

My Stretch in the Service, Volume 1

By Lionel B. Potter

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Gratefully yours,
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FOREWARD

This Journal will start from the date of my induction into the Army, January 6th, 1942. However, only the highlights of my career as an Aviation Cadet will be brought out on the preceding pages. For more elaborate descriptions of the trials and tribulations, see the letters written to my mother during the period prior to my being commissioned as a flying 2nd Lieutenant in the Air Corps on July 20th, 1942.

This Journal is being brought up to date while aboard the U.S. Army Transport Republic, re-christened the P33 en route to our first overseas base in the Hawaiian Islands. As this record is begun, we are some 250 miles west of San Francisco.

The Author
Sept. 5th, 1942

SYNOPSIS

On the afternoon of Jan. 3rd, 1942, I was formally accepted to service in the Air Corps of the United States after many months of hard work and many a disheartening experience with the various Army and Navy medical departments. Because of the slight mal-occlusion of my teeth, they would not accept me for training as a pilot.

However, after my classification of I-A, dealt me by the draft board, I decided to do something to fix my teeth so they would be acceptable to the Army or Navy. After numerable dentists had proclaimed this dental work impossible, I discovered the my pal and next door neighbor, Dr. Reed Quesnell, though he could remedy the situation. True to his word and following three to four weeks of hard and painful dentistry, I emerged with a couple rebuilt molars that actually occluded to the medical boards' satisfaction.

My acceptance by the Cadet Board was as of January 3rd, 1942 and they wanted to induct me on the morning of the 4th. However, with some tall persuasion, I was given until Tuesday to wind up my business affairs.

That Monday, January 5th, 1942, was really one to be remembered. Upon arriving at the office, I informed the boss that this was my last day. Whereupon he threw up his hands in concern as I had the production department pretty much organized to suit myself, new forms, procedures, etc. All day I dictated instructions, explained "pet" loans and various other cases I was carrying on mentally. Amazingly enough, things were pretty much under control when I left at 5 o'clock. It was an exciting day, everyone wanting to take me to lunch and the goodbyes and hasty gifts from the boys.

The following morning at 9 o'clock, I reported to the induction center at 4th and Main and began a long, weary day of signing forms, making new friends and just sitting and sitting. At 6:45pm on the 6th of January, we were sworn in and received our train tickets to Bakersfield. There were thirteen of us that boarded the train for the replacement center that night, and I will try and remember who they were and what has since become of them.

They were:

Doc Ballog, washed out in Primary
Reg Henn, washed out on physical in Bakersfield
Frank "Zork" Was, flying pursuit ships somewhere now
Gordon MacLean (the Beverly Hills aristocrat), whereabouts unknown
Willard Reineck, washed out in Basic at Lemoore and now a Navigator
Larry Van Tassel, washed out in Primary, present whereabouts unknown
Sid (Hockey star) Lovitt, washed out in Primary, now a navigator or Bombardier
Bob Wegner, the only one still with me and on the boat at this moment

There were three others including myself, but their names escape at this writing.

My stay at Replacement center was really rough. It was very cold and wet and inasmuch as we were living in tents, we enjoyed the full benefit of the weather,. I can still see the boys in tent 2, Co. "B" – Frank Was, Gordon MacLean and Chic – astraddle of the little gas heater in the middle of the tent. Right over it was the only place you could feel any heat at all. To make matters worse, we weren't issued any Army clothes and lived for 16 days in our civilian suits, which, needless to say, you could have stood up in the corner,

they were do dirty. To add to our misery, we were given another “64” physical and most of our shots – Typhoid, Yellow Fever, Tetanus, etc.

We, Bob Ward and I, left Minter Field as it is now called, on the 23rd of January, after 16 nightmarish days. We headed home for the night in his old “Model A” Ford roadster.

We reported to Oxnard the following noon and were very heartily and handsomely greeted by our upperclassmen of 42F, God bless ‘em. They drove us from pillar to post with nary a break. “Drive, Mister, Drive” came from all quarters as we stole out of our little bungalows. There followed eight, long weeks of misery, heartache and joyousness over flying.

The first four weeks of flying I was awes and I guess just plain scared of the airplane. There was pressure on all the time and your classmates “washing out” left and right each day. I waited each day for my “wash ride” but thanks to my instructor, Percy “Skip” Tibert, I came through with no dire results and finding myself liking to fly.

The week of graduation at Mira Loma Flight Academy was one long to be recalled with a smile of pride. We had a big, drunken party on the shore near Ventura and a dinner party and dance at the field. This was the week at Oxnard that Baker Rabilliard, McCoy and I went up to visit Deby and her friends at the S.M. Spaldings’ Tecelote (sp?) Ranch. They were Deby Dyram, Deb Spalding, Nancy Darhy(sp?) and Betty _____(?) We were A.W.O.L. every night this week, but then Baker was our C.O. so we got in about 5am every night.

There are a few more dates and names that should be remembered from Oxnard, namely; February 20th, 1942, soloed from #2 field over by the river, by Flight Commander Frank Jenkins. I made three of the worse bounce landings ever witnessed, but I walked away from them and my solo hop was over. My roommates at Oxnard were:

Don Aistroke (sp?), washed out and went to Air Corps Administration
Sherod Snotos

Jack Faiver, Gerry McCoy (Raunch)

Johnny “Crosswind” Hull, washed in Basic, went to Denver for armaments

Henry Grove, whereabouts unknown

After a big graduation parade and ceremony, we went home to San Marino, McCoy and I, and drove up to Lemoore on the following day.

Our arrival in Lemoore was uneventful except that it made us mad to have to take our “brass” off, The upperclass though, most of them Southerners, gave us a big laugh as their attempts to “Iron Ass” us were a big laugh to we from Oxnard, because we had it so tough there that their attempts at being tough were feeble by comparison.

Flying as at Basic was uneventful but lots of it, yours truly amassing something like 86 hours, plus 12 hours of link trainer. My instructor there, 2nd Lt. D. E. Richard was a good

boy, but pretty tough. He made good pilots out of Richardson, Rose, Rabilliard and myself though.

We had a good time at Basic mainly on account of the big party weekends at Fresno. Yes, the California Hotel will remember us for awhile (I'm not sure yet what happened to my Cadet Cap, but I think I traded it for a quart of Bourbon in the lobby of California one fine Saturday night, at least the Bourbon was on our dresser the next a.m. and my cap wasn't).

It was at Lemoore that I roomed with Bill Spuhler from Texas. He was a prince of a fellow and we had many a good time together. I don't know just where he is now, but I strongly suspect that he went to Lowery Field to fly P-38's. Some day I hope to meet up with him again.

It was the 2nd Sunday before Basic Graduation that Dinky, now my loving wife, surprised me by coming up to see me with Ole and the folks. I was surprised and delighted to see her. I know that day that she was going to be my wife, but I didn't ask her until some two weeks later.

We graduated from Basic the 26th of May with no ceremony whatsoever. However, this date was an important one as it was on this day that Dinky said "Yes" when I asked her if she wanted to join the Army. Johnny McGill and his girl and Dinky and I were returning from a nights at the Palladium (Harry James was there) and riding along Sunset Blvd. when I asked her. As a matter of fact, I believe it was right near the corner of Sunset and Western.

The following Thursday morning, we reported to Victorville for our advanced training. Here we found that we had no upperclass, which didn't particularly make us mad. We did find out though that we had a tough twin engine trainer to fly in the AT-9. Our group there was Rabilliard, Richardson, Polhemus, Purifay and myself. Bob Powers was in this group until he cracked up and had to sojourn in the hospital the rest of the time that we were there. We were all under the nervous hand of 2nd Lt. B.W. (Bert) Manning. He was a nice fellow in the ready room but a tough baby in the air. He had the idea that we were all trying to kill him – and –would – sooner or later. I believe that he was a little surprised that we didn't!

We had a fair time at Victorville, but it was always hot, and the "Coke" machines were forever empty.

Ed Polhemus was my roommate at Advanced an a good lad he was too. But he had woman trouble and so did I, being engaged and only seeing my fiancée on the weekends. So we consoled each other and had a great time giving birth to "blues" at each setting of the sun.

I was one weekend at Basic, or should I say Advanced, that Dinky, Jerry McCoy and his fiancée just newly arrived from Iowa, went down into San Bernardino to stay. This was

on the 7th of June and we stayed in a little _____, oddly enough addressed #10 Lullaby Lane. We had a big time and we were all brought much closer together.

There followed many weeks of tough flying, night and day, while the folks and Dinky were sending out wedding invitation and were having showers for her. We had set the date for the wedding at July 27th at 8pm in the Little Church of our Savior, San Gabriel. We chose this date as I was scheduled to graduate on the 26th of July, with a 10 day furlough to follow – all of which turned out to be a big laugh, I mean graduation and furlough, as you will soon discover!!

On the 20th of July, at an early morning formation, we were told that we would receive our commission on that day. This of course made me positively ill, as it really messed the wedding plans up beautifully. In addition, we discovered that the furlough was strictly a fairy tale and that we were moving out by airliner that night for our new base at Columbia, South Carolina.

To say that this abrupt end to all our plans made me lower than a snake's vest button is a masterpiece of understatement. Here we had been planning for weeks and things were practically all settled. Dinky had her wedding gown, the church was reserved, the flowers ordered, some 250 guests invited, the house full of wedding and shower gifts – is it any wonder I was sick at heart! All these weeks of planning shot to hell in 10 minutes. We were not alone however, Wane "Health" Smith was to be married on the 28th, Bob Painter to be married on the 27th, Russ Smith on the 26th, etc., etc. far into the night. So you see, I wasn't alone! (If that is any consolation, and brother, I needed consoling.)

As soon as I found out that we were leaving, I put in a hurried call the folks to hurry up if they wanted to see me before I left.

At 7 o'clock on the 20th, we had a more or less "pay line" graduation. About 9 o'clock, the folks, Dinky and the Himolds (sp?) arrived. After consoling each other for about three hours, with everyone bolstering the others' fortitude, of it was a great night. The best way to express it is that the family had "strong but broken hearts".

The folks left in a river of tears around one o'clock, but Dinky decided to stay and go back with Betty Anderson, now Mrs. Wayne Smith. The four of us, Wayne, Betty, Dinky and yours truly stayed up until 4am discussing the girls' plans to drive back to Columbia in Wayne's car and marry us back there. We had decided that this was the thing to do. So the girls left about four with grim determination to depart for Columbia as soon as possible. However, knowing the Army's flare for last minute changes, we told them not to leave until we wired them that we were definitely on the way. This was a good idea, for we didn't leave until Wednesday morning, the 22nd of July at 9am. Consequently, we were just laying around all day Tuesday with nothing to do, so when we found out that we weren't to leave until Wednesday a.m., Ed Polhemus borrowed a car and drove home. I arrived home about 8 o'clock to find no one there but the dog. After house breaking and making a few phone calls, I discovered that the folks were out to dinner and would be back soon. They were, and to say they were surprised to see me is putting it mildly – they

were figuring at dinner that I was somewhere over Texas by then. Ed and Margie McClendon were with them as well as Dick and Eileen Ashley. I was delighted to see them all again before leaving. That night, Dinky and I went down and saw Lindsey and Bonnie for awhile and then saw Harry Stewart for a few minutes. From Stewarts, we drove down to Doug and Jean Stockleys, but no soap, they weren't at home.

The next morning, I dashed back to the field with Ed and we took off at 10am. We had an uneventful trip back to Columbia and arrived there about 8 o'clock on the morning of the 23rd. From the air, the country looked very pretty, all pine woods, lakes (swamps), and green fields. Boy, were we disillusioned when we got on the ground. The following is a brief description of the base at Columbia, without prejudice.

The base was built amongst three swamps and was still uncompleted. The buildings were all one story and just covered with tar papers. The Post Exchange was about a 10x20' building that was so dirty, I wouldn't take my car there to be greased, And hot – it was this sultry, sticky kind of heat that just left you wring wet with no hope of a breeze to dry you out. Golly, what a hole!

We got a wire from the girls the day we got there, saying they were on their way east. If we could have stopped them, I think Healthy and I would have. But the fact was that they were on the way and we had to find a place for them to stay in Columbia some 6 miles away. We hunted for two or three days with no luck before we came across this upstairs 4 room apartment of the Van Benthuyzen's at 1830 Heyward St., Columbia. It was real nice and had a living room, one bedroom, dining room and kitchen. The kitchen had cold-spot refrigerator in it, as well as a gas stove. There was only one hitch, there was only one bedroom. But we fixed that up – we rented a bed and the living room into the second bedroom. I had flipped with Wayne to see who would get the bedroom – as usual, I lost.

The girls arrived ahead of schedule, on Monday the 27th around noon, after a flying trip east. Health and I ducked our afternoon classes and went into town with the girls.

That night, we went down and had a big dinner at the Ship Ahoy and came home to our new apartment tired but happy.

The following day, Tuesday the 28th, the girls made arrangements for the church, had the telephone connected and etc. As luck would have it, I had to fly that night and didn't get in until 1am. We had decided to be married Wednesday night of the 29th and I was planning on getting off that afternoon to get the necessary marriage license. However, just before I asked the C.O. about this, he jumped for cutting ground school Monday, when the girls arrived. This put me in a spot and I told him the spot I was in, but he wasn't very sympathetic as the Colonel was on his neck. But he finally agreed to let me go from 2:30 until 4:30 as I had to fly link at 5 o'clock. I grabbed a bus into town from the field and a taxi out to get Dinky. Of course she would be in the bathtub, which delayed us a little. However, we held the cab and tore madly down to the Courthouse for the license. It took a total of 15 minutes to get the license and be back in the cab. (The fee incidentally was \$1.00, a dog license was \$2.00, so I told Dinky it was cheaper to own a

wife than a dog, which remark she appreciated to the fullest extent, as she thought I was getting married because I could, as a married officer, get tires for my car. Anyway, we had a lot of fun over it.)

We were married that night (July 29th, 1942) at the Holy Trinity Episcopal church at 8:30pm. Well, yours truly didn't arrive at the apartment until 7:15pm from the field. When I arrived, things were really buzzing. We had heard that afternoon that we were being transferred to Greenville, South Carolina. This upset Smith into buying a couple of quarts of Canadian Club and everything was, as I said previously, buzzing. The house was full of half-dressed, half-tight, half-crazy and half-fed people. Gene Stivers and his wife were there as well as Mr. and Mrs. Van Benthuisen, Lillian and Ed Lovorn (sp?) and another roomer. Lillian Lovorn was maid of honor, or I should say, Matron of Honor for both girls. Mr. Van Benthuisen gave both Betty and Dinky away. Lillian and Ed Lovorn, it might be explained, were a recently married couple who occupied the other upstairs apartment and really were swell people. Mr. "Van", as we called him, was a prince if there ever was one and reminded me so much of my own uncle Ray.

Well everyone was dashing around the small apartment with a drink in one hand and a half-eaten fried ham sandwich in the other. Dinky was making the sandwiches while putting on her wedding accomplishments. Of course, there were at least three deep in the bedroom all the time, so yours truly snook down the back stairs to the maids' quarters. Of course, Melinda would bust in on me while I was in the shower – the G-d D--- door had no lock and I had no luck.

Betty and Wayne were to be married in the Presbyterian Church and Dinky and I in the Episcopal church. But there was a difference in time so that the gang ran from one church to the other! The Potters were late, as usual, and the reverend called to see if we were still coming. This was at 8:45pm and we were just leaving. (The ceremony was to be at 8:30pm.) When we arrived in Ed Lovorn's car, Dinky went right in to put on her wedding gown and I went into Rev. Melcher's study to sign the marriage certificate, etc.

Rev Melcher was really tops in his profession. A large, jovial fellow who just beamed with kindness and understanding. He was very sympathetic toward our difficulties in getting married and helped us more than I can tell. He arranged to have flowers in the church and an organist, which I hadn't even given a thought to. He helped us in so many ways. He had a long talk with Dinky, who fell in love with him, about her changing her own free will from a Catholic to an Episcopalian, which isn't easy.

At 9 o'clock, everything was in readiness for the big ceremony. The church was large, I would say its capacity was around 800, we had a total of about ten witnesses including the Rev's wife and small daughter. Let's see who was there: Lt. and Mrs. Jean Stivers, Wayne Sparks and his fiancée, Wayne Sparks' mother, father and sister, Mr. Ed Lovorn, Lt. and Mrs. Wayne R. Smith (married about one half hour), Walt Siedel, K.G. Smith and the Rev's wife and daughter. In the wedding ceremony there was Mrs. Lillian Lovorn (Matron of Honor), Mr. Van Benthuisen (gave the bride away) and Wayne Sparks (my best man).

A few minutes after nine, the organ played forth the wedding march and Dinky and Van came down the long aisle in the almost empty church, preceded by Lillian. I was thinking how hollow the church sounded to the strains of the wedding march, when I saw my honey coming up the aisle on Van's arm. She looked more beautiful than any bride I have ever seen, dressed in white Irish lace, carrying a white Gardenia corsage and a white prayer book. I only wished that more people could have seen her, to gaze in awe as I did. Of course, she was to become my wife, but she was breath-taking in her beauty.

Wayne Sparks and I were dressed in our full uniforms, the first time we had ever worn it as we had just graduated a week before. So, we were shining with military splendor, pink pants, blouses, tan shirts and all the required brass, not to mention the silver wings we were both prominently and proudly displaying.

The ceremony itself was beautiful and very solemnly delivered by Rev. Melcher. The only amusing point was when yours truly "butchered up a word, I don't know which one, and Dinky giggled. (I told her I would spend the rest of my life getting even with her for that giggle.) And, of course, I got eager and tried to put the wedding ring on her finger before it was blessed. The Reverend put me straight on this and kidded me about it later. After the ceremony, we triumphantly half ran the length of the church where we were greeted by a host of congratulating friends – all twelve of them.

We then went back to the apartment and Van started mixing drinks and brother when he mixes drinks, it's not the usual recipe, he puts the soda in first and then fills it up with whiskey. We got the wedding cake out of the ice box, where it had been kept after its wild ride across the country, and the two girls cut it together with our help, as the occasion requires. The cake was lovely and was made for us by a dear friend of the family, Mrs. Veda Babitt. Surprisingly enough, it came through in great shape and wasn't even dry.

After everyone was half-looped, thanks to Van's bartending, we changed clothes and he took us out for a wedding dinner outside of town somewhere, the name of the place escapes me at the moment. We had a nice steak dinner and after a few more drinks, we came back to the apartment tired, but happy after a very big day, July the 29th, no less.

The next day, Thursday the 30th, we spent out at the field, clearing ourselves from the various departments on the field and receiving our orders to report to Greenville without delay. It took Wayne Smith and I, he was transferred too, along with Polhemus, Rose, Sarkinson, K.G. Smith, Walt Seidel and myself, from 9 o'clock Thursday until 3 o'clock. We then went back into town to see if the girls had made all the arrangements to have the gas, electricity, phone, etc. turned off. They had most of this done already, so we just came home and took them out to dinner. Before we left, Van and his wife came up to see us and extend their regrets at seeing us leave so soon after they had become attached to us. They were nice too in returning half of our rent to us, \$35.00, all of which we had paid in advance.

That night if the 30th, was a scorcher, there just wasn't a breath of air. Dinky and I just couldn't sleep, even if we had wanted to, it was so doggone hot. The bed was just wet with perspiration and when you would move over to another part of the bed, it would be cold and damp and clammy. Finally, I got up to get a drink of water and Dinky was right behind me. I was standing in my shorts drinking a glass of water, when she bent down in her backless nightgown to get some ice out of the refrigerator. Well, the temptation was too great and I cut loose with half a glass of ice water right down her expose back. She let out a lusty howl and made a move to get even, and here is where I made my mistake – I should have noticed what she was doing when I doused her, she was filling a pan – a big one – with ice water and ice cubes, all of which I got in one broadside swish. I let loose with a very unmanly yowl that must have aroused and boy for 200 miles. Thus ended our first fight: with water all over us and lots of laughs. Then we lay awake and laid bets as to who would go into the bathroom next – Betty or Wayne. Lots of fun, but not much sleep.

On the 31st, at about eleven, we took off for the hundred mile drive in Wayne's car to Greenville, South Carolina. We left with mixed feelings, as I liked the B-25 and only had about two more hours to go before being checked out in it as a 1st pilot. Smith didn't give a damn because he didn't even get a chance to fly it during our brief stay in Columbia. Then too, we were in the 309th Bomb Group, which was supposed to be the parent organization and instructing all the new pilots as they arrived. This would mean that we might have been at Columbia for several months, but then, who the hell wants to stay in Columbia for any length of time – especially in the summer. Also, we were told that we were going into a group that was flying B-24's, which was just what I had been wanting all along – 4 motor bombers. So as you see, I didn't have too many regrets at leaving Columbia, we made a lot of very good friends there though, for a very short stay.

We arrived in Greenville around 4 o'clock of the 31st and checked in at the Greenville Hotel, which had been recommended by Mr. Van Benthuisen. We decided to stay there until we got out to the field and found out what the set up was.

Saturday morning, we drove out to the field, a huge, rambling sort of base that was still, like most of them, in the throes of final construction. We reported in to the commanding officer, Major Margrave, of the 320th Bomber Squadron and were told to take it easy and be out to the field every day by 8 and stay until 4pm. We did very little flying while we were at Greenville, as we were sweating out a transfer to the Willow Run Bomber Plant of Henry Ford's.

The six days we spent in Greenville were very quiet and we spent it making friends with the officers in our squadron, which now looked at last like a permanent assignment, and the girls having lunch and playing bridge with their wives. Here is where we met up with two swell kids, Lt. Howard Knudsen and his wife Barbara. We paled around with them a great deal at Greenville and at Ann Arbor.

The nights in Greenville we spent in the best beaneries we could find, namely and mainly the Sanitary Care, which had good steaks, seafood and liver. Wayne was long on "blood

rare” steaks, I on seafood and the wife went for “liver and onions”. So we had a great time eating.

Oh yes, we bumped into some more of our boys from Victorville, when we joined the 90th Bomber Group. Boys such as Warren “Big Stoop” Sleeper, Bill Shea, Tony Spelty, Ernest McRae, Lyle Schoenaur and others.

We weren’t at Greenville long before we discovered that we were in a “ready” combat group. This was confirmed when we were transferred to Will Run, supposedly the last training base before we were to go overseas. It was, but as we expected more or less to go to England, we got a surprise – that however is a story for later on in this record.

After six days spent at Greenville, we received our traveling orders to Willow Run. It was decided that the W.R. Smiths and the Potters would drive up, but there was one catch. I wanted to go by way of Philadelphia and New York. Philadelphia, to see my sister in training at Bryn Mawr and New York because I wanted to see if before I left the U.S. However, the Smith’s wanted to make a long trip out of it and go straight to Albany, where “Healthy” had friends, and thence to Niagra Falls. Well, this about started a row that had been brewing over the car for a couple weeks. Wayne and Betty were very selfish about letting Dinky or I use the car and we of course didn’t care to use it or even as much as ask for it under those conditions. But this was too much, planning a long trip like Niagra Falls and not even as much as discussing the trip with us, we who were expected to pay half of the expenses. Well, I had a talk with Wayne and we came to the only solution, short of a big blow off. We decided to junk both our plans and go by way of Chicago. This was agreeable to all concerned so we left about 11am on the 7th of August.

August 7th, 1942

We started north and had a nice lunch at Asheville, North Carolina. From Asheville, we continued toward the northwest and spent all afternoon going through the great Smokey Mountains of Tennessee and Kentucky. The road was really tough and twisted turned for two hundred miles. It was an interesting trip though, we saw fields of tobacco, corn, etc. and innumerable “hillbillies” selling everything from beautiful hooked rugs to fish, along the highway.

We had decided to spend the night in Donville, Kentucky, but we could not find a place to stay, so we traveled onto Louisville, where we finally bedded down in an auto court, around midnight.

August 8th, 1942

The next day, Friday, we set out again for the Windy City and arrived there in a rain storm, about 4 o’clock in the afternoon. Thence started our search for a hotel to stay in. We had intended to register at the Hotel Sherman, but it seems there was a C.I.O. convention in town and all the big hotels were full. So we finally ended up in the Hotel Harrison, right around the corner from the Blackstone, but much cheaper.

That Friday night, the 8th of August, we decided to do the town up proper. We had all been dying for some good mixed drinks and Chinese food, so we were delighted to find that “Don the Beachcomber” had a place in Chicago, very similar to the one in Hollywood. We had a swell dinner here and had enough “gold” cocktails to get us all half-looped. From the Beachcombers we traveled up Lakeshore Drive to the Edgewater Beach Hotel. We enjoyed dancing and drinks there out on the terrace overlooking Lake Michigan. Shep Fields and his “brass-less” orchestra were entertaining and we were surprised at how good he was. However, we had a lot to do, so we went on to the College Inn at the Hotel Sherman, the Panther Room to be exact. Duke Ellington was holding forth, and very well too. The only drawback was that the place was too crowded and much too expensive, quite a disappointment. We had intended going on to the Black Hawk Café, but it was late and the band there wasn’t too good, so we passed it up and went back to the hotel, tired and sleepy.

August 9th, 1942

The next morning we strolled around Chicago’s Loop and were disappointed to find that Marshall Fields Department Store was closed on Saturday. So we ambled down the avenue to the department store of Carson, Pirie (sp?) and Scott, where “Healthy” and I both bought much needed raincoats.

We strolled around Chicago for another hour or so, getting a big hoot out of the stir our Silver Wings were making amongst the fairer sex. That was the only time Wayne and I almost regretted that we were married. We stopped at the Marshall Field Art Museum and roamed through its magnificent halls and terraces, until we got tired of seeing all those ancient objects of art and thought it best to put the show on the road to Ypsilanti(sp?).

We checked out of the hotel about 1 o’clock Saturday the 9th, and drove around the southern end of Lake Michigan and up through the middle of the state of Michigan. This state impressed me more than any I had been through, I guess it was because it was nice and cool and green, reminding me so much of my beloved Washington. There was farm after farm, each having its own roadside stand, selling apples, corn, plums, etc. Of course, we loaded up on more of this stuff than we could ever eat.

We stopped in Kalamazoo for dinner and had a very nice meal at “Holly’s”. We almost got thrown out though by the local patrons for playing “I got a gal in Kalamazoo”. Why shouldn’t we though – everywhere we go someone drops a nickel in the jukebox and grins broadly at us as “He Wears a Pair of Silver Wings” grinds forth.

We got into Ypsilanti about ten o’clock and were directed over an amazing tangle of new roads to the Willow Run Plant. After getting stopped at about 9 of the 14 gates, we finally found the right one. This was at 11:30 and we were supposed to report in at 12 midnight. We thought we could sign in and then take off to find a place for us to stay, We, however, got a rude shock when the M.P. at the gate told us that if we went in the gate, we couldn’t get out again, as the base was confined. The hell with that! We had to find a place for the girls to stay – so we called up our squadron headquarters in the hangar and got

permission to report in the next morning. I believe it was good old Lt. J.J. Bily who gave us the OK, which, if it were to be known, he had absolutely no right to give, but it satisfied us and the M.P., so what could we lose!

Then began a midnight search by the Potters and the Smiths for a place in which to stay. We cover Ypsi pretty well and couldn't find anything but one room for \$5.00, which a landlady (very enterprising) was renting while the regular roomer was away overnight. That is a classic example of how bad the living conditions were around the Plant. People were living in trailers, tents and right out in the open.

We at last decide to go into Ann Arbor, some 8 miles away, and try our luck there. We were very tired by then and all out of sorts so we stopped at the only likely looking hotel in town, the Allene. We were so tired that everything was getting funny to us and this hotel, of the 1900 variety, fit right into our humor. The rooms were large with high, narrow windows and high ceiling, a single electric light bulb, one of Edison's first, dangled in a bare and lonely manner from a long cord in the center of the room. There was no bathroom - that was down the hall and two doors to the left - but a huge wash basin was prominently protruding from the center of one wall. We got a big laugh out of this and were still laughing as we dropped off the exhausted slumber.

The next A.M., Wayne and I went out to the field and were amazed to note the number of men in our group. The hangar housing the enlisted men was a good two blocks long and a block wide. This entire hangar was full of beds - 1400 of them. The officers' quarters were on the 3rd floor of the "hotel" or central office and control tower section of the hangar.

That Sunday, we just bummed around helping here and there, wherever we were needed. Lt. Sledge, our acting C.O. was apologetic all day for omitting our names from the list of married officers who were to be given accommodations in the Michigan Union, on the University of Michigan campus in Ann Arbor. He said that he would fix us up though and did, later on in the day. That afternoon, we took off early and picked up the girls at the Hotel and moved over to the Michigan Union. The rate there was \$5.50 a night until you had run up \$60.00, which was the maximum rate per month. We had really swell rooms there, large and very comfortable. The Union was a four story English type building, all brick with dormer windows, climbing ivy and etc. Smiths' and our rooms were adjoining and we used the same bath, which had a shower over the tub and all the plumbing fixtures were colored (very resting and homey). Our room had walnut "twin beds", which Dinky didn't like, but I did, as I was about getting ready to sleep nights. However, it wasn't long until the beds were pushed together, creating a canyon between, which we appropriately named the "Valley of Jericho". In addition to the beds, we had a nice combination dressing table and writing desk, a couple of overstuffed chairs, floor lamps, wall to wall broadloom rugs, etc. Really a nice place at any price, and we were ready to pay any price too, after living in all sorts of run-down places.

(At this point I ran out of blue ink and so will proceed on this, the third day of our voyage with black ink)

The next week was more or less routine. We flew some, both day and night, and I amassed a total of about 25 hours on trips to Indianapolis, Rock Island, Chicago, Cleveland, etc, to say nothing of the bomb runs on Lake Huron. I was now assigned to a definite combat crew, composed of 1st pilot Don Sullivan, your truly as co-pilot, Bill Lonergan as Navigator and Niece as Bombardier. Of course, we also had an Engineer, radioman, gunners, etc.

Whenever we flew, we flew with these crews. Sully is a great boy and has taught me a great deal about the B-24D. He doesn't let me fly as much as I would like though, I attribute this to the fact that his crack-up, while shooting landings with Peterson, made him leery of others pilots ability – of course I resent this but I can't say that I blame him, he almost got court-martialed over it.

The girls had a great time at the University, whenever I would come home early, the room would be full of girls, empty Coke bottles and smoke. Dinky was very popular with all the officers' wives and our room was king of a meeting place which is just the way I want it, for what is home, if it isn't a place you can entertain your friends?

During our stay in Ann Arbor, we fostered a friendship that had begun to grow in Greenville, that was with Russ and Jean Smith. They are a couple of grand kids and we got along swell. A lot of the girls didn't like Jean, but Dinky did and so did I – I believe she had a little too much class for them and perhaps made it too obvious. She has her home in the Hawaiian Islands and I am supposed to look up her father Mr. H.A.R. Austin when we get there.

One night at Ann Arbor, the Russ and Wayne Smiths, the Potters and Dick Sarkisian went outside of town about 8 miles to Whitlow Lake for a picnic. We really had a lot of fun too, swimming, eating ready to your taste sandwiches, etc. by the light from the cars' headlights. This, of course, attracted the mosquitoes in Michigan, but then what the hell is a picnic without ants or mosquitoes?

The rest of our two weeks spent in Ann Arbor was taken up with trying to find a decent place to eat and where they would serve it within two hours after you hungrily arrived. There were so many jobs to be had around this part of the country that everyone was independent as hell, including the waitresses – maybe you'd get waited on and maybe you wouldn't.

The Michigan Campus was very beautiful, with many new and old stone buildings. Lots of trees and green grass covering rolling hills enhanced the picture. I was surprised though to find that Tommy Harmon, their gridiron hero of the 3 previous years, was so heartily and healthily disliked by all the students. He was conceited, I guess.

The first week we got to Ann Arbor, I wrote to sis to come up and visit us, an invitation which she accepted. She arrived by train and bus on the 23rd of August and stayed until

the next Sunday night. A lot was to happen over this weekend, which I will tell you about in detail.

For a couple of weeks prior to the weekend of the 23rd, there had been rumors (good 'ol rumors) going around that we were soon to move out of Willow Run. All rumors had it that we were scheduled to go the New England for a couple of weeks, then to Greenland for a few more weeks and thence to Iceland, on the way to jolly old England. In fact, I was so sure we were headed that way that I got cousin Ida's address from Grandma Potter. Around the 20th of August, the commanding officer of the 3rd Bomber Command, our lord and master, General Connell, arrived for a big three hour conference. When the local C.O.'s came out of this meeting, they were all smiles, which is exceptionally unusual, as the General is and Iron Ass from a-way back! Well, as those things will, rumors started leaking out that our plans had been changed and we were now going to the Hawaiian Islands for patrol duty. This was, of course, too good to believe, so we tried our best to discount it, but when the non-coms were ordered to turn in their woolens and draw 5 sets of sun tans, we began to put a little faith in it. This would mean that our chances of coming back from this war was 50-50 instead of 50-10. Whoopee! I still didn't believe it though, until I saw the addresses on our boxed equipment – Stockton, California – good old "Cal". I didn't think I'd ever see it again.

I told Dinky about it, which of course delighted her, but I told her not to believe it until I told her personally that I had flown over Diamond Head.

After that visit of the general's, things began happening fast. At first, we were to be all packed and the train ready to leave by Monday the 24th of August. Then at midnight on the 21st, Friday night, we received a call from McWilliams telling us to report to the field immediately. We had just come back from a big party up in the Knudsens' room – a going away party as Howard had been transferred to Mae Dill Field, Tampa, Florida. Consequently, we were about half-looped and the news wasn't very cordially received. We suspected that this was a midnight move for sure, but we tried to tell the girls that it was nothing more than some last minute packing. I guess we weren't very convincing because they cried all the way out to the field. Just before we left for the field, I snook upstairs to where Sis was staying, with one of the absent officers' wives, and said goodbye to her, just in case we were leaving for good. As it developed, we stayed out at the field all night, crating and packing-up all our equipment for a quick move by noon Sunday. About 8am Saturday morning I got a ride back to the Union and was warmly greeted by wife and sister.

I slept then until about 1 o'clock and then went back out to the field where Wayne and I received another disturbing surprise. Instead of flying across to our new base in the air echelon we had been transferred along with Peterson, O'Brien and Yaple to the ground echelon leaving Sunday at noon. This move was made to allow four or five new pilots to come up from MacDill Field. We, of course, had the "Red Ass". Something terrific but it was a 3rd Bomber Command order and there wasn't a thing we could do about it. This meant that instead of flying across, we would go by troop train to the Point of Embarkation and thence by convoy to the Islands.

Well, to make a long story short, the girls and sister drove us out to the airport Sunday morning and we said goodbye to our wives until we saw them in San Francisco and sis for the dear Lord knows how long.

At 3 o'clock on that Sunday, the 23rd, we pulled out of Willow Run on the train with the rest of our squadron who wasn't flying. This started a long and rather rough train ride.

Our wives were going to settle up Monday for the hotel bill and pick-up our wayward cleaning. As Dinky and I had some photographs taken by an Ann Arbor photographer, we had to have the finished prints sent to San Marino because they wouldn't be completed until Friday the 28th. Speaking of those wedding pictures brings to mind my evident embarrassment at having to walk through the lobby and three blocks uptown, what with Dinky carrying her wedding dress over her arm. We looked like a wedding going somewhere to happen. Of course, the wife got a big hoot out of my florid blushes every time some wiseacre would grin broadly or an insinuating equivalent.

After the girls cleaned things up in Ann Arbor, they were to drive out to San Francisco in Wayne's car and await our arrival.

We left on the train about 3 o'clock Sunday, the 23rd, of August. We arrived in Pittsburg, California – about thirty miles northwest of Stockton on the next Friday morning at ten o'clock. We took the longest route possible and went by way of Chicago, Kansas City, Amarillo, Albuquerque, Gallup, Winslow, Barstow, Bakersfield and thence north. The trip was very slow and tiresome, then too we didn't make very good connections for food supplies and consequently we only had about for meals in the whole six days. Breakfast was unheard of. Lunch and dinner comprised of a lot of starches like potatoes, spaghetti, cheese, bread, beans, etc. When we made a stop, the fellows all made a bee-line for the grocery stores and I know of at least four towns that didn't have a single quart of milk or loaf of bread left when our train pulled out. The boys consumed over 4,000 candy bars alone on the trip.

When we pulled in to Camp Stoneman at Pittsburg, we found that we were the last one of the four squadrons to arrive; they thought we had gotten lost. After being in Stoneman for a few hours we discovered that it was a staging camp and that we would be there just long enough to round our supplies out and we would be on the boat – for where, we didn't know at the time.

We fumbled around that morning and part of the afternoon getting all our men assigned to quarters. About 3 o'clock we were about the only ones left in camp so we signed out and headed for San Francisco, hoping the girls had arrived safely.

When our bus arrived in San Francisco, we called Dr. Thompson and he told us to call the house. Well, when we called the house, the girls themselves answered and we were soon in a taxi and on our way out to the Dr. Thompson residences at 3601 Clement.

The girls greeted us warmly when we arrived and we were sure glad to see the, too. And why not, we hadn't seen the, for six whole days. We found that Jean Smith had come with the, in the hopes of seeing Russ when the air echelon came through Hamilton Field. However, she was upset by a wire from Russ later in the day saying that we would be Ypsi for at least another 12 days, so after a few tears of indecision, she took the plane back to him. In this flying business each moment that you can be together is a rare treasure, hang the cost.

The girls had just arrived in San Francisco themselves when we phoned and they found no one home but got in somehow. I immediately call the folks, collect as usual, and found them all down at the office. I wanted to be sure they didn't try and contact me at Pittsburg pursuant to the wire I sent from Barstow. It seems that no one was supposed to know where we were.

I talked to them for a long time and told them of our set up and that we would probably only be there three or four days before going overseas. I thought that perhaps I could get a two day pass and go home to see the,, but I told the, if that didn't develop I would wire Saturday night, the 29th, and they could come up as was their desire. I was fortunate in finding Aunt Carrie there for a few minute stopover on her way to Texas, so I got to talk to her for a few moments. She said that everyone was proud of me and the work I was doing, which made me feel pretty good as she had always thought I was a spoiled kid. Well, perhaps I am, but I'm a flying spoiled kid.

That evening after meeting the Thompsons, who are really super people, we five went out to a big steak dinner at Grisson's. After our lousy meals on the train, a big steak dinner really filled the bill.

The next day, Saturday the 29th, was a big day – Dinky's birthday, age 24, and the Smiths & the Potters one month wedding anniversary. I tried and tried all day to get off long enough to go into town and get Dinky a gift, but no luck, we were up to our ears getting new supplies for the men all day. Finally a little after six o'clock, we got off and tore into San Francisco – some 35 miles off. We got there at 8 o'clock and we couldn't even find a florist open. So for a birthday and wedding anniversary present I gave Dinky my dirty laundry.

When we arrived at the Dr.'s house, we found out that Mrs. Thompson had prepared a lovely birthday dinner for Dinky, everything from spaghetti to fried chicken. They even had a wedding cake and gifts – and me with my dirty laundry. They had three extra guest too,: three sergeants from the Coast Artillery who were a little quieted by the presence of two flying officers.

Dr. Thompson, a little, short man with a satisfied paunch, had a sparkle in his eye all the time, whether he be passing out some of his terrific Manhattans or cracking wise at the table. I don't know when I have met two more cordial people. They got real mad when we said we were going to a hotel to stay – so we stayed there in extra rooms which our hostess had all prepared.

After dinner, I sent the folks a straight wire telling that I couldn't get off and to come up if they could see their way clear. They left the minute they received the wire and were in San Francisco when we got in from the camp Sunday afternoon.

The next day, Sunday the 30th, we spent getting the rest of the supplies for the enlisted men as well as some for ourselves. We managed, however, to get off by about 6 o'clock and dashed into town, not really expecting the folks until about 9 o'clock, but there they were, waiting for me. We hastily checked out of the Thompsons' and I took everybody to dinner, again at "Grisson's Steak House", I knew Dad liked good steaks and he surely would get one. Betty and Wayne went on over to Oakland as his folks were staying over there.

After eating at Grisson's, we checked into the Hotel Stewart where the folks and Dinky and I had adjoining rooms. One of the rooms had twin beds and the wife pawned that off onto the folks. Then we lay awake and discussed everything from the sale of my car to personal papers. Mom had sold my car for me at the very good price of \$385.00 cash. With this money, she had cleaned up my bills, mainly the jeweler and the dentist. After all was said and done, we had \$113.00 balance.

Monday morning, we all got up at 6 o'clock and drove me out to the camp, then they went back into San Francisco to await my return.

Monday afternoon I went into town with Wayne and picked up my footlocker which went to Ann Arbor and was returned by the express men there to Pittsburg. When I got my footlocker, which I was really glad to get, it had cost me some \$19.00 in express fees.

While I was downtown, I saw a bracelet with a copy of my wings on it which Dinky had been wanting for a long time, so I bought it then and there. However, I didn't have time to have it engraved so she will have that done later.

I expected to get in late that night, so I called the folks while I was downtown in Pittsburg. Dad said he had a little dinner party planned on Fisherman's Wharf and they would wait for me. Just when it looked like we were going to be there until late, Sledge weakened and sent us home around 6 o'clock. I drove into Oakland with Wayne and then thumbed my way, Lieutenant or no Lieutenant, into San Francisco where I caught a cab to the hotel.

When I arrived, the folks gifted me with a honey of a Ronson (sp?) lighter, with a wind protector on it, and Dinky gave me the other half of my Parker 51 pen and pencil set, which pleased me more than I can tell. These gifts were birthday gifts inasmuch as I wouldn't be around the U.S. on the 22nd and they wanted to present them in person. I gave Dinky her bracelet and she was tickled and everyone was happy, but Dad was hungry, so we left the hotel in favor of a fish dinner.

After a swell dinner of prawns, clams, crab meet, etc., we grabbed another taxi home to the hotel – with seafood practically sticking out of our cars. There we had another big

bull session, this time the issue was whether or not Dinky should go home with the folks Tuesday morning or stick around on the hopes that I would get off Tuesday night. There was an “alert” already scheduled for 6am Wednesday, so there was no hope of getting off after that. Over Dinky’s objections, and inasmuch as Betty was going home, we decided that the sensible thing to do was to have her drive home with the folks Tuesday morning. It was very questionable whether I could get off or not and she would have to stay alone in a strange town, etc., so everything was better if she left with mom and dad. She didn’t like it, but she agreed. And so we went to bed. Was it to be the last time? Only time and the good Lord knows!

We got up the next morning and checked out of the hotel, grabbed a bite to eat across the street and were on our way to the camp.

All the way out, I was dreading the goodbyes which were to come. I hate goodbyes and this was going to be a tough one. We sat out in the car and talked over last minute arrangements and my affairs all seemed to be in good order. So with as little fanfare as possible, I kissed Dinky and mother goodbye and shook hands with Dad. Dinky bore up sell as she was getting used to the goodbyes and so did Dad, although he had as big a lump in his throat as I did. Mother, God bless her, broke down when I kissed her goodbye, which I supposed is to be expected for she has dedicated her whole life to bringing up sister and I. The last impression I have of them is Dad bawling Mother out for crying and Dinky smiling bravely. I knew I had better get out of there quick if I wasn’t to show my feelings. So I watched them drive off from the porch of our barracks.

That day was a busy one, thank God, and I didn’t have time for much thought outside of my part in the last minute preparations. We worked hard all day and went into town that night for a little relaxation and a few drinks, I had several Rum Collins at the “House of Collins” in Pittsburg and danced a few times with some of the nurses that the boys had gotten dates with from the post. I was surprised when Wayne and Walt Seidel walked in with a couple of them. They had asked me if I wanted a date, but I told them no. Hell, I had just said goodbye to my dear wife that morning. That’s the reason I was surprised to see “Healthy” with a girl, as he too had just said goodbye to his wife. He guiltily explained later that he didn’t care about the girl but he just couldn’t stand the thought of drinking alone and I believe him.

About 2 o’clock, after killing a lot of time and the same number of drinks, we grabbed a taxi and returned to the post. All of us were cold sober, much to our disgust as we had planned on getting good and pie-eyed on this, our last free night, in the good old U.S.A.

The next day, Wednesday the 2nd of September, we got the enlisted men on the ball and cleaned up the whole area. In order to keep it clean, each officer was assigned a floor in the barracks, where he was to stay day & night until we left. After cleaning up all day and collecting some last minute money from the finance office, we were told to hold a “showdown” inspection in our barracks and pick up all the liquor the men had – and me with four quarts of Scotch. Without batting an eye, (gee, what a hypocrite!) I handed out a couple of pints. I told the men I wasn’t going to inspect their baggage but put them on

their honor to turn it in to me. A few of the boys turned in a couple of pints which seemed to be all there was in the barracks. So, I turned this in to the C.O. and certified on my sacred honor that there was no more. A little later, one of the boys that had been on "K.P." came in and low and behold, they produced another pint. Well, hell, I couldn't turn it in now, after declaring that there was no more – so I told the, to pass it around after Taps and give everyone a nightcap, and for God's sake to get rid of the bottle. This cleared me and seemed to please the boys too!

Thursday morning, the 3rd of September, we had another formation with full field equipment and bags. The usual Army formula of "Hurry up and wait" was working to perfection as we had a formation every hour until our final departure at 3:15pm. We did nothing all day but put our field packs on and take them off again. We boarded the train on our special siding and we thought there was to be a big train race. The trains, five abreast and two deep, were all lined up and waiting to transport the troops to the boat. But, boy, what chair cars they had on those trains. They were made in early 1800. I am sure, the conductor said that the Smithsonian Institute had cut a car out of our train very recently as they had discovered that Abe Lincoln had made one of his addresses from it. No fooling, it had kerosene lamps for lights and an old wood stove in the rear for heating the car – we got a big laugh out of it.

It took us from 3:30 until 9:30 to get 30 miles from Pittsburg to San Francisco. It seems that there was no railroad bridge and we had to go all the way around the Bay. However, at 9:30pm, we pulled into Camp Mason, right in the heart of the exclusive Riviera section of San Francisco and practically under the Golden Gate Bridge. This was Fort Mason (Point of Embarkation), a group of barracks and two long piers – our boat was resting alongside one of them. After checking our ward of 15 men on board the boat, we clambered up a few decks higher and boarded ourselves.

We were to go across on the U.S. Army transport Republic, now renamed – or should I say renumbered – the "P33". I won't go into the tonnage, but it's a fair size boat, about half passenger and half freight. After milling around trying to find something to eat, which we didn't find, we went to our staterooms. There were three of us assigned to a small 8'x10' room, filled with two wash basins, a double bunk and a single one. Lt. Kinsella, a Bombardier and Lt. Karle Yapple (Pilot) were in with me – two very quiet and amiable fellows, we got along fine together.

After inspecting our quarters and not finding them as luxurious as we had hoped, we went out on deck to await the pulling up off the gangplank, etc. After an hour of waiting, we decided that they weren't going to pull out until later, so we went to bed, bullishly expecting to awaken the next morning far out to sea. Gee, were we surprised to look out the porthole Friday morning. Guess what? We were still tied up to the pier!!

Around 9 o'clock Friday morning, the 4th of September, we put out into the bay with the help of Navy tugs. Then we proceeded further down the bay to a position just about under the Oakland Bay Bridge where we picked up the rest of our convoy. This convoy, which was smaller than I anticipated, was made up of one other troopship, flying a Dutch flag,

and two other freighters – four all together. Our Navy escort, we discovered as we put out through the Golden Gate at noon, consisted of two overworked destroyers. So here we were, four ships abreast, heading west, flanked by two destroyers. There was a blimp too that followed us for about twelve hours out of San Francisco. Thus we were on our way and we now knew for sure that we were headed for the Hawaiian Islands. Would we have submarine trouble? Only time would tell, and that time was seven days to Honolulu. What made the submarine menace un-nice to contemplate was the fact that we had about 20 tons of high explosives in the hold on a troopship, but ours was different – we had 3500 troops on board too. Oh me, I'll sweat these seven days out.

At this writing, it is 10pm on the night of the 9th of September. I have now been writing this journal for four days in my spare time and have now completed my story to date.

END OF SYNOPSIS

September 9th, 1942

Spent another day on board in the usual manner, only today, I stayed out of the poker games and played bridge instead. Incidentally, another Lt. and myself gave Polhemus and the Flight Surgeon an awful shellacking.

I don't believe I have described a typical day on board and so will not overlook this further:

At 5am, the bugle sounding Reveille comes over the P.A. system and at 5:15, the alarm bell rings, calling the crew to battle stations and we passengers to our lifeboat stations. At these stations we stay for approximately one hour or at least until the sun rises.

We huddle together on the deck with our ever present life jackets on (we were required to wear them at all time) by the side of our already half lowered life boats. The danger from submarines is very real and the time most probable to expect an attack is just during the grey hour before the sun rises. Just after the sun sets is another dangerous period of the day. After the sun rises, we are told that the "ship is secure" and the "smoking lamp is lighted", we were not allowed to smoke after the ship was darkened at sundown- that is we couldn't smoke on the decks or state rooms, only in designated smoking lounges. Also, no one was allowed to throw anything overboard, not even so much as a cigarette butt – nothing that would betray our position. About two hours after dark, we dumped garbage and then immediately changed course, we zigzag all the time.

To go on with my story of a "day on board", after the ship is declared secure, about 6:15am, we go back to our cabins and usually sleep until breakfast which is at 8:15. After breakfast of fruit juice, cereal, a couple eggs, toast and coffee, we usually go into the social hall, or "gaming room", where there is always at least ten poker games going. You are either the "watching type" or the "playing type", on how lucky I feel depends the type I am in, usually the "playing type". These games go on all day and far into the night. If you don't play cards, you go up on deck and watch the endless ocean meet the equally endless sky. Perhaps you will take your shirt off and get yourself sunburned; we were

getting into some tropic heat now. Then others would get a book from the ships' adequate library and read all day. About half the passengers were asleep most of the time though, I believe. They would be awakened by a coon porter beating his rendition, on the bells, of "You're in the Army Now" or "Deep in the Heart of Texas", for meal time. We ate lunch at 12:45 and dinner at 6:15. We had excellent food on board, fresh vegetables and lots of fruit.

In the afternoon, the activities were the same as in the morning – poker, reading, sunbathing, strolling the decks or sleeping. The evening, after supper, was the same way. My new infantry friend, Lt. Bill Sabo from Waynesburg, PA., would usually go up on the top deck and watch the sun go down, talking and smoking our last cigarette before the order to "darken ship" was given. Then we would lie down on the hatch and watch the stars come out. It was getting quite balmy now as we were nearing the islands, and so we would lie up on the deck talking of home and the girl friends of the past until about 9:30 and then would come down and go to bed.

Tonight I am wondering if my expectancy of seeing Phil in Honolulu will hit a snag. This has been a point uppermost in my mind since I discovered that we were going to Honolulu. The hopes of seeing my pal there took a great deal of the remorse out of leaving the States. However, Phil's folks hadn't heard from him in two months and are quite frantic as to his welfare. Has he left the islands in favor of South America as he was threatening or what the hell and where the hell is he? As soon as I get a chance, after we dock, I am going to look him up.

Got a little homesick tonight when Bill and I were talking on deck, can't have this on the 5th day out – I would like to have my little honey with me though. Must close and go to bed, tomorrow is the 6th day out.

September 10th, 1942

Today is Thursday and the 6th day out of San Francisco. Nothing exciting all day.

After supper, Bill Sabo talked me into a poker game at 10¢, 25¢ and 50¢. This was fair to meddlin' good price for chips, but I got in it anyway. The one thing I didn't discover, too late to back out then, was that there was no limit on the betting. I lost \$30 so fast it made my head swim. I bought \$5.00 more chips and was determined to quit when that was gone. Well, I made a comeback and got all my money back I had lost. Then I got some convenient abdominal pains and retired from the game, which I should never have gotten into in the first place. Thus ends another day.

September 11th, 1942

Speculation was high today on the possible time of docking, which we found was to be 9:00am Saturday morning. We were all getting kind of restless now and would welcome the sight of land. The enlisted men too, poor devils, were beginning to visibly show the strain, their quarters on dog deck were really rugged. Intended packing tonight, but let it go until morning.

September 12th, 1942

We knew we should sight land this morning and all of us were straining our eyes to catch first sight of it as the sunrise brightened the sky. Much to the surprise of your author, he was the first to sing out the traditional “Land ho!” Yep, out of 3600 men on board, I was the first to sight land. Of course, this doesn’t amount to a damn, but it was a slight honor.

After the ship was pronounced secure, I went back into the cabin and packed my belongings. It was quite a job too as I had bought quite a bit of stuff on board the boat. When I had stuffed the last dirty shirt into the bag, I went out on deck to take a good look at the islands. When I got on deck, I viewed a rocky shore with mountains rising to a height of 3,000 to 4,000 ft. from the water’s edge. Here and there were a few cane fields stuck away in a lonely valley. Not all that met the eye was symbolic of the beautiful Hawaii we had pictured.

Diamond Head stood out very plainly in the morning sun and is all the landmark it is supposed to be. A sharp diamond shaped point of rock rising out of the ocean. Contrary to my impression, Honolulu is on the western side of Oahu and we had to sail around the north end of the island to get there.

We were just approaching Diamond Head when the bells rang out for breakfast, so we went down to eat. I had just taken a bit of toast, when the general alarm sounded. For a moment, not a soul in the dining room moved and then they all rose as one man and made for the door and stairs leading to their lifeboat stations. Just as I was clearing the door, about three coon waiters ran practically up my back. For an alarm of this kind, there was very little confusion and lots of speed.

We arrived on deck to see our boat doing circles and figure eights in the water at full speed. Our destroyer escort went roaring off to the port side of the boat and so we missed all the action. It seems that they sighted a Jap sub just as we were passing Diamond Head. No torpedoes were fired, but we got a thrill anyway. I discovered when I got to my lifeboat station that the piece of toast I had bitten off in the mess hall was still there.

The alarm lasted about $\frac{3}{4}$ of an hour and then we went down and finished eating.

After we finished eating, we went back on deck and watched the island pass us by. We rounded a point and saw Waikiki Beach and the hotels lining its shores. Then a little further south, the Honolulu skyline showed up.

At 11 o’clock, we pulled alongside of the Aloha Tower after being escorted through the mini fields and submarine nets. In accordance with Hawaiian Island tradition, we should have been met at the docks by Hawaiian girls throwing leis around our necks and the orchestra playing “Song of the Islands” and “Aloha”, which I found out means “hello” as well as “goodbye”. However, we knew that we weren’t exactly tourists and could expect none of these frills. But just as we pulled up to the pier, we unbelievably heard the strains of “Song of the Islands” issuing from the pier. Even the fact that it was a “G.I.” band in khaki uniforms took nothing away from the thrill it gave us.

There were a lot of arrangements to be made for our disembarkation and so, after viewing the pier for an hour or so, we went down to the dining room and had lunch.

About 1 o'clock, we got off the boats and were told to pile into trucks for our new base at Kipapa.

When we stepped virtually into the center of Honolulu from the pier, we got a good glimpse of the city. It is like any other city of 300,000 people, except that the buildings aren't more than 4 stories high and the names of the streets are unpronounceable. (The Hawaiian language, I am told, has only 12 letters in its alphabet: A, E, I, O, U, K, L, M, N, O, P and W, but boy, what they can't do with those letters!!)

We loaded onto the trucks and pulled out for Kipapa Field, our new home. On the way out we passed the Dole Pineapple plant and fields and more fields of sugar cane and pineapple. About 7 miles out, we passed the famous Pearl Harbor. Here you see a lot of construction going on, I guess, from what all the old-timers here tell me, that the Japs hit pretty hard here on the 7th of December. You can still see the hulk of the Oklahoma rising out of the water, it's on its side and resting on the bottom. The Arizona and others have already been scrapped already. It really was rough I guess.

Around 10 or 12 miles further on we came to a gulch filled with red dust and on the top of this gulch was our field. "Welcome to Kipapa" we yelled to each other, with bushels of red dust going down our lungs. Yes, it was a field that had just been completed – but we were used to breaking in new fields. Every field I have been to, with the exception of Oxnard, has been in the throes of completion, however, none of them, ever made it.

We were dropped off at our quarters and we got another surprise. The "officers' quarters" – ha ha – were 10x15' wooden shacks. They were thrown together with old pieces of wood siding and there were holes in the floor and the sides that rats could, and did, come through 2 abreast. The four "mad" pilots shacked up together and immediately started a little house cleaning and repairing. We made a table out of a door the carpenters haven't missed yet, and 2 saw horses. Then we hammered and sawed out a couple of chairs and installed various shelves. Of yes, we patched up the holes in the floor and walls as best we could with roofing paper. Now if there was only a "can" within a half mile or a water faucet within the same distance we could almost be comfortable. But no such luck, they were still piping water into the nearest latrines, distance ½ block and that wouldn't be done for at least 2 weeks.

Oh yes, it was rough, but the islands still looked good to us after 8 days of endless ocean.

After mess, they brought us canvas cots and a blanket along with some mosquito netting. We didn't know what the netting was for that they gave us, we soon found out when the mosquitoes came through the door in mass formation at dusk. They weren't big mind you, but I did hear a couple of them discussing a flight of B-17E bombers going over the

field. One said to the other: "Jeez, human, look – females!" That's not so bad, but you should see them sitting on your chest at night turning over your "dog tags" to see what your blood type is. So, you see we discovered why they gave us mosquito nets. And so to bed!

September 13th, 1942

Today we continued to build additions to the "Mad Pilots Roost". Yours truly built a door for the blackout entrance to our shack. Then I put up a shelf for my darling's picture, and another for toilet articles.

After censoring the enlisted men's mail for a couple of hours, I got anxious and got a ride into town to look for Phil Bishop. I figured he would be free on this day as it was Sunday I stopped at the Contractors' Hotel in the 3rd Naval Housing Area, as this was the address we on the mainland had. When I got there, they had no record of his working for the company and said that he was probably living in town. I tried every conceivable way then to contact someone who knew of his whereabouts, but I can say all I did was run up a very blind alley.

Well, it seems that there is a 7:30 blackout here and by 10:00 everyone has to be off the streets. So I thought fast and remembered that the Thedinga's were over here. A hurried phone call to Waikiki Beach found the, home and delighted and surprised to hear from me. They insisted, thank God, on my spending the night with them, which I accepted of course. After a bus trip to Honolulu and a transfer to another electric bus to Waikiki, I met Mr. Thedinga at the bus stop. He looked just the same as when I saw him three years ago. We went up to his house and there I met Mrs. T and we had a great bug gab fest. I was surprised to learn that Clara Joe was married, some 4 weeks now. She married an Italian sailor by the name Nazzio. I got to meet him a little later and he was really a swell "Joe" – I mean he is an Italian in the U.S. Navy.

Wode Thedinga came in a little while later and was surprised to see me too, in fact, he didn't recognize me – in fact, he was a stranger to me at first too. We went up and saw Clara Joe's apartment and then went to bed.

The next morning, I got up at 5:45am and had breakfast with Wode and drove out to the field with him. He works under Civil Service at Wheeler Field in the Armament Department; he arms the new ships with guns. So I arrived at the field.

September 14th, 1942

After I got back to the field, I got together with Lt. Armstrong and we went into town to pick up our freight. We were down there all day and it was here that I again started my search for Phil. I called the main office of the Pacific Naval Air Base Contractors and they at least said that he was still working for the, but they didn't know where he worked or where his residence was. As a last resort, I called the main personnel office at Pearl Harbor and who should answer but Phil himself. Was I tickled? You know it! He was dumbfounded to hear my voice and at first wouldn't believe it. But when he did, he wanted to see me right away. I told him that I would do my best to come out to his place

that night, Monday. However, when I got back to the field, I discovered that I would have no chance to get into town this night; there was too much work to do. So to bed.

September 15th, 1942

We went into the Matson docks again today to load some more of our boxes, of which we have plenty. After loading all day, I took off for Phil's apartment at Waikiki Beach. I arrived there at 5:15pm and Phil came a few minutes later from work. We had a great ol' reunion, you know, cussing at each other good naturedly, back slapping, wrestling, etc. I was sure glad to see him to say the least. He has gained a lot of weight, but looks healthy, if not happy. He used to weigh 155 lbs., but now he tips the scale at 188 lbs. His ear, which was injured in a fight in Honolulu over a year ago, doesn't look bad at all and he thinks it is awful. There is a sizeable piece out of it to be sure, but it is hardly noticeable. We had a few drinks at his apartment, which incidentally is very nice, and then he took me to dinner at the Royal Marina Hotel on the beach at Waikiki. We were about ¾ stiff when we got there which whetted our appetites to no end. We had a very nice dinner in a pretty hotel, I intend going back to see it again when I can see a little better.

After dinner, we went back to the apartment and just made it before the 10:00 o'clock curfew. We sat around and gabbed until late at night about everything. He wanted to know all about his folks at home, my marriage, etc. Finally, we just couldn't stay awake and went to bed. I tossed him for the one bed and lost, so I slept on the floor.

September 16th, 1942

Phil got up at 6am and went on out to work. I didn't have to meet Armstrong at the docks until 9am, so I slept in and took a luxurious shower before catching a bus for downtown. When I got in town, I left both our watches at a jeweler to be fixed. Phil's had a broken balance staff and mine had a broken main spring. I pleaded and cajoled, but I couldn't get better than three weeks service, he was so busy.

By 9 o'clock, I was down to the dock and began a long wait for Lt. Armstrong and his trucks. It was apparent that the U.S.A.T. Republic was going to sail that day as bags and trucks came into the dock. By noon, the passengers began showing up, all with strands and strands of flower lei's around their necks. Most of them were women and children, just a few Army and Navy officers. Quite a contrast with our "no woman" voyage over. Later in the day, we saw the ship leave and it made us plenty homesick.

We worked again all day loading our equipment and went home tired at 6 o'clock. When we arrived out at Kipapa, we found out that our planes had come in from the mainland. Seven planes came in, but one of them broke a tail skid at Hickam Field and had to be left there for repairs. So we had a good time shaking hands with our old pals. Don Sullivan, my 1st pilot, had trouble with his ship in the States and won't be over here for another week or so. Lt. McWilliams assured me that I was still in Sully's combat crew, which made me happy as I like Don a lot.

Our new ships are of the B-24E series with (3) .50 caliber machine guns in the nose. They are really nice.

September 17th, 1942

Today Lt. McWilliams asked me to become his assistant. This makes me the assistant operations officer, an important Air Force Job. He said that it would keep me busy until Sully got here. So today I spent down at the operations shack receiving orders from group HQ's at Hickam Field via phone and teletype.

About 9am, our C.O. Col Ramey called me and gave orders to load our planes with 500 lb. bombs and a full supply of .50 caliber ammunition. This in readiness for any necessary action. This we realize that we are in a real war zone, no 100 lb. practice bombs here – they are the real thing.

September 18th, 1942

I woke up this morning to find our new C.O., Maj. Seeburger (sp?) had moved in and O'Brien had moved out. So I am the only one of the "Mad Pilots" left in the "roost" Peterson and "Healthy" had moved out the day before to be with their respective combat crews. So now, I am living with all the big shots: Maj. Seeburger, 1st Lt. McWilliams and 1st Lt. Stone. McWilliams said he wanted me to stay there with him, so I did.

After breakfast, I came down to the operations office with Mac and he asked me then formally if I wanted to be a permanent assistant operations officer. He told me that I wouldn't be assigned to any combat crew and that I would spend most of my time on the ground. He said I would get in some flying time, but not as much as I would if I were on a combat crew. He also said that the job carried a 1st Lt.'s rating, which he hopes to get for me. He told me to think it over as we wanted me for the job, which requires a flying officer. I did think it over seriously and knew that I would be taken off of Sullivan's combat crew which I didn't like. But I thought of Dinky, my darling wife in the States, and decided that if I could get a job that was a little safer than flying in combat, I should take it for her sake, regardless of how much I wanted to fly. So I told him, O.K. if he saw to it that I got quite a bit of flying time in. I am now the official assistant operations officer – it was a hard decision to make.

I am now down at the operations office standing by the phone and teletype machine. I will work all day tomorrow and hope to get off tomorrow night to get in town. Must close now and write my honey.

September 19th, 1942

After a rather rough night in the operations office, where I tried hard but got little sleep, I went back on the job after breakfast. It is rather hard to sleep with the teletype machine working overtime about 8' away. Then too, the carrier from 90th Group comes at about 5am with the daily code sheets – nothing but interruptions.

The day was rather dull, with your author trying to learn the operations procedure. McWilliams did most of the work and I did most of the watching. I'm beginning to pick it up though.

I left the office at about 5pm and changed clothes to go into town. I had a pass that started at 6:00pm and ran until 6pm Sunday night. I hitched a ride into town with one of the plumbing contractors and arrived at Phil's apartment around 6:30 to luckily find him home.

I peeled off and took a shower right then and there as I was filthy dirty and covered with Kipapa red dust. The water has been off at the field for 3-4 days now and it is plenty rough to keep clean.

After I showered, we sat around and had a few drinks and made ourselves a dinner of macaroni and wieners. Then the boys called up a few gals and made dates for the next week. The gals over here are so in demand that the lousiest bag dictates her own dates. I was burned to hear my buddy Phil ask a gal for a date everyday in the week and finally got one. I remember on the mainland when if a gal didn't give us a date on the night eve asked for, we would call somebody else. Not so over here, however, the odds are about 150 men to one woman. Then there are the native "gook" girls", which some of the boys have become "color blind" to. Very disgusting to read in the newspaper of the marriage of Miss Betty Tong to Sgt. Gleason. After they have been over here for awhile, they get so nuts that these native girls look white to them. In a way, I don't blame them, but just imagine introducing a slant-eyed oriental to your folks as your wife. Ugh!

After dinner, we sat around in our shorts and gabbed some more. All the workers over here would give anything to get back to the States. All they do is drink and sleep. They have a hard time drinking over here too as they can only get one quart a week. Gas is rationed here also, 10 gallons a month – not too sharp for the car owners. And so to bed.

September 20th, 1942

Sunday morning, Phil and I got up and had breakfast at the Tropics. I had the first fresh eggs I have eaten since I set foot on the islands. This is tough as I love eggs as my mom and my wife can tell you.

After breakfast, a friend of Phil's, Toby Gaylord, picked us up and we went across the islands to Waimanalo Beach to swim. He drove up through the palis (cliffs) and I stood on the point where kink Kamkamahaha pushed someone off the cliff one fine day. Very pretty view from there and a very lusty wind.

From there we went on down to the beach aw Waimanalo and it was a delightful surprise as it was just like a cove at Laguna Beach, my favorite beach in So. Calif. The sand was very white and the water was green and warm, I'd say about 75 degrees F. The breakers were perfect for body surfing too and we had a great time. We had to be very careful of the sun though as it is really dynamite here in the tropical belt. As it was I got a little sunburned after being out in the sun for only ½ hour.

We left the beach at about 4:30pm as I had to be back at the field by 6 o'clock. We rove back by way of Diamond Head and Black Point, it was very pretty.

I grabbed a bus out of Honolulu and arrived at the field at precisely 6pm. I went immediately down to the operations office and was greeted warmly by Mac, he was glad to see me it seems. The boys had just returned from a search mission and we got a phone call from 90th C.O. that we had another one the 21st, so things were buzzing. Mac went up to bed about nine and I tumbled in at one after setting up the flight schedule. Big day.

September 21st, 1942

Rather quiet today with the ships out again on search mission. So we won't waste time with entries here.

September 22nd, 1942

Today is my 25th birthday. Last year at this time I wondered where I would be on this day and here I am in the Hawaiian Islands. I spent the day working and half way expecting a cable from the wife. But none came, due to the tying up of the cable lines by the government. So, I wrote her a letter and went to bed about midnight after an uneventful day. Phil and I had planned to be together on this day but I couldn't get off; so that was that.

September 29th, 1942

Have skipped a week but nothing happened of any consequence until today. Last night I came into town and Phil and I had our usual drinks and went to the Wagon Wheel for dinner. Then to bed. Tuesday morning, I got up and went down to the telephone company and made a deposit for my trans-Pacific call. I paid my \$16.50 for 5 minutes time and then was interviewed by the censor. After that I bummed around town and picked up our watches – Phil's and mine. Then I shopped around Honolulu and picked up some gifts for Christmas. A blouse, Lahale (sp?) bag, and a couple of strings of Pokka Shell beads. Then a set of island perfumes for sis. As my phone call was going through at 3pm. I took a taxi back to Phil's apartment. I was anxious to call Dinky because today was our 2nd month anniversary.

I sat around Phil's apartment for an hour and a half making notes on what I wanted to tell her. Then I forgot most of it.

The call finally made connections at 4:45pm and I heard the wife's voice. I was surprised to find that it was very clear. She told me that Bonnie had given birth to a baby girl and on my birthday. This tickled me to no end. We kidded her a lot about holding out for my birthday but I never thought it would actually happen. I hope they make me godfather. They said Pat was over here somewhere, but I haven't seen him yet. I asked her to send my camera so that I can take a few pictures to send home. I asked my honey too, if there was a chance of Junior being more than a topic of conversation. She said she was not sure but was going to see the doctor soon and find out. I'll do a little praying until I find out for sure. This would really be great, then in case I don't come back from this war, at least they will have my offspring. I should know before long.

I talked to mother and dad for a couple of minutes and then bid Dinky goodbye. Time was pressing me plenty close and I'm afraid I ran over a minute or so, but nothing was

said. It sure was good to hear their voices and it made me both happy and melancholy at the same time, it that is possible, and it is.

After I hung up, I made a mad dash for the Honolulu bus and then transferred to the Scofield bus. I arrived at the field about 6 o'clock and went immediately to work and on into the night.

September 30th, 1942

Nothing much new around this red dust cane patch. I did get a couple of letters though – more of a confirmation of our telephone conversation. Dad enclosed a clipping that was in the Alhambra paper showing a picture of me and a write up about my arrival safely at an undisclosed port. It rated Page One, which is not so bad, but I wish they had printed our wedding picture. I'll work late again tonight I guess, I'm doing practically all the operations work now.

October 8th, 1942

Nothing of any consequence happened during the last week. I went into town last Sunday and Phil and I took in a show at the beautiful Waikiki Theatre. After the show, we had a good meal, which is always welcome after the field rations we are on at the field. After dinner at the Tropics, I came on out to the field to work all night.

Today our new operations officer arrived from the 321st Squadron. He is an eager beaver by the name of Lt. Whitlock. He immediately began reorganizing the department, with which move he encountered plenty of opposition. I am not too happy about the new boss, but I am glad that McWilliams is going to get back to flying again. Maybe he will be O.K., but right now, he is a little unpopular.

I am making this entry while putting in another night here at the operations shack. The mosquitoes are especially rough tonight and really thick. They say only the female of the species bites – boy, I'd like to know where all the males are tonight. Boy, what I couldn't do with a nice tall drink right now. I have quart of Canadian Club left out of the 4 quarts I brought over and "brother", I'm hanging onto it for a very special occasion. There is no liquor left on the island and the civilians are distilling wood alcohol, drinking hair tonic and vanilla extract. I often kidded about it but didn't think anyone ever did it. There's not a bottle of Vitalis or Bay Rum in Honolulu. To these defense workers over here, this is a grave situation as their chief pastime is getting drunk. In a way I don't blame them – there's nothing at all to do at night in town as there is a 10 o'clock curfew and 7:15 blackout and I meant blackout. Honolulu is blacker than a coal miner's ass, but Pearl Harbor is lit up like a Christmas tree, I don't get it! Speaking of Christmas, I wonder what kind and where our Christmas will be this year. I have a hunch though, that our Christmas tree will have bananas on it. We'll see.

The food is still lousy and I'm still losing weight. It is getting a little better though but we still are practically on a canned diet. Phooey on Field Rations. I've had exactly 4 fresh eggs since I arrived on this island and only one glass of milk. Just once we had fresh lettuce. The frozen chicken we got here is a little old too. Why, just the other day I saw a

crate of frozen chicken labeled "To the A.E.F. with best wishes, Herbert Hoover." But we have had plenty of beans and Spam. Geez, someone in Washington went overboard when they order "Spam" for the Army. Boy, we get it for any and all meals, if I ever see any Spam, if I get back in civilian life again, I'll scream like a plug nickel in a pay phone.

I got our wedding picture through the mail today and it was really swell. I just sat and looked at it with mixed feeling. I knew I was doing a great thing for my county by being over and here and in the war zone. But, it just doesn't seem right to be away from my darling. The one month we did have together was one that I will cherish all my life. The picture is really perfect and Dinky looks more beautiful than any girl in the world. Will close now and drop my honey a few lines. (I have been listening to a radio station over my little 8x10 Emerson and low and be lonesome they announced it as: "KNX, the voice of Hollywood, it is 2:15am there. Boy, does this make me homesick!) I'm a little moody tonight with all the re-organization going on, the wedding picture, poor food and so on contributing to make me a little unhappy. I get kind of a kick out of these programs originating in the States, especially when they play "Over There, Over There". That's where I am, "over there".

October 16th, 1942

Nothing much new happened around here in the last week, that is until a day or three ago.

Our C.O., Major Seeburger, had been getting really rough on the boys during the last week, especially the officers. He was chewing everybody out. He was going to Court Martial me for using a Jeep to ride from the operations office to my little wooden shack, a distance of about a mile and a half. This is only one incident in dozens. The final stroke of genius was the confining of all the officers to the post, no reason given, just confined us all. I chased him down on the day I was supposed to go on pass – after 48 hour continuous duty. I sweated it out for 5 hours, but finally got it. I was the first officer to break the stupid confinement. This was on the 16th. That day was quite a full day. I went into Honolulu and went to town on my Christmas gifts. I got a lot more stuff for sis and Dinky and the folks. In all, I spent about \$60.00. Then I took a taxi out to Phil's at Waikiki and started a big wrapping spree. I didn't quite finish the job when Phil got home. We went over to the Moana for dinner and we ran into a couple of flying school pals of mine. Sooo, after dinner, we were forced to go up to Lt. George Chandler's room and do a job on a wee bottle of Segrams V.O. Oh, it was a great night, running from hedge to hedge after blackout deadline.

On the morning of the 17th, I wand me head, grabbed the Schofield bus and were on our way back to beautiful Kipapa.

October 17th, 1942

I immediately went down to operations when I arrived and found everyone upset and in a big turmoil. It wasn't long before I got the disturbing circumstances and was a little weak at the stomach myself. It seems that Major Seeburger came back to the base last night after a three day drunk at Hickam. He immediately called a meeting of his staff officers and proceeded to tell them that we were going "Down Under". During the discourse, he

screamed and cussed out the “dirty” politicians – including the President – and said they were sending we poor boys to our deaths in the “Bucket of Bolts”, as he fondly called our B-24D.

He went on, sobbing and screaming to give Gen MacArthur and others a good cussing out. He ended the fiasco by commanding all the officers to accompany him to the Mess hall, it was now 2 o’clock in the morning. When they arrived at the Mess hall, he kicked Lt. Harshman, mess officer, and the mess sergeant clear out of the hall. He then had Lt. Sledge begin cooking them eggs, by the dozen. He liked them, so he made Sledge Mess Officer. When the boys finally got away, he was frying eggs himself and stacking them one atop the other. He had completely cracked and was screwy as a loon. There are numerous other antics, too numerous to mention.

When came the dawn, Capt. Holt, Lt. McWilliams and Lt. Sledge went down to Group HQ to see Gen. Lynd about the situation. The outcome of their report was that Major Seeburger was ordered to report to Gen. Lynd at 1:30 that afternoon. When the Major heard of it, he called a meeting of all the officers. He had been practicing all morning, threatening to kill that officer or the other with his .45 caliber pistol. So we were all on edge. This is the first officers meeting I ever attended where all the officers came with loaded pistols. However, this precaution proved unnecessary as the Major was in a very sane and pathetic mood. He knew what was coming and with tears in his eyes, wished us good luck and goodbye. It was very pathetic and when he left, we felt very sorry for him and were all more than slightly blue.

October 29th, 1942

Nothing of any consequence occurred after the Major left us. We got a new C.O. on the 19th. He seems to be a good fellow by the name of Major Morse. I liked him immediately. I believe that I liked him because he looked so much like Uncle Roy, pipe and all.

During the last few days, in addition to my duties as operations officer, I have been collecting supplies and numerous little articles that I don’t think I will be able to obtain “down under”. Yep, it was definite now that we were going. The 319th left on the 19th and the 321st a week later. We were third to move out; we were told, so we were all packed and packing.

I had seen a beautiful candid camera in the Wheeler Field PX and was really “sweating it out” so to speak. I thought the wife was going to send me one for Christmas but wasn’t at all sure it would reach here before we left. I wanted to take photos on the way down, so there I was all undecided. However, I decided on the 28th and in a big rush, bought this Argus C-2 camera, f3.5 lens and all. It set me back about \$55.00, including the film, but it was a good price.

Boy, did it rain last night and still is. This beautiful Kipapa mud is something to behold. It’s about 2 feet deep everywhere and really gooey. Last night, I moved my cot no fewer than 6 times trying to get out from under a leak in the roof of our little shack The Chaplain was sleeping in our abode and so I asked him in all seriousness, after I had

moved my bed for the 5th time, if he was sure that the Lord had promised not to drown the world again. I've never seen the rain come down like it did all night – the weather station said it rained 18 inches that night.

Today, Charley Whitlock and myself finished up the list of “who’s who” on the air echelon and it was a tough job for everyone wanted to go by air. I don’t blame them, I’d hate to spend 30 days on an over-crowded freighter in enemy waters.

At four today, we sent the crews down to Hickam to get rooms for the stay overnight. All our ships were at Hickam for last minute gun mounts, radar, etc. We were to take off the morning of the 30th from there.

I got everybody cleared out of Kipapa and left on the last truck for Hickam, about seven bells. It was still raining hard and visibility was “00”. When I got to Hickahm, my only thought was to get a call through to Dinky at all costs and let her know I was leaving, by one means or another!! I went right over to the apartment of Lts. Wilcoxson, Scott and Browder (friends of mine from Ground Operations) and pit in the call from there. I had a couple of drinks and a sandwich with them while I was waiting on the call. The call was for 8:30 and at nine, the operator called and said no one answered in California. I was sick, to say the least. While I was waiting for the operator to try again, I consumed about half a quart of whiskey and still felt no better. I called Phil and told him goodbye and then waited some more. At about 11 o’clock, the operator called and said she had my part, hot damn! I must have run up one helluva bill for I talked to Dinky and Mom for a long time. My darling said she had seen Dr. Riddell about junior and he said he would let her know definitely in about 2 weeks, oh me, I’ll sweat this out. I told her I was leaving for Australia in the morning by referring to my visit to Bob Beebe. The second time I mentioned him, the censor asked me if I was anticipating a move and after I lied un-beautifully he requested – or rather demanded – that I make no further mention of Bob Beebe. Oh well, my point was already across.

October 30th, 1942

The rain cleared up today and we were to take off for Christmas Island at 9am. However, our ship developed a gas leak and so we were all to be held up a day. Four of our ships left the morning of the 29th and the three ship formation I was in were to leave the 30th, but it looked now like we would lead on the 31st.

We bummed around during the morning and had lunch at the officer’s club with Sarkisian and McCoy. Yep, I had finally bumped into Jerry. He told all about being married in Southern California and that Janet had gone back to his hometown in Iowa and was going to teach school there. After eating, we sat around the outdoor lounge of the club and sipped rum Collins while watching the boats go in and out of Pearl Harbor. We sat and drank and drank and sat. I saw Healthy over at another table getting gloriously oiled. Awhile later, I saw good old Healthy in a big conference with a general and about three full colonels, giving them hell in no uncertain terms about something. Ohhhhhh, I feared the worst but he evidently came out unscathed.

Just before dinner, I ran into some old friends I had met on a previous visit to Hickam and they invited me to join their party. We had a couple of drinks and then dinner at the club. They had two very lovely girls with them, the first I have seen since I hit the island, it was nice just to sit and look at them. They were white too! After dinner, we went over to one of the fellows' apartment and danced which was the first I had done since leaving home. One of the boys could play the sweetest piano I had heard in many a day and I really enjoyed it. While the other fellows took the girls home, he played the "Rhapsody in Blue" clear through and it was beautiful although it did make me feel blue. But was a nice "blue".

October 31st, 1942

We took off this morning at 9am after a very disastrous morning for your author. I was taking pictures of "Little Eva" (AP772) and crew like mad when the beautiful camera fell out of the leather case and smashed all to hell on the runway. Oh brother, was I fit to be tied. I bundled the parts up and was glad of one thing – the special lens didn't break. I had hopes of perhaps having it repaired in Australia.

We had a very uneventful trip and saw just loads of Pacific Ocean. We had been out about 8 hours when we sighted a little sand strip with cocoanut palms on it, this was Christmas Island. (Well, Christmas comes early this year!) This island was all kind of white sand with a maze of lagoons and cocoanut palms. We had a good meal here and pit up for the night in a palm grove. They told us that the fishing was excellent here and I, for one, was sorry we couldn't spend more time there. It was pretty and quite definitely a tropical island. We beat up a few cocoanuts and we were disappointed in the milk but the meat was good. The sunset and dawn were beautiful through the palm fronds and Healthy and I wished that the girls were here.

November 1st, 1942

We took off at 8:30am today for the Samoan Islands. Tututula (sp?) Field by name. We landed there, after skirting through the islands with a Marine fighter escort, at about 5:30pm. We were taken in beautiful Pontiac station wagons to the Marines officer's club where we were treated to gallons of beer.

The Army Air Corp and the Marins hit it off fine and they really took care of us, After a swell dinner, we were escorted around the island. We saw Pango Pango – a big disappointment – and ended up in some native huts discussing affairs with the island chieftain and his family. The natives were very friendly to us and brought us cakes and a native drink tasting very suspiciously like root beer. Their huts were thatched palms with a grass roof. They are all open on the sides and the floors were covered with woven palm mats, beautiful thins. I tried to get a couple of them but it seems that they went with the chief's daughter when she got married. So I was stopped cold. The chief said he would marry "Niiwala", his daughter, and I, but I couldn't quite figure out how I would explain my bigamy to Dinky, so I didn't get any Samoan rugs.

Samoa was a very pretty island and had all the beauty of a South Sea Island. There were gorgeous flowers and all kinds of tropical fruits and trees. In effect it looked just like a

tropical island should – the natives were being well-educated and spoke fair English. They all wore “lava lava’s”, a kind of flowered skirt that ran from their waists to their feet. The men wore the, from the waist down and the women also, but the women had on some kind of a blouse affair. I didn’t see a naked native on the island. Very disillusioning, I thought they all ran around in a “G-string”.

November 2nd, 1942

Up early again and take-off was at eight for the Fiji Islands. After passing over about a thousand little islands, we landed at 1 o’clock at Viti Levu in the Fiji’s.

During our flight today, we crossed the International Dateline and so we lost a day. We took off November 2nd and landed November 4th, the same day. Very confusing.

We were very well treated at Fiji by the English and had the best food we had run into since we left the States. They had a lot of horses on the island which could be bought for \$5-\$40. They were beautiful horses and we surly would have liked to bought one, but unfortunately, the planes were already crowded. Every one based there, from the buck privates to the Colonels has his own horse.

This was the place where I got paid for the month of October, I had been carrying my voucher with me since I left Oahu.

That night, we had a few drinks in the officer’s club and played a little poker. As usual, I came out just a couple of dollars ahead.

The natives are really black here and have hair just like a Fiji islander should have: real kinky. Their dress is the same as that of the Samoans and their huts similar too except that the sides are woven of palm leaves.

All of these islands are surround by coral reefs and white sand. The water is a beautiful shade of green or pale blue. We saw several hulks of boats that had hung up on these reefs which are just under the water.

November 4th, 1942 (Wednesday)

We took off at 7:45 for New Caledonia, the three of us and 4 from the 400th who caught up with us after taking another route from Christmas Island. So there were seven of us going to Nandi Field in French New Caledonia. (I shouldn’t say Nandi Field, Nandi is the town(?) and Planes de Giac is the field.)

We landed at about 2:30 and were to take off at once but Whitlock got stuck in the soft dirt at the edge of the runway so we were forced to stay. The four ships from the 400th, however, went on to Australia. We were to wish we had too.

New Caledonia is very wild and still very primitive, as a whole it is very dry and brown. Nournea is the only part of any consequence on the island. It was here that we saw

practically the whole allied fleet in the harbor, we weren't supposed to fly over it, but the message got screwed up.

Our quarters at Planes de Giacs were rugged for sure. They consisted of two iron barns of corrugated iron with cots thrown here and there at will. Our quarters were ironically named the "Hotel Astor". If the quarters were bad, there was one consoling factor – the food was worse. Positively the foulest I have ever tried to eat – and flies, let's not talk about it, none of us ate.

McAteer (sp?), myself and Lonergan made friends with a Sergeant there and he took us in a Jeep up the coast to the little primitive French town of Pomboo, it reminded me a little of the corner of Del Mar and Mission in San Gabriel, only there was no gas station or drug store. This Sergeant took us to the only eating place for a hundred miles and it really was quaint. In fact, it was so picturesque that it would have made a million dollars on Sunset Blvd. This big old house with all the furnishings of 1810 A.D., even to the cobwebs of the same date, was owned by a very nice old French family who had converted it from the local Bastille. But, they served us a marvelous meal. Kind of a cheese and onion omelet first, followed by fresh steak and French fried potatoes. We had loaves of real French bread too. We ate until we about burst and then had a bull session around the candle lit table. The candles weren't for atmosphere - that was all the lighting facilities they had. The usually served a quart of wine with the meal, but monsieur explained that they were "just out". The owners spoke no English at all, so our Sergeant guide took care of the ordering of the meal, etc. It was here that I got the French Franc notes for souvenirs. After this feast, which only the three of us had, we jogged back to camp and crawled into our mosquito nets at the "Hotel Astor" – glad that we're leaving the next morning. You can have all of my part of New Caledonia.

November 5th, 1942 (Thursday)

Up at 5:30 and off for Australia, and we had no regrets at leaving, but yes. We sighted the coast of Australia about 1100 and landed at Amberly Field about 1230. Amberly is about 25 miles north of Brisbane and practically in the city of Ipswich. We liked Amberly field immediately and it was like a real metropolitan airdrome.

We cleaned up in our barracks and enjoyed the luxury of a shave and a shower after our trip. With clean clothes on, we took off for the town of Ipswich, population about 30,000 outmoded souls., to sample the much talked of Australian 18% beer. It was all it was cracked up to be and really smooth – I don't ordinarily care for beer but this was good.

This town reminded me a great deal of an old country town of 1920. False front buildings, "Bobbies" with high hats and swallow-tail coats and all. It was here on my first day in Australia, that I formed the opinion that the Aussies were 20 years behind our country in styles, customs, housing, recreation, etc. The girls were still wearing their skirts and dress to a length well below their dimpled (just another word – honest wifey, I didn't peek!) knees. Their customs were prudish and spoke of the early 20's. The girls rarely smoked and don't drink – only the "bad" girls do these things. They don't enjoy any of the little luxuries that Americans take for granted in our way of life. Such articles

as automatic irons, toasters, coffee makers, hot plates, electric stoves, refrigerators, lighting fixtures, plumbing fixtures, etc. They still use wood and coal stoves and old ice boxes, to say nothing of crank-'em-up gramophones and room lighting by a single naked bulb hanging on a cord from the ceiling. Their plumbing fixtures too are old fashioned. They use the old 4 legged bath tubs and pull-the-chain variety of toilet. A "shower" is practically unheard of. Their houses are all of wood siding and raised up stilts, for some reason, about ten feet off the ground. I asked one of the girls I met why they don't have any of our modern appliances. She replied that all their imported goods come from England and they got just what English manufacturers sent them and no more. I asked her if something wasn't being done about this forced sale and she replied, "what can we do?" I promptly asked her if she remembered the Boston Tea Party, she laughed and said, yes, but that the Australians were an easy going people and were satisfied with their own little lives – that is until the "Yanks", as they call us, arrived to tell them of the great United States. Now they all want to come to America. Too bad, for they were getting along fine in their own little way until we made them dissatisfied with our stories of America. Hell, they might have gone along for years and never had known what they were missing.

When we arrived, we had to accustom ourselves to the use of the English system of monies. All our American money, though honored – in fact revered, would have to be changed into pounds, florins, schillings, pence, etc. This was extremely confusing at first as they have so many more coins than we do. So for awhile when we paid for anything, we would just hold out our hands and let the cashier take what he or she wanted. But we soon caught on and are old English money changers now. A little, dirty street beggar in Brisbane asked for two pence for a glass of milk; I gave him 2 American pennies and he was so excited, I thought he would have to hurry home and change his pants. American money is really cherished over here.

Another thing we had to get used to was driving on the wrong side of the road, or excuse me please, the right side of the road – but that's the wrong side. Of well, anyway you should drive on the left side of the road over here. The first ride we took I would have sworn that someone would hit us head on. To compensate for this mode of traffic, they have the steering gear on the right hand side.

But to get on with my tales of Ipswich. We drank all the beer they had in three pubs and then supported each other to the best beanery in town where we consumed half a cow and about 4 gallons of milk. I'll say this for Australia, they have plenty of milk. You can't go a block in town without passing at least three "milk bars" (similar to our malt shops). I'm off on a tangent again. Well, after dinner we discovered a dance was being held in town and we Yanks were invited. About eight of us decided to take it in and had quite an experience. They had a supposed hot swing band and their latest popular piece or pieces were "Tangerine" and "I don't want to set the world on fire". Wow! They made an attempt at Boogie Woogie rhythm that was pathetic and then Rhumba. I almost went crazy to hear that expressionless drummer playing softly and steadily through Fox Trot, Rhumba, Boogie Woogie and Waltz numbers. He played the same beat for all four. I raised such a fuss that the boys framed me and first thing I knew they were announcing that they had a "famous", get that famous, wifey, drummer from American who was

going to put on an exhibition. It still didn't click until he said "Let's give a big hand to Lt. Potter of the Army Air Force!" This was no small dance mind you, but about 600 people were there. This was something I hadn't bargained for but there was nothing I could do about it now. So I tromped up on the bandstand and changed the drums around to suit myself and away we went on "Diana". At first, I would like to have scared hell outta the rest of the musicians by using the cymbals but they soon caught on and tried to play as loud as they could, but I won. I put a decidedly different rhythm (I could never spell that word!) into the proceedings which at last our boys seemed to appreciate. When I asked them to play a Rhumba number, they all but dropped their respective instruments when I lit into the accented rim shots and tom-tom effects. It was a lot of fun.

After the dance – no let me describe as best I can the way they dance over here, before I go home. First, they are all trying to learn to "Jitterbug" which is as outmoded as the derby in the U.S. But our boys are good about it and are delving back into their past routines to give the Aussie gals a whirl (no pun intended). This of course, pleased the Aussie boys to no end. They come home on leave and find all the Yankees with their gals. We are warned too, not to flash our money any more than necessary as the Aussies get very little pay. This combined with the fact that anything an American wants in Australia he gets, doesn't go to make us any too popular with the Aussie troops. In effect, we have taken Australia.

Again, I have gotten off the subject of the dace, but I have to put down these things as I think of them. They try to dance the American way and are leaning fast – but they still throw in these worn dance numbers of another day or decade. Everything from Gypsy Taps to the Down Under version of the Square Dance, only they do it in a circle. Well enough for today, we grabbed the Amberly bus and turned in.

November 6th, 1942 (Friday)

Grabbed a bus into Ipswich and bearded the train for Brisbane. Let's see, there was Metcalk, Snokelburg, Sleeper and myself. The trains are ass quaint as the town. They are about 1/3 smaller than ours and very English. Each row of seats has its own door out onto the platform, all the coaches were wooden. We really had a rough ride into Brisbane. I believe I hit the seat about once every quarter of a mile. They are really fast too: it took us an hour and one half to go 25 miles.

Brisbane is quite a large city and is much more modern than Ipswich. It, I would say, has a population of around 600,000. We wandered around the streets of town for awhile enjoying the friendly smiles of the native women – I said "smiles", darling! I found at long last – and after 3 hours of pavement pounding – a camera shop that would at least attempt to repair my camera. So I let Percy Hambleton work ion it in his shop in "Ye Olde Arcade". We all ate lunch at Rowe's Café and were really delighted with the old English, or Australian, atmosphere and architecture. We had a perfect meal, well server, for about .60 including fresh seafood cocktail, steak and all the trimmings. Thins are really cheap over here. You can't spend more than .60 on the best meal in town and the Presidential Suite in the best hotel would only set you back at the most \$4.00 in our money.

The boys had picked up a couple of very lovely girls and were having drinks with them when I pulled up a chair at the lounge of one of the bog hotels. Some of the fellows were going to stay in town and come out the next am, but me, the “Eager Beaver” that I am took the train back to Amberly and was in bed early.

November 7th, 1942

We had a meeting this morning down on the line. It was here that I saw Major Morse, our C.O., for the first time since leaving Oahu. He told us that the planes needed new nose wheel collars and that we might as well go back into town and have a good time, he would call us when he wanted to take off. Sooo, we took off for Brisbane again. This time we caught a ride in an ambulance that was going right into Brisbane. Now I’m sure that have ridden in everything from gravel trucks to ambulance.

When we, Smith, Metcalf and myself, go into town, we went right to the bulleting office and obtained a room in the Oxford House. (Oh yes, I forgot to mention that I cabled the wife yesterday of my safe arrival.) After checking in at the Oxford House, which was more rustic than the famous Allanel Hotel of Ann Arbor, we went down and bummed around town somewhere, consuming spirits at most of the stops.

We went to a dance in town that night and I danced to a surprisingly good orchestra, we found out later that most of the, were Americans. Healthy and I met two very pretty girls at the dance and went out after it was over and had a malt and a gabfest. We ordered our malts American style and the girls seemed to like them thick too. (Down here, they only put one scoop of ice cream in a can of milk and call it a mile shake – chocolate flavoring is not to be found!)

Healthy and I had a conference before we took the girls home and decided that our wives wouldn’t mind our accompanying the girls home, like gentlemen should, if we told them we were married and just eager to be with a companion again. We did, and they were very understanding and we had a lot of fun. We walked them home as they said it was only a short walk. Egad, to an Australian, a short walk is anything under 10 miles. Their homes were right together and out 5 miles from our hotel. Geez, we seemed to walk all night. The girl I was with, Vanie Reid by name, was a dressmaker and had lived in Brisbane all her life: 23 years. She was a very nice girl and intelligent too. She, like the other people over here, wanted to know all about America, especially the movie people. So, about 3am, we limped back to the hotel and had to ring the night watchman to get in – it seems they lock the door at midnight.

November 8th, 1942

We just bummed around town today, not doing much of anything. I bout me a money belt, a tooth brush and a handkerchief. In the afternoon I met Vanie and we took in the local zoo, kangaroos, peacocks and all. We met McDonald and Layhee and their girls and we all had dinner at the Carlton Hotel and then all of us went to see “Moon Tide” at one of the local cinemas.

The show houses themselves are very nice and almost modern but the theater procedure was not. We were in the best theatre in Brisbane and paid \$3.00 for our seat, but they still made us sit through about 20 minutes of slide advertising. They have intermissions between features and a boy in a white coat goes down the aisles selling Peter's Ice Cream.

After the show, we took in another one of the local milk bars and tried to get a taxi out to her house. No soap, so I did the "hike act" again and on 2 one day-old corns this time.

November 9th, 1942

After finding my bed full when I got back to the Oxford House last night, I spent a fitful night with three in the bed: Healthy, Snokelburg and yours truly. We decided to check out and see if we couldn't get a room in a better hotel. So the bulleting officer sent us to the Commercial Travelers Association (C.T.A.) and it was really rugged. (I don't think the sheets had been changed for 2 weeks and we wasted a half four trying to get out of the "cage-type" elevator, it was worse than the Burke Building.)

After checking regretfully into the C.T.A., Metcalf and I started bumming around town, picking up a drink here and there. He had a date at 4pm and so we killed time until then, I had nothing to do anyway. His girl showed up with a girlfriend so I couldn't very well refuse to join the party – at least not the way "Red" put it up to me. Well, when we ordered drinks, the waiter at the Carlton refused the girls service. When I asked the waiter why, he at first wouldn't tell, but I got angrier and more insistent until he took me aside and told me that they were undesirables and common prostitutes. Wow, were we floored, because the girls were extraordinarily beautiful for Australians. But I caught Metcalf's eye and told him about it in the "John", quickly thereafter we told them that we had found out why they wouldn't serve them and would they mind leaving us. I'll say this for them: they were very ladylike in their departure, nothing at all was said, they just got up and left. (A few days later, through another source, we discovered that they were secretly G-2 girls.)

We then had dinner at Rowe's and went back to our hotel.

November 10th, 1942

When I got up, I found Metcalf and Snokelburg already gone, so I checked out and walked over to the Oxford House to see the rest of the gang. I met them there and we had breakfast. We called after breakfast and found that we didn't need to go back to the field that day, so we decided to take in the local beach resort, Surfer's Paradise at Southport – some 50 miles away. To make a long story short, we hired two little British cars with 8 hp engines and lit out of Brisbane for Southport. There were eight of us: Andrews, McWilliams, Brost (sp?) McCubbin, Hixson, Wiltse, Campbell, Healthy and myself. We had a great time going down and drank about all the cows dry for 50 miles.

We checked in at the Surfer's Paradise about 3 o'clock and were delighted. It was a first rate hotel of the classy resort variety. We got a swell room, McCubbin and I, American Plan for 1 pound 6 pence per day. The rooms were beautiful and the food was better. We

ran down a couple of girls on bicycles on the way to the hotel – after chasing the, through fields, across lawns and into the yard in our Standard. (Nicknamed the Red Charger.) So, Campbell and Andrews had dates with them that night.

We spent 2 days down there, swimming, eating and just plain loafing. I struck up an acquaintance with a girl whose husband is fighting with the Aussies in New Guinea, Milne Bay to be exact, so we had a lot in common – both married, both away from our better halves and both lonesome. So we had a good time swimming and palling around together. Pat Hine, or Mrs. L. Hine, was so much like my darling wife that I was ever so lifted morally by her company – I could almost pretend I was home again. (Don't take me wrong darling!) She gave me a picture to show you because I said she was so much like my darling wife. Her picture you will find herewith. She was also expecting a baby in March, all the same as my gorgeous better half.

November 11th, 1942 (Armistice Day)

Spent a lazy day reading about the battle royal going on and wondering how long it would be before we got into it, we didn't know that would be just five days later.

Managed to get good and sunburned while swimming and lying around the beach with Pat Hine.

November 12th, 1942

Received a call this a.m. from the field saying we were to report there Friday morning for take-off. We left around 2pm and arrived at Amberly around 8pm that night.

November 13th, 1942

There was a meeting this morning at 9 o'clock and Major Morse said all but our ship and McWilliams' airplane would take off for Iron Range. We saw the other five ships take off and then went up and packed. That night, we went into Ipswich and had dinner and went to see a show, "Convoy" and some stinker of "Judy Canovas". And so to bed.

November 14th, 1942

We took off about 10 o'clock for Marcebo, about 700 miles north of Amberly. We arrived there at 5 and had dinner. We found out that the other 5 ships had gone on. There were no housing facilities there for us so we spread our cots out under the wing of "Little Eva". It was a nice night and we got along fine under the stars.

November 15th, 1942

Took off at 8am for Iron Range, some 300 miles or so further north. We got to Iron Range around 11 o'clock and found out what our tactical base was like.

Just as we pulled up on the taxi strip and disembarked, we saw a 319th ship land from a night combat mission. The pilot leaned out of his window and hollered, "I'm an ace." It seems that they had shot down a Zero on their first mission. Yeah buddy, we really in the combat zone now. They had attacked shipping in the Buin-Faisi harbor and had stayed to pick-up a few float (sp?) Zeroes.

Our base is cut out of the jungle on the Cape York Peninsula. The landing strip is long but narrow and surfaced with molasses, if you don't think so, smell it.

We found our quarters were to be tents pitched in a clearing in the jungle bordering the runway and about 2 miles away. There are a great abundance of strange trees, including rubber, mahogany, iron wood, bamboo, etc. All the trees have vines hanging from them like a "Tarzan" movie. We got an awful kick out of it. We spent the remainder of the day hurriedly pitching tents and setting up cots for the night. This place is really rough, but it is amongst the trees so it could be worse.

November 16th, 1942

Spent the A.M. cleaning up and unloading the plane and further fixing up our wall-fly tent. There are five of us staying in it: Freeman, Yople, Stone, McCause and yours truly.

This afternoon we got orders to load our planes with 500 lb. demolition bombs for a raid tonight. We were all excited and eager as could be. You would think that there would be some apprehension at going out on your first bombing raid. But not our boys, they were falling all over each other trying to hitch a ride on a ship that was going. The electricity in the air was intense as the confidence and the excitement of a raid was felt.

The ships were to take off at 11pm, there were 15 of them all loaded, and make a raid on Rabaul shipping. Major Morse with Col. Meehan, group C.O. and Sorenson and crew lead off at 11:02 sharp and were closely followed by ten others. After the first few ships had taken off, Yople and I went up and went to bed.

I had just dozed off to sleep when I was literally bounced out of bed by a terrific explosion. Yople and I asked each other at the same time – "What's that?" Then we saw a tower of flame raise into the air, followed by the sound of .50 caliber machine gun shells going off. We thought together, geez, they are shelling us and the ground troops are attacking Yople and I, who were the only ones left in our tent, then noticed all the ambulances from the nearby hospital unit tearing out on the line. So we hurriedly pulled on our pants and leather jackets, strapped on our automatics and started on foot for the line. (The "line" is our word for "runway area".)

We had gotten about opposite the hospital when we got the story. It seems that the eleventh plane to take off had hit a couple 24's on the taxi strip and had crashed into the woods. The explosion was the wing tanks bursting. The hospital was an open air affair with wire screen around it. I saw a couple boys in there burned something horrible.

We hitched a ride down to the line on the "Goon Wagon" (ambulance) and viewed the remains of about five AP's, 4 B-24's and one B-17. A couple of the boys came tearing by mumbling something about 904 being the crashed AP. Well, your author being 320th operations officer tore like hell for the Base Operations tent to find out who it was that crashed. It turned out to be a 400th ship. Then someone said, "Where's Capt. Holt?", he was in that AP. We found him wondering around a few moments later, the only one to

survive the crash out of the eleven men on board. What an experience he had. This was truly a hectic day.

Only three of our ships got off for the target, Rabaul harbor. They were McWilliams, Whitlock and Campbell. They came in the next morning with their excited reports. McWilliams could not find the harbor a/c of weather; Whitlock found the harbor, A/A fire and searchlights. They made a perfect run on 6 ships in the harbor but only the bombardier got mad – the bombs would not release. He got so mad that he turned on all the lights in the nose, hence the A/A fire became intense. He said he was so mad that he would have bombed the “old ladies home” if he could have found it. Campbell thought he hit the docks but he wasn’t sure, the weather was awfully bad. Andrews also went on the mission and he dropped his bombs on the airdrome. They weren’t at all satisfied with the mission as they didn’t know what they had hit. That’s one nasty factor in this heavy bombardment, you can’t see what you hit without going back over the target – and that’s too damned dangerous. But were delighted to hear later that two docks had been destroyed and the Lakunai Airdrome damaged.

November 17th, 1942

The crews on mission were sleeping and I went down to group operations. My friend, Lt. Boyd, had made me assistant group operation officer until the regular crew of Lts. Browder, Wilcoxson and Scott arrive from Oahu. This was okay as I got to see that the 320th didn’t get screwed.

November 18th, 1942

Forgot to mention that Col. Meehan (group C.O.), Major Morse (our C.O.), Sorenson, Kinsella, Booroojy and crew were lost on the Rabaul mission of the disastrous night of the 16th. We sent 12 AP’s out looking for them today but to no avail.

November 19th, 1942

Another search mission today, but also no luck. I guess they really got themselves lost good.

November 20th, 1942

Went down to the beach today and went swimming and got myself sunburned. I went swimming in the raw whilst one of the enlisted men stood on the shore with a rifle watching for sharks. Spent an uncomfortable night with a red hot back. Wish the wife was here to rub Noxema on it.

We have about given up hope for 902, holding the Major, Colonel and Scrud (Sorenson). They must have crashed into one of the New Guinea mountains, they’re high – 14,000 ft and up.

November 21st, 1942

Nothing new. Bomber command has put us on training status so we can have a chance to get settled, too bad they didn’t do it when we first arrived, it might had saved us 9 AP’s.

November 26th, 1942 – Thanksgiving!!!

No turkey today, in fact we had the usual corned beef and cold canned tomatoes. But nevertheless we were alive and were thankful for that, some of our number will not celebrate any more Thanksgivings.

I wonder how the big football games came out today. We don't get any news here as the lousy Japs jam our frequencies.

This was just another day in the week.

November 27th, 1942

I was relieved in Group Operations today by the regular boys so I went back to our squadron as Ops. Officer. Charlie Whitlock now being acting C.O. Whitlock is a remarkable fellow, he excels in everything he attempts, he has a history like Tom Swift only much more intellectual. A college literature professor, a master classical musician, a rifle marksman, minister, authority on Shakespeare, amateur psychologist and an excellent fellow and hot pilot. He is only 22 also. Hat's off to "New Hampshire" Charles P. Whitlock.

November 28th, 1942

There is an alarming epidemic of diarrhea going through the field. Wiltse and McWilliams are in the hospital with it and almost everyone has a touch of it, yours truly included. Last night I woke up with cramps and waited a little too long to set out for the "16 holer", so half way there I made a dash into the jungle and just in time. Wooooie! I hope I'm not getting the G.I.'s as the boys call it.

November 29th, 1942

This is a banner day as we had a big turkey dinner with sweet potatoes included. Of course, we didn't have any dessert, but we were happy with just turkey and candied sweets, we even looked amiably past the G-d damn canned tomatoes.

We got word after dinner that the ground echelon had arrived in the harbor, some 20 miles distant. I got a ride on a G.I. truck to go down and meet them and boy what a rough 20 miles that was – never again. I arrived there to find the boys still on the boat and with only one small boat to bring them ashore. They, poor devils, had been on the boat for 22 days without touching shore. They had their water rationed and had to sleep on the decks, they were a sorry looking outfit when they came ashore.

November 30th, 1942

Worked around the tent today, raking, spreading sand and making a few rustic hangars. The men began coming off the boat, but no mail, very sad.

Rumor has it that our new squadron C.O. was to be Capt. Taylor from the 321st, a severe fellow.

December 1st, 1942

We have been on the alert for three days now and changing bomb load about every four hours. About noon we got orders to take off, to get 4 destroyers that were trying to get reinforcements to the surround Japs at Buna.

The whole group went out on this mission, 22 A.P.'s to be exact, our squadron leaving last. The 319th got there first and all they found was a lot of Zero fighters and come back minus 2 ships, which landed with motors shot out at Moresby.

We arrived there at dusk and found all ships under full steam of Lae. We left them with two on fire. There was plenty of shipboard anti-aircraft but no one was hit. Nice work, said I as I met them at the landing strip. I'm getting damn tired of sitting on the ground while the rest of the boys go on missions; I'm going to demand a combat crew.

December 2nd, 1942

Nothing of any consequence today. However I hear that our new C.O., Capt. Taylor, is organizing a new crew, Potter for Co-Pilot I seez!

December 3rd, 1942

I forgot to mention that Hesse and I went to Guinea to look for Crosson, Speltz, who didn't return from the destroyer mission the other night. Tony Speltz is a classmate of mine. We covered the whole coast of New Guinea (south coast) and back, but saw nothing but jungle, palm trees, natives and water. We flew so low that the natives threw cocoanuts at me, a big laugh.

Today we took off for Townsville, our first trek to civilization in a month. The town turned out to be very old and dirty with little amusements; however, we drank ourselves sick on milkshakes and stuffed our tummies with steak. I brought about 3 cakes, a case of chocolate and a carton of peanuts for the boys. We couldn't get a current magazine or paper to save our souls. We went to see a show in an open air theatre tonight and of course it rained.

December 4th, 1942

I finished up my buying and business with Bomber Command this am and we took off for home about 1pm. We brought about 35 sacks of mail back with us but still non for L.B.P. – it must be amongst the 130 sacks we left behind.

When I got down to operations tonight "Whit" gave me an official looking order relieving me of duty as operations officer and oxygen officer, hell, I didn't even know that I was oxygen officer.

I said, "What gives Charlie, am I canned?" He said yes, but to a good purpose – he had placed me as co-pilot and flying with Capt. Taylor, the squadron commander. Wahoo, at last I get a break and will get to go into combat. We are getting an "all star" crew too, thanks to a little finagling here and there. Capt. Taylor is a fine fellow and I am going to try and make him a good co-pilot.

I took the job of operations officer as a favor to McWilliams and got stuck with it. But every time I looked at my wings and the sweating I had done to earn them, I just couldn't sit on the ground and "clerk", my place is in the air, regardless of the hazard. So, I am happy to be back on combat again. However, I'm not telling the wife I am flying again – no need to worry her unnecessarily. I'll let her believe that I am still on the ground.

December 5th, 1942

Spent most of the day moving thins around and getting my tent straightened out. I am now in the tent with Gottke, Smith and Kuhn.

December 6th, 1942

Slept in this morning and missed breakfast. It was nice to sleep in. At lunch today, I ate with two Ferry Command pilots that had just flown in a 24 from the States. We pumped them for all the latest news and football scores. We were amused to hear that all the people in the States think that the war is about over. Maybe they're thinking about the last one, this one is still going good – we know- we're fighting it!!! I got one of the Ferry Navigators to call the wife when he gets back to Long Beach.

December 7th, 1942

It's the anniversary of Pearl Harbor here, but it's only the 6th in the Islands and the States. Spent the morning with Kuhn in the communications tent learning all I could about the radio facilities in the area. This afternoon I played some Monopoly with Campbell, Iverson, Arones, Middleton and McCause. Helthy and Gottke are flying to Brisbane (lucky!) tomorrow morning so I will write my darling a letter and have him mail it at Amberly. If he gets into Brisbane he will pick up my camera – I'll sure be glad to get it, there are so many pictures I want to take.

A bunch of the boys from the other squadrons came up tonight for a jam session with Cliff Marburger, a good clarinet and sax man, with us. They rung me in with an empty guitar case, a couple of whittled iron wood sticks and an eerie sounding wash basin. It was a good session though – 2 guitars, an accordion, trumpet, clarinet and yours truly – the "Wash Basin Beater".

December 8th, 1942

I am "Airdrome Officer" from 1pm on – so I will celebrate December 7th, in the States, in this manner.

As airdrome officer, I had my hands full as the whole group was called out to get a fleet of destroyers heading to reinforce Buna. They didn't even find them as they had been bombed earlier in the day and had turned back.

December 9th, 1942

Spent the morning as airdrome officer and the afternoon cleaning up and sleeping. I was up all night last night checking the AP guard, etc.

Tonight, I went over to the 321st and had dinner with Ed Polhemus as it was his 21st birthday. After dinner, we sat around and talked and played a little bridge. Later, Dr. Walzer broke out a bottle of bourbon and Ed never touches the stuff and he consequently made some choice faces.

December 10th, 1942

Laid around all day, nothing in general.

December 11th, 1942

Went over to the new area across the runway and began setting up a stand for the water tanks. Bible class at night.

December 12th, 1942

Spent all day in the new area getting blisters on my hands from cutting down trees with a dull axe. Amateur show.

December 13th, 1942

Cleaned my .45 in the morning and then worked on the tank platform in the afternoon. Worked all day over in the area.

Tonight, Averson, McWilliams and Berkovitz came back from a 3 day reconnaissance mission out of Port Moresby. Iverson's plane had discovered 4 destroyers and a cruiser heading to reinforce Buna. They were attacked by 4 Zeroes and a Mitsubishi 9-7 while shadowing this fleet. They didn't hit the planes or the naval units but collected a lot of 7.7mm holes in their AP.

McWilliams just got in, also full of bullet holes, as he encountered the same fleet after Iverson left. However, they shot down 2 Zeroes and the M97 twin engine bomber. McWilliams had a lucky one in that a bullet from the Zeroes came through his window, tore the collar off his leather jacket, grazed his chin and shot the no. 2 throttle out from between his fingers. A close one, yes indeed. Big bull sessions everywhere tonight.

December 14th, 1942

Made a slight error in dates, all the foregoing took place on Sunday. Today, we have about 4 ships out after the same 5 ships. They came in tonight, also all shot up. Every plane that arrived had holes all through it. Only one mishap and that was caused by a lucky hit on Campbell's ship – Cpl Sermon was killed while manning the right waist gun. The total of the flight was about 6 zeroes shot down and no ships hit. It's hard enough to hit a moving DD or Cruiser without pursuit interception, but with it and A/A from the boats, they couldn't get a decent target.

December 15th, 1942

Went over to the 400th area and saw Russ Smith this morning. He showed me the ship he came in on the night before and on which he was co-pilot for Pet Menge. Their ship was really shot up: no. 2 engine was completely out with a 20mm cannon shell hole in the transmission housing. One of the 7.7mm bullets came through the nose and tore a hole

through the leg of his flying suit. (A near miss, Jean should have been here to meet him when he landed, she'd of had a fit.) It rained like a son of a gun this evening, so just hung around the tent trying to keep things dry. Still no mail from home, 49 long days now.

December 16th, 1942

Rained again this morning so we didn't go over to the new area. Had dinner at noon and then got the glorious news that there was some mail for us. Wahoo, and there was! I got two letters, one from my darling dated November 7th and the other was a nice newsy letter from my good friend Ernest "Judge" Aydelott. Boy, did this mail look good, even as old as it was; I spent all afternoon reading and rereading them. Then I began a letter writing session that lasted until supper time. The letters I mailed totaled eleven and not duplicated either.

December 17th, 1942

Rained all day, I consequently spent the day in bed, not only because it was raining blue blazes but because I also had a surprisingly fine hangover from a few shots of brandy the night before. Nothing of any consequence tonight.

December 18th, 1942

One week before Christmas, a lot that means over here in the jungle. Capt. Taylor and I did get a present though, a new B-24, No. 41-24077, a number the Japs will have cause to remember. So I spent the day checking over the ship and starting to get it ready for combat duty. Hence, I'm having the bomb sight lowered to make room for the new nose gun, the rest of the guns cleaned and generally made ready for service. We're having the ammunition changed to 1-1-1, tracer-armor piercing-incendiary, a rough combination for combat shooting. The guns are becoming more and more important as we are getting a lot of Zero pursuit interception on our missions to sink these convoys trying to get through from Rabaul to reinforce Buna and Salamana. The boys are really getting shot up too. No casualties; plenty of holes.

December 19th, 1942

A lazy day, rained most of the day, everything is damp and mildewing and the roads are a sea of mud. Reports came in tonight that Jones, of the 319th, barely got into SRO with most of his control cables shot away and two gunners killed. Patterson reported shot down, Gramear – flying the mail up from Townsville – missing. A rough day for the 90th group.

December 20th, 1942

Spent the morning cleaning up the tent and the evening washing my dirty clothes. (The sun came out just long enough to dry them.)

Sy Brainard, from Pasadena, came in tonight from Armed Recon Mission. He had been shot in the leg and Farsby, his bombardier, had a dozen 20mm fragments in his skull, all from Zero fire while they were making a run on a convoy of 5 destroyers, 1 cruiser and 2 cargo ships. If these Japs aren't careful, somebody's going to get killed.

December 21st, 1942

Word came down this morning that Adams' crew was missing from a daylight (dawn) raid on enemy shipping. This put us all in the dumps as "Hot Rock" Adams was a great guy, as was big Warren Sleeper, a classmate of mine. Pappy Dewar was the navigator and red-headed Metcalf was the bombardier on this crew. A crew of ten men missing and we fear the worst as he fell out of formation when they ran into ice while trying to go through a "front" between here and New Guinea. Nothing of a happy sort happened today. Rained again, more mud.

December 22nd, 1942

Search mission went looking for Adams today, no luck. When these ships make crash landings, they burn immediately and the wing tanks explode, spreading crew and aircraft over 5 acres. Hence, your chances of finding the ships are slim. Rained again today, everything is mildewing and can't be stopped.

December 23rd, 1942

Capt. Taylor got a new ship today so yours truly in good co-pilot fashion got our crew on the ball and installed more guns and cleaned those we had. It is a new plane no. 41-24077 and promised to be a honey. Rained again today, it looks like the rainy season is here for sure. Everything is damp or muddy slush.

December 24th, 1942

Worked on the ship again today and now have four guns, .50 caliber Brownings, in the nose, a formidable array. We have a new crew and they seem to be a good bunch of guys. We got two boys who transferred from the 403 Recon Sqn. Our crew is now as follows: pilot, Capt. Roy L. Taylor; co-pilot, yours truly; navigator, Francis "Red" Sullivan; no bombardier yet; Eng. Sgt. MacCalmont; radio, Sgt. Sedilko; gunners, Rickels, Quimby, Wright and Cleavland.

Tonight is Christmas Eve and not exactly the previous joyous ones I can't help but recall. I went to church tonight in the little tent chapel. I didn't particularly enjoy the service, thanks to the G.I. trucks raucously rolling by and a gasoline generator right behind me. That the chaplain made a revival meeting out of the service didn't help my devout spirit any either. I did take Holy Communion though, which made me feel a little better. After church, we came up to the combat area and all cracked out our pet bottles. So the remainder of the night was one big party. (See my Christmas letter to my wife.)

December 25th, 1942

Slept in this morning and got up for dinner at noon, just slightly woozy. We had a very nice dinner, consisting of creamed turkey, fruit salad, mashed potatoes, string beans and cranberry sauce. The reason the turkey was creamed was that we only had 12 turkeys for 600 men. The cooks did very well though and we enjoyed it immensely. Not like my usual grand feast at home with oyster dressings, plum pudding and etc., etc., but it was remarkable for out here in the brush.

Took it easy all afternoon and stayed up late penning a Christmas epic to my darling.
Rained again today.

December 26th-27th, 1942

Got up this morning and the chief, Capt. Taylor, told me that we were going out on a mission to Rabaul harbor tonight. I was very excited as this was my first mission. I spent all day down to 077 and had her in top shape by dusk.

At the 8 o'clock briefing we were told that there was a total of 91 vessels lying in Rabaul harbor and were to strike just before dawn, with a load of 12, 500 lb. demolition bombs. The group meteorologist told us that the weather was very bad and to be careful. The take off time was set for 11pm as the run to Rabaul was about 5 hours and 950 miles from Iron Range. (This is comparable to leaving L.A. and flying to Portland, bombing and returning to L.A. – non-stop.) This incidentally is the first raid on Rabaul since the night of November 16th, a fatal night.

We were to take off right after the 319th and 400th squadrons. The first take-off was at a little after 10 o'clock and 16 B-24's were to follow at 5 minute intervals. We got down to the strip about 10 o'clock and I was checking over last minute details aboard the ship when I heard an explosion. I feared the worst. I knew it could only be an airplane or a gasoline truck. I ran down to the edge of the take-off strip with the others and heard that ship #2 of the 400th had crashed into the tress on take-off. We got to about 200 yards of the fire when the wing tanks blew up with a spectacular roll of flame, up to 3,000 feet in the air. Next, the bombs, 500 pounders, started going off and we hit for cover, but fast. The concussion when the bombs went off was so terrific that it knocked me flat on my puss.

This crash was exactly the same as on the night of November 16th, only one survived this one. The C.O. of the group, Col. Koon, was going with us and he came over and told us if we still wanted to go, we were going. They cancelled the rest of the 400th take-offs and well following the 319th off. I might mention that Lt. Kendricks was pilot on the ill-fated ship. As time was important, due to the Rabaul A/A and Zero efficiency in the daytime, we were the only 320th ship to take off, at 12:10am, after a close crape on take-off; we damn near hit the trees "a la Kendricks". Nothing eventful happened then until we got past New Guinea and then we ran into the worst series of cumulonimbus clouds (thunderheads) I have ever had the misfortune to fly through. They extended from the ocean to 40-50,000 ft. This type of cloud is the most dangerous type to fly through, due to extreme turbulence and icing conditions. Remember, it was night when we were flying through this stuff. We went through this stuff solid for 3 hours and at an altitude of 27,000 feet. Every few minutes, I would throw the flashlight beam onto the winds to see if we were picking up ice. We really sweat it out.

About 4:30 we sighted the coast of New Britain and intended following it up to Rabaul. At about 5:10am, we were over what we thought was the harbor but we couldn't identify any landmarks definitely. About this time my mouth became dry and I was still thoroughly cold from our altitude flight up. Just about the time we decided this wasn't the

right bay, it was quite cloudy and hazy, one of the boys in the back of the ship called up on the interphone and said this must be it as there was a ship firing at us from right below us. At the same time I saw a searchlight go on from the coast ahead of us – this was it, my mouth got drier. This searchlight was followed by about 15 more, three real bright and the rest rather dull. These searchlights were scanning the skies for us but they were away off to our left. A/A fire was beginning to burst close to us with big yellow flashes which jarred us almost out of our seats. About then we decided to turn. When we got around again over the harbor, we still couldn't see any boats, the searchlights came on again and this time they caught us in the beam. We were lit up like the corner of Wilshire and Western. Five seconds after the searchlights caught us, and still had us, the A/A guns began booming and close, I thought twice that our left wing was hit. (I was spitting cotton now.) But the "Chief" with a series of violent maneuvers finally eluded the searchlights directing the A/A fire, happy day. The third time we came in over the harbor, and low this time (5500 feet), the bombardier, Sgt. Rosenberg, thought he saw a ship and we made a run on it, dropping out 12 bombs at 50 foot intervals. Again the lights came on and the A/A, we were so busy staying out of their range and sights that we don't know whether we hit our ship or not. However, it was a relief to turn for home, yea verily. It's really a thrill to have the enemy firing at you and you wondering if that shell has your name on it. (Now I know why we get Flying Pay!!)

The trip home was the same old weather situation, still bad, and we landed at Port Moresby for gas. When we arrived home again, Iron Range, we were greeted hysterically as they had received a message saying that we were going down for a "crash landing". Someone had crossed up in higher command and given 2 ships the same call letters, the other ship is evidently port mortem. It seems that, when we landed at 12:30am, that 4 B-24's were out over New Guinea searching for us. We also discovered that only 6 of the original 17 had taken off, one crashed on take-off, one is now lost and three turned back because of weather. So we were the only ones that found the target. (I am attaching a copy of our supposed distress message which was received here.)

After a hearty lunch, the first food since last night, I crawled into bed, happy to be back. Total combat time for this mission was 11:30.

December 28th, 1942

As we left after midnight on the 26th, the entry preceding should have been the 27th.

December 29th, 1942

Lay around and rested today, caught up on a few letters.

December 30th, 1942

Capt. Taylor told me to get the ship in order this morning as we were going to Port Moresby at 1 o'clock to participate in a colossal raid on Rabaul shipping. Six of us left at 1300; Wiltse, Andrews, Altman, Sayre, Hesse and Capt. Taylor's "All Stars".

When we arrived at Moresby, we found out that the weather was bad and that the big coordinated raid had been cancelled. However, the lousy 319th, to whom we were attached

for the mission, saw to it that we went out on a 6 ship raid anyway, the one they were supposed to pull. But it seems that Maj. Kuhl, C.O. 319th, thought the weather was too bad for his boys – so they sent us out. This was a stinkin' trick but an order was an order. We were briefed for the Rabaul attack at 10 o'clock and then lay down to sleep until midnight.

December 31st, 1942

We got off for Rabaul at 01:30 and proceeded to Rabaul in the worst kind of weather. When we got there, about 0530m, we found the harbor blanketed by a solid cloud layer. After flying around for an hour trying to break through the overcast, we headed back as Rabaul Harbor with its 3 airdromes full of Zero fighters was no place to be after daylight and alone. One the way home, we went by Lae to drop our four 1,000 lb. bombs on the Jap airdrome there, but no luck, the weather was bad here too. So we traveled on back to Port Moresby and landed at 10am.

We were supposed to go out on this one raid, but the bomber command decided that we would stay over and go to Rabaul again that night to participate in the big attack. About 1pm, we lay down to get some much needed rest.

We got up in time for dinner and got a few of the details of the raid. It seems that the B-17's were to go into the Rabaul Airdromes and bomb them into immobility and attack the A/A positions about 4am. Then, after daybreak, we in the B-24's were to bomb the ships in the harbor. With the Zeroes unable to take off and heckle us and the A/A unable to shoot us down, we should be able to bomb the shipping to our hearts desire. This looked fine on paper.

We were briefed again at 10pm and then to bed for a couple hours sleep.

January 1st, 1943

I got a little screwed up on my dates thanks to all this night bombing. But New Year's Eve was spent being briefed for the raid. When we got down to the plane, around 12:30, we saw some of the boys shooting off flares and firing their guns in celebration of the New Year. We just piled into the airplane, checked the guns, gasoline and bomb and wished each other a happy New Year.

At 1 o'clock, we taxied to the end of the runway and prepared to take off. Gen. Walker of the 5th Bomber Command was supposed to fly with us and he didn't show up until we got to the head of the runway.

We took off at 01:15 and proceeded to Rabaul through some more horrible weather. The weather was so bad tonight, or this morning, that I honestly didn't think we were going to get back. We were at 25,000 feet until we got right over the target. During that 3 hour flight from Moresby to Rabaul, we ran into everything: rain, sleet, ice of all descriptions and it was rough as a cob. Why we didn't turn back I don't know, unless it was that Capt. Taylor didn't want to initiate the move and the General didn't want to show weakness by suggesting. So we merrily flew on through the worst storm I ever hope to have the

displeasure to fly through, on top of the weather, I had given Gen. Walker by co-pilots position and I was standing on the flight deck using a portable oxygen bottle which ran out on me at 25,000 feet – I damn near passed out before I found another outlet in the bomb bay.

We were supposed to rendezvous over Cape Lambert, just outside of Rabaul, at 6 o'clock but we didn't get there until 06:45 ourselves thanks to the sensational weather. So we went right on into the harbor. We broke out of the storm we had been flying through for 3 hours and there, right in front of us, was the harbor itself. I doff my chapeau to our navigator "Red" Sullivan, I don't know how he got us there without seeing any checkpoints, the stars or the moon. Rabaul Harbor was entirely clear of clouds and was beautiful in the early morning light, it was 6:45am and broad daylight. The harbor was a grand sight, just loaded with boats of all sizes and descriptions. This kind of target is a bombardier's dream of Heaven. There must have been 100 boats in the harbor, all sitting quietly at anchor. We spotted a huge transport off by itself and started our bombing run on it. It was so big it looked like the Queen Mary. We made a perfect run through a barrage of A/A fire that was bursting just to our right. Rabaul A/A was not supposed to be accurate, but this was a lie, the shrapnel sound like hail on the sides and wings of our ship. Then we had a stroke of foul luck, the bombs didn't release when we got over our boat. We were really sick to put it mildly. The bombs wouldn't release because the bomb bay doors had slipped down slightly and the safety catch had locked the bombs in. On our second run, A/A fire was still jarring us around, I went down and sat in the bomb bay and held the doors open. I was sitting in this position, with my feet dangling 8,000 feet above Rabaul Harbor, when the machine guns in the rear of the plane opened fire with a mighty staccato. I had just a moment to figure out what had started this when I saw 2 Zero's coming up at me from under the ship and firing directly into the bomb bay where yours truly was sitting. Our gunners were firing like mad and I could see the red tracers going by the Zero's. Then I saw what I had been expecting, smoke and fire spurting from the wings of the Zero's. I just sat there and waited for the bullets to hit me, but this wasn't my day and the shots went into the tail section and wing. This was my first look at a Zero and not exactly under ideal conditions. They are a cream color and have big red circles in the wings, very easy to identify.

Just about that time the bomb bay doors were closed from the flight deck and I went up there myself. I found that our tail gunners' guns had jammed and we had decided that it was not healthy to battle 5 Zero's without a tail gun. So, we turned away from the target and lit out for the nearest cloud with 5 Zero's in hot pursuit. By the time we disappeared in the clouds, there were only 3 Zekes chasing us, each waist gunner had shot one down, the General himself gave MacCalmont and Wright their proof and credit. So it was with mixed feelings that we left Rabaul, still carrying our 1,000 lb. bombs. We were sick because they hadn't released but were happy to leave that "hot shop" with 2 Zero's to our credit and not one B-24 to theirs.

The return trip was uneventful, the weather isn't bad in the daytime when you can see it. So it was that I spent New Year's Eve and the beginning of 1943, a big celebration but

not exactly like that of previous years. This was our third trip over Rabaul in 4 days and the Japs are getting to know us, 4077 is getting to be the "Rabaul Express".

We landed at Moresby at 10 o'clock amid a rugged rainstorm and so we had to stay there that afternoon and night.

January 2nd, 1943

We took off at 11 o'clock today for home at Iron Range and were glad to be gone from Port Moresby, it's hot as blazes there and full of malaria mosquitoes. Landed at 2pm and promptly fell into bed and exhausted slumber.

January 3rd, 1943

Got up at about 10am and just bummed around until after lunch. A sub was sighted off the coast here and a group of ships hastily took off, but so did the sub, so they had ride for nothing. Wrote letters tonight.

January 4th, 1943

Took it easy today, prepared to go to Port Moresby for a weeks stay. Saw a show in our open air theatre tonight, on the way home we killed a 13 foot poisonous Tiger Snake. This was the biggest snake I have ever seen outside of a zoo. This is the third Tiger snake we have killed in our tent area in two days. There are three deadly snakes, excluding the numerous pythons, in this northern Queensland jungle. They are: the green snake (Tiger), the brown snake (Bushmaster) and the Death Adder, a little fellow with a big reputation. To date we have killed 7 Tiger snakes, 1 Bushmaster and 1 Death Adder in our living area. Consequently, we are very "snake conscious" as most of these were found inside our tents.

We all went to sleep tonight with our guns and flashlights under our pillows (a rolled shirt or blanket) and dreamt all night of varmints.

January 5th, 1943

We were supposed to take off this morning at 6m, 9 of us, for a daylight raid on Rabaul Harbor. We were to meet 18 B-17's over Hood Point, New Guinea and the 27 of us were to attack Rabaul shipping at high noon. However, the weatherman saw to it that we didn't go as he opened the heavenly water gates and deluged us with 2 inches of rain between 3 and 5 o'clock. Boy, when it rains here, it doesn't fool, it really comes down. Hence the runway was too muddy to permit our taking off with our load of 4,000 lbs. of bombs and equipment. We were all relieved when they told us we weren't taking off, so we crawled back in the old sack and got in 40 more winks. Went down to the new 320th Officers Club tonight and had a few drinks while playing a couple rubbers of bridge.

January 6th, 1942

Today is my anniversary, one years service in the U.S. Army Air Corps. Old Jupiter Pluvius gave me two more inches of rain this early morning and hence no take-off for Moresby today. Everything we own is either damp or soaking wet and mildew is becoming a major problem as our clothes are rotting and falling apart with it. Nothing we

can do seems to sop it and the rainy season has just begun. We are in for 50-60 inches of water per month for about 3 months.

January 7th, 1943

We got up at the crack of dawn this morning and were to take off for Port Moresby. However our motors weren't running right so we stayed behind the other 11 ships. Spent the rest of the day writing letters.

Rumor has it that there is a large Jap convoy headed for Lae and coming down the southern coast of New Britain. This looks like our target from P.M.

January 8th, 1943

Finally got off for Moresby this morning at ten. We landed at 7 mile airdrome there, one of about five airdromes over there and were immediately greeted by a screaming ambulance. We finally got the idea that they thought someone was hurt on board, but we waved them off. As some more ships were following us is, we taxied off the end of the runway and awaited their landing.

One plane was coming in on a long, low approach and almost crashed on landing. It was then that we noticed he was flying on 3 engines and had his red passing light blinking, a sign of emergency or distress. When the plane rolled up to us, I was distressed to see how badly shot up it was and that it was Paul Gottke's ship with my pal "Healthy" Smith as co-pilot. The ship was riddled with bullet holes and #4 engine was shot out and trailing oil all over the wing. I looked anxiously for Healthy to emerge as the stretcher bearers made a run for the plane. It was then that I saw Smith emerge from the flight deck with a weary and begrimed countenance. I was sure glad to see him OK. We discovered a few moments later that my good friend Capt. R.S. "Bob" Holt and a waist gunner were both dead in the back of the ship. There was about a 6" hole in the side of the plane where an A/A shell had gone through and burst in the rear, killing the two men.

Right after Gottke landed, Andrew and Campbell came in, both on three engines. Andrews crew was shot up but everyone was okay. However, Campbell had one dead waist gunner on board. By this time, we had picked up enough information to realize what had happened. A Jap convoy of 4 transports, 2 cruisers and 4 destroyers were off Lae and affecting a landing to reinforce their position there. Of a consequence, the air was full of Zero fighters and the very accurate ship-borne A/A. From the looks of these three ships and subsequent ones, this was a real tough league we were flying in. I talked to Healthy and he said that their formation had been caught in a cone of A/A fire and later hit by about 15 Zero's. They were lucky to get back at all.

We parked our ship, it was then 1 o'clock in the p.m. and they immediately loaded the plane with 4 1,000 lb. bombs and gassed up. The Capt. Told me we were to take off for Lae at 4pm and I was a little startled about this news but expected it. I told the crew we were going to fly into this Jap hornet's nest and they just went to work seriously on their respective guns, their lives were to depend on these .50 cal. Machine guns. The formation of Andrews, Gottke and Campbell got 8 Zero's on their flight over Lae. I checked to see

that our bombs were loaded correctly and that there was a full load of ammunition. We expected trouble and I was going to be sure that we were prepared for it.

About 3:30pm, we said goodbye to everyone and received their sincere good wishes for a safe and successful raid. The air was electric with suppressed thoughts and unspoken forebodings. If I wasn't so bent on revenge for Bob Holt's death, I would have been downright nervous.

Our trip to the target was uneventful, with the usual and ever present thunderheads and generally sensational weather. We saw my airplanes going over with us at different altitudes and many coming back. We were throwing all our air power in the southwest Pacific into stopping this landing. So we three, Almond, Sayre and the "Texas Chief" were not alone. We were supposed to arrive "on target" between 5:45-6:15pm and the P-38's would give us "top cover", that is that they would protect us from Zero's attacking from above. So we were anxious to arrive on target at the appointed time.

We were just approaching the convoy when we noticed that a flight of B-17s about 4,000 below us (we were at 13,000 feet) was under attack by 12 Jap Zero's. We watched the flight for a couple minutes and saw two Japs dive into the ocean. Just about then they spotted us up there in the peanut gallery and up they came just like an elevator, straight up – what an airplane that Zero is. So we fought them, off for awhile before they suddenly disappeared. During the battle though we knocked out two of them (four down, eight to go!).

A moment later, we broke out of the clouds into the clear and saw the convoy below us. They were all moving, the four destroyers, the two cruisers were maneuvering swiftly and frantically to keep us broad side to the, so as to be able to turn all their fire power onto us. They quickly got our range and we had to turn into a bank of clouds to keep from being blown out of the sky. Our formation broke up when we went into the clouds and so we broke out of them all alone. As soon as we got into the open again, we sighted our target, a 10,000 ton transport that was unloading just off shore. The A/A got our range again and the Zero's began closing in but we turned onto our "bomb run" anyway. Our run wasn't more than 45 seconds, but it seemed like 45 years. The Zero's, nine of them, all vivid green with big red circles on their wings, began making passes at us from all angles and our gunners were matching their fire. After establishing our air speed at 200, I looked around us and began directing the guns. There were two Zero's coming in from 2 o'clock and one from 4 o'clock. They were even with our ship and to the right, thank G-d, was black with A/A shells exploding – the shrapnel hitting our plane sounded like rain on a tin roof. Then, just before we released our bombs, an over eager Zero pilot got too close and Quimby in the top turret caught him flush in the belly as he turned away from us. He burst into flames and leaving a comet-like trail of smoke crashed into the Coral Sea below, I watched his descent, fascinated and then awarded Pvt. Quimby the mythical "cigar".

A few seconds later, the light on the instrument panel blinked four times and the bombardier, Sgt. Parsons, sung out the most beautiful words in the world to a bomber

crew – “BOMBS AWAY!!” We immediately turned off our straight and level bomb run and not a second too soon for a terrific A/A explosion shook our tail nearly off – right where we had been. Phew, my mouth was drier than the Mojave in July. With a short dash into the clouds, we eluded the remains of the pursuing Zero’s, but before disappearing into the clods, we happily viewed the path of our descending 1,000 pounders. One hit short with a tower of water, the second bomb hit either on the stern of the transport or right under it. The third bomb hit a loaded landing barge just leaving the transport and debris filled the air, whether there were Japs or supplies on board, we don’t know, but we hope it was loaded with Japs. We didn’t wait around to see the results of our hit on the transport as that location had no future in it.

We land at Moresby and were glad to be there safe and sound a half hour later. We had quite an audience when we landed, mostly Aussies expecting to see some blood and shot up airplanes, we cussed the, roundly. So to bed and restless slumber.

January 9th, 1943

Up this morning at 4am after a few hours of restless sleep and went to the mess hall for briefing. It seems that the convoy had left Lae and was proceeding back to Rabaul from whence it came. So at 06:30, we took off for a point between Finchhaven and the western tip of New Britain where the convoy was supposed to be at that moment. Sure enough, we ran onto the convoy at about 8:45am, about 50 miles east of Finchhaven. We swung our three ship formation of the Chief, Andrews and Wilson around and made ready for a bomb run and we were to bomb in formation. The ships were staying under cloud cover as much as possible and we noted happily that there were only three transports now, along with three destroyers and one cruiser. Evidently, our transport wasn’t going back.

We swung onto our bob run and were about to drop on a big fat transport when a cloud obscured the bombardier’s vision. Of a consequence, we had to turn off of the run without dropping the bombs. We had no sooner turned away then the expected Zero’s attacked us. Nine of them jumped us and we had a running battle for about fifteen minutes, during which time they lost two airplanes. We corrected our first impression and decided that there were two Zero’s and seven Focke Wolfe 200’s all painted black – this is a German pursuit ship. By the time we discovered the Zero’s and FW200’s, we had lost the target and had to start looking for it again. We, and a couple of B-17 planes were looking all over the ocean for the convoy and radio conversation was heavy between the B-17’s and B-24’s. “Have you seen the convoy 24’s, come in 24’s!” B-17’s from B-24’s, “I think that they’re under that big thunderhead over there”, etc. Such was the conversation between the two types of airplanes.

We found the convoy again an hour later and still under the clouds. We dropped down to 1,000 feet and broke out of a cloud right on top of the convoy. We were , to be exact, about 300 yards away from a cruiser, Before they could get in a good shot, we were in a steep climbing turn and their A/A fell short. We made a run from 2,000 feet a little later and the bombs about 100 feet short. We expected to see Zero’s again but there were none thanks to the P-38’s that had come in while we were looking for the convoy. The P-38’s really acquitted themselves wonderfully, 55 Zero’s in the two day Lae battle. All total,

the Japs lost 148 Zero's in two days fighting as against our four. The rest of the day was spent in sleeping and playing cards. We found out that the transport we had hit had been "beached" at Lae and a couple of the boys went over today and finished the job.

January 10th-12th, 1943

Spent these days taking it easy and playing Bridge. It's amazing how you can go out and kill a couple hundred men and perhaps have a few of yours missing or killed and come back and sit down and relax at a rubber of Bridge. We are really getting callous. An hour after a friend of yours gets killed, he is practically out of your thoughts. It's a lot better that way though. It rained like hell today (January 12th) and our native grass shack fell down on us, narrowly missing Healthy. It got all our clothes wet and dirty but it was funny.

January 13th-15th, 1943

Still going on reconnaissance missions and Capt. Taylor being squadron C.O. didn't go out on these so we lay around and wrote letters and played more Bridge. On the 13th, Altman got himself shot down and they only found co-pilot Smith in a lifeboat. (This is not Healthy Smith). Andrews discovered him and dropped water and food and radioed for a Catalina to pick him up. The next day, thanks to Army-Navy red tape, he still wasn't picked up and our boys went out again to drop food and water. All they found was an empty lifeboat. Whether some of our boats picked him up or the Japs, we don't know.

Friday the 15th, we came on back to Iron Range and were glad to be here. The Capt. Spent the morning looking over our new area at Moresby, it seems that we are going to move over there in the next couple weeks.

January 16th, 1943

Slept in this morning and wrote in Ye Diary this afternoon, letters tonight.

January 17th-19th, 1943

Still resting up from our stay in New Guinea, just sleeping, writing letters and eating. The food has been good too, I think the cooks are stealing food out of the Quartermaster's kitchen. Tonight, the 19th, a couple of the combat crew Sgts. Dressed up in one of their wives' clothes, left in their footlocker and gave the boys in the shower and "open-air John" a bad time. It was a good gag and welcome relief from the drudgery of the last couple days. More gifts came in, they really look good even though they are late.

January 20th-22nd, 1943

Nothing very exciting Wednesday or Thursday. Some ships going to Darwin soon, hope we are one of them. Friday, Gottke, Andrews, Hedde, McWilliams and Ewing left for Darwin. We took off about two for Townsville, flying Gottke's ship 673 down to the Air Dept. there for repairs, it was badly shot up as you will recall. We arrived in Townsville at 6 o'clock and immediately made a bee line for town and some good food. Sully and I went into Athols Café and were insulted because they quit serving at 8 o'clock, we had only got away with two orders of lamb chops and a steak by that time, not to mention about 7 glasses of milk apiece. Boy did that, milk, cold water, steak, etc. taste good – we

almost ate ourselves into a big stupor. We walked this food off and returned to the field to sleep. However, not much sleep for this kid as the bed proved to be alive with little red ants and boy did they sting me. About 4am, I gave up and walked around until breakfast.

January 23rd, 1943

Bummed around town, bought another shoulder holster and collected an additional \$100.00 for uniform allowance. Took care of some business for the Chief. Took in a show with Sully tonight – it was an open air theatre and the only time I have ever gone to a civilian show where you could either watch the picture or the flashes of A/A fire overhead, the local batteries were having night practice.

January 24th, 1943

We moved into the Great Northern Hotel today and I am glad to get away from the ants. Bummed around again and saw another show.

January 25th-29th, 1943

Spent most of these days out at the field awaiting our plane, to be ready supposedly the 25th. We test-hopped the plane the 26th and it flew like a wounded duck, so we refused to fly it back. More waiting. Wednesday night I went with Cliff Marburger and one of the Aussie girl drivers (WNEL) to the base section officer's club. I got about half oiled and got in with the orchestra, Cliff on clarinet and yours truly on drums. We had a great time. The girl was very nice, her name was Wynn McIntyre from Brisbane.

We finally took off the 30th, and flew into Mareeba to spend the night. We spent the evening drinking up the enlisted men's bar and so to sleep.

January 31st, 1943

Flew on into Iron Range to find everybody packing for our move to Port Moresby. The boats are here now and being loaded. The boys aren't back from Darwin yet and we have heard that a couple of the, got shot up pretty bad, McWilliams and Andrews I believe. News has also drifted in of the 321st on DS at Moresby. It seems that air activity is increasing and the Japs are pouring planes into Lae, Wewak, Gasmata, Madang and Rabaul – something big is cooking and should break soon. Recon missions are being flown in formation now thanks to the great increase in Zero's.

February 1st, 1943

Spent the day packing and answering the numerous letters I found waiting for me here.

February 2nd, 1943

Quiet day – the Chief and Capt. McDonald both in the hospital with Denghy Fever. All the rest of us who went to Townsville were called in for examination but these were the only two that had it. Major Taylor has it bad.

February 3rd, 1943

Began packing for our move to Port Moresby. Gosh, I have accumulated a lot of stuff. The boys aren't back from Darwin yet.

February 4th, 1943

Still packing. I am flying to Moresby as Col. Koon's co-pilot, at his request. The boys got in from Darwin tonight without many experiences, many flights, but not much trouble. They saw Darwin is a good deal, good quarters, good food, good liquor, etc. Had a big gabfest over in Iverson's tent and slugged down 3 quarts of Arones Cherry Brandy. When they, Iverson's crew, came back from their furlough in Sydney, they brought a phonograph and some good records back with the, - so not the camp has music. They have one record that we all call the Red-Ass song, it is Connie Boswell's recording of "All Alone". Each night after everyone is in bed, they pour out this number into the still dampness of the night.

Speaking of dampness, boy we are really getting the rain – about 2" a day and it all falls in about a half hour, usually between 4-5 o'clock in the evening. It rains about 50-60" a month in this locale. We'll all be glad to get to Moresby and dry everything out – all our clothes are mildewing and falling apart, rotten clear through. All our bedding smells dank and musty and is never completely dry. Well, Port Moresby is only about 450 miles from the Equator and we will probably have to watch "sun rot" over there.

News has just arrived that Maj. Faulkner, 321st, and four of his ships had run into 25 Zero's near Wewok and had shot down 12 and gotten 6 more probables. Nice work, the papers are full of it but they give credit to the "Fortresses" instead of our "Liberators", Major Faulkner hit the roof and having cornered the A.P. correspondent here, gave him a lesson in aircraft identification. This is a sore spot with us, we are doing 90% of all the bombing down here and the papers back home say that the damage was done by a flight of "Flying Forts" – nuts!

February 5th, 1943

Continued packing and began the tedious job of packing up all of Maj. Taylor's equipment. Finished up late tonight and will be ready to leave tomorrow.

February 6th, 1943

Bade goodbye to Iron Range today. Took off in the rain at 4pm. I flew the plane most of the way, the Col. was little out of practice. We landed at 6:30pm and after a cold meal at Arcadia, we piled into bed.

I picked up some interesting information today on our flight over here, that is, the co-pilot's future. The Chief surprised me this morning by saying that he was going to check me out as soon as he was well. He further stated that he wouldn't turn me loose, but would give me a 1st pilots rating so that he could make me a 1st Lt., co-pilots can only go as high as 2nd Lt.

February 7th, 1943

Visited our new home today and found it to be a low hill north of Ward strip. It is very grassy now, the end of the rainy season is coming, and wooded with a strange tree to me. I immediately began looking for a choice camp site and found one up on the ridge of the hill. Up here we will catch the breeze which is a godsend as this country is really hot.

After battling the famous New Guinea mosquitoes for about three hours, we fell into an exhausted sleep, after working hard pitching a tent under the broiling equatorial sun.

February 8th, 1943

Woke up this morning with a peach of a cold, not much work will be done today.

It was nice and clear tonight and sure enough, the Jap bombers came over. Of course, we hadn't had time to dig fox holes and so with a prayer on our lips, we crouched on the ridge of the hill preparatory to watching the show. There were three Hap "Betty" bombers shown up in our searchlights. These planes are twin motored and similar to our B-26's. We could see the formation very clearly in the light of the searchlights but we were surprised to note that none of the A/A guns were firing. We had our question answered a few moments later when we heard a P-38 take off to intercept the marauders. They don't fire A/A guns when night fighters are going up, they are fearful of hitting our own plan. It was a good show and there was a cheering section just like at an American football game. We could see the P-38 make the attack and watched the red tracers as his .50 caliber machine guns and 20mm cannon fired at the three bombers. Everyone cheered until we were hoarse, it was just like watching a hockey game or fascinating sports contest, only this one was in dead earnest! On the third attack, the P-38 blew one of the bombers into flames and it plummeted like a fiery rocket to earth. At this pandemonium broke loose in the cheering section, our enthusiasm knew no bounds. We Americans are crazy, but we have fun even when our lives are at stake. The "38" pilot claims he chased and shot down one more before he had to turn back because of lack of ammunition. The P-38 and B-24 are the planes of 1943, mark my words.

February 9th-10th, 1943

Did some work on the tent but not much else as I still felt pretty lousy with a cold.

February 11th-20th, 1943

Spent this week fixing up our tent – cutting into the hill and building a clothes rack and bookcase. Nothing of a flying nature has occurred to mar our digging in. No more bombing since the 38's got after them. It's been very hot and the mosquitoes have been rugged every night.

February 21st, 1943

Spent a nice quiet day and went down to the Port Moresby officers club tonight. We had a real good meal and ordered everything on the menu, dessert three times. They had a good "G.I." band there and we ate it up. We arrived back to camp at 11pm and were greeted by an air raid alarm. However, they bombed "17 Mile" runway, which is about 12 miles from here. We could hear the, flying over and watched the A/A firing away. At 12:00, "all clear" was sounded and we went to bed. At 12:30am, another alarm sounded and we swearingly crawled out of bed. This time, they didn't give us so much time and we no sooner got out of bed then we could hear the Nippo's engines. I was standing there watching for the planes and wondering when and where the bombs were going to drop. Our slit trench or "fox hole" was still not built so when the bombs began bursting about a

mile away, good ol' Bud flopped down next to the bank where he had cut it out for our tent. Bombs are usually dropped in "train" or a string, and they came right toward us. The A/A was breaking right overhead and about this time Bud curled up smaller and closer to the bank, pulling my laundry bag over me for additional protection. The last bomb burst with a terrific roar and flash about 600 yards away. The ground trembled and so did I. But that was the last bomb and I can't say I was sorry. The raid had its amusing incidents though. A lot of us hadn't dug our fox holes and some of the boys were caught short. I saw one fox hole about 8' long with 14 men in it. A couple of the boys got wise and weren't going to get out of bed, but when the first bomb struck, they came just a whistling out of their tents. I saw two of them dive, bare butt naked, under a 3 ton truck and splash into about 6" of black, New Guinea mud. Another lad was swinging a shovel with a vengeance with his pals in a nearby fox hole encouraging him with cheers of: "We'll hold 'em off Fish, keep on digging!" It seems that the only time that "Fish" gets ambitious enough to dig on his trench is during an air raid. All clear sounded again at 1:00am and we went back to bed, not to be disturbed again. We thought this might be an all night raid in retaliation for our raids on Rabaul that have been lasting 7 hours with the boys just flying around and dropping a bomb every 15-20 minutes. They would drop these frag. Bombs, incendiary bombs and assorted beer bottles. (The beer bottles make a weird whistling sound when they are falling through the air.) The object of these nuisance raids on Rabaul was to keep the Japs from getting any sleep.

February 22nd, 1943

Dug our fox hole today and played Bridge tonight. Had a tough time digging the fox hole, we struck solid granite about 4' down. We were rather disappointed that the Jap bombers didn't show up tonight so we could try out our new shelter. Today was Washington's birthday – I wonder if anyone in the States got a day off?

February 23rd, 1943

Wrote letters today – no word from the Major, he's still in Sydney recuperating from the Denghy fever – halfway wish I could get it. Speaking of Sydney, and all the combat crews are, we are still trying to get back down there on our furloughs. When they issued the order that no tactical A.P.s would be used for ferry or freight duty, they really cut off our transportation. So, we could only go as far as Brisbane, which isn't much of a town compared to Sydney I am told. The ambition of a combat crew on furlough is to get drunk, full of huge steaks, sleep in a clean bed and shack-up with a gal. The object isn't to rest as much as it is to become horribly tired of civilian luxuries in seven days. After being in the war zone for four months, you have to work pretty hard on your seven day furlough to get tired of these things. Now there is some talk of sending the combat crews to a Red Cross ret camp at McKoy – about 100 miles south of Townsville – phooey! Everyone is up in arms, they don't want a rest, they want entertainment. If they try to enforce this they will have a strike on their hands and all the crews will refuse to fly – which is their privilege at any time. It will be ironed out I shop, to everyone's satisfaction.

February 24th, 1943

The boys went out on reconnaissance today and should be back around 2 o'clock, They leave at dawn, check the weather at Lae for the Air Transport Planes and continue on up the northern coast of New Guinea, the north shore of New Britain, the south coast of New Britain and across to the northern end of the Solomons. (They are sending our ground troops into the battle at Salamua and Wau by A.T.C.) These reconnaissance flights are tough because they fly all alone all over all the Jap hotspots: Wewak, Gasmata, Madang, Rabaul, etc. Most of our planes have been lost on reconnaissance. To date, incidentally, we have lost exactly 30 B-24's and 17 crews. Our total when we arrived 4 months ago was 38 planes and 48 crews. Those 17 lost crews are completely lost, there are about 5 more crews that have been killed in action as parts of other crews. Most of these were killed by A/A shrapnel or Zero fire – a few by crash landings. So you see this league is rough and if you fly too long, you're all going to be an angel.

We got word about noon that Andrews was attacked by Zero's on the west side of Rabaul, a few moments later the radio clicked out: mission abandoned; coming in direct; have ambulance ready. About half an hour later a similar message came from Brainard who was attacked on the east side of Rabaul and he also requested an ambulance to meet him upon landing. We have been awaiting the day when the Japs would lay in the clouds and wait for our reconnaissance ships, because they go out the same time every day.

Andrews landed two hours after his E.T.A., with his top turret completely blown off and his turret gunner shot four times in the leg – nothing serious, thank G-d. We were all down to the runway seating 'em out as they landed. Brainard came in with the nose all shot up and Red Sullivan the victim. He too got shot in the leg, but quite seriously. The bullet had hit the leg bone and caused a compound fracture. He was our navigator and so I was right there to help him out of the plane. He was really in agony and his mutilated leg told why. He hung onto my hand while the doctor put a frame on the leg and stretched it out. He must have been in tremendous pain when they pulled the leg out straight, but the Red Head was tough as nails and never made a sound. Geez, if it had been me, I'll bet you could have heard me yell in Southern California.

Well the tally tonight shows two more men in the hospital and only one flyable A.P. I'm glad that the Japs don't know this.

February 25th- March 1st, 1943

Nothing much new, the usual reconnaissance flights with no more mishaps. Went down to see Sullivan. His leg was put in a cast and will remain there for two months, much to his disgust. The doctor told him he was going home, he had done enough in this area. Complete reports on Brainard's flight and attack by 15 Zero's showed that they had shot down five of the, unassisted. The crew and I have been fixing up the Major's tent as he should be back from sick leave soon.

Berkovitz on reconnaissance March 1st sighted a convoy just out of Rabaul and heading our way. He couldn't tell how many ships were in it but he saw enough to know that it was large.

March 2nd, 1943

Browning left early this morning to look for the convoy of Jap ships. He sighted them about 8:30 north of New Britain in the Bismarck Sea. He reported 14 cargo and transport ships and 8 warships, 5 destroyers and 3 cruisers. All aircraft that was able to fly was sitting on the ground with all guns and all bomb bays loaded for bear. So with our entire striking force poised for the attack, we were ready for Brownings' discovery of the convoy's location. An hour after the message came in the air was crowded with airplanes. The slower planes like our 24's and the B-17's took off first, followed by the Beaufighters, Mitchell B-25 bombers, Beaufort bombers (torpedoes). These were followed by the P-40's and P-38's who were to furnish protection from the Zero's who are protecting the convoy. The attack was perfectly coordinated, which is always the way when the chips are really down. The whole of the air force rendezvoused over Rooke Island and went in from there. The P-38's and 40's did dive bombing and then went up high and chased the Zero's off. The Beaufighters then dove down, followed closely by the B-25's and strafed the decks of the warships so as to keep them from firing point blank and the 25's coming in to skip bomb. This attack worked out quite successfully, the score of all the aircraft was 4 cargo ships sunk and 3 more damaged and burning. Not a bad day's work.

March 3rd, 1943

The convoy battle in the Bismarck Sea still raging. The air again this morning was filled with beautiful flights of Allied airplanes. Today was the same as yesterday and the box score now reads: 8 ships definitely sunk, 7 damaged, 54 enemy aircraft shot down. We lost one B-17 today, after a direct hit by A/A it exploded in the air. Another B-25 crashed after being damage in the fight. A couple of our fighters failed to return. So far we have only had three planes in this fight as we are still running reconnaissance flights to be sure that no other convoy is setting out. So, our part in the show was mainly finding the convoy and shadowing it. This is a rugged job as these convoys are armed to the teeth, both with A/A and pursuit protection. A lone recon ship really has to play a game of hide and seek with the clouds to be able to shadow the convoy without getting shot down.

March 4th, 1943

The panes went out to the attack again this morning, the boys are all getting pretty tired but this convoy must be stopped or it will take the infantry six months to get them out of Lae which they are trying to reinforce. The scattered and battered convoy is now down in the Huon Gulf trying in vain to get to Lae. The weather crossed the Japs up and gave us a clear sunlight shot at them. They always plan on taking these convoys out under cover of weather - this time the Nippon weatherman made a mistake, a disastrous one. We got the good news today that Commander Bulkeley's PT boats were speeding to the attack from Milne Bay. We knew this squadron was down there and we were waiting for them to put there speedy torpedo boats into action. After the mornings pounding, the Japs only had four ships left: 3 cargo, damaged, and one destroyer, undamaged. The A20's got the

destroyer today and tonight the PT boats went in to finish off the damaged transports, which they did very neatly as the ships set off of Cape Ward Hunt. Box score tonight: 14 cargo and transports sunk, 8 warships also sunk. Our losses: 2 bombers, 3 fighters. The Japs have now lost 74 airplanes in the 3 day battle.

A sign appeared in our intelligence department tonight, I quote: "His majesty Tojo now having lost face is losing his royal ass!", end quote. We are, naturally, very jubilant over this, our biggest success to date – and it is an all Army Air Force victory – unassisted!

March 5th, 1943

Mopping up activities continued today as the sea ran red with Jap blood. The sea was littered with life boats and rafts and the water full of floating debris and both alive and dead Japs. The numerous life boats were all heading for a landing on Cape Ward Hunt but they didn't figure on the A-20's and the PT boats. The PT boats having polished off the damaged ships were touring at high speed through the Jap landing force, having a great time strafing and throwing hand grenades into the crowded Jap life boats. The A-20's were having a big time too, also strafing and sinking the boats and rafts. You see, they were all pretty mad about the Japs shooting our boys as they tried to parachute to safety when their plane was hit. As a result of today's mopping up, not a Jap or ship made a landing. Thus the battle of the Bismarck Sea ended with 22 ships sunk, an estimated 15,000-20,000 Japs have joined their miserable ancestors and they lost a total of 89 airplanes to our fighters.

By now, the air lanes were full of our victory and everyone seems to be a joyous about it as we are. We get an awful kick out of hearing our news, that which we made, coming to us from our homeland. We got a big hoot out of Gen. MacArthur saying that it was "divine providence" that guided us to victory. Later on he admitted that it wasn't "Diving Providence" that achieved the great success, but the Air Corps. This tickled us as Gen. Doug is very loath to admit that the Air Corps is worth a good G-d damn.

This afternoon a congratulatory message reached us from our own commanding officer, Gen. Kenney, he wrote: "Congratulations on our stupendous success. The Air Corps has written some very important pages in the history of aerial combat during the last 3 days. I'm so proud of all the gang that I'm about to blow a fuse. Kenney." This general is really liked by all the boys and you can tell from his down-to-earth message why.

The Major got back today so I guess we shall start flying again soon. He looks fine.

This was quite a busy day. Tonight we, Wayne Yople, Bill Gentry and I, picked up a couple of the nurses from the hospital and had dinner at the Port Moresby Officers' Club. Yople wanted us to go with him and "Ginny" Arelli, so she fixed us up with dates with her roommates. I escorted a Red Cross girl from Alagama by the name of Suzanne Tate. Bill was with a nurse known as Fran Trempis. We had a swell time eating and dancing. This was real relaxation from our hermit's life. We had, I found out, the three best looking girls on the island. It seems that there are about 45 white women on the island and about 16,000 men here. So the 320th doesn't stand short, we had the 3 best looking

ones. I'm sure the wife understands that I'm not stepping out on her, or does she? I told Sue that I was married and she said that is was very decent of me to admit it, not many of the, did. We had really a swell time and miraculously forgot about the war for a few hours.

March 6th, 1943

Wrote letters today and worked this afternoon on our Officer's Club.

March 7th, 1943

After breakfast, I went to church and wrote some more letters. Everyone is resting and fixing the AP's after the battle.

March 8th, 1943

Things very quiet, the only sounds coming from Gottke's crew, bitching about their leave at the "McKay Rest Home". They all want to go to Sydney like the rest of the crews did. However, they got their orders to go to McKay and if they stray south to Sydney they will be A.W.O.L. They are all burned up about it, they don't want a rest, they want to get drunk on good liquor, get fat on good food and spark the lovely Aussie gals. McKay is a Red Cross Camp and in order to make the combat crew go there they assign them under orders. Nuts, again!

March 9th, 1943

The radio is still full of our victory in the Bismarck Sea Battle. We heard a dramatization of it from San Francisco that tickled us, it was a bit colored.

March 10th, 1943

Healthy, Gottke, Bowman and crew left for McKay this morning and not very happy about it.

The Tokyo radio finally announced something about their very much sunk convoy. They said the MacArthur had made a terrific mistake and sunk his own ships. To say we laughed long and hard is a great understatement. Radio Tokyo sure puts out some amazing fiction.

March 11th, 1943

This was our day for recon. Wiltse went over Kavieng and saw a couple Jap battlewagons down in the harbor, however, he was alone and one helluva ways from our base here, so he didn't care to stir up the Zero's or A/A by dropping his bombs. So he just took pictures and got out of there. Iverson went over the new Jap hot shop at Wewak and he dropped his bombs and flew into the clouds to escape some 40 odd Zero's that were after him. Good old clouds, many a time they have saved us from annihilation.

March 12th, 1943

Quiet day, went to the officer's club for dinner tonight with Wayne and Yople.

March 13th, 1943

Woke up this morning feeling lousy and with a case of the "G.I.'s" (diarrhea), We were supposed to bomb Rabaul tonight, but about 3 o'clock this afternoon, news came in from a recon ship that there was another seven ship convoy going into Wewak. We got all ready for an immediate strike, yours truly still feeling lousy. The Chief and I were supposed to go but in view of my bedraggled appearance and his recently removed molar he decided to let Iverson go out instead. Plans were cancelled an hour later and now they're going out at 02:30am and bombing them in the harbor by flare. Wewak is no place to be in the daylight without pursuit protection and Wewak is too distant to give us any help from our own fighters. Wewak is loaded with Zero's which do not fight at night, hence the 12 plane raid just before dawn. We'll see how they make out. Wish we were going, but perhaps it is just as well that I stay on the ground as the "G.I.'s" increase with altitude.

March 14th, 1943

Went to church this morning and wrote some letters later on in the day. Tonights, Kun, Gentry, Bily, Noonon, Doc Welch, Fish, Elzey and myself went down to the PM Officer's Club for dinner. We celebrated "Possum"'s 22nd birthday.

March 15th, 1943

Maintenance day, all planes being worked on. Incidentally the strike on the convoy at Wewak was rather a flop as far as the shipping was concerned. It was so dark that even the flares wouldn't show the ships up. However, they did blast Wewak with a couple dozen 1,000 pounders. No mishaps.

There have been quite a few interesting true stories come out of this war that rival fiction. This being a nice quiet day I think I shall relate some of there stories here.

As an introduction to these stories, it might be proper to make note of the fact that the dear, generous United States received a certain number of Japanese each year, with open arms, to enable them to attend our universities. Of these west coast colleges, Oregon, Oregon State and UCLA rate highest in attendance of Japanese students. These students were only allowed to stay in the States until they finished college and then they were sent back to Japan. With this in mind it will be much easier to understand these amazing tales.

Our first story if told first hand by my pal Bill Gentry. It seems that a Jap was taken prisoner in New Guinea and sent to Townsville for questioning and internment at a concentration camp. Bill and a friend of his, both "D.U."s from the Oregon State campus, were about to take off from Townsville and as they walked through the hangar they noted a crowd of M.P.'s and onlookers over in a corner. They asked one of the mechanics what the commotion was about and he said that they had a Jap prisoner over there under guard and awaiting questioning. He further stated that the Jap obviously didn't speak English as they couldn't get an intelligible word out of him. They decided to have a look at him inasmuch as we in the air war have little opportunity of seeing the enemy behind the guns. As they sight the prisoner they both remarked that he looked vaguely familiar. As they came up to the circle of guards, the Jap saw them and immediately broke into a big grin and came over to them. He greeted them both by name

and in perfect English. He was the mess boy at the D.U. house before the war. Small world, isn't it?

Another story, also from the lips of Bill Gentry. One day when he was flying strike out of Darwin in B-26's, they ran into trouble with Zero's and had a motor shot out as well as being completely and helplessly out of ammunition. Two Jap Zero pilots made a couple of passes at them and receiving no return fire, they did an amazing thing. They came up about 5' of each wing tip of Bill's ship and flew formation with him. They were so close that he could see them, very plainly. Bill signaled to them, by shrugging his shoulders and holding his the palms of his hands, that he was helpless. He fully expected them, to shoot his other engine out and send them, all to a watery grave. But no, they just grinned and flew close formation with him for about half an hour. Just before they left him, they both waved and peeled off for their own base at Ambon. Why they didn't destroy him Bill doesn't know to this day, maybe one of them was his old vegetable man.

Still another story concerns a Jap Zero pilot that flew in the Lae area. This story is told by most anyone of our fighter pilots, they had all seen and know him. This Jap wears a UCLA blue and gold varsity sport jacket and a green silk baseball cap. He flew up alongside a P-39 pilot one day and identified himself. His plane was marked with a blue and gold band around the engine cowling, which was very easy to spot. Quite obviously he was a UCLA student. Well, the fighters used to see him all the time and would have dog fights with him, neither side firing a shot, just playing so to speak. This Jap became quite a legend among the old fighter pilots here. One day he disappeared and everyone believes that one of the new P-38 pilots just going into combat had shot him down without knowing his history.

Still another story comes from the 64th squadron of the 43rd B-17 group. This happened only a few days ago. It seems that this B-17, having gotten lost in a storm, was just more or less going in circles, uncertain how to crack through the storm or where his base was. His confusion was brought about mainly by a squadron of Zero's which had attacked him. Generally, Zero's won't bother with heavy bombers unless they are about to dump their payload. As soon as you turn off the target, the Zero's will leave you strictly alone as they don't care much for our 12-14 .50 caliber machine guns. Well, this pilot had completed his run and was going to head home if he only knew which way to go. There was one Zero that was hanging around, out of gun range off his right wing. Evidently, he noted the bombers lost condition, after running ahead of the B-17 a few times and coming back he conveyed the idea to the B-17 pilot that he wanted to help him. And he did, he lead the bomber through the storm and over the north shore of New Guinea where it was easy to find his way back to Port Moresby. With a friendly wave of his hand, he turned and returned to his own base, somewhere in New Britain. Unfortunately, all the Japs aren't like these described in the preceding stories. I have seen them shoot up our boys as they tried to parachute to safety.

There are many other stories that come in from time to time, but these are the best and have proof to back them.

March 16th, 1943

Very quiet day, read and wrote letters

March 17th, 1943

Spent St. Patrick's morning in a practice raid on the wreck in the harbor. Our new bombardier, Lt. Maher, is really on the ball, out of six bombs, he placed four against the side of the ship and one down the hatch, the other landing 50' short. This was done at 6,000' and 200 miles an hour.

Went down to the hospital tonight and saw Ed Polhemus, he's sojourning there with a stomach disorder – no wonder on the lousy food we've been getting. He's feeling pretty chipper and should be out soon.

Came back to the squadron to find out that we were going out on a big daylight raid tomorrow so quickly I flopped into bed, for we were to arise at 4am.

March 18th, 1943 – Mission #7

Was rudely awakened this morning by a sleeping assistant operations officer at 4am and after struggling into my suntan uniform, I sleepily made my way to the mess hall for a cup of that black varnish the mess Sgt. Has got the guts to call coffee.

While I tried to down the coffee I reviewed the events that were about to happen if all went well. It was to be a B-24 show of bombing strength with P-38's offering fighter protection, or "top cover" as we call it, and Aussie "Beaufighters" going a little ahead to strafe the A/A defenses. The target was to be Madang, a Jap stronghold and ammunitions dump up the north coast of New Guinea. They also have an airdrome there that has been giving us trouble, both as a Zero base and bomber base. All our flyable B-24's were to go, 16 in all, carrying a maximum bomb load of 12 500 lb. demolition bombs per each ship. In addition, there were to be 64 incendiary bombs in the aft compartment. The big bombs of course would be dropped mechanically by the bombardier, but the crew would throw the incendiary's out the rear hatch, like confetti. Big fun. That was the set up for the raid. Each ship was to peel off in a dive from formation and make individual runs after a certain portion of the target. This was more or less a tryout for similar attacks in the future – testing the practicality of this type of attack on an enemy strong point.

We took off at dawn, we were first as we were to lead the formation of 16 bombs. All went well, we formed at Korema and flew as a unit up to Saidor, about 10 minutes out of Madang. Here, at 9am, we were to rendezvous with the P-38's and Beaufighters. We arrived on the dot at 9am and soon saw 18 P-38's circling over us. Boy were we glad to see the,. We expected trouble from the Zero's as the last report showed 18 Zero's at Madang airdrome. The P-38's have more than proved their mettle over here and the Zero's are afraid of them.

A few moments later, the Beaufighters showed up and they came from the direction of the target. However, they fell in underneath our formation and we were off. Fourteen B-24's – 2 didn't take off on account of engine trouble – with 18 P-38's overhead and 8

Beaufighters underneath. We found out later that the Beaufighters had already been to the target and done their work, they were just going along with us to see the shows. We came onto the target at 9:28am and we started our dive, the other planes in the formation peeling off to the left and right to follow us in. We were the first to attack and dropped our bombs in a string at 100' intervals. We didn't see any "ack ack", but we could feel it jar us around. The bombs were perfect and fell right down a row of warehouses and barracks that we were to bomb only the last two were visible to me and these hit barracks squarely, blowing them to bits, it was a pretty sight. Maher couldn't have put the bombs better if he had placed them, by hand in each warehouse and barracks. The crew had a great time throwing out the little incendiary bombs. I had suggested that they throw the boxes out too, they might hit some unhappy Jap – I was joking of course, but they weren't, out went the bombs, boy and all! Oh yes, a great bunch of boys.

As soon as the indicator on the instrument panel signaled "bombs away", we made a sharp turn to the right and watched the others bomb. The P-38's were still majestically circling overhead and not a Zero ventured near. We circled just to the seaward of the target and watched the rest of the boys go in. It was very inspiring, just like a "rat race" in Basic Flying School, as each ship went onto the bomb run in precision-like order. We saw the A/A start firing again and the Beaufighters quickly changed their character, from spectator to strafing combatants. They flew like mad men through this hail of bombs. I saw an A/A position on the beach, that had been firing like mad, hit directly with a 500 pounder. There were planks, anti-aircraft guns, Japs and all flying through the air.

We formed again and booked back to see just a cloud of smoke covering our target. What a pasting it took. In 2 minutes, we reduced 5 months work to debris and ashes, our attack was completed at 9:30am.

I flew the ship home with Col. Koon acting as co-pilot for me, he is a good boy and very friendly for a group commander.

We had the usual big bull session tonight, which is practically ritual after a big raid. And then to bed, a tired, but happy boy, I repaid a few war bonds for my friends today!

March 19th, 1943

Took it easy today, the usual rest after a big raid. Found out that we almost got blown out of the air by an A/A shell which burst between our #2 engine and waist window. We felt the jolt as we went onto our bomb run yesterday, but couldn't see it. Iverson, who followed us in said that he saw it and thought we were hit. Ho hum, sometimes I'm glad that our visibility from the flight deck is poor.

Picked up Susan Tate, the Red Cross girl from the hospital and she, Ginny Cerelli and Lt. Tate and yours truly had dinner at the Moresby Officer's Club. I met this Susan Tate earlier in the month as I was visiting one of our ill officers in the 171st hospital. We got to discussing hospitals and when I said that my sister was in training there she was amazed. It seems that she had a nephew studying there. We decided to meet again and trade

addresses – tonight was the night. It was sure swell to have dinner with a real American girl again and Susan is really a swell girl. We had a big gab fest and danced.

March 20th-24th, 1943

Things very quiet, the co-pilots are being checked out and are shooting landings, etc. I have been having a tough time getting the Major to go up with me as he is so busy with squadron duties. I have only shot 3 landings and they weren't too sharp. I suppose this could be expected as I haven't landed a plane since September in the Hawaiian Islands. Wish I could get more time in.

Healthy & Gottke got back on the 24th and were pretty burned up about the McKay Rest Home deal. About the only thing they could say for it was that they did have good food. Their griping may change the raw deal on furloughs. I hope so as we are due to go on furlough in a couple of weeks.

I went down to the hospital tonight the 24th, with Pat Bowman, the Beverly Hills fireman, to see his woman, Jean Gallagher and I went along and chewed the fat with Sue.

March 25th-28th, 1943

We have been on the alert a couple times, but no action as yet. Pay, Jean, Sue and I took in the Officer's Club Saturday night, the 27th. Got back around midnight to find that they had sighted another convoy and we were on the alert again. However, the convoy is a long way off and consists of about 6 ships, don't think we will go out until it gets a little closer.

Spent Sunday morning of the 28th flying with Gottke and Healthy on some practice bombing runs. We came in early as a leak developed in the hydraulics system. This afternoon the 321st went out after the convoy and couldn't find them. We will be on the alert again tomorrow.

Received news today the 28th, that two of our freighters had been sunk by dive bombers off Ara bay, near Buna. We shot down six of the,. But there were still 24 left. Nuts, this war down here looks like it will go on forever. I sure wish they would send us some help down here, we are butting our heads against a stone wall and it is the survival of the luckiest, we are all getting very uneager.

March 29th, 1943

On the alert today and waiting for news of the Jap convoy. News came in about noon, but the convoy is still too far away to hit comfortably and safely. Hope they don't get a wild hair and send us out. (When I use the word "safety", in this line of warfare, I use it in the broad sense.) Later: nope, they didn't send us out, weather was too bad!

March 30th, 1943

On the alert again today – same convoy, same weather. But, we're definitely going after it today. The Chief and I will go it the Col. doesn't (the old "Col. Rogers feeling" is very strong here). The Chief figures that if his squadron was going out he should be leading

them – so, when Rogers said he was going to lead the flight, the Major told him that Campbell would go in our place, amen.

The mission was the usual “Rogers mix-up”. After the convoy had been sighted in the daylight, he decided to wait until dark to attack, This move was so stupid that several of the boys left the formation and bombed on their own. The convoy was just leaving Kavieng and were a perfect target when first sighted; they were traversing a strait and in single file, they could make no evasive moves whatsoever. They were sitting ducks on a pond. But no, the Col. wanted to wait until dark to hit them. The main force did and they couldn't see a cock-eyed thing. They had to drop on the flashes of the A/A guns. All the boys are convinced that Rogers is just plain chicken livered. Everyone landed at Dobodura after a rugged and unsatisfactory mission – the weather was horrible.

March 31st, 1943

The boys flew in from Dobodura this morning and they were really pissed off. Wrote a few letters and later, when the boys had gotten all the bull sessions out of their systems, we played a little friendly Bridge.

April 1st, 1943

Spent the morning practice bombing on the wreck out in the harbor. I made all but two bomb runs and they were pretty fair. I shot one landing and that was pretty good too.

April 2nd, 1943

Quiet today, wrote a few letters in the morning. Pat Bowman, “Butch” Gallagher (Army Nurse), Sue and I went down to the Officer's Club and had a pitcher of punch tonight. We sat around and shot the breeze and then went back up to the hospital and cranked out a few old tunes on the phonograph.

April 3rd, 1943

Uneventful.

April 4th, 1943

Healthy and I swiped a jeep and went to Port Moresby (8 miles) to church. We attended the Church of England, being the foundation of the Episcopal Church, was very interesting to me and a little different too. This was the first time I had ever heard a prayer said for the King and Queen of England, the Princesses, etc. It was very nice and a little odd to me – I thought at first that we had gotten into a Catholic Church.

April 5th, 1943

Shot some landings this morning from the pilot's seat, the first from that side and boy, was I lousy. The perspective and balance of the ship was entirely different from the co-pilot's side. I was pretty discouraged but the Major cheered me up.

This afternoon we worked on the final painting of our officer's club. I painted and made ashtrays out of 100 lb. bomb cases. The color scheme of the club is grotesque, blue and gold furniture and bar, chartreuse walls and palm trimmings. Oh, it was beautiful, yes

indeed. The club opened at 6 o'clock and a good orgy was enacted for the next 8 hours. Amen!

April 6th-9th, 1943

Nothing of any consequence occurred with the exception that everyone is excited about Col. Rogers, "D.F.C." trip to Truk. As we sat by the planes, on the "alert" one fine morning the ground crew began dragging out the bomb bay tanks for installation. Well, this gave us all a jolt as we didn't think Col. Rogers would be foolish enough to go through with this "suicide mission"!! Just a little about Truk: it is the Japanese naval base par excellence and comparable only unto Pearl Harbor. No one knows anything about the place; two naval officers went there in peacetime and were never heard from again. Three recon planes got there in the earlier part of the war but never seemed to get back. It is some 1100 nautical miles from here and if the maps are correct, we should get back to our base with 100 gallons of gas – ½ hours supply, that is, of course, if you fly a straight line and don't have to dodge unknown weather. Oh nuts, it's crazy – but we'll probably have to go!! Everyone is talking about it and no one likes it.

A group of planes under Col. Rogers' command went up to Wewak Friday night. As per usual, it was a messed up deal. Rogers got there somehow and claimed two transports – I've got to see the photos before I believe him. When he landed, his armored car, "Connell's Special" or "H.M.S. Repulse", piled up on its nose. The dumb Dodo landed while his poor engineer was in the nose trying to lock the nose wheel – he wasn't hurt but it surely wasn't Rogers' fault. What a man, what a man – phooey!!

April 10th, 1943

Uneventful day with the exception that we got the bad news that MacNair, of the unlucky 400th squadron, was missing following the raid on Wewak. His last report showed that he had two engines shot out – he at least made the target – or the target made him. Lt. Tingly was MacNair's co-pilot, he was one of our California 42G classmates. That makes three now: Tony Speltz, Warren Sleeper and Tingley. This also brings the groups total up to 31 airplanes lost, 21 crews are casualties. Eleven of these are 400th squadron. (The cheese gets more binding!)

April 11th, 1943

Healthy and I picked up Sue this morning and the 3 of us went to Holy Communion at the Church of England in the evening. It was a very nice ceremony and made all we Episcopalians not a little homesick.

At noon, Gottke, Brainard and Browning left for Brisbane to pick up some supplies and a couple new airplanes. The lucky guys, they will get a chance to get good food, cold drinks, etc., etc. Went up to the club tonight and played a little Bridge with some of the boys.

April 12th, 1943

Some new crews, one to be exact, came in last night and I was giving them the “poop” on the Japs and Port Moresby. Among other things, I said that the Japs haven’t bombed us here for about two months. Oh brother, if I could only have foreseen what was to come!

The Chief and I were going to shoot a little transition this morning, and were about to start our engines when we got word that a “yellow alert” had been sounded. A yellow alert is a preparatory alert and often times the supposed enemy ship is one of our own. The Chief and I went up to Group Operations, about 100 yards from the runway and in the midst of our parked planes to find out what this old horseshit was all about. The Japs bomb us in the daytime? Preposterous. We hung around operations for about a half hour and then I began to get the strong premonitions that there was something big coming soon. I caught a ride from the line up to the camp area and was just about halfway there when the “red alert” sound nervously. We at the time were just at the end of the runway and coming into a huge gasoline dump. Needless to say we tromped on the throttle and tore through two gas dumps and one bomb dump to get to our area. Although we could see no planes, except a few of our own P-39 and P-38’s flying around, we knew that something was definitely in the air. Maybe this sixth send of ours was caused by the sight of men scurrying up the hills, into fox holes, everyone on the road driving like mad and the anxious skyward gazes of all. When we reached our camp area, a few jolting moments later, we still hadn’t seen anything. But, I got halfway up the hill when Hermann shouted, “Here they come!” I looked up into the sky to the north and what I saw put wings to my feet. There was a bog formation of Jap “Betty” bombers at about 20,000’. When I say “big”, I mean 42 bombers in one big formation. I know there were 42 because I counted the, - from the comparative safety of my fox hole. After I spotted the,, I made a wild dash for the “Vista” fox hole, only slowing once, in order to grab my steel helmet which was being used as a wash basin. I plopped it immediately on my head and of course it would be still full of soapy water. Oh well, I wasn’t interested in soapy water all over me at that instant. By the time I was safely installed in my fox hole, the A/A was going good and I settled down to watch the show. The big formation broke up into two parts, nine coming in our way and 33 heading for the B-25 strips at 14, 12 and 17 mile airdromes. The Jap formation was very beautiful, a “V of V’s” and they stayed right in formation. Above the “Bettys” were about 50 Zero fighters which were keeping our fighters busy. The ack ack was lousy and I don’t think that they hit a single Jap plane. I saw one P-38 set a bomber on fire, but he didn’t go down. About this time, I had lost interest in the bigger flight and was becoming interested in the flight of nine that was coming directly overhead. I watched them very closely to see when they opened their bomb bay doors. I was happy to note that they didn’t open the, until they were directly overhead, which meant that the bombs couldn’t possibly hit near us. The A/A was still pretty intense but it was not at all accurate. In fact, it stunk! Then the bombs began falling on the strip and we began to become concerned about our planes, but they weren’t hit. A Beaufighter and a couple transports were hit, but no B-24’s. Only one bomb hit in a bunker and that bunker was empty. Three fires were visible as the bombers left, one over near 14 mile, one off the southwest end of Ward strip (an oil dump) and the fire caused by the Beaufighter burning. One fire, the oil dump fire, is still raging at this writing – it is now just past two hours after the raid. The bombs struck at 10:20am.

This left us all excited and a bit apprehensive about all the air raid protection we were supposed to have. There were very few of our fighters up after them and the Aussie A/A was stinko. The Japs didn't do any damage to amount to a damn, but they did find out that they could come in here in the daytime without much trouble, which is a big point at the moment, in view of our comparatively weak and over-worked planes and crews. They'll be back and how! They only lost, at the outside, three bombers. Nuts.

Just came back from lunch and the boys on the "alert" were interrupted in the middle of their meal to dash down to the line and take-off immediately for Madang or Bogia, a convoy was on the loose again and heading down toward Lae. So... that was the reason for the big air raid this morning. They were trying to keep the B-25's, P-38's, Beaufighters and B-24's on the ground so as to get their convoy through. As far as we are concerned they did not succeed as 6 of our ships are on their way to intercept them now. I don't know how 14, 12 & 17 mile made out – I know that they dropped a helluva lot of bombs over there.

This has been a very exciting day up to the present hour – more later. (0200)

(10 o'clock)

Our boys just got back with some very good news indeed. They had sighted the convoy in the bay just north of Nubia and had sunk two 10,000 ton transports. There were a total of ten ships there, 6 cargo, two destroyers and two cruisers. They left both transports burning fiercely and sinking. The A/A was very accurate and intense, almost all the planes returned with holes in the. They were attacked by 12 fighters, 7 Zero's and 5 new type twin engine fighters. They shot down 5 Zekes and one of the twin engine jobs. Luckily, no one was injured, although an A/A shell went through the bottom of Whitlock's ship, between the co-pilot and radio operator, but didn't hit either one.

We got the totals on the damage tonight of the Jap morning bombing. They knocked out 7 B-25's at 14 miles airdrome, one Beaufighter and a transport. The big fire was caused by 5,000 55 gallon drums of motor fuel going up in flames. No aviation fuel was lost. Seven men at the gasoline dump were killed. In the aerial battle, we lost three planes and one pilot. The Japs lost 12 twin engine bombers and 10 fighters.

April 13th, 1943

Excitement still felt round the camp after yesterday's big raid. Talked to Lt. Tate tonight and he gave me the dope on the running battle, he was the control officer and knew the straight information. It seems that our fighters, about 100 of them, P-39's, P-40's and P-38's intercepted the bombers up by Yule Island, about 50 miles northwest of here. There were three flights of 100 Jap planes. The fighters turned back the first flight and were about to work over the second flight when 65 more Zero fighters came up from the following flights. Our boys immediately had their hands full with 150 Zero's buzzing around. As soon as this additional fighter support came up from the rear flights, the first flight formed again and came on down. But the second and third Jap flights of about 100 bombers each had to turn back as they now had no fighter protection. Thanks to our fighters we only got bombed by 42 bombers instead of the intended 300. Whooee!

April 14th, 1943

Nothing much new today, some of the boys went over to Australia to pick up some food and beer for our Organization Day tomorrow. Our group will be one year old tomorrow.

We got the good news today that the Sydney leave schedule was back in effect, thanks to Gen. Kenney. This pleased us all very much as MacKay was getting increasingly worse. Let's see, we're due to go on furlough about the first of May. Sydney, here we come!

April 15th, 1943

Preparation all day for our big feed and program tonight. Stood by the plane on the alert this morning but nothing came of it.

Boy, what a meal we had tonight. Steak, mashed potatoes and gravy, string beans, fruit salad, iced tea, cake and ice cream. All this good food was flown in this afternoon. Oy, am I stuffed!

We assembled tonight at 8 o'clock for the ceremony. A few speeches were given when it started to rain like I have never seen it rain. The fly over the stage collapsed and about drowned everybody, including Gen. George C. Kenney, our distinguished guest and real Commander in Chief of the southwest Pacific Air Forces. We all got sopping wet, but stayed as a body to hear Gen. Kenney. He made a real speech and told us just what he had got from Washington, D.C. The sum total of it was that we now have 532 airplanes and by September, we should have over 1500 – sounds swell.

He also complimented us on our fine record – more raids, more hours, more enemy aircraft destroyed and more ships sunk than any other group that has ever been in the southwest Pacific theatre. Our squadron had the best record of any squadron over here too. Hurrah for us!

And last but not least, the General stated that we would get 100% replacements beginning right away. What does this mean? It means that we are going home!!

April 16th, 1943

Speculation was running riot today as the lists of those going home was being prepared – 20% a month, beginning in May was to be the goal.

Strike on Wewak going out tonight. We were slated to go, but the Chief got sick at the last moment and Lt. Sayre was assigned to fly 077. I was really burned up when I was told that our crew wasn't going – that is I was until I found out the reason, then I was just disappointed. I was all eager to get a crack at the Japs for retaliation on their big raid last Monday.

April 17th, 1943

The boys got back from Wewak this morning between eight and nine o'clock. They didn't do much damage. Lt. Sayre is as yet unreported, he was the one who flew our ship.

April 18th, 1943

Nothing new today. Picked up a Radio Tokyo news broadcast last night and they retold of their big raid on Port Moresby and how they had completely leveled all military objectives. Boy, what liars, the Burlington Liars Club are missing a good bet in this radio station.

Lt. Sayre now definitely "missing in action". We are all upset about it as Sayre, "Whizzer" White, Bob Null and "Bobbie" Black were all swell fellows as were the six enlisted men on his crew. We are still holding the hope that they made a successful crash landing somewhere and will show up soon.

April 19th, 1943

Received word from one of our Aussie spotters in enemy territory that they had found the burned wreckage of "077" and there were no survivors of the crash. They buried 10 bodies, the entire crew, without being able to identify any of them. The report said that they saw the plane on fire and it crashed soon after. The plane was positively identified from the AFCE and bomb sight number plates. We were sorry to learn of their deaths but this writer is thanking fate and the good Lord for intervening with the Major's illness, if not, this crew would have been ours. It doesn't pay to be too eager and push your luck in this business. Sit back and let fate take care of itself.