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Article Summary: This article presents a few of the Nebraska "boys" during the first two years of World War II in order to serve as a reminder of the sense of obligation and gratitude that Americans owe to millions of men and women who continue to serve.

Cataloging Information:

Names: John A Murphy; Sgt Dillman (McCook); John (Jack) S Loisel; Harold Sawyer, Charles E Barber, William M Brown, David J Eckholt, Lloyd A Stuehmer, Walter N Thompson, Jack Wilson, Burton E Aden, Dale L Barrett, Richard A Bartz, Allen H Blum, William N Boyd, James G De Wolf, Robert E Devoe, Herbert T Goodrich, Milton T Hansen, Robert P Hanson, Jean A Jack, Kent M Johnson, Harley A Kirk, Richard J McMullen, Matthias F McVey, Dennis K Maine, Charles E Marvel, Delman L Moore, Robert A Moose, Louis P Morrison, Robert B Otterpohl, Robert L Pierce, Jerry E Reeves, William G Riley, Harold M Sawyer, William P Southard, Dustin H Swanson, Wilbur H Weedon, Robert W Wilson, Wesley Haggard, Harry L Telles, George French Fritz

Photographs / Images: Corporal Wesley Haggard at Boys Town

"Nebraskans Everywhere"

MURLIN SPENCER *

The spectacular record of "Nebraskans Everywhere" during the first two years of this war is based upon action in the Southwest Pacific, but it is a splendid start on the account of Nebraska's heroic sons in the war.

"Nebraskans Everywhere," or any other attempt to relate at this time the valorous deeds of our boys in this war, can be little more than a symbolic beginning of that story. The minor fraction of our heroes here mentioned can only serve as a reminder of the greater tasks of the full record that remains to be compiled. It may also help to perpetuate that sense of obligation and gratitude that we owe to millions of men and women who have combined their efforts to save civilization in its most desperate crisis.

Since "Nebraskans Everywhere" was written, much supplementary material has come in and the editorial staff has tried to weave some bits of this additional material into the Spencer story which we deem it proper to reprint in full.

From Allied Headquarters in the Southwest Pacific (AP)—The twin machine guns of S/Sgt. John A. Murphy were hot. The Japanese Zeros seemed to fill the air—from forty to fifty of them, and they attacked in successive flights.

Below was the jungle-covered wilderness of New Britain, and for Murphy's Mitchell bomber there was nothing to do but fight. And it was fighting, with Murphy's turret guns pacing the bitter battle.

For one hour and ten minutes the battle raged, and when it was over and the score counted, Murphy of Columbus had bagged five Zeros in one of the greatest single one-man battles ever fought in the Southwest Pacific. The bag brought Murphy's total of Japanese fighters destroyed to six, giving him the lead in his bomber unit, the "Rough Raiders."

S/SGT. JOHN A. MURPHY, Columbus: Clippings reveal that the crew of Murphy's plane had the narrowest escape of any of the "Rough Raiders" in that attack.

* War Correspondent, Associated Press. (April, 1944.)



“The pilot was wounded, one engine was shot out, and forty-one holes were drilled in the plane itself. But the crew, before downing those Zeros, had sunk a six-thousand-ton cargo ship with a direct hit—and in a few seconds retribution was upon them. The attack was pressed to within fifty feet of Murphy’s turret.”

After thirteen months of continuous fighting Murphy was sent home, where a friend on the paper managed to get the full story. This reveals that the sergeant is officially credited with downing nine

Zeros in the one battle. But he had help. Quoting his own words:

We were badly shot up. One engine was put out of commission and our two waist guns were hit. My gun was working, and the fellows just kept passing over the ammunition and I fired away. Two of our planes were lost, and it was then we were attacked in full force. We were plenty lucky to pull out of that scrap!—*Columbus Telegram*, May 29, 1944.

The reporter added that Murphy had made forty missions and had more than two hundred combat hours, “but the mission at Rabaul is one that neither Jack nor the Japs will ever forget.”

Sergeant Dillman of McCook volunteered for a dangerous photo reconnaissance mission over Bougainville last June before the Americans took over that Solomons island. He rode the ball turret in the Fortress’ big belly.

Everything went well until the mission was nearly concluded. A gunner shouted, “Zeros, one o’clock!” and more than twenty of the little silver ships came down in a deadly dive, made their pass and came back for more.

This time they attacked from below and Dillman, curled up in the

ball turret, cut loose with his heavy machine guns. For forty-five minutes the battle raged, but finally the Zeros had enough—what was left of them, because five of their number had gone down flaming—and returned to their base.

Much of the credit for the Fortress' victory went to Dillman. His citation, when awarded the Distinguished Service Cross, related that "Throughout the fight, Dillman's expert and aggressive turret gunnery repeatedly broke up the enemy approaches and his fire accounted for one Zero." When it was over Dillman climbed back into the fuselage and helped care for the five who were wounded.*

There is one thing in common in these stories of heroism and daring in the skies over the Pacific. Both men were Nebraskans, fighting as Nebraskans [and allied fighters] have fought ever since war came to this jungle country south of the equator.

Air war has predominated in the Southwest Pacific, and consequently Nebraska's contribution to the war effort in the second year of war has been primarily in the air. But with General MacArthur's ground forces on the move, more and more Nebraskans are fighting in the jungles of New Guinea and New Britain. Their stories are stories to be told in the future, when the final score is in.

Just how much Nebraska has contributed in the second year of war never will be determined fully, but this much is known: More than one hundred medals have been awarded them—medals standing for planes shot down and ships sunk. They stand for fighter aces like Captain John S. Loisel, Nebraska's ranking pilot in the Southwest Pacific, with seven planes to his credit officially. . . .

Captain Loisel, a pilot of the Lightning P-38, was flying cover for bombing planes near Dagua air strip close to Wewak last August when his flight tangled with Zeros seeking to prevent the bombing. He opened fire on one Jap plane and it seemed to break into pieces in the air. A little later he caught another Zero in a slow roll, hitting it with two hundred rounds of machine-gun bullets at fifty yards. It crashed.

Another double kill was scored by Lieutenant Sawyer, a P-40 pilot, over the Huon Gulf. His bag was one Zero and one medium bomber, a fair day's work.

CAPT. JOHN S. LOISEL of West Point was one of the P-38 pilots who in the summer of 1943 flew over Wewak and by radio dared Japanese fliers to come up and fight. When the Japs accepted the challenge thirty-three of them were shot down. Again

* Readers may turn to page 33 in our preceding issue, where details are published from the account first appearing in the *McCook Gazette* of November 3, 1943

in December the P-38 unit spotted perhaps fifteen enemy fighters escorting dive-bombers near Arawe in New Britain. As the Lightnings moved in the Japs scattered; when the fight ended not one of their planes was left. The Lightnings returned without loss.

Jack Loisel's later record adds much to Spencer's story. Olen Clements, in a dispatch to the AP last April, reported: "The whole Fifth Airforce fighter unit has done the job of wiping out the Jap airmen, but outstanding among the hottest aces are the twelve youngsters who have shot down a total of 156 of their planes." Listing Loisel among those twelve, Clements added that he is officially credited with having bagged ten planes and has more than two hundred operational missions to his credit. In the past two years he has spent but twenty-three days in civilization. At the end of the first year he was given a chance to return home, but declined. He was over there when the war started, he said, and planned to stay until the end. His mother, answering an appeal for clippings, wrote:

"Jack is commanding officer of his squadron, but tells us nothing about his exploits. He says flying is fun; there is a job to do and he is striving to do it well. He seldom if ever complains about food or climate, but his last letter tells this:

"It is raining very hard outside and is a trifle damp inside. This kind of a storm hits fairly often. The rain comes down in torrents, and the wind at forty miles an hour drives it into everything. . . . Our outfit (Satan's Angels) is the best in the A.A.F., and I'll try to keep it that way. We've knocked 120 Nippos out of the sky and are still going strong."

LT. HAROLD SAWYER of Lincoln, the second man Mr. Spencer mentions as having the honor of "a double kill," was awarded the Air Medal in August 1943, the Purple Heart for wounds during action in New Guinea on November 16 last, and the Distinguished Flying Cross at about that time. He discounts all such honors, however, feeling that he is doing no more than any of his comrades, and no definite details are available except in the form of descriptions (undated) culled from his letters home:

Our boys in the air have done some marvelous things, but we have the greatest respect and praise for the ground troops. If it weren't for their work, advancing and keeping our fields in shape, the Air Force

could do nothing. Down here there is the closest cooperation between the ground and air forces that anyone could ask.

We live right in the middle of the jungle—in fact, right in the middle of a banana grove. We have to build our own tents. They are furnished, but for protection they have to be built up on a platform. So each four boys build their own version of a jungle mansion.

You can never realize how dense these jungles are until you actually have been through them. I speak from experience, for we went back into them the other day just to see what we would be up against if we ever went overboard. Should that day come, we're all set to meet it, for we have a complete jungle kit on the back of our 'chute. It contains emergency rations, ammunition, first-aid equipment, a big jungle knife, gloves, mosquito net, and silver coins with which to pay the natives to bring us back to civilization. Most natives in New Guinea are friendly; those that aren't are on the fence and for a few shillings they will turn friendly.

The natives build their huts of kunai grass, and when it dries it remains on the shacks. They pleat it and pack it so well that it doesn't leak. In some localities the huts are known to be five years old.

"Those medals," continued Mr. Spencer, "stand for more than ten thousand hours of combat fighting in the air and for long, deadly hours of fighting in the jungle." He refers again to Sergeant Dillman, to whom the Distinguished Service Cross was awarded for extraordinary heroism in action. He names six Nebraskans whose gallantry had won the Silver Star. These are Lt. Charles E. Barber of Omaha, Cpl. William M. Brown of Minden, Pvt. David J. Eckholt of Humphrey, Lt. Lloyd A. Stuehmer of Scribner, Lt. Walter N. Thompson of West Point, and Capt. Jack Wilson of South Sioux City. Then he refers to the Distinguished Flying Cross for heroism and extraordinary achievement and says:

Far too many Nebraskans have fought heroically under General MacArthur to list all their names, but here are some whose acts were recognized officially in citations awarding the Distinguished Flying Cross:

Aden, Sgt. Burton E., Grand Island	McVey, Sgt. Matthias F., Lincoln
Barrett, Sgt. Dale L., Humphrey	Maine, Sgt. Dennis K., Blue Springs
Bartz, Sgt. Richard A., North Loup	Marvel, Sgt. Charles E. Grand Island
Blum, 2d Lt. Allen H., Omaha	Moore, Lt. Delman L., Bartley
Boyd, Sgt. William N., Central City	Moose, Lt. Robert A., Omaha
De Wolf, Maj. James G., Kearney	Morrison, Lt. Louis P., Omaha
Devoe, Sgt. Robert E., Lincoln	Otterpohl, Sgt. Robert B., Randolph
Goodrich, Lt. Herbert T., Fairmont	Pierce, Capt. Robert L., Lincoln
Hansen, Pvt. Milton T., Blair	Reeves, Sgt. Jerry E., Omaha
Hanson, Lt. Robert P., Wakefield	Riley, Sgt. William G., Oshkosh
Jack, Maj. Jean A., Tekamah	Sawyer, Lt. Harold M., Lincoln
Johnson, Lt. Kent M., Fremont	Southard, Lt. William P., Omaha
Kirk, Sgt. Harley A., Greenwood	Swanson, Lt. Dustin H., Omaha
Loisel, Capt. John S., West Point	Weedin, Lt. Wilbur H., Aurora
McMullen, Capt. Richard J., Lincoln	Wilson, Lt. Robert W., Scottsbluff

In this story Murlin Spencer listed thirty-six Nebraskans. Requests for additional information were sent from this office to thirty of the families there represented. Nineteen responded with clippings, letters, occasional photos. The extent of the accounts here given is determined largely by the amount of material available, rather than by any estimate we might make as to the relative value of the services rendered or the relative courage displayed. These pages might be multiplied by hundreds if we could use all the clippings that come to the office files day by day. Such as do appear here are determined, in the main, by chance rather than by choice. Except in the case of very special honors conferred, it is impossible to choose between these gallant men. The names that follow are among those listed by Mr. Spencer.

CAPT. RICHARD J. McMULLEN, Lincoln. Here is a dispatch by William C. Wilson, with MacArthur in New Guinea, October 12 (UP):

Rabaul harbor was dotted with ships, looking like so many ants on a piece of candy, when Lieutenant McMullen piloted his B-24 Liberator bomber in over the target. . . . Then the bomb bay doors were opened. Icy winds ripped through the plane. I could see Zeros whipping across the airdrome and racing up toward us. Suddenly I saw the thousand-pound bombs drop. . . . It looked as if the whole Japanese navy was in the harbor. . . . For the next thirty minutes, forty enemy planes battled our Liberator and a number of others in our formation. Machine-gun and cannon shells began plowing into us, and one 20-mm shell smashed just two inches over my head. Later, I discovered ten machine-gun bullet holes forming a neat pattern in the fuselage around my body. One of our four engines was shot out of commission and another was damaged as the Zeros dived and zoomed around us. All the while the Liberator guns kept chattering away, and before the battle ended they were smoking and almost red hot. . . . The navigator and the engineer complained because they were kept too busy to get into the fight with their guns.

Another witness of the American raid on Wewak wrote: "When we came in on the airdrome there was not a single fire, but when we turned away from the field smoke was rising a thousand feet." The famous Jolly Rogers heavy bomber unit to which McMullen belongs is familiar in Southwest Pacific skies for the pirate insignia of skull and crossbones on the twin tails of their Liberators.

CAPT. DUSTIN H. SWANSON of Omaha is another of the Jolly Rogers boys of Fifth Air Force fame, and was in that first daylight raid on Rabaul.

Among other thrills, he has limped home from Wewak on three engines (one with a bad oil leak) over jagged mountain ranges, ready to bail out at any moment, yet Dusty coaxed his 'Golden Lady' on without even a crash landing. . . . Though jumped many times by clouds of Jap fighters, he thinks his most hair-raising experiences have been in fighting the Southwest Pacific weather. Once the men were forced to fly at eight thousand feet through the Owen Stanleys, dropping from four to five thousand feet a minute in storm clouds. With arming pins set on half of the bombs, they were lifted four inches off the bomb racks. Once the clouds parted to reveal sharp peaks one hundred feet below. "Some fun!" was Dusty's comment, so it's no wonder he'll welcome the sight of Nebraska's rolling plains.

S/SGT. ROBERT B. OTTERPOHL of Randolph is the subject of a lengthy story captioned: "Hero Visiting Denver Has Flown on 33 Missions in 11 Months." On his way home on furlough, he stopped to visit cousins. We quote:

A Liberator bomber, flying alone to its target over Japanese-controlled areas of the Southwest Pacific last August 21, did a wonderfully destructive job of bombing the Pomela Nickel Mine in the Celebes, shot down four out of twelve fighter planes, and got back to its base after a fourteen-hour flight so perforated with 325 bullet holes it looked like a window screen. One of the crew (all of whom were awarded the Silver Star for heroism above and beyond the call of duty) was Sergeant Otterpohl, waist gunner, age 21, with 302 combat hours on his military record.

Twelve Liberators were sent to bomb that mine. Eleven failed to find the tiny target, due to the great distance and thick clouds. Otterpohl's plane dropped seven bombs on a freighter and beached it, and swooped down to the burning ruins to strafe the barracks. Then twelve of the new Jap fighter planes the Americans call "Oscars" closed in on the lone bomber, with the result that in addition to the four definitely shot down, three probably were destroyed.

"I was credited with one of the definites," the gunner said. "He was coming straight in from the side about a hundred feet above us. I used a lot of ammunition. All of a sudden his plane exploded, the wings came off, and I thought the wreckage was going to hit our plane."

The clouds helped the bomber escape, with one engine damaged in a forty-five minute fight and with gasoline for five minutes of flying left. Almost miraculously, not a single crew member was scratched. The pilot came closest—bullets cut his parachute straps.

Sergeant Otterpohl's longest flight (also from Australia) was nearly sixteen hours against oil installations in Borneo. The attack was made at night, and refineries and tanks burning from other attacks could be seen fifty miles away. All crews participating were commended by General MacArthur and Lt. General Kenney.

Later, Sergeant Otterpohl received the Distinguished Flying Cross. The citation states that "this bombardment squadron of the Fifth Air Force is playing a major role against the Japanese in the South and Southwest Pacific."

MAJOR JEAN A. JACK of Tekamah (since given the rank of lieutenant colonel) is represented here by a graphic letter from his mother, who wrote:

Jean has told us very little of his exploits but seems chiefly concerned about his baby boy, whom he has never seen. The most we have is from a phonograph record of a speech he made when given the Silver Star. There he told how he and another Fortress made a daylight bombing raid over Rabaul on January 5, 1943. Fog obscured their target and anti-aircraft fire made things uncomfortable. Fifteen Zeros attacked the two bombers for a hundred miles on the way home. The turret gunner was seriously wounded. The crew shot down four of the Zeros; the other bomber brought down three more.

The No. 1 engine on Jean's plane was shot out of commission, as well as the left wing, and all the controls were badly damaged. A storm blew up that forced them to use much of the gas needed for the return trip. They radioed their location and prepared for a crash landing on an island. Friendly natives cared for them a couple of days (one of them his birthday) before they were picked up and taken back to base.

Jean has the Silver Star, Distinguished Flying Cross, Air Medal and Purple Heart, but has never told us how he got them. Since his promotion he is in charge of the airdrome, bombardment aircraft replacement pool, reception and training center for combat crews, and a service squadron at the Replacement Center of the Fifth Bomber Command.

FIRST LT. ROBERT A. MOOSE of Omaha, killed in action in New Guinea on April 3, 1943, while on his 123rd combat mission, was one of those Nebraska boys who never thought to claim the credit due him but never missed an opportunity to strike a telling blow — as witness this clipping from an Atlantic City paper, reprinted in Valparaiso, Indiana — presumably the home of Capt. Russell A. Francis whose life Moose had saved in a "dog fight" over Buna:

We dived on the enemy from twenty thousand feet at terrific speed, trying to get to the bombers, but as usual got tangled up with Zeros. The sudden change in altitude affected my motor and it began to run rough. Bullets flew past and I found two Zeros on my tail. Then First Lt. Robert Moose, seeing that I was in trouble, whipped in and shot down both those Zeros. . . .

Murlin Spencer himself adds a tribute to the skill of this Nebraskan:

Lieutenant Moose was over Oro Bay, near Buna, one day when the Japanese came over on a raid. Moose and others in his flight tied into the Nips, some going after the fighters, others after the bombers. Moose scored hits on three Zeros, sending them crashing into the sea in a triple kill, which comes only infrequently in the lifetime of any fighter group.

From a tribute in prose and verse written by "a classmate," First Lt. Jim F. Jennings at Long Beach, California, we quote briefly:

No one has ever lived who knew the equal of his courage, and no people have ever had a stouter barricade against a foe. Bob is going to school now in a new realm where the scale of men's thinking is large. He has seen at first hand how small is the world, how easy to fly around it, how petty and futile its fences and boundaries, how inadequate its old yardsticks of distance, and how pinched is yesterday's concept of geography.

Into this new battlefield of the sky, where war was never waged before (it's fifty degrees below zero, and air is one-fifth of its sea-level density) — into these shuddering heights goes "Old Mooser" on his steed of steel, soaring up like a rocket. Through his oxygen mask he is confidently smiling — and may the mighty song of his engine never falter.

As this copy goes to the printer, the Awards Division of the Air Corps is checking information received on additional planes to the credit of Lieutenant Moose. It is probable that one of these planes was in his last air battle, which would mean that he shot down four planes within five minutes. If this is confirmed it would automatically qualify him for the Distinguished Service Cross. Already he has been posthumously awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross with one oak-leaf cluster, the Air Medal with two oak-leaf clusters, and the Purple Heart.

CAPT. ROBERT L. PIERCE of Lincoln, pilot of a small fighter plane, has a story that must await our next publication of Nebraska's Heroes. Not only because of the wide range of material available, including a story of his own in *Skyways*, but because space does not permit the reproduction here of a water color, "Serenade," which his fellow servicemen voted the most popular entry in the art exhibit sponsored by the American Red Cross and the Army in New Guinea.

Now to pick up the thread of Murlin Spencer once more :

They haven't handed out medals earned in landing operations, which came in rapid succession on New Britain or New Guinea in December or January. But Associated Press correspondents have encountered Nebraskans everywhere. . . .

Despite these ground actions, however, Nebraska's contribution still remains primarily one in the air.

There is no complete record of the ships sunk and planes destroyed by bombers in which Nebraskans rode the pilot's seat or manned the turret guns. But the record would be impressive.

Sergeant Donovan's plane scored four hits on a merchant ship in Rabaul harbor and left it blazing fiercely. Private Eckholt rode a bomber over Rabaul which scored direct hits on a destroyer and then shot down five Zeros that attempted to intercept the flight. Another merchantman at Rabaul was sunk by Captain Wilson.

Lieutenant Steuhmer dropped two five-hundred-pound bombs so close to a Jap merchant vessel at Amben that the ship was left sinking, and then while he piloted the B-24 home, his gunners fought off from ten to fifteen Zeros in a thirty-minute fight.

The spectacular skip bombing, whereby the bomber skips its bombs into the side of Japanese ships, was employed by the bomber which carried Sergeant Vokoun to set fire to a Jap destroyer at Kavieng. Private First Class Berglund was in the now historic Bismarck sea battle and sank a transport, one of the twenty-two ships wiped out in that action last March.

T/SGT. ROBERT W. DEVOE, Jr., nose gunner on a B-24 Liberator, was one of the men assigned to soften up Cape Gloucester in the Southwest Pacific for an attack right after Christmas. It wasn't much of a target, he said, though it did help to pave the way for the marines—who, even so, arrived to find the enemy still pretty well entrenched.

Devoe, a Lincoln boy, was decorated by Lt. General Kenney. He won the Air Medal for participation in an aerial raid near Sakar Island, New Guinea. His plane was engaged in an armed reconnaissance mission when three enemy cargo vessels, all armed, were sighted. One of these was sunk by "that spectacular skip-bombing," the second was seriously damaged by strafing. But the thing Devoe remembers best is a Zero just twenty feet over his head. "That Jap was so close I could see his white scarf and jacket," he remarked, adding that this was one of the two planes he had shot down.

Then there was an attack on a convoy near St. Matthias Island just a year ago. "Despite heavy anti-aircraft fire from the two escorting gunboats, the crew made three bombing runs over the target, scoring two direct hits on the largest freight transport," reads the citation. For his part in this, Devoe received one of his three oak-leaf clusters. He also wears the Distinguished Flying Cross.

MAJOR JAMES G. DE WOLF of Kearney rates his achievements as "just par for the course — nothing exceptional." But he holds five major citations. There are four from the President for his squadron; the Soldier's Medal for saving the lives of members of his group, two awards of the Distinguished Flying Cross, one Air Medal for sinking a ship and one for completion of 300 hours of combat flying, and two stars for participating in two major battles. Thus he is considered Kearney's most decorated pilot.

Asked to describe the battle in the Bismarck Sea, the major cited that as an instance when air power aided the ground forces. The air force wiped out 15,000 Jap soldiers on the Bismarck Sea in three days, but the ground forces had fought for four months, at a cost of nearly 10,000 men, to capture the tiny village of Buna. De Wolf has been photographed twice for feature stories in the national weeklies. "But I was scared half to death all the time," he confessed when talking to an audience in the high school from which he graduated in 1937.

SGT. HARLEY A. KIRK of Greenwood is one of a Flying Fortress crew on reconnaissance over Bougainville. "Its pilot, finding the weather unsuitable for high-altitude photography, elected to descend to treetop level to strafe the aidrome and docks in spite of heavy anti-aircraft fire. As a result they destroyed at least one Japanese bomber and damaged others. For this they received Silver Stars today (April 28, 1943) for gallantry in action."

Sergeant Kirk also holds the Distinguished Flying Cross and Good Conduct medal, as well as a Presidential citation; and wears the Campaign ribbon with two stars. He was in the famous Bismarck Sea battle where a Japanese convoy of twenty-two

ships was destroyed. After two years in Australia and New Guinea as armored gunner of a heavy bombardment crew (with forty combat missions and over 300 combat flying hours to his credit), he was returned from duty overseas and assigned to the air base at Charleston, South Carolina, as an instructor in aerial gunnery.

"Those Zero planes can turn on a dime and give you change!" he said. "In the early days of the Pacific war, while tail gunner on a B-17, I came back with the plane so wrecked that it took nearly four weeks to get it back in the air."

There are other jobs besides combat jobs which need doing in war, however, and doing them well may mean the difference between victory and defeat. Sergeant King was awarded the Legion of Merit for his work in repairing damaged aircraft, getting them rolling again so that they could be used to fight. Major Steinberg was cited for his efficiency in organizing hospitals and arranging for the evacuation of wounded from front-line bases to rear-area hospitals.

T/SGT. RICHARD A. BARTZ of North Loup, once an acrobatic youngster but now crew mechanic on a cargo plane, works for hours at a stretch in repairing its machinery and has been decorated with the Distinguished Flying Cross in recognition of courageous service at the Island of New Guinea, (second largest in the world) and elsewhere in the Southwest Pacific. His father has a letter from Lt. General Kenney, written last November to notify him of the award made to his boy "for extraordinary achievement while participating in aerial flights." The citation continues:

In these three months he took part in more than fifty missions, dropping supplies and transporting troops over territory continually patrolled by enemy fighter aircraft. Often landings were made on fields only a few miles from this theater. . . . I want to tell you how genuinely proud I am to have men such as your son in my command, and how gratified I am to know that young Americans with such courage and resourcefulness are fighting our country's battles.

But there are no medals for laundry work. A letter last New Year's Day told of being too busy for writing much because he was "changing engines on the plane. Hope to finish the job soon so I can get a day off to wash some clothes." He

has told them of the lovely Bird of Paradise and the white cockatoos, natives of New Guinea; of hazardous flights over the Owen Stanley mountains; of helping to build a chapel there in the jungle. Thus danger, devotion and drudgery, beauty, glory and maddening irritations are strangely mingled in the life of these soldiers who are fighting our battles in far fields.

And then there are the transport pilots, men like Sergeant Reeves, Private Hansen, Captain Stover, Sergeants Norgan, Barrett, Riley, Lieutenants Davis, Fay, Thompson, Weedon, Knight, Johnson, Morrison and Wilson. . . .

T/SGT. JERRY E. REEVES, twenty-year-old radio operator from Omaha, has been in the army since September 1942 and recently working sixteen hours a day on a troop-carrier plane over New Guinea. One of his letters carried the terse postscript, "I got a medal." His parents heard no more about it until the *World-Herald* announced the award of a Distinguished Flying Cross "for heroism in flight and exceptional and outstanding accomplishment in the face of great danger. These operations consisted of over fifty missions, including dropping supplies and transporting troops to advance positions, flying at low altitudes over mountainous terrain under adverse weather conditions, in an unarmed transport plane, and often landing within a few miles of enemy bases." In September he had completed fifty-five missions in fifty days. Late in April his family received the message, "Missing in action since March 6th."

FIRST LT. KENT MARSHALL JOHNSON of Fremont was the subject of a report in his home-town paper (October 11, 1943) that invites repetition here. He was one of the pilots in a paratroop-dropping mission in New Guinea which completed the encirclement of Lee and Salamaua. We quote:

In this operation many scores of fighters, bombers and attack-bombers co-ordinated with scores of troop-carrier planes to form the greatest air armada ever assembled in the Southwest Pacific. "It was a thrilling sight," commented Lieutenant Johnson. "We were all proud of the fact that our unit was selected to lead the great formation, and of the fact that General MacArthur and Lt. General Kenney personally led this whole and highly successful operation of Flying Fortresses. The paratroops are a great bunch of boys with a fine spirit of fellowship, so that

complete cooperation was easy to attain. They took the operation in stride. We all joked and clowned around the planes as we waited for the take-off, and that joking continued almost to the moment they jumped over the target. I understand this was one of the most successful mass jumps ever made. Almost one hundred per cent of the troops landed within the target area."

Since that time Lieutenant Johnson has been busy carrying airborne troops, ammunition and supplies, and evacuating the wounded. He now (1943) has to his credit forty combat missions and has flown over 200,000 miles. But singing is one of his greatest accomplishments and greatest joys, and there is seldom a night that the gang in his barracks is not entertained by the harmony emanating from his room.

LT. ROBERT W. WILSON of Scottsbluff, who once delivered papers for the *Star-Herald* there and later used to caddy out on the Stockdale golf course (while attending college in California), is now pilot of a troop-carrier plane, one of a leading squadron completing a mass paratroop invasion in New Guinea. General MacArthur watched that invasion, and it was conducted with classic brilliance.

First, Lieutenant Bob flew his ship into position, and as it moved swiftly over its prescribed course the paratroopers bailed out, their chutes blooming like great war flowers. He said of them:

'Their spirit was amazing. You would hardly know that many were going on their first combat mission. They laughed and joked, and many even slept unconcernedly, while we were on our way to the target. This is the real American spirit—the kind that gets the job done.'

The youthful lieutenant has more than 1,300 flying hours to his credit—equivalent to about 210,000 miles or eight trips around the world. In January (1944) he flew across the Pacific in the greatest mass flight of troop-carrier planes ever attempted.

SGT. WILBUR H. WEEDIN of Aurora finds an interpreter in Pat Robinson (name and date of paper unknown), who also reports on the job of the transport men.

Now, for the first time, can be revealed the part these tireless lads have played, not only in saving Port Moresby but in turning back the Japs.

Without them the task would have been practically impossible. . . . These American youngsters have made many flights daily, carrying food, ammunition and guns to the fighting front. Many have flown as many as twelve hundred hours over here, and up to the last few days the

records did not show one plane lost or one boy injured in months of flying through the worst sort of weather.

The transport pilots load several thousand pounds of stuff in their planes and fly into the Owen Stanley mountain range. They drop down thousands of feet between high peaks into deep gorges to release their loads.

Without this dropped food and ammunition the Australian troops would have had great difficulty to continue fighting, because at that time there was no other way to get supplies to them. Then we started driving the Japs back. The transport pilots kept right on carrying supplies to the front and are still doing it. . . . Daily they take off, shooting across the mountains, returning, reloading, and taking off again.

They dropped millions of pounds of supplies in one month, and a high percentage of this material was recovered—a remarkable achievement. Then they flew a large number of troops from Australia without one mishap, and topped that by re-transporting them across the mountains to the New Guinea front.

A correspondent to the Associated Press has this to say:

An entire campaign depended upon these men who kept the bully beef express operating between Port Moresby and the battlefields of Buna, Sanada, Gona, Kokoda and Wau.

They took off in uncertain weather, lifted the heavily loaded transports over the formidable Owen Stanley mountains, landed on uncertain flying strips within a few miles of enemy positions. . . .

If they met a Zero—and some did—they could make a forced landing in the jungle or be shot down.

Murlin Spencer closes his tribute in these words:

They fly transport planes in the toughest run in the world. It isn't alone the danger from the Japanese planes, which can outfly them with ease and shoot them down any time they fly them. There is also the weather, temperamental, treacherous; and the mountains, which rise to fifteen thousand feet and back up the clouds behind them.

Day by day, however, these transport men go out, sometimes in escorted convoys and sometimes alone, to carry troops and supplies to advanced areas. They come back with wounded, and no one knows how many lives they have saved.

All this is the way Nebraskans fought in the Southwest Pacific in the second year of the war.



THE SAILOR COMES HOME
Corporal Wesley Haggard at Boys Town

WESLEY B. HAGGARD, Boys Town Citizen of 1935-37, whose bravery was mentioned in Richard Tegaski's "Guadalcanal Diary," has been awarded the Silver Star "for distinguished service in the line of his profession"—which is that of pharmacist's mate 1/c. "While a member of a patrol advancing through enemy territory, Haggard, with utter disregard for his personal safety, fearlessly faced the accurate rifle fire of enemy snipers to treat the wounds of incapacitated marines. Largely as a result of his valorous action the lives of several of the wounded were saved." —*Boys Town Times*, 4/9/43.

A letter from Boys Town states that some 550 of their citizens are now serving in the armed forces; three are prisoners of war; there are nineteen Gold Stars on their service flag; and several besides Haggard have been cited for conspicuous bravery. One of these is

PFC. HARRY L. TELLES, who received the Silver Star, Purple Heart, and a certificate signed by the First Lord of the British Admiralty, stating that after several hours of severe street fighting on the docks at Algiers their destroyer, under heavy bombardment from shore batteries, was compelled to withdraw. The ship's doctor was one of those severely wounded.

"In the midst of bursting shells, with no medical officer to direct his efforts. Private Telles coolly moved about the ship, rendering first aid and dressing the wounds of injured men. For his courage, skill, and calm performance of duty in the face of enemy fire, he was awarded the Silver Star. . . . By the King's Order, . . . I am charged to express His Majesty's high appreciation."

Another, killed in action the day after Pearl Harbor, was GEORGE FRENCH FRITZ of the 164th Infantry. "He embodied all that was good and noble," wrote the chaplain to his mother. "He was awarded the Silver Star posthumously and so died as he had lived, a hero—true to his God and to his country."

The limits of space forbid mention of many others whose names are recorded on a very long roll of honor received from Boys Town.

LT. GLEN LUNDY of Shubert has been awarded the Air Medal by Major-General Chennault, battling the Japanese in China. He is a member of the famous "Fighter Squadron" in the forward echelon of the 14th Air Force. The citation states that within four months this lieutenant participated in twenty-five combat missions, which included "low-level strafing and bombing raids on strongly defended enemy airports and installations in China, Burma, and Indo-China. He has actively participated in the defense of Chinese and American installations, . . . displaying courage and aggressiveness at all times." — *Falls City Journal*, 10/12/43.

George Weller, correspondent on the field at Salamaua May 21, 1943, sent a cable to his paper (*Chicago Star-Telegram*) describing at length the work of the "blue-eyed boys with a quick smile" who, with the brown-eyes and the gray, comprised a notable group of fighting pilots. Colonel Hough's Lightning P-38 is now famous; these boys were the ones who introduced it to the Japs in a furious dog-fight of thirty minutes at Salamaua. "In the tactical sense it was an epochal battle, for our pilots fought boldly and met the most evasive stunts of the twenty butterfly Zeros with twists of their own. Their vicious passes outclassed all conflicts of like numbers of planes over New Guinea."

Lundy, wrote this correspondent, was the first to spot them in the thin blanket of overcast. Pilot Peterson told him it was the "fiercest, fastest movement I've ever seen. The vertical development of the battle was extreme. They were trying to land on our tails, where they could shoot from not more than 150 feet." There were moments when the fighters were separated by less than one-tenth of that distance. The Zeros had the initial advantage and came at our boys from all angles.

Lieutenant Lundy, who shows the stuff Nebraska farm boys are made of, was among those known to have destroyed at least one plane. He was in New Guinea over fourteen months and has not been home since joining the army. The report that he was killed in action seems not to have been verified.

Readers not already familiar with the new Lightning and its vertical-flight magic will be interested in the briefed story of an amazing experiment found elsewhere in this Magazine.

S/SGT. ROBERT P. JUNGBLUTH of Arlington, with the Air Forces in England, by complete disregard for his own safety saved the lives of at least two of his comrades and thereby lost his right arm. The letter lauding their son, who is radio man and gunner on a bomber, came to his parents from the Division's chaplain. A note by the censor added: "Please pray for all of us." Details of this action could not be revealed. — *Fremont Tribune*, 3/31/43.

On April 6th the Silver Star was awarded "for gallantry in action . . . on a B-24 airplane on a bombing mission over Germany, 28 February 1943." The citation continues:

"Displaying great courage, skill and presence of mind under most hazardous conditions, Sergeant Jungbluth revived the left waist gunner, unconscious from lack of oxygen. . . . Immediately thereafter the bomber was attacked by a large force of enemy fighter planes, whereupon Sergeant Jungbluth manned the left waist gun, destroyed one ME-109, and continued to fight heroically until critically wounded by an exploding 20 MM. cannon shell." These wounds brought him also the Purple Heart.

Later, the release of details revealed that this bombing mission was over Wilhelmshaven. "The Epic Story of the *Night Raider*" (*Night Raider* was the name of their plane) was told in *Liberty Magazine* of June 26, 1943, with photos of the crew.

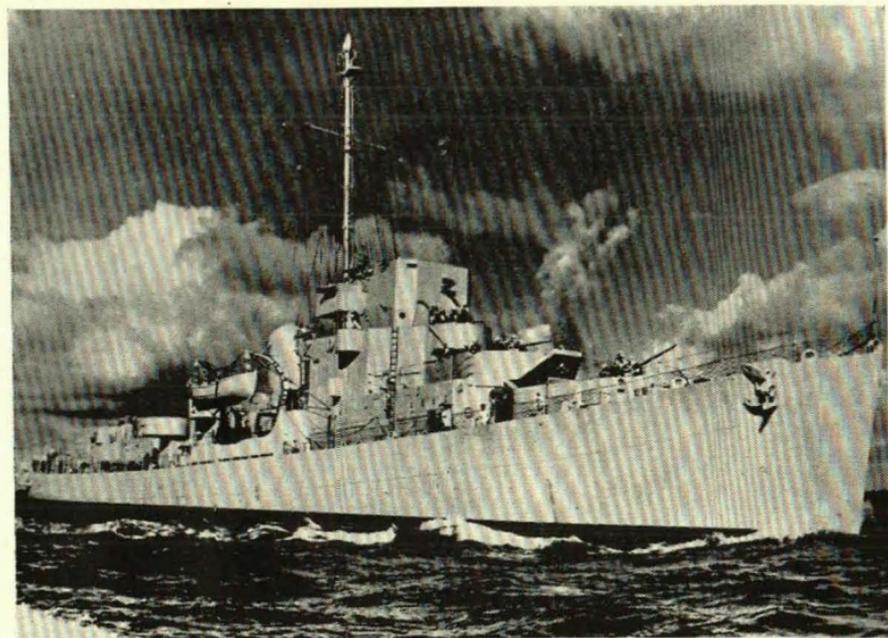
CAPT. ROBERT DAVIES of Wilber has received the Purple Heart and oak-leaf cluster for service and wounds in Sicily. During that invasion his unit marched 54 miles in 36 hours without sleep and then, with no time for rest, engaged the enemy for ten hours. — *Seward Independent*, 9/1/43.

MAJOR WAYNE THURMAN of Broken Bow won the Army Air Medal and oak-leaf clusters (five, now) "for outstanding service in duty of great responsibility," as well as the Silver Star award for senior pilots. In one of the first units assigned to the North African campaign, he has an impressive record of combat and special flying, and has been frequently in Iraq, Iran, Egyptian Sudan, Nigeria and England. — *Broken Bow Chief*, 9/2/43.

"THE U. S. S. DON O. WOODS" is the proud name borne by a destroyer escort vessel recently christened in honor of this Navy Corpsman from Wymore, hospital apprentice first class, killed instantly while giving first aid to several wounded Marines. Though repeatedly warned of his peril he pressed on into the sea near a rock cliff where hostile snipers endangered our troops. There, twenty-five yards from those menacing but hidden guns, he gave medical assistance and comfort to the helpless men until he himself was struck down. This was during the battle of the Solomons on August 8, 1942. His action was witnessed by Captain Paul Heinz Jr. of the U. S. Marine Corps, who wrote:

"Don was attached to my company when we landed on Gavatu. My platoon was first to gain the beach. Don was in the second platoon, but I soon lost track of him.

"About an hour later, advancing around the edge of the island, we became engaged in a fire fight with some Japs hidden in caves and rocks along the beach. Then I saw Don again. He came over in the thick of the fight to help Vincent in caring for



Courtesy Dravo Corporation, Pittsburgh

THE DESTROYER ESCORT *Woods*

my men. Vincent was killed by a burst from a machine gun, then Don was fired on as he ran to the rescue and he fell, mortally wounded."

The Silver Star, for conspicuous gallantry and intrepid conduct under fire, was awarded to Apprentice Woods in October 1943. He is entitled also to the American Defense Service Medal, the Asiatic-Pacific Area Campaign Medal, and the Presidential Unit Citation awarded the First Marine Division.

SGT. HARVEY W. CALAME of Scottsbluff is entitled to wear the Distinguished Flying Cross, the Air Medal, the Asiatic-Pacific Theater Medal with three stars, each representing his part in a major engagement; the American Theater Medal, the Good Conduct Medal, and a pre-Pearl Harbor medal.

It is doubtful if he wears any of them often, for he is about the most thoroughly modest fellow you could meet anywhere. In fact, his parents did not know he had won the DFC until notified by this paper.

Sergeant Calame, an aerial engineer with a B-17 bombardment squadron, says most of his action centered around the Solomons "when it was pretty hot down there." The various missions were successful, and not a man was lost. Although he would not tell about any specific raids, he did say this much: "We helped pound Munda to the ground until our troops finally took it. We did our best to harass the Japs." — *Scottsbluff Star-Herald*, 9/17/43.

CAPT. DEAN H. DRAEMEL of Fremont, bomber pilot on a B-25 (and also a second cousin of Rear Admiral Milo F. Draemel, who in July 1944 received the DSM), has been awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross "for extraordinary achievement while participating in aerial flight in the North African theater of operations." The citation continues:

"On 23d February, 1943, Captain Draemel led his flight of three B-25s in a low-level attack on an enemy convoy in the Sicilian straits. In the face of intense fire from an anti-aircraft barge and two naval escort vessels, and repeatedly attacked by fourteen hostile fighters, he courageously held to his course, en-

abling his bombardiers to score direct hits on a 500-foot merchantman, which sank a short time thereafter. Captain Draemel then expertly piloted his plane to protect a crippled bomber which was about to be attacked. . . . His outstanding leadership and conspicuous gallantry have reflected great credit upon himself and the armed forces of the United States." — *Fremont Tribune*, 10/8/43.

LT. M. GRANT MAUK of Hastings, co-pilot of a bomber, has now added to his Purple Heart the Distinguished Flying Cross for his work in Britain and North Africa. In a raid on Tunis he helped bring his plane back to safety after one engine had been knocked out and most of the tail controls shot away. The enemy fighters stopped only when they ran out of ammunition. "When their last gun ceased firing, their planes were so close that we could see their looks of surprise when the B-26 wouldn't fall." — *Hastings Tribune*, 9/3/43.

HENRY J. LEWON, formerly of Elkhorn, Fireman on the U.S.S. *Kanawha*, an oil tanker, has been awarded the Purple Heart for wounds received during the battle of Guadalcanal. Its presentation was a special on a graduation program at the Great Lakes Station.

The record shows that Lewon was on duty in the fire-room of the tanker when nearly a hundred Jap bombers and Zeros attacked. . . . Three bombs were direct hits on the *Kanawha*, but Lewon and a shipmate survived the blast. He was standing under the main oil feedline to the burners when the first bomb fell; as a result he was severely wounded and lost the sight of one eye. . . . Men on the beach who had been watching the ship observed that she was sinking slowly but burning faster, so they decided to tow the ship to beach and fight the fire. When the rescue party came aboard, Lewon and his shipmate hammered and hollered until they were heard. An enlisted man in the party, who had served on the *Kanawha* two years before, knew of an out-of-the-way hatch giving entrance into the pump room. Knocking off its top, they lowered lines to the trapped men and pulled them out just before the ship sank. — *Waterloo Gazette*, 12/31/43.

HAROLD FRANKLIN KINZER of Albion, gunner's mate with the U.S.S. *Atlanta*, is the proud possessor of a citation signed by Frank Knox, Secretary of the Navy, "delivered with congratulations" to each member of the crew of that splendid ship in her final engagement, which lasted but thirteen minutes. The story is eloquently told in the citation itself: no further words are needed to complete the graphic picture. We quote from the *Albion Argus* of December 2, 1943:

THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES takes pleasure in presenting the Presidential Unit Citation of the

UNITED STATES SHIP *Atlanta*

for service as set forth in the following

CITATION: For outstanding performance during action against enemy Japanese forces off Guadalcanal Island, November 12-13, 1942. Struck by one torpedo and no less than 49 shells, the *Atlanta*, after sinking an enemy destroyer and repeatedly hitting a cruiser which later went down, gallantly remained in battle under auxiliary power with one-third of her crew killed or missing, her engine room flooded and her topside a shambles. Eventually succumbing to her wounds after the enemy had fled in defeat, she left behind her a heroic example of invincible fighting spirit.



Courtesy "Our Navy Magazine," Brooklyn

THE UNITED STATES SHIP *Atlanta*

Much later, his parents received a letter giving a glimpse of what goes on in the mind of a soldier though few ever reveal it. That letter was set into type for the previous issue of this Magazine but could not be used there—nor now. Our readers will find it in full in the *Albion Argus* of July 6th.

S/SGT. HAROLD VAN OYEN of Madison was honored in an impressive ceremony at the Scribner Air Base on January 13th, when the Air Medal was awarded for valorous deeds in aerial combat and the Purple Heart for the wounds that cost him his life. His mother received the medals from Major Robert L. Fisher, in command at the Base, assisted by members of his staff. A formation of enlisted men took part in this service, paying silent tribute to their fellow member. Later, on the flying field, a squadron of pilots roared low over the field in salute.

But Mrs. Van Oyen, who had lost her husband only three days before the notice of her son's death, still refuses to believe he is gone. The fatal wounds were received on his fifth mission over German-occupied Europe. — *Fremont Tribune*, 1/14/44.

LT. KENNETH DROWN of Seward, dental officer for a field artillery unit, has been decorated for heroism in Tunisia. In a single day he descended into a 120-foot well under air attack to free a soldier who proved to be dead—but did recover his body; then after dark he and a comrade drove fifteen miles into enemy territory, voluntarily, and brought out two ambulances left behind when the Nazi attack swept over the Sidi Bouzi area. The pair again went back and returned with a self-propelled howitzer and a half-track loaded with ammunition. — *Seward Independent* 3/19/43.

PVT. FREDERICK R. PRELL of Anselmo, across the world from Lieutenant Drown, also received the soldier's medal for heroism by going down into a well to save the life of a comrade. This well was only 21 feet deep, but it was filled with carbon monoxide fumes. In spite of that, Prell and the three who worked with him (not Nebraskans) managed to rescue the unconscious soldier.

The medals were awarded by Maj. Gen. Simon Buckner, Jr., defense commander in the Alaskan theater. — *Beatrice Sun*, 3/19/43.