



THE LONG RANGERS

**with the
Thirteenth Air Force
in the Southwest Pacific
World War II**

**307th Bomb Group (H)
370th Bomb Squadron**

*By Mac Baker
(Marion M. Baker)*



The Chinese mainland is governed by the People's Republic of China. Taiwan (Formosa) is governed by the Republic of China. Both governments claim the entire territory.

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kindest regards and
 very best wishes
 Mac Baker



Bottom Row (L-R)

Harry E. Stengele III, (Pilot), Lowell McLearn (Co-Pilot), James A Sprott (Navigator), L.W. Hardy (Bombadier)

Top Row (L-R)

Raymond J Clousar (Engineer), Jerome A Wellfish (Top Turret Gunner), Francisco L. Ruiz (Radio Operator), Marion M. Baker (Asst. Radio Operator/Armorer Gunner), John F. Reginaldi (Tail Gunner), Mark J. Swartzhoff (Nose Gunner)

Chapter One

Air Combat Prep/One Chance

Diligent voices erupted into the intercom system of our oil-bathed, blazing B-24 airplane as we lifted from the end of the runway at March Field, California. Flight A-51's crew was equipped for and planning to carry out a night mission over the Mojave Desert and Hoover Dam. Only a couple hundred feet off the ground, two of our four engines were faltering. It was the summer of 1944.

Surrounded by 6,000 to 8,000 foot mountains of the San Bernadino and San Gabriel chains plus the fact that at this particular moment the fog (Pacific Pea Soup) came pouring in on top of us, we realized our options were not many.

Navigator Jim Sproatt called for a turn and a new heading. Pilots Burt Lawless and Lowell McLear instantly responded while urgently requesting permission to land. "Negative" came the reply. "Because there are numerous planes lined up that you could wipe out."

The flight plan that would have had Bombardier Sam Hecht line up his bombsight crosshairs on Hoover Dam and photographically examine his accuracy was off. His practice and that of the gunners who would have had opportunity to sight after fleeting jackrabbits and other targets on the desert would have to wait.

The relentless verbal count our navigator had begun at the first sign of diminished speed continued. It was his unbelievably often requests for a new heading that kept us circling blindly within what seemed like a five mile circle. The priority for use of the intercom was his.

Engineer Ray Clouser briefly confirmed that the plane would be unable to climb further.

Our pilots were exchanging conversation with the ground asking, "What can be done?" The reply came back "Stand by. We are looking for assistance."

One of March Field's main missions was being carried out – that of teaching crews how to deal with equipment malfunctions and give each man experience in caring for the equipment he was responsible for.

Ground radio announced they had located a man with lots of experience – a senior pilot who was on the line to talk with us. His opening question evidenced his presence. “Can you see a red light on top of the mountain on either the south end or the north end of the field?” he asked. “Negative,” came our reply. He responded “We are going to get you out of this, fellows. Get busy on finding one or more of those lights.” Some moments later our navigator interrupted his count to say he had a fix on the south light and a short while later he had located the other. The voice of our ground consultant said, “Picture a line between these two lights and fly to a point midway and turn east.” “But that will run us into the San Bernadino Mountains,” a voice from within the plane said. “That’s right,” answered our counselor, “But you have overlooked San Bernadino Pass.” Another inquiry asked, “What’s that?” “That’s how people drive their vehicles from Los Angeles through Riverside to Palm Springs,” we heard in reply. “Listen carefully,” he continued. “Open all windows. Yes, I understand you are flying between a fire and spraying hot oil. You won’t get a second chance to do this right. With your heads outside, the first man that sees darkness looming toward you must sound off on the intercom “Dark on the right,” or “Dark on the left.” And pilot, you must turn in the other direction. In a matter of minutes, our Navigator Jim Sproatt had made the necessary calculations and set the plane on a course due east through the fog toward the pass. A very short while later what appeared to me like a closing dark blob was perceived on my right. As I sounded off “Dark on the right,” our pilot turned the plane to the left. Momentarily darkness loomed on the left and the pilot changed the plane’s course and entered the pass. Briefly the plane straightened up, only to be redirected

by this pattern of voices from the right, left, right for nearly forty miles. All at once we burst forth out of our cloak of density into the beauty of the Mojave. Myriad stars sparkled against the backdrop of a crystal clear sky. A huge reflection of the full moon shone on the smooth desert floor. The Lord had answered our prayers and enabled us to traverse narrow, winding San Bernadino Pass in the dark – through the fog. Over on our right was Palm Springs Airport signaling us to fly straight in. We were so thankful but failed to show it. We dropped the burning engine over the suburbs of town.

The citizens of Palm Springs were marvelous to us. They provided us a great dinner, good fellowship and good lodging. An excellent breakfast was being served just as an ancient B-18 small tri-motor bomber arrived. The pilot said he had listened to the amazing saga on the radio the night before and brought the little plane so we could see what we had been through. He explained to us that “San Berdoo” Pass begun as an Indian footpath. It evolved into a road and recently became an improved highway with the shoulders on both sides cleared of brush.

Kind feelings and heaps of thanks went through my mind for the teams of Indians, settlers, service personnel and other people that prepared the way that our team might survive and continue to serve.

Chapter Two

Crossing The Equator

How far is it to the equator from here? The members of aircrew A-51 often heard this question asked during processing for eligibility to “ship out” for overseas assignment to combat duty. My turn reviewed training received at Aerial Gunnery School, Laredo, Texas: Sperry Ball Turret Operation at Lemoore Field, Lemoore, California: and graduation from the USAAF Armament Technical School, Buckley Field, Denver, Colorado. The crew was now in the finishing days of Transition School at Hamilton Field, San Francisco, California. The people here were readying us for over water travel eventualities such as plane ditching, swimming capabilities, life vests, lifeboats, chute handling and other emergency supplies.

“Crew – ready?” You are being assigned a new B-24 plane to fly to your overseas assignment station. You will fly approximately 3,000 miles from here to your first refueling stop at Hawaii, about 22 degrees north of the equator and then on to Johnston Island at 15 degrees north and some 850 additional miles. A word of caution to you pilots – “Keep your feet on the brakes when you land at Johnston Island to refuel. It’s so small you might get your feet wet on the other side.”

The new plane performed beautifully enroute to these tropical centers. The rich colors on land and sea gathered intensity as the ocean deepened. Leaving Johnston Island, Navigator Jim Sproatt directed us in a southwesterly direction toward Micronesia. The next supply point proved to be the Gilbert Islands and Tarawa Atoll, former scene of opposing navies and jungle fighters who blasted four-foot diameter holes into the walls of concrete blockhouses of equal thickness. The jungle, too, was so thick it would have been most difficult to see the buildings had huge shells not blasted out chunks of the surrounding woods. This leg of our trip brought us

some 1,600 miles closer and 2 degrees of the equator. Heading out we soon crossed the equator enroute to Melanesia and Guadalcanal in the Solomon Islands and about 1,150 miles closer to our destination. Similar to Tarawa the evidences of the massive naval, aerial and ground struggle cluttered much of the dense landscape.

A final leg westward of about 1,200 miles ended at 5 degrees south on a desert area in north central New Guinea called Nabzab. It was hot and sandy. We had reached our destination – the overseas combat assignment area.

Walking toward the evening chow line, I met a life-long friend from home. His name was George Mims. During his teen years his parents' home had a huge backyard. George organized seasonal sports there. We had shared many a baseball game and it was there I dislocated my shoulder practicing for a Thanksgiving Day game with the rival Revell team during football season. George had become a navigator on a B-25 Mitchell Bomber and I was delighted to see him. He told me he had already been processed and would leave next day for his assignment on the island of Moratai in the Moluccas Group of the Dutch East Indies. George reminded me to look him up if I drew the same assignment.

I was very glad when told my crew was assigned to Moratai. My crew A-51 settled into a tent located seven miles from our flight line. I then visited the Chief Clerk's office in the B-25 area and asked for George. A troubled look came over his face and he said, "I don't think that means good news." Momentarily he stopped shuffling paper and said, "Here it is. Lt. George Mims, navigator, and all his crew perished on their first mission in support of an Australian Infantry landing at Tarakan Island, Borneo, by being shot down by enemy fire and crashing with no survivors. What a way to start your war, eh?"

"Yes, and here's a man who has blessed my life many times over. We had known each

other since we were old enough to swing a baseball bat. We were in scouting together and I last saw him leaving for Clemson College as I was going to a new job in the Pentagon building in Arlington, VA.," I replied. Lt. Mims' friendship was as constant as his leadership, though he loved to kid around. When the baseball went into the hedge bush while I was catching he said something like "He looks like a grub worm digging around in there." There are possibly still people around who would remember me as "Grub." When the scout troop held their annual ball, he'd grin each time he came back again to ask for a dance with my date, Mary Lewis. His family and I both know him as a good student and a really good guy. His younger brother Jim and I are good friends also. Well, I need to write them about being near when the Lord called him home and let them know he is very much in my thoughts and warmest memories. Thanks for all your kind assistance. God bless you and your outfit.

Chapter Three

Imminent Peril Aboard

“Flak will be your chief antagonist on this mission. Although you will be flying at 18,000 feet, there are 55 heavy guns surrounding Balikpapan’s refinery and Seppinggan runway nearby. Bombardiers, the challenge is on you for the kind of accuracy that can help get World War II over with.” The memory of the briefing officer’s words lingered with me as the Thirteenth Air Force’s 307th Bomb Group (H) departed tiny Morotai Island in the Dutch East Indies. This assignment was ripe for danger. The Dutch oil magnates had invested a huge fortune on this southeast coast of Borneo, rich in oil when overrun by the Japanese Army. Half a day later the “Long Rangers” crossed the Straits of Makassar and the Indonesian coastline and circled over the rich green jungle toward the initial point and the bomb run to the primary target – the refinery.

Surprise was what everyone was working toward. Sam Hecht, our plane’s lead bombardier, was setting up his bombsight to drop on the repair shops and the production area center. The other planes would drop when he released. Bunched up tight very little would be left in the path of the planes formation, for we were carrying heavy demolition bombs. The bomb bay doors were opened and the crew began “sweating” the approaching moments. We knew that when the enemy gunners became aware of our presence it would take about one second per thousand feet of our altitude for them to get their shells up to our location once they started firing. Due to the locked bombsight we could not take evasive action until the bombs were released. Smoke and destruction and round dark circles on the ground being placed one after another indicated the 307th had done what they came for. The leaning plane emphasized our breakaway to evasive action and from the predictable pathway of the flak. Suddenly we

were out over the ocean and the crew was beginning to celebrate our safe exit from the target area. Unexpectedly, Sam's voice came over the intercom saying "Baker, I have a red light on my instrument panel. We must still have a bomb aboard. Check it out, will you?" My mind flashed to Armament School at Buckley Field, Denver, Colorado, where I was trained in bombs, bomb racks, turrets and machine guns. I entered the bomb bay carrying a parachute and oxygen tank. I heard the voice of Jim Sproatt the navigator as the wind was trying to blow me away. "We need to get this done as soon as possible, he was saying, and close the bomb bay doors. The wind through the open doors is drastically slowing us down. Too, it's eating up our gas and we have just enough to get home on."

The front of the thousand-pounder was down at 45 degrees from the retaining shackle. The arming wire was hanging from the rack above it. This meant the arming process had already taken place. When the stationary wire pulled out of the propeller on the bomb's nose, the wind started spinning the propeller toward its destiny – that of turning a preset number of times and flying off into space, thus allowing the explosive inside to reposition itself to "armed" condition, meaning it would explode when contacted, possibly when only touched by any means. Swinging one foot out to the sidewall of the plane and the other to the walkway gave me visual access to the fact that the shackle trigger on the rear had energized and failed to release the bomb. It then jammed from its weight. This meant that the oppressive mass had to be lifted enough to reset the trigger. Getting what leverage I could I lifted the rear of the bomb with my knee while using my pocket screwdriver to reactivate the trigger. The object of my attention was gone in an instant and fell somewhere south of Samarinda, Borneo, into the Makassar Straits west of the Celebes. With the bomb bay doors closed our flight returned uneventfully to our small island campground to the east.

Morotai is shaped like a tadpole. A unit of the Australian Army protected us by occupying the perimeter across where the head meets the tail. The remnants of the foe were occupying the large part of the island and the men and planes of the 13th Air Force staged off the tail. A couple of nights before one of our P-61 Nightfighters had downed a Japanese "Sally" bomber less than a mile out to sea behind my crews tent. The crew of the Japanese plane had not been accounted for but nothing stopped a good night's sleep that evening.

Chapter Four

Indonesia, Malaysia, Southern Philippines

General George C. Kenney, commanding general of the Far East Air Forces devised a strategy of combining the resources of two or more air forces to shorten combat time. Flying air groups onto a target from different altitudes and varying directions created confusion among the defenders.

When supporting friendly ground troops, anti-personnel bombs would be used and they were small meaning a lot of them could be delivered over the plastic markers at the head of their position without excessive blast effect. When equipment and machinery from planes to refineries needed to be destroyed, demolition bombs would tear them apart. The 307th Bomb Group (H) was under orders from the Thirteenth Air Force to join elements of the Fifth Air Force to assist the Australian Army invasion of Tarakan Island's enemy storage arsenal. As we leveled off at "six o'clock" approaching the target area at 6,000 feet, the somewhat broken cloud cover opened up and revealed a Fifth Air Force group "target bound" from 4,000 feet at eight o'clock preceding our group to the battleground. Our load of troop support fragmentation bombs landed forward of the advance line as they were supposed to. The bombardier of one of the planes in our flight lost his right arm from heavy flak.

Enemy airfields, planes, revetments, harbors and docks were often designated secondary or tertiary targets. Weather often dictated not only where the planes would plan to go but also where diversion would be necessary. On one diverted flight from Puerto Princessa on the island of Palawan, north of Borneo, to Zamboanga on Mindanao, a storm came up so violent that we could almost be sure lightning had entered one side of the aircraft and came out the other. A similar change of plans caused us to arrive over the docks and small shipping at Davao Harbor

in southeast Mindanao after dark. Arriving at 12,000 feet we looked down upon the most awesome display of small to medium gunfire imaginable. Its tracers were turning and falling back just below our plane.

An island that was huge in relation to Morotai faced us across the Molucca Sea from a distance of twenty or thirty miles. Returning at the close of day we began to see American P.T. boats scurrying into the creeks of Halmahera Island. Following the latest such event the traders returned and of course knew exactly what was going on. They indicated it was part of the "grand plan." There were many enemy troops left on this large island. Without transportation they could do little or no harm. The P.T. plan was to keep them out of the war at minimum expense. Whereas our island was located at about 3 degrees north of the equator, Halmahera had a portion directly on the equator. Later we learned that this highly successful plan was being employed at Biak Island, Wewak and Hollandia in New Guinea. They could attack if needed, suppress any sign of waterborne craft or call for air support if necessary. Among the Australians that came to trade was a captain with a most unusual inventory of goods. The one that caught my eye was a monkey. The trader assured me that he would not run away. In fact, he will welcome you home like family, he assured me. To this day I don't know how Bobbie, for that's his name the captain assured me, understood the transition, but he did. Sometimes one of the fellows next door or "down the way" would keep him temporarily, but he stayed with me like the trader said. Bobbie became friends with everyone and was amply cared for by them. We learned at briefing that we would not be going after airfields or planes next mission at Batangas, Panay or Baguio because of fresh and exciting intelligence info from Malaysia. Sandakan Harbor on the northeast coast of Borneo is packed full of prime shipping, the report read. The plan called for all gunners to be on full alert for hours since this was unfamiliar

territory. Our pilot, Captain Burt Lawless had been sent back to the states. His nerves were damaged beyond the effectiveness of any treatment they could give him there. Out of March Field, California, he had piloted our plane through San Bernadino Pass flawlessly in the dark. Since the entire 307th Bomb Group (H) would be going the group commander took over our plane and led the way. Two dozen B-24s armed to the teeth with bombs and loaded guns roared across the lush jungle and passed over the coastal plateau and burst out above Sandakan Harbor. The bomb bay doors opened. All planes were to drop bombs when the lead plane bombardier dropped his. Suddenly there was the armada. One sailing ship with full rigging rode on a teakwood structure to a high bow platform where one turban-wrapped sailor paused to turn and wave and complete a lofty dive as about 200 fifty-caliber machine guns bore down on and splintered his fine ship. The group commander ordered the bomb drop aborted and saved them for another day. On the return trip back to Moratai, top turret gunner Jerry Weltfisch excitedly entered the waist section of the plane looking very concerned. He told how our nose turret gunner Mark Swartzhoff had stepped back out of his turret and onto the nose wheel door and fell through. Jerry told how Mark was not wearing his parachute but did have on his harness. The engineer, Ray Clouser, was on the flight deck and heard the nose wheel door "pop." He told Bombardier Sam Hecht he was going to crawl down and check it out. Ray found Mark hanging outside the plane and pushed up against the plane's belly and gripping with his fingertips to the edges of the door. Ray couldn't reach Mark until he lowered himself way down and by the time he gripped Mark's harness he had no leverage left to hoist him with. Bombardier Sam Hecht had crawled down also. When he arrived Ray had his legs wrapped around the nose wheel holding on to Mark's harness. Sam found leverage and got a firm hold on Ray's harness and lifted them both back to safety. When Mark came into the waist he did not

appear to have a drop of blood in his face. He was almost immobile. John Reginaldi, the tail turret gunner joined us and offered plenty of jovial care that soon enabled Mark to regain his usual good humor.

Chapter Five

Leyte, Palawan, Southern Philippines

Fly airplanes on alcohol? Intelligence was telling us that this was precisely what the enemy was turning to as their supply lines were being hammered day by day by the 13th Air Force “Long Rangers” and the 5th Air Force “Jolly Rogers.” The 307th Bomb Group (H) of the 13th drew the assignment to target the source of this new aircraft fuel. Located far north of the equatorial fruit trees, nuts and spices we had become accustomed to seeing, we were to cross the Molucca Sea, the Celebes Sea, bypass Mindanao, the Philippines’ large southernmost island, and the Sulu Sea. Our goal was the Island of Negros, whose annual crop was almost 100% sugar cane. A huge plant had been built on the bank of its inland waterway, accessed from the Sulu. Originally producing sugar, it had recently been converted to the production of alcohol to be used as a substitute aviation fuel. Surrounding this refinery were docks, warehouses, garages and shops. The group centered on a coastal landmark and flew up to the inland waterway, following it to the site of the installation on the right ahead, as bomb bay doors were opened. The big demo bombs slipped from their shackles as our bombardier toggled the drop switch. The arming wire that ran through the propeller on the nose of each bomb pulled out and remained attached at the main frame. Every propeller started instantly spinning as it fell and at the preset number of turns spun off, thereby arming the explosive to go off upon contact. The dock, the refinery, the garages and shops disappeared into an ascending plume of orange topped off by a globular boiling, billowing black vaporous mass.

An interesting sidelight occurred some years later when as a civilian called to a national business meeting, the conversation moved to war stories. As this anecdote unfolded, a corporate associate from the other side of the nation jumped up from his seat across the dinner table for

twelve and waving his arms exclaimed, "I was there!" Then he explained to us that he was the assistant commander of a submarine that had been ordered to the strike site to follow up with his ordnance if need be.

Next day at our base, the music of a heavy stringed instrument with an oriental, plaintive sound was being broadcast repetitively over our radio. A woman's voice interrupted to declare, "This is Tokyo Rose. Men of Morotai, our Imperial Air Force will soon be paying you a visit." A few chuckles were heard and the discussion got back to what the noon menu would be. Having been served lamb stew for weeks on end my weight had dropped from 196 pounds to 164 pounds. Someone suggested how nice it would be if dinner turned out to be barbecue. Several days later a large fowl flew into our tenting area. It made itself at home on the lower limbs of the wooded area nearby. It so happened that a new type of ammo for a .45 revolver had recently become available for flyers. It had no ball shot. Instead it contained a full measure of tiny beads (bird shot). It was designated for survival use. One of the flyers got his revolver and a clip of survival ammo and fired at the bird landing on a lower limb. All he got was feathers. He fired again and again until the clip was empty. He garnered only another dozen feathers. The bird gave a sneer and flew away. I guess it's still possible the new invention may work on very small animals if need be.

Learning that the runway at Puerto Princessa had been rebuilt (probably by the POWs at the nearby camp) the Long Rangers flew up to Palawan in the Sulu Sea and disrupted it with 500 # general purpose bombs. The 307th group bulletin board displayed a life size likeness of General Douglas Macarthur reminding us of his promise "I shall return." Assignments began to be to areas never hit before. Among them were Bacalod, Tacloban and Leyte. Conditions the weather brought about in these areas were super wet and very miserable. Leaving Leyte I was

down in the ball turret when the power went off. A glance through the small inspection window facing the waist of the plane revealed nothing but flames. Hurriedly I followed the escape procedure to the interior of the aircraft and found the power cable to the turret shorted out and burning considerably into the vertical support. This wasn't supposed to happen but the insulation, heavy as it was, had cracked open and allowed the malfunction. It probably could be attributed to the heat of the tropical sun.

Following the Leyte landings in October 1944, a steel mat was being laid over the corrupted runway. A cloudburst was beginning to flood the area when our plane had to make an emergency landing on the loose mat. When the wheels touched the mat a sound like a mighty structure coming apart led one of our crew to say as we parked "Boy, I'm glad that's over." A more perceptive voice replied, "We still have to get out of here!"

Returning back to base nearly always meant letter writing. Most of this activity was accomplished on the end of a crate that was set where the most light fell. As the sun began to set mosquitoes started biting. For a while getting inside the netting around and above your sleeping cot helped but darkness always cut short what you planned to complete. The crew decided to construct a table around the center pole of our tent. It would be round in nature but with flat outer edges for more convenience. Anchoring would be necessary if we were to use the only easily available light source – aviation gasoline. Researching necessary precautions, we learned the lid must be discarded before lighting. Two five-gallon cans each containing two thirds full of fuel should provide an adequate smoke screen to take care of the mosquitoes and light the entire tabletop. In no time at all, happiness was some borrowed tools.

Chapter Six

An Engagement Fulminated

The footlockers, the inverted lard cans, personal effects like pictures, folded blankets all were suddenly illuminated as burning matches were tossed into the two cans of partially filled gasoline at dusk. There they sat on the crew's new desk encircling the center pole of our tent, giving forth light where there had been none, and filling all the tent dwellers with personal pride.

Most of the readers and letter writers gave way when the card game started. As the evening progressed, what had been a quiet retreat commenced to sound forth with moans and whistles. Cakes and cookies from home were produced as winners mellowed. What could be more delightful in the midst of a war? Is not the fellowship of man to man the essence of brotherly love?

It was the most unexpected and inordinate sound imaginable – extremely raucous and filled with urgency. The increasing whine of the air raid siren practically shouted Hurry! Hurry! Hurry! Then someone screamed from the front door of the tent that “You can see that their bomb bays are open and their lights are moving directly toward us. It looks like both ‘Bettys’ and ‘Sallys’ (Japanese bombers).” Everyone at the table moved at once. Too many knees caught the edge of the table sending the contents flying and the cans of burning gasoline spraying everything. Much of it saturated the sand on the floor so that at every step shoes moved aflame. The fire on the mosquito nets ballooned out against everyone's personal property.

When crews arriving occupied existing tents they found that air raid shelters had also been dug adjacent to the front doors. Certain comforts might have been added. In our case none had been. At times it really rained some every day. Tropically speaking, you could be sure the

floor would be wet. In our case it was somewhat like a baptism pool. Looking up as we entered, the bombs on their racks hung almost over our heads as the fire in our tent continued to blaze. The Lord's grace was being beseeched as everyone hugged the floor, certain of our probable demise. Then the sound of heavy bombing told us the attack was being carried out against the rows of parked B-24s and B-25s on the flight line seven miles to our east. We could visualize the lines of destroyed and severely damaged planes they had left behind them. We arose from our knees to start rebuilding, glad to be alive, and thankful too. Our concern turned to both our friends who worked on the line and the Aussies who backed them up both day and night against infiltration from beyond.

Frank (Francisco L. Ruiz), our radio operator, was pleased our crew had at last a full complement of men. When he had advised that there was an order from headquarters for our crew to seek out a volunteer to jointly serve as assistant radio operator he didn't know where to begin. All the men kicked that around for a while until I remembered that the Morse Code was pictured in the boy scout handbook and I had once learned it well enough to earn a merit badge. I noticed that Frank was again smiling real big as he went out the door. For me it had meant several sessions a week for several months when not flying.

This evening's briefing for tomorrow's mission had us assigned to disable Seppinggan Runway at Balikkppan, Borneo, a cog in the Japanese supply wheel for oil and oil products. As the crew returned to our tent, we met our Australian trader friends who had come to check on how we had fared through the Japanese air raid. Talking with them was like getting an education. They said they had a most interesting story to tell us. First, however, why do we continue to lose so much weight? Reciting the universal complaints about the greasy food immediately brought suggestions to solve the dilemma. They too, had been raised on lamb stew

and chops as their lean appearance vouched for. However, they continued, Australia is a source of a variety of fresh vegetables. They suggested we take up a collection, send an airplane to Darwin, and bring back a load of fresh veggies. The idea sounded great and was purportedly done. However, no one I ever talked to ever enjoyed such a meal at our table. As to the story you will want to hear about, if you continue to press your missions northward you may miss out on the biggest event in this part of the world, they said. Discussions have begun among some of our people for invading Balikpapan itself. Few people realize the enormity of its drilling, producing, refining, packaging, storing, shipping and transporting facilities. It will take the combined efforts of our planners and yours to prepare for this; we understand it will take a minimum of thirty to forty thousand infantry from Australia backed up by the American Air Force and Navy. The island fortress of Corregidor is much in the news at home these days and it is a hope of your General Macarthur it can be neutralized as a step back to Luzon – even Manila itself. Things are moving a lot faster, aren't they? By the way, there is a surprising availability of whiskey being offered us in a part of your trading area!

Chapter Seven

Corregidor, Luzon

The successful American landing at Leyte forced the Japanese into rethinking their battle strategy for the Philippines. The allied forces might now dominate some of their supply routes from the south. The Japanese began reinforcing all their installations north of Mindoro, convinced they had a new ace in the hole to the north. They requested all available supplies and assistance from China, Burma, Formosa and all their protectorates among others, aiming to be supreme when the next allied landing came.

The allies gave special attention to observation and decimation of airfields that might aid the Japanese movement of supplies toward Luzon plus enemy communications and production sites. Batangas on Luzon became a primary target. Tacloban and Bacalod became secondary and Zamboanga and Davao tertiary. It was decided to also strike at the southernmost obstacle to gaining access to Manila Harbor. This was Cavite Naval Base that was on an island less than four miles long off the South China Sea coast between Batangas and Manila. Their anti-aircraft weapons count was included in the figures gathered by the Far East Air Forces being used by the Japanese within the Greater Manila Air Center. Their count was just under 700 for the center. After capturing this naval base in 1942, the Japanese added a foundry, new docks and cranes and turned it into an arsenal.

A new and different problem presented itself for reaching this target. It was so far from Morotai, home base for the Thirteenth Air Force's 307th Bomb Group (H) that the planes would not have sufficient fuel for a round trip under ordinary circumstances. It was decided to put a bomb load in only one side of the bomb bay and use an extra gas tank on the other side.

In order to be able to strike a more productive area, 500-pound bombs were chosen for

this use. The 307th Long Rangers targeted the heavy industrial area of the island, striking several days in succession and creating not only large explosions but also huge fires that spread out rapidly after each bombing. It was decided to continue the strikes for two weeks after which the plant was practically burned out.

The door was now set ajar for attacking Corregidor, the island fortress guarding Manila Harbor and preparing the way for an infantry landing on the only beach there, accompanied by 50 C-47 troop transport planes loaded with paratroopers. The Thirteenth Air Force was given orders to proceed with attacking "The Rock" at once at high noon. Flying at 17,000 feet, the Long Rangers coursed in tight formation up the South China Sea and over cloud-covered Cavite. The westward turn was made as we came into sight of the docks of Manila in the far distance. The entire group dropped on the lead bombardier who was aiming at the firing gun batteries and stored munitions. Massive explosions resulted with smoke, fire and earth rising to a height of several thousand feet. Underground stored munitions went off in "L" shape. As our group alternated days of the first two weeks our target priority was the Japanese gun batteries. Aiming to destruct, explosions were set off above and below ground, sometimes in chain reactions. During this time, the Fifth and Seventh Air Forces joined in with their Jolly Rogers, Kens Men, and Red Raider groups. The Japanese were so dug in that it required massive bombing to realize results. Aerial photographs revealed that manpower was being utilized in a defensive mode against the coming landing. With the arrival of liberators from Guam it was time for a new strategy. The Seventh Air Force would strike at breakfast time, the Thirteenth at high noon and the Fifth at suppertime. After almost a month of heavy bombing, the plan changed to a more flexible type attack. Fighter planes were ordered in to strike the mouth of the caves, gun pits, disguised gasoline pits, living quarters, hillsides, ridges and selected plateaus where

paratroopers were to land. Just before the arrival of the planeloads of paratroopers and the beach infantry landing, the fighters machine-gunned every location known to have held an enemy from every angle. Corregidor was often referred to as a pork chop because of its shape. The paratroopers occupied the larger end and the Japanese gravitated to the smaller end, utilizing the burrows as they went. The final demise of the Japanese garrison was in the hands of the allied troops on the ground. Hundreds of the enemy dead were sealed underground. Well over 4,000 Japanese dead bodies were counted. Our dead were over 100, less than 10 MIA.

The Japanese defense of Manila had now moved back to the warships in Manila Bay, the troops' stronghold in northern Luzon where the Japanese generals were convinced the next allied landing would be at Linguyan Gulf; the walled city, the surrounding islands, Nielsen Field, Nichols Field and the vast Clark Air Center, site of six airdromes and 13 runways plus the air defenses at Baguio north of Manila.

Chapter Eight

Celebes, Halmahera, Indonesia, Luzon, Malaysia, Negros

After searching for months for a pair of small diaries detailing missions from 1944 and 1945, one of them has turned up with entries for the last few months of my overseas tour. Of current interest are the records of enemy planes encountered.

The discovery of an estimated 20,000 Japanese troops moving toward Manila from the northeast caused the Long Rangers to be dispatched to intercept them at either Luzon Island or Muzon town on Luzon. Both areas were totally covered with cumulus clouds, diverting us to Batangas Air Drome on the coast. It too was socked in so the Long Rangers diverted cross country toward Nielsen Air Field about 15 miles from Manila. Seven zero interceptors confronted us. One left his flight and climbed out of our sight. He came diving through our formation and hurriedly departed without firing a shot and they all dispersed.

As our flight successfully released our 30 clusters of three each 100# fragmentation bombs I saw from the ball turret a "staircase" of predicted concentration flak appearing to be aimed directly at our plane. I remember thinking out loud that the next round would hit us, when it struck into the spare gas tank of the plane flying on our right, releasing a flood of fuel through the plane. It continued in formation momentarily. Then three men leaped out of the rear hatch. Smoke was coming out of their shoes, their sleeves and collars. One man got his chute open and drifted downward unimpeded alone. The right wing of his plane dropped. The nose began to rise and then fell off into a downward dive from which it could never recover.

The flak had an entirely new look, silver and black. I learned it was a new product containing phosphorous. I was told it would cling to anything and then burn its way through. It's already been tossed into our formations from the front. Those outriders, searching for our

altitude, are probably also doing this.

After the Japanese had ordered planes from the field be sent to the Manila area, the huge allied landing at Linguyan Gulf on the north shore of Luzon by the U.S. Navy's Seventh Fleet and numerous allied bombers presented an enormous new threat to the Japanese as a look at the direction the landing troops were taking made it obvious they were on the move toward Clark Air Drome, 50 miles north of Manila. At once they began decentralizing their planes. The Thirteenth Air Force directed the 307th Bomb Group (H) to the far west side of Borneo midway between Sarawak and Brunei to Miri Air Drome to neutralize the airfield and report on dispersals arriving there, if any. A load of 500# general-purpose bombs destructed the runway and taxi strip, and one fighter plane parked there, and badly damaged several others parked nearby. An "Oscar" (Japanese fighter) took off as we approached, made a run at our nose and turned off short of coming into range. This was a surprisingly large installation and a squadron of "Nells" (Japanese bombers) was dispersed over the ground. Gunfire was turned on these. One was destructed, the others damaged. We were sure we would be back to Miri.

The Long Rangers returned for a follow up to Nielsen Field at Manila targeting warehouses and barracks. Accuracy was excellent. Defense was heavy.

Our next trip again was to Nielsen Field but it turned out to be a snafu. A cluster of 100# fragmentation bombs was found partially disengaged from its rack in the bomb bay, but in such a way it could be safety wired to keep the opening bomb bay doors from dislodging them entirely. Then the #1 engine lost oil pressure and had to be feathered. This caused a vibration throughout the entire plane. The flight commander ordered us to drop our load in the water and head for home.

We picked up an alert from the Fifth Air Force enroute back to Nielsen Field. They were

under attack by four Oscars (Japanese fighters). We found both Nielsen and Nichols cloud covered and bombed Las Pinas runway. Fires rose to 300 feet.

Diary Report of January 18, 1945: Our 29th air raid to date.

Next trip was another return to Nielsen Field, then Nichols Field, finding them both completely overcast and redirecting the 307th Bomb Group (H) to Fabrica on Los Negros. To lay waste their airstrip. Our flight struck accurately and successfully. Our own bomb bay doors opened so slowly our bombs fell into the water.

Cavite seaplane base airstrip and buildings.

Drew fire from Canacoa Point, Cavite. Overcast obstructed results.

Report of activity on Halmahera Island at two airstrips.

At Midi, several Sallys were on the ground. They were machine-gunned and one was destroyed. The airstrip was bombed. At Kosh the airstrip and one plane were damaged. The strips were immediately repaired and we returned seven times to knock out these installations. We returned to Morotai in time to be present for the 30th air raid - this time a single Sally that damaged several planes on the flight line.

Nichols Field, Luzon overcast, diverted to both Canacoa Point and Bokakoa Point on Cavite Island. Hit shipyard and supply dump near causeway and sank six escaping barges.

The Long Rangers were alerted that some of that armada last seen at Sandakan Harbor was sailing down the east coast of Borneo. Definitely identified were a baby carrier, two cruisers and a destroyer escort. Dropping southward we flew for three hours up the coast without sighting them so diverted to an air strip in the Celebes Islands named Manado and knocked out their runway.

Second search party for the armada also proved fruitless diverting us to the gun

installations around Seppinggan Runway at Balikkppan, Borneo. This installation must have been alerted that we were in the neighborhood for they fired a huge barrage of both light, then heavy flak at us continuously. Our engineer, Ray Clouser and myself were manning the waist guns, surrounded by thick puffs of black smoke. Shells were exploding under the engines, the tail, wings and the waist. As the plane crossed the runway diagonally the bombs took out guns on both sides and hammered the runway. Ray was on the left side firing at a gun emplacement when a big puff exploded in between the wing and the window, reeling Ray back into me from the concussion. The plane was being violently rocked all this time. No one was hit, and upon examination no holes were found - a miracle!

It was no surprise when ordered back to Miri, Borneo again on the far northwest side. What was surprising was that they had cleaned up the field and the remaining target was their runway which we "potholed" along with their taxi strip which was totally disabled. Departing, we shortly picked up a Zeke (Japanese fighter) at seven o'clock. He trailed us for about 10 miles and then made a pass that he broke off out of range and disappeared. Enroute home we sighted a naval utility boat half-sunken with live machine guns along the bulkhead as though to fire at passing fighters. We flew wide around it and not far away encountered a "Playmate" (PBY rescue plane). The weather turned bad and we had rough turbulence all the way home.

The Thirteenth Air Force was alerted to expect dispersing Japanese planes to arrive at Sandakan, Borneo Airfield. The 307th Bomb Group was dispatched and not finding any arrivals bombed the runway neatly every 250 feet. The prisoner of war camp at the end of the runway looked neat and well kept. It also had barracks.

Chapter Nine

Cebu, Celebes, Indonesia, Malaysia, Mindanao

It has been learned that many of the Japanese defenders of the city of Manila vacated after the bombing of Cavite to the island fortress of Corregidor. They were there when it fell.

The Japanese decided to disperse supplies and personnel to locations in Mindanao in the southern Philippines, northern Borneo, Cebu Island and Celebes Islands. The runways and facilities in these locations immediately became targets for destruction. Among these were:

Lincanan Air Drome, southeast Mindanao, Philippine islands dispersal area. Our 500# general-purpose bombs made a direct hit on their runway and revetments. Three anti-aircraft gun emplacements were located and mapped for future attention.

Zettlefield Air Drome, Jolo Island, Celebes Sea between Mindanao and Borneo. Totally destructed. A Japanese Zero passed us by from eleven to seven o'clock and on out of sight without approaching.

Sandakan Air Drome, Sandakan, Borneo. The Japanese may have used POW's to repair the airstrip and taxiway. It appeared to be usable. There were still no sign of dispersals. Our bombs fell east to west at 30 degrees this time, destroying both strips.

Enroute back to Morotai our crew searched diligently for both a downed P-38 pilot and a B-24 plane across the Celebes Sea without success.

Lincanan disposal area, southern Mindanao, Philippine islands. A Japanese Zero appeared at eleven o'clock and circled around us uneventfully. Very heavy flak from the end of the runway exploded over and under us until our run struck the runway and revetments and gun emplacements. As we left the fighter plane was noticeable departing toward seven o'clock.

Zamboanga Coastal Defense Test. Purpose: To locate and map any new Japanese defen-

sive gun battery positions prior to coordinated naval, air and ground attack and landing to reclaim this area. Carrying a full load of small, effective on personnel, and numerous, fragmentation bombs, the Long Rangers made eight runs over all the known gun batteries. The first was a dry run to locate gun flashes. The second and alternating runs were live with the intent to destroy them. Clouds moved in and overcast our last target. However we switched to radar and completed this mission.

Zamboanga ground troop support, southern Mindanao, Philippine islands. This mission was a coordinated attack and landing to reclaim this area. The Navy's seventh fleet shelled inland. The combined Thirteenth and Fifth Air Forces circled the landing area for one hour and twenty minutes staying in touch with the ground director "Quaker," the B-25 medium bomber group "Hepcat," and the P-38 fighter group "Alcatraz" who were bombing and strafing various targets marked by artillery shells of designated colors. Quaker designated the color the 307th Bomb Group and the fifth A.F. Barons were to bomb. It turned out to be the location of the Japanese personnel, and fell in the center of Lincanan tarpaper shack village surrounding a huge gully. The load of 500# general-purpose bombs converted the target to dust, dirt and smoke. Most unfortunately, one of the Barons' planes was struck and exploded.

Cebu supply and personnel dispersal area, Cebu Island, P.I carrying 30 fragmentation clusters, three bomb runs were made, releasing a third of them each time. Several fires and heavy smoke resulted.

Cebu supply and personnel area, Cebu Island, P.I. (near Cebu City) rain and medium turbulence broke out approaching the target carrying bombs weighing 250# each. 60% hit in the target area causing billowing gray to black smoke.

Oleon Airfield, southeast Borneo near Banjarmasin, Indonesia, destroyed the airstrip,

sighted small shipping nearby and another downed B-24 near the south Celebes. We reported on both. Giving full attention for a long time was required as this was unfamiliar territory and might require instant reaction at any time.

Sandakan Shipyards, northeast Borneo, Malaysia.

A huge assortment of watercraft capable of transporting supplies was reported in the harbor and activity in the boat building areas. The mission called for lightweight incendiary bombs to strike scows, yawls, PT boats, schooners and luggers. In addition the boatyard, lumber mill and dump were to be targeted. Fires broke out throughout the harbor. A second run for strafing heavily damaged six tightly anchored boats, the shoreline buildings and caused what must have been a rifle bullet from one of those boats to strike my left gun barrel.

Sanga Sanga, Bongao on Tawi Tawi Island, N.W. Borneo. The Long Rangers, giving support to the beach head on the northeast side of the island dropped fragmentation bomb clusters in advance of the landing of assault boats and knocked out Japanese machine gun nests and occupied slit trenches near buildings which were set on fire by our tracers. Troops hit the beach as we broke away.

Jolo Island dispersal area, N.E. Borneo. Slit trenches and gun positions the Japanese had installed between Jolo Town and Zettlefield Air Drome were destroyed with 500# general-purpose bombs.

Davao City, Mindanao, southeast P.I. The target of the 307th Bomb Group (H) was the electric generating plant in downtown Davao. Using 1000# demo bombs it was totally destroyed. Two bombs were saved for a small island offshore on the return route that was creating problems. They struck squarely. A strafing run was then done using all gun positions from 200 feet.

Guerrilla support Kabacan dispersal and personnel area, central Mindanao, P.I. The Japanese were dug in with heavy weapons. Heavy bombs were selected in the form of 1000# demolition type that the Long Rangers dropped from 5400 feet. The explosions could be both felt and heard. 100% hits.

Chapter Ten

Celebes, Indonesia, Luzon, Palawan

The 307th Bomb Group Long Rangers renewed their search for the Japanese Armada reported off the east coast of Borneo, Indonesia, without contact. We then diverted to destroy the runway and taxi strip at Makasar near the southern tip of the Celebes. Several three masted schooners were sighted and reported.

Next mission out, the 307th returned to the Makasar Straits between Borneo and the Celebes Islands looking for the Japanese Armada without success. Diverting to Limboeng Air Drome in the S.W. Celebes we were attacked by an overtaking flight of fighters from 8 o'clock. They drew intense fire from the left side of the group. An Oscar was damaged and rolled belly up to protect himself. Two Tojos coordinated on the nose and were driven off by the top and nose turrets. Another Tojo, apparently thinking we had radar guns came in at 12 o'clock high and dropped chaff. The fight ran on for about twenty minutes. An Oscar dived in on our nose turret and put two bullets in it as he broke away and out of range. The other fighters too, made passes but broke off out of range. Clouds moved in and they departed.

The Long Rangers immediately returned to Limboeng Air Drome in the S.W. Celebes and bombed the runway to destruction as four Tojos attacked from 11 o'clock. Three of them dropped out from the withering defensive fire. The nose guns poured it on the remaining one until he turned away and they all disappeared. Approaching an hour later an anchorage of 25 to 30 schooners were sighted in the shelter of Teluk Bone in the southern Celebes. From a height of 9000 feet, the group, with all guns ready dived to just above water level and severely damaged the nearest group of four three masted schooners and considerably damaged most of the remaining ones. Occupants were leaping overboard in every direction.

Escaping POWs report their captors would react with rage at situations they could not control. Race was one of them. They were at their worst after allied plane attacks, some said. I'm indebted to my Filipino friend now here in this country, Dr. Fernando Pao, for making me aware of former POW Hampton Sides' book of POW revelations. Dr. Pao attends church with me at Southeast Christian Church, in Louisville, Kentucky. Hampton Sides' book is titled "Ghost Soldiers" and describes a situation in his opening chapter at Palawan in the Philippines where the Thirteenth Air Force was subjecting the Puerto Princessa runway to regular destruction. The enemy commander went beyond atrocities and led a massacre of his captives by yelling continuously that hundreds of planes were coming and they must all get into the tunnel type air raid shelters where he had them torched with gasoline. Several men had planned a way to get out in advance and swam Puerto Princessa Bay and told their story. Hampton Sides was being held prisoner at the Japanese central assignment camp in northern Luzon at Cabanatuan City. Flying replacement prisoners to the Palawan Airfield would have been one Japanese use of that facility.

Rangers from the U.S. Sixth Army landing at Linguyan Gulf went on special assignment to rescue the prisoners at Cabanatuan. The Japanese sent kamikaze planes and midget submarines after allied ships. The Japanese leaders withdrew their forces in the face of the landing and moved toward the mountains. Filipino guerrillas attacked those enemy troops moving toward Manila. This was the same Sixth Army that went ashore at Leyte and reported over 12,000 dead and several thousand wounded versus over 50,000 enemy dead and many thousands wounded.

The U.S. 40th Division and XIV Corps drove on Clark Air Center. The U.S. 32nd Infantry Division and the Australian Navy reinforced the Linguyan landing units. The XI Corps went ashore and crossed Bataan with 30,000 men. A U.S. battalion cleared the islands of Subic

Bay.

Reports on previous events are filling in history for us. At the invasion of Leyte, located east of the island of Bohol (home of Dr. Pao), north of the island of Mindanao and south of the island of Samar, kamikaze plane attacks were used by the enemy when it became evident that they would lose the battle. Manila is 400 miles north from here.

Guns were discovered on Corregidor capable of shooting twenty miles.

The 11th U.S. Airborne landing takes place southwest of Manila and north of Cavite.

Naval support cleared the beach.

The First Cavalry Division went on the move from north of Manila to drive on the city and its 20,000 defenders.

The XI corps attack completes crossing Bataan.

On Feb. 8th the First Cavalry Division and the 37th Division reach Manila.

Next day the 11th Airborne Division lands near Nielsen and Nichols airfields.

The following week the U.S. Navy went to work on Manila Harbor clearing mines and waterways.

On Feb. 13th the 11th Airborne Division entered Cavite and Nichols airfield.

A landing follows this on Samar to clear the enemy out.

On Feb. 28th an Air-Navy-Ground landing took place at Puerto Princessa, Palawan with the 41st Infantry Division moving in to reclaim the island.

On March 1, newly arriving reinforcing troops at Linguyan Gulf were diverted to Baguio and the north coast.

On March 3, the last of 20,000 defenders of the city of Manila were declared, "wiped out" - American troops being reassigned.

On March 7, allied troops surround Batangas and San Fernando.

On March 10, the 41st Infantry reinforces Zamboanga.

Chapter Eleven

Indonesia, Malaysia, Palawan, Philippines

Reclaiming the Philippines continued with the 40th Infantry Division going ashore in a landing at Panay. 3/18/45

The 40th Infantry landed to reclaim Cebu City. 3/27

The 185th Regiment encountered fierce fighting when landing at Bacalod on Negros. 3/29

The 163rd Regiment that our group had assisted at a previous beach head left Tawi Tawi on the Sulu Archipelago to reinforce the Negros landing. 4/1

The 163rd Regiment returned/retook Jolo Island. 4/9

The Americal Division landed on Bohol Island to reclaim it 4/11

The 307th Bomb Group learned that there would be a major air, sea and ground landing at Balikpapan, Borneo, Indonesia in the summer of 1945 and we would be a more experienced component of it. Meanwhile we will keep our attention on keeping Seppinggan Runway inoperative and fuel production at a minimum. 4/15

Fort Drum was burned out in Manila Bay. Fort Frank was found deserted in Manila Bay. 4/15

Those Japanese that evaded the allied landing in northern Luzon occupied the Baguio area. The 33rd and 37th divisions met with fierce resistance there.

The 24th Division marched on Kabacan April 23rd.

The Americal Division left Bohol and moved to the S.W. area of Negros. 5/3

Allied troops have found Japanese fighter planes hidden in tree clumps miles from Clark Air Center. Airplane parts, shops and tools were found buried underground. Batches of gas

found buried underground.

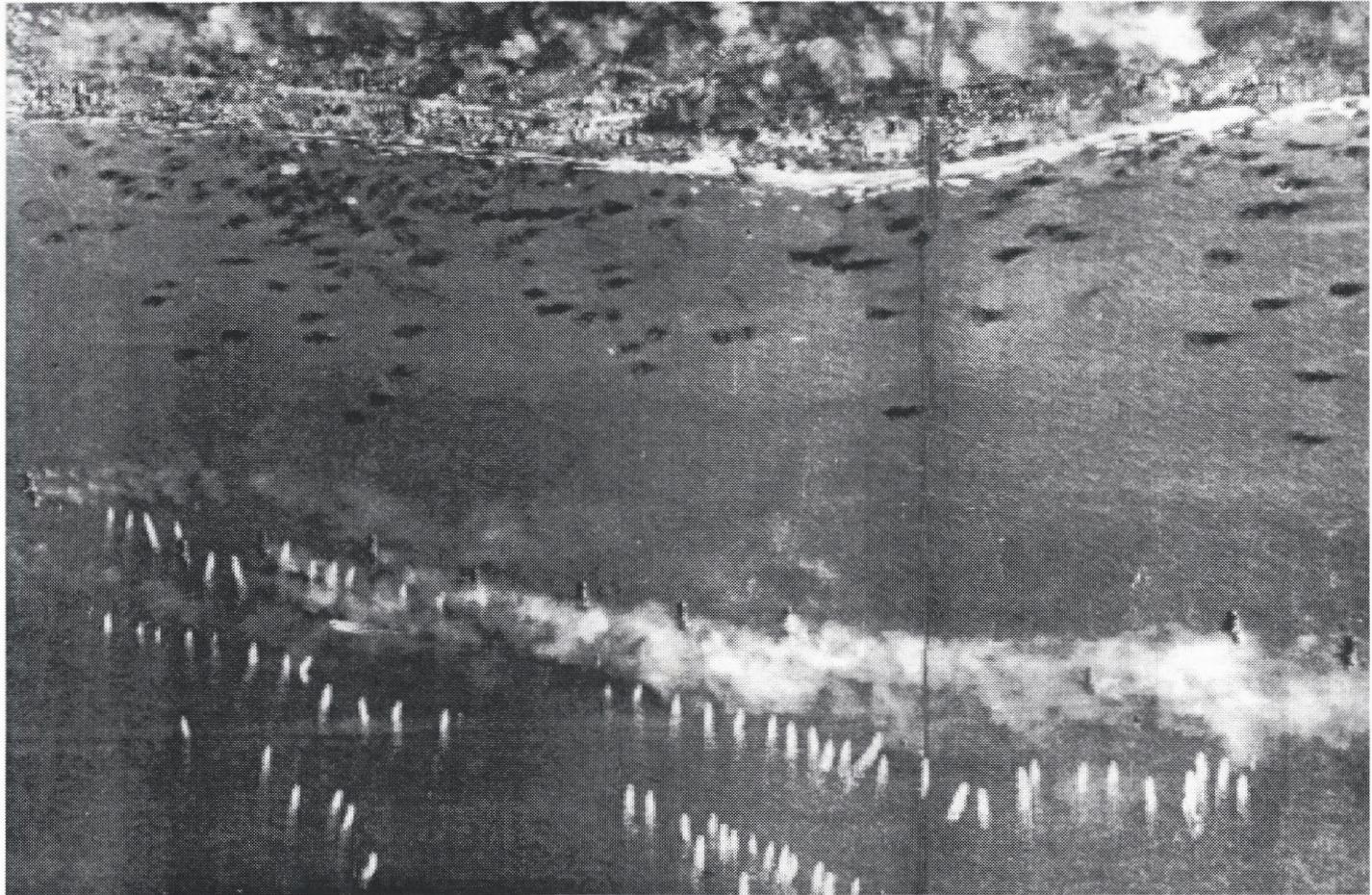
It is announced that General MacArthur now has control of all Army forces in the Pacific and Admiral Nimitz all Naval forces as preparation is made for the invasion of Japan.

The plan at Puerto Princessa, Palawan was for the 41st Division to go ashore behind the combined bombardment of the major supporting air groups and the navy, taking 8000 troops to subdue the enemy in the first few days fighting and then mostly to withdraw, leaving the mopping up to the guerrillas.

BALIKPAPEN - 1ST JULY 1945

The aerial photograph pictured below was forwarded by Paul Mallard of Cremorne, NSW, and came into his hands via Gp.Capt. "Long John" Hampshire DFC, a former CO of both 24

and 25 Squadrons. The photograph was not in as good a condition as we would have liked but it is a very historic one. It shows the 7th Division, AIF Landing Force moving towards



In This Issue:

| | | | |
|-------------------------------------|----------|----------------------------------|----------|
| Balikpapan Invasion | 1 | No 24 Squadron Firsts | 6 |
| Ragbag of Information | 2 | Wanted restoration Equip. | 7 |
| Folded Wings | 3 | Editor's Note | 7 |
| B-24 Restoration Fund Letter | 4 | Fuel Consumption Test | 7 |
| 1999 B-24 Liberator Reunion | 6 | Sick Parade | 8 |
| Lyndon Mckenzie, AO | 6 | Internet Sites continued | 8 |

the shore at Balikpapan at H Hour Minus 12 on 1st July 1945. At this time USAAF and RAAF Liberators were bombing the landing beach area.

The 7th Division Landing Force under the command of Major General Milford comprised the 2/27 Battalion, 21st Brigade led by Doherty was to land at Green Beach, 2/12 and 2/10 Battalions, 18th Brigade led by Chilton were to land at Yellow and Red Beach respectively.

Continued Page 5

PO BOX 1052 CANBERRA ACT 2601 <http://www.rnc.com.au/b-24/>

Balikpapan (Balikkpnan) Invasion aerial photograph

Source: Royal Australian Air Force taken July 1, 1945

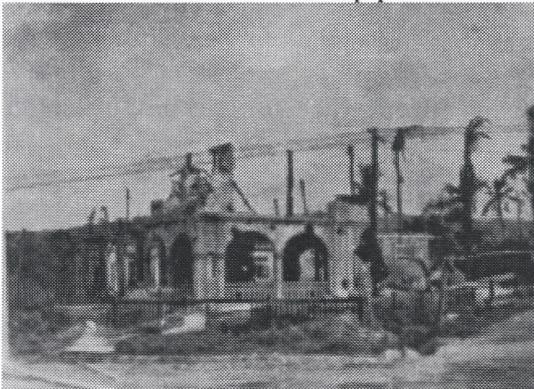
These two pages were found by my daughter Becky Breeding on her computer and downloaded by her recently. It's our hope that it enhances the story of the invasion of this oil rich area in Indonesia for you. ~ MB

BALIKPAPEN cont...

The Liberator Bombing Force was drawn from the 5th and 13th Air Forces, USAAF and the RAAF's 1st Tactical Air Force. Ten squadrons from this force bombed the landing beaches for



88mm Ack Ack on Balikpapan



Balikpapan Landing Area Mosque

45 minutes. Twenty-four B-24's from the 13th Air Force bombed first and were followed by twenty B-24's from I.T.A.F. The RAAF component consisted of seven aircraft from 21 Squadron, seven from 24 Squadron and six from 23 Squadron. Finally thirty-eight Liberators from 30th Bomb Group and 380th Bomb Group of the 5th Air Force finished off the aerial bombardment. A total of eighty-two aircraft from seven USAAF squadrons and three RAAF squadrons were involved.

In addition to the aerial bombardment additional fire of rockets and shells was delivered by a combined naval force. OBE2 was the name given to this Amphibious Operation, Balikpapan.

The above photograph's were taken by Maurice (Pat) Patrick of Kilimna, Vic. The twin barrelled anti aircraft gun was one of many which defended Balikpapan and it was necessary that as many of these could be rendered ineffective before the minesweeping operations which were necessary to be carried out before the invasion commenced, could begin. These guns were given top priority because some of them could be turned on the minesweepers. Some 200 ships took part in this operation on 1st July 1945. The damaged mosque, ruptured oil tanks and the general devastation of the town area attests to the effectiveness of the naval and aerial assault prior to and after the landing.

At Cebu City, approximately 14,000 men went ashore. 3/27

Almost 30,000 men of the 9th Australian Division landed from a Naval fleet in Brunei Bay to reclaim the west coast of Borneo, the islands of Labuan and Muara, the Miri oilfields and the Miri Airdrome in this oil producing area. 6/10

An Australian force of cruisers and destroyers continue support to free up both Sarawak and Brunei. 6/25

Filipino units mopping up will be assisted by the arrival of the Eighth Army to replace the veteran U.S. Sixth Army. 6/28

The Thirteenth Air Force Long Rangers commence a two-week bombing attack on Balikkppan and Seppinggan runway preparatory to a major air, sea and ground landing July 1. 6/17

Nine cruisers and thirteen destroyers of the U.S. Navy 7th Fleet join the aerial preparatory bombardment at Balikkppan for a week of landing preparation. 6/25

Three escort carriers join the air and navy units already bombing Balikkppan, Borneo,

Indonesia. 7/1

The landing area at Balikpapan, Borneo was divided into three beaches. They were the green beach, yellow beach and red beach.

Ships carrying 200 landing craft arrive and take up position at Balikpapan.

The three heavy bomber groups chosen to do a preparatory last minute bombing of the three beaches lasting 45 minutes prior to the troops going ashore were the U.S.A.F. 307th Bomb Group (H), the Royal Australian Air Force's first tactical Air Force and the U.S.A.F. Fifth Air Force. The top priority target was the 88 M.M. twin anti-aircraft guns that could be fired on the level as well as upward. Getting as many of these as possible before the Australian 7th Division, AIF landing force hit the beach was a top priority. As the last heavy bomber departed the beach area the Navy's amphibious forces turned their rockets and shells on known and unknown targets. At the appointed time when the barrage let up the water was churning with the attacking landing craft and their 33,000 troops of the reinforced 7th Australian landing unit. 7/1

The town of Balikpapan and a substantial percentage of the oil field was declared secure in the hands of the Australians. 7/3

Seppinggan Airfield was declared under the control of the Australians. 7/5

A few days later I was issued travel orders to Manila by available air travel, which turned out to mean "thumb a ride with any plane that would pick you up and take you in that direction." I managed to get there in four rides. The last one was a weary C46 cargo plane carrying a load of jeeps. When we were landing I was sitting behind the steering wheel of one of them when the landing strut on the right wheel broke and we dragged a wing part of the way down the runway. Beyond that no harm was done and I was directed to a casual camp for service people awaiting connections. I remember how delicious the fresh fruit was that a Filipino

lady was selling for several pesos from a straw basket she balanced on her hip while keeping a large straw hat from falling off and smiling like an ambassador through it all.

Several days later I became a passenger on a troop transport ship by the name of Kota Baroe (pronounced Baru). We lifted anchor from Manila Harbor enroute to San Diego, California, via Honolulu, Hawaii with stops in between. Our first stop was at Eniwetok Atoll on August 6, 1945. Just as I was getting comfortable on deck, the loudspeaker radio announced the bombing of Hiroshima, Japan and the hope the war would be ended almost immediately. I learned that we were waiting for a warship that had a huge hole blown out of its bow to arrive at Kwajalein, Marshall Islands, for us to escort to Hawaii. We were already taking evasive action as a school of dolphins adopted us by swimming with the bow of the ship as we passed Bikini Atoll and were still there when we pulled up to our new responsibility and moaned. The bow of the ship looked like the first high wave would swamp it. It was August 9 and the announcement that a second atomic bomb had just been dropped on Nagasaki, Japan made the first one seem more real. In less than another week (six days) the Japanese Emperor announced Japan's recapitulation. The war was over.

Although we had zigzagged continuously crossing the Pacific, the Kota Baroe arrived at Hawaii according to plan and pulled into the docks at San Diego exactly thirty days after departing Manila, right on time. Praise be to our Lord!

A new set of papers and a new set of plans with home and loved ones were just an exciting set of train rides ahead.

~ FINIS ~