



Cpl. Arthur Blodjian
21st Squadron
Fuel Truck Driver

Art was born on 3-1-1921 and grew up in Danvers Massachusetts.

Art left high school before graduating. "I wanted to be an electrician".

"I was a C student, C-, C+ and C. I had two teachers that I liked a lot. My 8th grade teacher and freshman high school. If I needed another mother the 8th grade teacher would have been it. Also, I was a crossing guard in the 8th grade. Now they have semi-retired people and pay them.

I also liked my freshman math teacher. My weak areas were fractions and long division so I didn't pass the first year. But I still liked the teacher. He was a very good teacher. The one I didn't like was the English teacher. If she gave me an A+ I still don't think I would have. After reading my notes you are probably thinking I should have paid more attention to her."

Art's father wouldn't pay for trade school, so Art paid for it himself by working as an auto mechanic at a Chevrolet dealer. "There was no course in electricity." So Art studied auto mechanics. Although he wasn't able to finish before the war, he went back afterwards and finished with the support of the GI Bill.

Art's father, who had been a chicken farmer, wasn't working when the war broke out. Art, in the meantime, was now working as a welder in a shipyard. Because of his father's income and his work as a welder Art had two reasons for deferment. Nevertheless, Art entered the Army Air Force.

When Art was drafted, at his physical the army learned he was asthmatic and weighed only 118 lbs. Art was put in limited

service with a "no combat" restriction. He was sent to Chennault Field in Chicago where he learned to drive many trucks and ended up driving a tanker truck.

At Millville, NJ, where he was refueling P-47Ds Art "could back a tractor trailer in between two planes". The rule was that the planes were fueled from behind. There had been an incident in which a plane's guns had accidentally been fired and went through a house that neighbored the field. A bullet hitting one of the tankers would have been catastrophic. Another safety precaution was that "each nozzle had a grounding cable connected to the wing."

Art recalls sailing to Japan on the Kota Inten. "Kota Inten means City of Diamonds."

"It was dark when we sailed out of Puget Sound. We listened to Tokyo Rose on the radio. After two to three days out she reported that the Kota Inten was at sea."

Art recalls that the ship sailed from Seattle to Hawaii on its own, not as part of a convoy. In Honolulu, the Kota Inten docked under the Aloha Tower and, while the men had to stay on the ship, hula dancers came to the dock and put on a show.

As they left Hawaii, they were joined by 3 other troop ships and 3 destroyers. As their little convoy made its way across the Pacific, one of the other troop ships broke down. Before they left it behind; "we all yelled over at them 'you'll be sorry'." "A few days later we broke down."

Art remembers the Lascar crew showering with their clothes on. On another occasion he got a look around the engine room. "The pistons were as big as aluminum ash cans." He also recalls flying fish "flying" alongside of the ship.

"We got an increasing amount of sunshine every day." Later, when they docked and had the opportunity to swim, the men all swam naked. "I stayed in the water all day." While sunning on the deck of the Kota Inten, Art had always worn shorts and was tan from the legs down and the belly up. After his day in the water he had an uncomfortable sunburn in between.

On Ie Shima they were told not to shower with the local water because they would get ringworm. Art did anyway. "We were so dirty, I figured we'd kill the ringworm." (Art didn't get ringworm.)

The island had peanuts growing in the ground and the "sorriest looking sugar cane I ever saw."

As for the nightly air raids, Art felt he was very lucky. If the Japanese bombed the "revetment area" (where the living quarters were), he was on the "line" (the air strip). "I always seemed to be in the other place when they bombed." "One guy built a bomb shelter out of empty gas cans."

At one point a Japanese soldier was spotted in an area of shrubs. "We surrounded him and were shooting at him." Art remains surprised that he and his comrades didn't hit each other. "We didn't hit the Jap either and he went up and surrendered to the officer's quarters."

After the war Art again tried to become an electrician. "I couldn't join the union without a sponsor and I couldn't get the training without being in the union." Art went back to the Chevrolet dealer and eventually retired from the Massachusetts Department of Public Works.

