from

SEATTLE

to

IE SHIMA

with the

413TH FIGHTER GROUP (SE)

A Narrative by Parker R. Tyler, Jr. Captain, Air Corps

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A NARRATIVE

by

PARKER R. TYLER, JR.,
Captain, Air Corps

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By Parker R. Tyler, Jr.
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This narrative was written in order to share with some friends my overseas experiences.

It's a sort of long letter that I was always going to write but never did till now.

PRTJr

Published By

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Cpl. Louis H. Axelrod

DEDICATED
to
my associates
in
SUPPLY AND TRANSPORTATION
413th Fighter Group

HEADQUARTERS

My "own little" sub-section

T/Sgt. Michael J. Grow
S/Sgt. John F. Begley

Materiel and Transportation

Maj. W. R. Waller, Jr.
Capt. L. D. Millikan
Capt. J. L. Studdard
Lt. R. J. Lather
WO. J. D. Hartman
T/Sgt. W. H. Gustafson
S/Sgt. R. H. Steer
Sgt. E. Rndzik
Sgt. F. G. Mertin
Cpl. J. Gentempo
Pfc. L. L. Russell
Pfc. C. Hill

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Lt. J. F. Neall
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S/Sgt. P. G. Moen
S/Sgt. G. M. Patterson
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Pfc. J. W. Gregory
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Lt. J. F. Harkness
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Sgt. R. L. Moore
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Cpl. A. H. Blodjian
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Cpl. B. Kennedy, Jr.
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Cpl. W. G. Rochester
Cpl. N. Snyderman
Cpl. G. V. Tillinghast
Pfc. R. Honsley
Pfc. V. O. Hunt
Pfc. A. J. Lombardi
Pfc. R. O. Miller
Pfc. V. C. Phillips
Pfc. C. T. Pierson

34th FIGHTER

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Lt. W. J. Woods
Lt. J. M. Wyndham
S/Sgt. A. E. Hoffman
S/Sgt. W. C. Kessler
S/Sgt. A. H. Krasinski
Sgt. T. H. Cowley
Sgt. S. R. Crocker
Sgt. D. M. Galie
Sgt. H. J. Heiner
Sgt. G. A. Lane
Sgt. D. Presto
Sgt. L. S. Rodgers
Cpl. H. C. Bostic
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Cpl. S. P. Korsak
Cpl. M. Lopez
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Pfc. J. A. Joseph
Pfc. R. J. Ray
Pfc. J. M. Reid
Pfc. K. R. Rollins
Pvt. S. J. Sidlik

We looked the transport over four days before we were to sail. It was a disappointment. A big grey white Dutchman by the name of Kota Inten. Dirty, we thought. The deck crew were Lascars from India; the rest of the crew, Javanese; the officers, Dutch. The day before, we'd inspected a Navy transport which sparkled and gleamed. The dirt of the Kota was a let down. Our fears, however, disappeared the day we embarked. The Kota was spotless. Learned then that when a transport is loading cargo, it doesn't go in for spit and polish until just before the troops arrive.

The 34th loaded the day before we sailed. There's quite a ritual about boarding a transport. First, troops assemble with full field equipment in the staging area, pile into trucks and drive down to the long docks of the Port of Embarkation itself. The trucks stop in a long line to disgorge their human cargo. A large Port band begins to play popular music. While the troops line up in the order they'll go aboard, Red Cross ladies appear from nowhere with a welcome doughnut, cup of coffee and a word here or there. Then, band blaring away, the boys start up the gangplank.

Didn't notice many smiles on our men's faces as they got out of the trucks waited in line or climbed up the gangplank. Remarks as to "this is it" were frequent. Everyone had been built up to this day….the day when we actually were going overseas. It would be a long long time before we saw our families again. Some of us had been fortunate enough to call our homes long distance that very day. A feeling of definite separation was marked. The spell of solemnity, however, seemed to break once the men put their baggage on their bunks and returned to the deck to see more and more troops come aboard. Cries of "you'll be sorry" were frequent as the boys kept coming. The lines of troops were punctuated by the same routine of striking up the band, the roaring of another truck convoy to a stop, sharp bursts from MP motorcycles, flurries of activity by Red Cross ladies, and music which ended abruptly when the last man of the contingent put his foot on deck.

The thought occurred to many that some of us wouldn't be coming back. We wondered who might be the first. In less than four months, four officers and two EM on the Kota were to die.

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Troops loaded most of the day. Finally, the last man came aboard, the gangplanks were raised and made secure. Then the old army game….we waited. Nothing seemed to happen. After about three hours, the Kota began backing into the Sound. All of us had restlessly awaited this moment. Again, most of us, silently or otherwise, said to ourselves, “this is it”. A sense of finality came over me as the big ship slowly turned and headed up the Sound. It was a typically rainy Seattle April day with the sun at intervals peeping in and out of the huge grey clouds which hid the Olympics and Cascades. The land of green trees slipped by swiftly. Then, as darkness descended with fog, the horn began to blow. We worried about that darn horn. We were sure that some submarine was lurking right outside the Sound and would treat those blasts as the mating call. Soon the passengers went to dinner.

For the officers, it was a pleasant surprise. There were three sittings for them. Their mess hall was small but clean. The food delicious. Each of the officers had a seat; oil cloth for a tablecloth. The EM were so many that their mess accommodations were not as nice. First, they had to wait in line; second, they had to stand while they ate from long high tables; and third all of them had to be rushed through the chow line in about an hour. Together with this poor presentation, the food didn’t seem attractive to them.

The Kota was carrying a large overage of officers and had them stacked 9 in a stateroom and in the first hold. The other three holds held EM. In each of the four holds were two decks. Bunks were three high in both officers’ and EM’s quarters. Officers had mattresses and pillows while EM had a canvas “mattress” or “spring”.

There were three other outfits on the Kota with us: an Ordnance Depot Company, a Port Company and a Bomb Disposal outfit of one officer and five EM. Three officers of the Ordnance Depot Company lived with Larry Studdard and myself: Capt. Bob Homma, the C.O., and 1st Lts. Bruce Walker and Hobart Falen. Nice boys and a great contribution to the pleasantness of the voyage. None of us got in the other’s hair all during that 32 day trip. Bob was teaching a couple of his officers bridge and I was doing the same with a couple of our officers. Bob and I would have occasional matches with one of our students as our partners. Bill Alter, the Bomb Disposal officer, was one of

the pleasantest kids I've met. Had a job that never appealed to me….deactivating enemy bombs.

The second day out all were saddened by the news that Ernie Pyle had been killed by a sniper on a small island in the China Sea. None of us had ever heard of it before. It was called Ie Shima.

In a very short time, each man fell into his own routine. Some read, others played cards, many seemed to write most of their day and a few did nothing but sun bathe or stay in the sack. The ship had a routine of its own. Every morning just before dawn, there was the morning stand-to. 5:15 AM was reveille and at 5:30 everyone had to be up on deck. In the evening, at dusk , there was an evening stand-to. All portholes had to be secured, no further smoking was permitted on the open deck and no lights were tolerated. The stand-to's were to meet the prevalent habit of submarines to attack just at dawn or dusk. Gun crews were always at their station during stand-to.

The first week out was chilly. I was the only officer to spend much time on deck. Had brought along my short overcoat. Some of the boys got a kick out of my sitting on deck, collar around my ears, with only my nose sticking out, reading my Gloria's letters over again or some book I'd picked up in the ships library. I wanted to see a beautiful sunrise in the morning. In my attempt to do this, would get topside about 0445 or 0500. Went 7 whole days without seeing one; too many clouds. Then was rewarded with a gorgeous symphony of color and light that rose to a beautiful crescendo.

Speaking of sunrises reminds me of the censorship hazards. Gloria wrote that the censor had cut out part of my description of sunrise. Not my first sunrise but another. Seems that on that particular day, as the sun was breaking through the mists, a low elongated cloud passed majestically from north to south, just over the peeping sun. The cloud was broken into many smaller clouds of various shapes. It appeared to be a string of small animals walking in single file. Mentioned the different animals that my imagination saw. All the animals were cut out.

As usually happens during any gathering of people, some phrases catch on and become sort of slogans or battle cries. Our ship was no exception. The gun crews were

summoned to their posts by the Chief Boatswain's Mate with the stern announcement over the Public Address System, "all armed guard personnel will shift into condition one". This announcement repeated at least twice a day, with the introduction, "now, hear this", became a slogan of the highest order. We still talk of "shifting into condition one". For instance, during an air raid, at the sound of the siren, if I were in bed, would shift into condition one by putting on my shoes and then lying back till I heard the ack ack guns begin to boom. Another famous or infamous remark arose from all announcements over the PA system. MP's would be told to "report to the mess hall immediately". Sgt. or Pvt. so and so would be asked to "report to the Transport Commander's office immediately". The word, "immediately", began to stick in our craws. If anyone had to make an announcement, he either studiously avoided "immediately" or enthusiastically jumped in and tried by means of different inflections to take the curse off the word.

Our first stop was Hawaii. The beauty of Oahu with its brilliantly green valleys and massive mountains is breathtaking. The water was a deep blue which, as it became shallow, sharply turned to green. We waited two hours outside Honolulu harbor for the pilot. As we sailed inside and passed many different ships, transports, works ships, etc., their crews and passengers would shout, "you'll be sorry". All of us, officers and EM, had behaved very circumspectly on the voyage to Hawaii because there was a bare possibility that we'd get off the ship and see the sights. We tied up to the pier on which another army band was loudly blaring familiar Hawaiian songs. All of us were dressed in clean suntans, ready to get off the ship. An hour after tying up, came the unhappy announcement, "by order of the Commanding General of the port, no one will be allowed off the ship".

Resigning ourselves with many a curse and a few smiles, we resumed our shipboard activity. At least the weather was good. So was the scenery, what we could see of it. Some officers had brought binoculars. All of us took turns looking through them. Hawaii is amazingly fresh. The Green is just as though the "paint were still wet". The valley floors rise gradually from the sea and end high up on the confluence of the two mountainous sides. The adjective "lush" kept going through my mind. Every possible piece of ground had its bit of plant life growing.

All during that morning and afternoon in Honolulu harbor, I kept telling everyone how much I wished I were ashore, had an automobile and a fistful of “C” coupons so I could ride around this wonder isle.

At 4 o’clock in the afternoon, the gods smiled on me. A Quartermaster Captain came aboard to ask our CO if we’d received the additional supplies authorized by the Commanding General of the 10the Army. No, we hadn’t; hadn’t even seen the letter. Capt. Moore (the QM officer) then asked if I might accompany him ashore so we could make up the necessary requisitions. As we got into his jeep, I said, “boy, you sure know the right thing to say”. He replied, “I thought you’d like to get ashore”.

We drove to his station, Wheeler Field, about 20 miles away from Honolulu. How disappointing were my first sights….run down neighborhoods and poorly dressed natives. Bob Moore explained that we were driving through the poorer part of town. Leaving the city, we passed supply depot after depot, army, navy and marine. The traffic amazed me. As heavy as any I’d ever seen in the states. All military. Not once in that drive to Wheeler did I see a private automobile.

Pearl Harbor is still a fantastic revelation to me. The shipping, literally stacked in the three sections of the Harbor, was proof that a picture was worth a million words. Certainly, I’d read accounts of how many ships the Navy had, how large our merchant tonnage was. Yet, with all that warning, the sight of what was evidently only a small part of our total strength floored me. By the time, I’d passed the first two locks, found myself without adjective to express my feelings.

After leaving the last Pearl Harbor lock, started climbing, passing one mountain range and looking across vast meticulously planted pineapple fields at another range of heavy blue mountains. The sun was dropping fast. The coloring of the mountains with their rugged rock sides, accentuated by the heavy white and whispy clouds was a perfect companion to the falling crisp temperature as we kept gaining altitude.

At last we reached Wheeler and Bob Moore’s BOQ. What a lucky man he and his fellow officers are for their oversea duty. Four of them had a house that in peacetime was an

officers' home. There was a wonderful electric range and a marvelously large and gleaming white refrigerator. Bob introduced me to his fellow tenants. Then over to the office where we worked till 9 o'clock. Back again to the house where we shared a large dish of canned peaches that had been chilling in the refrigerator. Had a fresh water shower before hitting the sack (on the Kota we had only salt water jobs). The next day, more work over at Bob's office. The head of Bob's section, Lt. Col. Roberts, knowing that I was anxious to get to the Hawaiian Air Depot, volunteered to take me in his own private car while Bob "walked through" our requisitions at the QM offices. The Colonel was a swell person, from Kentucky, who'd been in Hawaii for 38 months and was due for a 30 day leave the following month. He devoted his whole morning to taking me where I had to go in the Air Depot. After lunch, he drove me through the city. Showed me the famous Waikiki Beach, the two big hotels and the back streets of Honolulu. In fact, he showed me things I'd have had to spend weeks to see myself.

Spent the afternoon with Capt. Moore in his expediting of our requisitions. Then back to the ship, my "prison", for dinner and to wait for the supplies as they were brought in by truck. The Special Service Officer and the Red Cross Representative had arranged for a genuine Hawaiian entertainment with the Hawaiian girls doing the hula and other native dances with songs and music. It was well done and appreciated by the entire ship's company who were permitted on the pier for the show. One highlight of the evening was a GI's arising and starting to dance jitterbug style. A native girl followed suit, doing as well as he did. Another highlight was four Hawaiian girls instructing four GI's in dancing the hula. The contrast between the smooth rhythmic hip movements of the girls and the awkward jerking of the boys was truly hilarious.

While visiting the QM warehouse in the afternoon (Bob was getting them ready so he could draw what was coming to us as soon as the trucks arrived), one of the warehousemen had said they'd need some help in loading the equipment. Told them I'd give them the men. Had in mind arranging for the supply sergeant from each of the squadrons to go. It would be a break. They'd get off the ship and I was sure they'd be promoters enough to get Bob's driver to take them through Honolulu. The "lucky" boys left about 1730 and then discovered they had to load a huge 25' flatbed trailer.

They donkied enough stuff out of that warehouse to stack a pile 5’ high on the trailer. Whenever Grow, Patterson, Murphy and Galie think of Honolulu, I am sure they’ll remember the “break” I arranged for them.

During the show, the supplies started to come in. The last of them arrived about 2 o’clock in the morning. The supply officers and EM stayed up till 0430, setting up counters and breaking open the boxes so that we could make quick distribution. In the morning, we took a squadron at a time off the ship, passed them along the counter, induction center style, and gave them all the extra equipment. After we ran the squadrons through, we took the officers. Bill Woods helped us that morning. Was proud of the way the supply personnel came through and ran the “show”.

While the Kota waited for the pilot outside Honolulu Harbor, part of our flight echelon took off from Hawaii and flew over the ship on their way to Majuro. Others of the flight echelon came down to the Kota that first afternoon and visited with the boys….making them jealous too. (They’d flown from the states to Hawaii in C-54’s in a matter of hours, we’d taken 8 days.)

Then farewell to Hawaii, after a breakneck rush to load additional supplies which all units aboard had picked up there. Lingered off Pearl Harbor while the convoy was made up and then on to the next stop, Eniwetok. The old familiar routine of shipboard life resumed with the exception that as we left Hawaii and got further away, temperatures became warmer. The dress of everyone became briefer and briefer. On our trip to Hawaii from the states we had two women aboard….an army nurse and a civilian employee of the Army returning from a vacation.

While it was pleasant for some of the single officers to have female companionship, it was slightly trying for hundreds of men to be on their good behavior and circumspect dress. Both girls were perfect ladies and treated with the respect due such persons. One of the guard posts was a sport outside the girls’ stateroom. About five feet away from this post was another. Asked the two boys individually one day what their orders were. One said he was to see that no one went in the stateroom except the girls. The other said his job was to watch the guard. Never checked up on the story with the ship’s Provost Marshall

because I think a good story shouldn't be spoiled by sticking to the facts 100%.

The nights became so hot that the stateroom became intolerable. Woke up one night about midnight, wringing wet with perspiration. So taking my life preserver and field jacket, went topside. Found one man sleeping there, the full moonlight shining in his face. Went to another part of the deck and lay down on the life preserver. In a jiffy was sound asleep. Except for one or two nights toward the end of the trip, slept on deck every night. As time went on, more and more joined me. Finally so many were sleeping topside the boys were reserving the particular space on deck about 1800 everyday. There were many variations in the way the boys slept. Art Haigh borrowed a blanket from each of 7 or 8 EM and some of their shelter halves. Made himself quite a mattress. Other slept on the steel deck without the benefit of even a life preserver as mattress. Most slept alone but a couple spread out and made a double bed for themselves.

Every night or so, it would sprinkle for a few minutes and then stop. Toward the last of the trip, it rained quite hard and long during the night. Once, about 0400, awakened to notice that there were no stars to be seen. So was alert for the rain to begin. When it started, ran to a little steel box under one of the gun stations, curled up and went back to sleep. The "rains came" literally. With hair raising curses, the officers and EM arose in various stages of wetness and went below. One pilot slept right under my turret with a ships mattress under him. The water drained off the deck in his particular corner, The drain plugged up quickly. When he awakened, the water was over his blanket. Small waves were almost washing over him. He was thoroughly drenched. Another sudden rain came the next night. However, no one took time to swear. Merely got up with all their paraphernalia and ran.

Another night, staked my bed out early. Then went below and played some bridge. When I went up to retire, discovered it had rained quite hard during the intervening time. My fatigues which I used for pajamas, my kapok life preserver and my poncho were wet through and through. I slept below. Other nights, I bundled up in my poncho as did many others and slept right through the squalls, keeping dry and cool all the time.

The public address system of making any sort of announcement became more and more annoying. Sometimes, it was necessary to “scold” the men, or at least that’s the way the orders to do a better job seemed to be put over. Occasionally, the speaker would conclude his announcement with the statement that it applied to officers as well. At that, cheers and raucous laughter came up from the EM’s deck. It proved somewhat embarrassing. An agreement was made to put announcements of that character on the officers bulletin board.

The Dutch officers and crew drew whiskey and beer, drinking it in their own quarters. None was permitted to the Navy or Army permanent party personnel or to us passengers. Human nature, being what it is, friendships were cultivated with members of the crew. What more natural thing than a friend inviting a friend to a drink. All of such doings were naturally sub rosa. Infrequent they had to be because, on our part, we all wanted to be friends with someone who could invite us to a nice cold bottle of beer. We outnumbered the crew by the hundreds to one. In self protection, they were very choosey with their invitations.

Movies were an infrequent treat, made slightly exasperating by the machines breaking down every once in a while. The show would have to be postponed. That the movies were “slightly” old did not detract from their entertainment value.

There was a rush on the PX the first day it opened. We could buy Sheaffer pens wholesale and those imitation zippo lighters for less than a dollar. Three EM asked me to buy a lighter for them. Mine was promised to Mike Grow who was also left out when we were limited to either a pen or a lighter but not both. However was able to get a knife for John Begley.

In any group of persons there are promoters. Our passenger list had its quota. Because of lack of refrigeration space, the ship’s PX didn’t sell cokes iced. Some, however, knew this man or that in the crew who’d let him put a case of cokes in the cold rooms. The first coke I had aboard was given to me, cold, by T/Sgt Zwirz, a real promoter.

The EM’s comments on the food were evenly divided between how good and how terrible it was. Inspected it myself a couple times to know for my own satisfaction. Concluded

that their complaints had some foundation in fact yet felt that they were based mostly on the inevitable results of trying to feed so many men in such a confined space in so short a time. One Sunday, while talking to some EM on the forward part of their deck, learned that they were having “turkey and the trimming”; I went down to their mess hall and found two Hq. EM, said, “why you fellows should be ashamed of yourselves, complaining about the food. Here I find you eating turkey”. Replied Sgt. Martin, disgustedly, “the first good meal we’ve had on the ship and you have to inspect the mess”.

One of the pleasantest things about our trip on the transport was the daily newspaper put out by two of our EM, Nat Snyderman and Doug Watt. Their paper, “The Sea Wheel”, reflected a lot of hard and thoughtful work on the part of those EM who stayed glued to the radio to pick up news broadcasts, winnow the wheat from the chaff and season with their own particularly pertinent humor.

Eniwetok was an eye opener. Here in one spot we saw a large collection of troopships, freighters, landing craft, naval escort vessels in a huge natural harbor formed by the atoll of Eniwetok. Some of the officers were allowed ashore that afternoon. It was explained that every day there would be opportunities for more officers and EM to go. I was one of the fortunate ones. The ride to shore was made more interesting by the fact that we passed the many transports and freighters at anchor there. All became very interested when one ship carrying nurses and Wacs was pointed out. While most of the island had been denuded of palm trees, some ragged looking specimens had survived the invasion shelling. The island was jampacked with Quonsets, tents for living quarters, motor pools, mess halls and one little “jewelry” stand that reminded me of the hot dog stands one sees all over the highways back in the states. At this stand, an enterprising sailor had set up shop. Sold matched shell bracelets and necklaces. The shells were black, highly polished and beautiful. The prices were correspondingly “beautiful”. Believe the necklace sold for $25.00.

Eniwetok has two officers clubs. Both were on the beach and had nice bathing pavilions. As we rode down the road (people were very friendly overseas, stopping and picking up anyone who appears to be going in the same direction), we passed the club which was for Lt. Commanders and up in

the Navy; Majors and up in the Army and Marines. At this "brass" club, there were nurses swimming and sitting at beach tables. By a slight coincidence, only the "brass" club had ladies powder and dressing rooms. At last, our officers' club was reached. It was a Navy club open to officers of the armed forces and merchantmen of all the allies. Beer sold at 10¢ a bottle. After three bottles and a can of mixed nuts (there went my entire fortune of 65¢), I went for a swim, my first in the Pacific. The water was wonderfully clear; the beach snow white with sand and crushed shells.

Returned to the Kota, refreshed and happy about the whole thing. Might mention that it was probably the swim that gave me that feeling rather than the highballs the club started to sell an hour before our "train time". Any kind of whiskey, coke and a large chunk of ice for 15¢. Had to climb up the Kota's side on a narrow rope ladder. Was my first experience at anything other than the comfortable accommodation gangplank. The following morning, the next contingent of officers and EM were picked. A large barge came along side and took a couple hundred EM to an EM's beach for swimming, beer, and coke. The smaller craft that was to pick up the officers broke down. Midway in the morning came the announcement that there would be no further shore parties as we were to leave Eniwetok that afternoon. Many groans.

At Eniwetok, Capt. Stewart got in his flying time. Also Col. Olds the Wing CO., came aboard, inspected the troop quarters and spoke with different group officers about their particular specialty. Told me that as supply officer I had to make sure that none of our supplies was stolen when we hit "target". Said that we'd lost from the wing the P-51 outfit which had trained at Florida (they'd gone to Iwo Jima). Also stated that our ultimate destination was very nice and that "wonderful days were ahead".

An interesting thing about every stop we made was the amount of rumors and the quality of the rumors. Don't know how they start but have always imagined that a typical one might begin with an ejaculation as to what might happen if an enemy submarine or airplane got through to the shipping in the harbor. From there on, that innocent remark could be blown up into anything. Another thing that appeared funny to us landlubbers. The nearer we got to "dangerous waters", the smaller our Navy escort vessels appeared to be.

Occasionally, there would be test firing of the ship's guns. First, one of the 3" or 4" guns would go off. As the round burst high in the sir with a black puff, the gunners would try to get as near that first puff as possible. Our gunners were very proficient. The 20mm gunners would aim their rapid fire with tracers into the group of black puffs. The seeming accuracy of the anti-aircraft fire had its effect on our pilots. We could hear them commenting among themselves and the ground officers, comparing their chances with that of the hypothetical Jap who would of course be our particular target. This uneasiness on their part was somewhat allayed later in our trip when an aircraft carrier picked us up. Some of its planes towed targets for the gunners in the various ships in the convoy. The shooting, to be frank, was not so sharp. Our gunners, however, were the best in the convoy. That, of course, didn't make us feel badly at all.

On the 1st of May, immediately before evening stand-to, Burt Hamilton enjoined us, over the PA system to pay close attention to a very important announcement. The Kota's second mate then began to explain the way the world is divided into degrees and the necessity for the International Date Line. Then, dramatically, the speaker announced that in 5 minutes…4 minutes…3…2…1 we were crossing the International Date Line and leaving the 1st of May for the 3rd or May, automatically becoming members of the Golden Dragon Society.

VE day came to the 413th while we were on the high seas. Had there been liquor available, imagine we'd have got quite high. As it was, the ships personnel were models of decorum in their celebration. VE day would mean different things to different people. Wrote Gloria that I wished I were a writer so could write a story of just what VE day meant to them. Had done a lot of writing in my day; none of it fiction. Got to thinking, after writing Gloria, and decided to try writing the story anyway. The decision insured that my waking hours for the next week were taken care of. From morning till night pounded away. Finally got the story finished and passed it around to a few friends who had expressed a desire to read it. The best part to me was when I gave it to Frank Milan. After reading it, he discussed it with me, pointing out the rough spots. Then Frank read the story aloud. Was worth writing it just to

hear Frank read it. He's been an actor all his life and appreciates nuances in speech.

The EM created numerous shows and other entertainment for themselves. Boxing cards were put on, with cartons of cigarettes for prizes. All boxers were volunteers. In one case, a 145 lb. colored boy offered to fight. As it sometimes happens no one else of that weight volunteered. The MC of the variety shows, Ernie Nole would in each of his talks and sometimes several times during a night, ask the question, "does anybody want to fight Corporal Baxter". That always brought down the house. Finally a volunteer appeared. As I remember it, he was no match for the Corporal but was cheered as lustily as the Corporal at the end of the bout when the decision rightfully went to Baxter.

One night the EM put on an act that topped everything. A chorus of 8 "girls", dressed only in bras (towels) and Panties (G.I. shorts). They performed with the precision of the Rockettes. Their sensuous hip throwing and arm weaving brought fourth a terrific roar of approbation. One of the boys, Cpl. Mills, who is slight, made a very fetching chorine. As one of the officers facetiously put it, he had to be escorted off the stage for "her" own protection. Another highlight of this performance was the slipping of S/Sgt. Gordon's bra.

One of the boys brought along a dog…strictly forbidden, of course. But the dog was never around when the troop commander inspected the EM's quarters. So he came all the way. He was a favorite and I do believe that one time or another every EM aboard gave the dog something to eat.

Joe Coccia is an accomplished musician and piano player. He formed a band back at Bluethenthal, called "Coccia's Cats". The band, augmented aboard ship by a colored guitarist, played most every evening toward the latter part of the trip. It had a hard time quitting each night. The boys always asked for one more tune. When the band first began to practice, Joe wanted them to know perfectly their theme song (which had had written and called "The Growl"). He had them do it over and over again. The officers living near the "rehearsal hall" kidded Joe about the "only thing the band knew".

And so the time went. After Eniwetok, the next stop was Ulithi, a place I'd never heard of before. Most maps don't even show it. What a surprise was in store for us. Here was the meeting place of hundreds upon hundreds of ships: battleships, aircraft carriers, cruisers, destroyers, sub chasers, minesweepers, freighters, tankers and transports. The huge amount of naval power, which all of us knew represented but a fraction of our strength, overpowered most of us. We remained at Ulithi only two days, during which time no one was allowed off the ship. Two hours before sailing time, a radio order came through for Art Haigh, Danny Laffey and ten mechanics from each squadron to get off and fly to Saipan where they'd meet the flight echelon. We loaded the boys down with all their gear and away they went.

A couple hours after leaving Ulithi, Jim Maynard announced over the PA system that our destination was Okinawa. We were to arrive Saturday morning….four days from then. The Supply officers and EM got to work right away, catching up on our paperwork. I made arrangements for the supply officers and EM to stay aboard until all our cargo had been discharged. In a way, felt as though the bottom had fallen out of our world. Here we'd been leading the life of Riley without a care in the world. Now, in four days, we were actually going to war and to a hot spot, according to the news we read in the Sea Wheel.

The second evening out of Ulithi, the Kota's engines stopped. An eerie silence descended upon the ship. The rest of the convoy continued on its way. Dusk was falling. Evening stand-to was at hand. We didn't move forward an inch; merely rocked a bit. The convoy grew smaller and smaller in the darkening horizon. A small naval escort vessel remained going round and round us. As the big ship became lonely, so did those of us aboard. Conversation was desultory and apathetic. Most of us kept thinking our own lonely thought even though someone else might be talking. Finally it was quite dark. Stand-to was over. We were free to go below. Many of us, however, lingered on deck, commenting on the predicament we were in, the possible and imagined dangers surrounding us. At long last, the most wonderful of sounds came to our ears. The engine was turning over. The vibration of the ship returned. We ploughed through the sea after the convoy….friskily, like a little puppy who'd dallied and lost sight of momma and poppa but is very eager to catch up.

Saturday, all of us were up bright and early. Soon saw land off to starboard. It was Okinawa. We were therefore west of the island and had to be in the East China Sea. Small islands began appearing off the port side also. We heard a rumble as if of thunder. The noise became more pronounced. One of the Navy officers explained that the noise we heard was the shelling of Naha by units of the fleet and that we could distinguish the fleet in the distance. Sure enough, through the glasses (with the naked eye, for that matter) we saw battleships and cruisers pounding away. First, we'd see the flash, the smoke and then hear the thunder of the guns. Off Naha, some of the ships in the convoy dropped out and headed for Okinawa. We continued on our way.

The day was a grey one and it looked like rain. Rumor had it that the troops would get off the ship by noon. Each individual had been issued a days K rations and three D rations. We learned only when we entered the harbor that we were going to Ie Shima and not Okinawa. Ie is just west of Okie and the very place on which Ernie Pyle had been killed, the day after we'd left Seattle.

All of us gaped at both Ie and the high rugged hills of Okinawa just across the water. Okinawa, from Ie, looks a great deal like Oahu in Hawaii. The shore of Ie seemed entirely green. However, the binoculars revealed that much of the green was tents along the hill. On top of the hill, we saw silvery P-47N's and exclaimed, "why the flight echelon beat us to it". This proved wrong, however. The planes belonged to the 318th Fighter Group.

Chow was served on the Kota an hour after we reached Ie. While we waited that afternoon for something to happen the rain came down in torrents. The sea had a large swell which moved our ship hardly at all. But the smaller craft in the harbor bobbed up and down like the cork they're supposed to emulate. Forgot to mention that an hour or so after we'd been off Ie, a mountain appeared out of the clouds that were hanging low over the island. About mid-afternoon, it was officially announced that we'd stay aboard that night and disembark in the morning. We had dinner that evening and then, during stand-to, Bill Schierholz, who was friendly with the navy officers aboard, came up. Said word had just came up from shore to disembark that night. Could hardly believe my ears but 30 minutes after came the official pronouncement. Asked Jim Maynard, with heart in

mouth, if our original plan of supply personnel staying aboard would stick. Was leary of doing so but was damned if I would ask to go ashore. Jim said we'd stay.

A great deal of silent and thoughtful bustle followed. Darkness was closing in. The men learned they were to get off with full field equipment by climbing down rope nets hanging from the sides of the ship. Soon two landing craft, already loaded with ammunition, came alongside. The process of getting hundreds of men down the rope nets began. It was a long job and must have seemed interminable to those who were the first to leave the Kota. By the time half the passengers were in the small ships, most everyone was afraid to remain. I wasn't too happy about the whole thing. Told Bert Collison that the shortest verse in the bible was, "Jesus wept" and that the shortest verse in which I could compress my feelings was, "Tyler is scared". Two thirds of the way through loading, Pat Douley, the Transport Commander remarked to me, of course, you know you're going through hell tonight, don't you. Asked how he figured that. Replied that island intelligence expected a very heavy air attack that night, coupled with attacks by two man submarines. At first, thought he was trying to get a rise out of me but finally decided he was on the level.

Found that some of the supply EM were as apprehensive as I was. Kidded them about the whole thing. Ended up feeling pretty chipper myself….for about 5 minutes. After the last man was loaded, the landing craft cast off. The Kota's searchlights went out. The officers and EM spoke together for a few minutes on the officers deck. Then Bill went to bed, as did Windy, Alex, and Dale. Bert and I played Russian Bank with Johnny watching us. Finished about midnight. Went up on deck to look around. Not very encouraging….the clouds were breaking up and a beautiful half moon was illuminating the harbor. We seemed to be the biggest ship of all. Well, there was nothing else to do. Had stalled all I could. Went to our respective staterooms. Kept thinking how I might get killed and never see Gloria and Alice again…nor Mother, Sis or Harry in England. But as soon as I got into bed, went right to sleep. Wakened at 0420. The electric fan sounded like a Jap two engined bomber. Couldn't get its buzzing out of my ears. So got up, turned it off and went to sleep immediately.

Arose next morning feeling glad and grateful to be alive and eager to start unloading. After breakfast, a duck

(amphibious 2 1/2 ton truck) came alongside carrying Paul Silverman of the 337th Service Group. Paul shouted that, contrary to what we'd thought, the Service Group had arrived at Ie the same day and in the same convoy as we did. Said also that the Port Director was giving us only 5 ducks to unload both our ships. The five ducks turned out to be three. Was fit to be tied. On the first duck we loaded duffel bags for the EM and some hand baggage of officers. Bert, Johnny and some of their EM went with this first duck. On the next, Bill and his EM went ashore. Those of us that remained on the Kota waited for hours before the boys returned. What a tale they told. Nobody in the group could find precisely where the 413th area was. Jim Maynard had asked the first duck not to unload until he returned to tell them the exact spot. Two hours later he hadn't returned. So the boys unloaded on their own responsibility and returned to the Kota. Said that much of the island hadn't been demined as yet and their duck driver was careful to keep on the road which he knew was safe. The consensus of opinion was that we were lucky to be on the ship and not on the island.

Have mentioned previously that during the trip from the states we often had drill for air attack. After we left Ulithi, however, had been told practicing was over. The next alarm would be the real thing. The afternoon of the second day at Ie was a beautiful one. Skies had been cleared by the heavy rain of the day before. At about 1600, just after the boys had returned, the alarm sounded. We ran to our quarters, put on life preservers and steel helmets and closed the stateroom portholes. No sooner had I come out of the stateroom than all the guns in the harbor seemed to go off. The familiar rat-tat-tat of the Kota's guns sounded loudly in our ears.

Much to my surprise, the Dutch Officers didn't close the portholes in their dining room. Matter of fact, they stayed right at the portholes, looking out. So, I, much like a turtle, sticking his head out after the first alarm, went in and looked myself. In a moment we saw a Jap plane fly into sight. The fire from our ship was leading him but low. After possibly 20 seconds more of level flight, the Jap turned and began his dive on us. He dived right into our cone of fire. It was fascinating. The most amazing part of the entire "show" was that I wasn't a bit afraid though I knew he was coming right at us. I remained at the porthole about 15 seconds after he began his dive. Then ran into

that section of the bridge deck where all of us usually stood during practice alert. Told everyone with some excitement in my voice, that “he was coming right at us”. No one responded to my announcement but remained impassive as though they hadn’t heard me. As soon as I had uttered these words, noticed there were still 4 officers standing on the port accommodation ladder (Bill, Johnny, Allen of the port company and a Dutchman). Seeing them there, even though the Jap must have come a lot nearer made me feel I’d been wrong in assuming he was diving on us. Maybe he had swerved and was heading for someone else. Started outside. Had taken only two steps when the boys turned and ran inside, almost trampling me down in their haste to get in. No sooner had they got in when a terrific “whoosh” and a spray of water covered the entire side of the ship.

Nothing further happened. There was an uncanny quiet. The guns had ceased firing. We gingerly stepped out to the accommodation ladder. Saw a piece of aluminum lying on the deck. Another piece was further down. We started picking up the pieces. Someone told me that there was some damage to the cabins on the boat deck above. Went up immediately. Found in a navy officers cabin, pieces of the Jap’s engine. Picked up a piece of cylinder wall. Dropped it fast….red hot. Did pick up a valve and other pieces of the engine. Went outside on the boat deck and there, strewn all over, were oil, gas and bits of the airplane. Hurried up to the navigation deck and met the ship’s captain. His white uniform was covered with oil and gas. He showed me a piece of the Jap's jawbone with a molar still fastened to it. This fragment had struck him in the hand. The ship’s surgeon had two Jap teeth. Went out on the navigation deck. Saw a piece of the Jap’s brain and an enormous amount of aluminum. Some parts were quite large. Picked pieces up all over the ship and took them to our stateroom. Then went down to the EM’s quarters where we discussed the attack and our reactions to it. Told them they were welcome to help themselves to a souvenir from what I’d picked up. We returned to the stateroom where they selected their momento of the occasion. All they left me was a couple of pieces of aluminum and a push button with wire attached to it. Bert got the best souvenir…a name plate in Japanese characters.

The Kamikaze episode started some talk among the EM about how much more desirable it would be for all of us to leave the Kota and stay ashore. Arranged a little talkfast in which we explained to one another our fears which were

common. Finally agreed that it was our job as supply men to stay with the ship, sleep on it every night and in that way insure that what was ours would get to our appointed area on the island. We were in a hot spot at the moment; later it might be the crew chiefs or the pilots. But right then it was our hot seat and we'd have to continue sitting in it.

All in all, the supply personnel remained on the Kota five days and four nights. During that time, the work of unloading proceeded faster and faster. Since the Kota was big and conspicuous, word got around that the port authorities wanted to unload and get rid of such a desirable target. We felt the same way about. The Kamikaze boy had sold us on the virtues of living ashore in spite of the tales of how the boys got rained out each night, how they moved to what they hoped would be a drier campsite for the inevitable cloudburst the following night.

Supplies were unloaded by means of rope pallets and cranes. The only means of humans to get off were down the rope nets on the side. While we became adept at using the nets, one's arms got mighty tired if he had to climb up and down it three or four times.

One of the early difficulties (experienced by only those who got off the Kota before the supply folks) was living in a pup tent, keeping dry and safe from any bomb that might fall in the vicinity. The second night, after the troops landed, some of the boys followed the advice of one who said, "be comfortable and smart". Dig your foxhole in your pup tent. Then, when the alert sounds, there you'll be, snug as a bug in a rug, right in your own foxhole. Unfortunately, the holes were the natural collecting point for the water that drained off the ground when the heavens opened as they did on those first couple of weeks on Ie. Some of the boys woke up to find they were afloat and stood a good chance of seeing their equipment float away on the flood.

Parties of officers and EM met the landing craft carrying our stuff and each of the trucks hauling the stuff from the beaches to our area had one of our men on it. We lost very little. The tales that came back about the experiences of the men ashore were harrowing. The second night, someone heard something moving about in the bushes and started shooting. Evidently "everybody" took a couple of shots.

Must have been a hectic night. In the morning, three small Okinawa ponies were alleged to have been found shot dead. Many of these small ponies were roaming around the island when we first arrived. The remaining Ie civilians were herded together in two enclosures on both sides of a road leading off the beach. They were a sorry looking crowd. Probably we would have looked the same had we been subjected to the same experiences.

There was an air raid every night except the first. During these evening raids the ships in the harbor didn't fire. Only the ack ack outfits ashore let go. Soon as the siren sounded the small navy auxiliary craft in the harbor would start their smoke generators going and enclose us in a fog. It was SOP for us on the Kota to put on our life jackets, tin hats and then sneak outside to see what was going on ashore. The flashes of ack ack and the boom of their guns indicated that they were busy. But surrounded in fog most of the time, we didn't appreciate the fire works that were going on.

One of the busiest men on Ie Shima during those early days was Bill Alter. Jap bombs were lying all over the island. They had to be deactivated. Bill went to work the very first day he was at Ie. When I saw him, the fifth day (my first ashore), he had 2 Jap bombs on the back of the weapons carrier.

All our supplies were being unloaded at one central dump on Ie, near the 413th living area. A guard system had been set up. The squadron supply sections had set up tents there also that the supply officers and EM, when got off the ship, could live in that area until things were straightened out. Gradually, as the ship became emptier, fewer of the supply EM were staying on the ship. Certain supply EM started living ashore after the second night. However, the officers elected to stay; first, because we had some auxiliary gun crews made up of 413th EM who had volunteered to return to the ship and help the regular Navy crew. Second, we felt that all things being equal we preferred the dangers afloat to those ashore. We also liked the food. A couple of the supply officers spoke to me about having themselves made members of the auxiliary gun crews. So spoke to the Navy officer and the Chief Boatswain Mate. Asked them to let me know how many of us officers he could use. The chief didn't seem very happy about our offer. Said he'd consider where we could help but never did ask for our

services. Seems to me that the Navy officer is a much more sacrosanct individual than the army officer in his relations with EM.

At about 1630 on the 5th day, I, loaded like Aunt Mary's proverbial horse, pistol belt, machete, carbine, musette bag, gas mask, poncho and what not climbed down the ropes and got on a small navy taxi. About 15 minutes before had said my adieus to all the Dutch officers and navy personnel that I had come to know. As we pulled into shore, looked back at the Kota with a great deal of affection and wonder. What were things going to be like ashore?

Found that Dale had set himself up, at the supply dump area, in a small wall tent. I moved into the next one. Had, that evening, my first dinner of C rations, heated over a sterno can. Delicious. Also received a couple of letters from Gloria. After dinner, as darkness closed in, started to read them. Ended up by reading with my flashlight. Hadn't got through half the first one when the siren sounded. The ack ack started up in earnest. Fell flat on my face behind a box, because that's what had read was the thing to do. Strangely enough, nothing dropped on me. So arose, picking up my dignity with me and resumed reading. Had agreed with Dale that he'd sleep the first part of the evening and I'd sleep the last half of the night. He can sleep at any time and I've always had trouble falling asleep. We were to direct the unloading of the trucks as they brought our stuff from the beach. The unloading goes on 24 hours a day, except during alerts. The alert continued. The sky was lit up constantly with flashes of bursting ack ack. The dump was less than 50 yards from an AA battery.

Noise from this adjacent battery was so loud and frequent that Dale tired of dashing out of the tent into the foxhole he'd fashioned from some packing boxes. So he widened the foxhole, put the cot inside, got under a poncho (it was drizzling) and went back to sleep. Some officers and EM saw a Jap plane get hit; flash into flames and fall into the sea. I had my nose too deep in the wooden foxhole I'd fashioned after Dale's example to see it. The shooting kept up until 1:30 the next morning. During that time, had the uncomfortable experience of hearing the Jap go into his dive right over my head with a big whine. Heard the "whoomp" of the bomb and saw the tremendous flare of the gasoline dump as it went up. Looked like a huge fire. We

were sure the Jap had hit some large storage tanks but it turned out that he'd hit only a small dump of 55 gallon drums. Also heard another Jap plane drone as he "wound up", the whine of his dive overhead and another "whoomp". Popped out of my foxhole to see the sparks spout up from three different bombs. Thought "is this what these poor folks have been going through every night while we were on the ship". Turned out the raid that night was the longest and biggest Ie had up to that time (and since, as it turned out). Another thought that kept coming up was that only a little more than a month ago, I'd been back in Seattle going to shows, having as many cold bottles of beer as I desired, steak if I chose, three wonderful meals a day, and most marvelous of all, a daily telephone chat with Gloria.

How quickly one makes the transition from a chair soldier to a "field" soldier. At same time, realized that what was happening that night was nothing compared to a real bombing. Our air power saw to it that few Japs reached the island. The ack ack boys got 7 Japs that night; the night fighters 16. Heard other stories, the truth of which I can't vouch for, that possibly as many as 100 Jap bombers might leave their bases for Okinawa and Ie but only 30 or so ever got near enough to scare us by dropping bombs. Whether or not the real thing was a pale imitation of what we handed out or had witnessed in other theaters, shall never forget to my dying day the sound of the Jap's engine droning away overhead, getting nearer and nearer and, as the AA barked, fainter and fainter.

In the first 2 1/2 weeks, it probably rained most of the time every day. Only in about four or five of these days, were there any hours of sun shine. A great deal of one's day was spent in preparing food for the meal, getting water, washing a few clothes, cleaning up, fixing the tents, and, of course, doing some work. The roads were horrible because of the heavy military traffic and rain. Mud was ever present. One's feet were wet from morning till bedtime. Went to bed at dark because we had no lanterns (hadn't opened our equipment yet). Besides, were so disgusted with the situation by the time it got dark that's all we wanted to do. We also wanted to get as much sleep as possible before the air raid started.

There were unusual contrasts of selfishness and helpfulness during those first weeks. All ethics seemed to be thrown over in one's efforts to get a little more than someone

else. Group helping disappeared. Everyone seemed to think that this or that person was doing more or less of the work or getting more or less of the food. On the other hand, those outfits who had arrived ahead of us seemed more than willing to help us. Appreciated what we were going through. Went out of their way to help. A person who went down to the beach and "procured" something marked for someone else was a smart fellow. But, as it inevitably will happen, when someone stole some of our equipment, that unknown person was a son-of-a- and worse. Yet, surrounded by a den of thieves (to hear us talk), we were helped by friendly officers and EM who lent vehicles and water cans so that we could squeak along until our own equipment was unloaded.

I'd been on Ie about 10 days when my jeep was stolen. Parked it in front of the 371st Engineering Squadron mess hall. When I returned, it was gone and so were the two quarts of whiskey I'd had in it. Three days later the vehicle turned up in the 371st area….without the whiskey. One week later, when Bob Lather and I were driving to ISCOM, we got a flat tire. Pulled over to the side of the road, took the rotor cut and hitchhiked to the service group. 15 minutes later the jeep was gone. To this date, it hasn't been found. Offered the Provost Marshall a reward of one quart of whiskey for its return. While the Provost Marshall's EM jokingly offered to get me a jeep for the quart, good ol #2081177 has never turned up. Like Abou Ben Adam, its name leads all the rest whenever the Provost Marshall issues a lost property list. As irrevocably as the jeep was lost, is the reputation that clings to me. Rare is the time, when I borrow a vehicle, that the leader doesn't say, "now don't lose this one".

When Col. Thyng and Waldo Waller arrived, we'd reached a period where we were able to do something more than just exist. We could start getting ready to do some of the things that more directly concerned fulfilling our mission. The Colonel called all the officers and EM together. Told us what the flight echelon had been doing, how they'd put the P-47N's together at Hawaii and then seen them taken away to be flown by the 318th which was the outfit flying the 47's when we got to Ie originally. While we were sailing between Seattle and Ie, the flight echelon, traveling first by train, then air (one squadron went by aircraft carrier) reached Saigon and Tinian where they flew some long range missions to Truk. This talk of the Colonel's was the definite end of the first period of our

stay on Ie. We now entered the second stage, definitely getting ready for the flight echelon and preparing ourselves to go into action immediately when our air strip was completed.

During this first period, some officers and EM distinguished themselves by doing a fine job; others by not doing anything. Some devoted their entire day to taking care of themselves; others to taking care of their job and others. During our second week, another Kamikaze pilot hit the freighter carrying our vehicles. It was taken to nearby Okinawa where unloading facilities were better (the hoisting machinery on the freighter had been destroyed). Col. Olds suggested sending an officer to Okie to make sure that we got the rest of the vehicle off the ship and back to Ie. Bill Woods flew over the same day, taking with him Bert, Iggy, and Pence. Bill returned the next day with news of how badly shot up our remaining vehicles were and the need for 6 mechanics. Took back 2 from each squadron. In the week that followed, Frank Milan and Ed Morris, the other squadron transportation officers and Larry Studdard went over. I got there about four days later, having sent Mike Grow over the day before to look after other 413th equipment that was on the ship.

Had an opportunity to drive around Okie a bit but didn't get near the front. There was still bitter fighting down at the southern end. We were about one third up from the end of the island (Yontan airfield). It was relatively safe but definitely not as safe as Ie at the time. It gave us a thrill to think we were on Okie and nearer to the "real" thing. At first, liked Okinawa better than Ie but later decided the only reason I felt that way was that the roads in Okie were roads while those in Ie were merely ruts, deep and slushy. Mike Grow had a funny experience some weeks later in Okie. Was trying to get back to Ie. Went up to a C-47, parked where all the shuttle planes usually parked, and asked the pilot if he were going to Ie. The pilot (who thought he was merely asking for a ride) said, "sure, hop in". Mike did and was taken on a 45 minute tree top level flight while the C-47 sprayed part of Okie with DDT powder.

One day, about a month after we landed, Charlie Blick of the Ordnance Depot company told me about Bill Alter. Bill had volunteered to take care of a Navy mine in the harbor. He got it out and deactivated it. But one of the fuses blew

up in his hands. He died shortly afterwards. Bill was the first Kota passenger to die on Ie.

American genius for doing things in a big way and in a hurry finds a natural outlet in the problems presented by Okinawa and Ie. There were a few pieces of motorized transportation on Ie before the Americans came. One can understand why the horse and bridle paths didn't stand up to the pounding of the heavy American vehicular traffic. The Japs had two runways on Ie when we got here but both were pocked with bomb holes. First the engineers filled the holed, lengthened one runway and built it up so that it could take the heavy American planes that were to fly off it. Then, came the unfolding of the plan: three more runways (the other Jap strip was relegated to a taxiway), troops and their quarters, QM dumps, Ordnance dumps, bulldozers, tractors, buckets, shovels, coral pits, dynamite, bombs, ammunition, gas for the planes, gas for the vehicles and food. When I went down to AA of ISCOM about a certain type of supply, would be told the particular item would be coming in on the 6th, 7th or the applicable "echelon of supply". Everything had been planed and all was being fulfilled. Certainly there were snafus. But after all there were no superman to carry out the plans of the Chiefs of Staff, no miracle men themselves. What the average man was turning out made one proud and a bit self conscious; they were Americans like ourselves.

Air power was a tangible thing on Ie. Planes coming and going the take offs and landing, all through the day, seemed an endless procession. Flocks of fighters and then more flocks of them constantly combed the skies. The Jap was effectively cleared from the heavens. We never looked up during the daylight hours when we heard aircraft overhead, except from curiosity. It was the normal situation. Perhaps a quiet in which we heard nothing would have been a louder sensation to our ears.

Our service group, during the first weeks was wrapped up in its own problems of housekeeping. Here, too, their energy was spend entirely on taking care of themselves. Nothing was left over for us. Was thus thrown on my own and did not mind at all. Found everyone I called on friendly, more than helpful and willing. Anything they thought we needed they'd give us….if it didn't mean cheating someone else. No one was stingy and desirous of building supplies. They were morely concerned that we eager supply officers didn't get

everything for our particular outfit. Our supply officers and their EM went their rounds, making friends and getting things in that way that otherwise outfits never would have got. An that phenomenon, seen only in the air corps, came to the fore many times. In the air corps, everyone from the private to the Colonel is a supply man, going merrily around promoting supplies for himself or his outfit.

A fabulous institution overseas is the amount of stealing or procuring that's done in the service. When I say "steal" or "procure", don't mean it in the sense that one takes government property for his own use or benefit. It merely means that the person "diverts" it from the use to which it has been ordered. For instance, let us say that the general puts out an order that all lumber will be issued on a priority system; that all lumber and dunnage coming from ships must go to the lumber yard where it will be distributed according to that aforementioned system. Let us assume, further, that the priority system does not permit lumber for mess halls. The squadron commanding officers, with a grand gesture, tell their supply officers to get lumber for mess halls. "Their's not to question why. Their's but to do and die". Onward march the unquestioning supply officers (in the air corps, in the early stages of a landing, any officer or enlisted man will qualify as a supply officer). So down to the beach with trucks they go. By hook, crook, lying, doubtful statement, or silence at the right time, the lumber is diverted from the lumber yard. The mess halls go up. The Commanding Officers are happy and immediately start thinking up another project.

One of the earliest and most critical problems for the group was the access road between our living area and the road connecting us to the rest of the island. At first, the access road was a path. The pounding it took from heavily laden trucks carrying all our equipment to the area was terrific. In a very short time, the road consisted of two huge ruts with a hump of hard coral between them. It was not unusual for a vehicle to get "hung up" on that middle. Several crankcase pans had holes punch into them. It happened once to a jeep I was driving but discovered it before the engine burned out. Another, in the 1st squadron wasn't so lucky. Frank Milan had to go out and promote himself a new jeep engine.

One day, all group and squadron trucks were ordered on a coral haul. They could do nothing else but haul coral. It

was thought that one day's concentration putting coral on the road would make it a good road. Unhappy thought! The coral got lost in the ooze of mud that was all over the road. After not one but several back breaking days of unloading coral, the idea was abandoned. Each truck had to be unloaded by the backs and shovels of the EM…crew chiefs, armament men, ordnance men, clerks and all the specialists that any air corps outfit has. Arch Gratz and George Dean were in charge of that thankless and heartbreaking job.

Karl Kidd had another thankless job….filling in a parking area and building a coral road over a bad ditch leading to that parking area. Everytime Karl turned around, one of the squadrons had "stolen" one of their trucks from his detail and hauled a load or two of coral to a project of their own. How the boy kept his good humor and energy for completing the job is a mystery. After he finished that job (what a beautiful culvert he built….its still standing), he tackled the job of putting up a new road through from our area to the outside world. This road went an entirely different way from the old beat up access road we'd been trying to improve. In a very short time, by using squadron night lighting equipment and working all night, the new road was in. One of the engineer outfits on the island cooperated by lending us some of their men and equipment.

Sooner than we realized it, the flight echelon flew in. Many were the reunions of friends who hadn't see one another for many a week. Stories were swapped. Some sold the listener on how lucky he had been to go on his route; others made the listener unhappy to have missed such a good time. The boys were flying Combat Air Patrols the very next day after the planes came in. On the second day of flying, we had our first tragedy. Lt. Al Dusseault was killed in an accident while landing his ship. Al was the second officer form Kota to die on Ie.

Flying hours piled up quickly. Soon we were in the swing of things. Our mission of fighting and not just existing was being fulfilled. Almost immediately, one fact appeared. In an air corps outfit, there are two kinds of people: those fortunate enough to fight the enemy personally (these boys feel and see their participation in the war); the others help the pilots fight, get their ships ready, their supplies in and have things fairly decent to live in when they get down and rest up for their next crack at the enemy. Until we started flying, we were one organization,

occupied with the same problems, setting up camp, roads, tents, shops and offices on the line. Then we go to war in earnest. Our problems change, our "shop" talk becomes different. The pilots, lucky fellows, "see for themselves". They don't have to depend on someone else to talk about how it was up there….how they felt when they saw their first bit of flak…their first view of Japan, of China, their first Jap…the envy of those who didn't get a Jap. More and more we became two kinds of an outfit….the gladiators and the behind the scenes boys.

Nat Snyderman and Doug Watt did even a better job on Ie with their newspaper, "The Big Bird", than they did with their "Sea Wheel" published on the Kota. One thing I particularly liked about "The Big Bird" was its modest slogan, "Most reliable newspaper in the Japanese Empire".

Several weeks after the loss of my jeep for the second time, a weapons carrier I was driving froze. Telephoned for a wrecker to drag the vehicle back to the pool (left Sgt. Radzik in it while I phoned). A 21/2 ton truck, driven by Pfc Hunt came up. Hunt found it couldn't be driven so we pulled it off the road. Wanted to leave Radzik to watch the vehicle. But Hunt explained that no one could drive it away. Let myself be persuaded for about 1000 yards. Then told Hunt to drive back where we'd leave Radzik. Explained that with my reputation for losing vehicles, the Colonel would be perfectly justified in court martialing me if I left it without a guard. Told Eddie to stay with the vehicle till the boys came back with a wrecker. Next morning, phoned the motor pool to inquire when the vehicle be back in commission. S/Sgt. Pruitt, the motor sergeant, told me that when they went back in the morning, the vehicle was gone. Turned out that Pruitt had decided when they went back that night to leave the vehicle in spite of what I'd said, because the thing just couldn't be driven. But some one had done the impossible by morning. Johnny Harkness drove around that day and found the vehicle….at a marine motor pool. Of course, the story was around that Tyler had lost another vehicle.

One of the cutest things I've seen in the way of a morale boost from home was what Alex Carlisle's wife, Louette, did. She posed with a bathing suit in many different pin up girl poses while her sister took pictures. Sent Alex 12 or 15. They certainly didn't make him feel bad.

Tragedy struck another Kota passenger approximately three months after he arrived at Ie. A truck from the Ordnance Depot Company, hauling coral, ran off the road shortly after midnight and ploughed into the tent where Bruce Walker and Bob Homma were sleeping. Bruce died on his was to the hospital. Bob was bangedup; got a cracked rib. Fortunately, nothing further. After 10 days in the hospital he was back to duty.

A stirring drama was begun whenever our ships went on a mission. Heavy with a full load that varied with the mission, the 47's would hurtle themselves down the dusty runway, much as a broad or high jumper struggling to put forth his maximum effort at just the right moment to become airborne. Always, as the plane roared down the runway, we were conscious of the tragedy that was pent up and ready to be released by any error on the part of pilot or crew chief or material failure. Each take off was a lifetime that lasted 30 seconds. Each half minute a friend, his life, his family, his hopes, their hopes and ours flashed by. The moment the ship became airborne, we relaxed a bit and, as wheels began to retract and the boy gained altitude, we silently and unconsciously thanked God. Then turned to watch our next friend commit himself to the same cycle.

All the ships, having taken off, we'd return to our duties on the ground, sending after our friends our prayers for their successful mission. In our hearts, a successful one was one in which all returned. The drama was concluded when they returned. Here again we "sweated out" each landing, counting the planes as they came in. Yes, all of that squadron was in. Now for the next. Thank God, they were all back.

The 413th had its miracles. Arch Gratz's engine failed on his way back from a mission. He spent 7 days drifting in a rubber life raft before he was spotted by a Dumbo rescue plane. Then the Dumbo cracked up landing to pick him up. The Dumbo survivors and he spent another day in rafts till an American submarine surfaced and took them all to Guam. He was gone 30 days, during which time, none of the group knew his fate. Bob Allard was saved by the Chinese underground when his ship went in on the second group mission over China. After traveling through the underground for about a month, Allard was returned in poor health, to the group. He was evacuated. Rufo Ives walked away from two crack ups on take off. Bob Manning did the same on the day

Ives cracked up for the first time. Tommy Thompson, on the last group Napalm mission, his engine failing him, successfully dumped his wing tanks on the runway. He was rescued from his burning ship with minor injuries through the bravery of the 337th Fire Fighters.

Our group also had its losses. Major George Vigua was the first to be lost in combat. He was hit by ack ack as he made his rocket run over China. Ironically, his successor as Opreations Officer, Capt. Cecil Meierhoff went down, on another China mission. Lt. Johnny Heathcote went in after being hit by Jap anti aircraft. Lt. “Whit” Whittemore was killed when he couldn’t gain altitude after takeoff.

After almost two months of combat flying, rumors of peace came faster and faster. We wanted to believe them and yet didn’t want our hopes raised only to be dashed. We started thinking real hard about how soon we’d be going home; counting our points. It would be nice, too, to be able to sleep the whole night through on Ie and not grope out of bed at the sound of the alert and climb into a ditch or bomb shelter when the ack ack sounded. The Japs were sending over a plane at least every night during that particular period. It always arrived around 0200 in the morning and hanged around for an hour or so.

On Ie, nothing remains the same long. Three weeks after Karl Kidd put through the new road, bull dozers and earth movers were going back and forth over it. A new runway was being built. Eventually the runway was built up to a height of 10’ over the road. Then, as the runway shaped up, the engineers started an approach to the end of the runway. They piled up mud and coral on another section of our road, also to a height of 10’. It seems that we’re slated to go through ups and downs on whatever road we do have. The end of this runway, by the way, is right over the area where the 413th had its first supply dump.

Finally peace was officially announced. Hostilities ceased. Typically enough, the 413th had its planes loaded up with two 165 gallon wing tanks of Napalm. Tragedy struck us again when Lt. Richard (Shorty) Cleveland died in an airplane flying accident after peace had been declared.

Each celebrated peace in his own way. Some congregated together. Others got around a bottle. And still others wanted to be alone. I took a pint of Bourbon I’d brought

from the states and went alone, to the Medic's refrigerator on the line. Had three cokes with ice and whiskey by myself. Imagined that Gloria was there with me, quietly celebrating as we often do, curled up in a big chair or divan, my arm around her, not doing much, if any, talking. Thought of some of the nice things we'd been able to share since we'd been married and how we might soon begin to share such experiences again. Some Headquarters' men were up on the line that night too. Remember passing the bottle around to them and speaking with them. But actually they weren't there. Just Gloria and myself.

A memorable day for all of us on Ie was the day the Jap peace envoys landed here for transfer to the C-54's that were to take them to General MacArthur in Manila. Armed soldiers lined both sides of the runway at 5 yard intervals. Barbed wire was strung along the ends of the runway to prevent traffic. These precautions were certainly well taken because the entire island's population seemed to be there. Don' know what went through the Japs' mind as they saw the huge crowds of soldiers lined up along the runway that was resting on ground that only four months before had been farmland. B-24's were lined up solidly along the parallel taxiway. I've never seen so many cameras in my life. Everyone seemed to have one. The amateur and squadron darkrooms were busy the following weeks developing the photos.

With the peace announcement, the urgency disappeared from our work. Then, imperceptibly, a great deal of our work disappeared with the urgency. I found myself thinking more and more of myself as a civilian.

Have delayed until the last any mention of the religious services held on the Kota or on Ie. Men don't seem so dependent on God in the States where one turns the thermostat up for more heat, the switch on for more light. Yet as soon as we walked on the Kota Inten, in Seattle more men began to think of God and their relationship with HIM. Attendance at the services aboard ship and on Ie was greater and more regular than in the states. While war and death at first hand has "made Christians" out of many of us, the percentage of such conversions to the number of those still outside the flock is still small. Believe, though, that most of us are more willing to follow a strong Christian leadership than we were before we left the

States. Pray God that we get that leadership now that the atomic bomb is here.