
Balikpapan Guns (Implacements)

Attack 1000 Ship 463
20 - 250# G. P. Bombs
2700 Gals.
0405 T. O.
Cape Garan 10,000' (Rendevous point)
10° L = 017° On Bomb Run 165 (I. A. S.)
13,000' (Bombing altitude?)
Playmate 630 10 miles East of Balikpapan Harbor

North Strip
T. O. To West
We took off a 0411
As scheduled - 0617 it is now getting daylight.

Passed through violent thunderstorm at 0615
Rain and cloud so heavy that wingtips and outboard engines were invisible.
Lead: Leopard One Able. Our ship: Leopard One Fox. (Continued on next page)

I've never sweat out a trip as I did this one today. Gas Load: 2700. It took 1825 to get the bombs to the target. Left target with 875 to get home with. We came back in super auto lean - 1700 rpm, and IAS of 135-40. Hit a terrific storm covering the Celebes. We were all prepared to abandon ship. Should have, considering the landing I made. (I bet it wasn't that bad a landing!)

(Special Note:)(Bud Morgan was measuring the fuel every 30 minutes and I was computing fuel consumption. Each time he measured it, he and I both knew that we could not make it. I recall that we did dump some ammo overboard, and that we were ready to bail out all the way home. In my conversation with the radio operator in July 1986, he reminded me that three of the four engines cut out on the landing roll, from lack of fuel.)

Time total 1150 (Crew next door was shot down
CPN 1:00;PN 1:00(over Balikpapan. Two men
(lost. (***)
P 4:55; CP 4:55 (

21 ~~31~~ June, Thursday #4

Balikpapan 20 - 250# G. P.
0406 Cape Karang, 10,500' Rendevous.
Bomb Run 14°
12100 - 160 (IAS)
Sapinquin - Secondary
Playmate 41
Leave target "C" Channel
Mangar - Tirtuary
646 We had a darn good day today.
Bombed gun positions at Balikpapan again.
(***)(This could also have been the time when, on a very rare occasion, the pilot and co-pilot successfully ditched a B-24, then were killed when the Cat hit a wave on take-off.)(***)

Cloud coverage obscured target causing 100% miss. Squadron joined formation at Northern tip of Halmaheras on way back to Morotai and made formation landing.

We came skimming over runway

at 100 ft. and 200 miles indicated, then chandelled to traffic altitude. I was flying plane and made landing.

Total time: 1100 hours

Japs bombed us on the night of the 24th.

Co-pilot three tents down from us blew his head off with his 45 Colt.

Morotai bombed: 6-24-45

25 June - Mon. Mission #5
30 - 260# Fragmentation bombs
Rendevous 730

T. O. 0206
Cape BAGO assemble at 7500'
Leopard Two Fox
165 M/H - 110 Ft. B. I.

(?) of 500 Ft. (Probably "Interval")

Prior to I. P.
246° Mag Bomb Run
Bomb Alt 6500
Playmate 41
DO NOT DROP AFTER 0800!!

3000 Ft. at (?MEJO)

(C) Channel

RAMBLER

Bombs Away 0804

100 % Hit today's target

was covering a group of Navy Demolition Squads who were swimming to the beach to knock out underwater landing obstacles. Our attack was coordinated with the demolition men as they swam to shore. They were to get to shore 11 min. after bombs away. Fleet was off shore blasting hell out of Jap gun positions while we bombed same. 0830 on our way home with 1200 gals. left Area directly over target was clear but huge cumulo-nimbus prevailed in immediate vacinity. No flak or interception -- so far!

(This is the one that was led by our group commander, and we got a Presidential Unit Citation for destroying the obstacles offshore from Balikpapan.) (?)

26 June - Tuesday -#6

Radar strike on Balikpapan. T. O. 2015.
12,000 ft.
Varmint Two - Radio Call
Call Magpie before bombing run on Channel B - 30/100# G. P.
3100 gals. Drop every 45 min. 0100 - 0145 - 0230. West bound/8,000' even. East Bound Odd altitude.
T. O. Time 2017 actual. Power 2700 - 54".
Trip to target was uneventful.
First bombs - 10 - away at 0110
2nd bombs - 14- away at 0145
3rd bombs - 6 - away at 0227
Our target was the oil dump area west of Signal Hill at Balikpapan.

After dropping our bombs we circled area for 30 min. watching the fires. I counted 21 individual fires, four of which were huge oil fires. I called Magpie and asked for permission to bomb. Their (Magpie) radar picked us up at least 60 miles from target.

(An interesting sidelight is that Mickey Dorman wasn't able to pick up the target on his radar screen -- in fact I don't remember that he ever did. Unfortunately neither Bob nor I had much confidence in his bombing accuracy or navigation ability. Bob finally spotted a small flame in his Norden sight and bombed the small flame with the first 10 bombs, which set the first huge oil fire. From there it was easy. I also recall that in typical Holston fashion I thought that the only way I could see the bombs leave the bomb bay was to turn the light on. Bob shouted, "Turn the light out, do you want us to be lit up like a Christmas Tree?")

During trip back we hit very turbulent heavy clouds. We landed at 0745. Full moon during entire trip. No flak or inter. although we did see Jap heavy guns in operation. Apparently were firing at fleet anchored off Balikpapan Harbor.

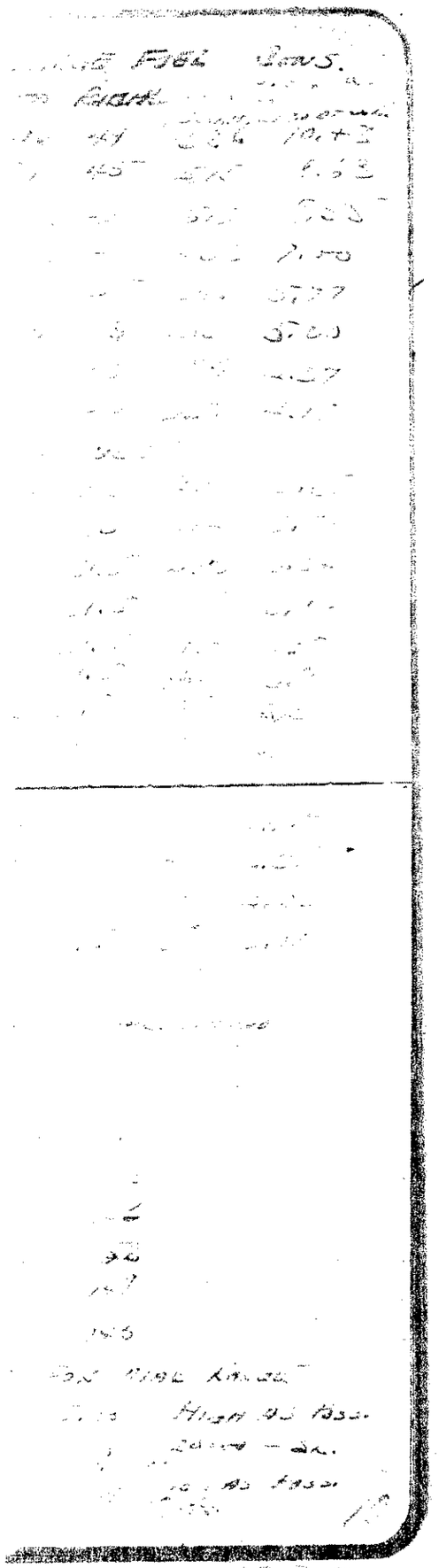
Total flight time 1130

PN	CPN	P	C
445	445	100	100

Bob Harder and his crew disappeared today down off Makassar Town. Were attacked by Jap fighters. Bob went in to strafe the town and was never heard from again.

(I believe that he had been ordered not to strafe with the B-24, but he was obsessed with the loss of his older brother in Europe.)

X 6-26-45



(Fuel consumption and maximum range figures for the B-24 at various altitudes and throttle settings. MOST important in that area, because from take-off to landing we were over water, enemy territory, or head-hunter territory. A good 90% of our flights were over water, because we had to dodge enemy radar, flak, and fighters.)

Mission #7 Cancelled.

2 July - Monday

Mission 8 - Ship 396
Co-pilot for Mann (Bill)
Balikpapan 9/500 G. P.
10-12 - 3100 Gals.
T. O. 0450
Cape Borzur IAS 160
CIRO 4 DOG
BAKER CHANNEL
Tomorrow our target is an air alert -- Magpie will designate target. 10:00 Son of bitches began firing at us. First burst off under right wing. Frags hit plane but I don't think we are holed. I counted 10 bursts of medium.

I set a new speed record for donning Flak suit. Could see anti-aircraft firing a number of rounds before flak began to burst. Threw everything to the firewall to get out of range. We were not on bombing run, we were circling in formation waiting for orders from Magpie.

1020 Magpie gave us a call - asked us number of ships in formation and told us to stand by.

Received Flak up near cape Banjor.

This is second day of invasion of Balikpapan.

I can see three large fleets off B.P. Harbor.

Heavy warships are anchored off shore and are firing onto mainland.

1050 Still circling, waiting for Magpie, only now we are flying out over ocean away from AA guns.

Magpie radioed to fighters to strafe villages in which were seen Jap vehicle movements.

1130 Target from Magpie 6166 M I Northwest of roadway.

Light AA fire.

Have my flak suit on this time!

Bombs away at 1153 - 80% (Hits) and now back to base. 1205 with 1050 gals. to get there with. Heard Playmate 37 call Magpie and say that she has three survivors aboard. Is now getting landing inst. (To unload survivors? (Is this not the Catalina which hit the wave on takeoff and killed the pilot and co-pilot who had successfully ditched a B-24?)

Perhaps we weren't quite so lucky -- No. 2 engine is throwing oil around nose section and is also smoking a little. 1300 crossing the West Shore of Celebes - weather for last five hours has been p--- poor. Had apple cider and candy for lunch today -- quite a treat!

Landed safely at base with No. 2 still throwing oil. 1220 Flying time.

Ship 515

3Jul Tue. Mission #9

Co-Pilot for Oberle (A3)
Primary - Balikpapan
T. O. 0655 - Ship 855
Rendevous Cape Bajor
at 6000 - Had Flak yesterday that point at 7,000.
Load 9/500 G. P. - 3100 Gal.
Cairo 3 Charlie
0710 Hit bad weather -
Rain = Hail mod turbulence.
Broke out at 0805 but we will be back in again in few minutes. 0810 in again. 0830 broke out of cloud. Looks like we will have clear sailing rest of way.

1110 Begin rendevous.
We have a good many Alto-Cumulus below us. May have a difficult time finding target.
1245 Received target from Magpie. Bombs away (as below) 1337. Got 90% hits. Alt. 6,000. No Flak, no interception. We passed over two carriers were escorted by destroyers. Had course killed to fraction. Our plane shadow passed directly over one of the ships. When we were nearing The Celebes, Wilcoxen asked permission from Sable to go down and strafe Jap ships. Permission granted.
Aussie B-24 was shot down over here at Balikpapan yesterday. We are alerted to be on lookout for crew which is still unaccounted for.

Target 5366 - FGQPD
220 BI
North heading.
FGKLPQ
Bombs away 1337
Bomb run 9°
Sounded as if the fighter ships at Balikpapan were having the time of their lives strafing Jap troops and vehicles.

1510
Wilcoxen is diving down to strafe Jap ships.
(I had to read and re-read this one because of the discrepancy in ETA vs. ATA of about two hours. (See P. 14). Then I realized that Lt. Mrak was flying with another crew that day. I sure am glad I wasn't navigating this one, because this whole mission would have MYSTERIOUSLY disappeared from the account!)

Our ETA at rendezvous 2036
Landed at 1910 Formation after dark.
Total time 1220 again.

#10
4 Jul 1945 - WED.
150th Ann. of our country.
Flying with crew --
Balikpapan - Ship 625
Ship 625 Cairo 2 Fox. Flys like a million bucks.
22-3/4 R/M. 32½" IAS 162.
Take off 0510
Altitude en route 10,000'
Perfect weather to Celebes - low scattered and broken.
0715 Appears that we are going to hit some pretty rough weather on West side of Cape Karran.
Bomb load 9/500 GP. 3100 Gals. petro.
Target as designated by ground control Magpie.
0725 In the soup
Out in 7 min.
Passing over an ideal little island to be stranded on. Probably about 25 sq. mi. and shaped like a 1-month human embryo.
Made my first night take-off this morning with heavily overloaded ship. It was good. Imagine that!

In the rain again. It seems to be getting worse. Our luck is changing. The target area is covered with a complete undercast and clouds down to 2,000 ft. It would be suicide to make a bomb run over Balikpapan at that alt. We made three runs hoping for an opening. Third run, when we opened the bomb bay doors the bombs salvoed due to a malfunction. We are heading back to a secondary target at Cape Karang. We got a distress call from Scaglyone. (Scaglyone) All of his compasses are out. We are going to find him and lead him home. Took him to Cape Karrang so he could drop his bombs. On back to base. Scagg is tailing us. The trip back is uneventful. Rendezvous off the tip of the Halmaheras. We took Scaggs position in formation -- A-3. We came in over the field for formation -- fighter -- landing. I was still in left seat -- Steve ~~had~~ had me fly as first pilot for entire mission. We were first to peel off so I cut out very steep. Held 30°/400 bank all the way around. Made a beautiful landing, and when nose began to settle to the nose wheel it kept right on going. When I saw that I had no nose wheel I pulled the stick back in my lap and rolled in full up trim keeping the nose from being completely demolished. All I could think about was getting some weight out of nose. I yelled to Bob, who was calling off air speed, to get in waist. Then I began to worry about fire. Steve had hit the crash bar. I opened my side escape window with my left hand while holding stick back with my right. After about 3000 ft. we came to a stop.

Before ship stopped sliding, crash trucks, ambulances, fire trucks, and a caravan of jeeps were running along behind us. As I got

out of the ship, I saw that we were completely encircled by spectators. Everyone was telling me what a beautiful landing I had made. NO ONE WAS EVEN SCRATCHED.

Time 1230

(SPECIAL NOTE: I have tried to get pages 15 and 16 of the diary in one narration on page 15, because it is very important to our crew as a whole. This is the occasion that sticks out in my mind as the most important time of all when I owed my life to Vernon Mrak. The radio operator and I, and the Nose Gunner and I have both discussed the fact that Lt. Mrak, with his great physical strength, literally held the nose of the ship off the ground so that the plane was not completely demolished and that we could all ten walk away unscratched. I recall that on that particular ship the navigator's table was on the flight deck directly behind the pilot's position. I was sitting there, sweating it out without anything better to do than grab a little 1-quart fire extinguisher which was fastened underneath my seat. I was still sitting there when Steve and Vernon came tearing out of the cockpit saying, "Let's get the hell out of here." They kidded me about thinking I could put out a large fire with the little fire extinguisher. We almost had a casualty, though. Bob ran back to the waist as Vernon had told him, opened the camera hatch to jump out, but with the nose on the ground the camera hatch was about 50 ft. in the air. He then came back to the bomb bays and bailed out as we all had to do.)

(I will add that I was in another crash landing on the way home. Many of us had souvenirs which we were bringing back to the states, and had them stacked in the rear of the plane near the Tail Gunner's position, overloading the tail of the ship. When we landed on Guam in a nose-high position, the tail skid struck the runway, and tore out the tail section of the plane. I'm <u>twice</u> lucky!)

7-3-45

The Col. who is the C. O. of the 5th Group which was down here at Morotai from Samar helping us with the support of th Balikpapan Invasion was lost yesterday afternoon when he was returning from target. He had with him all the group big shots. He gave an ETA as two hours out from Morotai and was never heard from again. Search ships are out looking for him.

Ship 64E A-5

#11 9 Jul 45 Mon

Air support Balikpapan

0803-1000 5/1000 SAP (Scrambled - 5/1000 is) (bomb load)

3100 Gas, 6000' Ft. Alt.

Ground Control

"TESPIRE"

Cairo One Charlie

Actual T. O. Time 0253

Before going to the line this morning we were warned that some of the Japs that had broken through the perimeter a few days ago were seen at the line, and had not been captured. I had been carrying my 45 Auto in my musette bag.

That practice was ended, and am now carrying my pistol in my shoulder holster as previously done.

Bombs away at 0908. Weather over target was perfect today. Est. 100% Hit.

Last night at briefing the Aussie Intelligence officer informed us that when the Australians landed at B.P. they found hundreds of dead Japs that were killed by our bombs. In an area near Signal Hill over 200 x 200 Yds. they found over three hundred bodies.

To date, there are well over 3000 dead Japs in the Balikpapan Area.

Aussies have captured Sepingan and Mangar Airdromes, and within few days will have the landing strips ready for our use.

We were told that the strips were nothing more than a mass of bomb craters.

1130 -- Total Time. 300N 830

I flew entire mission from left seat making takeoff and landing. We had to go around on our first landing attempt because nose wheel unlocked as I was getting ready to set it down.

10 July T. IFF Lecture. VCR 695
Bogy - Unidentified
Primary positions 1 - 3 - 6. Position 4 - anti-radar. (Referred to IFF Channel positions)

1 Regular Mission.
~~Anti-sub-patrol~~ 3 Sub Patrol
6 Air support
Hello
/~~Hazlew~~ Lily this is (our call name)

Bojangs Turn on

Curtains Turn off
Sun up One Position
Sundown - One position down
Clay Pigeon - Unidentified
Mournful Am I Identified?
(?) You are identified.

EMERGENCY PROCEEDURE

Fuel Systems

#12 - Flying with ~~Monka~~. Monica
11 Jul. Wed. Ship

6/1000 SAP, 3100 Gas.
Cape Bajor Rendezvous.
Take- Off. We will be on ground alert until 1100 6000 ft.
No Flight on 11th.
12 Jul. Took off as briefed previous day. T. O. Time 0702. Weather was fine for about 30 min. out from field. 0800 - Now we are in a squall line that apparently is running parallel to course.

The weather today has been raining all the way over. We were on instruments to Cape Karrang. And now , at 6000 ft. we are about 300 ft. over complete undercast.
ORBIT AT PT. CHARLIE -
Target area is clear --- Imagine that!

4464 LQVU
Standing One - Ground Control.

180° smoke center

75' Alt.800=400

Max Bomb Inter.
Left target at 1320 after making three dry runs on Jap gun implacements and trenches. Unable to drop bomb because undercast that closed completely just prior to our arrival.

We are going to bomb Secondary (Donggela warehouse area) at Cape Karrange.
As we were leaving primary target, The Aussies said"Thank you very much for trying so hard to get in on the target that we assigned you."

1110 Total Time

600 A I 510

300 - 300 235 - 235

#13 - 14 JUL = Saturday 855

Limboeng 3100 gas

T. O. 0604 - 8500 15/250 GP
Rendezvous 1000 - 1030
3500 Rendezvous at Field

For Group Box Landing

Southwestern tip of Celebes

Primary: Limboeng Airdrome
Secondary Boezoedoang
Tirtua/ry Malamboeng at Pare Pare
Saffono Mopanget Airdrome

Our mission today is to bomb Jap Airdromes at various targets. It is believed to be a few Jap fighters in these areas.

Bob Harder and (the) Col. from 5th Gp. were lost in this area near Makassar Town.

Rescue - Playmate 61 waiting off Cape Patiro. Our group formation takeoff this morning was p. p. Firstly, it was too dark to find the other ships, and secondly, somebody screwed up and it seemed that some of the ships were where they shouldn't have been.

I'm flying in the left seat again today for the fourth consecutive mission.

I made t. o. this morning also.

1020 - We had to detour around Jap flak emplacements. Have been flying over Celebes for past 2:00 hrs.

Some parts are very well cultivated by the natives. I have seen three fairly well built roads.

1035 - We just passed over Jap Seaport and airdrome of Towari in South Central Celebes - Actual take off time - 0612.

There were no Jap aircraft seen at Towari although the runways appeared to be in good condition and highway was excellent.

A very unfortunate thing happened as our squadron was circling up into formation. We were third ship in. As one of the other ships tried to cut us out to get in formation with us, our nose gunner got excited and mistook him for a single engine Jap fighter and let him have about 150 rounds of .50 caliber slugs. I do not know yet how many times the ship was holed. (He thought it was a Betty, a twin-engined bomber, and fired two-twelve round bursts. Fortunately the B-24 was so much farther away than he thought a Betty would be, so he missed him. Shortly thereafter, Steve called the crew and asked that we be on the lookout for a downed aircraft. That nearly scared the wits out of me, because I thought that we had shot it down.)
Practically as disgusting was that we made Five dry runs over our target which was perfectly clear, and besides, we were flying wing for the lousiest pilot that ever wore a pair of wings. Landing time 1745.
Total flying time 1130.
2010 Nobody has said anything to us about shooting up one of our own ships. It was perhaps from one of the other squadrons in our group.

We made group box form landing this eve. We were flying high squadron, #2, and on that lousy pilot's wing - We went into some very violent clouds just above the field,

7-14-45

THIS ENTIRE PAGE IS MADE UP OF THE COMMENTS OF W. O. HOLSTON

(Once again I am thankful to Vernon, this time for omitting a very embarassing time to me! He may not have been aware, but I also would have screwed up on this mission had it not been for a very careful and exacting Pilot and Aircraft Commander. They say that true confession is good for the soul, so here goes!

As we were going down through the Southeastern Leg of the Celebes, perhaps an hour away from rendezvous, Steve asked me for a position report, which he was accustomed to doing from time to time, and probably to see if I was on the ball! When I told him where we were, he told me that I was wrong. After discussing it over the intercom, he came down to the nose of the plane and pointed out on my chart our exact location. It seems that I had been picking up checkpoints along the route that were in a line a few degrees off our course, and the location which I had marked off was some 25-30 miles off from our exact position. Had he not been double-checking on me we probably would have missed our rendezvous with the rest of the squadron! On this and one other time, I was extremely lucky as a navigator. The other time occurred over water between Okinawa and Clark Field while I was at 13th AF Headquarters, and I will cover that near the end of this document.

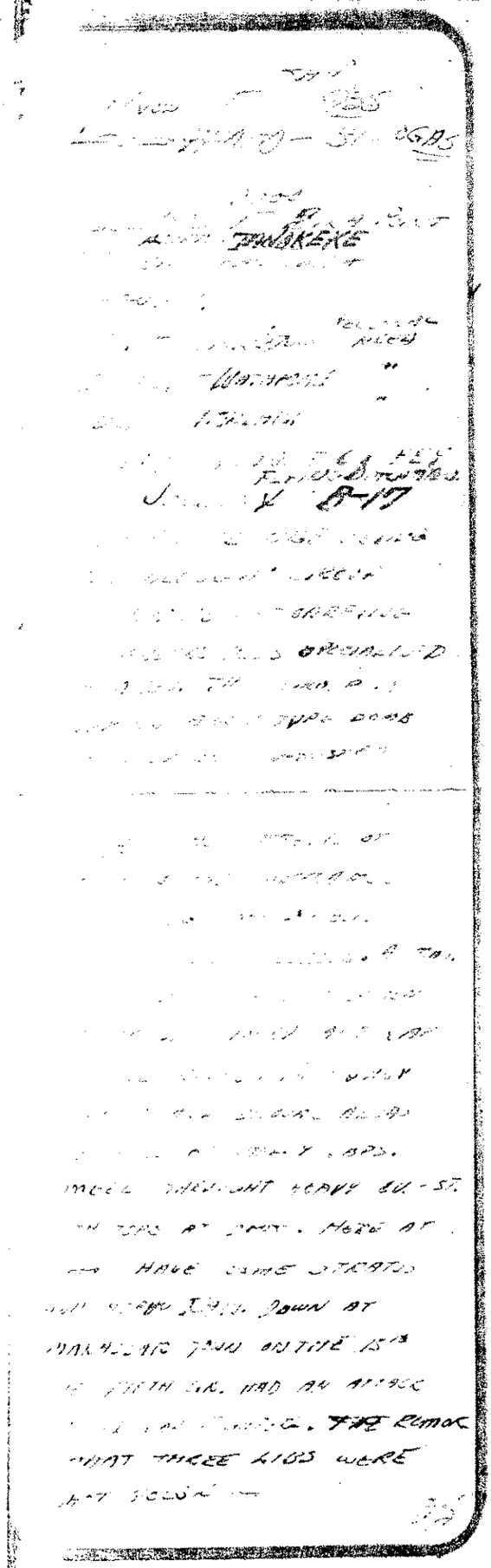
My other comment at this time is in regard to the mistaken identity of the B-24. When Jim called out that there was a bogey at one o'clock, I looked out the window and saw that it was a B-24. When I pressed my microphone to tell him, the cord to my throat mic had become disconnected and dropped to the floor of the plane. While I was frantically searching for the plug on the floor, he said in deliberate fashion, "There's a bogey at one oclock! It's a Betty! It's coming in! I'm going to fire!" Then he let out with two bursts from the twin-50 cal. machine guns in the turret. By that time, I was able to get the plug back in my microphone, and I yelled, "That's a B-24!" Steve came on the intercom to ask what was going on, and I had to tell him. (Steve and Vernon had been talking to the other planes in the squadron on VHF radio and did not hear anything prior to the firing of the machine guns.)

There followed the longest period of silence on the intercom that I remember ever hearing before Steve told us to be on the lookout for a downed B-24. He was talking about Bob Harder, but I really thought that <u>we</u> had shot down another plane from our group.)

and can't understand yet how we came out alive.
The son of a bitch went into a steep turn just when entering the clouds, and if I hadn't been throttled back, we perhaps would have colided at 5000 ft. above the field. Our airspeed dropped down to 122 Indicated. That alone should be enough -- I know that (#13) is my lucky number.
2300, tonight the Japs must have broken through the perimeter again. I heard machine guns chattering and could hear the bullets richocheting over our area.

(Thank goodness, I was unaware of the near-miss over the field, or I had forgotten about it. All the more reason I still hate to fly.) (I do remember the times the Japs broke through the perimeter, and the time we were dismounting 50 cal. and placing them on the beach.)
Today our squadron dropped 1000's of propaganda leaflets in and around Makassar Town.

16 July Monday - Ship 855
Steve, Don Watts, & I went out today for three hours of landing and formation practice. Steve made first take-off and landing - I the second and Don the third. Don is now an instructor and was very pleased with my flying, And said that he would see that I was checked out as soon as possible. (As first pilot.)



17, July - Ship 935

PHOTO - 3100 Gas

Rendezvous at 8000 - Bira Point
Alternate - Tanakeke

Tanakeke (our squadron)
370 th will lead group at 8000 ft.
Primary - Limboeng - Personnel Area
Secondary - Watapone " "
Tirtiary - Kendari - " "
Rescue: Playmate 61 - PBY
Jukebox - B-17 Flying Dutchman

Tomorrow we are going to fly along as group photo ship. We are carrying six cameras plus specialized camera men.

The group is dropping a new type bomb and they are interested to know the effects of it. (It was clusters of napalm bombs)

Also the cameramen are taking moving pictures for newsreel.

A Major is in charge of cameramen, 0800
Our targets today are Jap Personnel areas.

Nice ~~Dingy~~ juicy barracks and bivouac areas just full of smelly Japs. Bombed through heavy cumulus-stratus with tops at 8000. We're at 10 000 . Have some stratus and heavy rain.

Down at Makassar Town on the 15th, the 5th group had an attack from six Jap fighters. Rumor is that three Libs were shot down.

This is the fifth consecutive mission that I have flown from the left seat. The Group is using napalm fire bombs today.
Load 9/500 Napalm in clusters.
We really had a ride out of this one. Made the first run abreast lead squadron. First time was dry run. Followed them around second time and took pictures of their bombs away and hits. We found out that the 424th did not release their bombs so we made a dry run with them. By this time the weather had socked in to a complete undercast.
We let down to 2,000 feet to get below clouds and then made another run.
Going over the bomb run, we were fired upon by machine guns but we received no hits, I don't believe--.
I could see the flashes as they fired at us and helped our gunners locate them so they could strafe the Jap positions.
After bomb run it was necessary to make sharp turn and climb to avoid mountains that were directly on course and about 2500 feet above us. We pulled away from the 424th to miss the mountains.
They pulled back and went down to approximately 500 ft. to strafe.
(I do recall this incident, and seeing the flashes from their machine guns, but the thing I remember most is the mountain. There was a gradual slope from the sea and town on up to the mountain top which was rolling hills and very deceptive. By the time we finished the bomb run we must have been very close to the ground. We did have to look up to see the top of the mountain!)

This flight I remember very vividly. We were to fly photo ship for the 307th Bomb Group which required us to fly 200' below the lowest squadron so that the photographers could follow the bombs out of the bomb bays to the target.
The target was a large group of Japanese Barracks where replacement troups were being housed (Ithink). It was located at Makassar Town, I believe on the Southwest Coast of the Celebes. The people that we had on board besides the crew was a field officer (Major, I think), the civilians who developed the new napalm bomb and their photographers.

The bombs looked like two 10" pie plates placed together, then stacked in a package about three feet high. The straps holding the package together would detonate after leaving the bomb-bay, causing the individual bomblets to sail randomly to the target area causing a more or less shotgun coverage.

After three squadrons dropped their bombs from 8000' we followed the 424th around until we found a hole in the undercast, then had to get down to 2000 ft. to see the target. This meant that we were flying at 1800' minus the terrain elevation -- probably 1200-1500' above the ground.

As we approached the target, the Japs began firing from two or three gun emplacements -- I believe twin 20mm machine guns. I could see the tracers curving gently up to us and what concerned me was that I knew that every sixth shell they fired was a tracer that I could see. It was the ones that I couldn't see that worried me. I knew I was pretty well protected with my flak vest and steel seat but I was unprotected in the groin area. So, I pulled armoured skull cap off my head and put it where I thought it would do the most good.

There was one gun position located in some trees at a crossroad intersection a few hundred yards South of the target. It was from this position that the gunners had us pretty well zeroed in. I could see them very well -- below and to the left of the nose of the plane.

When our gunners -- either top turret or nose turret -- began firing, their bullets were falling short and kicking up spurts of dust. Then the dust spirts began walking up to the Jap gun emplacement, and as soon as our bullets found their mark, the Jap firing stopped.

I remember knowing what a good feeling that was because in a few seconds we would have been right over them, and they would have had us at point blank range.

Also, if we would have taken a bad hit, we were too low for all of us to bail out.

Somewhere packed away in one of my boxes I have before and after air photos showing the damage that we did on this mission. Some day I'll find them!

(COMMENTS FROM W. O. HOLSTON, 6/5/88)

(Most facts recorded above are exactly correct. The target was a barracks area E-NE of Makassar Town which is on the Southwest coast of the Celebes. I also remember the way the straps detonated and the bombs fell separately, scattering as they fell. There was a major aboard and some civilians. I take exception to the 12-1500' altitude, because I remember it to be 3-500', and remember that we had to sweat out getting away from the mountain in front of us. Jim Thompson, Nose Gunner, has related to me how he fired from the nose turret at the gun positions. I remember that there was much smoke on the ground, and I was afraid that the photos would be no good, but I do remember seeing the photos later. They showed the Napalm bombs to be very successful, and I would assume that almost immediately the B-29's in the Marianas started dropping them on Tokyo. The odd thing is that I do not remember being afraid of the flak as much as the mountain or the long trip home.)

I saw them shoot up a boat and the target area and everything else that would stop a slug. We went out over the ocean and climbed to 10,000 ft. while they went right down the coast continuing their little strafing spree.

We are now making a dash for home to get those letters that I know will be waiting for me--? Time: 1655--

Just got radio call that one of our ships is missing somewhere near the Halmaheras. They alerted us to be on look out for it. Wonder who it is this time?

Our ETA to the field is 1810. We hit our ETA right on the second! (Thanks for the good word, pal!)

As soon as we landed the ground crew came running up and said they had heard that we were the ones that went down today. Haven't yet heard who it was.

Total flying time 1140.

120 PI	100 CPI
450 P	450 cp

18 JUL Wed. Transition
We made three take-offs and landings and stalls, steep turns and semi-vertical reverses.

Total time 0305

0205 QD ± 100 c. p.

7-19-45 AM
Air Raid Alert
Also PM

19th JULY

Had an air raid warning this morning at 0315. Planes failed to appear.

Tonight when we were at the club singing old time songs and drinking we had our second air raid warning of the day. Still no planes appeared.

21 JUL Sat. Ship 396
Training flight
T. O. 1245 - Steve made first t.o.

120 QD .30 PI 125 CP
I had second - I made last, t. o. and landing.

22 JUL Sun. Ship 132
Total Time 155
100 CP & 55 QD

We were playing around today - Not really doing anything in particular. Just before taking off, four Negro Infantry (93rd Div.) men asked if they could go for a ride.
I've never seen anyone quite so pleased with one.

93rd Inf. Div at Hollandia (Black)

When I began to do steep banks and dives it made one of them sick. The other three laughed themselves silly. Then we circled over a PBY that was trying to rescue some downed fliers. After we got down they were very greatful for the ride.

They couldn't believe the beauty of the view upthere. One said he had seen the World's Fair and that didn't even compare.

Another said he didn't know what to think when he had to look up to see the water in one of the steep banks. (The 93rd D iv. ran a sawmill cutting lumber from the mahogany trees, but their main job was to guard the perimeter to prevent Japs from coming down on our third of the island.)

#15
23 JUL Mon. 393 - Ceram Islands
BAMBBUM
/~~XXXXX~~ 15/100 G. P. Rendezvous BONOM Is.
Bomb Alt. 14,000 ft.
Minimum altitude for tertiary at Halmaheras 10,000' - Tertiary Flak positions at Lolobata Airdrome - LA'HA & Lohang Airdrome are primary and secondary targets. Bomb individual squadrons.
Our target is supposed to have 12 - 120 mm. heavy Ack Ack guns - The most we have encountered to date.

Probable enemy fighters.
Playmate is the only rescue available.

Took off at 0602 on schedule.
We're flying our first lead position today - B-1
Leading the second flight of the squadron.
I am again flying left seat

I made take-off.

0945 We were unable to bomb primary or secondary because of complete undercast, so now we are headed back to tertiary at Lolobata.
Our target is gun positions up there that have been shooting at the Navy's P. T. Boats. Also there are some flak guns located there.
1030 Back on oxygen again. We are going to have to bomb this target at 17,000' because of heavy flak guns. At 17,000' we encountered very severe clear ice. Called lead ship and he told us to let down to contact. We let down to 4500' before getting out of complete overcast. Came back and tried to regroup over Morotai----
1315 We are back on our way to bomb the primary - Lolobata.

(By way of explanation, the Halmahera group of islands half-way surrounded our little island of Morotai. Japs had 30,000 stranded there, and another 5,000 on the Northern 2/3 of Morotai Island, with the perimeter about one mile North of the airstrip. They tried every night to reinforce the troops on Morotai and our PT boats defended us. The heavy flak guns on Halmahera were a constant problem to us at low altitude when we took off and landed.)
(Also, I believe that by now we were no longer using our Radar Bombardier.)

We dropped our bombs on a small Jap-
held island about 25 miles from our
field.

Total flying time 900

PI	CPI	P	CP
100	100	330	330

Practically all of today's flying was
formation --
We were flying our first lead -- Box 1

Night transition - 23 July

Lepord Able 2

Santi Ship 935
Baldwin The Black Radar
Mrak Heavy Bastard
Baldwin & I each shot 2 landings
completing our night-transition

Total time 125
35 QD 40 C. P. (Imagine an engineer)
(who wasn't good in)
(math!)
(1988 retort by Mrak: Or
a smart-alec navigator!)

24 JUL 45 T Ship 393
Today Steve & I lead the squadron today
for three hours of formation, Practiced
two squadron weather penetrations. Formed
Echelon to the right.

Flew over our area when went in for landing. I made three t. o. and landings.

Total time 310 (Math has improved!)

P	CP
135	135

25 JUL 45 WEDNESDAY

Today our Tonopah friend, Callison, was lost. He is the one who had the bulldog back at R. T. U.* Natives brought one survivor of B-24 crash back to Morotai. This one crashed in Halmahera. All The rest of the crew was killed when bombs exploded. Also another crew of the the 868th bailed out over Jap-held French-Indo-China. This has been the third crew that the 868th lost since Harder went down.

Two Jap destroyers and other boats were seen South of tip of Borneo.

(* R. T. U. probably meant "Reserve Training Unit or Replacement Training Unit.)

#16 26 JUL THURSDAY Ship 293

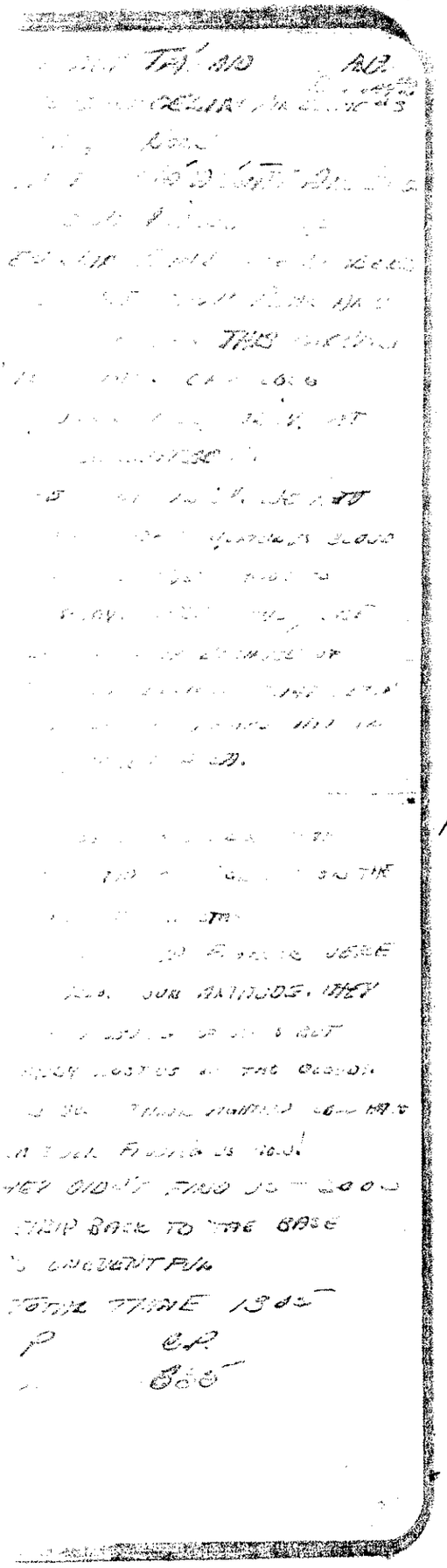
Flying Squadron lead with (A 1) Harry Coggins. Shipping search West of Southern tip of Borneo. (Changed to strike) Rescue - Playmate 61 Dog CA at Kabaladdea Island.

9 /500 G. P. 3100 Gas

T. O. 0606

Attack Altitude 7500

Left Breakway



Primary Ta'baio A. B. Runway #2
Secondary Oelin Airdrome , #3
Tirtiary - None-
Stanfu Mapangat Airdrome
Lepord Baker One
Ten Jap twin engine bombers raided the Balikpapan and Mangar areas this morning.
Actual take off 0606
Squadron assembly at Cape Selataon

Bombs away at 1228. We hit medium sized cumulus cloud on bomb run just prior to bombs away.

Three ships were unable to drop because of that. I don't believe that very many of our bombs hit in the target area.

1245
In passing over extreme Southern tip of Borneo on the way back to Morotai
1248
Three Jap fighter were seen below our altitude. They were climbing up to us but probably lost us in the clouds. - 1315 -
I don't think fighters will have much luck finding us now!

They didn't find us -- sooo-- the trip back to the base was uneventful.
Total time 1305

P	CP	
630	635	(Good adding!)

(On the following page is the account of the rescue of Callison and 4 other crew members. I want to mention that one of my very best friends, Helms, from S. C. was one of the lost.)

29 JUL SUNDAY

Don Callison, Jack Counts and three other men of Don's crew were found today after being in the water for 48 hours. Two of the crew were floating in a one-man life raft. Took turns hanging on the outside. Six more of the crew are still missing.

The five that were found were picked up about 100 miles N. W. of Majo Islands. I talked to Don, and he seems to have aged 10 years.

30 JUL MONDAY

2312 - Had another air alert a few minutes ago. One of our ships tried to come in without his IFF being turned on. Search lights had him pin pointed all around the field. We were on alert for about 15 min.

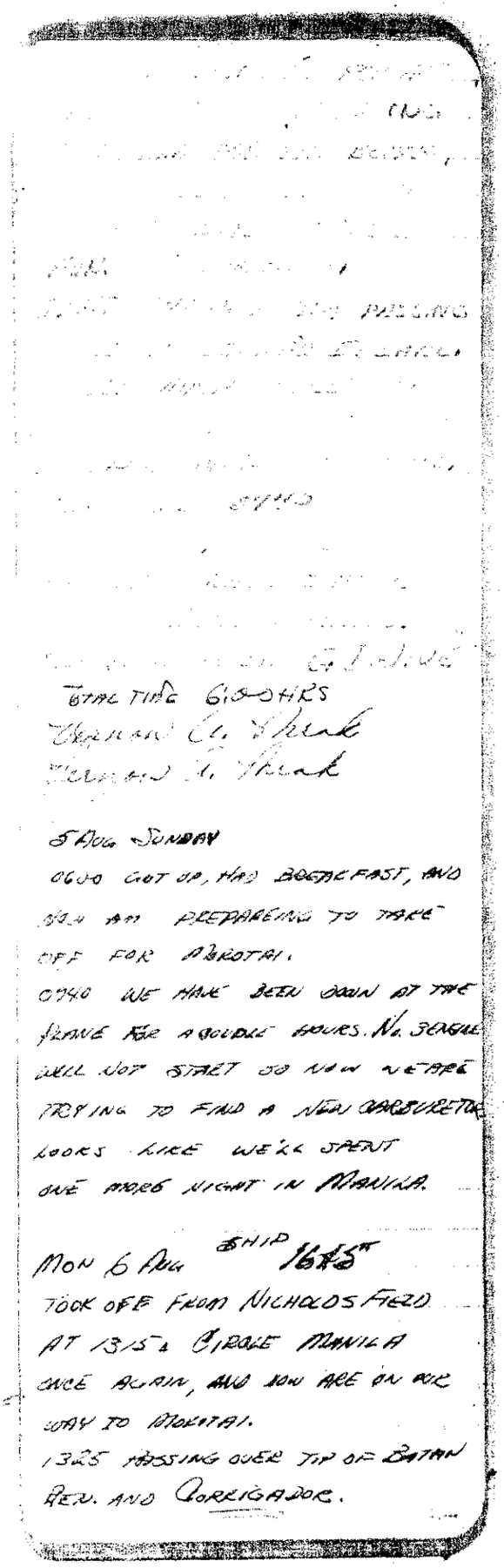
AUG 3 FRI Ship #645

We are flying ship from 14th Airdrome Sqdn. up to Nichols Field at Manila to bring back Air Corps supplies.

We expect to stay at Manila for three days. Gibson and McCarthy are riding with us on their way to The States. (I almost forgot to capitalize). This ship that we are in today is a war-weary if I've ever seen one.

#3 engine kept cutting out as we taxied to take-off position.

(the main thing I remember about Manila was that we ate some ice cream made from Water-buffalo milk, and the bananas weren't very good. The city was a complete pile of rubble.)



If it weren't for the fact
that we are going to Manila
for our beans, I'd never taken
off in this sad excuse
for an airplane.

0945 - We are now passing
over Mindanao Island.
Steve made take-off
this morn. First one in
the last nine missions.
T. O. Time 0740
1145 Tuned in the
commercial radio station
on our radio compass.
Now beating out "G. I. Jive".
Total time 6:00 Hrs.
Vernon A. Mrak (Writes better than)
Vernon A. Mrak (he adds!)
(Mrak, 1988: Had more)
(practice)

5 AUG SUNDAY
0600 got up, had breakfast, and
now am preparing to take off
for Morotai.
0740 - We have been down at the
plane for a couple hours. No. 3
engine will not start so now we are
trying to find a new carburetor.
Looks like we'll spend
one more night in Manila.

Mon 6 AUG Ship 1645
Took off from Nichols Field
at 1315. Circle Manila once
again, and now are on our
way to Morotai.
1325 - Passing over tip of Bataan
Peninsula and Corregidor.

RED-
I left my identification bracelet on my shelf — also those salt & pepper shakers in my ammo-box. Would you please mail them to me.
My address, in case you lost it.
16580 ROCEMONT Rd
DETROIT, MICH.
If you think that you can get to my joint for sure, on your way home, just hang on to them and bring them with you. Thanx Gib.

(Following apparently is a note from Gibson to a member of his crew)
Red-
I left my identification bracelet on my shelf -
Also those salt & Pepper shakers in my ammo box. Would you please mail them to me.
My address in case you lost it:
16580 Rocemont Rd.
Detroit 19, Mich.
If you think that you can get to my joint on your way home, just hang on to them and bring them with you. Thanx Gib

YESTERDAY STEVE AND I WERE OVER TO LOOK AT SHIP 396 THAT CRACKED UP ON TAKE OFF AT NICHOLS A FEW DAYS AGO KILLING PILOT, CO-PILOT + ENGINEER. THAT IS THE SHIP THAT WE FLEW ON A COUPLE MISSIONS. THIRTEEN MEN GOT OUT ALIVE — I CAN'T SEE HOW ANYONE WAS SAVED. THEY TOLD US THAT ONE MAN RAN 75 YDS WITH A BROKEN LEG. TODAY TWO OF OUR PASSENGERS ARE MEN WHO SURVIVED THE CRASH. THEY ARE PRETTY WELL BANGED UP. I SAW JACK FOSS, ED NOVAK ("I'LL BE SEEING YOU?") IS COMING IN OVER THE MANILA RADIO. AT NICHOLS JUST BEFORE WE LEFT. THEY WERE SHOT

SHIP #396

Yesterday Steve and I were over to look at ship #396 that cracked up on take-off at Nichols a few days ago killing pilot, co-pilot & engineer. That is the ship that we flew on a couple missions. Thirteen men got out alive - I can't see how anyone was saved. They told us that one man ran 75 yds. with a broken leg. Today two of our passengers are men who survived the crash. They are pretty well banged up. I saw Jack Foss, Ed Novak ("I'll Be Seeing YOu?") is coming in over the Manila Radio. At Nichols just before we left. They were shot down over Canton, China on their 19th mission.

DOWN OVER CANTON, CHINA ON THEIR 19TH MISSION. IT TOOK THEM 23 DAYS TO WALK BACK THROUGH JAP LINES. THEY WERE LEAD BACK BACK BY CHINESE GUERILLA FIGHTERS. ED SAID THE HE ALMOST SHOT ONE OF THEM WE THE G. FIGHTER WAS COMING UP TO HELP. HE COULDN'T TELL WHAT HE WAS. ED & JACK ARE ON THEIR WAY BACK TO THE STATES. BOTH HAVE AGED TEN YEAR SINCE I LAST SAW THEM IN, TONOPAH LAST FEB. THE NIGHT BEFORE WE LEFT TONOPAH JACK, BOB, AND I WENT TO LEONA DAVID'S HOUSE AND THREW A GOOD DRUNK ON HER WHISKEY. JACK SAID

THAT SHE IS PISSED OFF BECAUSE I HAVEN'T WRITTEN TO HER.

SPENT A COUPLE DAYS IN MANILA. I DIDN'T KNOW THAT WAR COULD BE SO TERRIBLE. MOST OF THE CITY WAS IN CHARRED RUINS. I DON'T THINK THAT I SAW ONE BUILDING THAT WAS NOT HIT BY BOMBS OR SHELLS. I TALKED FOR HOURS WITH THE PEOPLE WHO HAD LIVED THERE DURING THE JAP OCCUPATION. THEY ALL HATED JAPS LIKE POISON.

1415 WE'LL BE OVER MINDORO IN JUST FEW MINUTES.

1505 PASSING OVER SOUTHWESTERN TIP OF PANAY.

Down over Canton, China on their 19th mission. It took them 23 days to walk back through Jap lines. They were lead back by Chinese Guerilla Fighters. Ed said that he almost shot one of them when the G. (Guerilla) fighter was coming up to help. He couldn't tell what he was.

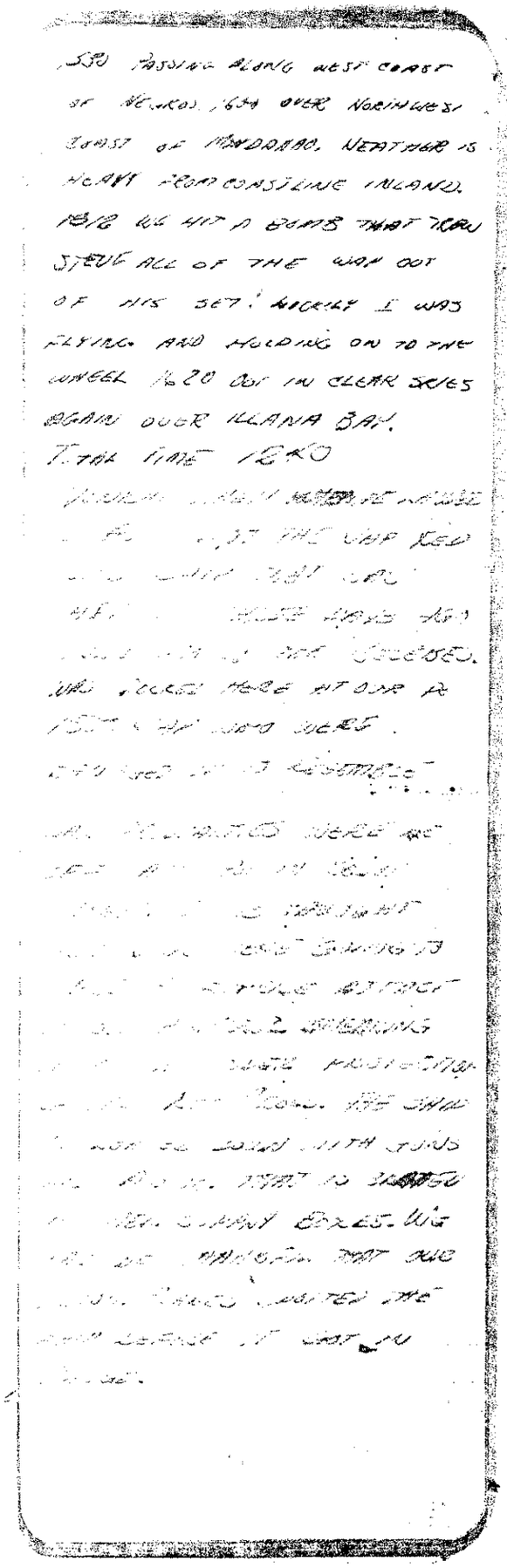
Ed and Jack are on their way back to The States. Both have aged ten years since I last saw them in Tonopah last Feb.

The night before we left Tonopah Jack, Bob, and I went to Leona David's house and threw a good drunk on her whiskey.

Jack said that she is pissed off because I haven't written to her. (I think that all of us were ageing rather rapidly, just didn't realize it because we saw each other every day.)

Spent a couple days in Manila. I didn't know that war could be so terrible. Most of the city was in charred ruins. (And rubble) I don't think that I saw <u>one</u> building that was not hit by bombs or shells. I talked for hours with the people who had lived there during the Jap occupation. They all hated Japs like poison. (my outstanding recollection was that the little children begging on the street were so clean!)

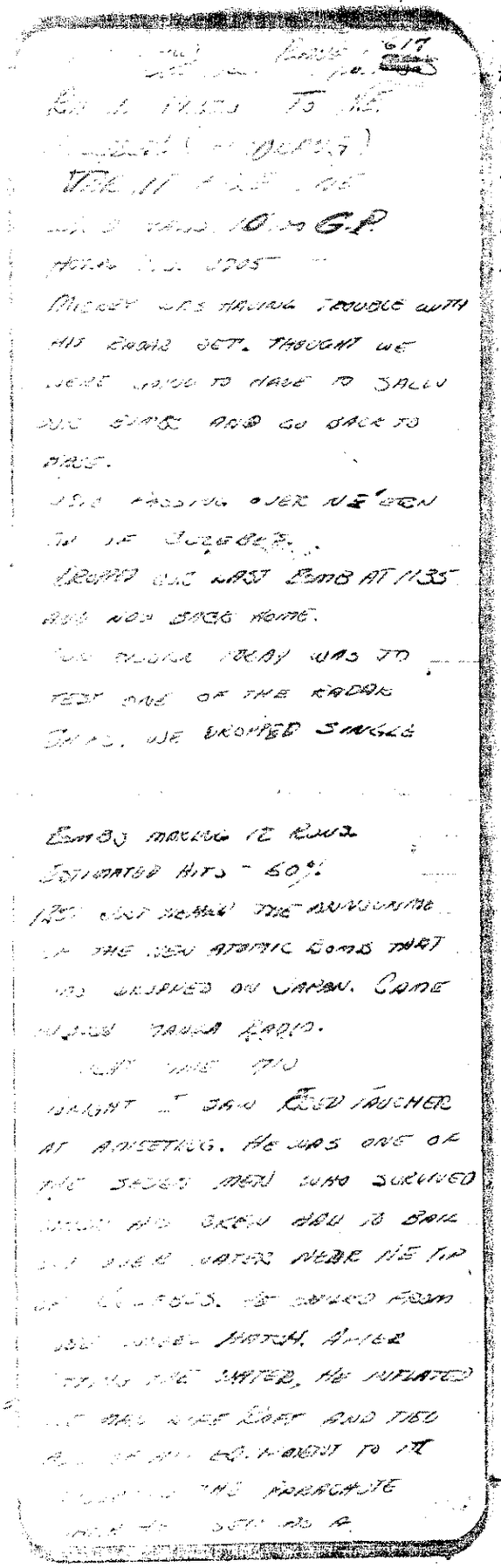
1415 - We'll be over Mindoro in just few minutes. 1505 - Passing over Southwestern tip of Panay.



1530 - Passing along West Coast
of Negros. 1600 - Over Northwest
Coast of Mindanao. Weather is
heavy from coastline inland.
1612 - We hit a bomb that threw (I think I)
(Meant "bump)
Steve all of the way out of
his seat! Luckily I was flying
and holding on to the wheel.
1620 - Out in clear skies again
over Illana Bay.
Total time - 1240
Tonight when we landed we found
that the Jap Red Cross ship
that was captured three days
ago down around the Celebes
was docked here at our port.

1500 Jap who were bandaged up
to resemble war casualties were
led off and put in cold storage.

It is thought those Japs were going
to make a surprise attack
on our airfield. Sneaking up
on us under protection of the
Red Cross. The ship is loaded
down with guns and ammo that is
crated in medical supply boxes.
We can be thankful that our
recon planes spotted the
ship before it got in range.



#17 - 8 August WED - Plane No. 617
Radar Mission to N. E. Celebes
- Amorang -
Varmint Able One
2750 Gals. 10/100 G. P.
Actual t. o. 0705

Mickey (Dorman) was having trouble with his radar set. Thought we were going to have to salvo our bombs and go back to base.

0810 Passing over NE'ern tip of Celebes. Drppped our last bomb at 1135 and now back home.

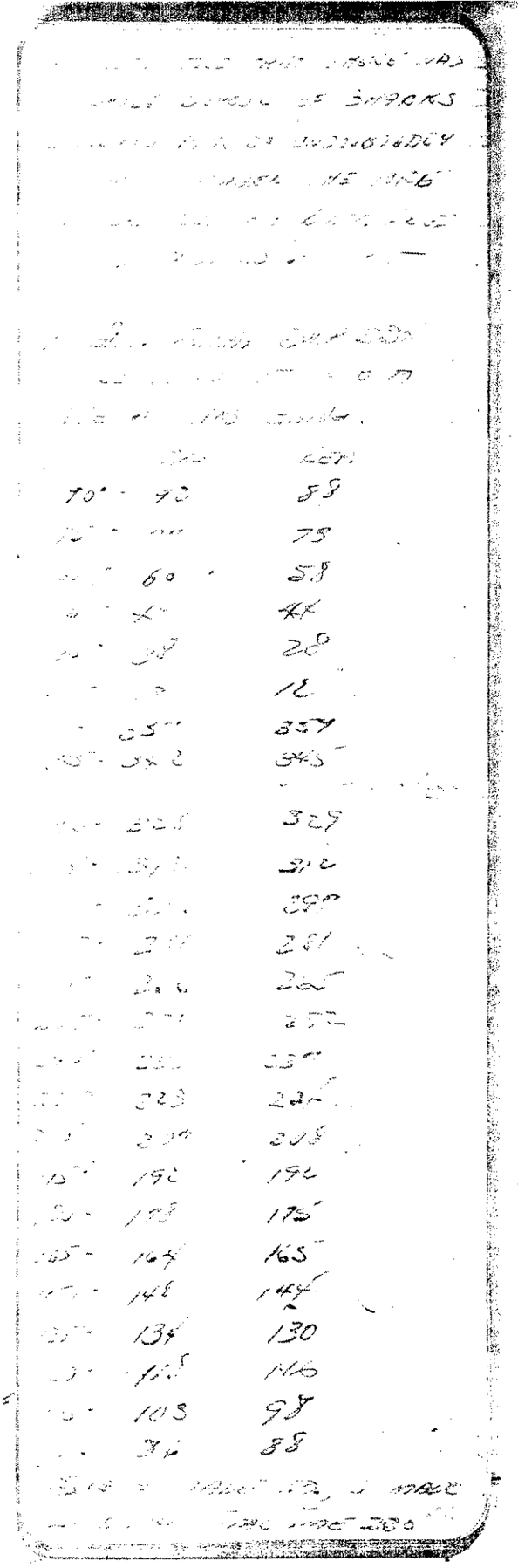
Our mission today was to test one of the radar ships.
We dropped single bombs, making

12 runs.
Estimated hits - 60%.

1251 - Just heard the announcement of the new atomic bomb that was dropped on Japan. Came in over Manila Radio.
Flight time 710
Tonight I saw Fred Taucher at a meeting. He was one of the seven men who survived when his crew had to bail out over water near NE tip of Celeb es. He bailed out from nose wheel hatch. After hitting the water, he inflated one-man life raft and tied all of his equipment to it, including the parachute which he used as a sea anchor. When Fred jumped he took with him his muset bag filled with provisions.

He took with him his musette bag filled with provisions. Had plenty of food and water. As nightfall came Fred prepared to try to get a little rest. Said that he had been dozing for about an hour when something hit the bottom of his raft, capsizing it. Getting back to the raft in the darkness he found that one side was completely torn away. He had his Mae West inflated, and with it he managed to keep himself and the raft afloat until daybreak. By that time he realized that he had to get rid of everything but his knife, two signal mirrors (which later saved his life) and cannister of drinking water. The next afternoon Fred and part of crew were spotted and picked up by one of our rescue Catalinas. Six of the crew were luckily able to get together after they hit the water while Fred was floating some distance from them by himself. By sheer luck and his ability to handle the signal mirror he was also seen and picked up. The other three members of his crew perhaps went down as sharks bait. (The signal mirror did require some little expertise to be aimed so that it would reflect the sunlight to a plane overhead. A one-man life raft was about 2' x 3' and was hard to spot from the air.)

When Fred was taken aboard the rescue plane he was told that there was a whole school of sharks circling him, so undoubtedly it was a shark that tore and capsized his raft.



Fred has 21 missions ----

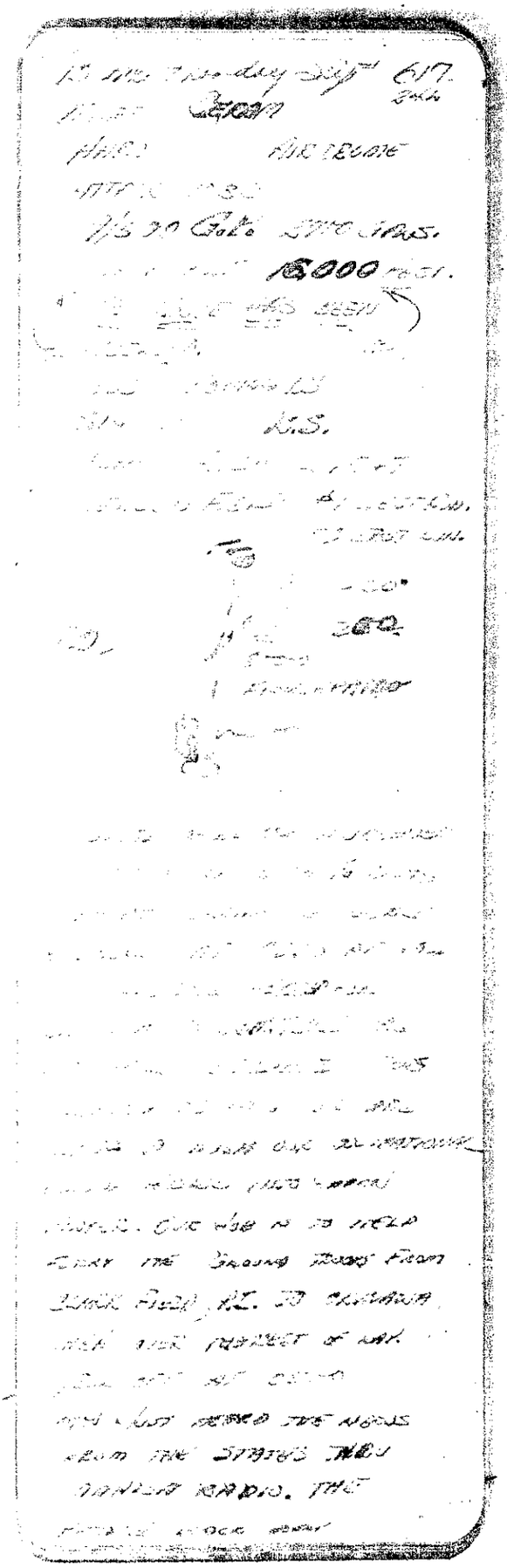
10 Aug Friday - Ship 334

Called us out at 1400 to make a compass swing.

	Mag.	Rep.
90°	92	88
75	77	73
60	60	58

(25 different headings with compass readings on all three compasses. This probably would have involved Steve, Vernon, Engineer - Bud Morgan, and me.)

Steve made t.o. I made landing
Total Time 230



13 AUG Monday - Ship #617
24L
Target - Ceram
Haro Airdrome
Attack 1030
9/500 G. P. 2700 Gals.
Attack Alt. 16,000 feet.
THE ABOVE HAS BEEN CANCELLED.
365 Homing KS
31Q RO K.S.

Clark Field - 475 ft. Alt.
Nielson Field #1 West Runway
#2 East Runway

(Radio approach signals and directions)

See Page 56 - 13th Story

Instead of being awakened at 530 to bomb down at Ceram, we were awakened at 0230 and told that we were headed for Okinawa and Japan. Peace was officially declared this morning so now we are trying to rush our occupational ground forces into Japan proper. Our job is to help ferry the ground troops from Clark Field, P. I., to Okinawa then over the rest of way. Took off at 0500.
0704 Just heard the news from The States, through Manila Radio.
The people back home know nothing yet of the Japanese surrender.

0840 - Over the Southwest tip of Mindanao. We are going to skirt along the Western edge of P. I. all the way to Clark Field to avoid the high mountain peak. (If I remember correctly, we were a little bit surprised at the height of the peak in North Central Mindanao. Our charts were pre-war Australian maps, and many of the peaks were in error on them.)

So far, weather has been good at our altitude. Below us there has been moderate activity. We have been dodging around thunderheads, some with top to about 22-25,000 ft. (At 8:30 I took a nap) Entered by Stephen Mattick.(Signed)

Total time 630.

PN	CPN	P	CP
30	30	245	245

SAME AFTERNOON

YONTANG - Near Naha (Okinawa)
Tower Drake - 75 Ft.
Two runways NE - SW 7000
Maj. Thomas, Oper. Rep.

54 Air TRA

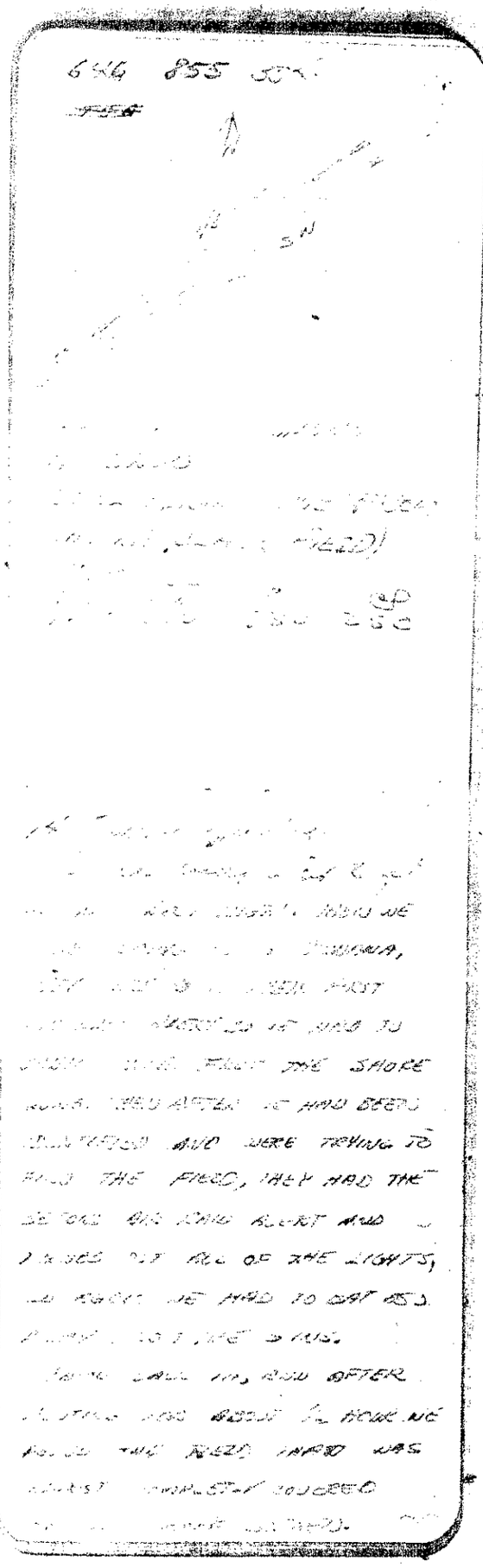
3 men - nose
8 - Flight Deck
5-6 Bomb Walk (Bomb-bay catwalk)

Rest on Radio Deck
Take-off time 1500

We took off with 15 fully-equipped Airborne Infantrymen. They are to be the first troops to land on Japan. We are to take them as far as Yontang Airdrome in Okinawa, and perhaps we may take them on to Japan.

(On this flight were Lt. Mattick, Lt. Mrak, Lt. Holston, Sgt. Johannes, Radio operator, and Sgt. Morgan, Engineer.)

646 855 334



Landed at Okinawa at 2200.

Total flight time from Manila (Clark Field) 700 Hrs.

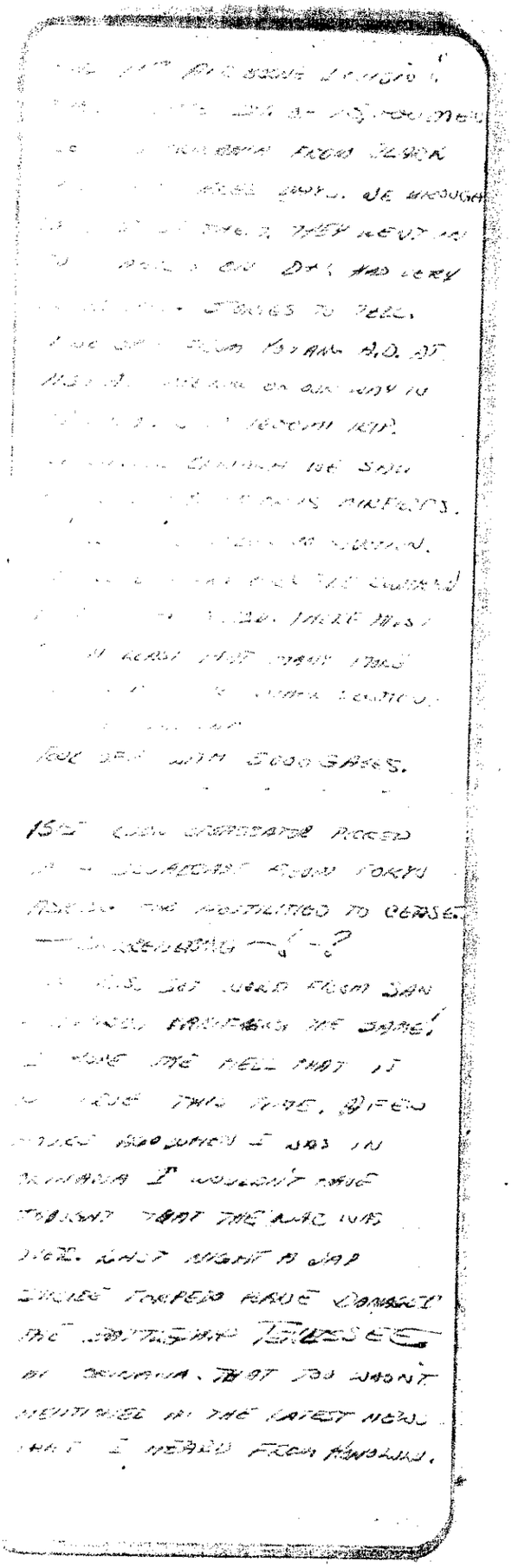
PN	CPN	P	CP
100	100	230	230

14 Tues.Morning.
It was really a job to get in here last night. When we were coming in to Okinawa, they were having their first air raid alert so we had to orbit miles from the shore guns. Then after we had been identified and were trying to find the field, they had the second air raid alert and turned out all of the lights. So again we had to bat ass away from the guns. Came back in and after we were hunting for about 1/2 hour we found the field that was almost completely covered by our smoke screen.
(After getting home I learned that a high-school football teammate was aboard the USS Pennsylvania that was hit by a kamakaze plane during this air raid.)

Got permission to land from the tower, and when we were only about 300 feet above the runway on the final approach we found out that were landing at the wrong field. Pulled up, went around, then left on course to destination. (Yontang Air Drome.) When we got there then whole damn field was still covered by a smoke screen. Went into the soup as we turned in on the base leg and were in it until the very last of final approach.

0930 Steve and I are sitting on top of our ship trying to get the lay of the land. Due East of us about 30 miles there is a tornado cloud forming. Now it has spiralled all the way to the ground.
I don't think that I've ever seen so many ships in one place in my life. There must be several thousand ships at this field - including B-29, B-32, C-54, and everything else I can name. As far as we can see in every direction there are ships. The infantry men that we brought up with us to Okinawa were very interesting, war hardened men. They fought at Guadalcanal, New Guinea, and right on up the line. They are with

(This was my first good look at a B-29, and I believe it was the only time I ever saw the B-32, an over-grown B-24 with a single tail fin.)



the 11th Airborne Division.
Their entire division of 15,000
men flew to Okinawa from Clark
Field in three days. We brought
the last of them. They went in
to Manila on D & I. Had very
interesting stories to tell.
Took off from Yotang A. D. at
1130 and are now on our way to
Morotai, a 1600 mi. trip.
Flying over Okinawa we saw
at least a dozen or 15 airfields.

Some were under construction.
We were only over the Southern
part of the island. There must
be at least that many more
fields on the other sections
of the island.
Took off with 3000 gases. (1gas- 1 gal.)

1515 Radio Operator picked up
a broadcast from Tokyo
asking for hostilities to cease.
--Surrendering--!--?
We also got word from San Francisco
verifying the same!
I hope the hell that it
is true this time. A few
hours ago when I was in
Okinawa I wouldn't have
thought that the war was
over. Last night a Jap
suicide Torpedo Plane damaged
the Battleship Tennessee,
at Okinawa. That too wasn't
mentioned in the latest news
that I heard from Honolulu.

(As mentioned before, the USS PA.
was also damaged.)

1545 - One of the ships in our formation had to feather No. 1 engine. He began to drop behind. We cut our airspeed down to 150 MPH so that he could keep up with us. He is going to try to land at Samar.

1715 - Passing over Samar the ship with the feathered engine is going to land at Samar Field. His Radio Compass is out so we are leading him in.

Landed at base at 2200.

Total flight time 1030

PN	CPN	P	CP
130	130	345	345

19 AUG SUNDAY - Ship 106
I flew first pilot and Ted flew co-pilot. Had a little contest to see who could fly a better B-1 position. Flying Group Box - Our Sqdn was in the hole. Our flying was pretty much a tie.
Total time 210
105P 105CP

22 AUG Wednesday Ship 645
Today I rode with Capt. Gentry on an instrument check ride. My inst. card expired in Apr. of this year. I gave him a good ride -- Made Inst take-off.
Total Time 240
QD 120 CP 120

(Over to p. 46A)

23 AUG - Thursday, Ship 113
424th Sqdn.
Leopard Dog 4
Collier 376 Compton 383
Total flight time 200
We flew Group Box composed entirely of 370th pilots. (Our Squadron)
We were graded by the inspector who was checking on Tactical Operation.

25 AUG - Saturday - Ship #334
We made a test hop. I was flying left seat and Capt. Washburn did all the flying from rt. seat. We flew up around the island. No. 3 engine bagan acting up. We feathered it and Steve landed.

It was his first left seat landing in a couple of months.
Total flight time 130 - 45-45.

AUG 29 Wed. Ship 395
0940 - We are on our way to Manila again today (Clark Field). This time ferrying 10 men from our squadron ground personnel. They are going to Clark as forward echelon to prepare our new location for us. We are taking Capt. Hertz, our Squadron Operations Officer. As fate would have it, this morning I made the worst take-off I've ever made in a B-24. I can imagine what the Captain thought, and that isn't good.

[illegible] 600.
We skirted the high
[illegible] peaks in Mindanao
and went up along the West
coastline of the P.I.
[illegible] time 600 - Two
of which were night.

Same afternoon 29 AUG Wed.
We landed at Clark
Field at 1025 and waited
around until 1425 before
the ground crew gassed us up.
Coming back from Clark we made
a record run considering the
headwinds we encountered. Our
average I. A. S. was about

185 for entire return trip. Ran
into pretty bad weather one
hour out from Morotai.
Total time 600 with two
hours of that logged as
night time.

31 AUG Friday Ship 334
Test Flight again
on the same ship that
we made the 3-engine landing
in a few days ago. We flew
over to Halmaheras
to get a close-up view
of the volcano. It was
pretty well weathered in.
Flight time one hour.

2 SEP SUNDAY SHIP 293
TEST HOP BOB MADE TAKE OFF
FROM THE LEFT SEAT. JUST AS
WHEELS WERE LEAVING RUNWAY
#2 PROP RAN AWAY. I TRIED TO
BRING IT BACK WITH TOGGLE
SWITCH BUT IT FAILED SO HAD
TO BRING PROP UNDER CONTROL
WITH FEATHERING BUTTON. OIL
PRESSURE DROPPED OFF TO 40 PS/IN
ENGINE WAS OPERATING VERY
ERRATICALLY BUT WAS NOT
NECESSARY TO FEATHER.
TOTAL TIME 1.00 HOUR.

3 SEPT MONDAY
WE ARE FINALLY ON OUR WAY
TO OUR NEW HOME. A SHIP (B-24

FROM THE 5TH GR. CAME DOWN TO
MOROTAI TO PICK US UP. T.O. TIME
WAS 0940. A FEW MINUTES
AFTER TAKE OFF WE RAN INTO
WEATHER AND FROM THE
LOOKS OF THINGS NOW WE
WILL BE IN THE SOUP ALL
THE WAY TO CLARK.
THIS MORNING A SHIP FROM THE
424TH SQDN EXPLODED IN T.O.
EVERYBODY ABOARD WAS KILLED.

4 SEPT TUESDAY B-25 #349
TODAY BILLY, FRED & I
WENT UP FOR TWO HOURS
IN A B-25 — BILLY CHECKED
ME OUT AS A B-25 PILOT —
HE SHOWED US THE COMBAT
TACTICS OF LOW LEVEL

2 SEP Sunday - Ship 293
Test hop. Bob made take-off
from the left seat. (Nelson?)
Just as wheels were leaving runway
#2 prop ran away. I tried to
bring it back with toggle switch
but it failed, so had to bring
prop under control with
feathering button. Oil pressure
dropped off to 40 ps/in.
Engine was operating very
erratically but was not
necessary to feather.
Total time 1.00 Hour.

3 SEPT - Monday
We are finally on our way
to our new home. A ship (B-24)

from the 5th Group came down to
Morotai to pick us up. T. O.
time was 0940. A few minutes
after take-off we ran into
weather and from the
looks of things now we
will be in the soup all
the way to Clark.
This morning a ship from the
424th Sqdn. exploded on t. o.
Everybody aboard was killed.

4 SEPT Tuesday - B-25 #349
Today Billy, Fred & I
went up for two hours in
a B-25. Billy checked me
out as a B-25 pilot.
He showed us the combat tactics
of low level attacks.

OFFTACKS. WE WERE INDICATING AS HIGH AS 350 ABOUT 20 FEET OFF THE GROUND. IT WAS REALLY FUN TO BUZZ AGAIN. HE MADE PASSES AT FLIPPO FARMERS, CAME SO CLOSE THEY HAD TO FALL FLAT ON THEIR FACES TO KEEP FROM GETTING HIT BY THE PROPS.

BILL IS LEAVING TOMORROW FOR IWO ISHIMA.

TOTAL TIME 200 QD

ON THE B-25

T.O. 44½ 26⁰⁰ 150
CLIMB 40 24⁰⁰ 165
NORMAL 31 20⁰⁰
30 17⁰⁰

CRITICAL I.A.S. 150
FINAL 150 2100 FULL FLAPS
LANDING SPEED 110
EMERGENCY SINGLE ENGINE
CUT BOTH THROTTLES THEN
APPLY POWER SMOOTHLY

7 SEP - FRIDAY ——
WE HAVE HAD ALOT OF BAD LUCK IN THE GROUP IN THE PAST WEEK LOST 4 SHIPS IN 3 DAYS AND YESTERDAY LOST ANOTHER.
3 SHIPS WERE LOST AT MOROTAI AND THE OTHER TWO AT PALAWAN.
OF THE SHIPS LOST AT MOROTAI, ONE BLEW UP ON TAKEOFF, ONE HIT A MOUNTAIN JUST NORTH OF FIELD DURING VERY BAD WEATHER AND THIRD ONE CALLED IN

We were indicating as high as 350 about 20 feet off the ground. It was really fun to buzz again. He made passes at Flippo farmers, came so close they had to fall flat on their faces to keep from getting hit by the props.

Bill is leaving tomorrow for Iwo Ishima (Ie Shima)
Total time 200 QD

(This must have been with the captain. I also wonder if I did not go along on the B-25 ride? I flew in one once!)

On the B-25

T. O.	44½	2600	150
Climb	40	2400	165
Normal	31	2000	
	30	1700	

Critical I. A. S. 150
Final 150 2100 Full Flaps
Landing Speed 110
Emergengency Single Engine
Cut both throttles, then
apply power <u>smoothly</u>

7 SEP Friday --
We have had a lot of bad luck in the group im the past week. Lost 4 ships in 3 days and yesterday lost another.
3 ships were lost at Morotai and the other two at Palawan.
Of the ships lost at Morotai, one blew up on takeoff, one hit a mountain just North of field during very bad weather and third one called in when he was

20 min. out from field & was never heard from again. At Palawan, one ship cracked up on takeoff and burned, the other cracked up on landing. 370th lost one of the five ships lost. None of crew were killed, but most are critically burned. I think that they are being taken back to the States for better medical care.

(I recall that speculation was that replacement ground crews were largely responsible, because most of our ground crews had been over a long time and were rotated home as soon as possible.)

8 SEPT - Saturday Ship 440
3100 Gals. Search mission to Hong Kong - Playmate 36
Will orbit from 12-1330, position report every two hours. If in trouble, every 30 min. ETA 3 hrs. from base. Varmint Able 5

365 Range	H_____cone 8000
310 Homing	5 min. 4500

(This is note concerning the radio beacon and field location in relation thereto.)

(These were missions calculated to intimidate the communists who were rising up in China and French Indo China. Sometime during these days I flew my last one. Unfortunately, none of my crew was along on the one I flew.)

315°-135° EVEN 135-315° ODD BACK
EVEN ALT OUT ODD ALT
160 INDICATED
BORAX TOWER
ACTUAL T.O. 0350
0600 TODAY WE'RE GOING ON A PATROL
MISSION COVERING THE COAST FROM
HONG KONG SOUTH TO A POINT SOUTH OF
TUNGHOA ISLAND. PURPOSE OF MISSION
IS TO SEE IF JAPS ARE TRYING
TO PULL ANY SNEAK PLAYS ON US
FROM BEHIND. THREE DAYS AGO WHEN
ONE OF OUR SHIPS WAS UP IN
THIS AREA, IT SPOTTED AN SOS
DRAWN OUT ON THE GROUND, IN WHAT
SEEMED TO BE A P.W. CAMP.
WHEN THEY WENT DOWN TO
INVESTIGATE THEY COULD SEE WHITE
MEN WAVING AT THEM, SO THEY
DROPPED MEDICAL SUPPLIES AND
AND RATIONS TO THE MEN ON THE
GROUND. WHEN THEY TRIED TO REACH
THEIR BUNDLES, JAP GUARDS KEPT THEM
AWAY WITH BAYONETTS, AND BEGAN
FIRING ON THE AIRCRAFT. PEOPLE
BACK HOME THINK THE WAR
IS OVER! IT ISN'T AS FAR AS
I'M CONCERNED UNTIL THEY STOP
SHOOTING AT US.
1125 PASSING OVER HONG KONG.
I WENT OVER THE CITY FOUR TIMES
TO GET PICTURES OF P.W. CAMP AND
BRITISH WARSHIPS THAT MOVED
INTO THE HARBOR A FEW DAYS
AGO.
REALLY HAD A LOT OF FUN TODAY. CAME
OVER 300 MILES UP THE COAST AND
NEVER OVER 1000 FEET. MOST OF

Even Alt. out Odd alt. back
160 Indicated
Borax Tower
Actual t. o. 0350
0600 To day we're going on a patrol mission covering the coast from Hong Kong South to a point South of Tunghoa Island. Purpose of mission is to see if Japs are trying to pull any sneak plays on us from behind. Three days ago when one of our ships was up in this area it spotted an SOS drawn out on the ground in what seemed to be a P. W. camp.
When they went down to investigate they could see white men waving at them, so they dropped medical supplies and rations to the men on the ground.

(I retract the statement on previous page) (WOH)

When they tried to reach their bundles, Jap guards kept them away with bayonets, and began firing on the aircraft. People back home think the war is over! It isn't over as far as I'm concerned until they stop shooting at us.

1125 Passing over Hong Kong.
I went over the city four times to get pictures of P. W. camp and British warships that moved into the harbor a few days ago.
Really had a lot of fun today. Came over 300 miles up the coast and were never over 1000 ft. Most of
(Yes, I remember! In a B-24)

THE TIME WE WERE FLYING AT INDICATED 500FT, AND BELOW. CHINESE COOLIES WOULD COME RUNNING OUT OF THEIR HUTS AS WE PASSED OVER. TODAY BYRON BUTLER IS FLYING AS MY CO-PILOT. I'M FLYING A BASTARD CREW COMPOSED OF MEN FROM FOUR DIFFERENT CREWS.
THE MOST PICTURESQUE TOWN THAT WE PASSED OVER TODAY WAS MACAO WHICH IS ABOUT 100 MILES WEST OF HONG KONG. I THINK I GOT SOME VERY GOOD PICTURES OF IT.
TRIP BACK TO BASE WAS UNEVENTFULL.
TOTAL TIME 1130

PN	CPN	P	CP
130	130	415	415

the time we were flying at indicated 500 ft., and below. Chinese coolies would come running out of their huts as we passed over. Today Byron Butler is flying as my co-pilot. I'm flying a bastard crew composed of men from four different crews.
The most picturesque town that we passed over today was Macao which is about 100 miles West of Hong Kong. I think I got some very good pictures of it.
Trip back to base was uneventful.
Total Time 1130

PN	CPN	P	CP
130	130	415	415

11 SEP TUESDAY SHIP 334
MISSION - MOROTAI T.O. TIME 0515
I AM GOING TO MAKE SHUTTLE RUN TO MOROTAI TO PICK UP MEN & EQUIPT. OF THE REAR ECHELON OF THE 370TH - SECOND FIRST PILOT MISSION WITHOUT STEVE.
0635 IT IS GETTING DAYLIGHT. THIS MORN WHEN WE WERE AWAKENED WE WERE STILL HAVING A MEAN RAINSTORM THAT STARTED YESTERDAY MORNING. FIELD WAS CLOSED ALL NIGHT WITH C&V 0-0 WE HAD TO WAIT WHILE UNTIL THE FIELD WAS OPENED. MADE GOOD T.O. AND SO FAR FLIGHT IS UNEVENTFUL. BILL CAME OVER TO SEE ME AGAIN LAST NIGHT LANDED 1050
TOTAL TIME 535

11 SEP Tuesday Ship 334
Mission - Morotai T. O. Time 0515
I am going to make shuttle run to Morotai to pick up men and equipment of the rear echelon of the 370th. Second First Pilot mission without Steve.

0635 It is getting daylight. This morn when we were awakened we were still having a mean rainstrom that started yesterday morning. Field was closed all night with c & V 0 - 0. We had to wait a while until the field was opened. Made good t. o. and so far flight is uneventful. Bill came over to see me again last night. (I was still living in a barracks and the poor devils were in the mud in a tent!)
Landed 1050 Total Time 535

[illegible] - AFTERNOON TOOK OFF FROM MOROTAI AT 1330. I HAVE WITH ME [illegible] CREWS OF THE 370TH THAT WERE LEFT BEHIND WHEN WE WENT TO CLARK. JOE + HIS MONKEY ARE ABOARD.
1630 WEATHER IS CLOSING IN PRETTY HEAVY DOWN BELOW US.
MY CO-PILOT TODAY IS ARNAUD A FIRST PILOT FROM OUR NEWEST CREW WHO HASN'T FLOWN IN THE PAST FOUR MONTHS. TOTAL TIME 615
P 305 CP 310

Same afternoon. Took off from Morotai at 1330. I have with me two crews of the 370th that were left behind when we went to Clark. Joe and his monkey are aboard. (Joe was co-pilot of a replacement crew that moved in and lived with us.)
1630 Weather is closing in pretty heavy down below us. My co-pilot today is Arnaud, a first pilot from our newest crew who hasn't flown in the past four months. Total time 615
P 305 CP 310

17 SEPT MONDAY SHIP C-47 6107
TODAY WE ARE GOING TO MOROTAI VIA TACLOBAN, LEYTE.
I AM CHECKING OUT IN C-47.
MADE TAKE-OFF AND LANDING.

17 SEPT Monday Ship C-47 #6107
Today we are going to Morotai via Tacloban, Leyte.
I am checking out in C-47.
Made take-off and landing.

I BOUNCED THREE TIMES, EACH BOUNCE SEEMED A LITTLE HIGHER.
TIME TO TACLOBAN 215 QD.
1100 I TOOK OFF FROM JOLUET STRIP LIKE A SNAKE
THE REST OF TRIP TO MOROTAI WAS UNEVENTFUL - STEVE MADE LANDING.
WHEN WE HIT RUNWAY, PLANE SWERVED SHARPLY TO THE LEFT.
MEN WHO SITTING IN JEEP BY THE RUNWAY GOT OUT AND BEGAN RUNNING FOR ALL THEY WERE WORTH
TOTAL TIME 400 HOURS QD.

I bounced three times, each bounce seemed a little higher. (I bet this was the first rear-wheel plane he had landed in two years!)
Time to Tacloban 215 QD. 1100 I took off from Joluet strip like a snake. The rest of the trip to Morotai was uneventful. Steve made landing. When we hit runway, plane swerved sharply to the left. Men who sitting in jeep by the runway got out and began running for all they were worth.
Total time 400 hours QD.

18 SEPT. TUESDAY C-47 (109)
MOROTAI TO CLARK.
LOADED UP OUR SHIP LAST NIGHT WITH 5000 LBS OF CARGO PLUS FOUR MEN AND THEIR EQUIPMENT
TOOK OFF AT 0820

18 SEPT Tuesday C-47 (109)
Morotai to Clark. Loaded up our ship last night with 5000 pds. of cargo plus four men and their equipment. Took off at 0820.

WE WERE IN WEATHER FOR SIX HOURS TODAY SOME OF IT WAS SO VIOLENT THAT IT FELT LIKE THE SHIP WAS GOING TO BE TORN TO PIECES. OUR RADIO COMPASS WENT OUT. FINALLY FOUND A HOLE IN THE CLOUDS AND LET DOWN OVER CORREGIDOR. WE TRIED TO COME IN TO CLARK ON THE DECK. WE WERE DOWN TO 150 FT AND WERE STILL IN THE SOUP. AFTER FLYING AROUND FOR ABOUT AN HOUR WE FINALLY FOUND THE FIELD. I LANDED AGAIN IN THREE HOPS. TIME 300 PAI 300 CPAI 45 P 45 CP.

We were in weather for six hours today. Some of it was so violent that it felt like the ship was going to be torn to pieces. Our radio compass went out. Finally found a hole in the clouds and let down over Corregidor. We tried to come in to Clark on the deck.

We were down to 150 ft. and were still in the soup. After flying around for about an hour we finally found the field. I landed again in three hops. Time 300 PAI 300 CPAI 45P 45CP.

(The End)

FOLLOWING COMMENTS ARE THOSE OF W. O. HOLSTON, ALMOST ENTIRELY FROM MEMORY WITH ONLY A FEW DATES AVAILABLE TO CONFIRM MY COMMENTS. They are to be construed only as supplementary to Lt. Mrak's diary which I found to be scrupulously accurate in every respect.

I arrived at Lemoore AAF Base, Calif. on 13 October 1944, and met with Lts. Stephen Mattick, Vernon Mrak, and Robert H. Nelson on 14 October 1944. We then met with Corporals John P. Morgan, Jr., Donald I. Johannes, James E. Thompson, Jr., John W. Belt, Earl McGuire, and a ball turret gunner whose name escapes me at the moment. Jim Thompson reminded me that he refused to fly after an episode whereby they were unable to retract a ball turret at Tonopah, and was replaced on our crew by one Donald D. Stackhouse. Upon our going to Langley Field, Va., we dropped Stackhouse and picked up Flight Officer Harold J. Dorman as a radar bombardier-navigator. TONY ALOTTA.

Two weeks after my arrival at Lemoore we arrived at Tonopah, Nevada, for overseas phase training on 27 Oct. 44. From that time until 26 Oct. 45 there were 10 of us as one crew, and with the exceptions made by Lt. Mrak and myself in our various remarks, where one of us flew the other nine were sure to be there. We arrived at P. O. E., Hamilton Field, San Francisco, 27 January 45; Langley Field, Va. 7 FEB 45; had 15 days delay en route 2 APR 45 - 17 APR 45; arrived Salinas, Calif. 17 APR 45, our new p. o. e. We left Salinas 30 APR 45, and Flew out of Mather Field, Sacramento, 2 May 45 11:00 p. m. I hope to add remarks concerning our stays at San Francisco, Tonopah, Langley, etc., but for the present I will deal with our flights to, from, and in the combat zone.

I have always contended that the flight from Sacramento to John Rogers field was my <u>best</u> navigation job, because I was scared to death that I would miss Oahu. It turned out that my ETA for the dog-leg Southeast of Oahu was dead perfect; then when we turned right 90° to about 290° our course was correct to zero in on Diamond Head; and I believe that we were off only about 30 seconds on our ETA for Diamond Head. I do remember that as soon as we turned to our approach to Oahu, with about 2 hours remaining on our ETA, I started scanning the sea for Diamond Head. Maybe there are navigators around who can see land 330 miles away at 10,000 feet, but I couldn't, so that was a very stressful two hours!

We arrived John Rogers NAS about 9-10 am on 3 MAY 45. I recall going to Hickham AFB and to Honolulu with its sea of sailors, and Dorman and I renting surfboards trying to surf at Wakiki Beach, but were unable to get enough waves to surf. The coral was only a few yards from the beautiful shore sand, and cut our feet when we got off the surf boards. That experience convinced me that there are no beaches anywhere that compare to Gulf Shores, Al. and Panama City, Fla.

On 5 MAY 45 we flew from John Rogers NAS to Canton Island. We were routed to fly over Palmyra Island for a check-point, then fly a dogleg to the right to Canton. Canton was a treeless coral rock, and ground personnel were rotated frequently from there to avoid becoming island-happy. This was our first time to cross the equator. We went swimming that afternoon on Canton Island, then took off the next morning for Tarawa. On the way from Canton to Tarawa we crossed very near the intersection of the International Date Line with the Equator. That would also be near the point where Amelia Earhart was supposedly lost.

(CONTINUATION OF COMMENTS BY W. O. HOLSTON, NAVIGATOR, CREW #138)

According to Lt. Mrak's Flight Log, coordinated with some notes which I had made, we flew from Tarawa to Guadalcanal, leaving Tarawa on 9 May 1945 and landing Guadalcanal 10 May 1945 because we had crossed the International Date Line. The next day we flew from Guadalcanal to Biak where we left the ship which we had ferried over. His Flight Log ended there at Biak on 11 May 45. According to my notes, we were ferried from Biak back to Nadzab, New Guinea 15 May '45, then from Nadzab to Morotai 30 May '45. From there we would fly most of our missions. I went from Morotai to Clark Field, P. I. on 25 Aug. '45. Upon leaving Clark for The States, I left 26 Oct. '45, where we wrecked the plane on Guam. We flew Guam-Kwajalein 6 Nov. '45; Kwajalein-Johnson 7 Nov. '45 where we were weathered in until 9 Nov. 45. We flew Johnson-Hiwaii 9 Nov. '45 and Hiwaii-Mather Field on 11 Nov. '45.

According to his Flight Log, he left Clark Field 2 Nov. 45, Guam 4 Nov. '45; flew directly from Kwajalein to Oahu 5 Nov. '45, and Hiwaii-Mather Field on 7 Nov. 45, beating me home by four days! I note that beginning January 29, 1946, he started flying C-47s out of Ellington Field. My next flight was aboard an Eastern Airlines Jet-Prop from Mobile, Al. to Charlotte, N. C., about 1961-62 as a paying passenger. We had a near-collision over Atlanta, Ga.

I will now cover some experiences which we had along the way which will, I hope, add something to the above accounts. Tarawa Island was the scene of utter devastation, with a small chapel literally surrounded by thousands of graves of our Marines. I remember that many of the graves were marked "Unknown". There were wrecked LSTs and LSDs in the shallow waters offshore. The entire island had been fortified with coconut logs with pillboxes and gun positions cleverly hidden among the long beach fortifications. Ashore were two major pillboxes which had mounted shore guns atop them and portholes for firing from within. The walls were 10' thick reinforced concrete half-buried in the coral sand. I remember being told or reading that one of the pillboxes had been knocked by a single tank with a flamethrower burning it out through a hole which had been knocked out by a shell from the USS Tennessee.

We saw shoes with feet still in them, human skulls at waters edge, stumps where trees had been, and the smell was still awful after several weeks. Tarawa, Manila, and Ie Shima are three horrible sights and experiences that will never leave me.

The flights from Tarawa to Guadalcanal and to Biak along with the ferry flights back to Nadzab and on to Morotai were uneventful to me. The story was told on Biak that a major who had a passionate hatred for the Japanese had let some of them out of a POW compound so that he could practice some duck-shooting.

On a pieced-together map which I have prepared, I have drawn a map of Morotai Island -- not to scale, of course. The island was shaped like an eggplant with the stem protruding from the southernmost part of the island. Our tent living area was along the Western beach area of the stem, facing Halmahera Island to our west about 20 miles. The flight strip was crossways across the small part of the island just north of the stem, with the harbor in the corner between

(CONTINUATION OF COMMENTS BY W. O. HOLSTON, NAVIGATOR:)

the stem and the main land body, just Southwest of the Landing Strip.

The Perimeter was one mile North of the runway. Along the perimeter was a division of Negro Infantry which had the dual task of keeping the area free of Japs and running a sawmill making lumber from the huge mahogany trees on the island. There were 5,000 by-passed Japs on our island, and 30,000 on Halmahera which was 20 miles to the West and circled around to the South of Morotai. We had several PT boats stationed near the airstrip to patrol the bay between Morotai and Halmahera to prevent reinforcements from landing. Vernon has detailed some experiences while we were there, and I'll try to add a few from memory.

A memorable event for the two of us was the installation of a radio antenna. We felt that we could get better reception with our Hallicrafters radio if we could install an antenna high up in a mahogany tree. Vernon obtained a set of lineman's spurs and belt for climbing poles, climbed the tree and placed the antenna about 50 ft. up. In climbing the tree, he managed to get the belt over a huge fork in the tree; however he could not release the belt on the way down due to the fact that he was leaning backwards off the tree. I was standing underneath him so that I could catch him if he fell, and he was struggling to get himself in position to unsnap the belt when Steve came to help. He obtained a rope, tossed it to Vernon, and Vernon was able to descend intact. Once again, Steve saved us from serious injury!

I remember one of the Air Raids which we had on Morotai. We would all go out to the beach and lie down to avoid injury from falling timbers or trees, and from flying shrapnel. On this particular occasion, a young officer lying near us was frantically trying to dig a foxhole with his bare hands through the sand and coral rock. We got a big bang out of him, but today I'm not so sure I wouldn't be doing the same thing. To be on the <u>receiving</u> end of an air raid was a little unnerving.

The squadron of PT boats stationed at Morotai went out on patrol in the bay every night to prevent reinforcements from arriving from Halmahera to take over our island. Some of the officers in our squadron would go out with them on nights off just for the thrill of being in a duck-shoot. I don't remember any of our crew doing this, and I know that I didn't! We could see the tracers flying and hear the firing from our tent area almost every night.

Perhaps the biggest contribution which Harold "Mickey" Dorman made to our crew was to add to our comfort. Upon leaving the U. S., he purchased a case of bourbon whiskey to be used as barter. The first thing that he obtained for himself was a beautiful grey and white wool Australian Army blanket. Then he obtained for us sheets and pillow cases, also from the Australian Prison Hospital on the island. Thus, on our canvas cots we had air mattresses (G. I.), sheets, and a pillow case that would hold our flight jackets and make an excellent pillow. He next obtained enough mahogany lumber from a Captain with the Negro Infantry, along with oil drums, timbers, and nylon screen to build us a sumptious island home out of our tent.

(CONTINUATION OF COMMENTS BY W. O. HOLSTON, NAVIGATOR)

We took the oil drums, stood them on end for piers; took the mahogany timbers, approximately 6" x 8", and made sills for the floor; took 1" x 4" studs to make rafters and studs; screened the walls and door with nylon screen; and used our tent plus parts of a discarded tent to make a very large, screened, floored area with steps and a front door. The roof was a work of genious: The rafters were nailed together at the top in a point like a hip roof, then nailed to each corner of the walls. Over them we stretched our tent, with the flaps extending out to the top edge of the walls. From the discarded tent we pieced in the corners where the flaps did not reach, and from other pieces of material we made awnings that extended out from the walls a couple of feet. We really had a mansion until a newer crew moved in to share the tent with us. From then on things were a little crowded, but no more so than the original tent would have been. I suspect that it was Vernon's engineering design that went into that home.

It seems that Dorman's propensity for trading carried over in another area. He conceived the idea of a small commissary of his own to buy and sell items to the squadron, because the little Group commissary was seldom open and did not have many things that we needed. I believe that our Group Commander soon put a stop to that competition for the Army.

I believe that Vernon and I shared another common trait: our hatred for the enemy. On one of our days off, without something better to do, all of us went down to the beach to watch the Japanese p. o. w.s pick up driftwood and trash along the beach while being guarded by their Australian guards. Perhaps the object was to give the prisoners some exercise, because they weren't too enthusiastic about doing much work. We were discussing it among ourselves when Vernon persuaded one of the Aussie guards to allow <u>him</u> to guard the prisoners. When he got the rifle with the bayonet on the end, he started immediately to order one of the most laggardly of the prisoners to get busy. He pointed to a <u>huge</u> log and told the prisoner to move it. When the prisoner refused to do so, he jabbed him slightly in the rear end. The Aussie promptly retrieved his rifle, and the incident ended. So much for that!

I almost forgot one other of Dorman's benevolences. For one fifth of bourbon he obtained from the navy enough ice cream powder and steaks to feed the whole squadron one night. We set off a fire extinguisher to freeze the ice cream. We then poured gasoline into an oil drum which had been partially filled with sand, and cooked the steaks on the lid of the oil drum.

Our food while in the Long Rangers Bomb Group was really great when compared to some of our stateside bases. Our cooks, and particularly the baker, worked very hard at preparing tasty food. Some of the best pies I've ever eaten were baked there from dried fruits. Crews on R & R to Australia would bring back a C-47 loaded with fresh eggs, fruits and vegetables which added to the variety, and the cooks did themselves proud in preparing the meals. To address one complaint of the enlisted personnel, I must add that though the mess halls were separate, the food for all of us was prepared in the same kitchen at the same time.

(CONTINUATION OF COMMENTS BY W. O. HOLSTON, NAVIGATOR)

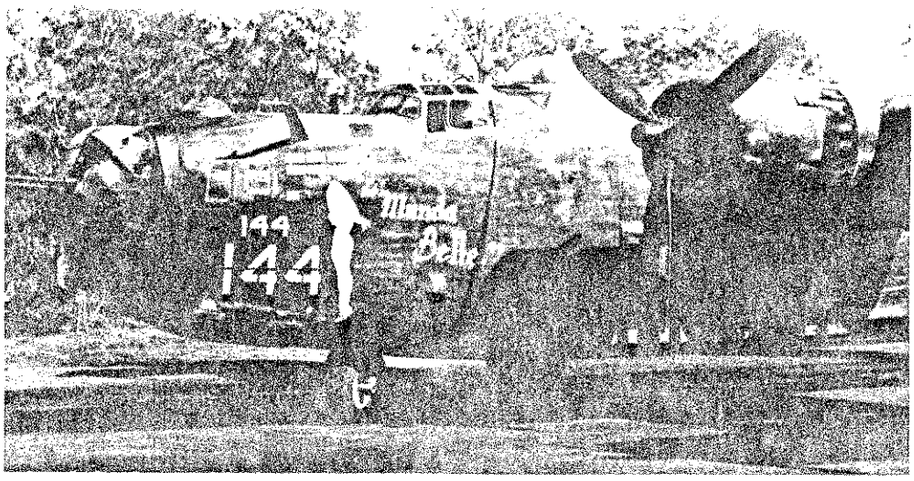
I will need to review tapes of my conversations with Jim Thompson, Ivan Johannes, and Earl McGuire, and add some more experiences which we covered together in 1987, but with the following paragraph I am ending this epilog to Vernon's diary:

For the past 35 years, mostly for religious reasons, I have been a teetotaler. Most of the members of my crew will find that very hard to believe, and most of my present-day friends will find this account equally hard to believe. I quit drinking as a result of a New Years resolution in 1954. I quit smoking as a result of a New Years resolution in 1964. To those resolutions and the Grace of God I owe my good health today!

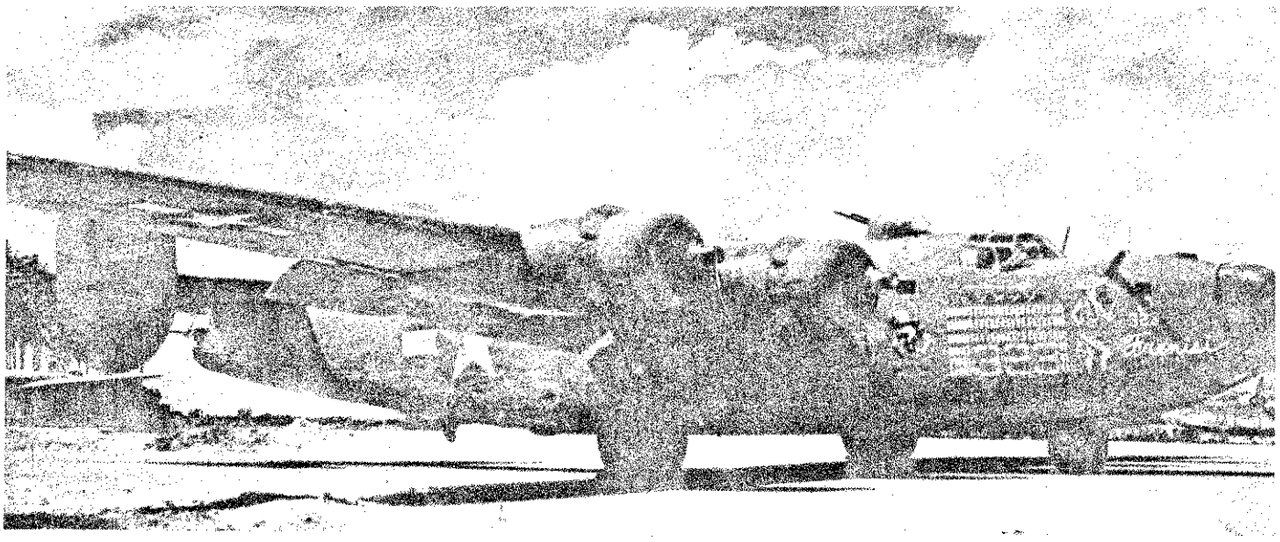
Perhaps from the combat stress or from the climate, I could not drink whiskey while I was in the South Pacific, because just a drink or two would make me very ill. That problem did not extend to beer, though, and the monthly issue of a case of beer per man was awaited with much anticipation. We learned to drink the beer at 90° temperature, because it seemed to give us a little more kick. Too, our flight surgeon prescribed an ounce of whiskey per day to relieve stress, would save it up until he got a fifth for everyone and would issue it for one big drunk! I don't remember what I did with the whiskey, but I drank the beer, all at one setting! After the crew moved to Clark Field and I rejoined it, we were able to obtain ice from the kitchen.

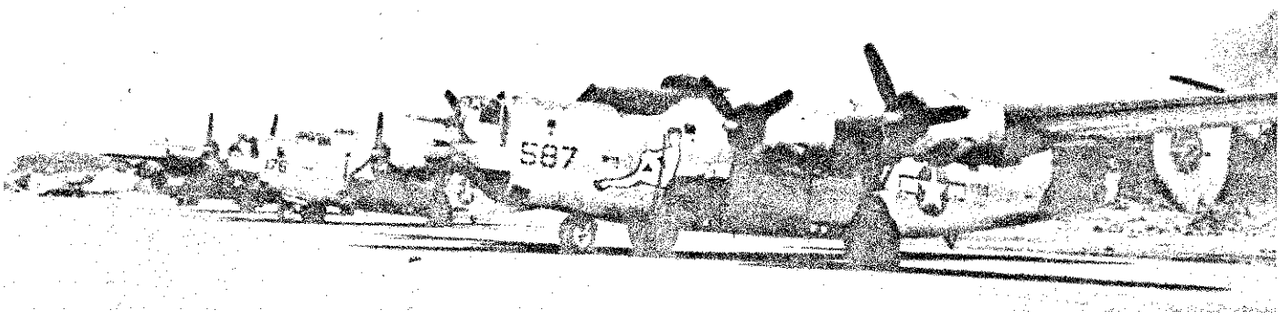
On the first beer issue, Bob and I purchased Steve's case from him, obtained a GI can with ice, and put all three cases of beer on ice in the can. Bob had to go to Manila in a jeep, so he told me to save him 10-12 bottles until he returned. I saved him 12 bottles! That is another chapter in the Holston history. I have always admired Steve's perseverance in refraining from alcohol and tobacco, and I am sure that today, after so much more combat, his good health is a result of his early life.

How many of you still have your short snorter?

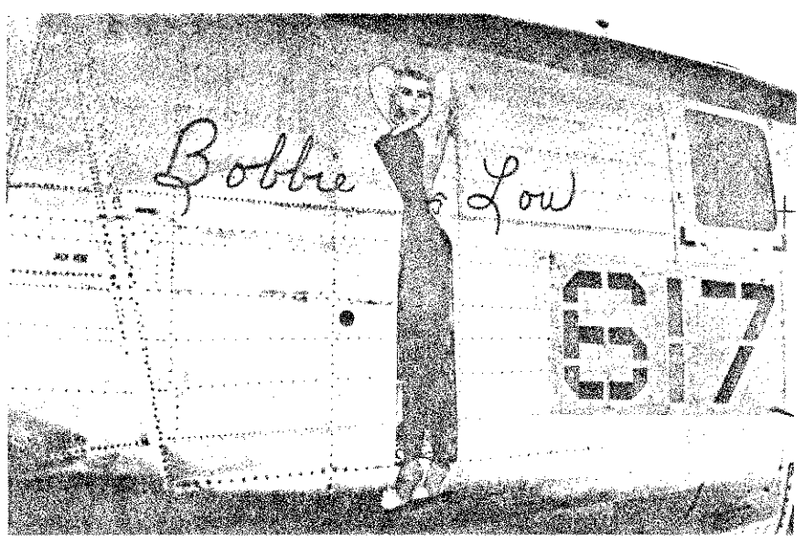


Left, B-24D of the 307th Group was named by its pilot after it made an emergency landing at Munda before that field was in regular use. Seen here on New Caledonia in late 1943, it has both small, old style, and large size aircraft numbers and faded black under and side surfaces. Below, the 307th's "Frenisi", a B-24D, 42-40323, named for a popular song, after 100 missions and with four enemy aircraft and three ships to its credit. (USAF)





Above, B-24J's of the 307th Bomb Group with the Long Ranger's group marking on the fin, LR in white on an insignia blue disc, and the upper, outer tail tips painted in the squadron color. Right, at the end of the war the three-digit aircraft number on the nose of 307th planes was painted, still in black, on a yellow panel. (Leo M. Myers; Walt Winner)



Dear Effie: This is the article I mentioned to you last night

1944

A letter I wrote to Good Housekeeping (my employer) now Mellon Bank (Ent)

moved slowly, as people were coming out of houses and offering best wishes to the prospective bride and groom.

"The bride had on a fancy costume with a headdress and a bunch of flowers that stood straight up above the headdress about a foot, something like a drum major's outfit in a fancy band. She carried a long sword over her shoulder with a green apple stuck on the point of the sword. The significance of this takes too much time to explain. The best man walked to the left of the bride and continually fanned her with a big bamboo fan—maybe it was the heat and maybe it was nervousness. The groom was also all dressed up for the occasion, but he apparently just walked along to accept the well wishes of the neighbors, etc.

"This country also has its racetracks, fine hospitals, golf courses—some artificially watered—baseball and football fields, big colleges and universities and many industries. I have seen department stores as big as Wanamaker's and a market many times larger than the Reading Terminal Market, where everything imaginable could be purchased."

Jim Thompson

We quote in part from a letter recently received from Jim Thompson.

"After this war is over I, too, am definitely going to need a course in logic. My thinking has become so twisted that it will take loads of adjustment to straighten it. Nevertheless, these youngsters are giving me many ideas as well as showing me how to enjoy some things I never before appreciated, including the singing of Frank Sinatra.

"Now let me tell you something about this place. Our field is situated on a plateau high in Nevada's mountains. One particular range provides a wall which surrounds the camp. At this time many of the peaks are snow capped. They are lovely at dawn and sunset, but for the most part all they do to me is to create a yearning to see civilization, metropolitan activity, trees and grass.

"You no doubt are wondering of what my activities here consist. Well, I am still primarily interested in the operation and firing of the Emerson Nose Turret in Liberators. In addition, they are trying to teach me some little about radio and the Sperry Ball Turret. Our pilot is anxious that we all are familiar with the duties of every man on our ship just in case of necessity.

"Our crew, which has been together for some time now, is made up of a variety of fellows. The pilot is a rather serious young man of about 27 years who was studying at the University of Wyoming before he entered the service. Our co-pilot was his roommate at college. He is the handsome member of the crew and is a natural leader of men. The bombardier, another handsome lad, is from Georgia. He was studying at Georgia Tech before the war. Our navigator is a little, intelligent, pleasant lad from Alabama. Iowa, Michigan and Illinois gave us our radio operator, upper turret gunner and tail gunner, respectively. I have a little more in common with our engineer, who comes from Pittsburgh. All in all, they are splendid fellows.

"We crew members all live together, while our officers have their quarters together. Both the officers and men study and train all the time as a crew. Hence we get to know each other very well, having many fine times. Many of the formalities that one generally sees among officers and enlisted men are eliminated. Yet we all respect our officers for both their positions and capabilities. The seriousness of our pilot pleases us all, as so much of our future depends upon him.

"Aside from daily trips to the Post Exchange, Service Club, movies and library, our recreation facilities are limited. You see, Tonopah is a town consisting of about ten stores, most of which do not have any appeal to soldiers. Whenever the men go to town they return bemoaning their losses at the Tonopah Club, a gambling establishment. You'll probably recall that gambling is legal in Nevada. Most of us are eager to do everything possible to earn a three-day pass at the end of this training. Perhaps then we'll be able to take a trip to Los Angeles.

"I have tried to give you an idea of what it is like here. We all realize that there will be worse places and not in the too far distant future we shall be wishing we were here.

"Let's hope things are going well back there. I should greatly appreciate your saying hello to everyone for me. Thank you for writing."

MATTHEW H. CATTANEA

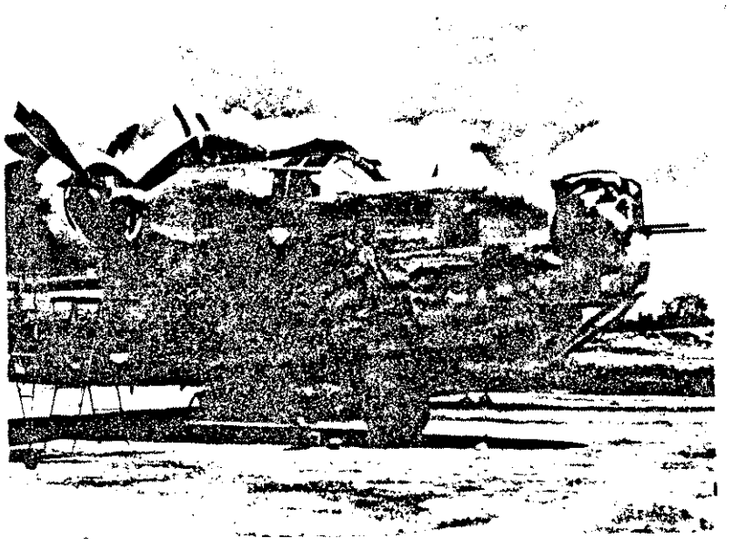
CHRISTMAS

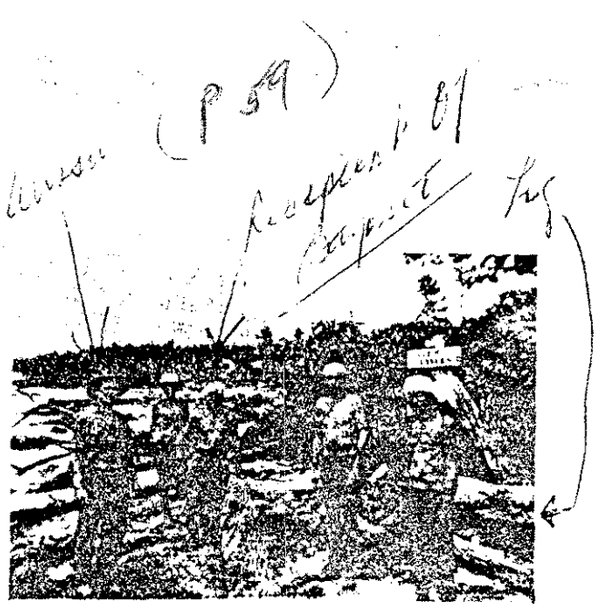
Christmas is a time for joy,
For each man and woman, girl and boy.
It's a happy, jolly, loving season,
It's a great celebration, that's the reason!
It celebrates the occasion for Jesus' birth,
The day that he was born on earth.
I enjoy Christmas very much,
It's a time of feasting, singing and such,
It's a time for merri-ment and gifts,
And it, my heart and spirit lifts.
It's a time for family and friends we love,
And a time for worship of the Father above.
It's the greatest annual holiday,
And a time when the family kneels to pray.

(One of Flo's JAPANESE high school students had an assignment to write a 14-line poem about Christmas which he asked me to help him do. The above is my message to him and to his teacher.)

Shown below are two pictures which Bud Morgan sent me to go in your booklet. One picture shows Ship No. 370, "Shady Lady", and the other shows the Jap P. O. W.'s working on the beach. Thanks to Bud for this one! "Have a great new year"!

The "Off Limits" sign is for the Nurses WOH Quarters, so Bud says!





W.O. Holston
826 Sherwood Dr.
Richardson, Texas 75080
Phone: 231-0406

At Christmastime our hearts reach out to friends we think of dearly,
And checking through our friendship lists, as all of us do yearly,
We stop a while toreminisce and to pleasantly review,
Happy little happenings and things we used to do --
And though we've been too busy to keep in touch all year,
We send a Christmas greeting at this season of GOOD CHEER --
So Christmas is a "lovely link" between old years and new
That keeps the "Bond of Friendship" forever unbroken and true.

-- Helen Steiner Rice --

Dear Heroes:

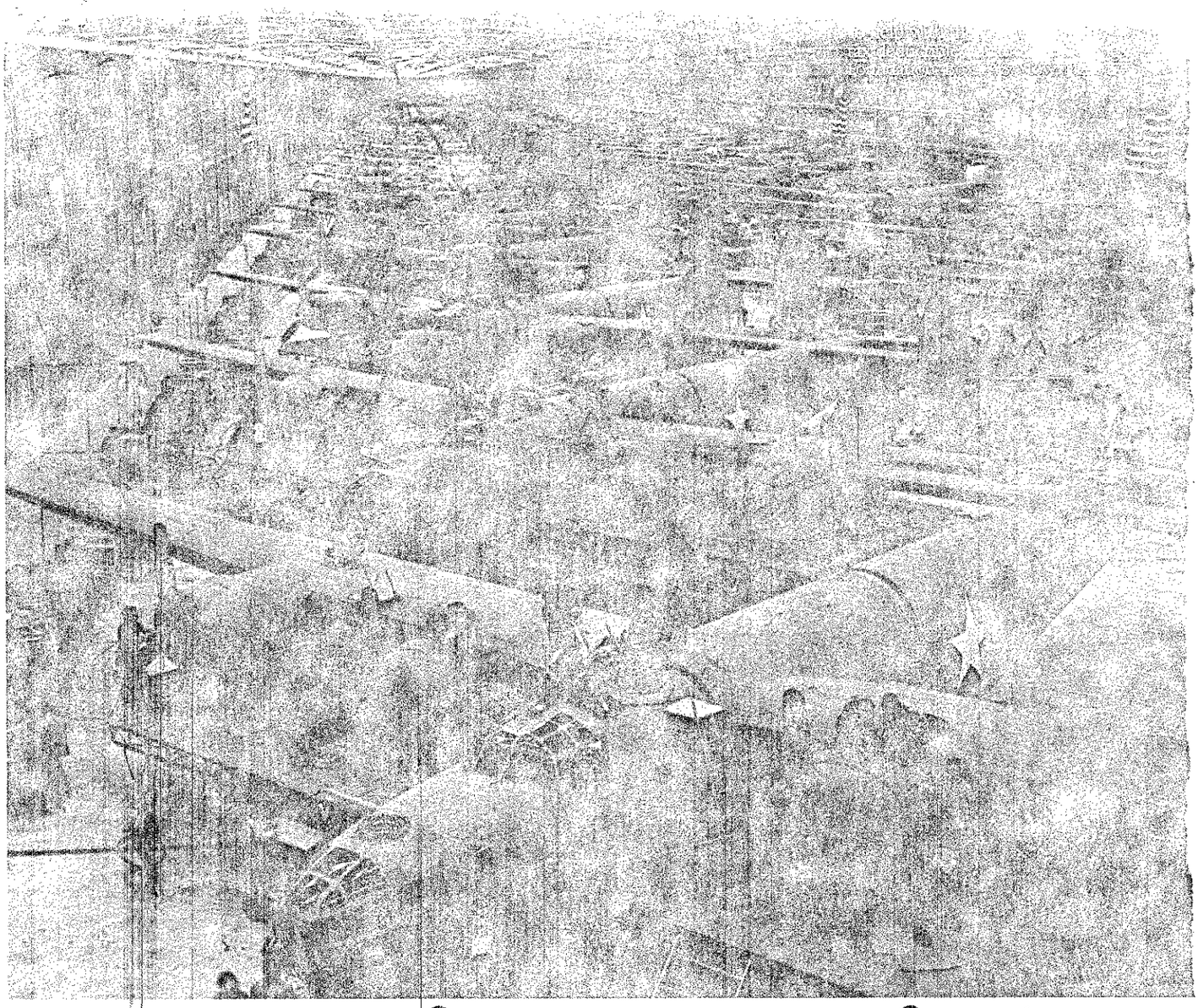
I'm sure you recognize the above as the same that I used last year. It's just so true as far as you guys are concerned that I think nothing else would be quite so appropriate.

We've had a great, more prosperous, and busy year this year, and are most grateful during the Thanksgiving Season for a healthy, happy and pleasant year. I am mailing this greeting this year very early because I am sending a little package along with it -- The final copy of Vernon's diary of our tour of the war zone. I honestly believe that your memories will be tickled and that most of you will shed a tear while going through it. If not, I'm sure that your families will enjoy going over it.

I am quite proud of the booklet which I have prepared, not because of my own work, because of the contributions made by all of you in making it possible. First, without each of you we would not have had a "crew". Without Vernon's sense of history, we would not have had the diary. And without the contributions which several of you made, I certainly would never have been able to complete it. My thanks to each of you! To Vernon for the time, expense, and patience with me in writing the booklet. To Jim Thompson for keeping in touch and for helping me to find all of you -- also for materials which he contributed to the overall memories. To Bud Morgan for the copy of Crew Picture #3. To Steve for the duplicate set of wings, bars, ribbons, G/O's and other materials. To Tubby and Earl for taking the time and expense to meet with me at HSV and relive the old days. I hope that this material will help you to remember those days.

I'm sure that, as I have, you have thought that our contribution was insignificant and our sacrifice very small as compared to those of our friends and predecessors; however we were each and every one of us there because we felt the necessity to be there, and were ready and able to do whatsoever we were ordered to do. Too, after reading the diary, I feel that our contribution was much greater than we thought it to be.

The diary speaks for itself. I know that you have comments that you'd like to make, so jot them down and I'll add them and send the others copies. In drawing the missions flown by our group on the map I realize now that I didn't draw all of our missions, and, of course, I drew in missions that our group flew which we were not on.



Forty-five years ago, our freedom was on the line.

On the front line. And on the production line. Because in Europe and the Pacific, America's fighting forces needed a new, longer-range heavy bomber. And on our assembly lines in Ft. Worth and San Diego, and on others across the country, America's working forces responded. At peak production in Ft. Worth, more than 30,000 workers, toiling around the clock, were building a new B-24 every four hours.

Now we are helping to build one more. By making a grant to help restore one of our original B-24s to its original condition. Soon a B-24 Liberator, which first flew in the Pacific, will fly again, this time in air shows around the USA.

Not as a symbol of American military might. Or of American manufacturing muscle. But of the American spirit which makes them both possible.

GENERAL DYNAMICS
A Strong Company For A Strong Country