

**Diversification in the Army Air Force:** On December 11, 1942, I was sworn into something called the Enlisted Reserve Corps, from which one could apply for weather forecasting (and a lot of other things). I was accepted in an Air Force program called "Meteorology B," which meant there would be six accelerated months of pre-meteorology training, and eight plus months of the real thing that followed. On March 15, 1943, a telegram advised me to report to Brown University, Providence, Rhode Island, immediately. I arrived in civilian clothes, but the army training unit was not there yet, and Brown's campus seemed deserted. A Tech/4<sup>th</sup> Class named Prime gave me a place to sleep in a very old dormitory and told me I could eat in the school's cafeteria. In the next couple of days, Dick Ramsey of Lexington, Kentucky, arrived as I had, equally confused. Then one night we were awakened in the wee hours when about 150 buck privates, direct from Basic Training at Clearwater, Florida, arrived and crowded into two dormitory buildings. This was to be my class and several became close friends. For at least a week, however, I was the only one marching with them in civilian clothes, and the authorities never realized that I never had Basic Training (eventually a uniform was forthcoming, but it didn't fit very well).

During my four years in the service, I never served with anyone from Delaware. However, in my 22-man unit at Brown (which we were soon advised to call a "flight") were five from the Philadelphia area: Carl Brandt, Wally Sonntag, Bob White, Jerry Haas, and Aaron Cohen. Several times we rode the train as far as Philadelphia together on a 36-hour weekend pass, which was granted once a month. Those in our Flight at Providence who lived farthest from home were Dale Richter from Wiggins, Colorado; George Thompson of Galesburg, Illinois; Martin Polhemus of Ames, Iowa; Ed O'Brien of St. Louis; and Dick Ramsey of Lexington, Kentucky. About ¾ of us made it through Pre-Meteorology, and moved on to Meteorology "A" at M.I.T. in late September 1943. The western fellows were assigned to Chanute Field at Rantoul, Illinois, for the final eight months leading to commissions. Whereas we had been buck privates at Brown, we were now Aviation Cadets and got paid \$75 per month instead of \$50. The boys from Brown joined those who had a similar course at M.I.T., and the combined class had a total of about 225 who became second lieutenants on June 5, 1944, the day before "D" Day in Europe. I really didn't pick up many new friends at M.I.T. Those of us from Brown seemed to be roomed together in the M.I.T. dorms, and we enjoyed sticking together. On the day we were commissioned, five other schools in the country each graduated about the same number of weather forecasters, so we flooded the market. M.I.T. and N.Y.U. in the East, Chanute Field and the University of Chicago in the Midwest, and Cal. Tech and U.C.L.A. in the West all had similar meteorology programs. Upon graduation, I was sent to Roswell, New Mexico, as were new lieutenants Harrison Munro from Illinois and a fellow named Goodman, both graduates of the Midwest schools. Of all my friends from the service, more than 90% were single, but a few were married. We had to be in uniform at all times.

At the Weather Station on Roswell Army Airfield, about 25 men were assigned, of whom about eight were forecasters, 12 or so were weather observers, and the remaining were recordkeeping "tactical" personnel. We needed one mechanical man at the station to keep our teletype machine in good operation. These fellows were from all over the country, and some became good friends. Anthony Rippo, an observer from San Pedro, California, and I visited back and forth and kept in touch until his death less than a year ago.

When I joined a 10-man B-24 crew to fly weather reconnaissance missions in the western Pacific, a new set of friends surfaced. Planning to train together at Will Rogers Field in Oklahoma City, my crew, nearly complete, arrived soon after I did from their basic flight school at Mountain Home, Idaho. The pilot was 28-year-old Dalton F. Newton of Lakeland, Florida, who had graduated from the Citadel in Charleston, South Carolina, and had joined the regular army in 1940. The co-pilot was Charles E. "Chuck" Fake from Ilion, New York. Our navigator was Theodore J. "Jack" or "Honest John" Furry of Kansas City, and the Flight Engineer was Seth S. Sparkes of Saginaw, Michigan. The three waist gunners were Robert F. Wagoner and John V. Freymann, both from California, and Norman A. "Jake" Jahaske of Belvidere, Illinois. The tail gunner was Stanley J. Gloede of Mount Clemens, Michigan, at 18 the youngest on our crew. While at Will Rogers Field, we were joined by Earl M. Alkek of Victoria, Texas, who was to be our radar operator. Radar was brand new on weather planes, and

fronts, thunderheads, and other special phenomena could be spotted on a small screen. Unfortunately, the radar equipment malfunctioned on most planes in our squadron, so it was never used, and the radar man had no job but to ride along with us. I was the weather observer and nose gunner. Newton was a first lieutenant; Fake, Furry, and I were second lieutenants; and Alkek was a warrant officer. The other five crew members were enlisted men. The Air Force was the most informal of the services, and much of the time the 10 of us shared and shared alike. At the larger bases and more permanent headquarters, however, we were five and five, except when we were in the airplane, and the system was weighted heavily in favor of the commissioned officers. The 10 of us were very close and shared experiences for eight months at Will Rogers Field, Hunter Field near Savannah, Mather Field at Sacramento, Barking Sands on Kauai, Harmon Field on Guam, and on Iwo Jima and Okinawa, but I never saw any of them again after our squadron broke up in the fall of 1945. Christmas cards were exchanged for a few years.

As described, my friends from World War II service were not local to this area. Although there must be others, I know of only one who is alive, Wallace E. Sonntag, age 95, a native of Philadelphia, who now lives with his wife in a retirement facility in Saratoga Springs, New York.

**Work Report:** On Tuesday, August 30, 18 volunteers were on hand, as follows: Steve Bryce (in charge), Matt Richard, Tim Ward, Mark Russell, Jerry Lucas, Paul Kratunis, Anne Cleary, Brent McDougall, Dennis Tiley, Bob Koury, John Schubel, Mac Taylor, Jay Williams, Bob Jordan, Neal Sobocinski, John Bacino, Tom Marshall, and Ed Paschall. The electric trains were cleaned and prepared for their operation on Sept. 4. The steam pipe from the expansion loop to the engine on the Model H-5 was shortened. The pilot tank on the Model 735 was drained and inspected. No condensate or moisture was found, so it was filled again with hexane. The pilot on this car was removed after a trial had determined that a smaller pilot pin did not help.

More tubes were removed from the old boiler from the Model 87. On the '37 Packard, the wiring harness was connected from the tank to the dash gauge, and the tail lights and add-on direction signals were worked on. On the Auburn Valley Railroad, the final debris from the downed tree was cleaned up, and two of the wooden coaches were inspected in preparation for Sept. 4.

On Wednesday, August 31, two volunteers attended, Richard Bernard (in charge) and Tom Marshall. With some difficulty, about eight more copper tubes were removed from the old boiler from the Model 87.

On Thursday, September 1, 13 volunteers attended: Bob Koury (in the afternoon), Jerry Novak (in charge), Tom Marshall, Jim Personti, Neal Sobocinski, Bob Jordan, Bob Stransky, Paul Kratunis, Kelly Williams, Dennis Dragon, Lou Mandich, Nate Blau, and Paul Blau (observing). After determining that the pilot tank on the 735 was full of "crud", it was again drained and removed from the car. It is a brass tank in good condition, and Lou Mandich took it to his shop to clean the interior for us. The Model T Ford was cleaned and prepped for its use on Sept. 4. The firewall on the Model 87 was cleaned with washing soda, water, and steel wool, and several copper tubes were removed and cleaned on the wire brush wheel, then reinstalled.

Wiring continued in the rear of the '37 Packard. The pump drive was connected on the Model H-5, and everything turns over in good shape. After the steam pipe is hooked up again, the car should soon be ready for testing on steam. The gift shop carts and the popcorn machine were brought to the Carriage House from the museum, in preparation for our Sept. 4 Steamin' Day. Bob Koury did track work in the afternoon, in anticipation of the A.V.R.R. runs on Sept. 4.

We are sorry to report that Dave Leon and Mark Bodenshtab have had health issues during the past week, causing them to miss our sessions. Dave was helping with the Auburn Valley again on Sept. 4 and said his problem was adverse reaction to certain medications. Mark says the worst is over and expects to participate in our run to Chadds Ford Days on September 10. We are glad both are on the mend.