

On 7 February 1944, the Officers and enlisted personnel ran an infiltration course at Boca Raton Field. The total length of which was approximately five-thousand feet. The time required to cover the same was set at a minimum of forty-five minutes. The obstacles encountered were underbrush, scrub trees, mesh barbed wire entanglements and an abundance of loose Florida sand. The barbed wire obstructions were located at the beginning and the end of the course. Concealed snipers in camouflaged jungle suits took "pot shots" at the supposed enemy from their tree and ground hiding places. The course was pock-marked with "fox holes" and roped off areas, containing charges, were exploded. Men in machine gun nests fired blanks at the dodging runners. All were made to cross a moat over a taut rope by the Sloth method, ie by hand and foot progress with the body suspended. When the Squadron finished it was dirty from grime and sweat. That evening the number treated in the Dispensary was testimony to the vigorous workout it had had.

On 11 February 1944, the Officers and enlisted men played an Official Game of touch football to a scoreless tie, exemplifying the fine spirit which exists between Officers and enlisted men in this Organization. The game was played according to rules with regulation periods, time-outs and halves. Everyone had a good time and it can be truthfully said that no one went away feeling disagreeable or unhappy.

DESTINATION UNKNOWN

At 0815, Friday, 18 February 1944, Officers and enlisted men were assembled along the tracks in the warehouse are awaiting departure, while the troop train switched cars. The train was made up of a baggage car, an Officer's Pullman, two troop carrier cars, two enlisted men's Pullmans and a Kitchen car. The train chugged out of the field, at 1055, to the accompaniment of music played by a "GI" Band, which was Colonel COPE'S farwell contribution. Major COUNSELMAN acted as deputy host. The feeling of nostalgia which should have been present was lacking, for the men, who for seventy-eight days had been impatiently straining at the leash, were at last on the move. Anything was preferable to frenzied inactivity.

The train cooks excelled themselves in preparing and serving meals, which, both tickled the palate and satisfied the appetite. The compass pointed in a Northerly direction of travel but could otherwise give us no clue to our destination.

Speculation waxed hot and bets were placed on staging areas known to range the Eastern Seaboard from Savannah to Boston. Those complaining of need for sleep were amply gratified. Aside from playing cards there was little else to do. Arival at Richmond, Virginia, precipitated further discussions; but when another engine hooked onto the rear of the train and started East, the mystery was solved. We were headed for Newport News or somewhere in the immediate vicinity. Such it proved to be.

19 February 1944, 1430, marked the hour of arrival at Camp Patrick Henry, Virginia.

The all too gloomy weather matched the spirit of our men, who, following orders bellowed over a loud speaker, picked up their bags and began the long trek to the barracks.

The Squadron, as a Unit, was paraded down Fifth Avenue (Not New York City) between crowds of curious onlookers whose taunts and jeers generated an internal heat which made added protection against the damp and cold unnecessary.

We passed the morale test by maintaining a dignified indifference, which though it bolstered our ego, did not detract one whit from the running outpour of comment.

Our quarters proved better than expected, for many of us had anticipated a bivouac encampment or its equivalent. They were cozy with just the right amount of natural ventilation that comes from warped doors with never quite close. Bed sheets are a luxury, and not wishing to spoil us, were denied.

At a staging area there is little to be done but watchful waiting. One can express himself freely in writing, but it only gives the squadron and base censors an excuse to "cut up".

Letters from home became at first a non-entity, then a fond memory. It's a great life if the imagination doesn't play "pranks".

A welcoming, by a representative of the Post Command at Camp Patrick Henry, lectures on mail censorship, pictures on troopship embarkation, attendance at Post theaters and going to church comprised the greatest part of our schedule.

The first twelve hour pass was issued on Friday, 25 February 1944 to a lucky few of the enlisted men; a second series, eighteen hour passes, on the 26th and a third, twelve hour passes, on Sunday, 27 February 1944. A flip of the coin among Flight Leaders, of each flight, decided the sequence in which the enlisted men were permitted open post. One third of the organization's strength was allowed absence at any one time.

In keeping with the fine spirit of competition in the Squadron, selected Officers and enlisted men took part in a basketball game played on 22 February 1944. Teamwork and exercise are what make for good American soldiering. The final score was 24-21 in favor of the Officers.

One is amazed at the number of men, who, following the example of our Commanding Officer, have volunteered for Brush-Bristle hair cuts; the standard length of which is about one-half inch!

27 February 1944 - Mail forwarded from Boca Raton, Florida was happily received today at the Officers Quarters. The enlisted men have been smiling for the past forty-eight hours and now, cognizant of the reason, we, the Officers, join them. Our Squadron, regarded from every angle of inspection, is in the verbage of the venacular, "on the ball". We are champing at our bits, awaiting the signal.

28 February 1944 - The "Ides of March" have come. Our APO Number is 9564, New York City, New York, our shipping number is 0622-AA and, today, a third number, HR 995, indicating the ship on which we are to sail, has been added.

Everyone is armed to the teeth, with the single exception of the Medical Staff, which must rely on the rules of the Geneva Conference for its personel safety. It is girded not with side-arms, but with brazards and the Medical Department Red Cross Identification Cards. We fervently hope that the "Jerries" will fight fairly.

The Medical Roster with corresponding identification numbers is listed below:

HEADQUARTERS FLIGHT

| | |
|-------------------------|--------|
| Capt REGNIER, Waldo A | 139253 |
| Sgt FAGG, Marshall F Jr | 139218 |
| Pfc MICCILE, Joseph F | 139217 |

FLIGHT "A"

| | |
|-------------------------|--------|
| Capt MATTISON, Robert E | 139210 |
| Cpl SACKIS, John J | 139213 |
| Pfc MARTINCIC, Carl M | 139212 |
| Pvt BRUNER, William K | 139232 |

FLIGHT "B"

| | |
|---------------------|--------|
| Capt CRAIG, Paul E | 139215 |
| Sgt RAPP, William D | 139221 |
| Cpl PAULO, Edward S | 139220 |
| Pfc GIZA, Stanley F | 139219 |

FLIGHT "C"

| | |
|-----------------------|--------|
| Capt SMITH, Nellins C | 139222 |
| Cpl RUSSO, Anthony J | 139216 |
| Cpl WARGO JR, John | 139211 |
| Pfc NARBER, Robert D | 139214 |

28 February 1944 - It looks like the real thing at last! Bags, packed stenciled and marked with chalk, have been delivered into the hold of the ship; which will probably be our home the next eight or ten days. Everyone is a trifle tense, though expectant. Tomorrow, after our last physical examination we will, it is hoped, be on our way. Where we are going only God and the Intelligence Officer knows--but neither will tell.

29 February 1944 - Surprise! We are still here; enjoying the cold, steady drizzle to which we are, by this time, accustomed. Nothing of importance has occurred with the exception of the "M.A.P." Physical Inspection. "M" stands for mouth, the rest we leave to your imagination and knowledge of regional anatomy!

Yesterday, the Officers, and today, the enlisted men, were paid the full amount due each man after deduction of the advanced partial payment received at Boca Raton Field, Florida. That partial payment was a "life saver" to many, whose high morale is indicative of their gratitude.

1 March 1944 - At 0900, all of the enlisted men of the Squadron, accompanied by eight Officers, from Flight "B", left by train for Hampton Roads, Virginia, there to do guard detail on Ship No 114. A trim, sea-worthy vessel; which has either just received a fresh coat of paint, or is recently out of shipbuilder's dry-dock. We hope it's her maiden voyage.

Second Lieutenant BUCHHOLZ finished his job today by collecting \$250.00 for five hundred advance orders of the Squadron pictures, taken by a member of the Signal Corps, on Thursday, 24 February 1944. The photos, by flights, are priced at fifty cents each. Tomorrow, possibly by afternoon, we will be marched to the train in full pack and strapping. Our destination the port of embarkation.

2 March 1944 - Yesterdays prognostication was correct. We are now on board the luxury line S/S General WILLIAM B MITCHELL, christened a month ago at Bayonne, New Jersey, in dedication to the late GENERAL WILLIAM B MITCHELL, for whom the B-25 was named. There are about 5,751 passengers aboard, including the troops and crew, twenty WAC'S, two feminine USO entertainers, and two correspondents from the War Department. The voyage will be a "lone wolf" crossing. The five inch guns on deck, from their size and station, look formidable enough to dispel any doubt of their readiness and efficiency. The Anti-Aircraft batteries are no less impressive. Here's hoping there will be no need for breaking their silence.

Everyone aboard has been ordered to continuously carry or wear his life vest, which probably means we will embark at an early date. The ship, which has a top speed of about twenty-seven knots per hour, will then have taken its first oceanic stride.

3 March 1944 - At about 1620 the Officers were marched to the warehouse area, where again they waited. The troop train arrived at 1710. They entered car No 10, single file, and settling themselves, as comfortably as possible, on the hard slatted seats in the