

even, side by side. They looked okay to me as they were, but I pulled on the cords anyway. No matter how I pulled they looked the same. Finally I just gave up. I guess that I stopped at the right place, because I passed the test. Now trying to land airplanes, I was paying for it.

With the first three months of Primary behind us, we moved on to Basic Flight training. About the same routine, but with a much hotter airplane. The BT-13 was a low wing mono-plane with greater horse-power and range than the Primary trainer. We were allowed to fly within a fifty mile radius of the school. As there were many flying schools in the area, we had to be on the alert for other aircraft. About forty miles north was a large lake named Lake Elsinore. Around it's shore line were three nudist colonies. Naturally this was a very popular area for flying to the hot blooded Cadets in the area. After a few mid-air collisions by gawking pilots, the area was declared off-limits to all schools.

One pay day that was on a Saturday, I stopped at a crap game hoping to pick up a few extra bucks, as I was planning a week-end in Hollywood and could use some extra change. My luck was all bad however, and before I knew it I'd lost most of my pay-check. Returning to the barracks I found most all of the guys gone except Hoppy Hoppenstein. He had been layed up with a case of measles and lost a few days of flying time that had to be made up. Our instructor told him that he could make it up by flying on Sunday's, but he would need one more Cadet to qualify for formation flying. I told him that I would be glad to help him out and would fly with them the next day. Many times Anderson had displayed his dislike for Hoppy, but he and I got along very good. What happened later was just a bad coincidence for me that I was along that day.

Hoppy and I took in the base movie that night and got up early for our formation flight. When we reported to the flight line, Anderson was already there. He was surprised and seemed angry that I was the other cadet. He filed our flight plan to fly north nearly to Elsinore, then here and there to make up our formation flight. We would be flying at 5,000 feet, changing position in the formation periodically. After take-off we formed at 5,000 feet with Anderson leading in number one position. Hoppy was number two and I was number three. It was a beautiful Sunday morning and we could see many private planes here and there. We flew due north for a few minutes then Anderson began climbing. We leveled off at 7,000 feet and then made a turn to the east. I began to wonder just what he had in mind about now, as we were on a perfect heading for Elsinore that could be easily seen in the distance. We were also 2,000 feet higher than our flight plan which was a definite no-no. Before long we were in the restricted area over the lake. I was lost as to what he was thinking of. I thought if we're going to break regulations, we should at least be low enough to admire the nude sun-bathers. Many boats were on the lake, several being sail-boats. Our leader started letting down in a spiral pattern. Down, down we went. At about 3,000 feet we leveled out and continued to circle over the lake. Suddenly Anderson signaled for a dive and peeled off. There was one isolated sail-boat just

leaving the dock that seemed to be the target for today. Hoppy peeled off following the leader down, then counting my interval I followed. When my altimeter read 1,500 feet I pulled up. Anderson went right to the deck and buzzed the lone sail-boat he had chose to harass, nearly swamping it. We reformed at 5,000 feet and turned toward the base. In just a few minutes our tower called, ordering us to return to base immediately and upon landing to report to the Commandants office. As we parked the planes on the hard stand, an MP truck arrived to escort us to the Base Headquarters. Anderson was called into the Adjutant's office first and after about fifteen minutes came out carrying a large brown envelope. As he walked past us, he stopped and said, " I'm sorry guys, Good Luck". Hoppy and I were then called in and soon knew what it was all about. We were washed out for buzzing the Commandant's sailboat in a restricted area and would be returned to Santa Ana for re-classification as Bombardiers. Our Captain Anderson left on sealed orders, probably to a combat unit just as he had planned.

Hoppy and I were sent to Alburquerque, New Mexico to Bombardier school. January 2, 1943 we graduated with our wings and 2nd Lt. commissions.

About a week later we were in Blythe, California in the first of three phases of transitional training for combat duty. Here the many new heavy bomber groups were being formed, the crews put together and the pilots checked out in the B-17 heavy bomber. Each of the three phases would last four weeks, so in just three more months I would join the war.

While awaiting assignment to a group, I found out that I had been rated as number two in my class. A Group in the second phase training at El Paso, Texas had an accident and the key personnel were all killed. The Group Commander, the Group Navigator and the Group Bombardier. The replacement for the Bombardier was to come from my class at Blythe. A class-mate and good friend, Jerry Stoddard was selected first. As he couldn't be located, I was told to be packed and ready to fly to El Paso the next morning, if Jerry didn't show up in the meantime. Knowing that he had been in L.A. on French Leave for several days, I had no doubts but what I would have to go. I wasn't too enthusiastic about the prospects of going as I didn't feel that I was fully qualified to fill this position. I packed but didn't sleep much that night. I could see no reason why Jerry would show at the last minute, and he probably would't want to go anyway. I was pleasantly surprised to see him come in about day-light and more surprised when he was delighted to go. This was the 372nd Bomb Group and Clark Gable was the Group Gunnery Officer and put in charge of making training films. He flew on missions over Germany to film footage for an aerial gunner film. Goering, [Chief of the German Luftwaffe], heard of this and put a bounty on his head of 5,000 dollars to any Luftwaffe pilot who could shoot him down. He was discharged as a Major by Captain Ronald Reagon having won the Air Medal and the Distinguished Flying Cross.

The 372nd was one month ahead of us in transition so went

overseas a month before we did. Jerry's plane was shot down a month before mine so I saved myself one month of POW time by not joining this Group.

I found time to run into L.A. for a few days, so went down to visit my old buddies at 7th and Flower. My ex-CO was very surprised to see me again. He thought I'd gone over with the two companies that were wiped out by the Japs. Many of my old friends had found wives among the volunteers and were settled down for a nice long war. When I returned to Blythe from my French Leave, I found that my new crew had been formed and assigned to the brand new 381st Heavy Bomb Group. 1st Lt. Earl Horr from Minneapolis was my pilot. He was married and had a shiny new baby boy. He was a very likeable type and to my joy a most competent pilot. Very methodical and an expert at everything he attempted to do. He never smoked nor drank booze but was a very successful gambler. He had an R.O.T.C. commission from college so went through flight school as an officer, without ever having been a cadet or enlisted man.

The co-pilot was 2nd Lt. William Robert Roberts [Billy Bob] from Farwell, Texas. Tall, dark and handsome best describes Bill. His secret ambition was to give Hollywood a whirl sometime after the war. Not at all conceited despite his good looks, he was a very likeable type. Studying Optometry in Chicago he joined the Airforce when war started. His girl-friend, Joyce, lived in Chicago and they were married after the war.

2nd Lt. George Paul Griffith was our navigator. He was from Marysville, California and planned to continue flying after the war as he, like myself had washed out of pilot training. He had lacked only two weeks more of Advanced to graduate when he had a personality clash with his instructor and was washed out.

Our flight engineer and top-turret gunner was S/Sgt. Chapin, his assistant engineer and a waist gunner was S/Sgt Clark, both from Texas.

The radioman was T/Sgt. George Orin from Ohio, and his assistant and ball-turret gunner was S/Sgt Patrick Henry also from Ohio. He was the old man of the crew, being 35 years old, married with two children.

The Armorer and tail-gunner was S/Sgt Arther A. Jones of North Carolina, His assistant and the left waist gunner was S/Sgt Everett Hodston from Maine. Jones never seemed to lose at shooting craps or playing black-jack.

After our crew was organized we started flying about six hours every day with six hours of ground school, seven days a week. No need to even think about a pass. We made a few long navigation flights taking about ten hours each.

We moved on to Pyote, Texas for our second phase training. Here the emphasis was on bombing and gunnery practice. We used the gunnery range at Alamogordo, New Mexico for air to ground gunnery practice. We would fly right on the deck and shoot at stationary targets. One time Pat Henry, the ball-turret gunner called the pilot and ask if he could fly a little higher as he was getting sagebrush caught on his gun barrels. After landing we did find

PILOT
LT. EARL HORN
MINNESOTA
MINK

CO-PILOT
LT. W.H. ROBERTS
FARGO
TEXAS

ENGINEER
LT. GLENN CHAM
MINNESOTA
MINNAPOLIS

PROP. OPERATOR
TS. S/P. GEORGE OLM
EAST LIVERPOOL
OHIO

WREST GUN
SP4. JIMMY CLARK
COBURN
ILL.

BOMBARDIER
LT. CHESTER HOOVER
GREYBULL
WYOMING

NAVIGATOR
LT. GEORGE GRIFFITH
SAN DIEGO
CAL.

BALL TURRET
SP4. FRANK HENRY
MINNEAPOLIS
MINK

WREST GUN
SP4. EVERETT HOOPER
AUBURN
MAINE

TAIL GUNNER
SP4. JEFFREY JONES
GREENVILLE
S. CARO.

sagebrush hanging on the turret. The air-to-air gunnery practice was much more interesting. Here we shot at a moving target pulled by another plane. We must have shot up thousands of rounds of .50 caliber ammo at the simulated airplane.

In the B-17E plane we were training in there were two .50 caliber machine-guns mounted one on each side of the nose compartment. This made a lone plane more vulnerable to head-on attacks. The later series the B17F that we would fly overseas had a .50 mounted in the nose that corrected this fault. Besides the nose armament, there were twin .50's in the top turret, a single in the radio-room top hatch, twins in the ball-turret, twins in the tail gun position with a single on either side in the waist. Because of this impressive array of armament the plane was called "The Flying Fortress".

Our bombing practice was very interesting. Besides the regular bulls-eye targets we had ships, factories, trains, bridges, etc. We bombardiers kept record of our bomb-hits that was called our "circular error" or just plain CE. This carried over from our cadets scoring. When I graduated my CE was less than fifty feet, meaning my average bomb hit was less than fifty feet from the center of the target. This was considered to be pretty good.

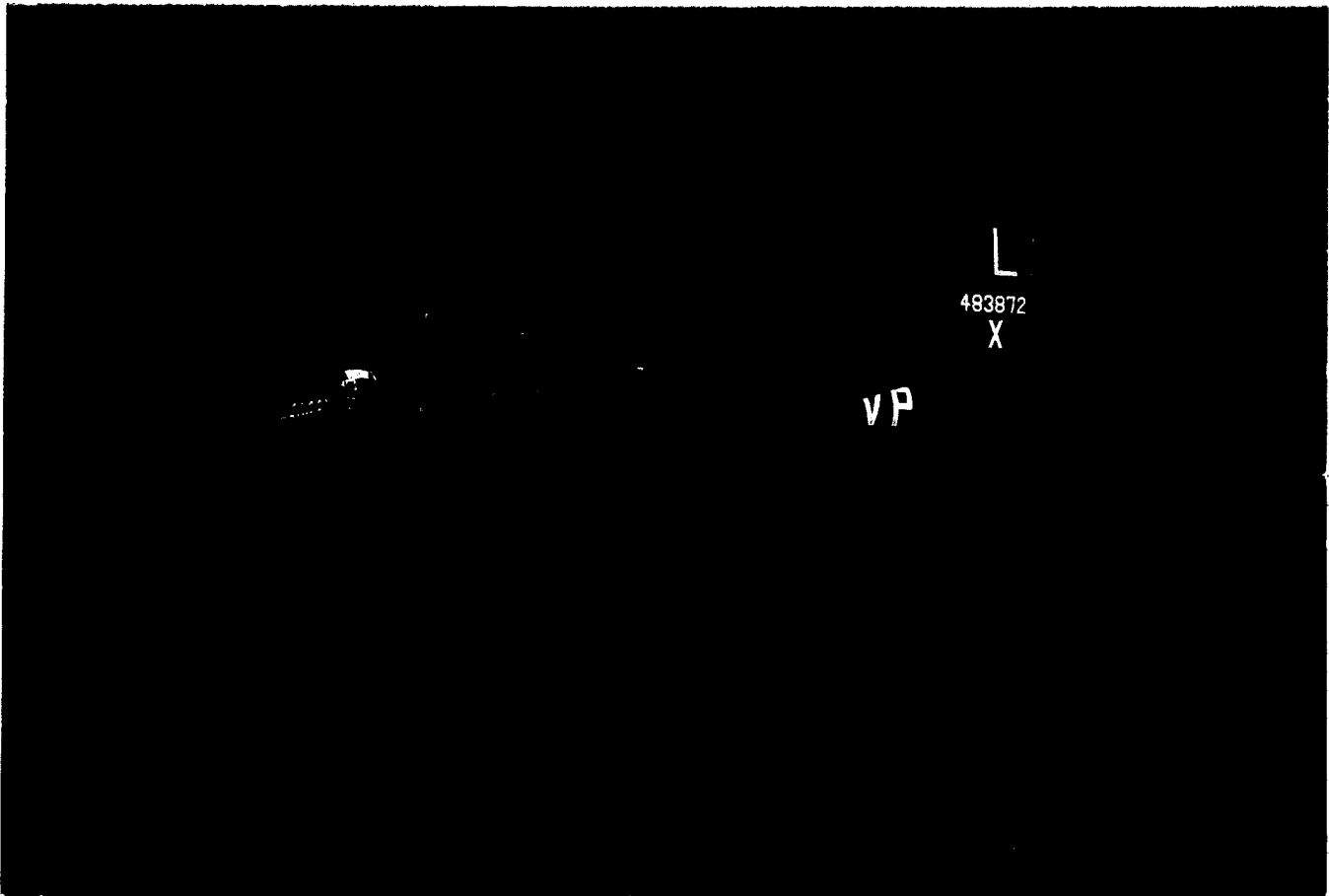
We used the Nordon bombsight that was highly secret. The British desperately wanted it but the US would not share it with anyone. It was quite small, weighing perhaps thirty pounds and easily carried with one hand. It was stored in a guarded vault and whenever checked out, the bombardier must always be accompanied by an armorer carrying a Thompson sub-machine gun. It's canvas bag cover would not be removed until the plane was air-born, then it would be mounted on the stabilizer in the airplane. It must be back in the bag before the plane landed. We bombardiers upon graduating, took a solemn oath to protect the sight with our lives if necessary. In the event we were about to be captured we could destroy the sight with one .45 round fired in the right place.

The sight in itself was infallible. If the bombardier fed the correct information and data into it, every bomb would be a direct hit so if a miss occurred it was because of human error. No country in the world had anything that would compare with it. The pilot would trim the aircraft and switch it onto AFCE [Automatic Flight Control Equipment], and transfer the controls of the plane to the bombsight. Two sets of knobs located on the right side of the sight would now control the plane. By manipulating these knobs the bombardier would maneuver the plane into the right position to kill the range and drift, putting the cross-hairs in the telescope riding directly on the target. The bomb-bay doors would have been opened, the racks armed and when the plane reached the bomb release point, the bombs would drop automatically. Once the cross-hairs were riding on the target, the bombardier could relax, take a nap or even shoot at German fighters until the bombs dropped. He would then immediately tell the pilot by inter-phone "BOMBS AWAY, OKAY TO TURN", while flipping a switch to close the bomb-bay doors. The pilot would switch off AFCE and start evasive action to avoid the flak and enemy fighters. During the bomb-run while the bombardier

was sighting in on the target, the plane would have to fly straight and level, making a fine target. Naturally we tried to make the bomb-run in a minimum of time. In school forty seconds was considered very good time but in combat it was about twenty seconds too long. By then the enemy flak batteries would have us bracketed, so we had to cut down our sighting time. Some of us got it down to about twenty seconds but we had to sacrifice some accuracy in doing so. With enough planes in the formation some would hit the target. The pilot Horr, was very good at trimming the plane so this helped me considerably in cutting my sighting time down and improving my CE. The CE of the bombardier was important to the rest of the crew in that it would determine the position of a plane in a combat formation. The lead elements were not so severely attacked by enemy fighters and the trailing elements caught them as well as most of the flak. We were all extremely happy when it came time to leave Pyote, Texas. The wind blew constantly day and night. Blowing sand made it a continuous sand storm forcing us to wear respirators and goggles whenever going outside. In the air up to fifty miles away, we could locate Pyote Army Air Base by the dust cloud hanging over it like a dirty halo. All the buildings were anchored to the ground with guy wires to keep them from blowing into Mexico.

Due to a shortage of training planes, four crews shared the same plane. On our move to third phase training at Pueblo, Colorado each plane would carry passengers and luggage. When my crew was moved some of us were flying with Lt. Marvin Lord as pilot. We were also carrying many pounds of Group equipment so we were fully loaded. During the take-off I was standing in the waist compartment looking out a waist gun hatch. As Lord opened the throttles and we raced down the runway for take-off, the plane suddenly dropped off on one side and at that instant I saw a wheel spinning down the runway. Lord pulled the nose up and luckily we did have just enough speed to lift-off. A second or two sooner we would surely have crashed and burned. So far in our transition training we had lost only one plane and crew but came very close to losing another that day. Upon calling the tower for instructions, our Group CO, Col Nazzaro ordered us to proceed to Tinker Field, Oklahoma and crash land the plane there.

Tinker Field was the grave-yard for crashed aircraft and all the wreckage from crashes was carried and stockpiled there. We were told that anyone who wished to do so, could parachute out, except for the necessary crew members needed to keep the plane in the air. I thought this a good chance to try the chute out, but when nobody else would jump with me I decided it wasn't such a good idea. We flew on to Oklahoma City and circled the base for two or three hours to use up the fuel and the gages were all in the red before the landing attempt. This enabled the news that a bomber was going to crash and burn so a huge crowd gathered to watch the spectacle. The passengers who didn't have a regular seat and safety belt sat on the floor in the radio-room with our feet together in the center and our backs braced against the wall. The gun hatch in the ceiling had been removed and we would use this



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hole as an exit, if able after the crash. We thoroughly expected the plane to be in flames by the time it stopped skidding, so would have to move fast in getting out.

The one wheel was retracted and Lord gently sat it down in the dirt adjacent to the run-way. Not so much danger of sparks flying as there would have been on the concrete runway. The landing was smooth but came to a very abrupt stop. We all scrambled out, expecting an explosion at any time. The ground rescue and fire team pounced on the plane, almost before it stopped and began spraying it with foam. We all walked away uninjured. Newsmen at the scene took many pictures of the crash and personnel. In 1945 when I returned home, I contacted an Oklahoma City newspaper to see if I could get a picture but all I received was a clipping covering the event. Our CO had followed us to Oklahoma to coach the pilot on the landing so we all got in his plane and went on to Pueblo that night.

At Pueblo, I found that the group I might have joined at El Paso, the 372nd, had just left. It was evident that Clark Gable was a member of that group. In the mess-hall was a sign "Clark Gable ate here", over a bed in a BOQ "Clark Gable slept here", and in one latrine "Clark Gable crapped here". Guess they rode him a little. He had wanted to fly but was over the 27 year age limit for the cadets. As there was no age limit in the gunnery schools, he took this course and became a gunner with a commission as a Captain.

Now in the third phase we were assigned a brand new B17F just off the assembly line and this beautiful bird was all ours to see us through 25 missions or maybe to die in it. It was customary to give the planes a name and an appropriate drawing on the nose section of the aircraft. Usually the drawing would be of a sexy nature like a scantily clad female in a provocative position. T/Sgt Orin the radio-gunner was an excellent artist and painted most of the planes in the group. On ours he painted a bosomy girl named "Iron Gut Gert". This name didn't hold up though as the first hit we took was in the belly of the plane.

Here at Pueblo we started formation flying in earnest, making long navigation flights in formation.

Our Group CO, Colonel Joseph Nazzaro, had been a star football player and boxing champion at West Point. His father-in-law, General Harmon at that time the Commanding General of the Airforce in the Pacific Theater. We all decided that he was bucking for the old man's job. In 1972 when I was working on an Airbase in Thailand I found a street named Nazzaro Drive. Upon inquiring about this, I was told that General Nazzaro, Commanding General of the Pacific Airforce when the Airbase was built by American Seabees had this street named in his honor. Seems that our predictions turned out to be correct. He was a very strict disciplinarian and took the war very serious. Although he pushed us to our limit, we were proud to have him as our Commanding Officer and felt that if anyone could see us through twenty-five missions, he was the one to do it. However when he announced that we would do more than twenty-five missions, we began to have some doubts. If one wished,

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he could volunteer for a second tour to do fifty or as many as he desired. Colonel Nazzaro stayed in England for the entire war making 47 of the toughest missions. He left England as a General needless to say. I think he had a little more than luck going for him. He would lose almost eighty per-cent of his original air crews, whom for the most part were personally screened by himself. He expected and would accept only the best from all men in his Group. He graduated from West Point in 1936 and flight school the same year. His courage and determination was amazing. I feel extremely fortunate and proud to have served under this man.

On our long range formation flights we would usually proceed to some city and make a simulated bomb-run on some target, usually railroad yards, a refinery or a factory. One day we joined several other groups from the western half of the country and made a huge dry-run on San Francisco. Fighter planes came up to intercept and according to the news was quite a show from the ground. A few days later we were ordered on temporary duty to Fresno Air Base in California. Jap submarines had been sighted off the West Coast and we were called to search and destroy same. We were loaded with 500 pound demolition bombs and would fly out over the ocean almost to the point of no-return. Flying a different route we would return to Fresno. We were here for a week, flying every day. Guess we scared them off as none were ever sighted. The permanent armament crew at Fresno would load our planes, then upon our return they would have to unload them. It was the bombardier's duty to oversee this operation. The proper procedure for un-loading, was to rig a block-and-tackle in the top of the bomb-bay and lower each bomb one at a time onto a truck beneath the plane. Each plane carried ten bombs and with thirty six planes in the group, made a total of 360 bombs to be unloaded each night. The chief armorer found a way to expediate this operation by simply opening the bomb-bay doors and salvo-ing the bombs out onto the concrete hardstand then loading them onto the truck with a forklift. I questioned the safety of this procedure but the Sgt. assured me that it was safe, said he did it all the time, and it was so much faster than the tech manual procedure. True, the bomb fuses had the safety pins in and theoretically it should be safe. Still there was the possibility of a faulty fuse that might malfunction I thought. I never adopted this method myself but some of our bombardiers did. Later, over in England after the group had returned from an aborted mission there was a terrific explosion on one of the pads while unloading the bombs. One bomber was disintegrated, three damaged and twenty seven men killed including a bombardier who was working in the nose of his plane 150 feet away. A piece of shrapnel came through the air and took his head off. Evidently a fuse had malfunctioned on a bomb that had been dropped and this started a chain reaction that set off all the bombs. The bombs had a fuse in each end, both nose and tail. After becoming airborne, the bombardier would lower himself into the bomb-bay and remove the cotter keys that acted as a safety on the fuses. Upon release from the plane the bombs would soon be armed. A slim wire running from each fuse would remain attached to the bomb rack, allowing the arming vane [small]

Doris (Allen) Hoover



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propellers] to spin off the fuse as the bomb dropped through the air. Now the bomb was completely armed and would explode upon impact or whatever the time delay was set for. This would be instantaneous, one second delay or ten second delay. In the case of an aborted mission, the bombardier must replace these cotter keys before landing to safety the bombs again.

Returning to Pueblo we finished up our third phase training program and were ready for our overseas assignment.

Now the time arrived that we had all been waiting for. Our six day overseas furlough. I was one of the more fortunate ones, having only about six hundred miles to travel to get home. I spent four very happy, yet sad days at home. The fact that I would soon be in combat made the family feel very bad, but I wouldn't of had it any other way. I was a bit apprehensive perhaps, but glad to be going.

I was having a beer in The Stockman Bar in Basin one morning [not being 21 didn't matter in those days] when I was invited to a farewell party for someone who was being drafted. The party would be in the bar and last all night. My problem now was where to find a date. All the girls I had ever dated before were either married, away to school or working somewhere. My last girlfriend had quit writing to me and lived in Spokane, Washington anyway. I had completely given up and decided to just go stag when Berl, my little brother, came in from school. He asked me if I remembered Doris Allen, Delma and Harry's sister. I sure did remember her, she was a beautiful little blonde but a lot younger than me. He said she would like to see me, something about a Prom that night. Great, I thought, here's my date for the party. I jumped in Dad's car and took off to her apartment. When she opened the door for me, all thoughts of taking her to a drunken bar party vanished. She was such a beautiful little thing, so small and innocent. She asked if I was doing anything that night and I said no. "Would I like to take her to the high school Prom?" I said I would love to and sincerely meant it. The fact that I considered myself a grown adult, and she only a High School girl didn't seem to matter. We went to the Prom that night and The Purple Bubble Ball the following night. I had to take the bus at midnight the next night but before leaving we became engaged to be married when I returned from my first tour of duty. I only had to fly twenty five missions, shouldn't take more than six months and I would be home again for awhile. I promised to send her an engagement ring as soon as I could put enough money together.

The bus put me in Pueblo with about thirty minutes to spare on the deadline set by the CO. We would be fined one hundred dollars for each hour we were late in returning. Bill Roberts had come in the day before to be sure of making it on time. He took a night club entertainer home that night and reported in five hours late. Griff's folks drove him back from California and they were very nice people. It seemed as though I'd known them all my life they were so friendly.

We flew to Smoky Hill Air Base at Salina, Kansas to be outfitted for combat. We were issued new clothing and flying suits