

PFC Harry S Vradenburg

I didn't want to work on B-29s! I had been trained on B-24s. They sent me to Walker even though I had never worked on B-29s. I was drafted from Albany, NY and assigned to the Signal Corps, which was attached to the Air Corps. I completed Basic Training in Atlantic City, NJ. Then on to City College and Niagara University, both located in New York. From there I went to Keesler Air Force Base in Biloxi, MS. **[Editor's Note:** In mid-1942 the Army Air Forces directed Keesler to focus upon the training of mechanics for B-24 Liberator heavy bombers. The school received its first B 24 in late September 1942. Six more arrived shortly thereafter, and specialized B 24 maintenance training began on 19 October. Generally unknown to most was the role that the Tuskegee Airmen and other black troops played on Keesler. In fact, more than 7,000 Blacks were stationed at Keesler Field by the autumn of 1943. These soldiers included pre-aviation cadets, radio operators, aviation technicians, bombardiers, and aviation mechanics. Keesler continued to focus upon specialized training in B-24 maintenance until mid-1944. (The Official Web Site for Keesler Air Force Base , retrieved April 06, 2013 from <http://www.keesler.af.mil/library/factsheets/factsheet.asp?id=4881>). I had B-24 Engine training in Ann Arbor, MI before being sent to Walker Air Base. I remember, after arriving at Walker, leaning up against a B-29 nose wheel and wondering what type of assignment a B-24 Engine Mechanic could possibly be given.

I was sent to Seattle and then overseas to Guam. I was assigned to the 457th Squadron and rode on a truck over to North Field. I ended up a Private under 1st Lt. Fitch Tillotson, who was in charge of personal equipment. I took care of issuing parachutes and oxygen just prior to missions; and collected the parachutes after each mission. I got to know many of the crewmen because of my duties.

During the down time, I played cards, poker especially...I was lucky at it. I loved Guam! We went swimming; it was a beautiful beach. When I could get away I'd go to the village and get to know the natives. We picked bananas and put them in lofts of their homes—"high and dry"—so that by weeks end they would ripen . One of the natives worked for the Navy, they would bring back ice and I we would use those bananas and ice cream powder and make banana ice cream.

One of the Marines married a native girl; I attended the wedding. I was able to obtain a Lieutenant's Jeep (loaned) and drove the wedding party.

I recall, not this woman, but some of the others would have a ribbon around their leg, this was to signify that they have VD.

There was a song I was trying to find...the lyrics were supplied by a native Guamanian; it chronicles the arrival of the US Army Air Corps and their battle with the Japanese; it was something along the lines of, "On the fourteenth of September 1943..." Does anyone recall it?

When the war was over, I was sent to Saipan and constructed a power line there—I had previous experience -establishing a power plant. From Saipan I took a ship back to California and then on to NY by plane. I was discharged from Upton, NY. I worked and started a family. We have 7 children, 10 grandchildren, and 6 great-grandchildren. In 1955 we moved to Saratoga Springs where I worked in the Transportation Business...a Pontiac dealership where I was a parts/sales manager.

I was active in the AmVets out of Albany.

