

# Thomas Patterson

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Dear Jim Kendall,

You said I wrote well and should write the story of "The Bobbie Lou" and her crew going overseas so here it is. I think that the date I'm starting this history is appropriate as it is the 52nd anniversary of "D" day.

The "Bobbie Lou" is a B-24 from the 370th Bomb Squadron in the 307th Bomb Group. I am 2nd Lt Thomas J. Patterson of New York City pilot of the "Bobbie Lou" which was the name of my wife at that time. Before I painted her picture on the side of the plane's nose the plane was just 44-49617 made in Ford's Willow Run Plant and had a Radar dome shaped like the Ball turret that could be lowered a couple of feet to use for bombing by Radar. It was a concept that was never used in our squadron because the Norden Bomb Sight was considered so efficient that it's potential was never realized.

## 1. The 2nd Lt. Tom Patterson crew ...

F/O Sam Rowell of Independence MO co-pilot,  
2nd Lt. Willaim Swope Needmore PA navigator,  
F/O Lindol French of Brookline Mass bombardier  
2nd Lt. Stewart M. Irwin, Seattle WA Radar Navigator  
Sgt. Edward E. Nixon of Yazoo City, Miss engineer  
Winfield S. Haldt of Terre Haute, Ind tail & ball gunner  
Lawrence J. Ward of Cambridge Mass radio operator  
Eugene W. Dezmelyk of Newton Square, PA nose gunner  
Bill Faris of La Porte, Texas upper turret gunner.

After the crew was assembled in the United States, we were sent to Hamilton Field near San Francisco CA to wait for favorable winds to fly over to Hawaii and thence to the Pacific Theater of Operations. We had a spare Tokyo tank in the bomb bays but even with that, we needed at least a zero wind factor to make the flight to the Hawaiian Islands which was going to take us 13 1/2 hours as it was. They then moved us to Fairfield/Suisun Air Base to wait because I think the rowdy Flight crews crowded the bar at the Officer's Club at Hamilton Field which had a lot of Generals in attendance and they couldn't get a drink. I had to admit that the crews got a little over exuberant waiting. Those silver wings did that you know!

## 2. Departure from the United States...

After waiting at Fairfield/Suisun for two weeks, Christmas Eve arrived. It was the routine for the Pilots and the Navigator to show up at a 16:30 meeting to hear the news, "Winds unfavorable today men. See you at 16:30 tomorrow." We'd all take off for San Francisco or wherever to kill some time. We were all dressed in our Pinks and Greens with our silver wings to impress the

local girls or the populace in general. Some of the guys that weren't required at the meeting had already taken off because who is going to be sent overseas on Christmas Eve, except Santa Claus of course?

Fortunately for my crew, we were all still there and when the Major intoned "the following crews will depart for Hickam field tonight at the following times", we were ready if not eager. My flight log shows that liftoff was at 23:55 Dec 24, 1944 from Fairfield/Susiun AAF for John Rogers Field Hawaii. I've forgotten why our destination in Hawaii was called John Rogers Field back then, but that is what is in my Log book.

We flew down the slot between the hills toward San Francisco bay at a low altitude to conserve fuel that would otherwise be used in a climb and flew to the San Francisco area which was obscured by fog up to maybe 600 feet. Only the skyglow of the cities shown through as a glow through the clouds below. As we turned to pass over the Golden Gate Bridge, the supporting towers of the bridge stuck up through the fog with it's red lights on the tips giving us a departing point from the States and from life as we had known it. The oldest man on our crew was 26 and the rest of us thought of him as old but old or young the thought that we might not come back in one piece made us a somber bunch.

I'm sure each one of us pondered what the future held for us and how the time away would affect the relationship we had with those we left behind. I was twenty one and my co-pilot was 20, one of my gunners was barely eighteen and Ed Nixon the Flight Engineer was the old man of 26. Also I had gotten married on June 10th of that year and as the engines droned on as we passed out of Golden Gate I'm sure I heard it clang shut as we went through. None of us had been out of the States before so it was a pretty subdued bunch except for the required radio calls to send us on our way.

Flying East to West, we were racing the sun so it took many hours to get light enough to see the Pacific Ocean below us. Our plane was a brand new L Model of the B-24 and was designed for Radar Bombing. We watched the Farallon islands pass below us and the coast of the United States disappear from behind us on our radar screen. Our Radio Operator kept them advised of our position and as we approached the Hawaiian Island we were told to drop down to 1500 feet from our cruising altitude of 8,000 feet and do our "Dance Routine" as it was called.

### 3. The Dance Routine...

Since Hawaii had been surprised by the Japanese at Pearl Harbor, any plane approaching the Islands had to have been briefed in advance how to do the "Dance Routine" which was that day's secret way to approach Hawaii. Our 'Top Secret Orders' that the Pilot received in a sealed envelope at the P.O.E. (Point Of Embarkation) were now opened to show us how the Dance Routine was to be accomplished for this 24 hour period. This routine comprised a system of either flying a square or a triangle with one minute or two minute sides and with the Identification Friend or Foe (I.F.F.) beaming a code only the U.S. would recognize. The blip on their radar screens would show a special symbol indicating we were a 'Friend'. We flew our prescribed Dance and

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were told to fly on to John Rogers Field.

We flew around Diamond Head and saw the town of Honolulu and then on toward Hickam field. My mind is hazy about whether we landed actually at Hickam or at the Honolulu airport as they were connected by a long taxiway and Hickam Field seemed to be used as a parking ramp for dozens of varied war planes of all types but especially B-29s' guarded by armed guards. It sort of insulted me that they didn't guard the B-24s' as tightly, we couldn't even approach the B-29s' for a look. "Hey! We were on the same side you guys." Of course I didn't know the roll they had in mind for those B-29s' or I'd have understood their precautions.

We had had box lunches on our way over which everyone else hated but I loved. I thought Spam was delicious. After a few quick winks of sleeps, I caught a bus down to Waikiki Beach so I could see for myself the playground of the Rich and Famous. What a disappointment. From the veranda of the Moana Hotel I viewed a short expanse of sand covered with loops of coiled barbedwire and every 100 feet or so an Army man with a rifle over his shoulder patrolling. I was impressed by the sheer intrigue conjured up by this panorama of sun, sand, barbedwire and guns but was disappointed in the beach. It seemed much smaller than I had imagined but I understood the armed men and the precautions taken and why they were there.

#### 4. Canton Island...

Next morning we were up at the crack of dawn for briefings and breakfast and on our way to Canton Island (I thought Canton was in China but the island is spelled with a "K" now). This Kanton is a flyspeck on the map but a delight to see as we refueled there after a flight of 11:15 hours. Kanton was southwest of Hawaii and seemed to be run by either New Zealanders or Australians. Their clipped English tipped us off to the fact that they weren't Americans. First time I'd heard English not American. I don't remember our accommodations there but we must have stayed overnight for my log shows that our next flight happened on the next day, Dec 29, 1944 to Tarawa where there wasn't a tree left standing, just tree trunks of palm trees. There was a terrible battle by the Marines for the Island and it almost wrecked it. The Japs left a nice runway though.

31 Dec, 1944 we flew from Tarawa to Guadalcanal to another scene of awful carnage by the Marines as they mopped up the enemy here. I remember a Marine telling me about a concrete structure there that was a long tunnel and they had just used bulldozers to cover over each end, sealing the fate of dozens of Japanese troops hiding in there. War is Hell and it tends to harden you to things that are best left in the past.

From Guadalcanal it was a short hop on January 1, 1945 to Nadzab at Lae on New Guinea where we left our B-24 for modification. The Tokyo tanks were removed and it was flown by someone else on up to Morotai island in the Molucca chain of islands our ultimate destination. On Morotai was Pitoe Field with two ten thousand foot strips for the bombers and a shorter 4,00 foot strip for the fighter planes. We flew up in a C-47 or "Gooney Bird" as it was affectionately called in those days because it flew 'Low and

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Slow' as my Mother told me to do so I'd be safe. Gooney Birds are funny birds. They forget to put their feet down when they come in for a landing and thumble head over tails when they hit the sand on Midway island, then stand up sedately as though nothing had happened. I think they forget to put the gear down when they make long flights over water. At Guadalcanal we were warned to avoid going near Bougainville in the Admiralties on our flight up to Nadzab as it was a hot bed of Japanese planes.

#### 5. Morotai...

The flight up to Morotai had a stop at Wakde Island and the view out the windows of the plane was spectacular with the Owen Stanley Mountains on our left and the Bismark Archipelago in the ocean on our right. The B-24 doesn't fly very fast, but this C-47 was being passed by ducks and other birds who'd honk to get by. I think I could have paddled a canoe faster, but alas I had no canoe so we endured the bumpy ride. It was so long ago that this phase of our overseas tour is hazy in my mind, but after we got to Morotai the memories flood back.

The plane landed on the shorter fighter strip and we loaded our B-4 bags into olive drab trucks for the trip down to the peninsula where all the squadrons tents were set up for living. It was late in the evening and the driver just dumped the enlisted men off at an official looking tent where they were directed to some sort of newcomers tent for the night. The Officers were not as lucky, as we were dumped off in the Officers area with no committee or person to greet us or show us where to sleep except a person came out and gave us a 16' X 16' paramidal tent folded around four foot tent poles and one longer pole. This was at 19:00 hours at night, so we found an empty tent with the mattresses rolled up and no signs of life in it and flopped on the cots and were asleep in minutes.

#### 6. Major Neeley...

The next morning in came a 1st Lt. who told us Major Neeley wanted to see us immediately, so here comes the welcoming we had missed. How wrong can you get??? The four of us Officers trooped over to the Squadron C.O.'s tent and there stood Major Neeley fuming at our audacity at sleeping in the tent that had just been emptied of the belonging of a crew that had been shot down the week before and that is why it was empty. We didn't know that and at 19:00 hours we weren't about to erect a 16' X 16' tent in the dark with no instructions, so why was he so angry? I think he must have been passed over for promotion or something and was bitter at life and took it out on us. We didn't know whose tent that was, but that it was empty and we were ready to drop from exhaustion. Not the best way to start off the tour with your new C.O.

We erected our tent next day on the sand at the end of the Squadron street. Ours was the last one on the beach with the lagoon only fifteen feet away on one side and the jungle fifteen feet on the other side. Between us and the next tent was a foxhole surrounded by sandbags in case of airraids and in front of it was a fully manned machine gun nest, as they had been having Japanese troops come over in boats from the next island at

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night until the fighter planes put an end to their scheme and sank most of the boats. This all happened within the last two weeks and was successful as there were no more boat raids.

#### 7. Our First Mission...

My Log shows that our first mission was on the 15th of Jan. 1945 to Jesselton, Borneo with 15 250 lb bombs on the runway. We flew a loose formation past Halmahera island because formation flying uses a lot of gass, then tightened up the formation to pass through the Celebes Sea to the northern part of Borneo and around it's northern tip to the backside of Borneo called Sarawak, to it's capital Brunei where Jesselton air field was. I can't even find it on the map anymore as Sarwak is no longer called Sarawak and Jesselton is no longer called Jesselton and it may have just been the name of the airfield there but I thought it was a town.

There is an exhilaration dropping your first load of bombs as though you have finally accomplished what you have been in training for all these months. Frenchy dropped his bombs right on the runway this time and Bill Swope took us there with unerring accuracy and the gunners were watchful if not needed this time and even the flight lunch tasted very good.

The return trip from a long mission gets to seem very long. Much longer than the trip to the target and it was dark when we landed at Morotai. The debriefing was short and we fell into bed like leaden weights to sleep the sleep of the newly initiated, worn out but proud of what we had done. Tomorrow we would have a conference on what to do about the miserable tent we were sleeping in, but tonight we were kings. Of course the inevitable air raid woke us in the middle of the night as the bombs went off fairly close by. The searchlights illuminated the lone bomber (Washing machine Charley as it was called) over head and the Ack Ack guns were deafening being only 100 feet away from our tent and were much louder than the bombs the Japanese dropped. This air raid was an annoyance raid and the damage was minimal at best except for the time they struck the Combat Whiskey supply. Is there no end to their infamy, I ask you?

#### 8. Combat Whiskey...

After each mission we got two ounces of whiskey to settle our nerves. Since I had decided to not drink as long as I was overseas I had them pour my two ounces into an empty bottle I had and hoarded it for barter. Some of my other officers did the same occasionally and we saved up a whole quart of mixed brands of whiskey. We borrowed a truck and took the whiskey to a sawmill run by Black Construction Engineering troops on the other side of the island. We traded for enough cut lumber to build a frame for our tent and since Bill Swope the Navigator was a construction contractor in real life we designed a magnificent tent raised on empty steel drums which let the air circulate under and around the new tent and the foot long centipedes wouldn't climb the steel drums but burrowed under them into the sand.

#### 9. Our tent, "Infinite Squalor"...

Under the overhang of the tent, mosquito netting sides let

breezes waft through and on the end of the over hangs we had canvas drop cloths to protect from the frequent downpours. It was really a nice tent after the squallor of our first tent which we called "Infinite Squallor" and this one was named "Infinite Squallor II" in memory of the first one. An incentive to build was given by the C.O. who threatened to bulldoze down the first tent we put up, which leaned crazily and was pretty bad. The second one was so much of an improvement that he moved into it himself when we were rotated home.

Life in the Squadron was interesting as there was a new movie every night and the island was covered with palm and banana trees shading and hiding the tents which made it pretty exotic. There were four squadrons right in this area, the 370th, the 371st, the 372nd and the 424th. In the center of all these and also right on the beach was the mess hall where the cooks were outstanding, making the best Banana Cream pie, I had ever eaten, from local bananas and canned condensed milk or powdered milk. The movie theater showed movies that had worked their way up the line from base to base and had a cartoon preceeding them. The PX had nothing to speak of but tooth paste and other essentials like that. The wonderful Red Cross girls served coffee at 11:00 every day for an hour or so and life took on a sort of repetition that made one day seem like the next.

#### 10. Red Cross Girls and U.S.O Shows...

I cannot say enough to praise those wonderful Red Cross women who were there and endured the same air raids and loneliness as we did. They were all volunteers and made the USO girls seem frivolous in comparison. We had a baseball diamond, a Rifle range, Post Xchange and a church to keep us busy since flight crews only flew every four days due to the number of planes in commission versus the number of crews available to fly them.

Infrequently, U.S.O. shows came through and everyone there who wasn't flying attended them. Seating was on a first come first serve basis except there was a Hospital section in the front of the theater and an Officer's section around it. To my great surprise one of the shows had three girls dancing and who, does one of them happen to be but a girl with whom I went to High School. I went backstage after the show and she recognized me immediately. I asked her for a date but she said she had a boyfriend back in the States and couldn't. I casually asked what he did and she told me he was an engineer working on some sort of Manhattan Project. I asked what that was and she said she thought it was a series of highways across the United States. Little did we know at that time that it was the Atomic Bomb project, but I figured that that was the cover story they used.

#### 11. Corregidor...

We were bombing the Phillipines a lot and went on the first raid to bomb Corregidor since we lost the islands to the Japanese. The names of targets in my log were names that the newspapers back home headlined like Leyte, Tacloban, Cavite, Canacao, Mindoro, Cebu and others. On one of our missions to Corregidor we lost a prop over Nichols field in Manila and had been told if we couldn't make it back on three engines, to land at Leyte where

they would have a prop and could replace it there.

I flew over on three engines with the gunners watching the clouds for zeros on anything that moved in the sky and actually did shoot at an out of range C-47 that had popped out of the clouds going the opposite way until I shouted into the mike, "Don't shoot. It's a C-47." Well it got our blood circulating and our hearts pumping and cleared the barrels of our Fifty caliber machine guns. We didn't want them to get rusty.

The landing at Leyte was right down the center of the runways and I worried about my wings getting clipped on all the wrecked Navy fighter planes pushed to the side of the runway from the "Battle of Leyte Gulf". These fighter planes had no carrier to land on as their landing field had been sunk in the battle. They had landed there all shot up and had been bulldozed off to the side to let more land behind them. The tips of our wings barely cleared the wreckage as we went by and I wondered why they were here, as news travels slowly to the troops and we hadn't heard about it yet back on Morotai.

## 12. Heaven or Hell?...

On Leyte, the Enlisted men went to one area and the Officers to another. We were led along a narrow path that was on the top of a sort of dyke between two rice fields. We used our flash lights to see the way and as I switched it from side to side there at ground level were two huge glowing red disks like large agate marbles reflecting back at me. At the same time I heard this awful "Mooooooo" and the shining orbs were revealed as the eyes of this huge water buffalo lying in the wet rice paddie with horns that looked like they were at least four feet across. I was so startled, I thought I'd jump out of my skin! When I saw those red eyes and horns and heard that demonic bellow, I thought I'd died and it wasn't Heaven I had gone to.

Miti was an airfield we hit on Halmahera island just across the lagoon that the Japanese Zeros flew out of and we demonstrated our Radar bombing capabilities in 617 the Radar Bomber that we brought over to take the pressure off the Norden Bombsight, but I guess we didn't make much of an impression on the higher ups because that is the only time we got to use our Radar Bombardier even though our bombs went right down the center of the runway there. The whole mission only lasted 4:45 hours there and back. Maybe it was the fact that this was the only plane in the squadron with Radar bombing capabilities and it's particular efficiencies, like bombing through clouds, could not be utilized by the other planes with only the Norden bombsight which required actually seeing the target to drop the bombs.

## 13. Phosphorus Anti Aircraft shells...

After our mission bombing Corregidor, we went on a Photo Reconnaissance mission to film the islands of Leyte, Samar and Cebu. We landed and stayed overnight at Samar and next day did some more photography of Leyte. Someone told me that from the photos they could tell where troops were hiding in the jungles. It was on one of these missions that we saw phosphorus AA shells which spray little pieces of burning phosphorus like a huge octopus

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tentacles spreading out above us. These tiny bits of phosphorus can burn a hole right through the aluminum skin of your plane or the plexigls windows or you for that matter. This was more of psychological weapon than damaging because you watched those white plumes come down and you can't move around much in formation, but maybe that was their plan to make us run into each other and crash.

#### 14. Rest and Relaxation...

After 25 missions we were supposed to get to Australia for R & R (rest and relaxation) and my Radar Bombardier/Navigator "Mitch" actually did get to go but the rest of the crew were all set to go when it was cancelled by Gen. Mac Arthur who said, "If the ground soldiers don't get to go. Why should the Air Corp?" Anyway Mitch went down to Townsville on the east coast of Australia and fell in love with the girls down there. The people were so hospitable and friendly that he didn't want to come back. He got to go because he flew with other crews as Navigator and got his 25 missions in early while the rest of us were on mission 23.

Another place we bombed a lot was Borneo, from Balikpapan in the South to Tarakan, to cover the Australian invasion in the north. We had never seen an invasion and it was fascinating to watch the invasion boats drive in toward shore at all different distances from land, then, at a predetermined distance, they'd all turn parallel and run until all the stragglers caught up and in unison turn toward the beach so that all boats hit the beach at the same instant to discharge their troops.

#### 15. Borneo's Oil Fields...

Also, there were missions to Sandakan and Mangar and Seppingan airfield at Balikpapan and my favorite name Lahuddatu. In one month alone, we hit Balikpapan six different times. At Balikpapan was an oil field and we had to avoid hitting the refineries because, contrary to what Napoleon said, an army does not travel on it's stomach but on it's ball bearings and oil is the life blood of ball bearings. They need oil to roll. Also, gasoline is made from oil and when you're out of gas and your ball bearings won't roll, everything grinds to a halt. Whoever controls the oil fields wins the war, from Ploesti in Italy to Balikpapan in Borneo.

We flew convoy cover one time loaded with depth charges but I guess the Japanese submarine commander saw that a B-24 from the 307th Bomb Group was there and was afraid to sink any ships. Our reputation got around, probably from our mission to Limboeng airfield in the Celebes where we dropped 8 1000 lb bombs on their runway. No planes on their runway but we sure tore up a lot of concrete and knocked down a lot of coconuts I am sure.

#### 16. Write Up in Newspaper...

I got a letter from home asking what I had done to get a write-up in our local Newspaper in a column devoted to servicemen. The story dramatically headlined, "There Were No Misses" and told how "Lt. Patterson of 1160 5th Ave and his crack 'Jungle Air Force' crew were on a shipping strike in the So Makassar Straights found

a flotilla of Japanese ships and dropped to 75 feet and left them all burning brightly." Well it was so long after the fact that I had almost forgotten about it as we had been looking for a much larger force but didn't find it and by the time it was embellished by the Public Relations Officer, it sounded like I had sunk the whole Jap Fleet single handed.

There were other targets we hit too numerous to name but the name Zamboanga on Mindanao island in the Philippines brings to mind the famous words from a song, "Oh, the monkeys have no tails in Zamboanga!" That is a line that will go down in history. Almost as famous as, "I shall return", which was said by someone out there in the Pacific theater.

#### 17. The Piglet...

One day, my enlisted men found a little pink piglet and kept it in their tent, where it slept between two G.I. shoes made from pigskin. Morotai was home for big black bristly haired wild boars that got to be 250 to 300 lbs when grown and this little piglet had just been born and somehow wandered away from it's mother and into their tent. We used to see these boars at the edge of the jungle with their four inch tusks and black hair. They left us alone and we left them alone and the wandering piglet was a fluke. That night when everyone in their tent was asleep, the piglet started to squeal it's head off.

Mama had come looking for junior and entered the tent squealing too, all 250 lbs of black bristles, tusks and anger at misplacing junior for so long. My men decided that piglet needed it's mother more than they needed it and hurriedly stepped outside for some fresh air while Mama exited with junior, both squealing theirs heads off, departing for greener pastures.

There were lots of pets in the Squadron such as dogs, monkeys, parrots and even some land crabs. Land crabs didn't make the best of pets as they tended to nip anyone who came too close to their one big powerful claw which they held over their heads menacingly as they scuttled along. Guys away from home like to have pets. I guess it reminds them of how things were back in the States. One tent had a small monkey and a puppy. The puppy was named Mutt and the monkey was Jeff.

#### 18. Censoring Mail...

The Officers were called upon to censor the enlisted men's mail so that no targets or bomb loads etc. were revealed. (Officer's mail was censored by the Intelligence Officer himself) we did it bycutting out the offensive lines with a razor. One enlisted man, who I admired for his ingenuity, would tell his girl friend, "yesterday we flew to... (and would cut out a section of the letter with a razor) "and we dropped... (another section cut out) and we shot down...(another section gone). This man was a ground crew man and didn't on fly missions but to his girl he was single handedly winning the war.

#### 19. Painting "Bobbie Lou" on the nose...

The B-24 we had taken into Nadzab # 617 finally showed up in our

squadron and I decided to paint my wife's picture on the side in my spare time. Bobbie Lou was a beautiful girl, blonde hair, green eyes and a knockout of a figure and the prevailing type of picture painted on planes was ususally a voluptuous "Petty Girl" in revealing garb. I decided to show my proud possession in a revealing nightgown standing on tip toes smiling provocatively. I had to use aircraft paint with gasoline for a thinning fluid instead of turpentine and it came out pretty good, if I do say so myself. Years later, I saw the picture in a book called "Nose Art From WWII" and there it was with some sergeant that I didn't recognize standing next to the plane right in front of the picture. As long as someone has that book, the "Bobbie Lou" will survive in history.

We didn't fly the same plane each time and flying another one over Borneo's dense jungle, I flew by a tall tree, much taller than the rest and there standing on a branch above the panoply of green was a man like figure with red hair, holding on to the branch above. We were right at eye level and it was just off the tip of the left wing, this person or animal or thing. When we got back I told the Debriefing officer and he asked around about this strange sighting until someone laughed and said that I had probably seen the "wild man of Borneo", a Baboon with red hair.

## 20. The Crash Landing...

As we landed on one of my missions, the right wing went way lower than it should on touchdown and I could feel this scraping through the control column and a strong pull to the right. Instinctively I gave it left rudder and right aileron down to lift that wing and added some power with the right outboard engine. I could feel the plane shuddering as it rolled along on one tire on the left and on the right wheel there was no tire. We were running along on the rim. The right tire had been flattened by flak and we didn't know about it until we landed where it just peeled the shattered tire off, down to the rim. I reared back so hard in my seat that the seatbelt squeezed my guts up against my spine and they were sore for weeks. After the landing, which didn't vere off the center of the runway, an Austrailian officer came up to me and said, "Did You make that landing?" and when I told him that I did, he said, "That was the best landing I have ever seen!"

I was feeling pretty good about the landing but at the same time I was worried that I had messed up the plane as that right landing strut had vibrated a lot running on the wheel rim. I was sure it needed replacing and maybe the whole right wing was bent or something. The next day, Major Neeley's righthand man took me out to the plane, which they hadn't moved off the runway yet, and he was asking me all these questions about what in my flight training helped me make the landing. I was petrified that they were getting ready to charge me for the cost of fixing it (B-24s cost \$240,000 in those days) so I told him that the plane really just sort of landed itself. I found out later that he was interviewing me for a recommendation for the D.F.C. and I talked him out of it. It is hard to believe that I talked myself out of a medal, but I did. all I had to have said was that my extensive flight training showed me what to do and he would have told Major Neeley the it had been Distinguished Flying.

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## 21. The Outrigger Canoe and Bagos the pig...

One day there was an outrigger canoe floating in the lagoon about 20 feet offshore with no one in it. It was a beautiful craft made of a hollowed out log with sticks going out to one outrigger on the side. I swam out and retrieved it and pulled it up onto the sand next to our tent assuming it was abandoned by natives of the islands, short wiry fellows with bushy hair. They often came around to barter for their goods. I still have two of my prized possessions, an intricately carved replica of a paddle, seven inches long and an inch wide with a unique crest like a pineapple at the opposite end of it's stroker and a slender carved pig, two and a half inches by eight inches. Both of these magnificent pieces, though roughly made, are carved out of the most lustrous black wood. We called it Molucca wood over there but it seemed almost like ebony, very dense and lustrous though not very buoyant so that if you drop it in water it sinks and then very slowly floats back to the surface, as if reluctant to come back to you. Teak wood is very close to this wood in appearance.

I named the pig "Bagos" as that was what they kept telling about the sale price in their pidgin English. It wasn't until I got home that my wife on hearing about it exclaimed that they probably meant "Bargain". It was beautiful wood, a mixture of dark brown and black with a tight grain, really exotic looking.

I had the canoe for a couple of months until one night during an extremely high tide it disappeared, as though the Gods of the natives retrieved it for them during the night and floated it back to their island. I enjoyed it for a while and then he gave it back to them. I loved that canoe and just wish I had taken a photograph of it, but I put it off and never got a photograph of my favorite possession out there.

## 22. Island Hopping...

The war in the Pacific was a series of Island hoppings, getting ever closer to the Japanese mainland. The allies would bypass an island, isolating it from use by the Japanese and leaving huge numbers of troops to wither on the vine there. When we got to Morotai, it was in the forefront of the war, the leading edge so to speak, with airraids every night, but after being there for nine months we had been passed as the new line was now in the Philippines and the Marianas. The island across from us had 50,000 isolated Japanese troops when the war ended. They had no way to contribute to their side because we sank all their boats and landing craft before they left the docks. Still, some never surrendered and I'm sure died of old age on Halmahera island and even in the hills of Morotai.

On Morotai in 1955, a few Japanese soldiers turned themselves in to keep from starving. They had been living in caves dug out between our two main runways where they reported by radio how many planes were on our bombing raids. I don't know what they did from 1945 until 1955 but it must have been a dull life unless they trained centipedes for races or bowled, using coconuts as bowling balls. I just don't know.

### 23. Ladies, please be seated...

One more escapade that was interesting had to do with the building of a Ladies latrine behind our newly completed Squadron Officers Club. Lt. Scaglione and I were put in charge of building it and given Carte Blanche to design and build this edifice. Well, "Scag" said he knew how to use dynamite because we had struck iron hard corral two feet down when we started to dig. It is a good thing that Lt. Scaglione wasn't a cook because if the recipe would call for two eggs he'd have put in four, so the amount of dynamite to blow the hole made a noise that dwarfed the Atomic Bomb and I thought the island would sink from the hole in it's bottom. Well, we got it finished all right and served it's purpose well.

I'd better end this History of the "Bobbie Lou" and let her live in my memory. I see the real one once in a while for I didn't move very far when we divorced and now I'm married to Esther, a wonderful woman whose husband was an Army Automotive Mechanic on New Guinea during WWII. She was a widow from Milwaukee when I met her eight years ago.

### 24. Letters Home...

On Morotai we were always trying to let our loved ones know where we were without saying it in letters. I decide to let my wife know by telling where we were bombing so I include the phrase, "How has little Phillip been?" in my letters hoping she would catch on to "Phillip been" as sounding like "Phillipine" since we didn't know anyone named Phillip. I did send her a Dutch coin in the envelope with MOROTAI scratched on it, then I dripped candle wax on it and MOROTAI disappeared. In a following letter I told her to put it in a pan on the stove and heat it up dissolving the wax revealing MOROTAI so she knew the name of the island. I still have that coin somewhere in a box.

Another little interesting episode, having nothing to do with combat started back in New York City where I worked for an advertising agency that had the Bulova Watch account and when I went in they presented me with a watch with the back of the case engraved with "Lick 'Em and Hurry Back". I carried that watch all through my tour until I was on the way home in Manila in the Philippines in a USO Men's room and put it down on the wash stand to wash my hands. I forgot it for a few minutes and walked out into the sunshine and half way down the block I remembered it and rushed back, but it was gone. It had an aluminum band, fashioned by some enterprising G.I. in the squadron that was intricately edged and you spread it open to slip it on your wrist where it sprung tight after it was in place. I hope it ended up on some Mindanao Chieftain befitting it's importance.

### 25. The Hole in "Bobbie Lou"...

Another crew flying the plane got an anti-aircraft shell right up through the bombay of #617 which went out the top of the plane punching a hole the size of a watermelon and exploded far above. It severed a few of the control cables and even though it was repaired back at the base, it always felt like it was flying a bit sideways after that. We always got a few small flak holes on

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missions but this was too much! Poor "Bobbie Lou".

Fifty years is a long time to remember a war but it shaped all our lives, we who lived in that generation. I hope we carried the torch high enough to light the way for future generations so they won't have to relive the past. The notations in my Log Book are pretty cryptic, ie. 15 demolition bombs on runway; Prop shot off, replaced at Leyte; 30 100lb Fire bombs; 28 260lb frags on revets; land flat tire on hub; Napalm on barracks; on hill guns; strafing of shipping; flak knocks out pilot window; on shipping in Makassar; frag clusters on AA; 250 GP on Japs; 6 250 GP 2 on hulk 4 on docks; 9 500lb GP to cover invasion. etc, etc.

#### 26. Tracer Bullets...

In Borneo on one mission, we were flying up the river at Banger-masin at tree top level, twisting and turning as the river did when we came across a camouflaged gunboat tucked under some foliage at river's edge. My gunners let go at it and I said, "Look how the tracer bullets seem to be bouncing back at us." Swope the navigator shouted, "They're not bouncing back. They are shooting at us," but by then we were past and continued on up to the Pare-Pare shipyard where we dropped our bombs destroying a few ships under construction. When we went back down the river we were ready for that gunboat and gave it a real raking with no return fire. They had told us, every boat would be enemy boats. My Log book says 9 250 lb bombs on shipping.

On one mission to Cebu island we dropped our bombs in a three plane formation and we were the lead plane supposed to be bombing a runway there. When the strike photos were printed, they called me and Frenchy in and asked accusingly, why did we drop our bombs short of the target and sure enough the photos showed two sets of bombs on each side of the runway from the puffs of smoke and a center set just short of the runway. Frenchy swore he dropped his bombs at the same time the rest did but the photos said differently. I backed him up, but who knows?

#### 27. Bubble Window...

I remember the one that says, "flak knocks out pilot window", we were dropping "chaff" or "window" as it was called. This was boxes of coiled aluminum foil which would open up in the slip stream and stream out over the target to confuse Radar. I was flying in the second echelon behind and slightly below other planes also dropping "Window". The flak started over the target and a close one shook the plane just as the "window" incident happened. All of us were throwing boxes of "window" out the waist at the time.

I looked up just in time to see three unopened boxes of "window" heading right toward my windshield. These boxes are about five pounds of solid metal when they are unopened (they open in the slipstream). There was no way to move in formation flying so you just hope that when they hit you it won't hurt anything. I almost made it except the last box smashed into my plastic bubble window that I used to view the left engines, shattering it into smithereens. When we got back to Morotai, there were no replacement bubble windows so it was replaced with a flat plexiglas

sliding window which I banged my head on time and again, forgetting there was no bubble to stick my head in any more. This is why my head is flat on the left side.

#### 28. The Atomic Bomb...

I ended up with 39 missions and the Atomic Bomb went off while I was on the ship coming home. It took 21 days for that ship because it was zigzagging all over the ocean and we stopped at a few places to pick up other troops at other islands also going home to retrain to come back again until the war was finished. I remember not being able to smoke a cigarette on deck at night until one night the loudspeaker announced that we had dropped a bomb on Japan and the whole ship was abuzz with "Why did they say a bomb?" they must have meant, "They dropped a bunch of bombs", what good would one bomb do. But the curious thing was that they also said that we could now smoke on deck at night. It wasn't until I read about the Atomic Bomb later that I realized that they meant "A" bomb, not a bomb.

The ship was still zigzagging to avoid submarines, but three days later it even stopped zigzagging and sailed along in a straight line toward the West Coast of the United States. Getting information from the ship's crew was like pulling teeth, very difficult and hard to swallow, but it finally dawned on us that for some reason, the War was over.

#### 29. March Field and the Riverside Hotel...

The ship was supposed to go to San Francisco where I was to depart for a base where I'd get some B-32 training, but it turned south to Los Angeles where we went to March Field. The B-32 was the successor to the B-24 but on the scale of a B-29, much bigger and more powerful. With the War ending, all these plans went down the tubes and we went to the nearest base for discharge from the service.

It was Sunday morning and I took a bus downtown to this large hotel, the Riverside Hotel and asked where I could get breakfast. There was a man there named Don MacNeil who had a radio show up on the fifth floor called "The Breakfast Club" and I was directed up there. I was ushered in and given a table in a room full of little old ladies also having breakfast while Don MacNeil chatted on a microphone, I was the only man in the place beside Don. When he asked, "Now who can give the Mother of the Day her corsage?" every eye turned to me. There I was a, 1st Lt. with silver wings and ribbons on my chest and the only man in the room. I was trapped. Don had already picked the Mother of the Day so all I had to do was pin her corsage on and then he said, "Give Mom a big kiss" and blushing through it I gave this little old Lady a peck on the cheek and pinned her corsage on her. They did pick up the check for my breakfast though.

#### 30. The Big Victory Parade...

I caught an Army transport plane across the U.S. came home to find my wife was visiting friends out on Long Island and had to go hunt her up out there. She had fallen in love with someone

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else while I was overseas, so another chapter of my life was just beginning, although I do remember a huge 10,000 veteran parade down 5th Avenue in New York City with the applause swelling as the crowds on the sides recognized we were Airmen as we marched by in formation. But the applause will only keep you going for just so long and Morotai seemed so far away by then.

Looking back at those times through the filter of fifty years is like viewing an eclipse through dark glasses, you only see the corona, which is the beautiful halo, not the black center. The dark glasses tend to become rose colored glasses and that is maybe the only way we can look at it, as an episode in our lives to tell our children about, if they'll listen. I can't even remember where for sure I picked up my crew, but I remember all of us were there up in Walla Walla Washington, for gunnery practice and high altitude bombing practice and Sam my co-pilot was practicing landings from his side of the plane.

We had a gunner that wasn't working out and we dropped him to the relief of all the rest of the crew. Some men work together and others just don't seem to be able to get along well and we were delighted with his replacement. Our crew had assembled at the Lemoore Naval Air Station and were shipped up to Walla Walla WA, for crew training to see if we worked together well

Some where up there in the P.X. I had just taken the straw out of it's paper cover while the crew and I were sitting sipping Cokes. I noticed a fly perched on the wall. I thrust the straw paper into my mouth and blew a spit ball hitting that fly right in the head, killing it and I was endeared to my gunners forever for my aim, shooting skill and calmness in an emergency.

31. Later on...

I have been in another war since then, where I wasn't exactly a combatant but I did see the badly wounded as we flew them back to the U.S. in our Air Evac planes from Japan. This time Japan was on our side and it reminded me of the saying;

"Those who forget the past, are doomed to relive it again."

I don't know who said that, but it is true.

Thanx for your time and indulgence,

Tom Patterson

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## THOMAS PATTHELSON

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August 15, 1996

I've added some new things to this history of the "Bobbie Lou" from reading the book "Morotai" by Boeman and by going back to an old book called "We'll Say Goodbye" printed in Australia while we were still on Morotai and the war was still going on.

THIS IS THE FIRST LETTER I WROTE TO YOU WITH THE ADDITIONS...

You said I wrote well and should write the story of "The Bobbie Lou" and her crew going overseas so here it is. I think that the date I'm starting this history is appropriate as it is the 52nd anniversary of "D" day, June 6, 1994.

The "Bobbie Lou" is a E-24 from the 370th Bomb Squadron in the 307th Bomb Group. I am 2nd Lt Thomas J. Patterson of New York City Pilot of the "Bobbie Lou" which was the name of my wife at that time. Before I painted her picture on the side of the plane's nose the plane was just 44-49617 made in Ford's Willow Run plant and had a Radar dome shaped like the Ball turret that could be lowered a couple of feet to use for bombing by Radar. It was a concept that was never used in our squadron because the Norden Bomb sight was considered so efficient that it's potential was never realized.

The 2nd Lt. Tom Patterson crew ...

E/O Sam Rowell of Independence MO co-pilot,  
2nd Lt. William Swope Needmore PA navigator,  
E/O Lindol French of Brookline Mass bombardier  
2nd Lt. Stewart M. Irwin, Seattle WA Radar Navigator  
Sgt. Edward E. Nixon of Yazoo City, Miss engineer  
Winfield S. Haight of Terre Haute, Ind tail & ball gunner  
Lawrence J. Ward of Cambridge Mass radio operator  
Eugene W. Dermelyk of Newton Square, PA nose gunner  
Bill Paris of La Porte, Texas upper turret gunner.

After the crew was assembled in the United States, we were sent to Hamilton Field near San Francisco CA to wait for favorable winds to fly over to Hawaii and thence to the Pacific Theater of Operations. We had a spare Tokyo tank in the bomb bays but even with that, we needed at least a zero wind factor to make the flight to the Hawaiian Islands which was going to take us 13 1/2 hours as it was. They then moved us to Fairfield/Suisun Air Base to wait because I think the rowdy flight crews crowded the bar at the Officer's Club at Hamilton Field which had a lot of Generals in attendance and they couldn't get a drink. I had to admit that the crews got a little over exuberant waiting. Those silver wings did that you know! We had been together for two and a half months and here are some reminiscences of life back then.

I. "Angels Flight" was a funicular railway down in Los Angeles where the hill was too steep for a regular street and so some

agency had put in a small set of tracks going almost straight up the side of the hill to the top and had called it Angels flight.

I had been in a coffee shop in the neighborhood for a 'cuppa' and as it was in the wee hours of the morning, had struck up a conversation with a pretty waitress. I was enroute to a base in California to pick up my new crew and proceed on to Walla Walla, Washington for crew training and orientation before going overseas. She was impressed with my pilot's wings and I was impressed with her waitress wings and the conversation turned to where could I find a hotel open at this time of night. She told me that they were all downtown, miles and miles away with no buses running at this time. She said, "I have a couch you can sleep on but you have to be quiet for my child is asleep there too."

I was desperate for a place to sleep and had two days to get to Lemore where I was to pick up the crew so I said "O.K." and we went a couple of blocks to this imposing cliff with a small archway at the bottom of it saying, "Angels flight". In the archway was a seat on wheels on a steep track going up the cliff, a regular funicular railway to the stars. We sat down and she pushed a handle and click..click..click.. up we went. It was glorious in a clear starry night gliding up to heaven.

At the top we got off the seat and she pressed a button and it dropped down out of sight for it's next passenger. I had such a feeling of exhilaration to have ridden this contraption and a feeling of relief when we went only a few steps to her apartment and the arms of Morpheus. That would be a good name for an Apartment building, 'The Morpheus Arms'.

The next morning I was awakened by her shaking my shoulder on the couch, saying "Time to get up" and I had the scare of my life when I saw this smiling skull with no lipstick, no eyelashes, hair brushed back and absolutely no eyebrows. I was scared, I had never seen anyone with no eyebrows. I didn't know it was the custom in those days to paint on a thin line arched above the eyes and coming out of a dead sleep to see this ghostly figure, was a shock. She had breakfast made and her little child was all over me looking at my wings and 2nd Lt. bars. I asked her what happened to her eyebrows and she laughingly told me she had plucked them all out because they didn't grow right and painted them on and put on false eyelashes. This kind sweet woman's name escapes me but her looks and kindness, I'll always remember.

## 2. Departure from the United States...

After waiting at Fairfield/Suisun for two weeks, Christmas Eve arrived. It was the routine for the pilots and the Navigator to show up at a 16:30 meeting to hear the news, "Winds unfavorable today men. See you at 16:30 tomorrow." We'd all take off for San Francisco or wherever to kill some time. We were all dressed in our Pinks and Greens with our silver wings to impress the local girls or the populace in general. Some of the guys that weren't required at the meeting had already taken off because who is going to be sent overseas on Christmas Eve, except Santa Claus or courses?

Fortunately for my crew, we were all still there and when the

Major intoned the following crews will depart for Hickam field tonight at the following times. We were ready if not eager. My flight log shows that lift-off was at 23:55 Dec 24, 1944 from Fairfield/Bussim AAF for John Rogers Field, Hawaii. I've forgotten why our destination in Hawaii was called John Rogers Field back then, but that is what is in my log book.

Fairfield tower played Christmas Carols over the radio as we flew down the slot between the hills toward San Francisco bay. We stayed at a low altitude to conserve fuel that would otherwise be used in a climb and flew to the San Francisco area which was obscured by fog up to maybe 600 feet. We had extra fuel in Tokyo tanks in the hombays to help us make it.

Only the skyglow of the cities shown through as a glow through the clouds below. As we turned to pass over the Golden Gate Bridge, the supporting towers of the bridge stuck up through the fog with its red lights on the tips giving us a departing point from the states and from life as we had known it. The oldest man on our crew was 26 and the rest of us thought of him as old but old or young the thought that we might not come back in one piece made us a somber bunch.

I'm sure each one of us pondered what the future held for us and how the time away would affect the relationship we had with those we left behind. I was twenty one and my co-pilot was 20, one of my gunners was barely eighteen and Ed Nixon the flight Engineer was the old man of 26. Also I had gotten married on June 10th of that year and as the engines croned on as we passed out of Golden Gate I'm sure I heard it clang shut as we went through. None of us had been out of the states before so it was a pretty subdued bunch except for the required radio calls to send us on our way.

Flying East to West, we were racing the sun so it took many hours to get light enough to see the Pacific Ocean below us. Our plane was a brand new Model of the E-24 and was designed for Radar Bombing. We watched the Farallon Islands pass below us and the coast of the United States disappear from behind us on our radar screen. Our Radio Operator kept them advised of our position and as we approached the Hawaiian Islands we were told to drop down to 1500 feet from our cruising altitude of 8,000 feet and do our Dance Routine as it was called.

### 3. The Dance Routine...

Since Hawaii had been surprised by the Japanese at Pearl Harbor, any plane approaching the Islands had to have been briefed in advance how to do the Dance Routine which was that day's secret way to approach Hawaii. Our 'TOP Secret Orders' that the Pilot received in a sealed envelope at the P.O.E. (Point of Embarkation) were now opened to show us how the Dance Routine was to be accomplished for this 24 hour period. This routine comprised a system of either flying a square or a triangle with one minute or two minute sides and with the identification friend or foe (I.F.F.) beaming a code only the U.S. would recognize. The blip on their radar screens would show a special symbol in-dicating we were a 'friend'. We flew our prescribed Dance and were told to fly on to John Rogers Field.

We flew around Diamond Head and saw the town of Honolulu and then on toward Hickam field. My mind is hazy about whether we landed actually at Hickam or at the Honolulu airport as they were connected by a long taxiway and Hickam field seemed to be used as a parking ramp for dozens of varied war planes of all types but especially E-29s guarded by armed guards. It sort of insulted me that they didn't guard the B-24s as tightly, we couldn't even approach the E-29s for a look. Hey! We were on the same side you guys. Of course I didn't know the roll they had in mind for those E-29s or I'd have understood their precautions.

We had had box lunches on our way over which everyone else hated but I loved. I thought spam was delicious. After a few quick winks or sleeps, I caught a bus down to Waikiki Beach so I could see for myself the playground of the Rich and Famous. What a disappointment. From the veranda of the Moana Hotel I viewed a short expanse of sand covered with loops of coiled barbed wire and every 100 feet or so an Army man with a rifle over his shoulder patrolling. I was impressed by the sheer intrigue conjured up by this panorama of sun, sand, barbed wire and guns but was disappointed in the beach. It seemed much smaller than I had imagined but I understood the armed men and the precautions taken and why they were there.

#### 4. Canton Island...

Next morning we were up at the crack of dawn for briefings and breakfast and on our way to Canton Island (I thought Canton was in China but the island is spelled with a "K" now). This Kanton is a flyspeck on the map but a delight to see as we returned there after a flight of 11:15 hours. Kanton was southwest of Hawaii and seemed to be run by either New Zealanders or Australians. Their clipped English tipped us off to the fact that they weren't Americans. First time I'd heard English not American. I don't remember our accommodations there but we must have stayed overnight for my log shows that our next flight happened on the next day, Dec 29, 1944 to Tarawa where there wasn't a tree left standing, just tree trunks of palm trees. There was a terrible battle by the Marines for the island and it almost wrecked it. The Japs left a nice runway though.

31 Dec, 1944 We flew from Tarawa to Guadalcanal to another scene of awful carnage by the Marines as they mopped up the enemy here. I remember a Marine telling me about a concrete structure there that was a long tunnel and they had just used bulldozers to cover over each end, sealing the fate of dozens of Japanese troops hiding in there. War is hell and it tends to harden you to things that are best left in the past.

From Guadalcanal it was a short hop on January 1, 1945 to Nadzab at Lae on New Guinea where we left our B-24 for modification. The Tokyo tanks were removed and it was flown by someone else on up to Morotai island in the Molucca chain of islands our ultimate destination. On Morotai was Pitoe field with two ten thousand foot strips for the bombers and a shorter 4,000 foot strip for the fighter planes. We flew up in a C-47 or Gooney Bird as it was affectionately called in those days because it flew low and slow as my Mother told me to do so I'd be safe. Gooney Birds are funny birds. They forget to put their feet down when they

come in for a landing and tumble head over tails when they hit the sand on Midway Island, then stand up so sedately as though nothing had happened. I think they forget to put the gear down when they make long flights over water. At Guadalcanal we were warned to avoid going near Bougainville in the Admiralties on our flight up to Nadzab as it was a hot bed of Japanese planes.

At Nadzab in New Guinea, we got training on how to survive in the jungle from Aussie instructors who told us not to drink from streams but to cut thick vines and drink the water out of them. It seems that the streams were full of parasites that could lodge in your intestines and cause all sorts of unpleasant results. They told us what fruit was edible and some of it quite tasty too. We saw our first native of New Guinea too, a bushy haired, beetle-nut chewing black man who lived in thatched huts around the perimeter of the base, usually where there was a stream. The huts were on stilts to let the air circulate and discourage wild animals entering while they slept.

Sam and I traded a couple of Aussie soldiers for two wide brimmed Aussie hats that we wore in Morotai until the Squadron C.O. threatened us with dire consequences unless we stopped wearing them. We had our officer's insignia on them, what more did he want? My father's cousin lived in Australia and I felt a kinship toward that country. He was a tennis champ.

#### 5. Morotai...

The flight up to Morotai had a stop at Wake Island and the view out the windows of the plane was spectacular with the Owen Stanley Mountains on our left and the Bismark Archipelago in the ocean on our right. The E-24 doesn't fly very fast, but this C-47 was being passed by trucks and other birds who'd honk to get by. I think I could have paddled a canoe faster, but alas I had no canoe so we endured the bumpy ride. It was so long ago that this phase of our overseas tour is hazy in my mind, but after we got to Morotai the memories flood back.

The plane landed on the shorter fighter strip and we loaded our B-4 bags into olive drab trucks for the trip down to the peninsula where all the squadrons tents were set up for living. It was late in the evening and the driver just dumped the enlisted men off at an official looking tent where they were directed to some sort of newcomers tent for the night. The officers were not as lucky, as we were dumped off in the officers area with no committee or person to greet us or show us where to sleep except a person came out and gave us a 16' X 16' paramidai tent folded around four foot tent poles and one longer pole. This was at 19:00 hours at night, so we found an empty tent with the mattresses rolled up and no signs of life in it and flopped on the cots and were asleep in minutes.

#### 6. Major Neeley...

The next morning in came a 1st Lt. who told us Major Neeley wanted to see us immediately, so here comes the welcoming we had missed. How wrong can you get? The four of us officers trooped over to the Squadron C.O.'s tent and there stood Major Neeley fuming at our audacity at sleeping in the tent that had

Just been emptied of the belonging of a crew that had been shot down the week before and that is why it was empty. We didn't know that and at 19:00 hours we weren't about to erect a 16' x 16' tent in the dark with no instructions, so why was he so angry? I think he must have been passed over for promotion or something and was bitter at life and took it out on us. We didn't know whose tent that was, but that it was empty and we were ready to drop from exhaustion. Not the best way to start off the tour with your new C.O.

We erected our tent next day on the sand at the end of the Squatron street. Ours was the last one on the beach with the lagoon only fifteen feet away on one side and the jungle fifteen feet on the other side. Between us and the next tent was a foxhole surrounded by sandbags in case of air raids and in front of it was a fully manned machine gun nest, as they had been having Japanese troops come over in boats from the next island at night until the fighter planes put an end to their scheme and sank most of the boats. This all happened within the last two weeks and was successful as there were no more boat raids.

#### 7. Our First Mission...

My log shows that our first mission was on the 15th of Jan. 1945 to Jesselton, Borneo with 15 250 lb bombs on the runway. We flew a loose formation past Halmahera island because formation flying uses a lot of gas, then tightened up the formation to pass through the Celebes Sea to the northern part of Borneo and around it's northern tip to the backside of Borneo called Sarawak, to it's capital Brunei where Jesselton air field was. I can't even find it on the map anymore as Sarawak is no longer called Sarawak and Jesselton is no longer called Jesselton and it may have just been the name of the airfield there but I thought it was a town.

There is an exhilaration dropping your first load of bombs as though you have finally accomplished what you have been in training for all these months. Frenchy dropped his bombs right on the runway this time and Eli Scope took us there with unerring accuracy and the gunners were watchful if not needed this time and even the flight lunch tasted very good.

The return trip from a long mission gets to seem very long. Much longer than the trip to the target and it was dark when we landed at Morotai. The debriefing was short and we fell into bed like leaden weights to sleep the sleep of the newly initiated, worn out but proud of what we had done. Tomorrow we would have a conference on what to do about the miserable tent we were sleeping in, but tonight we were kings. Of course the inevitable air raid woke us in the middle of the night as the bombs went off fairly close by. The searchlights illuminated the lone bomber (Washington machine as it was called) over head and the Ack Ack guns were deafening being only 100 feet away from our tent and were much louder than the bombs the Japanese dropped. This air raid was an annoyance raid and the damage was minimal at best except for the time they struck the Combat Whiskey supply. Is there no end to their infamy, I ask you?

#### 8. Combat Whiskey...

After each mission we got two ounces of whiskey to settle our nerves. Since I had decided to not drink as long as I was overseas I had them pour my two ounces into an empty bottle I had and hoarded it for later. Some of my other officers did the same occasionally and we saved up a whole quart of mixed brands of whiskey. We borrowed a truck and took the whiskey to a sawmill run by Black Construction Engineering troops on the other side of the island. We traded for enough cut lumber to build a frame for our tent and since Bill Swope the Navigator was a construction company store in real life we designed a magnificent tent raised on empty steel drums which let the air circulate under and around the new tent and the foot long centipedes wouldn't climb the steel drums but crawled under them into the sand.

9. Our tent, "Infinite Squalor"...

Under the overhang of the tent, mosquito netting sides let knees waltz through and on the end of the overhangs we had canvas drop cloths to protect from the frequent downpours. It was really a nice tent after the squalor of our first tent which we called "Infinite Squalor" and this one was named "Infinite Squalor II" in memory of the first one. An incentive to build was given by the C.O. who threatened to build down the first tent we put up, which I earned crazily and was pretty bad. The second one was so much of an improvement that he moved into it himself when we were rotated home.

Life in the Squadron was interesting as there was a new movie every night and the island was covered with palm and banana trees shading and hiding the tents which made it pretty exotic. There were four squadrons right in this area, the 370th, the 371st, the 372nd and the 424th. In the center of all these and also right on the beach was the mess hall where the cooks were outstanding, making the best Banana Cream Pie, I had ever eaten, from local bananas and canned condensed milk or powdered milk. The movie theater showed movies that had worked their way up the line from base to base and had a cartoon preceding them. The PX had nothing to speak of but tooth paste and other essentials like that. The wonderful Red Cross girls served coffee at 11:00 every day for an hour or so and life took on a sort of repetition that made one day seem like the next.

10. Red Cross Girls and U.S.O Shows...

I cannot say enough to praise those wonderful Red Cross women who were there and endured the same air raids and loneliness as we did. They were all volunteers and made the USO girls seem frivolous in comparison. We had a baseball diamond, a Rifle range, Post Exchange and a church to keep us busy since flight crews only flew every four days due to the number of planes in commission versus the number of crews available to fly them.

Infrequently, U.S.O. shows came through and everyone there who wasn't flying attended them. Seating was on a first come first serve basis except there was a Hospital section in the front of the theater and an Officer's section around it. To my great surprise one of the shows had three girls dancing and who, does one of them happen to be but a girl with whom I went to High School. I went backstage after the show and she recognized me

Immediately. I asked her for a date but she said she had a boyfriend and she told me he was an engineer working on some sort of Manhattan Project. I asked what that was and she said she thought it was a series of highways across the United States. Little did we know at that time that it was the Atomic Bomb project, but I figured that that was the cover story they used.

#### 11. Corregidor...

We were bombing the Philippines a lot and went on the first raid to bomb Corregidor since we lost the islands to the Japanese. The names of targets in my log were names that the newspapers back home had named like Leyte, Tacloban, Cavite, Canacao, Mindoro, Cebu and others. On one of our missions to Corregidor we lost a PROP over Nichols field in Manila and had been told if we couldn't make it back on three engines, to land at Leyte where they would have a prop and could replace it there.

I flew over on three engines with the gunners watching the clouds for peros on anything that moved in the sky and actually did shoot at an out of range C-47 that had popped out of the clouds going the opposite way until I shouted into the mike, "Don't shoot. It's a C-47. Well it got our blood circulating and our hearts pumping and cleared the barrels of our fifty caliber machine guns. We didn't want them to get rusty.

The landing at Leyte was right down the center of the runways and I worried about my wings getting clipped on all the wrecked Navy fighter planes pushed to the side of the runway from the Battle of Leyte Gulf. These fighter planes had no carrier to land on as their landing field had been sunk in the battle. They had landed there all shot up and had been killed off to the side to let more land behind them. The tips of our wings barely cleared the wreckage as we went by and I wondered why they were here, as news travels slowly to the troops and we hadn't heard about it yet back on Morotai.

#### 12. Heaven or Hell?...

On Leyte, the enlisted men went to one area and the officers to another. We were led along a narrow path that was on the top of a sort of dyke between two rice fields. We used our flash lights to see the way and as I switched it from side to side there at ground level were two huge glowing red disks like large agate marbles reflecting back at me. At the same time I heard this awful "MOOOOOO" and the shining orbs were revealed as the eyes of this huge water buffalo lying in the wet rice paddie with horns that looked like they were at least four feet across. I was so startled, I thought I'd jump out of my skin! When I saw those red eyes and horns and heard that demonic bellow, I thought I'd died and it wasn't Heaven I had gone to.

Midt was an airfield we hit on Halmahera island just across the lagoon that the Japanese Zeros flew out of and we demonstrated our Radar bombing capabilities in 617 the Radar Bomber that we brought over to take the pressure off the Norden Bombsight, but I guess we didn't make much of an impression on the higher ups because that is the only time we got to use our Radar Bombarrier

even though our bombs went right down the center of the runway there. The whole mission only lasted 4:45 hours there and back. Maybe it was the fact that this was the only plane in the station with Radar bombing capabilities and its particular efficiencies, like bombing through clouds, could not be utilized by the other planes with only the Norden bombsight which required actually seeing the target to drop the bombs.

### 13. Phosphorus Anti Aircraft shells...

After our mission bombing Corregidor, we went on a Photo Reconnaissance mission to film the islands of Leyte, Samar and Cebu. We landed and stayed overnight at Samar and next day did some more photography of Leyte. Someone told me that from the photos they could tell where troops were hiding in the jungles. It was on one of these missions that we saw phosphorus AA shells which spray little pieces of burning phosphorus like a huge octopus tentacles spreading out above us. These tiny bits of phosphorus can burn a hole right through the aluminum skin of your plane or the Plexiglas windows or you for that matter. This was more of the psychological weapon than damaging because you watched those white plumes come down and you can't move around much in formation, but maybe that was their plan to make us run into each other and crash.

### 14. Rest and Relaxation...

After 25 missions we were supposed to get to Australia for R & R (rest and relaxation) and my Radar Bombardier "Mitch" actually did get to go but the rest of the crew were all set to go when it was cancelled by Gen. Mac Arthur who said, "If the ground soldiers don't get to go. Why should the Air Corp? Anyway Mitch went down to Townsville on the east coast of Australia and fell in love with the girls down there. The people were so hospitable and friendly that he didn't want to come back. He got to go because he flew with other crews as Navigator and got his 25 missions in early while the rest of us were on mission 23.

Another place we bombed a lot was Borneo, from Balikpapan in the south to Tarakan, to cover the Australian invasion in the north. We had never seen an invasion and it was fascinating to watch the invasion boats arrive in toward shore at all different distances from land, then, at a predetermined distance, they'd all turn parallel and run until all the stragglers caught up and in unison turn toward the beach so that all boats hit the beach at the same instant to discharge their troops. There were a lot of double named places in and around Borneo and the Celebes islands, Tawitawi and Sangisang; to mention a few. Exotic lands...

### 15. Borneo's Oil Fields...

Also, there were missions to Sandakan and Mangar and Sepplingan all the way up Balikpapan and my favorite name Lahudatu. In one month alone, we hit Balikpapan six different times. At Balikpapan was an oil field and we had to avoid hitting the refineries because, contrary to what Napoleon said, an army does not travel on its stomach but on its heels bearings and oil is the life blood of heel bearings. They need oil to roll. Also, gasoline is made from oil and when you're out of gas and your heel bearings won't roll, everything grinds to a halt. Whoever

controls the oil fields wins the war, from Ploesti in Italy to Balikpapan in Borneo.

We flew convoy cover one time loaded with depth charges but I guess the Japanese submarine commander saw that a E-24 from the 307th Bomb Group was there and was afraid to sink any ships. Our reputation got around, probably from our mission to Limboeng airfield in the Celebes where we dropped 8 1000 lb bombs on their runway. No planes on their runway but we sure tore up a lot of concrete and knocked down a lot of coconuts I am sure.

The "Friendly Dyaks" . . . We had silk escape maps of the area where we flew, silk because it was light and took the permanent ink well without rubbing off or fading when wet and on the back it had instructions in a couple of languages that we were on their side. We were also told of the "Friendly Dyaks" who would hide us if we were shot down over Borneo. It was also mentioned that they were head-hunters who believed that if they took the head of an enemy, his courage would somehow rub off on them. What do you do in a situation like that? If you act too brave they are liable to fancy your head so we were to tell them that the United States government would pay big bucks for us alive. I often wondered, did they want to be rich or brave? These Dyaks looked like a cross between Malaysian and Philippine Indians and New Guinea aborigines. Short, brown and had slightly oriental eyes and wore very colorful costumes.

16. Write up in Newspaper . . .

I got a letter from home asking what I had done to get a write-up in our local Newspaper in a column devoted to servicemen. The story dramatically headlined, "There were No Misses" and told how Lt. Patterson of 1160 5th Ave and his crack Jungle Air Force crew were on a shipping strike in the 80 Makassar Straights found a flotilla of Japanese ships and dropped to 75 feet and left them all burning brightly. Well it was so long after the fact that I had almost forgotten about it as we had been looking for a much larger force but didn't find it and by the time it was embellished by the Public Relations Officer, it sounded like I had sunk the whole Jap Fleet single handed.

Then there's the time when we were met by what I thought was a "Follow me" jeep, so I followed it as the driver kept looking over his shoulder at us. He turned into a revetment, so I followed him in as he wheeled out and I turned and cut the engines. When I got out of the plane, there was Major Nealey in the jeep turning at me for chasing him around. He was just trying to get away from me in his own jeep, not lead me around.

There were other targets we hit too numerous to name but the name Zamboanga on Mindanao Island in the Philippines brings to mind the famous words from a song, "Oh, the monkeys have no tails in Zamboanga!" That is a line that will go down in history. Almost as famous as, "I shall return", which was said by someone out there in the Pacific theater.

17. The Piglet . . .

One day, my enlisted men found a little pink piglet and kept it in their tent, where it slept between two G.I. shoes made from

pigskin. Morotai was home for big black bristly haired wild boars that got to be 250 to 300 lbs when grown and this little piglet had just been born and somehow wandered away from it's mother and into their tent. We used to see these boars at the edge of the jungle with their four inch tusks and black hair. They left us alone and we left them alone and the wandering piglet was a fluke. That night when everyone in their tent was asleep, the piglet started to squeal it's head off.

Mama had come looking for junior and entered the tent squealing too, all 250 lbs of black bristles, tusks and anger at misplacing junior for so long. My men decided that piglet needed it's mother more than they needed it and hurriedly stepped outside for some fresh air while Mama exited with junior, both squealing theirs heads off, departing for greener pastures.

There were lots of pets in the Squadron such as dogs, monkeys, parrots and even some land crabs. Land crabs didn't make the best of pets as they tended to nip anyone who came too close to their one big powerful claw which they held over their heads menacingly as they scuttled along. Guys away from home like to have pets. I guess it reminds them of how things were back in the States. One tent had a small monkey and a puppy. The puppy was named Mutt and the monkey was Jeff.

#### 18. Censoring Mail...

The Officers were called upon to censor the enlisted men's mail so that no targets or bomb loads etc. were revealed. (Officer's mail was censored by the Intelligence Officer himself) we did it bycutting out the offensive lines with a razor. One enlisted man, who I admired for his ingenuity, would tell his girl friend, "yesterday we flew to..." (and would cut out a section of the letter with a razor) "and we dropped..." (another section cut out) and we shot down...(another section gone). This man was a ground crew man and didn't on fly missions but to his girl he was single handedly winning the war.

#### 19. Painting "Bobbie Lou" on the nose...

The B-24 we had taken into Nadzab # 617 finally showed up in our squadron and I decided to paint my wife's picture on the side in my spare time. Bobbie Lou was a beautiful girl, blonde hair, green eyes and a knockout of a figure and the prevailing type of picture painted on planes was usually a voluptuous "Petty Girl" in revealing garb. I decided to show my proud possession in a revealing nightgown standing on tip toes smiling provocatively. I had to use aircraft paint with gasoline for a thinning fluid instead of turpentine and it came out pretty good, if I do say so myself. Years later, I saw the picture in a book called "Nose Art From WWII" and there it was with some sergeant that I didn't recognize standing next to the plane right in front of the picture. As long as someone has that book, the "Bobbie Lou" will survive in history.

We didn't fly the same plane each time and flying another one over Borneo's dense jungle, I flew by a tall tree, much taller than the rest and there standing on a branch above the panoply of

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Green was a man like figure with red hair, holding on to the branch above. We were right at eye level and it was just off the tip of the left wing, this person or animal or thing. When we got back I told the Debriefing officer and he asked around about this strange sighting until someone laughed and said that I had probably seen the "wild man of Borneo", a Baboon with red hair.

## 20. The Crash Landing...

As we landed on one of my missions, the right wing went way lower than it should on touchdown and I could feel this scraping through the control column and a strong pull to the right. Instinctively I gave it left rudder and right aileron down to lift that wing and added some power with the right outboard engine. I could feel the plane shuddering as it rolled along on one tire on the left and on the right wheel there was no tire. We were running along on the rim. The right tire had been flattened by flak and we didn't know about it until we landed where it just peeled the shattered tire off, down to the rim. I reared back so hard in my seat that the seatbelt squeezed my guts up against my spine and they were sore for weeks. After the landing, which didn't end well, they were off the center of the runway, an Australian officer came up to me and said, "Did you make that landing?" and when I told him that I did, he said, "That was the best landing I have ever seen!"

I was feeling pretty good about the landing but at the same time I was worried that I had messed up the plane as that right landing strut had vibrated and maybe the whole right wing was bent or something. The next day, Major Neeley's right hand man took me out to the plane, which they hadn't moved off the runway yet, and he was asking me all these questions about what in my flight training helped me make the landing. I was petrified that they were getting ready to charge me for the cost of fixing it (B-24s cost \$240,000 in those days) so I told him that the plane really just sort of landed itself. I found out later that he was interviewing me for a recommendation for the D.F.C. and I talked him out of it. It is hard to believe that I talked myself out of a medal, but I did. All I had to have said was that my extensive flight training showed me what to do and he would have told Major Neeley the it had been distinguished flying.

## 21. The Outrigger Canoe and 'Bagos' the Pig...

One day there was an outrigger canoe floating in the lagoon about 20 feet offshore with no one in it. It was a beautiful craft made of a hollowed out log with sticks going out to one outrigger on the side. I swam out and retrieved it and pulled it up onto the sand next to our tent assuming it was abandoned by natives of the islands, short wiry fellows with bushy hair. They often came around to barter for their goods. I still have two of my prized possessions, an intricately carved replica of a paddle, seven inches long, and an inch wide with a unique crest like a pineapple at the opposite end of it's stroker and a slender carved pig, two and a half inches by eight inches. Both of these magnificent pieces, though roughly made, are carved out of the most magnificent black wood. We called it Molucca wood over there but it seemed almost like ebony, very dense and lustrous though not very

Anywant so that if you drop it in water it sinks and then very slowly floats back to the surface, as if reluctant to come back to you. Teak wood is very close to this wood in appearance.

I named the Pig "Begos" as that was what they kept telling about the sale price in their Pidgin English. It wasn't until I got home that my wife on hearing about it exclaimed that they probably meant "Bargain". It was beautiful wood, a mixture of dark brown and black with a tight grain, really exotic looking.

I had the canoe for a couple of months until one night during an extremely high tide it disappeared, as though the gods of the natives retrieved it for them during the night and floated it back to their island. I enjoyed it for a while and then he gave it back to them. I loved that canoe and just wish I had taken a photograph of it, but I put it off and never got a photograph of my favorite possession out there.

## 22. The Formation Landing...

Back in the States, Sam and I were being pushed through B-24 training in horrible weather up in Walla Walla Washington. The fog was so thick you couldn't see the wing tips of the plane most of the time. The last thing they showed us was a Formation and Landing, where 12 planes come over the field in formation and start peeling off, one at a time and landing. Weather was so bad that they put this off and put it off until the very end and then said, "We'll come in in formation and when the lead plane in-structs or tells you to peel, you peel and land. Normally you would just wait 30 seconds after you passing the end of the runway and do your own peeling but weather was too bad to let us try going this.

So here we are over on Morotai and the Squadron Commander tells us we are going to do a Formation Landing when we get back from this mission. We are in three plane "V" formations and I'm on the right side of the first "V" when we come over the end of the runway and I'm sitting there waiting for the lead plane to tell me to peel and sixty seconds have passed. I look out my left window and here is the lead plane in steep bank heading right for me and I'm at four hundred feet flying straight ahead. I pushed the nose down to within a few feet of the runway while the other plane barely skimmed by overhead. When I got on the ground, my C.O. chewed my ass for twenty minutes even after I explained to him we only did it once in training and the lead plane was supposed to order each plane to "peel" and he hadn't told me.

## 22a. Not enough runway...

One day while we were in a 6 X 6 crew truck going down to the line to fly a mission. As we passed parallel to the end of the runway some one shouted look and I heard the awn sound of metal scraping along cement. A plane saw that he wasn't going to get off in the length of the runway (overloaded) and he just ran back the end of the runway with his gear retracting and settled back down on the coral overrun with gasoline exploding and debris flying everywhere. I don't think the bombs went off because they hadn't been armed yet but ammo was exploding from the heat and if anyone got out alive I'd be surprised. We continued on with our

mission while a pall of black smoke hung over the airfield behind us. One of the casualties of war that goes unreported, but ten men died or were burned badly.

We must have heard about who it was when we got back, but through the haze of fifty years it has escaped me. I don't think it was one of our squadron's crews.

### 23. Island Hopping...

The war in the Pacific was a series of Island hoppings, getting ever closer to the Japanese mainland. The allies would bypass an island, isolating it from use by the Japanese and leaving huge numbers of troops to wither on the vine there. When we got to Morotai, it was in the forefront of the war, the leading edge so to speak, with airraids every night, but after being there for nine months we had been passed as the new line was now in the Philippines and the Marianas. The island across from us had 50,000 isolated Japanese troops when the war ended. They had no way to contribute to their side because we sank all their boats and landing craft before they left the docks. Still, some never surrendered and I'm sure died of old age on Halmahera island and even in the hills of Morotai.

On Morotai in 1955, a few Japanese soldiers turned themselves in to keep from starving. They had been living in caves dug out between our two main runways where they reported by radio how many planes were on our bombing raids. I don't know what they did from 1945 until 1955 but it must have been a dull life unless they trained centipedes for races or bowled, using coconuts as bowling balls. I just don't know, but thousands lived there on those islands out there after the war as I'm sure that going home to face their Emperor was too embarrassing after they lost.

### 23. Ladies, please be seated...

One more escapade that was interesting had to do with the building of a Ladies latrine behind our newly completed Squadron Officers Club. Lt. Scaglione and I were put in charge of building it and given Carte Blanche to design and build this edifice. Well, "Scag" said he knew how to use dynamite because we had struck iron hard corral two feet down when we started to dig. It is a good thing that Lt. Scaglione wasn't a cook because if the recipe would call for two eggs he'd have put in SIX, so the amount of dynamite to blow the hole made a noise that dwarfed the Atomic Bomb and I thought the island would sink from the hole in its bottom. Well, we got it finished all right and served its purpose well.

### 24. Jeepneys in Manila...

When our missions were flown, and Sam and I were up in Manila waiting for transportation home, the mode of transportation around town was by "Jeepney", a gaudily cart with a small horse pulling it. The roof usually had a fringe around it and was painted in bright colors. You took your life in your hands riding in one for it had to compete with real Jeeps and Army trucks of all sizes and traffic patterns were unknown. Sam and I decided that having our picture taken next these vehicles was sufficient for us. I had a 35mm camera and lots of film but no

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enlarger so I came home with lots of little tiny prints the same size as the film, 1 1/2 by 1 1/16 pictures. I still have one in my wallet, the negative lost forever.

I think the name "Jeepney" came from the fact that when a native of Manila got hold of a Jeep, he turned it into a taxi and called it a Jeepney.

## 25. Letters Home...

On Morotai we were always trying to let our loved ones know where we were without saying it in letters. I decide to let my wife know by telling where we were bombing. So I include the phrase, "How has little Phillip been?" in my letters hoping she would catch on to Phillip being as sounding like Philippine since we didn't know anyone named Phillip. I did send her a Dutch coin in the envelope with MOROTAI scratched on it, then I dropped candle wax on it and MOROTAI disappeared. In a following letter I told her to put it in a pan on the stove and heat it up dissolving the wax revealing MOROTAI so she knew the name of the island. I still have that coin somewhere in a box.

Another little interesting episode, having nothing to do with combat started back in New York City where I worked for an advertising agency that had the Enigma Watch account and when I went in they presented me with a watch with the back of the case engraved with "Click 'Em and Hurry Back". I carried that watch all through my tour until I was on the way home in Manila in the Philippines in a USO Men's room and put it down on the wash stand to wash my hands. I forgot it for a few minutes and walked out into the sunshine and half way down the block I remembered it and rushed back, but it was gone. It had an aluminum band, fashioned by some enterprising G.I. in the squadron that was intricately edged and you spread it open to slip it on your wrist where it sprung tight after it was in place. I hope it ended up on some Mindanao Chieftain befitting its importance.

## 25. The Hole in "Bobbie Lou"...

Another crew flying the plane got an anti-aircraft shell right up through the bombay of #617 which went out the top of the plane punching a hole the size of a watermelon and exploded far above. It severed a few of the control cables and even though it was repaired back at the base, it always felt like it was flying a bit sideways after that. We always got a few small flak holes on missions but this was too much! Poor "Bobbie Lou".

## 26. Jungle Rot...

Just prior to going home, I went to the flight surgeon to have him look at some quarter sized pink circle on my cheek and he called it "Jungle Rot". Jungle Rot is a term for a subacute fungus that shows up in hot, moist climates and is treated with Salicylic Acid. The pink circle it makes is ugly but will go away back in a dry climate, speeded up by the application of the Salicylic Acid. To look at my face, the doctor had his hand on my shoulder with his thumb resting on my carotid artery as he applied the ointment to my face. Then he took out his stethoscope and listened to my heart for a while and exclaimed,

"You've got a heart murmur. You shouldn't even be over here. How did you pass your flight physical with that?"

Well I knew that I had spent six months in bed with rheumatic fever as a boy after a strep throat and didn't bother to put that down on my form when I enlisted, or I'd have been rejected right away. I wanted in the fight, due to honor, patriotism and maybe even a little courage. I wasn't going to be left out for any slight irregularity in my heart, it was too important to me.

27. Remembering is difficult...

Fifty years is a long time to remember a war but it shaped all our lives, we who lived in that generation. I hope we carried the torch high enough to light the way for future generations so they won't have to relive the past. The notations in my Log Book are pretty cryptic, ie. 15 demolition bombs on runway; Prop shot off, replaced at Leyte; 30 100lb fire bombs; 28 260lb frags on revets; 1 and 1st time on hub; Napalm on barracks; on hill guns; strafing of shipping; flak knocks out Pilot window; on shipping in Makassar; frag clusters on AA; 250 GP on Japs; 5 250 GP 2 on bulk 4 on docks; 9 500lb GP to cover invasion. etc, etc.

26. Tracer Bullets...

In Borneo on one mission, we were flying up the river at Bangger-masin at tree top level, twisting and turning as the river did when we came across a camouflaged gunboat tucked under some foliage at river's edge. My gunners let go at it and I said, "Look how the tracer bullets seem to be bouncing back at us." SWOPE the navigator shouted, "They're not bouncing back. They are shooting at us, but by then we were past and continued on up to the Pare-Pare shipyard where we dropped our bombs destroying a few ships under construction. When we went back down the river we were ready for that gunboat and gave it a real raking with no return fire. They had told us, every boat would be enemy boats. My Log book says 9 250 lb bombs on shipping.

On one mission to Cebu Island we dropped our bombs in a three plane formation and we were the lead plane supposed to be bombing a runway there. When the strike photos were printed, they called me and Frenchy in and asked accusingly, why did we drop our bombs short of the target and sure enough the photos showed two sets of bombs on each side of the runway from the puffs of smoke and a center set just short of the runway. Frenchy swore he dropped his bombs at the same time the rest did but the photos said differently. I backed him up, but who knows?

27. Bubble Window...

I remember the one that says, "flak knocks out Pilot window", we were dropping "chaff" or "window" as it was called. This was boxes of coiled aluminum foil which would open up in the slip stream and stream out over the target to confuse Radar. I was flying in the second echelon behind and slightly below other planes also dropping "window". The flak started over the target and a close one shook the plane just as the "window" incident happened. All of us were throwing boxes of "window" out the waist at the time.

I looked up just in time to see three unopened boxes of window heading right toward my windshield. These boxes are about five pounds of solid metal when they are unopened (they open in the slipstream). There was no way to move in formation flying so you just hope that when they hit you it won't hurt anything. I almost made it except the last box smashed into my plastic bubble window that I used to view the left engines, shattering it into smithereens. When we got back to Morotai, there were no replacement bubble windows so it was replaced with a flat Plexiglas sliding window which I banged my head on time and again, forgetting there was no bubble to stick my head in any more. This is why my head is flat on the left side.

28. "We'll say Goodbye"...

On Morotai, shortly before I left, some men from the squadron went to Australia to have a book printed about the 307th Bomb Group and were taking orders for it. This was in March 1945 and no one knew how much longer the war was going to go on. When I arrived home in New York City, I was really surprised to receive the hard bound book in the mail from Sydney, Australia. The book was printed April 24th 1945. One of the numerous photos shows Lt. French, my bombardier at a briefing.

29. The overflow from England...

When the war in Europe ended, we started getting men from the 8th Air Force who hadn't flown their quota of missions and were transferred to our outfit in the Pacific. These men were all spit and Polish, in hand tailored Pinks and Green from the fog bound shores of England to the heat and humidity of Morotai, where your clothes turned mouldy if you just hung them up. Our flying outfit was khaki short sleeved shirts and pants or flight suits, all clean but unpressed. I felt sorry for this one 2nd Lt. who had just gotten hand embroidered insignia for his uniform and in three months it was going to look like (what is a synonym for horse manure?).

30. The Atomic Bomb...

I ended up with 39 missions and the Atomic Bomb went off while I was on the ship coming home. It took 21 days for that ship because it was zigzagging all over the ocean and we stopped at a few places to pick up other troops at other islands also going home to restrain to come back again until the war was finished. I remember not being able to smoke a cigarette on deck at night until one night the loudspeaker announced that we had dropped a bomb on Japan and the whole ship was abuzz with "Why did they say 'dropped a bomb', they must have meant, 'They dropped a bunch of bombs', what good would one bomb do? But the curious thing was that they also said that we could now smoke on deck at night. It wasn't until I read about the Atomic Bomb later that I realized that they meant "A bomb, not 'a' bomb."

The ship was still zigzagging to avoid submarines, but three days later it even stopped zigzagging and sailed along in a straight line toward the West Coast of the United States. Getting information from the ship's crew was like pulling teeth, very differ-

could and had to swallow, but it finally dawned on us that for some reason, the war was over.

31. March Field and the Riverside Hotel...

The ship was supposed to go to San Francisco where I was to depart for a base where I'd get some E-32 training, but it turned south to Los Angeles where we went to March Field. The E-32 was the successor to the E-24 but on the scale of a E-29, much bigger and more powerful. With the war ending, all these planes went down the tubes and we went to the nearest base for discharge from the service.

It was Sunday morning and I took a bus downtown to this large hotel, the Riverside Hotel and asked where I could get breakfast. There was a man there named Don MacNeill who had a radio show up on the fifth floor called "The Breakfast Club" and I was directed up there. I was ushered in and given a table in a room full of little old ladies also having breakfast while Don MacNeill chatted on a microphone, I was the only man in the place beside Don.

When he asked, "Now who can give the Mother of the Day her corsage?" every eye turned to me. There I was a, 1st Lt. with silver wings and ribbons on my chest and the only man in the room. I was trapped. Don had already picked the Mother of the Day so all I had to do was pin her corsage on and then he said, "Give Mom a big kiss" and blushing through it I gave this little old lady a peck on the cheek and pinned her corsage on her. They did pick up the check for my breakfast though.

32. The Big Victory Parade...

I caught an Army transport plane across the U.S. came home to find my wife was visiting friends out on Long Island and had to go hunt her up out there. She had fallen in love with someone else while I was overseas, so another chapter of my life was just beginning, although I do remember a huge 10,000 Veteran Parade down 5th Avenue in New York City with the applause swelling as the crowds on the sides recognized we were pilots as we marched by in formation. But the applause will only keep you going for just so long and Morotai seemed so far away by then. My father was a medaled hero of the Canadian Army in WWI and was so proud of me for my service to my country. My mother was dying of Multiple Sclerosis and neither of us could do a thing about it.

Looking back at those times through the filter of fifty years is like viewing an eclipse through dark glasses, you only see the corona, which is the beautiful halo, not the black center. The dark glasses tend to become rose colored glasses and that is maybe the only way we can look at it, as an episode in our lives to tell our children about, if they'll listen. I can't even remember where for sure I picked up my crew, but I remember all of us were there up in Walla Walla Washington, for gunnery practice and high altitude bombing practice and Sam my co-pilot was practicing landings from his side of the plane.

We had a gunner that wasn't working out and we dropped him to the relief of all the rest of the crew. Some men work together and others just don't seem to be able to get along well and we were

delighted with his replacement. Our crew had assembled at the Lemoore Naval Air Station and were shipped up to Walla Walla WA, for crew training to see if we worked together well

Some where up there in the P.X. I had just taken the straw out of it's paper cover while the crew and I were sitting sipping Cokes. I noticed a fly perched on the wall. I thrust the straw paper into my mouth and blew a spit ball hitting that fly right in the head, killing it and I was endeared to my gunners forever for my aim, shooting skill and calmness in an emergency.

33. Later on...

I have been in another war since then, where I wasn't exactly a combatant but I did see the badly wounded as we flew them back to the U.S. in our Air Evac planes from Japan. This time Japan was on our side and it reminded me of the saying;

I'd better end this History of the "Bobbie Lou" and let her live in my memory. I see the real one once in a while for I didn't move very far when we divorced and now I'm married to Esther, a wonderful woman whose husband was an Army Automotive Mechanic on New Guinea during WWII. She was a widow from Milwaukee when I met her eight years ago. Life goes on and I have discovered that I am not going to live forever as I once thought. I am not one of the immortals after all. I am going to a reunion of the old 307th Bomb Group in October 1996 and will get to see the other three crew members of the "Bobbie Lou" that are still alive. I haven't seen them for 50 years, these three crew of mine. Will they like me? Will I like them? We'll find out.

"Those who forget the past, are doomed to relive it again."

I don't know who said that, but it is true.

Thanx for your time and indulgence,

Tom Patterson