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1944

### 1944, Phillip to Family

Philip A. Lathrap

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## 1944, Phillip to Family

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### Comments

The date above is an approximation.



WHEN I RETURNED TO CAMP AFTER THE LAST NIGHT I SAW YOU I FOUND THAT WE~~RE~~ WERE RESTRICTED TO THE AREA AND ALERTED TO LEAVE IN 48 HOURS. NOTHING MUCH HAPPENED THE NEXT DAY, A FEW SHOTS AND THAT SORT OF THING. THE FOLLOWING DAY WAS ABOUT THE SAME, EXCEPT THAT I WAS ON NIGHT KP AND DID NOT GET TO BED UNTIL ABOUT THREE. AT FIVE IN THE MORNING WE~~RE~~ AWAKENED AND TOLD TO BE READY TO LEAVE IN ABOUT TWO HOURS. AT ABOUT SEVEN THIRTY WE FELL OUT WITH FULL PACK, TIN HAT AND EVERYTHING THAT GOES WITH IT. OUR BARRACKS BAGS HAD ALREADY LEFT BY TRUCK. WE WERE MARCHED TO A DRILL FIELD WHERE WE WAITED AROUND FOR ABOUT THREE HOURS UNTIL THEY DECIDED TO FEED US AGAIN. AFTER LUNCH WE LINED UP AGAIN AND WERE MARCHED TO THE ROAD ON THE WEST SIDE OF CAMP ~~XXXXXXXX~~ STONEMAN WHERE THE REST OF OUR GROUP WERE ALL WAITING, ABOUT FOUR THOUSAND IN ALL.

AFTER MORE WAITING WE FINALLY MARCHED OUT OF CAMP AND DOWN TOWARD THE RIVER, WITH MY PACK GETTING HEAVIER AND HEAVIER ALL THE TIME. WE ARRIVED AT THE DOCK AND AFTER MORE WAITING WERE GIVEN OUR BARRACKS BAGS AND THEN JAMMED INTO AN OLD RIVER BOAT. WE HAD JUST ENOUGH ROOM FOR A BARRACKS BAG, WE HAD TO SIT ON TOP OF IT, WITH NO ROOM TO MOVE. I WAS VERY LUCKY AS I WAS RIGHT NEXT TO A WINDOW AND COULD SEE WHAT WENT ON OUTSIDE.

ABOUT ONE THIRTY WE ~~RE~~ PULLED OUT AND HEADED DOWN THE RIVER TO SAN FRANCISCO. IT WAS A BEAUTIFUL TRIP BUT DID NOT ENJOY IT TOO MUCH BECAUSE I STILL DID NOT KNOW WHAT WAS AHEAD. WE REACHED SAN FRANCISCO ABOUT FIVE PULLING UP AT A DOCK ALMOST UP TO FISHERMANS WHARF. WE STARTED DISEMBARKING ALMOST IMMEDIATELY. FOR ONE LAST ~~XXX~~ LOOK AT AMERICAN SOIL. WE DID NOT HAVE MUCH OF A LOOK, WE JUST MARCHED ACROSS THE PIER AND UP THE GANGPLANK INTO A VERY BIG TROOP ~~XXXX~~ TRANSPORT.

ON BOARD WE WERE ~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~ PUSHED INTO A DARK PASSAGE AND DOWN A COUPLE OF FLIGHTS OF STAIRS. WE HAD THE SELECT POSITION FOR THIS TRIP, RIGHT DOWN ON THE BOTTOM JUST UNDER THE BRIDGE. THE SPOT ~~WHERE~~ WHERE ALL THE TORPEDOS WOULD BE AIMED. ON TOP OF THAT I HAD THE BOTTOM BUNK, UNDER THREE OTHER MEN. IF ANYONE WAS SICK I WAS CERTAINLY GOING TO GET IT. OUR COTS CONSISTED OF A SQUARE OF ~~XXXXX~~ CANVAS ~~XXXXXXXX~~ LACED TO A METAL FRAME WITH ROPES THAT CREAKED EVERY TIME WE MOVED ON THEM. IT WAS VERY CROWDED BUT AT LEAST WE HAD ~~XXX~~ A PLACE TO LIE DOWN. WE WERE RESTRICTED TO OUR BUNKS THAT NIGHT SO I WENT RIGHT TO SLEEP, IT HAD BEEN A LONG HARD DAY.

THE NEXT MORNING WHICH WAS SATURDAY APRIL 21, WE AWAKENED, OR MORE CORRECTLY WE WERE AWAKENED ABOUT SEVEN AND HURRIED UP TO BREAKFAST. WE WENT OUT ON DECK TO GET TO THE MESS HALL SO I COULD SEE THAT WE WERE STILL TIED UP TO THE DOCK. AFTER A NONE TO GOOD BREAKFAST EATEN STANDING UP I WENT UP ON DECK TO LOOK AROUND. IT WAS A USUAL SPRING MORNING FOR SAN FRANCISCO, COOL AND HAZY. ABOUT EIGHT WE CAST OFF AND STARTED DOWN THE BAY TOWARD TREASURE ISLAND. WE WENT DOWN ALMOST ~~XX~~ TO THE BRIDGE, THEN TURNED AROUND AND HEADED UP THE BAY TOWARD THE GATE. WE PASSED THE SUB NETS AND OUT UNDER THE BRIDGE PAST SOME FISHING BOATS AND OUT TO SEA. GOING OUT WE HAD A CONVOY OF A COUPLE OF MINE SWEEPERS AND TWO NAVY BLIMPS. AS SOON AS WE WERE OUT OF THE GATE WE HAD TO WEAR LIFE BELTS, PISTOL BELT WITH CANTEEN OF WATER AND OUR HELMET LINERS.

AS ~~XXX~~ SOON AS WE PASSED UNDER THE BRIDGE ~~XX~~ IT STARTED TO GET ROUGH, I COULD TELL RIGHT AWAY THAT I WAS NOT GOING TO BE A



GOOD ~~XXXXXX~~ SAILOR. ABOUT FIFTEEN MILES OUT WE DROPPED OUR PILOT OVER THE PORT SIDE AND I DROPPED BREAKFAST OVER THE STARBOARD AND RETIRED TO MY BUNK.

THE NEXT MORNING I FELT BETTER AND WAS ABLE TO KEEP BOTH MEALS. WE ONLY HAD TOO A DAY DURING THE TRIP, THERE WAS NOT ENOUGH TIME TO FEED EVERY ONE THREE TIMES. WE WERE ALL ALONE NOW, OUR ~~XXXXXX~~ BLIMPS HAD TURNED BACK THE NIGHT BEFORE. WE PASSED A ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ BOAT HEADING BACK TO SAN FRANCISCO ABOUT THREE IN THE AFTERNOON, IT WAS THE LAST THING WE WOULD SEE BUT WATER FOR NEARLY A WEEK.

OUR SHIP WAS THE USS GENERAL WILLIAM M. BLACK, A NEW BOAT ON ITS SECOND TRIP OUT. IT HAD GONE TO HAWAII ONCE. IT WAS QUITE FAST (OVER 21 KNOTS) SO WE WERE TO TRAVEL ALONE AND TAKE CARE OF OUR SELVES. WE HAD FOUR DUAL PURPOSE FIVE INCHERS AND A LOT OF SMALLER AA STUFF SO WE WERE WELL ABLE TO DO SO, AT LEAST I THOUGHT SO, BUT AFTER SEEING SOME OF THE PRACTICE FIRING WE HAD I ~~XXXXXX~~ WAS NOT SO ~~XXXXXX~~ SURE.

AT THIS TIME WE ~~X~~ HAD NO IDEA ~~XXX~~ WHERE WE WERE GOING ~~XX~~ SO THERE WAS MUCH SPECULATION, I HAD GUESSED NEW CALEDONIA BUT HAD NO IDEA AT THE TIME THAT I WAS RIGHT, WE WERE STILL WONDERING IF WE WOULD HIT HAWAII.

THE NEXT DAY I LOST BREAKFAST AND DID NOT EVEN BOTHER WITH LUNCH. I DONT KNOW WHY BECAUSE IT WAS NOT ANY ROUGHER THAN THE DAY BEFORE. THE FOLLOWING DAY I WAS OK AGAIN, WHICH WAS A GOOD THING BECAUSE I WAS ON KP. I HAD A VERY EASY JOB BUT IT WAS STILL THE SAME OLD KP. THE MESS HALL WAS ON THE DECK ABOVE THE GALLEY AND THEY HAD A DUMB WAITER TO CARRY UP THE FOOD. I WAS THE ELEVATOR OPERATOR. ALL I HAD TO DO WAS PUT THE FOOD ON THE PLATFORM AND PUSH A BUTTON. IT WAS OK UNTIL IT BROKE DOWN AND WE HAD TO CARRY UP THE FOOD BY HAND. IT IS NOT MUCH FUN CARRYING A ~~XX~~ PAN OF HOT FOOD UP NARROW ~~XXXX~~ STAIRS ON A ROCKING BOAT. IT WAS FINALLY FIXED AND WE MANAGED TO GET EVERY ONE FED. ABOUT ELEVEN IN THE GENERAL ALARM WENT OFF AND ~~X~~ EVERY ONE OF THE CREW SCRAMBLED TO BATTLE STATIONS. DOWN BELOW WE DID NOT KNOW WHAT WAS GOING ON SO WE ALL GOT READY FOR ANYTHING. ONE OF THE FELLOWS INFLATED HIS LIFE BELT SO THAT HE COULD GET OUT IN A HURRY. AFTER THE ALARM WAS OVER HE FOUND HE COULDNT MOVE, THE INFLATED BELT HAD JAMMED HIM INTO HIS BUNK. IT TURNED OUT ~~X~~ THAT IT WAS ONLY A SMALL FIRE IN THE SICK BAY. WITH VERY LITTLE DAMMAGE. ON KP THAT DAY I MANAGED TO EAT A LOT SO MADE UP FOR THE DAY BEFORE.

IT WAS BEGINNING TO GET WARM NOW AND THE WATER WAS VERY BLUE, ABOUT THE DEEPEST BLUE WATER I ~~HAVE~~ EVER SEEN. IT IS VERY BEAUTIFUL WITH THE SUN SHINING ON IT BUT THERE IS TOO MUCH OF IT. WE ALSO HAD FLYING FISH NOW. IT WAS LOTS OF FUN TO WATCH THEM BUT EVEN THAT WAS ~~XXXXXX~~ NOT MUCH OF A FUTURE. THE SHIP HAD A LIBRARY SO STARTED TO DO SOME READING. READ A GOOD BOOK ON ALASKA AND ALSO ONE ABOUT THE LIFE OF JACK LONDON.

EVERY DAY IT WAS BECOMING HOTTER AND HOTTER AS WE HEADED SOUTH. IT SOON BECAME OBVIOUS THAT WE WOULD NOT HIT HAWAII. ON APRIL 30 WE CROSSED THE EQUATOR AT ABOUT NINE IN THE MORNING. I AM AN OLD SHELLBACK NOW. IT DOES NOT FEEL AS IF I AM UPSIDE DOWN.

WITH THE HEAT AS BAD AS IT WAS ON DECK OUR LIVING QUARTERS WERE LIKE AN OVEN, ~~EMEN~~ AT NIGHT. WE WERE ALLOWED TO SLEEP ON DECK AT NIGHT BUT I WAS NEVER ABLE TO FIND A PLACE TO LIE DOWN. AT SUNSET THE SHIP WENT TO GENERAL QUARTERS AND WE ALL HAD TO GO TO OUR BUNKS WHERE WE WOULD BE OUT OF THE WAY. AS SOON AS IT WAS DARK WE COULD GO UP, THEN THE MAD SCRAMBLE FOR A PLACE ON DECK WOULD START. WE WERE AT THE BOTTOM OF THE BOAT SO WERE THE LAST TO REACH THE DECK. AFTER A COUPLE OF ~~XXXXXX~~ TRIES I GAVE IT UP AS A BAD JOB AND SLEPT



IN MY OWN BUNK IN THE HOLE. THERE WERE ADVANTAGES THOUGH, IT USUALLY RAINED SEVERAL TIMES DURING THE NIGHT AND ALL THE FELLOWS ON DECK MANAGED TO GET WET. THEY ALSO HAD TO COME DOWN FOR GENERAL QUARTERS IN THE MORNING WHILE WE COULD SLEEP A LITTLE LATER.

ABOUT THIS TIME WE STARTED TO HAVE FIRING PRACTICE. IT WAS VERY INTERESTING TO WATCH. THEY FIRED AT WEATHER BALLOONS, AND ~~XXS~~ AT THE BURST OF SMOKE OF THE SHELL FIRED BEFORE. AFTER LISTENING TO ONE FIVE INCH GUN GO OFF I WOULD HATE TO BE NEAR A BATTLESHIP WHEN NINE SIXTEEN INCH GUNS WENT OFF.

WE SIGHTED LAND AGAIN ON MAY 4 TH. A BIG ISLAND OFF TO THE PORT I NEVER DID FIND OUT WHAT IT WAS. WE COULD TELL THAT IT WAS NEAR BECAUSE THE RADAR HAD PICKED SOMETHING UP. WE LOOKED IN THE DIRECTION IT POINTED AND SURE ENOUGH LAND CAME UP OVER THE HORIZON SOON AFTER. THE RADAR ANTENNA LOOKS LIKE A BIG BED SPRING SET UP ON THE MAST. IT KEEPS TURNING WHEN THERE IS NOTHING AROUND BUT AS SOON AS IT PICKS UP SOMETHING IT STOPS.

THE NEXT DAY WE SIGHTED A BIG TANKER, THE FIRST BOAT WE HAD SEEN SINCE THE DAY AFTER WE LEFT SAN FRANCISCO. THERE WAS A LOT OF TALK BETWEEN THE BOATS, ALL BY BLINKER LIGHT. I WISH I KNEW MY CODE BETTER. THAT AFTERNOON WE SPOTTED ANOTHER ISLAND, THIS TIME A VERY SMALL ONE. IT WAS ONE BIG ROCK WITH SIDES COMING NEARLY STRAIGHT UP OUT OF THE WATER. IT MUST HAVE BEEN OVER A THOUSAND FEET HIGH, I CERTAINLY WISH I KNEW THE NAME OF IT.

THAT EVENING WE SPOTTED SOME PLANES, ~~XX~~ FIRST A COUPLE OF RNZAF LOCKHEED HUDSONS AND LATER A NAVY PBY. THE ~~XXXXXX~~ HUDSONS CAME DOWN VERY LOW TO HAVE A LOOK AT US.

THE NEXT DAY WAS THE SIXTH BUT CROSSED THE DATE LINE AND ENDED UP ON THE SEVENTH. WE HAD MORE PLANES AROUND US TODAY. THIS EVENING WE HAD A NOTICE THAT WE WOULD DEBARK AT NOUMEA NEW CALEDONIA THE NEXT DAY. EVERY ONE WAS GETTING READY TO GET OFF.

NO LAND THE NEXT MORNING WE DID NOT PICK IT UP UNTIL ALMOST NOON. WE CAME AROUND THE SOUTH END OF THE ISLAND AND UP THE WEST COAST. THERE WAS A LOT OF BLINKER TALK WITH SOME SIGNAL STATIONS ON THE SHORE. THERE IS A REEF ALL AROUND THE ISLAND SO WE PICKED UP A PILOT BEFORE GOING IN. THE SPOT WE WENT THROUGH WAS VERY NARROW. COULD SEE A COUPLE OF BOATS PILED UP ON THE REEF SO GUESS EVERY ONE DOES NOT MAKE IT. IT WAS RAINING WHEN WE CAME INTO THE HARBOR, BUT THE LAND LOOKED VERY GOOD IN SPITE OF IT. IT WAS LATE WHEN WE FINALLY DROPPED ANCHOR SO WE DID NOT GO ASHORE THAT NIGHT.

~~XX~~ WE WERE AWAKENED AT ~~XXXX~~ TWO IN THE MORNING AND TOLD TO BE READY TO GET OFF AT FOUR. ON TIME FOR ONCE WE TUMBLED DOWN A VERY STEEP GANG PLANK ONTO A LANDING BARGE AND STARTED THE MILE X TRIP TO THE DOCK. IT WAS JUST GETTING LIGHT WHEN WE HIT DRY LAND AGAIN X FOR THE FIRST TIME IN OVER TWO WEEKS. IT CERTAINLY FELT GOOD TO STAND ON SOMETHING SOLID, EVEN IF IT DID BELONG TO ~~XXXXXX~~ THE FRENCH. THERE WERE A BIG LINE OF TRUCKS WAITING TO TAKE US OUT TO THE NEW CAMP.



WE WERE LOADED INTO THE TRUCKS AND THEN SAT AROUND FOR A WHILE WAITING FOR THE ARMY TO GET STARTED. HALF OF MY LIFE IN THE ARMY I HAVE SPENT WAITING IN SOME SORT OF LINE OR OTHER. WHILE WE WAITED WE HAD A GOOD CHANCE TO LOOK AROUND. IT WAS STILL VERY EARLY BUT THERE WERE QUITE A FEW PEOPLE UP ALREADY. THEY WERE MOSTLY NATIVES BUT A FEW WERE WHITE. I FOUND OUT LATER THAT MOST PEOPLE IN THE TROPICS GET UP EARLY AND FINISH THEIR WORK BEFORE IT GETS TOO HOT.

THE NATIVES WERE VERY DARK AND NOT VERY GOOD LOOKING. NOT AT ALL LIKE THE NATIVES OF THE SOUTH PACIFIC WERE SUPPOSE TO LOOK. ALL OF THEM, MEN AND WOMEN ALIKE HAD THEIR HAIR DYED A REDDISH BROWN WHICH GAVE THEM A VERY STRANGE LOOK TO SAY THE LEAST. I FOUND OUT LATER THAT THEY PUT LIME ON IT.

WE FINALLY GOT UNDER WAY, DOWN THROUGH THE CENTER OF NOUMEA. IT COULD HAVE BEEN THE MAIN STREET OF ANY SMALL TOWN IN THE U.S. EXCEPT FOR THE STRANGE PEOPLE AND THE STRANGER LOOKING CIVILIAN CARS. THEY DRIVE ON THE RIGHT SIDE OF THE STREET THERE NOW BUT THEY CHANGED ONLY AFTER THE AMERICANS GOT THERE. NINETY PERCENT OF THE CARS THERE BELONGED TO THE ARMY.

WE WENT OUT THROUGH THE NORTH END OF TOWN PAST THE NICKEL DOCK AND THE NAVY SHIP REPAIR BASE, AND OUT INTO THE COUNTRY. IT WAS A BEAUTIFUL RIDE. EVERYTHING WAS NICE AND GREEN AND COOL, AND LOOKED ESPECIALLY GOOD AFTER THE LONG BOAT RIDE. WE PASSED THROUGH MANY ARMY AND MARINE CAMPS AND A COUPLE OF FRENCH AND NATIVE VILLAGES. AFTER A FIFTEEN MILE RIDE WE FINALLY CAME TO OUR DESTINATION, THE SIXTH REPLACEMENT DEPOT ~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~ NEAR THE TOWN OF PLUM. IT IS IN A LITTLE TRIANGULAR VALLEY ON THE COAST JUST SOUTH EAST OF NOUMEA. THERE IS A BEAUTIFUL SANDY BEACH THERE WITH COCONUT PALMS IN BACK OF IT. THIS IS ONE OF THE FEW PLACES THAT I HAVE SEEN THAT LOOKED LIKE THE TROPICS ARE SUPPOSE TO. IN BACK OF THE VALLEY THERE ARE SEVERAL HIGH MOUNTAINS, A COUPLE OF THEM WITH THE RED SCARS OF NICKEL MINES ON THEM.

WE UNLOADED OURSELVES AND OUR BAGGAGE FROM THE TRUCKS AND THEN WERE ORDERED TO PICK UP OUR THINGS AND START WALKING. AFTER A HALF MILE WALK UP A ROAD ON WHICH THE TRUCKS COULD JUST AS EASILY HAVE TAKEN US WE ARRIVED AT OUR AREA. WE WERE ASSIGNED TO TENTS AND THEN HAD LUNCH. IT WAS A VERY GOOD MEAL, ESPECIALLY SO BECAUSE IT WAS THE FIRST TIME IN OVER TWO WEEKS THAT I HAD EATEN SITTING DOWN.

WE WERE AT THIS CAMP ABOUT SIX DAYS. IN THAT TIME WE HAD CLOTHING CHECK, PHYSICAL CHECK, DEMONSTRATIONS OF ALL SORTS AND ALL THE OTHER THINGS OF THAT KIND THAT THE ARMY DREAMS UP. IT WAS ONE OF THE NICEST CAMPS I HAVE SEEN SINCE I CAME OVERSEAS BUT I DID NOT THINK SO AT THE TIME. IT LOOKED VERY POOR AFTER THE STATES. WE HAD A VERY GOOD PX THERE, ICE CREAM, COOKIES, AND LOTS OF OTHER THINGS THAT I HAVEN'T SEEN SINCE. WE HAD ONE SUNDAY OFF SO WENT SWIMMING IN THE OCEAN. HAD A VERY GOOD TIME, THE WATER WAS JUST RIGHT. AFTER THE SWIM WE LOCATED SOME COCONUTS AND ATE ONE OF THEM. IT WAS GOOD BUT WOULD HAVE BEEN BETTER WITH A CAKE UNDER IT.

THE NEXT DAY WE WENT BACK TO NOUMEA IN TRUCKS TO THE SIXTH REPLACEMENT DEPOT STAGING AREA ~~XXXXXX~~ WHERE I WAS TO STAY FOR THE NEXT THREE MONTHS. IT WASN'T A VERY GOOD LOOKING PLACE, VERY HOT AND VERY DUSTY, WITH VERY BAD LIVING CONDITIONS. IT WAS SUPPOSE TO BE A CAMP ~~XXX~~ WHERE MEN STAYED FOR A COUPLE OF DAYS WHILE WAITING FOR A BOAT TO BE LOADED. WE LIVED IN LONG HOSPITAL TENTS WHICH LEAKED VERY BADLY. I THINK THEY MUST HAVE BEEN LEFT OVER FROM THE LAST WAR. I WAS RAINED OUT THE FIRST NIGHT AND HAD TO MOVE TO A DRY SPOT BUT WAS NEVER COMPLETELY DRY THE WHOLE TIME I WAS THERE.



WE WERE RIGHT NEXT TO A SWAMP SO HAD TO USE OUR MOSQUITO NET ALL THE TIME WHICH MADE IT ALL THE MORE FUN WHEN WE GOT WET,

THE CAMP WAS ON THE PENINSULA WHICH RUNS OUT ~~XXXXX~~ SOUTH ~~XX~~ WEST OF NOUMEA. IT IS ROCKY AND I DON'T THINK THERE WAS MUCH OF ANY THING THERE BEFORE THE ARMY AND NAVY GOT THERE. WE WERE RIGHT IN THE MIDDLE OF IT, OVER THE HILL ON ONE SIDE THERE WAS THE OCEAN AND THE VALLEY WE WERE IN RAN DOWN THROUGH A SWAMP TO THE OCEAN ON THE OTHER SIDE. WE WERE ONLY ABOUT A MILE AND A HALF FROM THE CENTER OF TOWN AND COULD MAKE IT EASILY IN FIFTEEN MINUTES BY CATCHING A RIDE.

WE WERE ASSIGNED TO THE CAMP FOR RATIONS AND QUARTERS ONLY WHICH VERY GOOD FOR US AS THE OTHER MEN IN THE CAMP HAD TO GO OUT ON DETAIL EVERY DAY. WE HAD TO WORK ABOUT ONCE A WEEK OUT AT THE HEADQUARTERS OF THE WEATHER SQUADRON. THE REST OF THE TIME WE HAD OFF TO DO WHAT WE LIKED. WE WERE GIVEN A CLASS A ~~XXX~~ PASS SO COULD GO TO TOWN ANY TIME WE WANTED.

THERE WAS A BEAUTIFUL RED CROSS BUILDING IN THE CAMP. IT WAS ABOUT THE ONLY GOOD THING THERE. EVERY DAY OR SO THEY WOULD TAKE ABOUT TWENTY MEN IN A TRUCK AND GO OUT ON A SIGHT SEEING TRIP OR A SWIMMING PARTY. THE FIRST TRIP WE WENT ON WAS TO THE OLD CHURCH AND MISSION AT ST LOUIS ABOUT EIGHT MILES FROM NOUMEA. IT WAS VERY INTERESTING, THE CHURCH WAS NEARLY A HUNDRED YEARS OLD AND THE MISSION SCHOOL WAS NOT MUCH NEWER. THERE WAS A NATIVE VILLAGE THERE WHICH WE ALSO VISITED. I ALSO WENT ON SEVERAL SWIMMING PARTIES TO DUMBEA AND ONCE UP TO THE TONTOUTA RIVER. ALSO WENT ON ONE SIGHTSEEING TRIP OF THE CITY OF NOUMEA. WE ALSO WENT SWIMMING A LOT AT ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ ANSA VATA BEACH WHERE THE NAVY HAD A HOSPITAL AND RECREATION CENTER. IN TOWN I SPENT MOST OF MY TIME AT THE RED CROSS AND THE SPECIAL SERVICE LIBRARY. THE LIBRARY WAS ESPECIALLY NICE, A GOOD COOL PLACE TO READ ON HOT AFTERNOONS.

ABOUT A WEEK AFTER I GOT THERE WE WERE PUT ON ORDERS TO GO OUT TO WEATHER STATIONS. I WAS SUPPOSE TO GO TO EFATE, A SMALL ISLAND IN THE NEW HEBRIDES. I WAS LATER TAKEN OFF THE ORDERS SO HAD A NICE LONG WAIT TO GO SOMEPLACE. ON JULY 31 I FINALLY WAS PUT ON ORDERS TO GO TO PDG (PLAINES DES GAIACS), AN AIR FIELD ABOUT HALF WAY UP THE ISLAND OF NEW CALEDONIA. IT IS LOCATED ON THE WEST COAST ABOUT HALF WAY BETWEEN POYA AND POUEMBOUT.

ON AUGUST ~~XXXX~~ 4 TH WE GOT UP VERY EARLY TO CATCH THE SIX THIRTY BUS TO TONTOUTA AIRBASE WHERE ~~WE~~ WE WERE TO CATCH THE PLANE FOR P.D.G. THE PLANE WAS NOT SUPPOSE TO LEAVE UNTIL ONE BUT THE EARLY BUS WAS THE ONLY <sup>ONE</sup> TO GET <sup>UP</sup> THERE IN TIME. AFTER THE THIRTY FIVE MILE RIDE WE ARRIVED AT THE AIRBASE AND WENT INTO OPERATIONS TO <sup>BE</sup>BOOKED FOR THE RIDE. WE GOT THERE JUST IN TIME AS THEY WERE SENDING UP A SPECIAL PLANE WITH SOME DIVING EQUIPMENT. WE GRABBED OUR BAGGAGE AND PILED IN THE C 47 (A TWO ENGINE TRANSPORT LIKE THOSE USED ON MOST OF THE U.S. AIRLINES). THERE WAS ONLY FIVE PASSENGERS AND A VERY LITTLE BAGGAGE SO WE HAD PLENTY OF SPACE TO MOVE AROUND. AFTER TAKEOFF WE CIRCLED THE FIELD ONCE AND HEADED NORTH ALONG THE COAST. IT WAS A BEAUTIFUL DAY FOR THE TRIP, VERY CLEAR AND SMOOTH. WE FLEW OVER MANY LITTLE ISLANDS, AND OUT TO THE WEST WE COULD SEE THE REEF. THERE WERE A COUPLE OF SAILING VESSELS PILED UP ON THE REEF, THEY LOOKED VERY OLD. AFTER ABOUT A THIRTY FIVE MINUTE RIDE WE CIRCLED THE AIRFIELD AT P.D.G. AND LANDED.



THE AIR FIELD AT PLAINES DES GAIACS WAS NOT MUCH TO LOOK AT. TWO RUNWAYS LAID OUT IN THE FORM OF A "V", WITH A SMALL GROUP OF BUILDINGS ALONG THE SOUTH SIDE OF ONE RUNWAY. AT ONE TIME IT HAD BEEN A BIG BASE, PLANES FROM THERE FLEW AGAINST THE JAPS IN THE BATTLE OF THE CORAL ~~SEA~~ SEA, AND LATER IT WAS THE TERMINAL FOR THE AIR TRANSPORT ~~COMMAND~~ COMMAND, BUT THE WAR HAD GONE NORTH AND ATC HAD GONE SOUTH TO TONTOUTA AIR BASE AND P.D.G. WAS JUST AN EMERGENCY LANDING FIELD AND WEATHER STATION.

THE FIELD WAS ON THE MILE WIDE ~~PLAIN~~ PLAIN BETWEEN THE OCEAN AND THE MOUNTAINS WHICH COVER MOST OF NEW CALEDONIA. IT WAS A LONG WAY FROM ANY KIND OF CIVILIZATION, THE NEAREST TOWN, POUEMBOUT, WHICH WAS ABOUT TWENTY MILES TO THE NORTH WAS OFF LIMITS AS WERE A GOOD PART OF THE FRENCH TOWNS ON THE ISLAND. WE WERE ABLE TO GO THERE ON BUSINESS, SUCH AS HAVING LAUNDRY DONE BUT NOT FOR ANY SIGHT SEEING TRIPS. IT WAS NOT MUCH OF A TOWN ANYWAY SO GUESS WE DID NOT MISS MUCH.

THE LIVING CONDITIONS AT THE FIELD WERE VERY GOOD WE HAD BARRACKS TO LIVE IN WHICH SEEMED LIKE HEAVEN AFTER THE TENTS WE HAD HAD AT NOUMEA. THE FOOD WAS VERY GOOD TOO. ABOUT THE BEST OF ANY PLACE I HAVE BEEN TO SINCE I CAME OUT HERE. MOST OF THE SUPPLIES CAME FROM AUSTRALIA SO WE HAD QUITE A BIT OF FRESH FOOD. WE ALSO HAD A VERY GOOD DAY ROOM AND MOVIES ALMOST EVERY NIGHT. ICE CREAM AND COCA COLA AT THE PX TOO, I OFTEN WONDER WHY I WANTED TO ~~MOVE~~ MOVE OUT OF THERE.

~~XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX~~

WHILE I WAS THERE WE MADE ONE TRIP UP TO THE LITTLE TOWN OF VOE ABOUT FOURTY MILES ~~NORTH~~ NORTH OF THE FIELD. IT WAS THE NEAREST TOWN NOT OFF LIMITS. WE ARRIVED THERE IN THE EARLY AFTERNOON, SPENT A COUPLE OF HOURS LOOKING AROUND, AND THEN HAD A VERY GOOD HOME COOKED MEAL, SO THEY SAID. WHILE WE WERE EATING THE MOSQUITOS MADE A MEAL OF US. IT WAS A VERY PRETTY LITTLE TOWN, NICE AND QUIET, AND LOOKING LIKE ANY SMALL TOWN IN THE U.S., EXCEPT FOR THE FACT THAT MOST OF THE HOUSES WERE CONSTRUCTED OF CORRUGATED METAL SHEETS. AFTER DINNER WE HAD A VERY BUMPY TRIP BACK TO CAMP IN THE DARK. THE ROADS ARE BAD ENOUGH IN THE DAY TIME WHEN YOU CAN SEE THE BUMPS BUT AT NIGHT THEY ARE MURDER.

ABOUT TWO MONTHS AFTER I ARRIVED THERE WE WERE GOING TO ESTABLISH A WEATHER STATION AT KOUMAC ON THE FAR NORTH END OF THE ISLAND. I HAD LOOKED FORWARD TO GOING UP THERE FOR A MONTH OR TWO BUT ABOUT THE FIRST OF NOVEMBER I RECEIVED ORDERS AND SIX DAYS LATER I WAS ON MY WAY BACK TO NOUMEA, THIS TIME IN THE BACK OF A TRUCK. IT WAS A VERY HOT AND DUSTY RIDE, BUT THE SCENERY WAS INTERESTING SO DID NOT MIND IT TOO MUCH. ABOUT FIFTY MILES NORTH OF TONTOUTA WE PASSED THROUGH THE CAMP OF THE 25 TH DIVISION, MILES AND MILES OF TENTS ALONG THE ROAD. AFTER SEEING HOW THE INFANTRY LIVES I AM CERTAINLY GLAD I AM IN THE AIR CORPS.

NOUMEA HAD CHANGED QUITE A BIT WHILE I HAD BEEN AWAY. WENT BACK TO THE STAGING AREA BUT TO A NEW ONE THIS TIME. A VERY NICE CAMP ALONG THE OCEAN JUST OUT SIDE THE CITY LIMITS. FOR THE WEEK I WAS THERE I PULLED GUARD DUTY AT WEATHER HEADQUARTERS ALMOST EVERY NIGHT BUT HAD MOST OF THE DAYS TO MYSELF SO GOT TO SEE SOME MORE OF THE TOWN. IT TOO HAD CHANGED, THERE WAS A BIG PX THERE NOW IN WHICH YOU COULD BUY ALMOST ANYTHINGG EXCEPT A TICKET HOME..



ABOUT THE TWELTH OF NOVEMBER I GOT ORDERS TO MOVE AGAIN, THIS TIME TO TONTOUTA AIR BASE, SO OFF I WENT FOR ANOTHER THIRTY MILE TRUCK RIDE. TONTOUTA AIR FIELD IS THE TRANSPORT TERMINAL FOR THE ISLAND, ALL TRANSIT AIRCRAFT EXCEPT THE NAVY FLYING BOATS LAND THERE. IT WAS ALSO THE BASE FOR A NAVY SCOUT BOMBER SQUADRON WHICH PATROLED THE WATERS AROUND THE ISLAND.

I WENT BACK INTO TENTS AGAIN BUT THIS TIME THEY WERE MUCH BETTER, WITH WOODEN FLOORS AND ELECTRIC LIGHTS. WEATHER HAD ITS OWN AREA THERE SO WE WERE NOT BOTHERED BY ANY OF THE OTHER OUTFITS.. WE HAD MUCH MORE WORK TO DO THERE THAN WE HAD AT PDG. THE WEATHER STATION WAS A VERY BUSY PLACE WITH ALL THE PLANES GOING THROUGH. THERE WERE COMPENSATIONS FOR THE EXTRA WORK THOUGH, WE HAD A WONDERFUL PLACE TO SWIM THERE AND MANY OTHER ADVANTAGES, SUCH AS GOOD MOVIES AND AN EXCELLENT PX.

OUR TENTS WERE LOCATED ON TOP OF A SMALL HILL NEXT TO ONE OF THE RUNWAYS. ALL PLANES TAKING OFF WOULD GO RIGHT PAST OUR AREA, WHICH DID NOT HELP OUR SLEEP ANY. I MANAGED TO GET USE TO THEM THOUGH SO EVEN ABLE TO SLEEP THROUGH THE NAVY ~~XXXXXX~~ PATROL PLANES WHICH USE TO TAKE OFF ABOUT SIX EVERY MORNING.

AFTER A MONTH THERE I AGAIN RECEIVED TRAVELING ORDERS. THIS TIME A BIG JUMP ALL THE WAY TO HICKAM ~~XXXX~~ FIELD, HONOLULU. WE HAD TO WAIT NEARLY A WEEK TO GET TRANSPORTATION, BUT ON DECEMBER 23 WE WERE TOLD TO PACK AND LEAVE.

ABOUT TWENTY OF US AND OUR BAGGAGE WERE JAMMED INTO A C-47 AND OFF WE WENT. WE HAD SUCH A LOAD THAT I DONT KNOW HOW WE EVER GOT OFF THE GROUND, EACH OF US WAS AUTHORIZED 65 POUNDS OF BAGGAGE BUT I KNOW THAT MOST OF US HAD MORE. I HAD CLOSER TO 85. THE BAGGAGE TOOK UP ALL THE SPACE IN THE ~~XXXXXX~~ CENTER OF THE PLANE SO WE HAD NO PLACE TO PUT OUR FEET. THE SEATS WERE A NARROW BENCH ALONG EACH SIDE OF THE ~~WIDE~~ PLANE.

AFTER TAKING OFF WE CIRCLED THE FIELD TWICE TO GAIN ALTITUDE AND THEN HEADED NORTH OVER THE MOUNTAINS. IT WAS NOT A VERY GOOD DAY FOR SIGHT SEEING, AS THERE WAS QUITE A BIT OF HAZE. ABOVE THE CLOUDS IT WAS CLEAR THOUGH AND WE COULD SEE A LONG WAY OVER THE LAYER OF WHITE CLOUDS. IT WAS NICE AND COOL AT EIGHT THOUSAND FEET, QUITE A CONTRAST AFTER THE HOT TROPICAL CLIMATE. ABOUT AN HOUR OUT THE CLOUDS BEGAIN TO BREAK UP AND WE COULD SEE THE WATER BELOW. ONCE WE PASSED OVER A SMALL REEF, BUT MOSTLY IT WAS JUST OPEN WATER.

ALMOST SIX HOURS LATER THE TOP OF AN ISLAND PUSHED ITSELF UP OVER THE HORIZON AND IN ANOTHER HALF HOUR WE WERE OVER THE ISLAND ITSELF. IT WAS VERY ~~XXXXXXXXXXXX~~ RUGGED, WITH A VERY THICK JUNGLE. WE HAD STARTED TO LET DOWN ABOUT FIFTY MILES OUT SO WERE LOW ENOUGH TO GET A GOOD LOOK, AND TO FEEL THE HEAT. WE CROSSED THE ISLAND TO THE NORTH SIDE, CIRCLED OUT OVER THE WATER, AND THEN CAME IN FOR A LANDING AT CARNEY FIELD, GUADALCANAL.

IT WAS CLOSE TO SIX IN THE EVENING WHEN WE LANDED BUT THE HEAT WAS STILL TERRIBLE. WE WERE WITHIN TEN DEGREES OF THE EQUATOR IN THE MIDDLE OF SUMMER. THE AIR IS VERY DAMP TOO, IT FEELS AS IF YOU COULD GRAB A PIECE OF IT AND SQUEEZ WATER OUT.

THE PASSENGER OFFICE TOLD US THAT WE WOULD BE THERE FOR SEVERAL DAYS WAITING FOR TRANSPORTATION, SO WE WERE ASSIGNED BEDS IN THE TRANSIT AREA AND WE SETTLED DOWN FOR THE NIGHT, AND A VERY WARM ONE IT WAS.



THE NEXT MORNING WE WERE DOWN AT THE PASSINGER OFFICE BRIGHT AND EARLY, BOTHERING THE CLERK TO FIND OUT IF WE WOULD GET A PLANE OUT THAT DAY. ABOUT TEN IN THE MORNING WE FINALLY GOT A DEFINATE ANSWER. WE WOULD PROBABLY NOT GO UNTIL THE NEXT DAY. WE WERE WAY DOWN AT THE BOTTOM OF A LIST OF SEVERAL HUNDRED PASSINGERS. WITH THAT BIT OF INFORMATION WE SET OUT TO LOOK AROUND A BIT.

WE GRABBED A RIDE ON A PASSING TRUCK AND HEADED WEST TOWARD HENDERSON FIELD. IT WAS A VERY BEAUTIFUL RIDE OF ABOUT FIFTEEN MILES THROUGH THE JUNGLE. BIG HARD WOOD TREES AND COCANUT PALMS LINED THE ROAD ON BOTH SIDES. WE PASSED QUITE A FEW NATIVES ALONG THE ROAD, ALL TRYING TO GET RIDES. THEY WERE MUCH BETTER LOOKING THAN THE NATIVES OF NEW CALEDONIA, MUCH LIGHTER IN ~~SKIN~~ COLOR, THEY LOOKED ALMOST RED.

AT HENDERSON WE FIRST WENT TO THE PX TO SEE WHAT THEY HAD FOR ~~GOOD~~ SALE THERE. THERE WERE LINES OF MEN AT EVERY COUNTER AND WE DID NOT HAVE TIME TO WAIT SO LEFT WITHOUT GETTING ANYTHING. THERE WERE ALSO SOME NATIVES THERE SELLING SOUVENIRS, BUT THEY WERE ALL VERY EXPENSIVE AND NOT VERY GOOD SO DID NOT BOTHER TO GET ANYTHING. WE HUNTED AROUND THE FIELD FOR THE ~~MM~~ WEATHER STATION FOR ABOUT HALF AN HOUR AND FINALLY FOUND IT ON TOP OF A SMALL HILL OVERLOOKING THE FIELD. WE FOUND A COUPLE OF OLD FRIENDS THERE AND HAD A LONG VISIT AND ENDED UP BY GOING TO DINNER WITH THEM. IT WAS THE BEST MEAL I HAVE EVER HAD IN THE ARMY, A BIG THICK STEAK WITH EVERYTHING TO GO WITH IT. AFTER DINNER WE DECIDED THAT ~~IT~~ IT WOULD BE A GOOD IDEA TO GET BACK TO CARNY AND CHECK AT THE PASSENGER OFFICE AGAIN, SO WE GRABBED ANOTHER RIDE AND HEADED BACK. THE TRUCK TURNED OFF AT THE WRONG PLACE ~~AND~~ THOUGH AND WE ENDED UP AT AN AIRFIELD CALLED BOMBER ONE, ABOUT THREE MILES FROM CARNY. AFTER A COUPLE MORE RIDES AND WRONG TURNS WE FINALLY MANAGED TO GET BACK TO CARNY.

STILL ~~MM~~ NO LUCK AT THE PASSENGER OFFICE SO WE HAD SUPPER AND THEN SPENT CHRISTMAS EVE AT THE MOVIES. AFTER THE PICTURE ~~WE~~ WE WENT OVER TO THE RED CROSS CLUB UNTIL THAT CLOSED FOR THE NIGHT, AND THEN WE TURNED IN.

CHRISTMAS DAY WAS MORE OF THE SAME. NO CHANCE FOR A RIDE FOR A DAY OR TWO, BUT AT ABOUT THREE IN THE AFTERNOON WE WERE TOLD TO GET ~~IN~~ OUR BAGGAGE OVER TO THE TERMINAL AND GET SET TO LEAVE. AFTER ABOUT AN HOURS WAIT THEY SENT US OVER TO THE MESS HALL TO EAT. WE HAD A BIG CHRISTMAS DINNER WITH ROAST TURKEY AND ALL THE FIXINGS. IT SEEMED VERY MUCH OUT OF PLACE WITH THE TEMPERATURE UP CLOSE TO THE HUNDRED MARK, BUT I MANAGED TO PUT QUITE A BIT AWAY IN SPITE OF THE HEAT. I WAS NOT SURE ~~WHETHER~~ WHETHER I SHOULD EAT MUCH JUST BEFORE GOING UP BUT DECIDED TO TAKE A CHANCE.

BACK AT THE PASSENGER OFFICE WE WAITED AROUND UNTIL ABOUT FIVE THIRTY AND THEN WERE GIVEN OUR TICKETS AND TOLD TO GO TO THE PLANE, A BIG FOUR ENGINE C-54 THIS TIME. IT LOOKED BIG FROM THE OUTSIDE, AND EVEN BIGGER FROM THE INSIDE, JUST LIKE THE INSIDE OF A PULLMAN CAR WITH ALL OF THE SEATS ~~REMOVED~~ REMOVED. THE SEATS WERE BENCHES ALONG EACH WALL, JUST LIKE IN THE C-47, BUT THESE WERE MADE OF CANVAS AND COULD BE FOLDED UP AGAINST THE WALL TO MAKE ROOM FOR ~~STRETCHERS~~ STRETCHERS WHEN THE PLANE WAS USED AS A HOSPITAL SHIP. THEY WERE MORE COMFORTABLE THAN THE BUCKET SEATS ON THE C-47, BUT NOT VERY. ALL OUR BAGGAGE HAD BEEN STOWED UNDER THE FLOOR SO WE HAD PLENTY OF ROOM FOR OUR FEET. WE HAD ABOUT THIRTY FIVE PASSENGERS ON BOARD BUT STILL HAD MUCH MORE ROOM THAN WE HAD FLYING UP FROM ~~MM~~ NEW CALEDONIA.



AFTER EVERY ONE WAS FASTENED IN SAFELY THE ENGINES WERE STARTED AND WE TAXIED DOWN TO THE ~~ME~~ END OF THE RUNWAY. THE PLANE SITS SO HIGH OFF THE GROUND THAT IT LOOKS ALMOST AS IF WE WERE FLYING EVEN BEFORE WE LEFT THE GROUND. AFTER RUNNING UP EACH ENGINE SEPERATLY, AND THEN ALL TO THEM TOGETHER TO MAKE SURE EVERYTHING WAS ALL RIGHT WE TURNED OUT ON TO THE RUNWAY AND WERE OFF. IT IS A STRANGE SENSATION TO WATCH THE FLOOR TILT UP AT AN ANGLE AS THE PLANE STARTS FORWARD. IT FEELS AS IF THE WHOLE PLANE IS ALIVE WITH THE SIX THOUSAND ~~ODD~~ HORSES THAT ARE PULLING. AT ABOUT ~~ONE~~ ONE MINUTE AFTER SIX WE WERE IN THE AIR ~~AND~~ WITH WHEELS TUCKED UP WE STARTED THE HALF HOUR CLIMB UP TO CRUISING ALTITUDE.

WE HEADED STRAIGHT OUT TO SEA OVER SEALARK CHANNEL, THE SOUTH TIP OF FLORIDA ISLAND, INDISPENSABLE STRAIT, MALAITA ISLAND, AND THEN THE PACIFIC OCEAN AND DARKNESS. AS WE CLIMBED UP THROUGH THE CLOUDS IT WAS A LITTLE ROUGH, BUT ABOVE THEM IT WAS SMOOTH AS GLASS. AT ABOUT FIVE THOUSAND FEET WE BROKE OUT OF THE CLOUDS INTO ANOTHER WORLD WHERE THE MOON AND STARS WERE TWICE AS BIG AS USUAL AND THE GROUND WAS A SILVER CARPET STRETCHING AS FAR AS THE EYE COULD SEE. BEHIND US THERE WAS JUST A TRACE OF RED TO SHOW THAT THERE HAD ONCE BEEN A SUN.

AT NINE THOUSAND FEET WE LEVELED OFF, AND WERE ALLOWED TO LOOSEN OUR SAFETY BELTS, TAKE OFF OUR MAY WEST, AND WALK AROUND. IT WAS COLD AT THAT ALTITUDE EVEN IN THE TROPICS SO ACQUIRED A BLANKET TO WRAP AROUND ME. AFTER WATCHING THE CLOUDS ROLL BY FOR NEARLY AN HOUR I STARTED TO GET SLEEPY SO ROLLED UP IN MY BLANKET ON THE FLOOR WHICH WAS NOW CROWDED WITH SLEEPING MEN.

ABOUT FOUR HOURS LATER WE WERE AWAKENED AND TOLD TO GET ~~XXXXX~~ INTO OUR SEATS AS WE WERE GOING DOWN. AS WE PUTTING ON THE MAY WESTS WE COULD FEEL THE NOSE TILT DOWN SLIGHTLY AS WE STARTED THE LONG GLIDE DOWN TO EARTH. WE WERE RUNNING THROUGH A FOREST OF BIG CLOUDS NOW, WHICH TOWERED MANY THOUSANDS OF FEET ABOVE THE FLOOR OF CLOUDS BELOW. AT ABOUT SIX THOUSAND WE ENTERED THE TOP OF THEM, THE LAYER WAS THICKER NOW. AS WE SLID DOWN INTO THEM THE RED AND GREEN RUNNING LIGHTS ON THE WING TIPS GLOWED WEIRDLY AGAINST THE CLOUDS. THE AIR WAS VERY ROUGH NOW AND I STARTED TO FEEL IT IN MY CHRISTMAS DINNER. AS WE GOT LOWER IT STARTED TO RAIN, THE DROPS SOUNDING LIKE GRAVEL ON THE METAL SKIN OF THE ~~PLANE~~ PLANE.

WE BROKE OUT UNDER THE CLOUDS AT BARELY A THOUSAND FEET. IT WAS BLACK AS INK BELOW AND STILL RAINING. WE WERE FLYING SLOWLY NOW WITH THE ENGINES THROTTLED BACK, AND STILL GOING DOWN. FINALLY THE WHEELS AND FLAPS WENT DOWN, THE ENGINES PICKING UP SPEED TO COMPENSATE FOR ~~THE~~ ADDED DRAG. STILL NOTHING TO LAND ON THOUGH, THEN JUST UNDER OUR RIGHT WING THE LIGHTS OF A SMALL BOAT FLASHED PASSED AND A MOMENT LATER THE BOUNDARY LIGHTS OF RUNWAY WERE UNDER US, AND THEN WE WERE ROLLING, THE PUDDLES OF ~~RAIN~~ RAIN WATER SPLASHING OUT ON ALL SIDES.

WE CAME TO A STOP, TURNED AROUND, AND TAXIED SLOWLY BACK TO THE TARAWA AIR TERMINAL. A MOMENT ~~MMMMMMMMMM~~ LATER WE WERE OUT IN THE RAIN GETTING INTO A TRUCK TO GO GET SOMETHING TO EAT, A MEAL THAT I FELT I COULD VERY WELL DO WITHOUT. I ATE AN APPLE BUT DID NOT FEEL LIKE ANYTHING ELSE. AFTER ABOUT THREE QUARTERS OF AN HOUR WE WERE BACK IN THE PLANE AGAIN, WITH SEVERAL NEW PASSENGERS AND A FRESH LOAD OF GASOLINE. THE ENGINES WERE STARTED AND DOWN TO THE END OF THE RUNWAY WE WENT, RUNNING UP THE ENGINES AS ALWAYS. THEN AWAY WE WENT, THE LITTLE RED BOUNDARY LIGHTS ~~GOING~~

GOING FASTER AND FASTER AND THEN SINKING AWAY ALL TOGETHER.



IN THE AIR AGAIN WE STARTED THE HALF HOUR CLIMB UP THROUGH THE CLOUDS AND INTO THE CLEAR SKY AT NINE THOUSAND FEET. THE CLOUD LAYER WAS BEGINNING TO BREAK UP AND WE COULD SEE BIG BLACK PATCHES OF EMPTINESS BELOW US. AS SOON AS WE COULD MOVE AROUND I GRABBED A BLANKET AND WENT TO SLEEP ON THE FLOOR.

ABOUT AN HOUR OUT OF TARAWA WE CROSSED THE DATE LINE AND IT WAS CHRISTMAS DAY AGAIN. MY SECOND FOR 1944. IT WAS DAY WHEN I AWOKE. WE HAD BEEN IN THE AIR FOR SIX HOURS AND TWO MORE TO GO. IT WAS A BEAUTIFUL DAY, THE LAYER OF CLOUDS HAD COMPLETELY BROKEN UP AND THERE WERE ONLY A FEW CLOUDS FLOATING OVER THE VERY BLUE OCEAN. AN HOUR AND A HALF LATER WE HAD TO GET ~~RE~~ RIGGED FOR AN LANDING AGAIN. ALL MAY WEATS ON AND SAFETY BELTS FASTENED WE STARTED DOWN TO ~~WOM~~ JOHNSTON ISLAND.

JOHNSTON ISLAND IS A SMALL BUMP ON THE OCEAN ABOUT A MILE LONG AND ABOUT HALF AS WIDE. IT IS SURROUNDED BY A REEF ABOUT TWO MILES IN DIAMETER. THERE IS ANOTHER SMALLER ISLAND INSIDE THE REEF. THE LARGER ISLAND HAS THE LANDING STRIP ON IT. IT IS IN THE SHAPE OF A TRIANGLE WITH THE RUNWAY DOWN ONE SIDE AND TAXY STRIPS DOWN THE OTHER TWO. THE TOWER AND THE LIVING QUARTERS ARE ALL IN THE CENTER ON TOP OF A SMALL HILL ABOUT THIRTY FEET HIGH.

WE PILED OUT OF THE PLANE AND INTO A TRUCK WHICH TOOK US ABOUT A BLOCK OVER TO THE MESS HALL TO GET SOMETHING TO EAT. WE HAD A COMBINATION OF BREAKFAST AND CHRISTMAS DINNER WITH ~~MMMMMM~~ PANCAKES AND TURKEY. I WAS QUITE HUNGRY SO THOUGHT IT WAS VERY GOOD. BACK AT THE PLANE WE WAITED AROUND FOR HALF AN HOUR WHILE THEY FINISHED FILLING THE GAS TANKS. THEN WE WERE OFF AGAIN ON THE LAST LEG OF OUR JOURNEY, A FOUR HOUR HOP TO HICKAM FIELD HAWAII.

ABOUT TWO HOURS OUT WE STARTED TO RUN INTO WEATHER. THE PLANE WAS BOUNCING AROUND A ~~MMMMMMMMMMMMMMMM~~ LOT AND SO WAS THE TURKEY I HAD JUST EATEN. I ~~MMMM~~ TRIED TO READ BUT COULD NOT KEEP MY MIND ON THE BOOK. ABOUT A HALF HOUR OUT OF HICKAM IT STARTED TO RAIN. I WAS SO SICK BY THAT TIME THAT I DID NOT CARE MUCH WHAT HAPPENED. WE WERE STILL BOUNCING.

WE HAD STARTED TO GO DOWN THROUGH THE CLOUDS, WE BROKE OUT AT ABOUT A THOUSAND FEET AND FLEW UNDER THE OVERCAST. A FEW MINUTES LATER THERE WAS LAND UNDER US AND THEN WE WERE CIRCLING HICKAM FIELD WITH THE LIGHTS OF HONOLULU OFF TO OUR RIGHT TWINKLING IN THE EARLY EVENINGS DARKNESS.

IT WAS RAINING WHEN WE LANDED AND TAXIED OVER TO THE ATC TERMINAL. WE CLIMBED OUT OF THE PLANE AND INTO THE CUSTOMS OFFICE WHERE WE HAD A BAGGAGE INSPECTION. THEN WE LOADED INTO TRUCKS TO GO TO THE ATC TRANSIT OFFICE TO FIND OUT WHERE WE WERE SUPPOSE TO GO. NO ONE THERE KNEW WHERE WE WERE TO GO BUT ~~MM~~ THEY GAVE US A RECON AND DRIVER TO TAKE US OUT TO LOOK FOR THE WEATHER OUTFIT. ANOTHER FELLOW AND I WERE JAMMED INTO THE BACK SEAT WITH ALL OF THE BAGGAGE ON TOP OF US. THE OTHER TWO FELLOWS AND THE DRIVER WERE IN FRONT. WE DROVE ALL OVER THE FIELD LOOKING FOR OUR HEADQUARTERS. WE STOPPED ~~WOM~~ AT A NUMBER OF PLACES TO INQUIRE BUT STILL NO LUCK. AT ONE OF THE PLACES WE STOPPED THE THREE IN THE FRONT SEAT WENT INTO A BUILDING TO ASK SOME QUESTIONS LEAVING US IN THE TRUCK WITH ALL OF ~~WOM~~ THE BAGGAGE STILL ON TOP OF US. ALONG THE STREET STAGGERED A DRUNK, WHO, SEEING A NICE TRUCK STANDING THERE WITH THE MOTOR RUNNING DECIDED TO TAKE A RIDE. HE HOPPED IN AND BEFORE EITHER OF US COULD MAKE A ~~MMMMMMMM~~ MOVE TO STOP HIM AWAY WE WENT. AFTER A COUPLE OF BLOCKS ~~MMMMMM~~ WE MANAGED TO REMOVE ENOUGH OF THE BAGGAGE TO GET UP FRONT AND GET THE TRUCK STOPPED. THEN WE HAD A BAD TIME TRYING TO FIND OUR WAY BACK TO WHERE WE HAD LEFT THE OTHERS. WE FINALLY MADE IT, AND AFTER TAKING OUR LITTLE DRUNK GI TO THE GUARD HOUSE WE GAVE UP LOOKING AND WENT ~~M~~ TO ATC TO SLEEP.