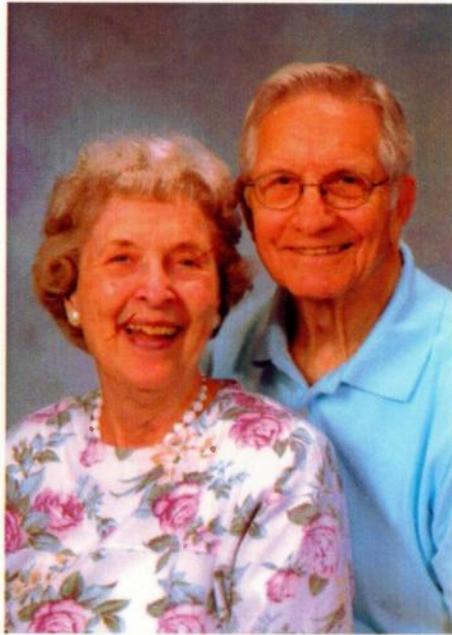


# War Stories & Memories



by **Robert H. Lamb**



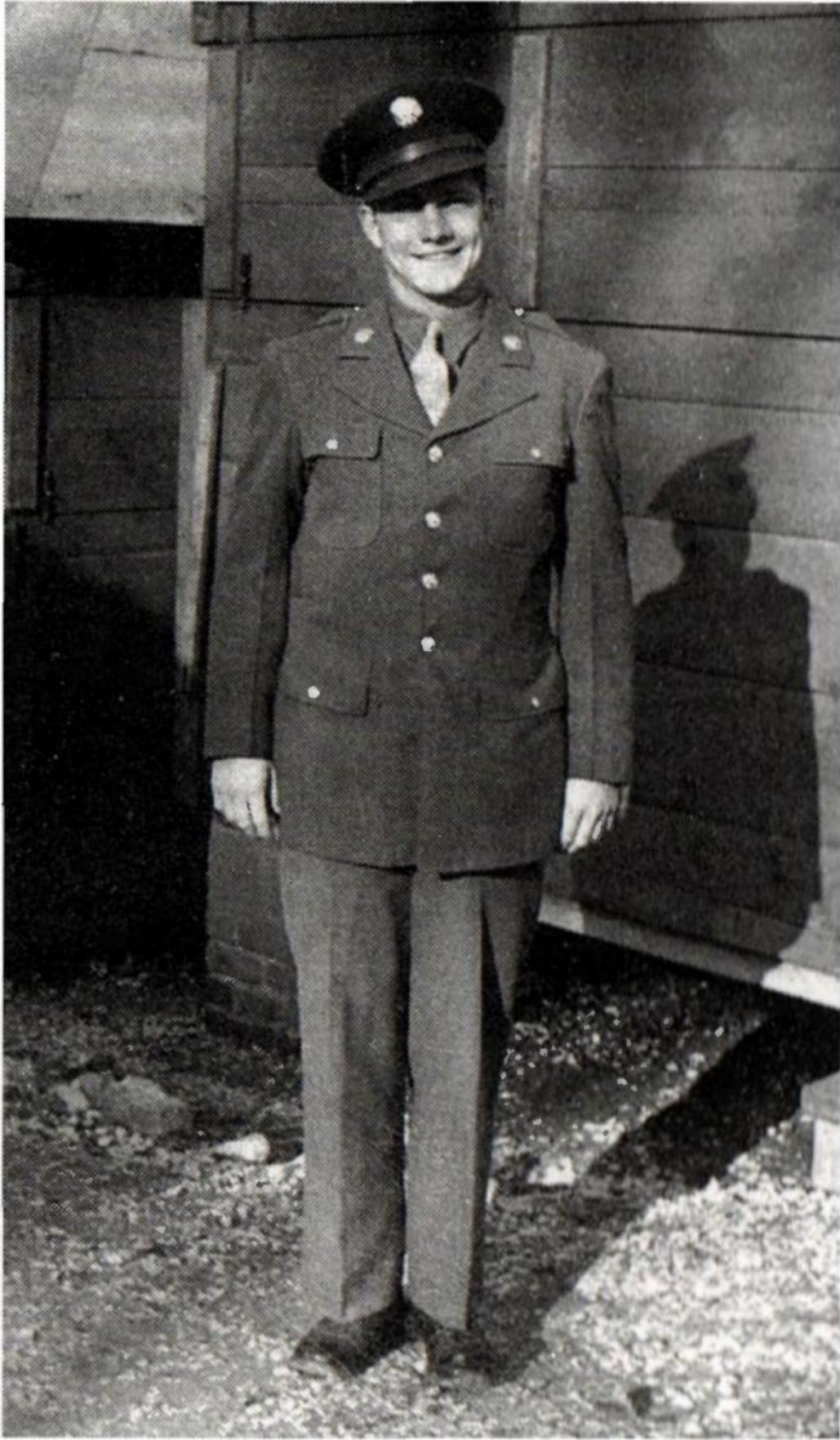
*Jean and Bob Lamb*

As I write this, my wife, Jean, and I have celebrated our 60th wedding anniversary. Among the many things to show for this good fortune, we have three sons and two daughters, three daughters-in-law and one son-in-law. In addition, there are four grandsons and three granddaughters plus twin great-grandsons. A 38-year career with 3M Company and more than 20 years of retirement bring me up to date.

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# **War Stories & Memories**



**by Robert H. Lamb**





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**War Stories & Memories by Robert H. Lamb****Servicemen from Boone Iowa who Robert Lamb met during the WWII**

Boone High Class	Name		
	Last	First	
1942	Brooks	Darwin (Bill)	
1937	Brown	Robert (Bob)	
1939	Christofferson	Kenny	
1941	Clark	Wilis	
1939	Condon	Ernie	
1942	Downey	Loren (Bud)	
1944	Friedley	Robert (Bob)	
?	Godfrey	Earl	
1941	Hensen	Dorothy	
1942	Hensen	Lois	
1942	Lamb	Don	Robert's cousin
1942	Lamb	Robert H.	Author
1944	Lamb	William (Bill)	Robert's brother
?	Leason	Bud	
1937	Leland	Jack	
1941	McVicker	Dwight	
1936	Miles	Bob	
1943	Miller	Florence (Punk)	
1942	Munsell	Bill	
Coach	O'Conner	Frank (Bucky)	Boone High Coach
1943	Sandon	John	
?	Steinhoff	Ed	
1941	Steinhoff	Glenn	
1942	Sutton	Gerald (Truck)	
?	Taylor	George	
?	Ward	Bob	
1942	Welin	Harold (Hod)	
1942	Youll	Ruth	



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# Prologue

In writing these memoirs covering my military career, I've chosen to focus on a variety of subject matters. It is difficult to avoid the chronological order of things. Personal relationships played a vital role throughout, and my overseas experiences created a climax to it all. In total I spent thirty eight months wearing the uniform of the Army Air Corps.

Like many others, I kept a diary. My facts and figures are as accurate as possible. In some cases, there will be incidents or references which are repetitive, but these occasions are intended to make the stories more complete or to add emphasis.

I am grateful to many who helped me in this endeavor. My son and daughter-in-law, Kevin and Carol Lamb, provided professional assistance as copy editors. Mary Sikora offered encouragement and guidance as leader of our Memoirs Class. My daughter, Jenni Allard, provided the graphics. My other children: Larry, Chris and Becky offered and gave support in many ways. Finally, my patient and tolerant wife, Jean, continued to love me throughout my first effort to be an author.



*Basic Training – Pneumonia Gulch  
Jefferson Barracks, Missouri*



## You Can Take The Boy Out Of Boone, But...

My hometown of Boone, Iowa, had a population of 12,383 in 1940. I believe that was the year the National Guard contingent from Boone was deployed to Camp Clayborne, Louisiana, for training. A popular song of the day was "Goodbye, Dear, I'll be Back in a Year. I'm in the Army Now." It was just the beginning of an exodus from Boone of men - and women - who would serve in the armed forces of the United States.

My active service time began in February 1943, after enlisting in December 1942 at Camp Dodge, near Des Moines, Iowa. My enlistment took a detour when I was rejected because of having high blood pressure; however, there was an opportunity for a re-check.

While riding the trolley back to Camp Dodge, I got acquainted with another Army Air Corps aspirant. He was going for a re-check, too, after being told he was three pounds under weight. He had a bag full of bananas and was hoping a stomach full of "Chiquitas" would do the trick. Our little story had a happy ending because he passed and so did I. I was told it was an anxiety attack that caused my problem.

This story is designed to show how the paths of so many from my hometown crossed mine during my 38 months of duty. All told, there were 27 whom I encountered, some more than once, in various locations.



It all began at Jefferson Barracks, near St. Louis, where Army Air Corps recruits were sent for Basic Training. Frank (Bucky) O'Connor was my high school swimming coach and tracked me down in "Pneumonia Gulch" where my tent was located. As a Physical Education instructor, he was permanently located there. He and his wife had invited me, and others from Boone, to their home for dinner, but one of my tent mates contracted spinal meningitis and I was quarantined for a week. As a result, I never made this "reunion."

I did meet Ted Pollard, from the class ahead of me in high school, on the road as he was heading for sick call - a very feverish person.

Because there were far too many enlistees for the facilities of the Army Air Corps to handle, dozens of campuses throughout the country were taken over to accommodate such a plethora of potential "flyboys." This technique formed a holding pattern until they could be funneled into the classification centers. Each College Training Detachment "cadet" was given 10 hours of flying time in a Piper Cub to help determine his basic aptitude for piloting a single-engine plane.

It was here I got a chance to use a talent I had developed many years earlier when I was a member of a drum and bugle corps. When a call went out for volunteers to be a bugler who knew military calls, I auditioned for the job and got it. It seems that the previous bugler, while the rest of the contingent was involved in their daily close-order drills, was caught "practicing his bugle" with one of the coeds behind the football stadium. In addition to being exempt from these drills, I participated in a couple of military funerals and played Taps. Of course I had to get up a few minutes earlier than the others and go to bed a bit later, but it turned out to be a "cushy" job.



*My Bugle — College Training Detachment, Carbondale, Illinois*

This location was one of only two where there was no one else from Boone.

At the San Antonio Aviation Classification Center (Texas), where we were tested rather intensely, we were just across the road from a pilot pre-flight facility. It was there I met Darwin (Bill) Brooks, from my high school class. He eventually flew fighter planes in Italy and became a commercial airline pilot after the war.

SAACC challenged us with a day and a half of concentrated written tests followed by a half-day of psychomotor testing and then a thorough physical exam. This provided the authorities with a capsule of our inherent abilities to qualify as flying officers - pilots, navigators or bombardiers.



Even though my classification officer wanted me to go to pilot training (there was a shortage of them at the time) due to my grades, my personal choice rated this as a 3. I listed a 9 for navigator and a 7 for bombardier.

I soon found myself at Navigator Pre-Flight School at Ellington Field, near Houston, Texas where I would have a nine-week assignment. A special perk we enjoyed there was the outstanding food, a rarity for military bases. Another memorable fact was the very high humidity, but that was typical of August and September on the gulf coast of Texas. Permanently stationed there was Ed Steinhoff, from home. (More later about the Steinhoff family.)

An 18-week tour of the San Marcos (Texas) Advanced Navigation School put me in touch with Bob Ward, who happened to be a cadet classmate of mine, and Kenny Christofferson, a member of the permanent staff there. On our graduation day, when my parents came down for the big occasion, there was much jubilation on acquiring my new wings and gold bars. In addition, we met Bob Ward's wife, Milly, also from Boone.

After a brief furlough, I was stationed near Roswell, New Mexico. for bombardier training. Having our commissions, we were classified as students "in grade." We learned the intricacies of the Norden bombsight, a very complicated mechanism. It had the reputation of being able to put a bomb in a pickle barrel from 20,000 feet. If that had ever happened, it would have occurred due to compensating errors. During my twelve weeks there, I met Jack Leland, also from Boone, who was stationed there permanently. Incidentally, the cooks and bakers who served our mess hall here even outdid those at Ellington Field.

My longest assignment occurred when I ended up at Deming (New Mexico) Army Air Base as an instructor to bombardier cadets. It lasted six months. Also stationed



there as an instructor was Bob Miles, an older brother of one of my high school classmates.

En route home from a recreational weekend flight, we encountered severe weather over the Texas-New Mexico border and were advised to RON, remain over night, at Lubbock AAB. This was most fortuitous because my only brother, Bill, had recently joined the Army Air Corps, and was in the midst of his basic training at Lubbock. Needless to say, I arranged for transportation to his barracks and surprised him. Also stationed there for basic training was Bob Friedley, a high school classmate of my brother, whom we sought out for a brief chat.

During a weekend visit to the Carlsbad Caverns, we spent the night at the Army Air Base near there. (It was also a bombardier training facility.) We dined at the Officer's Club where there was a small band playing dinner music. The trumpet player was Bill Munsell, another high school classmate who played first trumpet in our marching and pep bands. Bill later became very successful in the advertising business, having his own agency.

It became time to be doing something more productive toward the war effort, so the Army Air Corps decided I should be training with a crew to prepare for combat. As a result, Columbia (South Carolina) Army Air Base was my destination. Six of us met for the first time and began to get acquainted as a precursor to working together as a crew. To illustrate how young our fighting forces were, our crew was probably a microcosm of this. The day we formed our crew, the co-pilot celebrated his 20th birthday. Our radio operator, pilot and I were also 20. Our flight engineer was 21, but our tail gunner, the "old man," was 25.

Since Columbia AAB was a focal point for those returning from combat as well as those preparing to go into combat, it was quite a composite operation. A group



of “returnees” was being marched along the roadway by a tech sergeant I thought I recognized. When they halted and were given the command “Parade Rest,” I confirmed his identity and had a brief visit with Ernie Condon (we used to play in a drum and bugle corps together). He had been a gunner on a B-26 in North Africa.

We were sent to Greenville (South Carolina) Army Air Base to receive intense training in a B-25 medium bomber for 12 weeks. Developing teamwork was an absolute essential if the aircraft were to perform its multiple duties. I learned that Bob Brown, from Boone, was also at Greenville. He had returned from combat and was a member of the cadre here.

I took advantage of a three-day break at Christmas time and hitch-hiked to Fort Benning (Ga.) to surprise my cousin, Don Lamb, who was attending the Army’s Officer Candidate School. Not only did I see Don, but we also got together with Harold (Hod) Welin, who was in a different class at OCS. Both of them were high school classmates of mine, too. We had a Boone reunion and Christmas dinner. Don went on to a career in banking, and Hod spent many years as a funeral director.

My next move was a five-day troop train ride across the country to Salinas, CA. It is appropriate to recall a special event that occurred during this prolonged trip. Many spent time playing cards - all kinds. My favorite was cribbage since my dad and I had spent hours playing it with a cribbage board he had used in World War I. Apparently this game was a favorite among others throughout the train because two tournaments developed, one among the enlisted men and the other among the officers. Since I was fortunate to have retained my proficiency, I won the officers’ bracket. A tech sergeant was my opponent in the playoff, so we became the center of attraction. There was standing room, three or four deep, around the “center ring” as we vied for the best two out of three. A combination of good cards, lucky



draws and some intuitive talent were all on my side as I emerged as the “Cribbage Champ.”

While at Salinas, we spent another five days being outfitted with all necessary equipment to make us ready for operating in the Southwest and Western Pacific areas. Among those items was a .45 Colt automatic pistol. That was my weapon throughout the war. It was never fired except for training purposes. After the surrender, no one asked for it, so I returned home and put it with the rest of my mementos. Years later while working at 3M, I learned that one of my associates was a Scout leader and taught a course in gun safety. He responded enthusiastically at my offer of the gun for instructional purposes. I saw him several years ago and he still had it. By the way, this location was the only other one where I didn't have a chance to cross paths with someone from my hometown.

We then went to our POE, Port of Embarkation, at Fairfield-Suisun AAB, now called Travis Air Force Base, and waited for orders. It was just north of Vallejo, California, a very welcomed location because four girls from Boone had moved there to work in wartime jobs and were living together. They were the Hensen sisters, Dorothy and Lois, Ruth Youll and Florence (Punk) Miller. Lois and Ruth were also high school classmates. A true “old home week” occurred when I visited them on a Sunday. Loren (Bud) Downey, another classmate, and Dwight McVicker had also joined them from their nearby station at Mare Island Naval Shipyard. It was a great reunion. Bud later acquired a Ph.D. in education administration and had a career on the faculty of several universities.

My “home away from home” overseas was the 38<sup>th</sup> Bombardment Group (Medium), where our crew's training on B-25s was put to use. The 38th was called “The Sunsetters”, a reference to our overall mission. Japan was known as “the land



of the rising sun”; therefore we were to cause that “sun” to “set”.

En route to our first assignment, we stopped on the island of Peleliu to refuel and spend the night. This giant piece of coral was the site of one of the bloodiest battles in the Pacific, and it had a Marine cemetery to prove it. One of the graves there held the body of Glenn Steinhoff, younger brother of Ed, mentioned earlier.

Combat missions began on New Guinea, continued at Lingayan Gulf on the island of Luzon in the Philippines, and ended up on the island of Okinawa. Shortly before the atomic bomb brought an end to the war, a familiar face joined our outfit. It was Bob Miles, whom I had left at Deming AAB 10 months before. It so happened that Gerald (Truck) Sutton, another high school classmate, was on Okinawa at that time and we got together frequently. He later made a career as a family-practice physician in Boone.

Prior to leaving for Japan, I was attending a chapel service and met George Taylor, who was a Junior High classmate and had moved away. He later returned to Boone for a few years as a banker. Another pleasant surprise was that of seeing Willis Clark who was in the high school class ahead of me.

After a few months on the Japanese Island of Kyushu, where we were a part of the occupation forces, I learned that my brother, Bill, was stationed on Okinawa as a flight engineer for a C-46 transport plane. Thanks to our group's adjutant, I was given orders to become a “courier” and flew there on a C-47 “Gooney Bird,” together with several other non-pilots who were also getting their flying time. Bill and I spent most of three days having a good visit and talking about home. Being a crew chief, he even “pre-flighted” our C-47 before I headed back to Japan.

In order for flying personnel to earn their extra 50% of base pay (flying was



considered hazardous duty), they were required to fly a minimum of four hours every month. After Japan surrendered, the need to fly dropped off dramatically. One could stay “ground bound” for two months, but had to accrue 12 hours or more in the next month in order to maintain “flight pay” status. As a result, such courier flights were essential - financially.

I finally accumulated sufficient “points” to return to the states and rode a train from Fukuoka, Kyushu, to Yokohama, Honshu, (past Mount Fuji) to prepare to board a troop ship. During our processing procedure for embarking, it was necessary to convert our yen to dollars. There was a limit on the amount for a variety of reasons. The line I was in stopped with me at the cashier’s window. Luck was with me since my yen amount exceeded the maximum. The cashier just happened to be Bud Leason (whose name I hope I’m spelling correctly), who was in the class behind me in high school. Once again, it was “not what you know but whom you know that counts.” As a result, I had no yen in my pockets when I returned home.

In the early morning darkness, just before dawn, as we were milling about waiting to board the troop ship, USS General John Pope, the loudspeaker began calling out names to report for boarding. I suddenly recognized the name, “O’Connor, Frank S., Captain.” His verbal response was only a few feet from me, so I hastened to contact him. As I mentioned early in this story, he was my high school swimming coach. But O’Connor and I weren’t the only ones from Boone among the 6,000 on the troop ship; John Sandon and Earl Godfrey, from the class behind me, were there also.

After 12 days on board (we were quarantined a couple of days in Puget Sound), we were billeted at Fort Lawton, Washington for few days of processing before taking another troop train to Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.



As a personal thing, a group of us guys went into the barber shop of the Olympia Hotel to get "the works" since we hadn't had a real haircut for a long, long time. A haircut, shave, shampoo, massage and a shoeshine came to \$4.75. So I gave a quarter tip to the shine specialist.

Both Bucky O'Connor and I were discharged at the same time from Fort Leavenworth. He invited me to ride with him in a friend's car to Des Moines, where we parted.

It was either Fate or a monumental coincidence that the first person from Boone with whom I had any contact after going on active duty was the same person from Boone with whom I had contact just before being discharged.

Bucky became head basketball coach at the University of Iowa, but was killed in a tragic automobile accident while on a recruiting trip.

This is a recap of my Army Air Corps adventure. It would have been much less of a candidate for my memoirs had it not been for the 27 "home towners" I had a chance to meet along the way.



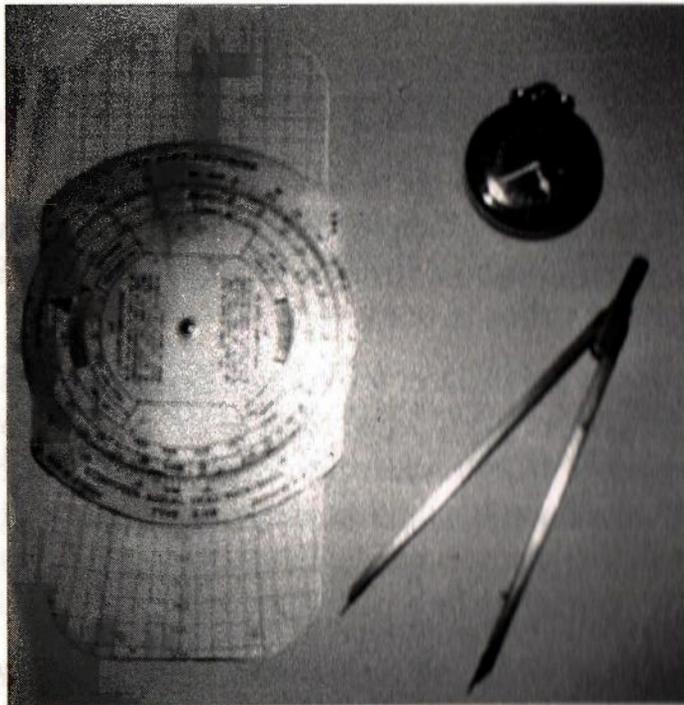
## Learning My Trade

This 18-week schooling prepared me to be an aerial navigator with training in four areas. Dead reckoning was the principle form, but I needed to know pilotage (from landmarks on the ground), celestial (from stars in the sky) and radio (not often used since the pilot was more versed in that).

It was a surprise to me to see eight or ten commissioned officers in our flight — another term for a classroom of students. Most of them were from other branches of the service. Because of their presence, our flight was assigned to the only barracks with a concrete floor. In addition, it had a toilet in it. There was a partition in the building, but due to spatial considerations, the officers got the part without the toilet. I was lucky enough to be a part of the group that got the other half.

In addition to the subjects above, we spent a lot of time on meteorology, instrumentation and solving theoretical problems. But the true measure of our competence came during our flight missions. They were both day and night flights.

Our second flight was designed to calibrate our instruments by the pilot conducting certain maneuvers only a few hundred feet above the ground. This is quite a test for anyone with a queasy stomach. Of the four of us cadets, two were washed-out pilot cadets - disqualified during flight training - and the other two had little or no flight time. Ironically, the two with former flight experience made lots of use of the "cookie cans." It was not a fun experience with the two of us doing all the work amid the prevailing odors.



*Navigator's Tools – E6B Computer, Dividers, and Chronometer*

I was a flight lieutenant and made a decision I regretted. We were scheduled for a night training flight, but some of the aircraft had mechanical problems. As a result only a few of them got off the ground. I was among those who did not fly and went back to our barracks. Night flights usually result in a delay of activities the following morning.

However, I used my rank and permitted the group who hadn't flown to sleep in. This provoked a very angry Capt. Hinson, our Flight Commander, to rouse my contingent and get us back on schedule.



Normal punishment for breeches of protocol and behavior was the “walking of tours” —usually on weekends. This consisted of marching in full dress, oftentimes with a full pack, around a prescribed square or rectangular route. Each cadet would stop at a corner, make a regimental military turn and proceed. The severity of the offense dictated the number of hours of tours one walked.

In my case, I walked a couple of hours, but the rest of the contingent was not exempt from discipline. Capt. Hinson felt it was time to have the classroom and instructors’ offices cleaned, so he assigned us to the task on a Sunday afternoon. He charged me with the chore of having it finished by a certain time or completing the job by myself. That was incentive enough to finish ahead of time.

To complete the story of our barracks with the concrete floor, it wasn’t long before our flight was reduced in numbers due to cadets being washed out. Therefore, those of us cadets remaining in this structure were moved into the other barracks and the officers in grade had full use of it and the toilet.

A few weeks before graduation, it was a custom for the school to sponsor a “beer bust” as a compensation for the cadets’ hard work. It was held on a Thursday evening and was a glorified picnic with plenty to eat and drink. My habits had not yet included the consumption of beer, but I had a great time singing, mingling and telling stories. At least I didn’t have a hangover the following morning for class.

The week before graduation we were allowed to wear our officer’s uniform, but with cadet insignia. It was quite a treat. In order to look like a seasoned combat veteran, many of us took our dress hat, removed the grommet, which gave it shape, then encircled our hat with it and tightened it to squeeze the fabric together. In that condition we put it in the shower to wet the fabric. By letting it dry in that shape, dimples would be created in the sides of the hat. This simulated the appearance of



having worn earphones which were necessary for combat crews. We called this “the fifty mission crush.”

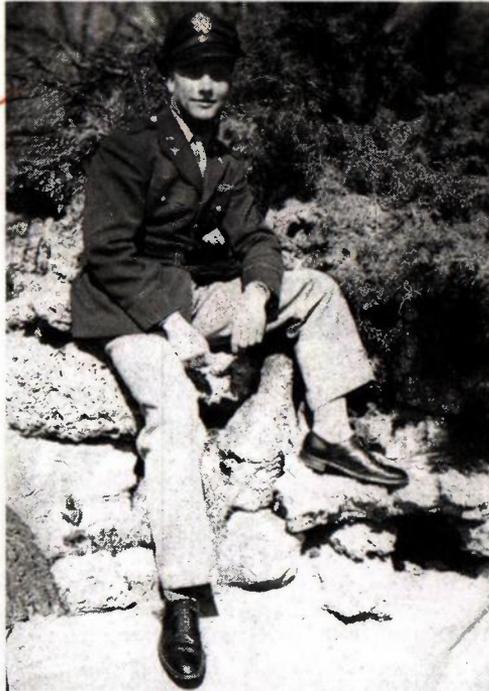
I remember that the officer’s blouse cost \$32.50, trousers were \$12.00, wool shirts (worn without a blouse) \$8.80, and a trench coat (with removable lining) was \$40.00.

My parents took the train to San Marcos for the big occasion and brought with them a specialty of my mother’s - a red, white and blue checkerboard cake. I brought the cake to the barracks the night before graduation and made the mistake of telling one of my “buddies” what was in the box. Saturday, February 5, 1944 was an eventful and busy day. By the time I returned to the barracks for the last time that night, my barracks mates had eaten all but a very small piece and a few crumbs. Just beginning a career as an officer and a gentleman, I could do nothing but forgive them.

My records show that I ranked academically 8th out of a class of 294.



## Dual Rated



*Newly Commissioned  
Bombardier School  
Roswell, New Mexico*

A few weeks before graduating from aerial navigation school, we were asked if any of us were interested in going to bombardier training and earn another set of wings. Such an achievement would qualify us to become dual rated. In that era, the B-29 was the main attraction as a new system. Reportedly it would require dual rated navigator-bombardiers.



I was delighted to learn of my next orders - 12 weeks at Roswell Army Air Base (New Mexico) to study the intricacies of the Norden bombsight. It had been a secret device until recently, which necessitated the wearing of side arms by everyone associated with the instrument. Also, it was such a sophisticated and highly technical piece of hardware that one of the publicity pieces claimed that it could put a bomb in a pickle barrel from 20,000 feet.

I received my commission as a second lieutenant with my navigator wings, which meant that I would be going to bombardier school "in grade." The whole class at Roswell would be made up of officers. I don't know if the fact that all bombardier students were officers made any difference or not, but the Mess Hall at Roswell had the best quality of food of any during my military career.

While the Norden bombsight occupied over 90 percent of our training, we were exposed to other bomb-aiming devices. One of those was designed for use on a strafe-bomber (low altitude bombing) and was made by National Cash Register in Dayton, Ohio.

It was an L-shaped mechanism mounted by hinges and secured to the bulkhead of the glass-nosed compartment of a medium bomber. The vertical arm of the device had numbers representing altitude (20-200 feet) and the horizontal arm's inscriptions noted air speed (200 to 400 mph). Wires were attached to each arm with beads to move along each wire. The bombardier would position each bead at the anticipated air speed and altitude, lean back against the headrest and align the beads. When the line of sight crossed the target, he would release the bomb. According to a comic reporter, if the bomb missed the target, the bombsight would ring up "No Sale."



I was a navigator on a B-25, and my missions were predominately strafe-bomber types. So, the idea of having a bombardier toggle bombs from a low level is ludicrous. Circumstances are such that the pilot can't determine in advance his exact altitude nor his air speed, and his experience for releasing the bombs is usually much more reliable.

A tradition which evolved from earlier classes of dual-rated navigator-bombardiers involved the wings worn on a shirt or blouse. Regulations forbid more than one set of wings to be worn; however, most civilians, and especially pretty girls at home, didn't know this. I don't know if it was the brainchild of an enterprising jeweler in Roswell or a couple of graduates heading on leave for a couple of weeks, but the idea was born. A set of "furlough wings" was created by soldering a miniature set of bombardier wings onto the top of regulation navigator wings. This was sure to attract attention and could result in a great evening out on the town.



*"Furlough Wings"*



Having established good study habits, I applied myself when necessary to learn about Dr. Norden's contraption. At graduation (there were 158 of us), I was informed that I was third in the class academically.



## Deming, New Mexico

In May, 1944, the only thing I knew about Deming, New Mexico, was that my father spent several months there at Camp Cody during World War I. He and several thousand others served as a deterrent to Pancho Villa and his band of renegades from Mexico.

Now, as a newly commissioned second lieutenant in the Army Air Corps and wearing the wings of an aerial navigator, I was about to complete additional training to qualify me as an aerial bombardier in Roswell, New Mexico. About half the class would be sent to the Mediterranean Theater to be part of a B-25 Bomb Group on the island of Corsica. The other half would be divided into several units and sent to other bombardier schools to serve as instructors to aviation cadets. Reputedly, the least desirable of the four locations was Deming, located near the Mexican border and over 50 miles from any other town.

As it turned out, I was assigned there and served over six months, longer than at any other location. It was not without a regimented work load and moments of excitement and enjoyment. Deming Army Air Base had an elevation of 4,300 feet above sea level. As such, its air was more rarified so that extra precautions had to be taken when flying. Normally, the use of oxygen was mandatory when flying over 10,000 feet; but since night air posed even more problems, oxygen had to be utilized once the plane took off and left the traffic pattern.

Training missions usually consisted of the pilot, instructor and three cadets. Two cadets operated in the glass nose where the bombsight was mounted while the other



remained in the back. The latter served as a photographer to record the accuracy of the practice bombs. A flash showed up at night and a white plume of smoke marked the spot in the daytime. It was necessary to have an opening in the bottom of the plane through which the camera would be aimed. This was called the camera hatch.

On one particular night mission, as soon as the cadets had positioned themselves and the plane was climbing to the proper altitude, the instructor checked to see if their masks were on. The photographer had not complied, so the instructor hastened to reprimand him. On reaching bombing altitude, the instructor checked on all cadets again. Much to the instructor's surprise, the photographer was still unmasked. After being "chewed out" for disobeying orders, the cadet said, "But sir, I've got the camera hatch open and I'm getting plenty of air."

All cadets wore parachute harnesses, which had D-rings on the front of the chest. To wear the parachute, a chest pack could be snapped easily onto the harness. It was S.O.P. (Standard Operating Procedure) to wear the chutes as the cadets moved about in the plane. In getting from the rear of the plane to the nose, it was necessary to walk on a catwalk, which crossed the bomb bay. This was not a particularly hazardous chore since there were struts to hang onto.

However, on one particular night mission, a cadet must have slipped or tripped as he was crossing the catwalk - and fell out through the bomb bay doors. Needless to say, the practice mission was aborted, the aircraft's position was radioed to the tower, and a near panic ensued. Because it was dark, it was futile to look for him, so the authorities waited for dawn. Once the light became bright enough, a number of planes were sent to fly precise search patterns. Fortunately he was spotted and a truck was sent to pick him up. He was found dragging his parachute behind him. (He didn't want to have to pay for losing government property.)



I still wonder what happened to Aviation Cadet Koch. He was a natural leader, excellent student and held a high-ranking cadet officer's title. We respected one another, and one day he approached me with a favor. His parents were both born in Germany and immigrated to the United States and became citizens. However, with the general attitude toward both naturalized Japanese and Germans as potential spies, our government was going to extreme measures to prevent them from reaching positions where they could learn sensitive information. Cadet Koch wanted me to be a character witness for him since he may not be able to graduate because his parents were German-born. The timing of this was poor since I received orders to leave for South Carolina to become a crew member on a B-25 and left before his hearing.

A perk we had was the opportunity to take weekend trips in an AT-11, a training plane we used. The trick was to get two pilots who wanted to go to the same destination so that I could be their navigator. Another caveat was that we could not go beyond 1,000 miles. With my home in Boone, Iowa, I had hoped for Des Moines, but it was just out of range. I found two fellows from South Dakota, so we teamed up to go to Sioux City, Iowa. This was close enough to their home as well as being somewhat convenient to the home of a girl I knew in southwest Minnesota.

I worked out another trip, this time to Omaha, Nebraska, which enabled me to spend a weekend with my parents and maternal grandparents. My father and grandfather both worked for the Chicago and North Western Railway and got passes on the train, which ran between Boone and Omaha.



## Training As A Crew

Although we formed our crew in Columbia, South Carolina, we soon headed north and west to Greenville, South Carolina where we would spend the next twelve weeks learning how to work together as a unit.

We were fortunate to have Dick (Rip) Coyne as our pilot and “crew commander”. Prior to receiving his wings, he trained in a B-25; so adjusting to a new plane was not necessary. His skills as a pilot were outstanding, and he possessed great leadership characteristics which served him well in his future civilian occupation.

Joe (Roddy) Rapach was both the youngest and smallest member of our crew. He graduated from single engine pilot school and aspired to be a fighter pilot, so adjusting to a much larger “bird” was quite a challenge. It was told that during his indoctrination flight, he almost had to put his feet up on the instrument panel to get sufficient leverage to pull back the “steering wheel.” He soon got used to it and became a very good copilot.

Our flight engineer and top turret gunner was Rollie Heskett who seemed infatuated with mechanical equipment of all kinds. He was quick to correct anyone who called an engine a motor. He always responded by asking the person where he was going to get an extension cord long enough. Family was important to him; and he invited us all to visit him after the war so that we could enjoy his mother’s chicken and dumplings.

We had quite a “songbird” as a radio operator. Bob Schelin supposedly had been a student at the Julliard School of Music, so was called on frequently to provide



entertainment. He turned twenty one en route overseas and reportedly inherited a large sum of money. Neither of these two assets seemed to affect his pleasant personality, and he was a steady performer at his station just aft the bomb bays.

Orland Gage was the “old man” of our crew and, as tail gunner, he was responsible for our armament duties. Because of his maturity and knowledge, as well as the fact he was able to perform a variety of other duties, he earned the rank of Technical Sergeant. Tail gunners usually had a ceiling rank of Staff Sergeant. Upon returning to Idaho after the war, he joined the National Guard. He was called to serve in the Korean conflict and eventually earned the rank of Major. As a result, eventually he held the highest rank of any of the crew.

In being able to respond to conditions of war time and battle, it was necessary to be exposed to such simulated activities. These involved gunnery training, bombing runs, navigational exercises, formation flying and other challenges to test our reflexes and decision making abilities.

There was a gunnery range at Myrtle Beach, South Carolina (about 150 miles or so away) so that practice could be performed over the Atlantic Ocean instead of land. We needed to spend two periods there to hone our skills properly and were scheduled to fly out and back on a particular Saturday. As luck would have it, a frontal system covered Greenville shortly after three or four of the planes left the runway. It would prevent us from returning that evening; so we spent the night there and conducted our second day of gunnery training on Sunday. This meant that we didn't have to make two trips; but best of all, it meant we didn't have to clean our 50 caliber machine guns twice.



However, this did have a bum element. A big band, of the Dick Jergens category, was booked to play at the Officer's Club and I had a date. Needless to say, I had to call from Myrtle Beach and break it.

Each time I meet Orland at a Bomb Group Reunion, he reminds me of a nighttime bombing mission we had while at Greenville. The lighted target was on a lake and we were flying at a few thousand feet. Previous daytime bombing missions had not resulted in scores that made me proud. I attributed this to thermals and gusty winds aloft. These elements are not usually present at night, so the air is often glassy smooth. On my first pass, my bomb hit "dead on" and put out the bulls-eye light. It took half an hour for the maintenance crew to get the lights functioning again. Once more, Rip did another great job in holding the plane perfectly level so that my bomb completed a "one-two" punch and the light went out again. This time the maintenance crew closed their shop to wait for daylight, and we went home.

The city of Greenville had a "Blue Law" that prevented the movie theaters from operating on Sunday nights until 9:00 p.m. This was designed to take away any temptation from attending Sunday evening church services.

Greenville was also the home of Furman University. Unlike today's large campus, there were two inner-city campuses, both with the student bodies being largely female. This was a real attraction to the servicemen nearby. One dormitory had three coeds, named Peggy, all with the same last names. Fortunately, they could be identified further by the fact that one was a blonde; one was a brunette and the other a redhead.



The Norden bombsight was one of the most highly technical devices used in WW II. It was our job to be able to “field strip” it if necessary. It’s ironic that today I’m a klutz when it comes to operating a computer. I probably couldn’t compete with a K-5 grade student.



*Norden bombsight*



# Services For The Serviceman (World War II)

World War II connotes bloodshed, violence, loneliness and heartaches. But there were many efforts made to counter them.

Faith communities throughout the country responded to many needs of the serviceman or servicewoman. The American Red Cross was both stateside and overseas, as was the United Services Organization (USO).

During my three years plus in uniform, I had opportunities to avail myself of all three of these efforts.

The first exposure of such was while in basic training at Jefferson Barracks Military Post, Missouri. (just south of St. Louis). We gathered in an auditorium-like facility to watch and to listen to three medical students from a local university. They entertained us by lip-synching the songs from an album by Mary Martin, Bing Crosby and Jack Teagarden, the trombone playing band leader. It was my first time hearing or seeing this type of talent, and I really got a kick out of it.

While at a College Training Detachment in Carbondale, Illinois, we “cadets,” as the local citizenry called us prematurely, were treated like royalty. There were 250 of us and many attended Sunday church services. Even though many of us would attend anyway, there was an added incentive connected with most churches. Church members often invited us to their homes for dinner and socializing. More often than not, these families included young ladies who were of dating age.



The Carbondale Methodist Church members and their pastor, Dr. M. S. Harvey, were especially hospitable. In fact, “cadets” provided the complete service one Sunday by furnishing ushers, voices for the choir, a talented vocalist for a soloist, someone to read scriptures and another to give the sermon.

Most cities that had military bases near them provided events for R & R (recreation and relaxation). Houston, which was near Ellington Field, Texas, a pre-flight facility for both bombardiers and navigators, hosted the cadets (we were officially given that title by now) in a variety of ways. Every Sunday afternoon, a large group of girls, called the Corps Club, reserved the Plantation Ballroom, provided a big band and invited us to spend a few hours having fun. What better way to spend “open post” time, the period when we didn’t have to be confined to the base?

The real Mecca for the USO was New York City, and I got to be a part of it. Prior to forming our crew in Columbia, we were given a furlough. Warren Lipman, who was from the Bronx, invited me to his home for a few days en route to Iowa. Never having been there, I quickly accepted. We took advantage of the USO “Canteen” (or whatever it was called) and were given tickets to a variety of entertainment venues, including the Broadway musical, *Carmen Jones*, and the Roxy Theatre. We enjoyed almost a non-stop tour of the famous sights such as the Empire State Building, Rockefeller Center and Radio City Music Hall, Greenwich Village, the Automat, and many more.

My first USO show overseas was held on the island of Biak, north of New Guinea. It starred Candy Jones and her *Cover Girls Abroad*. When not being an entertainer, Jones was a professional model, and the program was mostly music with very shapely gals providing the songs and dances.



We were based for a few weeks at Nadzab, New Guinea (the armpit of the world). Our duty was to fly a few bombing missions to “mop up” Japanese bases at Wewak and Rabaul. Even though the Red Cross had a checkered reputation at times, I saw nothing to make me a believer. In fact, they supervised a “day room” type of building (screened-in, with tables for cards, letter writing, etc., record player and light refreshments).

But it was their presence on the flight line one day that sold me. We were scheduled to fly two missions, morning and afternoon. I remember it well because it was my brother’s birthday. The Red Cross ladies met us after the first “milk run” and furnished us with sandwiches, drinks, etc. while the planes were being refitted with bombs, ammo and fuel for our second round trip.

While at Lingayen Gulf, in northwest Luzon (part of the Philippine Islands), we had visits from two USO groups. There was a baseball park a short distance from our base, which just happened to be on the sandy beach of the gulf. A road show of the musical “Oklahoma” was scheduled for two nights at the park. A stage had been erected on the infield so the audience could view it from the grandstand (capacity—several hundred).

It was a great show with remarkably good technical support (lights, sound, etc.). Even though the first night was for our bomb group, and the second for the P-38 fighter group just adjacent to us, I liked it so well that I went back the second night.

A few weeks later, Joe E. Brown, a popular comedian with a big, wide mouth, stopped by. His basic efforts were to relive many of his well known movie rolls, such as Elmer the Great. There was a “curtain raiser” act, which I don’t recall; but I really enjoyed Joe E.



Danny Kaye had become quite a star with his movie rolls and his “double talk” lyrics. While on Okinawa, I tried to see him; but all I got from a picture I took using a Brownie box camera was a flyspeck. The crowd must have been a few thousand, but the sound system was good enough to allow us in the rear to hear him quite well.

My last recollection of entertainers for the troops occurred when we approached our destination of Fort Lawton, Washington (near Seattle). While on board our troop ship, the General John Pope, carrying 6,000 “returnees” from Japan, a small tour boat met us out in Puget Sound. It carried a band and a female vocalist to welcome us home. She sang several familiar tunes, such as “Sentimental Journey,” but one was really new to us all. It was “Symphony,” but it sounded like she was saying “Sympathy,” a song that I knew, but the music didn’t match. Nevertheless it was a great way to welcome us “home.”

I’m positive that the service personnel around the world today are every bit as grateful as I was to be able to avail themselves of the entertainers of this generation. Thanks again to the USO and others.



## My Friend, The B-25



*Combat Crew Training,  
Greenville, South Carolina*

Most people identify the B-25 as the airplane that Lt. Col. Jimmy Doolittle piloted when he led a flight of 16 of them to bomb Japan in April of 1942. It was named after Gen. Billy Mitchell who was one of the most innovative tacticians in the history of the Army Air Corps, now called the Air Force.



This bird had many assets. As a medium bomber, it was capable of flying long and short missions. Also, it could bomb from both medium (8,000 to 10,000 feet) and low (tree-top) altitudes. Its configuration could be changed to accommodate either a Norden bombsight in a Plexiglas-enclosed nose or eight 50-caliber machine guns. It had reasonable speed, "going downhill" at 325-350 miles per hour, while it could cruise at a much slower, fuel saving rate. However, it did have a shortcoming. It was noisy - really noisy, especially when one was seated between its two 1700 horsepower, Wright R-2600 engines.

As a rule, its primary function was to act as a strafing-bomber. Much of the terrain in the Western Pacific was ideal for hiding both strategic and tactical targets, so it was both more accurate and easier to detect the targets from a low altitude. As such, the bombs were attached to a parachute to slow the descent in order to keep the explosives from damaging the low flying B-25s. These parafrags (fragmentary) or parademos (demolition) weapons were used depending upon the nature of the target.

Shipping "strikes" varied from trying to sink camouflaged fishing fleets and small cargo ships to the more traditional wartime vessels such as destroyers and even aircraft carriers. As a matter of fact, I flew on a mission where our group of 24 planes sank a destroyer and lost only one of our planes. Near the end of the war, our group was credited with sinking an aircraft carrier, but our commanding officer, who was leading the "strike," and all his crew were lost in the attempt.

Over land, the types of targets included airfields, airplane factories (in Japan), and alcohol plants, and we also provided support to our ground troops in their efforts to defeat the Japanese. It was tactically sound to fly from land to sea when bombing because the water was much less hostile in the event a plane was shot down. In



case the crew was able to escape the plane after it crash-landed on the water, an air-sea rescue plane, which usually was in the vicinity and out of range of enemy fire, was there to do its job.

The B-25 was also used for a variety of other missions. Because of its size, it was commonly used as a substitute transport. We had no “Gooney Birds” (C-47s) at our disposal, so our 25s were used for administrative missions. As long as the plane was not loaded with bombs and bullets, it had a lot of room for a payload. As a result, passengers were only a part of the “cargo” when it returned from certain areas. The makeshift Officer’s Club and Enlisted Men’s Club depended on these missions to keep their stocks of beer and booze from falling below a critical inventory.

Other more relevant uses included using the Mitchell for weather reconnaissance missions. (See Appendix 3) These were carried out daily and the data acquired was critical in planning subsequent bombing missions. They lasted 8-10 hours and usually consumed a full load of fuel.

Another mission was called a “night heckler” which was designed to give the ground troops a different type of support. (See Appendix 1) A tactic of the Japanese was to fire artillery shells into the American positions at night. This caused both casualties and sleep deprivation. We flew above the range of the artillery and spotted the flashes from enemy artillery. Having an identical map or grid like that of our troops, we would identify the positions of the enemy so that our “ground pounders” could return accurate fire and try to silence the intruders. It was usually cold (we had no heaters and the terrain was usually mountainous in northern Luzon, Philippines) and monotonous.



To illustrate how “games” were oftentimes played, we were returning from a mission in New Guinea to our very primitive base at Nadzab farther down the Markham River valley. A large thunderhead loomed in front of us, potentially blocking our progress. Since we had no oxygen equipment (necessary to fly over 10,000 feet) and no heaters (unnecessary when we operate near the Equator), the only option was to fly under it and get wet. The pilots got down on the deck and hopped over trees and through the rain. This resulted in our being able to pick out kunai grass from our engine cowlings after we landed. Kunai grass is indigenous to New Guinea and grows 10-15 feet tall.

Our six-man crew epitomized the fact that wars are fought by the young and supposedly invincible. The day our crew was formed was our co-pilot’s birthday. Roddy Rapach was 20. Rip Coyne, our pilot, was six months older. Next youngest was Bob Schelin, the radio operator, who would turn 21 in four months. My 21<sup>st</sup> birthday was only three weeks away. Rollie Heskett, flight engineer and top turret gunner, was already 21. The “old man” of the crew, at 25, was Orland Gage, our tail gunner. He was married with a 3-year-old son. Sadly, both Roddy and Rollie were killed during a mission over Borneo while giving ground support to the Australians who were attempting to recover that country from the enemy. (See Appendix 4)

It is interesting to report that when the ill-fated B-25 crashed into the harbor, it broke open. This allowed the radio operator and tail gunner to be thrown clear. This is a textbook example of the wisdom of flying from land to sea. One of our Catalinas (a PBY air-sea rescue plane) witnessed the whole operation and was there to pick up the survivors.



## Navy Flyers Really Have It Made

On June 24, 1945, I was selected as part of two flight crews to go to the island of Biak, north of New Guinea, to bring back to our base at Lingayen Gulf, on the northeastern shores of Luzon in the Philippines, a brand new B-25. We “dead-headed” one way in a plane named “Umbriago.”

It was necessary to refuel at Tacloban strip on the island of Leyte. It so happened that the Leyte Gulf was FULL of American ships — the Third Fleet. There appeared to be 400 to 500 vessels at anchor. We learned that there were 18 aircraft carriers among them.

Instead of departing after a short delay, it was discovered that our artificial horizon instrument was faulty, so it had to be replaced. This meant we were destined to spend a couple of nights just waiting. Upon investigating, I learned that the USS Belleau Wood was a part of the “armada.” A friend of mine was part of the crew of this light aircraft carrier, so we decided to visit him. What developed was a most enlightening experience.

Four others decided to join me, so we hopped aboard the water taxi and were taken to this “junior” size carrier. The Shangri La, a full-size carrier, was nearby and really dwarfed the Belleau Wood. Nevertheless, the latter’s 25 airplanes had destroyed 109 Japanese planes in the past four months.

One would think that the officer corps on board such a ship would consist mainly of Annapolis graduates, but there were only four on this carrier. There was the commanding officer and the executive officer plus two new ensigns. One of the



latter was assigned to be our guide to tour the ship since my friend had been left back in San Diego.

He was very thorough and showed us their barbershop, laundry, machine shops, kitchens, storerooms and, especially, their soda fountain. Fortunately for us it was inventory time and the facility was closed for business. This made it easy for them to provide the five of us with two half gallons of ice cream - which we eagerly consumed, together with fountain Cokes.

Due to the thorough tour, we missed the last "taxi" back to land; so the authorities seemed pleased to have us spend the night with them. We cleaned up before dinner and enjoyed the luxury of leather-upholstered chairs in their lounge before our meal, which turned out to be a memorable event.

Negro waiters, attired in white uniforms, served us steaks on silver platters (we had our choice of the meat being well-done to rare). We drank real lemonade and had more ice cream. Our manners were challenged for many reasons, not to mention the fact that we had white cloth tablecloths and napkins. It was indeed a real dining pleasure.

Afterwards, we were invited to join a select group of personnel on chairs positioned on the large elevator platform a couple of decks below the flight deck. The ship's captain, over the loud speaker, welcomed us on board as the elevator rose to its top level. On the superstructure was a movie screen arranged so that we could watch the film from our seats. We saw Elizabeth Taylor starring in the movie, "National Velvet."



After the movie, they assigned us three officers to different two-man rooms by moving cots into them. They even turned on the showers for us so we could bathe before going to bed.

Each of these rooms had bunk beds, innerspring mattresses, two sheets, bedspreads, and NO mosquito nets, with individual desks, wall safes, ample closet and shelf space plus air conditioning. Another perk was the fact that all their drinking water was ice water.

We were advised to leave our shoes outside the doors of the officers' quarters overnight. In the morning, we found them more polished than they had been since we left stateside.

Ironically, since we weren't used to those mattresses, our night's rest was the only negative factor during this luxurious visit.

Breakfast consisted of real maple syrup for our flapjacks, toast from pop-up toasters, apples from the refrigerator with the "dew" still on them.

We thanked our hosts many times for this special treat before getting on the water taxi. It was obviously a "local" because we made five or six stops en route to land.

Since there was a war to fight and a special job to do, we took care of our duties and boarded "Umbriago" to head to Biak, knowing we would have to land for an overnight on Peleliu Island en route.

I suppose an old saying is appropriate at this time.

"The Navy gets the gravy while the Army gets the beans."



P.S. As a bit of trivia, I found it most interesting that, especially for our servicemen on Biak, making purchases at the Post Exchange could be very confusing. Legal tender was from four countries and the rate of exchange was different for all of them. We dealt with Dutch guilders, Philippine pesos, Australian pounds and American dollars.



## Friendly Fire

The media has used its muscle to publicize the occasional incidents where American fighting men have been killed as a result of accidents caused by other Americans in both Iraq and Afghanistan, as well Vietnam and the Gulf War. While friendly fire is always a tragic incident, there are few combat personnel from World War II or any other war that cannot cite examples of this.

In my case, within three or four weeks our squadron experienced four accidents involving the deaths of 19 of our men and an unknown number of Army infantrymen. Since I participated in the last of these, let me relate the details.

Our 38th Bombardment Group consisted of four squadrons of B-25 medium bombers. These Mitchells, as they were called, were similar in configuration to the 16 aircraft that Jimmy Doolittle led when he flew off the carrier Hornet in April 1942, and bombed Japan.

Only one of our group's aircraft had a glass nose suitable for accommodating a bombardier and a Norden bombsight. The latter was the brainchild of a genius who created this fixture from a combination of basic physics principles. As I've said before, a properly trained operator was supposed to be able to "put a bomb in a pickle barrel from 20,000 feet." The early training of bombardiers was so secret that they all had to wear side arms.

The reason there was only one bombsight in our group is because our main forte was low level bombing and strafing. With eight 50-caliber machine guns in the nose, there was no room for anything else.



On May 23, 1945, our group was asked to give ground support to Army infantrymen who were pushing north on the island of Luzon (Philippines). (See Appendix 2) They needed to cross a river, near Santa Fe, but the Japanese were dug in. It was believed that bombing from an altitude of 8,000 feet would be the best strategy since, among other things, our own men on the ground would be in less danger.

Our strategy was to have the “glass nose” lead the group that consisted of four squadrons of six planes each. When it came time to drop the bombs, a radio signal would be given and the other 23 planes would unload. A specific target for the bombardier was to be a smoke bomb that the infantry would send across the river.

However, the Japanese snuffed out the smoke and sent one of their own into our territory. Only our bombardier knows why; but he must have been as intent on the smoke as his target that he lost control of its location. As a result, he released his bombs and those of the other five planes in his squadron so that they fell on American troops. Fortunately, the other three squadrons realized what was happening and withheld their actions.

In order to complete our original mission (at least three quarters of it), the rest of us needed to deposit our bombs on the primary target. With only one bombsight (and it belonging to a very impotent B-25), it became necessary for the lead squadron to fly a “dry run” and repeat its intended mission with the bombardier signaling the other eighteen pilots when to holler “Bombs Away.”

If there was anything good connected with this horrible mistake, it was that there were no enemy fighters or anti-aircraft to make our mission all the more dangerous. (See Appendix 2)



Many months later, en route home on a troop ship, I struck up a conversation with an Army infantryman who was on the ground near Santa Fe, Luzon, on that fateful day mentioned earlier. He related that there were many casualties, including fatalities, as a result of the friendly fire perpetrated by the 38th Bomb Group.

So much for the theory that bombing from 8,000 feet would be safer for those on the ground.



## Lingayen Gulf

While Gen. MacArthur chose to make his famous return to the Philippines on the island of Leyte, he returned to the island of Luzon at Lingayen Gulf, over a hundred miles north of Manila. Landing was made in the province of Pangasinan, whose largest city was Dagupan and the region's market center.

Four months later, our crew landed in the same place. Shortly after we arrived there, the citizens of the area arranged a party for our group. It was held in a badly damaged provincial capitol building. Before our troops landed, the Navy had shelled the area pretty heavily. This didn't dampen the enthusiasm of the affair. They had an orchestra that played both native music and easily recognized music from home. Dancing was in order, but it was necessary to conform to the local customs. In order to get a dancing partner, it was necessary to get permission from the oldest member of the family who was present. Sometimes there were three generations to negotiate. Each family member older than the girl had to give permission.

Among the many GI (Government Issue) supplies we had acquired before shipping out was a map case, designed to hold our maps. It was bulky and hard to carry, but did have one feature. Its diameter was slightly larger than that of a bottle of spirits and the length could accommodate two bottles. By shimming the interior with an extra map or two, it could be used to carry its contents rather safely. I planned to use one of my "friends" when the war ended or when I got the message to go home, whichever came first. The other was designated for some contingency.



It didn't take long for that contingency to develop. Soon after we arrived at Lingayen, we decided to have a house built since there was space right on the beach. The officers from two crews got together to be joint homeowners and proceeded to contract with local craftsmen to construct a building with nipa shingles and bamboo. It took a combination of bartering and currency to close the deal. Among the bartering items was my bottle of "contingency."

The house was very roomy with lots of space for the six of us. It had a "kitchen" area at the rear, which was separated from the large room by our definition of a bar. On one side of it were two stools created by acquiring two tail gunner's seats from the graveyard of junked aircraft. They utilized the right diameter of bamboo so that the seat posts could be placed inside the hole of the bamboo. In addition, we enjoyed the gulf view from an expansive and covered front porch. Our domicile needed a name and Connie, the other navigator, came up with "Shangri Lodge."

There were shops throughout the area that sold a variety of products. One of them sold "ice cream" at one peso (50 cents) per dip. It was nothing but flavored ice chips, but it was refreshing.

We were fed pretty well in our mess hall, but I do remember a couple of instances where the old adage of feast or famine did apply. The mess sergeant received a large amount of pork chops and we had them for dinner and supper for several days before he was forced to reinstate "everybody's favorite," Spam. But the pork chops saga couldn't compare with our time with eggs. Our friend, the mess sergeant, inherited many cases of fresh eggs. We had eggs in many forms for all three meals, and we were urged to take home the hard-boiled variety for evening snacks.

With so many Army Air Corps assets in the area, the need for maintenance of instruments and other support equipment was essential. Anchored ships in



*Our Crew — l-r, back: Bob Lamb, navigator; Rip Coyne, pilot; Roddy Rapach, co-pilot — front: Rollie Heskett, flight engineer; Orland Gage, tail gunner; Bob Schelin, radio operator*

relatively quiet water were a perfect solution to achieve this goal. There was such a vessel anchored a few hundred yards from our shore.

Next to our location was a squadron, or group, of P-38s. It had been the “home” of Maj. Dick Bong, a famous fighter pilot who was a leading ace in the Pacific. Their group was known for its carefree style of flying. Here are a couple of examples.

Their commanding officer had a B-25 at his disposal for miscellaneous uses. On a return flight from Manila, with a plane load of passengers and supplies, he decided



to “buzz” our area before landing. He pulled out of the dive with a barrel roll (OK for a P-38, but not OK for a B-25). Upon landing, they found he had sprung the wings so severely that the plane had to be junked.

It was common to assign training missions to acquaint pilots with new equipment and flight strategies. One such exercise resulted in tragedy when the pilots decided to play “follow the leader.” As the leader was diving toward the instrument ship with his partner right on his tail, he hesitated in pulling out of his dive. This delay resulted in the partner not having enough room to pull up, and he crashed full-speed into the water, just missing the ship.

For a short time after arriving on the sandy shores there, we wondered if we were really in a combat zone. There were breakers from the waves so that body surfing was commonplace. But almost overnight, the waters became calm and were that way until we left.

In addition to our duties as a member of a flight crew, we were assigned other chores to perform around our flying responsibilities. One of those was censoring mail. This was given to the officers and took a couple of hours, two or three times a week. We were to be aware of any intentional or accidental revelations of information that might be sensitive to the war operations and to report them to authorities. Occasionally we’d stumble onto a fellow who had one or more lovers . he was trying to balance while supposedly being faithful to another.

Rescuing downed flyers from the ocean was a very critical mission. This was given to Navy flyers, mostly, who flew large “pontoon” planes designed to land on and take off from the water. The PBM (Mariner) and PBY (Catalina) were chosen to perform these chores. On a particularly busy day when our fighters and bombers were doing their job on Formosa, the Japanese were equally busy defending



themselves. As a result, many airmen found themselves in the water, from either parachuting or fleeing from a plane they had to “ditch.” Fortunately a PBM was in an area where it picked up a lot of business, so much so that its new load was too heavy for it to take off. The Mariner was over a hundred miles from the northern tip of Luzon, but the pilot chose to taxi over the sea until he could reach a safe harbor. While the story had a happy ending and all on board reached land safely, the plane had to be scrapped because of the damage done to the hull as it plowed through the waves.

There were times when things didn't work out, and I want to report on one of those. We flew a shipping sweep, which meant we were to try and sink enemy ships which were carrying certain cargo. As usual, our bombing run was low over the water and we dropped a single bomb to strike one ship at the water line. The bomb was slightly short and skipped like a stone, up over the deck and through the superstructure. It then rolled off the deck and into the water without exploding. The rest of the bombs on our plane were faulty that day, too. Other planes on our mission had similar problems, too. This “malady” persisted for two or three days until we were able to replace the faulty fuses that caused the problem. This was a classic example of the importance of quality control at all levels.

Even when there weren't problems of this sort, our target accuracy always had room for improvement. A tongue-in-cheek comment could often be heard that at least we were contributing to a food shortage by bombing the rice paddies and waters where fish lived.

Tragedy struck our crew during the time I was on a mission to bring back a new plane from Biak (This adventure is described in another chapter.) Due to the inequity in the number of personnel in each crew category, a different set of crew



members was selected to work together for every mission. Most of the rest of the group was sent to the Philippine island of Palawan to bomb a key target in Borneo, where the Australian Army was attempting to recover the city of Balikpapan from the Japanese.

My crewmates, Roddy (co-pilot) and Rollie (flight engineer), together with my navigator roommate (Connie), were aboard a plane that crashed in the water during a bombing run there. It was an example of “friendly fire.” A small Navy flight-control plane was offshore away from enemy fire, and was given the responsibility to direct the bombers as they flew their missions. A group of B-24s (The Jolly Rogers aka the 42nd Bomb Group) was to fly at several thousand feet, while we were to go in at tree-top level to strafe and bomb specific targets.

The Navy officer neglected to consider the time it took for bombs to drop from the B24s to reach its targets, however, and he sent our B-25s in at the same time the bombs from the B-24s reached the ground. In a sad quirk of fate, a bomb went through the wing of the plane occupied by my two crewmates. They crashed into the water and the plane broke open. The four in the front of the B-25 went down with the plane, but the two in the rear were thrown clear of the ship and into the water. Again, the air-sea rescue people were there to pick up the tail gunner and radio operator.

In the center of our group area was a lagoon, and built on stilts over a portion of the lagoon was our recreational area - our Officers Club. It was a steady hangout for a few of the men, but there were occasions when it drew heavy crowds. Whenever there was a fatality or MIA (Missing In Action), the deceased or missing was the subject of a wake—of sorts—without the body. Liquid refreshments were plentiful, toasts were made, solemn memories were recalled and songs were sung—lots of



*Shangri Lodge — l-r, back: Bob Lamb, Rip Coyne, George Shedd, Lou Pitts, Gordon Smith - front, Rudy, Filipino house boy*

songs. Since the structure was group property, all four squadrons had access to it. There were days, or nights, when it was a busy place.

After a particularly full evening of songs wherein we seemed to have an endless supply of both parodies and actual lyrics, our squadron commander, Zane Corbin, called both the squadron bombardier and me into his office. He seemed to be impressed with the fact that the two of us never ran out of songs to sing, so he asked us to compile a squadron song book so that everyone could join in on the words. We included songs by George M. Cohan, Irving Berlin and other composers of that flavor, as well as other contemporaries of the day. There were also some



salty ones for variety. Corbin shipped out before we completed our chore, but I still have the remnants of our effort. It has been sanitized a bit, but it does give an idea of our songfests.

Roommates of the deceased had an inherited responsibility. Personal effects needed to be cared for properly and with respect. Of course, there were items such as toiletries, playing cards and knickknacks, which could be discarded without any problems. In fact, I still have a pair of surgical shears, which I still use in my shop, and an old tablespoon with the imprint of MDUSA in the handle. We survivors acquired these “trinkets” by cutting cards for them. Everything of a real personal nature was tabulated and given to the personal effects officer in the squadron to be sent back to the next of kin.

We find individuals with no scruples in every organization, and there was at least one in our Squadron. Connie had bartered with an ANZAC (Australia New Zealand Army Corps) soldier for one of the latter’s uniform hats when we were in New Guinea. He planned to send it to his young son. He also had a portable typewriter. Unfortunately, we saw both of these items in the possession of other members of our squadron long after they were allegedly sent home. We hadn’t had the foresight to copy the serial number of the typewriter or record special features of the hat to identify them.

During the latter days of the War while on Okinawa, another heartbreak occurred. Without going into a lot of details, we lost another crew, also due to “friendly fire.” Lou and Smitty, the other pilot and co-pilot from our house at Lingayen, and their crew, went down during a shipping sweep. This left only my pilot, Rip, and me from the original six who lived in Shangri Lodge.



## Excitement After The Surrender

World War II was over as the Emperor of Japan informally surrendered to the United States on August 15, 1945, bringing peace to the world. The formal treaty was signed on September 2<sup>nd</sup>—thereafter referred to as V-J Day.

To all American military personnel stationed in the Pacific area, including those of us on the island of Okinawa, it was a natural feeling to assume there would be no more “excitement” until we got our orders to go home. Of course, this did not count the excitement, which many created by indulging in all sorts of liquid refreshments to celebrate the end of the conflict.

That, too, wore off in time, but Mother Nature had plans of her own to keep us on our toes. On August 24<sup>th</sup> we were alerted to expect a typhoon. This required our tent ropes to be secured and the tent stakes to be pounded more deeply into the ground. As it turned out, the eye of the typhoon missed us and we got a good soaking as well as practice for what the future held for us.

September 16<sup>th</sup> was nasty all day with rain and wind increasing in intensity until it became a real typhoon. This required us to make frequent trips outside to secure the tent by tightening the ropes and pounding the stakes. To keep from getting our clothes wet, we proceeded with our maintenance work in our birthday suits - and how those raindrops stung!

Sleep was at a premium, but at least we saved our tent and its contents. Not so for others because many of the homemade shacks (which some preferred) as well as



other tents were badly damaged. The results of this storm showed us the fury that can be generated by Mother Nature. But she wasn't through!

About three to four weeks later, on October 9<sup>th</sup>, she tested us again—with even greater intensity. When the tent stakes began to pull out and some of the ropes broke, we got the message. We intentionally pulled out the tent poles and flattened the whole tent. Then we followed up by placing large stones around the edge of the tent, hoping to prevent the wind from picking it up.

Prior to that, we put on our rain gear to protect us. My attire consisted of a seldom used trench coat, a pair of winter flying boots (there's a long story connected to why I had winter clothing in the Western Pacific), an air/sea-rescue wide-brimmed hat and a flashlight. As it turned out, the 80-90 mph storm lasted about 10 hours with extremely damaging consequences.

The men sought refuge wherever they could, which included the “womb tombs” carved into the sides of the hills. These were the burial sites for the native Okinawans. Reports were mixed as to whether it was better there or out in the storm.

I found a small pyramidal tent, used for supplies, which was still standing, and tried to use it for shelter until I found out why no one else was using it. Even the rats were desperate, so they had taken refuge in this tent, thereby leaving no reason for a human with common sense to remain.

Our road, mess hall and all the administration tents were located in a depression or small valley. When the storm built up, it created a wind tunnel through that area, which tore the corrugated roof off the Mess Hall and flung it, together with two-by-fours and other building materials onto nearby tents, etc. In attempting to



## Hat from survival kit – “my typhoon hat”



*Yellow side (at left) to attract attention – Sea Green side - for camouflage*

get C rations, K rations, or 10-in-1 rations from the mess area, we took the risk of being hit by debris of all kinds.

With no other options, many of us crawled back under our weighted-down tents and tried to sleep or protect ourselves. Others bedded down in air raid shelters, vehicles and anywhere they could, including the airplanes. Our whole fleet of B-25s suffered only minor damage.

Our tent “weathered the storm” remarkably well, except for the coat of mud that needed removing. Instead of a tent for six, it became a cozy tent for 10 after acquiring our four neighbors who lost theirs and much of their belongings. The extra hands helped to restore ours almost to its normal condition.



The meteorologists scared us when they announced that we should prepare for another typhoon within 48 hours. However, before it came time to batten down the hatches, the warning was rescinded. Needless to say, it was a welcome relief since we were pretty tired of cold rations. In all honesty, I must admit that some of those meals were pretty tasty.

My friend, Aub Sweezey, who was a bus driver in civilian life, became chief of the motor pool when the war ended and many of the original personnel were sent home. We had made friends with men in the 9<sup>th</sup> Station Hospital, a couple of miles from us. Having wheels available at any time was a real fringe benefit, so it was easy to visit them as well as others on the island.

There was a caveat connected with having a vehicle at one's disposal. Many of the servicemen also wanted wheels; therefore it was necessary to protect "your" property, even if it was only temporary. Stories were told about a few vehicles that disappeared and were never found, although most of them were.

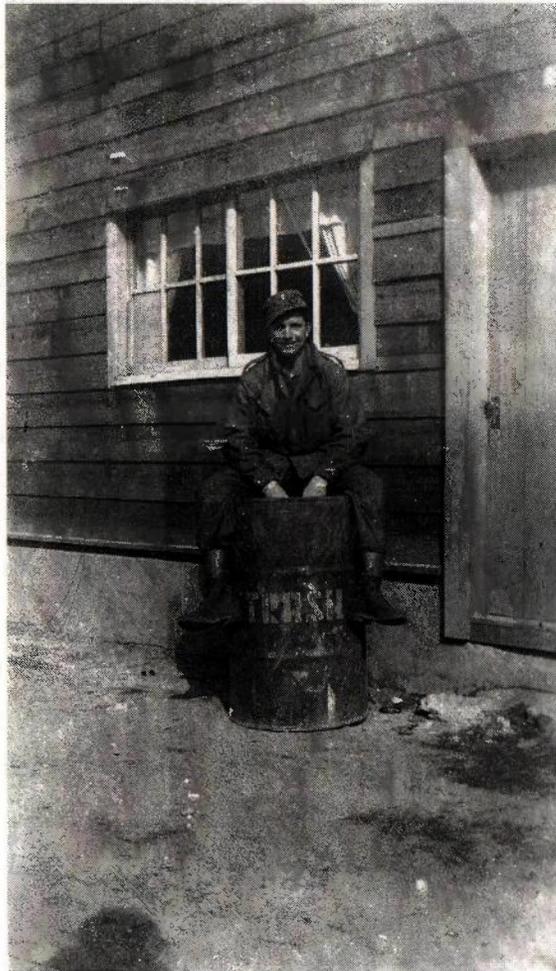
Since our mission was transient and moving north was our goal, many Jeeps, especially, were loaded aboard cargo planes and taken to the next destination. In this way the culprit could have his own personal transportation. To prevent this larceny, the driver would take the rotor from the carburetor so that the vehicle wouldn't start.

We were especially eager to accept our hospital friends' invitations to dinner on several consecutive days since our own menus were known to be rations from a box. They became experts at bartering by using 180 proof medicinal alcohol as a tool. Using their landing crafts, they found supply ships that had put to sea during the storm, so they traded for fresh fruit, vegetables and meat. It turned out that the cooks and bakers at the 9<sup>th</sup> Station were probably held in higher esteem than



anyone on the staff -- and we were there to benefit. It didn't hurt either that my friend, Aub, was in basic training with the hospital's butcher.

Which all goes to prove that it's not always what you know, but whom you know that counts.



*In front of BOQ —  
near Fukuoka, Kyushu, Japan*



## Land of The Rising Sun

Immediately after the signing of the peace treaty, there was an influx of American troops into the country of Japan. The Occupational Force was to spend an indefinite time there, so it was incumbent that living quarters be established as quickly as possible. The 38<sup>th</sup> Bomb Group was assigned to a former Mitsubishi aircraft assembly plant, south of the city of Fukuoka in the northern portion of the island of Kyushu, near the city of Futsikayishi.

Our group migrated gradually, according to the talents our personnel had. For example, Orland Gage, my tail gunner, had been employed by Potlatch Lumber Co., Potlatch, Idaho; so he was familiar with the timber industry. As a result, he was put in charge of the saw mill—an important facility because lumber was necessary for converting warehouses and industrial buildings into living quarters and work areas.

I ended up as a member of the rear guard. Apparently my talent was “turning off the lights”—and I didn’t get to Japan until after Thanksgiving. Having spent several months in the tropics, our uniforms were hardly suitable for the anticipated winter, so cold weather gear was issued to all of us.

Each of the rooms (created from traditional storage buildings) in our Bachelor Officer Quarters—everyone was a bachelor—accommodated six of us and our cots. Since central heating was out of the question, each room had a kilowatt electric heater, which had a parabolic copper reflector to heat a 150 square foot area. It was definitely not a pot belly wood stove like we had in basic training. It did provide us



with hot water every morning for shaving. The water came from a Jerry can placed in front of the heater overnight.

Jerry cans were very versatile items. They were rectangular in nature, had a convenient handle, and held five gallons of liquid. The shape was designed to fit into depressions on either side of the Jeep hood to carry gasoline for the vehicle. Incidentally, the name, Jeep, is a contraction of General Purpose Vehicle (GPV), its official name.

Prior to heading for Japan, many of us were alerted that we should be prepared for bartering. From a central supply source, I bought a large container of rations. This proved to be a good move.

From our “base,” en route to get the train or just sightseeing on foot, we encountered many young boys eager to buy cigarettes. With the value of occupational currency destined to become devaluated, it was advisable to convert it into real property. We were issued cigarettes at a nickel a pack (50 cents a carton) and the neighborhood kids would pay twenty dollars a carton. P.S. I didn’t smoke.

We became friends with a couple of them who took us to their homes to meet their parents. It was an education to be able to view a different culture first hand. We learned that American rations were in high demand and the Japanese were willing to barter. Among the many things I acquired, my prize was a lovely red kimono — for two seven-pound cans of cheddar cheese. It was allegedly a wedding gown and had certain decorations to verify that. I’ve never tried to prove it, though.

A large number of Japanese were farmers. Usually the lots of land were very small and required constant fertilization since crop rotation wasn’t practical. Among the first things our bomb group did when it set up shop was to build a latrine. In fact, it



*Kimono — Daughter Becky, model*



was a 36 “holer.” That resulted in the farmers bidding on a contract to remove the waste for use on their rice paddies, etc.

It was converted into a liquid solution and carried to the field in buckets hung from a yoke on the farmer’s shoulders. Some G.I. wag referred to this scene as “The Chipper Little Nipper with a Dipper.”

Socializing was S.O.P., so it was necessary to create both Officers’ and Enlisted Men’s Clubs. Extra special attention was given to this chore and the results showed it. The E.M. Club was completed first, and to dedicate it, the nurses from the hospital in Fukuoka were invited to help. They responded and it was a big success.

The O. Club was created from a two-story warehouse. One lower half was scheduled for the lounge. Moonlight requisitioning was in high gear and resulted in a classic curved bar with a brass rail. A small dance floor was built and, thanks to one of our pilots who was an artist, murals adorned the wall. It even had a powder room for female guests. Our dedication was scheduled for Christmas Eve, and the nurses obliged us by responding to our invitation.



Singing was always a part of the routine for many of the patrons and parodies flourished. One of the latter was based on the song, "Always."

I'll be overseas - always.

Wearing these O.D.s - always.

When the things you plan

Need a helping hand,

I'll be in Japan - always.

When they count the score - always,

I'll need just two more - always.

Not for the invasion, nor for the duration,

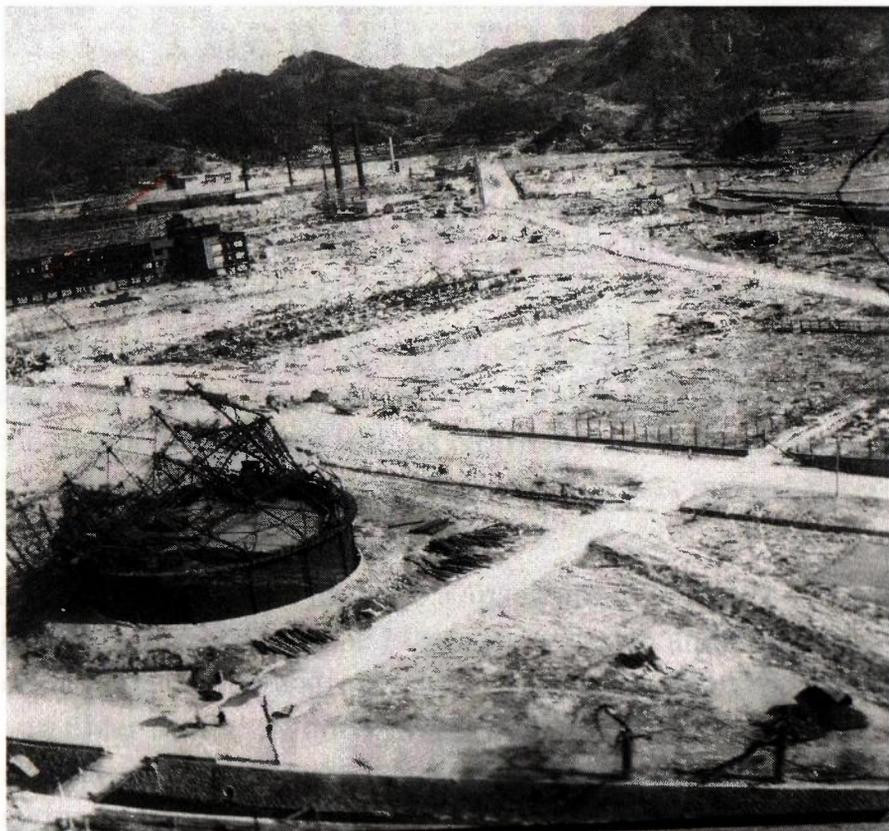
But for occupation - and always.



As mentioned elsewhere, we needed to fly four hours a month to qualify for our flying pay, which was an extra 50 percent of our base pay. On one such “training” mission, we flew over the remains of both Hiroshima and Nagasaki. With a Brownie box camera, I took shots through the front canopy of the plane. They showed the destruction of a basic residential city and an industrial city. Interestingly, the bridges and trolley tracks were unaffected in Hiroshima.



*Hiroshima — shortly after the bomb*



*Nagasaki — shortly after the bomb*



## And Then There Were Four

In other parts of this memoir, I talked about the personnel of my B-25 crew, our training, our bonding and our various duties. And I talked about the “friendly fire” accident that took the lives of two of the six of us. In an effort to help bring closure to the families involved, I took a train trip to visit the homes of Joe (Roddy) Rapach, co-pilot, and Rollie Heskett, flight engineer and top turret gunner.

Roddy lived in Buckner, Illinois with his widowed mother, and was the youngest of six children. I had spent three months in Carbondale, Illinois, attending College Training Detachment at Southern Illinois Normal University, a precursor to entering cadet training. It was most convenient that I was invited to return after the war to visit friends there as Buckner was nearby.

Arrangements had been made with Mrs. Rapach about my visit. I felt rather awkward when I arrived because the blinds were drawn and two large, framed photos of Roddy hung on the wall with black drapes on them. To add to the somberness, an older brother, who was brain-damaged due to a fall many years earlier, sat not so quietly on the piano bench. Our conversation was very cool, so I began by asking Mrs. Rapach if the fact that officials had recovered Roddy’s downed plane and he had been buried with honors in an Australian cemetery hadn’t provided her with some peace of mind.

It was fortunate for me that a daughter arrived about that time because her mother still believed Roddy was just Missing in Action and would be coming home. Somehow, the official message of his death and burial had never been received.



Understandably, she broke down and her daughter was there to comfort her. As soon as it was appropriate, I excused myself and returned to Carbondale.

The situation was quite the reverse when I arrived at the Heskett home in Junction City, Kansas. Rollie had two brothers and they lived with their parents on a small acreage where they raised chickens. He had invited me many times to visit him and enjoy his mother's chicken and dumplings.

One brother became my escort and took me to visit friends and relatives. When I asked about an official report of Rollie's recovery and burial, he hadn't heard either. But they were more pragmatic and had already accepted the fact that he would not be coming home.

A sidebar to the visit involved an excuse to celebrate my presence by buying a bottle of whiskey. It so happened that Walter Winchell, one of the most renowned newscasters of the day, had revealed that one of the top 10 revenues of personal income tax for the previous year, had come from a man living outside of Junction City, Kansas who had no visible means of income. In other words, he was a bootlegger. So it was there that we went to acquire our booty.

We were late getting back to the Heskett homestead and Mrs. Heskett was waiting for us with a dinner of chicken and dumplings. We lingered a bit too long since I had a train to catch, so I made a hasty farewell, thanked them for their hospitality and the brother took me to catch the train. We were too late to board it at the Junction City depot, but the brother told me I still could get on the train since it would be stopping at the Fort Riley depot a few miles away.

Another challenge presented itself because the road ran on the left side of the track while the depot was on the right side. This meant racing the train and crossing the



track ahead of the engine in order to get on the train. My mind conjured a memory of the Keystone Cops, from an old movie, doing the same thing. Most movies have happy endings, and my adventure did, too, but it was an unforgettable event.

This memoir was an illustration of the different attitudes and philosophies of two families and how they handled similar tragedies.



## Prepare To Be Pampered

About 50 years ago, I had a business trip to San Diego and stayed at the Town and Country Inn. I don't even know if it still exists; but there are things about it I still remember. It provided outstanding guest services, a special ambiance and great hospitality, and they had a slogan—"Prepare to be Pampered." In my opinion, that same slogan can be used to describe the Honor Flight program.

This program is designed to recognize all veterans of World War II in a very special way. It provides a method to allow veterans the opportunity to visit "their" Memorial in Washington D.C., at no expense, and to appreciate the magnitude and grandeur of this magnificent structure.

In our case, a group of eight of us from St. Leonard Retirement Center was bused, using St. Leonard transportation, to the Columbus Airport to meet other veterans and our "guardians" before boarding a Boeing 737 for the Baltimore-Washington Airport.

During our adventure with post 9/11 security, we experienced our first contacts with our guardians. They were most helpful in providing assistance in the form of wheelchairs, guidance, encouragement and old-fashioned congeniality, but more about them later. The first of many treats we were to receive during the day was "Breakfast at Starbucks," a beverage and muffin or Danish.

We were allowed on the plane early to get seated in the first several rows before the rest of the passengers were boarded. Our party consisted of 39 veterans and 17 guardians, while the balance of the 135 or so seats were occupied by traditional passengers.



This whole operation would have been impractical without our guardians. To use a cliché, “our wish was their command.” Patience, empathy and good cheer were qualities they all possessed. There was a mother and her teenaged son, two young firefighters/medics, and a schoolteacher couple, among others—a classic cross section of society from the Columbus area.

Our first truly heart-warming experience occurred as we were embarking from the plane at BWA. We were last to get off, and several wheelchairs were waiting in the passageway to the terminal for our use. As we appeared, the public who was waiting to board, stood and applauded, shook our hands, expressed gratitude for our service and gave us an unforgettable welcome to the area. And that was not the last time such an emotion was experienced.

With assistance from our guardians, we were shepherded through the terminal to board a Spirit Tours bus, which would be our headquarters for the next several hours. A few of the veterans did not bring cameras, but many of those regretted their decision. Those second thoughts were quickly erased by the fact that the guardians had a supply of disposable cameras to give away. The guardians also had an unlimited supply of cold bottled water to help quench thirst and prevent dehydration. Incidentally, the temperature around the Memorial was 90 degrees. There were a few vets who had the foresight to wear shorts.

Saturdays are the days scheduled for Honor Flights for many reasons—guardians are usually available and the D.C. streets are much more navigable. On our day, Sept. 8, 2007, many other Honor Flights had scheduled their trip. As a result, 550 to 600 veterans were expected to visit the Memorial. It would be the largest assembly of veterans at the Memorial since its dedication in 2004.



Present at that dedication with thousands of others veterans was Senator Bob Dole, who was also one of those who led the charge for the construction of this Memorial. He was also present during our visit, to be available for visiting and picture taking. In fact, out of his loyalty to the fraternity of veterans, of which he is a member, he returns to this site whenever an Honor Flight is scheduled to appear.

Our guardian, Dean, made sure we didn't miss anything, even the appearance of Kilroy, who was there, albeit, in a more insignificant location. Any veteran knows about Kilroy, but to elaborate would make a separate story. Dean's enthusiasm and desire to keep the seven of us together for pictures and verbal descriptions of details was highly commendable. Most shutterbugs utilize digital cameras these days, but there are still some of us geezers who can't get weaned from Kodak's roll film contraption.

We were stopped occasionally by strangers at the Memorial for brief visits and to shake our hands and add their appreciation for our service to our country over 60 years ago. Those incidents were very humbling.

Our bus received extra-special attention in the form of a camera crew who interviewed us all to provide background for a human-interest story. One of the wheel chaired veterans had been a prisoner of war in Germany for 2 1/2 years and had become close friends with another POW during that period. They had kept in touch with one another for over 60 years but had never been able to get together —until now. It would be a total surprise to our friend on the plane, but the rest of their families were in on the event that was to take place this day.

Time was scheduled to provide an opportunity to visit the Korean War and Viet Nam (veterans) Memorials. Since I had seen them, I chose to stay on the bus for a brief sightseeing tour. This included a stop at the U.S. Navy Memorial. Fortunately,



we were able to witness an impressive flag ceremony there.

Our driver's name was Campbell, a Viet Nam veteran, whose nickname was Soup. He said it was because he was "m-m-m good". He was loquacious and humorous in his description of sights and points of interest. But his most impressive talent was the way he could maneuver his tour bus. He parallel-parked it in a space only 3-4 feet longer than the bus.

Our hosts also provided us with a box lunch to eat on the bus. We ended our tour with a trip to the Iwo Jima Memorial. Unfortunately, time did not allow us to park and view it on foot. Nevertheless, we were impressed with its size and, of course, its significance.

One of our guardians, Bill, teaches American History to middle school students. One of his assignments is to have each student write a letter to a veteran to thank him for his service. Two of these letters were given to each of us. They were very touching and reflected the kind of emphasis their teacher had placed on World War II. Bill also stated that he and his wife, also a guardian, "live for the opportunity to participate in these Honor Flights."

In addition to the letters, we were given a Certificate of Recognition, a copy of an original poem, titled "Yesterday" (written by Jean Lamb), a VFW pin shaped like the state of Ohio, a picture of the Memorial on a magnet, and a beautiful pictorial book, "World War II Memorial, Jewel of the Mall."

Indicative of the type of people our guardians were is the fact that each of them paid their own airfare for the privilege of spending half of a weekend to be of service to a group of old geezers. This particular flight cost each of them \$200.00.



Upon our return to Columbus, we received the same ovation and recognition from passengers and others that we received earlier in the day as we deplaned. It was then that we began our return to St. Leonard's. 14 1/2 hours after pulling out of the circular drive in front of Chaminade Hall, we completed our journey.

The memories of this day will be everlasting, but equally everlasting will be our teary eyes, the lumps in our throats and heart-warming emotions we experienced from strangers.



## Epilogue

Obviously the last two memoirs were not recollections from my years in military service. However, they were so closely related to that time in my life that I felt justified in adding them.

I'm reminded of a strategic target in Japan during the war. This particular city was Usa and its manufacturing plants were producing products for the war effort. In the early 30s, it had a different name and was supplying toys that were sold worldwide. In those days, anything that was "made in Japan" was considered very poor quality. However, toys with the label, "Made in U.S.A.," were highly desirable. It wasn't long before a creative, and far-reaching, marketing decision was made by the Japanese to change the name of the city so that they could honestly state that their toys were "Made in USA."

During my uniform days, unlike thousands and thousands who served on the ground in combat, I never saw a dead person. It wasn't until I was a student at Iowa State College that I encountered one outside a funeral parlor. While driving back to Ames from Des Moines, after a Saturday night on the town, a car passed us at very high speed. Up ahead was a tricky curve which that driver couldn't handle. We were the first on the scene and found one man wandering about dazed. Another was badly hurt; and the third, who had been thrown from the car, was injured so badly that it was obvious he was deceased.

While on the subject of death, I'm reminded of a statistic relative to my high school graduating class. There were about 190 class members, with close to 100



boys. Probably ninety percent served in the military, yet there was not a single fatality among them. There were many casualties, but fortunately, all returned to civilian life eventually.

My 38th Bombardment Group experiences were modest compared with a great many others. My records do show that the group received four Presidential Unit Citations, compared with only one awarded to the other B-25 group in the 5th Air Force. I was entitled to six battle stars due to my missions being in that many geographical combat areas. My Air Medal was awarded after a certain number of flight hours and missions. I flew on 16. Other ribbons for my uniform were the result of being in the right place at the right time.

Many friendships were made during wartime, but few have stood the test of time. It was unusual for two people to remain together for very long. I'm proud and fortunate to have been paired with a friend for 20 months, from July 1943 to March 1945, before we were separated and sent to different bomb groups. This friend, Warren Lipman, and I have kept in touch with one another ever since. (I was deeply saddened to learn of his recent death.)

The individual pictures of me throughout this memoir were taken, coincidentally, every February from 1943 through 1946

Data used in the Appendix were acquired from the Air Force Historical Research Agency, Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama.



As I write this, my wife, Jean, and I have celebrated our 60th wedding anniversary. Among the many things to show for this good fortune, we have three sons and two daughters, three daughters-in-law and one son-in-law. In addition, there are four grandsons and three granddaughters plus twin great-grandsons. A 38-year career with 3M Company and more than 20 years of retirement bring this story up to date.

P.S. Ten years ago, our children sponsored quite a “bash” to celebrate Number Fifty. It included a ceremony wherein we repeated our original vows. To make it truly original, Jean and I wore the same attire in which we were married. She needed very little adjustments in her gown, but the tailor had to let out a few seams to the max in my coat and trousers. Nevertheless, it was a special occasion for which we were most proud.



# Appendix

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**Appendix 1**—This particular heckler mission gave me 8 hours and 5 minutes of combat flying time.

BOMBING GROUP (H)  
AIRCRAFT MOVEMENT SHEET

MISSION NO. 133-C-1(A)      123rd Bomb Sq.      DATE 13 May 1943.

A/G No. <u>7970</u>	A/G No. _____	A/G No. _____
Call Sign <u>CHC - 4120</u>	Call Sign _____	Call Sign _____
T/O <u>1740/12</u>	T/O _____	T/O _____
TOT _____	TOT _____	TOT _____
TUL <u>0050/13</u>	TUL _____	TUL _____
<u>Comdr. E. J. 2nd Lt.</u>	F _____	F _____
<u>1. Parker, E. 2nd Lt.</u>	CP _____	CP _____
<u>Lamb, E. 2nd Lt.</u>	N _____	N _____
_____	E _____	E _____
<u>Hurik, S. 2nd Lt.</u>	B _____	B _____
<u>Hare, G. 2nd Lt.</u>	G _____	G _____
<u>Gasser, R. 2nd Lt.</u>	SG _____	SG _____
_____	X _____	X _____
<u>Rank: STAGED THRU CLARK #1</u>	Rank _____	Rank _____

A/G No. _____	A/G No. _____	A/G No. _____
Call Sign _____	Call Sign _____	Call Sign _____
T/O _____	T/O _____	T/O _____
TOT _____	TOT _____	TOT _____
TUL _____	TUL _____	TUL _____
F _____	F _____	F _____
CP _____	CP _____	CP _____
N _____	N _____	N _____
E _____	E _____	E _____
B _____	B _____	B _____
G _____	G _____	G _____
SG _____	SG _____	SG _____
X _____	X _____	X _____
Rank _____	Rank _____	Rank _____

A/G No. _____	A/G No. _____	A/G No. _____
Call Sign _____	Call Sign _____	Call Sign _____
T/O _____	T/O _____	T/O _____
TOT _____	TOT _____	TOT _____
TUL _____	TUL _____	TUL _____
F _____	F _____	F _____
CP _____	CP _____	CP _____
N _____	N _____	N _____
E _____	E _____	E _____
B _____	B _____	B _____
G _____	G _____	G _____
SG _____	SG _____	SG _____
X _____	X _____	X _____
Rank _____	Rank _____	Rank _____





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5-2            12-2-45            1970/1            THE HISTORY            NUMBER

TO: 1-2, JOHN BIRD WING.  
 FROM: 5-2, JOHN BIRD WING.

FINAL RELEASE REPORT

(A) IFO 133-C-2A            12-27/8/45            6288 DORRIS            1-2-25.

(B) REEVE FERGUSON - 1-1-40 - 3-1-73 FR.

(C) T.O. JENNETH 17120/1    V.O.T. 21120/1 - 12245/1    T.O.L. CLARK -  
 12004/1    12,000/1  
 T.O.L. CLARK 12004/1    T.O.L. JENNETH 17120/1.

(D) CORRECTION TO ITEM "ST. BLANK" AND "GROWING" & "GROWING" JAGUO FOR SANTA  
 IN AREA OF "ST. BLANK" AND "GROWING".

(E) (1) (2) (3) (4) - NIL.

(F) JENNETH WING 17120/1 & "GROWING" AT 12245/1 AND "ST. BLANK" WING.  
 NUMBER OF SOME WINGS SHOWN ON LISTING BY 6/2, PHOENIX WINGING WING  
 A/7 LIST AREA.

(G) JENNETH WING; 2/19 CORRECT, 1973.  
 NUMBER: CLEAR.  
 DATE: 12,000/1 - 12,000/1.

(H) (1) NIL.

ALVIN J. HARRIS, JR.,  
 Captain, Air Force,  
 12004/1





EAL NR 6 V EBL  
TOO: 231155/I

OPTIONAL PRIORITY SECRET

TO: A-2, 38TH BOMB WING  
FROM: S-2, 38TH BOMB GROUP (M)  
CITE: TR 1694

FINAL MISSION REPORT: DIST: 1 COPY GP S-2 AND ADJ

(A) FTO-143-C-1(A) 23/5/45 223RD BOMBON 6 B-25 J'S.

(B) SANTA FE (GROUND SUPPORT).

(C) TO 0831/I TOT 1003/I TOL 1110/I 8,000'

(D) 6 A/P'S IN TWO FLIGHTS OF THREE PLANES ON A HEADING OF 70 DEGREES  
DROPPED 60 X 260 LB INST FREE FALLING FRAGS IN THE TARGET AREA MARKED BY  
SMOKE. RESULTS OTHER THAN BOMB BURSTS U/O.

(E) (F) (G) NIL.

(H) K-17 PHOTOS BY 1 A/P.  
K-21 PHOTOS BY 2 A/P'S.

(I) NIL.

(J) ENROUTE : 7/10 CUMULUS 3000' TO 5000', VISIBILITY 10 MILES.  
OVER TARGET: 9/10 CUMULUS 4000' TO 5000', VISIBILITY 12 MILES.  
RETURN : SAME AS ENROUTE.

(K) JAPANESE LEAFLETS DROPPED OVER TARGET. THIS SQUADRON JRB SQUADRON  
OVER TARGET.

(L) 60 X 260 LB INST FREE FALLING FRAGS DROPPED SELECT.

SIGNED HAWES

TOS.....EBL.....231205/I PR AR  
TGR: EAL 231202/I ES AR



1151

S-2 1199/I 29/4/45 OPR PRIORITY SECRET

TO : 4-2, 30TH BOMB WING

FROM: 6-2, 18TH BOMB GROUP

FINAL MESSAGE EXP-INT

(A) WFO-143-0-1(A) 29/4/45 27RD BOMBWING 6-2-25 JPS

(B) DATA PT (GROUND SUPPORT).

(C) TO 0811/I THE 1009/I FOR 1110/I 8,000'

(D) 6 A/P'S IN THE FLIGHTS OF THREE PLANES ON A HEADING OF 79 DEGREES DROPPED 50 X 200 LB BOMB FROM FALLING FRAGS IN THE TARGET AREA MARKED BY SMOKE. RESULTS OVER 1000 LB BOMB BOMBED B/O.

(E) (F) (G) NIL.

(H) K-17 PHOTON AT 1 A/P.  
L-21 PHOTON AT 2 A/P'S.

(I) NIL.

(J) EIGHTH : 7/10 ANGLES 3000' TO 5000', VELOCITY 10 MILES,  
OVER TARGET; 4/10 ANGLES 1000' TO 5000', VELOCITY 10 MILES,  
RETURN : SAME AS EIGHTH.

(K) JAPANESE LEADERS DROPPED OVER TARGET, FOUR SQUADRON AND SQUADRON OVER TARGET

(L) 50 X 200 LB BOMB FROM FALLING FRAGS DROPPED SUCCESS.

ALVIN L. WARDWELL, JR.,  
Captain, Air Group,  
Intelligence Officer.

CONFIDENTIAL

6230 BOMBARDMENT SQUADRON (M)  
36TH BOMBARDMENT GROUP (M)  
B-2 SECTION

A.F.O. 70,  
28 May 1945.

SUBJECT: Narrative Report, Mission No. 143-G-2(4), 23 May 1945.  
(Santa Fe, Luzon, Philippines Islands, Ground Support).

TO : Commanding General, Far East Air Forces, APO 925, (TERO GRAPHEM).

I

1. The primary target of this mission was an enemy concentration of personnel in a 2500 yard area West of Santa Fe ( $16^{\circ}10'N - 120^{\circ}56'E$ ). Crews were briefed that our troops were on the South side of the road and river running West from Santa Fe. Upon reaching the target area the Group Leader was to contact the Ground Station "Fandah" before making the bomb run; the target area was also to be marked by smoke. The medium bomb run was to be made from 8500 feet indicated altitude. The secondary target was an enemy personnel and supply area at Magapit ( $16^{\circ}07'N - 121^{\circ}41'E$ ) and the assigned area was located along the Eastern side of the Cagayan River at the first bend South of Lafa Island. The bomb run on this target was to be made from South to North at 5000 feet indicated altitude. The tertiary target was the enemy concentration of personnel and supply at Gumbalungan ( $15^{\circ}24'N - 122^{\circ}38'E$ ) in Northeast Luzon. Each plane was to carry a maximum bomb load of 260 lb. instantaneous free falling fragmentation bombs.

XI

1. At 0931/L, six B-25J type airplanes of the 6230 Bombardment Squadron (M), 36th Bombardment Group (M) took off from Lingayen Airfield, Luzon, and after assembling the Group formation over base, proceeded to the area of the target by way of the Dungen River pass. Weather enroute was 7/10 cumulus 3000 to 5000 feet with visibility 10 miles. Upon reaching the target and clearing with the ground station, three dry runs were made over the target area in order to definitely locate the target. Smoke panels were set up by the ground troops to aid in identifying the target area. At 1003/L, at a bombing altitude of 8000 feet, a bombing run was made and 60 x 500 lb. instantaneous free falling fragmentation bombs were dropped in the assigned target area. Results other than bomb bursts were unobserved due to foliage and altitude. Pictures taken with K-17 and K-21 cameras do not disclose damage other than bombs bursting in the assigned area. Weather over the target was 5/10 cumulus from 4000 to 5000 feet with visibility 12 miles.

2. There was no interception nor was anti-aircraft fire encountered.

3. There were no sightings other than activity by our own ground troops to the South of the target.

4. After completion of the bomb run the Squadron formation returned

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11/51

S-2	0919/T	23/6/45	OPR PRIORITY	SECRET
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TO: A-2, SOUTH BOMB WING  
 FR: S-2, SOUTH BOMB GROUP (S)

(A) WFO 173-D-25      23/6/45      SECOND BOMBING      1 R-25

(B) WE WFOOD - BAKETT PASS - CAGAYAN VALLEY

(C) T/O 220623/T LINGAYEN      TOL 221821/T TAGAO      T/O 220720/T TAGAO  
 TOL 220620/T LINGAYEN

(D) WFOOD WE WFOOD TO BAKETT PASS, CAGAYAN VALLEY AND PURA ISLAND AND  
 BURGNEY COMPLETED. WE REPORTED WFOOT 1/2 DEGREE TO "BOMB", A/P  
 LAMPUN LAMPUN DUE WE.

(E) (F) (G) (H) (I) NIL

(J) BAKETT PASS: 8/10 - 9/10 STRATA CUMULUS 7000 - 8000 FEET, VISIBILITY  
 UNRESTRICTED,  
 CAGAYAN VALLEY: 1/10-5/10 CUMULUS, VISIBILITY UNRESTRICTED  
 PURA ISLAND: CATU

(K) JAPANESE PROPAGANDA TRAPNETS DROPPED IN APANAY ANPA N OF CAGAYAN BAY.

(L) NIL

WILLIAM H. HARTY,  
 1st Lt, Air Corps,  
 Asst. Intelligence Officer.



EFZ V EBL NR 2 OPERATIONAL PRIORITY SECRET

TGC---230910/I

TO: A-2, 309TH BOMB WING.

FM: A-2, 38TH BOMB GROUP (M).

TK 2051

- (A) FFO 173-0-25 23/6/45 823RD BOMBON 1 B -25 J.
- (B) WX RECCO-BALETE PASS-CAGAYAN VALLEY.
- (C) T/O 220623/I LINGAYEN TOL 221521/I LAOAG T/O 230720/I LAOAG  
TOL 230820/I LINGAYEN.
- (D) UNARMED WX RECCO TO BALETE PASS, CAGAYAN VALLEY AND FUGA ISLAND 100  
PERCENT COMPLETED. WX REPORTED EVERY 1/2 DEGREE TO "BOXER". A/P  
LANDED LAOAG DUE WX.
- (E) (F) (G) (H) (I) NIL.
- (J) BALETE PASS: 8/10 - 9/10 STRATA CUMULUS 7000-8000 FEET, VISIBILITY  
UNRESTRICTED.  
CAGAYAN VALLEY: 1/10-5/10 CUMULUS, VISIBILITY UNRESTRICTED.  
FUGA ISLAND: CAVU.
- (K) JAPANESE PROPAGANDA LEAFLETS DROPPED IN APARRI AREA E OF CAGAYAN  
RIVER.
- (L) NIL.

END.....HAVE.....

EBL.....TO:.....230936/I NK.....VA

EFZ R M G OK BILL VA

S-2 AND S-1.

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