

he was called Crash Gold.

The following days were spent in a combination of dual and solo flight. Solo flying was the greatest of pleasures. To fly away from the field and practice loops, lazy eights, stalls and tailspins was pure joy and a sense of absolute freedom.

Much of the instructor's time was spent teaching the feel of an approaching stall. At altitude a stall was not a problem. We intentionally stalled and followed this with a spin in order to practice recovery procedure. Stalls were very dangerous at low levels. The plane crashes before control can be regained. Another emphasis was instilling a constant vigilance for loss of power and locating an emergency-landing site. At any time the instructor would cut the throttle and we were expected to find a perfect landing place and land upwind without risking a stall. After a few times a little trick was to let the student almost touch down before giving full throttle. Just when you were gaining altitude and patting yourself on the back for a great emergency landing the instructor would again cut the throttle. This time there would be a fence or trees dead ahead.

One day the instructor took me to an auxiliary field that we had all to ourselves. He got out and told me to practice touch and go landings. On one of the landings I was too far down the grass runway. When I started to give it full throttle I thought I was too close to the end of the runway and chose to abort the take-off. As I approached the edge of the field I ground looped and the engine died. The instructor walked across the field in blistering July weather to restart the engine. That may have led to the end of my career.

All good things must come to an end. When the last cadets had washed out and it was smooth sailing ahead there was another check ride. This time I was told that I had washed out of Primary for flying deficiency. My last flight was August 5th.

My next stop was Sheppard Field at nearby Wichita Falls. From the best to the worst. On arrival the First Sergeant gathered us on wooden bleachers and laid down his law. He was built like a fireplug and challenged anyone to step forward if they wished to question his authority. The balance of August was spent in survival. Because of a drought the water tasted and smelled terrible. A water fountain in the barracks was wired on all the time. To get a drink it was necessary to hold your breath when within ten feet.

Sheppard Field was a place with nothing to do but wait. Naturally, the Army Air Corps had to do something so we were marched out to the drill field every day for close order marching. Dust was so thick that you could not see the end of the formation and sometimes not even that voice bellowing out commands. With my developing street smarts it was time for action. On a trip to the dispensary for a routine medical checkup I saw a pad of appointment slips on the reception desk. Every morning after that I handed my appointment slip for a chest x-ray to the drill sergeant and was excused from formation.

The problem was to goof off all day without rousing the interest of MPs. And, how to stay cool. Since there was no money to buy cold drinks in the PX I discovered a special place. The PX was a large building raised about three feet off the ground. In the center was a refrigerated room and a curtain of ice water dripping down around it. Each day I turned in my x-ray slip and took a pocket book over to the PX where I relaxed in my private hide-away.

In September I was sent to Aerial Gunnery School at Tyn-

dall Field, Panama City, Florida. There we were housed in buildings with 10 men to a room. The grouping was alphabetic so my roommates' names began with "K" or "U". One fellow came from Milwaukee where his father owned a cheese factory. Once a week a large box came to him filled with snacks. Delicious! Tyndall Field had a snow white beach. Except for a lot of seaweed in the surf it was a perfect playground.

Several of the guys went to the PX every night to drink beer. One of the stay at homes complained loudly about the disturbance when they returned late. One night as the beer drinkers were crawling into their bunks there was a massive splattering sound. For an hour the complainer carried on about the terrible smell. Next morning we learned that someone had filled a helmet with water and poured it from his top bunk.

Being a lowly Private I drew guard duty twice. Once it was at the motor pool on a cold night. I quickly located an ambulance that was the ideal place to stand (sit) guard duty. The other time I was taken to the gunnery range about 4 miles from the Field. It was the darkest most isolated place in the world. Armed with a shotgun I could hear an occasional car on the distant highway. Nothing but dark shapes and weird sounds. If someone had dared to approach I would probably have shot him first and then said "Halt".

Our training was fun. We fired shotguns on a skeet range and rode in the back of a pickup in a special metal frame that allowed us to stand. As the truck drove along a winding trail, skeet targets were launched from every direction. We had one flight in a Hudson bomber to shoot at a towed target. It was the only flight on which I had a queasy stomach. Later I found out that everyone who had the greasy mock turtle soup for lunch had the same problem.

In November, wearing shiny Gunners Wings, I was sent to Salt Lake City with a 10-day delay enroute to go home. I had left my friend from Milwaukee as our train passed through Memphis. Later I discovered that I had picked up his B-4 bag from the vestibule at the end of the rail car when I got off. During the trip he had moved his bag and they all looked alike. The stationmaster was able to telegraph the train and my bag arrived home in a couple of days.

The base was outside of town, maybe in Provo. We spent a few weeks there while Headquarters shuffled papers. Finally in late November we gathered at the rail station and names were called out for the various positions on a bomber crew. That was the formation of the crew of the Archangel. We then boarded the train bound for Peterson Field, Colorado Springs, CO.

Our crew consisted of Paul J Schiappacasse- Pilot, Louis Pacheco-Bombardier, Walter Scheurs-Engineer, Marion G Young-Radio Operator, James E Rook-Ball Gunner, Leo Raymond Bolduc-Nose Gunner, Walter T Trechok-Armorer and Waist Gunner and me Tail Gunner. Because Schiappacasse was a B-17 Pilot and not checked out on B-24s we were assigned a new Pilot, Curtis G Green, Jr.

Colorado was very pretty when we arrived about the first of December. There were several inches of snow on the ground but it was so dry that it brushed off like sugar. Pikes Peak was visible nearby.

About two weeks later Trechok asked me to go to Denver with him. He had gone to Armorer School at Lowery Field and knew a couple of girls in Denver. We hitchhiked the 75 miles and