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My rest leave trip from New Guinea to Australia aboard Steak + Eggs and how the Good Lord played such an important role in this.

On June 10, 1944 I, John Spothaw decided that I would ride in the nose of Steak + Eggs which is surrounded by plexiglass where the Bombardier used to ride. We were supposed to land at Darwin, then on to Brisbane. On board was the Pilot, Rudy Uchelic, myself, Lewis Doty and a crew chief. A total of four. On the way to Port Moresby the plane developed slight engine trouble and we had to land at Port Moresby for repair. I was told by the Pilot that we would be here for about an hour. I enquired about a Code School's whereabouts, and was told that it was real close and I could walk to it. I had a good friend of mine here taking lessons for the Morse Code. His name is Joe Giglio, from the Communications Department that I belong to. He was

surprised to see me, and he insisted that I take a full bottle of whiskey with me when I go back to the plane. He said that he had bought it for me, and he did not drink whiskey. I am telling you this because later on, this will come into play. When I got back to the plane a purchasing Officer, a Captain had asked the pilot if he could hitch a ride down to Australia, and the pilot OK'd it. The captain asked me if I could do him a favor and I said yes, if I could. He said to me Sergeant, I've always wanted to ride in the nose of an airplane and if you could be so kind to let me take your place up there, I would greatly appreciate it. Naturally I said yes sir, now this is the very first step of the Good Lord's work. I joined the other two passengers in the tail section which were Doty and the crew chief. After riding several hours, we knew that we missed Darwin and

it was raining hard and continuous during the whole flight. The pilot over the intercom asked me if I could take a look to see if I could see land while he dropped down for a few seconds as he could not stay down very long. He did so, and I could not see anything on account of the hard rain. A little later, he the pilot told me to inform the others that we had to prepare for a ditching because he was running out of fuel. He told us to place our barracks bags against the bulkhead with our faces looking toward the tail of the plane. I did this, I was on the left side right next to the entrance door used to get into the plane which is located under the belly of the plane. Now, I am guessing, the door to be 3 feet wide by 5 feet long. Next to me was Doty who was praying with his rosary beads, and he told me that he could not swim, I took my Mae West off + put it over his head and informed not to pull the

cord until he was out of the plane. Next to him was the Crew Chief. I had talked with the crew chief and he agreed with me, that if we were lucky enough to get out of the plane that both of us should rush to the front of the plane where the Captain was with all the plexiglass around him. When the pilot brought the plane on the first hit, the entrance door broke loose from its hinges with tremendous force flying right past my head and tore a huge hole in the top of the fuselage as if it was tearing thru paper. The door flew out the right side of the plane and hit the stabilizer or tail section squarely knocking chunks of metal off. It seemed like it was tangled up on the tail because it kept hitting it, knocking metal off into the water. I found out later that this tail section had the number 166 on it. Finally the door and the loose metal DEERED off and fell into the Coral Sea, many miles short of the next jet down. Immediately after the entrance door flew off the plane

started to wobble so bad that I don't know to this day how the pilot ever got the plane back down to the water.

It is no wonder the plane was wobbling so bad because the wind gusting thru the hole where the door had been and shooting back to the tail, the wind shooting thru the huge tear in the fuselage and going back to the tail. On the second let down, I watched a wall of water being scooped up where the door was off and shooting right back to the tail thinking any moment that the whole tail section would break loose from the rest of the plane. The wall of water went back to the tail, then reversed and came back over us, drenching us completely. Now on top of this, when the pilot lowered the tail section on the second let down the impact hitting the water kicked steak & eggs straight up in the air. I would guess about 50 to 100 feet. I know the pilot could not have had any knowledge that the entrance door had gone off of the plane because

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he was struggling to get the plane back down to the water. When I heard the plane scraping the ground, I knew that we were in shallow water. Now this is where the Good Lord was at its best, where would anyone expect to hit shallow water in the Coral Sea? A miracle to be sure. When the plane stopped, the crew chief and I got to the front of the plane where the Captain was. He found most of the Plexiglass broken the Captain had a collar bone sticking out thru his flesh on one shoulder and deep cuts on one leg. We dragged him out of the plane to a small bush on land just to the right of the water's edge. We opened a parachute & spread it over the bush and the Captain to shelter him from the hard rain. He was delirious. Right away I thought of my whiskey bottle. Did it survive the crash?? I waded out to the plane in water no more than 3 feet deep and peered over the side and sure enough, there was the bottle of

Whiskey floating on the water. I took it back to the Captain, lifted his head up, and told him to take a good gulp. which he did, and he smiled at me and I patted him on the back. I left the bottle with him and did not touch it the rest of my stay there on the Low Wooded Isle, the third day that we were on this ~~isle~~, the weather broke and I decided to do a little bit of exploring. I walked south of the plane to about one third of the strip of ground which had to be no more than 40 to 50 feet wide at the most and a little longer than a foot ball field. About a $\frac{1}{3}$ of the way in, I ran into a SWATH of water, maybe 20 FT WIDE running from the right side to the left side on the whole piece of ground. It was no more than 2 to 3 feet deep. There were FISH of all colors and sizes swimming back and forth from one side to the other. I tried to catch a fish here later this day, but I didn't have any luck.

I intend to ask Bruce if this still exists when he went there in 2010. I'll Jerry. I hope that this information may help you or anyone else concerning STENKE Eggs. I can see why the tail of the plane, already weakened by the door off and the huge tear in the fuselage being battered constantly for 68 years by the high surf and the high winds that are so prevalent in this area. I have to assume that in time the tail section just folded back over the wings. It's been a pleasure writing this to you & you will have to excuse me for the bad writing. Respectfully

John Spethos.