

IT IS WRITTEN, I SAW WAR

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Wednesday, 16 April 2008
Last Updated Wednesday, 11 June 2008

As a radio-gunner on #1308, a B-25 arriving late one evening on the last lap of our flight from Mather Field, California to Biak, New Guinea, I had my first contact with warfare and it did not serve to instill me with great confidence, for I was not permitted to see but only hear and feel its effects

On the ground at Biak, tired and hungry, operations said "we unload and we eat". It was dark beyond belief, we had difficulty finding the mess hall-and only 33 flying hours ago we were "state side soldiers". The messhall, a palm thatched roof supported on poles with an opening all way around above the walls and one low wall for entrance/exit. I also recall a pole in the center entrance opening.

My mouth watered-we hadn't eaten in many hours and the food smelled good. (Obviously we must have REALLY been hungry) My mess kit was about half full when the clatter of gunfire and engines roar was punctuated by loud, earth shaking booms. The cooks eyes jerked upward, the ladle dropped from his hand, he spun on his heels-and the lights went out.

In the blackness, human shapes against the background of air raid warning and weapon flashes, loud shouting, one word stuck out of the cacophony-"Trenchs!". Apparitions leaped over the low walls, others swelled to and through the exit openings in the low, braided frond walls. Machine guns' loud chatter sounded like stones falling on an empty steel drum. The earth shook, ack-ack or anti-aircraft guns, followed by ear splitting explosions gave me reason to believe the others were right-the messhall was definately not the safe haven I originally thought.

Action followed thought -sprinting through the darkness for where I last remembered the door opening to be, I found it-aAND the center pole! Unable to see me prone on the ground, others collided with or fell over me. The din of warfare all about me , I can attest to earth-shaking (from close personal contact), trembling men and the acrid smell of burnt gun powder. I saw no bomb bursts, I saw no tracers in the dark skies, I saw no ack-ack bursts, I saw no aircraft, YET it is written I SAW war.