



August B. Habighurst
U.S. Army Air Corps —World War II Pacific— CBI
225 Medical Dispensary Aviation
Sergeant

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**Veterans
History
Project
Transcript**

**Interview conducted
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**Niles Public Library
Niles Public Library District
Niles, Illinois**



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Veterans History Project Transcript

Veteran: August B. Habigurst

Rank: Sergeant

Branch of Service: U.S. Army Air Corps

Theater: World War II – Pacific, CBI

Unit: 225th Medical Dispensary Aviation

Interview Date: 4/30/2008, 3 p.m.

Place: Large Meeting Room B

Equipment: Philips Digital Pocket Memo Recorder

Interviewer: Neil O'Shea

This Veterans History Project Interview is being conducted on Wednesday April the 30th in the year 2008 here at the Bethany Home in Morton Grove, Illinois, just north of the Niles Public Library. My name is Neil O'Shea, and I'm a member of the reference staff at the Niles Library. And I'm honored to be speaking with August B. Habighurst.

Gus.

Thank you, Gus. And Mr. Habighurst was born on December the 24th, 1922, in Baltimore and now lives here in Morton Grove. Gus learned of the project through a newspaper story, I believe. And he has kindly consented to be interviewed for this project. Prior to this interview, Gus was taking me through his album of military memories. And he has a veritable library of experiences gathered, assembled, and clearly remembered, from his almost four years in the U.S. Army Air Corps. So, Gus, you entered the Service in 19--?

'42.

1942.

I think it was April.

April the 5th, yes.

So, at that time, you were living in?

Baltimore, Maryland.

What were you doing before you went in the Service?

Well, I was going to school. I was going to be a, at least I hoped to be, in the medical field somehow. Johns Hopkins is in Baltimore, of course. But I was working in a food

company, Kraft Foods, at that time. And it led to my, what do you call it, I can't think of the term.

A deferment or a--

No. No.

No.

Where they put you in a number, you're a certain area. I was a medical technician. That was what I was put down as because of my work with Kraft, in the food industry.

So you had from graduated high school by then?

Not yet, no. No. I finished school after I got out of the Service.

So--but, even though you were still in high school, you had an idea that you wanted to work in the medical field?

Yes. Yes, that was my goal. My mother was a nurse. My daughter is now a nurse. And I was a nurse. I graduated as a nurse in 1943 in Walter Reed Hospital in Maryland. In Bethesda, Maryland, I think it is, if I'm not mistaken.

And you were employed by Kraft, the famous food company?

Yes.

I worked there for twenty-five years, but anyhow--

So were you-- were you drafted?

Yes. Well, I went to enlist right after Pearl Harbor. And I wanted to go in the Navy, because my cousin was in the Navy and he was traveling all over the world. And I wanted to see the world. And when I went down, they wouldn't take me, because I wore glasses. And they said I had an umbilical hernia.

And the Army said, "We'll take you, and we'll give you glasses, and we'll take care of your hernia." Well, they gave me glasses, but they never took care of my hernia. But I was very fortunate. Being in the Air Corps, I did get to get all over the world. And if I'd been in the Navy, I'd of been probably stuck up at Great Lakes or something for the whole duration. So no qualms.

You were a good swimmer? You weren't worried about the water?

Not really. I'm not that crazy about the water.

Okay.

But I would do anything.

Yes. So you were-- how did your, well, I guess your mother was kind of sad or understood the situation?

I was an only child.

An only child.

I was not supposed to go, because I was supporting my mother and my grandmother. But I said, "Eventually, I've got to go anyhow." And she says, "Well, you won't be, you won't pass the physical, because you have a hearing problem." I was born with something wrong with one of my ears, but I had extensive lip-reading as a young child in school. I had a very sharp teacher that noticed I wasn't hearing. And she sent me to lip-reading. And when it came time for the hearing tests, if somebody put their hand over their mouth, I said, "Put your hand down. I can't read your lips." But I passed my tests that way. I falsified it. But I've had hearing aids ever since.

So if you had declared your hearing deficiency--

I probably would not have been 4F.

You would have been 4F, most likely.

I'm guessing.

Yes.

And, even with your hearing deficiency, you were still a capable, alert--

Oh, sure.

soldier.

Sure.

I didn't get hearing aids right away, of course.

Yes.

I got them later on. But the ability, and as I say the smart teacher that sent me to lip-reading class, in those days, you know, what, sixty, seventy, years ago, I picked up that lip-reading. And it helped me. It's always helped me all my life.

I just want to say I can't tell that you have a hearing deficiency at all. And we've been talking for almost an hour now. So it was a wonderful teacher.

Sometimes the batteries go down. It doesn't make any difference at all.

What a wonderful teacher!

So what were your first days like in the military? Was it a shock?

Yes. Very naïve. I was brought up by parents in the Depression years, of course. We had-- we were poor, but we were healthy.

And I had no brothers and sisters. And I-- my father died. He was eighty--he was seventy-two when I was born. And he died while he was eighty-eight. And I took care of him for four or five years, dressed him, fed him, because he couldn't manipulate.

And my mother was a double amputee. She had diabetes.

And I didn't think I would ever go in the Service. But I did. But I sent home my pay, of course. It had to be done. But I felt I had to give something. Because we were-- my patriotism, I guess, was on top of everything else. It's just that I couldn't stand it. I will never forget Pearl Harbor. I will just never forget it, never forget it.

The-- so where was your boot camp or training?

Fort Meade, Maryland.

Oh, not too far away.

No. No. But that was like introductory. I wasn't there very long. They sent me to Tampa, Florida, for Air Corps training, and then they sent me up to Walter Reed Hospital for the medical training. And I had extensive medical training, as I said. I graduated as a male nurse, registered male nurse anywhere in the United States at that time. And I went for further training for flight surgeon's assistant. I worked in an operating room.

So they made the decision? So the Army Air Corps made the decision? You were drafted into the Army and then, somehow, you wind up in the medical--?

Well, see, I had to make a decision, because of my MOS – Military Occupational Specialty. I had to make a decision, did I want to go to medical school and graduate, whatever it was, and go on further? Or do I want to go to officers' training to be a second lieutenant? If I went to Officers' Training School, and I'd failed, I couldn't go to medical school, but if I went to medical school and passed, I could still go on to officers' training. So, I chose the medical, because I wanted to go on further, but I never got there because they sent me overseas.

So the Army realized your abilities and inclinations?

Apparently.

With other veterans, they say they wind up doing exactly the opposite of what they might have been skilled at.

No, I was very fortunate.

Yes.

Very fortunate. I thought I would get in, what do they call it, the Aberdeen, Maryland, the facility had to do with poison gases and things like that.

Yes. Toxic weapons.

I was afraid I was going to get into that.

Yes.

I didn't want to kill. I wanted to help. And I did.

Did you have to tell the Army that you didn't want to be in a situation where you would be killing people?

No. No.

It didn't--

It never came up.

Yes.

So what were the other people like in the boot camp? They must have been-- was that your first time away from home for any length of time?

Oh, yes, it was.

You must have met all kinds of different people?

It was rough because, in Baltimore, we're right on the Mason-Dixon line and, at that time, the negro people were in the back of the bus and in another part of town completely. Of course, it's different now, of course, but I was in the barracks taking my basic training with colored people, which was new to me. But, to me, it was fascinating. I mean, it was interesting, because I'm a people person. I like people. And I was scared to death I was going to do something wrong. But I got through it. I got through it.

So then, after boot camp, then you got some more medical training?

Yes. Yes, as I said, I went up to Walter Reed, finished that. I was getting ready to go to OCS. They sent me back down to Drew Field, Florida, which is right adjacent to Tampa, Florida, to the Air Force-- I took more training in the Air Corps. And I got sent right overseas, so it was quick, it was fast. All in a few months. See, we were originally going to Sicily, the invasion of Sicily, and we left from Hampton Roads, Virginia, in a Liberty ship to go to Sicily. And we got sunk by two ships in the Atlantic. It was awful.

The German submarine?

Yes. And just-- we were picked up. We were full of oil, and it was horrible. Anyhow, they picked us up, and took us to Oran, North Africa to the hospital. And we never got to Sicily. Our orders were changed. After being in the hospital recuperating, they said our orders were to go to India, and we went around, as I said, through the Suez Canal.

The Suez Canal? The Red Sea?

Yes. Yes, different Air Force, this time. See, a different Air Corps, because they kept changing our-- I was in several Air Corps in a short time.

So you were a valuable man. I mean--

Well, I don't know about that. No, no. It was just coincidence.

So, at this time, are you a private or a corporal?

I might have been a corporal by then.

I know you come out as a sergeant.

I was going in, as a matter of fact, it's immaterial now, but I understand I was up for, in those days, they called it a battlefield commission for a second lieutenant when I was captured. It never went through. My papers never went through. And it never materialized. But I had that honor bestowed on me. So I ended up as a sergeant, which was fine. Ninety-six dollars a month.

So your final, the mission that you, the outfit that you served most of your time with, that was the?

225th Medical Dispensary Aviation, yes.

And that group and that meant that you were in Calcutta, was it Calcutta then, or?

Well, we were formed in India, in Bombay, and then we went to Calcutta, working as a unit, and then, excuse me, excuse me, Bombay is on the west coast. Calcutta is on the east coast.

Was that a train ride from Bombay?

Train. Troop train. Then we drove Burma Road from Ledo, which was in Burma, to Kunming into China. And that was our introduction into China. And we came, we flew back, I drove it twice. And the last time we stayed in Chengtu, now I hope I get this continuity right, Kunming is the end point of the Burma Road, but I was in Chengtu which was north a little bit in the center of the city, the center of the country.

Was that also reached by truck at night, Chengtu?

No, I think we flew in.

Flew in there.

I think we flew in.

Incidentally, the big weapons carriers and the ambulances, Neil, they had to be flown in, and they were taken, cut them apart in Bombay and Calcutta, weld them, cut them apart, put them in a plane, fly them into China, weld them back together again, because they were so heavy, they couldn't fly over the Himalayas.

And you were saying everything in that war zone in western central China that was all-- everything in there had to be driven in or flown in.

Well mostly flown.

Flown in, because the Japanese?

Yes. Mostly flown. The Burma road was really nothing, really, I mean for materials. And we lost a lot of men even driving over the precipices. The precipices were so high. The roads were narrow. I've seen them go down 10,000 feet, jeep and everything, right over the side, right down, right down, horrible, horrible. It's an experience of its own.

So, learning, did you learn to drive? Was that also--

I never learned to drive in my life! They put me in a jeep, and I said, "I don't know how to drive." "You'll learn." I did.

So you're driving stick and all that?

Oh, yes. Oh, yes. We had to have the oil changed and everything, of course, maintenance, and you've got to go up a ramp to get your jeep up there. I went off it, because I didn't

know how to drive, but that's a long time ago. I drove ambulances. I drove everything after that. When push comes to shove.

Yes.

How was the Army food? Pretty good?

Yes, well, yes, it was all right. It was all right. Of course, I'm a food person. And it was all right. We survived.

When we were in China, it was bad. It was reverse lend-lease in those days. I don't know whether you've heard of that term or not? Reverse lend-lease. Roosevelt would give so much money to pay for food, and to pay for billeting, and so forth, for us, for GIs, and if the Chinese, if the indigenous crop was, say, cabbage, everybody ate cabbage. If it were peanuts, everybody ate peanuts. It was just what was available locally. And, sometimes, it was just eggs. You had eggs that would come out of your eyes! But we ate. We lived.

So, most of the time, you were stationed in China?

Most of the time in China.

Did you have one particular base?

We stayed in the Chengtu area. Oh, yes. Oh, yes.

And so in Chengtu--?

We built our hospital right there. We had our slit trenches. That was where I was hurt during a bombing. I was in a slit trench, and I had a bad-- my head and my ears were concussioned. See, we had to evacuate our people in the hospital. When there was an air raid, we took them out on stretchers. And we had sick trenches, and we put them in slit trenches. We had one raid-- I had malaria very bad, and a high fever, and I was out of my mind.

And that was, also, you contracted that in China, yes?

But malaria was very prevalent.

Anyhow, they told me this. They put me in a slit trench. And I'm out of my mind. I didn't know what was going on. And the raid was over. It was all quiet. I woke up, and I see stars, and I don't know where I am. And I went, My God, they thought I was dead and they're burying me!

Oh, dear.

I had that horrible feeling. But those things happen. My buddy that I told you about, we were walking back from a raid. You know what a P-38 is?

Yes, mustang.

They were over there using strafing. And you could get, in fact, I know the sounds of the engines. As we were walking back one night, there was a raid, and a small road, and I said, "Dick, drop!" He went to one side, and I went to the other side of the road. And this "B-R-R-R" came down. This just strikes right between us. We both could have been killed.

That was a Japanese zero or something?

No. It was a P-38.

An American.

Yes. Yes.

Why would a mistake like that happen?

Oh, a lot happened.

That was you and Mr. Dick--

Silviera Yes, Dick Silviera, yes.

So what was a typical--was there such a thing as a typical day when you were in Chengtu?

No. It was anticipating the next run, planes coming in, going over, coming back, we were active. And we, it is awful to say, but there weren't enough serious cases for us. They were all--mostly, they were either dead or they were not very serious, except this one chap I said was so bad that I tripped over his--

And I was walking in the mud at night looking for bodies and I tripped over his ankle, foot, his foot, we finally found his body later. He wasn't dead, but he was burned very badly, very badly, and he was burned so badly we could not take care of him completely, because he needed skin grafting and intensive care, and he had to be flown back to India for further treatment.

He had to be flown back to India.

For further treatment. And I was to chaperone him back, because I had been taking care of him, more or less his guide. And we were in a B-29, going back. They have a blister.

They called it a blister, a bubble plexiglass, I guess. And he's sitting there, and I'm sitting there. We were going back, and, all of a sudden, we had to dive, because we were being attacked, apparently, I guess, by strafing. And as we dove out of the atmosphere, the pressure, the bubble pulled out, sucked out, and pulled him out as well. But I had to work instantly, and I grabbed him, and pulled him back in again. And I didn't realize, at the time, when I looked at him, I'd pulled all the skin off of him that he was growing on. And just a horrible, horrible story, horrible! But he survived and he lived, got married. We corresponded. He lived in Coffeyville, Kansas, and we ended up calling him "Lucky." So, but it was quite an experience, quite an experience! And if I just saved one person, you know, I did my job.

Yes sir.

I did my job.

So, Chengtu was primarily for the Air Force base. And those B-29s, they were carrying out bombing raids on Japanese positions.

They were going to Japan?

Yes. Yes. Incidentally, Chengtu, it is not a very, well, it is bigger now. It wasn't a very large city. But, one runway, Neil, one runway! And our beloved government, I hate to say this, made such a boo-boo, in my opinion. They had big, huge gasoline tanks on each end of the runway. Well, one time, they went up.

No runway. Where were the planes coming? How were they to get in to land? There were some problems, logistic problems. But I wasn't running it. It wasn't mine to do.

Did you ever have to assist in an operation?

Oh, yes. Oh, yes. I'll tell you one incident, if you're interested. This is in India now. We're in India, we're not in China. But it's relevant. I was taught, in my schooling, I could suture anything above the cuff or below the collar. I couldn't do hands, or neck, or face. Anything else I could do. My training, I was in CQ one night, CQ, charge quarters, and it's in India. A Ghurka, do you know what a Ghurka is? A Ghurka wears a big turban and a big knife.

They were great fighters.

Oh, yes. They were fighting somewhere. And one came in, he had an awful gash here, terrible gash, he could have bled to death very quickly. And, so, I went right to my commanding officer. They were playing cards. It's a true story, playing cards. I said, "Major, there's a Ghurka out here. He needs surgery, but it's above the collar. I can't do it." "Oh, you can do it. You can do it." I said, "You know I can't do it." "I'm telling you, I'm commander. You do it. I'm busy!" So, I did it. And it was all right. I was scared to death, but I did it. But can you imagine?

Callous.

True story.

I got a lot of them.

Yes.

So you were able to stay in touch with your family?

What's that?

Were you able to stay in touch with your mother back home and grandmother?

Oh, no. No.

No letters for you?

No. We had V-mail in those days. Like birthdays, and Mother's Day, and things like that. We would-- but I would write. We had very poor mail service, very poor.

So did you feel--

Isolated. We were really isolated.

So was it-- did you feel like you were under pressure or under stress?

No. Forgotten. Forgotten, and I mean it in a, not in a, well, I'll give you an example. I don't know what it was. I couldn't tell you the day it was. But I remember we got an order. We're medics. Now, we have, you know, Geneva, Red Cross, we were not armed. I never had a pistol in my life, never.

You ever trained in that?

Never. Never. Never. They gave each of one us a carbine. Do you know what a carbine is?

A rifle, isn't it?

Yes, a rifle. It's semi-automatic. They gave us forty rounds of ammunition, and forty can go, fire, "B-R-R-R," that fast it could go, and an extra pair of shoes, and said, "We're leaving you. You better start walking back to India. Be careful of the communists going over the Himalayas." God's truth! And that was it. Literally abandoned. I mean, I don't know what month it was or anything else. I couldn't tell you. But I never had a gun in my life.

Why were they doing that, because the Japanese were getting close, or--

Oh, yes, oh, they were right at our doorstep. They had kamikaze paratroopers. They would come down in a parachute. That's how I got captured.

Shortly after that?

Oh, yes, and they saw the gun and everything. You know, it was a wonder I wasn't killed, but they couldn't understand the Red Cross and a gun, and I don't blame them. But not a good situation.

No. So, you were captured then in 1945?

Yes. Just a few months before the end of the war.

So that was in Chengtu, was it?

It was in Chengtu, but they moved us. I don't know where they moved us.

How many of you were captured at that time, do you recall?

Oh, maybe twenty-eight of us, I'm guessing.

Was your commanding officer captured, also?

Oh, yes, yes, but only two of us survived. My friend and I were the only two left. The others died or committed suicide. It was awful. It was awful. It was very, very, very, very bad.

I didn't think he would live, but I knew I was going to live. I was stubborn. I'm Dutch and I'm very stubborn.

Yes, and very adaptable and very resourceful.

I knew I had to get home.

Yes.

Excuse me. My grandmother had died while I was, you know, overseas. My mother was very ill, my father was gone, and all alone. And I knew I had to get home.

Is it okay if we talk about this?

Oh, sure.

So they put the twenty-eight of you on a truck and then they ship you someplace?

Oh, we walked.

Walked.

We just walked, and walked, and walked, and walked, and walked.

Missed the truck. I've got to tell you a funny thing. I told you I learned how to drive. I had to drive well. They had all kinds of weapons carriers, and dump trucks, and whatever. And, one day, I had to take a bunch of GI's, our own men, I think this was in India, I think. I don't remember. I had to take them somewhere, point A to point B. I had to drive and there were about fourteen difficult gears to shift.

Yes.

And they were all on the back of the truck, and I start off, and I pressed the loader. It dumps them all, dumped them all on the floor, on the ground. It was funny then. But it is funny now to me. But I didn't know what I was doing.

Yes.

Nobody taught me.

So you-- I think you mentioned that the fact that you were a medic and the Japanese knew that, that might have helped to save your life?

Absolutely. They needed our training. Oh, yes. Otherwise, I would have been gone. Oh, yes.

Would you have been shot, or worked to death, or starved?

Yes. Be killed somehow.

And the torture we had was minimal. We were all tortured. They, at night, they put our feet up and bamboed the soles of our feet so we wouldn't walk, walk away. See, it was open area, just a little fence around. And you'd get up in the morning, Neil. And sometimes you'd look down. On the field, you'd see a couple of them hanging up. Anyhow--

And they put you to work on the Yangtze River,?

Yes.

So you were a prisoner of war then, for a few months?

Just about four and a half months. It would have been longer, but it was--repatriated. You see, it was August, you know, the second bomb.

August 6th? August 9th?

Something like that. Yes. '45. But if we had lived, as I said, we would have gone to Japan.

Right.

Because they were ready to take us, but the whole, almost the whole, country was Japanese. The poor Chinese people really have, through the centuries, have suffered. Oh, my. Did you ever read *The Rape of Nanking*, that book?

Not all of it, no. Yes, I--

It was something else.

Yes.

In Burma, I saw atrocities in Burma. The Burmese changed their name, too. It is no longer Burma.

Yes. Myanmar or something.

I don't know what it is now.

Yes. They call it Myanmar.

I've seen women hung up, their breasts cut off, men hung up, and their genitals, as the Japanese went through the villages.

And that was just to terrorize the population you think?

Sure.

I don't mean to make all this morbid.

No. Not at all. Not at all. The--maybe, on a lighter note, you did have some famous entertainers make it to?

Yes. Yes, not many. But Ann Sheridan, a movie star, at that time, she was very, very big. As a matter of fact, I didn't know she sang. I thought she was just a dramatic actress. And I'll never forget the song she sang to us, because it stayed in my memory. "I'll be seeing you." It was very popular during World War II, apparently. But, of course, we didn't have any radio. We didn't know what was going on. But I'll never forget that. And Jinx

Falkenberg was a professional tennis player. I don't remember what she did, Pat O'Brien. Paulette Goddard. A few people, but few and far between.

PX supplies were minimal, minimal. Cigarettes, beer, toothpaste, things like that, just minimal. And Chengtu, the city itself, when I had a pass, I had a bike, I bicycled. I'd go all over town. I enjoyed that.

Did you-- I don't know if you want to mention it, the time that you made some special preparations for Ann Sheridan's visit?

Oh, yes. We knew, a day or so before, Ann was coming. And, of course, everybody was all excited about that. And they built a little latrine for her, just for her. It had her name on the top of it. I can see it now. Well, she came. She did her thing. And she never used it, she never used the latrine. So when she left, they put another sign up that said, "Ann Sheridan didn't shit here." And that's in our memory.

So that's a humorous recollection.

Pardon the vernacular, but that's exactly what it said!

Yes. Gus, you said you don't, as far as the medals go, you would have been entitled to a Purple Heart now, right?

I don't know why--I'll tell you, Neil, back up a little bit.

Sure. Please.

I've had so much trouble with the military. That's one of the reasons I'm here. Long story short; apparently, there was a fire in--

St. Louis?

Somewhere.

Yes.

And many records were burned. And my records were, some of them were burned. They had no record of my malaria. They had no record of my surgery. I've had an awful time with the VA. It's not their fault. But to try to prove something--

Yes.

What was I getting at?

The medals, the Purple Heart.

Oh.

Yes.

And I was supposed to get the ribbons for whatever it was. And I don't know where I got that. I have no idea. I have no idea. And then eventually get the medals that go with them. They were to come. I never got them. And I don't know what they were, anyhow. But so what. So what. It doesn't bother me. I'm just lucky I got out.

So when you were a prisoner for four and a half months, did you know that the tide of the war had turned against the Japanese, and maybe there was a chance you would get out?

Well, we heard rumors, of course. There was no more Chicago. There was no more New York. Everything was bombed out. The president was killed. Of course, Roosevelt had died.

That's right.

And he had, legitimately, had died, but they laid everything on their own head, don't you see.

Yes.

Just to lay it on. And we couldn't believe anything. As a matter of fact, do you remember the term Tokyo Rose?

Yes. Yes.

When we landed in Bombay, whatever it was, before we ever got into any of this, as we got off the ship, we were walking down, this speaker, "Corporal So and So, this is Tokyo Rose, don't you wish you were home tonight having a milkshake with your girlfriend?" "Sergeant so and so, this is Tokyo Rose, don't you think your girl is out with somebody tonight?" Can you believe it?

No, I can't.

They knew us by name. Eerie. Eerie. And then there was one over in Europe, too. I forget her name. Sally Axis.

Sally Axis, but that's another story, don't you see. But this Tokyo Rose, she was American. She was from San Francisco, I think.

Yes.

Oh, well. There was so much going on.

So how about that day, so do you remember the day that you were released to the Chinese or American Forces?

I didn't believe it. I didn't believe it. We had heard there was some bombing, some big bombing. Well, you know, so what. You hear everything. And, Neil, really it's the expression "living day to day." You've heard that. It was almost hour to hour. And we didn't know what, that's why I'm so tense most of the time. It has been bored into me. I'm ready to defend myself, this is, I don't sleep. I have amnesia. Well, it's awful, but, anyhow, we didn't believe it. And, finally, a Japanese who spoke broken English, as we called them, said, "We friends. We friends." That's all he said. And I thought, I wonder if the war is over? It just hit me. It just hit me. I'm sorry, but that was it, an awful experience.

Was that American troops then, or was it American troops who, or British troops or--

Americans came in later. Yes, they must have. I don't know where in the world they came from. They had to have been flown in. They had to be, because it was only a couple of days.

Yes.

But we still didn't believe it. I remember seeing the first GI. God, we were so thin. I weighed a hundred and nineteen pounds when I came home, at almost six feet.

And you still have a memento from that awful experience when you were a prisoner of war, right? You brought home

Yes.

the stones.

That's what I've got left.

And we have a picture of that which we'll put at the end of the interview in the appendix.

It's not much, but it's something.

Oh, yes. So--

I just want to say one more thing.

Most certainly.

We were supposed to fly home finally, but we didn't. The troop ship from Calcutta to Fort Lewis, Washington, I don't know, another twenty-one days, I had shorts on. We

didn't have any clothes. We landed in Fort Lewis. And I'm telling you, the first meal we just ate, and ate, and ate, until we got sick. And you know who served us our meal, German prisoners of war.

Wow.

And this is in December. We had to get clothes to go home. I made it.

You had a very good friend, a Chinese officer, Mr. Young.

Oh, Jimmy Young, yes, yes. He was a captain in the Chinese Army and he spoke excellent English. He had to speak English. And we were friends, and he would take me, when I had a pass, he would take me to a Chinese wedding or a Chinese funeral. He taught me Chinese etiquette for eating. And just very good friends-- but he didn't make it.

And I think you mentioned that one time you were standing next to the famous American war correspondent?

Ernie Pyle. We were in a slit trench, it was during a raid. I didn't know who he was. It was during a raid.

In Chengtu?

No, this was in Burma.

Another raid, and, again, you know, we were packed in there, and I didn't know who he was. We got to talking, and I recognized who he was. I introduced myself, and I said, "I appreciate what you are doing, and I really admire what you are doing very much." And he thanked me, and off he went, off he went, busy, busy, busy, but that was it. That was nice.

And you made it-- you were able to see Shanghai.

Shanghai?

Yes.

Just very briefly, very briefly, but I went back, as I said, since then, and I really saw it. Oh, yes.

So--

I went to Hong Kong, Beijing, it wasn't Beijing then, it was, what was it years ago, Peking, Shanghai, Hong Kong, all over. I love it. I love it.

Why?

I love the people.

Why?

I really do I think I'm part Chinese.

I thought you were Dutch.

Somehow. No, they were were and are-- It's a different China today. It's too westernized, in my opinion. I was lucky. I saw it before it went. But they were very helpful, truthful, they believe in family, and just wonderful people. They helped me a lot.

I'll just tell you one thing. When we first got there, they, some of our GIs, had red hair, and they had never seen red hair before, and they wondered how they got their hair red. Now, we were in a farmland, Chengtu was in a farmland. And the horizon, that's the end of the world. There's nothing beyond that horizon in their mind. On top of that, a fellow took out his false teeth, and they almost fainted! They had never seen that before!

Yes.

True but, of course, that's not today.

No, no.

So the-- where were you demobilized at or released from the Service?

Where did I get out of -- I think it was Fort Meade again. I'm pretty sure.

Back in Maryland?

In Maryland.

Yes.

I was in the hospital for a number of months after I got home. I got back in '45. I wasn't released until '46 sometime. Neil, I don't remember the date.

Yes. Late February, I think, in '46, you said.

Could be. But I know it was cold weather.

Yes. So did you have any trouble readjusting to civilian life? I would imagine you did?

No.

No. You were just young and resilient.

See, my job was, my job, in those days, if you returned to your-- your job was guaranteed when you returned.

And you got it.

And I had worked for Kraft, as I said, and I got my job back until I went to school. And I went on, and on, and on. I got my doctorate degree, my PhD, in 1953.

Was that on the GI Bill?

Yes.

What was your field of study, medicine?

Nutrition. I had my own business. I've had my own business for sixty years. This is one of my calling cards. I don't have the business anymore. Beckart Laboratories right here in Morton Grove. My middle name is Becker, as you know, and I had a partner by the name of Art, Arthur, so we put the two together and made it Beckart. And I've had clients from India, China, Berlin, Australia, Greece, France, all over the world, really. So, I've been very fortunate.

You received your PhD from which school, from--?

Well, it was back east, back on Long Island years ago. It's a university now, I guess. I really don't know.

So you used the GI bill then?

Oh, yes. I couldn't have done without it.

Yes.

I took night courses. I took, remember, in those days, they had, I don't know if you remember or not, but they had correspondence courses.

Oh, yes. Oh, yes.

You would send for things.

Yes.

I was determined. My education was disrupted because of the war. And I was going to somehow get it back. And the GI bill was beautiful.

So I brought a house. I used a GI loan to get a house when I got married.

Did you-- you had-- you met your wife after the war?

Oh, yes. Oh, yes. Oh, yes.

She didn't see you in a uniform?

No. No. No. No. I got married in '49. No.

And you did stay in contact with your wartime buddies after the Service?

Oh, yes. For a number of years with Dick, especially. And I lost contact with him. As I said, I was best man at his wedding. He came to my house in Baltimore for his honeymoon. And I took him around, he and his wife. His wife was in the WAVES in the military, she was in the WAVES. And I went to his home, met his parents in New Bedford, and we corresponded for a number of years, and I would visit him when I could, in that area. We would get together.

I guess maybe, Neil, I'm guessing, this is '08, maybe 15 years ago, he must have died. And a friend of mine in Morton Grove was from New Bedford. And he was going home on vacation one year, and I asked him to look my friend up, which was a coincidence, and I gave him the address, everything, his mother, his telephone, and everything. And he came back, and he said, "There was no family there. There is nobody there by that name. I couldn't find anybody."

You had mentioned he was of a particular nationality?

Portuguese.

Portuguese, in New Bedford, Massachusetts.

Oh, yes. His father was a fisherman, yes, but we were very, very close, very close.

So, not to go over a difficult subject, you and Dick were the only two that survived the imprisonment?

Yes. Yes.

He also was a medic, was he?

Yes. Well, yes, but he--

They thought he was.

What did I say, MOS – Military Occupational Specialty, you know what you were classified as.

He was a cook. No, he wasn't trained as a medic per se. He helped me save my life, and I helped him save his. We were just that close.

Why did you need the operation on your hand? --

Oh, I only, see, from here, all the way around, all away around to here, I wanted to raise-- my thumb was way back here when I was in a slit trench and somehow-- it got back there. I don't know how it was. I've got a stainless steel knuckle in here.

Yes.

Stainless steel, and they said, you'll never touch your little finger. Don't tell me never to do something! I'll do it.

You're determined.

And I did it.

Yes, so you--

And it's always been red all those years.

You were sunk in the Atlantic Ocean.

Yes, that was awful.

And you came down with malaria.

Yes, malaria, still bothers me to this day. I never got a pension for any of these things.

You contracted malaria in India. And then you go to China, and then you were, toward the end of the war, then you were captured.

See, I was mostly in, a little bit in India, enough to get sick, so to speak, a little bit in Burma, driving the road, but most of the time in China, so it was the CBI, China-Burma-India Theater.

So we have-- there are a couple of questions that we always ask the veterans at the end of the interview.

Sure.

How do you think your military service and experiences affected your life?

Well, good question. I've never been a quitter in my life, ever. I've always been my own boss. I've needed no motivation all my life. That's the way I'm born. But I knew what I was doing in the Service although I didn't know what I was doing in the Service. And I did it to the best of my ability. And I think it made me a better person somehow.

And I don't mean to wave the flag. I'm not saying that. But I deplore some of the things that are going on today with our country. And, again, it's none of my business. And I'm not a politician. But I don't like to see what's going on. And I'm glad I'm phasing out. At my age, I won't see a lot of this. I'll be eighty -six in December if I live that long I feel like a hundred and six!

And the next question follows on that one: did your military experience influence your thinking about war or about the military in general?

No. Well, yes. I'll take that back. It did, because I learned a lot about the so-called expression "political." I saw where people were bumped off of planes for high-ranking officers and their dogs, where the poor guy that should have been on the plane never got on the plane to go home, things like that. I've seen and I know that goes on, of course. But, well, like I told you, my commanding officer, for an example, that wasn't right. I could refuse. They could court-martial me, because he ordered me to do it. It was an order. And, believe me, I was scared to death that I would bumble it, number one. You know, you're a young kid. You're doing the best you can. But the military has made me cognizant, yes, of "political-izing", if there is such a word.

Yes. Is there anything, at this point, that you would like to add to the interview that perhaps we haven't covered?

I'm very appreciative of your time and your effort to do something like this. I never expected it, number one, never. And I hope-- I don't know if anybody would be ever interested in reading it, or looking at it, or anything else. If they are, I hope they can get something from it. I don't know what, but it's so personal with me, so personal. And between you and I and the telephone pole, who cares? I care, that's all I can say.

I'm very active in the military. I've put in many, many hours of volunteering up at Great Lakes. And, as I said, I'm a people person.

And there's another whole subject, and I don't know whether this is the time or the place for it, but I've developed no use for the military. They almost killed me. I almost died.

After the war or during the war?

About five months ago.

Oh.

I almost died. I know they didn't mean to do it, but another story, Neil, another story.

Yes. But, anyway, if you don't mind my saying it, you look and sound wonderful.

Well, thank you.

That's a very vigorous interview that you've given. And people are going to read it, and I think it is one of, this is, as far as trying to afford people, you know, a generation or two later what it was like, I mean, I think your powers of recall and description--

Well, they haven't taken my memory away from me.

No. it's remarkable, and anyone who reads your transcript is going to know a little bit more about the Greatest Generation and World War II. So thank you for calling me.

To me, that is the great war, naturally. And I appreciate World War I, I appreciate Korea, I appreciate Vietnam. I can not see what we're doing now.

Yes.

I just can't see that. That's a political thing, of course.

Yes.

And I don't want to bother you. I don't want to bore you with that. That's not my right to do that.

Okay.

Thanks, Gus. Thank you.

Reader's Note

The following 15 pages of photographs, records, clippings, and maps illustrate and complement Mr. Habighurst's memoir of service.

In addition, the web site http://cbi-theater.home.comcast.net/~cbi-theater/menu/cbi_home.html is devoted to the "China-Burma-India Theater, often referred as "the Forgotten Theater."

Mr. Habighurst is pictured below with best friend Dick Silviera. They were the only two of their unit's 28 men who survived their Japanese captivity after being captured near Chengtu.



Mr. Habighurst in uniform is pictured outside his Baltimore home.

Scanned loose page from Mr. Habighurst's album of World War II experiences.
These photos were taken on his way across North Africa through the Suez Canal and the Red Sea on the way to India.



THESE THREE WERE TAKEN IN ORAN, N. AFR.
FEB. 1943



TAKEN WHILE PASSING THRU "SUEZ CANAL"
MAR. 1943

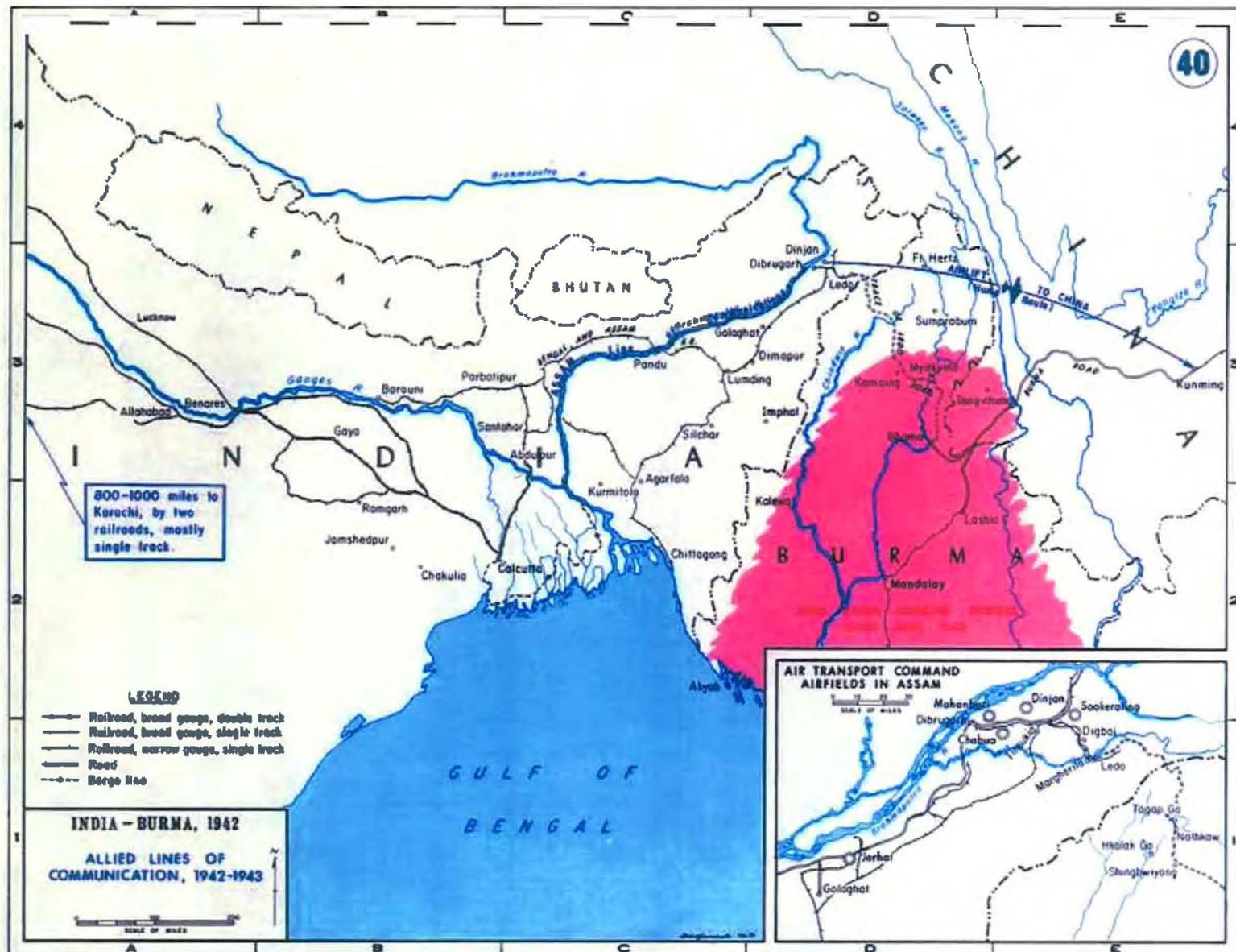


GOING THRU THE
RED SEA
MAR. 1943



TAKEN OFF OF
PORT SAID, EGYPT
MAR. 1943

China-Burma-India
Theater Map,
showing Ledo/Burma Rd.



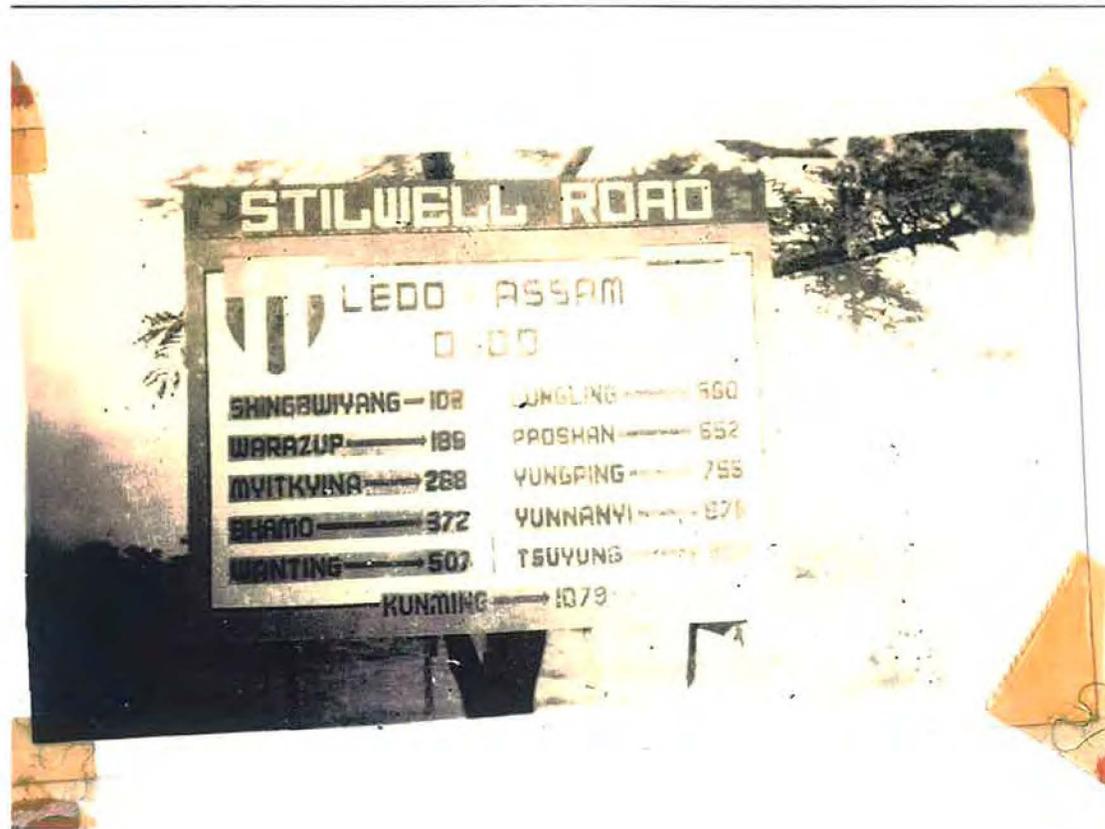
Above map developed by the [The Department of History, United States Military Academy](#) shows the Burma Road or Stilwell Rd. Mr. Habighurst, who drove the road twice, states it was 1079 miles long and had to be driven at night.

The **Ledo Road**, (from Ledo, [Assam, India](#) to [Kunming, China](#)) was built during [World War II](#) so that the [Western Allies](#) could supply the [Chinese](#) as an alternative to the [Burma Road](#) which had been cut by the [Japanese](#) in [1942](#).

After the initial section to Shingbuiyang, more sections followed: Warazup, [Myitkyina](#) and [Bhamo](#), 372 miles (600 km) from Ledo. At that point the road joined a spur of the old Burma road and, although improvements to further sections followed the road, was passable. The spur passed through Namkham 439 miles (558 km) from Ledo and finally at the [Mong-Yu](#) road junction, 465 miles (748 km) from Ledo, the Ledo Road met the Burma Road.

The Stillwell Road (named for General Joseph Stilwell and also known as the Ledo Road) Sign shown below is a scanned copy of a photograph provided by Mr. Habighurst who drove the road twice at night. It was built as an alternate route for the section of the Burma Road, controlled by the Japanese after their invasion of Burma. Its length was 1079 miles. Mr. Habighurst then flew by plane from Kunming to Chengtu where an air base served American bombers striking Japanese targets.

On the back of the photo, Mr. Habighurst noted that “each of the 10 cities named was stop for us to rest.”



Various "ENLISTED MAN'S PASS" (es) issued to Mr. Habighurst in North Africa, India and China.

225th Med. Disp. Avn.
 ENLISTED MAN'S TEMPORARY PASS
 Habighurst, August, B., Sgt. (Name) (Grade) (Army serial No.)
 225th Med. Disp. Avn. B-2, APO # 483 (Organization) (Station)
 is authorized to be absent—
 From 1200 29 Jan' 45 To 2359 29 Jan' 45
 To visit Khargpur
 Signed Charles C McVaugh Major MC, Commanding officer.
 *W.D., A.G.O. Form No. 7 26 June 1943 (OVER)
 *This form supersedes W. D., A. G. O. Form No. 7, 8 September 1942, which may be used until existing stocks are exhausted.

225th Med. Disp. Avn.
 ENLISTED MENS PASS
 Hostel 3, APO 627

NAME August B. Habighurst Rank Sgt ASN [redacted]
 TO VISIT Kurnning
 FROM 1200 7 Sept
 TO 2300 7 Sept

Charles C McVaugh
 CHARLES C McVAUGH
 Major MC,
 Commanding.

ENLISTED MENS PA SS

NAME [redacted] RANK Sgt ASN [redacted]
 TO VISIT Chentque
 FROM 0001, 16 September
 TO 2359, 18 September

Charles C McVaugh
 CHARLES C McVAUGH
 Major MC,
 Commanding.

MEDITERRANEAN BASE SECTION
 A.P.O. 600

LIBERTY PASS

Name [redacted] ASN [redacted]
 Grade Rfc Org 225 Med Disp
 Location Slapig [redacted] Tel. CP 2
 Effective date 2-5-44 Hour 1100
 Expiration date 2-5-44 Hour 2300

I certify that this soldier was inspected as to proper uniform upon the issue of this pass.

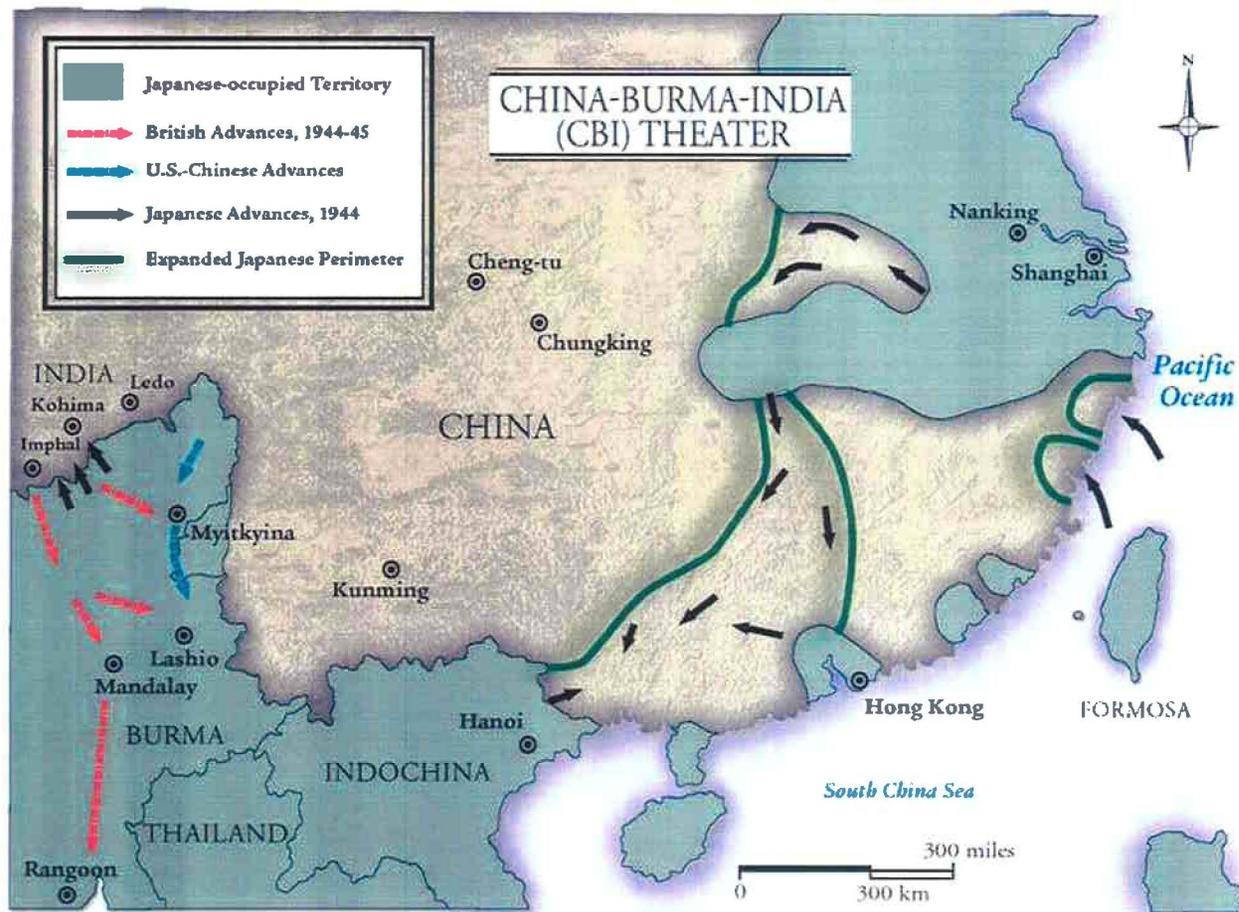
Charles C McVaugh
 Major MC
 Unit Commander

CANCELLATION PASS

Name _____ ASN _____
 Grade _____ Org. _____
 Location _____ Tel. _____
 Date of issue _____

The soldier bearing this stub has been deprived of this pass and ordered to report directly to his unit. If loitering enroute he will be taken into custody and turned over to the Military Police.

Arresting Officer



Courtesy of [http:// static.howstuffworks.com/gif/d-day-invasion-7.jpg](http://static.howstuffworks.com/gif/d-day-invasion-7.jpg)

Chinese paper currency.



Italian currency and other notes
Collected by Mr. Habighurst.



Egyptian Ten Piastres Note



INDIA

Japanese Invasion Money

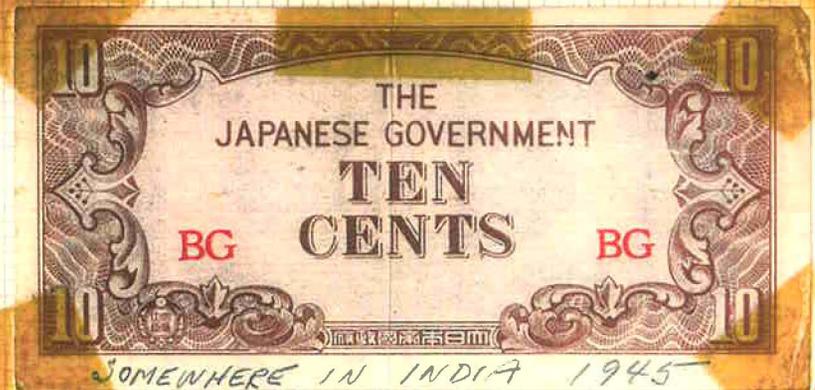
PHILIPPINE ISLANDS

Japanese Invasion Money



INDIA

British One Rupee Money



Scan of Mr. Habighurst's original rice-paper copy of the 10/27/1944 issue of the Chengtu News Bulletin. The reverse side, page 2 follows.

22 JAPANESE FIRST-LINE WARSHIPS SUNK OR DAMAGED OFF PHILIPPINES

American Aircraft Pursue Crippled Enemy Fleet

Twenty-two first-line Japanese warships, besides several destroyers, have been sunk or damaged in the great sea-air battle over the Philippines. These figures are given in communications issued from Pearl Harbour and General MacArthur's Headquarters.

BATTLES off Formosa and in the Sibuyan Sea cost the Japanese one large aircraft carrier, one light carrier, four cruisers and several destroyers—definitely sunk; two battleships, a large carrier, six cruisers probably sunk; and two battleships, one cruiser and several destroyers damaged.

The crippled Japanese formations are reported to be making off as fast as they can and are being constantly harried by Allied aircraft.

American losses in the engagements were one escort carrier and several light vessels. In addition, a number of escort carriers and destroyers were damaged.

It is officially announced that the U.S. force which met and defeated the Japanese Navy included 18 battleships and 47 cruisers, with a powerful destroyer escort. Admiral Nimitz has thanked a message to all officers and men expressing his gratitude for the courageous and aggressive manner in which they met the enemy.

Link-Up On Leyte

Meanwhile, American land operations in the Philippines continue for Leyte. General MacArthur reports that 130 American forces on the east coast of the island have linked up, forming an unbroken front of more than 40 miles. American planes have seized six airfields and liberated 31 towns. The San Jabalo Straits, which lie between Leyte and Samar islands, are now controlled by the Americans.

Battle In Tilburg's Suburbs

British Troops Cut Road From Hertogenbosch

FIELD-MARSHAL MONTGOMERY'S armies in the Low Countries continue to edge forward, with the Germans falling back towards the Dutch coast. From Hertogenbosch to Tilburg the British are pushing westwards, and have occupied an important rail and road junction just south of the former. Inside Hertogenbosch the Germans have been crushed into the western outskirts.

To the southwest General Dempsey's troops have crossed a canal just outside Tilburg where the Germans had been expected to make a stand, and are fighting in Tilburg's suburbs.

From Tilburg to the Scheldt Estuary, United Kingdom and Canadian troops continue their forward push and were last reported 4,000 yards from Bergen op Zoom. They are also advancing on Breda and Rosendaal. Here, as in other sectors of the front in Holland, the battle has resolved itself into a struggle for communications.

Meanwhile, General Crear's advance in the Scheldt pocket continues. He has succeeded in blocking the enemy's line of communication to South Beveland Island.

A correspondent at Second Army Headquarters reports that the Germans in western and southern Holland are running short of tank and supplies, due to the pounding they are receiving from the R.A.F. He adds that many German divisions have been reduced to less than half their normal strength.

On the American Third Army front the Germans have been driven out of a forest area 20 miles east of Nancy, after American artillery had silenced enemy batteries. There is nothing to report from the Aachen area.

R.A.F. Bomb Japanese Ammunition Dumps

The latest South-East Asia Command communiqué reports raids by British aircraft on Japanese ammunition dumps in the Arakan and also on communications in central Burma. Two aircraft did not return to base. On land there have been no major changes in the past 24 hours, either in the Arakan or the Chin Hills sector. In northern Burma British patrols have been active near Mohnyin, and Chinese patrols continue their operations south of Kozu.

Russians Capture Arctic Airfields

Making British Supply Route Safer

Red Army troops have broken across the Norwegian frontier in the Arctic sector, and occupied a number of airfields from which German bombers had been carrying out raids on the British supply route to Murmansk. At Kilerua, liberated by the Russians on Wednesday, the Red Army made one of its richest hauls of enemy supplies in this war.

The Norwegian garrison holding out in the Arctic island of Spitzbergen has received winter supplies from Britain.

In a broadcast last night from London, King Haakon said that Norwegian forces would soon be fighting beside the Russians in the battle for the liberation of Norway.

Big Anglo-U.S. Air Fleets Bomb Germany

Only Two Aircraft Lost

BRITISH and American bombers kept up the daylight offensive against Germany yesterday.

Leadsters of the R.A.F., accompanied by fighters, attacked the I.G. Farben chemical works, north of Cologne. This factory employs more than 20,000 workers. The British Air Ministry states that the attack was concentrated into a few minutes and was completed without loss.

Nearly 15,000 men of the U.S. Eighth Air Force were over Germany when a huge force of 1,850 bombers and fighters—1,200 of them were bombers—attacked targets at Munster, Hanover and other cities. Thick layers of cloud hung over the targets, which included marshalling yards, at Munster serving six railways, and the bombing had to be done by instrument. No German fighters attempted interception, but at some stages anti-aircraft fire was tense.

Of this huge American raiding force, only one bomber and one fighter failed to return.

Destroying Power Of The Axis

Consistent Strategy During Five Years Of War

(By Brigadier H.S. SEWELL)

Through five years of war, Britain has followed one strategy—that of destroying the power of the Axis. Every campaign has been aimed at achieving that purpose.

WHEN the Germans attacked in 1940, France and England, like all other countries at that time, except Germany, Italy and Japan, were not ready for total war. France and Britain were not given time to develop their potential strength. France fell in June 1940, and though Britain saved her men at Dunkirk all the Army's equipment was lost.

The immediate need was to build up an Army for home defence, but Britain did not neglect to plan for the future. After the loss of the Allied foothold on the Continent of Europe, the accomplishment of Britain's strategic aim—the destruction of Germany's power—depended on two things: (1) The defence of the British Isles, and (2) the retention of the strategic position in the Middle East, without which it was impossible to contain or attack Germany and Italy from the south.

Keeping Vital Link Open

The surrender of the French fleet and French armies in North Africa and Syria had left the Mediterranean unguarded, and there seemed to be nothing to prevent the Italians gaining complete control. Britain had only a small naval force in the Mediterranean, and Italian air power was overwhelming. British troops in Egypt and Palestine were outnumbered ten to one by the Italians in Libya.

Plans were made to meet this situation and were put into force before the French armistice was signed. It was decided at once that, apart from defensive needs at home, means must be found to secure the vital link in the British Commonwealth's sea communications through the Suez Canal and the land bridge between Asia and Africa. Retention of this point was essential for future offensive plans against the Axis. Men and material were sent from Britain, India, and the Antipodes, and the Mediterranean fleet was reinforced by two or three battleships. By these means, a small but efficient force was built up, though it lacked adequate air power.

Strategic Plan

June 1940 to June 1941 was a year of successes and reverses, but Britain was able to follow her strategic plan and, to some extent, advance it. Britain was fighting Germany and Italy alone, except for the gallant stand by Greece and the assistance of Yugoslavia for a short time.

During this period the following were among Britain's most notable accomplishments:—The Italian fleet was so damaged at sea and in its home ports that it never again ventured far out of Italian waters. Marshal Graziani's army, which had invaded Egypt, was destroyed by General Wavell in a two-month desert campaign. The conquest of Eritrea and the Italian Empire in North Africa was virtually completed, and the Red Sea opened for traffic. Iraq, where an Axis-inspired rebellion threatened the Middle East position, was occupied, and Vichy-controlled Syria was taken over by British and Fighting French forces.

Axis Shut In

All these operations helped to secure the Middle East position and were part of Britain's strategic plan. The Axis Powers were shut in, and this

move was to prove of great assistance to Russia as it afterwards enabled a supply route for the Soviet Army to be opened from the south through Persia, without interference from Germany. Later, after Pearl Harbour, it barred direct communication and military contact between Germany and Japan.

The small expeditionary force which Britain sent to help the Greeks was insufficient to stand against the German invasion. It is probable that no more men and transports were available at that time, and the Allies in Greece and Crete had to fight without air cover. The British fleet lost heavily from German air attacks during these operations, but the prolonged campaign in Greece and Crete may have saved Russia from German attack through Turkey and the Middle East when their western front was invaded in June, 1941.

Without strong German help it might have been impossible for the Italians to complete the campaign in Libya far much longer after the success of 1941. Rommel and his Afrika Korps, backed by the German Air Force, was a danger to the British in the Eastern Mediterranean, during a series of campaigns which lasted for twenty months up till the battle of Alamein. This victory and the British-American landings in French North Africa opened the way for the campaign in

(Continued in next column)

Advance On Forli

'Eighth' Drive German From David's Banks

Eighth Army troops in Italy are keeping up their advance all along the front, from the Adriatic to the mountains. Yesterday they encountered sporadic attacks from German rear-guard units near the village of Savio. Otherwise, the Germans have withdrawn entirely from the banks of the Savio river.

British forward troops are now five miles from Forli, on the highway from Rimini to Bologna.

Fifth Army troops—from the United States, the United Kingdom, South Africa and India—are officially stated to be making slow but steady progress against unrelenting pressure in their advance on Bologna.

Freeing Greece

Guerrillas Liberate Town Of Larissa

A report from Allied Mediterranean Headquarters is that Greek guerrillas have liberated the communications centre of Larissa, 120 miles north of Athens. This means that two-thirds of Greece is now in Allied hands.

British troops, meanwhile, continue their advance towards Larissa along the main road leading from Athens to Salonika.

It is officially announced that Mr. Anthony Eden, British Foreign Secretary, who was with Mr. Churchill at the Moscow talks, has arrived in Athens. He has conferred with the Greek Premier.

Obituary

Princess Beatrice And Archbishop Of Canterbury

We regret to announce the death in London of Her Royal Highness Princess Beatrice and of the Archbishop of Canterbury.

Princess Beatrice was the last surviving child of Queen Victoria, and was 87 years old. She was the aunt of Admiral Mountbatten, Supreme Allied Commander in South-East Asia.

Dr. William Temple, Archbishop of Canterbury, was 83. He died at midday yesterday of a heart attack. The son of a Peer, Dr. Temple was enthroned as Archbishop of Canterbury in April 1942. He was one of the most progressive and vigorous leaders of the Church.

Tunisia, Sicily, Italy. Now the main attack from the west is being successfully pressed by the American and British armies in France, and the Low Countries, and the objective of British strategy—the destruction of Germany's power—is in sight.

Tiddim Gives Control Of Vital Mountain Road

The British recapture of Tiddim has brought once more under Allied control the long and mostly winding mountain road which at one point or another has been the scene of constant action since the 17th Indian Division in March of this year made a fighting withdrawal to defeat the Japanese attempt to encircle and annihilate them.

After the defeat of the Japanese at Kohima, their failure to take Imphal and the reopening of the Manipur Road, there remained the task of driving the enemy out of India. Even when the 15th and 31st Japanese Divisions, further north, had been virtually destroyed, there was still plenty of fight in their 33rd Division, one of the best in the Japanese Army.

Yet, in spite of their ability to put up a series of rearguard actions, they have been pressed south gradually but remorselessly, by still better troops—the men of the Fifth Indian Division who have overcome not only their opponents but also terrible natural difficulties.

By October 9, forward troops of the Fifth Indian Division stood at milestone 158, having advanced 130 miles in 71 days. They were then just four miles from Tiddim. One tiny village after another had fallen to us, often after bitter fighting in which the ground forces received magnificent support from the air. But the Japanese continued—and still continue—to fight tenaciously.

River Crossed

It was anticipated that they would put up particularly strong opposition at milestone 120, the point at which the road reached the Manipur River. At the time, the river, which here is about 80 yards wide, was flowing at a speed of 10 feet per second. The bridge had been demolished by the 17th Division during their withdrawal. But a tactically sound outflanking move forced the enemy to retreat on Tongzang, and skillful work by the sappers enabled our forces to cross the river.

Administrative Headquarters

The pre-war importance of the village lay in the fact that it was one of the three centres of administration for the Chin Hills territory, and most of its 150 inhabitants were officials and their families. From the military point of view, Tiddim increased in importance with the reconstruction of the road from Imphal.

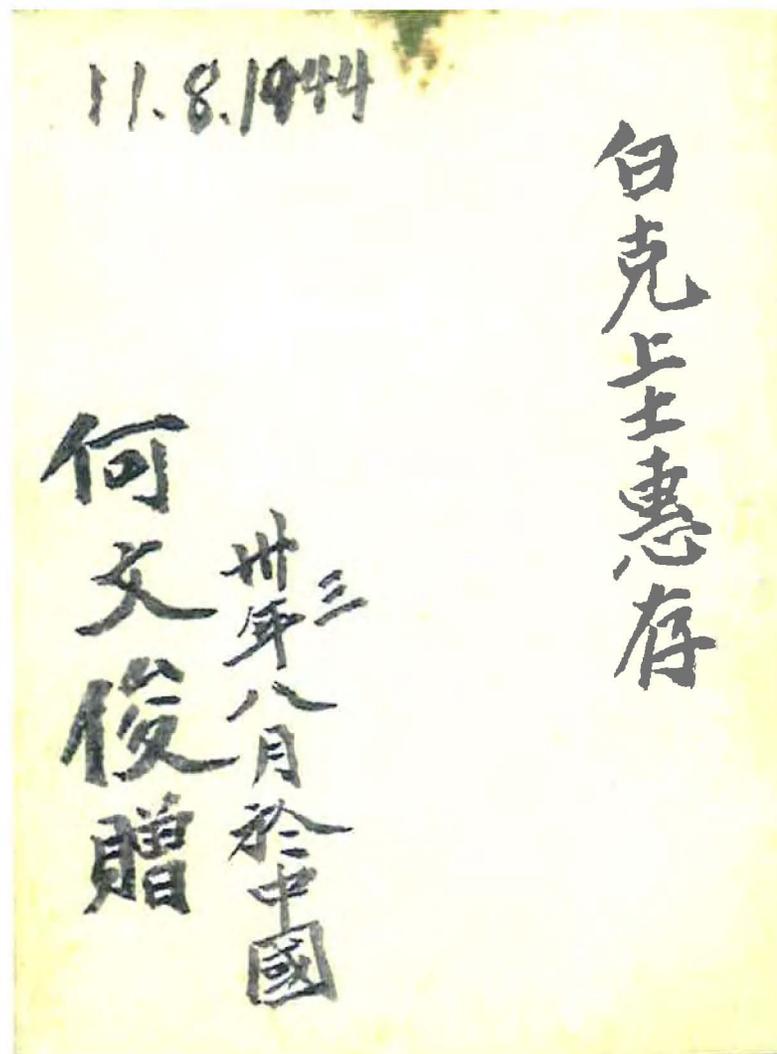
A typical frontier outpost, Tiddim was built among pine trees on a 5,000-foot high ridge which stretches eastwards to the 9,000-foot Kennedy Peak. Tunisia and Sicily and the invasion of Italy had made Britain's plan for the attack against Germany from the south lay back at

Mr. Habighurst's very good friend, Jimmy Young, a captain in the Chinese Army, is pictured below on the left. He would die later during the war fighting the invading Japanese Army.

The Chinese writing which appears on the back of the photo can be seen below.

Betty Zhan and Joel Hahn of the Technical Services Staff at the Niles Library translate the inscription as

“He Wen-jun humbly gives this present, during August of Year 33 [1944], in China, to Sergeant Bai Ke; please keep it.”





Photograph taken in Bethany Nursing Home at time of interview on April 30, 2008. Mr. Habighurst's hands, war album and duck are visible.

Mr. Habighurst's "souvenir duck," made of the actual stones from the Yangtze River. He brought them back from his time as a POW working under Japanese orders on clearing the river after his capture in Chengtu. Mr. Habighurst used Elmer's glue to fashion the duck.



Scan of page from Mr. Habighurst's war album. The U. S. Army, due to a fire, has no records for his decorations. Note the actual silver threaded China Theater patch—"the big one."
The Flying Tiger Unit, whose patch appears below, is now extinct.



Honorable Discharge Certificate



Honorable Discharge

This is to certify that

AUGUST B. HABIGHURST, _____, SERGEANT,

225TH MEDICAL DISPENSARY AVIATION,

Army of the United States

is hereby Honorably Discharged from the military service of the United States of America.

This certificate is awarded as a testimonial of Honest and Faithful Service to this country.

Given at

SEPARATION CENTER, FORT GEORGE G. MEADE, MARYLAND.

Date

FEBRUARY 1946.



CHESTER E HANOVER
MAJ INF

RECORDED AUG 27 1946

Enlisted Record and Report of Separation

ENLISTED RECORD AND REPORT OF SEPARATION HONORABLE DISCHARGE

4633-24

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1. LAST NAME - FIRST NAME - MIDDLE INITIAL HARIGHURST AUGUST B		2. ARMY SERIAL NO.	3. GRADE SGT	4. AREA OR CENTER MD	5. COMPONENT AUS
6. ORGANIZATION 225TH MD DISPENSARY AVN		7. DATE OF SEPARATION FEB 46	8. PLACE OF SEPARATION CENTER FT GEO G MEADE MD		
9. PERMANENT ADDRESS FOR MAILING PURPOSES MOSHER ST BALTIMORE 16 MD		10. DATE OF BIRTH 24 DEC 22	11. PLACE OF BIRTH BALTIMORE MD		
12. ADDRESS FROM WHICH EMPLOYMENT WILL BE RECEIVED SEE 9		13. COLOR EYES BROWN	14. COLOR HAIR BROWN	15. HEIGHT 6'0"	16. WEIGHT 165 lbs
17. U.S. CITIZENSHIP <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NATURALIZED <input type="checkbox"/> BORN IN U.S.	18. MARITAL STATUS <input type="checkbox"/> SINGLE <input type="checkbox"/> MARRIED <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (Specify)	19. U.S. CITIZEN <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	20. CIVILIAN OCCUPATION AND GRADE CHEMIST ASSISTANT 11 0-50.22		

21. DATE OF INDUCTION APR 43		22. DATE OF ENLISTMENT APR 43	23. DATE OF ENTRY INTO ACTIVE SERVICE APR 43			24. PLACE OF ENTRY INTO SERVICE BALTIMORE MD
25. SELECTIVE SERVICE DATA <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	26. EDUCATION <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	27. SERIAL U.S. GRADE NO. 22	28. COUNTY AND STATE BALTIMORE CO MD		29. HOME ADDRESS AT TIME OF ENTRY INTO SERVICE SEE 9	
30. MILITARY OCCUPATIONAL SPECIALTY AND GRADE MEDICAL TECHNICIAN 409			31. MILITARY EMPLOYMENT AND DUTY (i.e., industry, aviation and membership badges, etc.) NONE			
32. BATTLES AND CAMPAIGNS NONE						
33. DECORATIONS AND CITATIONS ASIATIC PACIFIC THEATER RIBBON GOOD CONDUCT MEDAL EUROPEAN AFRICAN MIDDLE EASTERN THEATER RIBBON WORLD WAR II VICTORY RIBBON						
34. WOUNDS RECEIVED IN ACTION NONE						
35. LATEST IMMUNIZATION DATES			36. SERVICE OUTSIDE CONTINENTAL U.S. AND RETURN			
35a. SMALLPOX SEP 45	35b. TYPHOID SEP 45	35c. TETANUS DEC 43	35d. OTHER (Specify) FLU OCT 45		36a. DATE OF DEPARTURE 12 JAN 44	
37. TOTAL LENGTH OF SERVICE			38. HIGHEST GRADE HELD SGT		36b. DESTINATION ALGERIA	
CONTINENTAL SERVICE		FOREIGN SERVICE		36c. DATE OF AERIAL 1 FEB 44		
YEARS MONTHS DAYS	YEARS MONTHS DAYS			20 MAR 44		
0 10 29	1 11 0			11 DEC 45		
39. PRIOR SERVICE NONE						
40. REASON AND AUTHORITY FOR SEPARATION CONVENIENCE OF THE GOVERNMENT PER SEPARATION (CATEGORY 1) (14)						
41. SERVICE COMMANDS ATTENDED EMDT AMC WASH DC						

42. LEAVEY FOR DUTY PURPOSES		43. MUSTERING OUT PAY		44. DOLLAR DEPOSIT	45. TRAVEL PAY	46. TOTAL AMOUNT, MAKE CHECKS OR MONEY ORDER PAYABLE TO THE TREASURER OF THE U. S. AND FORWARD TO COLLECTIONS DIVISION, VETERANS ADMINISTRATION, WASHINGTON 25, D.C.	
YEARS MONTHS DAYS	TOTAL PAYMENT	NONE	\$100.00	1.00	\$334.82 CAPTAIN FD		

47. INSURANCE NOTICE IF PREMIUM IS NOT PAID WHEN DUE OR WITHIN THIRTY-ONE DAYS THEREAFTER, INSURANCE WILL LAPSE. MAKE CHECKS OR MONEY ORDER PAYABLE TO THE TREASURER OF THE U. S. AND FORWARD TO COLLECTIONS DIVISION, VETERANS ADMINISTRATION, WASHINGTON 25, D.C.							
48. TYPE OF INSURANCE		49. HOW PAID		50. Effective Date of Assignment	51. Date of Last Premium Due	52. PREMIUM BURDEN	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> U.S. Govt.	<input type="checkbox"/> Other	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Allotment	<input type="checkbox"/> Direct to V.A.	31 JAN 46	28 FEB 46	6.40	53. INTENTION OF VETERAN TO <input type="checkbox"/> Continue <input type="checkbox"/> Continue Only <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Discontinue

54. SIGNATURE OF PERSON BEING SEPARATED 55. REMARKS (This space for completion of above items or entry of other items specified in W. D. Directives) LABEL BUTTON ISSUED NO DAYS LOST UNDER AW 107 (35) YWLFVR DEC 43 TYP SEP 45 CHOL SEP 45 ASR SCORE 49	56. SIGNATURE, OFFICE (Type name, grade and organization - signature) G A EICHENBERGER 2ND LT. WAC
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