WHEN IT WAS ROUGH

THE album was first projected in April, 1943. We had served more than eight months on the island, and looked upon ourselves as veterans of New Guinea, dusty with age, mildewed, war weary, and ready to be relieved. The Bismarck Sea Battle was very recent history. The Papuan Campaign was closed, and the ground forces were tightening their girths in readiness for the next move up the coast. Our ships were still the old originals, flying hard and often. The end of the war was a thing not to be discussed. The rumors were heady and strong. Going home. Going back to the mainland to be re-equipped. Going to Sydney to do submarine patrol. Five per cent a month . . . but there never has been an army worth its time that stood short on rumors. Our outfit was no more rumor-ridden than the other units with us. The force of our strikes across the Owen Stanleys never lessened.

It was always material for discussion—the question of the when and where of our long-awaited move. To 503, to one of the more remote inland fields from where we could reach out and strike the Japanese ground forces, in direct support of our own ground troops. We waited, and our ships still took off from the narrow, hill-bound strip to make the long climb towards the pass. We looked forward to the day when we would operate on the other side of the great mountain range, because it would not be necessary then to sweat out the weather of the Stanleys. The cloud formations that began at ten thousand and went all the way up brought quick age to the men who were caught on the wrong side.

We were willing to move for other reasons. It had become too quiet and too civilized down there. When we first arrived, there was a kind of peace and quiet to the war. A single road that ran erratically into the hills. A headquarters that did not deign to impress a small squadron with its authority. The food wasn't good . . . but there never has been a war that permitted its men to eat three meals a day in the forgotten style of home. We wanted to find out whether the mosquitoes would follow us to the new location. They were the most determined and pugnacious and consistently hungry mosquitoes we have ever met in New Guinea. . . . The basic reason for our desire to move, of course, was simply the logical desire to get forward, closer to the enemy, to work him over hard and steadily.

If the personnel of the various departments is studied, as pictured in 1943 against 1944, it will be discovered that a squadron is always in a state of change. Many reasons dictate change. Transfers, casualties, replacements, illness, men returned to the United States. . . . The men of April, 1943, were the men who had come overseas with the Squadron, or had joined it shortly before, or shortly after the Squadron moved to New Guinea for its record stay. They were here when it was rough. A phrase which is guaranteed to earn the quick hatred of any man who has less time overseas than the man making the calmly insulting statement. Nor does it change the attitude of condescending

superiority to point out that our later moves and recent camps, that our targets of recent months, the number and the length of missions run, can be stacked against anything the first nine months in New Guinea had to offer. Logic simply does not apply.

There are other changes noticeable, chiefly in the ratings. The men who wore the corporal, buck and staff sergeant stripes in 1943, or wore none at all, are wearing a grade higher in 1944. Not all men, however. Promotions are governed by the available openings. An old established squadron does not have those openings, under routine conditions, until they are supplied by transfers, the rotation plan or one of the other means. The combat personnel shows change in greater degree than any of the departments, because of the system of relief and replacement of combat men—and because of the other reasons afforded by missions, and the ordinary routine of flight.

We had the vague belief, in 1943, that there was a possibility of replacements, and relief. We were not the only outfit in the Southwest Pacific to hold that belief. It required time, events and maturity in war before we grew out of it, as our own country had to grow beyond the initial stage after Pearl Harbor, when it believed that the war with Japan would be ended in three months. We found out that Japanese steel, ships and explosives were very effective, that a man suffering injury from a Japanese bullet or bomb-fragment was a genuine casualty, that the rose-tinted theories offered by the arm-chair and cocktail lounge strategists had to be revised. We learned the hard way, with the men of the other units who were there with us.

The first nine months were memorable, and were climaxed by the amazing victory of the Bismarck Sea. The old ships hit every target within their range, introduced the parafrag bomb to the war, gave the closest of ground support to the ground troops of the Papuan Campaign, and kept flying against all odds that conspired to keep them on the ground or on the wrong side of the range. The most important fact, perhaps, was one which never made the daily press releases . . . the fact that we had learned how to live and to work in New Guinea, with the same standard of efficiency that kept our maintenance records, even against the high number of missions run, at the highest levels.

It is unfortunate that several of the pictures taken at that time are missing, because the original plan was to present the entire Squadron, as it was in 1943. Materiel, records, clothing, personal equipment and possessions are hard to hold on to, over here. The necessity of moving the tons of equipment over long distances, under unfavorable conditions, involves a percentage of loss and damage which cannot be avoided. The missing pictures evidently went over the hill during one of our moves, along with other photographs which would have been of value.

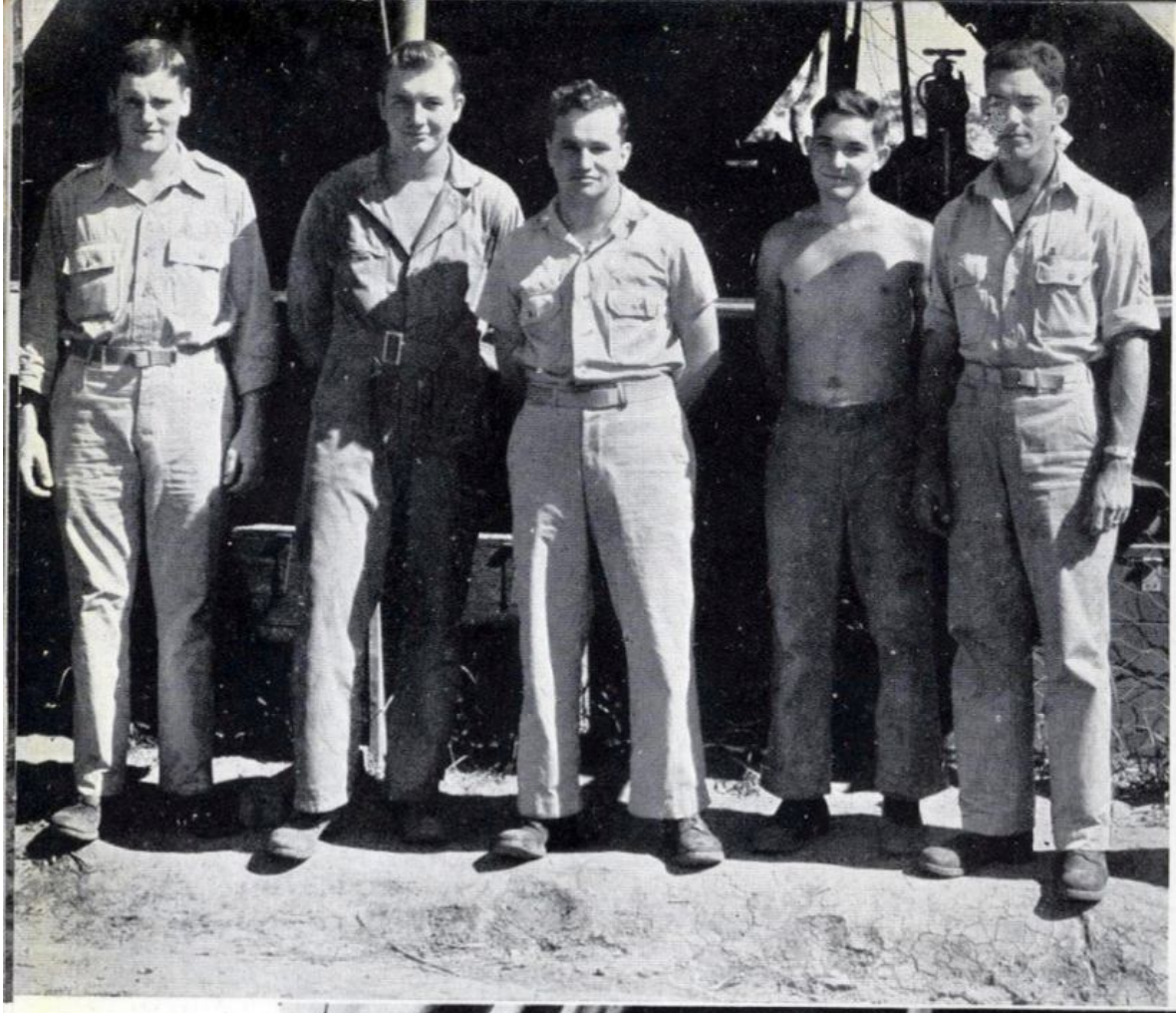
We were becoming veterans, in the first months of 1943, ready for any duty assigned, accustomed to the unusual ways of life on the island, and had learned to look forward to a long war. The months began to go by with amazing swiftness, as the effect of the Allied actions against the Japanese began to show. New pilots and gunners came to the Squadron, and then new ground personnel, well-trained in the schools of the United States. By the end of the year . . . Christmas, in the jungle camp at APO 503 . . . we were re-equipped with new A-20's, our roster was closer to full strength than at any time in the past, and 1944 looked promising. It has lived up to its promise.

ENGINEERING—1943

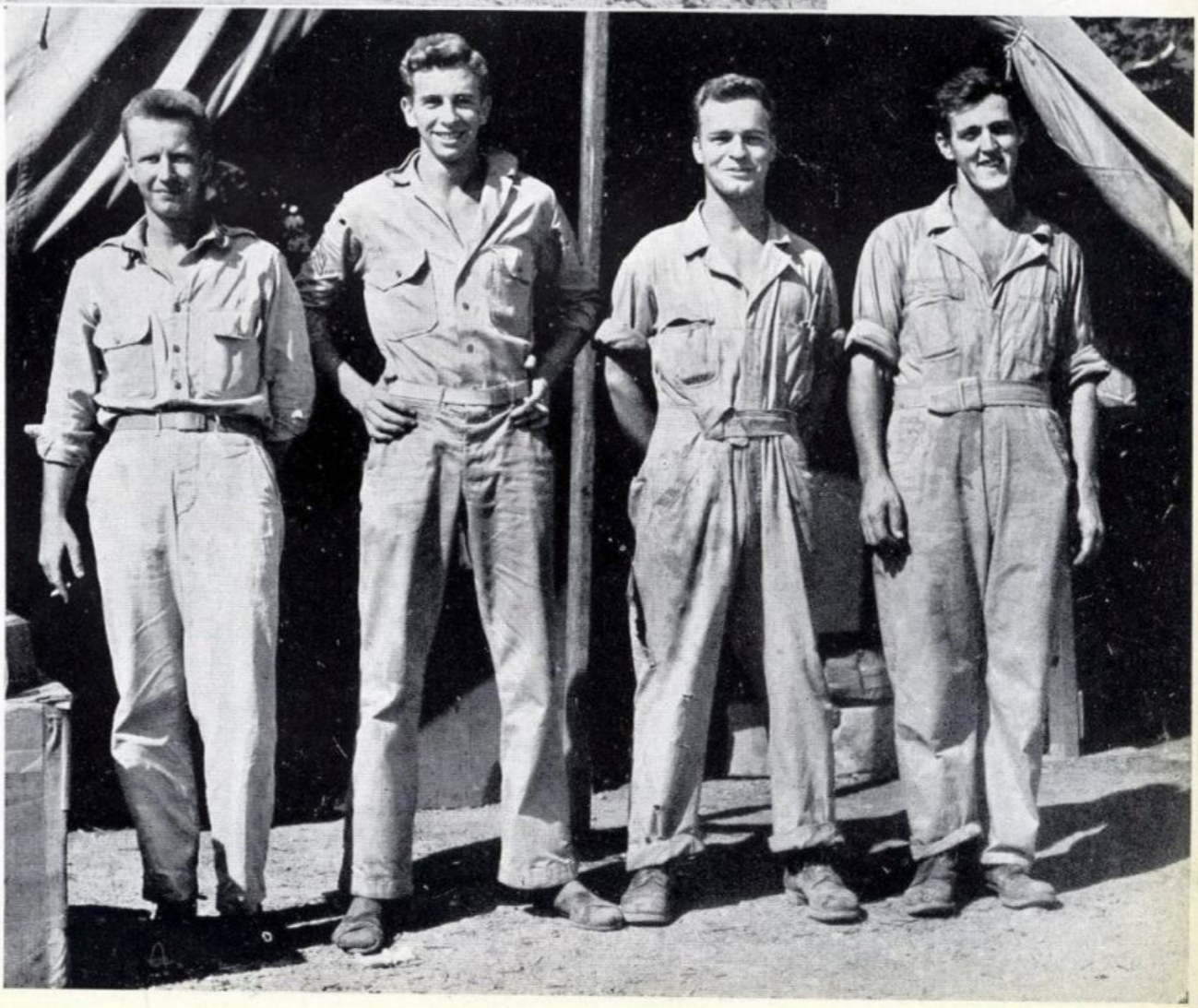
GUNNERS AND ARMORERS—1943

OPERATIONS—1943

COMMUNICATIONS—1943



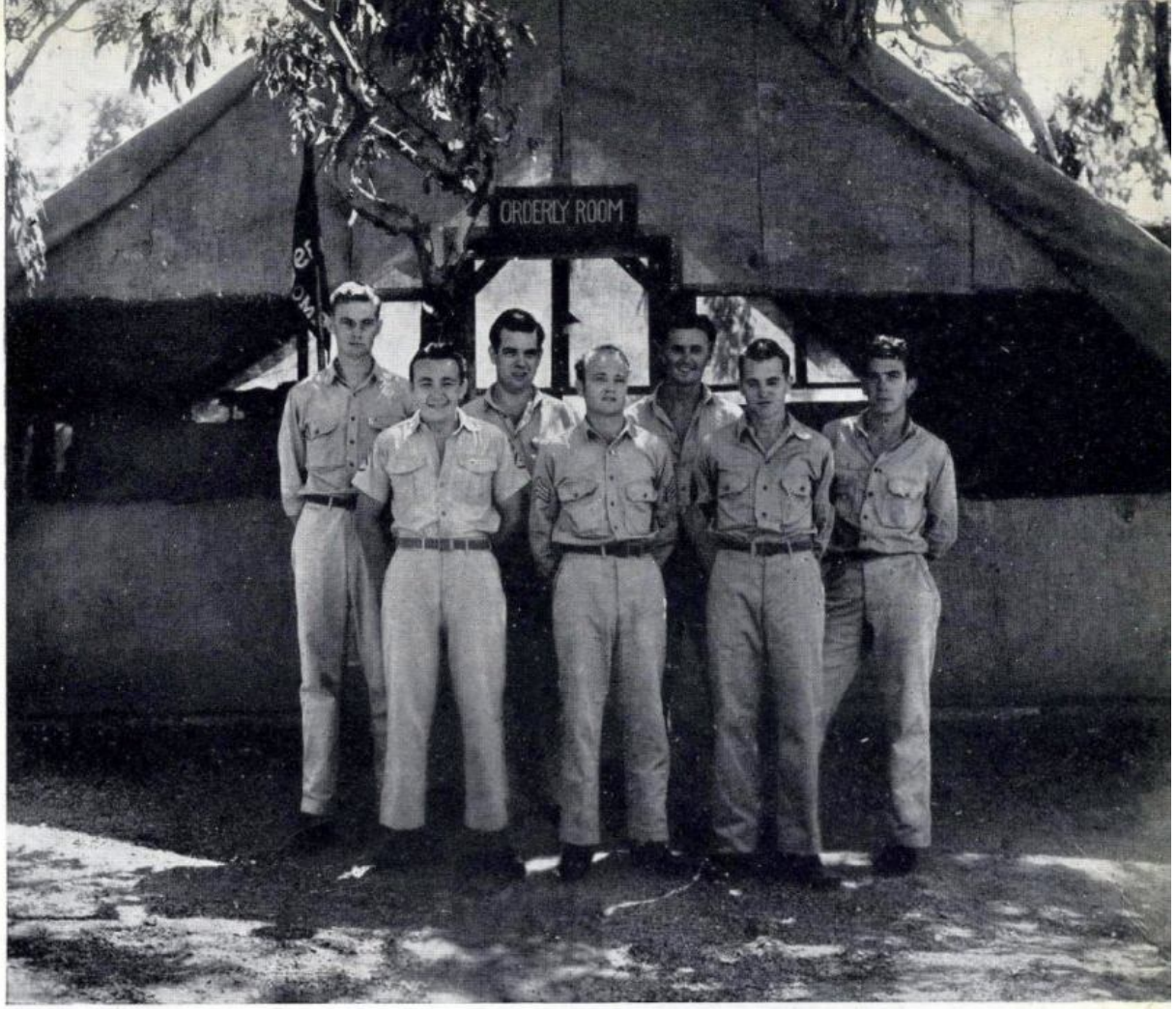
QUARTERMASTER
SUPPLY—1943



TECH.
SUPPLY—1943

ORDNANCE—1943

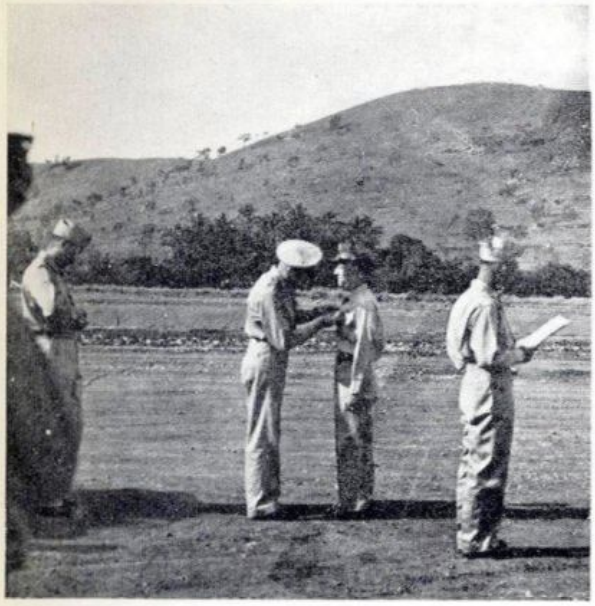
TRANSPORTATION—1943

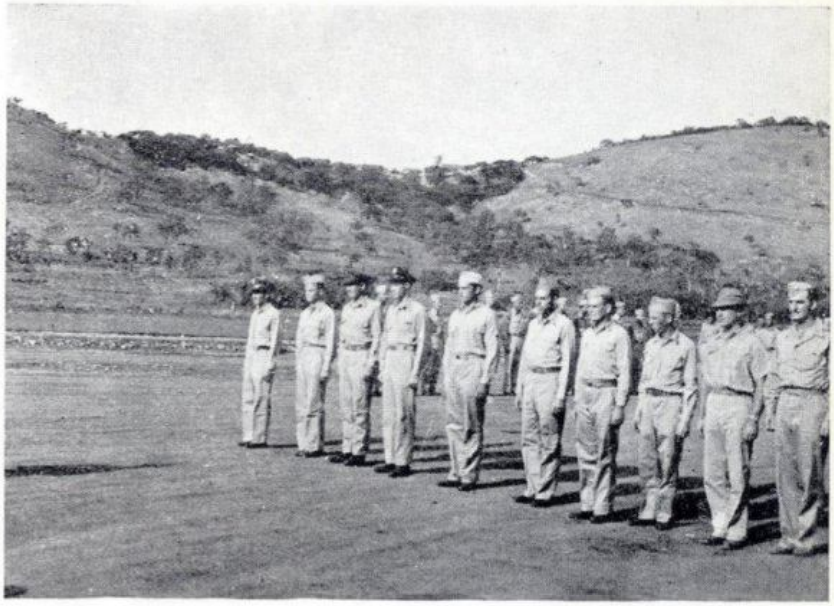


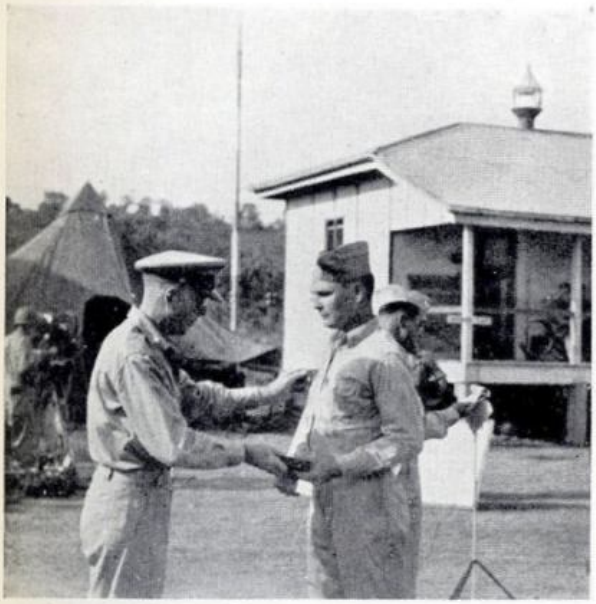
ORDERLY ROOM—1943

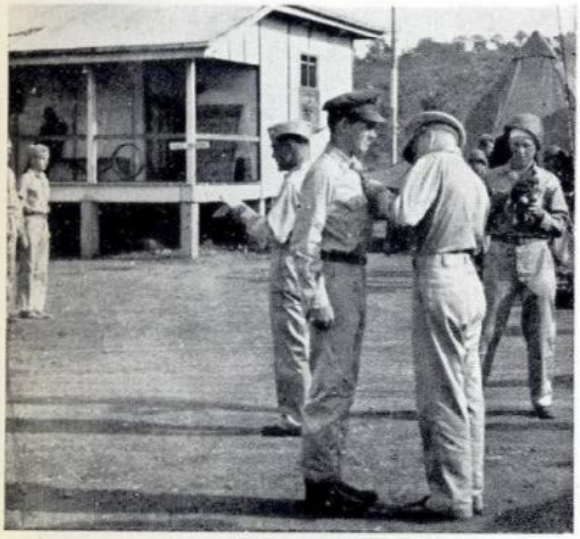
MEDICAL—1943

PILOTS AND GUNNERS—1943, MARCH

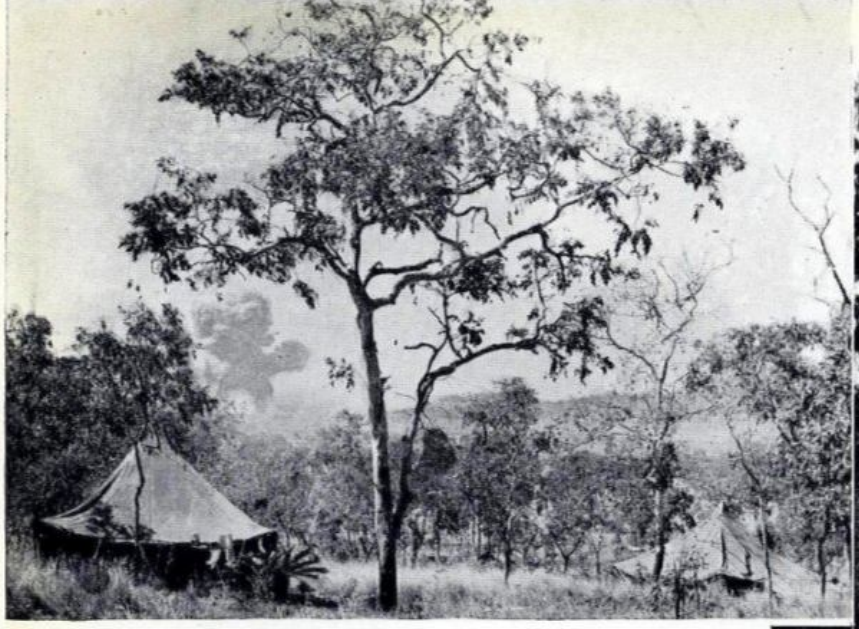


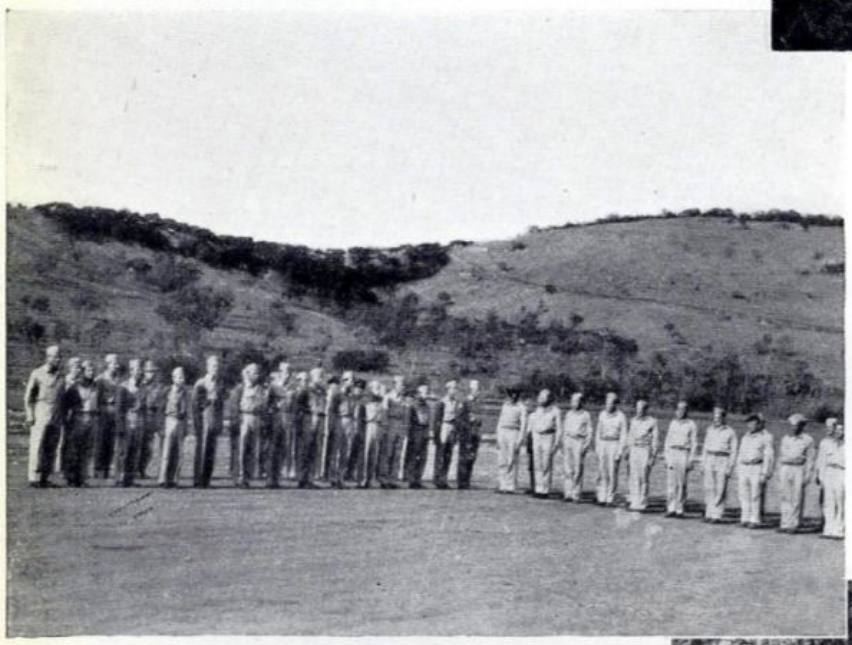




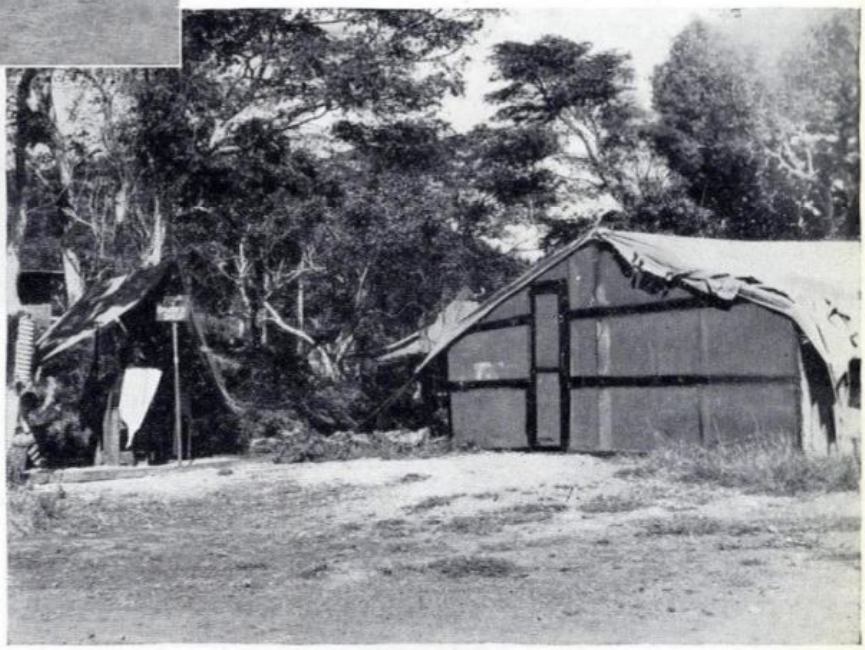


Awards and Decorations. A rare formation, held on a day designated for Maintenance and Training. Petri, Hall, Clark . . . Colonel Hall, in that upper right-hand picture, hunched over a bit in his very typical manner. . . . Taken at old Kila Drome, with the formation in front of the white-painted, hot-walled buildings that always seemed so out of place in that sheltered valley off the coast of New Guinea. We have stood to many of these formations, but this was one of the very first. A material manner of appreciation, for the work that was done, perhaps, but these men had it coming. Some of them will never go home. . . .

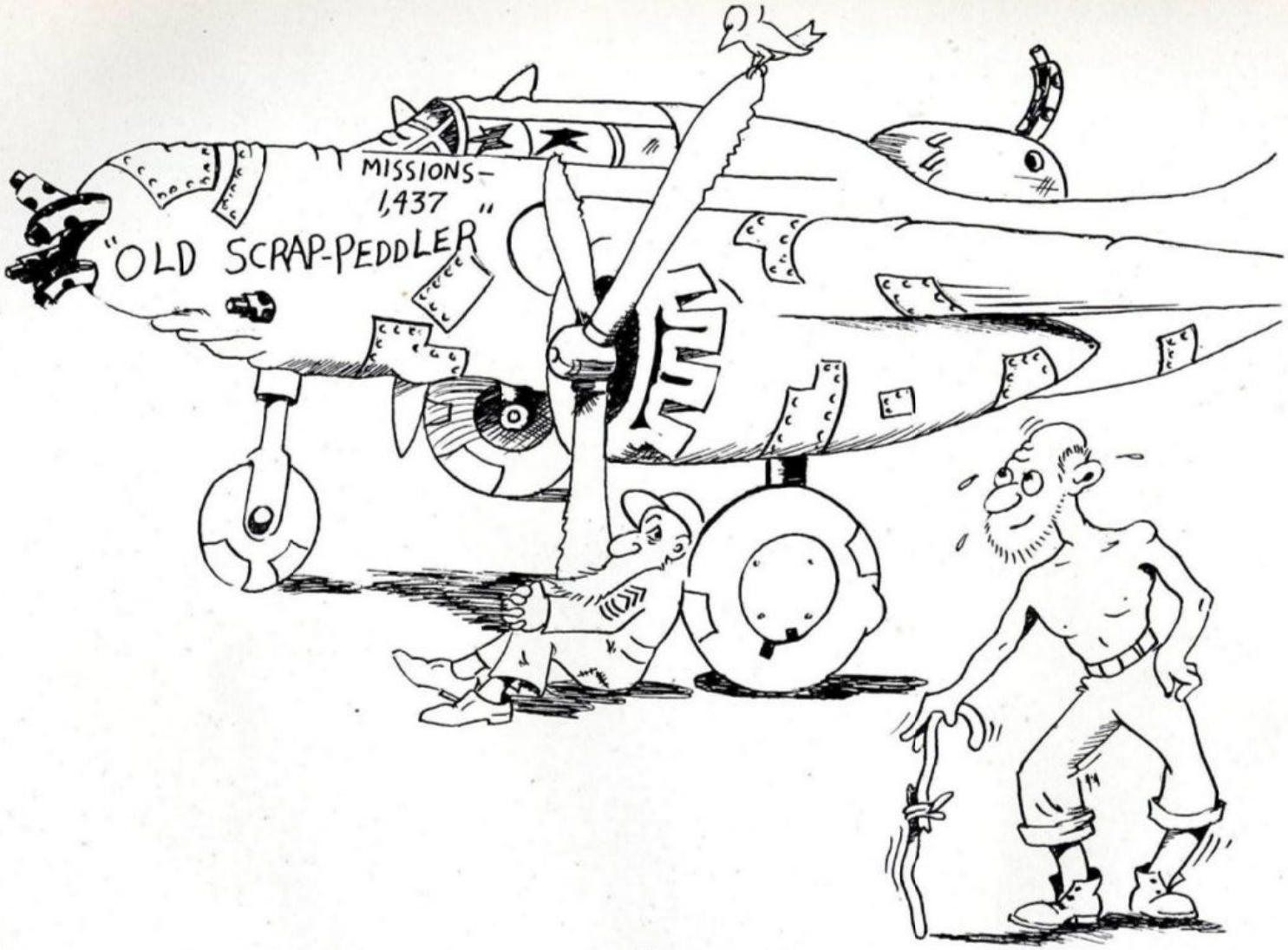




The raid of April 12, 1943, proved that our own fuel and materiel were as combustive and subject to destruction as those produced by Tokyo. It was a close one. They came over in force, but it was the small, lagging formation that struck close to the 89th and Headquarters, and made penitents out of the most callous sinners . . . for a few days.



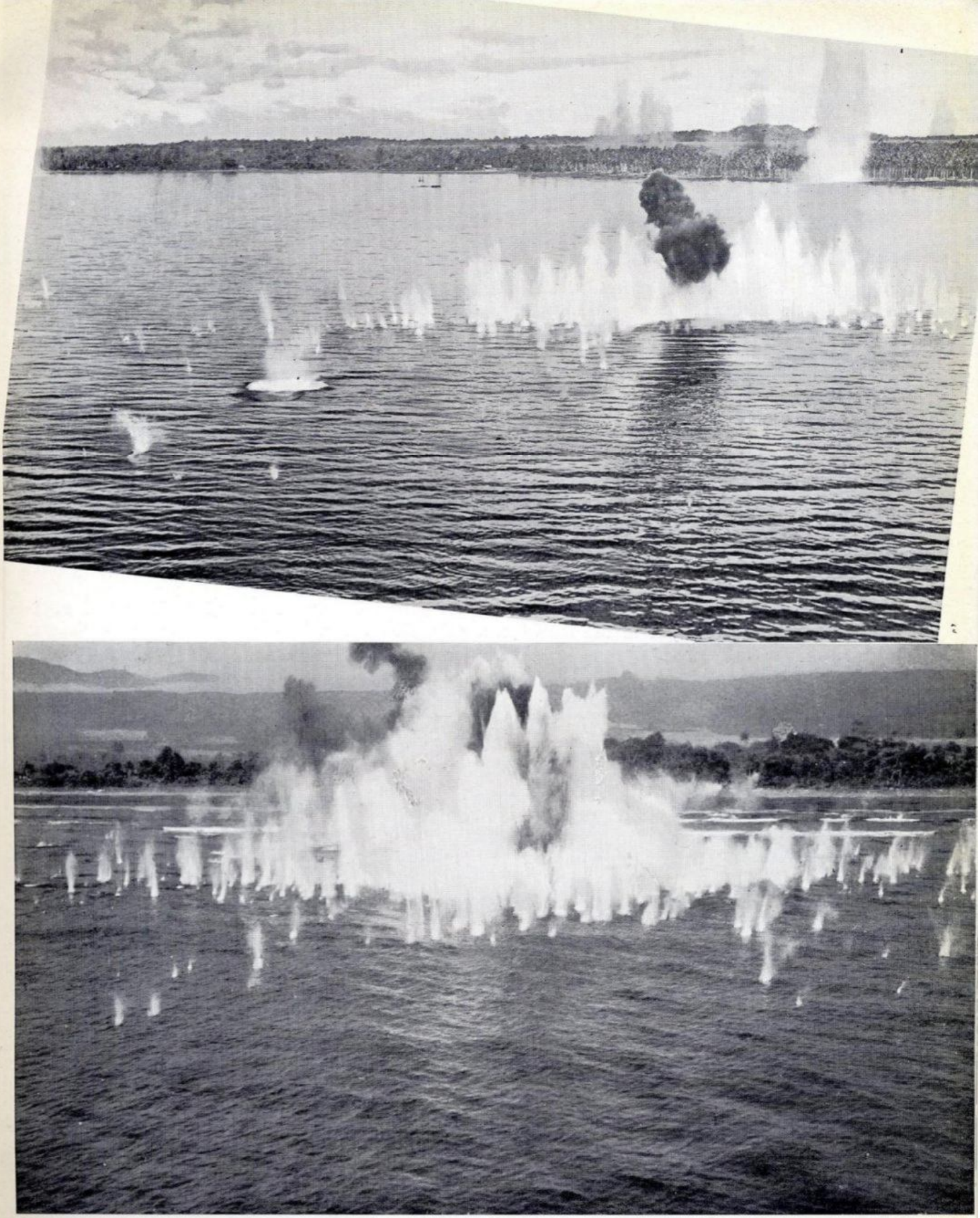
It was our first camp in New Guinea, made memorable by the heat, the mosquitoes, the brief strikes over the Owen Stanleys . . . the approach of the Japanese patrols across the range to within conversational distance of the strips . . . and then there was the close of the Buna Campaign, the Bismarck Sea, and then we began to move.



NEW GUINEA "OLD TIMERS" BENSON

"WELL, G.S., DO YOU RECKON SHE'LL STAND ONE MORE PRE-FLIGHT?"

Parafrags—detonation bombs—and the results. Unfriendly, deadly loads of destruction floating down to the wheel-marked surface of an enemy strip. . . . Craters, filled with the eternal New Guinea rain, making the landing surface unserviceable for the Japanese. . . . Component fighting units of the Imperial Air Force strewn out, useless, ineffective. Jeb Forrest would appreciate this page. This was his style of attack, to hit fast, hard, and to get away.



That's the New Guinea coast in the background, and an exploding ship hidden by those mountains of water. This is what the strategists mean when they refer to the cutting of the enemy's supply lines. Physical violence to interpret the theorist's words. . . .

TO THE AUSTRALIANS

THEY were in the fight from the day Germany struck at Poland. They had men in the Middle East, at Tobruk, in Libya, Syria. Their men are at Singapore, waiting for the day when the Allied planes will come in low, and the sounds of the relief forces shall be clear in the distance. Their Wirraways went into action above Rabaul against the graceful, fighter Zero . . . slow, under-gunned ships, against one of the finest fighters the first months of the war produced. At Port Moresby, their own P-40 squadrons fought against odds for weeks, without respite, until their last day when three P-40's took off to intercept fifteen bombers and their escort of Zeros. Then the American fighters moved in, but the Australians merely returned to the mainland to be re-equipped, and to go to Milne Bay where they fought against the Japanese invaders, to defeat them in the first decisive landing engagement in the New Guinea war. At Moresby, the area was studded with their guns and men, some of them returned from two years in Africa, and calmly, cynically witty about the fates which had taken them from the desert to place them in the jungle.

Their squadron of Bostons was operating from a strip near our first New Guinea base. It was a tribute to the magnificent ship, that the feeling of comradeship became a real thing between the two squadrons, but the beautiful ship and its style of attack made it inevitable. The association between the Australians and the Americans increased, because of very practical reasons, when the Japanese patrols advanced far up the trails towards Moresby. We saw the work of the Diggers on the brutal, undefined front of the first major ground fighting, and it became clear where they had gained their reputation for quiet, vicious determination in battle.

The Australian liaison officers, and their non-commissioned assistants, assigned to the Squadron to keep the channels clear between the air forces and the ground troops, were typical of their nation . . . until the merciless pounding they received forced them to revise their style of speech, and their theories of humor. A six-month period of service was not long enough, of course, to force a complete change-over, but they proved to be well disciplined pupils . . . and their speech became a fascinating mixture of Australian-American army talk, quite ——. The work of the liaison teams was of an importance not easily estimated, for it provided us with a detailed knowledge of the ground situation, an education towards the methods of survival in the jungle, and a more complete understanding of Australia and its people. Captain Stephens, Captain Braddock and Lieutenant Davey were with us, as ALO's. Their service with the Squadron was of value. . . .

The men from a great continent, with a small population which is largely concentrated into a few large cities, have again proved their steel in this war. There will be a new position for their nation in the world, during the generations of progress to come.

AUSTRALIAN MILITARY FORCES

SPECIAL ORDER OF THE DAY

by

Lieutenant-General SIR EDMUND HERRING
K.B.E., D.S.O., M.C., E.D.

GOC 1st AUSTRALIAN CORPS

Headquarters 1st Australian Corps
13 September 1943.

The capture of SALAMAUA marks the end of a campaign of 7 months' duration. It has been a campaign of very great importance to the Allied Cause in the South West Pacific, and I desire to take this opportunity of extending to all of you, Australian and American alike, who have taken part, my heartfelt congratulations. You have all done a magnificent job, have outfought the Jap and have triumphed in spite of the difficult terrain and trying conditions in which you have been called on to fight.

This message is addressed primarily to all of you who have borne the heat and burden of the fighting, to the infantry first and foremost, to the sappers for their grand work in this undeveloped country, to the signalmen who have maintained the vital communications and the medical services who have cared for the sick and wounded in most difficult circumstances.

It is also addressed to all those who have not actually taken part in the fighting, but have made the victory possible by their unceasing and unselfish devotion to duty on the lines of communication by sea and land, to those who have prepared supplies, to those who have loaded them into planes and on to ships, to those who have carried them through the air and over the water, to those who have handled them in all stages of their movement forward and finally those, including the natives, who have carried them to the forward troops.

I would also thank the Air Force for their generous co-operation at all times, and for their magnificent contribution to the victory won.

Lieutenant-General,
General Officer Commanding,
1st Australian Corps.

"I UNDERSTAND YOU A-20 PILOTS ATTACK AT LOW LEVEL"

HEADQUARTERS

ADVANCE ECHELON

FIFTH AIR FORCE

APO 929

1 January 1944.

AG 201.22

SUBJECT: Commendation.

TO : All Air Force Units, New Guinea Area.

1. The following message from the Commander-in-Chief, Southwest Pacific Area, is quoted for the information of all concerned:

"MY HEARTIEST CONGRATULATIONS TO YOU AND THE AIR FORCES UNDER YOUR COMMAND FOR THE BRILLIANT PART TAKEN IN THE CAPTURE OF CAPE GLOUCESTER. THE COOL EFFICIENCY, THE RESOURCEFUL DETERMINATION AND THE SPLENDID COURAGE DISPLAYED BY ALL RANKS FULLY MAINTAINED THE NOBLEST STANDARDS OF THE AIR SERVICE. NOTHING COULD HAVE BEEN FINER.

SIGNED MACARTHUR".

ENNIS C. WHITEHEAD,

Major General, USA,

Deputy Air Force Commander.