Lawrence "Bud" Waggener

Combined Memoir & *P-401* Log

This document is condensed from an autobiography written for his family. Most of the "family stuff" has been skipped in order to focus on his experiences and that of his crew aboard the crash boat *P-401* as part of the 15th ERBS while attached to the 13th Air Force, primarily in the Southwest Pacific Area (SWPA). While I have edited this document for brevity, I have used his own words wherever possible. I have changed courses steered that were given in degrees to just general directions, NW, SE, WNW, etc., for easier reading.

Army Enlistment, Artillery School, OCS and New Orleans

Lawrence "Bud" Waggener enlisted in the Army on 13 April, 1942 and by May, 1943 was a 2nd Lieutenant in the Quartermaster Officer Candidate School in Ft. Lee, Virgina. Originally bound for a military career in the artillery, by September, 1943 his course had been changed or corrected and he was headed to New Orleans, LA to be trained in the proper operation of air-sea rescue boats. Having successfully completed his training, he became a Master/Skipper of *P-401*, a 63-foot rescue boat and on 3 November, 1943 he was transferred to Stockton, CA to be shipped, along with his boat, to the great Southwest Pacific Area….

Aboard the *William A. Henry*, Liberty Ship

The *William A Henry* pulled away from the San Francisco dock on 26 February, 1944 and departed under the Golden Gate for a part of the world that my crew and I had never seen Before. One gets an odd feeling not knowing where and how long the sojourn will last and what can possibly be waiting for you!

Our crash boat was loaded at an angle atop hatch #3, just ahead of the liberty ship's pilothouse. The crew and I sat on the bow of our boat watching Alcatraz Island, Golden Gate Bridge, the Presidio, and lastly the Farallon Islands with their large herd of sea lions disappear from view as the *William A. Henry* was moving through the sea at 10.5 knots. I had no idea that it would be 25 November, 1945 before I would view that sight again.

During the next ten days the only life we saw were two or three dolphins swimming about the bow of the ship. A freighter passed us at a distance, headed toward Pearl Harbor. Black smoke was flowing from its stack that we were able to see from far over the horizon. The first land we saw appeared off our starboard bow about 20 days out of San Francisco. It was the Western Samoa Island, Tutuila.

A day later we were traveling west with nothing in sight in any direction. In the late afternoon I was scanning the ocean to the south when I saw a surfaced submarine on the horizon. I ran to the bow of the liberty ship and yelled to the Gunnery Officer, “There’s a submarine to the south of us!”. He notified the ship’s captain and we began steering a “zigzag” course immediately. We continued this action for at least two or three hours. We eventually learned that it was an American submarine from Pearl Harbor out on a training mission. That incident awakened all the troops and personnel on the *William A. Henry*.

On the 32nd day out of San Francisco (29 March, 1944) we passed through a narrow passage less than two miles wide between two long islands (Pentecost & Aurora islands) and continued to Espirito Santos. Here the U.S. had established large Army and Navy bases. In fact, the carrier *USS Yorktown* (CV10) and its supporting flotilla were in the anchorage refitting.

The next morning was very stormy, bout our escort to Guadalcanal (a Four-Piper) was standing-by and we followed her for 1.5 days to Sealark Channel off Lungo Point, Guadalcanal, Solomon Islands. At last we were in the War Zone; it would get more like was as we moved on.

We Named Our Boat Gung-Ho

During the ocean voyage to the Southwest Pacific, I found in the ship’s mess a magazine that contained a story about the U.S. Marine Corps raid on Makin Island. Their motto during the raid was “Gung-Ho!” – Chinese for “We work together!” I asked the crew for their reaction to the motto and they agreed that the name was a great one; especially our cook, Sims Wong, who had been born in Canton, China.

Unloading at Guadalcanal

The *Gung-Ho* weighed 50 tons (editor’s note: actual weight is 26 tons) and the Transportation Corps authorities in San Francisco knew there were no floating cranes in Guadalcanal capable of unloading the boat. So, they advised the liberty ship captain that he and his crew would have to do the job. The Jumbo Crane of the ship was rated at 36 tons lifting capacity. The William A. Henry’s first mate overhauled the ship’s Jumbo Crane during the voyage west to ensure that it was in perfect condition.

I dreaded the unloading of the *Gung-Ho* about as bad as any experience we were subjected to in the Pacific. I was sure that if somehow the boat was damaged in unloading, there would be no facility standing-by to make repairs and I would wind-up in charge of a sawmill or worse.

Nothing failed and before long *Gung-Ho* sat safely floating in the Sealark Channel. There was one problem and at this moment it was not easy to correct. The *Gung-Ho’s* 32-volt batteries were dead. Worse, one of them would not take a charge. Here we sat, tied to a

buoy a half mile from shore with no power, no lights, no refrigerator and no stove in working order. We bummed one more meal from the *William A. Henry* before she sailed away.

Reporting to the 13th Army Air Force

29 March, 1944 - My first job was to get ashore and report to 13th Army Air Force HQSS, wherever that was! As usual, it was a hot and sultry day! The day before it rained like I had never seen it rain before, and I was born and raised in Oregon. I put on one of my best suntan uniforms, stood on the bow of *Gung-Ho's* deck and finally waved a Navy coxswain in a passing barge for a ride to the beach.

I then tramped to the Lunga Point Port Commander's shack and explained my situation and his first question was, "Who's your CO?" I said "I am." He came back with something like "JEEZ, Man you're really hurting for brass! A 2nd Lieutenant in these parts isn't going to get any attention" He then asked what organization I was looking for.

I said my orders concerned the 13th Army Air Force and asked where they were located. He said they were at Carney Field, 11 miles east. When I asked how to get there, he replied, "If you don't have transportation (and I didn't) try your thumb! About a half mile south of here you will find a well-traveled road running east, follow it to Carney Field. I was eventually picked-up by another 2nd Lt. driving a Jeep. He took me right to the 13th AAF front door. When I told the captain at the front desk that I was reporting as a new unit and that we were a crash boat crew with a total of seven men, he looked at me like I was an alien from Mars.

After conversation with two or three other brass, he returned to advise me that I should report to a Lt. Col. John Trout, XO, 29th Service Grp. I located him in a canvas wall-tent with the sides rolled up. He was wearing suntan pants and a sleeveless undershirt with no insignia. When I described my outfit, its equipment and men, etc. he had only heard the following: "boat & seven men!" He backed away, consulted an enlisted man and returned asking, "Lieutenant, how in the Hell can 2nd Lt. and six men unload a liberty ship?"

I replied, "Colonel, my crew doesn't unload liberty ships. I again repeated that we had a 63-foot Air-Sea Rescue Boat with a speed of 33 ½ knots, that we were trained to perform search and rescue at sea and that we had our own living quarters aboard. His immediate response was, "Well, I'll be damned! Can you go fishing on that thing?" I answered, "Only if the fish are fast enough to catch the hooks."

Lt. Col. Trout finally pawned me off on a Major Wilson, Air In-transit CO who obtained parts and supplies I required and we were soon in business, doing what we were trained to do.

Duty in the Guadalcanal Area

Our crew, the 1569th QM Boat Crew (AVN) and its boat, *P-401*, was the first unit, trained for search and rescue, to be assigned to the 13th AAF. Major Wilson was aware additional crews were enroute, he asked me if I was interested in taking charge of running such a fleet. I definitely did not refuse such an order, but I let him know that I was committed to remaining with my men. Beginning 15 April, 1944 another crew and boat arrived ever two weeks. We moored our boat on the side of the KuKum (village) Dock where small freighters and barges unloaded supplies. It soon became the HQSS for crash boats working the Guadalcanal area.

10 May, 1944 - Enlisted men M/Sgt Hengen, S/Sgt Gordon, Sgt. Knutson, and W/O Bogaz accompanied me on a B-25 flight to Munda Island to return crash boat *J-724* under its own power to Guadalcanal. The flight north took one hour. We experienced a fire at the dock in the boat's engine compartment caused by a missing flame arrester and an engine backfire. We quickly extinguished the fire using an extinguisher. We spent most of the day preparing the boat for the return to Guadalcanal. We departed at 1630, sailed all night, weather cloudy and rainy, arrived at 13th AFF HQSS 1145, 11May, 1944. The engine oil line broke during the last mile of the trip.

When we originally arrived at Guadalcanal there was one 104-foot rescue boat in the area. It had no organized crew aboard and was inactive. I never learned how it got there or when it arrived.

There was also one 63-ft boat with an organized Navy crew and had been in the Munda Area. It was camouflaged in two shades of green. We acquired two shades of green and painted the *Gung-Ho* in the same manner. I ultimately added a "Shark's Mouth" to the bow. *Gung-Ho* was the only boat bearing camouflage paint in the 13th AAF rescue boat fleet.

Duty at Guadalcanal consisted of frequent ocean searches, but in the two months we were in the area, only one rescue was made, and it fell to Lt. Luttig's crew. We made a lot of trips throughout the area carrying officers to Tulagi, Malaita, Savo, and other islands. The ranking generals who boarded the *Gung-Ho* on these trips were Lt. Gen. Harmon, Brig. Gens. Barnes, McCoy and Usher. We flew a 3-star or a 1-star flag depending on which General was aboard.

Changes in Organizational Status

We underwent several organizational changes during our service, recorded below. It was a one-of-a-kind experience that I will never have to repeat again!

FROM			TO			Unit Designation & Location
Mo.	Day	Year	Mo.	Day	Year	
2	26	44	6	1	44	1569th QM RES Boat CREW Guadalcanal, Solomons
6	1	44	7	22	44	25th Emerg. Res. Boat Crew Admiralty Islands
7	7	44	9	15	45	15th Emerg. Res. Boat Sqn. New Guinea to Philippine Islands
9	15	45	11	25	45	370th AAF Service Sqn Clark Field to USA

Our First Movement, the Admiralty Islands

4 & 5 June, 1944 - Four crews made preparations to move to the Admiralty Islands for operations, 2nd Lt. Waggoner, 25th AAF Emerg. Boat Crew *P-401*; 2nd Lt. W H Kinser, 26th AAF Emerg. Boat Crew *P-404*; 2nd Lt. C H Luttig, 27th AAF Emerg. Boat Crew *P-407*; and WOJG M M Pelser, 29th AAF Emerg. Boat Crew *P-400.*

The Navy provided the *USS Zeal*, a mine sweeper, to escort our group to the Admiralty Islands. Major Yates traveled on the *Gung-Ho* with Lt. Waggener. For two legs of the trip each boat had to carry a deck load of four 50-gallon drums of 100-octane Gasoline. When we had traveled for 6 hours, we stopped, transferred the barreled fuel into our main tanks using a wobble pump, sank the empty drums using our machine guns and were again on our way.

6 June, 1944 - At 0600 Departed on course to the WNW following the *USS Zeal, DE-311* at 15 knots. At 1910 we docked at the Rendova Island's PT Base fuel barge. Took on 300 gallons. Departed Munda Harbors at 2035 6 June, 1944 new course generally NW at 15 knots.

7 June, 1944 at 1845 - We anchored in a small boat harbor off Torokina, Bougainville, Solomon Islands for the night. Kinser's boat, P-404 had minor engine problems, otherwise this portion of the trip was uneventful.

Next Stop Green Island

8 June, 1944 - We began refueling at 0800and finished fueling and got underway at 1245, refueling arrangements not satisfactory. Our plan was to reach Emiru Island, about 600 miles north of New Ireland before refueling. The sea was usually rough as it had been the last two days. We were running parallel to 10-to-25-foot waves coming from the west, and one minute our boats would be high above a pair of waves and the next your partner would be hidden from sight. The waves were not capping, but , WOW, it was rough.

Finally, we were running with a following sea and had to increase speed to 18 knots to maintain steerage. Again, Lt. Kinser's boat was having engine troubles. He determined that the starboard engine had lost one of its dual ignitions systems. Our Navy escort orders that wee make for Green Island to make repairs to *P-404*.

9 June 1944 at 0130 - Escort picks-up pilot boat in entrance to Green Island harbor.

0155 Anchor and secure engines. Green Island is a beautiful atoll that lies halfway between the southern tip of New Ireland and Bougainville. It is a circular and perhaps 5 miles in circumference. The 13th AAF maintained a bomber base on it. We enjoyed our layover and by now the Japanese had moved most of their planes to Truk, 500 miles north.

Our engineers gathered on P-404 and under took repairing the ignition but decided the unit had to be replaced. This required radioing 13th AAF Service Command, Guadalcanal wo ordered a replacement and had it flown to Green Island. This required the better part of five days.

Onward to the Admiralty Islands

14 June 1944 at 0640 - We are underway N for Emiru Island.
0800 Crash boats proceed N. Leave escort *DE-131*, she will have gun practice.
1245 DE Contact. Will set-off depth charges
1250 Change course to NW. *DE-131* rejoins our convoy in the lead.
1300 Kinser reports steering problem. Boat will not go straight ahead- turns only to port.
1315 *P-404* steering problem solved. Found can of beans had fallen between side of boat and steering bellcrank.
1527 Change course to WNW. Passed another convoy heading southwest. Now running 14 knots.
1840 DE Contact. "Follow us around convoy."

15 June, 1944, at 1045 - Docked at fuel storage, took on gas.
1200 Tied alongside *DE-131*, Emiru Harbor.
0600 16 June, 1944 Underway from Emiru Island
0615 DE Contact. Course W, speed 16 knots.

1107 WOJG Pelser *(P-400)* reports engine problem. Requests speed to be reduced to 10 knots. Contact *DE-131* who approves.
2013 Arrive at Seeadler Harbor, Lorengau, Admiralty Island. We are now at our new operating station.

Operations in the Admiralty Islands

16 to 30 June, 1944 - We moved our base of operations from Seeadler Harbor to Hyane Harbor, a small bay located on the east side of Mokerang Island. Hyane Harbor was adjacent to the north end of Momote Field that was used primarily by B-24 bombers. We set an “orderly tent” with telephone communications and storage of miscellaneous supplies. The 321th Air Service Group took over our administrative responsibilities.

We contacted the base Engineers regarding construction of a dock for safely servicing the boats and to facilitate the “duty Boat”. We also requested the replacement of a red buoy at the harbor entrance that was lost due to a recent storm.

Our crew was stationed at the Admiralty Islands for a period of seventy-five days, 30 June to 30 August, 1944 - The boat was on patrol and other duties a total of fifty-four days. Patrols involved awaiting flight departures and returns from Bombing missions to Truk, Palau and the Philippines. During this time the crew and boat made seven searches for reported aircraft mishaps. Most involved detailed and time-consuming grid searches; some lasting through the night. Most disturbing was the fact that in five of these reported accidents, no sign of life or wreckage was found. In two cases wreckage was found but luckily the airmen involved were rescued by PBYs just before we arrived at the crash sites.

6 August, 1944 - Transported to Meomai Island Dr. Lentz, Surgeon, 1st Cavalrt Div. and returned with the following wounded cavalrymen: S/Sgt LeRoy Blackburn, Sgt Alphonso Rodriguez, PFC John Costello, Hershel Moses, and PFC Arlie Potter.

7 August, 1944 - Made the same trip and returned with wounded , PFC Ralph M. Hall to 1st Cavalry Div. HQS Medical care.

18 & 19 August,1944 - Our crew used the Navy portable drydock at Lorengau to service Gung-Ho, P-401. We scraped the hull and coated it with anti-fouling paint, inspected the bottom and checked both propellers and shafts. Their alignment and condition were found to be very satisfactory. Gung-Hp was back in service by 1345, 19 August, 1944.

20 August, 1944 - Received notification from HQS that we would be moving up the coast of New Guinea shortly and took three days to load supplies and check engines, etc.

awaiting departure. We were advised that we would have a Navy escort to Aitape, New Guinea. From there northwest, we would make our own way.

Our First Attempt to New Guinea

21 August, 1944 at 0550 - Start engines, underway.
0650 In radio contact with Navy escort *YMS-315*
0658 Navy *YMS-49* will replace *YMS-315* as our escort.
0704 Underway for New Guinea course to WNW
0803 Change course to West
1252 *YMS-49* receives order, “Return to base”
1259 Ordered to “return to base” with escort. *YMS-49* states “Do not know reason”.
1819 Secure at Hyane Harbor

22 & 23 August, 1944 - Off duty.

24 August, 1944 - Underway for 13th AAF Bomber HQS, pick-up officers to attend bomb demonstration south of Los Negros.
0902 Demonstration over.
1105 Secure at Hyane.
1625 Patrol ACK-ASK, search for reported wreckage, none found.

27,28, 29, 30 August 1944 - Off duty, standing by to move to New Guinea

Our Second Attempt to New Guinea

31 August,1944 at 0551 - Underway, sea is rough, raining and high winds.
0651 Waiting at Seeadler Harbor entrance for escort.
0715 Escort *SC-892* arrives.
0725 VHF – Contact will be every two hours in daytime, one hour at night.
0800 Lt. Waggener relieved, S/Sgt Hinton at helm. Course NW
0900 VHF OK to check every two hours during night on odd hour.
1028 Change course to West
1600 Change course to WSW.

1 September, 1944 - All odd hour checks during night were OK
1231 Change course to WSW
1412 Entering Berlin Harbor, Aitape, New Guinea
1458 Secure alongside SC-982
1549 Proceed to PT Base
1655 Fueling at gas dock

1730 Secure in Aitape Harbor.

Moving to Wakde Island

2 September, 1944 - Anchored in Berlin Harbor, changed oil, both engines. Replaced bad *** condenser, starboard engine.

3 September, 1944 at 0633 - Start engines and clear harbor, course generally WNW.
0900 VHF Check, all boats OK
1015 *P-407* has a broken oil line, slowing to 10 knots, running on one engine.
1030 Called Kinser, *P-404*, suggested that he and WOJG Pelser go ahead. I'll stay with Lt. Luttig.
1306 Lt. Luttig completed repairs, speed 16 knots, course West.
1409 Tower call *P-407* for identification.
1510 Secure at gas dock, Hollandia, New Guinea, Pim Jetty
1747 Tie to *Q-127*, a 104-footer. Later met Curt Sutherland, Asst. Port Commander; I had partied with him in Portland. Just like meeting a long-lost brother from home.

4 September, 1944 at 0832 - Departed to get water at Old Hollandia, port consists of one grass-roofed hut.
0920 Arrived at Hollandia, tied to Navy tender, Mactan.
1745 Tied to Pim Jetty to spend the evening with Curt Sunderland and friends.

5 September, 1944 - *Gung-Ho* stayed behind with *P-407* that is having carburetor problems. Repairs should be completed today. Will leave at 0600 tomorrow. Installed fan in galley.

6 September, 1944 at 0555 - Underway to Hollandia Harbor.
0626 Depart Hollandia
0919 Reduced speed to 12 knots, *P-407* experiencing engine problems.
0930 Bearings indicate approx.. location is 139 deg. 54 min, West, 2 deg. 8.7 min South.
1045 Abeam (Serare) increase speed to 20 knots.
1220 Enter Wadke Harbor
1229 Hanging on anchor, stop engines.

Gung-Ho Duty at Wadke Island

6-18 September, 1944 - We were stationed at Wadke Island only 18 days. Planes were constantly landing and taking off from Wadke. Our duty seemed to be almost constant because two other boats were experiencing repeated engine trouble and were not able to run at sea. During this period *Gun-Ho* was "off-duty" three days. During these off-duty

Days we were able to perform items of repair and maintenance that could not be done otherwise.
Crash boatmen are much like cavalrymen. The cavalryman's primary duty is to care for his horse first! So too is the life of a boatman. You make sure that the boat is in good operable condition before you eat or sleep. I am sure that the crewmen of the *Gung-Ho* were as well-trained and qualified as any in the 15th ERBS, a newly organized unit of the 13th AAF of which all crash boats were made members.

It was at Wadke Island that an Associated Press reporter, Fred Hampson, wrote the article, "Portlander in Bombing Raid, CRASH BOAT STEALS THE SHOW", that appeared in Portland's "The Oregonian". He overheard this conversation between my boat and the tower at the end of the day:

Hello control tower, this is X-B202. May I come in now?

Hello X-B202. Yes, may come in now. Come in once over the field, the traffic pattern is left. Circle once and land to the east.

Hello control tower. It would be the neatest trick of the month. If it is all the same to you though, I think I will just pull up to the dock like I always do.

Of course, all the folks stateside got a big kick out of the newspaper article.

22 September, 1944 - *P-401* compass deviation chart was swung (updated). We swung the compass each time we made a major change in the distribution of anything metal aboard the boat.

Our Next Objective is Woendi Island (Navy PT Base)

23 September, 1944 at 1354 - Underway for Woendi Island PT Base. Four boats involved; as usual, *P-404* was running on one engine.
1435 Course NW, speed 9 knots.
1550 VHF radio check every two hours.
1706 Bearing (Koemamba Island) our position: long. 138 deg. 36.1 E, Lat. 1 deg. 38.2 sec. Speed 9.5 knots
1800 VHF check, Change course to WSW at 2130 hrs.
1930 *P-404* wanders off course. Reports binnacle light burned out. *P-400* takes over.
1941 Destroyer cuts across our course now.
2000 VHF check.
2135 Convoy stopped. WOJG Pelser reports loose logs floating in ocean. Encounters sunken Jap barge. Keep close lookout for enemy small craft.
2200 convoy assembled. Got barge separated, course WSW.
0737 Enter Woendi Harbor
0828 Secure at dock.

We Move on to Noemfor Island

26 September, 1944 at 0848 - Underway to harbor entrance for Noemfor Island.
0907 Clear Harbor, course S, speed 21 knots. We leave Kinser and Pelser behind with engine troubles.
0910 Change course, SW
0937 Change course, WNW
1413 Abeam Jenmanee
1420 Secure on sea anchor. There was only one place inside reef surrounding Noemfor Island more than 6 feet deep and wide enough to turn around that looked like a possible harbor. We must thoroughly investigate it before attempting to enter with crash boat. Luttig and I spent several days (Editor's note: maybe 24th to 26th) and nights on a sea anchor before we attempted to enter.

27 September, 1944 at 1358 - Underway for gas at Kamiri Bay. This was an inlet where a creek no more than 6 feet deep and wide enough to turn around using a spring line on the bridge. The sea was reasonably calm, so we went in with no difficulty.
1425 Secure to Kamiri Bridge.

28 September, 1944 - A USAAF gas truck parked on the bridge to deliver a load of gas in mid-afternoon.
1705 A western storm was brewing. The sea was bringing large swells into the little opening. It was very obvious that we could not remain in our present position. *Gung-Ho* departed first. I watched four large waves come in that were breaking on top (counting a rhythm as they broke) and opened the throttles as the fifth one rose. We shot out of the little creek and I swore I'd never return to that place again. Lt. Luttig in *P-407* made it too, but his bow struck bottom as he cleared the harbor and it scared the crew badly. No exterior damage was evident.

It was mandatory that we somehow find and anchorage out of the open ocean. Using a Danforth anchor in the ocean as a permanent mooring is neither advisable nor adequate. After our frightening experience departing Kamiri Creek. We proceeded around the north end of Noemfor Island to find a way through the reef.

At Broe Bay – Finally, we found what appeared to be an opening and I gave it a try. We inched forward through the opening into the bay. The inner bay was spotted with "coral heads", out-croppings just below the surface that made navigating extremely hazardous. The water in the bay was only five to seven feet deep. The meant that we would have to somehow flag the channel to make the harbor useable.

We requested through AAF HQS that we receive assistance from the Corps of Engineers with such a project that was promised but it did not happen until the Corps needed and started to use Broe Bay for its small boats. Meanwhile, it was absolutely necessary that we depart or enter Broe Bay in broad daylight with a lookout on the bow signaling to evade coral heads. This meant that if the 13th AAF planned a bombing strike with a launch anytime before dawn, we had to lay off the island all night. Our crew and boat were stationed at Noemfor a total of 14 days and we were "on duty" every day.

3 October, 1944 - We met a Dutch corvette at sea and transported ten of their servicemen to shore. They also had three Japanese prisoners with them. This was the only time we transported the enemy on our boat. They were a mean, emaciated looking lot. I told the Dutch officer not to take them below for any reason.

Air strikes that originated from Noemfor were particularly important. It was at that time the most westerly point from which our bombers could strike important islands such as the Celebes, Borneo and the Philippines; we stood-by on the first bombing raid flown to Balikpapan, Borneo, where oilwells and refineries were destroyed.

10 October, 1944 at 0750 - When returning from an all night stay on the ocean, the Gung-Ho struck a coral head entering Broe Bay and bent the starboard shaft and propeller. This took us out of action and our challenge was to get on a portable drydock for six to eight hours to make repairs. The nearest drydock we were aware of was at the PT Base at Woendi Island. We had left WOJG Pelser there on 23 September, 1944 awaiting drydock time to repair bent props and shafts. He was still there. With a letter from the 13thAAF Commanding General, we moved to Woendi asking for their help. You can bet that we were "low down on the totem pole". Admiral Halsey did not like Gen. MacArthur and it showed!

After waiting a week at Woendi, I learned that the 14ERBS had moved their portable drydock to Biak, about 40 miles west. I convinced WOJG Pelser that we should move to Biak and take our chances, hoping they would help us out. It takes about 8 to 10 hours to scrape and paint the bottom of a crash boat. At the same time the crew can change the shafts and propellers. How important was access to a drydock? *P-407* waited 75 days and *Gung-Ho* waited 52 days to access a drydock and make repairs that took less than 12 hours each. We kept busy during this time painting and servicing the boats. We installed new 50-claiber guns on our bow and stern.

After a trial run back to Woendi PT Base to get gas before leaving for Morotai it became apparent that there was still an excessive vibration in the starboard propeller assembly. We took Lt. Gambell, 14th ERBS Maintenance Officer, out for a ride to diagnose the problem. He agreed with my assessment and arranged for us to get back in the drydock on 13 December, 1944 at 2145 - We obtained a new shaft from 14th ERBS, installed it and our problem was solved.

7 December, 1944 - I went to the Port Commander's hut at Biak to report our departure for Sansapor, New Guinea. There I discovered Sidney Bennett, a boy from our Woodlawn Grammar School who was in the Navy and had been in the Pacific since the start of the war.
2320 Underway for Sansapor with P-356, P-592, P-611 & P-616 in convoy.

18 December, 1944 at 0003 - Course SW for 7 miles.
0037 Change course to WNW
0600 Abeam Mergarri (Noemfor) Continue at 13 knots
0706 Change course W by N, speed 21 knots
1440 Secure at Sansapor. Monsoon conditions during the night, worst weather I've ever experienced!

19 December, 1944 at 0200 - Deck watch abandoned, morring secure and OK.
0930 Gas Dock, took 625 gals, also loaded 180gal in drums for trip to Morotai.

Starting North to Morotai, Moluccas

20 December, 1944 at 1625 - Underway to Morotai
1713 Curse NNW, 13knots, 77 miles
2311 Course WNW for 200 miles

21 December, 1944 at 0611 - Increased speed to 21 knots.
0920 Slowed to 16 knots
0921 Received radio bearing steer W
1320 Secure to dock Morotai, Moluccas

Duty at Morotai, Moluccas

Gung-Ho was stationed at Morotai for 50 days; during this assignment we thought we were in "Fat City" because there was a gathering of the squadron's flotilla and we were able, for the first time, to have a day off now and then. We had a total of 12 days off at Morotai. The crew went to movies and USO shows for the first time!

Morotai was the first really active war zone we experienced where we were bombed almost daily. The Japanese never seemed to learn that the Allies fought with everything they possessed at all times. The Japanese would send over two or three airplanes, especially at night, and drop one bomb at a time, exposing themselves to anti-aircraft artillery seemed to be their delight.

About two weeks after our crew arrived at Morotai, a squadron of Aussie fighter pilots flying British Spitfires showed up at the island. Before their arrival, SOP (standard operating procedure) was that anti- aircraft artillery would shine their searchlights on the Japs and fire like crazy. Sometimes the artillery shot the enemy down, but more times they misses and the Japs got away. When the Aussies finally convinced the artillery to turn their lights on the Japs but refrain from firing and leave the shooting to the Aussies, thing really began to happen. The Japanese fell out of the sky like mad and after two or three visits, the enemy stopped showing up.

From Here to The End, I'll Highlight Only Those Incidents That I Think You Will Find Interesting.

<u>24 December 1944 at 0540</u> - Underway to a station 50 miles north of Morotai. We would start for this point an hour and a half before the air strike took-off, speed 21 knots.
0851 Arrived at estimated location. Travel required five course changes, all run at 21 knots.
1558 Underway returning to base.
1845 Reload gas tanks and secure at base.

<u>26 December, 1944 at 0650</u> - Underway to east end of air strip.
1223 log raft & wreckage reported off "16 Michael 32" a code for an AAF map location.
1335 Sighted raft and wooden debris. Fired 50 caliber guns into raft to break it up. Report action to "Gypsy" (radio tower).
1513 Back at east end of strip.
1712 SNAFU reported SW, 10 miles from strip. Called Sapphire #2, we will assist.
1830 Picked-up two oxygen bottles in oil slick 300 yards off Halmahera Island, Japanese territory
2047 Secure at dock.

<u>9 January, 1944 at 0712</u> - Underway to east end of strip.
0804 Hanging on sea anchor.
1204 Our cook, Joe Pedano, burned with hot grease.
1211 Underway to dock to send Pedano to hospital, have ambulance at dock.
1250 Pedano loaded in ambulance; sent to 155th Hospital with S/Sgt Hinton, boat's medic. Borrowed S/Sgt Horne, P-406 medic and returned to duty assignment.
1603 Returning to base.163777 Secure at dock.

By now the reader has probably noticed that when any of our boats travel in convoy, they ordinarily run at 10 to 15 knots. This is done primarily for safety and to conserve fuel. Our ideal cruising speed is 21 knots but this is too fast for convoying. We run very close in convoy in order to use VHF radio communication. Safety would be compromised too greatly at 21 knots.

12 January, 1945 - We had to repair an oil pump on our port engine. I recall that the designer of the boat did not allow for removal of the oil pump. The engine stringer had no relief in it to facilitate this repair. S/Sgt Knutson, who was mt very capable engineer fretted about how we were gong to get the pump off the engine without ruining it. Isaid, “Barney, cut a notch in the stringer; that’s what the builder forgot to do!” His eyes lit up and his frustration disappeared. What he foresaw as a long tedious job was finished in about three hours.

One more story about S/Sgt Barney Knutson warrants repeating here. He was drafted as a teenager during WWI and served on a destroyer (four piper) in the North Atlantic. Barney was never married. He was 41 when his Draft Board called him at the start of WWII. He had the second draft number pulled out of the hat, so the Army grabbed him! He was within days of his 45th birthday when we received orders to ship him home.

15 January, 1945 at 0020 - We were the duty boat and were dispatched to search for a B-24 bomber, a snooper, that crashed about 20 miles north of Pitoe Strip after take off for night bombing of shipping in the South China Sea. We heard it fly over our mooring as it flew north and everything sounded OK.

It was a moonless night and the plane crashed among several atolls, nasty conditions for sailing at night. The area was amid the route that Japanese barges traveled between Morotai and Halmahera. PT Boats challenged us four times!

0700 We made contact with the 124th Field Artillery personnel who came to search in an Alligator (amphib tank). They picked up and delivered into my custody a nose wheel and the B-24 log book. We found no survivors.
0746 Ordered to return to base.
0859 Secure at dock.

16 January, 1945 at 1129 - Underway to Hgele-Ngele Island.
1219 Contacted 124th Field Artillery about a body.
1250 Went ashore with Officer in Charge. He said contents unidentifiable.1338 Secure at base. Log doesn’t show further action.
2320 Having trouble with S/Sgt W H Hinton. He returned to the boat drunk.

17 January, 1945 at 0100 - W H Hinton still raising Hell. Called MPs and turned him over to Lt. Karr.
0621 Underway to Rao0811 Secure to station buoy.
1520 Return to base.
1657 Secure at base.
2330 Cpl. Joseph Pedano arrested for drunk and disorderly conduct, assaulting CWO John Cranston and sent to hospital at 2400.

19 January at 0930 - Cpl. J Pedano reports from hospital for duty. I ordered himto take his gear off the boat and report to Squadron HQS and the Commanding Officer for further instructions.

20 January, 1945 at 1131 - Emergency call to pick up a bodies at Ngele-Ngele Island.
1200 Arrived at island and picked up bodies.
1241 Returning to base.1312 Secure at base. Remains evacuated: Lt. John F. Davis, 0-712520 and Lt. Arlin B. Bittenger, 0-823795.
2000 Discovered right bank of starboard engine has a cracked exhaust manifold.

21 January, 1945 - Install new manifold on starboard engine. Repairs completed at 1600.

23 January, 1945 - Sgt William Martin detailed to replace Joseph Pedano as cook. Sgt Cihlar detailed to replace S/Sgt W H Hinton until replacement can be obtained.
0610 Underway for Roa Island.
0749 Secure top station buoy. Sgt Cihlar and Lt Waggener held sick call on Rao Island for ill GIs.
1615 Return to base with Lt. Michael Danko and Sgt Olen Lambert, members of Co. G 2nd Bn, 167th Infantry, who are ill but mobile.
1758 Secure at base.

1 February, 1945 0845 to 0930 - Lt Waggener ordered to appear as witness to court martial (Walton H Hinton) at 5230 Composite Rescue Grp. Medical supplies obtained for boat through 321st Service Group Medical Supply.

2 February, 1945 - Sgt. Robert Ryan reported for duty as Surgical Technician.

3 February, 1945 0639 - Underway for Rao Island. Returning the following men for duty with their unit. Lt. Michael Danko, Sgt. Olen Lambert, Pvt John Billy, and Pvt Theron Gay

1600 Returning to base with two native boys- respiratory difficulties: Teruienas, Dalanir Village, Tao-Too.

4 February, 1945 0619 - Underway to Rao Island.
0809 Arrived at Rao Island
1715Returning to base. Evacuating Raymond Ensey, 565 Signal AW BN to HQ & dentist.
1839 secure at dock.

5 February, 1945 0625 - Underway to Loloda Bay, Aoma Island.
1100 Put Lt Waggener, Sgt Ryan and Dutch military people ashore at Kaliacolia Island. Sgt Ryan gave First Aid to several natives who were shot by Japanese raiders two days before our arrival. One was a baby girl. We evacuated 23 natives to Morotai at request of the Dutch officers on board.

1300 Moved Gung-Ho on Aoma Island to pickup body of Lt David Simpson, P-38 fighter pilot who crashed in Loloda Bay several days ago. Natives recovered body and buried Simpson on the peak of Aoma Island. The natives exhumed the body, carried it down the steep mountain and roped it securely to the stern of P-401. See the Gung-Ho Cruise Album for photos of Aoma Island.
1440 Underway for Morotai.
1827 Secure at dock.
1920 Unload body and natives, secure again to dock. Dutch passengers on board for trip are all members of the Dutch Royal Army.

10 February, 1945 at 0205 - Underway for Sansapor, New Guinea.
1720 Arrived at Sansapor.

11 February, 1945 at 0015 - We rescued 15 stevedores, Army personnel, from the sea. Their DUKW sank in swells coming alongside a freighter. Released them to an LST for removal to shore. Our crew was sound asleep when the incident occurred and our reaction time was very spotty. It was a good thing no lives were lost.
0058 Secured to merchant ship.

Underway to The Philippines by Tow – LST 666

11 February, 1945 at 1800 - Our boats met convoy headed for invasion of Palawan Island, Philippines. We secured tow from LST 666.
2000 Began 2-hour watch, 2 on, 4 off.

13 February, 1945, 1400 - Sea growing rougher. Requested more cable from LST 666. Had to rig Spanish Windlass on boat to keep tow line from tearing up bow of Gung-Ho.

20 February, 1945 at 0004 - Sighted land.
0648 Entered Leyte Harbor.
0900 Took on new supply of water, also picked up extra cable for towing bridle.
1613 Hooked again to LST 66 and underway. Watches: 2-On, 4 Off.

25 February, 1945 - Took on water and cases of 50 cal ammo. (Editor's note: Probably at PT Base, Mindora, Philippines, his timeline doesn't work at this point.)
1616 Alongside *Tangiers* for gas, third time we've met this ship in SW Pacific.

27 February, 1945 1643 - Under tow with LST 709

1 March, 1945 at 0357 - Sight land.
0727 Cut loose from LST 709
0800 Proceed to enter harbor.

0846 Secured to dock, Puerto Princessa, Palawan, Philippines.

2 March, 1945 - Repairing stern railing damage. Went to LST 666 and took on water
1134 Secured at dock.1231 Underway to LST 717 to pickup Col Wolfenbarker and Gen Barnes, 13th AAF Fighter Commanding general.
1511 Returned to anchorage.

Before the story finishes with our duty at Puerto Princessa, Palawan, Philippines, I want to enter a few comments about our general circumstances. First, practically all the planes assigned to the 13th AAF Fighter & Bomber Groups that flew off the air bases we served were multi-engine types. There were P-38 Lightnings, B-25 Mitchells, and B-24s, the most produced bomber of the war.

All of these types of planes experienced losses in and around the target areas and sometimes failed to make it back to their base. In may of these instances flight crews were rescued by PBY “Catalinas” that followed the flights to the target area.

Records show that PBYs rescued in excess of 700 downed airmen in the South Pacific, while crash boats rescued about 300personnel. That figure included downed airmen and others involved in ship and boat mishaps. From reading this log, the reader can see that crash boats were widely used for missions beyond air-sea rescue.

Because our aircraft were multi-engine, hundreds of fighters, bombers and others made it safely back to our bases on one engine, or less than all their engines depending on the aircraft. Combat flights flying off Puerto Princessa Field were directed mainly at Borneo, Saigon and Singapore targets. These involved very long flights that entailed extreme distances over water.

Our detachment at Puerto Princessa consisted of four boats. We were anchored in the harbor at the west end of the airstrip and the duty boat was always stationed at the east end out in the ocean. Prevailing winds were from the east, so the vast majority of flights took off in an easterly direction. Gung-Ho was stationed at Puerto Princessa for 218 days. That was by far the longest we remained at any one location. A quick tally shows that we were Off-duty about one day per week. As I mentioned earlier, Off-Duty days provided time we used for preventive maintenance and other related activities.

9 March, 1945 at 1058 - We were Off-Duty but were requested to take a life raft and Major Elvove, Det. H, 85th fighter Wing to the PBY Base.
1245 Secure at dock.

28 March, 1945 at 0615 - Visited by Col Ford, CO 13th Emergency Rescue Group. It was a routine visit; no change in orders.

16 April, 1945 1050 - Underway to Baton-Baton, course S, at 21 knots.
1101 Course SSW for 36.2 miles
1351 Course W for 8 miles
1329 Anchor at Bivouac Point, put beer ashore. Pickup three evacuees.
1450 Underway for Puerto Princessa
1552 Request ambulance at Jetty
1716 Secure at dock. Had five additional passengers on return trip, including Carlton W. Harrod, Major, Chaplin, who held Catholic Church services on shore.
1900 Cpl. John Fischer returned to duty from hospital.

20 May, 1945 - The Detachment was inspected by Major LeBonte. He was contacted by an enlisted man (identity unknown to me) who entered a negative report that went to the attention of the Squadron Commander. As a result, Lt. Daubenspeck and I were ordered to report to the Squadron Commanding Officer and explain the reason for this situation.

24 May, 1945 - We flew to Squadron HQS at Morotai, Moluccas. We were not given any of the details revealing who made the complaint, the substance of the complaint or any of the circumstances. We learned subsequently that the man was complaining about non-receipt of mail, no R & R leave and similar petty complaints that were circumstances common to the entire Detachment.

24 June, 1945 at 0745 - Underway to Rizal (remote radar site) Understand there are people to evacuate due to fight among personnel.
1225 Arrive at Rizal
1255 Evacuate four personnel, plus two officers as passengers who went along to determine what occurred.
1515 Secure at dock, unload passengers.

3 July, 1945 at 0900 - Radio Watch.
1445 Underway for Bold Point to evacuate S/Sgt John E. Shufford39309704, suffering epileptic fits.
1625 Secure at dock.
1925 Return patient to ambulance for trip to hospital.

14 August, 1945 – Japanese Agree to Surrender Terms!

Laying to in Puerto Princessa Bay was hazardous! Every GI on shore was firing his "pice" at the bay. In celebration, I shot a "Vary Pistol" off the stern of the Gung-Ho and it narrowly missed landing on the deck! It was a Drunk Out!

28 August, 1945 at 0500 - Underway to Bohol, Dumaran. Evacuate ill Filipino woman.
0520 Course NE by E 82 miles at 21 knots.
1005 Course NNW for 3 miles.
1016 Secure at dock, Dumaran.
1430 Return to base with ill Filipino woman.
1835 Secure at doc. Unload patient in ambulance.

18 September, 1945 - Return two men to HQS for discharge.

26 September, 1945 at 0715 - Received call from *P-406* "Have all eligible men "to go home" ready at 0930. Sent W/Sgt Willard K Hengen to HQS for discharge. Hengen was a SUPER Mate. One crew member to which I will always be indebted!

1 October, 1945 at 1430 - Proceed to east end of strip. Pickup two lieutenants at sea in a raft (very rough and dangerous), members of the 68th Fighter Sqn.

2 October, 1945 - Received orders from 13th AAF to move all boats to Puerto Princessa, Palawan. Philippines to Cavite Naval Base, as soon as possible. I had four 63 footers and 12 men, including myself.

3 October, 1945 at 0505 - Four boats (three with skipper and engineer. P-401 with skipper, engineer and one deck hand) underway for Manila. Course NE by E at 22 knots.
1035 Course NNE
1630 Secure at San Jose, Mindora Harbor. Seas too rough to gas.

4 October, 1945 at 0630 - At gas doc, 900 gals.
0700 Underway to Manila at 22 knots.
1655 Leave Gung-Ho and other boats at Cavite Naval Base. I had been aboard the *Gung-Ho* from 26 February 1944 to 4 October, 1945 uninterrupted for a total of 650 days. "What a reliable lady she was; Goodbye old girl!"

Homeward Bound!

We moved to a tent camp at Clark Field to join several thousand GIs awaiting the same move. The men who left our outfit as early as 18 September were still there awaiting a ship. I made one trip to Manila, with Lieutenants Luttig and Snell, to a club that was "Officers Only". The club was packed with Filipino girls; we bought them drinks and the danced with us. Our tab for the evening was about $15.40 each.

The buildings in Manila were a shambles. All the bridges across the Pasig River were pieced together with Bailey Bridge spans. Old burned-out vehicles and streetcars were piled everywhere.

6 November, 1945 - We were trucked out to the most antiquated railroad line I have ever seen which made screeches and noises at 15 to 25 mph. We reached the Port of Manila in mid-afternoon and boarded the USCG Troop Ship Admiral Mayo, along with 5800 other troops. Our guess was that we would arrive in San Francisco on the 19th or 29th of November; we did it on the 25th at 1:00PM.

The U.S. Army had a ferryboat come alongside with a big band playing jazz. It was a beautiful site that we didn't see for very long because we were on a ferry bound for Camp Stoneman in moments. Hoopla really didn't concern us; we were interested in "getting our fannies home!"

Thanks America, for the memorable excursion, but I don't ever need to participate in another one.