

## World War Two Days by Ed Lamb

Using faded memories and available facts here is the story of Edgar R Lamb ASN 18194942. Neither saint nor sinner; neither hero nor coward; it is a story like millions of others. But, like fingerprints, the experience of each individual is unique.

In the fall of 1942 I was attending Capitol Hill Junior College, in Oklahoma City, having graduated from high school in August. The war was underway and A-20 attack bombers from Will Rogers Field could be seen through the school windows as they trained. The urge to join the war effort overcame my academic interest. The Aviation Cadet program accepted recruits to sign up at age 17. In January 1943 I took tests to join the program. The test score combined correct answers and elapsed time. Since I was late getting to my paper route, I finished in about half the allotted time, which resulted in a high score. On January 29, 1943 I was enlisted on inactive status since I could not be active until age 18. At that time it was over a one year wait before people were called up.

Soon thereafter I talked to Navy recruiters. They said it was possible to transfer to the Navy flight program because I was not yet sworn in to the Army Air Corps. The Navy gave me a train ticket to Ft. Worth. After a quick check there I was rejected because of bad teeth so I caught the next train home.

On March 23, 1943 at 6:30 PM I received a phone call instructing me to report for duty on March 25. It was the final training class before cadets were first sent to a college for initial training. Most of the next day was spent checking out of school and saying good-byes.

On March 25th, I reported at 8:00 AM for medical checks and paperwork and ended with a swearing in ceremony. That evening we boarded a train for the Aviation Cadet Center in San Antonio. Except for week long visits to friends and relatives it was my first time away from home. I did not know a single person. One of the cadets had worked as an ambulance attendant. He entertained us with tales of picking up the victims of A-20 crashes in baskets. As the train clicked along a few doubts about the future came to mind.

The next month passed in quarantine. The usual basic processing occurred. Military haircut, shots, and more tests. The doctors conferred about my sway back. It was most impersonal standing naked while several doctors discussed my back. We learned close order marching. I tried to make a special drill team but my walk has a bounce and regardless of how perfectly I marched my head always bobbed up and down in the formation. I qualified for Navigator, Bombardier and Pilot training. My lowest score was Pilot but that was my choice without hesitation.



We entered Pre-flight training in San Antonio in the Class of 44A, which would be the first class to graduate in 1944. Aviation Cadet training was meant to instill total discipline and an honor code. The days began with reveille and we fell in formation ten minutes later for inspection. Spit polished shoes and uniforms crisp. A few weeks later we were issued shorts for hot weather. The shorts were cavalry riding breeches cut off at the knee and all size 44. With my 26-inch waist the shorts were never unbuttoned and could be put on like a sack and cinched in place with the belt - saving a few precious seconds.

Pre-flight was 9 weeks divided into lower class and upper class. Lower class lived downstairs in the two story barracks. Hazing was prevalent although not official. Most every night I was called upstairs and put in a brace by the upper classmen. This is an extreme form of attention and sweat popped out immediately. Sometimes a

lighted cigarette was held close to my bare stomach but I couldn't suck it in another millimeter.

Classes went smoothly. My only problem was learning Morse code and passing the 10 word a minute test. But perseverance paid off. We had many college athletes in the program. One day we ran a 2 1/2 mile cross country for time. Only two college track people beat me but I learned what shin splints were as I limped for the next two weeks.

A bad molar sent me to the dentist. The office was a wooden building with several rooms. Each room contained four dentists. After a brief exam the dentist extracted the tooth. It wasn't easy. When he looked at the tooth it had roots heading in all directions. He was overcome with his success. Still holding the tooth in his forceps he showed it to the other dentists in the room then raced through the building showing off his trophy. Neglected, meanwhile, I could only wait and spit.

Next stop was Primary flight training at Victory Field, Vernon, TX. The barracks were one story brick and much nicer than San Antonio. Food service was also much better. We no longer had to sit at rigid attention as we ate.

My first flight ever was with my instructor on June 30, 1943. He gave me the controls briefly. What a feeling! Training proceeded normally. On July 11th I soloed. It was not a special experience. We simply took off and circled the field in the traffic pattern to land again. During this time of first solos we used auxiliary fields. One of the cadets made his first solo. On landing he came down too soon and dipped into the corn tassels well short of the runway. Gunning his engine he circled again. Meantime the instructors cleared the field of all traffic. Twice more he grazed the corn field before finally making a lousy landing. Afterwards