Chapter 1 – Boys to Airmen

October 1941 – December 1942

Sitting in his favorite rocking chair, staring away at some distant scene of life that denied its very existence to me, Dad began hesitatingly to reminisce. A faint, teasing trail of his liquored breath hit me as I settled down - a long story was coming, I knew, and he was not prone to long stories.

"Let's go back to 1941... I went to Bangor. I hitchhiked to Bangor to sign up."

"Why'd you sign up?" I asked. Realizing I wasn't going anywhere, I tried to look a little less like a trapped animal. Tonight was a big night in my life; little I knew then, though. My father and I had begun the evening arguing over something, and the actual rift had been hazy in the left-over smoke of young rebellion and adult authority - something about the car? Current events? Who knows? The topic of his youth had entered the discussion and stopped everything. I saw the 'when I was your age' look appear on his face as he tranquilized himself on what must have been vivid pictures of an important time.

"Why did I sign up?" he went on. "Well, why didn't I sign up? One reason was, I didn't want to be drafted. I wanted to join, on my own. I wanted to go into the Air Force as a pilot, but unfortunately at that time, if you were foreign born you didn't count."

We can't be sure how much being foreign born influenced his placement in the military, but that's obviously how he felt about it. What was the situation on the world scene in October 1941? In Europe, Hitler's armies and their allies had already invaded as far as Moscow in the east, overrun Scandinavia in the north, reached the Atlantic Ocean and English Channel in the west, and had been fighting in North Africa in the South for over a year. The Germans had also been bombing England almost as long. In the Pacific the Japanese were invading Asia and Southeast Asia. And what had the United States done thus far? We sent supplies to beleaguered nations (the ones that still existed) through the Lend Lease Act, and froze the financial assets of the Axis countries in the U.S.

There was a coalition of Allies in Europe in early 1940 and they were facing one of the most dangerous men the world had ever seen. We weren't in it yet. We stood by and watched as one-by-one, sovereign nations were invaded and conquered – telling ourselves that it wasn't our problem – that the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans would save us. The Axis powers in Europe had essentially reached their zenith in expansion and had already set in motion the process for systematically eradicating inferior races (including their own sick and disabled). And on the other side of the globe, Japan would soon turn its attention on us.

For some Americans it was too much to stand. Most of the people already in the armed services by late 1941 were career people or those who had just joined to serve a regular term. Others had responded to the President's vague 'temporary emergency' proclamation. However, there were a few individuals who saw the real storm clouds coming, and for them the United States wasn't moving fast enough. A few Americans served in the British and Canadian RAFs while others, like Dad, signed up early in the US armed services; not just to serve a term, but because they could see what was coming and wanted to get in early. So in this light, perhaps the proper question was not why did he sign up; but rather, where was the rest of America?

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October 1941

Dad settled into a hypnotic tone of voice - very slow and very deliberate.

"So I didn't get to go to cadet school. I wanted to be a pilot. They took me in… but not what I wanted… I wanted to be a pilot." As he went on, the speech impediment imposed on him by the night's refreshments (every night he had refreshments) became less and less irritating. Soon it was an integral part of the narrative. Dad's Enlisted Record indicates that the actual date of recruitment was October 6, 1941 at Portland, Maine. He was 5' 6" and weighed 150 pounds. Before being allowed to enlist, he had to procure a copy of 's certificate of citizenship as proof that he was an American; which he carried in his kit throughout the war.

"But that's part of living, I guess… you have to accept what comes," he said. "If you can't make it, you have to accept it, which makes quite a bit of difference. Well, finally they accepted me into the Air Force. I didn't even know then that it was part of the regular army."

That puzzled me. I didn't realize that he meant 'regular' versus 'volunteer/draft' army.

"It was just as much of a surprise to me as to you," he said. "So, when one got in the pay line every month - for that whole $2l.00 dollars; everybody stood in line, and here I was, ahead of master sergeants and staff sergeants who weren't regular army. They came under a different category 'cause they signed up after a certain time. I signed up just before they changed the categories. So that made me a wheel without a deal."

Though I was a little mixed up, I could with effort, understand him. My plans for the evening were forgotten. The night became still as if to listen to our two voices; mine questioning, his releasing. Usually by this time of the day, he was asleep in his favorite chair. Tonight, however, he was awake and starting to talk.

"Well, anyway, I went from Bangor down to Ayers, Mass., Fort Devens, there. I had to take different intelligence and physical tests, and 'what-have-you.'"

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Gus, the recruit *(Scrapbook).*

November 1941

"And from there they sent me to that 'beautiful,' 'lovely' place in Missouri, Fort Jefferson. They finally condemned it. Drew Pearson put the right word on it: 'Concentration Camp of the U.S.' And I mean it was rough."

"Why?"

"Why? All right. You pick up your tent in the morning and go pitch it somewhere else. Then, the next morning at 5:00 a.m. you go bring it back and pitch it. Meanwhile, when do you eat? I mean, if you're pitching a tent, how are you going to eat? So we go a day or so without eating. It's good for you, really. And this was before Hitler even thought about concentration camps [well, not really]. We had them here. Boy, after you'd spent six weeks there, you knew you'd been through something. There were quite a few guys that committed suicide there. They were hanging themselves and doing everything you could think of."

"Why?"

"Because they couldn't take it. It was too rough. Actually, the camp officers were very 'off the ball.' They didn't know what was going on. Now our sergeant in our area was what he thought was a real tough guy. Of course, you've got to realize now that we were only 18 or l9 years old. So to us a guy 24 years old with stripes was a big wheeler dealer, and he pushed it. And that's what happened. Nobody bothered him."

"How many suicides happened while you were there?"
"About 13."
"How long were you there?"


Private Gus, the Armorer
(Courtesy of Bernadette Karter)

"About six weeks. That's a pretty good average, huh? But all those kids that actually committed suicide, they had been drafted and were stuck, you know? With the deal? And they couldn't accept it. 'Course the majority of us were volunteers and we knew we had to take a beating. It makes a big difference you know between draftees and volunteers. 'Course they didn't burn draft cards in those days, they didn't dare to. It was a funny life there actually because you had no choice, really. You could be drafted, or you could volunteer. That was your choice. One way or the other, you were going in and that was it. You stop back and think, there were 16 million boys in the service when I was in England. You know? That's a lot of people! Sixteen million! You don't pick them up right off the street; not today, anyway."

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December 1941

"And in December '41, from Fort Jefferson I went to Lowry Field in Denver, Colorado, which is the Air Force Academy now. When I went there, I went to school as an armorer. They also had a photography school there, and fact is, we had a guy come into the Shop [Dad's upholstery shop in Skowhegan, Maine] this afternoon that went through Lowry as a photographer. You never know when you're gonna meet somebody. I spent six months there. I should have gotten three stripes, but I didn't."

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As Gus began his armament training, the country was suddenly at war. On December 7th, 1941, the "Day of Infamy," the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor. In the first wave, 214 Japanese aircraft swooped down on the unsuspecting American fleet and began to destroy it, beginning at 0750 hours (ten minutes to eight in the morning). The surprise was complete. In the first wave almost every US aircraft was destroyed or damaged and seven battleships were put out of commission. After the second wave attacked the entire US Pacific Fleet was out of action.[1]

If the Japanese commander, Admiral Nagumo, who did not understand air power, had allowed the attack to continue, the American aircraft carrier *Enterprise* could have been added to the death toll as well as the huge oil tank reserves and repair facilities which were left intact. Without these reserves and facilities, the US Navy would have had to retreat back to the American mainland. Two American aircraft carriers escaped the slaughter but it would be a long time before the Japanese would feel the might of American sea power.[2]

Ironically, the Japanese commander who had planned the raid, Admiral Yamamoto, had attended Harvard University in the US, and was possibly the only person in the Japanese military who understood what had been really accomplished. He feared that they had merely awakened 'a sleeping giant.' He was right. On the other side of the globe, another astute man also understood what had been accomplished. After receiving the news of Pearl Harbor Winston Churchill felt very relieved, "Being saturated and satiated with emotion and sensation, I went to bed and slept the sleep of the saved and thankful."[3] He knew that America would be joining the war, and that made him hopeful – and to show his support he declared war on Japan even before we did. Back in the

[1] *Warplanes and Air Battles of World War II*, Beekman House NY, BPC Publishing,1973, 69.
[2] Warplanes, 62.
[3] Warplanes, 69.

States, Americans everywhere were thoroughly enraged. The next day, on the 8th, while millions of people listened on their radios, Congress unanimously declared war on Japan, and as an afterthought, also declared war on Germany. This challenge was tantamount to a declaration of war to the death. The Germans returned a declaration of War on the US three days later on December 11th. The major allies were Britain, Russia, and the USA, versus Germany, Italy, and Japan. The Free World had opposed Hitler's New Order and Japan's Greater East-Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere. But things did not look good. The Germans were outside Moscow and Leningrad and the Japanese seemed unstoppable in the Pacific.[4]

When the Japanese struck, the US only had a small Air Force of about 100,000 men and 1,157 combat planes spread out all over the world. Of the 526 planes stationed in Hawaii and the Philippines, only 176 were left after the first few days of combat.[5] The officer in charge of the Air Force in the Philippines reported that his command consisted of "twenty airplanes, a lot of trucks and five thousand kids without a leader."[6] America needed an Air Force and it needed it fast. How to create new schools and fill them with recruits; and then train them adequately for war was the awesome task taken on by the USAAF. And how to create fighting squadrons from boys barely out of high school with such a small cadre of experienced men, was an equally daunting challenge. At this point, not even one airman had yet been trained as an aerial gunner. "The job was treated as nonessential."[7]

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January-April 1942

By mid-January the Germans had begun a U-boat campaign along the American east coast. Despite that, by January 26th, the first American forces were already arriving in England. But mainly, during this period the US worked on expanding our armed forces – thousands of men were recruited and hastily trained. And while these preparations were underway, setbacks continued to befall the troops already in the field. On April 9th, 1942, US and Filipino troops on Bataan surrendered and began their infamous Death March. After the surrender, only fourteen B-17s managed to escape from the Philippines to safety in Australia.[8]

To raise American morale, General Jimmy Doolittle made a daring raid on Tokyo with sixteen B-25 bombers that took off from the aircraft carrier *Hornet* on April 18th. In military terms, the effect was minimal but Americans got a 'boost' and the very surprised Japanese got a 'black-eye;' but still only a small portent of what was yet to come. An air raid drill was being practiced inTodyo as Doolittle's B-25s flew by at 1,000 feet. But the surprise was total. They hit oil storage tanks, factories and military installations in four cities, Tokyo, Kobe, Yokahama, and Nagoya. One bomb hit the aircraft carrier "Ryuho." Doolittle reported that the results had "far exceeded the most optimistic expectations."[9] Amazingly, the one American who did not get a morale boost out of the Tokyo raid was Jimmy Doolittle himself. His squadron was spread out all over the oriental map and most of his men had been captured or killed. It was a miracle he and most of his crew had survived. As a squadron commander he felt he had been a total failure.

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May 1942

Gus graduated from armament school on May 2nd, 1942. Towards the end of his stay at Lowry, he wrote a letter to the Independent-Reporter – the local newspaper in Skowhegan, Maine:

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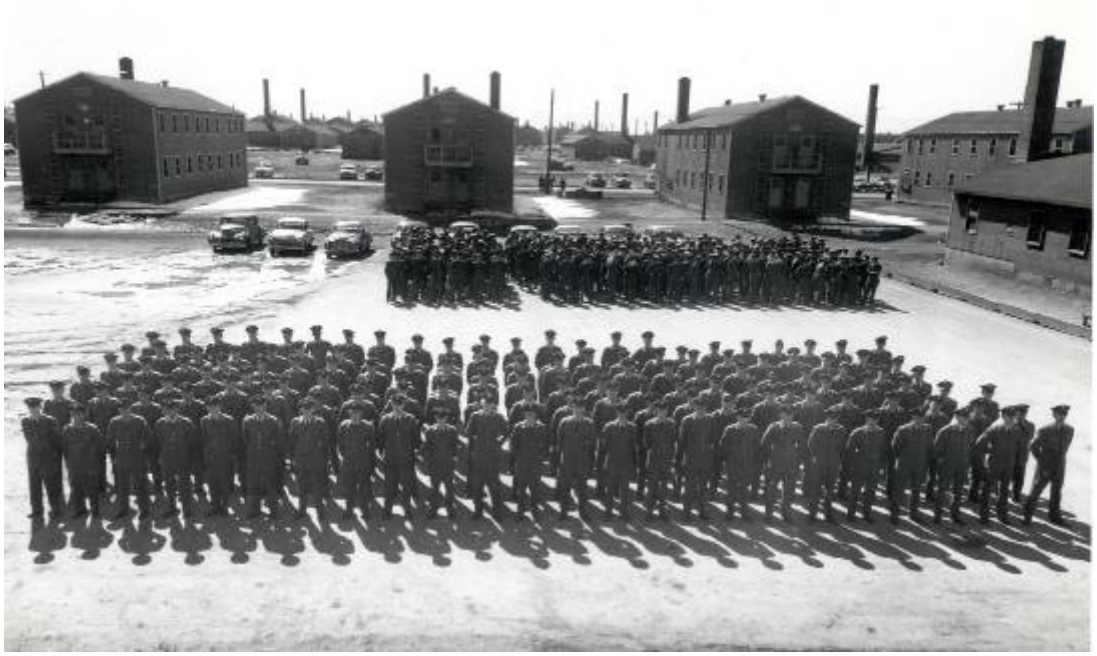
[4] Warplanes, 69.
[5] Online USAF Museum.
[6] Geofrey Perret, *Winged Victory*, 145.
[7] Perret, *Winged Victory*, 124.
[8] Online USAF Museum.
[9] Warplanes, 78.

I wish to thank you very much for sending me your newspaper. I find it very interesting and it helps me to keep up with what is going on around my home town. I have been gone for seven months now and I find through your paper that there are already many changes made in the old home town.

The people here in Denver are treating all of us very fine but they cannot be like those at home. So thank you again for thinking of me and for your paper.

"Keep 'em flying." Pvt. Gaston G. Poulin.[10]

"Keep 'em flying" was a byword for US Air Force ground crews everywhere.



Gus at Lowry Field (he's in there somewwhere) *(Scrapbook).*

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Gus continued his narration.

"And from there I went down to Meridian, Mississippi, should call it another name, and then, Jackson. I remember the train ride – 2 ½ days! And I don't mean with a bunk. It was on a coach, not a Pullman... and we slept on the floor, without sleeping bags. Well, when I was down in Jackson, Jimmy Doolittle was planning a special mission. I had hoped to go, but I had only been there a couple of weeks. Remember that raid on Japan?"

"Ya (*Thirty Seconds over Tokyo*)." I replied.

"If I had been there a little longer, I might've had a chance to get in. I had experience as an armorer, but I hadn't been on the flight-line long enough. He picked out 16 crews. It was a real hush-hush deal. Fact is, we didn't even hear from them afterwards."

In Meridian, some men who had been training for B-25s and the new men just out of training schools were put together in groups, and at this point, Gus thought he would serve as ground crew for a B-25 unit.

"This was '42, after we got our big raise from $21.00 a month to $50.00. You try to live on it. Oh ya, the first time I ever pulled any KP was there, in Jackson, only I didn't pull it very long. I gave up on it - just quit. We didn't have to, so I didn't. We were technicians... ah... specialists unspecialized."

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[10] Gus Poulin's Scrapbook.

ARMY INTELLIGENCE: The Military Intelligence Division of the Army got this message the other day, and it was some time before the officers discovered it was not a code but a proverb. Are YOU smarter'n them? "Inhabitants of domiciles of vitreous formation with lapidary fragments should not perform jactation."[11] (People who live in glass houses should not throw stones.)

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June 1942

On June 4th, 1942, the Battle of Midway took place in the middle of the Pacific Ocean. It was clearly a US victory, stopping the Japanese invasion force headed for Midway Island, a small American base in the middle of the Pacific Ocean. But although we blunted the Japanese advance we didn't stop them altogether. The US and Japan would trade blows, engaging in see-saw air and naval battles, including land assaults, for at least another two years. During the battle there was a little-publicized episode in which four B-26 Marauders - the only four available on Midway took part in the air attack against the Japanese fleet. One, piloted by Captain Jim Muri launched his torpedoe at a carrier and flew over the flight deck to avoid the ship's anti-aircraft guns. But what impressed him the most was the size of the carrier's battle flag. Two of the four Marauders were shot down.[12]

Willis L. Brainard

In June, 1942, the men slated for Marauder service were sent to their first phase of training. Two B-25 groups were sent to Barksdale Field in Louisiana and MacDill Field in Florida. These were the two main training sites for B-26 crews.[13]

Gus said, "Well, from there, I ended up down in Tampa, Florida, at MacDill Field - breaking in green pilots. We had to fly with 'em, you know? And most of these guys would come out and look at a B-26 and (gasp!), 'Does that thing really fly?'" When the Marauder appeared at the early training bases it was deemed the "most advanced bomber in its class." However, the design enhancements were too radical for any but the "best pilots and mechanics."[14]

"Anytime anybody took-off," Gus related, "they had to have a full crew. So my job was just sitting up back and sweating out the guy in front. That's where I met Willie."

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Willis Lee Brainard, aka "Willie," was born in Bozeman, Montana, the fourth child of five. He went to school in Chinook, playing football and basketball and graduating in the spring of 1941. After that, he bummed around all summer, riding on railroad cars, and decided to join the Army Air Force just a few days before Thanksgiving. He was to report for duty in January, 1942, but after Pearl Harbor he was called in earlier. His enlisted record indicates he mustered in on December 23rd, 1941. He was 5' 6" and weighed 171 pounds. He went to basic training at Shepard Field in Wichita, Texas, and then went to MacDill Field, Florida, where he trained as a flight engineer.

"What does an engineer do on a plane?" I asked him.

"You transfer fuel," Willie said. "At MacDill Field, I used to stand behind the pilot and the rookie. My job was to make sure he didn't do anything wrong. One time this new guy reached for the flaps, but he reached too far down and was about to grab the lever that let down the landing gear. I slapped his hand and he got pretty mad. 'How dare you…' he says. He went to Captain Travis, the squadron commander, and complained. 'Did he break your wrist?' Travis asked him.

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[11] Gus Poulin's Scrapbook.
[12] b-26marauderarchive.org.
[13] Roger A. Freeman, *B-26 Marauder at War*, Charles Scribner's Sons, NY, 30.
[14] Freeman, *B-26 Marauder at War*, 6, introduction.

'No,' he said. 'Well, he should have,' says Travis. That officer never mentioned it again. Travis told me about it, later."

Then Willie asked me, "Where'd you get that 'Willie' stuff?"

I was at a loss. "From my Dad," I said.

"Ya, he started that," Willie replied. "I made the mistake of telling him my home town nickname and pretty soon it was all over the squadron. My name was Willis Lee but my sister's called me Will Lee and that turned into Willie."

"Well, what do you call yourself?" I asked.

"Lee," he replied.

Apparently he had not heard the name 'Willie' in a long, long time.

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Samuel M. Findley

Another enlisted man who flew with the pilot trainees at MacDill Field was Samuel M. Findley from Mount Vernon, Texas – people just called him 'Tex.' He was six feet tall and weighed 130 pounds. Sam had been working as an airplane mechanic for a school for British R.A.F. flight trainees when Pearl Harbor was attacked. He signed up immediately and did his basic training at Shepard Field and then went to Aerial Gunnery School at Harlingen, Texas. Tall for a gunner (there was a 5' 10" maximum height and 150 pound weight limit), Tex 'squeezed-by' by bending his legs just a bit until he stood just under the maximum. So, compared to the others, he was tall and lanky and got some comments for it.

"Tex got a lot of ribbing," said Willie, "because he was so tall and skinny."

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About his experience at MacDill, Tex says, "MacDill Field was located on Tampa Bay and upon arrival there we were all billeted in tents on a section of the field called 'Tent City.' There were some beautiful twin engine airplanes lined up near the flight line of a type that I had never seen before. I asked someone what they were and was told 'those are B-26s. They are medium bombers called Marauders and are made by the Glenn L. Martin Co.' Boy! How I wished I could be a gunner on one of those. Some were flying around the field and they were noisy and seemed to be very fast."

Richard J. Travis
Captain, 453rd

"After we were in Tent City for a day or two," Tex continued, "we noted that no one came around and called the roll or otherwise checked on us or assigned us any duties. A few of us went up to headquarters to see what our status was. We gave an officer our names and after checking around he informed us that none of our records had arrived and that we should go back to 'Tent City' and await further orders. We went back and told the others what we had learned and several of them left and went 'absent without leave' (AWOL). Some were gone for up to two weeks and were never missed. I sure felt like going myself but I just couldn't bring myself to do it and besides I didn't want to risk losing my stripes. Time sure passed slow just laying around with nothing to do and I thought, 'Here we are with a war going on, and I'm an aerial gunner and should be out fighting those damned Japs, but I'm just here in this tent city laying on my butt.'" The squadron commander, Captain Travis, acknowledged the difficulty of throwing so

many men together into non-existent units and trying to make disciplined fighting squadrons out of them in such a short period of time.[15]

Tex continued, "After two or three weeks some NCO came and called some names (mine included) and told us to gather our gear and follow him. We got in an army truck that carried us to some permanent wooden barracks where we were to be billeted. I found out later that I had originally been sent to MacDill Field to join the 320th Bomb Group but they had become fully staffed and had departed for another airfield. The 320th Bomb Group finally ended up in North Africa. Our group was equipped with the airplanes that had been used by the 320th for training and they were in poor shape. My Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) was, because of my civilian experience, Airplane Mechanic Gunner and I was assigned to assist one of the new crew chiefs in our squadron in readying one of the aircraft for flight. We were in a race with the other crew chiefs to be the first to have their assigned aircraft operational. The crew chief who I was assisting was a recent graduate of an Army technical school, but he had never had any prior experience working on aircraft. His name was Eugene Pechon. We really worked hard and diligently and were the first crew to get our aircraft readied."

Eugene L. Pechon

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ARMY AIR FORCE MECHANIC REQUESTS: Hand me the fabric, dope. Put in the cowling, screw. Check the aileron, droop. Time that engine, Mag. Check that spark, plug. Watch that retainer, nut.[16]

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Col. Thatcher

Tex described what happened next, "We advised the Group Commander, Col. Thatcher, and Squadron Commander, Captain Travis when they arrived to fly the aircraft. Col. Thatcher questioned me as to the airworthiness of the plane and I assured him that it was ready for flight. He said, 'Get you a parachute and get on board.' Boy was I thrilled! This was the first multi-engine aircraft in which I had ever flown in and when it took off it accelerated with a surge of power that I could hardly believe. During flight Col. Thatcher shut one engine down, feathered the propeller, and flew around with only one of the two engines operating. I wasn't even aware that such a thing was possible in an airplane. After that first flight I flew as often as I could with whoever would take me along as engineer on a flight. Many of our flights were to the bombing range where hours were spent making bomb runs on a large circular target. The bombardiers, who were recent graduates from bombardier school, would release one sand-filled practice bomb on each bomb run. These practice bombs had a small powder charge which, on impact, would explode and indicate the impact point. Each bombardier strove to be the most proficient in getting his bombs closest to the bull's eye of the target."

The 323rd Group commander, Colonel Herbert B. Thatcher was a native of Orange, NJ. He had graduated from the U. S. Military Academy in 1932 and joined the Army Air Corps in 1936. He attended flying school at Randolph Field, TX, and, as part of the small cadre of seasoned Air Force officers, now found himself in command of a B-26 Marauder Bomb Group.

[15] John O. Moench, *Marauder Men*, Gen. (Ret.) Malia Enterprises, 1989, 22. Postwar comments of Richard V. Travis.
[16] Gus Poulin's Scrapbook.

Two Marauders ready for take-off *(Photo courtesy of W. L. Brainard).*

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William P. Zipperling

Another young man, who happened to have an unusual background, also joined the group at MacDill Field. His name was William Paul Robert Zipperling, and everyone called him "Zip." He was born in Hamburg, Germany on January 30, 1913, to parents Robert and Elise (Reddig) Zipperling. While he was in the German merchant marine, his mother arranged how he would escape from Germany. She contacted relatives in the United States and let them know that Zip would jump ship in New York Harbor and asked them to help him get settled in his new country. He was sixteen years old at the time. His parents remained in Hamburg. Zip became a naturalized citizen and had tried to join the U. S. Navy when hostilities broke out. They wouldn't take him because of his flat feet. He was about to be drafted so he entered the Army Air Force instead and trained to be a radio-gunner. He was older than most of the other enlisted men at MacDill, being 29 years old at the time.[17]

His wife, Lillian Zipperling described him:

"Bill Zipperling was a stubborn German with a soft heart. He didn't say very much but what he did say was final. What he wanted to do, he did; and when he laid down the law, that was it. Yet with this same stubbornness, he defended anyone or anything in trouble. He was the most loyal friend you could ever have and when he adopted you, you were his forever. His first adoption was a country…"

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Gus continued, "One pilot, an Indian… Boy! Could he fly that plane! [There were several native Americans in the Group.] He was a captain, training the rookies, and one day I just happened to be on his flight. I'm telling you, I took one look at that rookie and I knew we were going to be in for a rough time. You can tell when a guy's scared of a plane, just by the way he looks at it. Well, anyway, we were just cruising along and all of a sudden, we went into a flat spin – that's when the plane goes down in a spiral but it's still horizontal to the ground. When we were down to about 40 feet above the bay, the Indian hollers, 'Leggo! Gimme the wheel!' And he pulled

[17] From telephone conversations with Lillian Zipperling; and newspaper clippings sent by her.

us out of it. Brought the plane back, too. Boy, didn't he give that rookie hell. We wouldn't fly with that guy anymore."

The B-26 was quickly recognized as a 'hot' plane, which could only be flown safely by an equally 'hot' pilot. Because of this, a culture quickly developed in the B-26 aircrews in which they became very choosy about whom they would fly with, and whom they would not. In fact, for aircrewmen, it was a primary concern whenever joining a new crew. The B-26 was way ahead of other bombers in design and therefore in performance. It has been called "the Rolls Royce of combat airplabes." The engines were two 1,850 horse-power Pratt and Whitney R-2800 engines that could take the plane to 315mph. But what complicated things was that it had to be landed at 105mph or it would stall out. This is the same landing speed of modern jet fighters. Also the plane needed a 2500 foot runway to take off.[18]

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Gus remembered one of the men who had a musical inclination. "I remember another Indian who saw a piano for the first time, 'What's that?' he asks. 'It's a piano.' 'A what?' 'It makes music.' 'How?' 'Like this.' And we showed him how. He learned to play it, too. I mean he didn't learn to read music and everything, but he got to play pretty good by ear."

Gus wasn't bad at tickling-out a rousing 'boogie woogie' on the piano, either.

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Jack L. Boling

"We had a first sergeant," Willie said. "Jack Boling. Evidently he had been in the army since '39 or '40. Boling was one of those guys that when he got out of his bunk he was properly dressed, ready for inspection. He was our first sergeant in Tampa. Once, I kind of spouted-off to an officer. Boling took me aside and he said, 'Soldier, let me help you out.' (Willie sat upright as if standing at attention.) 'If you want to cuss-out an officer, this is how you do it' (laughing). And he drilled me on how to call an officer an SOB without ever saying the word and ending with 'Sir.' 'Sir, I think you are an SOB, Sir,' with perfect respect. Boling could tell any officer that without ever getting out of line. The officer might get upset but he couldn't do a damn thing."

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"That was a rough six weeks," Gus said about the time spent breaking in new pilots. "One rookie pilot came in for a landing at about l40 mph (normally it's supposed to be at about 120 mph) – hit the ground, bounced about 40 feet the first time, 30 feet the second time, 20 feet the third time, then out into Tampa Bay. We used to say 'One a day in Tampa Bay.' They even kept a crane at the end of the runway to pull them out with."

"That's why I hated rookie pilots," Willie said. "They just… did things too fast! I'd fly with anybody… except the rookies. If they needed an engineer and I wasn't on alert, I would go. But that was one of the jobs of the flight engineer. He sat there and watched. I had flown with quite a few other pilots, just to get better acquainted with the damn airplane."

"A spate of fatal accidents led to rumors of the Marauder being unsafe to fly, a cry taken up by the Press and politicians and exaggerated out of all proportion."[19]

Tex explained, "Many B-26 crashes were occurring at MacDill Field. The saying, 'One a day in Tampa Bay' was an exaggeration, but anyway it was bad. [Actually, it was about one a week[20]]. I just accepted it as a hazard of flying in military aircraft. Most of us in the flight crews began wearing identification bracelets, on our wrist, in addition to our official identification tags (dog tags) that we wore, on a chain, around our necks. Most of us had somewhat of a fatalistic

[18] Perret, *Winged Victory,* 94.
[19] Freeman, *B-26 Marauder at War,* 6, introduction.
[20] Perret, *Winged Victory*

attitude about flying. Most of the crashes were due to pilot's inexperience and some were due to faulty design problems that were soon corrected. I also participated in many navigational training flights made for the purpose of giving the navigators, who were fresh out of navigation school, more experience. Many of these flights were at night and over water in what is now known as the Bermuda Triangle."

"One plane disappeared completely," Gus said, "706 was the number. They never found it... it's either in the Gulf or in the Atlantic. I've seen nights, I'm not kidding you, you'd be there sittin' there watchin' 'em come in... Wham! Blow up! What reason? Nobody knew."

"Ever hear of a magneto?" Gus suddenly asked me. "It's like the battery in a car. We found out one morning that every mag had filings in it. Naturally, if you took off, it would be like flying without a battery. The airplane might get off the ground, but then it would start to stagger; and you can't glide a B-26 like you can a cub; B-26s have an 87 degree gliding angle. That's not far from straight down! I saw some of the boys in Europe get it, and of all the guys I saw, none came out of it. The wings would tear off. How're you going to fly with one wing?"

The Martin Marauder soon picked up many unofficial names besides *Widow Maker: Baltimore Whor*e (named for the factory in Baltimore), the *Flying Prostitute* (because the wings were so small it had no visible means of support), *Winged Coffin, Martin Murderer, One-way Ticket, the Flying Cigar, and the Flying Brick,* were some of the more common nick-names. In fact, the reputation of the plane was so bad that military placement personnel began to lie to recruits assigned to Marauder service, telling them they were going to a B-25 unit or a fighter squadron, etc.

In those days, the Air Force was the cutting edge of advancements in military technology and other branches began to complain that they were attracting the brightest and best men. Others complained about the quick advancement and youthfulness of its officers. Enlisted men in infantry units also felt that the enlisted airmen had too many stripes as well. But even with all those perks the reputation of the B-26, probably the most advanced bomber in its class at the time, made the benefits feel somewhat precarious. General Doolittle called it an unforgiving aircraft.[21] But the bad reputation was ill conceived. Although the accident rate was higher than B-25s it was lower than A-20s and P-38s, those aircraft never received such bad publicity as the name "widomaker"[22] The real truth was that many pilots had not been properly trained to fly the Marauder, and it was also a hard plane to maintain.[23]

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Throughout the war, fully fifteen thousand men and women, 5% of the American deaths in World War II, were killed in stateside flight accidents.

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Towards the end of June, the first of many USAAF planes, eighteen B-17s, left the United States for England, and it was about this time that General Dwight Eisenhower was selected as the overall Allied commander in Europe.

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July-August 1942

"The officers were looking for volunteers for gunnery school," said Gus. "Just to get the hell out, I was ground crew, they didn't have enough flight crew so they had me go along. They made me a flying armorer, and sent me to gunnery school."

Gus's records indicate that he entered gunnery school on July 20th at Tyndall Field, Florida.

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[21] Freeman, *B-26 Marauder at War,* 6.
[22] Freeman, *B-26 Marauder at War,* 31.
[23] Perret, *Winged Victory,* 96.

Willie said, "There was a bunch of us that went through gunnery school at Tyndall together. There was me, Frenchie (Gus), Odom (Howard Odom), Roy (Clarence C. Roy Jr.), Dell (S.) Benson, Crowe (William F. Crowe), and Kenny Class. We weren't doing anything, anyway… there was nothing to do… it was so disorganized. One day the First Sergeant asked me if I wanted to volunteer for gunnery school and I said, 'Sure.' I didn't think about it – we didn't know enough at that time not to volunteer for anything in the Army!"

Gaston Poulin, Willis Lee Brainard, Howard Odom, Clarence Roy, Dell Benson, Bill Crowe, Kenny Class

Tex, who had already attended gunnery school at Harlingen, Texas, explained, "One T-6 aircraft towed a fabric sleeve and gunner trainees standing in the open cockpits of three other T-6 aircraft in the flight would alternately fire 100 rounds of 30-caliber ammunition at the sleeve. The projectiles in each trainee's ammunition belt were coated with a different color of paint. After each flight completed firing, the aircraft returned to the field and the sleeve was dropped and the hits scored by each trainee were tabulated. In order to graduate from the Gunnery School a trainee was required to score an average of 20% hits during the Air-to-Air firing."

"For training pilots we had flying sergeants - a bunch of nuts," Gus related. "You were supposed to stay at least 200 yards away from a flying target. They flew right next to it. You couldn't miss… could have thrown the gun at the target! The guy towing the target, sitting in a V-18 [a training plane], would sit and shiver, afraid you'd hit him… didn't blame him."

"I wouldn't tow targets for that bunch of guys!" Willie added.

"Most of those pilots wanted to get into combat," Gus continued. "Some guys ended up in swamps goofing around, supposedly not checking the gas gauge; or they would fly upside down, a guy's gun would fall out. We had crotch belts not safety belts; you couldn't fall out but you could hang out."

Tex said, "I was consistently scoring more than 20% hits in the Air-to-Air firing. The machine gun had a ring and post sight and I took care to fire short bursts to keep the shot pattern close to the sleeve. At 200 to 250 yards that sleeve looked very small. Sometimes it would be towed at an altitude above you requiring you to squat down in the cockpit in order to aim the gun and sometimes it would be towed at a lower altitude requiring you to climb up on the side of the cockpit in order to fire down. There was a strap secured to the floor of the rear cockpit that the gunner trainee could fasten to his parachute leg strap to assist in keeping him from falling out of the aircraft. After the first few flights I did not fasten myself to this strap. I had horrors of falling out and my parachute accidentally opening so I figured I would rather fall free and then open my parachute if I did fall out."

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Gaston's brother, Guy, enlisted in the service on July 23rd, 1942, and was sent to training in Ft. Myers, Florida. Later, while in Atlantic City, New Jersey, he also wrote a letter to the hometown newspaper:

> Independent-Reporter: thanks a lot for the paper and I hope to receive it weekly. It sure does make a fellow feel good to read the home town news. I appreciate it. I am having a swell time and I really like the

army life. I am taking my basic training and hope to be sent to a summer school. I'm not a bit lonely and I really expect to become a good and loyal soldier. Pvt. Joseph Poulin, Wing B. Room 957, Atlantic City, N.J.[24]

Guy the graduate
(Photo Courtesy of Solange Turcotte)

Once Guy told me about the time he went to a party in Atlantic City. There were some US Marines there and somehow he irritated them, probably making jokes about the Marine Corps, so they promptly threw him out of a second story window.

"Wow! Did you get hurt?" I asked.

"No," he replied, chuckling, "I went right back in."

He must have made some kind of impression on the marines, because when I asked him, "Did the marines throw you out again?" "Nope. They left me alone," and he laughed even harder. That was Uncle Joe, and to anyone who knew him, it was all too believable.

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On August 8th, U.S. Marines landed on Guadalcanal; and the 'island-hopping' in the Pacific began in earnest. Also about this time the first all-American air raid took place in Europe. The 97th Bombardment Squadron H made the first U.S. heavy bomber raid on August 17, 1942.[25] The US air war in the European Theater had commenced. A few days later, Gus and his cohorts graduated from gunnery school (or should we say survived) on August 25th, 1942. Also about this time, another blow to the B-26 reputation occurred. The high command decided to take the Marauders out of service in the Pacific Theater. To simplify logistical problems, maintenance, and to accommodate the need for shorter airfields, the commanders of the Air Force in the Pacific decided to concentrate on use of the B-25 Mitchell bombers instead. Many of the aircrewmen did not appreciate the switch.[26]

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September-October 1942

On September 6th, the United States lost two B-17s, the first American bombers shot down in the ETO. They were lost to German fighters.[27]

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The 323rd Bombardment Group was created on September 11, 1942. It contained four squadrons, the 453rd, 454th, 455th, and 456th. It was at that time that the men were finally being assembled into specific units at Fort MacDill, Florida.[28]

Gus continued, "Well, after we got through that... let's see... that's when Colonel Travis... ah, Captain Travis then, organized the squadron to go to England. He went around picking the raunchiest group he could get (laughing)."

"Ha! I was just thinking about Willie," Gus said. "Hauled him out of the guard-house!"

Willie protested, also laughing, "I was never in the guard house or ever in any kind of trouble like that! None of those stories are true!"

"Why'd he pick them?" I asked Gus.

[24] Joseph Poulin's Scrapbook.
[25] Online USAF Museum.
[26] Freeman, *B-26 Marauder at War*, 23.
[27] Online USAF Museum.
[28] Moench, *Marauder Men*, 21.

"They weren't afraid. He didn't want any 'scare crows,' or whatever you want to call them. I call them 'yellow bellies.' That's what he was picking out… the whole group... the raunchiest bunch you could get."

"How many guys were there?"

"Well, there were six to a crew, and we had 16 crews; so you take it from there. Even with the pilots and co-pilots and bombardiers and navigators, he wanted the hardest ones."

"You were one of the hardest ones?"

"Right!"

"How come?"

"I dunno, just was, that's all."

I thought he was just exaggerating for my benefit, the way they do in the movies. It's WWII American folklore - all the best fighters are misfits, you know, like the movie *Dirty Dozen* or *The Devil's Brigade*, etc. That's how it usually goes, just a twist on the old American Cowboy image. But later, I read a statement by a 323rd Group flight surgeon, Dr. Charles B. Sadler, and I realized that in this case, it was actually true. "Following graduation from Randolf [flight surgeon school], I went through the AFCC at Nashville and then was sent back to MacDill field, eventually to join the 323rd Group which I soon realized was an elite assembly of men."[29] Gus, Willie, Tex and the others were now members of the flight echelon of the Squadron and got their wings to prove it. They were 'Marauder men' of the 323rd Bombardment Group, 453rd Bomb Squadron.

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Willie described their off-duty time.


Kenny Class

"While we were at MacDill, we used to go down to the dance hall in town, the Red Rooster. There were a lot of girls there. It was a great place to dance and meet girls... and get into trouble (laughing). They had a black dance band that was really good. One of our guys, Kenny Class, was a drummer before the war. He went right up there and started playing drums with them. In those days things were pretty segregated and you didn't mix much with black people. Everybody wondered what the hell he was doing up there. The band liked to have him come. 'Ah, here comes our replacement drummer,' they'd say."

"Musicians had no color line," Willie continued. "Kenny was a musician and musicians didn't care. All they cared about was if you could play – if you could play, you could be in the band. Music was about the only non-segregated part of society then. Kenny sounded a lot like Krupa [Gene Krupa, a famous big band drummer] when he played those damn drums. Some people told Kenny he shouldn't do that, but he didn't care. He was having a hell of a good time. I liked that place. Girls went in there and there was lot's of 'em to dance with. I really enjoyed dancing. You got four or five drinks in ya and you went dancing. I guess that's why I really didn't drink that much, because I was dancing all the time."

"Were you a good dancer?" I asked Willie.

"My wife says I was. She didn't like to jitterbug, though. My older sisters would put on a record and teach my kid brother and me how to dance. We were only 8 or 10 years old when we started dancing with our sisters… and that makes a difference right there. It also improves your balance and footwork. I tried to learn how to tap dance too… God, what a club foot I had!"

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On September 13th, 1942, the Battle of Stalingrad began, opening the Russian counter-offensive against the German invasion. Soon after, in a public speech, Stalin cryptically warned

[29] Moench, *Marauder Men*, 346.

the US and Britain that if they didn't begin a western front soon it might go badly for them. No one knew for sure what that meant, but it didn't sound very good. Regardless, the Americans were not ready for an offensive in Europe, yet. We decided to concentrate on Africa first and began assembling an invasion force.

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Ralph Neil Turcotte

On September 17th, my Uncle Neil, Ralph Neil Turcotte, joined the Army Air Force and was trained to be a Marauder man. His three brothers had also joined the service. His wife, my Aunt Solange, writes:

"All four boys were in the service at the same time. Roy was a Sergeant in the infantry for 39 months, from Oct. 1942 to Dec. 1945. He was stationed in Okinawa for a few months. Leon was in the Army Quartermaster Corps as a Postal Clerk from Aug. 1942 to Feb. 1946. Walter was in the Field Artillery from 1944 to 1947. He was in Germany and was in the Battle of the Bulge. He was a courier. Neil was a Staff Sergeant in the Army Air Force for thirty-nine months from Sept. 1942 to Dec. 1945. On Sept. 17, 1942, three days after his twenty-second birthday, Neil joined the U.S. Army Air Force and was sent to Ft. Devens for one month of basic training. From there he was sent to Seymour Johnson Airplane Mechanic School in Goldsboro, NC, for sixteen weeks, then to the Glenn Martin Factory School in Maryland for a five week course as a B-26 specialist."[30]

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Private Guy Poulin
(Photo courtesy of Solange Turcotte)

In October, Guy Poulin's training brought him to Spokane, Washington, but the unit would have to move to two other locations in order to complete their training.

In October of 1942 at Geiger Field, Spokane Washington the 34th Bomb Group became the parent group of the 390th. Personnel from the 40th, 6th, and other organizations formed the cadre force of the 390th Bomb Squadron. Weather conditions prevented the achievement of minimal training requirements. Therefore, operations were moved to Ephrata, Washington on 25 November 1942. However, similar conditions were encountered there and on 8 December 1942 the squadron was moved to Blythe, California. [31]

Uncle Joe once told me a story about the *Eightball* and crew in training in San Francisco - that they had almost been court-martialed for flying under the Golden Gate Bridge.

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By this time, the end of October, 1942, the squadrons of the 323rd group were at about two thirds of their authorized strengths, a situation that would not change by the time the unit would enter combat. To make up for it, enlisted men were advanced to positions meant for officers or higher grade NCOs and as regulations tightened down, they were reclassified to hide their true functions. In another 'shortage' created by politics, commanders in Washington decided that the 323rd Group would not have any copilots and ordered that the copilot facilities be removed from the planes. General Moench, in his research, could not find any reasonable excuse for this 'strategy,' except for saving weight, and stated that, "Marauder aircrewmen would later assert that the persons responsible for the 'no Co-pilot decision' had no understanding respecting (nor consideration of)

[30] Biography by Solange Turcotte, 3.
[31] Online at 390th.org

the other members of the B-26 aircrew." The men who had been training as copilots were reassigned to other units.

November – December 1942

Early in November, the Marauders of the 323rd Group relocated for training.

"When we left Florida, we went up to South Carolina, Myrtle Beach," Gus said.

"We were about to begin another phase of training," Tex explained, "in simulated war zone battle conditions at Myrtle Beach, SC. This time I didn't have to ride the train to our new destination. I flew up in one of the Marauders." Mytrle Beach was to be their base of OUT exercizes (Overseas Unit Training) because the environmental conditions were supposed to be similar to those of England. The men were bivouacked in tarpaper huts which did nothing to keep out the cold or heat. But the men got in a lot of flying time.[32]

"The airfield at Myrtle Beach consisted of two asphalt runways carved out of a pine forest," Tex continued. "Our quarters were tarpaper barracks scattered out among the trees. Here we slept on canvas cots and ate standing up at tables in the mess hall. This is where the flight personnel were organized into crews and began flying together as a crew and where specific stations were assigned to the gunners. It was decided that all of the flight engineers would be the tail gunner on our crews. The other two enlisted men on our crew [besides myself] were Sgt. Bryce Ramey who, when not required at his station in the aircraft's radio compartment, would man the waist guns, and Sgt. James M. Smith, who was the top turret gunner. Smith was from Mississippi, Ramey was from West Virginia, and of course I was from Texas. No one in the squadron called me Sam. Everyone knew me as Tex."

Tex said, "The officers on our crew were Lt. Roscoe R. Haller from New York, pilot, and Lt. Wayne Kachner, bombardier, who I believe was from Kansas. The Martin Marauder was equipped with dual controls for a co-pilot, but none of the flight crews in the 323rd Bomb Group had co-pilots. We were the only Marauder group that did not have them. Our training at Myrtle Beach was somewhat different than what we had done at Mac Dill. We were flying at really low altitude."

The Haller Crew: Roscoe Haller, Wayne Kachner, Samuel "Tex" Findley, James Smith, Bryce Ramey.

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Of the forty-six men in 'Barracks No. 2' (fancy name for a tarpaper shack), there were two men who had also attended the reunion in Colorado City - S/Sgt Richard Inman and S/Sgt Casimir V. Sochocki both of the ordnance section. Men of the armament, transportation sections were in that barracks also. Thinking that everyone had a nickname, I asked Mr. Sochocki what he was called in the service. He wrote back, "We called each other by our last names, SOCHOCKI, of course there was a few exceptions for the ones that were called other names (ha, ha!)."

[32] Moench, *Marauder Men*, 26.



Casimier Sohocki (L) and Richard Inman (R)

I asked Sochocki about his background.

"I was born on January 28th, 1923, in South Bend, Indiana. Dad came from Poland in 1906, married Mom, a local girl in 1913. Her name was Tillie Szulezewski – how's that for a Polish name! They had four boys and four girls and believe it or not, Mom had seven miscarriages. They lost a girl, Irene, in 1918 during that flu epidemic. I attended a public school, a parochial school and quit high school in my senior year and joined the USAAF. I loved to play softball and did a lot of golfing. I enlisted on January 16, 1942. I did basic training at Charlotte Army AM Base, Charlotte, North Carolina and also received ordnance training. I joined the 677th Ordnance Company AVN(P) in its infancy and promotions came quickly. The 677th was split up and the men went to different bomb groups. I and 16 of the 677th went to the 323rd Bomb Group – I and 3 others wound up in the 453rd."

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Gus and Willie were placed together on the same crew, along with radioman Charles J. Ketcham. Gus was assigned as turret gunner, Willie was the engineer/tailgunner, and Ketcham was the radio/waist gunner. The officer crew was 1st Lt. Albert W. Satterwhite (pilot), George Friesner (bombardier) and 2nd Lt. Richard J. Baker (navigator).

"When Ketcham joined the crew as the radio operator," Willie explained, "he hadn't gone through gunnery school yet. He only went to radio school. Unfortunately, he was blind as a bat, wearing those thick glasses, you know. So Satterwhite would fly the plane past a floating target in the water off the coast, and me and Frenchie would coach him on aerial gunnery. We finally got him so he could hit the darn thing, but it took a while! Sometimes we took the shots for him, just so we could go home."

Gus said, "Ketcham was from New Jersey, but I'm not kidding you! He couldn't see. He was a tall character with big goggles. His father was a minister and he used to carry this small Bible with him, and he'd read the Bible. I don't know how in heck he could read it; the print was so small! But he read it anyway and it made him happy. No, really, he was a good 'Joe.' I mean, there was no getting around that."


The Satterwhite Crew: Albert Satterwhite, Richard Baker, George Friesner. Charles Ketcham, Willis Brainard, Gaston Poulin.

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"I liked flying as tail gunner," Willie said. "I had no trouble getting in and out and there was an escape hatch right near my position. I liked that. I used to practice popping that thing out, just in case. I never knew where we were going, but I always saw where we'd been (laughing)."

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Willie described his part in the new combat simulation training. "I used to sit in that tail, Satterwhite (the pilot) didn't like it at all. But I could see when they'd use the vertical stabilizer, I could sit there and watch it move. And I'd watch it and watch it… so long I'd watch it. At that time, we were flying practice bombing runs, using flour sacks for bombs. At a certain point, the bombardier actually takes over control of the airplane, he makes the last part of his run and makes the final adjustment before he releases the bombs. I could lay down on my back and get my foot up against the damn thing [the base of the stabilizer], and when I thought he was getting ready to drop the bombs I'd give it a shove. Of course the tail would go like this (swing to the side) and Satterwhite would yell over the intercom, 'Brainard! Get your damn foot off that vertical stabilizer!' Well, our bombardier had a pretty good sense of humor… of course, Satterwhite didn't like that. I did. I thought it was funnier than hell."

I told Willie the story in Freeman's book of the turret gunner, Denny McFarland, who'd rotate the turret from side to side, just to make the pilot adjust the trim – until the pilot caught-on.

"Well that's the way you would keep up the spirit of a crew," he said. "You know… you did things. Maybe they weren't funny to a serious-minded guy, but those of us who were good at our jobs… well… if that pilot and bombardier weren't good at their job, well, they shouldn't have been in the front seat (laughing). But that's what made life worthwhile. I never took things too seriously at that time."

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On November 8th, 1942, Operation Torch, the US invasion of North Africa was implemented. The plan was to catch Rommel's troops between the English in the east and the Americans in the West. The operation had to be executed "as American as possible," due to the fact that the British had recently sunk the French naval fleet at Oran. Because of that General Dwight D. Eisenhower was selected as the overall commander of the allied forces.[33] A few days later on the 11th, the Germans and Italians occupied Vichy France (so much for an armistice with the Germans). Operation Torch was a success. The French fought half-heartedly for a few days to save honor, and then quickly embraced the invaders. The North African French were allies too. There were many other allies all over the world but their participation was limited by their resources.

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Tex said, "As we progressed in our training all personnel were being granted furloughs on a rotational basis. In November I got my furlough and came back to Mt. Vernon, Texas, where my parents resided. My brother came home on leave at the same time and we spent a joyous time together with parents, relatives, and friends. This was the last time we were to see Louis Ray alive."

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Gus said, "We stayed there [at Myrtle Beach] about two months. We were waiting for our new planes. They hadn't built them yet. Meanwhile, of course, we're running around all over the place."

"You had free time?" I asked.

"Free time? We made it free!"

"What did you do?"

[33] Perret, *Winged Victory*, 180-181.

"Oh, we went into town. There was usually nobody there, so we went into a couple of other towns… might as well forget those towns. Greenville, South Carolina, holy mackerel, what a disappointment that was. We ended up in town at Myrtle Beach. There was one restaurant, thirteen bars, and no hotel, so you went to the bars, bought your liquor and went back to camp to forget about it - except to raise heck with the cook about 2:00 in the morning."

"Why?"


Richard J. Travis
Captain, 453rd

"Well, we wanted something to eat! We couldn't go into town; there was nobody there. Oh, one night, the C.O. [Captain Travis] came out and says, 'All right, you guys are all grounded.' So we says, 'All right,' and we had a couple of guys sneak out and pick up a few jugs."

"How'd they get out?" I asked.

"Crawled through the fence."

"You didn't have any guards?"

"Ya! There were guards there, but... ah... they knew better anyway... we knew them as well as they knew us. Besides, they wanted some, too, so you can't blame 'em there. Some of the boys went out, got a supply, and came back. We were playing cards and stuff - the only thing to do. Next morning, of course, we had to do something with the bottles, so we buried them. The Captain comes around and he says, 'What's there in the ground?' We said, 'dead soldiers.' Nah,' he says, 'can't be.' We said, 'Ya! They're dead!' Well, naturally some of the boys had left theirs out, you know. Then he says, 'Now I know what kind of dead soldiers they are.' At least we'd buried them, so he couldn't say too much about it."

"He didn't mind?"

"He wasn't happy! Oh, he racked into us for a few minutes, you know? Really blowing his top! It didn't make any difference; nobody listened."

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James S.
Siegenthaler

"Travis got on me one time in Myrtle Beach," Tex related. "I had on a pair of cowboy boots. He told me, 'You know, you're out of uniform in those cowboy boots instead of G.I. shoes.' Later on, he told me to put the boots away and when we got overseas I could probably wear them. I later sold those boots to Jim Siegenthaler after we got to England."

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Almost upon arrival at the new base a rumor circulated that they were to be sent overseas right away. This prompted many men to take a leave.[34] Aunt Martha, Gus's younger sister, remembers when Gus came home on leave. "I do recall the leave he had before going overseas. I was in the 8th grade and it was wintertime. I do not recall the exact date. I do have a photo of the event. The only one missing was Guy who was in the service out in one of the western states."

"The only thing I remember is that he came home once when we had snow on the ground, and I was dressed in my snow suit, so it must have been cold. We took a family picture in the front yard," says Aunt Bernadette (Bunny), the youngest sibling.

[34] Moench, *Marauder Men*, 26.

The Poulin Family: L-R (back row) Martha, Mèmére, Yvette, Victor, Gaston, Solange, and Pèpére; (front row) George, Bernadette (Bunny), and Roger; the only one missing is Guy *(Photo Courtesy of Bernadette Karter)*

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Tex related, "After I arrived back to Myrtle Beach the aircrews, with their airplanes, were sent to Panama City, FL where we were trained to drop torpedoes against naval vessels. One of the instructors was a Captain Muri who had made a torpedo run against a Japanese craft during the Battle of Midway." Part of their training was to learn how to fly the Marauder on one engine.[35]

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Willie remembers one incident in Florida that also did not endear him to his pilot, Satterwhite.

"Down in Panama City, we were practicing torpedo runs. Satterwhite was the copilot and one of our West Point officers was the pilot – can't remember the name. I was kneeling between them. That was the minimum crew. Whenever you took off you had to have a flight engineer on board, and depending on your mission, sometimes a navigator or bombardier. This time, it was just the three of us and we were doing simulated approaches to an aircraft carrier. We came in and made a hard landing. The nose wheel strut gave out and the nose dropped to the ground. They had trouble with the nose struts on the early B-26's – they kept collapsing. Luckily, no one was hurt. When we came to a stop, the pilot opened the overhead hatch – there's one above the pilot and one above the copilot, and he got out. Satterwhite went next and got stuck in the hatch. He had a wide fanny and I was underneath pushing him through. I couldn't stop laughing. The others thought it was kind of funny, too. Well, I guess you know that didn't sit too well with him. That's another reason Satterwhite didn't like me."

[35] b-26marauderarchives.org

A crashed Marauder – not a very pretty sight *(Photo courtesy of W. L. Brainard).*

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DEFINITION OF PATRIOTISM: Taking your arm from around your girl to clap whenever an army plane flies across the movie screen.[36]

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"Keep 'em flying was the Army Air Corps byword. It was good slogan because of the sweat and toil it took to keep a plane in the air. A song was recorded in 1941 by Gene Krupa with Johnny Desmond on vocals.

Keep 'Em Flying

Keep 'em flying, keep 'em in the sky.
Keep 'em flying, hitting hard and high.
On every lip the fervent cry,
Keep 'em flying on full soar.

Keep 'em flying, every headline screams
Keep 'em flying, Army fighting teams
On thirty thousand different fields,
Keep 'em flying on full soar.

(Spoken): March to the cannons, give it the gun.
Zoom with the air corps, to the sun.

Keep 'em flying, clear the hangar floor
Keep 'em flying, spread your wings once more
From pole to pole, from shore to shore
Let thirty thousand motors roar
Let thirty thousand eaglets soar
Keep 'em flying on to war.

Gene Krupa; Johnny Desmond, Vocals; Col. John F. Daye, Service Orders, (Coleman) 1941.

[36] Gus Poulin's Scrapbook.

Technical Sergeant Willis Lee Brainard
323rd Bomb Group, 453rd Bomb Squadron
USSAF 1941-1945

Technical Sergeant Samuel M. Findley
323rd Bomb Group, 453rd Bomb Squadron
USSAF 1941-1945