
"ANGIE
THE
OX"

It is proper and inevitable, that a squadron should create its own book, because it has lived its own story. A squadron is the smallest complete unit of the tactical arm of the air force. The manner in which the men and officers live and work together, under exacting and, at times, unpleasant conditions, will create that intangible thing called the esprit de corps. There are many factors required to create that spirit of the corps. The smashing of the enemy at his own game, for one. The full knowledge that is given to the men who perform their duties to the best of their abilities, and see their faith justified in the record of their squadron. There are the opposing factors of rain,

heat, mud, dust, food, mail which act together to try the men's morale. These factors must be defeated, because their defeat is as necessary to a world victory as are the smashing of the enemy installations and the rout of his armies. We have lived and worked

together, overseas, for almost three years, as a part of this show which began small and in darkness, and have taken what was given, and have handed out a thousand times more. Bread cast upon the waters shall be returned seven-fold, but the Nips made the grave tactical error of dropping steel . . . and we returned kind with kind. We have moved by land, water and by air, have built camp after camp only to move forward again, looked at field rations and the empty mail box for days upon end time and time again, we have worked on our ships during the heat and the rain of the day and the unfriendly dark of the night and have flown our ships across targets insane with ack-ack . . . the album was inevitable.

It is a personal album. Not for the general market, even though the Second World War is the most written war in history. There has not been a single phase of the conflict left unrecorded since the day Germany overran Poland on its first move to final defeat. Those fragments of posterity which survive should benefit by the records, and be warned. As a squadron, we believe that one war is enough for any man's lifetime, and perhaps our album shall serve to act against the actuality of another war. We want to believe that the families of our men on the Honor Roll shall not have sacrified to a lost ideal. It will not be too long before the last mission is run, the last crew is interrogated, and Intelligence has sent in the last report to Bombcom, and then our album shall justify its existence, and the world will be given the opportunity to justify this war.

The 89th Squadron is a tactical unit, with the A-20 as its weapon, and its one purpose to attack the enemy. It is the attack bomber's duty to destroy equipment and supplies, to harass and hammer personnel, to wreck organization. The attack bomber can be compared with the swift-striking cavalry of the War Between the States . . . not the Civil War. This squadron came from Savannah, Georgia. . . . Minimum altitude means that our ships are on the deck when they hit. They hit low, at great speed. They have gone the length of the runway at Lae at eight feet above the ground, against the direct fire of ground gun positions. They have flown through the debris heaved skywards by the bombs of the ships gone ahead over the targets. The A-20 is a flying platform for guns, and a weapon of artillery that can hit the target at amazing distances. The ship is typical of air power in general, but for all of us it retains an individuality because of its speed, strength against punishment, and its utter beauty in flight. It is the pilot's airplane, and it must be a nightmare for the Japanese.

It has been an unconventional and unethical war in this theatre. . . . Things that shall not be easily forgotten have happened in this savage, no-quarter fight on a group of islands that were half-unknown to us before Pearl Harbor. The last desperate gesture of that Japanese infantryman at Buna, when he stood in the line of fire of our strafing planes and threw a hand grenade . . . the Bismarck Sea Battle, when one of our pilots made a perfect strike with a 500 pound bomb, followed it with a second, to sink the 800 ton freighter, and returned to say bitterly that if he had known one bomb would have sunk the ship, he would have saved the second for another target . . . the rendezvous on the decisive morning of the Bismarck Sea fight, when the Fifth Air Force met to form for the attack, and B-17's, P-40's, P-39's, the Australian Beauforts, our A-20's and every ship that could get off the ground was out there, circling, waiting . . . going into the harbor at Kavieng against everything the Nips owned, hitting everything they owned and coming out without a loss . . . watching The Brain circle the strip with one wheel down, the nose wheel half-down, and a bomb hanging nervously on damaged shackles in the bombbay . . . listening to an engineer's pointed remarks as he digs palm splinters and branch fragments out from between the cylinders of his engines, then listening to the pilot as he admits that it had been a little difficult to stay below the ack-ack and above

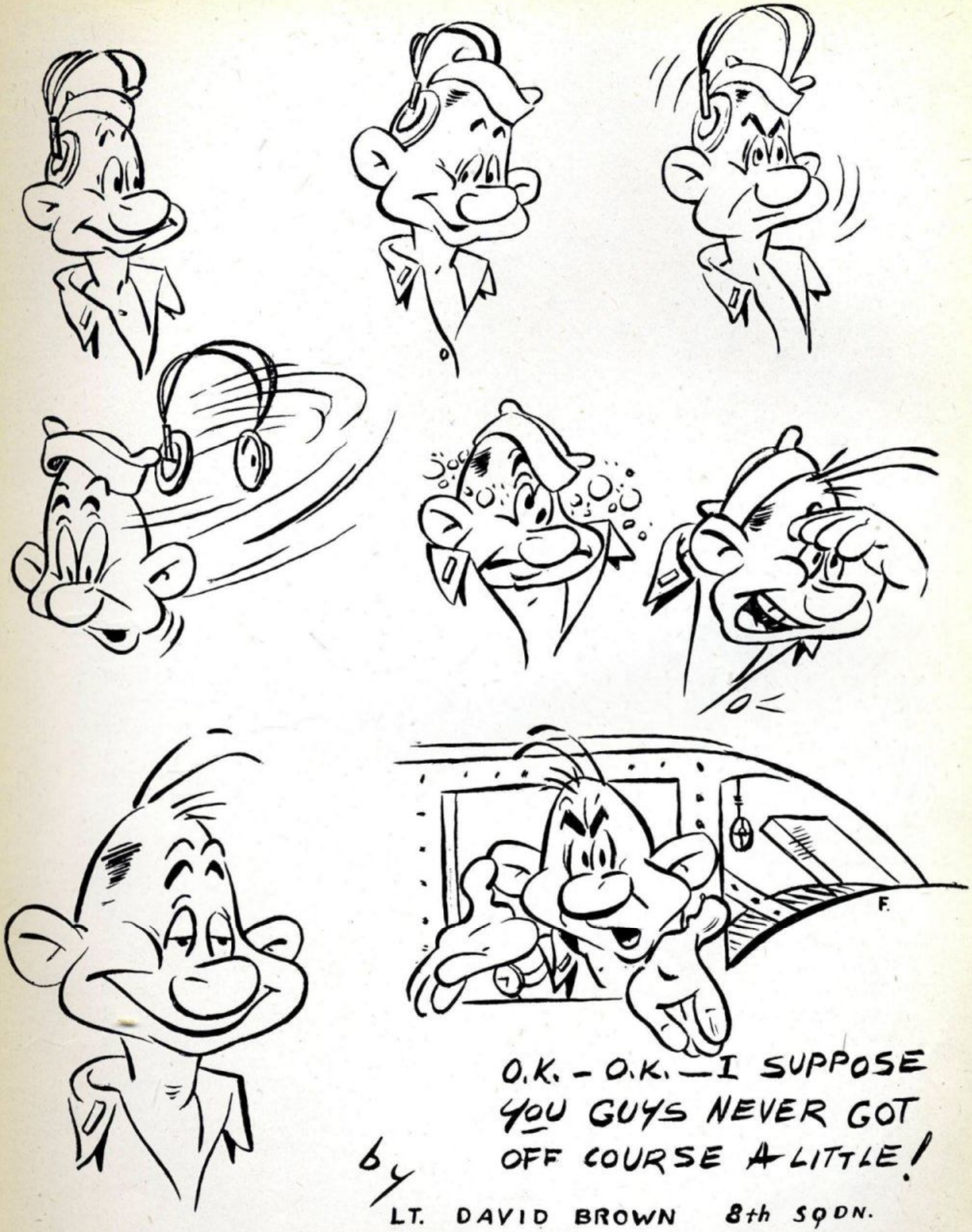
the trees . . . the discovery of the *Taiyei Maru's* register between Jew Louie's engine cylinders, and Rod's gesture as he remarked: "Well, it's proof, isn't it?"

A squadron's life is built around its aircraft, and it is natural that they are given names, instead of being referred to by number or by letter of the alphabet. The early A-20's were picturesque and varied in the names given by their pilots or by a conference of pilot, gunner and crewchief. We had Eightball, Kentucky Red, Mary Marual, Pappy's Joy, St. Sebastian, Oklahoma, and other highly individualistically named ships that carried the freight to every target within striking range, and carried it regularly. They were old A-20's, and paid for themselves in destruction spread among the Japanese times over, before the newer, heavily armored 20's began to come over from the United States. New pilots and crews came too, as relief, long due, for the men who had been here in the beginning. It remained the same squadron, of course, because men and ships assimilate swiftly in a forward zone. The work demands it.

A catch-word in the Squadron for aeons, it seemed, had been the word "Character". It was used as a cryptic description of any man who gave evidence of an eccentricity . . . such as making devout assertions that he liked New Guinea. In the long run, it became generally used, because under the glass, it developed that few men were without outstanding and individualistic habits which set them apart from men equally unique. This was the beginning of the thunderously approved decision to call the 89th Squadron "The Characters" . . . and it was approved because several copies of Damon Runyon's books were in the understocked squadron library, and they were always in demand. It held our imaginations, and even the Broadway characters reminded of home.

Then Suor—with a pencil, a stack of paper and a corner of the big desk at Mindy's—brought the characters to life. Mindy's was a four-room home, built by three pilots and a ground officer, at the big valley camp. A labor of love. Cement floor, shower, kitchen sink and hessian-cloth paneled ceiling and walls that set a pattern for the newer camps of the area. The last elaborate effort to create luxury, because in the camps that followed pyramidal tents became the demand. The very luxury of Mindy's proved its downfall as a home, because it became regarded, unofficially, as the Squadron Officers' Club—and out of it, after discussion and bull-session over the nightly teas, came the Characters. Merciless caricatures of the pilots, each name fitting, ideally, the personality of the pilot. Tobias the Terrible, Hot-Horse Herbie, Judge Goldfobber the Tennessee Lawyer, Good-time Charlie . . . Burke, for he never stood short, until that day at Noemfoor, and even then he made his run over the target before he went in. Our ships became known from Port Moresby to Biak and points north.

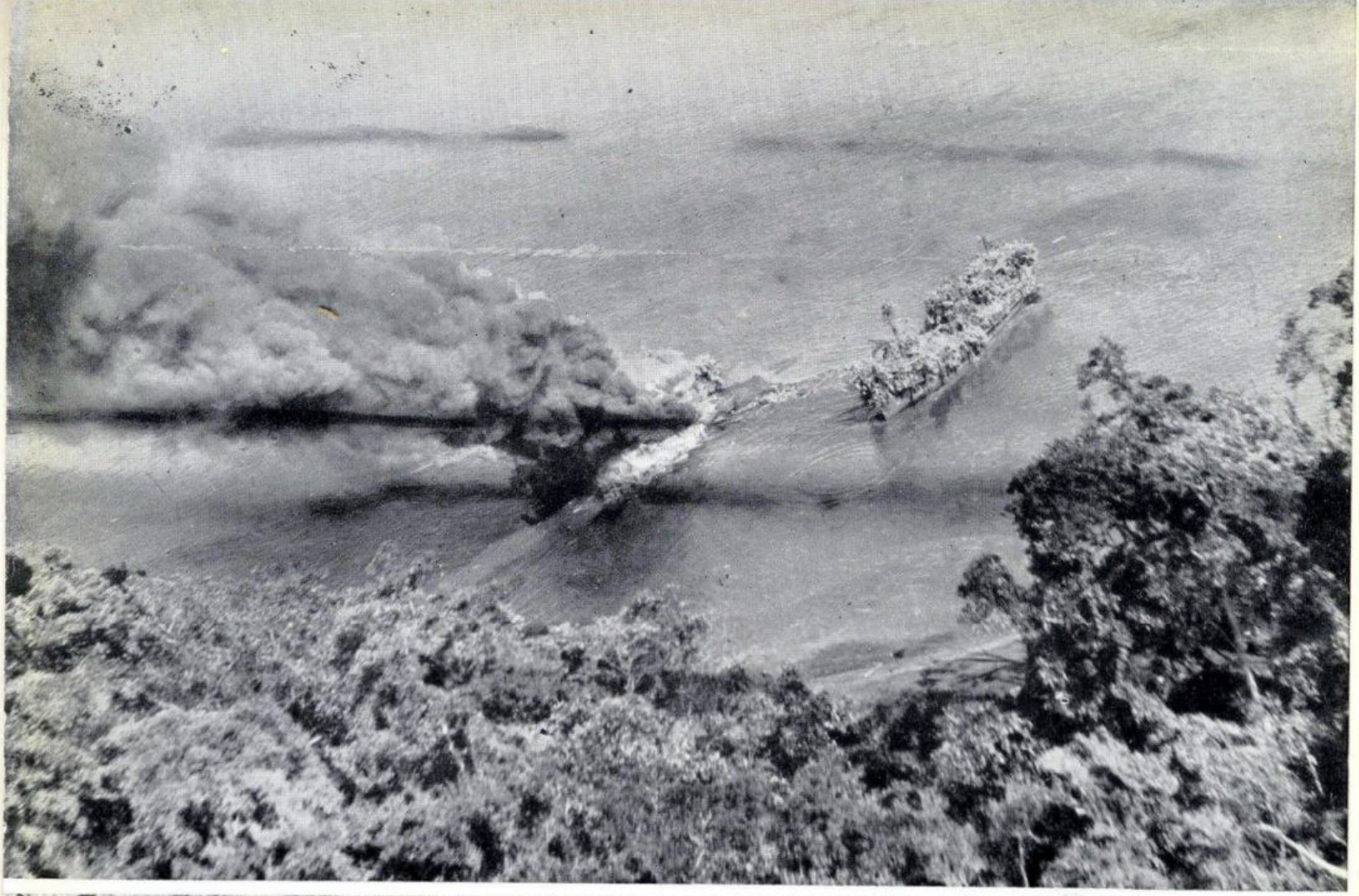
It is ironic humor that the fanatical followers of the Bushido Code must suffer attack from ships named with complete disregard for the dignity of the Japanese order of war. Their oriental, peasant minds must fail to comprehend the attitude of a nation whose men will take the ultimate in fighting machines, and christen them with irreligious names that rip away the false glamor of war. They would not understand that our Runyon characters have brought laughter, and have brought home a little nearer, too, by the quick flashes of memory they create. The humorless dignity of the Samurai might suffer irreparable hurt when he is in a palm-log dugout, waiting out the strafing runs of Jew Louie, Paddy the Link, The Brain, Jo Jo, Big Nig and their partners . . . but perhaps it does not matter at all to the Samurai, as he watches the disintegration of his nation's ambitions, whether the end comes with dignity, or without.

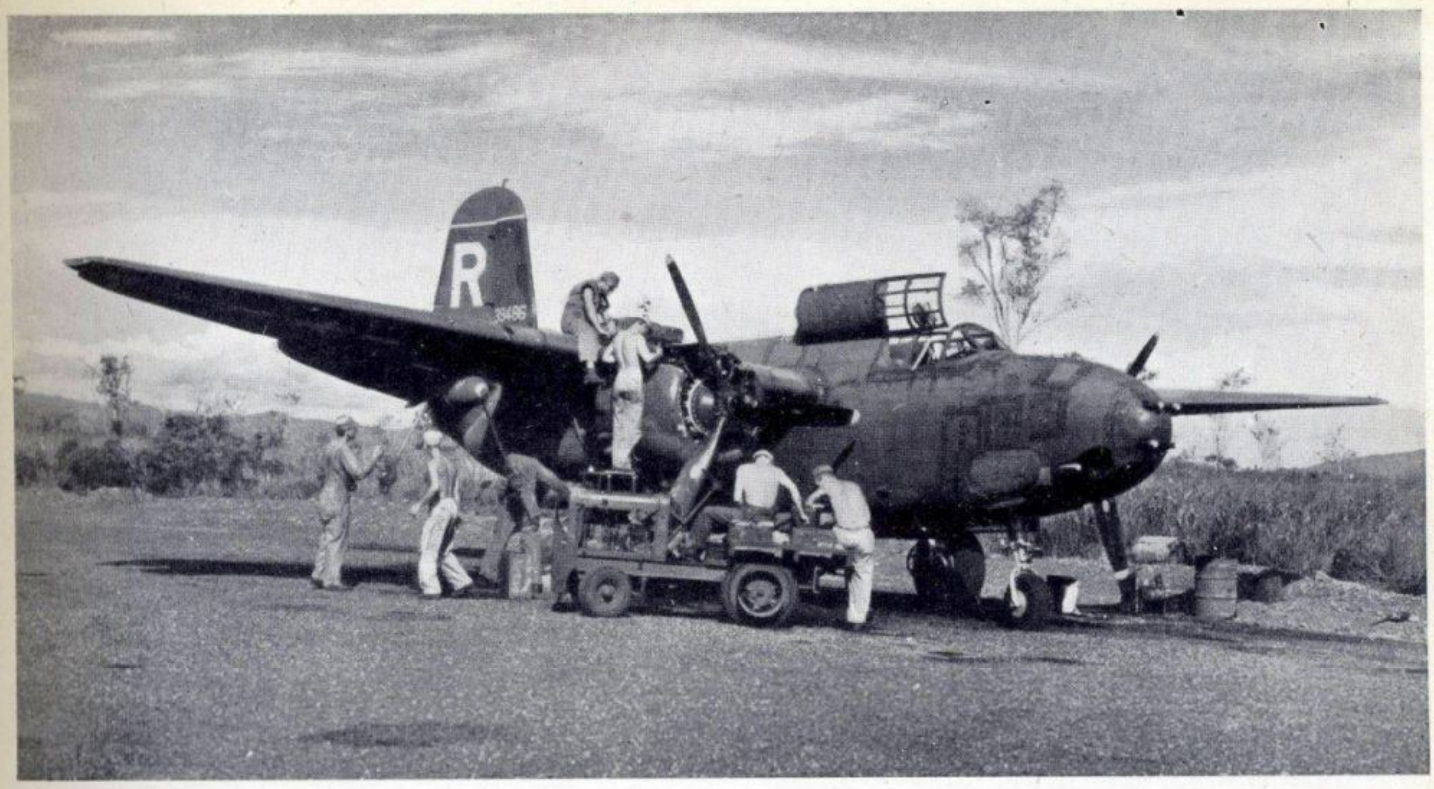


GLOOMY SUNDAY

"PILOT REPORTING — ACK ACK LIGHT, SLIGHT, AND INACCURATE!"

"DIDN'T MY BOMBS HIT THAT BARGE? PLEASE SERGENT ..... HUH SERGENT, HUH ??"





PERSONNEL

We've read the things written about us. We have read everything that has come our way, anything which provided a sound basis for the arguments of the nightly forums of the dimly lighted tent area. It is possible that the writers who studied us through their fourth dimensional microscopes have analyzed us correctly. They glamorized our pilots, and painted our gunners with that star-gazing gleam in their eyes, but most of them missed the ordinary things. A pilot climbing stiffly out of the high cockpit, too worn and tired to do anything but make out the form one and to head for camp and a few hours' rest. A gunner working out on his guns until late at night, and then going out on a mission at dawn. No one can know what it is to work on the line until the experience is given. The hot, gritty dust whipping across the parked plane, fouling the engines, even beneath the canvas, working into the precise prop mechanisms. It might not be of interest to a writer to watch a truck load of crewchiefs, armorers, ordnance men returning to their camp after ten or twelve or fourteen hours on the line. The mothers of those men would not recognize their own sons. A layer of dust so thick that it can be rolled back with the clenched fist is an effective method of attaining incognito.

We have read that there are few military organizations as complex as the air corps tactical unit. It might be true, because the modern fighting airplane, completely equipped, demands a considerable variety of specially trained men to keep it in fighting condition. It takes trained men to keep the ships ready to fly . . . and highly trained men to get them off the ground, make the long run to the target, and bring them home again. It

seems complex, yet, actually, the organization is broken down into neat, component parts which enables each man to know precisely his duty, and permits the entire organization to function smoothly, at peak effectiveness. This is the logical place to clear up at least one cliche which has been in use by civilians since the first Jenny staggered off the fields of France. The man who crews an airplane is a crewchief, member of the engineering department. He is not a Grease Monkey. He is a tolerant man, because the very nature of his work demands patience, forbearance, and a deep understanding of human nature and pilots. He is a crewchief, a radio man is a radio man, an armorer is an armorer, the gunner is a gunner. A straight line is often the shortest distance between any two points.

The Squadron was understrength when it first came overseas. As the new men came in to fill the vacancies, the responsibility for their training fell upon the older men. We have had gunners, with fifty missions and more, who have never had the benefit of a formal gunnery school. We have capable engineers, crewchiefs, who were overseas before they had begun to understand the first basic principles of maintenance. We have radio men of high rank and capabilities, without school certificates, self-taught. Armorers, ordnance, motor pool personnel, who had to get their knowledge the hard way. They had to work it out, under the sun, in the dust, the heat and the rain, in the open, unshielded revetments. The older men . . . older in experience and with army schooling . . . trained the new men until it was recognized they were capable of crewing planes, or ready for any of the precise duties demanded by the accurately built aircraft which are our squadron's weapons. The army is a school. It never suspends the training of its men. The training is only intensified on active duty, because necessity drives hard.

Engineers, Armorers, Gunners, Communications, Ordnance, Supply, Kitchen, Motor Pool, Medical. Departments within the Squadron. Coordinated to maintain, operate and fly the ships which are the open pride of every man, and provide the deepest reason for the discipline which can keep us over here, month into year, at peak efficiency. Beyond this division by departments, there is another and more evident division . . . combat and ground personnel. The Tables of Organization designate very clearly where the line is to be drawn. It is a necessary division, even if the individual man must be over-ridden to be forced into the pattern. This division only emphasizes the basic unity of the Squadron, because it proves that our record was made possible only by the fact of each man performing his assigned duty, every day . . . even if it has meant that men have had to sidetrack their personal desires. There is no man knowing the A-20 who would not sell his soul to fly at least one mission in the beautiful ship—but the organization of the Air Corps makes it impractical, and impossible, for all men to fly combat. The Squadron has always known a unity of purpose and spirit, regardless of these necessary divisions. We like to believe that our ships have so bound us together. There is a satisfaction and a thrill in the flight of one of our own squadron ships which an airplane of another squadron cannot offer. We are A-20. There is no other weapon of war quite the same.

Combat personnel, and the ground echelon. Material for a long, boring novel about a man who wanted to fly, and through circumstances beyond his control, found himself duty-bound in the ground echelon of the Air Corps. The men who service the ships have long ago learned that all that is written is not true. Everyone flies over here, on the long moves, to the mainland, from area to area where work is to be done and materiel is to be found. It is not combat flying, of course, but the terrain of New Guinea is not a kindly terrain to any ship or man in trouble. Then there have always been the nocturnal visits of the Japanese, which are admitted to be one of the great common denominators of mankind. The slit-trenches, dug with mathematical care by all ranks, are always equally favored by all men. A bomb falling through the open bombbays of an enemy airplane, droning high overhead, would not differentiate between the men who wore the silver wings, and the men who pulled the pre-flights, loaded the bombs, de-tuned the radios and heated the corned beef hash for two meals a day.

Unity in the Squadron was inescapable, because when a group of men must face together long weeks without mail, solid weeks of field rations, the lack of even the smallest of luxuries which meant that life was reduced to a level of plain and unadorned existence, a bond is formed that is not to be easily broken. If that novel about the earth-bound man is written, and it evolves that he is a bitter and frustrated personality, well, we will figure that he did not come out of the 89th. He would not have stayed around long, because this is a war in which personal hopes and ambitions must often be laid aside.

There is real satisfaction in working on a ship. It is an intricate, deadly and massive weapon, requiring conditioning equal to that given to a thoroughbred racing horse. The man assigned duties as crewchief on a ship recognizes his responsibility, because the men who fly his ship are entirely dependent upon his knowledge and ability. The men in the air have confidence in the knowledge that their ship is crewed by a reliable man, that each phase of the work necessary to keep their airplane's efficiency at peak has been covered by trained air corps men who go beyond their training because of the real recognition of their responsibility. A successful strike at enemy shipping, or a devastating raid upon an enemy airstrip, carries a keen, physical thrill for the men who participated in the mission, and carries a deep satisfaction for the men who watched their ships take off, because they were on that strike, through their work, their quick decisions, their steady, unremitting day after day efforts in the hot, dusty revetments and the open camp, where the routine work was accomplished.

Routine . . . a word that covers territory, and looks out of place in an article discussing the Squadron's part in this war. The headlines of home must give the impression that our existence was made up of continuous action, without respite . . . that we lived in a land of swamp, jungle, rain and blazing heat. The impression was more than half correct, but not in its entirety. The action has not been continuous, for no man or organization can bear action without rest for two years. But there has been more than one period when the combat crews and the men on the line have been very near exhaus-

tion, beneath the strain of weeks of steady missions. There have been other periods, which saw our ships on the ground and the men actually looking for work, because we were waiting to move forward, or there were no targets requiring the close attention of our ships. It was contrast during all of our time overseas, but the well-established routine of camp life, line work and flight-readiness was always followed.

The days always begin early in the Squadron, without formality, when the Charge of Quarters walks through the area, blowing a whistle. Breakfast, and then a formation near the orderly room. Not a complete formation, for the crews are on the line early, often before the sun climbs over the mountains to push away the mists on the strip. The formation over, the men go to their jobs. Engineers, radio, armorers and gunners and ordnance to the line: the orderly room heads for their big tent: motor pool goes back to the never-ending job of keeping the vehicles in running condition. They all scatter, spread out to assigned duties, as they did the day before, and they will the day following. Seven days a week, month into month, their routine continues—the ships go out on missions that are briefly reported in press releases, and the life seems never-ending in its sameness. Until the orders come again, alerting us, to be ready for another long move forward. Then we know that it has paid off.

The saving quality of all men in war is humor. It is as necessary as food and mail, with an even higher priority, perhaps, because of the food we must anticipate, and the veritable droughts of mail that come without explainable cause. The humor will often reach a new height in irony . . . grim humor that might not be understandable to one not engaged in the same job . . . but it is usually sound, and very logical humor that would drive a Boswell to distraction if he attempted to get it on record, and failed. The Cajun's classic, and profitable, gesture towards the Japanese and their inferior methods of manufacturing inferior timepieces, for example. He owned a watch made in Japan, and it proved to be unreliable as a time keeper in New Guinea. He wrote a uniquely insulting note, tied it to the watch, and a gunner heaved it through the bottom hatch of one of our old A-20's over Lae. It was one way of doing business. The bull-sessions that never end . . . beneath the wing of a ship, in the messhall, in the orderly room—but, at their very highest quality—in the tents at night, when the day is ended . . . it is at the bull-sessions where phrases, catch-words and tall stories deserving of immortality are born, and are borne away with the wind into the limbo of forgetfulness. This is typical of the army. We do not know if the armies of the Axis are provided with the same life-saving ability to rid their lives of monotony, discomfort and danger with words that cut away to the bone of contention. It might be given only to the armies that are in the right, and must win in order to give the world a break. A captured Nip diary once told us of the poor quality of the motion pictures that were being sent to the Japanese troops in New Guinea. The writer said that during one showing the audience booed lustily, and got up and left the open-air theatre. His attitude encourages the belief that there is hope for his nation in the post-war world . . . and then it is offset by the words of a Japanese officer, who stated that his unit had been forced to live on herbs, roots and grass for three weeks, but maintained that "it was excellent training". . . . We have

never developed the desire to exist on the grass and roots of New Guinea, and were inclined, at first, to believe that his entry was hard-won humor. The circumstances under which it was found, on his body after the fighting was ended, made it improbable that he knew the meaning of the word. Further proof, undeniably, that an army without humor cannot win.

It takes routine to win the war. Hard work, intelligent work—but if the attitudes and duties are tempered by an irreligious refusal to glamorize and idealize our period of service, the total effect is bound to be greater. It is a serious business. There never has been a war fought which did not add its percentage of heartbreak and disillusionment to the world it hurt. We are no different than ordinary people, for if a ship goes down, and takes men with it—it means a loss which it is not good to think about too long or too often. If we must remain away from our people and our homes for two years, three years or longer, our one salvation is to disregard the loss, and to make our overseas tour of duty effective, disastrous to the enemy, and of value to our own lives. The Runyon Characters will help to make our squadron service memorable . . . the daily press releases, in the newspapers of home, which state that attack bombers again hit Manokwari or Babo . . . but, above all, there will be the consciousness of long association with men who formed a striking force that did a job against odds, and in stride, as if we were back on the sheltered fields of Savannah.

HEADQUARTERS SOUTHERN BOMBER GROUP

Townsville, Australia

25 March, 1942.

MEMORANDUM TO: Eighty Ninth Bomb. Sq. (L)

With great pleasure we extend our thanks and appreciation to the officers and men of the Eighty Ninth Bomb. Sq. (L) who have done such an excellent job of maintaining our aircraft during the preceding fifteen days. Since we have had no ground crews at all and were forced to maintain our aircraft with the crews who flew them previous to your appearance on March 10 we most heartily welcomed you then. Since that time some of your men have been working almost constantly, night and day, and what they have done cannot be overestimated. We could not possibly have maintained the rigorous flight schedule which we have maintained without your assistance.

What we have accomplished is also partly yours. Our enemies have suffered extensive damage because we have worked together. While we cannot publish the exact details of our successes we can tell you that whatever major activity has been discussed in the newspapers regarding this particular area during the last fifteen days we and you played a part in it, a part our enemies won't forget.

You are a fine group of Americans. May your future be as brilliant as your past.

/s/ Richard H. Carmichael,

/t/ RICHARD H. CARMICHAEL,

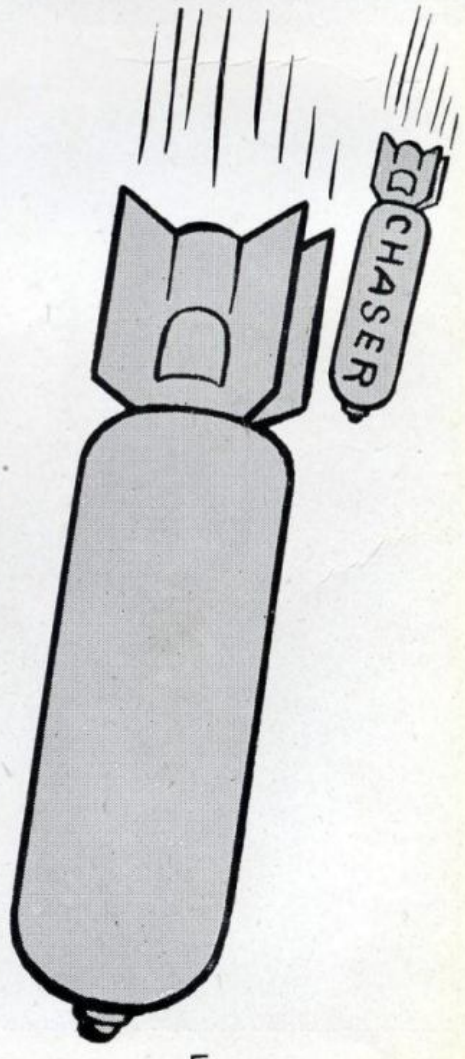
Major, Air Corps,
Commanding.

THE GUNNERS

ENGINEERS–FRONT OFFICE

TECH. SUPPLY

ENGINEERS



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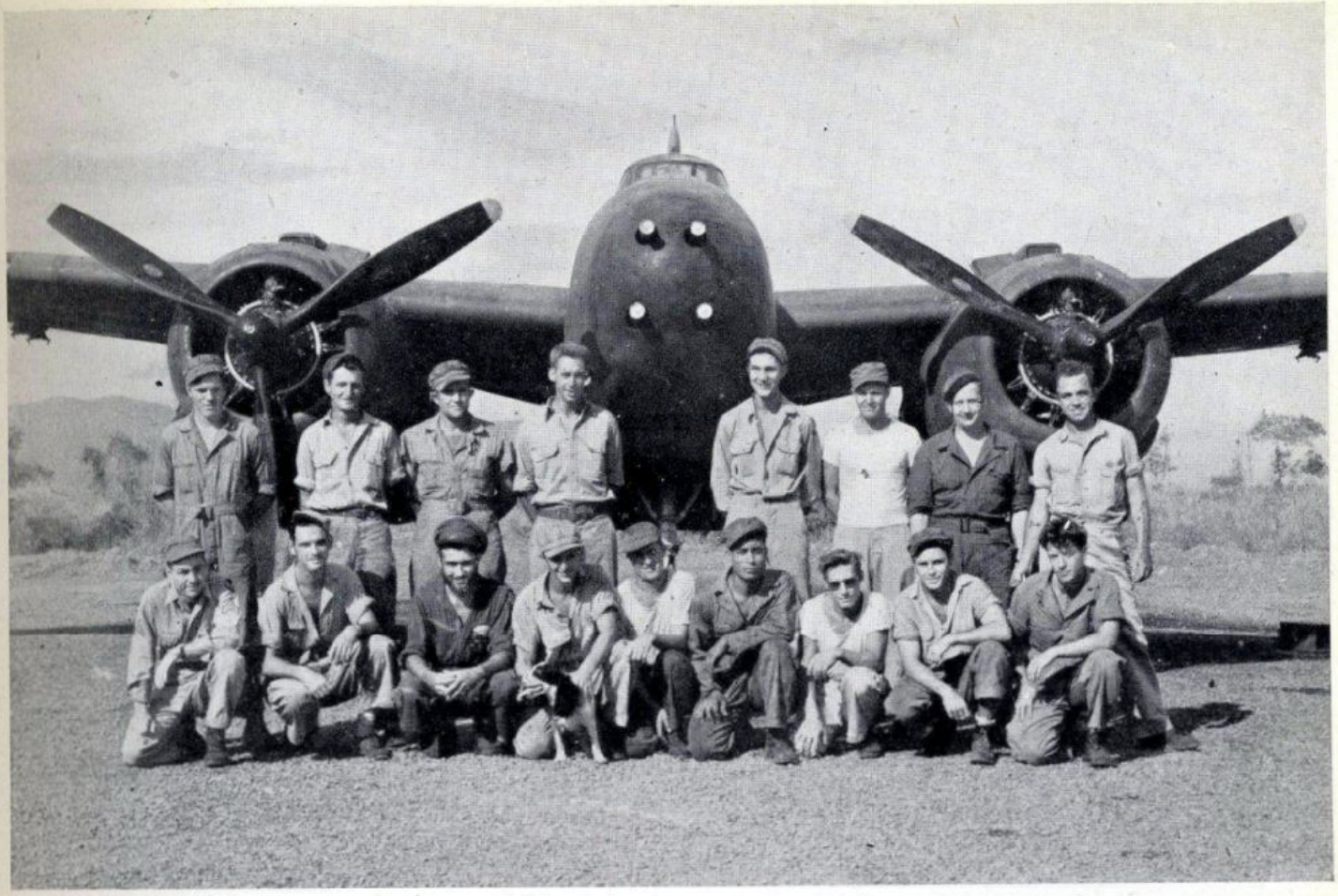

ENGINEERS