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No. no number

7-4531-2
6060528

437th Fighter Squadron (SE)

Location: U.S.S. Casablanca (6 Jul - 20 Jul 45)
 Harmon Field, Guam (20 Jul - 26 Jul 45)
 North Field, Iwo Jima (7 Jul - 15 Dec 45)

Chain of Command: 414th Fighter Group (SE)
 301st Fighter Wing (15 Oct 44 - 5 Aug 45)
 VII Fighter Command (5 Aug - 23 Dec 45)
 20th Air Force (5 Aug - 23 Dec 45)

Commander: Major John R. Brown, Jr.

Aircraft assigned: Republic P-47N Thunderbolt

1 July, 1945 - 30 September, 1945

The USS Kingsbury was riding the waves of the blue Pacific somewhere between Eniwetok and Saipan on APA #177, escorted by two PC's. It was Sunday, and church was in session. Suddenly there came a call to General Quarters, and every man went to his post. For five minutes the ship took evasive action, and the air was tense. The "All Clear" was sounded, and all personnel went with relief back to their routine activities. This was July 1, and the 437th's 15th day at sea.

At noon on the following day, the ship arrived at Saipan and Tinian. There they stayed for five days, celebrating the 4th of July aboard ship, with boxing matches, music, and ice cream.

On July 5th, the Kingsbury set a course for Iwo Jima. The following day, back at the San Francisco Port of Embarkation, the air echelon, with 50 officers and 52 enlisted men, was setting out on the USS Casablanca for Guam. The ground echelon, on the USS Kingsbury, disembarked on Iwo Jima on July 8 at 1530. Latrines were dug and C rations were distributed. Some, but not all, officers had cots the first night; by the following evening however, all officers and enlisted men had been issued a bed.

By Tuesday, July 10, the Squadron was fairly well settled in, and many went souvenir hunting. The island had been taken by the U.S. Marines several months earlier after an ownership dispute with the Japanese Imperial Army. Water was the scarce item, for both drinking and washing, but the Squadron adapted itself well to the prevailing conditions.

Wednesday, July 11, was a banner day for the 437th --- three beers and one Coke were distributed to each man. On Friday the 13th, the air echelon, which had finally landed on Guam, in the Marianas Islands, was operating out of Harmon Field and made their first air strike against Truk. Meanwhile, back on Iwo Jima, the ground personnel were receiving a fifth of liquor apiece and were making preparations to move to their new area.

The pilots flew their second, and last, mission from Guam on July 22. This mission was another strike against Truk.

July 24 was a welcome day for the Squadron -- their popular C.O., Maj. Brown, arrived at Iwo after convalescing in a Guam hospital. On Friday, July 27, part of the planes arrived from Tinian, and the air echelon rejoined the ground detachment on Iwo Jima. Of the 42 aircraft in the Tinian shipment, the 437th received 12.

Toward the end of July, the Squadron began fuel consumption tests to determine the capability of the P-47N for extremely long missions. Test #1 was flown on July 29, by Lts. Butler, Menza, Shaw and Weber. They took off at 0855 using 165-gallon wing tanks, one 110-gallon belly tank, 6 rockets, and 3200 rounds of .50-calibre ammunition. The four remained airborne for 10 hours, the longest of any in the Group.

Test #2 took off at 0800 on July 30. Four P-47's, piloted by Capt. Vaught, Lts. Kalagian, Carmen, and Proulx, with 165-gallon wing tanks, 6 rockets, and one 500-lb bomb. This group was airborne for 6½ hours.

During August, the 414th Fighter Group supplied 11 aircraft in a fighter strike against the Nagoya area, although none of the 437th pilots participated in the attack, much to their regret.

August 2 was a rather bad day for the squadron. On this date, Lt. Benedict, while flying C.A.P., experienced fire in his cockpit, and was forced to bail out two miles off shore. The Navy fished him out, however, gave him a hot breakfast, and brought him safely home. On the same day, after a normal landing on Center Field, Lt. McAdam turned off the B-29 taxi strip and struck a steam roller with his left wing tip.

About this time, eight new officers were assigned to the Squadron -- Capt. Robert W. Martin, 1/Lts. William C. Fullilove, David E. Fitton, Jr., George E. Maxon, Jr., and 2/Lts. Ray R. Cannada, Ralph R. Holmes, and Henry A. Jones. Capt. Martin, however, was later transferred to the 15th Fighter Group.

Wednesday, August 8, was a real "red letter day" for the 437th. They were to fly top cover for bombing raids on Takamatsu, Minato, and Tokushima. The 437th was finally going to Japan!

The Squadron did its job well. The flight was a hazardous 1500-mile mission over water where weather conditions were extremely poor, and where no intermediate bases existed. For this mission, all participating pilots were recommended for the Air Medal. These included Capts. Butler and Vaught, Lts. Dunnavant, Bukowski, Shaw, Bauman, Proulx, Carmen, Johnson, Dunfee, Burkmaier, and F/O Knapic.

Thursday, August 9, the squadron received word that the 20th Air Force had three days earlier dropped an atomic bomb on Hiroshima, a city of 343,000, causing its complete and absolute destruction. The same day, the USSR officially declared war on Japan.

The following day, Operations, Intelligence, and Personal Equipment moved to a new location on top of a hill overlooking the squadron maintenance area. At the same time, Capt. Stanley B. Jones, 437th Intelligence Officer, was transferred to Group Intelligence. 2/Lt. Ramon Santiago became the new squadron Intelligence Officer.

On August 12, Capt. Courtney, Operations Officer, led a flight in a fighter sweep against the Nagoya area. Eight rockets were seen to hit the target, a housing project. For this, the following were recommended for the Air Medal: Capts. Courtney, Green, and Mourer, Lts. Bell, D. R. Jackson, R. J. Jackson, Murrin, Menza, Whitley, and F/O MacDonald.

Wednesday, August 15, 1945--three years, eight months, and seven days after the attack on Pearl Harbor--the Empire of Japan surrendered to the Allies, ending the bloodiest and most costly war in the history of the human race.

After an address by Col. Thorne, the following twenty-four hours were given to the men to use as they saw fit. The squadron officers sent sixty-five quarts of whiskey to the Enlisted Mens' Service Club, and there were few incidents the men could recall after uncorking the first bottle. Sgt. George Shaw tried walking down the steps with his chin, and Pvt. Walter Traugh walked through the shower walls--or thought he did.

Now that the war was over, the 437th was soon back to normal peace-time activity. It was announced that beginning Saturday, August 18, and continuing every Saturday thereafter, a standby inspection would be held, with a parade following immediately thereafter.

The squadron received information on Friday, August 24, that the 414th Fighter Group would fly two escort missions to the Empire on the 25th and 27th of August. The men busily began preparations for the flights, but soon afterward word came that the missions had been postponed. All was not lost, however, since the word came too late to schedule the regular Saturday morning parade.

Monday, August 27, found the news of the "Sunsetter Institute" spreading through the squadron. A wide selection of courses were offered, and school was scheduled to be held during the afternoon, Monday through Friday. The 437th signed up en masse and stood by awaiting "school days" in September.

On Thursday, August 30, the squadron was airborne in a Group Air Carnival over Tokyo. The 437th P-47's arrived in time to see the "Victory Air Parade" in full swing. Landing operations could be seen near Yokohama. C-54's covered Atsugi Airfield, scene of Ge. MacArthur's arrival a few hours later.

Recommendations for decorations had worked their way up the chain of command, and September brought confirmation of the earned awards to pilots of the 437th. 1/Lt. Keith C. Lovell was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for establishing... "a brilliant record of achievement in sustained air operations over the Japanese homeland". The Air Medal was presented by the Commanding General, VII Fighter Command, to the following:

Capt. Lester C. Mourer	2/Lt. William H. Bell, Jr.
Capt. James L. Hall	2/Lt. Arnold C. Birkmaier
1/Lt. Hudson N. Benner	2/Lt. Leo W. Bukowski
1/Lt. James J. Butler, Jr.	2/Lt. Anthony J. Carmen
1/Lt. William B. Hinn	2/Lt. Louis A. Dillon
1/Lt. Donald R. Jackson	2/Lt. Gordon M. Dunfee
1/Lt. Robert J. Jackson	2/Lt. Robert H. Dunnavant
1/Lt. William C. Meyer	2/Lt. Arthur P. Goguen
1/Lt. David E. Fitton	2/Lt. Carl H. Johnson
1/Lt. William C. Fullilove	2/Lt. Nicholas Menza
1/Lt. Erwin L. Perry	2/Lt. James E. Murrin
1/Lt. Charles E. Plath, Jr.	2/Lt. Clyde J. Froulx
1/Lt. Marvin H. Snead	2/Lt. Robert E. Shaw
1/Lt. Norman S. Teahan	2/Lt. Charles Weber
1/Lt. Hiawatha Mohawk	2/Lt. Douglas E. Whatley
1/Lt. Harry E. Thompson	2/Lt. Keith C. Lovell
1/Lt. Raymond E. Tucker	2/Lt. Donald A. Zuercher
1/Lt. Fred E. Warner	F/O. Edmund A. Knapick
2/Lt. Richard C. Bauman	F/O. William A. MacDonald

September 2, 1945, was designated as official V-J Day, and promotions were announced for several officers and enlisted men of the 437th. Seven new flight commanders and eight new assistant flight commanders were appointed, and Capt. Mourer replaced 1/Lt. Trivetter as Squadron Adjutant.

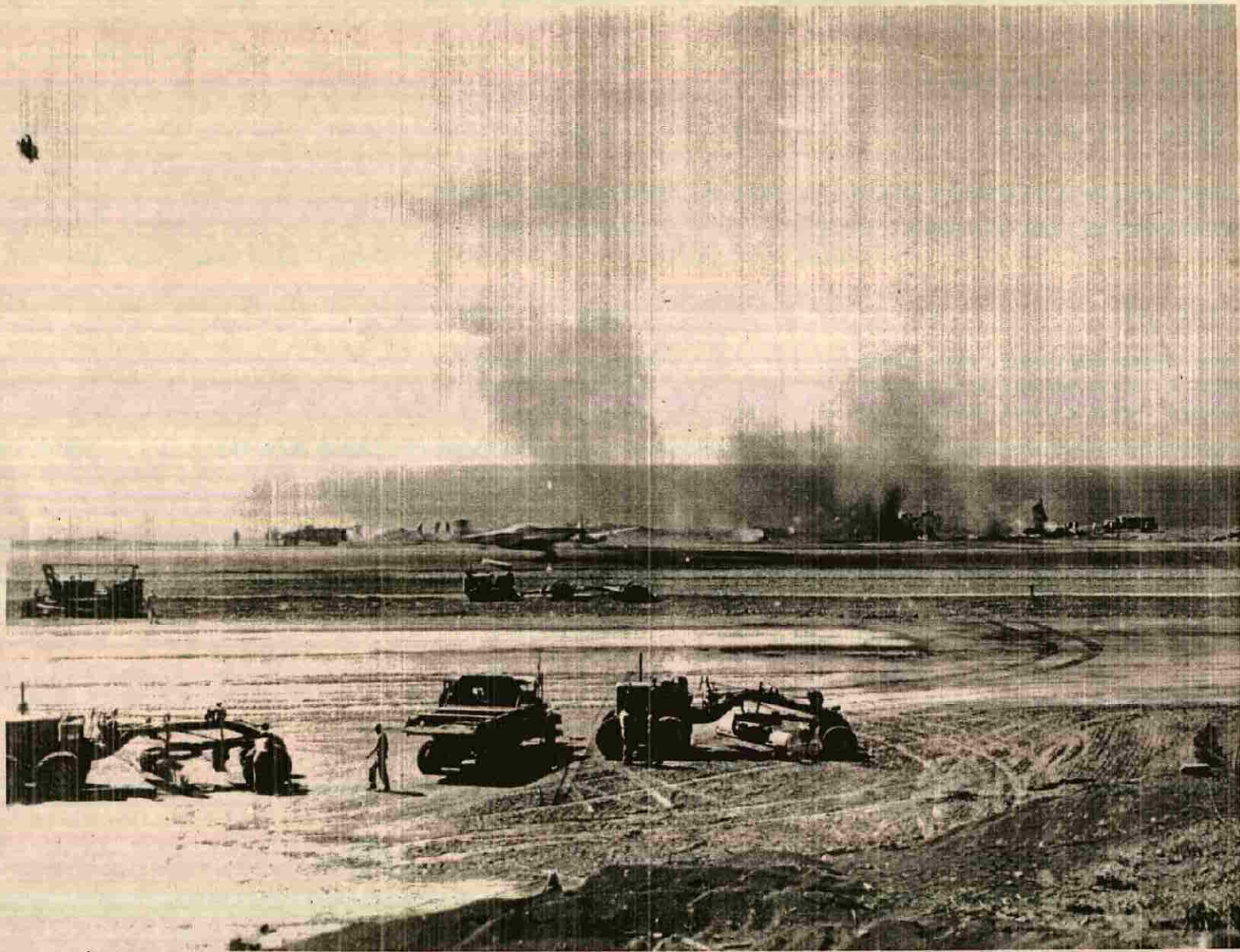
Following V-J Day, the armament section was established on a peace-time basis. Guns number 2, 3, and 4 of both wings were removed from the P-47 and cosmolined, in compliance with a VII Fighter Command TWX.

September 7 marked the opening of the 437th Officers' Club, "Down Town Iwo Jima". The opening included free drinks, nurses, an orchestra, and dancing... the next best thing to being back home. On the same day, Capt. Louis A. Green was transferred to the 301st Fighter Wing at Ie Shima, Ryukyu Islands.

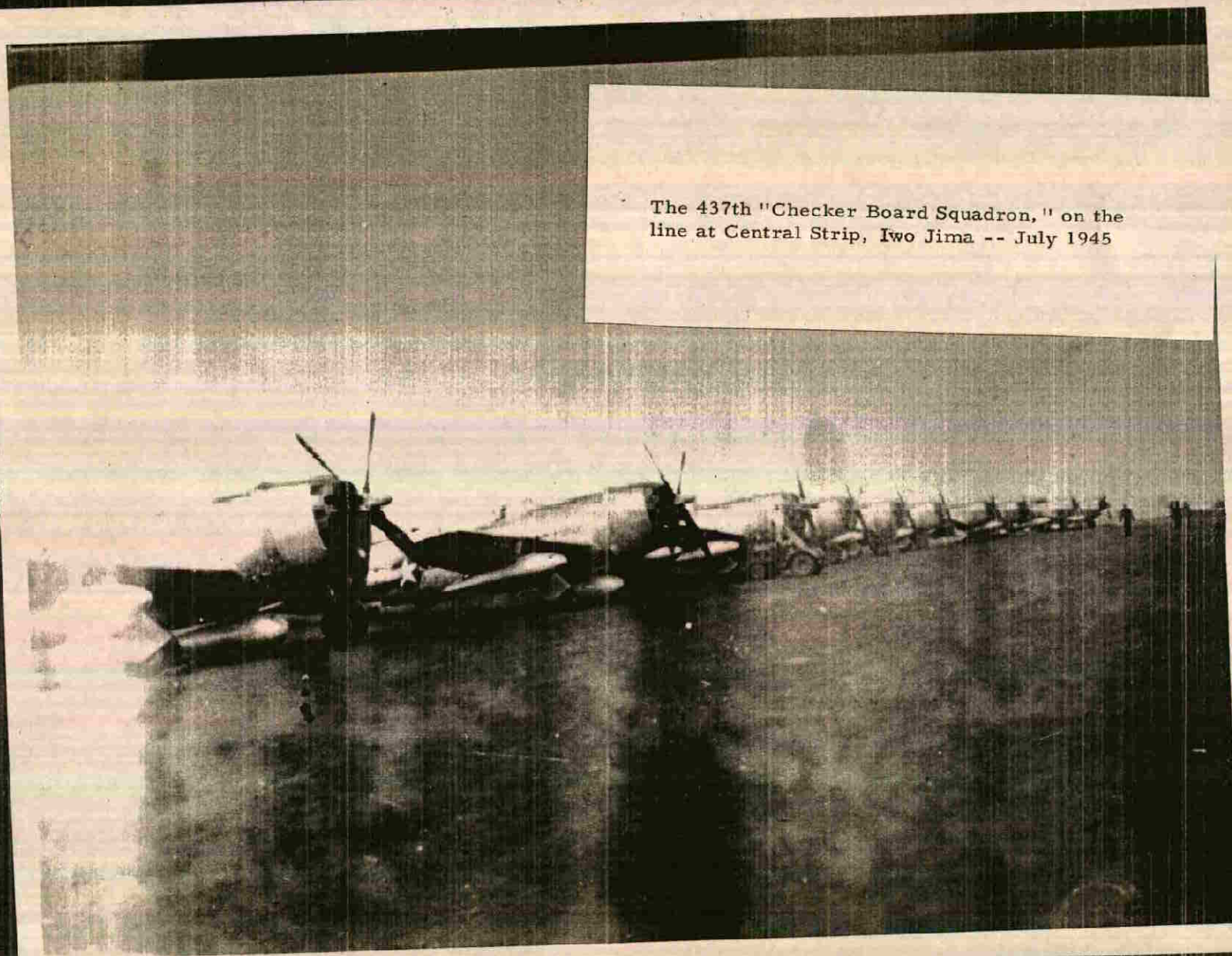
On September 15, Group Headquarters notified all squadron commanders that their pilots would have a total of twenty hours flying time for the month of September. At the time this order was given, 437th pilots had an average of five hours time; the war was over and few people had been concentrating on flying. In the scramble for flying time, pilots began flying from 1730 to 1730. Planes in commission, planes out of commission, pilots checking their flying time, closing out Form 5's for the pilots shipping out...such was the Operations clerk's nightmare. By the 30th, however, all had reached their 20 hours, with the exception of those grounded.

For weeks, rumours had been going around about Battle Stars; Battle Stars for credit in battle participation. These rumours became a reality on 18 September and 22 September, as General Orders for two Battle Stars were received. These were welcomed not so much for their decorative value as for their point value toward the critical score needed to return to the States. In general, all men with over 85 points, and all men over 35 years of age were to be rotated. Under this plan, the following men of the 437th left during the month of September: Capt. Gordon B. Slater, Capt. Winston W. Vaught, 1/Lt. Hiawatha Mohawk, Cpl. Norman D. Lester, S/Sgt. Peter Dorpino, Sgt. Charles J. Leone, and Sgt. Cecil O. Bontragh.

Some of the key men of the squadron were transferred on the 28th. Capt. Johnny Courtney, Operations Officer, was sent to the 15th Fighter Group; Capt. Lester C. Mourer, Squadron Adjutant, and Capt. James L. Hall, Flight Commander, were all transferred to the 21st Fighter Group.



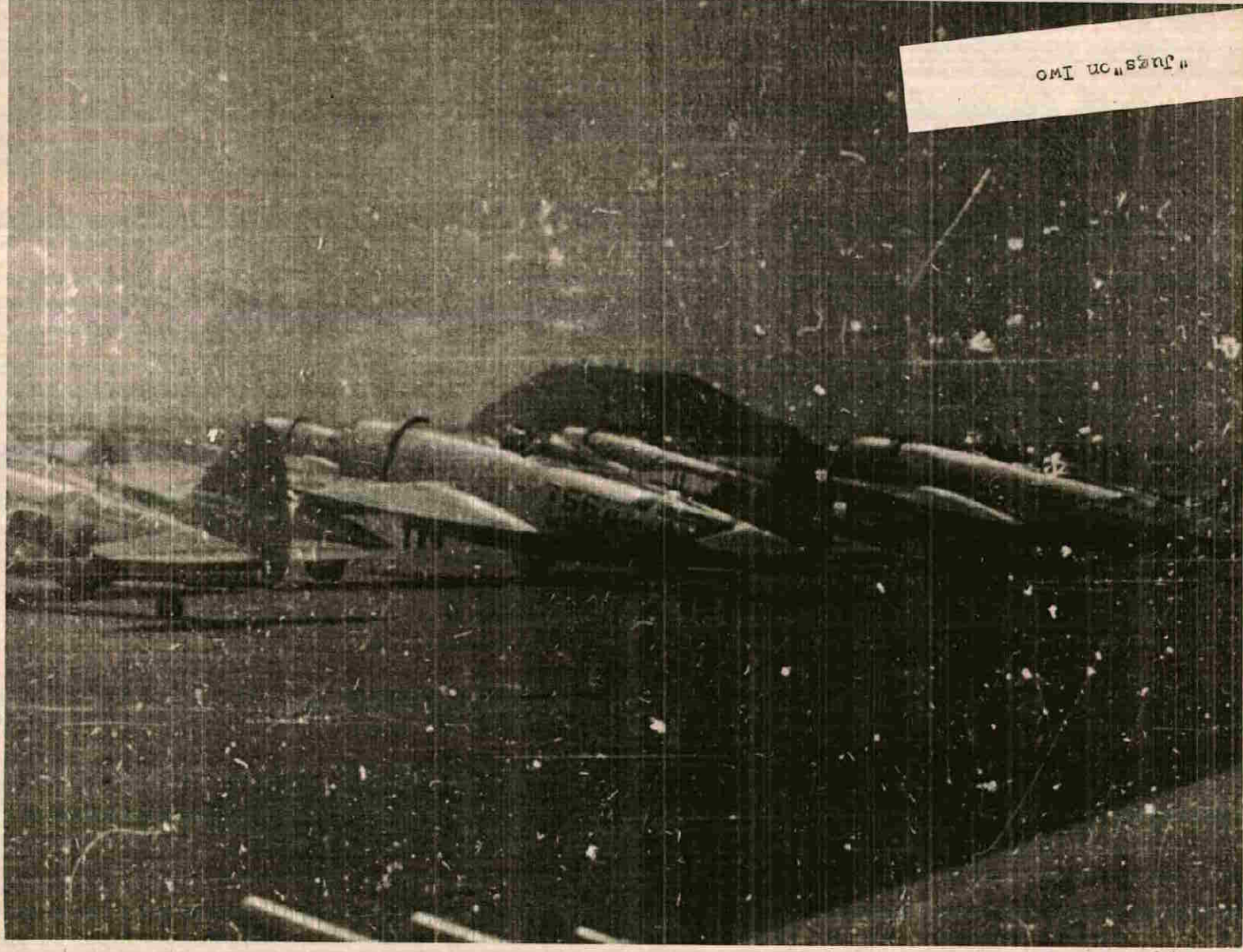
Two Jima airfield construction

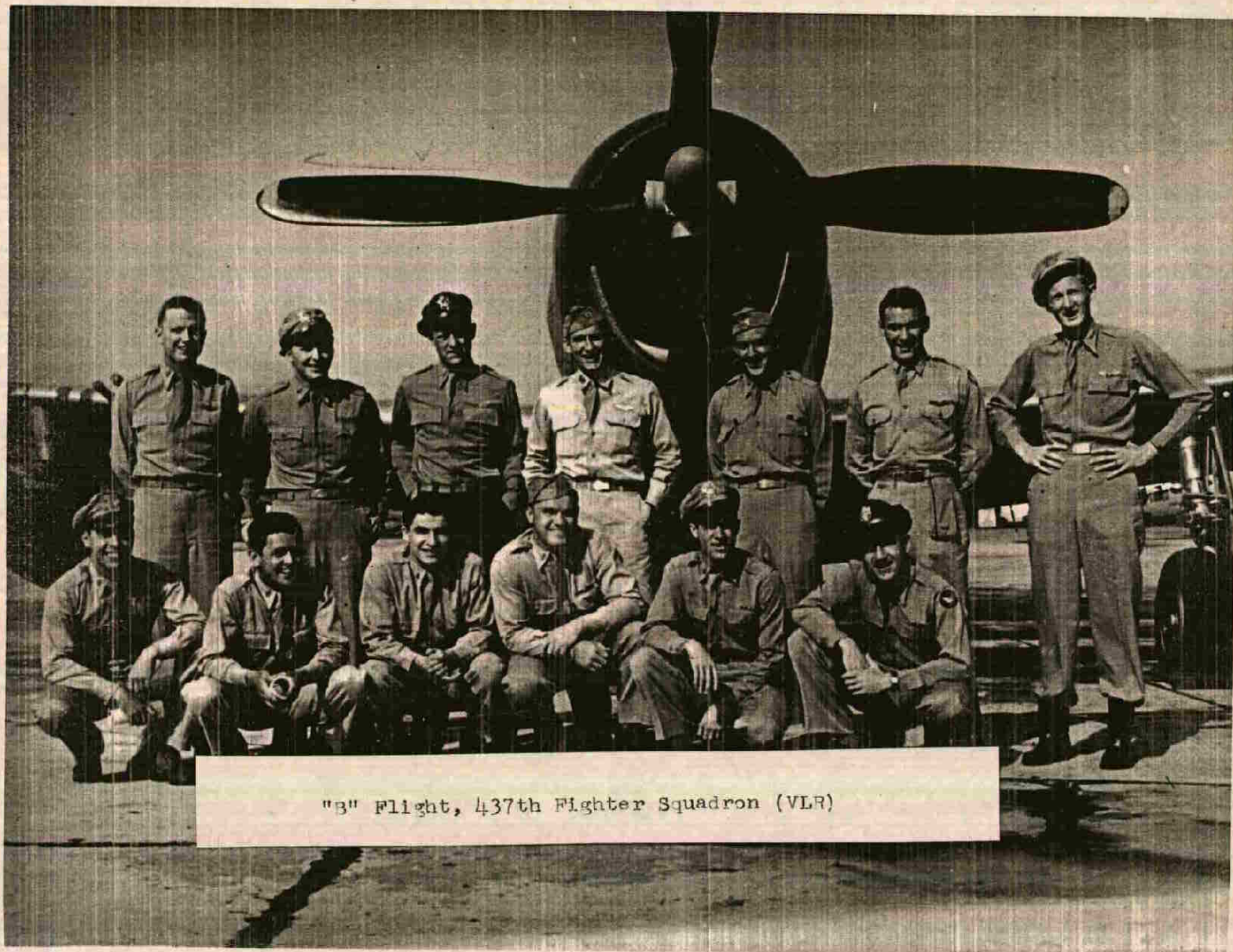


The 437th "Checker Board Squadron," on the
line at Central Strip, Iwo Jima -- July 1945



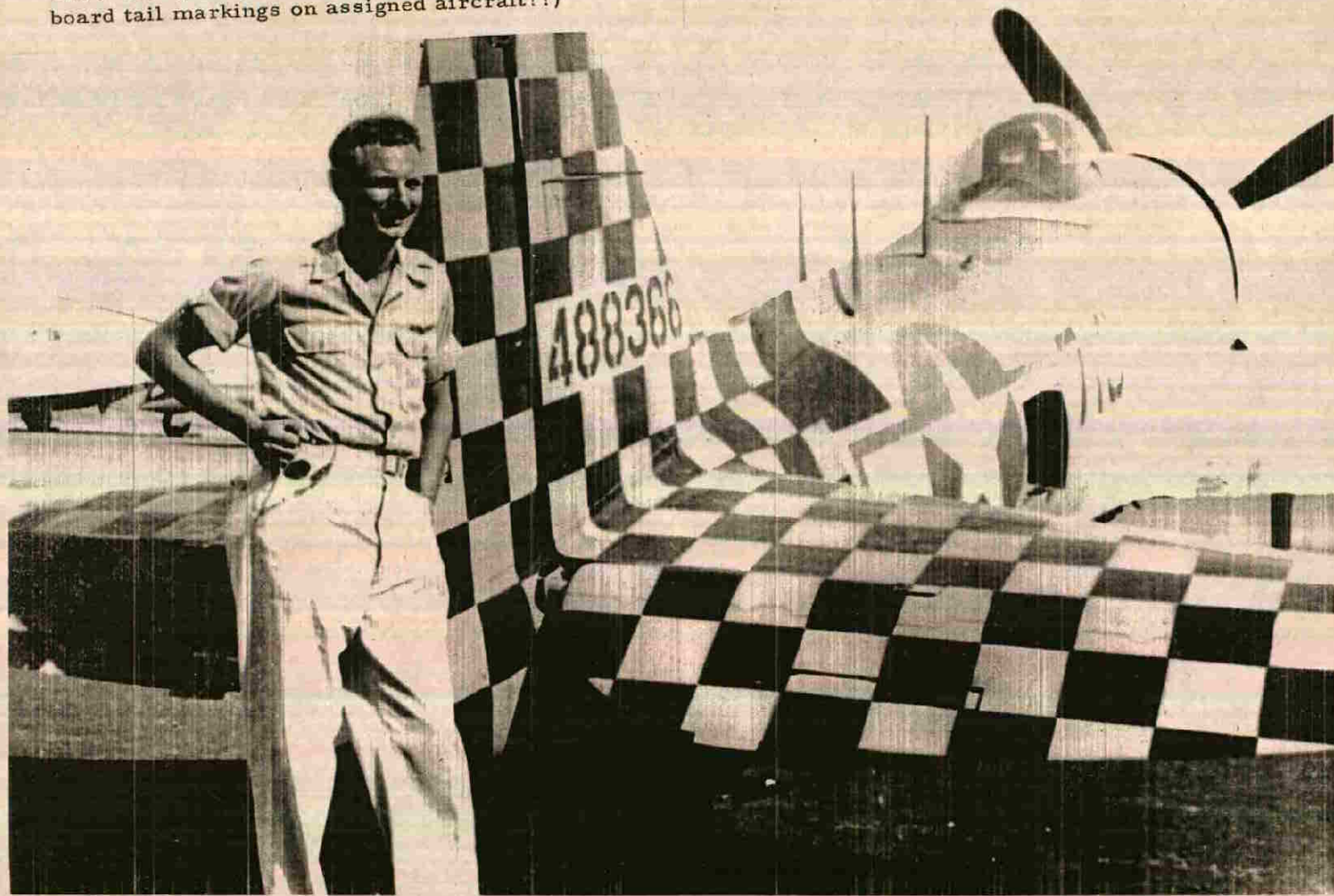
One of the 437th Jugs on the line





"B" Flight, 437th Fighter Squadron (VLR)

Capt James J. Butler, Jr., "B" Flight Comdr,
437 Ftr Sq and "Baby Dumpling" -- Iwo Jima
July 1945. (Note: Due to personnel shortages
etc., each pilot painted black and yellow checker
board tail markings on assigned aircraft!!)

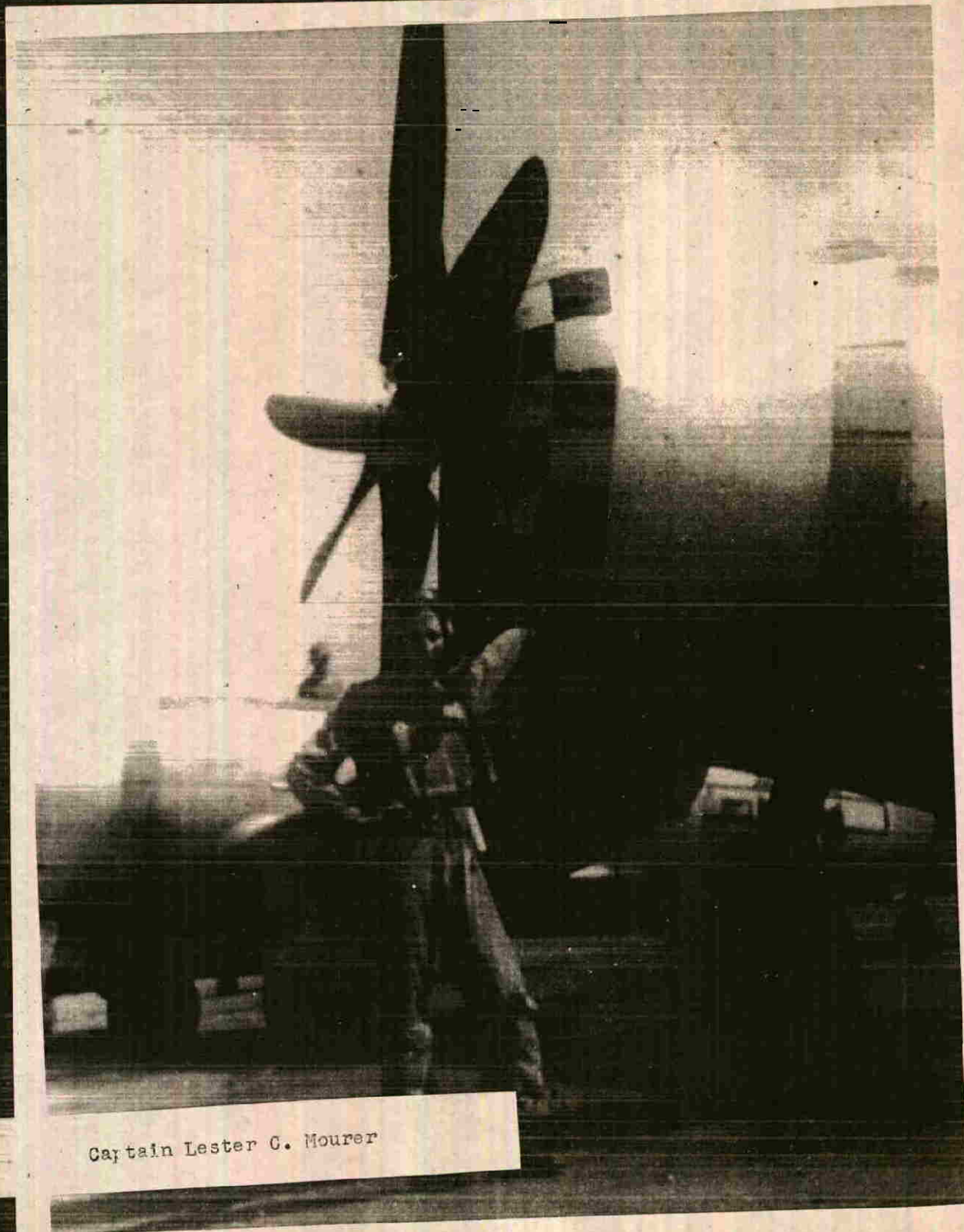


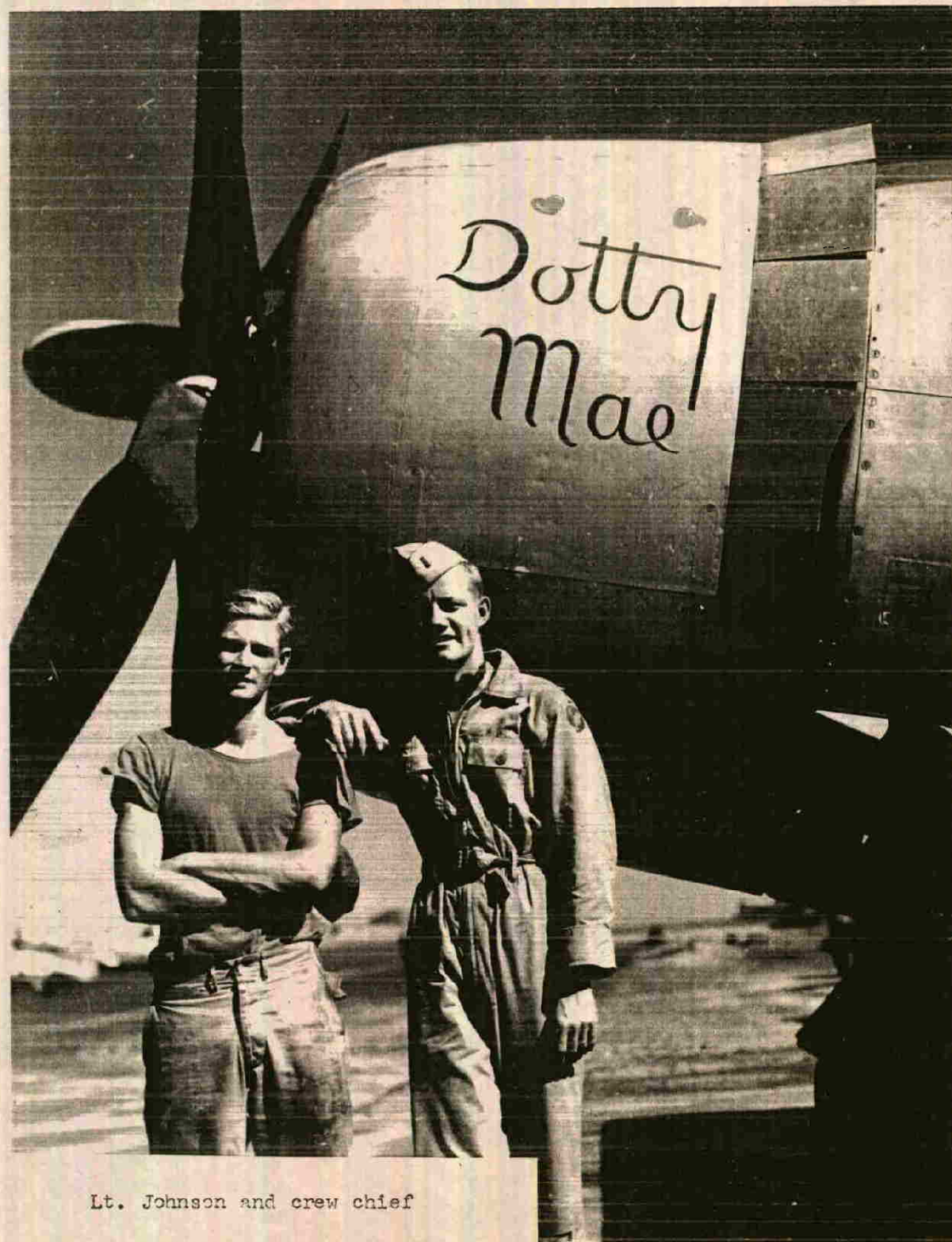


Sargeant Newman, Mourer's crew chief, on P-47's on Iwo



Lt. David Pitton





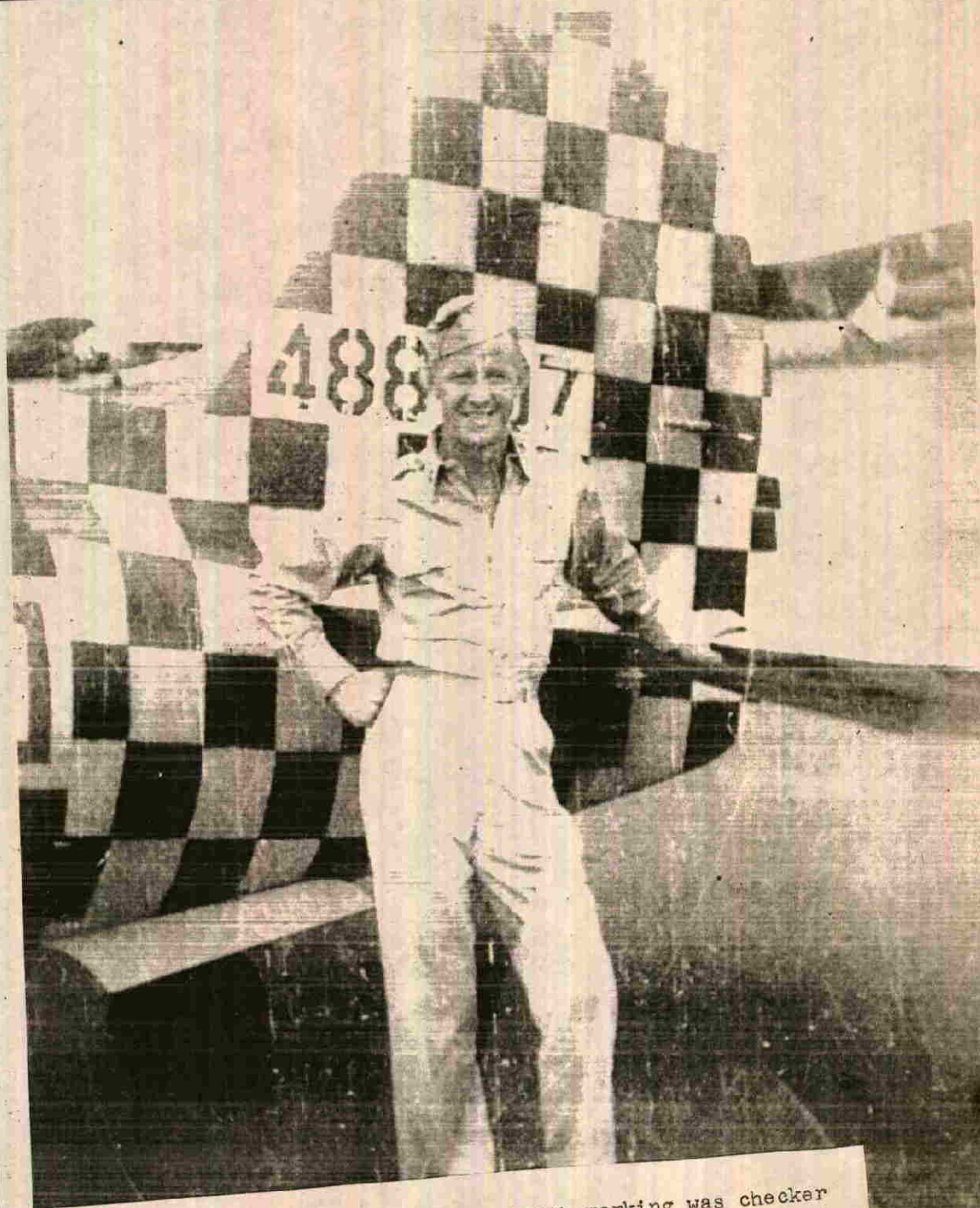
Lt. Johnson and crew chief



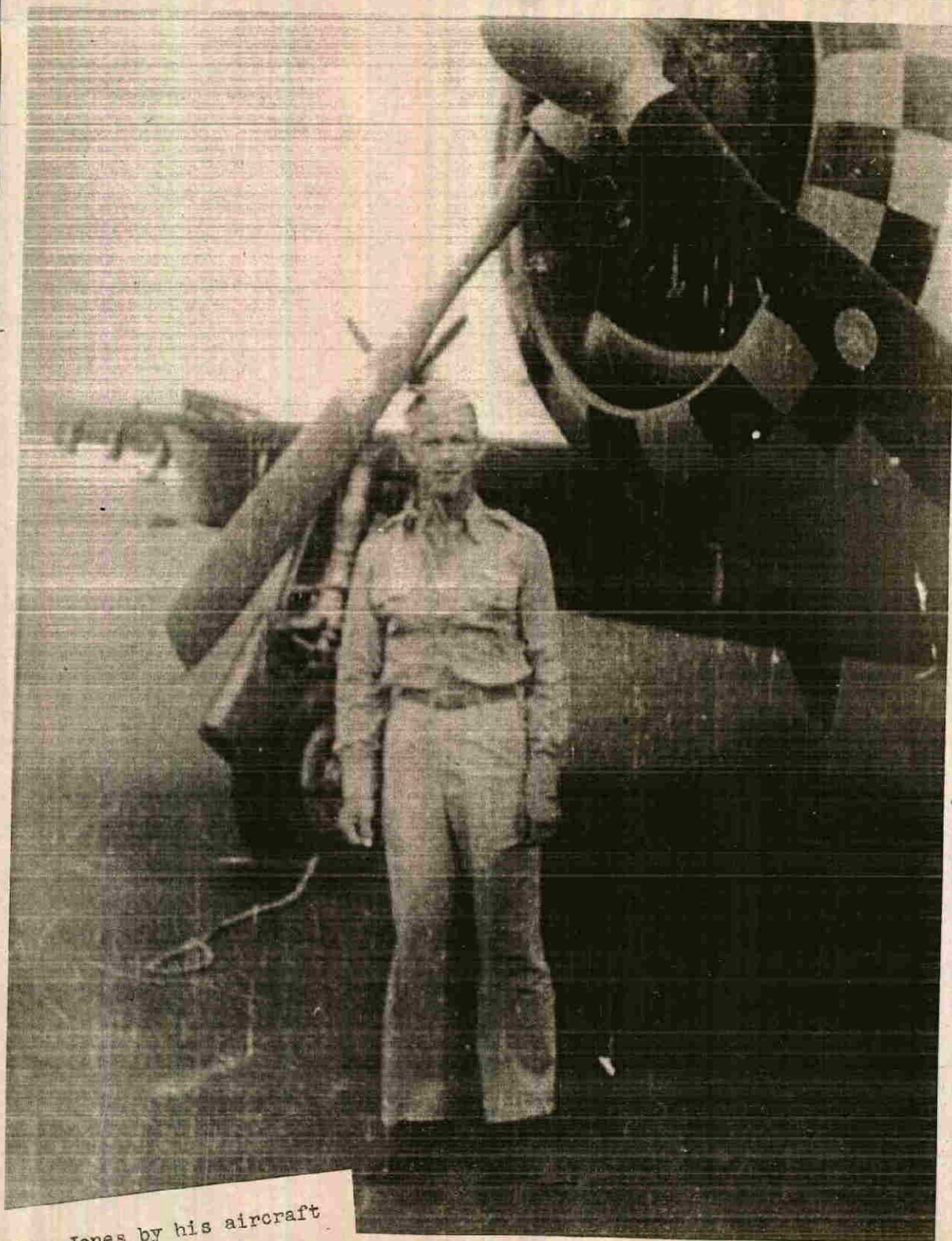
Lt. Fullilove and his aircraft



Henry Jones painting the tail of his aircraft



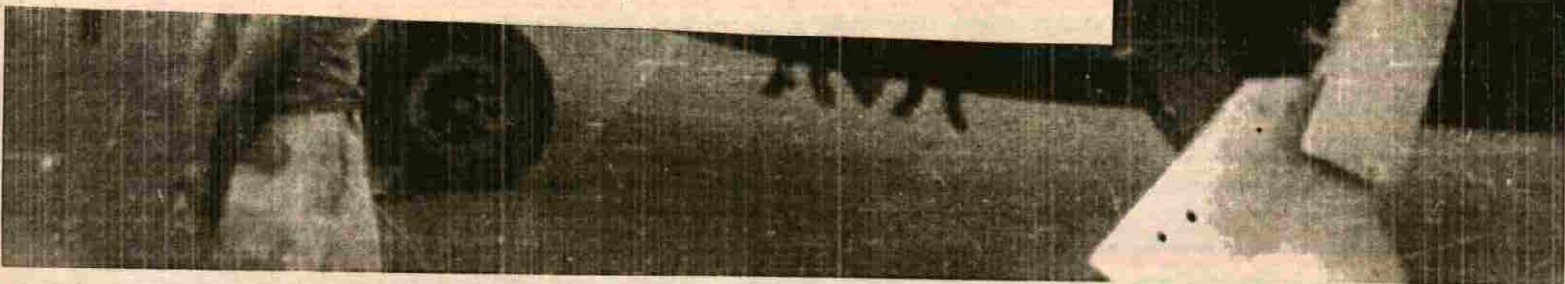
Lt. Jones standing by 437th P-47. 437th marking was checker board cowl and whole tail assembly



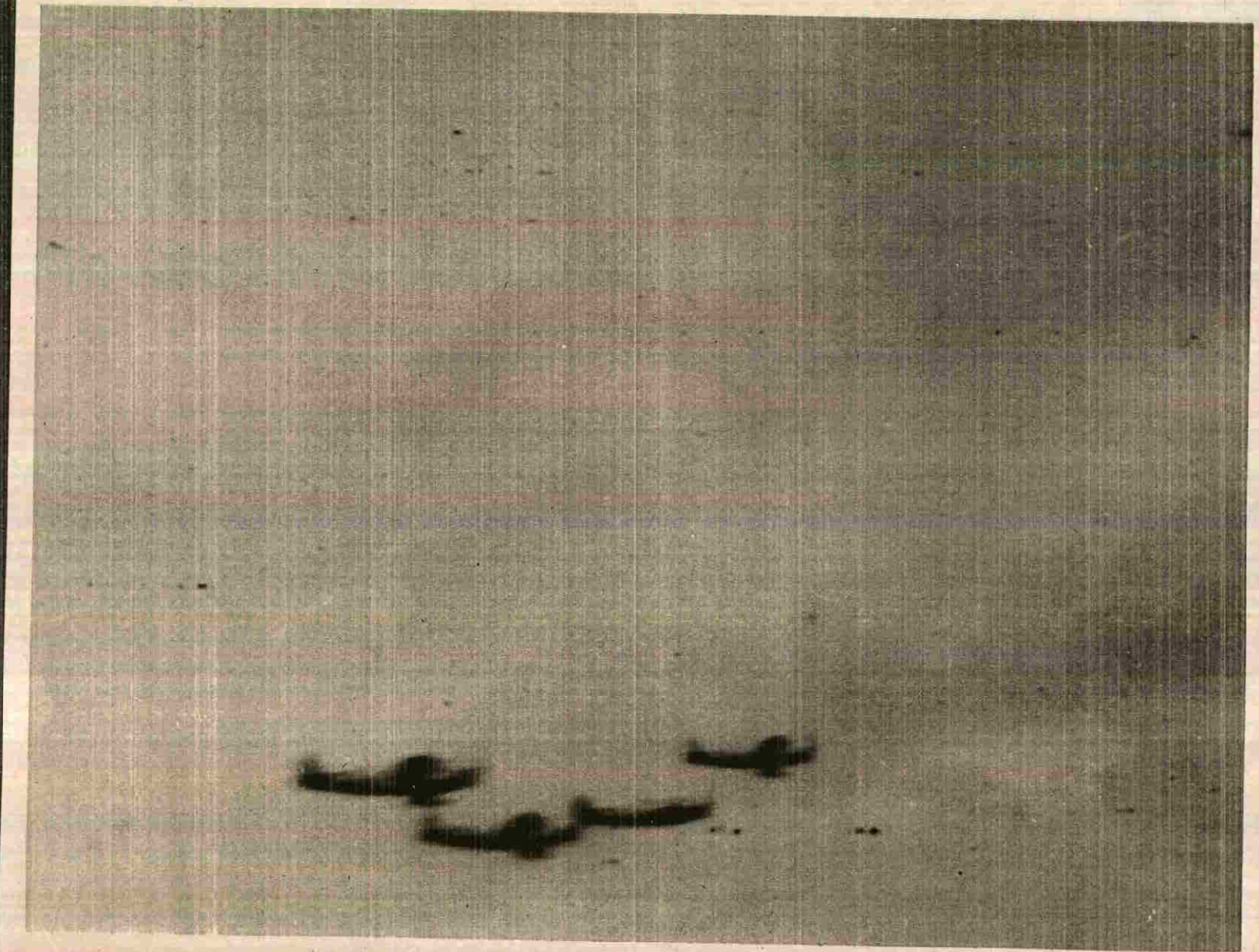
Lt. Jones by his aircraft



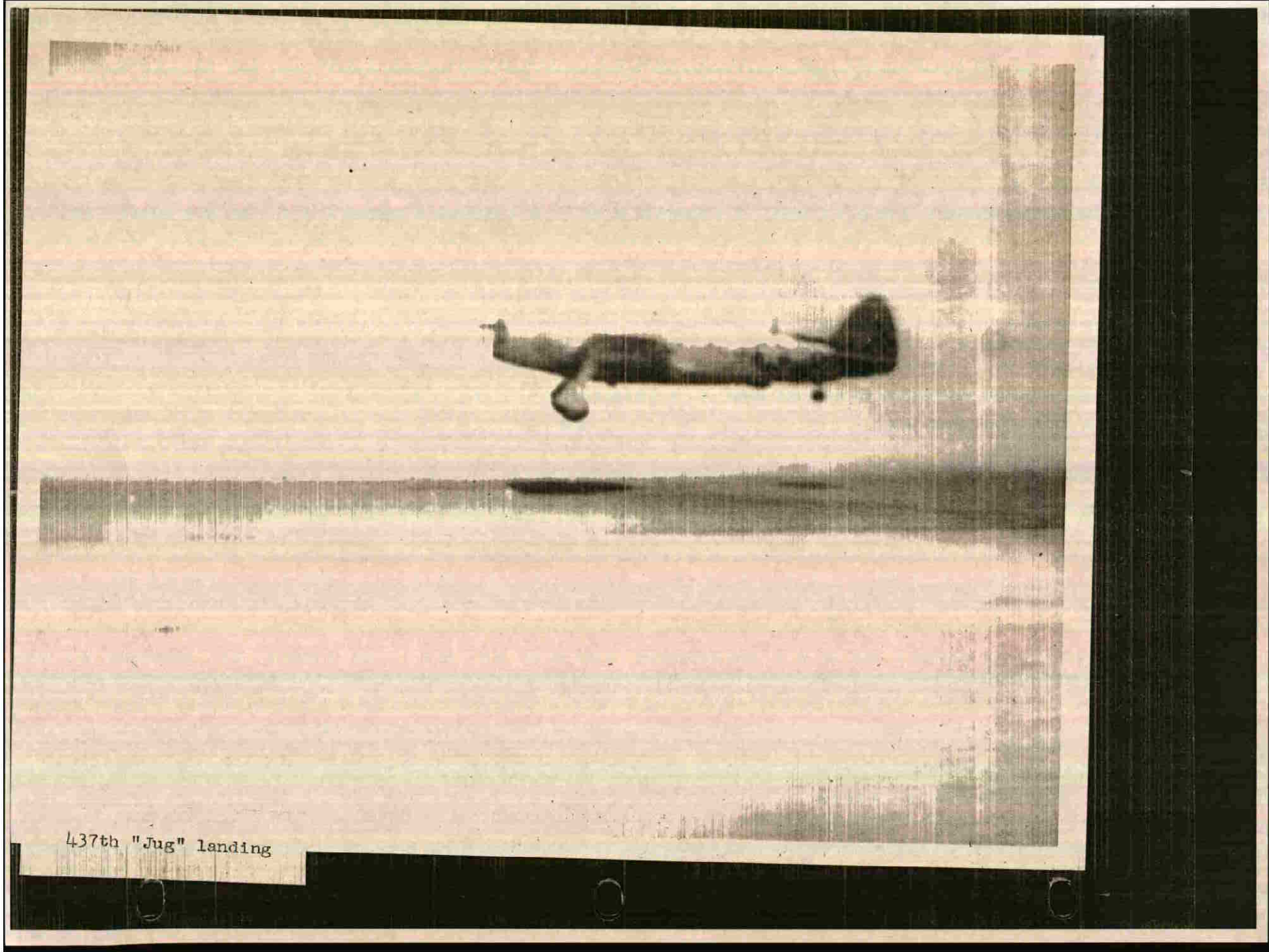
437th ground crew waiting for aircraft to return from mission



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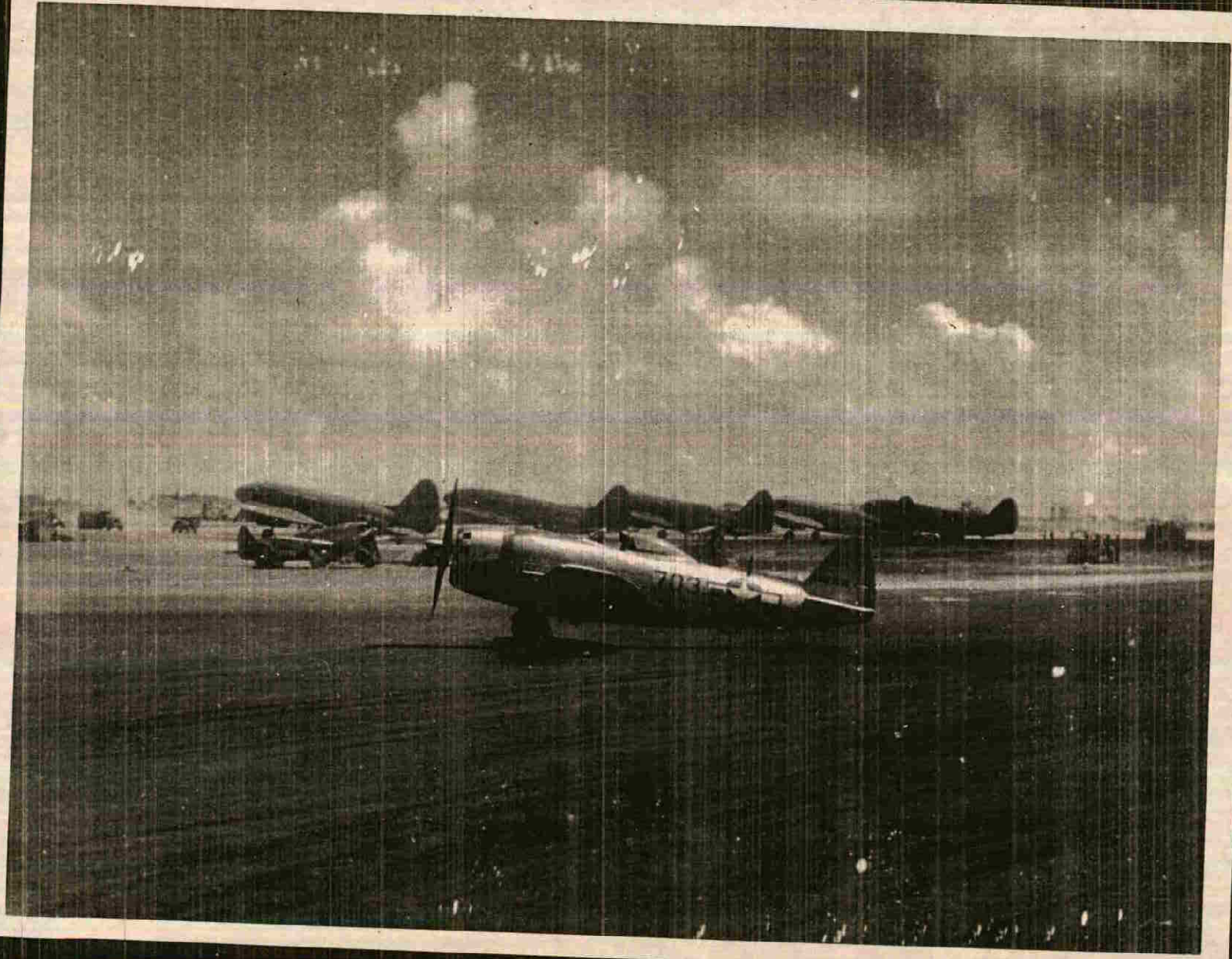
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437th "Jug" landing



Captain Sneed (Mae West) and friends



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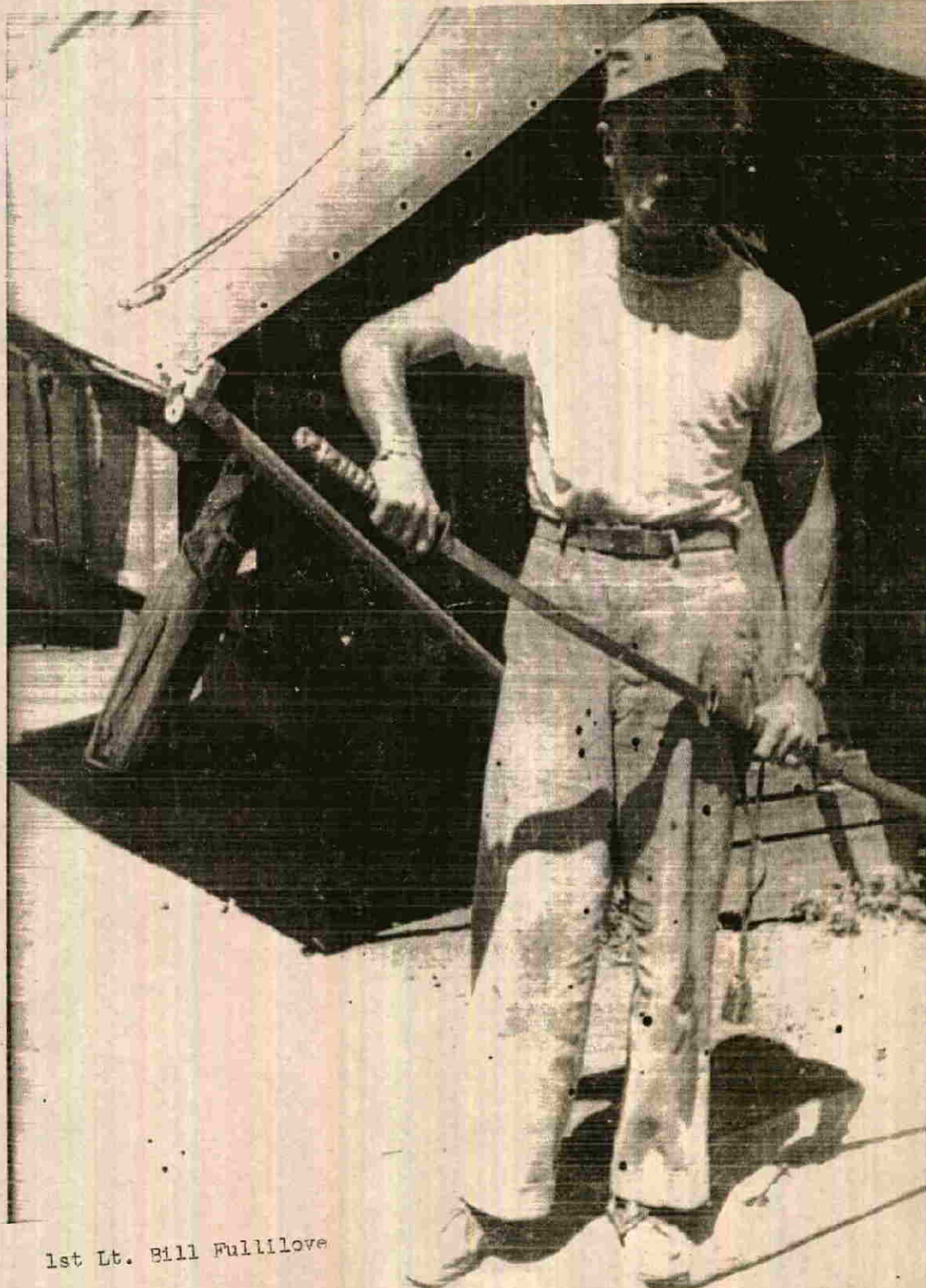


Lt. Dave Fitton up on return from last mission 437th flew-
top cover for the "Big Mo" in Tokyo Bay for signing of the
surrender documents

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1st Lt. Bill Fullilove



Lt Bauman





Colonel Thorne on Iwo



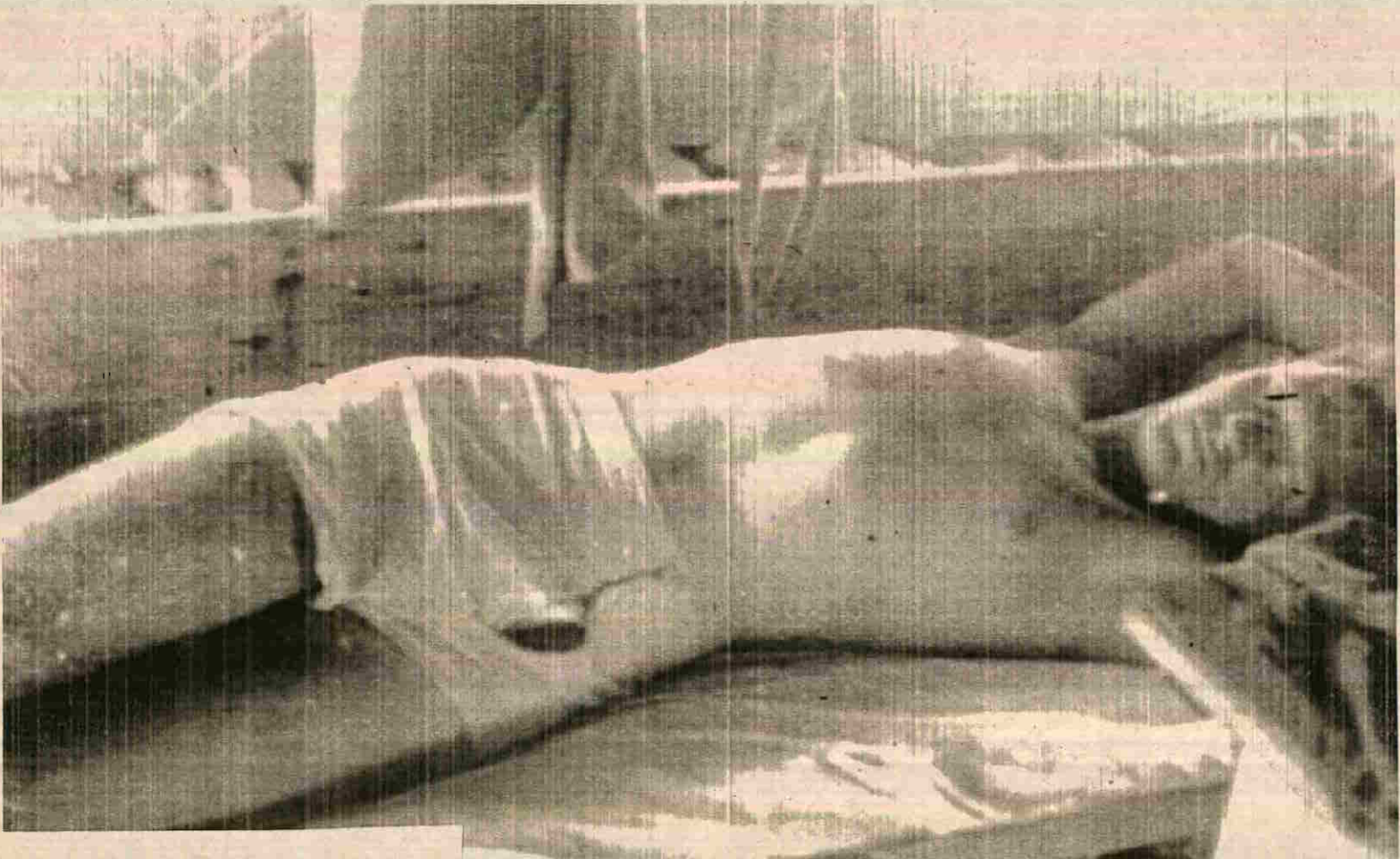
Doug Whatley, unknown, and Bauman



Top of mountain on Iwo Jima. Lt. Bill Crawford, Sgt. Charlie Shoemaker, Unknown, and Lt. David E. Patton. (All above from Harrison, Arkansas)



Sneed, Courtney, and Slater

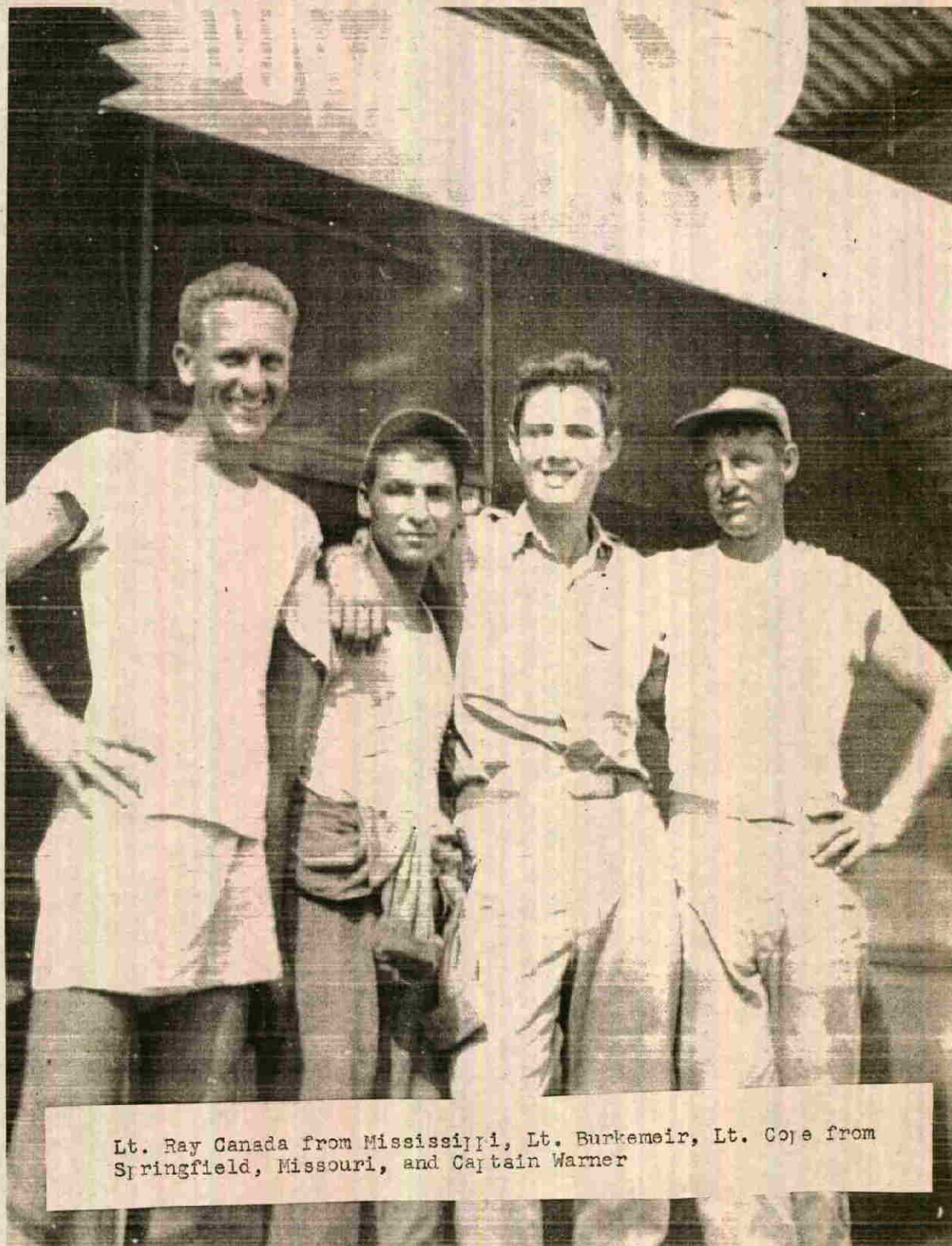


Ray Canada--caught napping

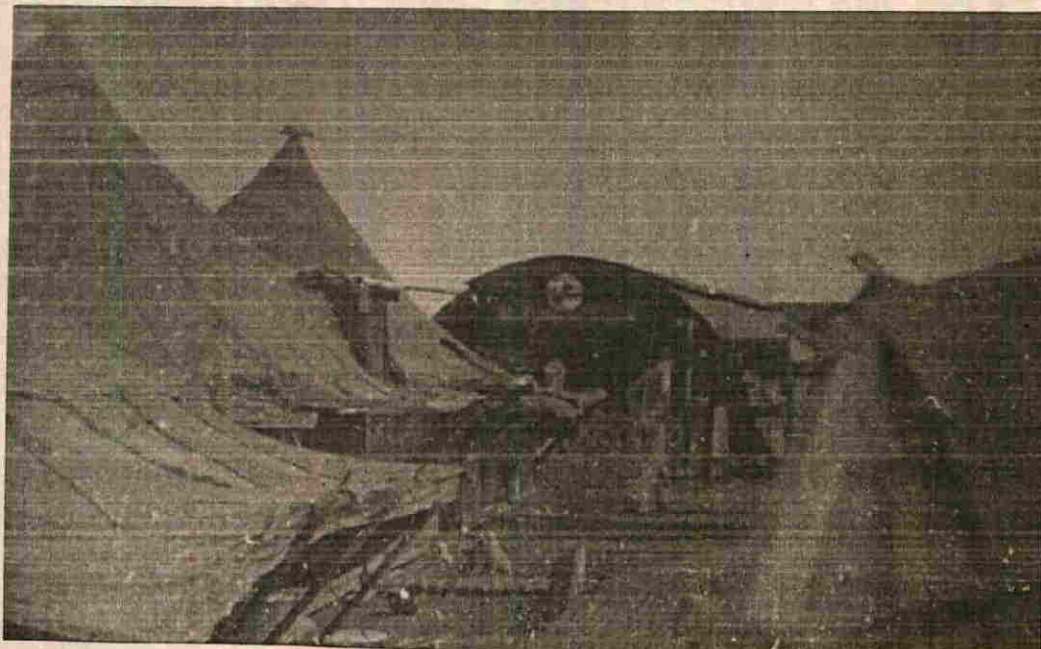


1. Jackson	5. Carmen	9. Powell	13. Murrin	17. Canada
2. Berkshire	6. Hall	10. Meyer	14. Holmes	
3. Sneed	7. Fullilove	11. Menza	15. Stinson	
4. Prescott	8. Jackson	12. Dunfee	16. Shaw	

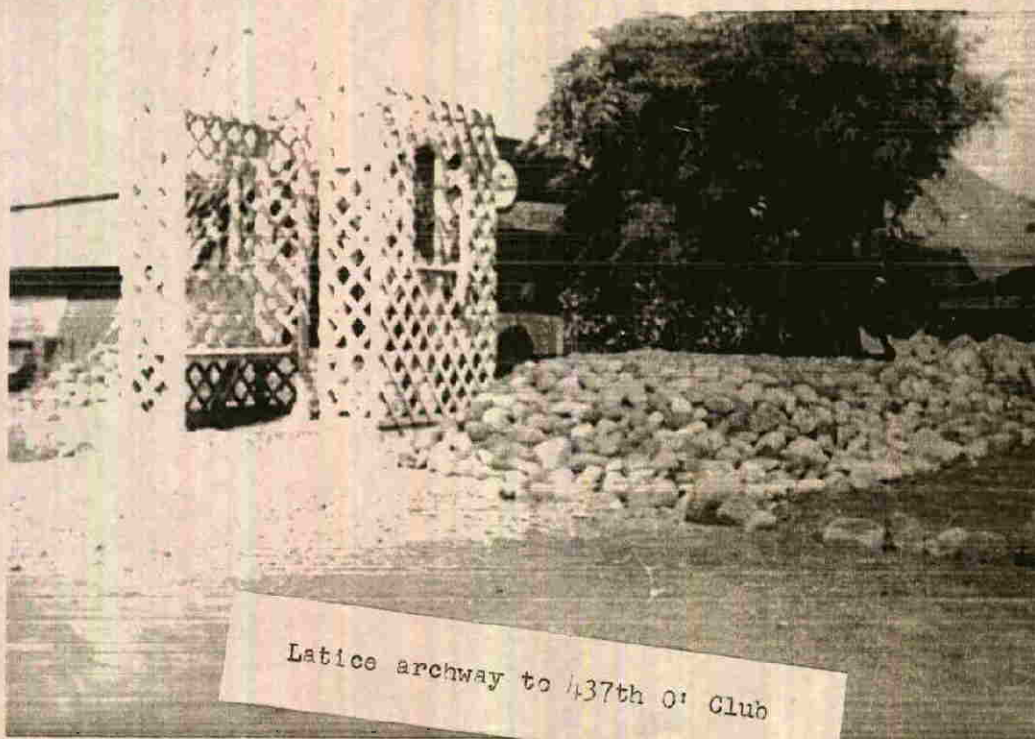




Lt. Ray Canada from Mississippi, Lt. Burkemeir, Lt. Coje from Springfield, Missouri, and Captain Warner



Officers tent area looking down to "Downtown Iwo Jima"



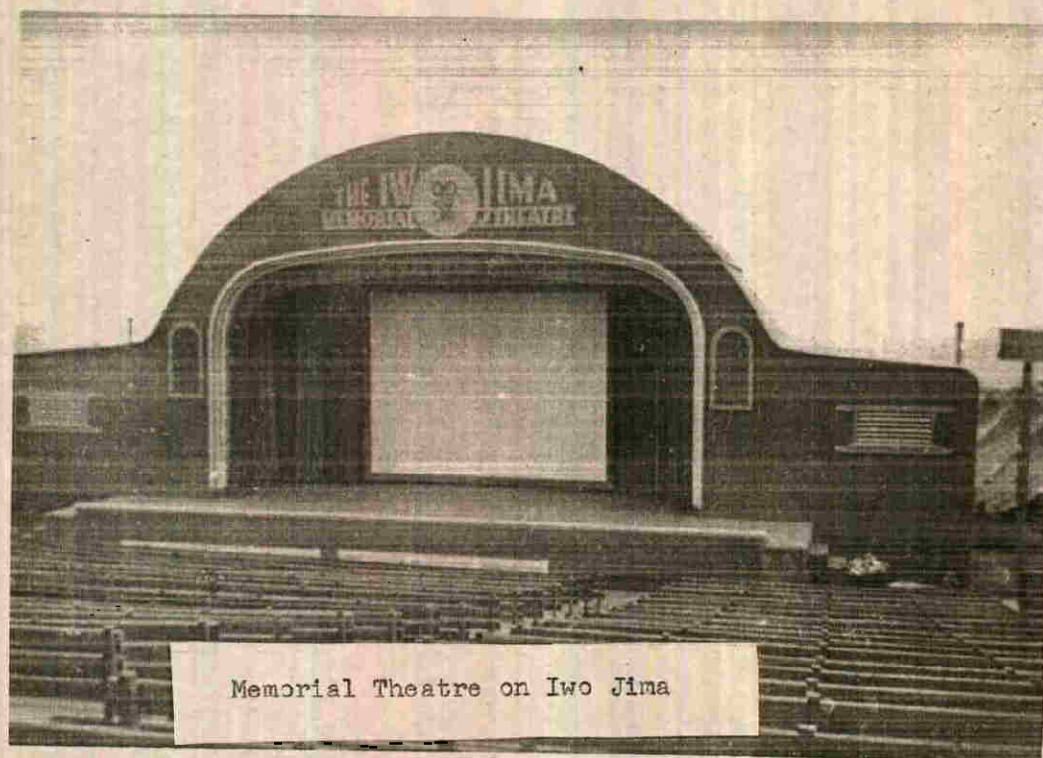
Latice archway to 437th O: Club



AND WE WILL WIN THE PIECE THAT FOLLOWS . . .



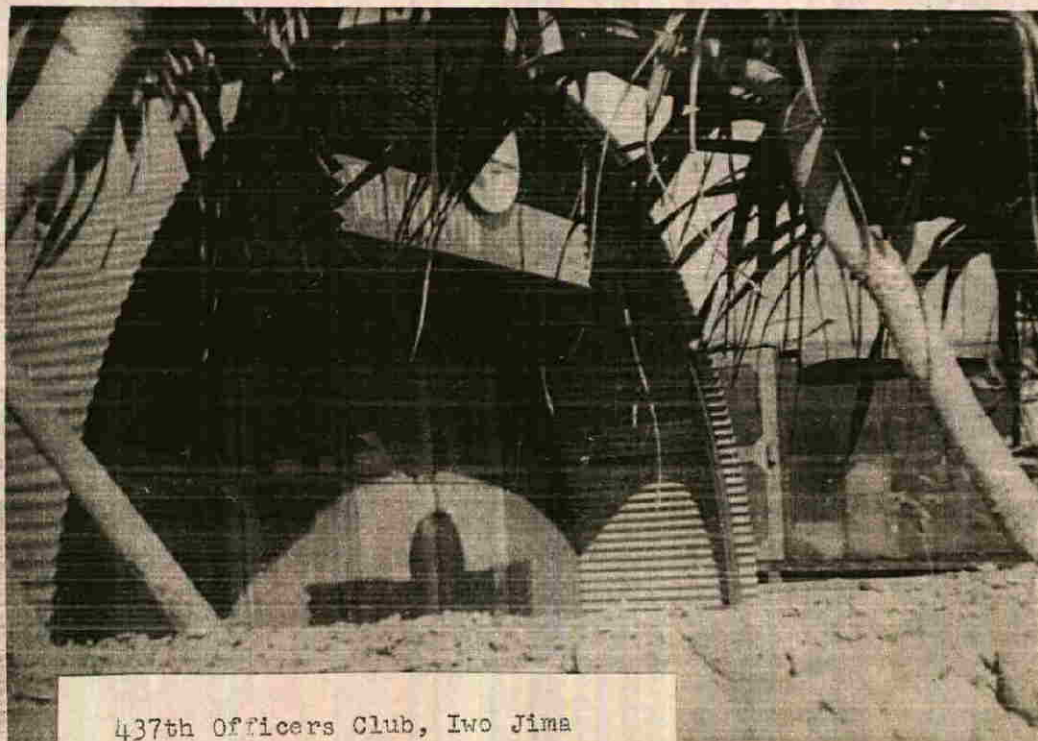
"Sidewalk Cafe" just outside 437th Club



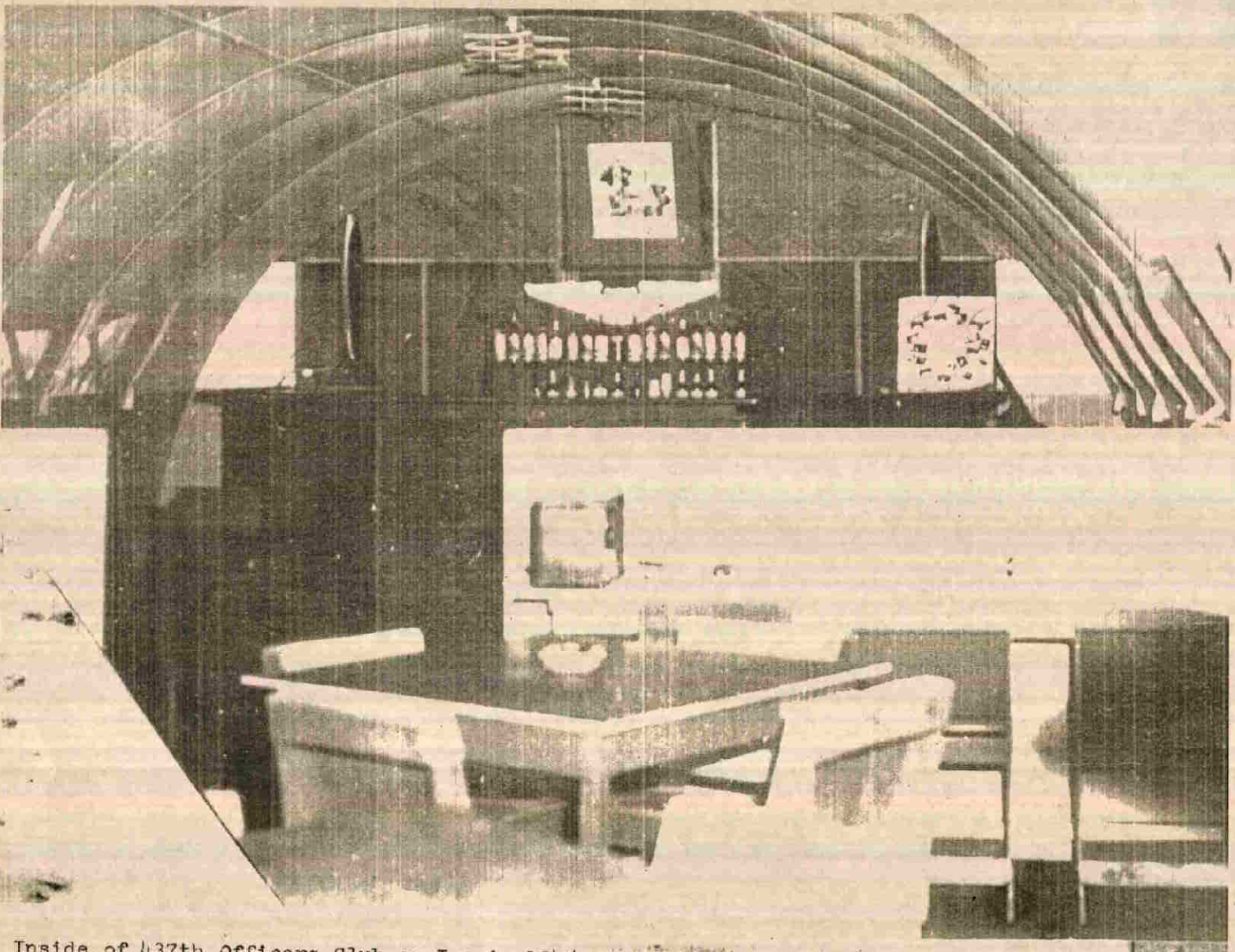
Memorial Theatre on Iwo Jima



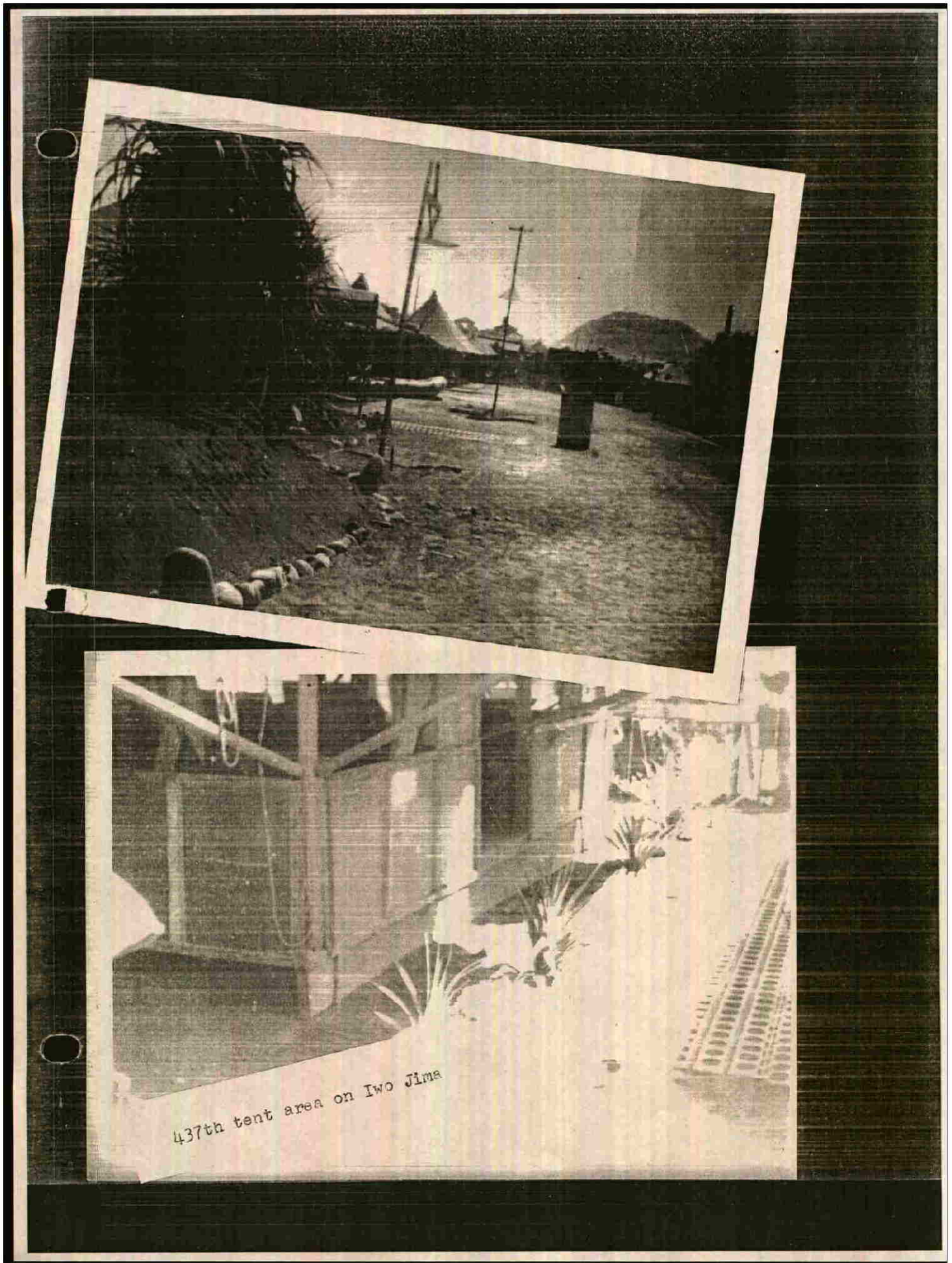
Front of 437th officers club on Iwo Jima, in 1945



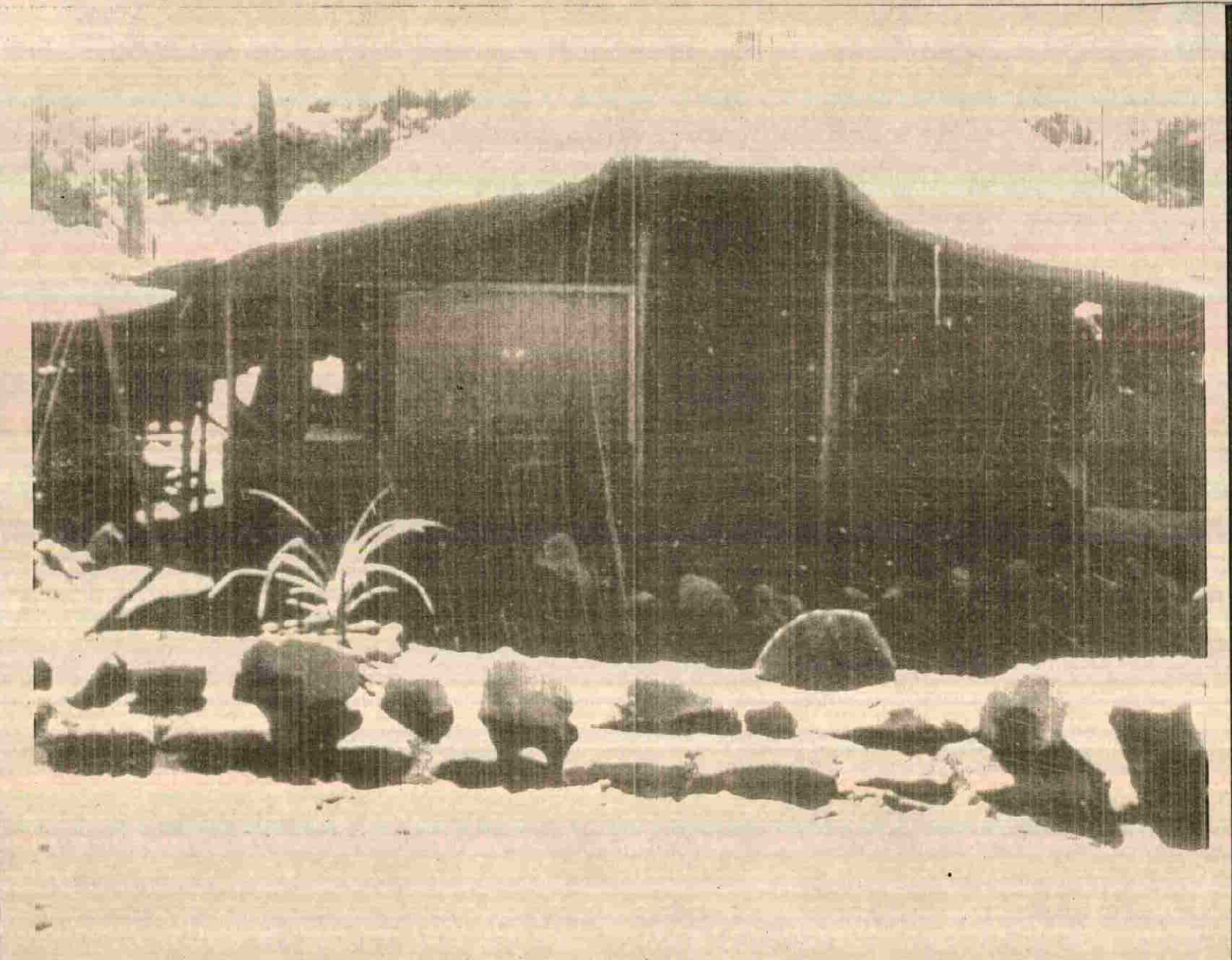
437th Officers Club, Iwo Jima

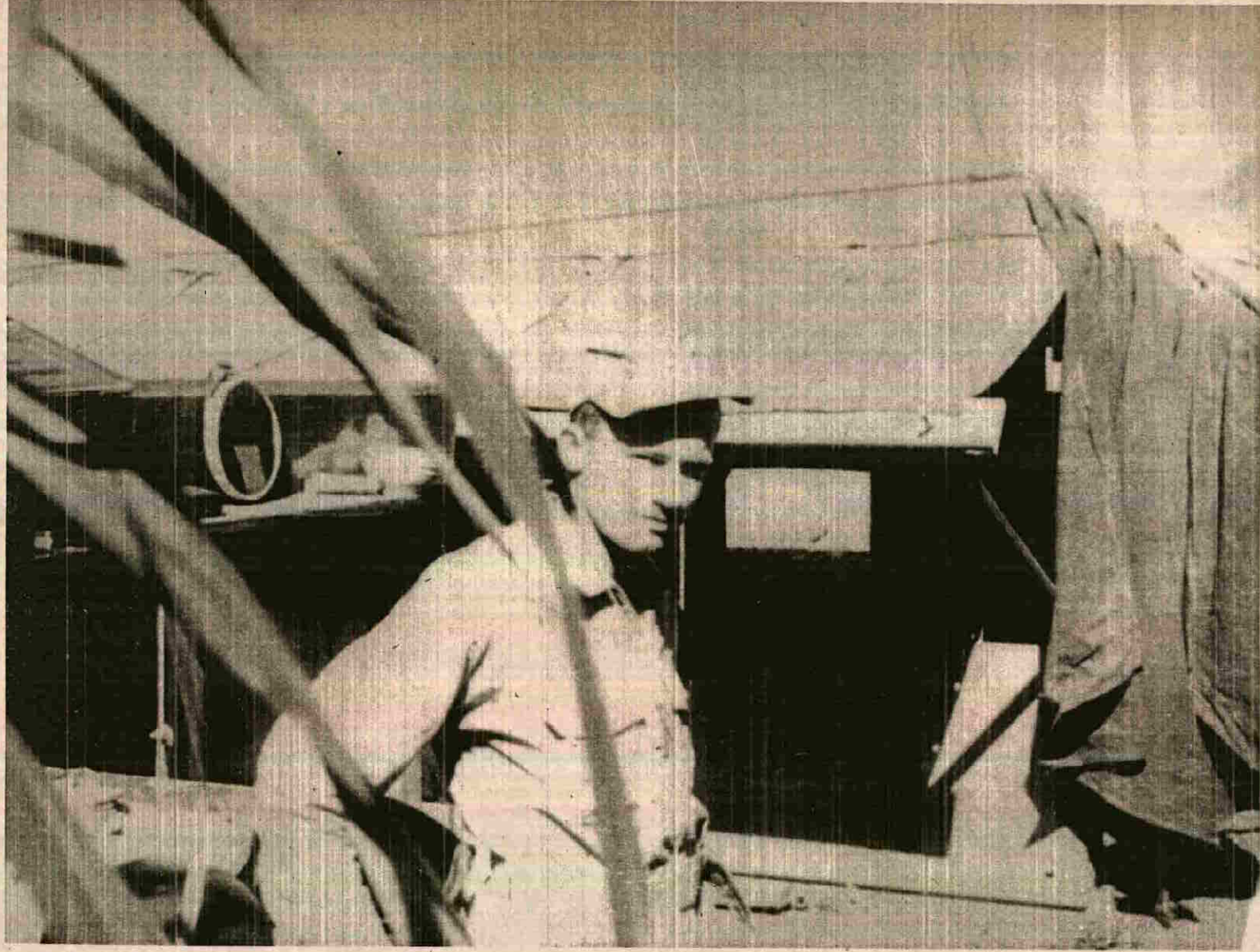


Inside of 437th Officers Club on Iwo in 1945

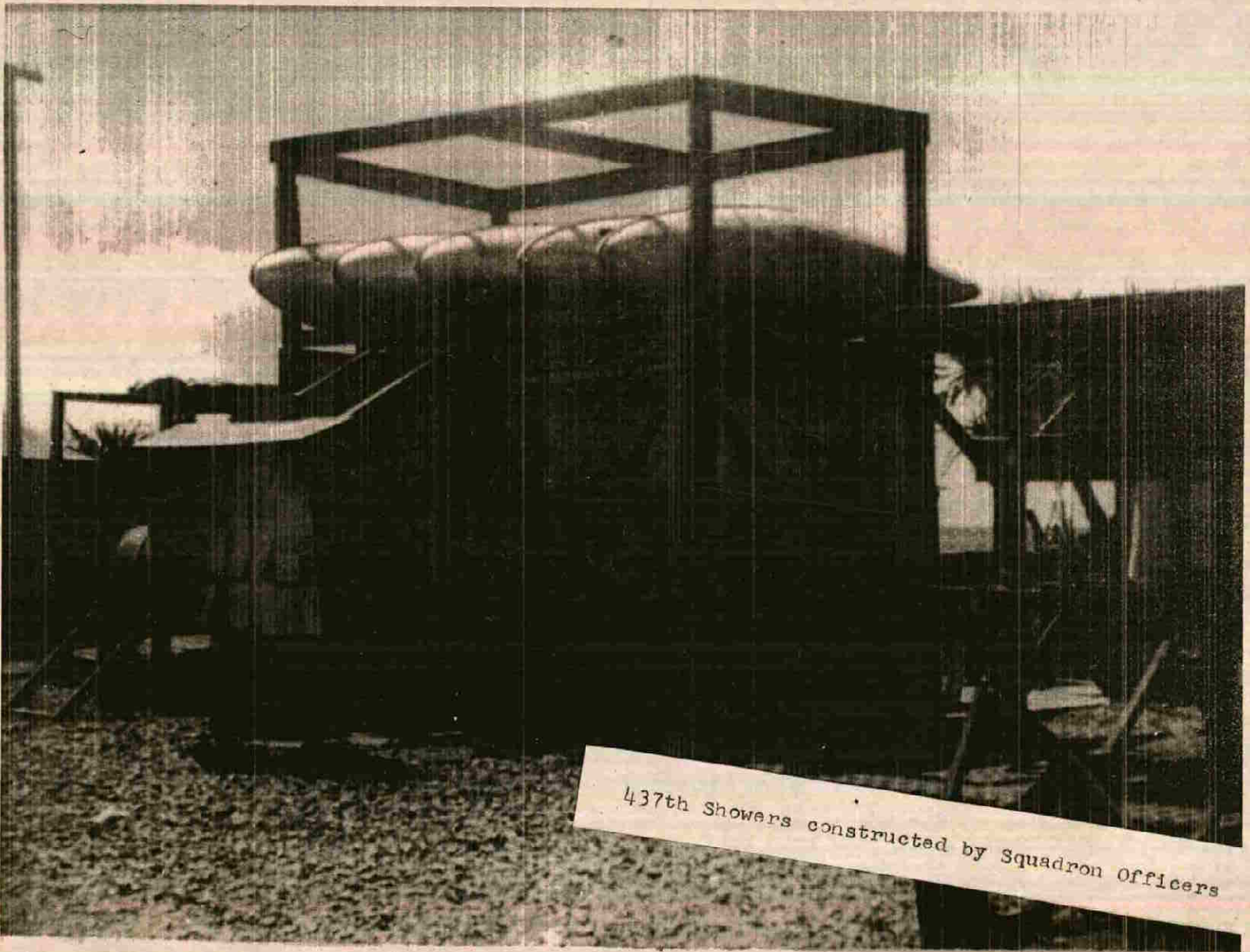


437th tent area on Iwo Jima



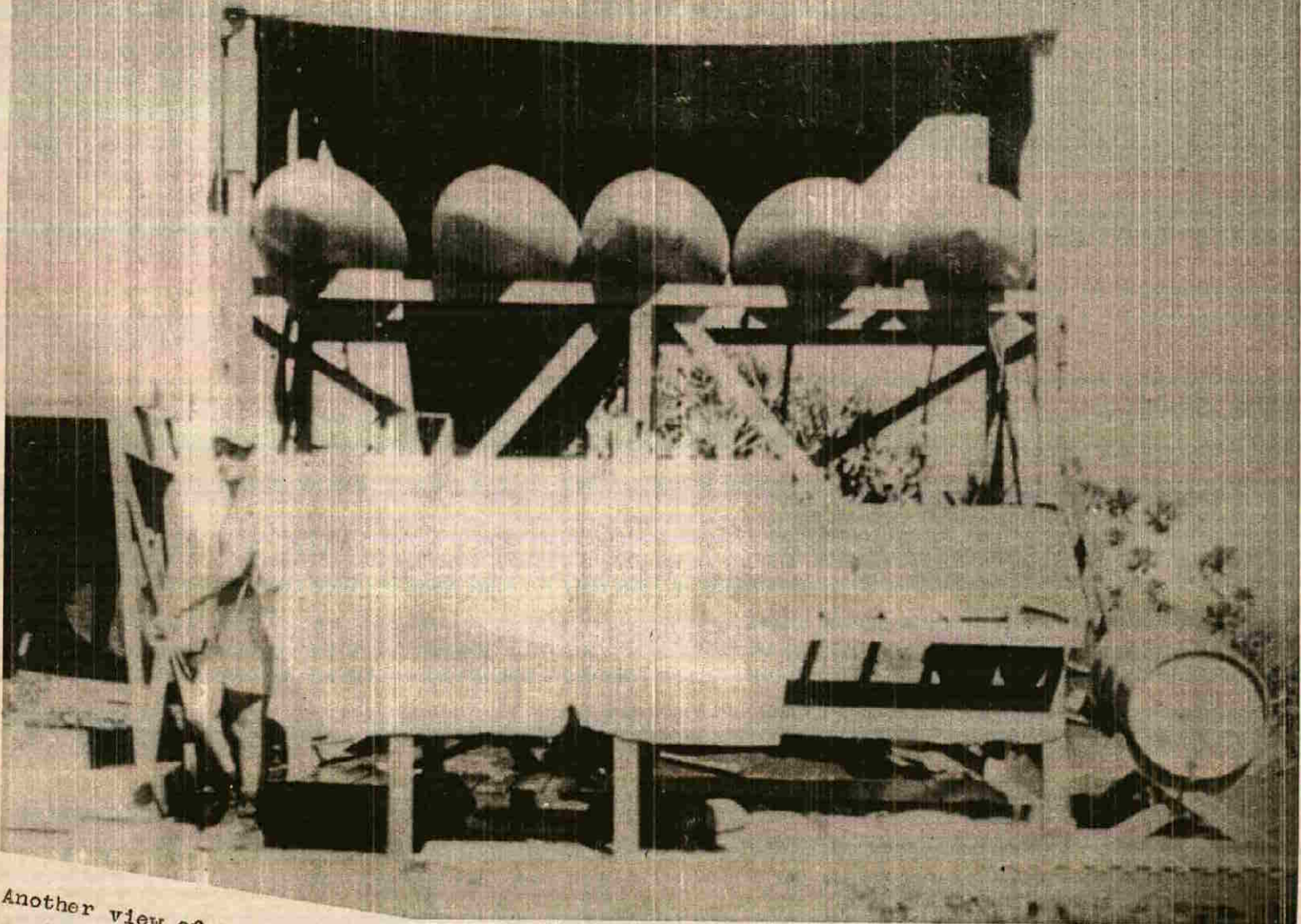


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437th Showers constructed by Squadron Officers

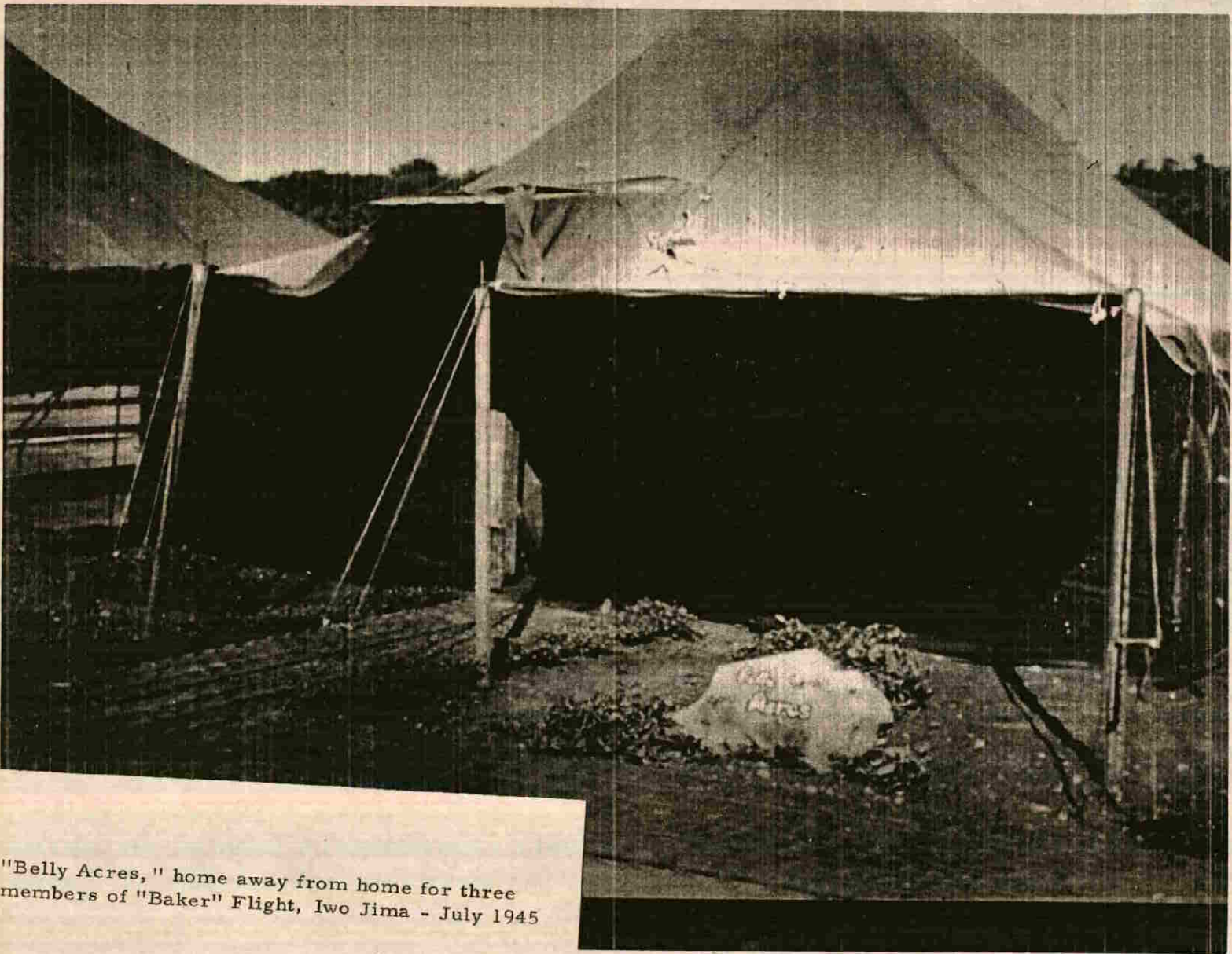
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Another view of the fuel tank showers



437th Ftr Sq Housing Area, Iwo Jima -- June 1945



"Belly Acres," home away from home for three
members of "Baker" Flight, Iwo Jima - July 1945



Living quarters - July, 1945

HEADQUARTERS VII FIGHTER COMMAND AAF
APO #86

GENERAL ORDERS)

25 August 1945

NUMBER 69)

EXTRACT

SECTION

AWARD OF THE AIR MEDAL.V

SECTION V

AWARD OF THE AIR MEDAL: - By direction of the President, under the provisions of Executive Order No. 9159, 11 May 1942 (Bull. No. 25, W.D., 1942) as amended by Executive Order No. 9242-A, 11 September 1942 (Bull. No. 49, W.D., 1942), and pursuant to authority contained in paragraph 17, AR 600-45, 22 September 1943, and Letter, Hq AAFFOA, subject "Delegation of Authority to Award Decorations", dated 5 June 1945, an Air Medal is awarded by the Commanding General, VII Fighter Command, to the following officers, Air Corps, United States Army, for meritorious achievement while participating in aerial flight. While participating in very long range fighter missions against the Japanese Empire, they accomplished the missions successfully and with distinction above that normally expected, displaying high professional skill and courage which reflected great credit upon themselves and the Army Air Forces:

Second Lieutenant RICHARD C. BAUMAN, 0706572
Second Lieutenant WILLIAM H. BELL JR, 0802999
First Lieutenant HUDSON N. BENNER, 0466470

Second Lieutenant ARNOLD C. BIRKMAIER, 0715447

Second Lieutenant LEO W. BUKOWSKI JR, 0821661
First Lieutenant JAMES J. BUTLER JR, 0686196

Second Lieutenant ANTHONY J. CARMEN, 0815120

Second Lieutenant GORDON M. DUNFEE, 0821384
Second Lieutenant ROBERT H. DUNNAVANT, 0805012

(GO #69, Hq VII FC, dtd 25 Aug 45)

First Lieutenant WILLIAM B. HINN, 0797828

Captain JAMES L. HULL, 0366624

First Lieutenant DONALD R. JACKSON, 0799567

First Lieutenant ROBERT J. JACKSON, 0874838

Second Lieutenant CARL H. JOHNSON, 0826675

Flight Officer EDMUND A. KNAPIK, T62398

Flight Officer WILLIAM A. MACDONALD, T62725

Second Lieutenant NICHOLAS MENZA, 0823114

First Lieutenant WILLIAM C. MEYER JR, 0666414

Captain LESTER C. MOYER, 0666219

Second Lieutenant JAMES E. MURRIN, 0824540

Second Lieutenant GLYDE J. PROULX, 0831587

Second Lieutenant ROBERT E. SHAW, 0809200

First Lieutenant MARVIN H. SNEAD, 0810750

First Lieutenant FRED E. WARNER, 0877620

ant CHARLES WEBER, 0802088

ant DOUGLAS E. WHATLEY, 02063900

BRIGADIER GENERAL MOORE:

E.P. MUSSETT,
Colonel, Air Corps,
Acting Chief of Staff.

ARBER JR,
ARBER JR,
Air Corps
d. Gen.

EM concerned.
ds Section.
Gen Section.

A TRUE EXTRACT COPY:

Ramon R. Santiago
RAMON R. SANTIAGO
2d Lt., Air Corps

Item 9

HEADQUARTERS VII FIGHTER COMMAND CAF
APO #88

GENERAL ORDER 3)

31 August 1948

NUMBER 74)

E X T R A C TSECTION XIII

AWARD OF EIGHTH BRONZE OAK LEAF CLUSTER TO THE AIR MEDAL:- by direction of the President, under the provisions of Executive Order No. 9158, 11 May 1942 (Bull. No. 25, W.D., 1942) as amended by Executive Order No. 9242-A, 11 September 1942 (Bull. No. 49, W.D., 1942), and pursuant to authority contained in paragraph 17, AR 600-45, 22 September 1943, and Letter, Hq AAFPCA, subject "Delegation of Authority to Award Decorations", dated 5 June 1946, an Eighth Bronze Oak Leaf Cluster to the Air Medal is awarded by the Commanding General, VII Fighter Command, to the following officer:

First Lieutenant HIAWATHA MOHANE, 0800022, Air Corps, United States Army, for meritorious achievement while participating in aerial flight. While participating in a very long range fighter mission against the Japanese Empire, he accomplished the mission successfully and with distinction above that normally expected, displaying high professional skill and courage which reflected great credit upon himself and the Army Air Forces.

BY COMMAND OF BRIGADIER GENERAL MOORE:

OFFICIAL:

E. P. MUSSETT,
Colonel, Air Corps,
Acting Chief of Staff

s- JAMES F. GARDER JR,
t- JAMES F. GARDER JR,
Lt Col, Air Corps,
Actg Adj Gen.

DISTRIBUTION: "B"

PLUS: 1 - ea Off & EM concerned
PLUS: 10 cys - Awards Section
PLUS: 10 cys - Adj Gen. Section

A TRUE EXTRACT COPY:

RAMON R. SANTIAGO
2d Lt., Air Corps

HEADQUARTERS VII FIGHTER COMMAND AAF
APO #86

15)
:
74)

31 August 1945

E X T R A C T

THE DISTINGUISHED FLYING CROSS: - By direction of the President, the provisions of the act of Congress approved 2 July 1926 (49 Stat., W.D., 1926), and pursuant to authority contained in paragraph 600-45, 22 September 1943, and Letter, Hq, AAFPOA, subject of Authority to Award Decorations", dated 3 June 1945, a Distinguished Flying Cross is awarded by the Commanding General, VII Fighter Command, to the following officers, Air Corps, United States Army, for extraordinary achievement while participating in aerial flight. Pilot of a fighter type aircraft, established a brilliant record in sustained air operations over the Japanese home islands. Flights of more than 1500 miles were accomplished over hostile enemy land areas. The threat of intense antiaircraft fire and adverse weather conditions, together with treacherous weather conditions, made the operations above those normally encountered in air combat. The extraordinary ability, professional skill, and courage displayed by these officers were an inspiration to their fellow pilots and contributed toward the elimination of the Japanese Air Force. Their outstanding accomplishments clearly set them apart from their comrades, and they have gained great credit upon themselves and the Army Air Forces:

First Lieutenant KEITH C. LOVELL, 0696704

BY COMMAND OF BRIGADIER GENERAL MOORE:

E. P. MUBSETT,
Colonel, Air Corps,
Acting Chief of Staff.

2- JAMES F. GARBER Jr.,
1- JAMES F. GARBER Jr.,
Lt. Col, Air Corps
Actg Adj Gen.

A TRUE EXTRACT COPY:

Re: "B"

- cc Off & EM concerned.
ccs - Awards Section
ccs - Adj Gen Section

RAMON R. SANTIAGO
2d Lt., Air Corps

HEADQUARTERS VII FIGHTER COMMAND AAF
APC #86

GENERAL ORDERS)

31 August 1945

NUMBER 74)

E X T R A C TSECTION VI

AWARD OF THE AIR MEDAL: - By direction of the President, under the provisions of Executive Order No. 9136, 11 May 1942 (Bull. No. 25, W.D., 1942) as amended by Executive Order No. 9242-A, 11 September 1942 (Bull. No. 49, W.D., 1942), and pursuant to authority contained in paragraph 17, AR 600-45, 22 September 1943, and Letter, Hq AAFVDA, subject "Delegation of Authority to Award Decorations", dated 3 June 1945, an Air Medal is awarded by the Commanding General, VII Fighter Command, to the following officers, Air Corps, United States Army, for meritorious achievement while participating in aerial flight. While participating in very long range fighter missions against the Japanese Empire, they accomplished the missions successfully and with distinction above that normally expected, displaying high professional skill and courage which reflected great credit upon themselves and the Army Air Forces:

Second Lieutenant LOUIS H. DILLON, 0821465
First Lieutenant DAVID E. PITTON JR, 026807

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