

**MY RECOLLECTIONS OF THE 404th BOMB SQUADRON (H)  
By T. O. WILLIAMS**

**IN DECEMBER 1941, SHORTLY AFTER PEARL HARBOR, AN UNLIKELY GROUP OF ENLISTEES GATHERED AT SHEPPARD FIELD, TEXAS TO ENTER AIR MECHANICS SCHOOL. WE WERE TAUGHT THE RUDIMENTS---"REMOVE AND REPLACE"--- GENERATORS, STARTERS ETC. NO ACTUAL MECHANIC WORK! PLUS A LOT OF "HUP---TWO---THREE---FOUR" TO MAKE US INTO A PERFECT DRILL TEAM. LATE APRIL 1942, WE WERE SHIPPED TO SAN DIEGO, WHERE WE SPENT A MONTH AT THE CONSOLIDATED AIRCRAFT COMPANY TO STUDY THE B-24. THE ASSEMBLY LINE WAS VERY IMPRESSIVE AND WE FELT VERY MUCH PART OF THE WAR EFFORT.**

**IN EARLY JUNE 1942, WE WERE SHIPPED TO BARKSDALE FIELD, LA. WHERE THEY TRIED TO ATTACH US TO A B-26 SQUADRON. "NO WAY JOSE"---WE FINALLY WERE ATTACHED TO THE 44th BOMB GROUP WHICH COMPRISED THE 67th, 68th, 69th AND THE 404th SQUADRONS. WE WERE AT BARKSDALE FOR ABOUT A MONTH, THEN WE WERE DETACHED FROM "WILD BILL DONOVAN'S" GROUP AND SENT TO WILL ROGERS FIELD, OK. FOR FINAL TRAINING. (THIS IS WHERE JOHN KUFFER AND J.B. NUNN BIT THE DUST AND MARRIED MARTHA AND BEA---GOOD FOR THEM!)**

**AT THIS TIME THE 404th WAS SUPPOSED TO GO TO THE ALEUTIANS FOR SIX MONTHS TO TRAIN AS A COLD WEATHER SQUADRON FOR THE EIGHTH AIR FORCE IN ENGLAND. BELIEVE ME THE WEATHER COULDN'T HAVE BEEN WORST IN THE BRITISH ISLES (AS YOU ALL KNOW THE 120 MILE AN HOUR WINDS WERE SOMETHING ELSE---I WONDER WHERE THE WORD WILLIWAW CAME FROM?).**

**WHILE IN OKLAHOMA CITY I GOT REACQUAINTED WITH MY BRIDE TO BE BUT SOON AFTER LEFT THE STATES. (AFTER 49 YEARS OF MARRIAGE WE HAVE 2 DAUGHTERS, 4 GRANDCHILDREN AND 2 GREAT SONS-IN-LAW.**

**OUR INTRODUCTION TO THE ALASKAN THEATER WAS BY BARGE ON SEPTEMBER 18, 1942. THE CAPTAIN OF OUR SHIP MANAGED TO RUN US AGROUND ABOUT A QUARTER OF A MILE FROM SHORE SO OVER THE SIDE ON ROPE NETTING WE WENT CARRYING TWO BARRACK BAGS. SOME OF THE GUYS WENT INTO THE DRINK. NEXT MORNING GEORGE RUBICK HAS HIS APPENDIX REMOVED.**

**ON SEPTEMBER 22, 1942 WE GOT REACQUAINTED WITH THE CHAIN. TO NAME A FEW WHO WERE IN THE FIRST "WAVE"---JOHN KUFFER, JAKE (J.B.) NUNN, EMMETT WATTERS, DON MITCHELL AND MYSELF. OUR C.O. MAJOR ORTH PROMISED WE WOULD BE BACK IN ANCHORAGE BY CHRISTMAS BUT WE DIDN'T**

**MAKE IT UNTIL MARCH. BY THEN I HAD BEEN PROMOTED FROM A P.F.C. TO A S/SGT AND DREW OVER \$700 IN BACK PAY. "WHAT A WILD WEEKEND!"**

**OUR FIRST NIGHT IN TENTS ON ADAK I SET UP MY COT ON THE TUNDRA AND WOKE UP THE NEXT MORNING ON THE GROUND AND SOAKING WET.**

**WE USED TO CALL PANCAKES "TIRE PATCHES" AND TO THIS DAY SPAM IS NOT ALLOWED IN MY HOUSE! ONE DAY WE HAD TO ABORT A MISSION TO KISKA AND WHEN WE GOT BACK TO ADAK IT WAS SOCKED IN SO WE ENDED UP AT COLD BAY. WE HAD HOWARD HANDELMAN WITH US; HE WROTE "BRIDGE TO VICTORY" WHICH WAS PUBLISHED IN THE READERS DIGEST. WHEN WE LANDED AT COLD BAY IT WAS -42 DEGREES. THE TRANSIENT TRUCKS TOOK US TO THE MESS HALL WHERE THE MESS SGT. HAD FOOD ON THE GRILL. OH BOY--- HAMBURGERS---GUESS WHAT, GROUND SPAM! THAT NIGHT I HAD A COT NEXT TO THE STOVE (OIL, HAD TO KEEP A CANDLE UNDER THE CARBURETOR). MY FACE GOT FROSTBITE THAT NIGHT AND MY BEARD STILL WON'T GROW IN SOME PLACES.**

**WHILE ON ADAK, SHARING A TENT WITH KUFF, MITCH AND EMMETT WE HAD A REAL BAD EARTHQUAKE THAT SCATTERED EVERYTHING, INCLUDING OUR STOVE.**

**THIS IS PART OF MY STORY WITH THE 404th WHICH ENDED IN JANUARY 1945 WHEN I RETURNED TO THE STATES, GOT MARRIED AND ENDED UP AS LINE CHIEF AT BUCKINGHAM FIELD, FT. MEYERS, FL.**

**AS THE SAYING GOES "I WOULDN'T TAKE A MILLION FOR THE FUN I HAD AND NOT 10 MILLION TO GO THRU IT AGAIN. 28 MONTHS WAS ENOUGH.**