



A WORLD WAR II JOURNAL
FORREST S. WILCOX AND THE ARMY AIR CORPS
13th Air Force, 307th Bomb Grp., 371st Squadron



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREVIEW	1
THE PROMISE	2
THE BEGINNING	3
THE TRAINING	6
THE CREW	12
TO THE FIGHT	17
MOROTAI	23
THE MISSIONS	26
GOING HOME	40
EPILOGUE	43
MEMORABILIA	45

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Dedicated to my grandchildren so that they may better know of their grandfather's times.

My grateful acknowledgment to my close friend, Joan Lederman, for her many readings and editing of this manuscript and for her perspective and suggestions. My thanks to Kirt Dressler who got me off on the right foot at the beginning and for the final edit.

FORWARD

Of the many things that my father did for me, I appreciate most the record he made of his life experiences. He sent his handwritten scratchings to his sister Alice (whom we call Alas as in "Oh dear me.") who edited and typed them and made carbon copies. When I got my first computer, I transferred the work to disks and did additional editing. I also inherited a copy of his brother's poems and incorporated many into the story. These writings provide a unique family record.

A large part of my appreciation of my father's and my uncle's writings lies in their revelations about life in days gone by. I want my grandchildren (currently Maya and Benjamin), to have the same curiosity and appreciation as I do. If they do, it will probably be the middle of the 21st Century. Then they will be able to read my personal history of the mid-20th Century, as well as their great-grandfather's autobiography about the early 20th Century. I hope they will carry on the tradition. If only my grandfather or grandmother had written something about their lives, the collection would make an engaging saga.

When we write of ourselves, I believe we provide a personal legacy that will survive longer than anything else we, who are not famous, can leave behind us.

To my grandchildren in the 21st Century, I send my love.

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PREVIEW

In the Fall of 1940 I entered the University of Maryland knowing I wanted to be a chemical engineer. I was a member of a "gang", but we didn't live in the streets, we lived in a basement where we had assembled a chemistry laboratory with all the usual paraphernalia, including an air compressor we had converted from a discarded refrigeration unit. Our hero was Thomas Edison. I had an inspiring chemistry teacher in High School, Mr. Kreible, an excellent lecturer, who further whetted my interest. The image that everything around us, with all the differences we see, is constructed from a few atomic particles, was mysterious and fascinating. This image aroused my curiosity enough to pursue chemistry further and I thought it had a future for me. The logical nature of chemistry appealed to me, but there was more. Just as parts of a symphony meld into a whole, parts of chemistry unite to explain the physical world.

I was mechanically inclined (my motto was - if someone put it together, I could take it apart and fix it), so I chose chemical engineering rather than theoretical or bench chemistry. As it turned out, the choice was a good one because chemistry and its engineering applications became the dominant high technology of my day (for example the development of plastics) just as solid state electronics became the dominant technology of today. What's next?

I was active in amateur radio (call letters W3ITT) and a second choice as a college major might have been electrical engineering. But, in the '40s, we did not have electronics as later appeared in the '60s after the development of the transistor. Electrical engineering at that time involved motors, power distribution networks, and power utility management -- not nearly as interesting to me as the many applications of electronics and computer engineering today. Even Hi-Fi stereo was yet to come.

After the attack on Pearl Harbor, December 7, 1941, my college curriculum accelerated to three full semesters a year. I attended continual classes with only an occasional one week vacation at Christmas and between semesters from the fall of '41 until I went into the service in February 1943 -- a real grind, with no spring breaks.

There were few protests over entering the war, though I remember my father declaring in 1939 that he opposed the U.S. getting into the war. In 1942, German submarines were sighted off of our Atlantic shores and a Japanese submarine shelled the California coast.

While reading this please think about a time when there were no laundromats, very few plastics, no Hi-Fi and very little FM. Zoot suits with neat pleats were in style and bikini bathing suits were only in burlesque shows. There were no touch-tone telephones, no digital clocks. Life without Dacron?

Cars had triangular "no-draft" windows, no air conditioning, no automatic transmissions, and no turn signals. Few had radios. There was no television; we got moving pictures from Movietone News newsreels in theaters and listened to news from London through fading signals and static. But some things don't change. We had soap operas then; we have soaps now!

THE PROMISE

Summer of '42

Selective Service (the draft) became law before Pearl Harbor, by one vote in the Senate, as I recall. There was an incentive not to be drafted and to enlist since enlistees got their choice of the military services. An opportunity to enlist presented itself. If I joined the Army Reserve, and committed myself to applying to the Air Corps after graduation, I could first finish school and get my degree, they PROMISED. As a bonus, I would get flying lessons and solo in a real airplane! Pilot training was an offer I couldn't refuse, and on April 14, 1942, I soloed at the College Park, Maryland airfield -- today the oldest continuously operated air field in the world. The Wright Brothers trained army pilots here.

I was under 21, so I had to obtain my parents' permission to enlist. Mother signed the necessary papers, and if there were any reservations, she did not express them. Actually, I am not sure that my father had a chance to agree since he had already volunteered for the Air Corps, and was off training in Colorado as an Intelligence Officer (he also volunteered in World War I). He was part of the 375th Bomb Group forming at that time. The 375th became part of the famous 14th Air Force Flying Tigers in China. He flew the "Hump" (Mt. Everest). Military service is almost a tradition in my family. While my grandfather didn't serve, my great-grandfather "had a horse shot from under him" in the Civil War.

Perhaps my parents felt some relief that I chose to join the reserves. As a joke, a friend had once phoned them saying I had changed my college major to ascetic dancing!

February 16, 1943

In the middle of a class in welding, a government program to prepare "Rosie Riveters" and the like for the war effort, I was summoned to the phone. It was a call to active duty and I was

The Beginning

told to report to Washington, D.C.'s Union Station, Track 30, at 9:30 p.m., February 23rd. Travel by Sleeper! I had enough presence to call back to confirm that the call wasn't a prank.

Included in the call-up was John Glorieux who would be Operations Officer when I reached the island of Morotai in the Pacific, and Bob Wright who would become a P-38 fighter pilot, and whom I would meet again in the Philippines. It wasn't by accident that Bob and I became good friends; since our last names began with "W", we were assured of a bunk close to each other for many months, along with Wadell, Wainwright, and Wolfe. Also called up were many of my fellow students, for a total of 85 reservists. We were assigned the lofty grade of Private by the Aviation Cadet Examining Board, Washington, D.C., and I was assigned Army Serial Number ASN 16089423 and dog tags. (In February 1968 this group, "Flight 631", held a reunion in Washington, D.C. I did not attend.)

The suddenness of being called up was a surprise, but not traumatic. My father was in training and the war was a fact of life; few questioned the necessity to fight. Two of my "gang" had already entered the services.

My mother was living in Milwaukee with my sister after my father went into service. I was living in a basement room in the same building where I worked as a laboratory assistant and night janitor for the Department of Interior, Bureau of Mines, located on campus. The job not only brought in needed cash, but also avoided college dormitory and dining fees. I attended classes in the day and did chores in the evening.

It didn't take long for me to wrap up my civilian life (I think I had ten days) and store my few possessions in a house that my parents owned and were renting out in College Park, Maryland.

The Beginning

February 25, 1943

As my father had done only a few months before, I arrived at Miami Beach, Florida, for Basic Training. Early on they gave us a physical examination and shots. I remember standing in line when the word was passed back that the shot to look out for was the one in the left testicle -- what did we know? One guy passed out, but I wasn't the first in line, and I was determined if those ahead of me could take it, so could I. At that time we all trusted the system.

We were quartered in Miami Beach resort hotels -- The Surrey, The Broad Ripple, The Rendale, and The Greenbrier -- but this was a serious time, not a vacation. The hotels were stripped of all glamour items and rugs and the elevators were not available. We had the inevitable fire drills at 3:00 in the morning, sometimes with gas masks, repeated every ½ hour until the Sergeant had enough. It's a wonder someone didn't break a leg racing down 3, 4, and 5 flights of

stairs. We had the usual GI (cleaning) parties, white glove inspections, and parades. I liked parades then and I like parades now. A military parade passing in review with flags waving and the band playing The Washington Post March brings a tear to my eye and a lump to my throat.

Smokers learned not to litter by "field stripping" cigarette butts. This required breaking open the cigarette butt paper and distributing the remaining tobacco on the ground, balling up the paper and pocketing it, if anyone was looking. I was not yet a smoker.

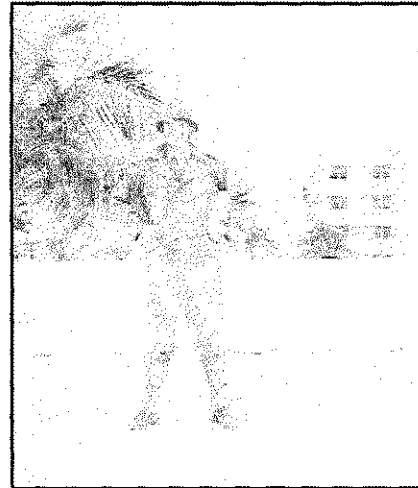
At each first assembly in the morning the cadet officer read the orders for the day, always ending with,

"By order of Col. Kim-m-m-m-m-m-b-e-r-l-y",

drawn out like Ed McMahon introducing Johnny Carson on late night TV. We adopted this order as a reason for any event. "Where are you going?". "I'm going to the latrine,

by order of Col. Kim-m-m-m-m-m-b-e-r-l-y".

We drilled and marched, singing songs like "Bell Bottom Trousers", "The Minister's Daughter", "Roll a Silver Dollar", and "Bang, Bang Lulu". We marched around the public streets of Miami Beach and the drill instructor would switch us from the ribald lyrics of these songs to the Air Force Anthem, "Off we go into the wild blue yonder . . ." to avoid being, as we say in the 90's, "insensitive". Part of the processing included reading us the Articles of War, which among other things, described courts martial, fines, forfeiture, and jail if we went AWOL. Reduction in rank was also mentioned, but then being Privates at the time, this wasn't much of a threat.



FSW, Miami Beach - in leggings.

We knew that this training was necessary, but some of it seemed a bit silly. We put on our new uniforms, helmets, jackets, leggings (being issued leggings was silly), and went up on the roof of one of the hotels and took turns taking pictures of ourselves to send home. Basic training lived up to its reputation -- lots of hup, two, three, four, yes sir, no sir, no excuse sir, short-arm inspections ("milk it down"), and endlessly boring. The fact that we had no time off, seven days a week, made every day seem endless.

Many of the routines used in marching, called close order drill, were very familiar to me. At McKinley Tech High School in Washington, I was a member of the high school Cadet drill team and at the University of Maryland I had two years of ROTC and was a member of the Pershing Rifles Drill Team. We were good enough to win a regional competition in New York City. For some, however, a quick decision between left and right while marching was a struggle.

April 1, 1943

Leave Miami Beach by train -- a welcome relief -- destination unknown. As the posters of the day said, "Loose lips, sink ships!"

April 3, 1943

Arrive Cincinnati, Ohio, 29th CTD (College Training Detachment), University of Cincinnati.

On the surface we potential "aces" were here to get some general knowledge and polish since we were all aspiring to be officers and gentlemen. We had classes in English, History, and Mathematics, and lectures on various subjects. This was easy going for me since I had already completed more than two years of college. We were introduced to the standard punishment for violations of rules and regulations: "gigs", and "walking the ramp". Gigs were awarded for many and various infractions. This meant marching around a quadrangle for one half hour for each gig, generally on a Saturday afternoon when others had passes to go into town. We were also introduced to "pro-kits", short for prophylactics kits, a self-treatment to ward off VD "in case we got lucky". I never did.

There were 500 or more of us, not all from Miami Beach, and by an odd quirk of some selection process from an obviously long list of names, half of the names began with "M" and "N".

My back-home girlfriend and high school classmate, Ruby (Jean) Manant, visited and gave me a combination log book and diary called MILITARY SECRETS. (I made an effort to locate Jean for our 50th high school class reunion without success.) My entries in her book and my pilot's log are major sources for this writing. Another, but minor source, is the 307th Bomb Group Newsletter currently being published four times per year.



Wash. D.C., Jean (Ruby), FSW, Mrs.
Manant

June 19, 1943

Leave Cincinnati on a sooty, drafty, hot troop train. No more comfortable sleepers! We traveled with the windows open to get some breeze, but this also gave us fly ash from the coal fired locomotive. All of my belongings were stuffed into a brown barracks bag somewhere in a baggage car.

June 21, 1943

Arrive San Antonio, Texas as E/A/T (Enlisted Aircrew Trainee) for preflight school, otherwise known as Cadet training. As part of our processing we attended a lecture and received a mimeographed form letter to send home. The letter told how great training was and how nicely we were being treated and how hard we were working. All we had to do was sign it and put it in an envelope to send home. It didn't need a stamp; servicemen just wrote FREE on their correspondence where the stamp would usually go. It was the first letter home for some of us.

We had classes in aircraft and naval ship identification, meteorology, sex lectures (It's a gland, not a muscle. Exercise won't improve it.), plus the usual PT (physical training). I also got my first assignment to guard duty, -- "Halt, who goes there?" The hardest part of guard duty was to memorize the ten or so rules that had to be recited on demand by the duty officer; "I shall not leave my post until properly relieved." Etc., Etc.

(September 8, 1943

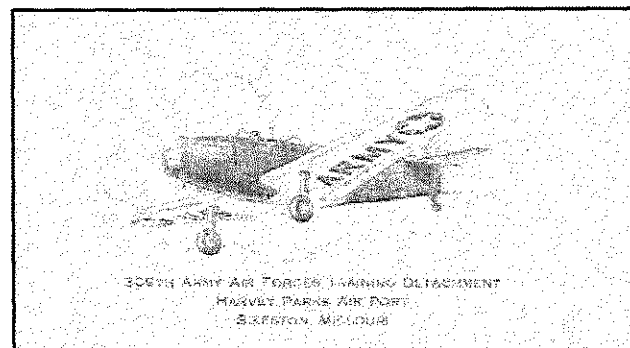
Italy surrenders.)

The Training

October 2, 1943

Arrive Sikeston, Missouri for Primary flight training, Class of '44-D.

Flight training was in the Fairchild PT19, the most fun plane I ever flew. With 175 horsepower, the PT was much more powerful than the 65 horsepower Piper Cub I piloted previously while in school. It flew gracefully and was agile at acrobatics. The PT (PT for Primary Trainer) was a low-wing plane painted Air Force blue and had yellow wings. The open cockpit made you feel like you were the Red Baron of WW-I; indeed, we even had white silk scarfs, and a flyer's helmet with goggles. The school was privately run with older civilian instructors provided by Parks Aviation. The instruction was friendly and good.



Sikeston, MO., Primary Trainer



Kennaville, Tex.

WILCOX, FOREST S.
Milwaukee, Wis.

WILHOFF, ROBERT
St. Paul, Minn.

WILLARD, WILLIAM C.
Denver, Colo.

WILSON, HERBERT R.
Colorado Springs, Colo.

WOHLERS, WALTER H.
Sheading, N.H.

WRIGHT, ROBERT M.
Lynchburg, Md.

YOUNG, GLEN W. *W*

YOUNG, R.
Chicago, Ill.

Future Hot Pilots of Sikeston, Missouri.

A hot topic of conversation was who would have the nerve to fly under the bridge across the Mississippi at Cairo, Illinois. Some claimed to have done it; I debated, but the fear of dismissal if caught won the argument.

At Sikeston, I bought a Pierce chronograph watch which immediately became a prized possession. The Pierce had many buttons, scales on its face, a stop watch, and a sweep second hand. The price was \$150, equivalent to \$1000 today. My friend, Bob Wright, was so impressed that he bought one also. We would compare our watches to see which one kept the most accurate time. The competition was intense and I would take the back off and make adjustments, or not wear it at night if it needed a smaller trimming. This watch remained a prized possession until, after the war, while working in DuPont's Philadelphia paint laboratory, I dropped it into a can of paint. I sent it back to the factory for repair, but it was never the same again. The numerals were readable in the dark -- from some radium isotope, not recommended today.

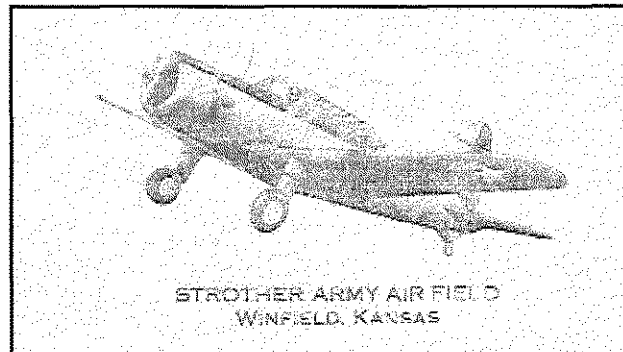
About this time I started smoking Camel cigarettes and continued at a pack a day until I quit in 1954, to save money. Quitting smoking was a very difficult thing to do and it was literally years before the hunger passed completely.

December 7, 1943

Arrive Strother Army Air Field, Winfield, Kansas for Secondary flight training.

Here I trained in the Vultee BT13 (BT for Basic Trainer), with 225 HP, the roughest plane I ever flew. We called it "10,000 nuts and bolts flying in loose formation" and "The Vultee Vibrator". In Miami we had lived in stripped hotel rooms. In Cincinnati, we had college-style dormitories. The Sikeston accommodations were not bad because it had been a private school.

Here, at Winfield, it was bleak and cold and we lived in regular drafty army-style barracks with a coal burning stove in the center of the long common area filled with double-decker bunks and footlockers for storing our belongings.



Winfield, Kansas, Basic Trainer

At the completion of secondary training, some had the opportunity to choose between single-engine advanced training (fighters) or multi-engine training (bombers). On my last flight at Strother, the instructor said, "You've got it". I did spins, Immelmans, rolls, flew upside down, and more -- I knew it would be my last chance for acrobatics. The instructor knew that I had chosen bomber training and suggested that I reconsider, but I didn't change my mind. Today, given the choice between driving a race car and a 16-wheeler truck, I would choose the truck. In

hindsight, I know that I am not aggressive enough for fighters, which were the choice of my friend, Bob Wright, who had more of a jock personality. He ended up in the P38 Lightning, the flashiest fighter of its day. We had trained together for over a year, but now we parted -- for a time.

My worst chewing out happened at Strother for taxiing too fast during practice takeoffs and landings. I was summoned to the tower for a first-class reaming. I was almost in tears. Two fatalities gave me a lesson in the seriousness of what we were doing. Fellow Cadet Thomas Dee crashed and died on takeoff, and William Rowland died in a midair collision at night. Both had left Washington with me on the train to Miami for basic training.

The deaths didn't affect me emotionally, as I remember, and there was no pussyfoot counseling to make us "feel good". Those that "washed-out" of training saddened me, and there were several at each level of training.

February 14, 1944

Start Advanced Training in twin-engine, Cessna UC78's at Blackland AAFB (Army Air Force Base), Waco, Texas.

I remember we were practicing difficult crosswind landings on a very windy and gusty day. While in the air, you have to fly slightly into the wind to stay lined up with the runway, but as soon as you touch the wheels down you have to straighten up so as to roll squarely down the runway. Taxiing is a bit of the same. On one landing, my instructor took the controls from me upon landing, which was probably the responsible thing for him to do -- but a gust of wind caught the tail of the plane as we taxied and we did a ground loop and ran off the runway into mud. We had to be towed out. I felt sorry for him for losing control of the plane, being the instructor.

This was the first plane that had retractable landing gear. When the throttle was pulled back as for a landing, a horn went off to remind the pilot to put the gear down. Inevitably some poor soul landed, gear-up, and when asked how he could do that, he explained that he couldn't think with all that noise going on.

April 15, 1944

Discharged as a Private and commissioned 2nd Lt. AUS (0-720417), rated Pilot, (MOS 1092), and transferred to Fort Worth, Texas. I have earned my pilot wings.

There were few relatives at the short ceremonies. As far as I know, all commissions and promotions were AUS, Army of the United States as opposed to USA, United States Army. The former designation was a temporary appointment, for the duration of the war. There were many officers who had temporary appointments as Captain (or higher), AUS, but Sergeant, USA, as their permanent rank. Many cadets were commissioned Flight Officers, a grade between

noncommissioned and commissioned officer, but with a Lieutenant's pay. The difference only depended on the date of enlistment, the more recent enlistees were Flight Officers.

I was very proud to be an officer and it fulfilled a fantasy from college R.O.T.C. (Reserve Officer Training Corp) and even earlier in High School Cadets at Mckinley (Tech) High School in Washington D.C. Though very proud, I recognized it was not for the leadership abilities of an infantry appointment which I considered more hazardous.

We were given an allowance for tailored uniforms and it was with great pride I wore my dress jacket, gabardine "pinks" and Air Corps style crushed hat and my pilot wings. (Would my father trade his captain bars for pilot wings? I wondered.) I turned in my duffel bag in exchange for the officer's B-4 bag with "Lt. Forrest S. Wilcox" stenciled on the side. This was a great accomplishment in my life.

I signed up for a monthly \$75 War Bond for which \$56.25 was taken out of each month's pay. The bond matured in 10 years to a value of \$75.

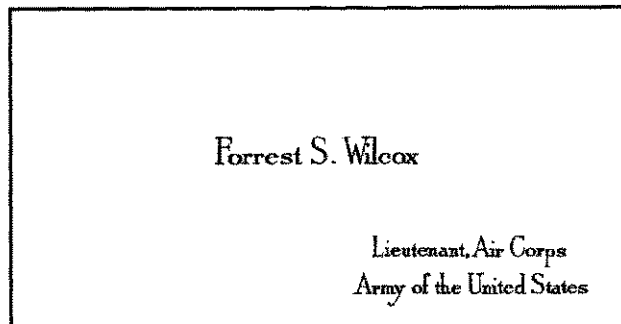


Lt. Forrest S. Wilcox

May 3, 1944

Fort Worth, Texas -- five-week engineering training course, preparatory for B24 flight training.

We studied the B24 hydraulic, fuel, and propeller systems, and other engineering details. Recently my daughter, Beverly, gave me a reprint of an official B24 pilot's operating manual, much to my surprise. I never had one when I was flying the damn things!



There were more classes in enemy aircraft and naval vessel identification. The naval instructor told us his wife was expecting and allowed that it was more fun "laying the keel" than being at the "launching".

May 15, 1944

First flight in a B24. Instructional, I'm sure, but also serving to get my flying time in for the month and extra flight pay.

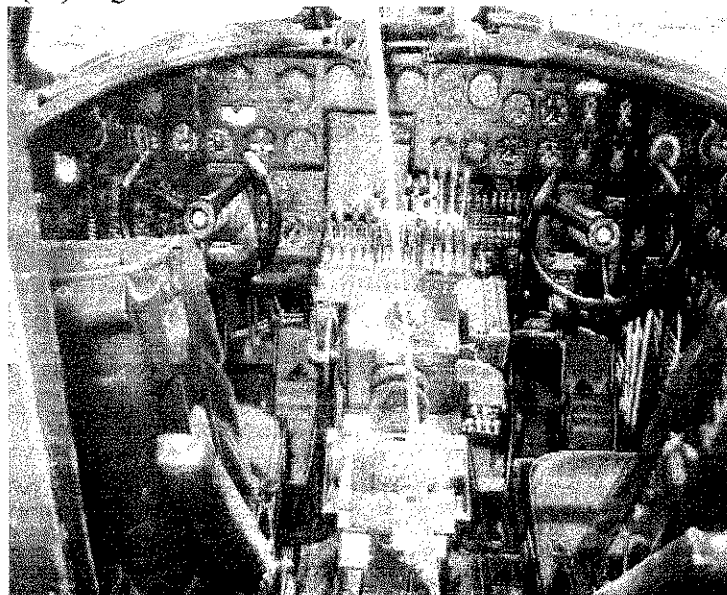
It was a very macho feeling to hold the throttles of four engines in the palm of your hand and control 4800 horsepower. With previous planes, there were things to check before we flew, but now there were necessary long checklists and procedures.

At first sight, the instrument panel seemed rather formidable, but many instruments are duplicates, one for each of the four engines. Actually the B24 had five engines. It had a "putt-putt", a small gasoline powered engine about the size of a good power lawn mower that provided electric power to start the first (#3) engine.

May 17, 1944

Granted 15 days leave.

I have no idea what I did with the time. I think this was when I started dancing lessons at the Lavonia Bellah Dance Studios in Ft. Worth. I learned to foxtrot, rumba, waltz and best of all to Lindy (jitterbug?), which I still enjoy today. I could have fallen in love with my instructor, but was too bashful to even suggest a date. I think her name was Marjeane Hicks.



B24 Cockpit

June 2, 1944

Fort Worth, Texas, start B24 Training.

One of the interesting experiences in flight training was working in a Link Trainer which simulates instrument flying -- that is, flying using only instruments to tell you what your plane is doing. Without any visual reference to the ground or the horizon, your sense of which way is up and which way is down can become confused. The result is called vertigo.

The trainer is an enclosed box mounted on hydraulic cylinders with the usual flight controls. As you manipulated the controls, the hydraulic cylinders tipped the box in a manner responding to the flight controls and reflected on the instruments. We simulated cross-country



Mae Ellen Atterbury



Nell



Hilarity Club



Helen Oujesky

All Nice Gals of Ft. Worth

The Training

trips using navigational radio beams fed into our earphones. If you were to the right of the beam, you would hear a Morse code A, (- ———). If you were to the left of the beam, you would hear a Morse code N, (—— -). And if you were right “on the beam” the two overlapped and you heard a steady tone. With all the tilting and tipping, it was easy to get vertigo and “crash” if you didn't believe your instruments and let the “seat of your pants” take over. The instructor's prompting is still with me, the all-important sequence of “needle, ball, and air speed”, as my eyes would go from one instrument to the next and repeat. This was enough to keep you from “spinning in” (crashing) but, of course, you also had to watch the compass, listen to the beam, check the maps, etc.

I had live training too. In flight, the instructor used a hood to cover the cockpit windows, and I had to fight my natural instincts as to which direction was up, and believe and react only to the instruments. Needle, ball, airspeed -- needle, ball, airspeed.

June 6, 1944

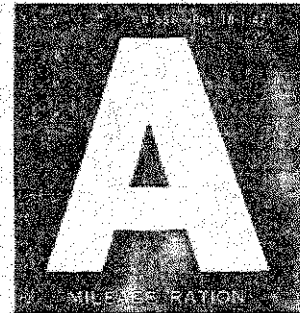
(D-Day, Invasion of Europe at Normandy, France.)

August 5, 1944

Completed B-24 training, granted 14 days leave.

Mother bought a used car in Milwaukee and drove to Ft. Worth to visit me. We decided to drive back to Milwaukee and visit my sister and her family, returning to Ft. Worth at the end of my leave to pick up my new assignment. Gasoline was rationed, of course, but with our allowance plus a little begging by a soldier in uniform (me), we made it. We had to buy a tire, also rationed, and I don't remember how we managed that. I am sure it was a used carcass with a retread.

While in Milwaukee I met Lorraine Pennington with whom I corresponded until my return to the states. (I then discovered that her name was Lorraine Penkowski which didn't matter to me, but apparently did to her.) Our relationship ended when I decided, after the war, to return to the University of Maryland instead of getting married.



Gas ration stamp.

THE CREW

August 21, 1944

Posted to LeMoore, California to join with a crew.

With my assignment, I received a 2-day delay en route and ration coupons for gasoline and travel by car. Mother and I traveled the panhandle of Texas through Arizona to LeMoore, California, stopping to see the Grand Canyon, Boulder Dam, and the Petrified Forest on the way. It was very hot and we envied those cars with "air conditioners", a fixture that fit in the window and delivered outside air to the car interior, cooled only by the evaporation of water inside the cooler. We did invest in a "water cooler" that worked on the same principle. It was a canvas bag, generally hung on the front bumper, filled with water that was cooled by the evaporation of moisture slowly seeping out its pores. It was also a bit of insurance against the car over-heating and running out of water while traveling across the desert.

August 25, 1944

(Paris liberated.)

September 1, 1944

Arrive LeMoore, California.

The rules for "flight pay" require two hours of flying time per month as the minimum. Flight pay is an additional 50% added to your base pay -- getting your flying time in was important. (Obviously, flying an airplane is much more risky than, for example, being in the infantry. Hah!). So I went back to flying a BT13 single engine plane.

Mother stayed a few days, sold the car at a small profit, and took the train back to Milwaukee.

And so our B24 Liberator crew came together: from Maryland, Illinois, Indiana, Minnesota, Massachusetts, California, South Carolina, and more. There was one problem; at least one of the crew took exception to the assigned co-pilot. The complaint was that he was a goof-off, a goldbrick, and on hikes, he always ended up riding in the ambulance. I had no other information on which to make a judgment. I wanted a harmonious crew, and we hadn't "bonded" yet, so I managed to get a replacement, Archie Summers. We were still lacking a navigator, whom we would pick up in Walla Walla, Washington, along with other changes in the crew.

The Crew:

Forrest S. Wilcox	Age 22	Pilot
Archie W. Summers	23	Co-pilot
Adam Baltowski	20	Bombardier
Barney E. Gillen	20	Engr/Top turret gunner
Robert Emge	20	Radio Op/Waist gunner
James R. Garner, Jr.	23	Lower Ball turret gunner
Kevin L. Stokes	25	Nose turret gunner
Ade N. Stearns	32	Waist Gunner
James F. Kirby	20	Tail Gunner
and, joining us later,		
John G. McLoraine	20	Navigator
John Spatig		Replacing Gillen
Rader P. Reif		Replacing Garner

Laid-back Archie started in the infantry, wrangled his way into OCS (Officer Candidate School), and then went through flight training as a Lieutenant, a better way to get flight training than as a cadet, I am sure.

Adam Baltowski and Bob Emge applied for pilot training but failed the depth perception test, they told me recently.

“Stoker” smoked cigars, started in the infantry, and used his golfing talents to lead the good life, playing and organizing golf for the Army before transferring to the Air Force.

“Pop” Stearns was the old man, being 32. Why he was in the service, I don't know. He was married and had at least two kids.

“Mac” chose to be a navigator from the git-go.

September 29, 1944

Assigned to Combat Crew training at Walla Walla, Washington. Navigator John McLoraine joins the crew.

The crew fit together nicely, though Archie and Stoker would get into arguments about God and church. Archie surprised us and married a girl named Nadine, and a strange “hippie” couple (this is 1944, not the 60's) put on a party for them and the crew.



The Crew in Calif., me in white scarf.

One crew crashed into a mountain, but the rest of us survived training, which included cross country navigation, gunnery, and bombing practice. The scenery was beautiful and I got my first look at a year-round snow-capped mountain, majestic Mount Rainier.

Kevin took several of us out for a round of golf on a rainy, chilly day. I lagged far behind, whacking at the ball. I have never tried to play since.

October 20, 1944

(Invasion of Philippines.)

December 2, 1944

Transferred to Hamilton Field, California.

Up to now, the planes I flew were assigned from a pool. At Hamilton I got *my own* plane, a new four engine B24 bomber (44-49629) made by Ford at its Willow Run Plant in Michigan. I have the invoice for it: \$291,000. It was bright aluminum. Early planes were painted olive drab, but that only added weight, it was said. More than 18,000 B24's were made during its production run at various plants, more than any other plane ever manufactured, including the highly promoted B17 Flying Fortress.

I am definitely jealous of the exclusive tributes given to the B17. The B24 flew faster, higher, carried a greater bomb load, had more armament, dropped more tons of bombs, had a greater range, was used in *all* theaters (Alaska, Africa, China, the Pacific), and in greater numbers. The B17 was a tail dragger like a Piper Cub and it flew like one, I'm told. Phooey! Though to be fair, in the early part of the war, the B17 was all we had and the plane and the crews performed heroic service.

December 7, 1944

Crew and plane ordered to proceed to Fairfield-Suisun Air Base, California.

Our plane had radar equipment in place of the normal belly turret whose position was Jim Garner's specialty. He was replaced, therefore, by Rader Reif, a "hush hush" (at the time) radar operator.

December 8, 1944

December 11, 1944

December 15, 1944

Fly fuel consumption tests and perform calibration of the compass in preparation for the hop overseas. The war in Europe was going well. We were on the west coast, so we assumed we would be off to Hawaii.

With lots of time on my hands and no duties, I became addicted to gambling -- so much so that I got advances on my pay and was usually short of cash. I was successful at craps, betting "no come" (the roller wouldn't make his point).

I enjoyed playing poker more, but I inevitably lost. We played pot-limit, table stakes. Bets could be as much as was in the pot, but not more than the money you had on the table. The initial ante was usually a quarter, so the pots never got much over \$25-\$50 dollars. We were on "per diem", which meant an extra \$7 a day in pay. This money added to my losses.

December 12, 1944

Orders to ship out to Biak, New Guinea, then amended to move to Nadzab, New Guinea. By what appears to be odd reasoning now, I sent my camera home for safekeeping. However, it probably gives an insight into my point of view then. The camera was dear, bought used, with money that I probably should have spent on better lunches at school. If I had a thought that I would die in combat, I would no doubt have taken it with me. I expected only a sojourn and wanted it safe for my return to record the *important* things in my life to come!

Most of the crew joined in for a trip to San Francisco. Besides a few sights, we went to a club called Finocchio's where we were entertained by female impersonators. At the time I assumed that these were normal men putting on a risque show. Today I know better.

At Rader's invitation, I attended one of his church services. He belonged to the Pentecostal Church with a very large congregation, by my standards. During the sermon, several people rose and "spoke in tongues"; the minister waited and continued after the interruption. Rader gave thanks to God for each of his meals and was strong in his faith and would engage in discussion about it only if someone brought the subject up. I admired Rader; he put up with the irreverence of a lusty crew with equanimity and dignity. I am sure he prayed for our souls regularly.

December 24, 1944

All B24s take off for Hawaii, but we stay behind because of high fuel consumption.

One plane ran short of gas and the crew jettisoned everything, including their personal baggage, to lighten the load and make it to Hawaii. It was related to me that the navigator subtracted the difference between compass north and true



My father, Captain Ralph F. Wilcox

north instead of adding it. For the San Francisco to Hawaii flight the difference between subtracting and adding the error would put the plane heading off by 30 degrees.

December 31, 1944

New Years with Dad, his account follows:

"After two years in China, we were given a furlough to go to the States for "rest and recuperation". I accepted, came back over the hump, and rode C46 transports back across India and Ethiopia to W. Africa, across to Ascension Island, then to Brazil, up the South American coast to Florida, thence by train to Milwaukee at Christmas time. Beatrice [my mother] was living with Lasca and John [my sister and her husband] then. Meanwhile Forrest had become a first pilot on a B24. He called from California to tell us he was about to go overseas. I told him if he could hold the plane somehow I was coming out to see him. I took the electric train to Chicago, a bus out to a cold ATC (Air Transport Command), and got on a plane going west. No heat and terribly cold.

"With several sailors going home on leave, we were bumped off at Denver and spent a couple of days waiting for another ride. Three new empty C50 ships arrived on the way to San Francisco, but said we had to have parachutes, another problem.

"I think there were three parachutes available so we agreed to "draw cuts" for them. Finally, one of the pilots took pity on us, all from combat zones, and said if we could run and sneak on his plane just at take-off time he wouldn't know it. This we did one very cold morning and I made a landing at San Francisco.

"I went through the Red Cross to locate Forrest who was about sixty miles away at Suisun Field. The post there gave me a girl-driver and car to ride like a king to Suisun. Forrest was holding the B24 and complaining about gasoline consumption. I spent New Years with him and his crew, drinking beer, and singing songs. One of his crew [Mac] played the piano. After a couple of days I had to find my way back to Milwaukee."

I was impressed with the great effort dad made to come see me, especially for such a short visit. My father was very proud of me. After the war, when introducing me, he always made it known that I was a bomber pilot.

Early January, 1945

Because of our delayed departure from Fairfield-Suisun, we named our plane "The Reluctant Wagon" in parody of a popular Disney cartoon and song. Dad had some Disney type art-work painted on the side of the plane.

The words of the song went like this:

For,
I am the Reluctant Dragon, What Ho, Quite So
The very Reluctant Dragon, Oh very, very don't you know
They call me the killing dragon, what rot, I'm not
I just won't fight, I want to play
I know I sha'nt get hurt that way...
(Walt Disney)

TO THE FIGHT

January 11, 1945

We did not know, from day to day, when we would get clearance to leave for our overseas assignment. When it came, the plane must have weighed more than 70,000 pounds with all the baggage and two extra gas tanks in the bomb bay. (Today's passenger jets take off with three times this weight.) Each bomb bay tank held 420 gallons of gas, giving us an extra five hours of flying time or approximately 800 miles.

When the day did arrive, we took off in total darkness and I remember it vividly; we were warned about the electric power lines not far from the end of the runway. When I turned onto the runway for takeoff, I wished that the B24 could back up so I could get every foot available. I pressed the brakes and powered up the engines until the prop wash was shaking the plane. When I let off the brakes, the plane slowly picked up speed and, half way down the runway, it was only my faith in Consolidated-Vultee, the designer, and Ford, the builder, that led me to believe it was going to fly.

I kept the nose down for a few extra miles per hour of air speed, then slowly pulled back on the control column to raise the nose and start gaining altitude. You can feel in the control column when lift off is about to occur, and I felt only mush as the nose angled upward more than I had ever experienced before. Was it going to stall out? We slowly lifted off and when I was sure that we had cleared the ground, I called to Archie, "Gear up!" As the landing gear came up, I didn't try to climb, I wanted less drag and more air speed. We still seemed nose-high and my concern continued over the possibility of a stall and disaster.

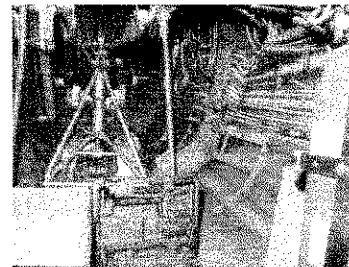
My strategy may have given the tower a few anxious moments because I was not climbing, but I could see the lights on the power poles at the end of the runway and I only wanted to clear it -- even one foot of clearance would be enough. I think we were the last bomber to leave Fairfield-Suisun, now Travis Field.

An unforgettable sight, equal to the Grand Canyon or Mt. Rainier, was the endless and immeasurable number and brightness of the stars, enhanced by the total darkness of Pacific nighttime and its effect on my night vision acuity. Mac's first impression at his initial sextant reading was that he would never find the stars he needed for navigation. We were completely dependant on the sextant readings, we had no radio navigational equipment within range.

But, alas, it was not to be. We made hourly checks on our gas consumption and about halfway, Mac and I held a conference and estimated that we might not have enough gas to reach Hawaii, or very little in reserve, so we did a 180 and returned to Fairfield-Suisun with the help of a tail-wind.

The gas gauges in the B24 are very imprecise and the reading depends on the attitude of the plane and the attitude of the plane depends on the loaded weight and its distribution. No one in authority ever said a word to me about aborting the flight. It would be another 31 days before our next try.

Poor Kevin. He bedded down in the nose wheel compartment shortly after takeoff and, on landing, we let him walk out onto the tarmac expecting to be in Hawaii.



**Nose Wheel
Compartment**

February 10, 1945

Off to Hawaii again at 9:05 p.m.; a 31 day delay since our first attempt. The continued long delay in leaving Fairfield was beyond our control and resulted from the weather over the Pacific, and the high prevailing head winds for the east to west trip.

We arrived at John Rogers Field at 11:05 on the next morning, a distance of 2400 miles and 14 hours of flying time. Mac brought us in right on course after navigating all night by the stars. Diamond Head lay dead ahead. The extra gas tanks in the bomb bay were removed.

Being sent to the Pacific was probably better than being sent to the European Theater. There would be less anti-aircraft fire and fighters, but unlike Europe, the enemy was reputed to be more fanatical. A big negative for the Pacific was evident when I looked down as I was flying across the ocean. It was a new sight to my eyes and scary to look in all directions and see only water; a B24 doesn't float! I also realized how impossible it would be to find me sitting in a dinghy in that great expanse of ocean, and from at least 5000 feet (a mile) overhead.

Part of our survival kit was a mirror, about six inches square, for signaling. In the center was an "X" where the mirrored surface was removed and the glass was transparent. On the back there was a mirrored surface surrounding the "X". Holding the mirror toward the sun and looking at the rear mirrored surface, you can see the sunlit "X" cast on your cheek by the sun shining through the "X". By sighting and aligning the target viewed through the "X" with the "X"

on your cheek the sunlight was reflected to the target. On a cloudy day you could use the mirror to be sure that no one was sneaking up from behind.

Part of the kit consisted of two plastic flasks in which were stored food pellets, sulfa powder for wounds, anti-malarial Atabrine tablets, water treatment tablets, a compass, gum, etc. I kept one of the flasks as a souvenir, and when I returned to college after the war, tried to use it as a whiskey hip flask on a date. The alcohol in the liquor reacted with the plastic and was undrinkable. Like the Virginia Slims cigarette ads, You (plastics) have come a long way, baby!

"The trip was uneventful - we listened to a lot of different radio programs for hours (KPO, KFI, one from Texas). About [10:45 Sunday] I picked up the island of Oahu [by radar] about 45 miles out - came in pretty good. We flew around the island, over Pearl Harbor and Honolulu to the other side and landed at 11:00 am.

"Our quarters weren't bad - slept on cots. In the evening I met Ackerman (went through Midland & Langley with him). He's on a B29. Went out and went thru it. It's really nice. Bed at 11:00.

"Briefing at 08:30, also at 1:30. Met Almeling & Robert Schafer from Midland and Langley. Rode over to Hickam Field that the Japs bombed. Still some evidence on hangars. It's a really beautiful field. The Hawaiian girls are really sad looking, in all ways. To bed early." (Rader Reif Diary.)

February 12, 1945

Arrive Canton Island, with one tree.

I made the poorest landing in my entire experience as a pilot. I must have dropped us in from 10 feet off the ground. I had the landing gear inspected to make sure no damage was done. A humbling experience; but then, they say any landing that you walk away from is a good one.

"Up at 01:50 - ate - loaded plane - took off at 05:20. Flew SW over Palmyra then to Canton Island. Uneventful trip. Very small island - all coral - looks very white. Landed 16:15 (hard landing). Two B24's already in, one followed us in. Two P61's and a B25 followed us quite a ways.

"Walked all up and down the beach in the lagoon, then out by the ocean. Two palm trees on the island. Very desolate. (Barracks were small wooden bldgs - six to a building - slept on cots." (Rader Reif Diary.)

February 14, 1945

"Up 06:15 - food not bad any place so far. Taxied to runway - came back to put more hydraulic fluid in lines. Took off at 08:50 - went through a couple of

thunder storms - crossed the equator - the international date line, flew straight for Tarawa. Came in in pouring rain, the plane leaked a lot.

"Landed at 14:55. Got a pretty good meal, went sight seeing. We lost 1,069 men here in Nov. of 1943. A lot of Jap barges, a tank or two around. Lots of Jap fortifications along beaches. Only a few palm trees left on this side of isle, rest shot away. A big cement blockhouse really battered up where Japs held out quite a while. Quite a few natives around working with the G.I.'s. Lots of bldgs made of palm trees, ours had a canvas top - six to a bldg. A lot of live U.S. ammunition (.30 cal.) in water along beach where U.S. men dropped it when hit. Some Jap 127 mm guns all shot up. Guarded plane for a while and a storm came up in about 5 minutes. Took a shower in the rain, (outside showers) - water warm. To bed about 9:15 - poured all nite long.

"When we landed this afternoon we really sweated it out, plane kept weaving from side to side - besides raining hard." (Rader Reif Diary.)

Tarawa. We arrived in the middle of a thunderstorm and had to circle the field at low altitude for 20 minutes before we could land. The landing itself was a little hairy, I had to use the controls to fight the wind gusts as they tipped the wings. While flying over the field, we could see grave sites and relics of the bloody Marine landing in 1944. On the flight from Canton, we crossed the Equator and the International Date Line (without ceremony).

When I took a shower that evening, I didn't know the showers were salt water, and I washed my hair with soap; what a goopy mess. I searched around and found a tap of fresh water at the mess hall and got relief.

February 16, 1945

Carney Field, Guadalcanal. (An early base for the 307th Bomb Group as it advanced across the Pacific.)

"Up at 05:00 - hot cakes for breakfast - that's about all we ever get anymore. Took off at 07:00 - two B24's following us. Went thru quite a few cumulus clouds - headed for Guadalcanal.

"The islands are really big compared to the ones we have been on. Landed 13:45. Had a good dinner and good ice cream. We've eaten on plates so far. A bunch of fuzzy natives here cutting the grass. It's really hot here - the humidity is terrible. The jungles are really thick - banana trees, etc. And they fought in this stuff. Barracks aren't so bad - rounded tin huts - with mosquito netting." (Rader Reif Diary)

February 17, 1945

Nadzab, New Guinea. Our orders are fulfilled -- I deliver #44-49629, "The Reluctant Wagon", to FEAF (Far Eastern Air Force), Nadzab, New Guinea.

It was disappointing to realize that we would lose our plane -- we had assumed that it was going to be ours, or at least be in the pool of planes that we flew. I was notified that Mac, the Navigator, was going to be taken off the crew. Mac and I protested and he stayed with us. That we were successful surprised me; we were a very green crew with little rank.

The housing was in tents on wooden platforms, and the weather was hot and dusty. I took my .45 pistol and went up in the hills and played movie hero John Wayne out in the wild west. I soon found that shooting from the hip was very impractical if you wanted to hit a target.



"Up at 05:00 - take off about 07:30 - another uneventful trip - passed quite a few islands on the way - Rabaul for one. Landed at Nadzab, New Guinea, the heat is really terrific and you really sweat! They took our plane away from us as soon as we landed. Drove about 10 miles up in the foothills to Hdqrs., etc. Finally got barracks - they are tents with wooden frames. All the sides are open and raised two to three feet off the ground. The mosquitos start coming out about 18:00 but we sleep good. Met Saticamp and Barrett here besides 3 other radar men.

"Our navigator is going to Loran school. We go to Red Cross Officers Club every night - about 20:30 they serve sandwiches and some cold drink besides cold water - it really tastes good! We play games too. The food in the mess hall is good about 1/4 of the time - usually serve warm drinks, lemonade and "iced" tea. Met Gene Jelcick from Sunnydale - he's a P38 pilot (the lucky Bum!) Finally went to "Mickey" [radar] school. Here three weeks I have done nothing." (Rader Reif Diary.)

March 13, 1945

Fly from Nadzab to Biak, New Guinea.

When the time came to leave Nadzab, we were given an F7A war weary wreck of a B24 (#42-73031, built in 1942), outfitted as a photo reconnaissance plane, to fly to Biak. We flew over the most dense jungle I have ever seen. Number 2 engine coughed a couple of times en route. This was drama that we did not appreciate, especially after flying the "Wagon". Recently

CLASS OF SERVICE
 This is a full-rate Telegram or Cablegram unless the enclosed slip is marked by a suitable symbol above or below the address.

WESTERN UNION

SYMBOLS
 DL - Day Letter
 NL - Night Letter
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The filing time shown in the rate table on telegram and day letters is STANDARD TIME at point of origin. Time of transit is STANDARD TIME at point of destination.

17A06

1945 MAY 1 AM 8 26

1- JBA202 24 00 VT WASHINGTON DC 7 1240A

MRS MAYBE C REIF - 2970 *Boonville Ave*

12562 147 Ave Sausalito CALIF

THE SECRETARY OF WAR DESIRES ME TO EXPRESS HIS PLEASURE THAT YOUR SON 2ND LT ROEF HADEN P RETURNED TO MILITARY CONTROL ON BERTAL ISLAND 17 MAR 45 AFTER HAVING BEEN MISSING TWELVE MONTHS.

J A ULI THE ADJUTANT GENERAL

By	To
<i>J. A. Uli</i>	<i>Boonville</i>

17 45x

THE COMPANY WILL APPRECIATE SUGGESTIONS FROM ITS CUSTOMERS CONCERNING ITS SERVICES.

(1992), a news story told of finding a lost B24 in the jungles of New Guinea. We could have been there too, though the B24 is supposed to be able to maintain altitude on two engines. Could our crew have been confused with the crew of that lost B24 recently discovered? Were they flying a war weary wreck too?

At the 1994 Bomb Group reunion in St. Louis several of the crew told of their parents receiving "lost in action" telegrams. Mac's parents were not alarmed since they had received a letter dated well after the telegram. (See Western Union Telegram.)

"Take off from Nadzab at 12:20 in an old war weary wreck - (The ambulances and fire trucks were waiting at the end of the runway), we took a Sgt along. Ran into some real storms - follow the coast of New Guinea after coming onto Wewak. Saw our old "Reluctant Wagon" but we can't get it.

"Staying in tent (seven to a tent) right on the ground. We can sleep good - it's not too hot and cool in the evenings. At PX can get good American cookies (not Australian) - tomato juice and candy. Walked all over the beach with Bal[towski] looking for shells. Can see the caves where the Japs dug in along beach. Climbed a coconut tree. There are still some Japs up in the hills right back of us.

"Heard that Jim Roberts went down over Formosa." (Rader Reif Diary.)



Top Row:

Stearns
Top Turret

Kirby
Tail Turret

Spatig
Engineer

Emge
Radio

Reif
Radar

Bottom Row:

Stokes
Nose Turret

Summers
Pilot

Baltowski
Bombardier

Wilcox
Pilot

McLorraine
Navigator

MOROTAI

March 16, 1945

Arrive Morotai, Halmaheras (Spice Islands) via a C47 as a passenger, the current home of the Long Rangers 307th Bomb Group.

"The Halmaheras look pretty big and are occupied mostly by the enemy. Landed, waited two hours for a truck - then to Red Cross to eat. Then for a real bumpy, muddy 10 mile ride to get to our area. Got tent #28, Evanstan St., electric lights, wood floor. The food is really good, we could never complain. Everyone is so friendly, a very good squadron, I'm glad I got it. B. A. Smith is here and has 22 missions." (Rader Reif Diary.)

Our arrival was also noted by an entry in Earl Johnson's diary (as published in the 92-3 issue of the 307th Bombardment Group (HV) Association Newsletter). He wrote, "Another new crew entered the squadron the other day. I suppose we will see them out opening coconuts any day now." That I did.

Later, at our indoctrination, we were advised that if our plane goes down and we are captured by natives, be sure to claim American heritage, not English. As a longtime colonial power in the area, the English were not always welcome.

The Island of Morotai:

The 307th Bomb Group had moved to Morotai of the Dutch East Indies in November, 1944, only four months before I arrived. These islands are south of the Philippines and east of The Celebes, and almost exactly on the Equator. Morotai is no more than a few square miles in area, round in shape, with a peninsula on which we were housed (actually tented). The island had a beautiful white sand beach a very short walk from my tent. The sound of the ocean could often be heard. From the beach I could see another island across the water, maybe a mile away and looking down the beach, to the west, an island with a smoking volcano maybe 10 miles away. We had frequent rain showers and usually it was hot and humid, but breezy. Heat rashes in the arm pits and "jock itch" were common.

The peninsula was largely a coconut grove with tents for living quarters. The tents were maybe fifteen feet square, with the corners tied to coconut trees. Each tent had a tarp cover suspended above it to ward off falling coconuts and heavy downpours. Some tents were on the ground and some, like ours, had wooden platforms under them. Up the peninsula toward

the main part of the island were located the mess halls, a theater, a recreation room and still further, the air strips and "Pitoe" control tower.

Toward the interior and beyond the air strips the land became hilly. There were an estimated 5,000 Japanese holed up on the island, but held at bay by a detachment of infantry.

All of my missions were based from the island of Morotai. Besides four squadrons of B24's there were groups of "Black Widow" (P61) night fighters, equipped for long range missions and with radar for night navigation.

There were five of us in the tent, the officers of my crew; Archie Summers, co-pilot; John McLoraine, navigator; Adam Baltowski, bombardier; and Rader Reif, radar navigator, who never flew with us but generally in lead aircraft that had radar, and myself.

The beds were regular army cots. I and a lucky few had air mattresses obtained from departing or departed crews. Each bed had mosquito netting suspended over it which we carefully tucked in around us at night. We had one bare electric bulb in the center of the tent. While there, a fantastic new convenience came along called an "aerosol bomb". Previously, we had to search and destroy mosquitoes in the dark after tucking ourselves in and with lights out. With this bomb, psst, psst and all was quiet.

Just behind the tent was a pit 3 or 4 feet deep with a corrugated sheet metal cover. We were supposed to jump in during air raids. It looked very dismal and creepy-crawly and we discussed the relative merits of seeking its protection or just taking our chances. We had few air raids where enemy planes actually appeared. On one occasion it was dusk and we could see a Japanese fighter/bomber in the search lights as well as dramatic tracers from our ground anti-aircraft guns. He got away, apparently unharmed. The Japanese had an inactive air base about 25 miles from Morotai at Lolobata.

Located on the beach were the Happydale Officer's Club and close by the Enlisted Men's Club. They were not fancy, little used, and there was no organized gambling (poker and craps), as existed at Fairfield-Suisun in California.

The latrines, privy style, were screened in and 6 or 8 holers. They were located away from the beach and more central to all the tents. We showered and shaved "al fresco" in an enclosed area, and like most G.I.'s, we used our helmets for wash basins. The shower water was not particularly cold and the water tank was filled daily. I don't remember any shortage of water. Once there was warm water and when I went back to the tent to tell the good news, no one believed me! I can hear Adam now, "Oh sure, yeah."

"A lot of natives came around here selling things -- they are all diseased. One day a whole tribe landed -- men women and children -- none of the kids under 10 wore

clothes and there were a bunch of them. A bunch of mothers with babies, some old men. What a sight but very interesting.

"Mail has been coming in pretty regular. Have a small basketball court - lights for night games, etc." (Rader Reif Diary.)

March 17, 1945

"Breakfast is very good so get up every morning. Five of us in a tent - rather crowded. We met a lot of fellows - had lectures, etc. Went down to the line to look over planes, finally ready to fly. We don't do a thing in between the times we fly.

"In my spare time I've made a cabinet, desk, wash stand, and a chair (canvas) - it's work but it's worth it.

"First mission, a shipping search - sunk a destroyer - a lot of flak. Still live with Wilco etc. but not on their crew anymore. (Rader Reif Diary.)



A Favorite Plane

THE MISSIONS

March 29, 1945

My first mission, bomb Oelin Airdrome, Borneo. Flight time 13 hrs., in "Rose Marie". (Plane J series, 44-?0132.) See Map, Page 39.

I have now had just over two years of training. Since this was my first mission, Archie was replaced with an experienced co-pilot. It was common practice for the squadron to fly individually and assemble into formation at a rendezvous near the target. We had not yet assembled and were scattered when three Zekes (Japanese fighters) attacked. We quickly fell into formation and the vibration from our ten .50 caliber guns shook the plane. Flying in formation increases the effectiveness of fire and also minimizes the chance that we shoot at each other. The Zekes made several passes and dropped air to air phosphorus bombs that seemed rather ineffective to me. In theory, the phosphorus was supposed to attack the aluminum wing surface and start a fire. We all did our jobs, and kept cool.

When the fracas started, I almost flew into the lead plane by gawking at the action instead of keeping my eyes on the lead ship, absolutely required for formation flying.

Flying in formation is not difficult but does demand 100% attention on the lead plane. No "needle, ball, airspeed", but one hand on the four throttles and one hand on the stick and your eyes on the lead plane with continuous adjustments to the controls to maintain a relative position. The requirement for the lead ship is that the pilot make no violent maneuvers. Depending on which way the lead ship turns, it is necessary to quickly increase or decrease the throttle setting to maintain a relative position.

April 1, 1945

Demolition and napalm bombs on Sandakan, Borneo (located on the north end of Borneo). Flight time 10 hrs. 30 min. (Plane J series, 44-?0946.)

Rader had a fellow radar operator ("B. A." Smith) of acerbic demeanor, who would come by our tent occasionally and grouse, (seriously I assumed) "We're like lambs being led to the slaughter!" I never knew how serious he was and I was amused. I believed in our purpose.

April 3, 1945

Fly to Palawan for staging to Kuching, Borneo (Western tip of Borneo/Sarawak). Flight time 5 hrs. 20 min. (Plane 4-?0946.)

A direct flight to Kuching was beyond our range, hence we used Palawan as an intermediate (staging) stop to load bombs and refuel.

April 4, 1945

Bomb Kuching with 6000 lbs. of incendiaries in two runs, and return to Palawan. Flight time 10 hrs. 30 min. (Plane 44-?0946.)

April 5, 1945

Bomb Tarakan, Borneo with eight 250 lb. demolition bombs on return trip to Morotai from Palawan. Flight time 7 hrs. 25 min. (Plane 44-?0946.)

April 9, 1945

Bomb Beluran with eight 1000 lb. bombs. Navigation snafu (not Mac's), so hit secondary target. Flight time 10 hrs. 45 min., in "Kansas City Kitty". (Plane L series, 44-41480.)

We had a rejoinder for any minor error, bellowing like Captain Bligh in *Mutiny On the Bounty*, "You blundering fool, blithering idiot, we'll all be killed." Laws were formulated that governed errors and blundering. The acronym SNAFU arose early in the war, Situation Normal, All Fouled Up. There was FUBAR for Fouled Up Beyond All Recognition. Gumperson's Law stated that the probability of an occurrence is in inverse proportion to its desirability. Murphy's Law said that if anything can go wrong, it will. O'Tooles' corollary to Murphy's Law stated Murphy was an optimist.



**On Morotai, Spice Islands.
Bal, Ray, Mac, Archie, FSW**

April 12, 1945

FDR (President Roosevelt) dies, Truman (a haberdasher from Missouri) for President?

April 13, 1945

Bomb Davao, Mindanao, Philippines. Nine 1000 pounders. Practiced skip bombing at 200 feet. Flight time 5 hrs. 30 min. in "Janie". (Plane L series, 44-41535.)

We flew roughly every third day or so and the time in between was boring. We had no other duties except to occasionally censor mail. There were no inspections, drills, parades or other ch...n-s..t routines. We had movies some evenings and a couple of USO shows came through. I remember doing some reading, making ice cream, trying to make and sail a boat, some swimming, and not much else. A basketball court was available. We made up war stories to tell our grandchildren, my favorite ended with "... so I hacked my way through a wall of human flesh and blood, dragging my B24 behind me."

April 16, 1945

Bomb Cotobato, Mindanao, The Philippines with eight 1000 pounders, no AA (antiaircraft fire). Good run. Flight time 6 hrs. 5 min. in "Dinah Mite II". (Plane 44-?0548.)

April 19, 1945

"Mac" is assigned to one of the lead crews to bomb Saigon (of 1960's Viet Nam fame), staging out of Puerto Princessa, Palawan, The Philippines. It turned out to be a really hairy mission. The lead plane was shot up before the bomb run and crash landed on its return to Palawan. Mac took over as lead Navigator. The rest of the crew stayed home. See Mac's account in the Memorabilia section.

"Went to chapel, the 371st is DEAD!, but 13th is very good, Major Ellett is a real Christian. On Tues, Thurs, & Sat is Bible study and singing (good songs too). Had an Easter sunrise service on the beach - was a beautiful morning and a beautiful service." (Rader Reif Diary.)

Today I can't imagine what we did to occupy ourselves with so much time on our hands. We ate three meals a day, we showered, and got an occasional haircut -- but that still leaves a lot of free time. One activity was to make rings from Florins. A Florin is a Dutch coin about the size of an American half-dollar; at that time both were almost pure silver. We would take a Florin and work it on edge with gentle blows of a hammer until it became a wide band of silver. With filing, more working, and a hole in the middle the coin became a handsome ring -- if you were skilled and patient. I tried to make one but was unsuccessful.

A neat trick I learned was to hold three Florins on edge between the tips of my thumb and forefinger, let the middle one drop and hold it between my little finger and the forefinger, rotate it with my index finger and return it to the middle of the stack. I mastered this using five Florins and rotating two of the inner alternate coins. I was cool!

April 22, 1945

Primary target is shipping at Balikpapan, Borneo (a major oil depot). There being none, we hit our secondary target, the personnel area at Manggar. A little AA fire. Flight time 11 hrs. 10 min. (Plane L series 44-??463.)

April 24, 1945

Air raid alert at night.

April 25, 1945

Bomb Boeloedoang, South Celebes with four 2000 pound GP (general purpose) bombs; drop leaflets to encourage surrender. A lone "Oscar" fighter rose to greet us but did not engage. Flight time 10 hrs. 50 min. in "Susie", her 106th mission. (Plane J series, 44-0587.)

BERLIN SOEDAH DJATOEH

Berlin, iboe kota Djerman soedah direboet oleh tentara Roesia.

Tidak lama lagi Djerman mesti tergoeling dibawah poehoesian jang sedang menghantam dia di Timoer dan di Barat.

Tentara Roesia jang sekarang mendoedoeki iboe kotanja soedah mereboet hampir semoesa dari daerah2 Djerman disebelah Timoer. Tentara Inggeris, Amerika dan tentara dari Negeri2 Serikat jang lain soedah madjoe dengan tjepat pada daerah Djerman seblah Barat.

Kesengsaraan dan penderitaan jang disebabkan oleh Nazi pada banjak negeri2 di Eropah dengan serangan2 jang tidak mendapat perlawanan, sekarang mengoen-djoengi pada bangsa Djerman.

Kedjatoehan Berlin menjebakkan Djerman terkoetok dan kembalinja perdamaian dan atoeran bagi Eropah. Semenjerahnja Djerman, akan membikin Serikat leloesaa boeat mengirinkan seloeroeh kekoeatannja jang tidak terbanding itoe kedalam peperangan menghantjoerkan Djepang.

Djepang djoega akan membajar kerogian2 karena penjerangannja jang tidak dilawan, pada bangsa2 jang tidak mengadakan perlawanan itoe. Djepang akan dilempar keloear dari semoesa negeri jang telah didoedoekinja.

**PEROENJOENGAN DJERMAN DJOEGA MENDJADI
PEROENJOENANNJA DJEPANG**

M 284

BERLIN HAS FALLEN

Berlin, capital of Germany, has been captured by Russian forces.

Soon Germany must collapse beneath the crushing blows which are smiting her in the east and in the west.

The Russians who now occupy her capital have already captured most of Germany's eastern provinces. British, American and other Allied forces are advancing steadily into Germany's western provinces.

The misery and suffering brought by the Nazis to most of the countries of Europe by their unprovoked attacks is now being visited on the German people.

The fall of Berlin spells doom for Germany, and the return of peace and order to Europe.

Once Germany surrenders, the Allies will be free to throw the whole of their overwhelming strength into the war against Japan.

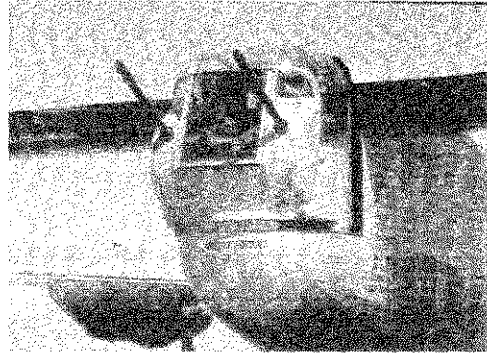
Japan, too, will pay the price for her unprovoked attacks on peaceful peoples. The Japanese will be thrown out of all the countries they have occupied.

GERMANY'S FATE IS JAPAN'S FATE.

TARGET: N.E.I. general.

DISTRIBUTION: For immediate and wide distribution, when and if Russian forces capture Berlin.

Jim Kirby had a jam in his tail turret gun and in clearing it, it misfired and badly injured his hand. We wrapped him up in blankets and radioed ahead that we needed medical attention on landing. We were met by an ambulance and off he went. By an odd turn of fate, it was an Army, not an Air Corps, ambulance. No questions were asked and the next morning an Army Major presented Jim with the Purple Heart. We kidded Jim, because he had not properly cleared his gun and we thought the Purple Heart was not clearly deserved. Jim had the last laugh though, the Purple Heart gave him extra points toward going home.



Kirby's Tail Turret

Back at camp, I tried some sailing. The sailboat episode was figuratively a disaster and could have been a literal one. Rader and I found a wing gas tank used by the P61 Black Widow night fighters to extend their range. The tanks are teardrop in shape and cut in half they look like a small boat hull that is big enough for two. We fitted it with a mast and sail of sorts and used an oar for a rudder. We set out like two boys in a tub, which is what we were because we didn't know enough to provide a keel. The tank had a round bottom and it didn't matter which way we pointed the nose (to use the nautical term of bow would be inappropriate), we went down wind. We soon realized we were in trouble, being blown offshore, so we paddled hard for a ship anchored in the bay. They towed us back to shore. It was most embarrassing.

April 27, 1945

Mandai, South Celebes. Flying with eight 1000 pounders; we also dropped propaganda leaflets encouraging the natives to resist the Japanese. Flight time 10 hrs. 15 min., "Susie's" 107th mission.

I didn't see more than a half dozen enemy fighters during my 33 missions and, logically, we never had fighter cover. Most of our runs were probably beyond the range of our fighters. The strategy of General McArthur was to bypass the enemy strongholds in the South Pacific and carry the war directly to the Japanese homeland. It seemed as though we were bombing Japanese runways and supplies so that *they* couldn't move north, and they were repairing runways for us to bomb so that *we* couldn't go north.

Many of the bypassed islands, including my Morotai, still had thousands of Japanese soldiers -- landing troops and clearing each island would have been very costly.

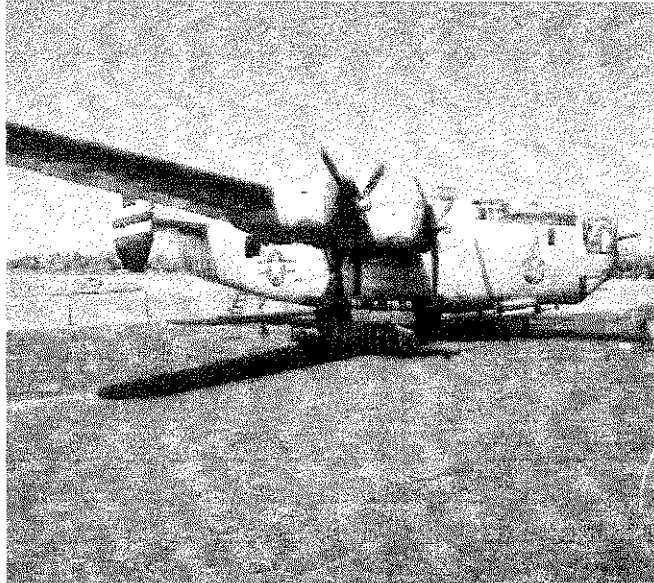
May 1, 1945

Tarakan to Tawi Tawi, Borneo. Weather reconnaissance. Flight time 14 hrs. (Plane M series 44-??874.)

The Missions

We took off at 7:40 in the evening and landed at 9:40 the next morning -- an all nighter! Tough navigation, thank you, Mac. We could see fires from the Allied invasion of Borneo going on below.

On the many long missions we put the plane on automatic pilot, and Archie and I would relax and chew the fat. Mac kept busy navigating. He always knew where we were and when we would get home. The engines purring, the warm sun, and the missed sleep when we took off early in the morning combined to make us sleepy. More than once Mac, whose desk was right behind me, tapped Archie or me on the shoulder and asked that at least one of us stay awake. The engines not only had a gentle purr, but there was also a rolling sound as the four engines went into and out of synchronization.



All American in Tampa

The sound of the engines makes me emotional today. The impact of the feeling made me choke on two recent occasions: Once in 1990, when I heard a B24 rev its engines for takeoff the day the "All American" restored B24 visited Tampa, and once again when "Delectable Doris" flew over at a dedication ceremony at the '92 reunion of the 307th Bomb Group in Dayton, Ohio. Other sights and sounds sometimes have a similar effect, a flag on parade, a marching band, a reunion in a movie, for example. The common explanation eludes me. Just nostalgia?

On Morotai, natives appeared rarely, no women that I remember. They showed us how they climbed coconut trees and opened coconuts. They came in outrigger dugout canoes from the islands across the bay.

May 4, 1945

Massamba, South Celebes. "Searched for Tare Able DD, Tare Baker". The meaning of this entry in my flight log is not clear to me today, but I think the reference is to Japanese freighter transports. Antiaircraft fire. Load was eight 1000 pounders, 2700 gallons gas. Flight time 11 hrs. 40 min.

May 7, 1945

(V-E Day, Victory in Europe, Germany surrenders.)

Makassar, South Celebes. Load of nine 500 pounders, 3100 gallons of gas. "Direct hit ?for? tare" (again the meaning is not known.) Strafed 30-40 schooners. Flight time 11 hours, in "Susie", her 111th mission.

Sometimes we bombed in formation and depended on the lead ship Bombardier to set the course for the bomb run. Adam would determine when to release. When Adam used his Norden bombsight to set course, the control of the plane was turned over to him. I maintained only altitude and air speed. The little dips of the wings as Adam "killed the drift" by changing course, were unsettling.

I'm not sure how we got it, but we acquired a 78/33-rpm phonograph at some point (Mac says we paid \$100 for it). It was about the size of a portable typewriter and was powered by a hand crank and a spring which later broke. Never mind, we used our finger to spin the records. The recreation office had some 33 rpm records including favorites like *Sentimental Journey* and *Sweet Lorraine*. The latter had special significance since that was the name of the girl I was writing to back in Milwaukee. Other greats were *Bizet Has His Day* (terrific horns and drums) and *Back Beat Boogie*. The Bizet piece is a swing adaptation of a classical tune. They don't write good songs like these anymore, especially ones like *Mairzy Dotes and Dozee Dotes*, *Three Itty Fittys*, and *Cement Mixer, Putty, Putty!* There were many "war" songs we enjoyed such as *Coming In On A Wing And A Prayer*, and *Praise The Lord And Pass The Ammunition*;

"The sky pilot said it, you gotta give him credit, a son-of-a-gun of a gunner was he. Praise the Lord and pass the ammunition."

Spike Jones and his City Slickers had *Der Fuhrer's Face*;

"Ven der Fuhrer says, 'Ve iss der master race'
We go sig heil, thppfft, sig heil, thppfft, right in der Fuhrer's face."

"Mac" was a trumpet player and briefly played in a band before entering the service. He would take out his horn on rare occasions and play a few notes and then put it away. We couldn't coax him to do more and he eventually sent the trumpet home.

May 11, 1945

Mandai, South Celebes. Six 1000 pounders, 2700 gallons of gas. 80% on target. Flight time 10 hrs.

Many of our missions took us across The Celebes, such as the missions to bomb Balikpapan, Borneo. On one occasion, unexpected antiaircraft fire came up on the left from a Japanese battery. It was almost at our altitude and a little below us. I racked the plane in a steep bank and hightailed it out of there.

May 1945

"Greenberg's crew bailed out over some islands north of the Celebes. Greenberg, the pilot, and two gunners were picked up. Four of the others are killed from ambush by a Japanese patrol. One man taken prisoner." (Earl Johnson's diary, 307th Bomb Group Newsletter.)

May 13, 1945

Oelin A/D. Fifteen 250 pounders, 3100 gallons of gas. Hits unobserved. Susie's 112th mission. Flight time 13 hrs. 25 min.

We all carried "short snorters" in our wallet, I don't know where the name came from. A short snorter was a collection of paper currency pasted end to end, each bill from a country that we had visited. On the bills, we collected signatures of drinking buddies, roommates, and acquaintances, most of which I no longer recognize. It helped pass the time.

May 21, 1945

Samarinda, Borneo. Fifteen 250 pounders for personnel area. Ninety per cent on target. 3100 gallons of gas. Flight time 12 hrs. 30 min., plane 44-?1548.

There were rumors that there might be a mission to bomb Surabaya, Java, a 2500 mile sortie. It had been done once before and the prospect was not looked forward to with any joy. This was reaching the far limit of the B24's range, if it was to carry any bombs.

May 26, 1945

Tarakan invasion support. Six 1000 pounders. Recon to Tawao. Flight time 10 hrs. 45 min., plane L series, 44-?1675.

Reconnaissance missions were especially boring -- just fly over the prescribed area and observe the weather or shipping.

We got two ounces of whiskey for each mission we flew. I don't know why except that we were supposed to be so shook up that it relaxed us. We accepted the whiskey and saved it in whiskey bottles, mixing bourbon, rye, and blended spirits all in the same bottle. It was used for parties and as exchange "wampum". We exchanged some of it for ice or frozen steaks at the navy locker. The beef was a welcome change from the Australian mutton at the mess hall.

A plane was sent regularly to Australia to pick up fresh vegetables and eggs. Otherwise, it was canned vegetables and powdered eggs and dishes like spaghetti and peas and the famed ground beef in a white sauce on toast (S.O.S, Shinola-on-a-shingle.). I liked Australian mutton the least. We also got the notorious Spam, which I liked then and still like today. There was plenty of milk and butter and some fruit.

Another offering at the mess hall was our daily dose of Atabrine, a pill that reduced the risk of malaria. It turned your skin a shade of suntan, but with a tinge of yellow.

May 30, 1945

On this day the crew arrives at our assigned plane early in the morning ready for our next mission. The plane is serviced and loaded with bombs and gas by largely unseen armorers and line engineers. I entered the taxi queue for our turn to take off and eventually line up on the runway as the plane ahead (piloted by Boeman) clears the ground. I didn't see it go down, but it ended up at the end of the runway in a plume of black smoke. The mission was canceled because of fear the bombs would explode as planes flew over on their takeoff. Several of Boeman's crew survived. Among the dead were a Catholic, a Jew, and a Protestant. Rader remembers going to the funeral.

Boeman has written a book of his experiences and describes the accident. He cannot explain what happened. One possibility is that instead of pushing the gear-up lever the flaps-up lever was used. They are located only about 10" apart. Boeman considered finishing his missions as a co-pilot, but was returned to the states.

The ground crews deserve special mention. Many had been away for three years sweating through the South Pacific. Perhaps they had less risk, but it was a hard life for them.



Looking raunchy!

June 5, 1945

Convoy cover, Tawi Tawi. Six 350 pound depth charges, looking for submarines. No contact. Flight time 11 hrs. (Plane L series, 44-??404.)

June 7, 1945

Convoy cover, Zamboanga, Philippines. Carried six 350 pound depth charges. Flight time 13 hrs. 15 min. (Plane M series 44-??2371.)

We didn't get very hungry on our long missions. We were given box lunches that included a sandwich, an apple, some non-melt chocolate and perhaps cheese and crackers. We were rationed a case (24) of canned beer a month which I learned to drink warm. Cigarettes were rationed, for which we had to pay 50 cents a carton. Both were items of barter.

June 11, 1945

Tarakan invasion support, six 1000 pounders. Flight time 10 hrs.(Plane M series 44-??2371.)

June 13, 1945

"One crew shot up over Balikpapan (Dohogne crew), all bail out, seven picked up by Aussie PBY Playmate, two missing." (Vernon Mrak Diary, 307th Bomb Group Newsletter.) [This Playmate was many years before Hugh Hefner's girlie magazine's Playboy Playmate.]

I am not sure how I got it, whether by trading whiskey or by purchase, but I acquired a concertina -- one of those little squeeze boxes, octagonal in shape, with a dozen chords on one end and an octave and a half of keys on the other. I enjoyed playing it, but others complained and teased me so much I became self-conscious, so I got rid of it. It was a loss to me, but not to those around me which can be affirmed by those who have since heard me attempt to play the piano, the guitar, and the trumpet.

June 14, 1945

Balikpapan, Borneo, thirty 100 lb. fragmentation clusters. Results unobserved. Flight time 10 hrs. 50 min. (Plane M series, 44-?2371.)

June 16, 1945

Promoted to 1st Lieutenant, AUS.

Balikpapan, Borneo, thirty 100 lb. fragmentation clusters. 2700 gallons gas, -- only 200 left on return (enough for 1+ hours). Flight time 10 hrs. 50 min. (Plane M series, 44-?1826.)

June 19, 1945

Balikpapan, Borneo, thirty 260 lb. fragmentation clusters. Target: Gun installations. 2700 gallons gas. Estimated 70% hits. Flight time 11 hrs. 15 min. (Plane M series. 44-?2371.)

June 21, 1945

"[A] Co-pilot blew his head off with his .45." (Vernon Mrak Diary.)

June 22, 1945

Balikpapan, Borneo, thirty 250 lb. fragmentation clusters. Target: Personnel. 2700 gallons gas. (See Mission Plan in Memorabilia.) We sighted a ditched B24 off Cape Flesco on the northwest corner of The Celebes and circled until a Catalina PBY "Playmate" rescue plane arrived. The ditched plane was near the shore and not in deep water.

The B24 was clearly visible and all in one piece. We could see some of the crew on the beach. We learned later that, by agreement, all but the pilot and co-pilot had bailed out before the plane circled and ditched. It was their 13th mission. We also learned that after the PBY picked up the crew, it hit a wave on takeoff and crashed, killing the pilot and co-pilot of the rescued crew.

June 25, 1945

Balikpapan, Borneo, thirty 250 lb. fragmentation clusters. Target: Beach fortifications and sapper support (Naval demolition specialists). Sappers swim ashore to knock out underwater obstacles before invasion forces attack. 2700 gallons gas, 11 hours, 20 minutes. (Plane 44-2371.)

June 26, 1945

*"Bob Harder and his crew disappeared today off Makassar Town."
(Vernon Mrak Diary.)*

June 28, 1945

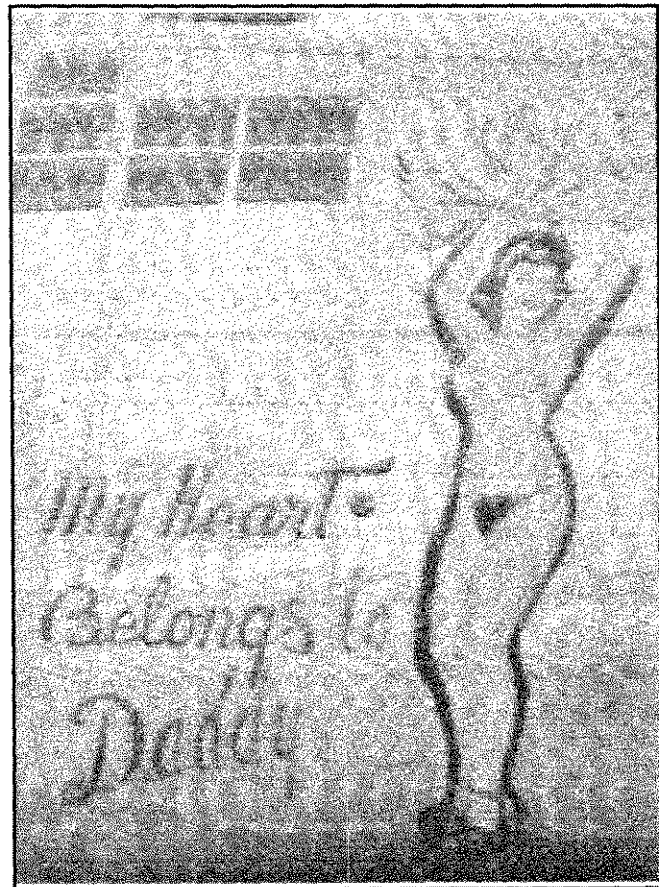
Balikpapan, Borneo, thirty 250 lb. fragmentation clusters. 2700 gallons gas, 11 hours. One frag bomb exploded under a 424th Squadron ship. Four runs over target, 0% on target. (Plane 44-1046.)

July 2, 1945

Balikpapan, Borneo, nine 500 pounders, 3100 gallons gas. Invasion support. Flying in "My Heart Belongs To Daddy". (Plane 44-?1696.)

On one of the return flights from a target, one crew, low on gas and with low visibility, couldn't find the Morotai Pitoe air strip. I could hear the drama of the talk between the pilot and the tower over the radio until they switched to another channel. Morotai was small enough to be easily missed, especially if you didn't know if it was ahead or behind you.

There was never any formal announcement of planes lost, hit, or downed. I suppose if I had hung around the Operations shack I could have found out.



Note score card at top left, 35 missions.

July 4, 1945

Sampit Bay and Banjarmasin, South Borneo, shipping search. Fifteen hour and 20 minute mission, our longest.

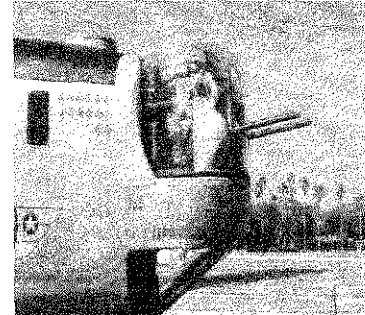
Archie says that we were selected for this mission because we had one of the best gas-consumption records. It was about the Sampit Bay mission that I later had misgivings, although we were on a search and destroy run for all shipping. A short way up the Barito River we came across a small power boat, perhaps 25 to 30 feet in length. We were flying low, maybe 500 feet in altitude. We came in with the nose and top turrets blazing. I could see the tracers in the water stitching a path across the boat. I could also see people diving into the water to get away. It was a much more personal relationship to war than dropping bombs from 2 or 3 miles overhead.

July 7, 1945

Balikpapan, Borneo, fifteen 250 lb. GP bombs. 3100 gallons gas.

July 9, 1945

"Reports that some Japs have broken through the perimeter and have not been captured." (Vernon Mrak Diary.)



Stoker's Nose turret

July 16, 1945

Local transportation. My log book does not indicate the nature of this and some following flights. Most were only 3 hours in length. I don't remember whether they were for the purpose of "breaking in" engines, or to provide flying time and training for various flight personnel, or some other reason.

July 17, 1945

Limboeng (Makassar Town), South Celebes. Target: Personnel areas. Nine 500 pound napalm clusters with no tails. These were the same bombs used by B29s to firebomb Japanese cities. Over Tokyo the bombs had three foot cloth tails to slow their descent and make them scatter.

From a description in Vernon Mrak's diary, apparently this is the mission that Stoker and Mac recall we almost flew into a "stone mountain" as we came out of a bomb run at low altitude.

July 18, 1945

Local transportation.

July 19, 1945

"Air raid warnings but no planes appeared." (Mrak Diary.)



What's war without a pin-up? A classic Rita Hayworth

July 22, 1945

July 23, 1945

July 24, 1945

Local Transportation.

July 26, 1945

Target is the runway at Tobanio. Nine 500 pounders.

Archie and I decided to see what a B24 can do and put it into a dive. We chickened out at 280 MPH and, by agreement, we both put our feet up on the instrument panel and faked straining to pull out. I don't know whether it was a good practice maneuver or foolish, but it did impress Mac, Bob, and John who were on the flight deck behind us. The redline (maximum) air speed is 325 MPH, cruising speed is 160 MPH.

As noted below, there is another recollection of this incident. Indeed, if we didn't remember to roll the trim tab back, we really would have had to fight to pull out of the dive.

Taped at the 1994 St. Louis 307th Reunion Meeting:

Archie: We were coming back from a mission, all of us fat, dumb and happy. Somebody started the conversation, how fast will this darn thing go? Someone else said I don't know, let's try it. So we put the trim all the way forward, pushed it down as far as we could and almost couldn't pull it out because it kept mushing.

Mac: Let me kiss your bald head! Wilco says he doesn't remember it that way.

Archie: We told everybody in the rear, don't be standing up because this is what we are going to do.

Archie (to FSW): I remember when we started I was sitting there sideways in the seat. And you said how fast will this thing go? I said, "I don't know". So we tried.

July 29, 1945

Local trans. "Five crew members picked up after being in the water for 48 hours." (Vernon Mrak Diary.)

July 30, 1945

Kotawarintin, South Borneo. Ten 250 pounders and 3500 gallons gas. Takeoff weight 68,500 lbs.

August 6, 1945

We hear a tremendous new bomb was dropped on Japan. This was the atom bomb dropped on Hiroshima. The news fueled rumors that we were about to move up to the Philippines or Okinawa in preparations for bombing Japan. There were rumors about redeploying forces from Europe to the Pacific. Indeed, I think some were in transit. Prior to the defeat of Germany, the war in the Pacific had taken a back seat to Europe in terms of supplies and manpower.

August 7, 1945

Godeng, South Borneo. Nine 500 pound napalm clusters. 90% on target.

This is my 33rd sortie; flying "Indian Thummer". I did not know it at the time, but this was my last mission. Normally, after 35 missions a leave or rotation was granted. There were rumors that 40 or more were going to be required. Tomorrow I will be 23.

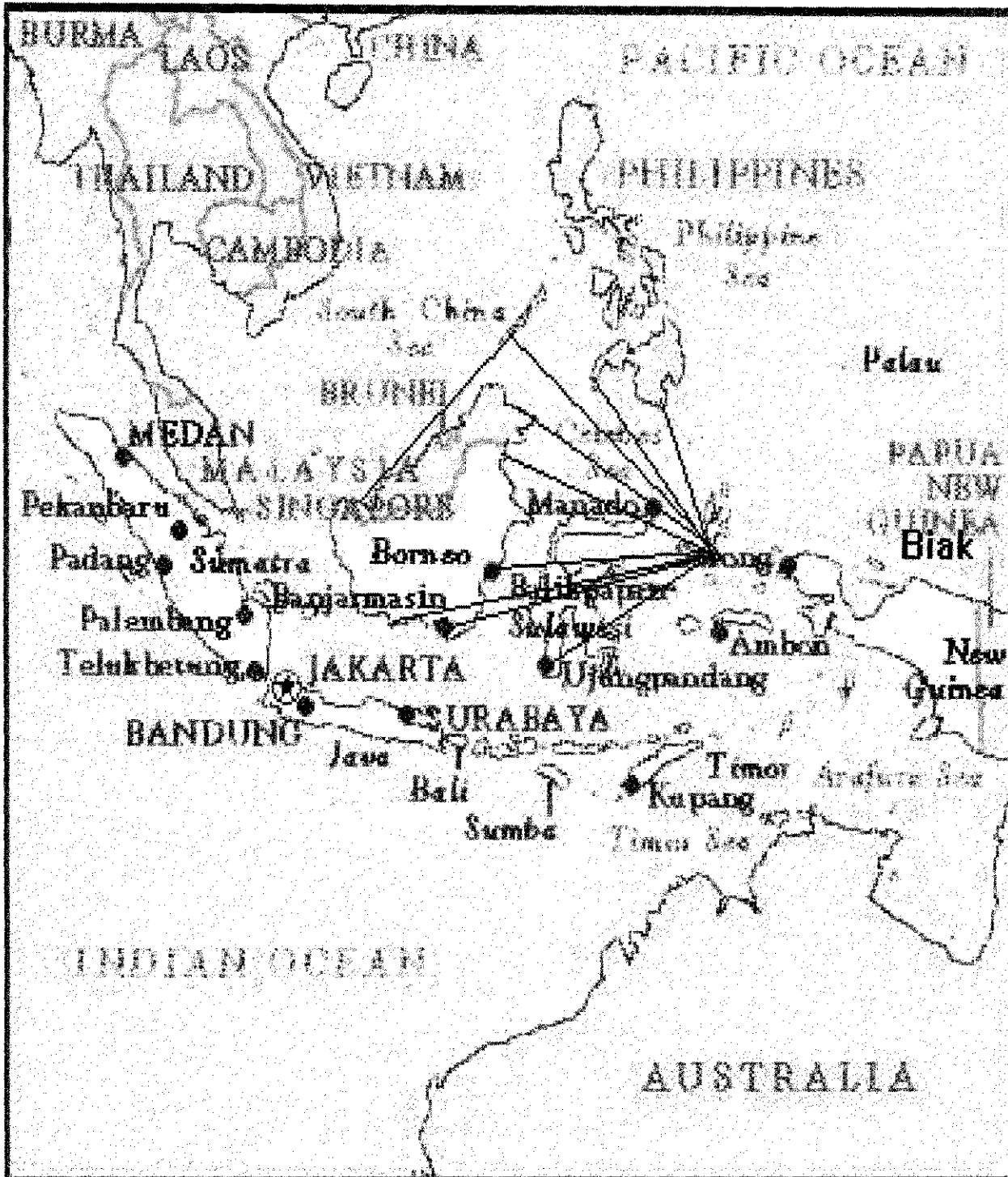
August 9, 1945

Another BIG bomb (Nagasaki) -- talk of negotiations.

As to the "moral" issue of using the bomb, for me it's a "no brainer"; it was them or us -- the right of self defense against someone trying to kill me. There is no doubt in my mind that the Japanese would have used an atomic weapon if they had one. If they could, they would have dropped it on Los Angeles or San Francisco.

A 40's Poster





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Range of the missions.

GOING HOME

August 11, 1945

The last mission of the 307th Bomb Group. In the history of the 307th, 61 planes were lost or missing. I have not seen an account of personnel losses nor total planes nor total missions.

August 14, 1945

Japan surrenders.

August 18, 1945

Ferry service to Florida Blanca, Luzon, The Philippines and return to Morotai. Four planes get stuck in mud.

Evidently I said good bye to Mac and Adam and left them in Manila to wait for their transportation back to the states. I don't remember this nor any sad goodbye's and hugs. We had assembled to do a job; the job was done. So, see you later alligator. (Who navigated back to Morotai?) I didn't appreciate the meaning of what we had done then as I do now. Mac and Adam boarded a Liberty ship, collided in the harbor with another ship, and did not leave Manila until August 31st. (See Mac's account in Memorabilia.) They arrived in Seattle on September 28th, 9 days before I left the Philippines.

August 21, 1945

Local, "GRP BOX"?

I have read that this was a formation "flyover" being graded by an inspector checking on Tactical Operations.

August 22, 1945

One hour of "slow time" in a Douglas C-47 "Goonie Bird" to break in a new engine.

August 27, 1945

Ferry for first echelon of the 307th's Headquarters move to Clark Field, Manila. Pick up tents and deliver to Tanaun, Leyte, Philippines. Flying with a skeleton crew.

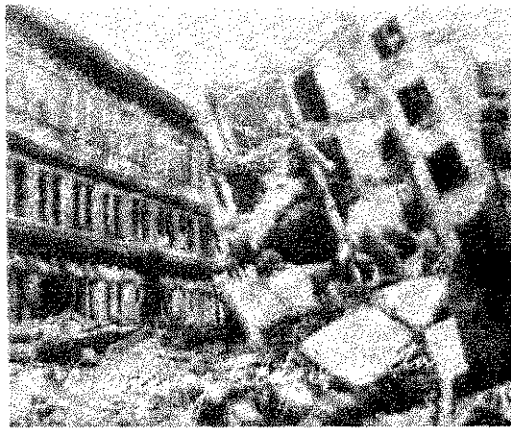
August 28, 1945

Return to Clark Field.

August 29, 1945

More tents to Tanaun, and return to Morotai.

Manila, The Philippines, 1945



September 1, 1945

Ferry service to Clark Field, Manila, and return to Morotai.

I met my old school and Cadet friend, Bob Wright, now a P38 pilot, and delivered him and a case of whiskey to Zamboanga, amid some heavy thunderstorms. My memory tells me that Mac was with me on this trip, but . . . See August 18.

September 2, 1945

V-J Day, Victory over Japan.

September 9, 1945

Ferry service to Clark Field and return to Morotai.

It had been a week since Japan's surrender and we were all checking and comparing our points for going home and wondering, "Is it really over?" "How long will it take to get home?" Also, WHEN are we going. We were all in for "the duration plus six months", will it really take that long? And, in particular for me, have I forgotten all of my chemical engineering after three years away?

September 13, 1945

Final flight from Morotai. I arrive in Manila to await return to the States.

On Morotai, I was nursing a small orange plant I had started from seed in a paper cup. In a final farewell, I planted it at the base of one of the coconut trees to which the tent was tied. Could it be bearing oranges now? It is a fantasy to go back and find out.

In Manila there was destruction all around and hardly a building that was whole. Yet, the beer halls were open, the women attractive, and there was "government" beer, but no ice.

October 8, 1945

First hop homeward bound was Clark Field, Manila, to Guam. There is a minor problem with the plane shortly after takeoff, but after a short conference on the flight deck, and with a biased judgement, we elect to continue.

As in Les Brown's popular song, I started my "Sentimental Journey" home in "My Heart Belongs to Daddy." Who got to fly home and who didn't? I don't know. Perhaps Mac was bumped by rank. My navigator for the return to the states was Captain Joe Henry, the Lead Navigator for the Squadron. On the other hand, we were all assigned service points and these may have been the basis. Points were determined by awards, time overseas, number of missions, etc.

October 9, 1945

Guam to Kwajalein. We had one man sleep in the plane at each stop as a precaution to prevent another crew from "borrowing" needed repair parts at night.

October 10, 1945

Kwajalein to John Rodgers Field, Hawaii. I was approached by a man, half in uniform, who wanted me to stow him on board for the rest of the trip home. I refused and suppose I should have turned him in, but I was taking no chances that might delay me or the crew.

October 11, 1945

John Rogers to Mather Field, Sacramento, California. I got cold feet. I had collected some souvenirs, mostly radio electronics I think, and again, I didn't want anything to go wrong, so I tossed them out over the Pacific.

When we landed, our plane was greeted by the ever-present Jeep with a "Follow Me" sign on the back. We followed him for a long distance and ended up in a dusty junk yard of parked B24's as far as the eye could see. There were hundreds, maybe thousands. We added ours and left. Later, I was issued a receipt for "One War Weary Type B24".

It occurs to me that my "Reluctant Wagon" may have never seen service. Many of the supplies that were being accumulated for the push into Japan were bulldozed into the ocean and were not worth salvaging.

Forrest S. Wilcox
9 Coachlight Square
Montrose, NY 10548

August 1996

EPILOGUE

Our crew arrived at Morotai at the best of times -- the camp was set up and the war, as it turned out, almost over. In honesty, most of my missions were "milk-runs" -- very little enemy action in terms of fighters or anti-aircraft fire, nothing like the early days of the war in the Pacific or the action over Europe. Other than Jim Kirby's "accident", neither the crew nor any of my planes received a scratch.

Looking back, my recollection is that there was very little fraternizing between the crews. But then I'm a loner; maybe it was my choice. I did attend Stokers's and Penny's wedding in Philadelphia shortly after the war in 1948. Also about this time I met Mac and Bal in Chicago while passing through. Other than the members of my crew, I can name no one from those days. Even among my crew there was little or no contact until the 1980's when I decided to locate the "lost lambs". I found:

Archie went back to Walla Walla and graduated from Whitman College with a degree in sociology. He briefly tried Law School, quit and went back in the service as a 2nd Lt. in the infantry. He served in Korea, Viet Nam, and at the Pentagon. He retired as a Colonel.

In locating Archie, I came across an Archie Summers in California (a B17 bombardier) who related a story: While in the states he received a package addressed to Archie Summers. From the return address he knew it wasn't for him and so he returned it. After he was sent to England, he received the same package again. He opened it and ate the peanut brittle inside.

Mac and Bob entered the insurance field.

Adam worked for a large Savings and Loan bank as its comptroller.

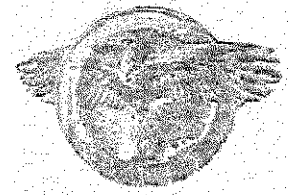
Rader joined the reserves and was called up for the Korean War, flying in B29's. He worked for the post office and had a publishing business.

Jim Kirby was called-up for the Korean War and by chance met Rader at a base in Florida. We have since lost track of his whereabouts and in spite of considerable efforts to locate him have turned up no clues. He is the only member of the crew unaccounted for.

Kevin became a lobbyist for New England Telephone.

Ade Stearns and John Spatig have passed on.

I had 35 days of paid leave before being mustered out at Camp McCoy in Wisconsin on January 22, 1946, after two years and 11 months of service. We were all issued the "ruptured duck" lapel button to show that we had served. There was much talk about the country falling back into the Depression that preceded the war. It seemed logical that unemployment would rise as defense factories shut down and millions of troops returned to civilian life. To get some chemical engineering experience, and a start on work experience, I took a temporary job in the Pfister and Vogel Tannery which I got through the efforts of Louise Terhorst, my sister's mother-in-law. The next summer, between semesters, I got a job at the Forest Products Laboratory in Madison, Wisconsin, through the efforts of my father who at the time was head of the Forestry Department of Indiana. Since each of these positions resulted from a little "pull", I was very conscientious, I think, in performing them. I know the FPL was happy, I volunteered for the graveyard (12-8 am) shift.



The ruptured duck.

I worked at Pfister and Vogel Tannery until it was time to return to school in February. I had greater apprehension about going back to college than any experience in the service. It had been three years. How much did I remember; did failure lie ahead? As it turned out, my grades were even better than before. Like most vets, I was more mature and in a hurry to go to work.

After graduating from the University of Maryland in 1947, I went to work for the Dupont Company in Philadelphia, working in the laboratory on paint products. In 1952, I was transferred to the Newburgh Fabrics and Finishes Division and worked on (among other things) a material to be used for shoe uppers. In 1962, I resigned and went to work for the Mearl Corporation at their laboratories in Ossining, NY. Mearl makes iridescent pigments and I became Plant Manager of a plastics facility making iridescent film for packaging. I retired in 1986.

I have often been asked if I considered becoming an airline pilot? Not seriously. I had 1000 hours flying a four-engine military bomber. Many pilots, especially those of the Air Transport Command, had more than 10,000 hours in civilian type planes. I knew I wouldn't have had a chance. I did stay in the Reserves for a while and might have been called back for the Korean War except that the B24 was obsolete, outclassed by the B29 Super Fortress.

A FINAL WORD

How do I feel about flying the "old-fashioned crates" when I see the hot delta-wing jet fighters and stealth bombers of today? In another fifty years, they will be old fashioned too, with old fogies walking around them remembering and writing about outmoded times for the benefit of their grandchildren.

MEMORABILIA

Patches

Photo, B17 & B24

Instrument Rating & ID

Pictures, South Pacific

Picture, Captain Ralph Wilcox

Crew Picture

B24 Fuel Consumption

Honorable Discharge

Separation Qualification Record

Certificate of Service

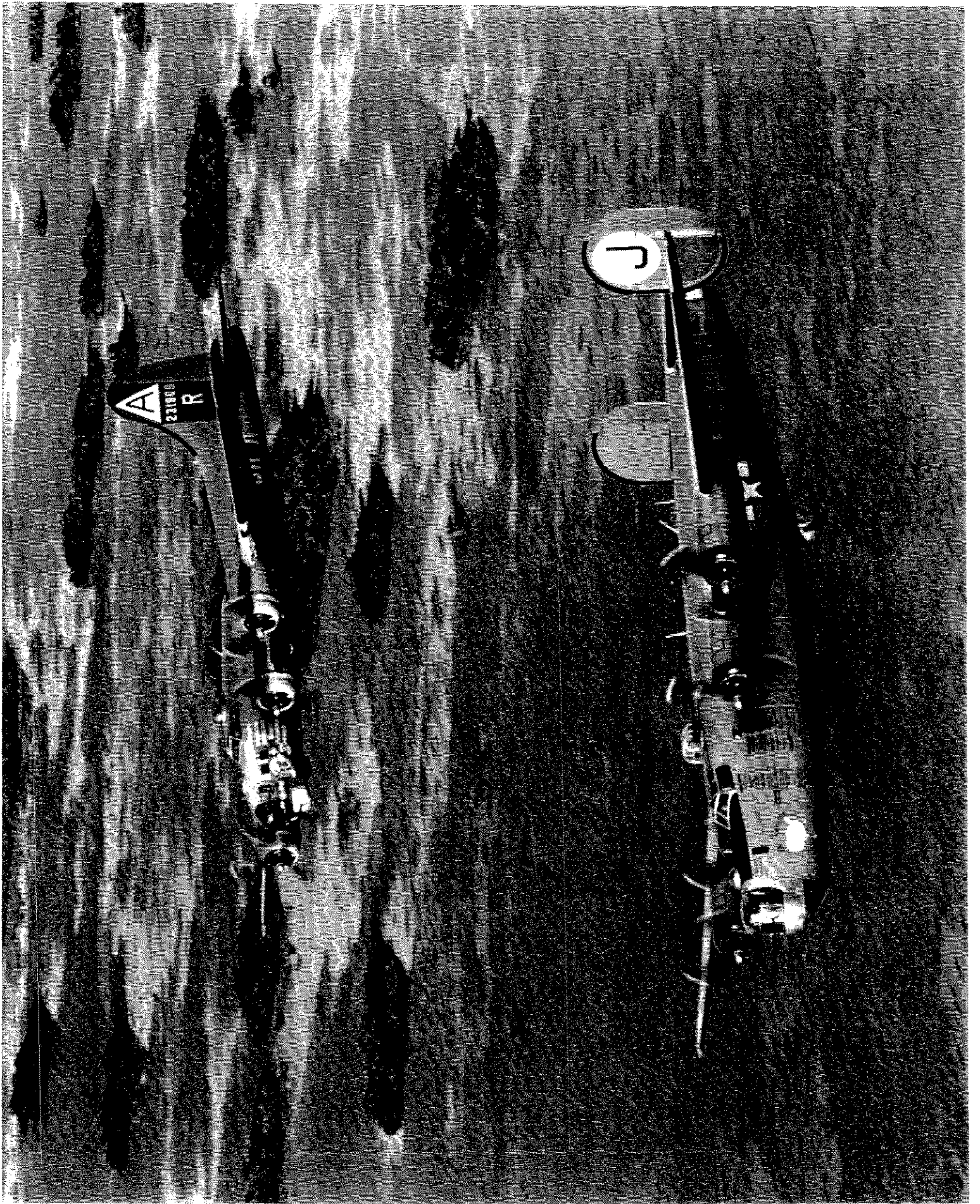
Mission Plan

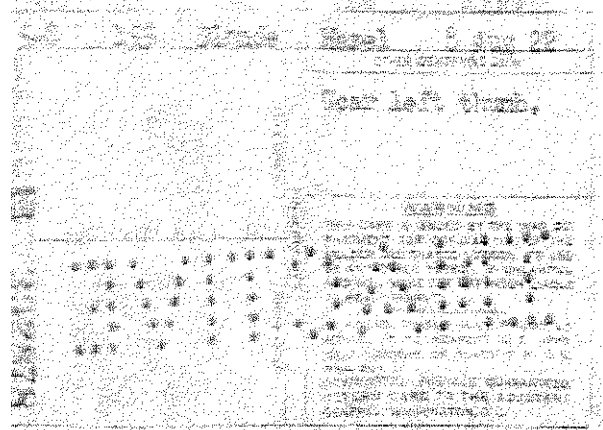
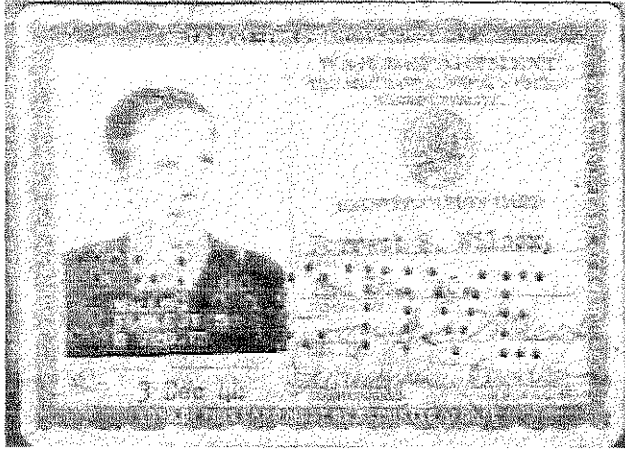
Pilot's Log Book

Invoice for "Reluctant Wagon" B24

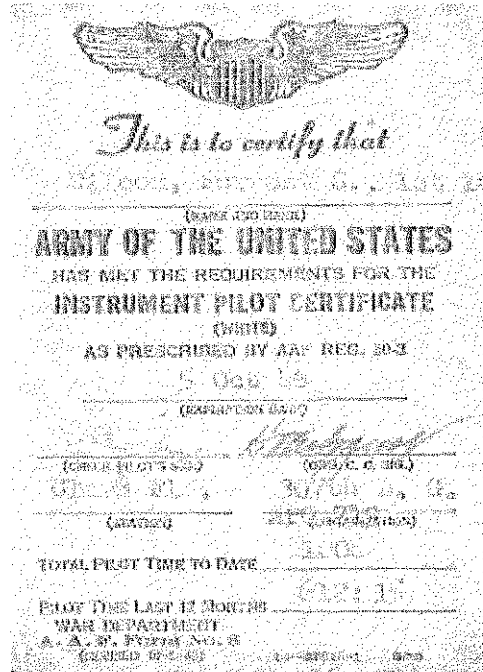
Excerpt, John MacLoraine's Memoir







War Department ID card.



Instrument Rating



On Morotai, Mac and Archie



Archie and Mac



Rader and Mac



My father in China.

FUEL CONSUMPTION FOR THE B-24

RPM	MP	GALS per Hour	GALS per MIN.	RPM	MP	GALS per HOUR	GALS per MIN.
2700	49*	626	10.43	2200	32	221	3.68
2550	45	518	8.63	2150	32	214	3.57
2500	41	513	8.55	2100	31	202	3.34
2400	38	432	7.00	2050	31	187	3.12
2300	35	346	5.77	2000	31	174	2.90
2250	34	313	5.20	1950	31	169	2.81
2200	33	282	4.37	1900	31	165	2.75
2200	32	250	4.17	1850	31	151	2.51
				1800	31	148	2.47
				1750	31	143	2.38
				1700	30	134	2.23
				1650	291	124	2.07

NOTE: Fuel consumption is figured for an altitude of
10,000 ft. It will be 10-20 GPH less at S.L.

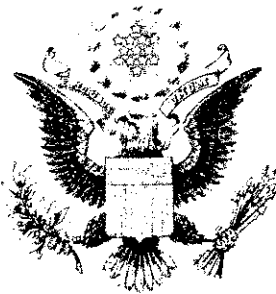
INDICATED AIR SPEED FOR MAXIMUM RANGE

70,000 lbs 164 mph
65,000 lbs 161 mph
60,000 lbs 158 mph
55,000 lbs 155 mph
50,000 lbs 152 mph
45,000 lbs 149 mph
40,000 lbs 145 mph

ALTITUDE FOR MAXIMUM RANGE

35,000-45,000 As high as poss.
45,000-55,000 20,000 to S.L.
over 55,000 As low as poss.

Army of the United States



Honorable Discharge

This is to certify that

FORREST S. WILCOX

Army of the United States

*is hereby Honorably Discharged from the military service of the
United States of America*

*This certificate is awarded as a testimonial of Honest and Faithful
Service to his country.*

Given at Blackland Army Air Field, Waco, Texas.

Date Fourteenth day of April, one thousand nine hundred
and forty-four.

For the Commanding Officer:

ROBERT L. RENTH,
Colonel, Air Corps,
Executive Officer

ENLISTED RECORD OF

Wilcox
(Last name)
Forrest
(First name)
S.
(Middle initial)
16089423
(Army serial number)
Aviation Cadet
(Grade)

Born in Chambersburg, in the State of Pennsylvania

Enlisted on ~~XXXXXX~~ June 17, 1942, at Milwaukee, Wisconsin

When enlisted or inducted he was 19 years of age and by occupation

a Student

He had Hazel eyes, Blond hair, Ruddy complexion,

and was 5 feet 6-3/4 inches in height.

Completed 1 years, 9 months, 27 days service for longevity pay.

Prior service: None

Office of the Agent Finance Officer
 Blackland Army Air Field
 Waco, Texas
 APR 14 1944
 (Date)

Noncommissioned officer None

Military qualifications None

Army specialty Pilot

Attendance at None (Name of noncommissioned officers' or special service school)

Paid in Full \$ 49.00 This Date

D. E. Slessman
 D. E. SLESSMAN, 1st Lieut., F.D.
 Agent Finance Officer

Battles, engagements, skirmishes, expeditions None

Decorations, service medals, citations None

Wounds received in service None

Date and result of smallpox vaccination February 26, 1943--Immune

Date of completion of all typhoid-paratyphoid vaccinations April 4, 1944

Date and result of diphtheria immunity test (Schiek) None

Date of other vaccinations (specify vaccine used) Tetanus-- April 4, 1944

Physical condition when discharged Good Married or single Single

Honorably discharged by reason of AR 615-160, to accept commission as 2d Lt, AC, AUS.

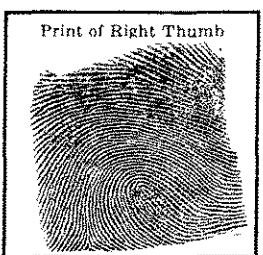
Character Excellent Periods of active duty None

Remarks Efficiency Rating: Excellent

Favorably considered for Good Conduct Medal.

No time lost under 107th Article of War.

Aviation Cadet is not entitled to travel pay.



Signature of soldier Forrest S. Wilcox
Forrest S. Wilcox
C. A. N. Cox
C. A. N. COX,
1st Lt., Air Corps,
Asst Pers Off

INSTRUCTIONS FOR ENLISTED RECORD

- ¹ Enter date of induction only in case of trainee inducted under Selective Training and Service Act of 1940 (Bull. 25, W. D., 1940); in all other cases enter date of enlistment. Eliminate word not applicable.
- ² For each enlistment give company, regiment, or arm or service with inclusive dates of service, grade, cause of discharge, number of days lost under AW 107 (if none, so state), and number of days retained and cause of retention in service for convenience of the Government, if any.
- ³ Enter qualifications in arms, horsemanship, etc. Show the qualification, date thereof; and number, date, and source of order announcing same.
- ⁴ See paragraph 12, AR 40-210.
- ⁵ If discharged prior to expiration of service, give number, date, and source of order of full description of authority therefor.
- ⁶ Enter periods of active duty of enlisted men of the Regular Army Reserve and the Enlisted Reserve Corps and dates of induction into Federal Service in the cases of members of the National Guard.
- ⁷ In all cases of men who are entitled to receive Certificates of Service under AR 345-500, enter here appointments and ratings held and all other items of special proficiency or merit other than those shown above.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR CERTIFICATE OF DISCHARGE

AR 345-470.
 Insert name; as, "John J. Doe," in center of form.
 Insert Army serial number, grade, company, regiment, or arm or service as 16089423, Corporal, Company A, 1st Infantry; "Sergeant, Quartermaster Corps."
 The name and grade of the officer signing the certificate will be typewritten or printed below the signature.
 any guaranty...
 1940541 has been...
 available to the person to



SEPARATION QUALIFICATION RECORD

eld

SAVE THIS FORM. IT WILL NOT BE REPLACED IF LOST

This record of job assignments and special training received in the Army is furnished to the soldier when he leaves the service. In its preparation, information is taken from available Army records and supplemented by personal interview. The information about civilian education and work experience is based on the individual's own statements. The veteran may present this document to former employers, prospective employers, representatives of schools or colleges, or use it in any other way that may prove beneficial to him.

1. LAST NAME--FIRST NAME--MIDDLE INITIAL WILCOX, FORREST S.				MILITARY OCCUPATIONAL ASSIGNMENTS		
				10. MONTHS 21	11. GRADE 1st Lt	12. MILITARY OCCUPATIONAL SPECIALTY AAF-Pilot, B-24 1092
2. ARMY SERIAL No. O 720 417	3. GRADE 1st Lt.	4. SOCIAL SECURITY No. 578-20-6455				
5. PERMANENT MAILING ADDRESS (Street, City, County, State) 5551 North Shoreland Avenue, Milwaukee, Milwaukee Co., Wisconsin						
6. DATE OF ENTRY INTO ACTIVE SERVICE 15 Apr 1944	7. DATE OF SEPARATION 22 Jan 1946	8. DATE OF BIRTH 8 Aug 1923				
9. PLACE OF SEPARATION Separation Center, Camp McCoy, Wisconsin						

SUMMARY OF MILITARY OCCUPATIONS

13. TITLE--DESCRIPTION--RELATED CIVILIAN OCCUPATION
PILLOT, B-24: (4 engine) Piloted a B-24 in combat in the Southwest Pacific. Flew 33 combat missions with approximately 450 hours. Total pilot time 1050 hours. Flew all types of missions in all types of weather and combat conditions. Holds valid white instrument rating. Thorough knowledge of local and general flying regulations and meteorology.

MILITARY EDUCATION

14. NAME OR TYPE OF SCHOOL—COURSE OR CURRICULUM—DURATION—DESCRIPTION

AAF - College Training Detachment - Cincinnati, Ohio - 3 months - Grad.
 AAF - Preflight - San Antonio, Texas - 2 months - Graduated
 AAF - Primary Flight - Harvey Parks Airport - Sikeston, Missouri -
 2 1/4 months - Graduated
 AAF - Basic Flight - Strother Field - Winfield, Kansas - 2 1/4 months -
 Graduated
 AAF - Advanced Flight - Blackland Field - Waco, Texas - 2 1/2 months -
 Graduated
 AAF - B-24 Transition - Fort Worth - Fort Worth, Texas - 3 1/2 months -
 Graduated

CIVILIAN EDUCATION

15. HIGHEST GRADE COMPLETED	16. DEGREES OR DIPLOMAS	17. YEAR LEFT SCHOOL	OTHER TRAINING OR SCHOOLING	
3 yrs Coll.	None	1943	20. COURSE—NAME AND ADDRESS OF SCHOOL—DATE	21. DURATION
18. NAME AND ADDRESS OF LAST SCHOOL ATTENDED			None	
University of Maryland, College Park, Maryland				
19. MAJOR COURSES OF STUDY				
Chemical Engineering				

CIVILIAN OCCUPATIONS

22. TITLE—NAME AND ADDRESS OF EMPLOYER—INCLUSIVE DATES—DESCRIPTION
 STUDENT, COLLEGE; University of Maryland at College Park, Maryland
 until 1943. Studying for degree in Chemical Engineering. Completed
 3 years.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

23. REMARKS AWARDS: Awarded the Air Medal with 2 oak leaf cluster,
 Asiatic-Pacific Theater ribbon with 3 battle stars, American Theater
 ribbon, Philippine Liberation ribbon and the World War II Victory
 Medal.

24. SIGNATURE OF PERSON BEING SEPARATED	25. SIGNATURE OF SEPARATION CLASSIFICATION OFFICER	26. NAME OF OFFICER (Typed or Stamped)
<i>Forest Wiley</i>	<i>Dean F. McCloskey</i>	MC CLOSKEY, DEAN F. 2nd Lt. AC



Army of the United States

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

This is to certify that

FORREST S WILCOX O 720 417 FIRST LIEUTENANT
371ST BM SQ APO 926

*honorably served in active Federal Service
in the Army of the United States from*

15 APRIL 1944

to

22 JANUARY 1946

Given at SEPARATION CENTER CAMP MCILCOY WISCONSIN

on the 22ND *day of* JANUARY 1946

J. A. Sexton, Jr.
J. A. SEXTON, JR.
MAJOR, AC .

MILITARY RECORD AND REPORT OF SEPARATION CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

1. LAST NAME - FIRST NAME - MIDDLE INITIAL WILCOX FORREST S			2. ARMY SERIAL NUMBER 0 720 417		3. AUS. GRADE 1ST LT		4. ARM OR SERVICE AC		5. COMPONENT AUS	
6. ORGANIZATION 371ST BM SQ APO 926				7. DATE OF RELIEF FROM ACTIVE DUTY 22 JAN 1946		8. PLACE OF SEPARATION SEPARATION CENTER CAMP MC COY WIS				
9. PERMANENT ADDRESS FOR MAILING PURPOSES 5551 N SHORELAND MILWAUKEE WIS						10. DATE OF BIRTH 8 AUG 1922		11. PLACE OF BIRTH CHAMBERSBURG PA		
12. ADDRESS FROM WHICH EMPLOYMENT WILL BE SOUGHT SEE 9						13. COLOR EYES HAZEL	14. COLOR HAIR BROWN	15. HEIGHT 5'9½"	16. WEIGHT 160 LBS.	17. NO. OF DEPENDENTS 0
18. RACE WHITE <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NEGRO <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (specify) <input type="checkbox"/>		19. MARITAL STATUS SINGLE <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MARRIED <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (specify) <input type="checkbox"/>		20. U.S. CITIZEN YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>		21. CIVILIAN OCCUPATION AND NO. STUDENT				

MILITARY HISTORY

SELECTIVE SERVICE DATA <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	22. REGISTERED YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>		23. LOCAL S. S. BOARD NUMBER		24. COUNTY AND STATE PRINCE GEO MD		25. HOME ADDRESS AT TIME OF ENTRY ON ACTIVE DUTY SEE 9			
26. DATE OF ENTRY ON ACTIVE DUTY 15 APR 1944			27. MILITARY OCCUPATIONAL SPECIALTY AND NO. PILOT B-24 1092							
28. BATTLES AND CAMPAIGNS AIR COMBAT BORNEO SOUTHERN PHILIPPINES AIR OFFENSIVE CHINA										
29. DECORATIONS AND CITATIONS ASIATIC-PACIFIC RIBBON W/3 BR STARS AIR MEDAL 1W/1 OLC VICTORY MEDAL AMERICAN THEATER RIBBON PHIL LIBERATION RIBBON										
30. WOUNDS RECEIVED IN ACTION NONE										
31. SERVICE SCHOOLS ATTENDED NONE						32. SERVICE OUTSIDE CONTINENTAL U. S. AND RETURN				
						DATE OF DEPARTURE 10 FEB 45		DESTINATION A/P		DATE OF ARRIVAL 21 FEB 45
33. REASON AND AUTHORITY FOR SEPARATION RR 1-5 DEMOBILIZATION						8 OCT 45		USA		12 OCT 45
34. CURRENT TOUR OF ACTIVE DUTY						35. EDUCATION (years)				
CONTINENTAL SERVICE			FOREIGN SERVICE			GRAMMAR SCHOOL		HIGH SCHOOL		COLLEGE
YEARS	MONTHS	DAYS	YEARS	MONTHS	DAYS	8	4	3		
1	3	5	0	8	2					

INSURANCE NOTICE

IMPORTANT IF PREMIUM IS NOT PAID WHEN DUE OR WITHIN THIRTY-ONE DAYS THEREAFTER, INSURANCE WILL LAPSE. MAKE CHECKS OR MONEY ORDERS PAYABLE TO THE TREASURER OF THE U. S. AND FORWARD TO COLLECTIONS SUBDIVISION, VETERANS ADMINISTRATION, WASHINGTON 25, D. C.

36. KIND OF INSURANCE Nat. Serv. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> U.S. Govt. <input type="checkbox"/> None <input type="checkbox"/>			37. HOW PAID Allotment <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Direct to V.A. <input type="checkbox"/>		38. Effective Date of Allotment Discontinuance 31 JAN 46		39. Date of Next Premium Due (one month after 38) 28 FEB 46		40. PREMIUM DUE EACH MONTH \$ 6.50		41. INTENTION OF VETERAN TO Continue <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Continue only <input type="checkbox"/> Discontinue <input type="checkbox"/>		
---	--	--	---	--	--	--	---	--	--	--	---	--	--

42 	43. REMARKS (This space for completion of above items or entry of other items specified in W. D. Directives) 1940S41 issued by the Veterans Administration on 12/15/41 at the request of LAPEL BUTTON ISSUED										
44. SIGNATURE OF OFFICER BEING SEPARATED <i>Forrest S Wilcox</i>						45. PERSONNEL OFFICER (Type name, grade and organization - signature) WILLIAM E GAROFALO CAPT INF ASST ADJ <i>William E. Garofalo</i>					

SECRET

Wilcox
CWD/jwn

MISSION PLAN

22 June 1945

ATTACK TIME: 1000I

PRIMARY TARGET

TAKE OFF

GROUP ASSEMBLY

ALTERNATE GP ASSEMBLY

ROUTE FORMATION

ROUTE OUT

TARGET APPROACH

PLAN OF ATTACK

ATTACK ALTITUDES
WITHDRAWAL

SECONDARY TARGET

PLAN OF ATTACK

ATTACK ALTITUDES

BOMB INTERVAL

TERTIARY TARGET

PLAN OF ATTACK

ATTACK ALTITUDES

BOMB INTERVAL

ABORTIVE TARGET

PLAN OF ATTACK

ATTACK ALTITUDES

BOMB INTERVAL

ROUTE BACK

- : BALIKPAPAN PERSONNEL.
- : 370th - 0400; 371st - 0406; 372nd - 0412.
- : Will be accomplished over CAPE KARANG (00°38'S-119°43'E), from 0745 to 0815I. Sqdns will circle left with 370th at 11,000 ft; 371st at 10,500 ft; 372nd at 10,000.
- : CAPE MAJOR (00°45'-117°35')
- : Individual ships to Assembly - Sqdns in Trail to Target.
- : Base around tip of HALMAHERA to TP(00°00'-124°00'E) to Assembly (00°38'S-119°43'E) to TP(01°16'S-117°09'E) to IP(01°15'S-116°56'E).
- : A loss of 500 ft. will be accomplished just prior to IP. A left turn of 15° will be made onto a bomb run of 254⁰ mag. Gp Leader will contact "MAGPIE" on Chan. "B" or 6720 when 50 miles out and upon leaving target.
- : Bombing will be by Individual Sqdns. The 370th will lead; 371st #2 and 372nd #3. Lead bombardier of each Sqdn will sight for range and deflection; all others for range only. Airspeed for bombing run - 165 MPH(I). Bomb interval - 85 feet.
- : 370th - 11,000 ft; 371st - 10,500 ft; 372nd - 10,000'.
- : A SLOW LEFT TURN will be made off the target at 170 MPH(I). 30" MP; 2000 RPM.
- : SEPINGGAN.
- : As briefed.
- : Same as Primary.
- : 125 feet.
- : MANGAR.
- : As briefed.
- : Same as Primary.
- : 85 feet.
- : LANGOAN.
- : As briefed.
- : 8,000 feet.
- : 85 feet.
- : Direct to Base.

COMMUNICATIONS

FREQUENCIES

- : Command 6280 Kcs Interplane 4475 Kcs Distress
- : Primary 8455 (0700-2000I) Secondary 8045(0700-2000I)
- : 3664 (2000-0700I) Secondary 3476(2000-0700I)
- : VHF "A" Chan-Bomber Int. "D" Chan-Fighter-Bomber
- : "C" Chan-Tower "D" Chan-Distress & Homing.

GROUND STATIONS

COMMENTS

- : MOROTAI - E18; PALAPAN - PE4; GP Call - 6EC.
- : IFF on position "1". Weather requests as briefed. Flash reports to be sent by Sqdn leaders as soon as possible. Radio discipline will be maintained.

RESCUE FACILITIES

- : Playmate "41" will orbit at Balikpapan from 1000 to 1030I. CW Call - X23/F.

BOMB LOAD

- : 20 x 250 GP. Fusing - Instantaneous.

GAS LOAD

- : 2700 gallons.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

- : GP LEADER CONTACT "MAGPIE" BEFORE BOMBING AND AFTER LEAVING TARGET AREA. ALSO CALL "CAT" WHEN BOMBING IS COMPLETED.

OVER

OVER

OVER

OVER

OVER

FLIGHT SCHEDULE

22 June 1945

<u>CREW</u>	<u>SHIP</u>	<u>T/O</u>	<u>VOICE</u>	<u>CW CALL</u>	<u>ATTK ALT.</u>	<u>TOT</u>
370th						
FRENCH	9617	0400	Leopard 1A	6EC/A	11,000 ft.	1000I
GIBSON	2334	0401		B	"	"
KURASH	1646	0402		C	"	"
Etheridge	1106	0403		D	"	"
KAIN	2396	0404		E	"	"
SCAGLIONE	2393	0405		F	"	"
371st						
BRIGGS	1872	0406	Leopard 2A	PT2/A	10,500 ft.	1000I
WILCOX	1046	0407		B	"	"
GLORIEUX	0938	0408		C	"	"
MANGER	0946	0409		D	"	"
DIXON	1815	0410		E	"	"
MURPHY	1870	0411		F	"	"
372nd						
GWYNN	9725	0412	Leopard 3A	U23/A	10,000	1000I
DALY	1693	0413		B	"	"
STEVIE	1700	0414		C	"	"
HALL	2363	0415		D	"	"
HUBER	1621	0416		E	"	"
SOREM	1843	0417		F	"	"
(Spare)	2395					

Clyde W. Dooley

CLYDE W. DOOLEY,
Capt, Air Corps,
Ass't. S-3.

2
11/8/13
15/13

393
215.15
215.15

37
95

1930
130
3.18
551

744
387
288
77

DATE	AIRCRAFT FLOWN						REMARKS OR INSPECTOR'S SIGNATURE CERTIFICATION NUMBER AND RATING
	MAKE OF AIRCRAFT	CLASS	TYPE	CERTIFICATE NUMBER	MAKE OF ENGINE	H.P.	
44-45							
DEC 24	B-24	HB	L	44-49629	PRATT WHIT	4800	
JAN 11	B-24	"	"	"	"	"	2300 11 ⁰⁰ to 0920 12 ⁰⁰ PWI first comp.
" 11	"	"	"	"	"	"	"
FEB 10	"	"	"	"	"	"	2105 10 ⁰⁰ to 1105 11 ⁰⁰ PWT 1 hour the one time!
" 12	"	"	"	"	"	"	"
" 14	"	"	"	"	"	"	Closed date line, saw grass & holes of log
" 16	"	"	"	"	"	"	"
" 17	"	"	"	"	"	"	Final Destination!
MAR 13	F-1A	Foto	J	42-73031	"	"	11 ⁰⁰ - 12 ⁰⁰ and "
MAR 29	B-24T	HB	J	"	"	"	41 - 3 sectors, no front, 2nd 2nd - 3rd sectors, 2nd long way over target
APR 1	"	"	"	"	"	"	Morotai - Palawan - return
" 3	B-24	"	J	"	"	"	"
" 4	"	"	"	440446	"	"	3 tons of incendiary - 2 runs
" 5	"	"	"	440946	"	"	9-150 bombs - 2 runs
" 9	"	"	"	"	"	"	8-1000 ⁰⁰ from 11 ⁰⁰ to 12 ⁰⁰ SECONDARY 4-1000 ⁰⁰ 6-000 205 JETS. ONE RUN! PRACTICE SKIP BOMB AT 200
" 13	"	"	"	"	"	"	"

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THE FOREGOING ENTRIES ARE TRUE AND CORRECT.

SIGNED *James S. Hood* ASN 0-720417

CROSS COUNTRY		INSTRUMENT RATING OR HOOD	DUAL		SOLO		DAILY TOTAL TIME
FROM	TO		C-AS P INSTRUCTOR	C-AS P STUDENT	DAY	NIGHT	
FAIRFIELD 2 ULSUN	LOCAL	A.I.				4 20	4 20
"	SOMEWHERE IN PACIFIC RETURN					1 20	9 00
"	LOCAL					4 20	4 30
"	JOHN RODGERS					1 30	11 30
JOHN RODGERS	CANTON I.					8 20	2 30
"	CANTON I.					6 05	6 05
TARAWA	TARAWA CARNEY FLD					6 25	6 25
TARAWA	GUADACANAL					5 25	5 25
GUADACANAL	NADZAB					5 25	5 25
NADZAB	FIAN	0 45				6 30	6 20
MOROTAI	DELIN AD	0 45	6 30			6 30	13 00
"	SANDACAN		4 50			4 50	9 40
"	PALAWAN		2 40			2 40	5 20
PALAWAN	KUCHING		5 15			5 15	10 30
PALAWAN	TARACAN		3 40			3 45	7 25
PALAWAN	MOROTAI		5 20			5 25	10 45
MOROTAI	BELURAN		2 45			2 45	5 30
"	DAVAO						
"	MINDANAO						
79 05	TOTAL	1 30	31 00			76 45	23 00
Hood	AMT. FORWARD	79 05	41 10	215 25		160 55	31 45
	TOTAL TO DATE	1 30	122 10	215 25		237 40	54 45

237 40

My Log Book
Generally, Archie and I split our time.

DATE	AIRCRAFT FLOWN						REMARKS OR INSPECTOR'S SIGNATURE CERTIFICATION NUMBER AND RATING
	MAKE OF AIRCRAFT	CLASS	TYPE	CERTIFICATE NUMBER	MAKE OF ENGINE	H.P.	
17 APR	B-24	HB					MOAN 2-1000 - 100% TO 100%
22 APR	B-24	"	L				NO SHIPPING AT BALKAPAPAN HT 500 MANGGAR PERS AREA 100% 370 1070-1000-2000 AP
25 APR	B-24	"	J	106			2700 GAL. BEEFED LEAFLETS. SUSIE 100% 4070 MIAA, PTD - LEAFLETS - 8-1000
27 "	"	"	J	107			SUSIE 100% WY 850 TARRAN - TAWI TAWI
1 MAY	"	"	M	874			1940-2940 SAW EYES FROM INMARS 3100 15-2500-2700 TARRAN HT
4 "	"	"	J				TAKE ASSE. DD. TAKE BANGK. FOR 3100 2500 TAA DIRECT AT TARRAN
7 "	"	"	"	Susie			TRAFFIC 30-40 SCORERS - SUSIE III 6-1000-2700-8070
11 "	"	"	"				3100-15-2500 - HITS UNCBV
13 "	"	"	"	Susie 0581			3100-15-2500 - PERSONEL AREA 9070
21 "	"	"	"	441548			3100 6-1000 TARRAN SUPPORT REL. 11. 10 TARRAN
26 "	"	"	"	441675			6-850 DEPTH CONVOY COVER (NO CONTACT)
5 JUN	"	"	L				CONVOY COVER 6-1000 TARRAN SUPPORT
7 "	"	"	M	14237			9070 3100 GAL
11 "	"	"	"				30-100% TARRAN SUPPORT
14 "	"	"	"				3100 4-800
16 "	"	"	"	1826			30-260 TARRAN 2700 (200 GALT)

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THE FOREGOING ENTRIES ARE TRUE AND CORRECT.

SIGNED *James S. Miller* ASNC-720417

CROSS COUNTRY		ACTUAL INSTRUMENT RADIO OR LOGBOOK	DUAL TIME			DAILY TOTAL TIME
FROM	TO		C → P INSTRUCTOR	P → D STUDENT	SOLO DAY NIGHT	
MOROTAI	COTABATO MINDANAO	0 45	3 05		2 15	6 05
"	MANGGAR	0 30	5 35		5 00	11 10
"	BOFLOWOANG S. CEBU	0 25	5 25		5 00	10 50
"	MANDAL S.C.	0 30	5 05		4 40	10 15
"	TARAKAN SO.		7 00		1 40	14 00
"	MASAGARA SE		5 15		4 15	11 40
"	MAKASSAR SE		5 30		4 00	11 00
"	MANDAI	0 30	5 00		4 30	10 00
"	DELIN	1 15	6 40		5 30	13 25
"	SAMARINDA MID. BARNEO	0 30	6 15		5 45	12 30
"	TARAKAN	0 30	5 20		3 50	10 45
"	TAWI TAWI	2 00	5 30		2 00	11 00
"	ZAMBOANGA	1 30	6 35		3 45	12 15
"	TARAKAN	1 45	5 00		3 15	10 00
"	BALIK PAPAN		5 25		5 25	10 50
			5 25		4 25	10 50
TOTAL		10 15	88 35		65 20	177 35
AMT. FORWARD		1 30	122 10	215 25	330 40	680 15
TOTAL TO DATE		11 45	210 45	215 25	301 00	857 50

DATE	AIRCRAFT FLOWN						REMARKS OR INSPECTOR'S SIGNATURE CERTIFICATION NUMBER AND RATING
	MAKE OF AIRCRAFT	CLASS	TYPE	CERTIFICATE NUMBER	MAKE OF ENGINE	H.P.	
19 JUN	B-24	HB	M	442371	PRATT-WHITNEY	4800	GUN INSTALLATIONS 30-260 FRAG 70% 7000 30-250 GP 70% PERSONEL 0%
22 "	"	"	"	1096	"	"	SIGHTED 100% 250. 1 OUTRIGER B-24 BATTER SUPPORT
25 "	"	"	"	442371	"	"	2700 30-260 FRAG 70% ONE MIAA 230 UNDER 425 4 SHIP
28 "	"	"	"	1096	"	"	3100 30-260 FRAG 0% 4. 4 SHIP 4-500 200 20% 3100
2 JULY	"	"	L	1696	"	"	AIR ALERT (INVS. SUPPORT)
4 JULY	"	"	"	1696	"	"	15-250 1090 3100 SAMBIT BAY SHIPPING SEARCH - CAPT. BORNHO
7 JULY	"	"	M	2371	"	"	15-250 GP 50% 3100
10 "	"	"	"	51046	"	"	LOCAL TRANS
17 "	"	"	"	51046	"	"	PERSONEL AREA 4-500 NAPALM COMBUST 3100 - 3070 (NO TAILS)
18 "	"	"	"	1826	"	"	LOCAL TRANS
17 "	"	"	"	848	"	"	LOCAL TRANS
22 "	"	"	L	1675	"	"	LOCAL TRANS
23 "	"	"	M	1815	"	"	LOCAL TRANS
24 "	"	"	L	1696	"	"	LOCAL TRANS
26 "	"	"	L	0429	"	"	4-500 3100 100% TO RUNWAY 280 GAL
29 "	"	"	L	1696	"	"	LOCAL TRANS

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THE FOREGOING ENTRIES ARE TRUE AND CORRECT.

SIGNED *James S. Miller* LT AC 6-720417

CROSS COUNTRY		ACTUAL INSTRUMENT RADIO OR LOGBOOK	DUAL TIME			DAILY TOTAL TIME
FROM	TO		C → P INSTRUCTOR	P → D STUDENT	PILOT DAY NIGHT	
MOROTAI	BALIKPAPAN		5 35		4 40	11 15
"	"		5 40		4 45	11 25
"	"		5 40		3 40	11 30
"	"	1 00	5 30		3 30	11 00
"	"	1 30	6 05		3 35	12 10
"	TANJUNGPURA	2 00	7 40		5 10	15 20
"	BALIKPAPAN		5 15		4 45	10 30
"	LOCAL				2 50	2 50
"	LIMBOENGA	1 30	5 30		4 00	11 00
"	LOCAL				3 00	3 00
"	LOCAL				3 00	3 00
"	LOCAL				3 40	3 40
"	LOCAL				3 00	3 00
"	LOCAL				3 00	3 00
"	TOBANIO		6 25		6 25	12 50
"	LOCAL				3 00	3 00
TOTAL		6 60	53 20	23 00	62 00	128 20
AMT. FORWARD		11 45	210 95	215 25	301 00	857 50
TOTAL TO DATE		17 45	264 05	215 25	303 00	128 10

DATE 1945	AIRCRAFT FLOWN						REMARKS OR INSPECTOR'S SIGNATURE CERTIFICATION NUMBER AND RATING
	MAKE OF AIRCRAFT	CLASS	TYPE	CERTIFICATE NUMBER	MAKE OF ENGINE	H. P.	
30 JUL	CONSOL	HB	B-24A	926	Pied+Whitney	4800	3500 - 10-250* TO WT 87500*
7 AUG	FORD	"	B-24	4442	"	"	UNDA.
18 "	CONSOL	"	B-24A	2404	"	"	3100, 9070 9-500* HAPALM CLUSTERS
21 "	"	"	"	815	"	"	FERRY - 4 BLANES STUCK
22 "	DOUGLAS	C	C-47A	5235	"	2400	GRP BOX
27 "	CONSOL	HB	B-24A	2404	"	4800	SLOW TIME
28 "	"	"	"	"	"	"	FERRY FOR 12 E-HOLON
29 "	"	"	"	"	"	"	PICK UP TENTS
1 SEPT	"	"	"	371	"	"	MORE TENTS
"	"	"	"	"	"	"	NO TENTS
"	"	"	"	"	"	"	FERRY
"	"	"	"	"	"	"	MET RM. WRIGHT
9 "	"	"	"	870	"	"	FERRY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THE FOREGOING ENTRIES ARE TRUE AND CORRECT.

SIGNED

Forest S. Helms 1st Lt

CROSS COUNTRY		TIME				DAILY TOTAL TIME	
FROM	TO	INSTRUMENT RADIO OR HOOD	CP AS INSTRUCTOR	GD AS STUDENT	PILOT DAY NIGHT		
MOROTAI	S. BARRIO ROTAWARININ	1 30	7 20		4 50	1 00	14 40
"	S. BARRIO LODEG	1 30	7 10		4 40	1 00	14 20
"	FLORIDA BLANCA LUZON				5 55		5 55
FLORIDA BLANCA LUZON	MOROTAI				4 20	1 00	5 20
MOROTAI	LOCAL		0 50		0 55		1 45
"	CLARK FLD		1 05				1 05
"	CLARK FLD MANILA TANAUN LEYTE				5 50		8 20
"	CLARK FLD TANAUN LEYTE	2 20			2 30		2 20
"	CLARK FLD TANAUN	2 20					
"	TANAUN MOROTAI	3 35					5 55
"	MOROTAI CLARK FLD						
"	CLARK FLD ZAMBOANGA						
"	ZAMBOANGA MOROTAI	5 05			5 00	1 00	12 05
"	MOROTAI CLARK	1 40			4 30		6 10
"	CLARK MOROTAI	5 15					5 15
TOTAL		3 00	37 40		38 30	4 00	83 10
AMT. FORWARD		17 45	264 05		215 25	303 00	75 10
TOTAL TO DATE		20 45	301 45		215 25	401 30	79 10

DATE	AIRCRAFT FLOWN						REMARKS OR INSPECTOR'S SIGNATURE CERTIFICATION NUMBER AND RATING
	MAKE OF AIRCRAFT	CLASS	TYPE	CERTIFICATE NUMBER	MAKE OF ENGINE	H. P.	
13 SEPT	FORD	B-24	M	848	Pied+Whitney	4800	MANILA FLD STAY
8 OCT	CONSOL	B-24	M	4444 8690	"	"	"Sentimental Journey"
9 "	"	"	"	"	"	"	in "My Heart Belongs to Daddy"
10 "	"	"	"	"	"	"	
11 "	"	"	"	"	"	"	

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THE FOREGOING ENTRIES ARE TRUE AND CORRECT.

SIGNED

CROSS COUNTRY		TIME				DAILY TOTAL TIME	
FROM	TO	INSTRUMENT RADIO OR HOOD	CP AS INSTRUCTOR	GD AS STUDENT	PILOT DAY NIGHT		
MOROTAI	MANILA		3 15		3 10		6 25
CLARK FLD	GUAM	3 00	4 00		2 00		9 00
GUAM	KWAIJI JOHN RODGERS HAWAII		4 15		2 45	1 30	8 30
KWAIJI	JOHN RODGERS HAWAII		6 55		4 55	2 00	13 50
JOHN RODGERS	MATHER FLD		7 20		7 20		14 40
TOTAL		3 00	25 45		20 10	3 30	52 25
AMT. FORWARD		20 45	301 45		215 25	363 00	75 10
TOTAL TO DATE		23 45	327 30		215 25	383 10	78 40

Mein Hot Foot



Look Who's Here Again

RECEIVING AND ACCOUNTABILITY REPORT

RECEIVED BY (SIGNATURE) DATE RECEIVED (MONTH DAY YEAR) RECEIVED BY (SIGNATURE) DATE RECEIVED (MONTH DAY YEAR)

OCT 23 1944
 ORDER NUMBER: 1-45-3286
 CLASSIFICATION: []
 REQUESTOR NO.: []
 ORDER NUMBER: []

RECEIVED FROM (SIGNATURE) []
 RECEIVED FROM (SIGNATURE) []

SHIPMENT TO (LOCATION OR CONTRACTOR) []
 SHIPMENT TO (LOCATION OR CONTRACTOR) []

DELIVERED BY (TO) []
 DELIVERED BY (TO) []

DATE SHIPPED: OCT 23 1944
 CONTRACTING OFFICER: []
 ORIGIN - DESTINATION: []

SHIPMENT NUMBER: 37580
 DISCOUNT: []
 P/A NUMBER: []

UNIT ACCEPTED: []
 UNIT: []
 STOCK OR PART NO.: []
 DESCRIPTION OF ARTICLES: []
 UNIT COST: []
 TOTAL COST: []

UNIT NO.	UNIT ACCEPTED	UNIT	STOCK OR PART NO.	DESCRIPTION OF ARTICLES	UNIT COST	TOTAL COST
1	1	only		airline, Heavy to shipment, designated as Air Corps Model B-24L, complete and conforming to Consolidated Aircraft Corporation Specification Report No. 2D-32-013, June 1, 1942 Serial Number: 44-49629		Estimated Unit Cost \$291,000.00
<p>In Accordance with Supplemental Agreement Number 4 Change Order 4 & 10.</p> <p>Further shipments will be made on this contract.</p>						
<p>RECORDS MAINTAINED BY CG, ASC W.D.G. # 10, 14 OCT 1944</p> <p>Engine Serial Numbers: CP-318695 CP-318447 CP-318070 CP-318099</p> <p>Forward any over, short and damaged reports or related communications to Army Air Forces Contracting Officer FORD MOTOR COMPANY 3600 Schaefer Road Dearborn, Michigan</p>						

INSPECTOR'S CERTIFY THAT THE ARTICLES LISTED ON THIS REPORT WERE INSPECTED AND ACCEPTED BY ME AND THAT THEY CONFORM TO THE CONTRACT REQUIREMENTS THAT THE ARTICLES LISTED ON THE BACK OF THIS REPORT WERE RECEIVED FOR THE REASONS STATED AND THE FOREGOING REPORT IS CORRECT.
 DATE ACCEPTED: OCT 19 1944
 INSPECTOR'S SIGNATURE: []
 RANK: []

FOOD: []
 RECEIVED BY (SIGNATURE): []
 RANK: []

PAID ON VOUCHER NUMBER: []
 MONEY ACCOUNTS OF (NAME OF FINANCE OFFICER): []
 RANK: []

CONSIGNER

Flying a B-24 in WWII Was Half the Battle

The March 7 General Dynamics advertisement asking for donations "to help restore a B-24 to its original condition" just happens to strike this particular former B-24 pilot as a piece of supreme irony and unmitigated chutzpah.

True, "forty-five years ago, our freedom was on the line" and on the night of Nov. 14, 1944 (at the ripe old age of 22), I flew a B-24 and a crew of 11 out of Fairfield-Suisun (later renamed Travis Air Force Base) in California, to join the 868th Bomb Squadron ("The Snoopers") of the 13th Air Force, for combat in the South Pacific: Noemphor, Morotai and Okinawa.

Aside from being variously called (with no affection), "the flying prostitute" (no visible means of support) "the prop hanger," "the flying brick"—and enjoying its own notorious version of the Air Corps song: "Off we go, into the wild, blue, yonder—CRASH!"—it was the worst, misbegotten, wrongly conceived, improperly designed and negligently slapped together piece of junk ever to needlessly take the lives of American flyers.

I flew and survived 35 missions. But seven out of my original 11 crew members died—not from enemy action, but from mechanical failures of the B-24! If they restore a B-24 "to its original condition," then God help and have mercy on whoever has to fly it again.

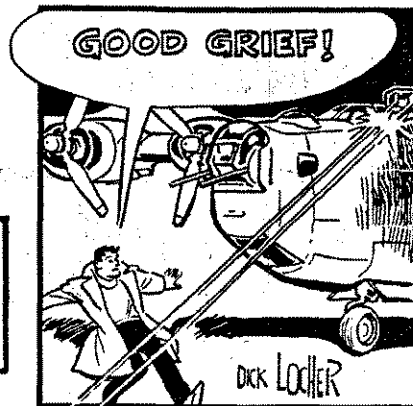
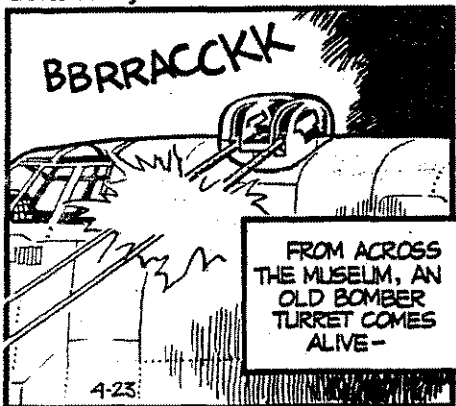
If they really want to symbolize "the American Spirit," that honor belongs to the brave crews of the B-24, who fully knew it was a horrible deathtrap but went up in it anyway, because "forty-five years ago, our freedom was on the line."

MURRAY GRAINGER

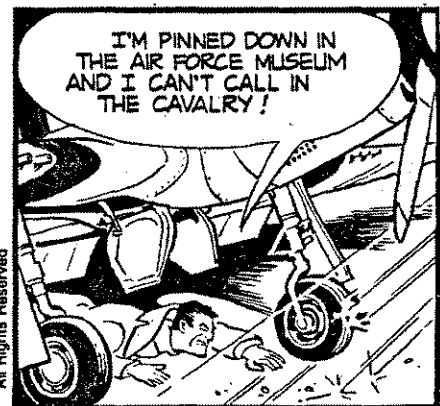
South Orange, N.J.

Other views of the B24.

Dick Tracy



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The following is part of the writings of Navigator John McLoraine. We have a few differences in our recollections.

Combat Crew Training

Walla Walla, Washington October 3, 1944 - November 30, 1944

LeMoore Air Force Base turned out to be only a processing station. After eight days, fifty-six of us, all navigators under the command of Lt. William W. Williams (guess what the initial stood for), boarded a train for Walla Walla, Washington. This was the Air Force base where we would be formed into combat crews and fly combat simulated missions. The challenge of getting through the aviation cadet program was now behind us, and combat was on the horizon. A different mental attitude was beginning to settle in. The moment of truth was not far away, and we began to realize that how well we performed had a direct bearing not only on our own well-being, but on that of nine other crew members as well. In other words, other lives were now in our hands.

I was assigned to BOQ-708 (Base Officers Quarters) room 45 with Adam Baltowski, who was to be our crew's bombardier. Adam, who was from the northwest side of Chicago, and I would fly thirty-five combat missions (close to 400 combat hours) together. We also would return home together on a Liberty ship, vacation together in Michigan after the war, take dancing lessons together at Arthur Murray's, and date the same young lady until she decided to marry him.

That same night we met the pilot and co-pilot of our crew, Forrest Strevy Wilcox and Archie Summers, respectively. Wilcox was from the Milwaukee, Wisconsin area and Archie from downstate Illinois. With only a few exceptions, we would fly most of our combat missions together and share some very interesting experiences, some of which will be recounted later on. We would soon be joined by the remaining members of our crew: Lt. Rader Reif (Radar), John Spatig (Engineer), Kevin Stokes (Nose Gunner), Ade Stearns (Top Turret Gunner and Assistant Engineer), Bob Emge (Radio Operator), and Jim Kirby (Tail Gunner). Thomas Hodges (Waist and Sperry-ball Gunner) would join us on occasion.

Combat simulated transition training at Walla Walla was just that. We'd be awakened at 3:00 a.m., attend mission briefing at 4:30 a.m., and take off on cross-country flights that took us as far as Reno, Nevada and Billings, Montana. Most of our missions were at a 20,000 foot altitude with outside temperatures in the 30°- 40° below zero range. We were also cross-trained at Walla, where Adam took navigation courses and instructed me in the use of the ingenious Norden bombsight. Thank God we never had to put that training to use.

Archie was married in the Protestant chapel on the base at Walla. Our whole crew celebrated with dinner at the Marcus Whitman Hotel followed by a house party thrown by the Ronald Foos', a family that had for some unknown reason befriended our crew. They threw several parties for us during our brief stay here. To say they were a bit on the wild side would be a gross understatement.

Hamilton Field, California December 2-11, 1944

On November 30, 1944, we departed Walla Walla for Hamilton Field, California where we were assigned a brand-new shiny B24 Liberator Bomber, fresh off the Detroit assembly line (#9629). I'm sure we all naively felt this would be our prized possession to proudly fly into battle. With this in mind, we carefully aligned its astro-compass bracket and driftmeter, flew fuel consumption tests, and were issued all of our overseas combat gear, including shoulder holsters and .45 automatic pistols. Nine days after our arrival at Hamilton Field, we were ordered to fly our beautiful B24 to Fairfield-Suisun, California Air Base from which we would depart for the Southwest Pacific and combat.

Fairfield-Suisun December 11, 1944 - February 10, 1945

What should have been a relatively short stay at Fairfield-Suisun turned into almost two months for some reason. We had flown at least four fuel consumption tests, all of which proved unsatisfactory, and this delayed our departure. Many years later, long after the war, a little bird suggested to me that maybe those fuel consumption tests hadn't been quite as unsatisfactory as they were reported to be. The other part of the story is that the pilots' father was planning to visit his son before we left for the combat zone and had encountered some delays. I do recall a very pleasant evening at the Officers' Club with Mr. Wilcox, Sr. I even had the pleasure of playing the piano for him as we all lifted our glasses and sang.

Our days and nights became reversed during our two months at Fairfield-Suisun. We'd arise at 8:00 p.m., shave and shower, and walk to the Officers' Club for a steak and eggs breakfast at about 10:00 or 11:00 p.m. Later on, you had your choice of poker, craps, music, reading, or a game of pool. The club was open twenty-four hours a day as I recall, so time was of no consequence. The night cashier at the club was an attractive, young woman who appeared to be six to seven months pregnant. She also shot a mean game of pool, although she had some difficulty getting close to the table. It turned out that she was married to the base meteorological officer, Lt. Dick Heilbron. Many nights in the wee hours of the morning, the only occupants of the Officers' Club were Jane, Dick, and our crew. We became fast friends and have corresponded at least once a year, almost every year, since the war ended. During the mid-1980's, I had the pleasure of dining with them while on a business trip to

Kansas City. Not long thereafter, they visited our Arlington Heights home while on a trip celebrating Dick's retirement. To think that an innocent pool game in 1945 resulted in a friendship of over forty-six years!

At last we got the green light to depart Fairfield-Suisun for overseas. I don't even recall having a navigational briefing, but there must have been one considering that we were making the flight with no accompanying aircraft. It would be of almost fourteen hours duration, with nothing to guide us except the stars. I would be navigating, celestially, for almost the entire fourteen hours. While he vehemently denies it even to this day, our nose turret gunner, Kevin Stokes, had the habit of drifting into a sound sleep almost immediately after take-off. This night was apparently no exception. However, five hours and 900 nautical miles out over the ocean, our fuel gauges mysteriously malfunctioned again. We were forced to return to the mainland, landing in the still darkened California sky at Fairfield-Suisun. Still groggy from a near 10 hour sleep, Stokes lowered himself to the runway and remarked about the beauty of Hawaii. The rest of the crew, well aware that we were back in California, played their roles perfectly until it finally dawned. Kevin has never lived that one down.

Flight over the Pacific Ocean February 10, 1945

Probably two weeks later, with "repaired" fuel gauges and after the reunion with Mr. Wilcox, we again get the green light. We are ready. It is a crisp, clear California night. Once again, we are making the overseas flight alone. Because of prevailing winds, a course correction must be made midway to Hawaii. The smallest navigational error at that point could throw us hundreds of miles off course at destination. It will be an interesting night. Stokes is probably asleep already.

Once airborne, I secure the navigational chart that will be used to plot star-fixes (readings of star locations at a given time) to the navigator's table in the nose of the plane. Books containing the azimuths (the direction of an orbiting body in space) and the location of those stars to be used during the flight are identified. Because we would be flying missions half-way around the world from where we had trained, and in far different latitudes, the star constellations would be different also. This required us to carry dozens of chart/star books along to our theater of operations.

Once we reach our flight altitude of 8,000 feet, I prepare the sextant which will be used to "shoot-the-stars". This ingenious device contains a liquid in a sealed chamber which, when coaxed properly, will form a small bubble. The navigator must now identify a star constellation in the heavens and then select one of the main navigational stars within that constellation. While bracing himself against the motion of the plane, the navigator now centers the bubble in the sealed chamber, centers the selected star within the bubble, records the precise Greenwich civil time, and begins to "shoot" by

depressing a plunger-like extension which records on the sextant where that star is in the heavens. Every time the star and bubble are centered, the plunger is depressed. This goes on for one entire minute and an average reading is taken. Now the process is repeated using two different stars selected from two different constellations whose azimuths will, when plotted, form a triangle. If the navigator has done his work correctly, the plane's location should, theoretically, fall somewhere within that triangle. The problem is that if you end up with a large triangle, your star readings probably left something to be desired. So, you pray for small triangles. Another problem is the fact that by the time you've averaged your star readings, consulted the proper books, and plotted the readings on your navigational chart, the plane is probably a hundred or more miles beyond the point where the readings were taken. I rush to repeat the process, as quickly as possible, while giving the pilot any course corrections required as a result of the last star-fix. This bedlam will go on for more than thirteen hours.

There were three incidents that occurred that night of February 10-11, 1945 that will always remain with me. When I stuck my head into the clear plastic astro-bubble in the top/front of the B24 to select the stars for the first star-fix, I was overwhelmed by not only the number of visible stars but by their brilliance. The combination of a crystal clear night, being over the ocean as opposed to land with its rising impurities, and our 8000 foot altitude apparently had a magnifying effect on the heavenly illumination. I must admit to a moment of panic. Even the outline of familiar constellations, so critical to star identification, were obscured by the blinding array until my eyes slowly adjusted. An uneasy moment had passed.

The second episode of that night involved the mid-flight course correction that was mentioned earlier, and co-pilot Archie Summers. About six hours into our flight, Arch decided to stretch his legs by crawling up to the nose of the plane to see if I was awake. By this time, the navigational chart was a maze of azimuth lines, triangles, and notations, and the equipment such as sextant, books, and calipers littered the area. After studying this confusing mess for a moment, beads of perspiration broke out on his forehead. I can still hear the one question he posed before returning to the flight deck, "Do you mean to tell me that you can look at his mess and really know where we are?" I can't recall how I responded to the question, but it certainly didn't do much for my own self-confidence, especially since it was almost time to give Wilcox a new compass heading for Oahu.

The last memorable incident that occurred during our flight to Hawaii happened about 100 miles from our destination. After more than twelve hours of seeing nothing but stars, there are bound to be some doubts about their reliability as a navigational method. Also, our celestial training had, for the most part, involved flights of comparatively short duration. We had never put the stars to the test over such a lengthy period. About a hundred miles from what I hoped would be John Rodgers Airfield on

Oahu, I tuned in the radio frequency of John Rodgers on our radio compass. If we were on course or reasonably close, the needle on the compass would swing to a heading of zero degrees. What a huge relief when the needle swung within a degree of 0°. We had been only slightly north of our intended course line and arrived within several minutes of our estimated time of arrival. I would never again question the reliability of celestial navigation.

On February 13, 1945, we continued our journey with a flight to Canton Island, which is nothing much more than a very small strip of coral with one runway out in the middle of the ocean. I seem to recall there was only one palm tree on the island. The next leg of our trip took us to Tarawa and then on to Guadalcanal in the Solomon Islands. The U.S. Marines had landed here on August 7, 1942 opening the first major U.S. Amphibious operation in the Pacific. The struggle to force the Japanese off the island involved some of the bloodiest fighting of the war. The island wasn't cleared of Japanese until February, 1943. However, while attending a movie in an open-air theater here, we had no idea that the audience included a Japanese sniper who was holed up in a palm tree. He opened fire and killed an American soldier who was seated only a few rows from us. Throughout our tour of duty in the southwest Pacific, we would encounter token resistance from small bands of Japanese who had been left behind when the main body of their troop strength was evacuated in retreat. Twenty-five years after the war ended, there were still Japanese soldiers living on some of these islands who believed they were still at war.

On February 17, 1945, we flew from Guadalcanal to Nadzab, New Guinea, which was the headquarters of the 360th Service Group, a combat replacement and training center. During our three weeks at this base, Rader Reif and I would receive six days of concentrated training in the operation and adjustment of a new navigational device called LORAN (LONG RANGE Navigation). Intense is probably a better term to describe what was accomplished in that six days, which saw every student pass with flying colors. Our final examination was challenging to say the least. We were each assigned to our own radar set. Not only were they non-operational, but they had been deliberately bugged with all kinds of problems. It was our job to make the set operational, identify the problems, correct them, take a navigational reading and plot it on a map, all within a very brief time span. I have never been too adept at handling mechanical things, but had no problem whatsoever in handling that assignment, proof positive of the efficiency and effectiveness of that training program.

While at Nadzab, we received notice that I was to be transferred to a different combat crew. Our crew had been together over four months by now and, while only a brief period, it was already full of many shared experiences and a developing sense of comradery. Wilcox (Wilco) was as unhappy as I was with this turn of events, so together we marched in on the staff officer in charge and let our

feelings be known. Wilco really laid it on, and I was allowed to stay with our crew.

On March 13th, we flew from Nadzab to Biak, New Guinea and, while my sketchy notes make no mention of it, I believe our beautiful new B24 was taken from us here. We were assigned a B24 relic that had seen a lot of combat. The final leg of our long journey began and ended on March 16th when we landed on Morotai in the Dutch East Indies, approximately sixty miles north of the equator. For some unknown reason, our crew was listed as "Missing In Action" about this time, and telegrams to this effect were sent to each of our homes. While flying the beat-up plane to Morotai, we had encountered some mechanical difficulties, and the threat of having to bail out might have had something to do with this listing. That telegram must have had a devastating impact at home.

Morotai, Dutch East Indies March 16, 1945

We had finally arrived at what would be our home away from home for the next five to six months. It had taken us five weeks since our departure from Fairfield-Suisun Air Base in California to reach our destination.

We were now officially assigned to the 13th Air Force, 307th Bomb Group, 371st Bomb Squadron. Morotai, a small island in the Molucca Seas, would be our home base from which we would fly almost all of our combat bombing missions. The five officers of our crew shared a completely open (no walls) wooden floored hut with a heavy canvas roof. Tall coconut palm trees covered the area so there was plenty of shade and an occasional breeze. However, the coconuts would frequently fall, landing on and ripping the canvas roof. This didn't help us to keep our powder dry during the rainy season. The army cots we slept on, which were like concrete, each had a mosquito netting which had to be tucked in at night to keep an unbelievable variety of insects from devouring us alive. Once in a while, after tucking the netting in, you would discover that an intruder already occupied your cot. Then the scramble was on to avoid one another. My intruder one night was a slimy, lizard-type creature that slithered halfway up my leg before I could extricate myself from the tangled netting.

A short distance from our hut was a small open structure that faced out onto the Molucca Sea. It was commonly referred to as the Officer's Club, somewhat of a misnomer. Some nights we could look across the sea to the neighboring Halmahera Islands and see Japanese campfires only a few miles away. During our stay on Morotai, these same Japanese would manage to rig a radio antenna and send out radio signals, using Morotai's broadcasting frequency, to lure incoming planes into the Halmahera Mountains to crash. When not scheduled for more important missions, some of our crews would fly over the Halmahera's to bomb the campfires out.

Entertainment on Morotai left something to be desired. We were starved for music. A crew that

had flown its thirty-five missions and was returning home had an old wind-up record player and some records that they sold to us for \$100. Shortly after they shipped out, the mainspring on the turntable broke, so we were forced to take turns spinning the turntable manually. I can still hear the strains of Wilco's "Sweet Lorraine".

The food on Morotai was not exactly gourmet, but it kept us alive. We were generously supplied with powdered eggs and S.O.S. (S___ On a Shingle), but once a month or so, we'd have fresh eggs and milk; what a treat! Since our strike missions were quite lengthy, we were usually supplied with food to eat on the return to base. The menu never varied, Spam on dry, crumbly, two inch thick bread, but it always tasted good on the homeward bound leg. On arriving at Morotai, the usual mess hall fare was spaghetti and peas or peas and spaghetti. I can't recall ever seeing a meatball. The military units with the best food on Morotai were the Navy (7th Fleet) and Australian troops (Aussies). After every bombing mission, it was customary to give each crew member two ounces of whiskey to "calm the nerves". However, instead of drinking it, we'd save it until we each had a full bottle and then trade it to the Navy and Aussies for steaks and that delicious full-bodied Australian Ale. Following one of these trade-offs, we had a party with each of us consuming approximately 4-5 huge steaks washed down with two quarts of ale. It's a wonder they didn't have to lessen the bomb load the next day to offset the additional crew weight being carried aloft.

13th Army Air Force - South and Southwest Pacific **The "Long Rangers"**

Before proceeding with this story, I want to take a few moments to talk about the 307th Bombardment Group's role, as part of the 13th Air Force, in driving the enemy back to Japan where they should have stayed in the first place.

The B-24 Liberator Bomber was the weapon the "Long Rangers" used to pound the Japs by day and night, from high and low altitudes, for more than two years. Air strikes included such targets as Wake, Truk, Nauru, Palau, Corregidor, Tarawa, Ocean Island Celebes, Kahili, Rabaul, Woleai, Halmahera's, Borneó, and the Philippine Islands. In the air, 355 Jap planes were shot down, with sixty-eight probables and fifty-one more damaged. On the ground, in over 500 missions, 170 Jap planes were destroyed as were scores of their airfields, supply dumps, oil refineries, and harbor installations. On the sea, the 307th chalked up over 27,000 tons of shipping sunk and 112,000 tons damaged.

The longest missions of the war were flown by the "Long Rangers", with thirteen hours in the air to hit Wake Island, sixteen hours to hit Yap, and seventeen hours to hit Balikpapan. By the time we arrived on the scene in March, 1945, the Japs had been driven part-way back toward their homeland

so our missions, although long, were not quite as long as earlier missions. Approximately twenty percent of our missions were in excess of thirteen hours duration.

The foregoing pretty well describes the type of targets we hit. However, our method of reaching the target area was entirely different from that used in the European air war. In Europe, the squadrons moved into flight formation immediately following take-off and remained in tight formation until they made their bomb drops. In the south and southwest Pacific, we would fly separately, sometimes in excess of six hours, until we reached an RP, or rendezvous point. There the squadron and group would meet and go into tight formation for the brief run to the target, then return to base individually.

The construction of Morotai as an air base began in October, 1944, only five months prior to our arrival in March, 1945. The first members of the air echelon arrived in November, 1944 and were able to take-off three days later to continue the task of supporting the Philippines campaign. There were "Red Alerts" and nightly air raids during this period. There were also "Black Alerts", the possibility of Japs invading this forward base which was centrally located among by-passed enemy islands on every side. Morotai was indeed vulnerable to Japanese land, air, and sea activity at this point, but that vulnerability had diminished to an occasional air raid by the time we arrived on the scene.

Some Memorable Missions

There were many boring hours for most crew members flying long distances to and from target areas. The navigator didn't share this luxury as it was necessary to constantly check our position, make course corrections, calculate wind direction and velocity, estimate time of arrival at RP spot bomb hits over target, figure compass heading back to base, etc. Scattered throughout our 400 combat hours together, however, there were some very exciting moments that I would like to share with you. There is no written record of these experience to my knowledge, but they have been stored in the memory bank with reasonable accuracy just waiting to be extracted and recorded for posterity.

How Fast Can a B-24 Go?

This was one of my most memorable experiences during the war. I don't recall precisely when it occurred, but it did occur on our return to Morotai from a bombing mission. It was most likely some time in May or June, 1945. We had probably 15-20 strikes to our credit by this time and, as a veteran crew, were pretty well adjusted to mission routines. I was positioned on the flight deck between Wilco and Archie. We had dropped our bombs from an altitude of 20,000 feet and were probably still close to that altitude when either Wilco or Archie said something to the effect of, "Let's see what this old bucket of bolts can do." With that, it was nose down and we began a long dive toward the sea. I

vaguely recall calling out our advancing airspeed and descending altitude as we plunged 210, 220, 230 - 15,000', 14,000', 13,000'. By now, the wings are beginning to flap like those of Big Bird: 240, 250. 260 - 12,000', 11,000', 10,000'. The wing flapping has now been joined by a shuddering vibration throughout the ship: 270, 280 - 9,000', 8,000'.

Wilco shouts to Archie, "Let's pull her out." They both try to pull the nose up, but nothing happens; we are frozen in the dive: 290 - 7,000'. To get more leverage, they put their feet against the instrument panel and use all their strength to pull the nose up, 300 - 5,000'. "Mac, pull on the wheel with me." The nose slowly begins to rise. The airspeed begins to drop. We are leveling out. We are safe; the wings are still on. We now know an old B-24 will do 300 miles per hour in a dive. We sweat profusely. We would never try that crazy stunt again.

Independence Day with a New Twist

On July 4, 1945, we flew the longest of our combat missions, fifteen hours and twenty minutes. We would carry auxiliary fuel tanks in the bomb bays instead of bombs; one other B-24 would accompany us. The purpose of our mission was to look for enemy shipping along the southernmost coast of Borneo near the city of Bandjermasin. Without bombs, we could do very little damage to larger ships. Our fifty caliber machine guns could effectively damage smaller targets and raise havoc with Japanese troop evacuations reported in the area. We were about to experience the most exciting Fourth of July of our lives.

Bandjermasin sits on the South Barito River, about five minutes flying time, north of where the Barito flows into the Java Sea. As we approached this position at a very low altitude (our entire mission was low level to conserve fuel), we could scarcely believe our eyes. Lined up in two neat rows were a number of Japanese fishing boats that were being used to evacuate troops that had probably been quartered in the Bandjermasin area. I can't recall just how many there were, but it was probably close to twenty. It was time to limber up the fifty calibers. Along with the other Liberator, we proceeded to make low level strafing runs over the neatly lined up rows of boats. We all took turns in the turrets, each with two fifty caliber guns, so that every crew member had some shots at the enemy. Stokes gave me a turn in his nose turret, but selfishly took it back when he saw how much fun I was having (only kidding). With little ammunition left, we proceeded up the South Barito, at little more than tree-top level, to complete the job and return to base. The next day photo reconnaissance planes were sent to the scene of our Fourth celebration. Their photos showed neat rows of fishing boats resting on the bottom of the bay. Only the tops of their masts protruded above the water. What a way to celebrate Independence Day.

Rendezvous in Darkness
or
The Sunrise that Wasn't

We had our share of excitement in the form of anti-aircraft fire (particularly over the Borneo oil fields at Balikpapan), enemy fighter opposition, low fuel situations, and the like, but there were some frightening elements to this particular mission that exceeded all the others. I can't recall any combat situation we experienced as a crew that presented the danger of 'no return' as much as this particular mission did.

As planned, the group was to rendezvous, at sunrise, before the customary formations preliminary to the short run on target. Once again, my notes are not accurate as to date and target, but I'd guess this occurred in early May, 1945. The horrendous problem we encountered was that someone had miscalculated the time of sunrise at the RP. It was *pitch black* when we arrived there. Liberators were everywhere: above and below, in front and behind. Radio communication between planes soon took on an anxiety pitch when it became obvious that the rendezvous plan was not about to be accomplished. My most vivid recollection of this event was the moment when a B-24 Liberator, obviously not aware of our presence, climbed to our altitude immediately in front of us, with an indescribably small clearance. One brush of contact and two B-24 crews would have ended their tours of duty prematurely.

Sunrise slowly dawned; the panic of an aborted mission had scattered our bombers. Radio communication with other planes had weakened, and all of a sudden we were alone. Where? As navigator, it was my responsibility to find a secondary or tertiary target and then get us home. How do you do that when you don't know where you are? Where do you start from? How do you give your pilot a compass heading when you don't know where you are? For a very anxious period, I'm not sure how long, we seemed to fly aimlessly. I finally picked up a coastline checkpoint on Borneo. From there, we finally managed a bomb drop on the tertiary target and found our way home with a teacup full of gas. All squadron navigators were assigned to "special duty", shooting stars, and completing navigational logs because of our "grossly inadequate performance." However, the real problem was the miscalculated time of sunrise at the RP.

Gone With the Wind . . . Or Almost

Early in our tour of duty in the Southwest Pacific, we were ordered to bomb a target west of the Celebes Islands. There was excessive cloud cover at and below our assigned flight altitude preventing any visual sightings of checkpoints to help establish our position along the line of flight.

Our meteorological briefing had indicated that we would encounter head winds most of the way to the target. What we didn't know, and had no way of knowing, was that instead of head winds, we in fact were experiencing rather strong tail winds. Consequently, we were much farther along our intended course than we thought. Miraculously, we broke out of clouds barely in time to avoid flying directly into a mountain range that rose to our flight altitude. Had the clouds not dissipated when they did, our tour of duty would most likely have been abruptly ended.

* * * * *

At this point in our story, I hope not to have given the impression that the main thrust or focal point, our family, has been relegated to a position of less importance than my war experiences. This is definitely not the case. The nature of our story, as it unwinds, passes through the war years which are filled with personal experiences I thought you might find interesting. I promise to relate only one more combat tale and then our scenario will take on a new complexion as it shifts direction.

Saigon Affair

Saigon (French Indo-China in 1945 and now known, I believe, as Ho Chi Minh City in Vietnam) was one of the more important targets we were to deal with because of its port facilities and concentrations of Japanese troops. A bomb strike here would also adversely affect enemy morale since it was well beyond the normal range of our bombers.

The decision was made to fly the entire group from Morotai to the airfield at Puerto Princessa on Palawan Island in the Sulu Sea, a flight of five to six hours. After refueling, we would proceed across the South China Sea to Saigon, drop our bomb payload, and return to Puerto Princessa. This segment of our mission would take ten hours and fifty-five minutes.

Before departing Morotai, the number three lead crew in the group found themselves without a navigator. I was assigned to fly the mission with them. In describing the "Rendezvous in Darkness" mission, I mentioned that the danger of 'no return' was perhaps the greatest insofar as our regular crew was concerned. The 'Saigon Affair', however, while flying with a different crew, presented a series of episodes, any one of which could have ended in disaster.

In the wee morning hours of April 19, 1945, we took off from Morotai for Palawan Island, west of the Philippine Islands. Unfortunately, the lead plane blew a tire on take-off and was scratched from the mission. Upon landing at Puerto Princessa five hours and thirty minutes later, we were advised that we were now the number two lead crew in the group and if something happened to the new lead crew,

the entire group would form behind us over the target. Panic wasn't setting in yet, but it wasn't far beneath the surface. While I had never met our pilot before, the pressure of our new position in the group line-up seemed to be taking its toll on him. As back-up to the lead navigator, I'm sure my nerves were tightening as well.

With refueling completed, we taxied out and began the take-off runs. Our bad luck was to continue. The lead plane had engine trouble on take-off and had to return to base. May the saints preserve us; we are now the lead crew.

After five harrowing, nail-biting hours, we reach the rendezvous point. The rest of the group falls into bombing formation around us, and we begin our run on the target which, as I recall, was shipping in Saigon Harbor.

In our previous six missions, we had encountered fairly heavy anti-aircraft fire over some targets, but only limited resistance from enemy fighter planes. We are in for a surprise. Half way to the target, we spot them. The air is swarming with Japanese zeroes. Early in the war in the South Pacific, the zero chewed up allied fighter opposition with contemptuous ease in the conquests of the Philippines, Malaya, and the Dutch East Indies. Powered by a fourteen-cylinder, air-cooled, radial engine and built of light new aluminum alloy, the zero could outspeed, outrange, and outmaneuver most of our fighters. Firepower included twin .303 caliber machine guns and, on the front edge of each wing section, a 20MM cannon. It was those exploding cannons that we were now flying directly into as five zeroes converged on the lead plane--ours. Standing on the flight deck between the pilot and co-pilot, spotting attacking enemy fighters, watching the exploding wing cannons being fired directly at us (it seemed impossible that they could miss us at such close range), we had momentarily been distracted from the main purpose of our mission, namely, pick out a shipping target, drop our bombs, and get the hell out of Saigon harbor. In the heat of the moment, the pilot lost his cool, although he didn't have it from the time we took over the lead position. For some unknown reason, he struck my flack helmet with his fist. I promptly returned the favor and nothing more was said of the incident. Moments later, we successfully dropped our 500 pounders on a large freighter that was docked in the harbor, and I gave the pugilistic pilot the compass heading for Puerto Princessa. However, the day's excitement was not yet over.

The zeroes, apparently running low on fuel, had now returned to their base. Unknown to us, they had damaged our ailerons in the initial attack. The ailerons form a part of the wing assembly and are critical to the lateral directional control of the aircraft. Considering the extent of the damage, it took substantial effort to maneuver the plane around to the compass heading for home. Any additional damage to those ailerons and there is no telling where we would have ended up, probably somewhere

in enemy territory. The return flight is uneventful until we spot the runway at Puerto Princessa. There appear to be fires burning on both sides of the runway. As we near the landing strip, we can now see giant bulldozers clearing the only runway of B-24s that, upon touchdown, have sunken into the surface and nosed over. Torrential downpours that unexpectedly occurred after our departure weakened a runway that was not designed for heavy bomber aircraft. We safely escape the final insult of the day by successfully landing. The 'Saigon Affair' is over but not forgotten.

Going Home

There were many significant events of worldwide importance that occurred during our overseas tour of duty. Holed up on our little island in the Pacific with no radio or newspaper, it was almost as if we existed in a different world. Either we never found out about world happenings, or we found out long after they occurred, or their importance didn't seem to have the impact or meaning they would have had if we had been living normal lives.

We flew our sixth mission on April 13, 1945. On our return to the base, we found out about President Franklin D. Roosevelt's death in Warm Springs, Georgia on April 12th at the age of sixty-three. He died on the eighty-third day of an unprecedented fourth term.

On May 7, 1945, we flew our tenth mission, eleven hours searching for enemy shipping. On that same day, Germany surrendered unconditionally to the allies after almost six years of unspeakable atrocities. The surrender was signed in Reims, France at General Dwight D. Eisenhower's headquarters. To the best of my recollection, no special announcement was ever made of this extremely important event that ended the European phase of World War II.

On June 22, 1945, we flew our twenty-first mission to the oil fields of Balikpapan on Borneo, our hottest target. The day prior to this mission, the Japanese forces on Okinawa surrendered after two and a half months of deadly struggle in which more than 100,000 Japanese and 13,000 Americans lost their lives. Word of this important surrender never reached us to the best of my knowledge.

During the first week of August, 1945, all flight crews were instructed to tear down and burn all living quarters and debris in the camp area in preparation for a move to Okinawa by amphibious LST's. The final assault on Japan was about to take place and we'd be in on the final curtain. But other forces were at work that would drastically change the course of the war. On August 6th, Hiroshima, Japan was destroyed by the first atomic bomb used in the war. On August 9th, Nagasaki, Japan was similarly destroyed. On August 14, 1945, President Harry S. Truman announced Japan's unconditional surrender and the end of the Pacific phase of World War II. The formal document of surrender was signed aboard the U.S.S. Missouri in Tokyo Bay on September 2, 1945.

As I stated earlier, our knowledge of what was going on in the world around us was very sketchy at best. On August 18, 1945, the bombardier and I received relocation orders terminating our stay on that beautiful, tropical paradise called Morotai and returning us to the good old United States of America. For some strange reason, no other members of our crew received similar orders. Our pilot, Wilcox, radio operator Emge, and a skeleton crew flew us to Manila, Philippines where we were to await the availability of a Liberty ship to return us to the U.S.A. After six days in a huge, open-field tent city, we received orders to proceed to Manila Harbor where we waited in a blistering sun for the tenders that would take us out into the harbor to board a 16,000 ton transport, the SS Sea Marlin. While sitting in a patch of grass along the harbor wall, I removed my wristwatch and placed it under a small bush. In the stifling heat, we were perspiring heavily and the wristband was irritating my wrist. Several months earlier, I had sent money home and asked Mom and Dad to buy a gold watch and ship it to me, which they had done. It was a beautiful gold instrument with a large sweep second-hand.

With the arrival of the tenders, we were hastily assembled into formation and marched to the pier for boarding. Once aboard the Marlin, I glanced toward shore and, at that moment, remembered what I had left underneath a small bush on shore. I could see the bush, but there was absolutely no way to retrieve the watch.

On August 25, 1945, the Marlin began its slow withdrawal from Manila Harbor which was overcrowded with ships of every size and description. But as we slowly made our way through the maze of ships, elated at the thought of finally going home, several of us spotted a large oil tanker that appeared to be slowly moving toward our starboard bow. We couldn't be sure because of the angle of her course. The anchor ball hanging from her mast indicated she was still at anchor and not moving toward us. As the distance between ships diminished, it was soon very apparent that we were about to be rammed, and rammed we were. The tanker crew had failed to lower the "anchor ball" as they also got underway.

The collision ripped a hole in our starboard side that appeared to be fifteen to twenty feet wide. Ex-bombardier Baltowski had been below deck when the collision occurred but escaped injury.

The Marlin was now taking on water and listing to starboard. The list worsened until we were leaning at a ridiculous angle but remained afloat. In fact, we spent the night on the deck of the Marlin although it was difficult to keep from rolling downhill to the starboard railing. Since the Marlin was no longer seaworthy, the next morning, August 26th, the tenders arrived to return us to the pier from which we had originally come. To say that we were somewhat depressed is putting it mildly, but a sudden thought brightened my spirit. Is it possible that my watch might still be under that bush? On reaching shore, I made a dash for the bush. No wristwatch awaited my arrival.

We reported back to ugly tent city to await the availability of another Liberty ship, a sad looking bunch of depressed ex-airmen.

Five days later, we received orders to proceed to Manila Harbor where we boarded the SS Cape Victory which, at 10,000 tons, was considerably smaller than the Marlin. Without incident, we left the harbor arriving at Leyte, Philippines on September 2nd, Ulithi, Caroline Islands on September 5th, and Eniwetok, Marshall Islands on September 10th. The destroyer escort that had accompanied us from Manila now returned to base, and we were left to continue our journey across the Pacific Ocean unescorted. My sketchy log runs out at this point; our part in the war was over and there was little incentive to continue keeping records. As this project develops, however, I really regret the decision to discontinue maintaining a journal. From here on, the story is strictly from memory with a minimum of help from school, employment, and family memorabilia.

But to pick up where we left off, we encountered a violent storm half-way across the Pacific which lasted three days. The height of the waves and pitching motion of the ship were such that when the bow was down, the stern was totally out of the water, exposing the powerful screws that propelled us and sending violent shuddering vibrations throughout the vessel. Almost all aboard were deathly sick before long, a fate I was spared. I recall one lunch time during this three day period when two of us showed up in the galley. Only soup and apples were available. Even the cooks were sick. We stood at the long, narrow, waist-high eating benches that were anchored to the ships floor and extended completely across the galley. As the ship pitched and rolled, the apples would roll from one side of the room to the other. We were alright as long as we didn't look at the soup rolling around in the bowl.

Twenty-eight days after leaving Manila, the USS Cape Victory sailed through the Straits of Juan de Fuca off the coast of the State of Washington. We were met by a bevy of beautiful girls and a military band welcoming us home, a very emotional moment. Our overseas duty had been relatively brief, approximately eight months. But so much had happened in that short span of time that, as the coastline of the United States came into view, there was a sudden realization of what we had just been through coupled with the expectation of reunion with loved ones and the resumption of our normal pursuits. All these emotions coming together at once, along with a feeling of pride in our country and our heritage, brought a lump to the throat and a tear to the eye. I hope this doesn't sound like flag waving, for it isn't. World War II was admittedly different from many of the conflicts that have occurred since then. If Hitler's Germany and Hirohito's Japan had succeeded in carrying out their insidious plan of world domination, God knows where we would be today. To have taken arms against these aggressors and won the victory justified a feeling of pride in our country and what it stood for.

Within twenty-four hours of our arrival at Fort Lawton, Washington, we had been processed and received orders transferring us to discharge centers located in our home areas. Adam and I boarded a train for Fort Sheridan, Illinois where we were officially discharged, honorably I might add, effective December 21, 1945. Since leaving home August 8, 1943, I had spent approximately five days at home. Someone gave me a ride to downtown Chicago where I boarded a Lake Street elevated train for Oak Park and home. It was an eerie feeling boarding that train; I recall it like it was yesterday rather than forty-some years ago. I was still in disheveled flight togs, carrying a very beat-up flight bag, having yellowish-green skin color (due to daily doses of Atabrine to prevent malaria), surrounded by civilians in business attire all seeming to be staring at me. I don't remember what day of the week it was or what time of day it was, but all this and the thought of the very uncertain future that loomed on the horizon made it a very uncomfortable ride. It must have been a shock to my parents when I walked in unexpectedly. We sat up into the wee hours talking, talking, talking.