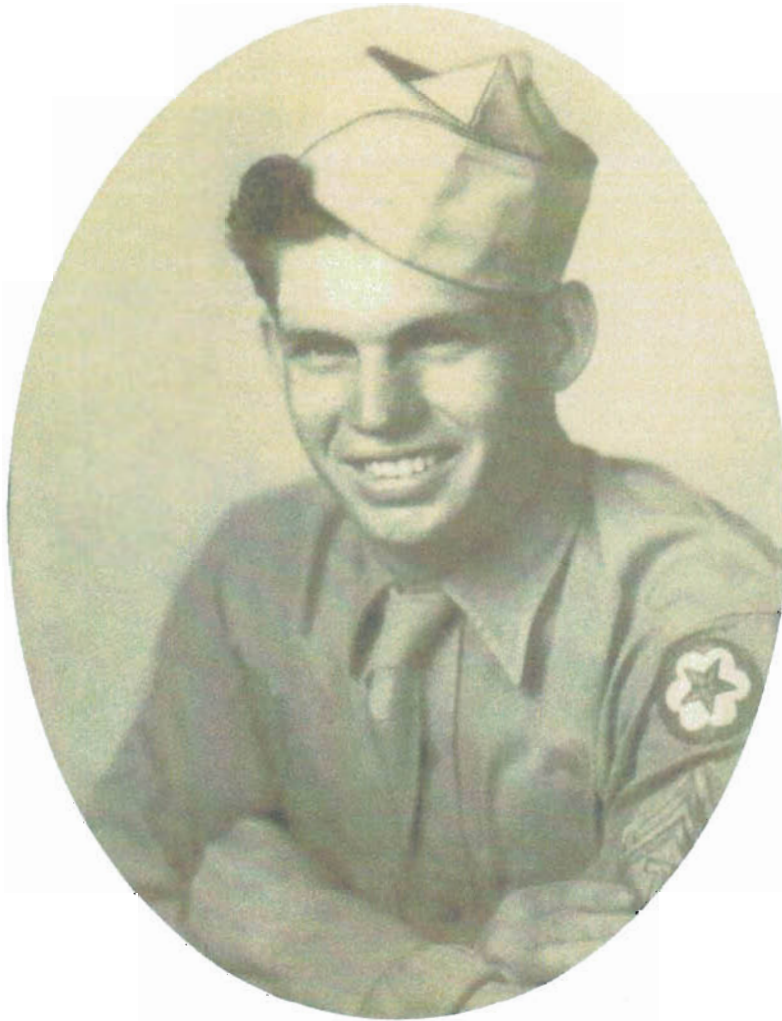




CECIL'S STORY

Cecil Herman Robinson

JULY 20, 1924 - SEPTEMBER 5, 1998

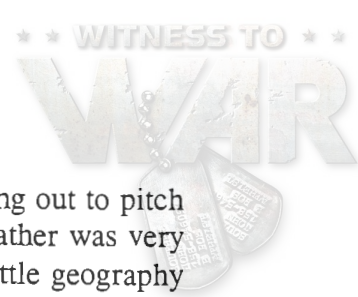


* WITNESS TO *
WAR
1941-1945

In the afternoon of the 22nd day of August, 1944, we would disembark the **Sea Bass** on the shores of **Port Moresby, New Guinea**. We had not been told where we were going, we had not received any mail, nor had we been able to mail any letters. We had not seen any type of boat or ship after leaving San Francisco Bay. We had not seen any land during the forty-five day voyage. We had arrived in New Guinea during the monsoon season. Within twenty-four hours, we would become acquainted with monsoon weather.

I was ready for land, regardless of who was holding it. I had been seasick ninety percent of the forty-five days at sea. We had not had a fresh water shower, and had been cramped in the bottom-most deck. The three-deep bunks had been so close you could barely turn over without rubbing and awakening the person above you. Our stay at Port Moresby would be very short lived.

Our landing was in the early afternoon. I do not remember the disembarking, though I do remember marching for some time, before we would come to a pretty beach. The captain who was in charge let us fall out of formation and told us we would camp there for the night. Quite a few of us pulled our clothes off, down to our shorts and decided to go swimming. The water was pretty and clear, there were swells or waves two to four foot high, though it did not look that rough. As I started wading further out, I noticed the bottom was covered with rocks, rather than sand. I started going a little further out and the waves were so strong that the water would push or pull you off your feet and roll you across the sharp rocks. Robert Pannell was near me and he was experiencing the same thing. I decided that I had had enough and started half swimming and half wading back toward the beach. When reaching the beach area and examining my feet I could see that they had taken quiet a beating. Robert Pannell was also out of the water and he had gotten cut up much more than I.



We were soon back in formation and would march further on before falling out to pitch tents. This time we had stopped in a coconut grove. At this time the weather was very nice. It wasn't hot and wasn't cold, and it did not look like rain. (A little geography of the southern part of New Guinea: the rainfall during the monsoon season averages nearly 200 inches). The area we were to camp in had a lot of tall grass, or weeds maybe. Everyone was getting their half-tents from their duffel bags and examining a place to put one down. To erect a tent, it required two people to bring their half-tent together in order to make one two-man tent. The grass looked very good to me, so I was thinking, "why the heck should I go to all that much work, why not get my poncho, spread it on the grass, put a blanket on top of it and use one blanket to cover with." Everyone else appeared to be paired up with someone and tents were going up all around me. I was tired and lay down to see if it would be comfortable enough.

I would awaken many hours later with water running between my blankets. I guess the top blanket had kept the water off me for some time after the rain had started. When I felt the water, I moved, this letting more water rush under me. I jumped up to see if I could find anything dry. I could see that I had left my duffel bag standing open and everything in it was soaking wet. I closed it up, grabbed my poncho to keep the rain off and ran to a small wooden shack of which I had noticed nearby before lying down. I went inside to find the water coming through the roof as hard as the rain outside. I had noticed where Robert Pannell had pitched a tent with another GI nearby, so I started crawling through the entrance to see if I could find enough room between them to lay down. They were not happy at all, though I had no other choice but to stay.

I thought daylight would never come, especially with wet clothes on and a wet blanket to wrap up in. As soon as daylight came I crawled out of their tent to survey my situation. I could see that everything I had was soaking wet. I could not even pick my duffel bag up due to all the water in it. The rain had stopped and everyone else started dismantling their tents. We had been told the day before that we would have a long march this morning to embark onto another ship. I knew that if I was to carry all my equipment I would have to take every piece of clothing from the bag, wring the water from them, and put each piece back into the bag. I started with the blankets, before long a couple of guys came over and started helping me ring out the larger items. I do not remember eating anything, whether we did or not, I don't remember. I do remember getting into formation with all my wet gear, and wondering, how in the world will I be able to carry all this? We started walking on a mud road, which appeared to have been used by military vehicles only. We had all of our possessions on our back, slipping and sliding, and a constant rain to only worsen our hardship. We saw no buildings, vehicles, natives, or other military personnel. We must have walked for two to three hours before we would come to the ocean again. We then could see some landing craft, a ship alongside a jetty. We had been told very little. The only thing I can remember was that we would be boarding another ship for a location further north. We were told to be "at ease, and that we would be there for some time before boarding". Standing in the rain with everything you have wet, no where to go in order to get out of the rain, and nothing

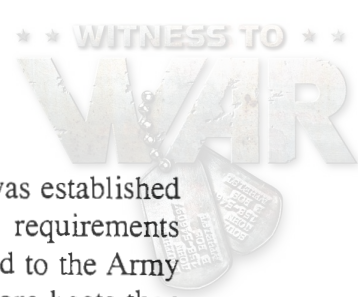


to sit on, you can just imagine what everyone was saying to his friend, or to the soldier near to him. Some of the sergeants would go and talk to the Officers, and by their appearance, they seemed to be discussing our situation.

It was later, probably in the early afternoon, when the ship started moving from the jetty and going further out into the harbor. It then anchored. Many of the soldiers would ask the sergeants "what was going on", they would say, "We don't know". The captain would finally announce to us that we would be carried to the ship by landing craft. It was now mid-afternoon, still raining, and everyone becoming more agitated. Finally we would see three or four LCMs coming toward the beach. I must have got on the last boat, I remember the landing craft had a tarpaulin stretched over the top sides, preventing the rain from coming down onto us. This would also make it nearly dark in the back section of the boat. As this was the last boat out, the captain would get aboard with us. The soldiers were so mad, calling the idiots in charge all kinds of names. The captain got as far back in the boat as he could, and tried to squat in a position where other men would not recognize him. He never said a word while we were underway.

The ship crew had dropped large, rope-like ladders over the side for the soldiers to climb up from inside the landing craft, while the landing craft was standing by alongside the ship. This would cause each soldier to climb approximately ten to fifteen feet up this ladder while carrying all his field equipment, plus his duffel bag. This would have been bad enough in fair weather, although now the deck of the landing craft was covered with mud from our muddy boots. Now even the ropes where the soldiers ahead of us had climbed were also covered with mud. I had gotten within five to seven feet from the side railing where sailors had lined the side of the ship, helping the soldiers as they reached the deck. These sailors would reach over the side grabbing equipment from the hands of soldiers and help them make it on board ship. I had stopped and was about to drop my duffel bag, not believing I could make it any further. I looked up and there was a large sailor climbing down above me. At my last effort in holding on, he grabbed my duffel bag from my hand and started back up the ladder. I was then able to make it to the side rail where I would again be helped aboard. I would continue to believe it was the most miserable day I could remember. We then traveled through the night, to arrive the next day at **Hollandia, New Guinea**. There the ship would pull along-side a wharf, where we would disembark again. (Today, 1/98, **New Guinea** is now **Dutch New Guinea** it is the largest island in the world, consisting of about 152,000 square miles of rugged mountains, covered with heavy rain forests. The coastal climate is **hot** and **humid**, hundreds of different languages are spoken by the natives, comprising mostly of Melanesian. These natives are regarded as the most savage and ferocious of all Pacific island natives; **head-hunting** and **cannibalism** may still be practiced in the more remote mountains). Hollandia had already been taken by the U. S. 162nd and 163rd Infantry, in April 1944. This practically ended the New Guinea Campaign. There would still be scattered Japanese soldiers left in the surrounding jungles.

We had not been told exactly what our duties would be when arriving in New Guinea.

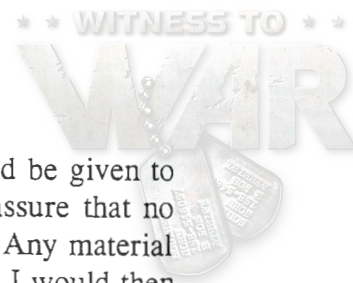


Most of what we knew, I will try to reiterate. The 350th Boat Company was established by the Transportation Corps, to support the Navy and Merchant Ship requirements overseas. It would also furnish manpower to operate boats owned/assigned to the Army Transportation Corps. It was estimated at one time that the Army had more boats than the Navy. The soldiers who had been assigned to this organization had been chosen in two ways. One, by civilian or prior military occupation; secondly, by unassigned soldiers much like myself. While at Fort Hamilton, New York, "The Stars and Stripes" ran an article, referring to us as "saldiers". We would be issued **navy work clothes** while operating, or when working, as a crew member aboard these boats. We would wear blue pants and shirts, white tee shirts, white navy caps, and boat shoes. Approximately twenty percent of the soldiers had worked on fishing boats, tug boats, and some had spent time in the Navy. These men were older than the majority of us.

We would set up camp on land, near a protected cove. Our camp would be near a camp consisting of Amphibious Engineer Soldiers. This camp would be on a trail leading into the jungle, and the only other camp accessible by land. Our camp would be within walking distance to the protected harbor, where the boats we would operate would be harbored. I do not remember how many tents our company would require, as some of the men who had already been assigned to boats would stay full time on their respective boat. As soon as we got the tents set up many of us had nothing but dirty clothes, so we began trying to find where we could find some fresh water to wash our clothing. We were told where we could find a small stream of water. Three or four of us gathered up our dirty clothes and started in the direction indicated. We found the stream and would also find a few of the soldiers from the Amphibious Engineers there. The first thing we noticed was how **yellow** their skin was, their eyes were yellow also, where they should be white. I asked one how long they had been there, he informed me that they had been in the South Pacific for nearly three years. I felt like I had been hit by lightning. There I was already getting homesick, and to think of these fellows being gone this long? My morale was at an all time low. We would find out that this outfit had a 16mm movie projector, and about once or twice a week would get movies of which they would show at night.

Our camp had been secured, partly by placing thin trigger wires supported with stakes to hold the wire about eighteen inches from the ground, if run into by an intruder the wire would trigger explosives like hand-grenades. This protection was armed each night before dark and disarmed early each morning. All personnel had been advised and knew better than to walk near this area during the above mentioned hours. Some nights when the Amphibious Engineers' Camp was showing a movie, the security system would not be armed until all the troops who had walked across this secured area were back in camp. This was the duty of the Armory Personnel.

I was still assigned as the mail clerk, therefore I was not allowed to stay in the same tent with other soldiers. (This was due now to having **censored mail**). My duties now required that I collect all the outgoing mail, (the envelopes could not be sealed) and take

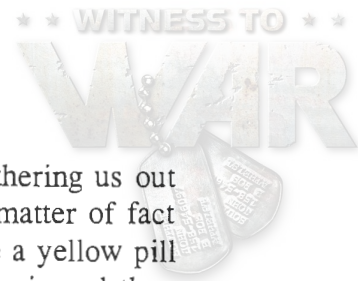


this collected mail to the Orderly Room, which was a tent where it would be given to the Commissioned Officers. They in turn would read all the letters to assure that no restricted information was present. This was performed usually at night. Any material in the letters which was restricted, or in question, was cut from the letter. I would then be given the mail back, of which I would have to seal each letter.

As we had not received any mail after leaving California, all mail was being forwarded to this APO here in Hollandia. I had so many bags of mail, not enough time and no place to sort it out. Therefore I would bring mail bags to an open area in the camp, climb onto a table and start **calling mail**. I called so much that I got so hoarse that I could hardly talk. Some of the fellows suggested that they would do the calling for me. So I then let some of the soldiers who had a fresh and louder voice do this for me until the mail was back to normal and my throat got better.

My day would consist of getting this mail onto an **LCM (landing craft)** which would carry me across a body of water, putting me back onto land again. Here I would try to hitch a ride on one of the many Army supply trucks traveling on this newly constructed dirt road through the jungle. The trucks would be carrying supplies from the 6th Army Hdqs.' different field units. From where I would get onto a truck, it would be about four miles to Hdqs. where the mail would come into from the U. S. A. There was a USO tent there and a lot of other **Army Divisions**. A **Navy Sea Bee Unit** was nearby also. I would usually have to wait about two hours before my mail would be ready for pickup. Again I would have to walk down this road, wait for some supply truck to come, and then hope I would soon get one to stop. Most of the time when they would see the U. S. mail bag they would stop. I would again have to wait until a certain hour, when this LCM would show up to pick me up. The weather was hot, the road was either dusty or muddy. I began to hate this job, especially after many of the soldiers found out the routine of how the letters were censored. Many of them would come to my tent at night and try to get me to replace the letter they had previously wrote with a later letter of which they wanted me to put into the envelope for mailing. I could not do it, then they would be mad. Another thing that was bothering me was that while the officers were reading the mail out loud at night (most of the time there would be two to three of them doing this together), they were laughing about what a person had written). They were not supposed to discuss what was written with anyone else, and as my tent was next to theirs, I could hear every word said.

Within a couple of weeks I requested through the Company Commander to be relieved of my present job, and to be assigned to one of the **tug boats**. I was informed that to do so I would lose my present rating. I told him, so be it. I do not remember now who took my job. I went the next day and reported to a Sgt. Harold Tatman, on ST 629, which was a 45 foot tug boat. The other ship mates were Joe McAleer, and Warren Breneman. I was a Private again and would stay on this boat for some time. We would find out pretty soon it was much better to sleep on the boat than back in the tents. In the cove that we would anchor our boat, the water was quiet calm, yet there was enough

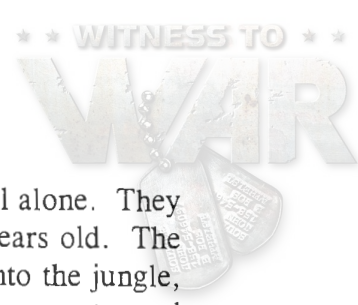


breeze to sleep well. We would also notice the mosquitoes were not bothering us out there, yet when we went to the camp area they would eat us up. As a matter of fact every one was now using a mosquito-net. We were also required to take a yellow pill each day. I think they were called aidabran. They were to prevent malaria and they would also turn your skin yellow. This is why the soldiers we had seen were so yellow.

Within a few weeks we would be living a little more like human beings. We had rigged up drums to rest on a wooden frame about eight feet high. We had a pipe fit into the bottom of the drum with a valve and sprinkle head attached. We had a water truck which would come each day to fill the tanks with fresh water, I don't know where this water came from, because the water which was put into the drinking water blister would come from another source. Someone also put a large curtain-like around the wooden pallet we would stand on when taking our shower. There had also been a **double hole outdoor toilet built**. A pit had first been dug, probably about five to six foot long, and about two to three feet wide. A double hole frame work had been built to stand over the hole, with a wooden roof attached. Some of the soldiers who stayed inside the camp most of their time had scrounged lumber and floored their tent. Others had went so far as constructing wooden boards around the sides, of which they could hang various things. We now had a portable generator which could be run until a given hour, in order to have a light in the tent.

I would continue to maintain a cot in the tent with the First Sergeant. The First Sgt. stayed in the Orderly Room all day and would also stay there each night as the Orderly Room had been fixed up better than any of the tents. It had been floored, walled around with wood boards and had a radio and fan installed. Therefore he would only come to the tent to sleep, and sleep only. He had taken no interest in the tent, and now that I stayed on the boat most of the time, I felt the same way. Our tent was next to the mess tent, in such a position that when there was a line before getting into the mess tent, the people would be standing right at the entrance to our tent. Our tent was also in a wash area (when it rained the water would run right through our tent). If I was lying in my tent, and it started raining, water would run right under my bed and through the tent, then running right by the mess tent. Due to this I could not put anything on the ground or it would get washed away. **Not much to come home to.** I had found a wooden box that I would sit my duffel bag on. We did not have our name in front of the tent, as many of the other soldiers did. I think it was due to not wanting anyone to know who slept there. Many times I would be in line for chow further back than my tent entrance and watch some of the others looking into our tent, as if to say, "who in the world could live in this?"

We had begun to see some of the **natives** who would walk a trail near our camp leading into the jungle when going in one direction, and leading back to the ocean inlet near where we kept our boats. These natives lived in wooden shacks built out over the water. They had a make-shift wharf built of which they walked on to enter their living quarters. They also kept their outrigger canoes tied up to their huts or pushed ashore. They used

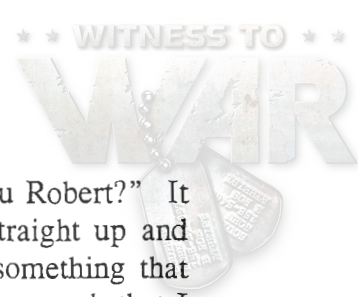


the canoes to fish in, you could see very small children out in the canoes all alone. They must have learned to row these canoes by the time they were five to six years old. The women would usually be the ones we would see walking the trail going into the jungle, when they would come out they would have a lot of fruit like bananas, coconuts, and other things of which I did not know. When a man or more than one man would be with the men, they would be carrying a large machete, but nothing else. The women could be loaded down with bundles on their head and both arms full, but never would you see the men carrying more than the knife. Men or boys never wore more than a loin cloth attached to a belt-like band around their waist. The women would wear a skirt from the waist down, and nothing above their waist. Most of the smaller children wore no clothes at all.

One day while Breneman, McAleer, Sgt. Tatman, and myself were anchored in this cove, we did not have any tow jobs going on at the present time, so we were killing time. Two or three boys came out to our boat and got pretty close to us, just paddling their canoe in order to stay near and watch us. We had some canned sausage, some bread and something else we used to make a sandwich. Breneman held it forward and motioned for the one with the paddle to come near, he then held it out for him to take it. (Breneman made hand motions to eat). The kid took one bite from it and spit it out. He handed it to another one who did the same thing. This one then threw it into the water. Breneman looked at us and said something to the effect, "are we eating food so bad the natives won't even eat it?" Another day this same kid came to our tent area and was standing around watching us. As usual the weather was as hot as it gets over there, and that was **hot**. Breneman went into his tent, and pulled from his duffel bag a pair of woolen underwear, ones which had been issued to us when leaving the U. S. Breneman showed him, or helped him, get into those long woolen underwear. The kid grinned from ear to ear and ran off wearing them. We all had a good laugh and wondered how long he would keep them on? I think Breneman was wanting to get rid of the underwear, knowing we would never use them in the South Pacific.

Another day when we were off duty, it may have been on a Sunday, one of my friends (**Robert Swain**), decided we would go **wild pig hunting**. We had been told that there were many wild pigs in the jungle. We got our guns and started taking the trail we had seen so many natives take into the jungle. It was probably early afternoon, we walked out of range from the Army Engineer camp, on until the trail divided, and became more dense. We could hear sounds of what we thought were hogs rooting in the ground, yet we had seen no sight of an animal of any kind. We were on a slight hill and it appeared that the noise was further down into the hollow below us. We decided to separate, I would stay there and Robert would walk in a circle and go over and up the hill on the other side of the hollow where we were hearing noise coming from. He left, and I sat down to be quiet for a while. I was squatting down, trying to be quiet, so that I would not distract any pig or hog.

After maybe twenty minutes, I heard something making noise which sounded like maybe

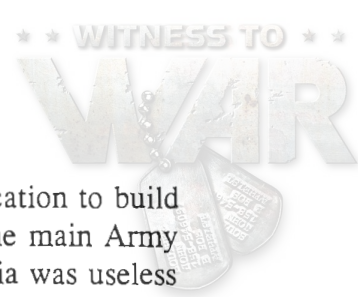


it was Robert coming back. It got a little closer and I said, "is that you Robert?" It sounded as if the noise I was hearing was running away. I jumped straight up and moved from around a bush I had been squatting behind. I then saw something that looked like a person running away from my position. It frightened me so much that I just froze where I was standing. When I recovered, after a few seconds I called "Robert is that you"? I got no response. At this time I didn't know whether to stay or leave. I walked a short distance in the direction from where the noise (I believed it was a person running) had taken place. There I found a field jacket, I knew it was not a U. S. soldier's clothing. I looked it over and decided it must be a Japanese Army field jacket. It was the right color and had some writing that wasn't English. I took it with me and then began to get much more frightened.

I called Robert's name louder, yet no answer. I was afraid if I left to go in any direction I would get even more lost from him. I held my rifle in my hands now and waited a while longer. I decided to call him once more. When I did, he answered not far from me and was coming from the opposite direction from where the person I now believed to have been a **Japanese soldier** was. I asked him if he had been back at any time where we had been? He said no. We decided we had lost enough time and should get back to camp. We thought we were heading back in the right direction, but we began to get into a deep marsh with no dry ground. The sun was getting lower and it was darker than when the sun was shining. We could make out a pretty tall hill, not tall enough to be a mountain. We decided to head for the hill, thinking if we could get on top of it we could see the ocean, from there we could tell in what direction we should go in reaching our camp.

When we got high enough going up the hill, we could tell that we were lost, and were heading in the wrong direction. We lost all interest in everything except getting back to camp. It was nearly dark before we would reach camp. We would find out later that there were many Japanese soldiers who had escaped capture. Many of them would be killed later trying to come into the Army Engineer Camp next to us. (I would keep the Japanese field jacket and bring it back home much later).

I had seen so many of the natives coming from the jungle with bunches of bananas on their head. I decided one day I would take my bayonet and go looking for some. I did and found a large tree with a bunch hanging higher than I could reach. I took my bayonet and cut the entire tree down to get the bananas. It was much heavier than I had thought it would be. I managed to get it back to the tent. I hung it up by tying it to the tent pole. I waited a week or two, and still no ripe bananas. Many of the soldiers had walked by my tent and seen the banana stalk hanging there. The next time one of the soldiers saw me he said, "you want those bananas to ripen?" and, I told him, "I sure do". He then told me to wrap the banana stalk with my poncho and keep it covered. I did, and the bananas began to ripen at the same time. I gave away a lot of bananas, yet I ate so many I thought I was going to get sick on them.

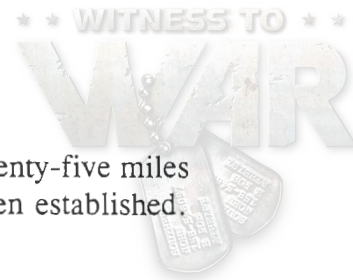


Hollandia had been chosen for invasion because it looked like a good location to build a base for long-range heavy bombers to aid the Philippine invasions. The main Army invasion force was the 31st Infantry Division. It then proved that Hollandia was useless for heavy bombers, because the soil was too soft.

A lot of the Japanese soldiers left around Hollandia was due to stragglers not knowing about, or not able to follow, the withdrawing Japanese force fast enough. They were then left without information, supplies, ammunitions or food. I know right near our camp there was an abandoned rice supply. This may have been one reason for so many Japanese soldiers trying to enter camps at night. Many nights we would be awakened by machine-gun fire coming from the camp behind us (the Amphibious Engineer group) shooting at, or killing, Japanese soldiers trying to infiltrate their camp. The Japanese soldiers had tried once before to come in with their hands in the air for surrender. The American soldier on guard (with a 50mm machine-gun) relaxed to call for the Sgt. of the Guard. One of the Japanese soldiers had a hand grenade taped to his back. Another Japanese soldier who was standing behind him reached forward and grabbed the grenade, killing this American soldier. So from then on, orders were to shoot first, asking no questions. To my memory we had no known Japanese soldiers to trigger our security fence, or to attempt entering through other points. We had been very lucky. Though on the last day in New Guinea, we would find a Japanese machine-gun, loaded and set up beyond our security wire, overlooking our camp.

As we were breaking camp to begin our invasion trip to **Leyte**, two of the soldiers had been making a concoction we called **jungle-juice**. This was made from dried fruit, rice of which we had recovered from sacks of Japanese rice (left behind during the U.S. invasion of Hollandia) and yeast, putting this into a container with a certain amount of water. This would ferment within a week or more, making a very strong alcoholic drink. When these soldiers went behind our camp where they had hid the container of jungle-juice awaiting for it to ferment, they discovered the Japanese machine-gun. The gun was clean, oiled, and in very good condition. At this site where the gun was located, there was a clear view right to an area where our troops stood while waiting in line at the entrance to the chow tent. It was the consensus of the Sgt. of the Guard, and the Company Commander that they (the Japanese soldier, or soldiers) were waiting for such time as when a formation would take place, or when as many men as possible would be standing together, before attacking us.

At this time I had never seen **General MacArthur**, only knowing he was the Commanding General and was directing these invasions of which we were to take part in. We had been very busy towing barges from one ship to another ship, or to a floating crane, where they could be unloaded. We would also go out of the channel to open sea where seagoing tugs had towed these barges from other islands or from allied sources. We were also towing water barges to navy ships, or marine ships. I would find out much later why I had never seen General MacArthur. He was staying on a crest of a hill overlooking a beautiful lake (Lake Sentani). This beautiful body of water was cupped

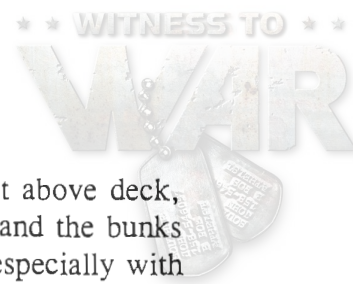


in the mountains which rise to an elevation of 7000 feet, located some twenty-five miles inland from Hollandia. This is where MacArthur's headquarters had been established. This was one man who didn't live like any ordinary soldier.

I must tell one instance which I have thought of so many times and wondered what would make grown men try such things? This will go back to **jungle-juice**. At this time I was working as a deck-hand on another 45 foot tug boat, of whom Lee D. Bryant was the skipper. I think one of the other ship mates was Norris, I don't remember the remaining person. We had brewed a batch of jungle-juice, found it to be ready to drink, so we started sipping on it. I do not remember why we were idle this afternoon, though we must have been, or we would have been in deep trouble later. The skipper had served in the Navy for nine years and we thought he was a very skilled seaman. The more we drank the more we thought of going home. We began to talk about going out to sea, going as far as we could, maybe running aground on a beautiful island, or maybe being picked up by a merchant ship which would take us back to the good-old-U.S.A. The skipper said, "why not?" We then started out of the channel which would lead us to open water. We must have traveled for at least two hours. We could still see land and we started to talk about what we would need and decided to take inventory on our supplies. We had no radio, no charts of the area, we had only a half tank of fuel, but most of all, our jungle-juice was running out. The hot sun was sobering us up and we began to really think about what we were trying to do. I think we came up with the idea of returning for resupplying. It would take us until after sunset to reach our camp entrance. I have thought of this so many times, wondering if we would have went further if anything would have happened to the boat or engine, what we would have done with no radio? This was the last jungle-juice party we would have. I don't think we talked about it much later, each knowing how foolish we had been. There would be another case similar to this which happened later.

During this era, colored soldiers were assigned to colored Army Battalions, and white soldiers were assigned to white Army Battalions, or Divisions. Not mixed. In this incident, about six to ten colored soldiers belonged to a supply outfit. Their job was to drive amphibious ducks (trucks which could travel in water or land). They were mainly used to go out into the bay, or gulf, where the supply ships would anchor for unloading. The ducks would pull along-side the ship, supplies would be hoisted over the side of the ship and lowered down into the duck, until it was full. The duck would then head for shore (usually a sandy, sloping area where the duck's wheels could take over from the propeller as it reached bottom). It would then climb onto land and continue as a normal truck. These six to ten colored soldiers decided to fill one of these ducks with gas, water, food and some other supplies, and head home to the U. S. A. They had reached one hundred miles away from shore when they were missed and a rescue plane located them out in the ocean. I never found out what kind of punishment they received.

We had taken a lot of pride in maintaining our boat and would work every week-end, making rope bumpers and would repair worn equipment. We also kept the boat painted



and clean. We had also built bunks on top side so we could sleep right above deck, behind the wheel-house. This space had been used to store equipment, and the bunks were actually below deck. Due to it being so hot in the South Pacific, especially with the boat being made of steel and no cooling below deck, it was impossible to sleep below deck. Above the bunk frames which we had fabricated above deck, was a flat roof extending out on both sides far enough to shield us from the rain. The wheel house had a water tight door on each side, with a large glass window so the person running the boat could see out through the windows on either side. Inside the wheel house, right behind the steering wheel and controls was a bunk where the skipper would sleep, or rest.

It would not be long before we would be told to prepare for an ocean voyage, where we would be traveling on our present assigned boats. We would not be told **where**, or **how long** a trip we would be making. The skipper on each of the 45 foot tug-boats were issued dehydrated food in one gallon cans. He was also issued a propane fuel two burner stove. This was a small size which would sit on a small kitchen counter. We had been issued a five gallon can of lard. This was for cooking. We had quiet a large space on the covered deck where we had fabricated the frames for our mattress of which we would sleep on. We would use this extra space to store our food supplies and a two-burner stove. We moved things that we thought we would not need below deck where our original bunks were. At this time we had not been told exactly how we would be traveling (whether under our own power or being towed by something larger than our own 45 foot tug).

Within a few days (this was about the middle of October), we would find out that we were being towed by a larger Navy sea-going tug boat. I do not remember who the party was that would prepare the large tow line which would be connected around our wheel house and pass back through the bow cleats. The large rope line was padded at places where it would come in contact with the corners of the wheel house (this was to protect the line from chafing as it moved back and forth around the corners of the wheel house). Our tug boat would be towed behind three or four large barges of gasoline. To prevent the lines from breaking should we run into rough weather, each line between the barges would be 700 feet long. All the lines were steel except the one fastened to our boat, it was a large rope.

There was also a fire box on the side of the wheel house containing a fire ax, fire extinguisher, etc. We were told in case of trouble with the line (maybe breaking, or a barge sinking) to get the fire ax and cut the line to free our tug from the sinking tow. We had also been told that in case of any of the tow becoming broken apart from its original rigging, we were to break loose and assist in rounding up, or whatever was necessary in saving any or all of the gasoline barges. The length of towline between each piece being towed would put our boat so far behind the Navy tow boat, we could barely see the tow boat. And even when we could see it, not having radio contact or signal equipment and know-how, would render us helpless, especially at night.