

THE NEW WING-DING
36th Photo Recon Squadron



I hope that you all have had a great holiday season and that the weatherman was not too unkind to you. We on the northeast coast have had our fill of snow and we can now look to the grass getting greener again and a new season of flowers and leaves on the trees, once more.

“Travel by LST”

How many of you fellows remember how we traveled from one island to another by this means of transportation? Can you find the spot where you set up your poncho to protect you from the elements, while we went from one beautiful spot to another?

I just thought that this picture would bring back memories to many of you. I have more pictures of this type. The only way that I will know if you like them is if you let me hear from you. In fact as I mentioned before if you have any photos that you would like to share please send them to me. I will return them to you after I have scanned them for publication.



Here is a story from the newsletter of the Fifth Air Force Memorial Foundation, Issue 5 dated 31 July 1997.

“Up from Shangri-La”

The day was May 13th 1945 at Hollandia, New Guinea. MacArthur’s forces along with Admiral Nimitz’s massive navy were heavily engaged in softening Japanese defenses on the island surrounding the approaches to Japan and Okinawa. Then a tragedy gripped the United States like no other incident in World War II. A C-47 with twenty-four passengers and crew on an R and R weekend, failed to clear the 8000-foot high mountain ridges guarding the entrance at Hidden Valley in central New Guinea.

There were only three survivors – Margaret Hastings, a WAC corporal, Tech. Sgt. Kenneth Decker and 1st Lt. John McCollom.

Three days later search aircraft discovered the survivors and rescue efforts were underway. Jungle-wise Australian and Dutch authorities advised against attempting to organize a safari as too dangerous. Dense jungle, fast flowing streams, and above all, hostile headhunting cannibals would impede any effort into their territory.

The daring final stages of the rescue makes the ending of this historic tale as fascinating as the beginning.

Perhaps it was because of Maggie that this saga received the greatest amount of media coverage than any other episode of World War II, according to Burrell’s Press Clipping Bureau.

“To me this story had some meaning, more than just another story of one of many incidents of WW II. I just referred to my oral history to confirm some facts. It was just less than a month before this incident on February 17, 1945, while we were stationed on Biak, that I approached First Sgt. McGuinness for a three day pass to visit a friend of mine who I thought was in Hollandia. I was granted a pass and when I went to the Air Transport Command outfit on the airstrip and presented them with a pass for what I thought was to Hollandia actually turned out to be in Finschaven, on the southern tip of New Guinea. This I did not find out until we were in the air over a few hours.

My visit with my friend went along fine until I went back to the strip and tried to find a ride back to Biak. I was stuck there on the strip for a few days and when I finally got a ride back I reported to Sgt. McGuinness at 9 P.M. he told me that he was going to write me up the next morning as AWOL because I was three days late. I think you fellows remember what happened the next night at 9 P.M. when we were all watching the movies. To refresh you that was the night that the Japanese bomber came and dropped his bombs on the ATC outfit on Sorido strip. We were lucky because if that Japanese bombardier had held his hand on the bomb release a second or two more I believe that he would have hit our area.”

Now how about telling me of some of the stories that you remember from our tour of duty, overseas.

It is my sad duty to let you know that three members of our squadron have joined the Silent Wings.

Jim Pellizari 10/27/2000

Vivian Perkins 12/11/2000

Lou Gross 2/19/2001

Below is a photo of a few squadron CO's including our own Major Neal Bakker. As you all remember, too well, that he was lost in the ditching of a B-25 that occurred after the hostilities ceased.



Major Bakker is standing in the rear to our right. This photo was sent to me by one of our very active contributors, John Epperson, who was one of our pilots. The other CO's are not identified.

Speaking of John, the following story was sent to me, by him, for your enjoyment.

“Sub Sighters”

“Some of the convoy commanders communicated with us, later on, that just the presence of our planes flying over the area kept the subs from operating with total freedom. It is a fact that a sub can spot a plane long

before someone on the plane can spot a sub. So we were fulfilling a function just by flying around the convoys.

We were stationed in Greenland for 13 months and then we were transferred back to the states to Camp Campbell, Kentucky. We were in limbo there for some time, and then finally transferred to Muskogee, Oklahoma, where the 36th became an operational unit. We transitioned in the F-5, which is the photo recon version of the P-38, and after getting more or less competent in the picture taking business, we were a valid unit, which you are all familiar with from that point on.

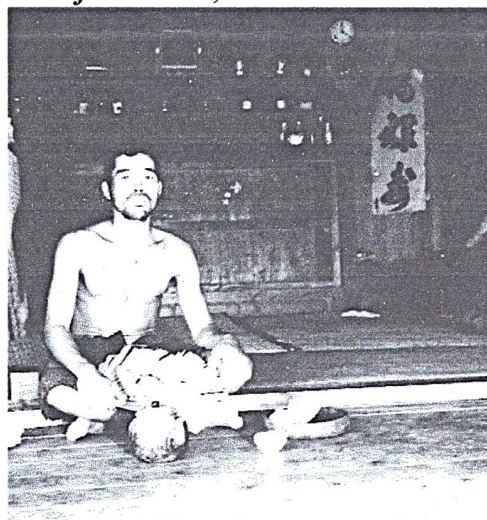
So what is this all leading up to? Well, what I have to tell you is that the Commanding Officer of the First Provisional Bomb Flight was none other than Neil Bakker. He was a Captain at that time. And as it turned out, he was my CO for my entire time as a pilot in the Army Air Corps, as it was called at that time. He was my boss in Greenland, then Camp Campbell, and finally in the 36th, beginning at Muskogee and throughout the rest of our travels as the war progressed.

As we went from station to station, Hollandia, Biak, Clark Field, Okinawa and finally to Japan we were separated from time to time. So as it turned out, I only heard through the grapevine that our esteemed commander had been lost at sea after ditching his plane in the ocean. That was a sad day for all of us, as Major Bakker was a fine man, a great leader, and a good friend, at least to me.

I was discharged from active duty at Brooks Field, San Antonio, Texas in December 1946. John Epperson, boy pilot ! God, were we ever that young”

At the annual dinner of the Army Air Forces Historical Association, this past February 24th we had a guest speaker, Gil Cohen, who is a famous WWII Air Corps illustrator. He is not a veteran but his work is world renowned for its accuracy. He gave an illustrated speech after dinner and presented a print of one of his pictures of an 8th Air Force B-17 crew getting ready for a mission.

Man on Sessoko Rhetto off coast of Okinawa, with his clock.



When I was serving on detached service with the 5th Photo Tech. Squadron, in early July 1945, I hitched a ride on an army duck and went to this little island, where I knew that there were not too many GI's. I thought that I might get some photos of the people there. As I was walking down a country road I came upon this man sitting cross legged in the front of his home. I had a C-3 (Speed Graphic) camera with me. He seemed typical of that country so I stopped and held my camera up to my eye level to take his picture. He immediately rose and held up his hand. He stepped down from his home advanced towards me and grasped my left arm. I was surprised and was ready

for a possible negative reaction from him. All he did was look at my wristwatch and he nodded and holding up his hand indicated to me that I should wait. I nodded and he climbed back up and walked to the rear of his room and opened the face of his old Sessions clock and he turned the hands to indicate 4 P.M., which was the present time. He then walked to the front of the room and resumed his seating position and nodded to me. He just wanted to make this photo authentic in every way. I would imagine that the old clock had been stopped for years, but in his mind it was set in perfect time.

This is just a small story in the great mix of incidents, which I experienced during the war, most of which were pleasant but interesting. I like to write these things down, but I need your help to relay these things in the Wing-Ding

I do not want this to be too much of an Ed Trinkleback newsletter but if I do not hear from you fellows I will have to bore you with my own stories, or make the Wing-Ding a two page newsletter once again.

I know how most of you fellows hate to write. Honestly, I hated to write, but when I started with a word processor, which was given to me, I started to enjoy writing. After that came the computer and now I could have photos also. Well I am not trying to sell you on getting a computer but as a suggestion why don't you tell your story to your children and grandchildren and I am sure you will find one who enjoys putting your service memories down on paper. This will be good for your families and also enjoyable for the younger generations that take on this task.

Ed the Editor Title bestowed on me by Jim Chastain.

Article reprinted from "Heave-Ho" the newspaper of the Monterey.

"Here's One Soldier Who Likes the Army!"

Among interesting people aboard the ship is a G.I. who likes the army! He is Cpl. Kenneth Moore of Effingham, Ill., and his love of the army is the real goods.

The average G.I. when asked to display his favorite photo, almost invariably he will show you a photo of his wife, sweetheart or Mother. Not so with "Soldier" Moore. He exhibits pictures of two high-ranking army officers under whom he served.

Moore, who is 35 years of age and has no dependents or family ties, is, in his own words "a soldier of fortune." He has served, in his two and a half years of service, in the Infantry, Signal Corps, Corps of Military Police, in a Prisoner of War Camp, in an Aviation Fire Fighting Platoon and is presently in the Air Corps as a photo lab technician. The latter, he states, is his favorite arm of the service.

He feels that through this service he knows the Army very well and likes the adventure of it, "never knowing what tomorrow will bring." In spite of all this Moore is not a "thirty year man." He wishes to serve a three-year hitch with the Army of Occupation and then return to his old civilian job as a press photographer.

Moore says if he were ten years younger, he would continue the life of a soldier."

Until the next issue, stay well and let's hear your stories. Ed the Ed