

# "I PASSED THIS WAY"

by

RUSSELL R. RATLIFF





# PROLOGUE

by the author, Jered O. Ratliff

Russ's grandson: oldest of 6 children of John, 4th child of Russ

*In May* 1992, when Grandpa finished this book, I remember him sharing that he was going to keep adding to it, sending out copies of the additional pages and research as Christmas gifts. The original was printed on 8-½ by 11" paper, landscape orientation, and folded/stapled in the middle. It *was not* assembled sloppily. To the contrary: a professional printing press of some sort arranged the printed pages so that they nested, and that the bifold would house the staples in clean and professional spacing. While he claims to not have spent any time proofreading, he clearly put some care into the actual assembly of the pages and the books.

Grandpa seemed to also take some diabolical enjoyment out of the fact that his addenda to the book would be on regular sheets of paper, that would stand out from the size and orientation of the initial volume. In the early 20th century, Sears Roebuck made their catalogs slightly smaller than Montgomery Wards' versions, so that theirs would have to be placed on top and therefore read first. Whether or not Grandpa's strategy was similar, he carried a true care through the diabolical, one that ensured his stories and his legacy would be passed along for future generations to enjoy. He spent the last 17 or so years of his life harvesting his deep interest in genealogy and the etymology of our last name. He didn't want the next torch-bearer to have to start from square one.

Grandpa's stories may have droned on and been on "repeat" quite a bit, he may have spent too much time parked on the left side of the couch with CNN blaring at 92% of the TV's capacity, and he might have been too short with Grandma in the 25½ years of their marriage that I was alive for. Even as a child, though, it was never lost on me how difficult his upbringing was and how this affected his expression of love and care for those around him.

- By the time he was 6, Grandpa had lived in 6 different locations in 4 states.
- A few months before turning 10, he became man of the house when his father -- an itinerant blue-collar Nazarene minister -- died of pneumonia in the city where he worked, 90 miles from home.



- At 15 he helped his mom and 4 younger siblings return to California in a 1926 Chevy that broke down so often, the trip took them 2 months to complete.
- At 23, he enlisted, was processed and became part of the Army Air Force. Two months later the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor and his involvement in combat was assured.
- At 24, he was in Hawaii, then a US territory, and would begin sorties and active combat missions near Christmas 1942
- By 25 he had already returned to the mainland, having been involved in active combat for over half his time in the military. He would marry less than a year later.
- At age 32, with 3 children ranging from newborn to 4½, he discharged from military service, a step his wife initiated; he was ready to ship to Japan/Korea.
- At age 47, he moved his wife and 5 children from bustling southern California to rural Trinity County.
- Grandpa would move one more time -- a few years later -- across town to the house on Martin Road that would be his home until he passed away in 2002. (This doesn't include the move to Enterprise, Oregon, that was going to be longer-term, but ended up just lasting a few months).

Those of us who knew Grandpa knew that he loved the structure and rigor a uniform provided. He outlines his love of the uniform from Boy Scouts to the VFW. But he also valued the fraternization that came with staying in one place for a long time, something that the 1965 move to Weaverville finally afforded him. Grandpa spent years in the philanthropic Clampers organization, and for years spent many weekday mornings with buddies rolling dice at the Golf Course restaurant in Weaverville, an outing he plainly referred to as "coffee."

I have left the vast majority of spelling differences in the text, and even some misspellings depending on the context. Many words he used were accepted as open compounds (e.g. "air field") that are now commonly single-word compounds ("airfield"). With all the literal "war stories" I heard as a kid, it seemed to me that Grandpa must have been overseas for many years. His pennants in the typing/smoking office at home were a clear reminder of the names of the many islands he visited and referenced in his stories. It was a shock to me to piece together the timeline and realize that he spent just 14 months deployed in the Pacific. By no means does this statement belittle the time in active combat. If anything,



the fact that it so dominated and framed his life's paradigm in the years after is evidence of how impactful - even harrowing - an experience it was to fight to defend our country. I find myself even more proud of being his grandson, sharing when I am able *my own* versions of his war stories. Maybe I'll manage to keep from repeating the same ones to the same crowd. What won't happen, though, is for this to make me any less proud to be part of the Ratliff family.

Twenty-five years after it was first typed, it was a true labor of love to transcribe his story. After typing it all in, I then combed through many times for clues about the timelines of various events in his life and also how they correlated to world events of his day. As my idea germinated to "modernize" his book, I did not want to strip the character of the story or try to somehow find mistakes to correct. It was amazing to see how many details were relayed nearly perfectly; Grandpa's memory and attention to detail was clearly acute. Where there were slight clarifications to be made I did so as an inset to the story, but not changing the story itself. A visual that I initially created just for myself became an intriguing map of his life, and so I have preserved a map that can be accessed at [www.tinyurl.com/RussellReese](http://www.tinyurl.com/RussellReese) that includes locations where he lived, and several significant journeys of his life. I also discovered a perennial reunion of the 307th Bombardment Group that may someday be of interest to some of Russ's descendants. Information for this group is at [www.307bg.net/history/missions.asp](http://www.307bg.net/history/missions.asp) as of this publication.

This brings up a point of clarification, that of the 307th and 370th that Grandpa frequently referenced. I could never keep them straight, but in revising his work did learn a bit about the structure of the numbered groups in the military. The 307th *group* was an umbrella under which the 370th *squadron* belonged (as well as the 371st, 372nd, and 424th squadrons).

Grandpa's other passion, genealogy, has also been of keen interest to me for many years. I seem to explore this in spurts, and perhaps when I am retired I can fully take this on. In 2002, I flew out from Texas to Weaverville for Grandpa's funeral. I was 25. When Grandpa was 25, he had already returned to the mainland from his combat-laden deployment. Just a kid - with a bunch of other kids - protecting the freedoms we frequently take for granted. Fifty-eight years and 2 generations later, my life at 25 looked quite a bit different.

That weekend I was helping to move some things and I saw a box marked "Genealogy" in Grandpa's handwriting. Taped to the box was a scrap of paper that said "Jered?," suggesting that someone meant to ask me if I would be the guardian of grandpa's work. I've scarcely had more honoring moments than this. My work to continually update this tree



continues. Today's living descendants are now 3 generations past Grandpa; before long the 4th will begin. Those will be the children whose reference to him will be that of a "Great Great Grandpa."

This harkens back to another aspect of Grandpa that I relish and recall, and also mimic: when he would explain members of our ancestry, he would say something like "my Grandpa's father, my great-grandpa, was your great-great-great grandpa"). There is something aesthetically powerful about listing all the greats instead of truncating it to "2nd great," "3rd great," etc.

Near the end of the creation of this book, I was inspired to record an interview with Russ's only living sibling: Wendell ("Wendy"). Russ lost his father in 1928, brother Forrest in 1964, and sister Hope in 1976. He predeceased his sister Alice, who passed away in 2007. But Wendy was still alive and spry. Pneumonia as a 4-year old had a lifelong impact on Wendell, as he would contract it many times in his life. But each time he would pull through.

On October 15, 2017, I was able to meet with Wendy as well as his daughter Lois, who was also his live-in caretaker. I recorded most of our conversation that day, and in fact there were a few points of clarification in the book that I had not known otherwise. Wendy was our family's last link to the Greatest Generation, the "GI" Generation. For nearly 2 hours, I found myself once again regaled at stories from decades before I was born.

Twenty-four days later (November 8, 2017), Wendy, age 93, passed away, pneumonia's encroachment no longer able to be fended off. The fortuitous and providential nature of my conversation with him could hardly be more clear.

Grandpa's soul was definitely hardened in many areas, yet it didn't take long to see how a sense of humor and inventiveness revealed his character. He didn't say "good-bye" at the end of a phone call, but the enthusiastic "yes" at the beginning when he realized who you were more than made up for this to me. I never heard him tell me "I love you," but he took me to the Redding Air Show in 1986, drove 85 miles to my high school graduation in 1994, and there were countless encounters with townsfolk in Weaverville (pop. ~3500) where people would tell me how proud Grandpa was of me and his other grandchildren. Clearly he talked about us to others with pride. I've never been to another home with a rigged bear trap for a door knocker, and his trophy that was engraved with "They Just Don't Make Them Like They Used To" was also one-of-a-kind: the body of the trophy was the rear half of a donkey.



I've often wondered how I would have fared, faced with the same life circumstances as he. I can't imagine how I would have emerged, but certainly I would be jaded at most anything and anyone that came my way. One thing is clear from his text: he was proud of his hard work. He loved his family dearly, even if the ways he communicate this were not what we expected or desired. He wanted his descendants to have an appreciation of where they had come from, and in taking the time to write these memoirs, he did just that.

*This revision is dedicated to Grandpa's nuclear family of 7, which only was together for 6½ months before his dad succumbed to pneumonia. Grandpa and his siblings helped comprise "The Greatest Generation"*

**His father**

James Henry Ratliff; born November 6, 1893 (Grant County, IN), died May 3, 1928 (Muskegon, MI)

**His mother**

Marjorie Irma North; born July 4, 1897 (Grant County, IN), died March 1978 (Weaverville, CA)

**Himself**

Russell Reese Ratliff; born July 7, 1918 (Vallecito, CA), died August 19, 2002 (Weaverville, CA)

**His sister**

Hope Nadine; born October 15, 1919 (Nampa, ID), died April 1976 (Lancaster, CA)

**His sister**

Alice Maybell; born May 23, 1921 (Nampa, ID), died December 22, 2007 (Olivehurst, CA)

**His brother**

Wendell Oliver; born April 12, 1924 (Muskegon, MI), died November 8, 2017 (Redding, CA)

**His brother**

Forrest Macy; born October 26, 1927 (Carson City, MI), died August 3, 1964 (San Bruno, CA)



## Foreward

I am prompted to set forth some of highlights of my life because of my genealogy search, my inability to learn anything of my ancestors occupations. I assume that they were all farmers. At least until my grandfather, Phineas, who was a builder of mausoleums.

I am not a writer nor am I a typist. I will not proof read any of what I have written in search of errors in grammar, left out words, double typing of words or spelling. RRR

### **“WHAT YOU SEE IS, WHAT YOU GET”**

Dedicated to

To my 5 Children and Their 12 Children, and to My one Great Grand Child and to the many Great and Great Great Grand Children that follow.

The dedication would now read:

*“To my 5 children, their 14 children, and to my 31 great-grandchildren ...”*





## I Passed This Way

by

Russell Reese Ratliff

It was on the 7th of July, 1918, that I made my appearance into this world, exactly one year from the day that my Mother and Father were married. The place was a little mining town, hardly on the map, in a town named, Vallecito, in Calaveras County, California, in the heart of the "Mother Lode" country.

My Father, James Henry Ratliff, had migrated to California from Indiana, probably in 1916 hoping to finishing his schooling and became a minister. I do know that he attended the Nazarene School in Pasadena, CA.

**Vallecito** is a small gold-rush era town about 55 miles east of Stockton. Officially, the name was Vallicita when Russ was born; the name was changed in 1940. In 2010, the population was 442. Given the reaction locals had to Russ saying he was born there, the town was likely even smaller than this in 1918.



**Pacific Bible College** opened in 1910, and later became Pasadena College (1919). In 1973, the school moved to San Diego and is now Point Loma Nazarene University.

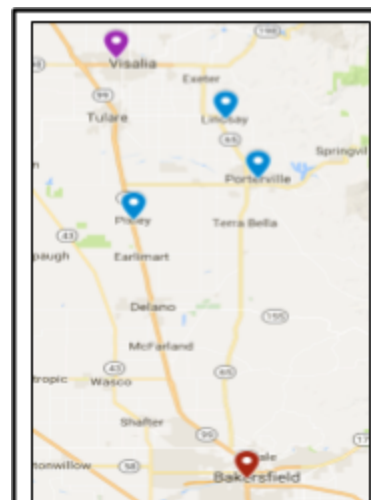
During the summer, James went to work for a man on a ranch in Tulare Co. This man's name was Charley Beachamp who had married my Mother's sister in Michigan and had migrated to California.

The summer that James went to work for Charley Beachamp, my Mother

left Michigan to go to her sisters. In short order, James met Marjorie, fell in love and were married on July 7, 1917. The wedding took place in either, Pixley, Porterville, or Linsey.

Now I assume that when the haying was done, my Father and Mother left the ranch and went to Vallecito where Father went to work for a gold mining company at mine #9. I remember hearing stories about this before I was 5 years old.

July the 7th 1918 rolled around and I was born. Born at home and Mother was assisted or whatever, by a girl about



From north to south: Visalia, then Lindsay, Porterville, and Pixley, followed by Bakersfield.



**"Where he saved my soul"**

Lois, Russ's niece, shared a story about traveling north by bus in the 1970's with Marjorie. As they passed through Pixley, Marjorie said "Pixley is where your grandfather saved my soul."

Mother's age, acting as midwife. Her name was, Edith Walton.

The story that I'm about to tell took place, 50 or 55 years later. My wife, Helen and I were exploring the town of Vallecito and as far as I knew, Edith Walton still lived there. Stopping at a small grocery store, I inquired of the owner, if Edith Walton lived there and could he give me directions to her place? He asked me why I wanted to know, to which I replied, "Oh, I was just curious. I was born here." He looked at me, shook his head and said, "no, no, there was never anyone born here." Laughed and told me where she lived. We found the place, walked to the door and knocked and a little old lady answered the door. She said "can I help you?" I said "my name is Russell Ratliff." I thought for a split second that she might faint, but soon she said, "I don't believe it, come in." As soon as we were seated, she asked us to remain for a minute while she went a couple of doors away to get her sister. We visited for an hour or so and left, never to return.

**Vallecito to Los Molinos**

With the freeways of 2017, this is about a 3½ hour journey, mostly on CA 99. In 1919, however, this would have been a significantly longer journey, on roads that were managed by the state, but not formalized.

**"Little Valley"**

**Vallecito, California**

Vallecito sits in the heart of gold country in Calaveras County, California. Other than being born here, Russ had no other connection to this area. The family moved away before Russ was 6 months old, and there is no extended family and no other connection there. However, pictures of the area give a little glimpse into what life was like for the young Ratliff family in the late 1910's



**Main Street, c.1908** Russ was born 10 years later  
The population of Vallecito was about 400.



**Mine #9.** Possible location of Murphy brothers' discovery of "gold." James worked here.



About 6 months after my birth, and for some reasons that I have never heard, Uncle Charley was on the move. He had bought, rented or somehow had acquired a ranch at Los Molinos and some sort of a deal was made with my Mother and Father to meet them in Stockton at some specified time to join them for the trip to Los Molinos.

**Family connection**  
Mary was one of Marjorie's 3 older sisters. She married Charlie Beachamp in 1906.



Somehow the connection was made. I've never heard just how many wagons or horses were in his caravan, I know that there was a buggy or some such a rig because there was the two women and me, plus Aunt Mary had 3 kids of her own: Melvin, Lesley and Charlene.

**Los Molinos to Nampa**  
This was at least a 550-mile journey.

Things didn't work out too well at Los Molinos so it seems and the Beachamps moved to Red Bluff and the Ratliffs moved to Nampa, Idaho. Again my Father must have some plans for school that never worked out. By this time or before we were in Nampa a couple of years, I had 2 sisters, Hope and Alice. Father worked at the Carnation milk plant.

**Carnation and Nampa**  
Carnation was a major employer of Nampa at the time, then a town of about 8000. It built on the site of the town's sugar beet factory, which before failing had been a major boon to the town's economy. Carnation operated in Nampa until 1969.

Nampa is also the present-day site of Northwest Nazarene University, so it is very likely James' education at PBC was connected to his decision to move the family to Nampa.  
<https://goo.gl/af3mY7>

From there we moved to Prairie City, Ore., where Father worked for a lumber co. falling timber. By the time about 5 & a half we were on our way to Michigan to live on and work Grandfather North's farm. That is my Mother myself and 2 sisters boarded a train for another sister of Mother's, Aunt Mable's. Father was to join us as soon as he wrapped things up

**Prairie City, OR**  
Elevation: 3500'  
1920 population: 643

in Ore. As I think of it now, the hurry for us to depart was that I had another brother or sister coming into this world shortly. We arrived at Aunt Mable's shortly after dark. The train stopped just about a block from her house and let us off, not at a station or anything like one, but in the middle of no where and Aunt Mable was waiting for us.

**Nampa to Michigan**  
This was about a 2,100 mile trip, and looks to have been by train. This would likely have been a 5-6 day trip if they were able to take a non-stop train. More likely this was about a 2-week adventure.

At age 5 I do not remember just how and when the next event took place but, it must have been within a week or



two that Mother gave birth to her 4th baby, Wendell Oliver. I suppose that as soon as things settled down we went to stay with Mother's oldest sister, Aunt Monola (Minnie) who lived in Greenville, some 40 miles distant. Within a week or two Father joined us, and we left there for Grandfather North's farm. Father farmed the place for the next 2 years. During this time Aunt Mable married again to John Bush, whose wife had

**Sealed Power Corporation**  
Originally "Piston Ring Company" in 1912, it is still in operation as of 2017.  
<https://goo.gl/RZaWPv>

passed away a few years earlier. Uncle John soon bought the farm from Grandfather and we moved to Sethton, a very small community just a mile away. It was here that the youngest of we kids was born, Forrest Macy. At this time, Father was

working in Muskegon for the "Sealed Power Piston Ring Co." and Father commuted on some weekends, not all because of the 80 mile distance and lack of transportation of his own.

**Pneumonia**  
Pneumonia not only took James' life, but nearly the life of his 4½ year old brother Wendell. Wendell remembers having learn to walk and talk all over.

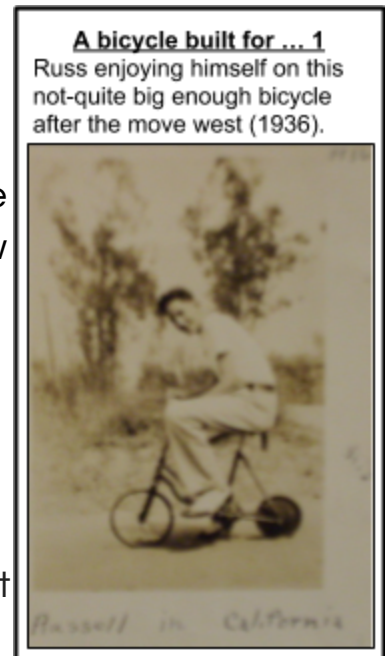
Tragedy struck when Forrest was but 6 months old. Father came down with pneumonia, someone picked all of us up, took us to Muskegon, just a day or two before Father passed away. We were destitute, no life insurance and no income from anywhere. My mother was a widow with 5 children ranging in age from 6 months to 10 years, I being the oldest and except for Mother, was the head of the household.

**The move into town**  
Based on census records from 1930, it seems that "town" was St. Louis, Michigan. Russ's brother Wendell shared how idyllic this property was. "Everything a young boy could want," he recalled.

Mother began receiving from the State what was termed a "widow's pension," 40 dollars per month. Our situation, being 5 miles from town, made it necessary that we move into town. The

town that Mother selected, with no particular reason that I know of, except perhaps that there was a Nazarene Church there, a church that both Father and Mother favored. This proved to be the best move possible, we made life long friends and Mother after a time found work at the local creamery wrapping butter.

The years passed, I had joined the "Boy Scouts" a new troupe, the dues were 5¢ per week, something that was not easy to pay since in those days, 5¢ was 5¢. 5¢ would buy a



quarter pound candy bar or a quart of milk or a loaf of bread. Thus began my love of a uniform. A love that was to remain with me throughout my life, in the Army Air Corps, the Infantry and the National Guard and today, the Veterans of Foreign Wars.

**1934, not 1935**

Based on an interview with Russ' brother Wendell (2017-10-15), and Russ's later reference to visiting Grandfather Phineas in 1934, this move west was actually a year earlier than what Russ stated here.

In 1935, when I was half way through high school we received a wind-fall. Grandfather North had purchased some bonds that had matured and had them included in his will (I suppose) any way, Mother rec'd as her share, one \$400 bond. With this, she made the decision that we were going back to California. I was 16. We bought a 1926 Chevrolet and a trailer to take as many of our possessions as possible and we were on our way. What a trip it was to be, we were to be on the road for nearly 2 months, due in part or mostly to break downs.

There is no doubt that this was my worst trip ever. But not Mothers, for she as a girl of perhaps 12, she had made a journey from Michigan to West Virginia in a wagon with a sister or two and with Grandfather North. Grandfather had made some sort of a deal for some acreage that seemed to have been misrepresented and as soon as he saw it, turned around and went back to Michigan.

Our trip to California terminated in Wickenburg, Arizona. Terminated as far as being on our own, when the old Chevy gave up, we had lost the gears in the rear end and were broke. We sent a telegram to Cliff Steele, husband of Mother's niece Valice, Cliff had a truck and came to our rescue, loaded our belongings and we were back to his place the following day. We sold the Chevy for \$10 and the trailer for \$15.

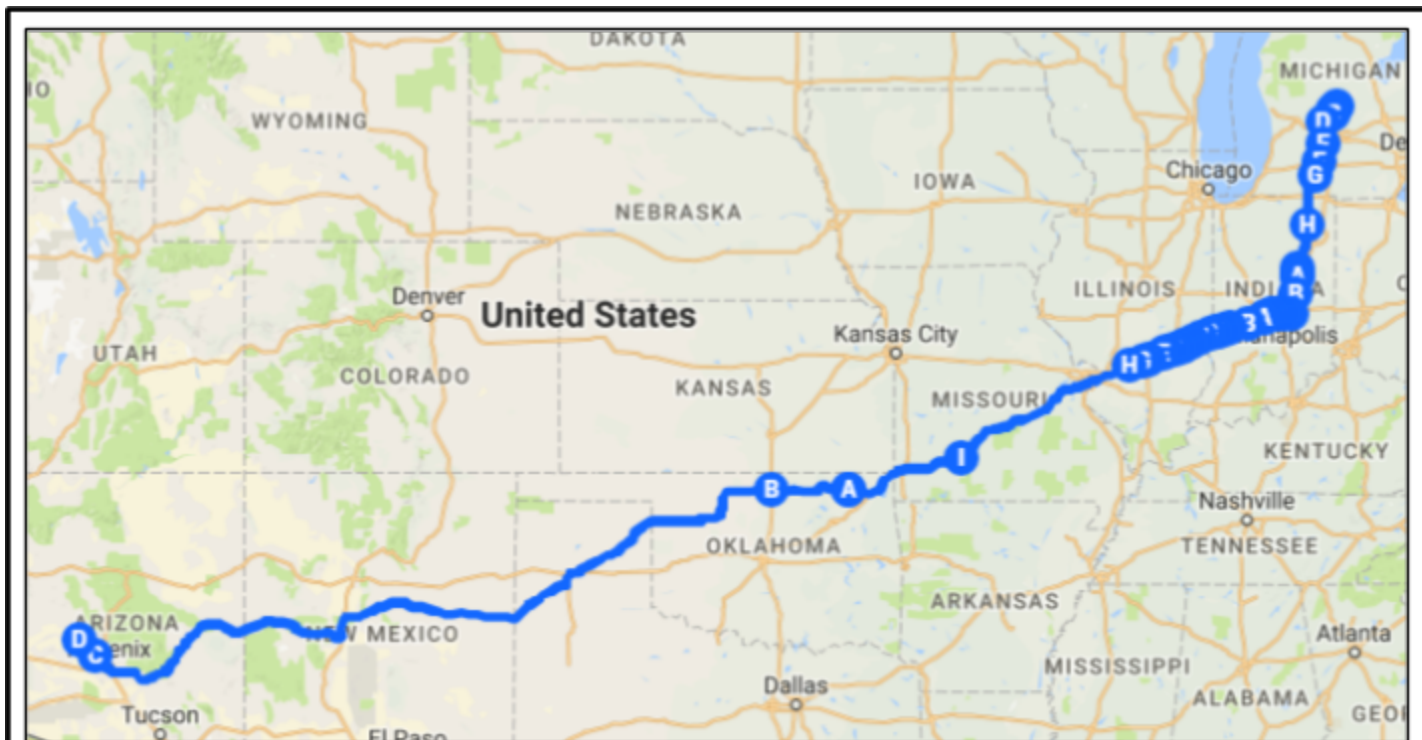
**Family connection**

Valice's mother Minnie was one of Marjorie's 3 older sisters; Valice was only 5 years younger than Marjorie. She married Cliff Steele in Los Angeles in 1923.

We were at Valice's for about a week, I went to work with Cliff baling hay and Mother made contact with the Nazarene school in Pasadena and with their help, found a place to live and a job with the school.

My formal education was for all practical purposes over and I did whatever I could to help support the family. For the next 5 years I worked at ranching with Cliff Steele, at the Ford Agency, auto paint shops, service stations and department stores





*In the heart of the Great Depression, Russ, his mom and 4 younger siblings embarked on the*  
**“worst trip ever”**

In 2017, the trip from Carson City, Michigan, to Pasadena, California would take about 32 hours. In 1934, though, before Interstates and in the days of "brother can you spare a dime?" they made their way across 2000+ miles and at least 8 states in a 1926 Chevrolet towing a trailer. According to Russ, their car had many breakdowns. It appears that they were spared the worst of the dust bowl, but its effects still assuredly impeded their travel. According to accounts later in the book, as well as from Russ's brother Wendell, the trip included a stop at their Grandfather Phineas' in Fairmount, IN. Most likely they traveled approximately the following: MI-66 to IN-9 to Fairmount, IN, then IN-9 to US-40 (to Indianapolis and St. Louis; I-70 and I-55 emulate this path), then US 66 to Vinita, OK. At Vinita, either US-60 or US-66 would get them to Amarillo. US 60 and 66 would both also be viable options to Los Angeles, but it appears that US-60 got the nod, based on their eventual stop in Wickenburg, AZ (just northwest of Phoenix). Wickenburg is on US-60, but US-66 followed modern day I-40 through Arizona.

This is where the car finally gave up the ghost. Russ's cousin Valice lived in Los Angeles with her husband Cliff. Cliff came out to rescue them and bring them the rest of the way to Pasadena. They arrived on the 10th birthday of Russ's younger brother, Wendell: April 12, 1934.

in Pasadena and a machine shop in LA where I learned to weld and also took a course in welding, hoping to go to work in the ship yards.

It was 1941 and war clouds had been gathering for some time, the war in Europe was 2 years old and it was just a matter of time before we would be in it. The ship yards were going on strike and I decided to join the Air Corps before the draft caught up with me. Then going to the Post Office, I stopped by the recruiting sgt. To see what he had to offer, told him what I wanted, took a short test for air-plane



mechanic course and passed it. In a day or so I reported to the recruit headquarters at 6th and Main in LA, was sworn in with 6 or 8 others and was on my way to Fort MacArthur, San Pedro for processing.

Three days at Ft. Mac. and we were on a train heading for Jefferson Barracks Mo. for basic training. It was here that I met a man in my barracks who had had an earlier hitch and I suppose because I was 2 or 3 years older than



*Fort MacArthur, San Pedro, 2017*  
What remains of Fort MacArthur is a museum and a small part that is an annex of the Los Angeles Air Force Base. Like many of Russ's stops in the 1940's, this location saw heavy use in immediately before and during WWII, and soon after was on its way to decommissioning.

most of the guys, he took a liking to



*Red brick barracks at Jefferson Barracks Military Post*  
Jefferson Barracks was a critical post for the US Army from 1826-1946, and is still in use today, making it the longest-operating military installation west of the Mississippi.

me and needing a buddy, said to me, "stick to me and I'll show you how we can keep away from all of this drill and other objectionable pass time work." We, or should I say, he would volunteer us for jobs such as changing sheets from the beds, guarding the barracks while the rest were out drilling etc. Thanks to Seamon, I was learning fast,

learning the ropes and how to adjust to Army life with the least amount of resistance.

Three weeks of this and a group of us who were going to mechanics school were on our way to Chanute Field Ill. for 22 weeks of school. Arriving there at about the 4th of December, 1941, we were scheduled to begin our course on Monday the 8th of December. Sunday morning, Dec. 7th while just laying around the barracks, doing nothing in particular, playing cards, listening to music on the radio or just talking, we were interrupted by a news flash, Pearl Harbor was being bombed. My immediate thoughts were that school was out and that we would be

**Chanute to Indianapolis**  
130 miles each way.

pulled out of the Air Corps and shipped to an Infantry out fit be



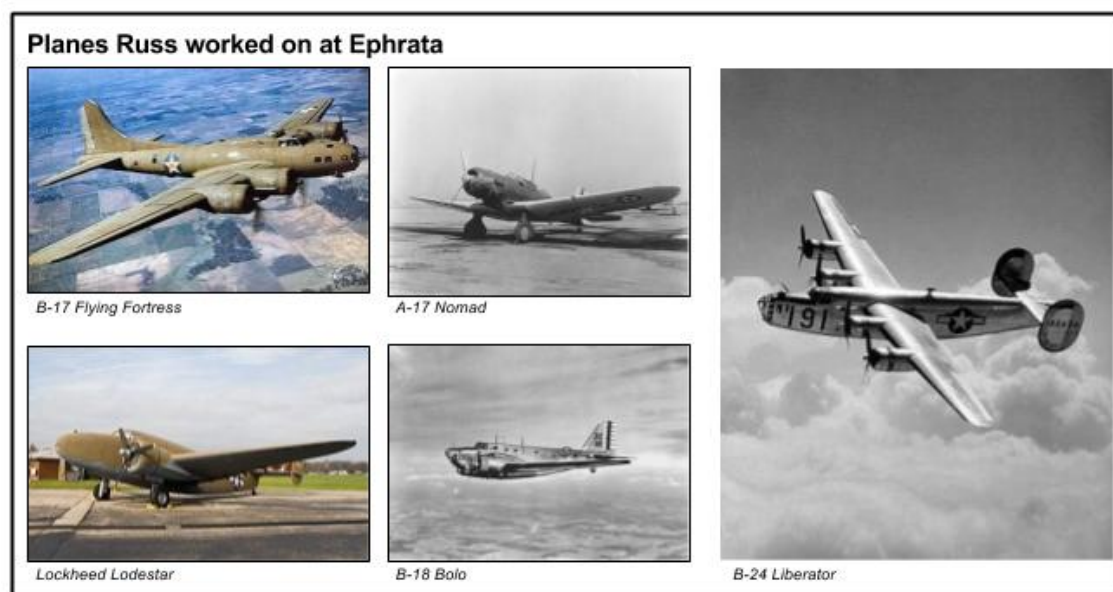
*Chanute Field, 1943*  
Rows of Link trainers fill this classroom. These trainers were used to teach both Link trainer operators and maintenance technicians.



sent overseas. However, wars are not fought on such notice and school began as scheduled.

Two weeks later, Christmas week end was upon us & something of significance was to happen to me. I was invited to go to Indianapolis with a buddy for the Holiday. This being his home, he had a girl friend there who had a girl friend who worked with her and a double date was arranged. Here I met Helen Troutman. Also, her Father, Mother, and kid Sister, Pat. This was the beginning of a courtship by mail, which was to last for next 2-½ years. Only one more date was to be had during my schooling at Chanute.

Upon graduation I was immediately shipped to Geiger Field, Spokane, Washington. There to be assigned to a new outfit just being formed, The 370th Sqd/n of the 307th Bomb Group. In about 2 weeks, before any duty could be assigned, we were shipped to a place called Ephrata, some 120 miles south of Spokane. This town



had a population of about 450 and had a paved landing strip belonging to Northwest Airline for the purpose of providing an emergency landing place. There was nothing there, not a building of

any kind, in the middle of the desert, just sand and sage brush.

We began erecting tents, tents for everything, kitchen, offices, supplies, PX, latrines and everything. We were on a schedule of 10 on, then a 36 hour pass. Soon we were building 3 or 4 wood buildings, a headquarters bld'g, a PX, a latrine (a many holer) and a couple other bld'gs on the line.





Our numbers were to grow, too, as I remember, to a strength of around 2,000. Remember I said that the population of the town was 450, so I need not say that "Night Life" was non-existent, making work and training foremost in our thoughts. Wenatchee, a town of good size was 53 miles away and good times were to be had there while in our 36 hour pass.

We had some airplanes, 4 of them. We had an old B-17, 1, old A-17 (single engine attack) 1, Old B-18, built by Douglas, (something on the order of a C-47) and a, I think a Lockheed Lodestar. That was it for a few weeks until we received 4 B-24's in our Sqd'n.



.50 caliber machine gun, M2 Browning, "Ma Deuce"



Russ's MOS was code 747: Air Plane and Engine Mechanic

So, here I was, an airplane mechanic without an airplane to work on. There were too many mechanics or too few airplanes and I needed a job besides clerking in the PX. Then and I never knew how it came about, but I was called to report to the engineering officer, one Capt. Fontane. Doing so, he told me that they were setting up a fuel section. There was to be a staff sgt. as section head, 3 sgts. and 3 pfc's and that he thought that I was the man to be the section chief, I agreed. So I had a job of driving the semi tractor and trailer in to town and hauling a load of fuel to the base. This job was short lived, no longer than two weeks had passed when an order came out saying that any 747 (A/P mech) had to be filling that job or be shipped out. This I couldn't handle so, it happened that in my tent, there were 2 air-crew gunners and I began going with them to the skeet range began shooting skeet and getting

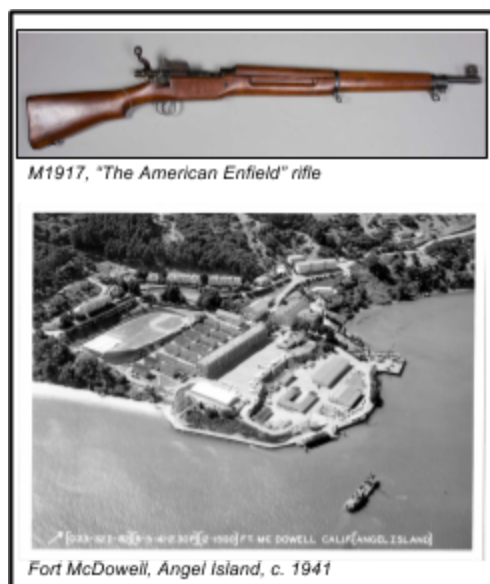
instructions from them on the 50 cal. machine gun, also going with them to combat lectures. I had for a couple of weeks been seeing Lt. Brown, the Operations Officer and Capt. Fontane, the Engineering Officer about being assigned to a combat crew as an engineer. Each time that I saw one of them, they would send me to the other to be released or requested, I was getting no where. Then I attended a lecture given by the Sqd'n Commander, Capt. Jerkins. At the conclusion of his lecture, Jerkins asked if



there was any questions. No one raised a hand so, I stood up and asked how I should go about getting on a combat crew. Jerkins asked me about my MOS and I told him that I was a 747. He then said, "you'll have to see Capt Fontane and then Lt. Brown." I said that I had and that each time I saw one, I was sent to the other. His reply was, "the old Army Game, see (me) right after this." I did and he saw Capt. Fontane and Lt. Brown and I was an engineer.

After a week or so I got an ass't engineer by the name of Henderson, a staff sgt. fresh from mechanics school and gunnery school. The policy then was that when a man finished gunnery school he was automatically a buck sgt. and if he had graduated from mech. or radio school, he was a staff sgt. So I had a s/sgt. for an ass't and I was a pvt. The first of the month saw me a PFC, the next month, a buck sgt. Our 4 B-24s were in the air for all the time that they could be, one crew following the other and on the ground only for needed maintenance, that was considerable because of the dust and sand that we were operating from. Sometimes a new engine would only last for 40 hours, chewed out by dirt. The poorest engines were those Pratt & Whitney's that were built by Chevrolet. Buicks were some better. Those that were built by P&W were much better for some reason. The some reason was that airplane engines are not put together the way auto engines are.

Along about the time that I had made sgt., orders came through for the Group to pack up and move to Sioux City, Iowa. What a change! Here was a brand new air base, new hangars, barracks, stocked PX, theatre, chapel, every thing, plus a town to go to. Here also we got 6 more airplanes. It was great but, lasted just 3 weeks when orders came in to install all new engines on our old airplanes and ship overseas. First to San Francisco then, where?



I still did not have an airplane of my own. Some how, I suppose because of my persistence in getting on a combat crew, Lt. Brown had me as his own personal engineer and he was not to have a crew of his own. This did not hurt, yet. I was the first of the original 12



engineers to make S/Sgt. and did so at Sioux City. I don't remember that any of the S/Sgt's that came out of school ever made T/Sgt.

So we packed up and landed at Angel Island in the S/F Bay. Here we were all issued all new winter uniforms if we needed them and Enfield Rifles, slimy with cosmolene. Two days later we were loaded aboard a troop transport with the name, "SS Torrence" and sailed early in the morning.

It was unknown to us that this vessel was a converted Norwegian freighter but, we soon learned that there was something different about her when just outside the 3 mile limit the Stars and Stripes were hauled down and the Norwegian flag was run up. We were heading in a north west direction, surely this did mean that we were bound for Alaska, that we had suspected because of our winter uniform issue.

We soon realized that we were flying the Norwegian flag because we were on a Norwegian ship with a Norwegian crew. The first thing that happened after leaving the Golden Gate was that all the gunners aboard were gotten together by some one and turned over to the 3rd mate for some duty. We were to man the 6 or 8 50 cal. machine guns and the sailors would man the 2 20 MM guns. That was our only protection, should we be attacked by Jap subs.



Oerlikon 20mm naval gun with its operator, c. 1942



Russ's trip from Angel Island to Diamond Head was likely on a ship like the M/S Kilstrøm, pictured above, a WWII-era Norwegian freighter



This was a good deal, I was the main with the most rank and the 3rd Mate chose me to be the commander of the gun crews, giving me the run of the ship. After the first day out we changed course to a south westerly direction and held this for the next 4-½ days. Nothing could be learned of our destination. It was on the 5th day that we saw land on the horizon. In a few hours I recognized "Diamond Head," so what were the winter



uniforms for. The answer to that was that there was still a fear of spies.

It was late in the afternoon when we debarked and loaded into trucks for an hours ride or less. By the time we reached our destination it was dark and where ever we were, there were tents and cots to sleep on, all set up by someone, so we climbed into bed. That night was most miserable, we did not sleep alone, we didn't sleep. We had guests all night with us under our blankets with us, mosquitos like I had never seen before or since.

After trying to hide beneath our blankets and catching 40 winks here and there, the dawn came and we surveyed our surroundings we found that we were in the middle of a pineapple field with cane edges. There was a new strip, not quite finished, built by cutting ridges and filling deep gullies. Our airplanes were there, all but one that didn't make it. I lost a good buddy on that crew by the name of Winkler. The airplanes were all parked in bunkers and we moved into 8 man shakes. These must have housed the construction crews. The name of the place was Kapapa and was to be the home of the 370th sqd'n for the next 3 months.

**Two close brushes with future war celebrities**

Russ makes mention later in his life story of his close geographic connection to Pappy Boyington, inspiration for his book and the 1970's TV show *Baa Baa Black Sheep*. Another individual who would receive notoriety later in life was Louis Zamperini, subject of *Unbroken* by Laura Hildebrand and later turned into a movie produced by Angelina Jolie. Zamperini was part of the 372nd squadron of the 307th bombardment group. Russ was the 371st. Zamperini's home base was Kualoa Field, which was the closest part of Oahu to Kapapa Island.



At top: Louis Zamperini, c. 2012. Zamperini's lengthy time alone at sea and eventually as a prisoner of war taken by the Japanese was chronicled in *Unbroken*. Zamperini passed away in July 2014, at the age of 97.



Gregory 'Pappy' Boyington, at right, led The famous 'Black Sheep' squadron. Eventually receiving both the Medal of Honor and the Navy Cross. Boyington, 75, died in 1988.

**Oahu to Midway to Wake**

This is about a 2,500 mile journey each way. Midway Island is, coincidentally, removed just a little to the north of halfway. This is NOT, however, the origin of its name.

Midway is roughly halfway from North American and Asia, and nearly halfway around the world from Greenwich, UK. It is about 1/3 of the way from Oahu to Tokyo.

We trained and trained, gunnery practice, bombing practice and flying practice. A pass to Honolulu once in a while was not what it was cracked up to be. December the 22nd came and we got some new, secret orders. Fly out to somewhere and not come back for as long as a week. The pilots and navigators knew where we were going but, no one else. After a long, long flight we landed at Midway Island. There the navy painted the underside of our B-24's a flat black and we as well as the other 3 sqd'ns were being loaded with bombs for another flight. Once again the pilots and navigators knew. Those who read this can read all about it in



history books. We hit Wake Island on Christmas Eve, 1942, and returned to Wake, thence to Oahu, completing the longest bombing mission in history.

A couple of days later, group sent a B-24 on a recon reconnaissance to Wake to photograph the damage and did not return to Wake. They did get to Wake and did get away, but missed Midway on the return. The crew that was lost was a composite crew made up from the 4 sqd'ns. Two from the 370th, Lt. Brown, our Operations Officer and Edger Higgenbotham, tail gunner, my buddy who lived in my shack. A dozen of our airplanes searched for them for a week or 10 days without results.

In a few days, Jan. of '43 we heard for the 3rd or 4th time, "this is it," what ever that meant. "It," seemed to take on a more ominous meaning each time we heard it, this time certainly was no different. Orders were to load the most essential tools and office supplies on our airplanes for an undisclosed destination. We were moving, the ground personnel and equipment were to follow when transportation became available. It was not until we were airborne that I learned where we were going, and then the location was not a familiar name to me. I may have heard the name before from news stories, but it meant little to me.



The first leg of our trip, about a 10 hour flight, was



Canton Island. Actually, Canton was an atoll, not exactly an island. It was shaped in the form of a crescent with a lagoon in the center, barely big enough for a landing strip. The highest point above sea level was a sea wall that was pushed up around the perimeter to hide the activity from Jap submarines and afford some protection from high waves, (I guess). Canton was just 2° below the equator. We were to spend the night and fly on the next day, we were assigned a tent, furnished a blanket and a cot, fed, played some Black Jack and were to bed. It sounds strange that being on the equator one freeze to death, I nearly did.



The next morning, I'm sure that we were fed, but I cannot remember it, and went to our airplane. Two engines were started, but the 3rd would not turn over. The starter was out, so we had to lay over for 2 days while a new starter was shipped from Hawaii, then it took another day to install. We flew out the next day ending our sojourn at Canton, never to see it again.

**Rickenbacker**  
World War I and II pilot Eddie Rickenbacker was with 7 others who were adrift at sea for 24 days before being rescued. He would later become the CEO of Eastern Airlines before retiring. He died in 1973 at age 82.

Our next landing place was Espiritu Santo, an island in the New Hebrides group, another 10 hours.

Backing up for a minute to Canton. Canton was the atoll that Eddie Rickenbacker missed on his way to what ever his

destination was in the South Pacific. I do not remember where he was going or who was flying him. I do know that many hours were spent before his rescue was effected after many days in a rubber raft. History records it well.



Henderson Field, Guadalcanal, April 1943, roughly the time Russ was on the island

And so we landed at Espiritu Santo on one of several strips there, I mean 2 or 3. By now this had become a rather large supply base, having been the

jumping off point for the first operations at Guadalcanal, some 4 hour flying time away. We spent, perhaps a week or 2 here, perhaps flying some search missions, I do not remember, then we heard it again, "this is it." And we were on our way to Guadalcanal in the Solomon group. Things there were pretty much under control by this time, fighting was still going on, on the ground, Pistol Pete was lobbing a few rounds into our positions and the airstrip, Henderson Field. Henderson was a captured Jap strip that we had made some little improvement on.

**Not what it seems**

"Pistol Pete" or "Millimeter Mike" were names given to Japanese 105mm and 150mm artillery.

"Washing Machine Charleys" (sic) were Imperial Japanese aircraft performing solitary nocturnal operations over Henderson Field. They were so named because of their distinctive engine sound.

"Betty Bombers," as Russ explained, were also nocturnal aircraft, though with twin engines intentionally desynchronized.

"Jap" is generally considered a derogatory reference in 2017, though considerably less so in Russ's era.

Of our Group's 4 sqd'ns only 2 had left Hawaii and two had remained with the 7th Air Force. We, the 370th and the 424th were now in the 13th Air Force. I do not remember for sure which sqd'n first flew up to the "Canal." I think that it was us, the 370th, while the other remained at Espiritu to fly search missions. The reason for this



was that there just wasn't room at "Cactus" (code name for Guadalcanal) for both sqd'ns at one time, hence we traded places every 2 weeks.

"Washing Machine Charley" was somewhat active at this point, usually flying over every night and dropping a string of bombs hoping to do some damage and to keep us awake. In this, he had some success, but he was paying a good price for any success that he had.

While we were waiting the arrival of our ground personnel, we were getting rations and quarters (tents) from another unit. I've forgotten who they were, but they had a genuine wooden mess hall, that is for a short time after our arrival. We had been there for a week or two when "Washing Machine Charley" paid us one of his routine visits. The air raid siren had sounded and we stayed in our cots for awhile, until we heard the de-synchronized drone of his twin engined "Betty" bomber, or hear something else happening. This night something else was about to happen. Charley



was about to drop a string of bombs across our area. As I remember it, the first bomb had hit before we hit our fox hole. Then it took only a split second for the 6 of us to pile in. I was the farthest away and last in and I think that my butt was above ground level. The next day the hole became deeper. Anyway there were some 8 to 12 bombs in the first string. I know that I counted them at the time, the first was quite a distance from where we were, the 2nd closer, the 3rd closer and so on until a very close one hit. I had somehow gauged the interval between bombs and when 6th or 7th hit so close my thoughts were, good! the next one will be beyond us and it was.

As far as I know the only damage that Charley had done was that, that close bomb exploded in the top of a palm tree in our grove, blowing the tops off of 16 trees and flattening the mess hall flat. Breakfast was a little late that morning. We did have breakfast and it came before lunch, what a good breakfast it was, the best in many months. Being without supplies caused by that bomb, the mess crew had gone to the US Navy for emergency rations and came up with the first fresh eggs and pork chops



that we had had since leaving the States. However the following day we had a mess tent and the usual powdered eggs and Spam.

It must be noted here that as far as I know, this "Betty" got away and back home to Kahili on Boughainville. And so we flew many missions of like nature, sometimes making as many as 20 passes across a Jap air strip, dropping one bomb at a pass and keeping it up most of the night.

Not all of the "Washing Machine Charley's" were lucky. When we caught one in search lights and had a P-38 in the air, it was good bye Charley. It was during these first few weeks that Charley was again lucky. My crew was on the strip getting ready to fly another night harassing mission when the air raid siren blew. We took cover in what ever we could find, mine was a light anti-aircraft gun implacement, a ring side seat for the show that was to take place. One of Charley's bombs hit a B-24, blowing it all over the place and setting off two others afire and exploding ammo made sieve of two others. All at once, airplane-wise we were at half strength. No one was hurt.

During the month that followed our ground personnel and equipment arrived, a new bomber strip was under construction by a Marine construction outfit and the sqd'n. set up camp at Koli Point. We will operate from here until such time as needed until another better & longer strip is built near by, to be known as "Carney." Carney will be 7 thousand feet long, 5,000' of steel mat with 1,000' of concrete at each end.

Like babies from Heaven, we had gotten our lost airplanes replaced, the 424th sqd'n had moved up to the "Canal" and we were in full swing.

I had gotten a new airplane and there had been a shuffling of crew personnel because of airplane and crew members that had been lost. In the new assignments I fared very well indeed. My somewhat new crew would remain constant for most of the time to follow. My pilot was now, Capt. Newman, the ranking pilot in the Sqd'n. We were to be the lead ship in regular formations, my bombardier was the lead bombardier. Capt. Newman, co-pilot Marx, radio operator, Wolf and my ass't engineer were all from a crew that had bailed out on New Georgia Island, picked up by a "Coast Watcher" and returned to duty after a leave in New Zealand.





So we were no. 1 and because Capt. Newman was the ranking pilot and quite eager, he would volunteer us for special missions, often juicy ones. This could have been our downfall but we seemed to be a charmed crew. I flew 29 missions with

**Buka**

Buka Island is just northwest of Bougainville (see previous inset map). The Allied forces had advanced and either overtaken or neutralized many of the airstrips in this region.

Newman, the most spectacular of which included the sinking of 2 Jap ships. While on a single search and destroy mission, we were at the northern end of the Solomons, near Buka, when we spotted a Jap freighter, making several runs on it we damaged it to the point that the skipper was able to put her hard on the beach before she could sink. Perhaps a month later while snooping around Bougainville, just a very few miles from the big Jap air base at Kahili, we spotted another ship. This one proved to be a tanker and low in the water. After making several passes and attempting to do a little skip bombing, a tactic used by Navy torpedo bombers, we were not successful, however we were most successful in our strafing fire. The ship began to blaze. Continuing to make passes over her and strafing as she headed for the beach, perhaps a mile distant, she became an inferno. Even after she hit the beach we strafed, the hull was cherry red from bow to stern and the smoke had risen to 10,000 feet before we turned for home. I have often wondered why were not attacked by fighters from Kahili, we were only about 20 or 30 miles from there. Since this ship was without a doubt carrying gasoline, was it possible that Kahili was out of fuel? If so, they were still out.

So, we had 2 ships to our credit and a Zero. The 1st ships destroyed by the Group, our airplane was to be the only one to be credited with 2 ships. Part of the legacy of an airplane that was to be forever known as "Old 266."

We had caught another ship along the Bougainville coast in the days to follow, this time we had spotted her in a small cove, a harbor named Timputz. This harbor was surrounded on 3 sides by high hills, making a good bomb run difficult. At low level, on 2 or 3 passes our bombs fell long because the ship would not come into sight until it was already too late for an accurate release. We dropped our last 2,500 pounders from an altitude of 5000', both were near misses, but neither bomb exploded as far as we could see. I've never heard anything more about this ship, we could not claim it as being damaged.



Many of our missions were exciting, though 4 or 5 do stand out in my memory. We always longed for some buildings to bomb but, buildings were a scarce item in the jungle, one group that we did get a chance to bomb was a Catholic Mission that the Japs had taken over and according to reports, was being used as an Officers Club or a Hospital or some such thing as that. I have forgotten just where it was. I remember that as the Japs were getting close to it, some way it was arranged with the Navy to send a submarine in and evacuate the people who ran the place. This was accomplished, a well known story, making the headlines in the papers back home. At the request of the Priest, who was there for some 30 years, ever since leaving France and had never returned to his home land. I have forgotten his name, but he was at our briefing and told us his story and bid us a safe and successful mission. It was hard to see just how much damage we did because of all the vegetation but I'm sure that the Japs knew that we had passed their way.

Another mission that was quite exciting and totally a failure, took place one night near Shortland Harbor. Shortland Harbor, as the name implies, was on the island of Shortland, just a few miles south of Kahili. The sqd'n had been contacted by Headquarters, who had been contacted by the Navy, wanting 2 B-24s to come up the slot, one to carry flares, the other loaded with 500 pounders. They had a Jap ship spotted and wanted help. Very short notice for us to load up with bombs and get up there in time to do any good, but we loaded and took off. One of the B-24s belonged to the 424th. Capt Newman chose the bomb load. About 2-½ hours later we arrived near Shortland. Contact was made with the PBY that had asked for help and Capt Newman asked them to strike a match, (meaning drop a flare) for the next 20 minutes or so we flew in circles around the flares, hoping to catch a glimpse of the ship in the reflection of the flares. We were also in contact with the 424th B-24. When the Black Cat, (PBY) had exhausted his supply of flares, the 424th took over and dropped his a couple at a time, then we saw it as it left a wake behind.

Now, to lose some altitude and prepare for a skip bomb run while keeping track of the ship.

I must state at this point that we knew that the ship was an AK, (a cargo ship) because the Navy had said so in its first request for help.



And so we bore down on our prey, full steam ahead, bomb doors open, like shooting fish in a rain barrel. That is until all hell broke loose, a thousand tracers were coming at us, if their guns were loaded as ours were, every 5th round, a tracer, there were 5,000 rounds coming at us. We got through but we had been hit. We weren't sure where, however Capt Newman thought that it was time to go home and we did. We had made a run on a Jap cruiser. Was this the ship the Navy had seen?

Upon returning home, an examination of our airplane we found that we had taken a 20 MM through an inboard gas tank and the self-sealing tank had sealed with only a loss of a few gallons of gas.

Not having kept a diary, I am not sure of the sequence of some of the happenings that I relate, it being 49 years ago, but I guess that I should give you a little about our rest leaves in New Zealand. What a beautiful place and such wonderful people. And the girls! For two weeks life would be hard to cope with. There were parties all day



long, dinners at the girls' homes, things to see and places to go. Going to a girl's home for dinner was surely a treat, because of the company, the food and the girl. Shall I say that we were Yanks and the people were thankful that we were there. You see, by the time that we hit Guadalcanal, the Japs were on the move threatening the whole of the Pacific. They already had most of it, all that remained was Australia and New Zealand and it was just a matter of a very short time and they would be there.

At this time the fighting men of Australia and New Zealand had been in the desert of Africa for two years, to 4 years, there was no military left to protect them. And the girls faced a real dilemma, the ones that were left at home were either too young or too old. The Yanks were just right and they had money and a ration of booze, something hard to come by. So if you wanted or were able, it was out to a different girl's home every night for dinner.

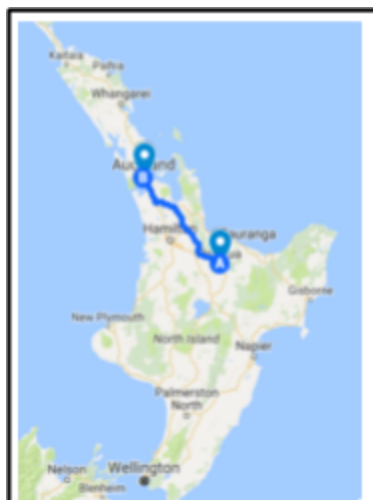
Restaurant food was very good and reasonable. The favorite was steak and eggs for breakfast. As I remember it, the cost was 2 and 6 for a 6 or 8 oz steak and 4



eggs any way you wanted them. 2 & 6 meant, 2 shillings and a six-pence, equivalent to --- I've forgotten but, less than a dollar.

Rotorua was a fine spot to visit. I went by myself by train. Leaving Auckland at 8 AM, I was in Rotorua shortly after dark. Can you imagine it? I had covered the entire distance of about 130 miles in so short a time? Yes, you read it right, 130 miles in 11 hours. Zane Gray described Rotorua as being like Yellowstone. I guess the thing that I remember most, besides the wild pig that we had for dinner at the hotel was the songfest that evening. In a rather large room off the lobby, was a piano and somehow there gathered a few people. There were 4 maybe 5 ladies in their late 40's or early 50's plus a New Zealand Air Force Cadet, his wife and myself. Now, one of the ladies could play the piano and quite well, except that she had to have music and the only piece of music to be had was, "Rose O' Day." Now I already knew the words to Rose O'

Day but, if I hadn't known them, you can bet that before the evening was over, I surely would have.



**New Zealand joyride.** The north island of New Zealand, with Rotorua (point "A") and Auckland (point "B") shown, about 130-140 miles apart.

After about 4 days there it was back to Auckland. This time, fate had smiled on me, I didn't have to ride the "Limited." Though as it turned out, I wasn't much better off for time. One of the ladies of Rose O' Day fame, was going back to Auckland and she had an automobile, sorta. It was an Austin 7, right hand drive of course, the only right hand drive that I have ever driven, I got along fine. Now as I soon learned, Madaline needed a companion for the journey. I will spare you the details, but leaving at about 11 AM we just made it to Auckland before dark. On the way we had about 4 flat tires and bought one when the one tire could no longer be patched up. However,

all in all it was a fun trip.

Arriving back in town 2 days before we were scheduled to return to the jungle, I had a chance to rest. Then to the airport where our transportation was waiting. It was the same L-B-30 that had brought us down. We were about half way to the airplane when a man came running out telling us that we were scratched. Some Marine Officers with a higher priority were put aboard. The airplane taxied to the end of the



strip, run up the engines and headed down the runway, when it was about a hundred feet off the ground it exploded, killing all aboard. (A L-B-30 is a transport version of a B-24). A landing was about to be made at Munda, hence their high priority.

**Auckland to Munda**  
Munda Airport is on New Georgia Island in the Solomon Island. It is about 2300 miles NNW from Auckland and about 200 miles NW of Guadalcanal. The Allied Forces overtook Munda in August 1943.

Within a day or two another airplane was arranged for to take us back to the jungles of Guadalcanal & Koli airstrip. Koli was a poorly constructed strip, all steel mat without nearly enough base for heavy bombers. Our heavy B-24's compacted the runway until steel in many places would buckle and rise as much as a foot above the ground and the landing gear would roll it back down as rolled ahead. It was from this strip that I was to get my greatest scare of my lifetime.

The squadron was to make a maximum effort, every airplane that we had was to hit Nauru. Nauru was a Jap held island that produced a large portion of the world's phosphorous. I do not remember if this was to be my first trip there or not however, I was to make this flight 3 times. The distance required that we carry 1,465 gallons bomb bay fuel tank. Requirement was a safety consideration, the trip could be made without the extra fuel if everything went well.

**Nauru**  
Approximately 800 miles NE of Guadalcanal

It was shortly before dark and we were ready to leave, Major Ed Jurkens was to be my pilot, Capt Newman was moved from the left seat to the right & Lt. Mark, my copilot would sit this one out. Then at the last moment a Lt. Col from headquarters and bumped Capt Newman from the copilots seat. I do not remember the name of the Col. It could have been Burchard.

We were the lead airplane and were aligned with the strip for takeoff, Major Jurkens eased the throttles ahead. I was standing between the pilot and copilot reading the RPM, manifold pressure and air speed. Air speed was our first concern, it wasn't coming up as it should have, Major Jurkens remarked, "what's wrong?, we have plenty of RPM, plenty of manifold pressure" but, the end of the runway was coming up and the airspeed would not go above 80 MPH. Ahead I saw what we beyond the end of the strip for the first time, nothing but stumps of what had been large trees and very rough ground. Aboard we had nine 500-pound bombs and in our fuel tanks was 3,665



gallons of gas. I was sure that my flying days were over, there was not enough time to stop and the end of the runway was about 200 feet away. In a desperate attempt, Major Jurkens pulled back on the yoke, we left the ground and we flew. Impossible. At 80 MPH? IMPOSSIBLE.

I don't know if the pilots behind us saw that something was wrong and stayed put or if my Sqd'n Commander gave the word not to take off and clear the run way for our return.

We flew out over the water, salvoed our bomb load and landed. The airspeed reading 80 MPH.

What was wrong? Blame was placed on the soft runway. The mission was still on but, the load was to be lightened, our safety margin of gas was to be sacrificed, so it was drained on the ground, 465 gallons from about 10 airplanes. Then the mission was scrubbed. Dumping the gas, as it turned out, was not the smartest order ever given. The following morning, my crew chief found the answer to the problem, he found a crack in the static side of our airspeed indicator and the reading would not go above 80 MPH. We probably had taken off and landed at something like 150 MPH.

A word about Nauru. It was a 10 to 11 hour mission with nothing in between except water. There was always a lot of Jap Navy Ships there with very good radar directed anti aircraft guns and their flax was always the most intense of any that I ever saw., though to my knowledge, we never lost an airplane there. There was a fairly large airstrip there but, because of our first airplanes in, did a pretty good job of tearing up the coral strip. During one raid, it was early in the morning, daylight, I was near the tail end of the formation and could plainly see Zeros taxiing around looking for enough undamaged runway to take off, this time it seems they couldn't find it.

This was really a maximum effort. Everything that was to be had that could make the round trip was used. The first wave hit at midnight, they were the Navy PBYs, perhaps as many as 6, then there were some B-17s from somewhere, an hour or so later, maybe as many as a dozen of them, ten 10 or 11 of the 424th B-24s followed by our 10 or 11 B-24s. I mention this because of the size of air force, While we heard about 1,000 plane raids in Europe we mustered a raid of as many as 40 airplanes.



Fighter escort for local work was to be had about half the time for daylight raids. These escorts came mostly from the Navy and the Marines, sometimes we would get some Air Corps P-38s for high cover, as many as 5 or 6 with Marine Corsairs working the formation. And at times we had Navy F4Fs or New Zealanders with old P-40s.

It would be some 40 years later that I come to know that one of the F4U pilots would become very famous. Interesting to me was that I would realize that he was the leader of the Marine outfit that was escorting us on at least one of our day light missions. His name was Major (Pappy) Boyington. "Pappy" had shot down 19 Japs before he himself was to be shot down somewhere between Guadalcanal and New Guinea, was picked up by a Jap submarine and spend the rest of the war as a prisoner of war.

How I came to know that he was our escort on at least one mission was when I read his book, "Baa Baa Black Sheep." He describes the mission with great disgust, mad at the P-38 pilots who were to fly, "high cover" for mission.

The mission, as I remember it was to Kahili. His pilots were to work the formation while the P-38s were to fly high cover. I remember this because we became separated from the P-38s because we were just below a layer of clouds and the 38s were above. Since radio silence was to be maintained and that we were doing the navigating the 38s could not see us and returned to the fighter strip near Henderson. I remember this well and it was brought back to me in Pappys book. I don't know why he was so upset, the P-38s were not there to protect him, we were the ones who should have been mad, perhaps we were but, I for one didn't think it a big deal since we were not used to having an escort on every flight. Nice to have, that's for sure, very, very nice on one mission that I recall. I don't remember where we had gone, other than some place in the Solomons and I don't remember what our escort was made up of, maybe some F4Us, maybe some F4Fs, maybe some P-40s or all of them. However after we had dropped our loads and were on the return home we were hit by a big batch of Zeros and a real fight took place. There was a couple of dozen Zeros and a dozen of our fighters locking horns. The attack was, of course, on the bomber formation and many of the Zeros got in close, close enough to count the pilot's teeth. We burned up more ammo that day than any other. Strange that I did not get to the intelligence tent to



read up on how many of our fighters were lost, if any, I only remember that there were at least 6 or 8 splashes in the water made by someone buying the farm. I do not know what other damage was done to our bombers, other than to our own. "Old 266" suffered two 25 caliber bullet holes in the de-icer boots and a shot up hydraulic line that necessitated the lowering of the landing gear by hand.

I was soon to earn another rest leave to New Zealand. By this time I had 52 missions behind me. I had earned 2 Distinguished Flying Crosses and 6 Air Medals.

Rotation back to the States was not a cut and dried thing as it was in Europe, where you were rotated upon completion of 25 missions. The powers that be had decided that the war in Europe be won first, then some attention could be paid to the Pacific. So, our prime mission was to stop the Jap advance. This we did with a minimum amount of personnel and equipment and sparse rations. Rotation of air crews was on a "catch as catch can" basis. If a crew could be found somewhere that could be spared, they might be sent to us enabling us to send a crew home. The crew to be sent home was not a crew that had been flying together, but a composite crew, made up of a pilot, copilot, navigator, bombardier, engineer, ass't engineer, radio operator, ass't operator, nose gunner and tail gunner, all chose by a point system.

I'm not sure just how this system worked but, it had something to do with missions flown and hours flown. I missed making the first crew to be relieved by a matter of 2 or 3 hours of flight time. This was something of a disappointment to me because I was ready. I had about 30 missions at this time.

No big deal though, I'd make the next crew relief. I did, but the next relief crew did not show up for another 3 months. I was on my way back to New Zealand and it still hadn't shown up.

After 2 weeks in N/Z I returned to Espiritu Santo awaiting a ride back to Guadalcanal, sacking out in a barracks when a runner from the orderly room came in and said, "Sgt. Ratliff, you are to follow me to the Orderly Room and pick up your orders to go home." First I had to go back to Guadalcanal to get my gear, then find my way home.





I think that I'll record what this "Beautiful piece of Paper," said, as near as I remember it. To wit: (after the date and hdqrs USEAFISPA)



The following named Officers and Enlisted Men are hereby relieved of duty with the 307th Bombardment Group and will report to the Debarkation Officer, at Hamilton Field, San Francisco upon arrival in the U.S. Transportation authorized via belligerent or non-belligerent aircraft, belligerent or non-belligerent vessel. (then the list of 10 names). There was no reporting date.

My nose gunner, Iddings was on the same order and we decided to go to New Caledonia, 13th Air Force Hq and pick up our DFCs and Air Medals that we had coming before going home. Arriving at the Hq we were told that we could stick around for a couple of days and Lt. Gen. Harmon would present us the medals. This was too much of a delay and we began looking for transportation home. We found a flight to the Fijis, then one to Hawaii, then one to S/F. Reporting in and awaiting orders, I got a 30 day delay en route to a new redistribution station in Santa Monica.

So I walked up to Mother's house unannounced, Mother was home ----- and she cried.

Some time later at Stockton Air Base, I was presented a Silver Oak Leaf Cluster to the Air Medal by Col Backus, former Commander of the Philippine Air Force. A Brigadier General then, but broken by order of MacArthur, because he had lost his air force to the Japs -- while Mac escaped to Australia.



Some months later while stationed at Amarillo, my DFC orders caught up with me and before massed troops was presented my DFC by Brig. Gen Connel.

Along about this time, my sister Hope had quit her job building B-24s and joined the Navy. My brother Wendell was in boot camp in S/D. Before the end of the war



Wendell would see duty on a mine sweeper, and would come under attack by Kamikaze attack and survive, to sweep the harbors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Forrest, my youngest brother soon turned 16 and joined the merchant marine. Then as soon as the war was over was drafted into the Army. Sister Alice was married.

Back to my return from the S. Pacific. After I had spent my 30 days leave I reported to the Redistribution Station in Santa Monica where the Air Corps had just taken over the Edgewater Hotel to be used for processing returning combat personnel. Things were not well organized at this point. As I walked into the lobby, the first thing that I saw was a line leading down a hall way. Well, I had been in the Army long enough to know that when you saw a line, you jumped in. I had no idea what it was for but, the expressions on the faces told me that there was nothing to fear, perhaps even something good was to be had. All that I could see was that there was a door that people were going in, one at a time, and coming out in about 2 minutes with smiles on their faces and a piece of paper in their hand. I didn't bother to ask what was going on.

In a few minutes it was my turn to go in the door. Inside was a corporal sitting at a typewriter and I walked up to the desk and stood there thinking that he knew what I was there for. After 3 or 4 seconds he said, "well sgt., what do you want, a 3 day pass also?" What could I say but, "yes" and he typed it out and I left for my 3 day pass.

I was here for a week or two, during which time we were interviewed by various people, including a "shrink" to make a judgment as to our fitness for shipping out to Salt Lake to the 18th Replacement Wing. I had bought a '34 Ford and drove when it was time to leave. I should say that the stay at Santa Monica was great. There were press interviews on coast to coast radio and parties galore. This ended before things became boring.

Salt Lake was miserable, it was January and bitter cold. I really don't think that this trip was necessary just for re-assignment to some station. The only thing that I remember about the place or what we did was to have an interview with someone to see where we wanted to be assigned, the choice seemed to be ours. Having been in the tropics for a year and getting a taste



of cold weather, my reply was, "I don't care, just send me south." I was assigned to, "Biggs Field, Texas, El Paso."

Upon arriving at Biggs I was assigned to a training sqd'n as an engineer instructor. My duty was to fly with student engineers and check them out on B-24s. This was good duty, I had 5 stripes, somewhat of a war hero, so my students thought, the work load was light and I was drawing flight pay. I was there only 2-3 wks. when I bumped into Jack Ralph. I haven't mentioned Jack before nor any of my other pilots or pilots that I had flown with. I must mention, Lt. John Ralph because we had flown so many missions together. Jack became our pilot while on Guadalcanal when Capt. Newman was made our Operations Officer. Jack was assigned to us, or we were assigned to him when he was promoted to 1st pilot.



We flew 38 missions together and so getting together at Biggs was great, although we were in different sqd'ns we fraternized on a regular basis while I was there. I'll get back to our relationship in a later page of this story.

As good as my assignment was at Biggs, it had been my desire to become a pilot. I had in my possession a letter of recommendation from Major Jurkens, my Sqd'n Commander and Jack gave me another. I was supposed to have 3, however a letter from each of these people was plenty for the board that I was to meet. First, I had to take an exam by a S/Sgt in El Paso, three of us took the exam, two of us passed it and were on our way to Amarillo for classification exams. I qualified for pilot school and was sent to Stockton CA to await assignment to preflight.

Flying schools were not hurting for students at this point, it seems that every kid that turned 18 was signed up for school.

So, to keep us busy we were to be, "on the line trainees." To tell you what kind of a group I was in I'll tell you this, on the train from Amarillo to Stockton, the train was made up of recruits who had just finished basic training, taken their exams to qualify them for pilot, navigator or bombardier and were to await school. Besides them, there was me and another T/Sgt on board the train. This was lousy duty.



I was first assigned to what was termed, "Production Line Maintenance," my job was to wash the windshields of the DCX-78s before they left the hangar. After a day or two I tired of this job. It seemed to me that I was qualified for something a bit more technical than this. I went to see the engineering officer and complained. First he said that he had no one to ever complain so quickly. I doubt that he knew anything about me so, I gave him a little run down and told him that though I wasn't allowed to wear them as a student, I was getting paid for 5 stripes. Well, he saw the light and the next day I was promoted to ass't final inspector.

This was some better but, hard to handle and I asked for a furlough. It was granted. And I took off for Indianapolis to see my "pen pal."

Something big was in the wind, bigger than getting away from those UC-78s. At this writing, this airplane is all but forgotten. They were built by Cessna, a twin engined, fabric covered, wood framed, advanced trainer. It also had another military designation, but the other names that I remember were, "Double Breasted Bob Cat," "Bamboo Bomber," and "Serenade in Glue."

Arriving at Indpl's, I was met at the train station by Helen Troutman and I guess her Father Leo. A policeman who was to retire after 47 years on the force. I stayed at the Troutman's for the next few days and the subject of marriage came up while Helen and I sat on the porch swing. Yes, that dreaded "M" word. Not that I was about to



### **First comes love ...**



Russ and Helen's courtship seems unorthodox 70+ years later, but was fairly common at the time. They met near Christmas 1941 in Indianapolis; he was on leave from Chanute Air Field. They had one more date after this: Easter 1942 (left). They wrote lots of letters (center), and then were married August 6, 1944 (right).

fugitate but I thought it better that we wait until I had finished Preflight at least. My "pen pal" had different thoughts and said, "if we wait until then, we'll never get married." I was trapped & we were married about 3 days later.

I returned to Stockton and found a small house that was rented to an old 307th buddy whose wife had ran off so he sublet it to me and I sent for my wife. To my surprise, my Wife was a good cook, however her laundry skills left something to be desired. It seemed that she thought that my wool GI socks needed boiling and the more she boiled them the worst they smelled and by the time she gave up on them they were more like baby booties in size.

We were soon shipped out to Roswell NM to do some more waiting. We found a home in town that had a bedroom to let with kitchen privileges. Here, we were together with a whole



Russ and Helen were married August 5, 1944. Here they are in spring 1946 with baby Joyce (born 12/23/45)



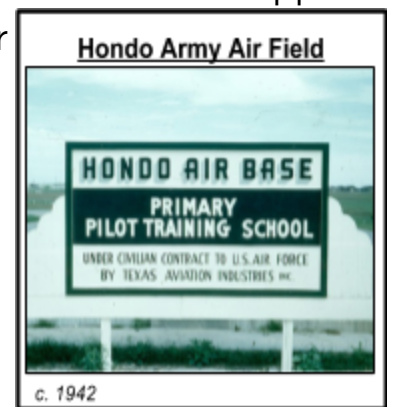
batch of over seas returnees, all staff and tech sgts., all waiting for preflight. On the base was a great NCO club, Helen had a job in town and I was assigned as an oxygen specialist. All that I had to do was meet returning aircraft, B-17s, and check their oxy, supply and fill them up if needed. I don't remember that any ever need to be filled.



I suppose that we were in Roswell for about 2 months when orders came through for the Aviation Cadet Center at San Antonio. I would be restricted for the first 6 weeks, as all were and so I sent Helen home to Indpls. When the 6 weeks were over she was in San Antonio, registered at the Gunter Hotel. The Cadets had a 12 hour pass and we made the most of it. I do not think that these passes were ever longer than 12 hours.

At the completion of preflight, all of us who were engineers were called out to see if any of us wanted to volunteer for B-29 flight engineer school. At this time the war was well along and the washout rate was very high in pilots school and I thought it wise if I raised my hand, several others did likewise and we were off to Amarillo again. Here we went through a shortened familiarization course and shipped to Hondo Texas for cruise control. 6 weeks and we would get our commission. Helen and her girl friend found quarters at a large house in San Antonio, there being no place in Hondo. Hondo was 40 miles away and we got into town on weekends.

And so, we graduated with a delay en route to Maxwell Field Alabama. We went to Indpls, thence to Montgomery for B-29 transition.



Again we found a room in a house, then a small house trailer in the back yard. Helen was expecting. Due along about Christmas time.

A word about the B-29, it was big, carried a big load and had a long range but it was never an airplane that I ever learned to like. It was all work and no fun. I was stuck to the engineer's panel, a mass of levers, gages and switches. It seemed to me that it was something akin to being in a submarine, I could not see out of it. For an example,



### Transitioning to the B-29

The B-29 had a "Central Fire System" that included 4 remotely controlled gun turrets, each armed with two .50 caliber machine guns.

In reading Russ's description of the artillery system in the B-29, one can only imagine how detached this would seem compared to his combat experience in a B-24.

Despite training to fly a B-29, Russ never flew a B-29 in combat.



one night we were shooting landings at a strip in Florida, we made 10 landings just for practice before returning to Maxwell and I never saw the ground.

Along about this time came the Atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the war was over, all that remained was for the surrender to take place aboard the battleship Missouri; this was broadcast and we listened to it. Whatever people thought of MacArthur, it must be said that for this ceremony, he was Magnificent. Without looking up the text, I remember only that he said, "the representatives of the Japanese Government will now sign the Instrument of Surrender." When this was done he said, "these proceedings are now closed." THE WAR WAS OVER.



I could have applied for discharge immediately but, had contemplated making a career of the Army and stuck around for several months, doing very little except flying my 3 hours and 10 landings per month to draw my flying pay. This I did by being an observer in the back seat of an AT-6. This activity had no value to the Air Corps except that it kept a few people in the Service should they be needed. No one seemed to know what the conversion to a peace time military would require. My



rating and rank was that of an engineer on a B-29 and the B-29s had been flown to Arizona and parked in the desert never to be flown again.

About the 1st of Dec, I sent Helen home to await the birth of our baby. This occurred on Dec the 23rd, Joyce was born and I was there.

In Feb I had enough of nothing to do and when an order came out for all Flight Officers who had been in grade for 6 months would submit two copies of their orders of appointment and orders, ordering them to active duty. One of these orders I could not find in my file, so rather than having it looked up, I decided to submit a request for discharge. I was eligible the day that the war in Europe ended.

Flight Officers, ranked between a Master Sgt and a 2nd Lt and was considered by many to be the lowest form of military life.

Eligibility for discharge was based on a point system. There were points for months in service months overseas, marital status, dependent children, medals received, etc. A Flight Officer by this time needed only 18 points, I had 137, I was discharged.

So, it was back to Indpls. After, I suppose about a month I went to California. My mother, Marjorie had a small house that we could have while she went to Michigan to spend some time with her ailing sister. I sent for Helen and Joyce, and began thinking about making a living.

I was offered a job at the Ford agency but, was also thinking about construction work. This seemed to be the best choice of the two and applied to the Carpenter Union and was sent to work for a contractor named, Wm. Crowell. For some reason, I never learned why, the business agent remarked that he hated to send me there but, he could not have done me a bigger favor, as it was to turn out.

I reported to the superintendent, Murry Gavel and was turned over to a carpenter who had been with the company for 26 years, Dan Shumake to be his helper.

The building was to be a 3 story, reinforced concrete warehouse and offices for Cornet Variety Stores. The building was hardly out of the ground when I started there, and for some reason, Murry took a liking to me, whether it was because I was a Vet or





because I worked and seemed to grasp on to what had to be done. What ever, the job lasted nearly a year, carpenters came and went and Murry and I put the hardware on the front door and gave the keys to the owner.

For the next 4 years I worked for The Crowell Co. and learned the trade, under the best of the best. I was about a year and a half into my apprenticeship when I was called into the union to take an exam for a higher rating. I wrote the exam and was given an oral exam by the president, then informed by the business agent that I was qualified for journeyman. A few days later, Bob Crowell paid me a visit on the job and said to me, "Russ, I've had notice from the Union that you have made journeyman." I replied, "yes, I guess so." I knew that the next thing I was to hear, was that I was fired. Not that my work was not satisfactory but that I feared the jump in my pay scale would be more than the company would go for, because the Union had just negotiated a new contract and the journeyman's hourly rate had jumped from \$1.90 per hour to \$2.35 per hour. That would make my pay jump from a 5th period apprentice at \$1.25 to

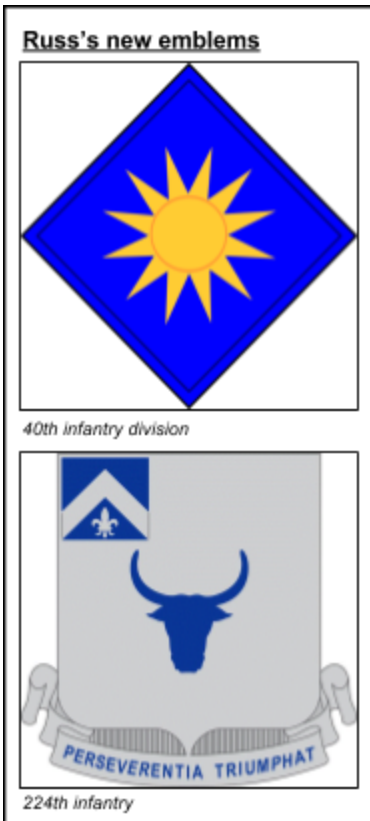
journeyman at \$2.35, almost doubling my pay. So, what happened? Bob said, "congratulations, you certainly deserve it." This was one of the 3 nicest things ever said to me.

By 1948 I had joined the National Guard as a T/Sgt. and shortly after applied for a commission, met the board and was commissioned a 2nd Lt. My unit was a Heavy Mortar Company, 224th Infantry Reg't of the 40th Inf.

Division. In 1950 we were federalized for duty in Korea and sent to Camp Cook, which is now a part of Vandenberg A/F Base.

**Minimum wage in 1948**  
\$0.40 was the minimum hourly wage,  
equivalent to \$4.17 in 2017 dollars.

While training was going on here I was sent to Ft. Benning Ga. to take the Officers Associate Infantry Course. I had applied for this course knowing that I was not sufficient to the task of being a company commander. At this time I was the Reconnaissance Officer, 2nd in command and needed the schooling.



Fort Benning was a great school, I enjoyed every minute of it. In our class of 300, there were about 250 Officers from many countries. They were from Greece, Italy, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Turkey, Venezuela, Siam and the Philippines. It should be noted that at this time, that we kept the Israelis and the Egyptians in separate barracks and classes.

Benning was fun, both from the standpoint of some of the people I met and weapons that we became involved with. We were given the chance to fire most of the weapons common to the infantry at that time, such as: rifles, carbines, mortars, grenade launchers, recoilless rifles, bazookas, tank mounted 90 MM's and machine guns, etc. We also had classes in: intelligence, record keeping, tactics and demolitions. We also learned that, "An Infantry man's Mother was not His Best Friend." His best friend was the Artillery.

**Jack Ralph's plane, the C-75**

The C-75, also repurposed as the Boeing 307 Stratoliner, was the first commercial transport aircraft to enter service with a pressurized cabin, allowing it to cruise at an altitude of 20,000 feet, well above many weather disturbances. Russ stated only 13 were made. Research indicates there were even fewer: 10.



A 1/144 model of the C-75.

Our division had shipped to Japan while we were in school. Upon completion of the 12 weeks in school, we were given a 30 day delay en route leave. Now, being only a short distance from where Jack Ralph was stationed, in Mobile Alabama, I called him, saying that I would like to pay him a visit. Jack met the bus at about midnight and I spent the night with him and his wife Boots. In the morning

we went to his office where he was the Operations Officer for a sqd'n of C-75s. These aircraft were built by Douglas, something on the order of a C-54 or DC-4 only longer and bigger engines. Only 13 were ever built.

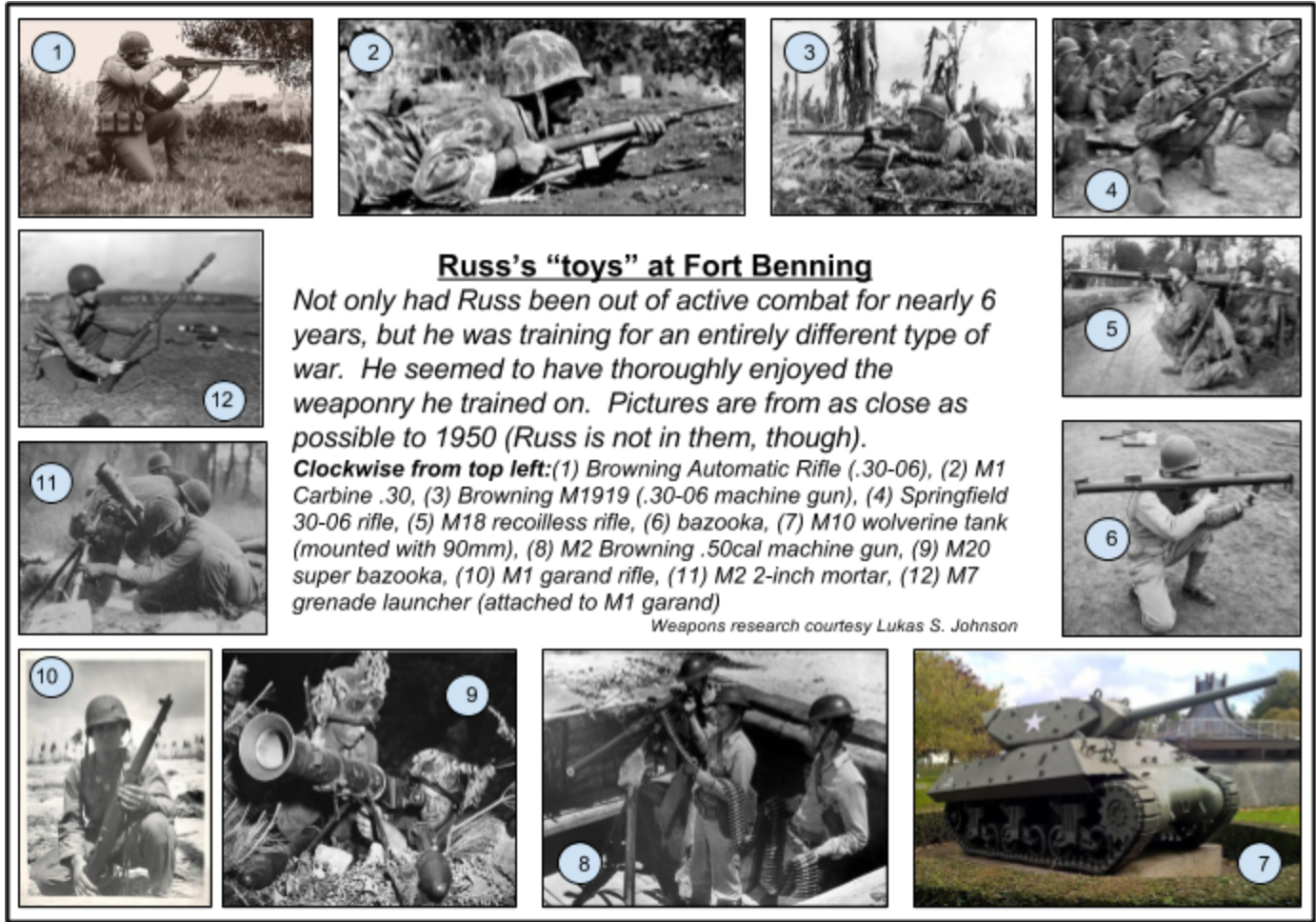
Along about 10AM, while in Jack's office, a sgt entered and asked Jack if 6,000 gallons of gas was enough for a flight to Long Beach? Jack said, "yes, who is going?" and to send the pilot in to see him. Shortly the pilot came in and Jack asked if he had room for a passenger and the reply was yes, so by noon I was on my way home. Jack also told the pilot not to put my name on the manifest. This was so that I could draw travel allowance. It was to be 35 years before I was to make contact with Jack again.

**Russ and Jack**

Despite the many years that elapsed between Russ and Jack's meetings, their war experiences clearly developed between them a special bond. Russ shared how Jack knew it was him on the line.

In late August 2002, Russ's son John called Jack to let him know that Russ had passed away. Jack was immediately choked up, mumbled something unintelligible about not being able to continue the call, and had to hang up the phone.





He didn't know my home address and he was taking an assignment to Ottawa Canada as Military Advisor for a year and so we lost contact.

Thirty five years as I said, I was glancing over a map of Wisconsin when my eyes fell upon the name of a small town, Cuba City. I remembered from our flying days that this was where Jack was raised. Immediately I picked up the phone and dialed the operator and asked for a Jack Ralph, she didn't have one but, she had two others, I took both of their numbers. The first number proved to be Jack's step mother and she

told me where he was and I called. Boots answered and said that Jack was out of town for a few days but, would be back Sat. night. When Sat. night rolled around, I called again. A man picked up the phone, "hello," he said. I said "hello, this is Russ Ratliff." He said "I knew it was."

**Reunions of the 307th**  
The 307th Bombardment Group, "The Long Rangers," maintains a website and holds annual reunions for survivors and their descendants.  
[www.307bg.net](http://www.307bg.net)

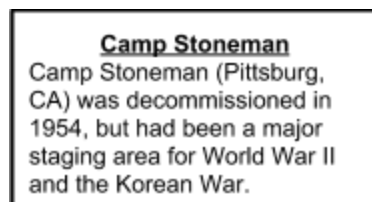


During our conversation, he told me that there was an association of the 307th Bomb Group and that there was to be a reunion in Milwaukee in 5 months. I said, "I'll be there" and I was. Some party!

I'll back up these 35 years to when I landed in Long Beach. Upon my arrival home, I learned that my wife had started paper work to have me discharged due to hardship. I was not happy, but at the same time I knew that she was right. We had 2 kids, Joyce and Jaynee and a 3rd was on the way. Check that, Jim was here.



After my leave, I reported to Camp Stoneman and in 30 days I was discharged and in a week was back to work with Crowell. I worked with the old gang for the next 5 years, working my way up to carpenter foreman on million dollar jobs, building schools mostly.



I had a neighbor and buddy who was driving for a van line as a lease driver, he told me that the company had an opening for another leaser and had a tractor for sale, a new GMC, if I was interested. Almost immediately my feet began to itch. I raised the required \$1,000 and was in the trucking business.

In the years that followed I wore out 4 trucks, covering almost every mile of highway in the 14 western states and some in the east, driving an average of 100,000 miles a year for 12 years.

About this time I became road weary plus needed a change. (I almost said, change of scenery). We had spent a vacation at my sister's place in Weaverville, I liked the country and made the decision to sell my truck and move there. Helen was against it, she didn't want to leave the city and asked me what I was going to do for a living? I told her that I didn't know but, there were people living there and that I thought that I was smart enough to make a living at something.



I sold the truck and went to Weaverville to have a look see. I found a tire shop for sale and a milk route for sale. I decided on the milk route, knowing that I had a hard row to hoe.



**The next generation begins.** Easter 1969; Russ (50), Jaynee (21), Joyce (23) holding Evan (3.5 mos), Joe (10), Helen (49), John (15), Jim (18)

I was determined to follow this course. Mainly to get my 5 children out of the city environment and the racial problems that were beginning to develop. As it turned out, I was exactly right, the high school that Jaynee had graduated from was closed down for a week or two the following year because of racial problems.

After moving to Weaverville, both girls attended Shasta College for two years, taking the bus for the 50 mile trip in. Jim, John and Joe graduated from high school and attended Shasta a period of time.

Jim for 2 years then went to work for

the Forest Service. John and Joe soon went to work for me and we developed the milk business to include, potato chips, soft drinks, ice making and what ever else we could find to peddle. It was every bit as tough as I had predicted but we made it with no regrets by any of the family. My competition was a local family, in the business for 40 years at least, went broke or sold out to another and he went broke, picked up by another and he was gone, leaving Trinity Dairy virtually without competition.

<b>Graduation years</b>	
As a point of reference, the years in which Russ's children graduated high school:	
Joyce:	1963
Jaynee:	1965
Jim:	1968
John:	1971
Joe:	1976

From 10% of the milk business, we went to 90%. From zero % of the ice business to 100%. It took a lot of work. From the start and for the next 6 years I did not have a day off, a fact.



Then in 1985 I sold the Dairy Business to my 3 sons. Jim was not active at all, just had his name on the paper. By about this time he was the boss man at the Forest Service Ranger at Coffee Creek, exactly where he wanted to be. As happy as a pig in mud.

When John and Joe took over the operation, we went to Oregon for a visit with Gary and Jaynee and family. It was about elk hunting time and elk hunting was always a big deal with the Wisharts, they really did it up right, much fun in the big tent around the fire. Many stories and always poker after dinner. It was on this trip that I found out that the air port at Joseph, just 6 miles from Enterprise where all of the Wisharts lived, was with a operator. So, when I returned home I made contact with the State of Oregon, Division of Aeronautics and after some months, did lease the airport, just for fun, the place was run down and a mess. Just what I needed to keep me busy and have fun.

As I told the state, I had no qualifications for being a FBO, except that I had an airplane and liked to fly. That I did not have to make a living and that I was a carpenter by trade and thought that they needed one of those as badley as they needed anything. I sold them on the idea, after I had informed them that for the operation, I had lined up a girl who was a instrument rated, commercial pilot and instructor. This filled the requirements and the airport was mine on a 5 year lease with an option to renew for 5 more, 5 yr. leases. Now if I could just live out the options, I would be 95 years old and probably be the world oldest FBO. An intriguing thought and something to shoot for.

I bought a 35' fifth wheel travel trailer and pick-up and closed the house and went to Joseph with Helen. She was not happy and never in the months to follow. It became apparent that my wife could not handle the situation and that I could not handle her in this situation. And so we returned to Weaverville.

For the past 5 years I have busied myself by going to reunions and doing a bit of genealogy search. In this occupation I have been able to visit the last of the 50 states with one exception, that of Delaware, some who have been there tell me that I haven't missed anything.



My genealogy search goes on--off and on. I suspect, in fact, I know that I have learned more of the family than anyone that I have ever known, ever knew. It started when I was about 14, when I hitch-hiked to Indiana from Michigan to visit my Grandfather, Phineas Ratliff. He gave me a paper that he had written, of everything that he knew of his ancestry. This paper I had lost many, many years ago and only days ago did it turn up in a big Bible that had belonged to my mother. I had forgotten most of what Grandfather had written. Most of what he said was from his memory and from what a niece of his had related to those who attended family reunions. From my search, I have concluded that, whoever this niece was, she was not correct in anything that she had to say. I can't say this for sure because I don't know what she said and what Grandfather said.

I have written all that I know on quite a few papers and they will be left behind, someone will have them, so I will not include much of that information here. I will say that, from my memory of Grandfather's papers, I was able to find my way to the key of most of what I have learned on my own, independent of anything else. It led me to Surry County NC, which led me to a Quaker minister, who after another 5 years, gave me a book with the proof of some things that Grandfather told to me and a great deal more. The book was a publication by the Quakers, "Journal of the North Carolina Friends Historical Society," Vol. IX, No 1.

I have written this much of my life because of my interest in genealogy, who my ancestors were, but mostly what they did for a living and why and when the spelling of the name changed. I am not at all satisfied, as Grandfather's paper says about the change. It states that it was his Grandfather that did the changing, this I suppose is a possibility but, there were Ratliff's long before his Grandfather Richard was born. I find them in England as far back as 1672 and Richard was born in 1759. The Quakers say that his father, Joseph, spelled his name Ratliff. They do not say that This, Joseph was a Quaker and they do not say when nor where he was born. They do say that Joseph married a girl by the name of Mary Fletcher.

I cannot get any kind of a handle on the changes in the spelling, who made a change, why the change was made (except what Grandfather's paper said and I do not accept that) --- yet. If that were true, why or when did his father follow his son and



change his spelling from Radcliffe as Phineas says. I should like to go back to Surry Co. NC and search again the books of deeds for a clue and search the records of any health record that many exist.

I have been in contact with a Richard P. Ratcliff who has written a book on the Ratcliff's of Henry Co. Ind., The same county that Cornelius owned land in and next to Wayne Co. where His father Richard was & according to Phineas, Richard deeded ground to and started the Quaker Church of Hopewell, which still stands, or did in 1934, so it seems. I intend to go there in May this year, 1992.

I have stated before and I do so again, I am more than a little persuaded at this point that any Ratliff, Ratliffe, Ratlift, Ratcliff, Ratcliffe, Radcliff, Radcliffe, Radliff, and a dozen other spellings were just nothing more than whims, back and forth for any reason, whatsoever. The greatest collection of these names I found in a deed record book in Surry Co. NC. Here in the small town of Dobson, the Co. Seat. In this book was the records of about a thousand land transactions between Ratliff's and Radcliffe's (6 or 8 different ways of spelling the name) and other people, dating back to the late 1700's. I have referred to this in other papers, but since I like to tell the story I will tell it again with an added bit of information.

I have queried the Quaker College and genealogists on this and have received no satisfactory reply, so perhaps I know something that they do not.

Mention was made in the Yadkin Co. Historical Society publication, dated 1981, about The Swan Creek Baptist Church and how it began. I disagreed in part with a date and disappointed in the fact that a Richard Ratliff's name was not a part of the story. This story starts out with the acquisition of a piece of property on Swan Creek by the Baptists from the Quaker trustees who had control of it. It does not say how the Quakers came into possession of this property, but here is my story.

It was in the spring of 1985 that I was reading over the deed records in the court house in Dobson, the Co Seat of Surry that I found reference to the deeding of piece of ground on Swan Creek. The deed read that this piece of ground, (I don't remember the size) was deeded to a group, calling themselves Quakers. It was





deeded by the owner, "Richard Ratliff." The year was 1809. My Great, Great Grandfather was in Surry Co. this date.

The Yadkin Historical Society article says that a brush arbor was constructed, but trouble overtook the Quakers and the Church was abandoned. As I said, I was not happy with the story and put in a call to the person who wrote the article, one Frances H. Casstevens and questioned her about the date that she had said that the Baptists had acquired the ground. She had said that it was 1797. I pointed out to her that if she went to the Surry Co. Court House, in, and I gave her the book number and page, that this deed read 1809. And that it was my Great, Great Grandfather that had deeded the ground to the Quakers. Her reply was, "Oh, those deeds were sometimes not recorded until years later," and didn't want to talk anymore. I suppose she could be right, though I have my doubts.

I have re-stated this story because of my re-discovery of the paper that Grandfather Phineas gave to me in 1934, in which he said that his Grandfather, that would be Richard deeded a piece of ground to the church and started the Hopewell Quaker Church. The time frame is right for this to be the same Richard that was at Swan Creek. It is my plan to visit, Hopewell this spring.

This was not intended to dwell on genealogy, it just comes up and since it has there is another story that may be of interest that has had something of a tie in with Wayne or Henry Co. Indiana.

My youngest brother, Forrest's middle name was, Macy. I had never known where the name came from until I was given a booklet by my friend, the Quaker minister that I had met in Surry Co. and later in Ivor VA. From this booklet I learned that Grandfather Phineas' middle initial was "M". I then found that my Great Grandfather, Cornelius' 2nd wife's maiden name was Macy. Her father's name was Phineas Macy, Get the tie in?

While I'm on this, there is another story, a story of coincidence. I was relating the above to son John and he remarked that his acc't's name was Macy and that he was from Indiana. He then picked up the phone and dialed Jim Macy, Jim bounced right over to see my book and brought his "Macy" book. It was an amazing



thing, His Great, Great Aunt was Lycia Ann Macy, my Great Grandmother! Born on the same day in Henry County, Indiana. I have yet to learn how or why Jim wound up in Trinity Co. CA with me.

The following are some pages from the book that my friend, the Quaker Minister, that I met in Surry Co. N/C and given to me 5 years later in Virginia.

1.1146491 Susanna Pearson, b. 1817-08mo-04.

1.1146492 Achsah Pearson, b. 1819-07mo-27.

1.1146493 Ichabod Pearson, b. 1821-01mo-20, d. 1821-11mo-17.

1.1146494 Lydia Pearson, b. 1822-10mo-17.

1.1146495 Rebecca Pearson, b. 1825-07mo-20.

1.1146496 Henry Pearson, b. 1828-06mo-26.

1.1146497 Mary Pearson, b. 1831-04mo-12.

1.1146498 Sidney Pearson, b. Try County, Indiana; m. at Duck Creek Meeting; Guielma Kees, b. 1837-09mo-21.

1.11464910 Catherine Pearson, b. 1838-12mo-07

1.11465 Rhoda Pearson, b. 1750-04mo, d. 1833-11mo-24, Clinton County, Ohio; m. 1778-08mo-18 Contentnea MH, Wayne County, North Carolina, Ruben Peele, b. 1760-10mo-29, d. 1834-08mo-18, son of Josiah Peele. To Belmont County, Ohio before 1807-12mo-12, then to Clinton County, Ohio before 1832-11mo-22. Their children:

1.114651 John Peele, b. 1781-06mo-02, d. 1869-12mo-01; m. 1807-12mo-02, Lydia Bundy, daughter of William and Mary (Peele) Bundy. Their children:

1.1146511 William Peele, b. 1807; m. ca1833, Clarissa Starbuck.

1.1146512 Reuben Peele, b. 1810-03mo-04; m. Emily Wilson.



1.1146513 Mary Peele, b. 1813-07mo-27; m. Isaac Pearson.

*There was another daughter*

Rhoda Peele, b. 1815-08mo-20; m. Jonathan C. Mills.

1.1146514 Emma Peele, b. 1818-05mo-11; m. Benjamin Bentley.

1.1146515 Mark Peele, b. 1821-01mo-11; m. Mary E. Jessup.

1.1146516 Lydia Peele, b. 1828-02mo-18; m. Cyrus Carter.

1.114652 Margaret Peele, b. 1783-03mo-31, disowned 1809-10mo-28

1.114653 Sarah Peele, b. 1784-11mo-03; m. 1808-09mo-07, George Maudlin.

1.114654 Mark Peele, b. 1786-07mo-21; m(1) 1809-10mo-11, Zilpha Elliott, b. 1792-03mo-15, d. 1813-10mo-15; m(2) 1814, Mary (- -), b. 1786-08mo-18. His children by his first wife Zilpha Elliott:

1.1146541 Nancy Peele, b. 1810, d. 1811

1.1146542 Rebecca Peele, b. 1812-04mo-13; m. 1829, Dover Meeting House, Amos Whitson. Their children:

1.11465421 Hannah Whitson; m. (- -) Ellis.

1.11465422 Mary Whitson; m. (- -) Metcalf.

1.11465423 Phoebe Whitson; m. (- -) Carter.

1.11465424 Anne Whitson; m. (- -) Shugart.

1.11465425 Jesse Whitson

1.11465426 Enos Whitson

1.1146543 Zilpha Peele, b. 1813-09mo-25

The children of Mark Peele by his second wife Mary (- -):

1.1146544 John Peele, b. 1814-10mo-16; m. Larannah Phillips

1.1146545 Lydia Peele, b. 1818-09mo-05; m. 1836-10mo-19, Hiram Bond

1.114655 Chloe Peele; m. 1810-08mo-29 (- -) Rouse, disowned for marrying one "not of our Society"



1.114656 Mary Peele; m. 1810-11mo-14, Jacob Elliott.

(Reference for Peele Family: Notes on the Prewitt-Light, Ringer-Hollowell and Allied Families, by L.D. Prewitt, 1939).

1.11466 Jonathan Pearson II, b. 1766, d. bef. 1793, reported married 1780-09mo-09, Contentnea Monthly Meeting, Sarah Peele, daughter of Josiah and Jaehova (- -) Peele, who m(2) 1783-03mo-09, Frederick Loving.

The children of Jonathan Pearson (1.1146, page 6) by his second wife Sarah (Bogue) <Bundy> Pearson:

**1.11467 Elizabeth Pearson, b. 1767-07mo-16, d. 1839-05mo-22, Wayne County, Indiana;** m. 1784-02mo-22, Contentnea MM, Wayne County, North Carolina, Richard Ratliff, b. 1759-11mo-04, d. 1826-02mo-11, son of Joseph and Mary (Fletcher) Ratliff. To Henry County, Indiana in 1822. Their children:

1.114671 Anna Ratliff, b. 1786-04mo; m. William Maudlin, son of John and Ann (- -) Maudlin.

1.114672 Joseph Ratliff, b. 1788-03mo-08, d. 1837-Apr-12, Clear Springs, Indiana; m. Rebecca Lamb, daughter of Joseph and Sarah (Stone) Lamb. Their children: (Reference: The Bachelor-Williams Family, by Lyle Williams).

***"The Southern Friend" publication has a page missing, so there is lineage missing between 1.114672 and 1.114676, JR***

1.114676 Mary Ratliff, b. 1799-08mo-22; m(1) John Elliott; m(2) David Palmer.

1.114677 Gabriel Ratliff, b. 1802-05mo-08, d. 1846-Oct-18, Spiceland, Henry County, Indiana; m. at Duck Creek Meeting, Henry County, Indiana, Catherine Pearson, daughter of Nathan and Mary (- -) Pearson.

1.114678 Elizabeth Ratliff, b. 1805-10mo-11; m. Exum Pearson (1.114683, page 14) son of Nathan and Huldah (Lamb) Pearson.

1.114679 Cornelius Ratliff, b. 1810-Feb-17, Surry County, North Carolina, *(RRR wrote in "My G Grandfather")* d. 1892, Grant County, Indiana; m(1) 1827-Aug-29, Hopewell



Monthly Meeting, Henry County, Indiana, Abigail Gilbert, b. 1806-09mo-25, d. 1851-06mo-12, daughter of Joel and Lydia (Morgan) Gilbert; m(2) 1852-Nov-24, Lydia Ann Macy, daughter of James and Anna (Mendenhall) Macy. His children by his first wife Abigail Gilbert:

1.1146791 Richard Ratliff, b. 1828-Oct-07, d. 1849-Dec-28, Hopewell, Henry County, Indiana.

1.1146792 Betty Ratliff, b. 1830-Dec-16, d. 1905-Apr-11, Hopewell, Henry County, Indiana; m. 1852-Jun-23, Phineas Macy, son of James and Anna (Mendenhall) Macy. Their children, all b. Hopewell, Henry County, Indiana:

1.11467921 Albert Macy, b. 1853-Mar-27, d. At birth

1.11467922 Matilda M. Macy, b. 1854-Aug-17, d. 1892-Sep-12; m. 1875-Dec-05, Nicholas Campbell.

1.11467923 Rachel Macy, b. 1856-Feb-27, d. 1917, Hopewell, Henry County, Indiana; m. 1876-Feb-02, William Pearce.

1.11467924 John Wesley Macy, b. 1858-May-11, d. 1931-May-29, Hopewell, Henry County, Indiana; m. 1883-Oct-18, Marion County, Indiana, Jenny Green, daughter of Matthew and Jane (Armstrong) Green. Their daughter:

1.114679241 Mabel Macy, b. 1894-Feb-18, d. 1978-Jul-05, Henry County Indiana; m. 1915-Nov-05, J. Alvin Harden, son of Horace and Emma (Test) Hardin. Their daughter:

1.1146792411 Dorothy Hardin; m. Robert Grand Massey, living in Alexandria, Virginia.

1.1146792412 Clifford M. Hardin, living in St. Louis, Missouri.

1.11467925 Joseph R. Macy, b. 1860-Mar-07; m. 1879-May-18, Julia Emma Hendrix, daughter of William and Matilda (Ross) Hendrix.

*(RRR wrote in a note here but it is faded due to copying, and is illegible)*



1.1146793 Calvin Ratliff b. 1832-Oct-25.

1.1146794 Reuben Ratliff, b. 1834-Mar-06.

1.1146795 Millicent Ratliff, b. 1836-Feb-25.

1.1146796 Joel Ratliff, b. 1838-May-03.

1.1146797 Mary Ann Ratliff, b. 1840-Jul-02.

1.1146798 Exum Ratliff, b. 1843-May-16; m. 1866-Aug-18, Virginia E. Baker. He served in Company "I", 69th Indiana Infantry in the Civil War.

1.1146799 Lydia Ratliff, b. 1845-Jun-08.

The children of Cornelius Ratliff by his second wife Lydia Ann Macy:

*(RRR wrote in a note here that says "My great grandfather <illegible> mother).*

1.11467910 Abigail Ratliff, b. 1853-May-18.

1.11467911 Anna Flora Ratliff, b. 1856-Jan-30, **d. 1924-Dec-09**

1.11467912 Seth Carson Ratliff, b. 1857-Sep-27, **d. 1936-Dec-05**

1.11467913 James F. Ratliff, b. 1860-Mar-24, d.

*(RRR wrote in "Uncle Jim, I've met")*

1.11467914 Avis L. Ratliff, b. 1864-Nov-02

1.11467915 Phineas Ratliff, b. 1866-Jul-15, **d. 1947-Oct-20**

*(RRR wrote in "Grandfather, I've met")*

1.11467916 Henry H. Ratliff, b. 1868-Aug-11, d. 1870-Mar-07. Cornelius and Lydia Ann (Macy) Ratliff moved to Grant County Indiana in 1872.



Since I seem to have 2 or 3 pages that are blank remaining, I may as well fill them with what Grandfather had written and given to me. The following is from a copy made from the original paper that has been lost, perhaps and I suspect remained in the hands of whoever made the copy that I recop'y. I do not know who made the copy. It could have been my brother Forrest or my sister, both have passed on long ago.

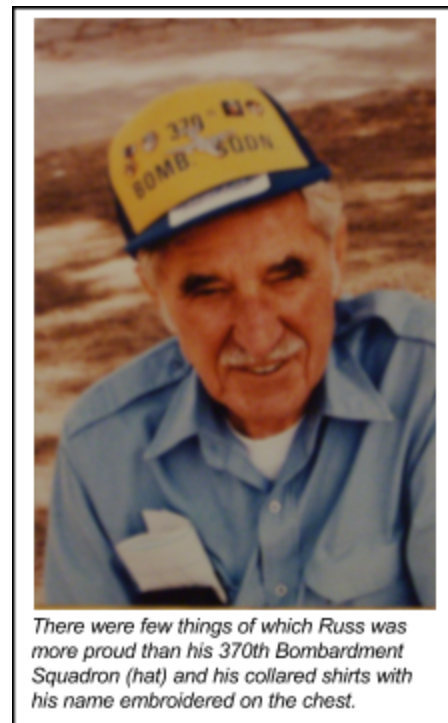
### Ratliff Genealogy According to Grandfather Phineas

The first known of the Ratliff's was one Joseph Radcliffe who came to America with William Penn and was one of the main spokesman at the treaty with the Indians but, little is known of the Radcliffs until Joseph Radcliffe Sr. rode on horseback from Philadelphia to Pasquatank County, North Carolina. At that time all the Radcliffs were strong abolitionists and Joseph Radcliffs intention was to marry a slave owners daughter. She was so opposed to the abolitionists party and would not marry under the name one whose parents were Abolitionists. So they appealed to the Friends Church to have the name changed from Radcliffe to Ratliff. This transaction shows in the minutes \_\_\_\_\_ quarterly meeting of "The Friends of the Quakers" as they were better known.

Joseph Ratliff had a large family of children. Some time during his married life he moved from Pasquatank Co. (?) to Gifford Co. (?) North Carolina. I am not sure what County it was. I have a niece that has a history and tell of all the (?) traveling (?) taken from the minutes of the Quaker Church. At the death of Joseph Ratliff, he was a large slave owner. My Grandfather Richard Ratliff (?) was a mere boy at the time of Joseph's death (?) Before my Grandfather became of age the Quakers wrote in the discipline of the Church prohibiting any one owning slaves from belonging to the Church. All of my grandfather's brothers and sisters left the Church except my grandfather and an older brother Cornelius. When my grandfather became of age freed his slaves as he was much opposed to slavery and he became a poor man. He and his brother Cornelius sold what little belongings they had and my grandfather moved to Surry Co, North Carolina and his brother Cornelius moved to what was believed to be Ohio, but when the lines were run found it to be in Indiana Territory. He had entered the land on what Richmond is now built. My grandfather wanted to go



with Cornelius but my grandmother would not move. The first thing my grandfather did on arriving at the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains in Surry Co. was to organize a Friends Church. He raised his family there. At the breaking out of the war of 1812 his oldest son (Mathew?) was just past 21 years old and married only a short time before. When they made up the draft for the war his name was drawn. Grandfather being so opposed to war advised him to go to Indiana to his brother Cornelius Ratliff. He started at once getting ready to leave, leaving everything behind. The way he escaped the draft was a friend of his was on the draft board and he came right to Uncle Mathews house and told him his name was drawn. The next morning he went over to his father's to bid him a last farewell and the man came to his house with the draft



notice and seeing that he was preparing to get away so hard, started over to my grandfathers where Uncle Nate was. Seeing him coming he slipped (off) the road and hid until (Uncle Nate) passed by. He walked all the way from No. Carolina to Indiana while his wife rode horseback on the road. He kept back in the woods far enough so he could just see her on the road. Later a number of the family left N. Carolina and came to Indiana. Finally grandmother decided to come to Indiana too. They moved there in 1815. My father was 4-½ years old. They first settled in Wayne Co. Thus he entered a piece of land. He again laid out a plot of ground and established the Hopewell Church. After the road was straightened the Church and graveyard was nearly in the middle of the section (?) so they moved the Church and graveyard to another location but it is still called the Hopewell Church. At my grandfathers death my father fell air (heir) to the farm and this was where I was born.

This is an exact copy of the copy that I found after so many years. In making this copy, I now think that it must have been my brother, Forrest, that made the copy. I suspect that where question marks and brackets are used is due to legibility of the original script.





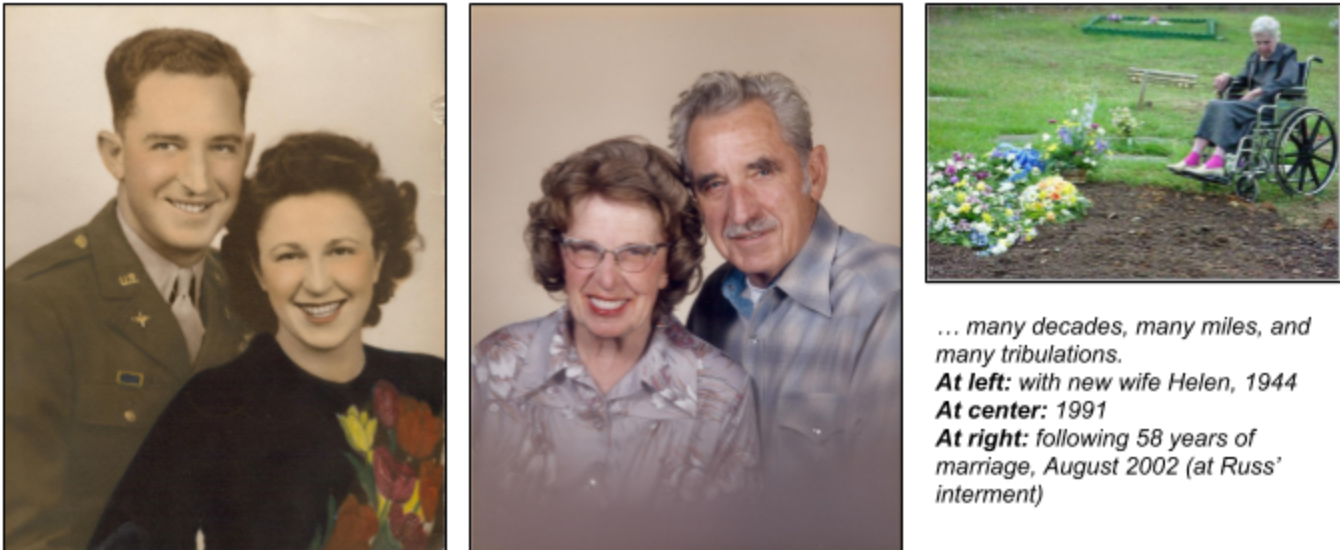
In the time that I have remaining, my search will continue and I will add to this what ever I find of significance. I hope to find more late this spring (May of 1992).

I would like to leave you this philosophy, one that I have endeavored to follow:

*"If there is anything that I can do, let me do it now, for "I shall not pass this way again."*

And when I come to the end of the Rainbow, may I be with God and may God go with You and Yours.

**A love that endured ...**



... many decades, many miles, and many tribulations.  
**At left:** with new wife Helen, 1944  
**At center:** 1991  
**At right:** following 58 years of marriage, August 2002 (at Russ' interment)

