



Wartime Memories

By
Gordon W. Schmal
Colonel, USAF (Retired)

TO

Casey, Joe, Kiersten, Colleen, Kyle, Jody, Marcus, Ryan,
Tommy, Bonnie, Ben, Eric, Caroline, and any and all
grandchildren who come along.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	2
World War II	4
Preflight	5
Pilot Training	8
Primary	9
Basic	13
Advanced	16
Crew Training	19
Deployment	24
Combat	28
The Korean War	46
The Vietnam War	53

INTRODUCTION

Motivation to record my wartime experience came after I read of my ancestors' adventures of when they immigrated to this country from Germany in the early 1800's. The experiences of my great-grandfather, John Stark, were especially interesting since he served in the U.S. Army during our war with Mexico, and later made the trek across the country to the California gold fields in 1849.

I've addressed these memories to my grandchildren, now too young to grasp the material, but who, I hope, will eventually find it worthwhile to treat as a legacy and pass along to future generations.

My children may also find these remembrances interesting although I'm sure some of the stories have been told repeatedly in past years. Hopefully, these will be more believable than were the tales I told them of the hardships that I had to endure in my youth.

Initially I planned to record just the period that I flew in combat in World War II, but then I recalled what a very exciting experience it was to leave home and enter Aviation Cadet training. So at the risk of being tedious with technical detail, I feel it necessary to share with you this interval in my life when the most important thing in the world to me was to become a pilot in the Army Air Corps.

Chapters on Korea and Vietnam were added even though my participation in these wars was only in a supporting capacity. However, I believe the experiences I had during pivotal periods in these conflicts were exciting enough to be recorded here.

Some of the men who served in Vietnam also had sons who were sent over there and shared the dangers of that long, drawn-out war. So did I. Two of my boys, Tom and Robb, followed me to that war-torn county; Tom, while I was halfway through my one-year tour, and Robb, who joined the Army and was sent to Vietnam in 1969.

You may wonder how I can remember events that occurred almost fifty years ago, but I assure you that many of the happenings are as vivid today as they were at the time they took place. Now of course, it may seem as if every day was dramatic, but at the time it was mostly homesickness and boredom mixed with hard work, often a very terrifying experience, and always an anxiety to finish the job and get back home.

To enhance these memories, I have drawn on a number of sources including the USAF Research Studies Institute and the library at the 8th Air Force Museum located on Barksdale Air Force Base, Louisiana. Especially useful were the 2d Bomb Group History, other histories and accounts of the wars, technical documents, and Phillip Day's memoir "The Saga of the Reluctant Copilot". His story provided details in helping me augment the account of my flight training. John Horn, our navigator, helped with several important particulars of the months we spent together on a bomber crew.

"Best Oldest Son," Tom, prodded me into writing this story after I told him of my many futile attempts to put it on tape. I can thank him now that it's finished but that's not always how I felt as I struggled for months to put it down on paper.

I appreciate the dilligent editing help from spouse and children (Mollie, Tom and Jim). Tom also gave yeoman's service in having the manuscript transferred to disk. Jim volunteered right from the start to publish this account, and you can plainly see that it could not have been accomplished in a more creative and professional manner.

Finally, I could never thank my wife Mary enough for helping to keep up my spirits with her letters during WWII, and for being both father and mother to our children as I wandered over the globe during our many separations that spanned the last two wars.

Gordon W. Schmal

WORLD WAR II

This story begins before we entered the war following the bombing of Pearl Harbor by Japan on 7 Dec 41.

Even before this tragedy, it seemed almost inevitable that we would eventually get into the fight. Our government became increasingly involved, and our national sympathy overwhelmingly supported the Allies (especially Great Britain) in their war against the Nazi.

Nothing was more dramatic to me at the time than the Battle of Britain. In the late summer of 1940, when England was alone, and threatened by invasion, her Royal Air Force pilots (flying Spitfire and Hurricane fighter aircraft) won the crucial air battle. As Winston Churchill put it, "Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few."

I was a great admirer of those gallant pilots. I nearly went to Canada with a couple of friends to join their air force (R.C.A.F.) in the Spring of 1941. We backed out because we did not know how to tell our parents and did not want to simply run away. But I did not discard my dream of becoming a fighter pilot, and was confident that I would soon be leaving my job on the evening shift in a defense factory.

Later that year the Army Air Corps eased its restrictions to enter the Aviation Cadet Program. Instead of the requirement for single men between the ages of twenty and twenty-six with two years of college, the doors were opened to married men and high school graduates, and the age limit was lowered to eighteen.

I applied immediately, but first had to overcome the misgivings of my parents, whose approval was still required since I was under 21 years of age. My mother especially agonized over signing the application and did so only with my father's gentle persuasion. I think he better understood my pressing, almost desperate need to take this step. I'm sure both must have been somewhat relieved that it was not until I had passed my twenty-first birthday (Mar 12, 1942) that I was finally sworn in, after the interminable time needed to be accepted into the program.

In the meantime, to find out what flying was all about, and to increase my chances of success in the Aviation Cadet Program, I took flying lessons in the Fall of 1941, at an airfield near Chicago Heights, Ill. I soloed and had several exciting experiences in the thirteen hours I logged in a 65 HP Aeronca owned by a neighbor of mine. On my second solo flight the carburetor iced up and the engine quit while I was in the landing pattern of the airstrip. I successfully made a "dead stick" landing. Beyond a doubt, the silence that occurred after the engine quit on that little airplane was as quiet as it ever gets in this world.

On another occasion I could not get the plane to climb above 800 feet, and aborted the flight. On my next flight with my instructor (and my last in that aircraft) the engine blew a spark plug and we made an emergency landing in a cornfield.

Being concerned about the requirement to pass the comprehensive written examination, I hired a school teacher to tutor me in mathematics, since my last schooling was early in 1938, when I had finished high school.

After passing this examination, and later the physical, I was made a Private (\$21.00 per month) on 20 Mar 42, and sent home. I was called up a month later for active duty as an Aviation Cadet (\$75.00 per month), and sent to Santa Ana, California, for preflight training.

PREFLIGHT

The trip from Indiana to California was great! We boarded the train in Gary or one of the nearby towns. My family was there, having earlier driven me over from our home in Hammond. We even had a small high school band playing to see us off. Our group had a train coach all to ourselves (maybe 25 cadets), and it was "First Class," with just compartments and drawing rooms. To me, this was a very big adventure. The only traveling I had done up to that time was a week's vacation at the Wisconsin Dells; a couple of trips to Indianapolis; and once, back to Mancelona, Michigan where I had spent the first six years of my life. Otherwise, I had been pretty well anchored to the southern tip of Lake Michigan. Travel was a luxury that very few could afford in the depression years of the 1930's. Since we did not have a military escort, we made the three day trip to the West Coast seem like one great party (with girls being the only missing element)! Of the group, I was acquainted with only person, Richard Bohney, who had been two classes ahead of me when I attended Dyer High School. He was in my sister Wilamine's class and still had a crush on her.

The most impressive part of the trip was our early morning arrival in Santa Fe, New Mexico, with my first look at mountains, the beautiful clear blue skies, and the distinctive Spanish style architecture of the buildings. What a contrast with the grime and smoky air of South Chicago and the industrial corner of Northwest Indiana where I had grown up. Also impressive was our slow journey entering Pasadena and Los Angeles. The citrus groves and orange trees surrounding the elegant California-style homes were a beautiful sight; quite a change from today's tract housing and smog-shrouded views of shopping centers and freeway complexes.

Preflight was a combination classification center and basic training school. Our stay was to be seven weeks; however, this was eventually extended two more weeks due to a lack of facilities for flight training. Santa Ana Army Airbase, still under construction, was a sprawling place with row upon row of two story barracks interspersed with mess halls, theaters, chapels, athletic fields, etc. We arrived there by bus from the train station and were greeted by shouts of "You'll be sorry!", and "Did you bring your P-38?" from cadets in earlier classes. It happened that a pair of P-38's stationed at a nearby airfield zoomed over the airbase about the time we entered the main gate. No aircraft was more alluring to me than this twin-boom, sleek fighter, then called a pursuit aircraft and named "Lightning."

We were issued uniforms and immediately immersed in the process of being converted from civilian to soldier. Much of the time we spent standing in line for something, and we always lined up alphabetically - this held true for the entire time I was a cadet. Oh, how often I wished my last name was Able, or Baker, or even one starting with C or D.

For the first few weeks we took classification tests and another, very thorough, physical examination. I no longer recall the exact type of tests, but there were many multiple choice written exams and a bunch of "hand-eye" coordination tests. I must have done okay as I was classified for pilot training, placed in class 43-A and not chosen to be shipped out later, for training as a navigator or bombardier. It's a good thing too, as I had never once entertained the thought of becoming anything but a pilot!

I had one concern about passing the physical exam, since I was two pounds underweight when initially examined prior to having been selected for the cadet program. At 6' 0" tall, the Army said I should weigh a minimum of 143 lbs. No waiver was permitted and I had had to go back for a recheck, and was able to make the weight only after gorging myself on water and bananas. This time, when my height was being measured, I bent my knees slightly without being noticed, and at 5' 11" easily made the minimum-weight requirement!

I do not recall our exact routine, but the schedule described by Phillip Day during his stay at Santa Ana is very familiar: "This meant getting up at 0545, formation on street in front of barracks at 0600, do all clean up, personal and barracks, by 0700, formation and march to Mess Hall, eat to 0745, formation and march to barracks, change to athletic clothes, formation at 0830 and run in formation to PT for one and one half hours, run in formation to barracks, shower and clean up, change to fatigues, formation at 1030, march to parade ground for 1 hour of drill, march in formation to Mess Hall at 1145, eat, march in formation to barracks, change to khaki including tie, formation and march to classes at 1245, in classes from 1300 to 1630, march to barracks, get rid of school gear, formation for retreat ceremony at 1700 in front of barracks, march in formation to Mess Hall, eat 1715, march in formation to barracks, free from 1800 to 1900, study from 1900 to 2130, personal time from 2130 to shower, shave, shine shoes, clean rifle, write letters, prepare for tomorrow and then to your bunk with lights out at 2230. When we had morning classes we got up at 0500 instead of 0545."

One item of personal grooming that needed no time was hair care since the airbase barber had reduced our hair length to about an eighth of an inch. However, there must have been a method in their madness, since we could barely lift our arms after having been vaccinated and inoculated for all of the diseases the Army expected us to encounter.

Not having been in the best of physical condition, I remember my first day of PT (Physical Training). After some calisthenics we were directed to run around the track and then complete the obstacle course. Well, I was a walking, winded person about halfway around the track and then made a laughable attempt at the first obstacle - a ten or twelve foot high wall to be scaled by a rope. However, it wasn't long before we were doing it all without any appreciable strain and when I left Santa Ana, I considered the obstacle course "a piece of cake." So much for youth, an "eager beaver" attitude and yes, even pride to look my best while marching in the dreaded parade held every Sunday afternoon.

Classroom subjects included aircraft/ship identification, Morse and blinker code, some mathematics and physics, history and customs of the service, first aid, and on and on. We were also introduced to the firing range and courses in armament and we were not even deprived of the opportunity to put on our gas masks in a room full of tear gas. The medical people told us about venereal diseases and showed a film and then a chaplain gave a talk on the value of chastity. The VD film seemed to follow us from one station to another.

We were housed eight to a room in our barracks, and everything was expected to be ready for unannounced inspections. Housekeeping chores were a part of every cadet's daily routine. Any dirt or dust was to be removed from the floor, wall, shelves, lights, windows, etc. The storage or arrangement of our gear was prescribed in detail - clothes hung in a certain order, shoes lined up correctly, and foot locker contents all stored in a precise manner. Naturally, all trash or litter of any kind around the outside of the barracks was picked up ("policed"). We were even taught how to dispose of cigarette butts! After removing the tobacco, the paper was rolled in a tiny ball before discarding. We all got our share of "special" duties which included "latrine orderly," K.P. (Kitchen Patrol), and guard duty. Without going into detail, I can assure anyone that once you experienced these activities, failing any other ambition, they provided enough motivation to do about anything to obtain an officer's commission.

A very disturbing incident occurred at the time. One of the men in our room had \$80.00 stolen from his footlocker. He had kept the bills rolled up, and secured them in an empty film case. He told me that he suspected one of the three former sergeants in our room who kept pretty much to themselves. Although he reported the theft, no one was accused and nothing could be proven, but it was difficult at best to think that you were living with a thief in your midst.

We were finally allowed off the airbase after four weeks of confinement. What a thrill it was to be free of the military routine for twenty-four hours and be able to escape to the real world. I recall going through the main gate to catch a bus for LA and Hollywood when we saw cars lined up, with local residents waiting to take us to their homes for the weekend. They were there each of the four or five Saturdays that I had liberty (called "open post") but I never took advantage of their warm hospitality as I was much more interested in the bright lights of the city. It should be recalled that only a few months earlier we were very concerned that the Japanese fleet would launch a strike on the West Coast and many defense measures were employed. These included blackouts, balloon barrages, and deployment of weapons and fighter aircraft. It was also about this time that Americans of Japanese descent were so shamefully rounded up and interned in camps out in the desert for the duration of the war.

Open post in preflight ran from noon Saturday to noon on Sunday, and in flight training, from Saturday noon to Sunday evening at 5 p.m. Needless to say, one tried to cram as much fun as possible in the hours available. To most of us, this meant going to town, sharing a hotel room with two or three buddies, drinking lots of beer/liquor, splurging on a big meal (usually a steak), and hoping to find girls to party and dance with until the wee hours of the morning. Unfortunately girls rarely materialized and if it happened, it was a friend who found one for me, as I was too shy to be successful on my own. Besides, there were hundreds of uniformed men on the streets, and in the bars, and in the night clubs and hotels in town.

On one of my first liberties, I looked up the uncle of a friend of mine from back home. Her uncle was "Spike" Jones, a nationally known band leader who had a novel jazz band that, while playing popular tunes, would suddenly break out in wild and crazy renditions. He was rehearsing his band when I came by and when they paused for a break, we had a pleasant visit over a drink. That evening or maybe on a later trip to LA, I went to the Palladium Ballroom where there were lots of girls and was able to dance to the music of Artie Shaw, another famous "Big Band" leader.

My most memorable open post was one I took to nearby Balboa Beach. After a night of partying and dancing in a beachfront pavillion, the next morning a buddy and I decided to go for a swim in the lagoon, a few blocks away. The water was quite cold so while we stood at the dock trying to decide what to do, a motor boat pulled up and the man at the wheel asked us if we would like to go for a ride. Well, we could hardly believe our eyes! It was Spencer Tracy, a big movie star and always one of my favorite actors. We rode around the lagoon where he and other members of the movie colony had weekend homes. Our route took us by Humphrey Bogart's dock where he was working on his boat. He and a lady standing on the dock both waved to us. A bit later, we saw Dick Powell, and Joan Blondell, both well known movie stars, on the porch of their cottage and they also waved to us. Our ride lasted twenty to thirty minutes and Tracy talked mostly about whether he should enter the service. Many of his friends had. Clark Gable, Jimmy Stewart, Henry Fonda, among others - and I guess he was feeling us out about the need to join up just because they had. I don't believe he ever did, but I seriously doubt that anything we told him had any impact on his decision. It was a great morning, one always remembered and I'm sure repeatedly told over and over to one and all, ad nauseam.

Being close to Hollywood, we had celebrities entertain us at the airbase. Jack Benny, who was the most popular radio comedian of his day, broadcast his Sunday night show for our enjoyment. Dinah Shore, probably the most popular female singer at that time and a great blues singer, came out one evening and put on a special show for us. Dinah sang from the boxing ring with her piano accompanist and belted out one number after another for well over an hour. We would have stayed all night if she could have held out. That, as well as the Bob Hope show I later enjoyed in North Africa had to be tops in showbiz entertainment for me.

The cadets at Santa Ana put on a variety show. We must have had a lot of talented people from stage, screen, and vaudeville, as they put in a terrific performance for a very appreciative audience.

By late June, 1942 we had completed Preflight and I was notified that my primary flying school would be Thunderbird Field near Phoenix, Arizona. I could hardly wait; like the others, I thought Preflight had lasted an eternity. Actually we were most fortunate, since cadets entering the program in after 1942 were subjected to a much longer preparation before they could begin pilot training. They spent a month in Army Basic, three months at a College Training Detachment, and then twelve weeks at Santa Ana or one of the other preflight and classification centers in the country.

PILOT TRAINING

Pilot training had three stages: Primary, Basic, and Advanced - all to be successfully completed before we could receive our wings and the gold bars of a 2nd Lieutenant. Prior to the war this program took twelve months to complete but due to the mounting war pressure, was reduced to seven months - nine weeks for each of the three stages. Flying time was also reduced but not as drastically. Instead of 240 hours, we received 205 hours with the biggest cut coming in basic where we went from 100 to 75.

PRIMARY

Thunderbird was located about ten miles North of Scottsdale, Arizona, then a town of less than a thousand. The field was owned by Southwest Aviation Corporation with our flight training contracted by the Army. All flight and ground school instructors were civilians, but a small contingent of Army personnel were present to evaluate training, give us check rides, provide medical care, conduct PT programs, and pay us.

The student body at Thunderbird increased by a third with our arrival since we were scheduled to train at Thunderbird II, then under construction and not ready for occupancy. The pastel colored stucco cottages with rooms designed for two people now held four of us underclassmen, and I suppose the dining hall, classrooms, flight line, and other facilities were overcrowded as well. We were fortunate, however, to have our full complement of aircraft and flight instructors.

At Thunderbird, we flew the Stearman PT-17 manufactured by the Boeing Aircraft Corp. This was a two seat (in tandem), fabric covered, open cockpit bi-plane, powered by a 220 HP engine. It was a well built and rugged aircraft, a quality not be despised in a plane that had to take the punishment we inflicted on it. Additionally, it was very responsive and a sheer delight to fly.

The upper wing held the fuel tank and it was gravity-fed, which meant that the engine would quit when flown in inverted flight. The propeller would continue to windmill however, and the engine would start immediately when normal flight was resumed. The fuel gauge was a graduated glass tube of liquid with a floating cork to measure the fuel level. Cockpit instrumentation was simple: a tachometer, oil temperature and pressure gauges, magnetic compass and an airspeed indicator. This last instrument was rarely if ever used since we were taught primarily "seat-of-the-pants" flying. This meant that the horizon was the reference point of attitude and that your body would sense the various deviations from straight and level flight. You responded to pressure on the control stick and rudder pedals and to the noise created by the vibration of wires connecting the upper and lower wings. When you slipped or skidded in a turn, your body could sense this, and your body also sensed any acceleration or deceleration. I guess the only time I used the airspeed indicator and compass was when I completed a cross country flight near the end of this schooling.

Primary was divided into four standard phases. In the pre-solo phase we became familiar with the general operation of light aircraft and achieved proficiency in forced landing techniques and in recovering from stalls and spins. In the second, or intermediate phase, pre-solo work was reviewed, and precision of control was developed by flying standard courses or patterns, know as elementary 8's, lazy 8's, pylon 8's and chandelles. The third, or accuracy, phase demanded high proficiency in various types of landing approaches and landing; the fourth, or acrobatic, phase required ability to perform loops, Immelmann turns, slow rolls, half-rolls, and snap rolls.

My instructor, Mr. George, a was middle aged, fatherly type person, with a very quiet and pleasant disposition. There were two flights, or groups, and he had five or six students in each flight. When we flew in the morning, we had ground school, PT, and drill in the afternoon, and the next week this would be reversed.

The student occupied the rear seat on all flights, with the instructor in front of you when flying dual. The communication was one-way; the instructor talked

to us through a "Gosport System." This was rubber tubing attached to the student's helmet and connected to a single tube that ended in a funnel-like mouthpiece. We could not communicate except to nod our head or give an OK sign to a yes/no question. Instructors were not always as patient and good natured as Mr. George. Some had a mean streak and would punish a student's mistake by kicking rudder pedals to force the knees up, or slap the control stick causing the student's control stick to hit the inside of his knees hard enough to leave bruises, and must have hurt like hell.

I do not recall having any difficulty flying the airplane and I'm sure the flying experience that I had earlier in the Aeronca was most helpful.

One had to be very careful to maintain control of the Stearman on the ground upon landing. The landing gear was narrowly spaced and unless one stayed "on top of it" at all times - especially in any kind of cross wind - you could easily ground loop (the tail making a rapid circle around one wheel, usually damaging a wing tip as it dragged the ground). This would automatically entitle you to a check ride from a senior instructor and peg you as a potential wash out candidate. This was dubbed "The Washing Machine," and when you failed two or more check rides you were eliminated from pilot training.

I remember coming in for a landing on my first solo flight and having to "take it around" because two planes had ground looped, one to the right and one to the left of the runway, and the plane just ahead of me had "nosed over," I assumed because the student applied the brakes too hard. Control of landings and take offs was maintained by signals from a light gun aimed at the pilot from the control tower. I was given the green light to land but there was no room on the runway as I approached and I had no choice but to abort the attempt. Ground crews had cleared away the planes when I made my next approach and I was able to land without any problem. After completing this solo, I was able to proudly wear my goggles on my helmet when not flying, and not dangling around my neck like the "dodos" who had not soloed.

In a few weeks, "Thunderbird II" was far enough along to take our class. It was located less than twenty miles from Thunderbird I, and I accompanied my instructor in our flight over there. As we flew along he asked me if my seat belt was fastened securely, and after checking, I gave him the OK sign. He then suddenly did a snap roll and my arms and legs were flying all over the cockpit. This was my first experience with an acrobatic maneuver. Mr. George, of course, got a big charge out of all this.

Although we occupied this new airfield, construction was by no means complete. Especially missing was any sign of air conditioning for the entire six or seven weeks we stayed there. Since this was mid-July and we did not leave until late in August, there was no relief from the burning heat of the central Arizona desert. At night we dragged our cots out of the dormitories and slept under the stars, then woke up chilled to bone. One cadet was bitten by a scorpion when he tried to put on his slippers in the morning and ended up being hospitalized. Classroom work in the afternoon was especially miserable. I still recall the oven-like atmosphere of aircraft and naval identification classes when the blinds had to be drawn over the windows to permit us to view the slides.

There was no let-up in drill and PT programs, and I recall afternoon sessions when it was necessary to brush away surface sand and gravel to keep from burning your hands doing push-ups. We continued to march in formation for all scheduled activity whether it was to the flight line, classroom, mess hall, the evening

retreat ceremony, or whatever. This went on during all stages of training until we were upperclassmen in the last four and a half weeks of advanced school.

Dust storms were another desert phenomenon we had to cope with. On at least two occasions we were routed out to the flight line where we donned our gas masks and held onto the lower wings of aircraft to keep them from blowing into each other. Even this effort often failed since the wind blew so hard that it was impossible to keep from being dragged along with the plane by the storm. I have to assume tie-down equipment was not installed or used, or maybe the ropes normally used for this were inadequate for the job. When we returned from these excursions we found our bedding and everything we owned covered with a coat of sand. I'm sure you can appreciate the usual comment about Arizona, "And we took this away from the Indians!" or "Let's give it back to the Indians!"

While the heat and dust were very disagreeable, the concern of possible failure to meet the standards and to wash out of the program was by far the most stressful part of primary and a source of constant anxiety. While I felt I was making good progress and not aware of any particular difficulty, I was never told I was "doing fine" or "that was a good ride" by my instructor. After a dual ride, Mr. George would tell me to work on my stalls or pylon 8's or some other routine, but he never praised any of my efforts. I had soloed promptly in seven or eight hours and passed my first check ride satisfactorily, when an incident occurred that became my low point as a cadet. We were practicing spot landings in the morning and this procedure made it necessary to fly a precise pattern in order to be in a position to touch down on a fairly narrow chalked strip perpendicular to the landing area. I had made several good landings and had come around again with a dozen or more of us jockeying for position to turn on the base leg - the key to final approach. I hurriedly looked behind me to clear the area, made my turn, and nearly collided with a plane carrying a student with a Lieutenant in the front seat. The Lieutenant moved his plane close to mine and angrily motioned me to land immediately. I landed and after parking the plane, dejectedly told Mr. George what had happened. He made no comment and I headed back to the ready room alone and feeling the lowest I ever felt in my life, knowing I would join the many others who had washed out. The afternoon passed with no word but I was sure that on the next morning I would be told to pack my bag. I reported to the flight line as usual, but Mr. George said nothing to me about the incident and neither did any officer or senior instructor, and I was not about to ask. So I was to live after all, and it must have been that the officer decided to overlook the incident, or more likely, Mr. George interceded in my behalf.

One would think that it would be clear sailing after that, but not so. The "wash-out" rate was awesome - something like 50-60% of my class. Of the eight assigned to our large room in the new dormitories at Thunderbird II, only two remained - Clyde Stevens and I - when we finished primary. You asked yourself, "Will I be next?" every time you said goodbye to a departing roommate.

The big wash-out rate must have been the main reason that longer and improved screening methods were employed in 1943; especially the ten hours of dual instruction in Piper Cubs given to students while at College Training Detachments.

Weekends away from this very hard routine were essential and spent in Phoenix. The Westward-Ho Hotel was the hang-out for most of us and some called it the Westward "Ho" House, but I was never aware of any solicitation by members of the oldest profession. The open post routine remained the same, only the hang-overs were worse as we tried to soak up all the spirits in town. Fortunately we had

all of Sunday to recover; I normally slept until it was time to make the late Mass, and in the afternoon took in a movie or two in air conditioned comfort before returning to the field.

One weekend I hitched a ride to Prescott on an invitation from my mother's cousin and her family. A cadet was not permitted to thumb a ride, but it was okay to stand along the road and look like you wanted a lift. In those days a man in uniform had no problem getting a ride as just about every car going his way would offer to help. My lift into Prescott was a harrowing experience. An elderly man in his pick-up truck gave me a ride up this narrow, twisting, mountain road, that climbed several thousand feet and was unprotected by any guard rail. This old man never stopped talking and pointing out landmarks and property owned by friends and relatives, and he showed no apparent interest, (or hardly a glance), at the road ahead. It was a long and agonizing drive as I sat with white knuckles clutching the seat and expecting to plunge off the road any minute.

My cousin's family gave me a very warm welcome and the two children, a boy of twelve or so, and a girl of fifteen or sixteen, made a big fuss over me and especially my uniform. It was a pleasant interlude, and since I can't recall the trip back, it must have been routine.

We made one cross country flight, a triangular course with legs about thirty miles each, and this was the first time we flew out of the authorized practice area. I recall feeling somewhat lost as check points went swiftly by over unfamiliar terrain. One of the students did get lost and landed at the Phoenix Municipal Airport. Actually, if you wanted to, you could have trailed along with the other planes since there were always several in sight.

My final check ride came when I had completed forty-five hours of flying time. It was an hour long ride with one of the officers and was a super relief to have passed it successfully. All that now remained to complete the total of 60 hours that was required and paid for by the Army was solo flying. These last 14 hours were a real joy, the most fun I ever had flying an airplane. With no need to practice, I could do what I pleased. I would normally climb four or five thousand feet where it was cool and wring out that Stearman with every acrobatic maneuver I knew. I even got to where I could do a halfway decent loop. When descending it was always by spinning (one time completing ten turns before kicking it out and leveling off). A few times I joined in a game of chicken with other "hot pilots". We would roll over and fly inverted, silently descending in a glide to see who would be the last to revert to normal flight as we came closer to the ground. I did not keep score but I believe I won most of those games.

During the last few flights I spent some time flying over a gas station with a house and maybe another building, on a road just outside the training area. When you dove down and "buzzed" the place, a young woman would appear and wave to you. With a girl as an appreciative audience, it was all the encouragement needed to display your daring flying skills. The word soon got out and the sky became crowded by Thunderbird II students showing off their aeronautical finesse. I'm sure it was pure luck that some accident did not occur in that melee; however, it did not go unnoticed. The service station owner called the base and complained of the noise and nuisance, and it was not long before the officer-in-charge held a formation and read us the riot act. He appealed to our "cadet honor" and asked that all cadets step forward who had been over the gas station that morning. Seventeen cadets made the move and I nearly did when I remembered that I had not flown that morning having finished my sixty hours the

day before. The seventeen were punished by spending much of their time walking tours before graduation. A tour was one hour of marching back and forth in a prescribed area, often shouldering a rifle or carrying a parachute.

I was posted to Marana Field, Arizona for Basic training. The log (Air Corps Form 5, which I still have) shows that I finished Primary with 60 hours total, 25:58 hours dual, 34:02 solo, and 151 landings.

BASIC

Marana Army Airfield, located about thirty-five miles Northwest of Tucson, was still under construction and would again give us the dubious distinction of being the first class to graduate from a new airfield. How new? To quote from Volume VI of "Army Air Force in WWII": "At Marana, Arizona, for example, flying began on a level spot in the desert before landing strips were ready, and a detail of men had to fill ratholes in the earth each morning before the planes could take off."

I still have copy of the "Interphone", a yearbook type publication of photographs, poems, cartoons, and biographies produced by members of class 43-A at Marana, and I have made generous use of this book to refresh my memory.

The base had a half-finished, rather desolate and dust blown appearance that gave it a desert outpost atmosphere. Many building were tarpaper covered, and inside the framing was exposed - no ceilings, just open rafters and the underside of the roof. We were issued mess kits and used them until electricity was installed and we could eat in our cadet mess hall and not from the field kitchen. We filled our canteens from Lister bags to take to the flight line and the barracks until drinking water was available base wide. In a few weeks though, the Post Exchange and dayroom were finished, and future classes would enjoy a theatre and swimming pool that were nearing completion when we departed in late October, 1943.

Our airplane was the BT-13, manufactured by the Consolidated Vultee Aircraft Corp. They named it the Valiant, but we called it the "Vultee Vibrator". It was a low wing, all metal monoplane, with conventional (not tricycle), non-retractable landing gear. The engine was a Pratt and Whitney 450 HP radial, driven by a controllable two-position propeller. The cockpits were enclosed in a sliding canopy and seating was in tandem, but in this case the student always rode in the front seat except when practicing hooded instrument flight. We now had radio communication, both from plane to ground and between cockpits. To me it was a big airplane and roared with a nice surge of power on take-off that felt great as it set you back a bit in your seat. At idle and during taxing operation the engine made quite a racket as it spit and coughed and gurgled. If I heard one today, I'm sure I could recognize that engine.

The class was divided into six flights of twenty-five or more cadets and student officers. I believe we started with 150 in our class (compared to the 500 in later classes), but it may have been more. In any event we graduated 135 for a wash-out rate of only ten or at the most fifteen percent. A big improvement over primary. All flight instructors were Lieutenants and each had four or five students. My instructor was 2nd Lt. Fisk, and again I was fortunate to draw a nice guy who was patient and helpful. There was a lot to learn in basic in the 75 hours of flight time allotted to this stage. It was divided into a transition phase, involving familiarization with the plane and fundamental

operations, and a diversified phase, which included accuracy maneuvers and acrobatics, and formation, instrument, navigation, and night flying.

Instrument training was doubtless the most important part of the basic curriculum. Experience in combat underlined the necessity of flying at night and under all weather conditions, and such missions required operation of aircraft by instruments. The AAF system relied almost exclusively upon the three rate instruments: the needle, or rate-of-turn indicator; the ball, or bank indicator; and the airspeed indicator. The installed gyroscopic instruments were practically ignored.

As I look back, the BT-13 was a very stable airplane and I cannot recall having any problem flying it until we started instrument training. Just as in Primary, and later in Advanced, I passed all check rides satisfactorily. The plane handled well in stalls and spins, and acrobatics were fun with the extra power. Formation flying was new but not nearly as difficult as I had imagined. Eventually we took off, flew around the area for awhile, entered the pattern and landed, all in a three ship "V" formation led by an instructor. When flying formation you do not take your eyes off the lead ship until you finish the landing roll - that was one of the reasons we had to pass a blindfold test of the cockpit. You knew every switch and control, and could operate them - change the prop pitch, lean or richen the fuel/air mixture, crank flaps up or down, and operate the radio (hand held microphone) - all without a glance into the cockpit. Formation flying was fun and I recall pairing up with another cadet on occasion and flying so close that we would almost overlap wing tips. Not an authorized maneuver, I'm sure.

Almost halfway thru basic we started night flying. We used Marana and two nearby dusty auxiliary fields at Gilpin and Rillito. We especially enjoyed getting away to Gilpen during the earlier transition phase because we could purchase a coke or milk shake and chat with a girl at a soda fountain in a store next to the landing strip.

I remember the first time I started the BT-13 at night and was startled by the fire and sparks coming from the exhaust just a few feet from the right side of the cockpit. For night flying the field was divided into four quadrants and planes would take off and fly to the prescribed quadrant and altitude, then circle until called in for a landing. All of this was exciting and was such a different experience to me. The air was smooth, the plane seemed quieter, and I felt very alone with just the bright stars over the desert and only the runway flare pots visible except for the lights of an aircraft slowly making an approach and landing. All this produced a eerie or sort of mystical feeling. However, reality set in on a couple of occasions. Once I found someone else at my altitude in my quadrant and after a couple of circles I realized that I was in the wrong quadrant and zipped across the field undetected to the one I was assigned. On another occasion, while I was parked and having a cigarette near my plane, another student took off, roaring down the line of parked aircraft, mistaking the navigation lights on our aircraft for the runway. How any and all of us escaped this near disaster is a miracle.

Other than flying activities, the routine at Basic was not much of a change from Primary. Up at 5 a.m., dressed at 6:00, breakfast, then march to the flight line. In the afternoon; classes, PT and drill. The schedule was alternated weekly and adjusted for night flying. Academics were taught by a civilian staff and were mostly a continuation of previous courses. Among them were weather, navigation, theory of flight, aircraft systems, flying regulations, Morse code, and aircraft/ship identification. None of the courses were especially difficult

and I doubt that any cadet washed out due to flunking academics, although we were tested and graded at every level. The most onerous course of all was Morse code. The code given in blinker from an Aldis light was not too bad since we passed the course when we could take five or six words a minute. The code by radio was a different matter. I believe we were required to take this at thirty words per minute, maybe not that fast in Basic, but that was the figure I recall we had to eventually attain. Every day for at least an hour we donned our earphones and wrote down the dits and dashes making up the Morse code letters and numbers. We graded ourselves but periodically were tested by an instructor. To this day I do not understand why such proficiency was necessary. I gather this may have been reduced in later classes, since Phillip Day wrote that ten words per minute was necessary to pass in Basic and did not elaborate on this subject in Advanced.

Learning to fly an airplane by the use of instruments with no visual reference to the ground and horizon was the most difficult phase of basic training. It was doubly so for us since the Link Trainers to be installed at Marana had not arrived and we were taught instrument flight without first practicing the techniques and procedures in a simulator. The Link Trainer was a device in the shape of an airplane, with a cockpit complete with stick, rudder pedals, throttle, all engine and flight instruments, and free to move on all axes. The pattern flown was controlled by the operator who could add rough air and could change the wind direction and velocity. He also acted as flight director, giving course and altitude changes to the pilot. Although our instructor would explain the function of instruments and demonstrate maneuvers in flight, this was a poor substitute for ten hours in the Link that we were supposed to have in basic. While under the hood, we started with straight and level flight and shallow turns, (made more difficult by the turbulence produced by desert air thermals), and progressed to steep turns and recovery from unusual positions. These could be spirals, inverted flight, a near stall, and even spins, all with only basic instruments since the artificial horizon was covered over in the rear cockpit. The gyroscopic instruments were merely introduced to us in Basic even though they permitted a pilot to fly on instruments with much more precision and confidence.

We were taught how to fly the radio range, a system of navigation stations about 100 miles apart, that made up the airways - highways of the air. This was especially difficult to comprehend without an initial orientation in the Link Trainer. We even lacked a training aid and had to settle for a puzzling blackboard session by one of the instructors. I should think we must have taxed the patience of our instructors to the limit with our inept performance in this important phase. Some of the instructors lacked the patience displayed most of the time by Lt. Fisk and I recall the ashen look and hushed voice of some cadets who told of their instructors venting their anger during instrument sessions. While I felt for my fellow cadets who were subjected to this treatment, I can now, in retrospect, see more easily how this could happen. The instructors almost to a man would have taken any flying job in preference to instructing. Most were newly graduated 2nd Lieutenants in their early 20's and had no idea they would be instructors after earning their wings - not with the crying need for pilots in every war theater. Tom Readheimer, a golf buddy of mine these past ten years, graduated from the cadet program in February, 1942 and was immediately posted as an instructor in Basic. He had no choice and he received no training; the war situation did not permit this luxury. He said he volunteered for everything and anything that came along but to no avail and was stuck instructing Basic students in the BT-13 for twenty-five long months. Take about unsung heroes!

I believe we were given open post most weekends since weather never curtailed flying that would put us behind schedule. We were taken to Tucson in GI trucks and by the time we hit the highway after traveling many miles on a dirt road, we were covered with dust. We had to clean our uniforms since civilian clothes were not permitted to be worn by military personnel in WWII, except when participating in athletic activities. I do not recall where we stayed or anything special about Tucson except for getting together on Sunday mornings at the Santa Maria Hotel coffee shop that put out a great breakfast. One Saturday I went to a football game with a cousin (I had not know him before) who attended the Univ. of Arizona. He had a date and found one for me but I doubt that we hit it off too well. Besides being short and a bit on the heavy side, she was crazy about beautiful Arizona - hardly a subject we could agree on. On another weekend several of us went to Nogales to visit Mexico, my first time out of the U.S., and my first taste of Tequila. Had a great time, and the señoritas - WOW!

We flew several cross-country flights, at least one of them at night, and this time the legs were a hundred miles or more. One of the cadets made a forced landing in a field in Mexico, on a leg that took us to Douglas, Ariz. near the border. Mexico was neutral at the time but there was no problem about returning him or the airplane. I believe he was lost but I'm not sure. One cadet became lost returning from the auxiliary field at Rillito which was only three or four miles from Marana. The instructors in his flight then had him walk around for a week with a "Help the Blind" sign hung from his neck and carrying a canteen cup that held pencils.

A few weeks before graduation we received our assignments to advanced flying school. I was delighted with my posting to Luke Field, near Phoenix. This school provided single-engine training in the AT-6 - the last step to obtain my wings and, I was sure, a "ticket" to the cockpit of a fighter. Then an event occurred that was one very big disappointment. It seems that the highest ranking cadet officer (cadet major), also on orders to Luke, wanted twin-engine training. He went to the Commandant of Cadets, and told him that he and many other cadets were very unhappy about the selections for Advanced. This was taken as fact and reported to the West Coast Training Command Headquarters. They in turn "cooperated" by making new selections based on height. I do not know the cut-off but at 6' 0", I was switched from single-engine at Luke to the twin-engine school at Roswell Field, New Mexico. What a blow! Now many in our class were really unhappy, but our complaints to the Commandant, made by a delegation of cadets, were to no avail.

My Form 5 shows I received 74:30 hours in basic, 29:40 hours dual, 44:50 hours solo and 8:00 hours as a safety pilot - time spent in the front seat while another pilot occupied the rear for instrument work under the hood.

ADVANCED

In late October, I went by train to El Paso, Texas on my way to Roswell Army Airfield. I traveled with Julius Siegel, a roommate of mine at Marana, and one of only four of us from Marana posted to Roswell. Juli was from New York and married. His wife Trudy would join him later at Roswell after he had arranged to find living accommodations in that small city now swollen with military personnel, their dependents and civilian war workers.

We arrived at El Paso in the morning and had all day to kill since the bus to Roswell did not leave until that evening. I recall the many soldiers on the

streets from nearby Fort Bliss and the big charge we got out of the hesitant salutes we were given in our unrecognized cadet uniform. I'm sure they applied the old saying "If you see it, pick it up; it moves, salute it; if it doesn't, paint it."

We went across the border to Juarez and had several drinks when we found them so inexpensive. After getting quite a "buzz on" we took a bus to the city limits and tried hitch-hiking. When that did not succeed, after a couple hours we caught the Greyhound and I recall Juli becoming sick and having a miserable trip to Roswell.

The base was fairly well established and a very busy one with bombardiers being trained in the AT-11, a twin-engine Beechcraft aircraft, and two classes of cadets in their last stage of pilot training. We were given another physical examination just as we had in Primary and Basic. In those days flying personnel had to pass a physical each time they were posted to a base and not on the annual schedule established later. Once again I "took" an inch or two off my height to make certain that being underweight would not create a problem.

I trained in the AT-17 Bobcat and the UC-78 (UC standing for Utility Cargo). Except for the propellers, there was no difference in the two aircraft. They were underpowered with two Jacob nine-cylinder radial engines of 245 HP each, and cruised around 130 mph.

We called the AT-17 the "Family Car of The Air" and the UC-78 the "Useless 78." Both aircraft also had very poor single engine performance. I am sure most of us would have preferred a more powerful, tactical type advanced trainer. Late in the war the B-25 Mitchell Bomber was modified for this purpose, a very welcome upgrading, I'm sure.

I do not remember the name of my instructor but I recall that he was "all business," and gave the impression that instructing cadets was really not something he cared about. After a period of transition in twin-engine operation we concentrated on day and night formation flying, instrument flight, and cross-country work. The heavy flight activity at night and the distress it brought is not easy to forget. The problems came about when one group was practicing night landings and other groups, returning from other night training activity, were all entering the pattern for landing. The final approach leg, which normally should not extend over one or two hundred yards, would stretch out a mile or more. The control tower would then order pilots to shorten the base leg and this would cause a traffic jam on final approach. If you felt brave (or foolish) you would squeeze in and land, otherwise, take it around for another try and hope for a little less traffic. On one occasion, I was returning from a night formation flight with another cadet in the pilot seat (the seating was side-by-side). The fellow panicked and yelled "you take it" while starting a turn to final approach from a shortened base leg. I grabbed the wheel and had to complete the approach and landing from the right seat, something I had not done before. One night this situation produced a fatal accident when two planes collided. We had many accidents in all three stages of pilot training, several fatal to students and instructors. It was not surprising then that night transition with my instructor was completed after only one flight and, at the most, two landings.

Instrument training was intensified and we were expected to perfect our instrument flying and radio navigation techniques. Now we made full use of gyroscopic instruments, as this was necessary for any degree of competence when flying into airports and encountering weather conditions that produced low

clouds and poor visibility. On a typical instrument training flight the instructor would taxi out and line the airplane down the runway, then I would go under the "hood" (from the co-pilots seat), take off, and climb to cruise attitude as directed by the instructor. After displaying my knowledge of lost communication procedures, I would be directed to make an instrument approach for a landing at Roswell Army Airfield. Referring to the let down chart that depicted the authorized procedures, I would locate the frequency of the Roswell Radio Range Station (hopefully free of static) and guided by the signals transmitted by this station, make an approach to the airfield, removing the "hood" only when I was a few hundred feet from the runway. In the meantime, the instructor may have pulled back a throttle to simulate a single engine emergency, or craftily raised the flaps or landing gear on the approach to test my alertness. For certain he would let know that it was a very sloppy ride and have me climb up and do it all over again.

Day and night cross-country flights would now take several hours, and we put to good use our classroom work in planning these navigation flights. At night we would fly the airways where you would determine your location from rotating beacons that flashed blinker code signals. These you cross-referenced with your navigation chart.

Low-level cross-country flights were the most fun. We were supposed to fly these at 500 feet, but it was really legalized "hedge-hopping," as we skimmed over the bare terrain of New Mexico and West Texas, dodging windmills and power lines. Occasionally we checked our location by climbing to find a town, and then checking the name on the water tower or train depot.

Classroom work continued with emphasis now on weather, flight planning, and aircraft operating systems. We also spent considerable time on the firing range, becoming familiar with various weapons. During one session, the noise from the firing of a Thompson Sub-machine gun resulted in damage to my left ear, and produced a ringing that has not left me to this day. We were also required to fire 200 rounds on the skeet range using a 12-gauge shotgun. I was never able to hit more than 14 of the 25 clay targets. The whole process bruised my shoulder, and I even cut my nose with my thumbnail, by holding the gun incorrectly, I suppose.

The four of us from Marana, needing thirty hours in the Link Trainer, were scheduled almost immediately for this instruction, including night sessions, even after all other ground schooling was completed. During the last few hours in the Link we just put in our time and played around by making patterns that would spell our name or form a design of some sort.

At the halfway point we were upperclassmen and given privileges that made us feel like the officers we would be in a few weeks. Earlier we had ordered our uniforms using the \$200.00 allowance from Uncle Sam, and now simply had to meet the required flight, classroom, and athletic schedule. We were given a class "A" pass permitting us to come and go from the airbase whenever it suited us. What a great feeling! No more marching, no reveille or retreat formation, and ground school classes, except for Link, were about completed.

One weekend I went with the Siegels and a couple of other cadets to visit the Carlsbad Caverns. We had a wonderful time touring those awesome caves. I was so impressed that years later I took my family to visit them in 1973, the year I retired from the Air Force.

About this same time, my brother Frank traveled by train all the way from Hammond to visit me. He had just enlisted in the Coast Guard, quit his job, and was waiting for notice to report for active duty. We had a great time the weekend we spent together. We stayed at a hotel and I showed him around the base. I recall that he was impressed by the "complexity" of the AT-17, and enjoyed listening over the headset to the tower operators controlling aircraft traffic. We had a huge "Texas Size" steak that almost covered the platter it was served on. He arrived on a Friday and left Sunday, a wonderful visit, one that briefly relieved my homesickness.

By Christmas, I believe, all our training requirements were complete and two of my roommates and I drove to Ruidoso, NM, a resort town about 100 miles west of Roswell. We rented a cabin for two or three nights and cooked the food we brought since this was a summer resort and we were the only residents besides the caretaker. Although a poor substitute for this special day (the first Christmas separated from family), it was fun and a nice change of pace. We even put up a Christmas tree.

Upon returning from this trip, I heard that one of the instructors planned to take an AT-17 to his home in Oklahoma City over New Year's. I was able to sign on as his copilot and was anxious to take this trip and visit Robert Thomson, a good friend and drinking buddy from home, who was stationed at the Marine Corps base in Norman, Okla. I called Bob (my future brother-in-law) and we arranged to meet in Oklahoma City. The plan was for a four day trip, but a major ice and snow storm developed in the Texas Panhandle and the instructor and I spent the best part of two days in and out of the weather station hoping for a break in the weather. It did not happen and I had to bring in 1943 as best I could at Roswell.

On January 4, 1943, we donned our new officer uniforms and marched to the commissioning ceremony - our last formation. The uniform, dark green blouse (jacket) and pink trousers, was an exceptionally sharp looking outfit. After a couple of speeches, the Base Commander handed out our commissions and the orders rating us pilots, and after leaving the stand, we had our friends (or wives) pin on our wings and gold bars. A BIG day.

From Roswell, I was ordered to the Replacement Wing at Salt Lake City, Utah for reassignment. My pay now went to the princely sum of \$150.00 per month base pay and \$75.00 in flight pay. In advanced I had a total of 70:05 hours: 23:30 dual and 47:35 hours solo, and 30 hours Link Trainer time. Total Student Time: 204:35 hours.

CREW TRAINING

Most of our class was sent to the Salt Lake City replacement center and I assume we departed for that destination immediately upon graduation. I'm sure I still harbored a faint hope that with my twin-engine training I would be given a shot at flying the P-38, a twin engine fighter. This hope was dispelled when after a few days at the replacement center I was placed on orders to report to the 29th Bomb Group, at Gowen Field, Boise, Idaho. I do not recall much of my stay at the replacement center except that we hung around the officer's club and fed the slot machines. These "one armed bandits" were a major source of revenue for Officer and NCO clubs in those days.

At Boise I soon found out that not only would I not pilot a fighter, but I would not pilot anything! I was to be a copilot on a Boeing B-17 Flying Fortress. Some letdown! I'm sure this feeling was shared by all twenty new arrivals and "hot pilots" who got the same treatment - right after earning our wings by completing thirty-six weeks of arduous training. Later I was to find out that many copilots in bomber aircraft also came from single-engine advanced schools. One soon learned that the needs of the service always came first.

About the first order of business after settling in was to meet the other members of the crew, although some may have drifted in during the month from gunnery, navigation, or bombardier training. It was then I discovered that we would not simply train as individual crew members, but that this was a fixed arrangement, and we could expect to eventually be going into combat as a cohesive crew. I was to be relegated to the right seat in the cockpit, permanently!

The key member of the crew was our pilot, 2nd Lt. Arthur Nelson. Art had graduated from cadets two months earlier and had just completed transition training at Pocatello, Idaho. He was from Missouri and I believe came from a farming family. He was an excellent pilot and his reserved, pleasant, and responsible manner earned him the loyalty and support of every member of the crew. 2nd Lt. John Horn, our Navigator, was from Whitefish, Montana; a big, husky, outdoorsman, and a steady individual - very conscientious about his duties. 2nd Lt Thomas Morris, our Bombardier, was from Pennsylvania, and with his easy going and devil may care spirit contrasted sharply with John Horn's personality. These two shared the nose compartment in the B-17, and normally roomed together, as Nelson and I did. Nelson, Horn, and I were twenty-one years old, our birthdays being only a month apart. Morris was younger, either nineteen or twenty.

The enlisted crew of six was comprised of an an engineer, radio operator, and four gunners. The engineer was a Staff Sergeant, all the others, Sergeants. Staff Sgt Kester was an older man (twenty-six or seven), married, and a father. The others were much younger, eighteen or nineteen, all fine young men, and as far as I can recall, concientious and never in trouble or a cause for concern. After these many years all of the officers are now in contact with each other but only Ted Townsend of the enlisted crew has surfaced. Ted was one of the waist gunners and lives in Bozeman, Montana. We got together a couple of years ago and had a wonderful visit.

As I walked around the B-17 for the first time and peered forward from the main entrance located near the tail, it was hard to believe anything that big could fly. The "F" model (latest) was 74' 9" long and had a wing span of 103' 9" and height, taxiing position, of 19' 1". It was powered by four Wright Cyclone R-1820, nine-cylinder air-cooled radial engines with exhaust driven superchargers, that each produced 1,200 horsepower for take-off. Armament consisted of three turrets each mounting two .50 caliber machine guns, and five single flexible-mounted .50 caliber machine guns. A formidable machine and aptly named the Flying Fortress. On the other hand, its clean lines and large dorsal fin, plus the ability to absorb punishment from enemy flack and fighters and still bring you home, earned her the title "The Queen of the Sky."

I recently went inside the B-17G parked outside the museum at Barksdale Air Force Base, home of the 2d Bomb Wing (formerly my 2d Bomb Group), and home of the Mighty Eighth Air Force head-quarters. I was surprised at the smallness of the bomb bay. It seemed so much larger when I flew it and when it was full of bombs. Its capacity of 4,000 lbs, seemingly big at the time, was modest

compared to our heavy bomber, the B-24, with its 8,000 lb capacity, and the British heavy bomber, which could carry a whopping 14,000 lbs of bombs. I was even more surprised at the messy, decayed condition of this museum Flying Fortress. Most of the equipment and instruments had been removed; it was dirty and all blotchy where the paint had peeled off; there was a clutter of junk stored in the fuselage; in fact, it was hardly recognizable as a flying machine. I could only handle a five minute stay since it made me a little sick to see a B-17 in this state. What a shame that this Fort, flown into Barksdale in 1976, had been allowed to deteriorate to such a marked degree.

If any of you are curious and would like to see a B-17, then visit the Confederate Air Force in Texas and not Barksdale. For a small fee you will take pride that the CAF takes in their ownership of a Flying Fortress that is in mint flyable condition and still looks like the "Queen of the Sky."

My Form 5 does not show any flying time in the B-17 until the 21st of January, 1943, and that a three hour flight as a passenger which must have been for orientation purposes. I have to assume I was busy attending classes and learning enough about the aircraft to sit in the right seat and initially perform copilot duties. Learning all I needed to know about the airplane and its many systems would take many weeks, and I still recall spending hours diagramming the hydraulic, fuel, oil, electrical, oxygen, and other systems. The cockpit was a maze of dials, switches, levers, and controls that had to be memorized to the point that you could identify each item blindfolded and know exactly its function. To give you an example of the complexity (simple compared to today's aircraft) of this machine, I've reproduced in the Appendix the expanded "Starting Engine" checklist for the B-17F from the official technical order of Dec 25, 1942. My first flight as a copilot was at night, as were all of my flights in January. We must have operated almost around the clock, and our squadron started at night and then had two weeks of daytime operation. I know the mess hall was always open and it was great to order bacon and eggs after landing at midnight or finishing a session in the Link at 3 AM or some other ungodly hour.

I do not believe you could have picked a worse place for our initial crew training than Boise, Idaho in mid-winter. Boise, at 2,700 feet above sea level, is surrounded by mountains except to the Southeast along the Snake River. One peak, almost in the city limits, rose to nearly 7,600 feet. Coupled with this hazard was the poor terminal weather and the snow storms that created static in radio range transmissions. In addition, a critical leg of the radio range had a split beam that made tracking difficult even for skilled pilots. As I look back it seems we lost many crews and aircraft during our month long stay at Boise. An awful price to pay to accommodate politicians (I can think of no other explanation). It may have been here when I first heard the term "he bought the farm." This was usually said of a flyer who had lost his life in an accident. Since many of the men came from farm families and all of us had \$10,000 of Government Life Insurance, with parents as beneficiaries, the term implied that the \$10,000 would pay off the mortgage. Insensitive, even callous I suppose, but also part of the hardening that goes with high risk activities.

My log shows that I flew a total of 30:25 hours in fourteen flights while at Gowen Field. We mostly flew the old "E" model and several times we flew two flights per day. I logged forty landings - eleven on one flight - but I doubt that I made more than one myself, if any. Art Nelson felt he needed all the practice he could get since in his transition training at Pocatello he must have encountered problems (maybe weather) and he had only sixty-five hours on arrival at Gowen. A lower figure of thirty-five hours sticks in my mind, but that is

ridiculously low for two months of transition; especially when the AAF goal was to give pilots right out of flying school one hundred hours of transition time in heavy bombardment type aircraft.

One flight was only fifteen minutes long and that must have been the time we blew a tire on landing and the Squadron Commander, acting as instructor pilot, helped with the throttles to keep the plane on the runway. I did my usual co-pilot thing, open the cowl flaps, raise wing flaps, and move the propeller controls to high RPM. Later that day, in a meeting, the squadron commander reviewed the incident and praised my action as an example of how to react in an emergency situation. My first compliment! It was welcome even if my action involved only simple co-pilot duties and hardly drew on any piloting skills. Being singled out was somewhat uncomfortable though.

I do not recall much of the city of Boise, state capital that it was. We seemed to be too busy with our training schedule or else there was little in town to attract me. I believe it was here that one needed membership to frequent a night club that sold liquor and our entrance was checked thru a slot in the door that reminded me of a speakeasy from prohibition days. In early February we finished our first phase where individual crew members received training in their specialties.

On 9 Feb. we took a B-17F to Walla Walla, Washington for Phase II. During this phase, team work of the entire crew was stressed. Bombing, gunnery, and instrument flight missions were performed by full crews. We were Crew #38 of DeJohn's Provisional Group and ten crews were on the set of orders directing this transfer. We flew only a few days at Walla Walla when we moved to the airbase at Redmond, Oregon. This was caused by the heavy fog at Walla Walla, which limited our ability to operate.

Most of our flights were to the bombing and gunnery range, although we did get a start on formation flying. I recall my first stint in formation and how exhausted my right arm became after only fifteen minutes of "horsing" (no hydraulic assistance) that "big ass bird" around. Eventually one's arm muscles were trained and with experience you developed good techniques and were able to relax and had no problem maintaining your position in a formation for hours at a time. As co-pilot I was also the gunnery officer and tried my hand firing from each of the gun positions except the ball turret. This turret, installed into the bottom of the fuselage, was too small to handle my height and still allow me to operate the controls. I also dropped a practice bomb or two using the secret Norden Bomb Sight. Most of the gunnery practice was on fixed ground targets but we did practice some air-to-air gunnery on sleeves towed by other aircraft. One of the crews, while practicing on the gunnery range, was hit by a vulture that smashed thru the plexiglass nose of their B-17. The plane landed okay, and the navigator and bombardier escaped with only minor cuts and bruises, but what an awful mess and stench it produced. In all, we flew over 68 hours at the two bases before moving on to Rapid City, South Dakota for Phase III training on Feb 27th.

I do not recall visiting the nearby cities but I do remember being warned at Redmond that we should not get involved in fights between the local lumbermen and shepherders. On the way to Rapid City, Horn asked Nelson to make a detour and fly over his home in Whitefish. Nelson agreed and we made a low level "buzz job" over the lake and John's home that must have caused some commotion in that small community.

At Rapid City, very cold weather set in almost immediately and it was so cold we were unable to start the engines. When it finally did break we moved to Ainsworth, Nebraska and finished most of our Phase III training from that base. I believe the weather held except for a severe blizzard with blowing snow so heavy you could not see your hand in front of your face. To get from the BOQ to the mess hall you were guided by a rope strung between the two buildings. I've never seen anything compared to it before or since. John Horn was married while we were at Ainsworth and I stood up for John and Marie at their wedding. Now, almost forty-eight years later, that strong wartime marriage has ended, with the sad news that Marie passed away after a long illness.

I remember very little of Ainsworth or Rapid City except for a glamor portrait taken at a studio in the latter city. I believe all the officers in our crew had their picture taken in the same studio. I recall some of us drove into Ainsworth on a sunny Sunday afternoon for a soda or sundae at the local drug store. On the way we had to stop for a flock of pheasants while they crossed the road. When I mentioned this to someone, I was told that many farmers considered pheasants a pest because they claimed so much of their corn crop. It seems that the pheasant population had zoomed because so many young men, who did most of the hunting, were now in the service; there was also a severe shortage of shotgun shells due to the production of ammunition going for military needs.

When the weather permitted we flew two or three flights a day, some seven hours or longer. This phase was aimed at developing unit operation. We had extensive exercises in high altitude formation, long range navigation, target identification, and simulated combat missions.

Everything did not always go smoothly on these training flights and I recall getting lost on a long night navigation mission. John Horn provided me details on this. He said that Nelson would not fly the headings he gave him and would be off ten degrees or more after flying five minutes. After several of these corrections, and his straying off course, John told him "I quit." Some time later Nelson asked John where we were and was given a heading back to Ainsworth, and eventually we found our way home. As a result of this incident, Nelson put Horn up for a check ride which he passed so convincingly that John got his first compliment! At the critique that followed, the head of the navigation department told Art Nelson that he wished that his navigation instructors could do as well as John Horn had done.

We finished by flying 92 hours in seventeen days in March. We may have been tired, but we were confident and ready for combat when we were finally given a weeks leave and ordered to then report to Salina, Kansas. It's impossible to describe the feeling of going home after being away for almost a year. Homesickness is not new by any means, but when it's your first time away from home, and for a such a long period, its especially poignant. Those five days at home the first week of April went fast. My mother was pleased to see that I looked fine in my uniform. She said she had wondered how the Army was dressing me after I wrote that I had tried on my blouse and pink pants prior to graduation exercise at Roswell. All of my buddies were in some branch of the service so no one was around when I visited the old haunts where we use to hang out. I did visit the plant where I worked before the war and where my father and brother Ralph were employed.

I also had a couple dates with Grandmary - then Mary Thomson. We had dated about a half dozen times during the two years or so that I knew her before I went into the Army. I gave her a copy of the yearbook from Basic, and one of the pictures I had taken in Rapid City. She in turn gave me her picture. We

corresponded regularly all the time I was gone and continued to do so while I was overseas. Tom Morris came from his home in Pennsylvania and spent the night with me just before we left for Kansas. I do not recall that visit and it was only when he mentioned this while visiting us in November '89 that I can write about it. He said we double dated and went to the Palmer House Lounge in Chicago with our dates.

DEPLOYMENT

We were at Smokey Hill AAF, Salina, Kansas, for about three weeks getting ready for our overseas movement. Our most important issue was a brand-new B-17F, #43-3189, that had just been flown in from the Douglas Aircraft factory in Long Beach, California, one of the sub-contractors of the Boeing Company. We flew only nineteen hours in the plane during this period. Most of this was slow time to break in the new engines and a couple of flights to calibrate our navigation equipment, a very important function if we were to be successful in crossing the "pond" (Atlantic Ocean). In those days we did not have all the fantastic aids that navigators have today.

Deciding on a name for our new plane was a problem that involved the entire crew. We finally settled on "O.D. Angel" (O.D. for the olive drab paint job). This name was selected after it failed to win a "name the plane" contest conducted by another crew in search of a name for their new B-17.

We were issued all of our overseas gear - winter and summer flying clothing, parachutes, oxygen and gas masks, weapons (.45 caliber pistols for officers, carbines for enlisted) and numerous other items including bags to carry all the stuff. We had quite a bit of time on our hands and one afternoon and evening we attended a carnival or fair in Salina. I recall Art Nelson getting "suckered in" by a fast talking worker at one of the game booths. He dropped almost \$40.00 before John Horn and I could convince him of the futility of trying to win a big money prize. I remember the streets being crowded with servicemen that evening and the nearly non-stop job we had returning salutes. We actually took to the alley at one point to avoid this nuisance, which only four months earlier was a novelty we enjoyed. There were lots of very pretty girls in Salina - a wonderful contrast to the monotonous landscape of central Kansas.

We were finally ready to go on our great adventure. Although the special order of Apr 21, 1943, lists twenty-one crews of the DeJohn Provisional Group for transfer to Morrison Field, West Palm Beach, Florida, for subsequent overseas movement, we went as individual aircraft and crews. My Form 5 shows we departed on 26 April and logged 8:30 hours on the 1,300 mile Salina-Morrison leg. By this time Art Nelson had been promoted to 1st Lt, and all of the enlisted crew promoted one grade, except the radio operator, Art Cole, who was jumped to Tech Sgt, the authorized grade for this position.

Morrison Field was a very busy terminal that handled all the traffic flying the southern routes thru South America to and from Europe, Africa and the Middle East. I was told that at least one poker game at the Officer's Club had been in continuous session for over a year.

A very happy incident occurred while at Morrison. The sextant issued to John Horn at Boise for celestial navigation was not the type he had trained with in Navigation School at Mather Field, Calif. He had constantly complained about

how clumsy and difficult the "box" type sextant was to use compared to the "pistol grip" one he used at Mather. At Morrison he ran into a classmate from Mather who had the reverse problem: trained on the "box type" and issued the "pistol grip" design. They exchanged sextants with great delight, and this event was celebrated with much relief by the crew who by now was keenly aware that he would have to negotiate the long over-water flight from South America to Africa.

After an extensive briefing on the 27th, we left the next morning for the 9:30 hour flight to Waller Field, Trinidad. I especially recall one item of the briefing. We were told to ignore any SOS signals coming from a surface vessel as we flew over the Caribbean. It seems that a B-24 crew, responding to a light signal from a ship, descended to investigate and was shot up and had to ditch their aircraft after being machine gunned by a German submarine.

After a routine flight we landed at Waller Field and experienced our first landing surface of PSP, ie., pierced steel planking. What a racket it made! It sounded like the airplane was coming apart. However, this planking was a godsend to the AAF, operating as it was, all over the world. It was made of prefabricated square mesh mats that the engineers laid on prepared surfaces (runways, taxiways, and revetments) allowing operations to be conducted in even the muddiest of conditions.

We spent a couple of days at Waller Field before continuing on to Belem, Brazil on the first of May. While at Waller we flew for one hour locally and I do not know the reason for this unless we had repaired something that needed to be flight checked. I do remember unloading the external bomb racks which were stored in the fuselage and took up almost all the available space aft of the radio compartment. The two huge racks were to be attached to the underside of the wings and were each capable of holding a 2,000 lb bomb. The racks were never employed in training and had not been used tactically, but must have been included in the contract when purchased by the Army. We were delighted to carry them off where they joined dozens of others dumped by previous B-17 crews in the jungle near the parking ramp.

We must have been paid our first per-diem money while here, even though there was no place to spend it. Morris was made a temporary finance officer at Morrison and given enough cash to pay crew members for travel and possible delays of up to thirty days. At \$6.00 a day, he must have been issued \$1,800 which he carried locked in the bag used to carry his bomb sight.

The flight to Belem, Brazil was interesting as we flew along the coast passing British and French Guiana and Surinam, and caught a glimpse of Devil's Island, where France had sent its lepers at one time, and where Dreyfus was imprisoned for alleged treason. During the last part of this flight we flew over the mouth of the Amazon River, which took us well over an hour to traverse, before reaching Belem, several miles south of the Equator.

After landing at the Belem airport, which looked like it was freshly carved out of the jungle, we were unexpectedly greeted by youngsters wanting to sell us monkeys. These kids were ten or twelve years of age and asked for cigarettes in the English taught them by the GI's stationed there. Everything was prefaced by seven words. "Hey GI, give me a ___ cigarette" or "you fly that ___ B-17." It was quite a shock hearing such vulgar language coming from these children. Members of our enlisted crew bought one of the monkeys but as I recall it did not survive very long.

We departed the next morning for Natal, Brazil and I recall at breakfast the huge stalk of bananas that hung from the ceiling of the officer mess. I helped myself to several of the delicious tree-ripened fruit.

At our crew briefing on this leg we were asked to be on the lookout for a B-25 flown by Tom Harmon, a celebrated former All-American halfback from the University of Michigan. He and his crew were reported missing after he departed a day or two earlier on his flight to Natal. We saw no trace of his aircraft and although he turned up later we never did get a straight story about his disappearance. Harmon came from Gary, Indiana, and when he was a senior at Horace Mann High School I participated in a regional track meet with him in 1936 or 37, at the time I attended Dyer High School. I was not much of a runner (you did not have to be, in a school of less than one hundred students) and did not even place in a heat, so I was hardly any competition for this star athlete. Tom is also the father of Mark Harmon, a movie actor my grandchildren might know.

The flight to Natal was almost entirely over the tropical forest: an entire sea of tree tops from horizon to horizon. We were issued jungle kits, complete with machetes, and I know I prayed that we would not have to use them. "O. D. Angel" behaved beautifully and the 6:30 hour flight was smooth and routine.

We spent two days in Natal since the plane was due for a periodic inspection. I do not remember anything of the city but I recall enjoying the beautiful beach and ocean. It was great and the weather perfect. Bikini-clad girls? Not really. In 1943 beachwear was not very daring and besides we were about the only occupants of the beach other than isolated family groups. Several crew members bought "Natal Boots"; light brown, calf length boots that looked real sharp but fell apart in a few weeks. I probably would have bought some if I could have found a pair to fit my long narrow feet (I wear 13AAA!) Ted Townsend tells me that he bought ten watches from one of the native citizens for a very low price and that he sold them for a nice profit when he got to Africa.

This next leg was the big one. A flight of over 2,200 statute miles to Dakar in Senegal, Africa that would take us over twelve hours - all of it over water. I believe our plane was equipped with wing tip tanks (called Tokyo Tanks) and with 2,700 gallons of gas; there was no need to have gas tanks installed in the bomb bay. The shorter range crews of medium bombers (B-25, B-26) had to go by way of Ascension Island, and then to Accra, Gold Coast (now Ghana) in Africa. Crews going that route were warned not to be fooled by signals duplicating the Ascension Radio Range Station, transmitted by German submarines. These tactics had caused some flights to miss Ascension and end up casualties when they ran out of fuel.

We took off for Dakar the evening of 4 May to take full advantage of nighttime hours for celestial navigation. We cruised at 7,000 or 9,000 feet just as we had for all the legs since we left Salina. We encountered some cloudy conditions but there were enough breaks for John to get good three position fixes on the stars. It was a smooth and uneventful flight and we made landfall right "on the money." Art and I took turns in the cockpit and with the auto pilot working properly, it was just a matter of monitoring the instruments and making the minor course corrections given us by John Horn. The only problem (and I guess it really was not a problem) came in the middle of the night when I was alone in the cockpit while Art was getting forty winks. Suddenly it sounded to me that the propellers were out of synchronization and we were having engine trouble. I checked and re-checked all of the instruments and everything was perfectly normal. It was really very hard to make myself believe this and it

took some time for my heart to quit pounding and my stomach to settle down. I was scared stiff with vision of a crash landing at night in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean.

We departed Dakar the next morning and I was glad to leave the hot sleeping accommodations there that were a long bus ride from the airport. Here and in Brazil and Trinidad we slept under mosquito netting and took atabrine tablets since the risk of Malaria was great. On the bus ride into town the day before, I saw a native squatting alongside the road. He had the appearance of a wild African tribesman (from the movies, no doubt) and bolted into the bushes alongside the road as we drove by.

This next leg was an eight hour flight, mostly over the Sahara Desert to Marrakech, Morocco. Since we could not fly over Spanish Morocco (Neutral Country) we had to go by Tindorf, Algeria making a slight dog-leg track of the flight. The desert was just that - sand without let-up, and once again I was delighted we made destination without incident. However, if we had an emergency that made it necessary to crash land or ditch the aircraft, I would have much preferred this leg than over the jungle or ocean. With trouble on this flight we could have had a reasonable chance of landing in one piece and eventually rescued after being spotted from another aircraft flying this route.

After an overnight stop at Marrakech, we made the short hop to the Sala Aerodrome at Rabat, Morocco the next day, where we were to spend the next week in training. On our twelve day journey from Salina, Kansas to Morocco we had traveled approximately 9,000 miles in 54:30 hours flying time and with minimum ground time. Tom Morris had a lot of his \$1,800 to turn in.

My Form 5 shows we made five flights of under four hours while at Rabat, and except for a flight back from Oran we used this time practicing close-formation flying while under the supervision of a combat veteran. The trip to Oran was a sad one. Our pride and joy, the "O. D. Angel" was commandeered by the Base Commander and (Nelson, Kester and I) picked-up an old mud splattered B-17, and flew it back to Rabat. We eventually named this ship "Mary Jane" - Mary for Grandmary, and Jane for Art "Slim" Cole's girl friend. She served for most of the fifty combat missions flown by the crew.

While at Rabat we made the acquaintance of a French family that had three daughters. Nelson, Morris and I spent a couple of awkward evenings in their home trying to converse in sign language since we had no knowledge of French and their English was rudimentary at best. I do recall being served refreshments and the father eagerly accepting our cigarettes.

The Headquarters Bombardment Training Center Special Order of May 15, 1943 transferred us to the North African Strategic Air Force base at Chateau-D'un, Algeria, where we were to join the 2d Bombardment Group (Heavy).

Our training days were over - for me it had gone on for over a year. From now on we would employ our skills to successfully (we hoped) drop bombs on enemy targets. I was anxious to enter the fray.

COMBAT

Chateaudun-du-Rhumel, home of the 2d Bomb Group, commanded by Lt. Col. Thomas, was located about fifty miles Southwest of Constantine, Algeria. Our crew was placed in the 20th Squadron, Capt. Joseph Triggs, Commanding Officer. We were the first of its replacement crews when we arrived on May 16, 1943.

I suppose this is as good a time as any to detail the structure we were part of, and that had earlier in the month seen to the successful completion of the North African Campaign. On top was the North African Theatre of Operations U.S. Army (NATAOUSA) General Dwight D. Eisenhower, Commander-in-Chief, followed by the North African Air Force (12th Air Force), Lt. Gen Spatz, Commanding General; North African Strategic Air Force (12th Bomber Command), Maj. Gen. Dolittle, Comdr; and the 5th Bomb Wing with Brig. Gen Atkinson in charge. This Wing was comprised of the four Bomb Groups located in North Africa. Two of these, the 97th and the 301st Groups, were the initial units to arrive and begin operating in Europe, from English bases. Transferred to the 12th Air Force, their veteran crews began flying missions from North Africa in November, 1942. In March of 1943, a third B-17 Group, the 99th, joined the Wing, followed by the 2d Bomb Group in late April, 1943.

The 2d Bombardment Group (Heavy) - its history goes back to World War I - began combat operations on April 28, 1943. The Group had four squadrons: 20th (ours), 49th, 96th, and 429th. Each squadron was authorized twelve aircraft and crews but I doubt that we ever had more than ten aircraft/crews at any one time.

The crew we replaced, piloted by Lt. Thompson, was forced down at sea following a mission to Palermo, Sicily on the 9th of May. We replaced that crew in more than one way. Nelson and I moved into the tent vacated by Thompson and his copilot, and it's my guess that the balance of the crew also fell heir to the quarters made available by the previous occupants' misfortune, or perhaps slept in the pup tents we were issued in Kansas. Our standard 14'X14' pyramidal tent held six officers and since there were no cots available, Art and I tried to make ourselves comfortable on the ground. A couple of the other pilots in the tent slept on bomb fin cases. Six of these metal 2'X2', foot high stands, though very uncomfortable, at least kept a person dry when a rainstorm could threaten to flood you out. However, it would be several weeks before I could accumulate a sufficient number of these to assemble a makeshift bed. No, we did not have sleeping bags and air mattresses. Just two blankets and if that was not enough cover, we slept in our clothes and used our fleece-lined winter flying suits for padding. I also cut down some stalks of wheat in the field where our tent was located in order to provide a mattress of sorts.

In North Africa the tour of duty for heavy bombers was fifty missions. My Form 5 shows the dates and hours flown on all my missions but not where we went or the kind of target we bombed. For that information I referred to the 2nd Bomb Group history which provided these details but for some unknown reason omits the entire months of September and October 1943. I also used the combat records that Horn and Townsend sent to me. These forms provided a complete history of their operational times and missions. I was not given this form and only have my Form 5, which shows only that I flew eleven missions in September and eight in October.

The first mission flown by the crew was on 21 May, and I did not accompany them on this sortie. It was the practice for replacement crews to fly on their first mission with one of the Flight Commanders who took the left seat while the

crew's pilot (Nelson) occupied my copilot position. That first mission was to an airfield in Italy, and I'm sure they had to return prior to reaching the target since the flight of 5:30 hours would not be time enough to reach any target in Italy and return to Chateau D'un.

The first mission of our entire crew was on 24 May 1943, and we went to Terranova in Southern Sardinia. We bombed the docks and the raid took 5:45 hours. A momentous event, and even if I had total recall, I'm sure there would be no way to describe the excitement and emotions that I experienced beginning the night before, when we were notified, and through the debriefing, when we were safely back at Chateau D'un.

I do not know how well we covered the target with our bombs and this was normal since I could not view the target from the cockpit, and we relied on Eddleman, the tail gunner, or Adams, the ball turret gunner, to report this as best they could. Usually strike photos were posted to enable crews to later check their bombing results. We did not have a fighter escort and we did not see any enemy fighters, but the flak (anti-aircraft artillery shell bursts) was terrifying. On the way to the debriefing, we crew members agreed that we had encountered, and would report, moderate-to-heavy, accurate flak in the target area. We could hardly believe our ears, then, listening to the veteran crew just ahead of us reporting none or very light and inaccurate flak while being interrogated by the intelligence officer!

We were to find out the very next day, when our target was Messina, Sicily, what heavy and accurate flak was really like. On that mission the Germans put up a "box" barrage of 88mm shell bursts between the I.P. (Initial Point) and the target. We had to fly into this scene of destruction. The flak was so intense it obscured the group of B-17's just ahead of us, and fit the description of being "so thick you could walk on it." It was like running a gauntlet of black, ugly, boiling, bursts that you could sometimes hear and smell, as they signalled their lethal message to all your senses. If there was any scrap of adventure remaining in me after the first mission, it was long gone with the Messina raid, as the stark reality of imminent death set in. With forty-eight more missions to complete, one did not not assess his chances of survival. The war was now something to be endured as best you could, and hopefully your luck would hold out.

Flak was a part of all but the four missions to Pantelleria and a few others. Sometimes we encountered flak on the way to and from the target despite planning that would route us away from known anti-aircraft (AA, or ack-ack) emplacements. Some evasive action could be taken by the formation prior to reaching the I.P. - some 12 to 20 miles from the target. Once reaching the I.P. however, it was imperative to maintain a steady course and altitude to ensure effective bombing results. Most of the flak would be "tracking", where your formation was picked up on their radar or sighting equipment, and you would be shot at as long as you were in the range. Occasionally you could see them zeroing in on you, finding the range, the first bursts ahead or behind, left or right, etc, and then coming in close.

Our plane took frequent hits from fragments but we were very fortunate that no one was killed and only our tail gunner, Eddleman, was slightly wounded by flak. The worst part for me was the feeling of utter helplessness, especially on the bomb run. Eventually I acquired a piece of armor plate to fit under my seat cushion and another piece that I rested my feet on. I also put on my steel helmet and always wished I could have pulled it down to cover me to my waist.

Replacement crews arriving near the end of my tour were equipped with flak jackets.

Living under field conditions did not present any major problem. The weather was pleasant and according to the Group history, no rain fell from early May to late September. We played softball or tossed a football around on non-operational days. There were plenty of these since we averaged less than ten missions a month. I loved to play cards and usually found a game of cribbage, gin rummy or pinochle. Later I played bridge after learning the game by reading a book by Hoyle. I would deal out four hands and figure out the bidding and play from his instructions. It got me started and I finally worked up enough courage to join in a game only to learn that my bidding was awful. But I stuck with it and bridge became my favorite card game. I also loved to read and there must have been a small library there, or one traded books around with others. We kept up to date with the U.S. and world news from the Stars and Stripes, the newspaper published by the Army, and enjoyed "Yank" a worldwide magazine put out by enlisted men for enlisted men.

We had movies weekly, maybe more often. These were held outdoors and you brought your own seat or sat on the ground. You also needed a lot of patience because it took time to change reels and projectors would break down frequently. I also remember going to a movie in one of the cities in Algeria or Morocco. The movie was "Jezebel," starring Bette Davis. I had seen it in the U.S., but now it was amusing to hear everyone speak their parts in French.

Shaving with cold water was necessary and never much fun. However, it was important to shave in order to prevent irritating your skin with the close-fitting oxygen mask. No shower facilities became available for several months so you made do with soap, a wash cloth, and your steel helmet filled with water. We did frequent an Arab bath house in Chateau D'un and that served the purpose very well if you could stand the shock of being hit by a bucket of cold water thrown by an attendant after twenty minutes or so in a very steamy sauna-type room. The trip through the Arab quarter to the bath house was very unpleasant and odoriferous since the streets were used to drain sewage and attracted scores of flies that all seemed to zero in on your lips. On one visit I saw a small child sitting in the drain on the side of the street with what appeared to be a large scab on his forehead. Upon closer inspection, I observed that it was not a scab but a solid mass of flies that had settled on an open sore!

There was practically nothing to spend money on and I was glad I had allotted \$75 per month to purchase war bonds before I left the States. I usually lost much of the balance of my pay in a crap game, often after winning a little playing poker. Cigarettes and candy were rationed but there were plenty of cigarettes available, although one often had to settle for odd brands like Chelsea or Woodwinds. We never had enough candy and there was no beer, liquor, or soft drinks to be found. One soon craved sweets and I recall my sister sending me a box of Hersey bars after several months, and I almost made myself sick eating half of them at one sitting. Selection was very limited and I seem to remember finding only peanut bars or gum drops to purchase. It must not have been near that bad because Grandmary reminded me that I sent her two of her favorite Clark bars after she could not find them back home in Hammond. A reverse care package - talk about true love!

The only additional duty that I can recall was that of censoring outgoing mail. Officers censored their own mail (which was spot-checked) but all mail from enlisted personnel had to be censored. This job, assigned on a rotational basis, was very dull since there was little in the way of news to write about to family

and friends. Nothing regarding operational activities was permitted although I believe we were allowed to mention how many missions we had completed. I do remember chuckling over a letter from one of the men who was a circus employee in civilian life. He had written to his girl friend and it was obviously a very intimate relationship. His use of the English language was especially amusing since his spelling was atrocious, he never capitalized, and used punctuation in a random manner. There was also a letter from a soldier with an overactive imagination. The letter was written shortly after we had moved to Tunisia and he wrote that dead bodies and burning vehicles were strewn all over the area. After I finished with my razor blade, little remained but the salutation and closing.

I'll try and describe how a "typical" mission was conducted and hopefully give you some feeling of how we went about our job.

An orderly or someone would come by in the evening and notify those in the tent who were to fly the next morning. If you were playing cards, or reading, writing, or joking around, things would immediately quiet down as you got ready to turn in, knowing you would be awakened at four or five AM for the briefing and an early morning take-off. I suppose I occasionally had trouble falling asleep after being alerted for a mission, but not often as I normally slept like a log. It was usually dark when you were awakened by a flashlight shining in your face and after stumbling around washing-up you had breakfast and went to the briefing tent with other officers of your crew.

The briefing, lasting thirty to forty-five minutes, started when the Group Commander arrived (all were called to "attention") and was seated. The first order of business was to uncover the large map of the Mediterranean area showing the target and the route to and from the target in red ribbon. If it was a hot spot like Naples, Palermo, Foggia, Messina, or someplace that looked mean, it was accompanied by groans (Pantelleria called for cheers). I no longer recall the sequence of the briefing but it must have included intelligence, ie., the importance of the target, and flak and enemy fighter estimates. Also, communication call signs and frequencies for the units involved were issued. On this item I believe the radio operators were given a rice paper "flimsy" of printed essential information that was to be chewed and swallowed if in danger of falling into enemy hands. The briefing continued with ordnance - bomb loads, fuse, and intervolometer settings - weather, and a whole host of operational details. These would have to include the start engine, taxi, and take-off time of each squadron and a chart to show plane assignments by pilot, and the position the plane would fly in the formation. Then there was the assembly and climb out procedures, check points along the route, and emergency procedures, including ditching and how to escape and evade capture. A brief pep talk by the Group Commander and synchronization of watches ended the briefing.

Services by the chaplain usually followed. The Catholic services that I attended were comprised of a brief prayer service for our success and safety, followed by general absolution.

Then as copilot it was my job to pick up the escape kits for the entire crew. Each escape kit contained a silk map of Italy and Sicily, some money (Lira), sulfa powder, a bar of concentrated chocolate, "stay awake" pills and perhaps another item or two. These kits were carried in a zippered pocket of the flight suit. After going by truck or jeep to our plane, Nelson briefed other crew members on the mission and we boarded the aircraft about ten minutes before "start engine time" after a walk-around inspection of the plane and a check of

the bomb load. "Start taxi" was initiated by a flare from the control tower since strict radio silence was always maintained.

After taxiing and take-off in sequence, the leaders, by circling in the assembly area, allowed all aircraft to catch-up and fill their assigned slot in the formation. How many B-17's? That would vary with the target. If it was a maximum effort, all four groups of the wing would be on the mission. This was rarely the case as our targets were, almost without exception, tactical (airfields, marshalling yards, harbors) and not strategic (factories, oil refineries, cities). The diagram in the appendix is typical of our formations except that we normally flew three thousand feet lower than the altitude shown.

The formation would proceed at a low altitude (2-3,000 ft) over the Mediterranean to escape radar detection. The climb to bombing altitude would start about 30 to 45 minutes before "time over target" if it was a coastal target. By this time one or more aircraft would have had to turn back, mostly due to engine trouble of some sort. The engines that were rebuilt by the Studebaker Corporation had the worst record for failure. If it was necessary to abort the mission after crossing the "bomb line," you were credited with a mission, if not, unless it was on a "rugged" target, turning back was an exercise in disappointment. The "bomb line" represented the area north of which you were vulnerable to enemy fighter attacks. My Form 5 does not reflect which aborted flights were credited as completed missions. I do know that we returned to our home base many times on three engines and once we had to make it back on two.

Once the climb started the tension really mounted. By now Nelson had crew members test fire their weapons and I had the crew start their routine reports while on oxygen. Using the intercom radio to communicate with the crew I'd call "copilot to crew: oxygen check" and they would answer, "tail okay, "right waist okay, "radio okay," etc.

Now, the pilot had to be especially alert to maintain a close formation and much depended on the lead aircraft. If the lead pilot knew his business, and made only gradual power increases for the climb to (bombing) altitude, the formation would remain intact (Captain Headrick, 20th Squadron Operations Officer, was an excellent leader). If not, aircraft would be strung out trying to catch up, and very vulnerable to enemy fighters. Once at altitude (20,000 to 24,000 ft) we were all alert to sight enemy fighter aircraft. As fighter control officer, I kept my head on a swivel. I was in the best position to spot them and report their position and strength when under attack. I had no other duties to distract me since I was not flying the airplane or manning a machine gun.

As the formation approached the I.P. we would be in a tight formation. For the bomb run and when the flak appeared, Jerry (enemy fighters) would break off his attack to avoid being hit by his own ack-ack. The bombardier would open the bomb bay doors and "toggle" the bombs when he saw the lead ship's "bombs away." As soon as all the bombs were released, the formation would turn away from the target, pick up speed by a gradual descent, and head for home as the bomb bay doors were closing. This was usually the very best feeling of the mission, although at times Jerry would resume the attack once we escaped the flak barrage. Once we were well on our way back and had descended below 12,000 ft, we removed our oxygen masks, the formation loosened up, we brought out our "K"-rations, and the crew could chatter away over the intercom.

Approaching home base, planes with wounded aboard would fire red flares, be the first to land, and were met by an ambulance. After we landed and looked over

the damage done to the aircraft, and went over anything wrong on the airplane with the crew chief (maintenance man), we caught a ride to the debriefing area for interrogation. Without fail, the Red Cross ladies would be there to greet us and provide donuts and hot coffee, and no, they never charged us for these refreshments. The mission ended when the intelligence officer had taken down our comments.

We flew two more missions in May. On the 28th we bombed the harbor at Leghorn, Italy, and on the 31st, the marshalling yards at Foggia, Italy. On both of these missions we encountered German fighter aircraft. It's a rough estimate but I'd say that we spotted enemy fighters on thirty of our missions and our formation was hit by fighters on at least twenty missions. Except for the Foggia mission in mid August, the attacks were flashing hit and run affairs, sometimes repeated, from the dozen to twenty Jerry fighters that would normally show up. Until well into August when our P-38's moved into the airfields vacated by the Germans in Sicily, fighter escort was extremely limited due to their lack of range from North African bases. Even later, when we did get an escort, they were normally diverted to a strafing mission after escorting us to the target. Nevertheless, there was NEVER a more comforting and beautiful sight on a mission than an escort of P-38's. The poem written by T/Sgt Robert H. Bryson, a radio-operator gunner in the 429th Squadron, 2d Bomb Group, says it all:

LIGHTNINGS IN THE SKY

Oh, Hedy Lamarr is a beautiful gal
and Madeline Carroll's, too
But you'll find, if you query, a different theory
Amongst any bomber crew
For the loveliest thing of which one could sing
(This side of the heavenly gates)
Is no blonde or brunette of the Hollywood set--
But an escort of P-38s.

Yes in days that have passed when the tables were massed
With glasses of Scotch and Champagne,
It's quite true that the sight was a thing to delight
Us, intent upon feeling no pain.
But no longer, the same, nowadays, in this game,
When we head North from Messina Straits,
Take the sparkling wine--every time just make mine--
An escort of P-38s.

Bryon, Shelley and Keats ran a dozen dead heats
Describing the view from the hills,
Of the valleys in May when the winds gently sway
An Army of bright daffodils.
Take the daffodils, Bryon - the wild flowers, Shelley--
Yours of the myrtle, friend Keats
Just reserve me those cuties - American Beauties--
An escort of P-38s.

Sure, we're braver than hell; on the ground all is swell,
In the air it's a different story;
We sweat out our track through the fighters and flak,
We're willing to split up the glory.

Well, they wouldn't reject us, so Heaven protect us
And until all this shooting abates,
Give us courage to fight'em - one other small item--
An escort of P-38s.

Most of the Nazi fighters were Messerschmitt 109's, but occasionally we would run into the Fock-Wulf 190, and some Italian fighter aircraft. The Italians never made much of an attempt to penetrate our formation and when seen, usually stayed out of gunfire range - sometimes performing acrobatics.

I was probably not the first to spot the enemy but once they got within range and we were under fire, I did most of the reporting. This was done over the intercom and Jerry's position was represented in relation to our aircraft. Twelve o'clock was the nose and six o'clock was the tail of our Fort, and the attacking fighter's location would be called out: "two 109's, two o'clock low, "four at ten o'clock high, "watch those three at two o'clock level," etc. Everything happened very fast, but not so fast that I failed to see their 20mm cannon blinking as they shot at us. It always seemed they were aiming right at me and that their shells would smash into the cockpit any second. It was a completely helpless feeling and I needed to fight back the panic that almost overcame me in order to report the action on intercom in a voice that did not communicate to the crew the terror I felt. I'm not sure I was always successful. I do know that many times I would have given anything for a machine gun and a chance to fire back. A copilot's lament!

Jerry would especially gang up on a straggler. We saw it many times and it was always a heartbreaking sight. After repeated attacks the B-17 would gradually go into a spiral, mortally wounded. The men would start bailing out and our crew, keeping this death watch, would excitedly count the parachutes as they emerged. I can still picture the scene and hear our guys report "there's one," "there's another," "I see, three, now four," "there's two more," "get out you guys, get out," as the bomber passed out of sight.

On our first Foggia mission our tail gunner Eddleman burned his ankle from an overheated boot (tail and ball turret gunners were issued heated suits since they worked in cramped positions). I know he got a lot of kidding about how he should be put in for the Purple Heart for his "wound."

On June 1st, 1943, Prime Minister Winston Churchill, General George Marshall and other top brass visited Chateau D'un on a brief tour of the base that also housed the 97th Bomb Group and the 5th Wing headquarters. We were not notified of this visit and did not see any of the dignitaries (for security purposes, I suppose).

In June and most of July our activity was concentrated on Sicily in preparation for the invasion of that island. But first, the Group helped bomb the island of Pantelleria into submission. During a five day period beginning 7 June, we flew four mission - two in one day - against gun emplacements. I would have been delighted to fly all of my remaining forty mission on that island since we received no opposition and flew the last couple at 10-12,000 feet, leaving our oxygen masks in their containers.

In mid-June the Group moved about thirty miles away to Ain M'Lila, Algeria. It was during this move that we stood down for four days and had a squadron party. Someone found a supply of cognac in the costal town of Philippeville and brought

back a case which was emptied into a washtub and mixed with grapefruit juice - our only mix. The flight surgeon (Capt Ihle) located some nurses at a local Army hospital and sent an ambulance to bring them to the party.

There was some source of music and I'm sure we danced the legs off those wonderful girls. I know it wasn't long before we were staggering all over the place from the very potent beverage and who wouldn't after draining a canteen cup (one pint) of the stuff. Art "Slim" Cole, and Eddleman got my attention from an opening in the corner of the tent and I filled a canteen cup of theirs. I even got some smooching in when I rode back to the hospital with the nurses. A glorious party and hangover; just what we needed after a dozen missions and before going back to Messina on the 25th of June and to Palermo, Sicily on the 30th, a target that rivaled Messina for its flak barrage.

Along about this time we replaced two of our original crew members and I no longer recall the reason they left us. TSgt Shuppig took TSgt Kester's place and Sgt. Buster Andeel replaced SSgt Averitt as waist gunner.

Sicily was invaded on 10 July and we flew a mission the next day to an aerodrome at Catania on the East coast of that island. The invasion force was a massive sight and even from 20,000 feet the sea seemed virtually covered by hundreds of ships of all kinds. I saw some of the assault ships making landing and lots of smoke and shell bursts from the Allied naval force shelling the island, and felt a real part of the invasion even from my lofty perch. A squadron of Spitfire fighters from Malta rendezvoused with us to provide aircover as we were about to turn North for our bombing run. The Spits came head-on, right into our formation and lost a couple of their members when our gunners mistakenly took them for ME-109's. This was very unfortunate but they really had no business joining us in this manner. At a closure rate of 600-700 mph, friend or foe cannot be distinguished.

July was significant in ways other than the Sicily landings. Our first mission to Rome, Italy took place on the 19th, with the target being the marshalling yards. The briefing was very detailed about the need to stay clear of the Vatican and the many churches and places of historic interest. The raid must have taken the Germans by surprise since little or no flak or fighters were encountered. We also had long missions attacking aerodromes in Italy, and on the 23rd at Liverano our ball turret gunner, Conrad Adams, and Buster Andeel, waist gunner, were given joint credit for shooting down an ME-109. I believe it was on this mission that we returned with only two engines operating and we made it back only after lightening the ship by throwing out about everything unattached except people and life support items.

Coming back from one mission when we were at low level and relaxing with our "K" rations, we suddenly observed large splashes in the water below our formation. German bombers were bombing us from above! Everyone scrambled to man their positions and tighten up the formation. The attack was brief and no damage had been done, but it served to frighten us enough that we kept a look out for a repeat performance when returning from our next few missions.

On the 31st the ground echelons left by truck convoy to our new base at Massicault, Tunisia, fifteen miles west of Tunis. We flew in on the next day on so, and this base, while closer to civilization, was also a regular dust bowl. On a move like this we would be left with cases of "C" rations (canned hash or stew) and we would eat them cold or have the cans heated in tubs of hot water. This was not much worse than our regular fare. I'm sure food was more discussed (or cussed) than any subject with the possible exception of women. At first,

the food seemed okay. After all, I had never tested Spam, Vienna sausages, or hash and stew from a can. Even the powdered eggs and powdered milk with oatmeal for breakfast could be endured. The mess Sgt would do his best to disguise his offerings but Spam was Spam and after a while even the odors emanating from the kitchen would dull one's appetite. After we moved to Tunisia we ate in a mess tent and could sit down for meals. Prior to that we filled our mess kits and ate standing up at waist high tables - okay for horses I'm sure. I actually looked forward to the K-ration that was issued for missions, and even the leathery flapjacks with canned bacon was a treat. Fruit cocktail, canned peaches, or fruit of any kind was treasured when available. All of us received cookies or cake from home but after traveling around for weeks or months, the boxes would be crushed and we shared the stale crumbs as best we could. My longing for fresh eggs was never satisfied until we moved to Italy, my last month overseas. There we were able to purchase (with GI blankets or shoes or other bartering items) a few eggs from local farmers.

We did get some relief from the diet of C rations when the Mess Sergeant purchased vegetables or fruit that were in season from the Arabs. This was a mixed blessing as I recall servings of eggplant (ugh) that went on for weeks. Another more serious problem was the diarrhea that swept through the squadron, producing long lines at latrines from vegetables not being washed thoroughly. The war did not stop because we had diarrhea and we all had to deal with the problem while flying missions. For a receptacle I used my steel helmet lined with newspapers since there was no room in the cockpit for empty ammo cans, as used by the other crew members. Undressing for this event was no simple matter - especially in cold weather when fleece-lined outerwear was needed. One started disrobing by removing the parachute harness, then the life preserver, winter jacket, pants and boots, flying suit, and finally one's long underwear. Disposing of the boxes over enemy territory must have caused some consternation at times.

Getting your laundry done got to be expensive. You had to furnish the soap and pay \$3-\$5.00 a bundle. Americans spoiled the local economy by throwing their money around. The Germans, when they occupied Tunis, would get their laundry done by furnishing the soap to do their laundry and enough for the person's family to get theirs done. No money exchanged hands.

In August we flew just five missions but they were all very rough. On the 4th we went back to the marshalling yards in Naples and that target was always heavily defended with ack-ack batteries and fighters. On the 9th we had our third and last mission to Messina as we bombed a highway bridge to prevent the Germans from escaping to Italy. Sicily surrendered on August 17th. The 13th found us back to Rome and this time the enemy was better prepared for our visit, but it was on the 19th that we got hit the hardest of all our missions.

On that morning we were briefed that a transformer station in Foggia would be our target. The Group had not been to Foggia since May (Eddleman's "Purple Heart" burn), and we knew it would be no picnic since the Germans had relocated several of their fighter squadrons in the area after abandoning the airfields in Sicily. We would have no fighter escort and our own "Mary Jane" was out of commission so we were given the Group Commander's airplane on this occasion.

Since Foggia was well inland there was no way to avoid alerting the entire enemy defense force, since we had to reach bombing altitude prior to penetrating the West coast of Italy. Jerry jumped us with twenty or thirty ME-109's a good twenty minutes before we reached the target. These were the most pressing, crazy, almost suicidal attacks as they swarmed into the middle of our formation

with their cannon blazing away at point-blank range. I stopped reporting as we were engulfed by the enemy and, most frustrating of all, almost all of our machine guns were jammed or malfunctioned, preventing us from firing back. We welcomed the flak over the target as the 109s broke off their attacks, but the relief was short lived - they barrelled into us again immediately after we released our bombs. It started all over, the same pressing attacks for another fifteen or twenty minutes. Four of the six or seven aircraft in our squadron were shot down and a 20mm shell had blown away part of the face of Buster Andeel, our waist gunner. Buster remained unconscious but alive when we left him with the medical people at Palermo, Sicily, but died shortly afterwards.

Why did all our guns malfunction? I was told by our enlisted crew that the crew of the Group Commander's plane never bothered to clean their guns after a mission. I believe this was discovered to some extent when our gunners test-fired their weapons enroute. John Horn remembers this mission very well as I am sure did all the other crew members. He says that the 20mm shell that got Buster ended up lodged in the radio compartment. He also recalls that the Group Commander's crew chief had to patch over 600 holes in the aircraft and that the "old man" was mad as hell about the damage - John adds, "as if we got them on purpose."

After our move to Massicutt enough tents became available that we were able to have one just for the four of us officers of the crew. The extra room was great, but because we had so few diversions, all that "togetherness," found us getting on each others' nerves. In the eight months since our crew was formed, there was hardly a day we did not share except for the week of leave in April. John Horn acquired a German P-38 pistol and an Italian Army rifle that he planned to use for hunting when he got back to Montana. He spent many hours cleaning, wrapping and caring for these weapons which he kept locked in the foot locker he was issued for his navigational books. Tom Morris enjoyed "needling" John, and I recall John's heated reaction when Tom would "mistakenly" call his hometown "Whitehorse," or "Whiteface" or something other than Whitefish. Many of our idiosyncrasies must have been irritating. I recall all of us going together for our weekly ration items and after returning to our tent, Nelson, Morris, and I would wolf down our two candy bars while John, with marvelous restraint, would lock his up in his foot locker and make them last all week. I wonder how the others put up with me?

Sometime during this period I "had it out" with Art Nelson about his formation flying. I never felt he flew a tight enough formation and I know that I urged him many times to pull up closer as we lagged behind. This was especially a problem when we were in echelon left of the lead ship and Art had to look across the airplane, to his right, in order to maintain position. It was a very heated discussion over a very serious matter, and I'll sure give Art all the credit in the world for acknowledging the problem and agreeing to allow me to fly the ship whenever the lead aircraft was on my side of the cockpit. Both John and Tom were present but as I recall did not enter into the discussion. Recently I asked both if they remembered this incident. Tom did not, but John's memory of this nearly fifty year old incident was quite vivid. After sending him a draft of this section of my story, I received a long letter from him which illustrates well the seriousness with which the whole crew viewed maintaining tight formation. I will quote here in part:

"It was somewhere around our 25th mission (an extremely rough one) that I informed Art that I would fly no more missions with him as he had a habit of lagging behind the formation, and on that one, we went on into the flak over target as the rest of the squadron was coming off target. As I say, this

happened many times and I informed him that I had only been married a short time and I really wanted to get back to my wife. As I remember you said you would not fly with him any longer either. Morris said nothing! That evening the enlisted crew came to me, said they had heard you and I would no longer fly with Nelson and asked me to tell him that they would no longer fly with him either.

"I believe it was the next day that Nelson came to me with tears in his eyes and asked for one more chance. I told him that if he fell out of formation one more time (unless we lost an engine) that would be the end. I think that is when your discussion about flying formation came out. (I said nothing because I hoped you would become our pilot and take over the crew. You were a far better pilot than he was.)

"I remember Nelson asked me to go to our crew to ask them to give him another chance, and they agreed since I told them that both you and I were going to. They agreed you should get the crew!

"On Nelson's behalf I will say he performed beautifully from then on and soon was leading the Squadron and was promoted to Captain."

On August 14, Bob Hope and his troupe put on their show for us. It was such a wonderful performance because Hope, a great entertainer, knew exactly how to tailor his show to please each of his audiences of servicemen. Afterwards we were able to meet him and members of his group when they had lunch with us in the 20th Squadron Officer Mess Tent. Captain Hendricks gave Frances Langford, the female singer in the troupe, a pair of his khaki trousers to use for her dusty jeep rides between camps. By this time they had been in Africa for over a month and I noticed how fatigued Hope looked as he ate his food. It should not have been surprising since they put on three shows almost every day and between shows he would brighten up the day of hundreds of hospitalized men with his humor as he passed through the wards.

September of 1943 was a busy month, partly on account of the good weather but mostly because we were strongly contested in our landings in Italy, near Naples. At one point things were so desperate that we went in at 10,000 feet dropping 100 lb bombs on a road leading to the front. We missed the road but took out a convoy of German trucks that had taken refuge in a shallow ditch along side of the road. Some job for heavy bombers of the "Strategic" Air Force!

Since there is no complete record of where I went this month, or in October, I will proceed to describe missions that were memorable during these months, with no regard to chronological order.

On one occasion we bombed an airfield not too far from Athens, Greece. To do this we flew into an airbase in Sicily, spent the night, and then took off early with a load of bombs, and after hitting the target, returned non-stop back to North Africa. What I remember most about this mission was the fear of running out of fuel. As we approached the African Coast, we had to keep transferring fuel from one tank to another just to keep all engines operating. Knowing we could not make it home, we had decided to ditch the aircraft on the beach along the Tunisian coastline when John Horn spotted an airfield. As we approached to land, first one, then another engine quit running, and only one remained in operation as we finished our landing roll.

John Horn attributes our running out of fuel to a Sirocco, ie., a giant sandstorm with winds that blew sand from the Sahara over the Mediterranean. It severely reduced visibility, even at heights above 20,000 ft.

The hungry people of Sicily also provided an unforgettable sight on that trip. In Sicily, after eating our evening meal, men, women, and children dug thru the garbage cans, where we had dumped our scraps, to carry away food for their families. Heartbreaking? I almost choked on the little food I could force down while watching this scene.

Our tail gunner, Harold Eddleman, was slightly wounded from flak on one of our missions, and also received credit for shooting down an ME-109 during this period.

During the briefing on a mission to a target in Northern Italy, we were told to be on the alert for a B-17 that the Germans had recovered and repaired after it was shot down on one of our raids. They had employed this Fort to join a formation of B-17's and proceeded to shoot down one of them. The Fortress that they captured and used for this purpose had our 20th Squadron markings. Well, shortly before finishing our climb to altitude, and well into enemy territory, we lost an engine. When something like this happens, one is not able to keep up with his formation and it's necessary to join up with either an approaching Group, or one that just finished its bomb run. Neither option was open to us with our 20th Squadron markings. So we stayed below and behind our Group and ahead of the Group behind us, trusting that the dozen or so ME-109's attacking that Group would not spot us in our isolated position. We were ever so fortunate that they did not and we proceeded home alone. That hour or so of acute anxiety defies description.

One very long and stressful mission took place when we went after an aircraft factory near Augsburg, Germany. This was our first strategic target and a chance to play the part of being a "big time" Air Force. The mission was led by our new Group commander, Col Herbert Rice, who took over from Lt. Col Thomas, on 4 Sep, and we departed in two waves of nineteen Forts in each wave.

A P-38 escort accompanied us until we were opposite central Corsica and shortly after they departed, some ME-109's jumped us, and then took on the wave that followed us. The two or three B-17's damaged from these attacks joined several earlier dropouts and left our force substantially diminished. Then, while crossing the coastline of Northern Italy we lost sight of the second wave after encountering unexpected flak. Probably evasive action by both waves contributed to this separation. We continued North with only our one wave, now reduced to about fifteen bombers. We started climbing after we encountered clouds at our altitude approaching the Alps. This did not succeed, however, as we shortly entered another cloud bank and were forced to abort our mission to Augsburg. Since Munich, our alternate target, was unreachable we turned toward Bologna, a "target of opportunity." Once clear of the clouds we saw that only four of us remained of the "mighty force" of thirty-eight that left North Africa.

Upon reaching Bologna we made a bomb run on the marshalling yards but for some reason did not drop. Colonel Rice then led us around for another pass and this time we made a successful bomb release. No fighters challenged us and what little flak we saw was inaccurate, but it seemed as if we had been hanging around this dangerous territory forever, and we were ever so vulnerable. Now we headed for home, about out of oxygen, and "sweating out" our fuel supply all over again. I might add that as we approached the Alps on the way to Augsburg, Nelson had John Horn plot a course to Switzerland since it was likely that we

would lose an engine or suffer some damage that would make it impossible to return to friendly territory.

By early September we had built a Squadron officers' club out of scrap lumber, and some of us would gather outside the club at night to watch the "fireworks" when German bombers attacked the shipping at Bizerta, about thirty miles away. One night a friendly aircraft flew over the field and was welcomed with a heavy stream of fire from the local ack-ack boys before being identified. When this happened all of us ran for the shelter of foxholes, previously dug, thinking we were being bombed. I along with several others jumped in the first one we could find which was alongside the tent next to the Officer's Club. When one of the occupants of the tent, who had helped dig the foxhole, came out to find shelter there was no room for him. He was obviously much put out by this because the next morning we saw him out with a shovel, filling up the hole.

Ted Townsend, our other Montanain, acquired an Italian motorcycle and this provided the crew a lot of fun tearing up and down the dusty Tunisian roads. Ted talked me into giving it a try and I damn near broke my leg when I tried to turn around on the narrow road after proceeding a couple of hundred yards or so. I ended up in the ditch with the bike on top of me, still churning away. That was my first and last time on a motorcycle until your Uncle Jim brought one home after he got out of college a few years ago, and I cautiously rode it around the neighborhood streets.

Major General Dolittle flew with our group on one mission, and maybe more often. We all felt honored to have this world-famous flyer lead our group - the same man who led the first raid over Tokyo a year earlier and received the Congressional Medal of Honor for his heroic action.

Some of the crews that departed England and went to Regensburg on the first Schweinfurt - Regensburg raid landed at our field at Massicault. I asked a couple of the officers on one of the crews how it went. They simply shook their heads and mumbled something like "really rugged" and I left it at that since they were obviously exhausted and moved like zombies. Only later did I find out that sixty of the Forts sent on that mission never returned.

At this time crews flying heavy bombers out of the United Kingdom had to complete twenty-five missions before going home. This Schweinfurt raid, where losses ran to an appalling twenty percent of the B-17 attacking force, was a good example of why these flyers only needed half the missions that we were required to accomplish in North Africa.

Understandably, we never talked about our chances of survival in this business, but I do recall a bull session in Casablanca that several of us had while waiting for the ship to take us back to the States. We counted the losses our squadron (twelve aircraft) sustained over the ten months of May, 1943 through February, 1944, and could account for twenty-three that were lost. Seven or eight of this number were shot down on two raids in late February; one to Steyr, Austria, the other to Regensburg, Germany. Fortunately I had completed my combat tour by this time and was not around to participate in these missions.

As tough as it was to fly fifty missions with this kind of loss rate, it must have been a veritable slaughter of the crews flying heavy bombers from England. I heard or read someplace that their groups suffered a 100% turnover every three months. Later, in 1944 and 1945 when the long-range P-51 Mustang became available to provide a fighter escort all the way to and from targets, casualty rates decreased dramatically; however, losses were still heavy in early 1944,

when the tour for heavy bombers stationed in England was increased to thirty. Grandmary's brother, Tommy Thomson, lost his life piloting a B-17 on a repeat attack to the ball-bearing works at Schweinfurt on March 24, 1944. The notice that he was reported Missing In Action arrived at his parent's home on April 10, 1944, the day Grandmary and I were married.

Sometime in October I ran into Vic Jens, an acquaintance from Hammond. I do not remember how we got together but under our circumstances an acquaintance from home becomes a long lost friend. Vic came to North Africa as a gunner on a B-26, Marauder, and had flown missions before being grounded. Why was he grounded? I do not recall, but it was not for medical reasons. It's probable that enlisted crew members could quit flying and take a reduction in rank to Private or Private First Class.

I do know that the B-26, built by the Martin Aircraft Corp., had a very bad reputation, being called "The Widow Maker," "The Baltimore Whore," (from where it was built) and "The Flying Coffin." At Tampa, Florida, where pilots were trained to fly the aircraft, it supposedly earned the reputation "One a day in Tampa Bay." I believe a modification that gave the B-26 larger wings made it a safer plane to fly. In any event, you can be sure that all crew members who successfully completed their combat tour in the Marauder were just as vocal in their loyalty to their aircraft as we were to our "Queen of the Sky."

Back to Vic, who was a Corporal at that time and a smooth, "wheeler dealer" who seemed to have unlimited access to a jeep. I liked the guy and we got along great.

He had a friend, also from the Calumet area, who worked at a Quartermaster warehouse in Bizerta. Vic and I would drive up there and his friend would let us have some coffee and canned goods which we would take to Tunis where Vic's friends, who were French refugees, had an apartment. There we would eat and drink the wine they brought, play cards and dance to the music of their phonograph records (French tunes). There were a few more guys than gals, and we had the usual language problem, but it was lots of fun. I believe we played "hearts" and I noticed how odd it was that the French kids dealt cards to the right. Many years later on a visit to a race track at Longchamps, near Paris, I noted that the French also ran their horses in the opposite direction from us. These parties (only two or three) always included a lot of singing toward the end of the evening and the song that usually ended the party was the French National Anthem, "La Marseillaise," a sure bet to bring on copious tears from the refugees.

Other trips include a visit to Carthage where I met a girl friend of Vic's and her sister. I was also introduced to the girl, and her family, that Vic eventually married after the war and brought home to the U.S. All in all, I had a very good time and it was certainly a very welcome diversion from the airbase existence; especially in November when the weather severely curtailed operations.

Five of eight missions logged in October were long - over eight hours. At that time of the year temperatures above 20,000 feet were in the minus 10-20 degree range, and cold fingers and toes were another problem to be faced. We were supposed to have a heater to keep the cockpit warm, but I doubt that it ever worked. I know that one time I even took off my G.I. shoes to rub my toes and move my feet around in my sheepskin lined boots. A stupid move on my part - had I needed to bail out I would have lost both of my feet to frostbite. Besides, nothing I did seemed to help. One also learned to be careful when relieving

oneself using the relief tube located in the forward end of the bomb bay. The urine from the first person using the tube at altitude would freeze and anyone who used it afterwards would come away with a wet hand or glove.

We also experienced a couple of other reminders of the approaching winter. On one mission to a target in Northern Italy, our I.P. was to the Northeast of the target and we must have encountered a jet stream (unknown at that time) since it took us over twenty minutes to negotiate the fifteen or so miles to the target. It was a nightmare of a bomb run, with flak our constant companion.

I also recall a mission when one of the 250 lb bombs did not release and hung up on the rear shackle with the arming wire detached. All that kept the bomb from being fully armed was the fuse propeller which stalled just above the airstream. I had to go back carrying a portable oxygen bottle and hang onto the bomb bay walkway with one arm while kicking the bomb several times before it broke loose and fell away. It was such a scary business that I hardly noticed the icy blast hitting me from the open bomb bay doors.

November brought my promotion to 1st Lieutenant, and you can see from the promotion order in the Appendix that the future President of the United States commanded that I turn in my gold bars.

Weather conditions shut down operations for most of November, but my Form 5 shows that I flew one mission to the Tuolon Naval Base, and that we had six practice missions during the month.

The big change for me came on 23 November '43, when I was placed on orders for temporary duty (TDY) with the newly formed HQ 15th Air Force located at Bari, Italy. I was given the job of surveying the abandoned airfields in the boot of Italy that were to be used for new B-24 groups scheduled to arrive in the Theatre in December and January. Why me? I have no idea except a vague understanding that "Mary-Jane" and several other Forts in the Group were grounded due to lack of replacement engines. With only six more missions to complete my fifty and then head home, I was anything but happy with this turn of affairs.

I'm sure I did not leave for this duty until after Thanksgiving Day on the 25th, because I recall the big turkey dinner with all the trimmings. I also remember listening to Axis Sally broadcasting from Berlin. We listened to her programs more than we did the BBC (the only other English speaking broadcast available), because she had better music, a sexy voice, and her banter was amusing. On this occasion she said "You Americans should be thankful today that you have the German Army between you and the Bolsheviks."

Lt. Hempstead and a partial crew of his took me to Bari for my orientation, and then flew me to the half dozen or more bases that were on the list to be surveyed. The survey, as I remember it, involved completing a form on each base with a drawing of the runway, taxiway, and ramp structure; listing obstructions affecting take-offs and landings, size and conditions of buildings, and I'm sure other items that I no longer recall. I had spent two or three days on this when we had an accident on our last or next to last base. One wheel of the B-17 broke through the sod into a drainage tile while we were taxiing toward the parking area. This base housed an RAF Spitfire squadron and their light craft had no problem traversing this sodded area that could not support our heavy bomber. I sent a message to 15th AF HQ, and then arranged to have the area around the Fort roped off since the left wing fuel cells had ruptured and were leaking 100 octane, after the wing buckled as it hit the ground. After

returning to Bari (by truck), I joined several other Lieutenants from the 2d Bomb Group in escorting the new groups from their arrival base at Marrakech to their new home in Italy. After helping to escort one of the groups to Italy, I returned to Bari hoping to be relieved of the assignment. Brig. Gen. Bourne, 15th AF Director of Operations, saw it differently, gave me his "pep talk" and I had to return again for one more trip.

By then the 2d Bomb Group had moved from Africa to Amendola, Italy (near Foggia), so I caught a ride up there and then spent that evening and the next day (23 Dec) visiting, reading my mail, and opening Christmas gifts. One of my gifts was a diary from my sister and I completed entries in this journal during the next six weeks. All of my old crew members from the "Mary-Jane" had finished their missions and gone home except TSgt Shuppington who was shot down on his 49th mission.

The next thirty days, until I was released from TDY, was spent traveling, waiting around for aircraft arrivals, delays caused by weather conditions, or delays for reasons unknown. For example, I spent over two weeks at Telergma, Algeria, from the 4th of Jan to the 20th, in the "Hotel De Gink" (BOQ) waiting for the 451st Bomb Group to get their movement orders to Italy. Other than flying a practice mission with them at the request of their Group Commander, Colonel Eaton, and conducting the critique that followed, I slept, read, played cards, "shot the bull" and visited Constantine, a picturesque city some thirty miles away.

One of my "bull sessions" included a trio of USO entertainers - Lefty Gomez, baseball Hall of Famer, Fred Corcoran, golf promoter and first full time PGA tournament director, and Jack Sharkey, former world heavyweight champion. After their performance, we sat up half the night in the "Hotel" drinking their booze and listening to their many stories, especially those that Gomez and Corcoran had to tell. A fantastic evening; one I hated to see end. It might not have if we hadn't emptied the bottle.

Earlier, while waiting at Marrakech, three of us rented horses from the stables at the Mamonia Hotel and went for a ride. The horse I had only knew how to trot or canter and after bouncing around on her for almost an hour, I had such a sore butt that I avoided sitting down for a couple of days.

The scene of a French policeman beating up on an Arab man on the streets of Marrakech remains in my memory. This officer was mounted and talking to the Arab, and then he suddenly started hitting him with a club. He kept beating him with this club even after he knocked him to the ground. I'm sure policemen beating up people is nothing new in the world, but to me it was a shock to see a man beat up on a public street when he was apparently not a threat to anyone. It's not surprising to me that the Arabs fought as long and hard as they did to rid themselves of French colonialism in Algeria during the 1950's.

When we stopped at Oran, I looked up Jean Baron, the uncle of a girl my brother Ralph was dating. He was a resident and worked in Oran but had lived and worked in Hammond and the Chicago area for several years. We had a couple of drinks and dinner, then saw a movie. He was very pleasant to be with and it was especially nice to talk about people and places from home. That was on New Year's Eve, and after we parted I went to a dance at the base sponsored by the Red Cross and had a real good time.

I did not need the diary to remind me of the next night that I spent at the airport at Algiers. The temperature hovered near freezing with a mixture of

rain and snow falling. I was given two blankets and directed to an unheated tent being used for transient officer's quarters. The cots were double deckers with just rope webbing for a mattress, and the wind blew through every crevice and under the flaps, all night long. I ended up wearing just about all the clothing I carried in my B-4 bag (suitcase) and even opened this bag and layed it over me to try and keep warm. Nothing worked, it was a very miserable night!

The diary mentions food more than anything else, and I did eat much better as a transient than I did with my outfit. On 28 Dec, while at Marrakech, I noted: "They had Cokes here, so I went hog wild and drank four bottles - the first I've had since coming overseas."

I finally returned to to my squadron on Jan 22, 1944. I was made one of three Flight Commanders since all the other experienced pilots that survived had finished their tour and gone home. On my final six missions, I checked out new crews, and flew as Squadron Lead Pilot or Deputy Group Lead. I also flew the new B-17G on two missions. This model had a chin turret to take care of head-on attacks, and electronic supercharger controls that greatly simplified power adjustments at altitude.

I moved into a tent occupied by Fred Osborne. His situation was similar to mine only I believe his delay was due to being hospitalized for almost a month for some illness. We were appointed Flight Commanders on the same set of orders. I also fell heir to an air mattress and sleeping bag left by departing crew members. The tent, now located in an olive orchard, had been weatherized. The stove was a model of American ingenuity. An oil can served as the stove and 88mm shell cases, welded together to form the stovepipe, were kept clear of the tent by an aluminum shield fitted to the top of the tent. Aircraft tubing led to an oxygen bottle outside the tent that held aviation gasoline. Inside the stove a tin can was modified to dispense the flame, and a valve was installed on the tubing to control fuel flow. It worked great, but not all were as well built because we had frequent blow-ups and numerous fires in our tent city.

Facing a combat situation after a two month lay-off was very hard, but I believe my new responsibilities made it more endurable. I felt that I had a little more control of my destiny now, compared to when I was sitting in a copilot seat.

After a near sleepless night, my first mission on the 24th was to Sofia, Bulgaria. Triggs led the Group and made such a mess of it that he was relieved as Squadron Commander and replaced by Captain Chrismon. The primary target had been covered with clouds, so we wandered around, looking for our alternate and inviting several ME-109 attacks before heading home, still with our bomb load. One ship in the 20th, and two in the other squadrons ran out of fuel and ditched in the Adriatic.

A new treat was added to the traditional coffee and donuts after each mission when the medics distributed two ounces of whiskey to each crew member. I asked Captain Ihle, our flight surgeon, if I could collect back pay for previous missions but he did not see how he could do that. Incidentally, Captain Ihle, who was an initial member of the group when it was reactivated in Ephrata, Washington, back in October, 1942, had made movies of the Group during these years. Doctor Ihle, who now resides in San Antonio, had these films transferred to video tape and the copy he sent me is a very valuable addition to my other memorabilia of these times.

On the 27th, we bombed the Salon de Provence aerodrome near Marseille, France. I led the squadron and shortly after we left the target, three FW-190's made a

head-on attack, the lead ship almost colliding with us. My upper turret gunner got one of them but we took a hit from a 20mm cannon that blew a large hole in my right horizontal stabilizer causing a severe vibration in the control column. The trip home was long and worrisome with pieces of the stabilizer tearing off. I feared complete loss of control should this part of the tail assembly break away. After landing, the crew counted over 300 holes made by heavy flak over the target and from pieces of the FW-190 that hit our ship after it was destroyed. We were very fortunate once again that not a single person was injured from all this enemy activity.

The weather held and I flew missions on each of the next four days. The strain increases as that magic #50 approaches. Finally, on 31 Jan 44, we hit the airfield at Udine, Italy and much to my relief the fifteen or so enemy that appeared, using rockets for the first time, hit the second wave.

I had finished my tour. I am not going to try and describe the joy over the event. To be alive and uninjured from this experience makes it the greatest day in my life. No longer would I have to "sweat out" flak, 20mm cannon shells, mechanical failure, frostbite, anoxia, bad weather, running out of fuel, mid-air collisions, and, on occasion, being hit by .50 cal. gunfire from careless gunners in your own formation. I kissed the ground and pulled the cords releasing the carbon dioxide from the bottles of my Mae West - a 50th mission ritual.

Although I did not attend the movie that evening, now moved indoors to a nearby cave, a drawing was held afterwards for the war bond lottery. I won the \$500.00 bond! Wow, and I thought I had used up all my luck. On the other hand, Osborne and I walked-through our promotion papers to Captain, a routine matter at that time for Flight Commanders with three months in grade as 1st Lieutenant. They were quickly approved at Group and Wing Headquarters in Foggia, but when we got HQ 15th AF in Bari on 4 Feb, we were told the new Commanding General, M/Gen Twinning, was "shaking up" the entire command and had put a freeze on all promotions. What a low blow that was!

About this time Colonel Rice called Osborne and me to his office and asked if either of us would like to stay on as Squadron Commander once we were given leave back to the States. He promised an immediate promotion to Captain, and that we eventually would make Major or even Lt. Colonel. This held absolutely no appeal to us and I'm sure we must have been astounded by the offer. It was so unbelievable - that anyone would willingly continue to fly in combat! As it turned out, a Major (West Pointer), newly arrived from the States, took over the 20th several days before I departed for home from Amendola. He was shot down on his very first mission - a low level raid in support of the landings at Anzio on the West coast of Italy.

The process of getting my "going home" orders took over two weeks, and there were further delays at Casablanca waiting for ship transport. While in Casablanca I was the victim of a pick-pocket. It happened after three of us spent an evening at "Rick's Place" (a night club cashing in on the movie "Casablanca"). As we left and were walking to the cab stand for a ride to the airbase, a couple of Arab men approached us and said they could take us to a club that stayed open (past the midnight curfew) and had "hoochie koochie" dancing girls. Since we were all in the mood for taking that in, we told them to "show us the way". As we walked along together they suddenly disappeared, and I discovered my wallet missing. One of the other guys also had his lifted. We ran down a narrow street in pursuit but they had disappeared. In addition to \$80 in cash, identification cards, etc., I lost my irreplaceable "short

snorter". A short snorter is a dollar bill indorsed by another member of a crew who had made a transoceanic flight. Mine also contained the signatures of well known people: Bob Hope, B/Gen Teddy Roosevelt, Jr., Jimmy Dolittle, and others.

On March 11, 1944, after a memorable ten and one-half months overseas, I departed on a fast Liberty Ship to home in the U.S.A.

That's my World War II story. Would I ever want to fly on another mission? No, never, absolutely not! Were we all heroes? Not to my thinking. Mostly we did what we were ordered to do: fly the airplane and complete our missions despite the opposition. We did that, never turned back, and even made a second pass over a target when necessary. I'm proud of all that but mostly I'm thankful that God permitted me to survive unharmed.

For you who want to read about the war in North Africa, I suggest the book "Here Is Your War," by Ernie Pyle, a war correspondent and a favorite author of mine. I have included an excerpt from this book in the Appendix.

THE KOREAN WAR

Orders directing me to report to Camp Stoneman, California by 6 Oct 1950, for further assignment to Japan, were not at all welcome. War had broken out in Korea on the 25th of June, when the Communist North Korean army invaded South Korea. After pushing the United Nations forces (mostly U.S. and South Korean troops) to a perimeter near Pusan, our landings at Inchon, near Seoul had successfully forced the invaders back, to north of the 38th Parallel (the dividing line between the two nations).

A lot had happened since I had departed North Africa in 1944. I regained my civilian status, went to college on the G.I. Bill, returned to active duty, and was now stationed in Minneapolis, Minnesota, as a Captain and Weather Officer in the United States Air Force. These were not, however, the most important happenings in my life. Now I was no longer a single, "gung ho" pilot looking for a wartime adventure, but a husband and the father of Mollie, Tom and Laura. In addition, Grandmary had just been informed that she was pregnant (Robb). It was an anguishing departure and a long and heavy-hearted train ride across the country.

I hung around Camp Stoneman, near Pittsburg, Calif. for ten days before departing Fairfield-Suisan AFB (now Travis AFB), Calif. on a DC-4 transport of the Flying Tiger Airline. This flight across the Pacific was the most miserable and exhausting trip that I had ever taken. We were seated in bucket seats along the sides of the cabin with our baggage strapped down in the middle isle. The DC-4 was not pressurized so we cruised at 6 or 8000 feet and it took almost 36 hours of flying time to complete the three legs of this journey. We stopped for an hour or two each in Hawaii, Wake Island, and Guam, to take on fuel, obtain food, change crews, etc. Not being able to get more than "capnaps" in the sitting position, I was never happier to finally set down at the Haneda Airport outside of Tokyo.

I recall the stop in Hawaii where we were all draped with leis by a group of ladies upon arrival. Also that I had to pay fifty cents for a glass of draft

beer at the Honolulu Int'l Airport. That seemed outrageous when the going price for a beer was no more than a quarter back in the States.

My first assignment was that of shift forecaster at the Haneda Airport, undoubtedly the busiest airport in the Far East at that time. Initially, however, I checked in with the base flight section since I was on flying status and required to maintain proficiency in order to draw flying pay. I immediately signed on to copilot C-54 (same as the DC-4) flights to Okinawa and Guam, and flew a total of 34 hours over the next five days. This was great duty and I hoped to eventually check out as first pilot in this very fine aircraft. I clearly remember one very early departure from Guam when we stopped at Iwo Jima and had breakfast. The mess hall served fried egg sandwiches and as soon as I took my first crunchy bite, I spotted a large cockroach scurrying across the table in the dimly lit mess hall. Visualizing half a cockroach embedded in my sandwich took care of my breakfast that morning.

My blissful life of just flying soon came to a halt when I was placed on the regular forecaster schedule. These were twelve hour shifts that were especially exhausting since I had to wait for a bus (I swear they had square wheels) that took one hour to reach my accommodations near downtown Tokyo. I did get three days off after three of these shifts and on one of these breaks visited the Blantons at Matsushima Air Base near Sendai in Northern Japan. The Blantons were friends of ours from when I attended Weather Officers' School at Chanute AFB, Ill., after graduating from college in 1948. Grandmary and I were godparents to their daughter Linda. I was impressed with their nice living quarters, their two full time servants, and the busy social life they enjoyed on this small airbase.

This was my first visit to the Far East and I thoroughly enjoyed the experience of becoming acquainted with the customs and the beautiful countryside of Japan. The people were extremely polite and not just because we were an occupying power. Their women were, and I gather still are, very subservient to men and this must have been very attractive to our servicemen since the U.S. was soon flooded with Japanese war brides.

Orders came transferring me to Seoul, Korea in mid-November. By this time our (United Nations) forces had fought their way up into North Korea and were moving toward the Yalu River that separates Korea from China. My Squadron Commander arrived in Seoul several days later and informed me that I was to set up a weather station at Sinanju, a landing strip on the West Coast of North Korea located about halfway between their Capital of Pyongyang and the Yalu River. I was to take up a mobile weather van, with its driver, plus two weather observers to augment the two man observing team that had been operating from the airstrip the past week or two. I was also directed to establish a weather forecasting facility since future plans called for fighter-bombers (P-51s) to relocate to this airfield, and not simply stage from this location as they were presently doing. I obtained another vehicle, a weapons carrier, but I had considerable difficulty obtaining the necessary operating and living equipment authorized for my weather detachment. Even blankets and winter clothing were hard to find - but all very essential for the bitter cold temperatures in North Korea. Some "midnight requisitioning" and a little bartering with a case of whiskey I purchased from the Squadron Commander got us most of our necessities.

We departed Seoul on 26 November with our two vehicles, spent the night at an airfield near Pyongyang, and arrived at the Sinanju Airstrip the next afternoon. The trip was uneventful except for a spring breaking on the van, and my losing about \$60.00 in a poker game.

After reporting our arrival to the Base Commander, I had the van moved next to the Jamesway Shelter. This was a large winterized quonset type tent that housed the airmen, and I moved in with them. The next two days was spent setting up the weather station and improving our living conditions. The lack of meteorological equipment (not obtainable prior to departing Seoul), made it impossible to obtain needed winds aloft observation.

On the evening of the 29th I was informed that we would have to evacuate the airbase! The Chinese Army had crossed the Yalu River in force and our retreating army could not promise to hold the Sinanju airstrip past seven o'clock the next morning.

We spent the night listening to our artillery supporting the frontline troops, packing our equipment and having the Jamesway loaded into one of the C-119 transports that were in and out all night long hauling people and equipment out of danger. I tried to have our van put aboard but was turned down by the Combat Cargo unit. I then had to decide whether to destroy the van and return all of us by the transport aircraft, or to evacuate our two vehicles. Since the driver of the van, Sgt Sanders, and two of the observers, S/Sgt Butler, and Corporal Bishop, were more than willing to accompany me back by road, I decided to evacuate in that manner, and sent the two other observers to Seoul by aircraft with orders to report to our Squadron Commander, Major Linder, upon arrival.

When I told the Base Commander of my plans to leave in our two vehicles at daybreak, he told me I could not depart unaccompanied and would have to join the convoy of base vehicles departing at 11:00 hours. I did not think much of this delayed departure and located an Army Captain who also planned to get away earlier. This officer was a pilot and was awaiting a replacement engine for his observation aircraft. He had a crew of a dozen or more Korean mechanics and maintenance people, a jeep, and two Korean trucks that he wanted to take back with him.

Now, with our five vehicles to make up a convoy, I obtained the Base Commander's approval for an early evacuation and we departed around 7:30 on the morning of 30 Nov. On the way out we went by the Captain's engineless airplane (a Piper Cub, I believe) and waited while he set it on fire - a sad occasion for this young officer who had a few "choice" words for the situation that brought this about.

The Army pilot knew of a short cut to take us South to Sukchon where the 24th Division Headquarters had pulled back from the onrushing Chinese Army. This route avoided the main highway, which was crowded with retreating troops and refugees, and took us across a river and through a village. From this village we had heard a lot of shooting going on the night before, so I was more than a little uneasy as we drove down the main street, despite reassurance from the Korean mechanics that the shooting was between local civilian factions.

We had not progressed more than a few miles when one of the Korean trucks broke down. We used the van to tow the truck but the chain kept breaking and we must have had to stop and re-tie the chain on four or five occasions in the twenty miles and two hours or more it took us to crawl into Sukchon. The road was not much more than a bumpy clay path, and we were almost its only occupants. Needless to say, it was an extremely tense situation with all of us looking over our shoulders expecting to see the appearance of Chinese tanks or troops. In addition, the other spring on the van broke, so it was with much relief to

finally reach Sukchon, drop off our aviator friend and his vehicles, and join our Army on the highway to Pyongyang.

The next twenty-five miles back to Pyongyang took us over six hours. There were all sorts of military units retreating on this highway and any stalled vehicle was abruptly shoved off the road by an armored vehicle that roamed the column to keep it from stalling completely. I also recall passing slowly through a troop of Turkish soldiers who helped themselves to most of the half bushel of apples I had bought and placed in the bed of the weapons carrier. Since the Turks were fierce looking and well armed, we made little more than a mild protest.

Although it was a comfort to be back among our armed forces, a retreat is not a very uplifting experience. To me it was a very disheartening - an ignominious - ordeal. Certainly no situation to be in when you were an officer in the "best and greatest country and Armed Forces in the world."

Late in the afternoon we finally pulled into Pyongyang and I was able to get a call thru to Major Linder, who directed me back to Seoul. We shared the tent space of the weather detachment and after a meal, I turned in exhausted after our trip, not having slept for nearly forty-five hours. During the night, "Bedcheck Charlie," a North Korean aircraft flying low level, dropped several bombs on the field and damaged some of our aircraft. I slept right through the bombing and all the confusion and bedlam that resulted from this surprise attack.

We were off again in the morning for the last leg of our trip, after Sgt Sanders replaced the van's oil filter and generator, which had vibrated off the previous day. Shortly after getting under way the van developed a radiator leak, and about every hour for the next eleven hours until Seoul was reached, it was necessary to stop and refill the radiator with water from a village well or river. About a mile from the 30th Weather Squadron Motor Pool the van finally refused to run. I then had the weapons carrier tow the van into the compound, which completed the journey.

I was told the sequel to this adventure several years later by Major Carl Hellman, the 30th Weather Squadron Material Officer at the time. The van we went to so much trouble to save was moved by rail to Pusan for transshipment. There, in the process of loading it aboard a ship, the van was dropped in the bay when the crane attempted to move it off the dock!

So much for that period except for a tragic accident. While in Seoul after our return from North Korea, Cpl Bishop, driving me in a jeep, hit a hand-drawn cart after I had directed his attention to some object or activity away from the street. We stopped and found an Army ambulance to take the injured Korean to the hospital. Later, I checked up on the victim and found out that he had died and that he had left a wife and four children. Yes, it was an accident but I will also never forget that I was largely responsible for its happening.

In mid-December I was transferred to an airbase at Chinhea, Korea, on the Southern Coast about twenty miles west of Pusan. I was to establish a weather detachment to support the 18th Fighter Interceptor Wing, flying Mustangs (P-51's), that was forced to evacuate North Korea after the Chinese invasion. Most of the weather people I inherited were withdrawn from Wonsan on the East Coast of North Korea. The one officer in this group, Lt Ed Stallcup, was in my weather officer class at Chanute AFB. Ed was a non-stop talker, nicknamed "Silent Ed" by some of his classmates. We were never very busy at this base, with its little transient traffic and weather briefings to tactical units

provided by a staff weather officer. I recall how difficult it was to "hide" from Ed. He would even stand in my office and read from a supply catalogue when other conversational avenues were exhausted.

One of the fighter squadrons in the wing was manned by South Africans and I remember what big party people they were. After several hours of drinking they could be coaxed into demonstrating the Zulu War Dance. You simply would not believe the way they shouted and carried on. I thought the floor would give out the way they pounded on it.

I made friends with a communications officer whose unit provided us with teletype and radio facsimile service (for weather charts produced by the Weather Control in Tokyo). He was a musician and worked on occasion with the South Korean Naval Academy Band, located nearby. When he was asked to participate in a concert, I accompanied him and afterwards joined his host at a restaurant in Chinhea. Most of the dishes were unrecognizable and very unappetizing, such as eels and fish with heads attached and their eyes staring at me. I stuck to the rice, some nuts and several glasses of excellent Korean beer.

I recall entering our weather detachment in the base volleyball tournament. We had, at the most, twelve people assigned, and competed with squadrons of over two hundred. We won one game after another and ended up the "champs." Naturally the trophy was proudly displayed in a prominent location in the weather station.

I left Chinhea on a seven day R&R (rest and recuperation leave) to Japan in late March. I went to an airbase near Osaka and played some golf, and visited the sights in Kyoto and Takarazuka which were nearby. This was the peak season for cherry blossoms, and the trees and setting at Takarazuka, home of the Japanese Opera, were especially remarkable for their beauty. When I returned to Chinhea, I was astonished by all the work that had been done by my weather people to fix up the weather station. I had been unsuccessful in getting the base to act on the work orders I had submitted to improve the bare rooms given us in the Base Operations building. Now, the weather personnel had covered much of the cement floor with rubber matting, built a counter and weather display for weather charts, and many other improvements including closing in an area for my office! The men must have spent every available hour to do all the work that was accomplished in the week I was gone. I did not ask how they came by the material to do all these things.

After a few months we were finally assigned a clerk to do the typing and other administrative details. The young airman was most anxious to return to Japan where he had a Japanese girl friend he wanted to marry. The senior NCO weather forecaster knew that the girl he planned to marry was a prostitute (he lived with her himself for awhile) and after he informed me of this I made every effort to thwart the airman's plans, including refusing him leave to return to Japan. I was successful, and several years later the airman sought me out when I was attending a conference at Wright-Patterson AFB, Ohio, and thanked me for what I had done although he admitted he was furious with me at the time. He was now happily married, a father, and had put on 20-30 lbs so that I could hardly recognize him.

In early April I volunteered to fly weather reconnaissance aircraft over North Korea in response to a message asking for pilots to fly the Douglas B-26 on these missions. I had heard that pilots flying these mission out of Teagu were getting in their fifty missions and going back to the States after only three to four months. By this time I had been separated from my family for over six

months and missed them terribly. I could expect to be away for almost another year since the policy for unaccompanied weather personnel at that time was a six month Korean tour followed by a year in Japan or one of the other locations in the Far East or Pacific theatre. I reasoned that the risks were worth the opportunity to avoid this lengthy separation from my loved ones. As it turned out, my squadron commander (now Lt. Col. Linder) turned down my request because, he said, he had an important assignment for me. This "important assignment" was a transfer later that month to run the weather station at the Teagu Airbase.

My two months at Teagu had to be most unpleasant assignment of my career. In the first place, I was put in charge of the detachment but not appointed its commander. This title stayed with a good friend of the Squadron Commander, who had been given a spot promotion to Major and moved from the detachment to squadron headquarters pending his eventual assignment as Operation Officer a month later. The spot promotion system was new and one of its stipulations was the requirement to hold a position that authorized the rank. My Teagu weather detachment called for the rank of Major, and since I met all the requirements for a spot promotion (except for the position), it was especially galling to have to tolerate this imposition.

The Teagu Airstrip was the busiest and most important airfield in Korea at that time since it supported a Fighter Bomber Wing, a Tactical Reconnaissance Wing, plus the 5th Air Force Flight Section. The Base Commander was a very demanding officer and minced no words in letting me know when he felt that the weather services did not meet his expectation. With the staff I inherited, especially the forecasters, I was on the receiving end of more harassment than I cared to handle. A Captain, who had a serious drinking problem was assigned but was practically useless. He had been brought in by the Squadron Commander to "keep an eye on him." However, he was sent to me out at the airfield and not placed in the squadron headquarters located in the city of Teagu. The two enlisted forecasters were also a pain in the neck. The S/Sgt was a flippant, wisecracking NCO and I had to handle complaints about him from pilots. The T/Sgt was a fat and lazy character who did only the absolute minimum required of him. My one blessing was Warrant Officer Venable; he was a jewel and I'm sure he kept things from falling apart. Even some of the observers were a problem. I recall one big husky fellow who spent his spare time lifting weights and asking for a transfer because of the dusty conditions that we endured were "bad for his health." One morning I noticed that all of the temperatures after midnight were recorded in whole numbers. I asked the Chief Observer about this oddity and was told that the "problem boy" who was on duty during this shift did not want to strain his eyes by reading temperatures to the 10th of a degree as required!

The policy of allowing detachments in Japan, Okinawa, etc., to nominate personnel to fill quotas needed to man the weather detachments in Korea was primarily the reason we had more than our share of poorly qualified people. The commanders were only too glad to cull the marginal performers from their staffs and send them to Korea.

By far the most difficult time I had during this period was waiting for news from home of Robb's birth. He was due in early May but it was a three week period of duress until I got news that he had arrived on the 29th of May. I'm sure, if the option were open to me during this interval, that I would have resigned my commission and gone home to be with my family.

In mid June, 1951, having completed my Korean tour, I was transferred to Itazuki Airbase, near Fukuoka, on the island of Kyushu, Japan. This assignment lasted

only six weeks when I was offered the job of managing the weather station that supported the Joint Operation Center (5th AF and 8th Army JOC). Since the Commander's position I held at Itazuki had to be relinquished anyway with the arrival of a Major from the states, I welcomed the opportunity to take on a job that turned out to be one of the most interesting and challenging that I had as a weather officer.

By this time we had pushed the enemy North to a stalemate near the present DMZ, and the JOC had moved back to Seoul from Teagu. My staff was a small one, but the people were all top-notch and it was a pleasure to work in such an environment. We provided all the forecasts for the Seoul Area Command, Hq 8th Army, Hq 5th Air Force, briefing material for the two briefing officers, and most importantly, around-the-clock weather support for air operations directed by the JOC. On occasion, when the launching of F-86 Sabre Jet fighter aircraft to the Yalu River area was involved, the weather forecast became a critical factor. Prior to my arrival, a flight of F-86's returning to their home base at Kimpo were unable to land there or at their alternate airport due to fog, and several had to bail out from lack of fuel. I recall sweating out several of my own "no-fog" forecasts until all of the Sabre Jets had safely landed.

My promotion to Major on September 1, was most welcome and I'm sure the extra money I was able to send home made a big hit with Grandmary. At that time officers did not receive a separation allowance (enlisted got an extra ten percent in overseas pay) so there was not much leeway in our budget that had to provide for my away-from-home living expenses. We did get the benefit of not having to pay income taxes for any part of a month spent in Korea. This ruling led to clock-like visits from the Wing Commander and members of his staff who were stationed in Tokyo. They would arrive in a C-54 on the last day of the month and depart the next day to head back to Japan, thereby insuring a two month tax exemption.

Hours at work were long but that was not a problem since there was little to do when off the job. Most of the time we operated with only two forecasters, besides myself, to cover the twenty-four hour service to the JOC. When one went on R&R to Japan, the two of us that remained practically met ourselves coming and going for the week we covered, with a "six hours on, six hours off" schedule.

I returned to Japan in late November after the forecasting staff had been beefed up, and a Senior Major replaced me as officer-in-charge. In Japan I worked as a duty forecaster and found an opportunity to get in some flying time, something I was not able to do while in the 30th Weather Squadron, since USAF had waived the requirement to maintain proficiency while in Korea in order to qualify for flight pay.

In late January I received my "going home" orders and shortly afterwards was joyfully reunited with my family after that long, long sixteen month separation.

The war in Korea is often called "The Forgotten War," but I'm sure it was never forgotten by the families of the 54,246 Americans who were killed in action, or died of injuries or disease, or by the hundreds of thousands of veterans wounded or scarred by that war.

VIETNAM

In the Spring of 1967, while on an inspection trip, I received a call from Colonel Barney, Vice Commander, Air Weather Service, and he asked me if I wanted to command the 30th Weather Squadron, now located in Vietnam. He had selected me and two other Lt Colonels who had been passed over for promotion to Colonel, to command the three weather squadrons involved in the Southeast Asia conflict. His theory was that such an assignment would open the "promotion door" with a creditable performance during this period. I told him that I would let him know of my decision after talking it over with my wife. Now this sounds as if I could pick and choose my assignments, but in fact, this was the first time in my career that I was offered a choice. I could decline the offer because my previous overseas tour (Jul 63 - Aug 64) had been back to Korea, and was unaccompanied (no dependents authorized). It was Air Force policy not to send people on consecutive unaccompanied assignments.

Only with Grandmary's acquiescence did I decide to accept this assignment. In the seventeen years since I had last gone off to war, Robb, Anita, Jim, and Nancy were added to the family and the other, oldest, three had or were about to "leave the nest." The apparent last chance promotion opportunity that this assignment offered, plus the settled and enjoyable living situation in Belleville, Illinois, contributed to the decision to take the position in Vietnam that was offered to me.

I also felt there was a strong possibility that I would be reassigned to a flying job that would separate us anyway now that my three year assignment to the office of the Inspector General was ending. I was physically qualified for flying, drawing flight pay, and many of my peers had been swept "back to the cockpit" due to expanding wartime needs. I had over 2,000 hours piloting the C-47, "Gooney Bird," and hundreds of these aircraft were being used in Vietnam. They were utilized in the propaganda campaign to drop leaflets, to broadcast messages over loudspeakers, as gunships employing the "Gatling Gun," and as flareships to light up the night for these and other nighttime attacks on the enemy. A flying job at this point in my career would be a "dead end," perhaps in more ways than one.

I departed for Vietnam from Norton AFB, San Bernardino, California, in early August, 1967. Before catching my flight, I picked up my son Tom, now in the Marine Corps at Camp Pendleton, California and we spent three great days together driving around, playing golf, and visiting Disneyland. I recall locating Tom at the firing range and asking his sergeant to let him off for a few days. The Sarge, seeing me in uniform on my way to Vietnam said something like this to Tom "You mean you're staying here and your old man is going to Nam?"

I arrived in Saigon on a Braniff Airlines Boeing 707, after stops in Hawaii and Clark Air Force Base in the Phillipines. Braniff had all their aircraft painted a bright orange and dressed their stewardesses in colorful Gucci-designed uniforms. After stepping out of the plane onto the platform and viewing all the smashed terminal buildings of the Tan San Nhut Airport, I could not imagine a more incongruous arrival into a combat zone.

Upon reporting in, I was due for another surprise. There were no accommodations for me on the base and I was expected to find an apartment in Saigon! A Warrant Officer who was with me in my previous assignment offered to help me get settled. Also, Lt. Col Joe Tyndall, who had just arrived to take over as Group Operations Officer, joined me in sharing an apartment located in a slum area a

couple of miles from the airbase. It was a new experience for me to buy bed linens and other household necessities, including a small refrigerator and an electric fan - neither of which were very reliable with so many power outages in the city.

I was able to spend several days with Lt Col Skinner, the officer I replaced, and found this very useful. We took a trip together to a few of the bases and I was able to meet some of the officers and men and to see first hand some of the problem areas. Laura, who kept most of the letters written to her over the years, found a letter I wrote on 9 Aug 67, shortly after I returned from this trip. I told her in this letter that I had resolved to write every day with every other letter to one of the children. I'm sure I was not able to adhere completely to this commitment but I do think I came close to meeting it. While I was always conscientious in writing and keeping in touch with all family members, I could never match the dedication Grandmary sustained in our many lengthy separations over the years. It was a rare event when she did not daily write me a long letter, full of news from home.

My squadron (headquartered at Ton Son Nhut) consisted of the weather detachments that supported organizations located on the ten airbases that the U.S. Air Force operated from in Vietnam. Another squadron of the Group supported the Army Air Forces in 'Nam, and a third squadron, located in Thailand, provided weather support to our Armed Forces located in that country. The Weather Group in charge of the three squadrons, commanded by Col. Ed Carmel, also had a weather central and a briefing facility at MacV (Military Assistance Command Vietnam). These two facilities were also located at Tan Son Nhut Airport.

One apparent need was to move away from the Group Headquarters. My squadron headquarters was located in a Quonset building located in the center of the Weather Group complex and I found this to be an uncomfortably close arrangement. It was to be many months before I could find another location and when I did I was also able to solve another problem - developing a closer relationship with the 834th Air Division. The 834th provided all of the in-country airlift and had plans to build a compound that would house their headquarters staff now scattered in various buildings all over the airport. I was able to offer the Air Division some specialized weather support for their Command and Control Center and they in turn provided me with more than adequate, air-conditioned, offices.

There was much to do since I operated with a small, six-man headquarters staff, and had to accept the frequent personnel changes that were inherent with one year tours. I felt a need for frequent visits to the detachments that were spread from Can Tho in the Delta to an operating location at Dong Ha, situated in the North, seven miles from the DMZ (Demilitarized Zone). I set a goal of quarterly visits to each detachment and made special visits when necessary. I also held two detachment commander conferences - one in October at Tan Son Nhut, and the second in May at Bangkok, Thailand, after some wheedling with the new Group Commander, Col Wood.

After seeing the many important functions being performed by the detachment at Da Nang, I selected it as a good candidate for the Williams Award. This annual award was the top Air Weather Service honor as it was given to the weather detachments selected as best in the weather service. Captain Tom Guest, one of my staff officers, spent a very profitable week at Da Nang gathering information and testimonials, and then putting together the package that eventually won this highly coveted award for Major Cody and his people at Da Nang.

The Weather Wing Commander, Colonel Stiles, arrived in December for a visit from his headquarters in Hawaii. I knew he was an avid golfer so I lined up a foursome for us to play the course located on the airbase. It was only my second or third round since my arrival in Vietnam and I really looked forward to the game. While teeing off on the second hole I injured my back and was unable to continue. I managed to drive my vehicle to the BOQ (I had moved on base in November) and made it to my room but was later taken to the hospital where I spent the next four days. I have never - before or since - suffered such excruciating pain as I did with the muscle spasms I endured from that injury. However, I was discreet in not revealing just how I injured my back since some of the men in the hospital ward were recovering from wounds received in combat.

When Colonel Stiles visited the following summer, the golf course was not playable since it was the scene of some heavy fighting and was repeatedly shelled during the TET offensive. This time his visit was again marred by another incident. Major Cody, Detachment Commander at Da Nang, was on R&R when we visited that base during a heavy rainstorm. Due to some mix-up we were not met at the plane with a car upon arrival and our party was thoroughly soaked in our dash for cover. Stiles, not at all accustomed to this sort of welcome, turned to me and said something like "Goddammit Schmal, is this your detachment that won the Williams Award?"

The TET Offensive started on January 31, 1968, and it surprised everyone. Upon awakening that morning I repaired to the bathroom to clean up for the day and had to locate the light switch since the room was dark for the first time. As soon as I did, a couple of guys screamed at me to "turn it off!" and it was then that I found out that we were under attack. After I returned to my room and stretched out on my bed, a rifle slug smashed into the room and knocked down some plaster on the wall opposite my bed. Now I moved quickly and rolled under my bed, steel helmet in place and pistol handy. Later that day I searched for and found the slug (from one of our own M-16 rifles, I believe) and I eventually gave it to Robb, but it has long since been lost.

When I went to my office later that morning I found an unexploded shell lodged near the clerk's desk next to my office. The administrative clerk, Sgt. Groves, arrived that day or the next, and he came with bag and baggage, moving back to the airbase. Only a few weeks earlier, Groves was delighted to move to an apartment in the city after a wait of many months for his application to be approved by the Base Commander. Now, with all the vicious street fighting and shelling of the city, he lost no time returning to the security of Tan Son Nhut.

While that first morning was the most vulnerable that I felt during the offensive, we were subject to month-long rocket and mortar attacks that would arrive in the early morning hours providing us with an unwelcome wake-up service. One rocket leveled the chapel located next door to my BOQ, and another exploded a few weeks later on the walk that separated the BOQ from where the chapel used to be. Explosions that close got your ears ringing and heart pounding for some time.

I'm sure Tom will always remember the TET Offensive, as he landed with a planeload of Marines at Da Nang on the day it started, and that airfield and city got lots of attention from the Viet Cong. The next day or so he called to let me know that he had arrived okay. I think he spent a day or two with Major Cody's weather people before working his way North to Dong Ha, where he reported to the 3rd Marine Division Headquarters.

On Washington's Birthday, I was finally able to get up to see Tom. After an early morning flight to Da Nang, I caught a ride on a C-130 transport to Dong Ha. When we reached the airfield we had to circle and wait to land since it was being shelled by the North Vietnamese from across the Demilitarized Zone. Once we landed, I called Tom from the airfield and asked him to pick me up. He said he would but sounded somewhat reluctant, believing I'm sure that the airfield was still being shelled.

It was unbelievably great to see Tom and we visited for most of the day although we spent a lot of our time hunched down in shelters while the V.C. lobbed rockets at the base or we took some "in-coming" from across the DMZ. I was not fully prepared for the conditions at Dong Ha. Although I had my side-arm, I did not bring my helmet and was dressed in a short sleeve fatigue uniform that was inappropriate for the chilly weather this far North in mid-winter. Tom had to scrounge around and find a steel helmet and a field jacket for me to wear - and he enjoyed needling me about my unpreparedness.

We spent time in his tent, had lunch, and visited his work place, meeting some of his buddies and a Lt. Col. that ran the G-2 section where Tom worked as a cartographer. By mid-afternoon, despite Tom's protest, I decided to head back to Da Nang since I felt his mother would not appreciate both of us being victims of the frequent shellings we were subjected to. While walking back to the airstrip (about one mile) the shelling started up again and we flattened out in a ditch alongside the road. We could hear the whistling of the shells as they passed overhead on their way to the Marine helicopter pad. I counted twenty-seven rounds before the gun(s) were silent. As we continued our walk I told Tom he could chalk this up as a unique experience since any father can take his son fishing, to a ball game, etc., but not many get to share a ditch in our circumstances. Later I read where Dong Ha was on the receiving end of over 300 rounds on Washington's Birthday. Some celebration!

In March I flew to Hawaii where Grandmary joined me for my seven day R&R leave. She had flown in from St. Louis and we had a wonderful time although it was unseasonably cold and rainy so we did not spend much time on the beach.

Also in March, the Air Weather Service Commander, Maj. Gen. Pierce, came over for a visit but was routed to Thailand since he could not enter Vietnam. MACV's General Westmoreland had put a stop to the endless procession of non-essential visitors to Vietnam now that the war had greatly intensified. Instead, Bill Shivar, Commander of the Weather Squadron supporting the Army, and I joined members of the Weather Group in journeying to Bangkok.

The city of Bangkok is a delightful place to visit and the contrast to Saigon was not unlike the contrast of Tokyo to Seoul during the Korean war.

We joined General Pierce in hosting a cocktail party for the Military Weather Officers in the Thailand Air Force. They in turn gave each of us a silk necktie that displayed the Air Weather Service emblem. I still have this Thai tie. Thailand National Weather Service officials treated our party to a seven course dinner at a local restaurant and the table manners of the head of this Service - a Vice Admiral - came as some surprise. One of our courses was that of small chicken or squab legs and I watched the Admiral shove his chair back, pick up the food, and when finished, drop the bone on the floor before grabbing another leg. These manners seem more appropriate for a Medieval Lord. I noticed that members of this party - many schooled in England or the States - appeared embarrassed at this display.

About this time I brought another officer into my headquarters to conduct a program of training Vietnamese military weather technicians to replace our weather people. We had trained many of their officers and enlisted personnel in stateside schools but had failed to integrate them into our military operations. A published agreement that I drew up between our 7th Air Force and the VNAF established the guide lines, and Captain Wilks managed this project with such enthusiasm that it produced exceptional results. By the time I finished my tour we had Vietnamese weather personnel in five of the ten weather detachments. At Can Tho, where Vietnam trained their pilots, the detachment was almost wholly manned by native personnel.

My many trips in Vietnam were almost always interesting or exciting or both. I flew on all types of U.S. Army and Vietnamese aircraft and helicopters, Air America (the CIA Airline), and many types of USAF airlift aircraft. Ground transport was very limited and dangerous since the Viet Cong had infiltrated all areas of the country. On one of my visits to Pleiku, I ran into "Silent" Ed Stallcup who had been pulled out of the weather service and was flying as a Navigator on C-47 flare dropping missions. It was really great seeing Ed and we spent the evening recalling our days together at Chinhea, Korea. Ed, now a Lieutenant Colonel, said that his squadron had thirty-three Lt. Cols. assigned and I guess this was typical of most Gooney Bird operations and many airlift squadrons. I later heard that one squadron flying C-47's had five promotions to Colonel when an annual promotion list was published. At this stage these "hot pilots" of WWII days were probably showing around the pictures of their grandchildren instead of their girl friends.

One time returning to Saigon from Cam Ran Bay in an Air America C-45, we ran into thunderstorms that tossed that little Beechcraft all over the sky. I have never been more frightened on a flight (non-combat) in my life and felt certain that we would perish. Of course, a pilot flying as a passenger is never very comfortable in that role. This was especially the case when I returned to Saigon from Can Tho on a chopper flown by a Vietnamese pilot. He was hot dogging it, and his antics in skimming over the rice paddies and trees made me fervently wish that I had waited for a more conventional hop.

Once on a return flight from an East Coast base (Phan Rang, I believe), I caught a ride on a C-7 transport to Tan Son Nhut. A jeep and a weapons carrier comprised the plane load and we (passengers) were given the only seats available - inside the vehicles. I took the drivers seat in the weapons carrier and was then joined by three red-robed Buddhist Monks who slid in beside me on the seat. We smiled and nodded to each other and as we flew along facing the tail of the C-7, I once again was amazed at the places this son of William and Martha Schmal found himself. This feeling I know I felt at other times, such as flying over the Sahara, escaping from North Korea, or while visiting an Eskimo village on an inspection trip north of the Arctic Circle out of Thule, Greenland.

I visited Tom again at Dong Ha in April or May when things were quieter and brought him a big bag of goodies that he was unable to obtain up there. Then in July I took leave and went to Hong Kong where I met Tom who flew in on his R&R. We called his mother in Belleville, Ill. from our hotel room, did some shopping, and saw the sights of this interesting and crowded city. We also took in a night club tour and found ourselves in the market area on the last stop. There, a man with a cobra snake boarded the bus and proceeded to cut and then peel the skin away from the head to the tail of the cobra while the snake was still alive. An unusual and uncomfortable demonstration since I was seated up front in an isle seat and much too close to this action.

My tour ended in early August and after rejoining my family, we moved back to Colorado Springs, where we had spent a very enjoyable two years in the early 60's. This was the last war in which I took an active part and it is also the only one we lost - a long, unpopular and disastrous conflict that took a heavy toll of American lives.