

...erton, Washington, 25 October 1945, one year to the day after the  
...er Bay sank, and just two weeks short of three years from the day I  
...ed my Navy career. I arrived home in Idaho Falls on 30 October,  
...remely grateful to be with Alice and our children.

Earl and Alice became parents of two more children. He became  
...manager for a car dealership and worked in accounting and income  
... until he retired at age 70.

Church callings include being a stake missionary, Sunday School  
...intendent, stake Young Men president, bishop, branch president, and  
... that, a stake patriarch. He was involved as a leader in Scouting from  
... time he was 17 and is a recipient of the Silver Beaver Award.

Eventually, the Bagleys relocated to Salt Lake City, via California.  
... his final years Earl enjoyed singing and playing his harmonica in a fiddlers'  
... band in the Salt Lake Valley. He passed away 1 January 1994, at age 83.

*Taken from Earl Bagley's autobiography When I Was In the U. S. Naval Reserve During  
World War II.*

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## HAL R. JOHNSON

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*Yea, open your mouths and spare not, and you shall be  
laden with sheaves upon your backs.*

(D&C 33:9)

To this day I don't like Spam. I ate my limit while I was at Morotai  
in the Dutch East Indies during World War II. Spam was served at many  
meals, and when we went on bombing raids we had Spam sandwiches.

I returned from my Church mission in Brazil, to Idaho Falls, in  
November 1942. Foreign missions were then thirty months, which allowed  
us time to learn the language. Since we were at war I felt fortunate to have

been able to complete my mission. I immediately volunteered for service in the Army Air Corps and reported for basic training and classification in early February 1943.

While waiting to report for duty I met Virginia Pond at a dance. She had dated the fellow I went to the dance with. Shortly he left to return to his work in the Bremerton Shipyards. As he was leaving he said: "Hal, you take good care of my girl." I did. Thirteen days after our first date, Virginia and I were engaged. We were married on 19 January 1943. There wasn't time for a long courtship; in fact there wasn't even time for much of a honeymoon. Two weeks after our wedding day I was on my way to the service. It was hard to leave my new wife, but marrying Virginia remains the very best decision I have ever made.

After several months of training, I was commissioned a second lieutenant and assigned as a bombardier on a B-24. On 24 September we were assigned to 13th Air Force, the 307th Bomb Group, 424th Bomber Squadron on Nadzab Island, New Guinea.

It was from here that I flew my first mission, which took us from Nadzab, New Guinea, to Boiken Plantation, near Wewak. It gave me quite a thrill. I labeled a lot of names on the bombs to make sure the folks back home got in on the war. There was no target visible on the heading we came in on, so we dropped just in from the shore. According to crew members, my bombs positively knocked down three palm trees.

A month later we were permanently stationed on Morotai Island in the Dutch East Indies. Things there were pretty primitive, but for our purposes, it was strategically located. We flew a total of forty-two bombing missions against targets held by the Japanese. Our missions included installations in the Celebes, The Philippines, the Halmaheras, and Borneo.

One night two of us were watching the searchlights play on Japanese planes and the ack-ack batteries sending up their futile barrages against the raiders, when we heard the telltale whistle of a bomb. There were two blurs as we bolted for our foxhole. We felt the ground shake as the bomb burst. Next morning we learned the bomb made a direct hit—on a latrine.

I quickly came to admire the men on our crew. They were fine fellows. We worked well together and genuinely liked each other. When we were not flying at night and it wasn't raining, we spent a lot of time in our tents. The guys all played cards. Cards had never interested me, so while they dealt, I

read. But there was not much to do other than fight a war.

We actually held only a little part of a group of islands, and we were continually under threat by 25,000 Japanese Imperial Marines on nearby Halmahera Island. The enemy troops there were reported to be well-equipped and well-fed. Halmahera Island is visible from Morotai. Only our air superiority kept them on their side of the water. However, in early December they threatened invasion, and our planes were flown to the island of Noemfor for safekeeping. To top it off, our favor announced that the entire American garr.

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Lieutenant Hal Johnson, Summer 1944.

for safekeeping. To top it off, our favorite "radio personality," Tokyo Rose, announced that the entire American garrison on Morotai had been annihilated.

The Japanese increased their nightly air raids. Many of our B-24's, loaded with gas and bombs, prepared for the next day's missions, were destroyed on the ground. But our maintenance personnel worked miracles and somehow every morning we launched our planes. It was widely held that we controlled the strip by day and the Japanese had control by night.

Insects made life unpleasant. The mosquitoes were especially bestial, thriving in the many puddles. Malaria was prevalent and we followed malaria control regulations daily. I was constantly bothered by heat rash. The doctor always said, "You'll be okay when you get back to the States."

A rest leave in Sydney, Australia, was a welcome change from the strain of combat. For nineteen days I did things I had missed, being away from home. My friend and I had a room at the Bernley Officers' Club. We swam at Bondi Beach and ate wonderful food to our hearts' content.

The part of flying that concerned me most was take-off. Because we were so heavily loaded with bombs and fuel, had we crashed during lift-off it would have been all over for us. We were not much concerned about



Eddie Meacham and Hal Johnson (r).

enemy fighters. By this time in the war most of the enemy fighters in our area had been destroyed. But bad weather frequently made things hazardous in this part of the South Pacific.

18 November 1944. Target: Pamoesian oil fields and refinery, Tarakan, Borneo. Our target was the refinery and separation plant on Tarakan Island. Our rendezvous went badly, but we did get over the target and how we plastered it! Precision bombing by all squadrons. Huge fires were started and the smoke rose up in a cumulus cloud to at least 12,000 feet. The lead ship in our squadron did not drop his bombs, so we made a second run for his benefit. There was some moderate flak, inaccurate, and our top turret gunner saw a dog-fight between two "zekes" [Japanese fighter planes] and four Thunderbolts. Satisfying mission. Flight time: 10 hours 20 minutes.

3 March 1945. Mission # 31, target: Manado Town, Celebes. We started out this morning to bomb barracks at Tarakan, but two and a half hours out, we lost number three engine and headed back with the prop feathered. We managed to get back to Manado Town, which we bombed through an undercast, and then headed home. With our number three was out, there wasn't enough hydraulic pressure to lock the landing gear in place, but by rocking the plane back and forth the pilot managed to lock the gear. We rigged up two chutes by the waist windows, in case the brakes would fail.

*Norm  
Haille*

... us, but luckily they did and we landed without incident. Bomb load was  
 very 100-lb napalm bombs. Flight time: 5 hours 25 minutes.

3 April 1945. Mission # 40. Today we went to Puerto Princesa on  
 Palawan Island in The Philippines, from where we were to stage a couple of  
 missions to Kuching in southwestern Borneo. We landed on the strip we  
 used to bomb and that was a rare feeling. Only one strip and no taxi loop, so  
 we had to circle for an hour waiting for our turn to land. We were parked  
 close together—planes from all four squadrons. We were taken over a very  
 dusty road to the transient camp, which was, and I find it hard to believe, the  
 best I have yet seen. Showers for cleaning up, good food, better than the  
 mess-garrison we have at Morotai, and good latrines. Nights were cold enough  
 to use a blanket. Scorpions and centipedes were frequent, but I hung my  
 shoes, A-3 bag, and clothes up every night and was not bothered.

Only occasionally over some targets were our B-24s harassed by  
 enemy fighters. The weather was our most consistent enemy.

My position in the aircraft was up front, just below the cockpit. It  
 was from here that I operated the new Norden bombsight when it was time  
 to drop our bombs. One day as we were returning from a run, the cloud  
 cover made visibility non-existent. We had no radar. The pilot was flying at  
 very low altitude, attempting to find a glimpse of anything that would show  
 him where we were. Sitting at my station in the nose I was doing some  
 humble and urgent praying. Suddenly the clouds ahead opened just in time  
 for the pilot to veer around the cone of a volcano directly ahead of us. My  
 prayer turned to one of thanksgiving. I suppose that the Lord had more for  
 me to accomplish while on this earth.

—Norm  
 Heille

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Troops on Morotai lived in tents; we even attended church in the  
 chapel tent. There were several installations for different military units on  
 Morotai. I met another LDS man from Idaho Falls who was attached to a  
 neighboring squadron. My friend Eddie and I set about finding all of the  
 LDS men on the Island. No one had been appointed group leader. We just  
 invited all of the Mormons we could find to attend a sacrament meeting each  
 Sunday. We also contacted a Navy chaplain to invite Navy personnel. Our  
 attitude was that it was better to be damned for doing than damned for not  
 doing. Both Eddie Meacham and myself were officers and had access to a

Jeep to drive around the island to invite the Mormons to Church. Between 35 and 40 of us met in the chapel tent. A canteen was the common cup from which we all partook of the sacrament. My missionary experience was very helpful. We enjoyed being together with other LDS servicemen. Eddie and I remained lifelong friends.

It's strange what you remember. My friend Bob had flown sufficient missions to earn a furlough to Australia. When he returned from leave he brought back a wonderful pair of fur-lined flying boots he purchased there. They were especially nice, although he never wore them when he flew. He said he intended to take them home. I expressed my admiration for them, to which he replied whimsically, "Hal, if anything ever happens to me, you can have them." Even though we were in a war zone and flying sorties, none of us thought anything would ever happen to us. It never occurred to me that I wouldn't return to my wife and new son. Whimsy turned to reality for Bob. He and his crew didn't come back from a bombing run over Balikpapan. When his personal effects were packed for shipment home, for some reason that I do not now recall, I did get those boots. I brought them home with me and wore them for years.

After flying my forty-second bombing mission I returned home for rest and recovery. Virginia and I were enjoying being together at Ponds Lodge in Island Park when we got word that the atomic bomb had been dropped on Japan. I will be forever grateful to President Harry Truman for having the courage to use that bomb. Following my leave, I returned to Santa Ana, California, where I was separated from the service. I then went home to be a husband and father and to make my way in the world.

Hal and Virginia are parents of five children, have twenty-five grandchildren and fourteen great-grandchildren. He entered the insurance business in Idaho Falls. His Church callings have included being bishop, counselors in a stake presidency, counselor in the Idaho Falls temple presidency, president of the Brazil North Mission, and president of the Sao Paulo Temple. He is currently patriarch in the Idaho Falls Ammon West Stake.

Taken from an oral interview with Paul H. Kelly and from personal records of Hal Johnson.