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Pat M. Walker

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Dear Mr. Ellinger:

I recently read in the "Marauder Thunder" dated October 1994, the article regarding 500# Bomb Loads for the old Marauder and also saw that you were encouraging communications from former Marauder Men. I thought the following, concerning how I became a Marauder Man, might be of some interest to your reading public, if not to future generations.

The Army Way

I was one of those fortunate people who graduated from High School in 1938, in the depths of the depression and the best job available was in the United States Army as a Private at \$21.00 per month (as my old first Sergeant use to say, "Whether you earn it or not"). I spent a year in the Horse Artillery, then transferred to the Air Corps and was ultimately assigned to the 27th Bomb Group at Barksdale Field.

The commanding officer of my 27th Bomb Group Squadron was encouraging people to take a short discharge, re-enlist and go to Mechanics School. Having no intention of making a career of the armed forces, I refused to re-enlist, but did strike a deal with my C.O. that I would get busy and pass the A.M. exam. At that time, the Air Force offered a first A.M. rating and a second A.M. rating. First A.M.'s were paid at the rate of a Tech Sergeant's pay (\$84.00 per month) and second A.M.'s were paid at the rate of Staff Sergeant's pay (\$72.00 per month).

I ultimately passed the A.M. exam, before my colleagues returned from Mechanics School, and in early 1941 I was given an A.M. rating and assigned as a crew chief on an A-20. The early day A-20's had a single front seat pilot and a rear seat in which there was a minimum of controls for flying the airplane, just enough to allow the pilot to relax. The rear seat was to be occupied by what was called an assistant pilot, who was also classified as a mechanic and as a gunner. In due time, the 27th Bomb Group became part of the Ferry Command ferrying A-20's from the West Coast to Savannah, Georgia, where they were picked up by another leg of the Ferry Command and taken to England. I made several of these trips with my Headquarters Squadron Commander, Captain Herman F. Lowery.

The draft had long since started, but the Army had not decided what to do with people like me who were scheduled to be discharged in September of 1941. In early September 1941, the 27th Bomb Group went on Louisiana maneuvers and I was left at Savannah Air Base for the Army to decide whether to discharge me or keep me. The 27th Bomb Group returned from Louisiana maneuvers in the early part of October and promptly embarked for the Philippine Islands. I again was left behind for the Army to decide what to do with me.

In due time, after the 27th had left Savannah, Georgia, I was informed that I would not be discharged, but would be retained in the service for the duration and I would be sent to rejoin my unit. In late November 1941, I was placed on a merchant ship that was carrying a small number of Army person-

nel and was sent to join my unit in the Philippines. The war broke out while we were en route to the Philippines and the ship I was on was diverted to Davao on the Philippine Island of Mindanao. I arrived in Mindanao on Christmas day 1941 and was simply told to "rejoin my unit" which was some 500 miles to the North at Nichols Field on the Island of Luzon which had long since been occupied by the Japanese.

By this time, it was obvious to even a Private Soldier that we were losing the war and that my options were pretty much that of joining the Philippine Guerrillas on Mindanao, hooking up with an Army unit that was going to surrender or try to make my way to Australia. While I was still pondering my options, an A-20 aircraft arrived, being flown by my old Squadron Commander, Captain Herman F. Lowery. We were both delighted to see each other still alive; and, Captain Lowery told me he was going to take the aircraft on to Australia.

I asked the Captain who was going to occupy the rear seat and he told me his instructions were to find another pilot and fly on to Australia. I asked Captain Lowery how he expected a pilot to maintain the old single pilot A-20 which was already in bad mechanical condition. Captain Lowery thought this over for a few moments and said, "I have orders to take another pilot out with me, so I am going to promote you from crew chief to pilot and take you with me. Your job is to make this thing fly and I will do the flying."

We left Mindanao and, in due time, after hopping through what is now Indonesia, we arrived in Australia in the month of March 1942. Captain Lowery and I parted ways, I was sent to a replacement depot and he was assigned to a B-25 outfit and was later killed flying out of New Guinea. All my records and every indication that I had been in the Army were with the 27th Bomb Group when it was destroyed at Nichols Field and nobody seemed to know what to do with me.

I had long since contracted a severe case of malaria fever, but had refused to go on sick leave, fearing what the Army would ultimately do with me. After several attacks of malaria, each getting worse, I finally became incoherent and found myself on an Army Hospital ship headed back to the United States tagged "to be discharged, enlistment expired."

In due time, we arrived in the United States and I was sent to an Induction Center in Mineral Wells, Texas. Each time I tried to explain to people at the Induction Center that I had been in the Army 3 1/2 years, was an A.M. and that I wanted to be assigned to a bombardment unit, they simply stared at me as if my sanity had left me. In due time, I was sent to Wichita Falls, Texas and was told that I would be sent to Aircraft Mechanic School. I finally found a "Texas Aggie" Lieutenant who would listen to me and who saved me from being sent to the Mechanics School, but made me a drill instructor in his school squadron. Almost daily, I went to see the Squadron Commander, asking when I could be assigned to a combat unit that was going overseas. All of my records having been lost and the A.M. rating having been abolished in the armed forces, the Squadron Commander told me, "the only way you will ever get out of here is to go to some sort of Army school." He told me there was a school in Denver, Colorado that only lasted about 6 weeks, which was the shortest school available.

This was the school that trained power operated gun turret mechanics. I promptly applied for the school, was accepted, finished in May and was shortly, thereafter, assigned to the 319th Bomb Group, 437th Squadron. I was placed in the armament section, of course, as a Private, A.M. ratings having been abolished. I had no records to prove that I was entitled to a Tech Sergeants rating, despite the fact that I knew absolutely nothing about armament, I became an armorer.

I departed the U.S. in September of 1942, with the 319th Bomb Group which went to England and ultimately down to Africa. In the month of November 1942, in Africa, I received the first noncommission officer rating I had ever had in the U.S. Army when I was made Corporal. In due course, I was promoted to Sergeant, Staff Sergeant and Tech Sergeant, but as a gun turret mechanic

rather than as an aircraft mechanic. For a short period of time, I tried to tell the engineering officer that I was a long standing aircraft mechanic and would be happier working at aircraft maintenance than I would at armament, but as usual with the Army nobody listened.

In due time, I became a reasonably competent armorer and when the section chief of the armament section was demoted and transferred, I was made armament section chief and promoted to Master Sergeant. I stayed with the 319th Bomb Group as it changed from B-26 to B-25 aircraft and when it left the European theater and went on to the Pacific with A-26 aircraft. I was in Okinawa when the war was over and after much soul searching decided I would terminate my military career and try to get some education.

Since all of my records were lost in the Philippines, I had a very difficult time convincing anyone who I was and what my background was and the only thing that gave me an opportunity to talk to them was my old serial number (6292480) which indicated that I was what was often referred to as a "previous service soldier."

In the year of 1942, I was only paid 4 times. I drew partial pay in Australia in March of 1942. I drew another partial pay in Baton Rouge, Louisiana in the month of August 1942. I was again given partial pay in England in the month of October. In December of 1942, in Africa, I finally got my pay status straightened out, though, I was still being paid as a Private rather as an A.M.

Incidentally, the old 319th Bomb Marauder Group, B-25's and A-26's be hanged, was the only U.S. Army unit to fight against all three of the Axis Powers, of the some 200 old desert hands who deployed to the Pacific, less than 100 are still alive. A fitting motto for this elite group of men would be "In our countries time of need, the word was "went" not "sent."

While the following paragraph does not pertain to the Marauder's, it does tend to indicate that even Marauder Men can make foolish decisions. While I was attending Law School at Baylor University, I was joined the National Guard in the infantry for the purpose of supplementing my income. I graduated from law school in December of 1949, and shortly thereafter the Korean War broke out and I was again called into the service as a platoon leader in the infantry and sent to Korea. While I only spent approximately 10 months in Korea, I can readily attest the fact that there is a better way to make a living than being an infantry officer. I much preferred being a Private soldier with an A.M. rating.

Respectfully,

PW/cn