

## PREFACE

This book is an account of ordinary experiences and some outlandish incidents that I observed or in which I participated from 1943–45. It grew from a less detailed account presented to our sons at Christmas, 1969. My wife and friend, Bee, commented that the original was a start—she called it an outline and said it lacked human interest—but I had intended it only for Dick and Fred. Later, usually after reading a book pertaining to the war years, Bee would suggest I have another try at expanding the story. She has suffered through reading three or four or more revisions during the past ten years or so and her candid comments and questions have been most helpful. Thanks to Bee, what once was an outline is now a book, although much changed in scope and style.

The 312th Bomb Group has held annual reunions since 1948 and for the past twenty years I have been able to attend many of them. At these gatherings I was able to talk to others who shared the experiences herein reported and subsequently exchange correspondence with a number of others whose recollections prove that a good memory is not faultless and thus have permitted some correction of details, dates, and names. The notes, logs, and official orders in my files did not always give the full perspective of many events in which the 312th participated when we were in New Guinea and the Philippines. In many instances I have relied upon the recollections of Don Dyer, Cal Slade, Ed Hambleton, Jack Klein, Babe Young, Jim Wylie, Clif Graber, and a host of others.

Volumes four (*The Pacific: Guadalcanal to Saipan, August 1942 to July 1944*) and five (*The Pacific: Matterhorn to Nagasaki*) of *The Army Air Forces in World War II*, edited by Wesley Frank Craven and James Lea Cate (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1950, 1953), served as the authority for the dates of events, units involved on certain missions,

when units were based at particular airfields, and other details affecting our group.

Russell L. Sturzebecker's *The Roarin' 20's: A History of the 312th Bombardment Group* (N.p.: Russell L. Sturzebecker, 1986) includes escape and evasion reports, the names of casualties (there were 150 in all), and mission activity by squadrons, crews, and month. This valuable history also touches upon a wide range of events in the day-to-day life of a combat unit like the 312th: living conditions, recreation, food, the work of the chaplain, and the logistics of moving men and equipment to new bases.

As it stands now, this account is as factual as diaries, letters, logbooks, official orders, and a dimming memory can make it. It is the story of a young man from a small town growing up and engaging in the serious work of the 389th Bomb Squadron and seeing places and sights the like of which he had never dreamed. The tough times and unpleasant conditions made this experience a broad and still-valued education.

Looking back, sharing in the efforts of the 312th Bomb Group in the Southwest Pacific provides me with some satisfaction. We were, during our youthful days, a part of the history that was made in New Guinea and the Philippines in 1944 and 1945. I am glad I was there, grateful to have survived, and pleased that there is still interest in this story.