

GEORGE, MY WAR HERO

The story of a US Army Officer and
his important mission during WWII

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TRUDY GROSSMAN

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~PREFACE~

I got started working on this book in 2009 when I signed up as a volunteer at the Vista Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired in Palo Alto, California. I had been living in the Bay Area for two years, initially arriving as a graduate student in mechanical engineering at Stanford University. After graduation, I began working as a mechanical engineer at a company in the area.

To share a bit more of my background, my nationality and ethnicity is Indian, but I was raised in the United Arab Emirates, a small country in the Middle East. Like many of my peers, I came to the United States to pursue higher education, being fortunate enough to have the financial means and academic credentials to do so. I first went to the University of Southern California in Los Angeles where I got an undergraduate degree in mechanical engineering before heading up to Stanford.

I decided to begin volunteering as it had been something I wanted to do for many years but had never got around to it. Since I was done with school and reasonably settled into my new job, I thought now would be as good a time as any. I chose to volunteer at the Vista Center for the Blind and Visually Impaired because my mother had told me that when she was younger, she did some volunteer work reading books to blind children. For some reason, that seemed to resonate with me and I thought I'd try helping out with those who were blind or visually impaired as well. This would be my first experience doing any type of volunteer work. Shortly after signing up, the Vista Center paired me up with Trudy Grossman, the author of this book.

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When I first met Trudy, she was 88 years old and suffered from age-related visual impairment. The state of her vision was such that she could make out overall shapes and colors, but could not see smaller-sized details, such as text, facial features, etc. For reading and writing, she used a desktop video magnification device that magnified a page onto a video screen and allowed her to see the text on it. She had contacted the Vista Center because she wanted assistance with writing a book about her late husband, George. George had passed away in 2003 when he was 86 years old. He was a WWII veteran and while serving, he had worked on an important assignment in the Pacific War. A few years before his passing, he began writing his memoirs. In his memoirs, he planned to chronicle his experiences during WWII. However, George passed away before he could finish doing so and the project remained incomplete. Trudy wanted to bring George's wish to fruition and write a book about his military career. However, her visual impairment made this task difficult for her to do on her own.

When Trudy and I first started working on this project, neither of us had any experience writing memoirs. Additionally, I had no experience working with someone who was visually impaired. So the task seemed quite daunting at first and we weren't quite sure where to begin. However, we tried different things and over time, we stuck with the ones that worked and dropped the ones that didn't. We worked out a system where Trudy would write her recollections down on paper on her own. Then, when we would meet, we'd go over what she had written and I would clarify any questions I had. Finally, I would take what Trudy had written back home and type it up. On a few occasions, we made some audio recordings of her memories. Trudy would recall certain events and I would follow up with questions for clarification. I would then listen to the audio recordings later on my own and type up the stories.

Since George had begun writing some of his memoirs before he passed away, Trudy had maintained copies of whatever he had worked on up to that point. She also had a large collection of George's old military documents. Both turned out to be valuable sources of information. She also had a lot of material in her old photo albums and scrapbooks. Finally, the Internet was a great resource to find information on WWII and the Pacific War.

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It has taken Trudy and me a little over a year, working a few hours a week, to complete this book. Personally, it has been a great experience working on this project with Trudy. I have been fortunate to meet and get to know her as she is a very warm and friendly person. Being that she is visually impaired, I was expecting to witness some occasions when she'd display frustration at the loss of her sight. This would be completely justifiable considering how important this facet is in our daily lives. However, I was astounded by the fact that she always maintains a positive and up-beat attitude. I haven't once seen her feel sorry for herself. In fact, she mentions all the time how grateful she is to have lived a wonderful life. This is a quality of hers that I truly admire. Another thing about Trudy that became clearly evident is how much she loves George. At times, when we'd talk about George, it would get too painful for her and it brought tears to her eyes because she missed him so much. After all these years, her affection towards George is as strong as it has always been. I'm very thankful to have come to learn about her, her husband's and her family's lives. I hope you enjoy reading this book as much as I've enjoyed helping Trudy write it.

I would also like to give special thanks to Anita Brewer for lending her splendid voice to record an audio version of this book. Anita is a resident of the Bay Area. She has a strong passion for community service and has worked with local non-profit organizations for several years. Anita came to the Vista Center as a client in 2009 and as a result, she became interested in volunteering. She recorded a resource manual for a workshop being held at the center. When she heard about the request to have this book recorded, she was delighted to oblige. Anita also loves children and at the time of making the audio book, she was working as a teacher's aide at a private school.

Finally, I just thought I'd mention that Trudy and I have tried our best to make this book as accurate as possible. However, we are not professional writers or historians so any factual errors contained in this book are unintentional and we apologize in advance. It is not our intention to portray any past event differently from how it actually occurred. We've used several external references, particularly for details about the Pacific War, and listed these references in a bibliography at the end of the book. Also, accounts

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of certain conversations are not verbatim but have been written in such fashion for its story-telling effect.

Gautam Dandavate
Ghostwriter



Gautam and Trudy.

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*To my beloved George*





# ~CHAPTER 1~

## BEFORE THE ARMY

I first met George while we were at Ohio State University in the fall of 1939. It was the first week of my sophomore year. I had pledged for the Kappa Alpha Theta sorority during the previous school year and all us neophytes were about to be initiated as full-fledged members. I was still living with my parents at the time since our home was in Columbus, Ohio, the same city as the university campus. However, I was spending the night at the sorority house, my first and only time doing so, as the initiation ceremony was the next day.

That evening, the doorbell happened to ring and being a neophyte, it was my job to answer the door. I opened the door and a very nice young man named Dick introduced himself. We talked for a bit and he asked me if I was interested in going on a double date to one of the local college hangouts. I was under the impression that he was asking me to be his date and we would be going with another couple. I agreed and he went to get the other two members of the double date. When the three of them arrived, I realized that Dick already had his own date. He was fixing me up with the other fellow, his roommate and fraternity brother from the Phi Gamma Delta house, of which they were both members. He was very nice and handsome, and I liked him immediately. The four of us ended up having a great evening.

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As you may have deduced by now, the “other fellow” was George. I found out later that George hadn’t had the chance to date much since he was very busy at college, so his good friend Dick thought he’d help him out and find him a date. We named our first son after Dick, as he was the one who introduced us.

For George and me, it was almost love at first sight. We continued dating and found that we had much in common. For example, during the previous summer, we had both worked jobs as camp counselors. He was a counselor at a private boys’ camp while I was a counselor at Girls Scouts’ camp. Both of us were also very fond of swimming. These shared interests and experiences served as great ice-breakers and led us getting to know each other better.

George had to be a persevering person to date me. Since I lived at home and pretty far away from campus, getting to spend time with each other regularly posed a challenge. Finally, he bought an old car so that he could come visit me closer to home. The car was blue in color, and had two seats in the front and a rumble seat, which is a seat that folds out from the trunk, at the back. George christened his car “The Blue Dream”. George would often loan his car out to his friends. However, he did so under two conditions. The first condition was that they returned the car with as much gas that was in it when they borrowed it. The second condition was that they parked the car at the top of the hill when they returned it. This was required as it was the only way we could give our car a rolling start and get its engine running.

The following spring, George gave me his fraternity pin and we went steady. There was a special ceremony to mark the event at my sorority house. On the front porch, the girls from my sorority lined up on one side while the boys from George’s fraternity lined up opposite them. George and I stood in the middle, hand-in-hand, while both groups on either side took turns serenading us. Then, George put his fraternity pin on me, we kissed, and we were officially steady. George’s parents had also driven over from his hometown of Lakewood, Ohio, for the event. It was a lovely occasion.

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*Me at Ohio State University.*



*Me (right) at my sorority house, Kappa Alpha Theta.*

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*George and me on one of our first dates.*



*George (left) and his good friend, Dick.*

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*My sorority sisters serenading us at the ceremony marking George and me “going steady”.*



*George’s fraternity brothers serenading us at the ceremony marking George and me “going steady”.*

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*George and me at the ceremony marking us “going steady”.*



*Me “yes-ing” George after he put his fraternity pin on me.*

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George had always looked forward to going to college in his younger years growing up in his hometown of Lakewood. His parents hadn't had the opportunity to receive a complete education, having only gone up to middle school. George's eldest brother, Clarence, spent less than a year in college before getting a job, while his second-eldest brother, Wally, went to work straight out of high school. Based on the experiences of his family members, George felt that he would have a lot more opportunities in life if he received a good college education.

There were three other individuals that instilled the desire and motivation in George to go to college. The first individual was Reverend Harry McCormick, a reverend in George's hometown church. Back in those days, a much smaller proportion of the youth went to college. During his sermons, Reverend McCormick always emphasized his belief that several problems of the day could be solved through the education of the youth. He also said that while society had a role in assisting them, it was the primary responsibility of the youth themselves to ensure that they got a good education. The second individual was Coach Russ Linden, George's high school swimming coach. He too talked up the value of college to the kids in his swim team. The third individual was Oscar Fox, the secretary of George's local YMCA, of which he was a member. George went to YMCA Camp in the summer, first as a camper and then as a counselor. It was during these camps that George learned many things from Mr. Fox. One of the lessons that Mr. Fox taught George was a saying by Abraham Lincoln:

*No man has a good enough memory to make a successful liar.*

Mr. Fox interpreted this saying to mean that it isn't good for one to tell lies, even small white lies. While telling lies may seem advantageous in the short run, it would do more harm in the long run. It's easy to remember the truth but difficult to remember lies. Eventually, the lies would catch up to you and once you're exposed, your credibility would be damaged. By getting a good education, one can speak truthfully and confidently about what they've learned and should not have the need to lie.

While George had the aspiration to go to college, he also faced obstacles to achieving this goal. They were in the midst of the Great Depression and George's father had been out of work for four

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years. His parents didn't have the money to fund a college education. His Aunt Lotty, who lived with them and used to work as a schoolteacher, promised George \$5 a month to help support him while he was in college. While his aunt's offer was a generous one, George needed a lot more than \$5 a month for college. So while in high school, George worked various jobs and saved up as much as he could.

George was a very good athlete in high school. He was an important member of his school's swim team and football team. However, in preparation for college during his senior year, George had to work to earn enough money and keep his grades up. He couldn't commit himself to being a member of both the swim team and football team as well. George loved to swim and he even had the lofty ambition of becoming the world's fastest 50-yard freestyle swimmer someday. Therefore, he chose to drop out of the football team to alleviate his workload.

This decision didn't sit well with both his high school principal and his football coach as it weakened the team's chances for a good season. When George didn't show up for the first day of football practice, the principal called him to his office. He asked George why he was dropping out of the football team. George explained to him that this year, he had the added responsibility of working to save up for college. This meant he would have to sacrifice some of his existing obligations. This explanation didn't satisfy the principal. He told George that based on his mediocre academic record, he probably wouldn't be able to get into college anyway, even if he was able to save up enough money. The principal concluded the conversation by saying, "I'll expect to see you out on the field for practice tomorrow afternoon," and then walked out of his office. George stayed in the principal's office and contemplated his situation, weighing out the pros and cons of the decision he had to make. After careful thought, he made his choice. He did not show up to football practice the next day.

This clearly didn't please his principal. When the time got closer for George to go to college, George's swim team coach, Coach Linden, tried his best to set him up with a scholarship. However, the scholarship required the recommendation of the high school

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principal. The principal refused to provide his endorsement and the scholarship fell through.

George's mother also posed a roadblock for him to go to college. While she loved him and wanted the best for him, she discouraged George from going to college. She was afraid that because of their financial situation, George would not be able to afford getting through all four years and would have to drop out part way. She thought that George would be better off staying at home and getting a job, where he'd at least have a roof over his head and three meals a day. To dissuade him from going, George's mother called him to her bedroom one day. She had laid out several items she had saved over the years, items that George had given her as little tokens of his love for her. Among the items was a picture frame he had made in woodworking class. In the frame, he had put a picture of the famous painting of "Whistler's Mother" solemnly sitting alone in a chair. George's mother said to him, "George, if you go, I'll be sitting here all alone just like Whistler's mother".

Despite the pressure on him to stay, George still felt it was imperative that he leave home for college. There was one more hurdle that George had to overcome with this decision. George had a dog named Tige (pronounced "Tiger" but without the "r"), a tiny fox terrier that was gifted to him by his aunts when he was a small boy. George loved Tige dearly and the two of them were inseparable. George would talk to Tige like he was a human being and the way Tige looked at him, he was certain that Tige understood every word he said. George also taught Tige a lot of tricks. He could jump through hoops that George made with his arms. He could also sit up, balance a peanut that George placed on his nose, and when George snapped his finger, toss the peanut up in the air and catch it in his mouth and eat it. However, Tige was now getting old. He couldn't move around much anymore and he often stood in the back yard and barked a lot. Since George was the only one Tige would listen to, he was also the only one who could keep him quiet. With George leaving home, his parents wouldn't be able to take care of Tige on their own. So a few days before leaving, George took Tige to the vet, and as George held him in his hands, they put Tige to sleep. This was a very painful event for George since he loved his dog so much. He felt terrible about it for years.

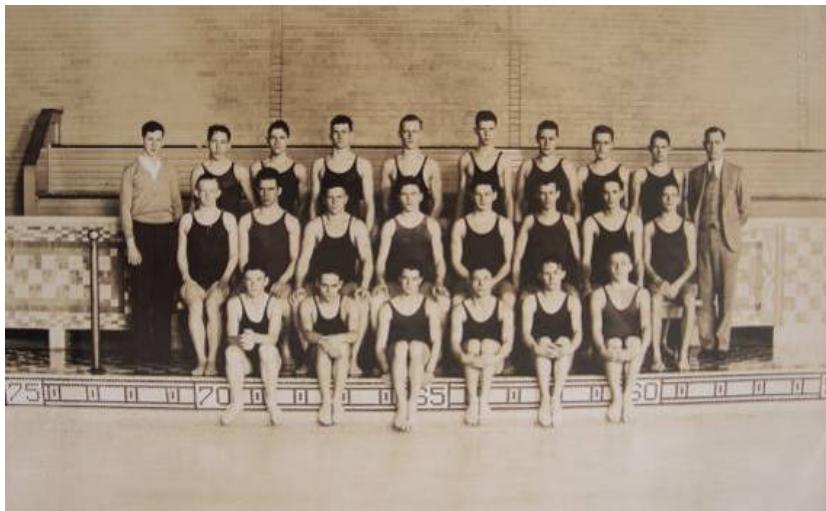
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After assessing the different colleges he could go to, George selected Ohio State University. While there were smaller colleges nearby, George wanted to go to a major university like OSU. Also, OSU was a state college and at the time, they were required to take students from state high schools that completed the necessary curriculum. There was no guarantee that they would keep them though and most were washed out during the first year. OSU also had a reputable swimming coach and George had ambitions of making the college swim team.

When the day came for George to leave for college, he packed up his things and got ready to hitchhike the 150 miles to Columbus where OSU's campus was located. He said goodbye to his mother and walked out the doorway. When he walked out of the house, his father was waiting quietly in his car. When he saw George, he started up the engine, opened the door and said, "Hop in. I have to make a business trip to Akron and I've wanted to call on a few potential accounts in Columbus for some time. It might as well be today, we can kill two birds with one stone."

George and his father didn't speak much during the trip as George's father wasn't much of a talker. Once they reached OSU, George's father dropped him off at a rooming house, shook his hand and said, "Good luck, son." He then got back in the car and drove off. While George's father could have said more, the gesture of driving him to college spoke volumes. It showed his father's support of George's decision to go to college and no words could have made the message more eloquent. George's father was a quiet man who didn't say much while his wife usually did all the talking. However, George's father always used to say with a grin, "At least I have the check book!"

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*George (bottom row, 3<sup>rd</sup> from left) with his high school swim team.*



*George (right) and his swim team making the local newspaper.*

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*George (bottom row, 3<sup>rd</sup> from left) with his high school football team.*



*George in his high school football team uniform.*

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*George's parents, Harriet and George Grossman.*



*"Whistler's Mother" painting.*

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*George with his beloved dog Tige.*

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While in college, George was heavily involved in several fraternity and athletic activities. He was invited to pledge for the Phi Gamma Delta fraternity house in his freshman year. George was also a member of the OSU freshman's swim team.

George enjoyed being part of a fraternity. Before WWII, fraternities were a lot different from what they are now. The Fraternity System was based on high standards such as no drinking in the house, no women above the first floor, no use of someone else's property without their permission, no cheating on exams, abiding by a dress-code, and partaking in special charity programs for the local community, to name a few.

However, one thing that wasn't so pleasant about being in a fraternity while pledging was the hazing. Every Monday night, Phi Gamma Delta held a weekly Sacred Pledge Session where pledges were hazed. During the session, upper classmen were equipped with 24" x 4" x 1/2" paddles. If a pledge had done everything as he was supposed to for that week, which included keeping his grades up, learning assigned fraternity history, completing all household chores, participating in extracurricular activities, etc., he only received a single smack across his butt. This was just as a reminder of what it felt like. For those who hadn't done all that was expected of them that week, they weren't as lucky. They would be yelled at by the upper classmen and whacked multiple times on their behinds with the paddles. Furthermore, if a pledge showed up late for the hazing session, he would receive even rougher treatment.

George showed up late for a Sacred Pledge Session one day. He had swimming practice with his OSU freshman swim team and the coach held them back that day for a long, unscheduled meeting. When George arrived late, the pledge master told him to step into the center of the room and assume the position to be whacked. George's heart was beating furiously and his face was flushed. Up until then, George had rarely been paddled as he was consistently meeting his pledge obligations. The pledge master asked George harshly, "So just why are you late?" George explained that he had unexpectedly been held back by his coach after swimming practice. Some of the active fraternity members began snapping their fingers. This indicated they were satisfied by the pledge's answer and didn't feel a paddling was warranted. The pledge master didn't seem too

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pleased by this, however. He told George to stand up straight and face him. He then asked George, "I understand that you were a pretty good athlete in high school. Is this correct?" George answered promptly, "Yes, sir!" George's reply may have come off as too cocky. It brought a diabolical smile to the pledge master's face. The pledge master went to his briefcase and pulled out a sheet of paper. He said to George, "I have a list here of several challenges. I will read out a challenge and you have to tell me right away whether you can do it or not. I want quick, clean, yes or no answers. No uncertainty or ambiguity. And one last word of advice. I want honest answers. Don't you dare lie to me." The pledge master then proceeded to read out the following 14 athletic challenges and a 15th and final academic challenge:

1. *100 yard dash - 11.75 seconds*
2. *120 yard low hurdles - 16 seconds*
3. *Running high jump - 5 feet*
4. *Running broad jump - 17 feet*
5. *16 pound shot put - 30 feet*
6. *20 foot rope climb - 12 seconds*
7. *Baseball throw - 250 feet, or javelin throw - 130 feet*
8. *Football punt - 120 feet*
9. *100 yard swim - 1 minute 45 seconds*
10. *1 mile run - 6 minutes*
11. *Front hand spring - landing on feet*
12. *Hand stand - 10 seconds*
13. *Fence vault - chin high*
14. *Good posture - B standard*
15. *Scholarship - 2.0*

As each challenge was stated, George answered unwaveringly, "Yes, sir!" With his final yes, pandemonium broke out in the entire room. George was the only who hadn't realized the significance of what he had just done.

Prior to the meeting, there was a discussion among the fraternity members about an article in the day's OSU newspaper. The article listed details about the Sigma Delta Psi athletic honorary. In order to gain membership to Sigma Delta Psi, one had

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to complete a series of 15 tests, 14 athletic tests in various sports and 1 academic test. So far, only a handful of OSU students had been inducted into Sigma Delta Psi since its inception.

George had just been tricked by the pledge master into committing himself to getting inducted into Sigma Delta Psi. After he read George the OSU newspaper article, the pledge master told him, “I’m not going to smack you with my paddle tonight. I’ll just practice my swing and wrist snap on some of your pledge brothers. But, come next Monday night, you better have demonstrated to me and to the rest of the fraternity that you were telling the truth when you said you could pass all these tests”.

Although George was put under a lot of pressure when he was made to answer the pledge master, he did answer truthfully and was confident he could pass all the tests. So during the week, George began attempting the series of challenges. The OSU daily newspaper kept track of his progress. He progressed through each test one by one, passing them successfully. Finally, he passed the last test and achieved the rare honor of becoming a Sigma Delta Psi member. George was delighted by his achievement, as too were his fraternity brothers. It brought a great deal of respect and publicity to the fraternity that one of their pledges had performed this feat. A few weeks later, George was proudly initiated into the Phi Gamma Delta fraternity house along with his fellow pledges.

At the end of his freshman year, George was also elected into Romophos, an honorary for sophomores at OSU based on academics, leadership and service. The initiation ceremony included a ritual where all Romophos neophytes dressed in burlap sacks and Turkish fez hats, were chained together, and marched around campus praying to the fictitious Roman god, Romo.

While George was initiated into Phi Gamma Delta, the fraternity couldn’t provide him funding for his education and living expenses at OSU. However, they did promise him that they’d set him up with jobs to pay his way through college. Some of the jobs included being a waiter at Andy’s Hungarian Restaurant, selling OSU football programs, working at fraternity house kitchens peeling potatoes, serving drinks at the University Club, and other odd jobs.

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Despite his hectic schedule during his freshman year with jobs, his fraternity and athletics, George didn't lose sight of why he was at OSU – to get an education. The pressure was on since he had to avoid the big freshman wash out and furthermore, meet the high standards to be in a fraternity. He was taking a full course load and was truly appreciating the things he was learning in the classroom, from math to science. He studied hard and was able to maintain good grades.

George had a great freshman year. He was enjoying college life so much that he wanted to experience everything. He didn't want to sacrifice any activity so he tried to do it all. This meant he was only getting two to three hours of sleep a night to maintain his busy schedule. His busy workload continued into the start of his sophomore year. This ended up taking a toll on George's health. By the end of the first quarter of his sophomore year, George broke out with carbuncles, which are painful boils with a hard core in the center, on his arms, legs, back and the back of his neck. George was able to make it through the end-of-quarter finals, but dropped out of OSU to attend to his health.

George went back to his welcoming home in Lakewood and spent his first day back catching up on sleep. He then went to his family doctor to get his carbuncles looked at and treated. He spent the next couple of weeks resting at home until the carbuncles were under control. George also went to his family dentist and had some issues with his teeth taken care of.

Having just recovered from illness and coming close to being completely burned out, George thought he'd take things a bit easy the upcoming quarter. He decided to go to Kent State University, a smaller college nearby, instead of OSU. The pace of education at Kent State was a lot slower than at OSU. For example, the amount they covered in a math course over the entire quarter at Kent State, they covered at OSU in just a couple of weeks. George only spent one or two quarters at Kent State before eventually ending up back at OSU.

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*George (4<sup>th</sup> from right) with his Phi Gamma Delta fraternity brothers.*



*Phi Gamma Delta Fraternity House at OSU.*

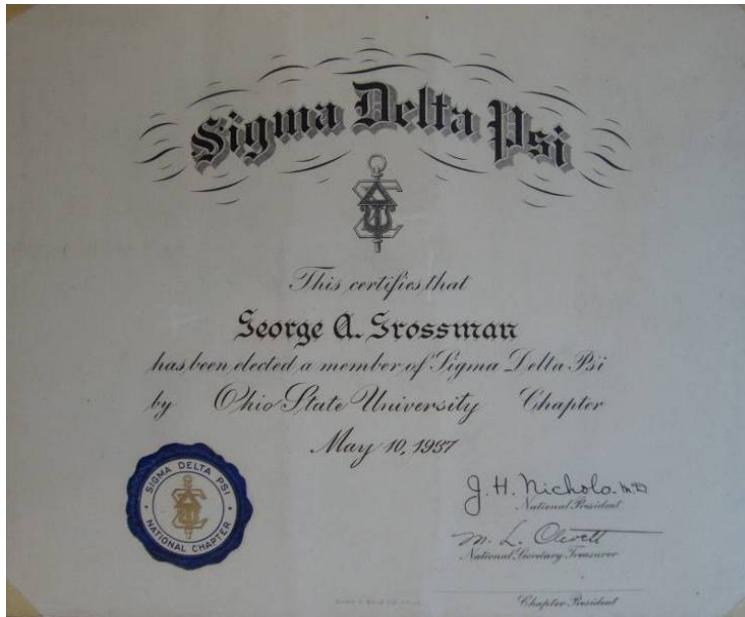
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*George and me (center) at a Phi Gamma Delta Christmas Party.*

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OSU newspaper clippings tracking George's progress through the Sigma Delta Psi honorary tests.



*George's Sigma Delta Psi honorary certificate.*

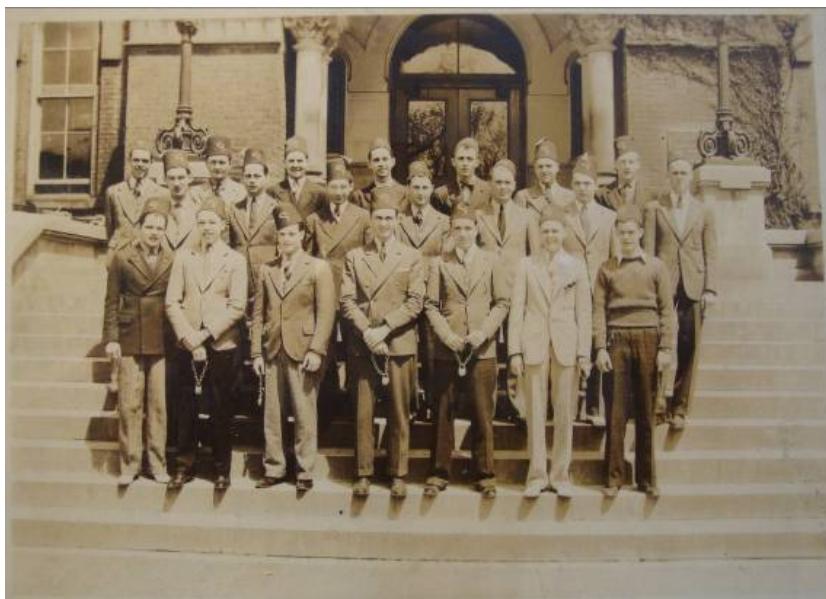
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OSU newspaper clipping of George's Romophos initiation ceremony.



*George (right) before his Romophos initiation ceremony.*

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*George (bottom row, 3<sup>rd</sup> from left) with his fellow Romophos members.*

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George and I had been seeing each other for about two years. It was around this time that George proposed to me and I happily said yes. He gave me a lovely diamond engagement ring. I hadn't known this then, but he gone to my father first to ask his permission for my hand in marriage. We were so happy and in love.

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George graduated from OSU in December 1941 with a degree in Business Administration. He began graduate school at OSU in Industrial and Systems Engineering right away in the fall. I was still a senior at OSU and had about half a year of college left.

George was only part way into his first quarter at graduate school when he was drafted in February 1942. This came as a bit of a surprise. There was a dearth of industrial engineers at the time, so students in that field weren't usually drafted. George and some of his friends were sent for basic Army training to Camp Perry up near Lake Erie, Ohio, in the cold of winter.

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George (3rd from left) and fellow draftees at Camp Perry in Lake Erie, Ohio, in early 1942.

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Being drafted in 1942 wasn't George's first experience with the military. In the summer of 1935 while he was still in high school, George was looking through the newspapers to find a summer job. Since they were in the middle of the Great Depression, there were hardly any opportunities. However, George did notice an advertisement with a picture of a large, beautiful swimming pool with the caption "Largest Swimming Pool in the State of Indiana". It was an advertisement for the Citizen's Military Camp at Fort Benjamin Harrison in Indianapolis, Indiana. The camp was for young men aged 16 to 22. Military training would be given every morning and the afternoons could be used for recreation and games on days when parades weren't scheduled. Those that attended the month-long camp would receive transportation, uniforms, equipment, food and lodging. Additionally, the attendees would be paid \$30 at the end of the camp. This offer sounded mighty good to George, especially considering how much he loved to swim. He submitted his application to the Citizen's Military Camp right away and looked forward to spending his summer afternoons swimming in the beautiful pool.

George's application was accepted and that summer, he took his first train ride ever to get to Fort Benjamin Harrison. Once there, George discovered a few things that he wasn't expecting. Military training started each day at 5:30 AM with a loud bugle call and went on for a good seven hours till 12:30 PM when they finally broke for lunch. As for his afternoons, which he thought would mostly be free for recreation and games, it turned out there were parades scheduled five days a week.

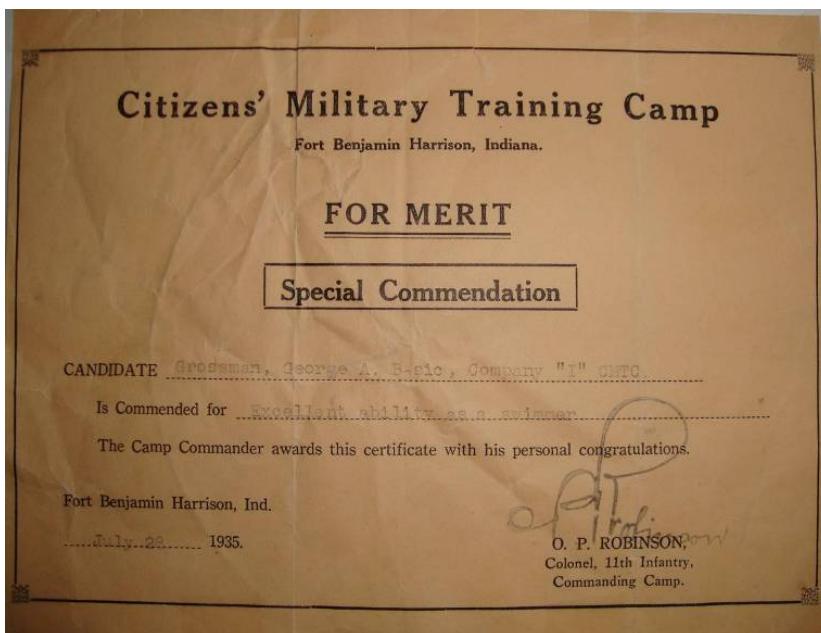
Nevertheless, George was able to get a couple of hours after the parades to go swimming. During the camp, George earned his Senior Life Saving Credential. Also, a swimming meet was held on the last day of camp and George won a couple of medals.

As for the military training, George particularly enjoyed the firing range, learning to shoot at targets up to 300 yards away. The firing range had pits underneath the targets so that once a shooter was done with his round, the shooter could then safely pull down the target and score his hits from the pit while bullets from the other shooters whizzed by safely a couple of feet above his head. George earned a marksmanship medal on the final day of camp.

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Another thing George enjoyed at the camp was the military parades. He liked the feeling of being dressed up in uniform and marching to the beat of the military band. The camp ended up being a different and exciting experience for George.

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George's special commendation for "excellent ability as a swimmer" from Citizen's Military Training Camp, which he attended in the summer of 1935.

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While marriage was on the cards for George and me, I wasn't quite ready for it yet as I was still in school and he was only making \$21 a month in basic Army training. In fact, after George's first month in training camp at Lake Erie, his first paycheck after deductions for the insurance act came up to exactly \$7.43. Being pay day, there was a big craps game going on in one of the barracks. Since George thought he couldn't do much with \$7.43 and had very little to lose, he gave the craps game a whirl. He ended up getting hustled and lost all his money. After losing his money, George wrote me a letter asking me to send him \$5 for some basic necessities like soap, shaving cream, etc. He expected full well that his ever loving would send him the money. I got his letter and wrote him the following reply:

Dear George,

If I were the kind of girl who would marry a man who gambles, you would not be proud of me, and I want you to be proud of me. So - shape up.

I love you dearly.

Your Trudums

George recalled this story many years later at our 50th wedding anniversary. He said that the reason we had an excellent relationship all those years was we each lived by the same set of standards. He then added that our standards were the same because it was I who set the standards.

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Once George completed his basic Army training, he went on to Ordnance Officer Candidate School at Aberdeen Proving Ground in Aberdeen, Maryland. He was training to become an ordnance officer in the Army. Ordnance is the branch of the Army that deals with the procurement, distribution and storage of military equipment such as weapons, ammunition, artillery, combat vehicles, etc. Ordnance officers are typically responsible for the maintenance and operational aspects of weapons and vehicles used in an ordnance platoon.

During this time, I was able to meet George just once when he got a day off from training in the summer of 1942. He went home to his folks in Lakewood and I went there too so that he could meet all of us at the same time. It was the first time I was really getting to

## TRUDY GROSSMAN

meet and spend time with his parents, so I was a bit shy and nervous. George's mother said to him, "George, who is this kitten you've picked out for yourself?" It was great to see George and his parents, but he had to go back to training camp the next day.

George completed his Ordnance Officer Candidate Course at Aberdeen Proving Ground in October 1942. He was now an ordnance officer on active duty with a rank of Second Lieutenant. By then, I had graduated from OSU with a degree in Home Economics. The two of us had decided that we were now ready to get married. George got a few days off after graduating from Ordnance Officer Candidate School. I was living at my parents' home in Columbus, so George came there briefly in order for us to get married. The wedding date was just one day after George's arrival. I remember him coming back home very tired from having done all-night maneuvers the previous night. We had a short dress rehearsal for the ceremony that day as well.

George and I were married on Monday, October 19, 1942. The ceremony was held in my hometown Methodist church in Columbus and our minister, Dr. Peale, presided. George was dressed in his Army uniform while I wore a green wool suit with a brown hat. George's brother Wally was best man while my sister Janice was maid of honor. My neighbor played the organ at the wedding. Although it was a Monday, many guests were able to show up for the wedding. After the ceremony, we held a reception at a hotel nearby. It was a lovely occasion and one of the happiest days of my life.

As the wedding festivities came to a close, George and I slipped away for a short honeymoon. We went to small, nearby town in Ohio and stayed at a local inn. I had picked out the place, having visited there before and remembering it as a charming place. However, I didn't know that since the war began, it had gained a bit of a reputation as a place where soldiers spent the night with their girlfriends. The next day, as George and I walked arm in arm down the stairs to the hotel dining room, I heard someone call out in an accusatory tone, "Truuuuudy!" It was one of my sorority sisters from OSU. She must have thought I just spent the night at the hotel with some soldier and not as a newly married bride. I cleared things up right away. I said to her tersely, "I'd like you to meet my

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husband, George.” Having realized her misunderstanding, she replied, “Ohhhh!” That was the only conversation I had with my sorority sister during my honeymoon and George and I enjoyed the rest of our time together.

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TRUDY GROSSMAN



George visiting his parents and me back home on his day off from training in the summer of 1942.



George with his parents when he came back home on his day off from training in the summer of 1942.

GEORGE, MY WAR HERO



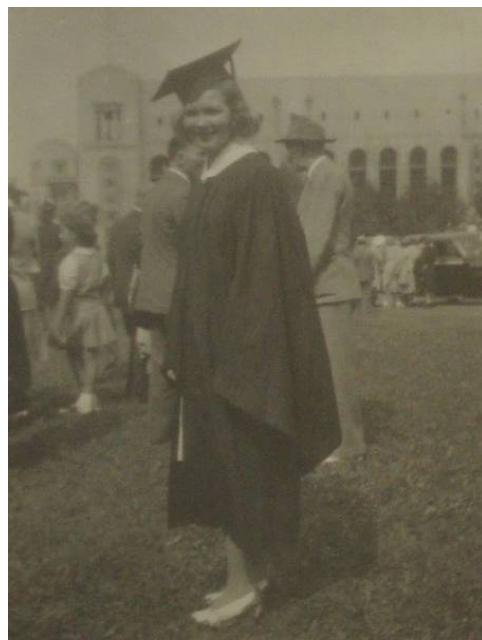
George and me when he came back home on his day off from training in the summer of 1942.

TRUDY GROSSMAN



Announcements of my engagement in the OSU newspaper.

GEORGE, MY WAR HERO

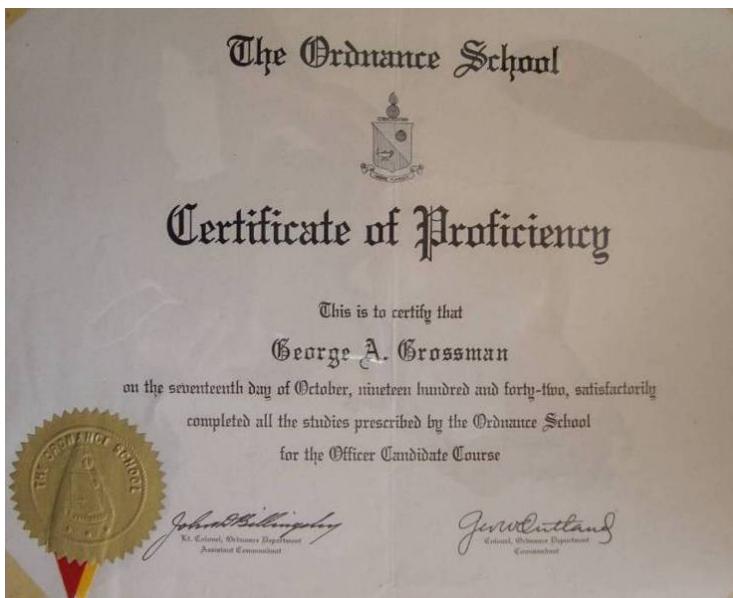


My OSU graduation ceremony in the summer of 1942.

TRUDY GROSSMAN



George at Ordnance Officer Candidate School in Aberdeen Proving Ground, Aberdeen, Maryland.



George's Certificate of Proficiency from Ordnance Officer Candidate School.

GEORGE, MY WAR HERO



George and me walking down the aisle on our wedding day, October 19, 1942.

TRUDY GROSSMAN



George and me on our wedding day just after getting married.

GEORGE, MY WAR HERO



My parents, Mildred and Fred Ridenour, at our wedding.



George's brother and best man, Wally (far left), and my sister and maid of honor, Janice (far right), at our wedding.



Guests at our wedding.

GEORGE, MY WAR HERO

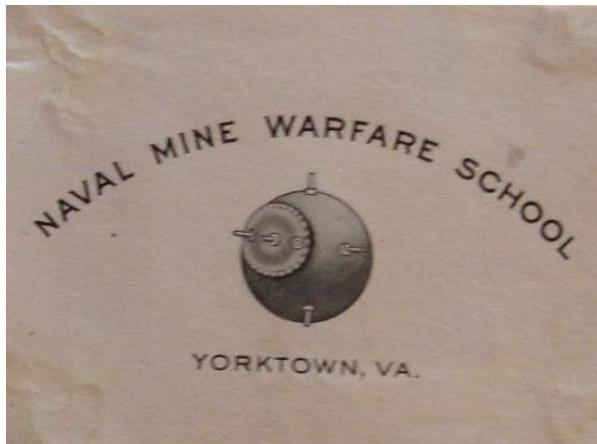
After a couple of days, George and I returned from our honeymoon to Columbus. George was now scheduled to take a training course at the Naval Mine Warfare School in Yorktown, Virginia. The training course was in the field of aerial mine warfare.

Aerial mining is the laying of naval mines by dropping them into enemy waters by aircraft. At the time, aerial mining was not a widely used tactic by the US military. However, there were a few proponents of aerial mining in Army Headquarters in Washington, D.C., including the likes of Colonel J. B. Montgomery and Lieutenant Colonel George Younger. They believed its implementation would help in winning the war. A program was set up in which Army officers received aerial mine warfare training at naval mining schools. The course being held at the Naval Mine Warfare School in Yorktown was part of this program.

In addition to George, there were around 200 Navy engineers and a dozen officers from other branches of the military, such as Ordnance, Artillery, Special Weapons Divisions and Signal Corps, who also took the course. At the end of the training, there was a test to obtain certification for the course of study in aerial mine warfare. Only twelve officers graduated from the course, of which George was one of them. In fact, he did an excellent job, scoring first in the test.

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Upon completion of the course in aerial mining, George was now assigned to a permanent station at Tinker Air Force Base in Midwest City, Oklahoma. I was to join George while he was stationed there, so he briefly returned to Columbus, and the two of us flew out to Midwest City.

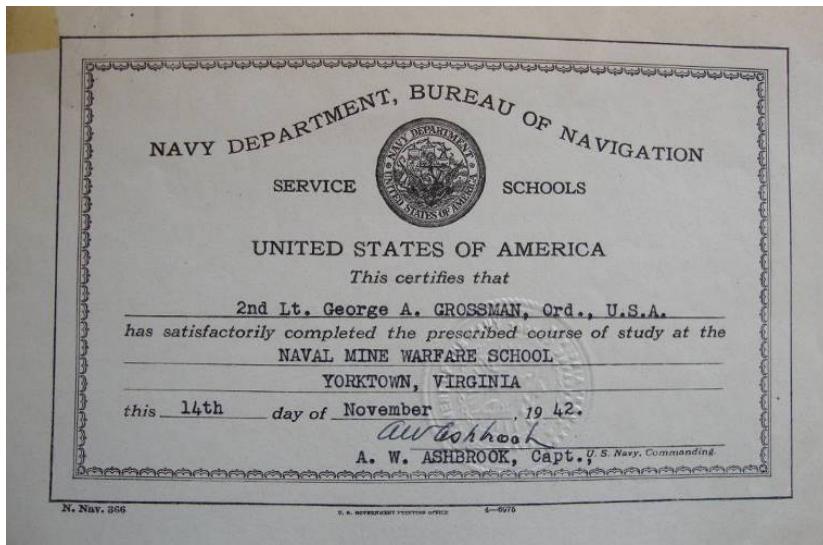


*Business card for the Naval Mine Warfare School in Yorktown, Virginia.*



*George at the Naval Mine Warfare School in Yorktown, Virginia.*

# GEORGE, MY WAR HERO



*George's Certificate for Aerial Mine Warfare Training from the Naval Mine Warfare School.*



## ~CHAPTER 2~

# TRAINING SOLDIERS

George and I arrived at Will Rogers Field in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. It was 3 AM and the airport was completely empty. All we saw was a spooky museum made up of dead rattlesnakes and other desert scenes.

George was stationed at Tinker Air Force Base in Midwest City, located a few miles southeast of Oklahoma City. While there, we stayed in a home close to the base. George's main responsibility during this assignment was to provide basic training for the troops at the base. The troops consisted of around 300 African-Americans. They were from the Deep South, places like Louisiana, Mississippi, etc., and most of them had very little education and money.

When George first arrived at the base, he met with the other officers in his unit. They were fresh out of Officer Training School and had received just six weeks of training in Miami, Florida. They were at the base to provide basic training for the troops, just like George. George, however, had spent about nine months total in Army training and had a lot more experience than the other officers. When they first met George, they said to him, "Are we ever glad to see you! We don't know how to train these troops!"

After their first meeting, George and his fellow officers all went together for lunch at the mess hall on the base. The mess hall was very large and it served both officers and the black privates. George and the other officers sat in the center of the hall. That day, officers

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were being served steaks for lunch. George looked over to the tables where the black troops were sitting. Instead of steaks, they were served some unrecognizable goop. George asked the other officers, "How can we sit here, right next to the troops, eating steaks, while they only have goulash?" From what George learned in his training, the protocol was that officers and troops were both supposed to eat the same thing. The excuse the other officers gave George was that the troops were from the Deep South, where they're not used to eating steak. If they fed them steak, they'd probably get sick. This excuse made no sense to George, since some of the officers were from the South as well, and they weren't getting sick from eating the steak.

~~~

Everyday, the troops' training began early in the morning at 5 AM. They started off by lining up on the field with George taking their attendance. However, at that early hour, it was still dark out and George couldn't make out the privates' faces. So when someone replied as being present, George had to assume it was actually the private replying and not one of his friends covering for him.

George noted that the black troops all had peculiar haircuts on arrival to the base from their homes in the South. They had clumps of hair on different sections of their head and each one's cut was unique. George learned that back home, they cut their hair in that fashion as a way to identify themselves and to indicate which family they were from. However, once they were brought to the base, they all received a standard haircut. A black barber had to be found to give haircuts for the troops because in those days, no white man would cut the hair of a black man.

George became more familiar with the troops over time and there was one private who caught his attention in particular. This private was quick on his feet and learned fast. George found out that the private had been the president of a college for black students before being drafted. Seeing his potential, George recruited the private to help him train the troops. A few days later, George checked to see how the private was doing with the troops. He was happy to see the troops singing a rhythm song and marching to the

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beat in perfect fashion. George was so impressed by the private's job that he gave him a temporary step up in rank.

One day, news came that an important General was going to visit the base to review how the troops' training was progressing. There was a lot of preparation by the troops for the General's visit as no one wanted to displease him. On the morning of the General's arrival, the men had to wake up early, make their beds, and neatly place all their Army-issued clothes and supplies on their beds for the General to review. The General arrived at the base and entered the first of three barracks the troops were housed in. Everyone was nervous. The General walked up to the first private's bed. He looked over his items and frowned. The General counted six pairs of socks laid out on the bed. He asked the private grimly, "Soldier, how many socks were you issued?" Shaking like a leaf, the private answered, "S-s-s-six pairs, suh!" The General said, "I see all six pairs of socks laid out here. What are you wearing for socks now?" The private who was helping George train the troops, the one who he gave a temporary step up in rank, spoke up for the terrified soldier. "Sir, he's not wearing socks with his shoes because these boys aren't used to wearing them back home." The General grumbled, spun around and said to everyone as he walked out of the barracks, "I will be back tomorrow at the same time and I expect everything to be right then." He didn't even go to the other two barracks. When the General reviewed the troops the next day, everything was right.

Sometimes, a private would need to go home temporarily because they'd fall ill or they had to attend to an urgent matter. However, the privates never seemed to have enough money and weren't able to afford the trip back home. This shouldn't have been the case, though. The troops were paid adequately so that if they had to go home in an emergency, they should have had enough saved up to make the trip. George wondered what the troops were spending their money on. One day, the chaplain of the base said to George, "I know where the troops are spending their money. I think we better go into town and let me show you." They went into town and entered a building. Inside the building, there was a line of New York showgirls, all dressed up in fancy clothes, silk stockings and high heels, parading across a stage. These girls were prostitutes and each of them had their own trailer nearby the base. The

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chaplain told George that the troops on the base were spending their money visiting these showgirls. These privates had probably never seen a New York showgirl before, let alone a lady in silk stockings. The girls could tell the soldier's rank by the insignia on their uniform and would charge them accordingly. The military police knew about the showgirls offering their services to the troops. They ensured the girls were regularly tested for STDs to make sure they didn't spread any illness to the troops. So now George realized why the privates never had enough money.

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One day, George brought home a little dog cupped in his hands for us to keep as a pet. He was a black Cocker Spaniel and we named him Buddy.

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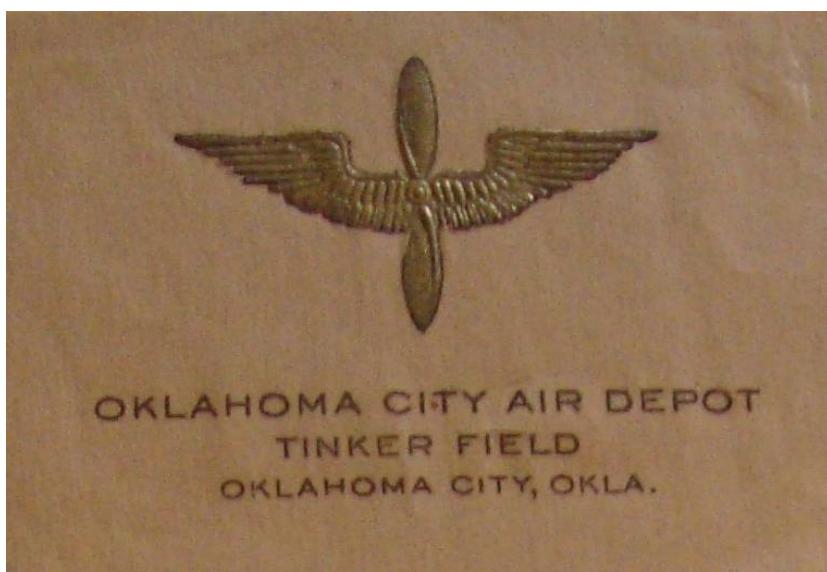
George and I went to town one day to see what Oklahoma City was like. We visited the Oklahoma State Capitol Building. As we walked around the city, we saw Native American women standing on a street corner. They were wrapped in blankets and had papooses strapped on their backs with their babies snugly cradled inside. Later on, we went into a hotel to get something to drink. There, we got to talking with a really nice lady sitting by the bar. She liked us immediately and told us if we wanted to have an alcoholic drink, we could use her club card. Oklahoma was a dry state at the time, which meant that getting an alcoholic drink was very restricted. We were unaware of this and it was our first education of how dry states worked. We were naive and had a lot to learn back then, but we were very much in love and happy.

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It was Christmas time at the base and the black Red Cross held a Christmas pageant for the troops. In those days, if a group of ten or more black soldiers wanted to get together, they were not permitted to do so without supervision. A white officer had to be present to oversee the gathering. The Army was concerned that the black soldiers could be getting together to organize riots to protest the discrimination against them. So to allow the Christmas pageant to go on, George attended the show to supervise and I accompanied him as well. We both had front row seats to the show.

## GEORGE, MY WAR HERO

Among other things, the pageant included a nativity scene. Since the event was held by the black Red Cross, the characters in the nativity scene, like the baby in the manger and angels with wings, were black. We had never seen a nativity scene with black characters before. George was afraid I might laugh, which would have looked very bad. However, I managed to keep a straight face and we enjoyed the evening.



*Business card for Tinker Air Force Base in Midwest City, Oklahoma.*

## GEORGE, MY WAR HERO



*Our pet dog Buddy that George got us while we were in Midwest City.*

## TRUDY GROSSMAN

After about three months at Tinker Air Force Base, Army Headquarters in Washington, D.C., realized that George wasn't supposed to be stationed there. It turned out that it wasn't the job of ordnance officers to train troops. Ordnance was considered a technical branch of the service and George's skills as an ordnance officer were not being fully utilized by simply providing basic training to troops. As a result, he was ordered out of Tinker Air Force Base immediately. Despite the short duration of our stay in Oklahoma, it was a memorable time for both of us.

Due to George's outstanding performance in the aerial mine warfare training course he took at the Naval Mine Warfare School, he was selected to become an instructor of aerial mine warfare for his next assignment. George spent the next couple of months receiving accelerated, advanced training in aerial mine warfare in order to become an expert in the field. Once this training period was complete, the Army stationed him at the Army Air Force School of Applied Tactics, or AAFSAT, in Orlando, Florida. There, George would be responsible for setting up a training course to pass on his newly gained expertise in aerial mining to the top officers of the Army Air Force. Once again, I accompanied George for this assignment and the two of us packed up and headed to Orlando.

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George and I left for Orlando in early 1943. It was an exciting time for both of us. Neither of us had much experience traveling back then. It was the first time either of us had been to Florida. In fact, the train ride to Orlando was the first time I had ever been on a train. We enjoyed the sights from our window during the train ride. On the way, we saw beautiful orange tree groves. We also saw sand that was so white in color, it looked like snow.

Once we arrived in Orlando, the first thing we needed to do was arrange for our housing. George immediately went to the military housing center to see what was available. However, there was a shortage of housing as men were arriving at AAFSAT in large numbers. For days, George looked and looked for housing, but he didn't have any luck. At the housing center, George got acquainted with Frank Temple, a captain in charge at the center. After getting to know George, Frank kept suggesting to him that the two of them

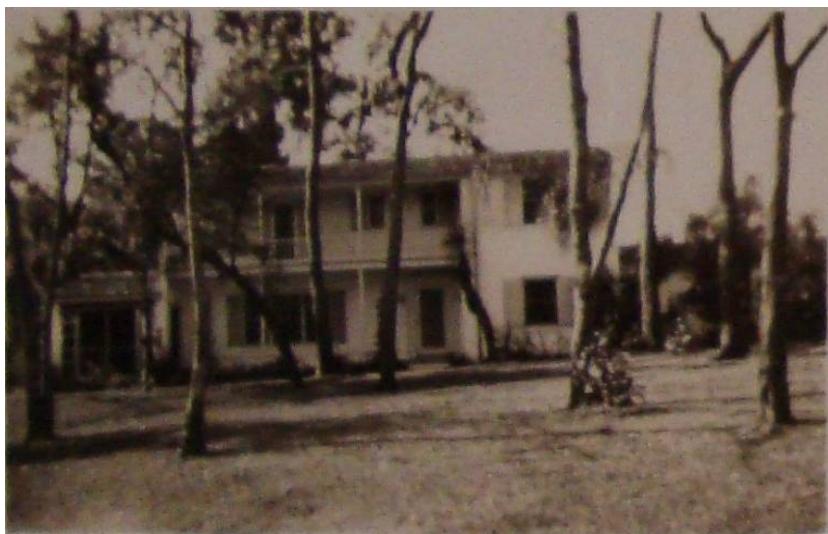
GEORGE, MY WAR HERO

and their wives should get together and meet each other. However, George was anxious about not having found housing yet. He kept putting off Frank's invitation so he could solely focus on the urgent task at hand.

More time passed and still having had no luck with housing, George finally accepted Frank's invitation. The four of us met for lunch; Frank, his wife Mary, George and I. We all had a good time getting to know each other. Towards the end of the lunch, Frank revealed a proposal he had for us. Frank was aware of a lovely house that was available for rent. He suggested that the two couples should live together and split the rent. It seemed that as Frank got acquainted with George, he approved of him and thought that he would make a great house-mate. He was pushing George to have the couples meet so that Mary could check me out as well. Mary must have kicked Frank under the table during lunch to give him the sign that she approved of me too. We accepted Frank and Mary's offer. All this time we were having trouble finding housing and the solution ended up being right under our noses.

The house was a beautiful mansion in a little, nearby town called Winter Park. George and I got the second floor. We had a lovely master bedroom and used the second bedroom as a living room. We also had a gorgeous pink tile bathroom. Frank and Mary had the first floor, including the maid's bedroom and bath. The yard of the house sat right on the bank of Lake Virginia. Rollins College, one of the oldest universities in Florida, and other mansions in the neighborhood also shared the coastline of Lake Virginia with the house. The monthly rent was \$125. Since Frank had a higher rank of Captain and made more money, he paid \$75 and George, being a Second Lieutenant, paid \$50. Mary and I took turns cooking for the entire house. Mary was from the South and was a great cook. It turned out to be a wonderful arrangement. The four of us were very compatible living together and we remained friends for life.

The rental agreement included us having to take care of the house owners' dog, a Springer Spaniel named Rip. George and I had also brought Buddy along with us to Orlando. The two dogs got along beautifully.



Our first home in Florida, a mansion in the town of Winter Park.

GEORGE, MY WAR HERO



George with our two pet dogs in Florida, Buddy (right) and Rip (left).



Buddy, Rip and me.

TRUDY GROSSMAN

The Army Air Force School of Applied Tactics, or AAFSAT, was one of the premier Army Air Force training facilities. It was the first and only Army Air Force mining school at the time. At one point, it was considered to be the location for Army Air Force Headquarters, but it was eventually decided that the headquarters be located in Colorado Springs, Colorado.

At AAFSAT, George began his job as an instructor of aerial mining. George's students included staff officers in the Army Air Force, Navy, Marine Corps and a few officers and dignitaries of other Allied countries. Aerial mining was at a nascent stage in the US Army Air Force, and George's training lectures were some of the first of their kind. Building off the training he received himself, George constructed comprehensive lectures on aerial mining for the Army Air Force crewmen. The lectures started off being 20 minutes long, with George eventually developing them into 6-hour-long classes. The techniques of aerial mining were top secret during the war. Their details remained highly classified for a long time after the war as well and not many people were made aware of it. Since aerial mining was a new and untested strategy for the US Army Air Force, the students in George's classes often kidded him by asking, "When are your mines going to win us the war?"

George's course was well-received by the officers at AAFSAT. Senior staff officers rated it superior in both content and presentation. Some officers even went so far as to say it was the most worthwhile course they had taken during their service. For all classes at AAFSAT, instructors were rated by their students at the end of the class based on how well they taught. George always came in first in these instructor evaluations. In fact, it got so embarrassing that after a while, AAFSAT stopped holding the evaluations.

Over time, George put together an aerial mining training manual entitled "Bottoms Up! Aerial Mines and Modern Warfare". It contained details on mine-laying tactics, planning and operations, as well as technical specifications of the various types of aerial mines used.

GEORGE, MY WAR HERO



George in uniform while at AAFSAT in Orlando, Florida.

TRUDY GROSSMAN

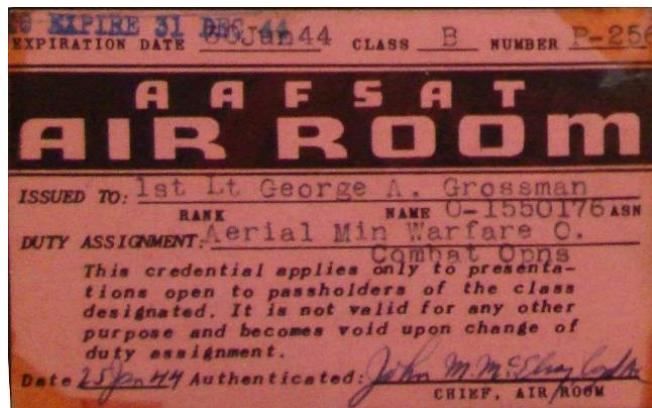


George's colleagues at AAFSAT.

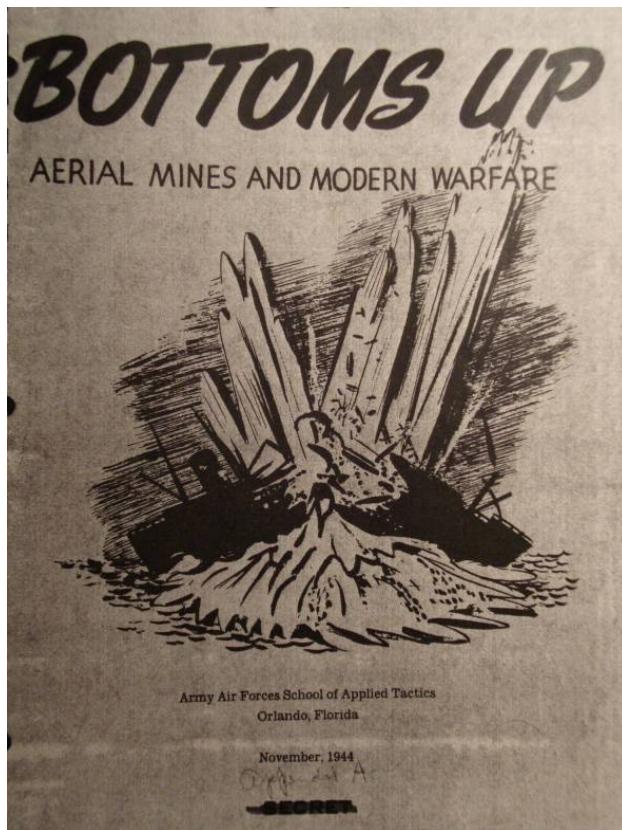


The AAFSAT "Gang" (left to right) - Bill Williams, Roger Chaffee, Frank Temple and George.

GEORGE, MY WAR HERO



One of George's access badges at AAFSAT.



The cover page of "Bottoms Up!", the aerial mine warfare training manual that George prepared for AAFSAT.

TRUDY GROSSMAN

Shortly after moving into our new house, George bought a sailboat from a soldier going overseas. Since our house was right in front of Lake Virginia, George thought it would be great to have a boat to go sailing on the lake. The boat he purchased could hold up to four people and although it was hand-made, it was done so with good craftsmanship. However, there was one thing I had to point out to George. When he brought the boat home, I said to him, "But George, we don't know how to sail!" He said, "That's no problem! We'll just go to the library and pick up a book on sailing." That we did, and soon enough, we were having a wonderful time sailing on the lake in front of our house.

Our two dogs loved to swim alongside our boat when we went sailing. The trouble with this, however, was that there were alligators in the lake. The alligators weren't dangerous to people that swam in the lake and we never heard of any alligator attacks on people, but they were known to eat dogs.

Each house along the lake had big, lovely yards that ran up to the bank of the lake. There was one alligator in the lake that liked to swim out of the water and sun-bathe on the yards of the different houses. All of us in the neighborhood considered the alligator as a pet, and none of us were frightened or bothered by his sun-bathing. Well, a Major moved into one of the houses along the lake. Not knowing the local story about the alligator, he came across it sun-bathing in his yard one day. Probably thinking the alligator would make a great purse for his wife, he took out his gun and shot and killed it. He had hell to pay as the entire neighborhood was mad at him for killing our pet.

GEORGE, MY WAR HERO



George and Buddy on our boat sailing on Lake Virginia in Winter Park.



Me on our boat sailing on Lake Virginia.

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Winter Park was a lovely little village with several mansions around Lake Virginia. There were also a few streets with houses on them. There was one street that was paved and lighted, but was completely barren of houses. Some entrepreneurs had apparently bought up the area with the plan to build houses and make a fortune. However, their plan didn't come to fruition. The whole area for miles around had big, beautiful trees with Spanish moss draped all over them. It was quite a sight for us folk from the North. George and I enjoyed taking many walks there. It was also said that this street was where students from Rollins College went to smooch.

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During one of our walks in Winter Park, we came across an orange grove a short distance away from our home. We saw a middle-aged man working there. We said hello and asked him if we could buy some oranges. He was very nice and friendly. He offered us to sample an orange before we bought it. He cut one in half and gave it to George and me. It was delicious and we asked the man for a bushel of them. He then said, "Wait a minute, now there's another type of orange that you may like even better." He then offered us a sample of the other type. This one was delicious too. He continued to offer us samples of several kinds of oranges. By the time we were done sampling all of them, we were already full. We ended up buying a bushel of oranges with some of each type for later.

Based on the way he was dressed, we had assumed the man was just a regular worker. It turned out that the man was actually the owner of the orange grove and several other groves in the area. His name was Joel Phillips and over time, we became good friends with him and his family.

Mr. Phillips started off in Georgia working as a manager of orange groves. He then moved to Florida and worked as a manager there too. Over time, Mr. Phillips became very knowledgeable about the local orange groves and he scouted the best ones in the area. Most groves would yield a good crop once every five years or so. There were only a select few that yielded a good crop year after year. Once he had enough money saved, he bought up all the good orange groves he had scouted and became very wealthy and

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successful. This was in contrast to businessmen from the North who weren't that familiar with orange groves. They would buy groves simply based on the yield from the previous year, expecting a good yield the next year. They didn't realize that the next good crop would probably only occur after another five years. As an owner, Mr. Phillips did an excellent job and made smart decisions. For example, one year, all the orange grove owners decided to change their crop from white grapefruit to pink because pink grapefruits had become very popular at the time. Mr. Phillips, on the other hand, did not follow suit with the others and stuck to the regular white grapefruit. When the time came for the canneries to can the pink grapefruit, they discovered that it turned into an ugly gray color which they couldn't sell, thereby wasting the produce. Mr. Phillips really made out that year as a result.

Mr. Phillips was married to his wife Grace, and they had two sons and a daughter who were all grown up and similar in age to us. They were a very interesting family. Mr. and Mrs. Phillips were very intelligent and up-to-date with current events. Although they were wealthy, they were also down-to-earth and had good values.

They lived in a nice, yet not too extravagant, house where we visited them and held great conversations. In her kitchen, Mrs. Phillips used to make homemade butter with fresh milk from their own cows that they kept on their land. She used an old-fashioned plunger-type butter churn and painstakingly pumped the churn-staff up and down to make her butter. One day, George noticed that she had a cooking mixer sitting unused on one of her kitchen shelves. George asked, "Why don't you try using the mixer instead?" She was so pleased after discovering how easy it was to churn butter with the mixer. They would never run out of butter now that there was no more tiresome plunging to do.

One of Mr. and Mrs. Phillips's sons was deaf. However, he didn't let this stop him from pursuing his interest of flying. He had a small airplane which he loved to fly. There was an issue when it came to take off and landing though. Typically, one has to use the radio to communicate to air traffic control before taking off and landing onto an airstrip. However, the local airport was a small one that didn't see much traffic. The Phillips family was also well-known and respected in the community. Therefore, he was able to

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work out a system with the airport's air traffic control to take off and land safely using visual indicators.

Their daughter was a slim, pretty girl who was just starting off at college. Before she left for her first semester, I recall her showing us her wardrobe of beautiful clothes. However, when she came back home from college for Christmas, she had packed on the pounds. She explained that she was part of the party-planning committee of her sorority and part of her responsibility was to taste and choose the food for her sorority's events. I thought to myself, "It's a shame she probably won't be able to fit into her lovely clothes anymore."

The family also played an active role in their church. Mrs. Phillips was part of their church's women's missionary society. Each church in the area had a women's missionary society and every year, all the societies would have a special get-together. However, the society of the one black church in the area wasn't invited. Women from Mrs. Phillips church were opposed to the attendance of black women at the event. This really angered Mrs. Phillips as it clashed with her values. She couldn't understand how women holding an event for religious reasons could discriminate against others. In fact, once a year, Mr. Phillips would be invited by the black workers of his orange groves to preach at their church. Mr. Phillips used to treat the workers of his orange groves, and all orange groves he worked at throughout his career, with dignity and respect. In turn, he was very well-liked by them and was invited to preach at their church as a show of appreciation. The Phillips family left their church of many years because of the discrimination displayed by the women's missionary society. Instead, they decided to use their own money to found a new church that wouldn't be prejudiced.

We were really proud to know the Phillips family. They were bright and fascinating people. They also remained humble and principled despite their wealth, making them truly deserving of their success.

## GEORGE, MY WAR HERO



*Mr. Phillips at the Orange Cooperative Society for the Winter Park area.*

## TRUDY GROSSMAN

While in Orlando, we made friends with many other servicemen and their families. I remember our first Thanksgiving in Orlando, which was also our first out of Ohio. However, we felt very much at home as we spent Thanksgiving dinner at a fellow officer's house, along with other military friends and their families. The officer's wife had done a great job with the table decorations and at the head of the table, there was a beautiful turkey. All the military men were smartly dressed in uniform, including our host. As he stood up and began carving the turkey, the turkey slipped off the table, onto his spic and span uniform and then onto the floor. However, the incident was passed over very quickly and we all had a great evening.

## GEORGE, MY WAR HERO



*George and me with some of the military men and wives we made friends with in Florida - the Temples, the Chaffees and the Williams.*

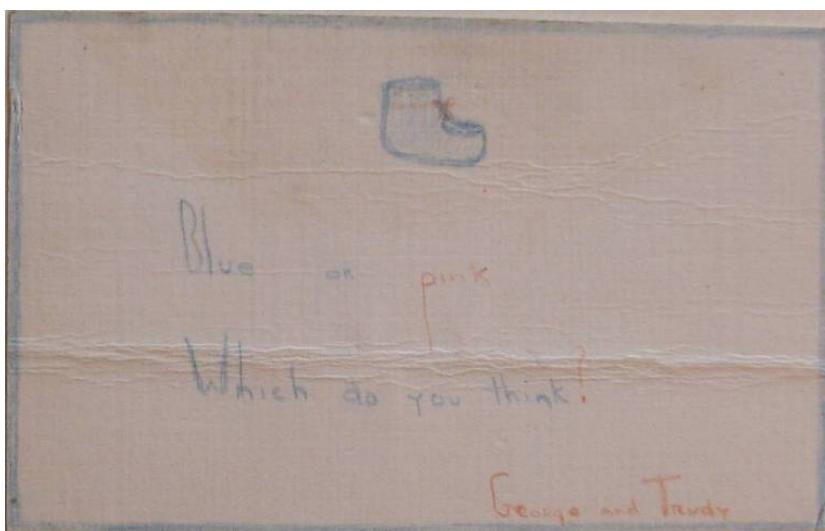
## TRUDY GROSSMAN

As time went by, we noticed that all the houses neighboring ours were being taken up by Generals. Soon enough, the row of houses along the lake became known as "General's Row". Frank was worried by this and said to George, "We better move out of here. They might send us overseas so that a General can take our house!" George, however, wasn't concerned. He told Frank, "Don't worry! We have a one year lease on our house and there's no way they can break that contract." George was right and we were able to stay in our house for the entire year. However, we were told we'd be kicked out the day our lease expired to make way for a General to move in. We had to find new housing elsewhere.

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When we first arrived in Orlando, I immediately went to a local high school to look for a job as a teacher. I caught a lucky break as it turned out the Home Economics teacher at the school was very pregnant at the time. She had wanted to take a leave of absence to have her baby and she was delighted to have me replace her for the last six months of the school year. So for six months, I taught Home Economics at this high school. My students were all girls and they were very mature for their age. A lot of them had boyfriends who were soldiers currently in Army training and scheduled to go overseas to fight in the war. The job went well and I had a good time teaching the girls. However, pregnancy must have been catching since towards the end of the school year, I became pregnant with my first child, Dick. It was my turn to take a leave of absence to have a baby, so that was the end of my teaching.

GEORGE, MY WAR HERO



A greeting card George and I sent out announcing that I was expecting my first child, with the message "Blue or pink, which do you think?"

TRUDY GROSSMAN

Once I was into my pregnancy, I started suffering from morning sickness. To keep the morning sickness at bay, I used to eat crackers in the morning before getting out of bed. However, one particular morning, I was in the kitchen fixing George's breakfast and I felt a sickness coming on. I immediately started racing through the house to get to the bathroom. I got out of the kitchen, through the dining room, and into the living room, but that was as far as I could make it. I threw up right then and there in the living room and ended up falling over and sliding into the stuff. I felt so miserable. What made things worse was when George came to see what happened, he stood there and started laughing. I could have killed him! No prizes for guessing who ended up cleaning the mess after that.

The hospital that treated me while I was pregnant was a Seventh-day Adventist Church hospital. My doctor was a military doctor. He was great, as were the nurses and the rest of the staff at the hospital. The Adventist church is a Christian denomination that follows some practices that are different from other Christian churches. One of these practices is vegetarianism, so the hospital did not serve meat at any of the meals. However, their food was still very good. Sometimes, the hospital menu oddly listed non-vegetarian dishes like pork chops. While it looked liked pork chops, it was actually made out of soy and tasted pretty good. A couple of times, George secretly slipped in some hamburgers for me, since he thought I was getting bored of eating vegetarian food all the time.

One day at the hospital, George told me of an incident he had just witnessed in the parking lot. The hospital parking lot was at the top of a hill and down below was a small lake. An excited new father-to-be drove into the parking lot and parked his car. He hurriedly got out of the car and slammed the door shut. Just as he did so, the car slowly started rolling down the hill. In his haste, he forgot to pull on the parking brake. He watched in horror, along with George, as the car rolled down the hill, plunged into the lake and disappeared from sight. Since it was war-time, items like cars were luxuries that were very hard to come by. George felt very sorry for the man.

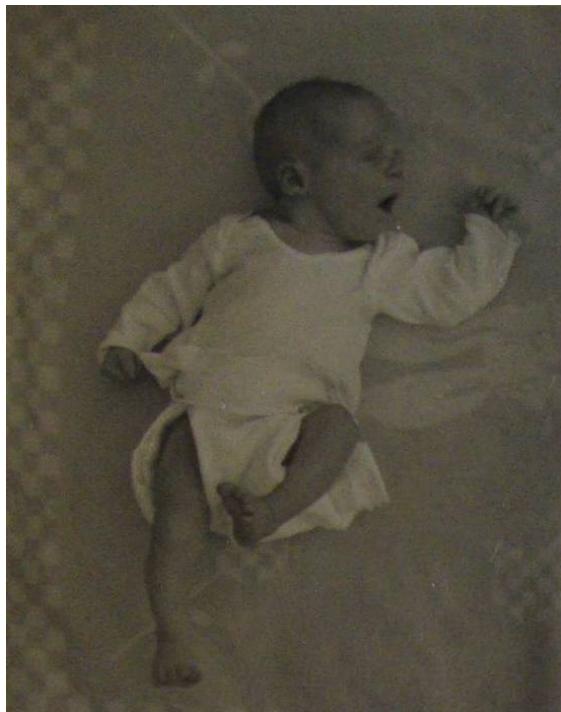
Our son Dick was born in the hospital on January 27, 1944. He weighed seven-and-a-half pounds and was a healthy and lively baby.

GEORGE, MY WAR HERO

At the time, new mothers had to stay in the hospital for an entire ten days after giving birth. If you really felt strongly about leaving sooner, you had to be taken home in an ambulance.

In the meantime, our good friends Mary and Frank also had a baby girl. They named her Nancy, and she was born six months before our son Dick. Since the two babies were born so close together, we decided to have them baptized at the same time. The baptism took place in a pretty Army chapel. Organ music played in the church while Dick and Nancy were baptized, and the ceremony was followed by refreshments.

TRUDY GROSSMAN



Our newly born son, Dick.

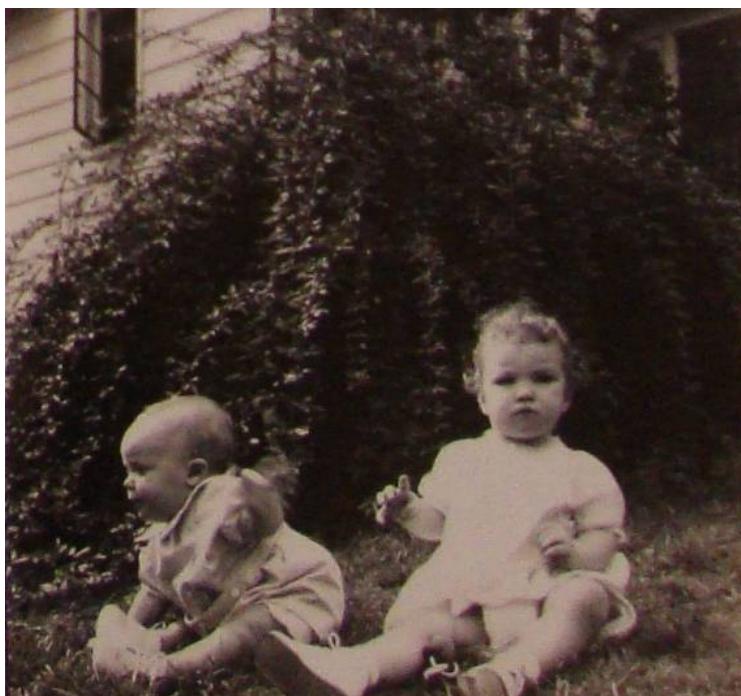


George and me with our son, Dick.

GEORGE, MY WAR HERO



A greeting card we sent out announcing Dick's birth.



Dick (left), and our god-daughter, Nancy Temple (right), who were both baptized together.

TRUDY GROSSMAN

By the time I had Dick and we brought him back from the hospital, we were living in our third house in Orlando. It was on a pretty street lined with one-story houses. The house didn't come furnished and we didn't have much money at the time. For our bed, we bought a mattress and supported it on four blocks at the corners. It was our version of a Hollywood bed. As for Dick, we pulled out a drawer from our dresser and made it into a little crib for him to sleep in.

Another one of the "amenities" we had while living in this house was an old fashioned wood-and-metal washboard to wash our clothes. A washing machine was another luxury item that was difficult to come by during the war, so we used the washboard to wash our clothes by hand. One day, George was finally able to find a washing machine for sale and he bought it. We did several loads of laundry on our first day with the washing machine. Once the loads were done, we put up a clothesline in the yard and hung our clean clothes to dry. However, soon after putting the loads up to dry, the poles holding up the clothesline suddenly collapsed. All our freshly washed clothes fell onto the dirty uncut grass and the nearby dusty street. It turned out that the wooden poles we used to hold up the clothesline were full of termites. So we had to stay up until midnight washing the clothes all over again.

Our land-lady was a red-headed Florida native named Dolly. She was a vociferous talker and she came over to our house daily to chat. I didn't mind chit-chatting with her but she visited so frequently, I sometimes found it hard to get my household chores done. Her husband, in contrast, was a quiet man named Ernest. He was handsome and had gray hair that gave him a distinguished look. While he was Italian by ethnicity, he was raised in Cuba. His father had migrated to Cuba from Italy and set up an orange farming business. They had many acres of orange groves there. Ernest had inherited the business from his father, and he would go by himself to Cuba for six months of the year to run the orange groves. Dolly and their daughter accompanied Ernest to Cuba the first time but didn't like it there, so they stayed back in Florida during his subsequent trips. After the Cuban Revolution, Ernest lost his property in Cuba as the government took possession of it.

GEORGE, MY WAR HERO



Our third home in Florida where we were staying when Dick was born.



Dick sleeping in the dresser drawer that we used as his crib.

TRUDY GROSSMAN

Neither George nor I had seen the ocean before, so we planned a trip to New Smyrna Beach on the coast of Florida near Orlando. It would also be the first time we'd be taking Dick to the beach. The drive to the coast was a pretty long one and required a fair amount of gas. Since it was war time, gas wasn't just readily available, but was rationed out to the public. Ration coupons were distributed to everyone so that we were only allowed to purchase a certain amount of gas at a time. So George and I saved up on our coupons in order to make the trip.

Once we had enough coupons to buy the gas, George, Dick and I drove to New Smyrna Beach. When we arrived, the beach was curiously empty. We noticed large signs at either ends of the beach but we didn't read what the signs said. Without giving it a second thought, George, Dick and I had fun on our day out at the beach.

After a having great time, we packed up and got ready to drive back home. As we were getting into the car, George dropped the keys onto the car floor through a small gap between the seats. We struggled to get the keys back out but we were eventually able to do so.

Then, as we drove out, we read one of the large signs at the beach that we ignored earlier. It said, "DANGER! STAY OUT OF AREA! W.A.S.P. AERIAL TARGET PRACTICE IN PROGRESS!" W.A.S.P. stood for Women Air Force Service Pilots. They were an organization of non-combat, civilian, female pilots that were authorized to fly military aircraft. The W.A.S.P.s were founded during WWII to alleviate the workload for male pilots in the Army Air Force from their non-combat duties so that they could be assigned for combat service. One of the duties of the W.A.S.P.s was to provide support in aerial target practice. This involved them towing aerial targets from the backs of their planes. The targets would then be shot at by Army Air Force pilots from the air or by anti-aircraft weapons from the ground with live ammunition for training purposes. No wonder the beach was empty that day, had we read the signs, we would have stayed out too!

We weren't driving for long when all of a sudden, we got a flat tire. And just our luck, we were right by Mosquito Lagoon with mosquitoes buzzing in the air all around us. George got out the car

GEORGE, MY WAR HERO

and replaced the flat tire while I wafted the mosquitoes away with a towel so he could work in relative comfort.

Despite the few hiccups, we got back home safely from an enjoyable day at the beach. Things could certainly have been worse, considering we were at a beach that was closed off for aerial target practice.

TRUDY GROSSMAN



George, Dick and I on our trip to New Smyrna Beach, Florida.



Dick enjoying himself during our day at the beach.

GEORGE, MY WAR HERO

George came home from work at AAFSAT one day and announced to me that he had to go to Army Headquarters in Washington, D.C., for a short trip. He had to meet with the higher-ups to discuss some matters regarding aerial mine warfare. I asked him, "So when do we leave?" He told me there was no way I was coming with him. Someone had to stay home and take care of Dick. And besides, he was only issued one ticket for the train ride.

Since it was war time and so many of our men were fighting overseas, the capital was now filled with women. In order for the country to continue to run smoothly, women were working at the important jobs in Washington our men would have previously occupied if they weren't fighting abroad. Knowing this, I didn't want George to go to Washington alone amongst all those women. While I never really doubted George's commitment to me, I figured it wouldn't hurt to tag along. I told him that we could work it out so that he, Dick, and I could all go to Washington together.

The train left late at night and was an overnight journey. George, Dick and I waited until everyone in the cabins had gone to sleep. Once the coast was clear, we quietly snuck onto the train. I was carrying Dick in a small basket. Our ticket was for a single upper berth. We climbed into our small quarters, the three of us, without making a sound. George and I slept snugly together side by side and Dick slept in his small basket at our feet.

The next morning when we woke up, everyone else in our cabin was awake, freshened up, dressed and sitting in their seats waiting to arrive at our destination. I first crawled out of our bunk and heated a bottle for Dick. I then got Dick out of his basket and sat down to feed him. Finally, George got down from the berth. Everyone else in our cabin looked at us, astonished at how the three of us had managed to squeeze into that little space. They must have felt they were watching a circus act with several clowns coming out of a tiny car. It was funny to see their reaction. In the end, the whole trip went well.

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At the time, George had a saddle that he used to ride our neighbor's horses with. George enjoyed riding while our neighbor's horses needed the regular exercise as well. Just as with our sailboat, George had bought the saddle from a soldier that was going

## TRUDY GROSSMAN

overseas. When George's time came to go overseas, he too sold off the saddle. Such transactions were very common during the war. George put an ad in the newspaper for the saddle and he only got one interested customer. A young woman was interested in buying it, but she only knew how to ride a Western saddle. The one George was selling was an English saddle. The Western saddle was more commonly used in Western and Southern states for horseback riding. There are several differences between a Western and English saddle, including a horn in the front, a deeper seat and wider stirrups for the former. So before she bought it, George taught the lady how to ride the English saddle. I can see them out of my window right now, the young woman sitting on the saddle propped up on the fence and George showing her the correct way to use it. After being trained in using the saddle, the lady set off happily with her new purchase.

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After two years of our living in Orlando and George training airmen in aerial mine warfare, there was serious discussion in the US military as to whether aerial mining should be used in the Pacific War against Japan. The British had used aerial mining to great effect in their fight against the Germans. However, while the US military was well-versed in the traditional forms of undersea mining by naval vessels, they didn't have much experience with aerial mining. There was also a preconceived notion that aerial mining was more of a defensive strategy. However, George, having become an expert in the field, believed that aerial mining was a useful offensive measure that the US military could use to help win the war against Japan.

In October 1944, George was asked to go to Twentieth Air Force Headquarters in Colorado Springs. The Twentieth Air Force was responsible for all missions against Japan in WWII. George was tasked with selling an aerial mining program as part of the war against Japan to the Twentieth Air Force.

The proposed program was to be headed by Commander Ellis A. Johnson. Commander Johnson was an ex-mathematical physicist from the Carnegie Institute of Washington. During the war, he served as a mining officer, starting off at the Naval Ordnance Laboratory. He went on to serve aboard the USS Lexington and

GEORGE, MY WAR HERO

USS Yorktown and participated in the First Battle of the Philippines and the Palau raid. Like George, Commander Johnson was also convinced that aerial mining would be an effective strategy to help win the war against Japan. He wrote up a plan to mine Japanese waters by air, specifically the Japanese Inland Sea and Shimonoseki Straits. It was this plan that George was selling at Twentieth Air Force Headquarters.

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I had gone along with George to Colorado Springs as well. We left Dick, who was now eight months old, in the caring hands of George's parents in Lakewood.

While we were in Colorado, George and I found the time to visit Pikes Peak in the Rocky Mountains. We got to the top of the mountain by taking a funny little cog railway train. It was very cold, but it was a beautiful snowy scene all around and we had a good time. We learned that the train ride back down would be the last one until the war was over. All the workers at the top of the mountain had to come back down with us too.

While in Colorado Springs, George was having a bad allergy problem. He needed to get some medical attention so he went to the dispensary at the base's hospital. The military doctor there treated George strangely. He seemed to be ignoring George's request for help and was not taking him seriously. The doctor kept delaying offering treatment, and George had to go back to the doctor several times. Finally, George discovered why the doctor was behaving so strangely. The doctor thought that George was scheduled to go overseas, and was feigning illness so that he could stay home. Once George convinced the doctor he was actually sick, the doctor treated him.

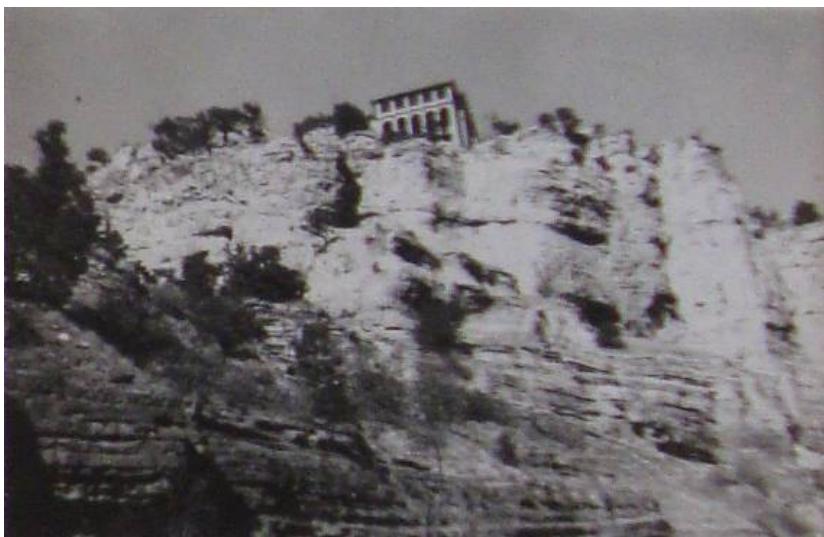
At Twentieth Air Force Headquarters, George explained the merits of aerial mining to the head decision-makers. In doing so, he was able to convince them to conduct an aerial mining mission of Japanese waters. However, it was approved only under the condition that George led and oversaw the mission along with Commander Johnson. This meant that George would have to go to the Pacific in a few days time.

TRUDY GROSSMAN



*Dick at George's parents' home in Lakewood before we left for Colorado Springs, Colorado.*

GEORGE, MY WAR HERO



*Pikes Peak in Colorado.*



*George and me at Pikes Peak.*

TRUDY GROSSMAN



*George on the cog railway at Pikes Peak.*



*Me on the cog railway at Pikes Peak.*

## GEORGE, MY WAR HERO

We returned to George's parents' home from Colorado Springs. While George and I were happy to be reunited with Dick, George would be leaving for the Pacific very shortly around Christmas time. It was with great sadness to see George go overseas. I feared for whether I would see him again, and if I did, when and in what shape he would be in. However, we knew that the country was at war, and its men and their families had to make sacrifices. With a hug for his little son, and a kiss and a hug for me, George left for the Pacific. Dick and I went to stay with my parents in Columbus. They loved having us there and we were grateful to have a good place to go to.



## ~CHAPTER 3~

# OPERATION STARVATION

George's mission in the Pacific was to plan, set up and execute the aerial mining of the Japanese seas. At that stage of the war, Japan was heavily dependent on cargo ships carrying supplies, such as food and raw materials. The Inland Sea was the main waterway that Japan used for its shipping routes.

The Inland Sea is the body of water separating the three main islands of Japan: Honshu, Kyushu and Shikoku. Japan's topography is such that over two-thirds of the land is mountainous. This makes transportation of supplies by ground very difficult. Therefore, a majority of cargo transport in Japan is done by shipping via the Inland Sea. During the war, cargo ships sailing in the Inland Sea carried essential supplies between Japan's ports. About 75% of all domestic shipping was done by sea. Supplies were also brought in from neighboring trading countries like Korea, the Philippines, Taiwan and China. It was estimated that Japan imported 30% of its food, 80% of its oil, 90% of its iron and 25% of its coal by sea. In addition to shipping supplies, the Inland Sea was a strategic location for the Japanese naval fleet. Naval bases were located at Kure and Hiroshima along the sea's coastline. The Inland Sea is accessed through the Shimonoseki Straits in its northwest section and through Bungo Suido in its southwest section.

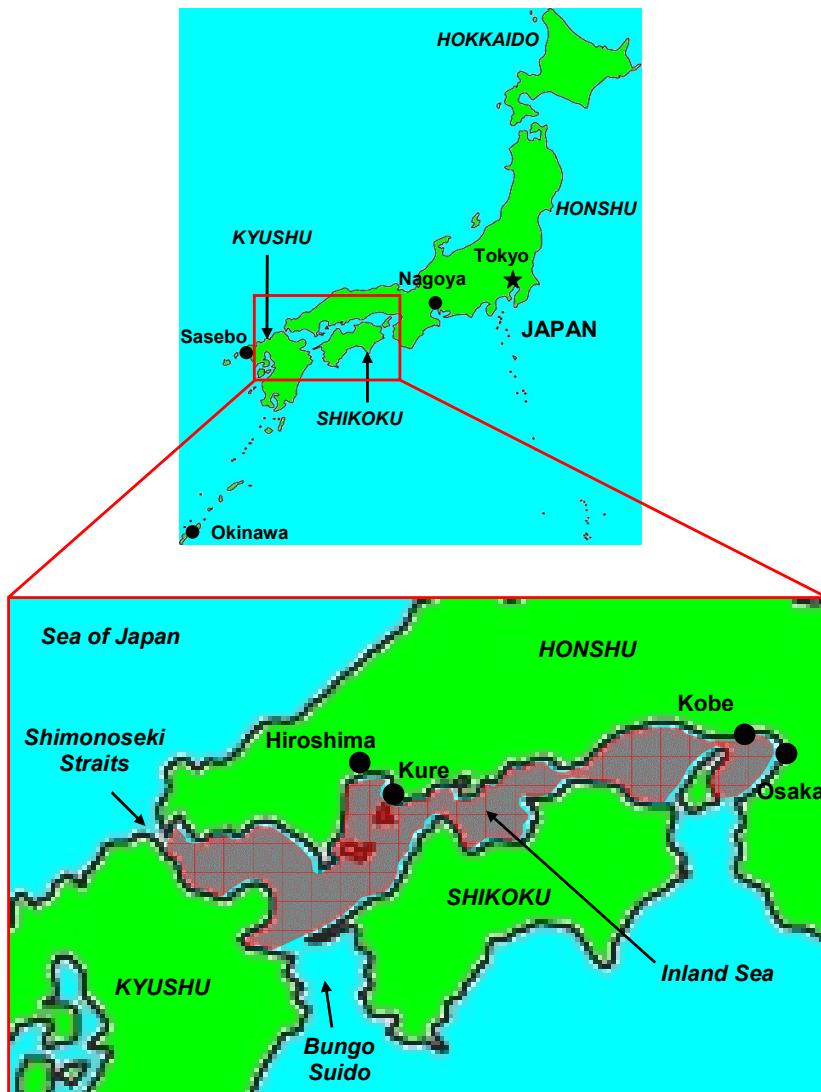
While the war intensified and got closer to Japan's borders, the Inland Sea still remained a relative safe haven for the Japanese. The

## TRUDY GROSSMAN

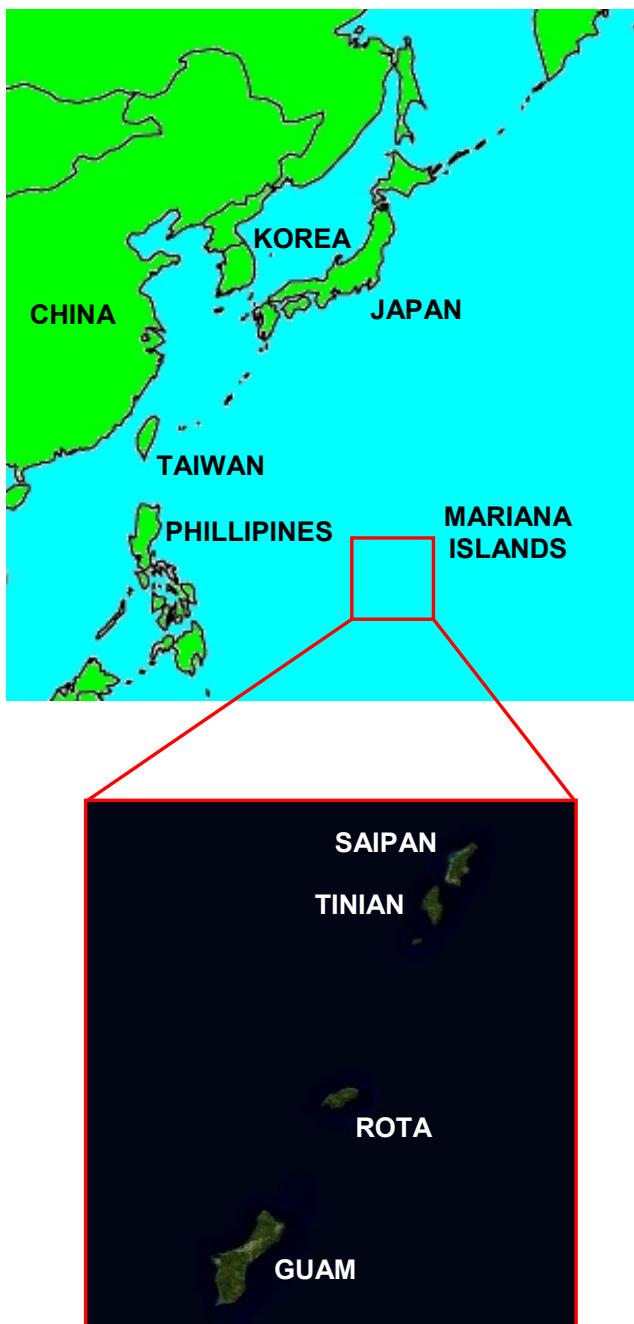
sea is located in Japan's inner territory and was protected by an extensive network of Japanese mines around its borders. Until then, the US military's strategy was to use both submarines and aircraft to directly attack Japanese cargo ships to prevent them from delivering supplies. This strategy achieved limited success so the military had now decided to try aerial mine warfare. The goal was to create a blockade to stop Japanese cargo ships from traveling their routes. George, together with Commander Johnson, led the team responsible for implementing aerial mining missions to achieve this goal.

The aerial mining campaign against Japan was carried out by the XXI Bomber Command of the Twentieth Air Force based in the Mariana Islands. The Marianas are a commonwealth of the US located in the Pacific Ocean south of Japan. The main islands of the Marianas are Guam, Saipan, Tinian and Rota. The Marianas were won by the US from the Japanese during WWII in 1944. Due to its strategic location, the US military built bases on the islands in its war effort against Japan.

## GEORGE, MY WAR HERO



*Map of Japan and the Inland Sea.*



*Map of the Mariana Islands, Japan and Japan's trading countries.*

## GEORGE, MY WAR HERO

George flew into XXI Bomber Command Headquarters in Saipan in December 1944. At the time, Japanese bombers were carrying out raids on US B-29 Superfortress bomber bases in Saipan. The B-29 Superfortress bomber was the US Army Air Force's bombing aircraft of choice at the time. As George's plane approached Saipan, a raid was on-going. The pilot had to wait until the raid stopped and it was safe to land. From the plane, George was able to look down and see kamikaze planes crashing into B-29s on the bases below. The pilot told George, "Don't worry, we're safe up here. They want to blow up the B-29s below, they won't be concerned with us. And besides," he said as he pulled out a small hand gun out of his holster, "I'm armed!" As soon as the raid was over, the pilot landed the plane and they rushed to the safety of the island's caves where the XXI Bomber Command Headquarters were located.

# TRUDY GROSSMAN

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| US-28                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       | TICKET          |                                             |
| Pursuant to provisions of existing regulations, the following named individual is authorized to travel on aircraft operated for, by or under the control of the Air Transport Command between stations shown hereon, and shall be subject to all established rules and regulations. Deviations from the normal course of travel to accomplish official business will be honored only when such deviations are noted hereon. |                 |                                             |
| Priority Identification No.<br>2-294356-H-DEC                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |                 | COMMANDING GENERAL<br>AIR TRANSPORT COMMAND |
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*George's ticket to Saipan.*



*Aerial view of B-29 Superfortress Bombers assembled on a base in Saipan.*

## GEORGE, MY WAR HERO

Soon after his arrival, George met with the staff of XXI Bomber Command and presented plans for the aerial mining mission. Colonel Blanchard, George's boss while he was at XXI Bomber Command asked him, "Grossman, what are you going to call this operation?" Up till that point, George had given some thought as to what an appropriate name for the operation would be, but he never imagined that he would be given the honor and responsibility of actually naming it himself. George answered promptly, "Operation Starvation, sir." George chose the name Operation Starvation because he believed that through the planting of aerial mines in Japan's waters and blockading its shipping routes, the country would be starved of its needed supplies.

When George first arrived in Saipan, officers were arriving at XXI Bomber Command Headquarters in large numbers, more than what was necessary. Most of the officers had arrived simply with the intent of getting promoted to a higher rank. However, a new general was recently put in charge of XXI Bomber Command, General Curtis LeMay. General LeMay was not happy about the large size of his staff and he had a way of dealing with it.

Shortly after being put in charge, he gathered all his men at XXI Bomber Command Headquarters. With a cigar in his mouth, he announced to them, "I've never worked with this many men at once in my life and I'm too old to learn how to do it now." He was only 38 years old at the time. He continued, "Most of you are career officers who believe that wartime is the opportunity to win promotions and decorations. I agree with you, so long as you are out there fighting the war. However, I don't consider sitting at a desk at my headquarters as fighting the war. Therefore, there will be no promotions or decorations for anyone here while I'm in charge." A loud, collective moan was heard from the disappointed gathering. With a sly, subtle smile on his face, General LeMay continued, "I have an answer to both your problem and mine. I will approve all transfer requests into the wings and squadrons of this command, where you will actually be fighting the war and will have plenty of opportunities for promotions and decorations."

And with that, the number of staff at XXI Bomber Command Headquarters dwindled down drastically. George remained part of the staff to carry out his duties for Operation Starvation.

TRUDY GROSSMAN



*One of George's access badges at XXI Bomber Command in the Marianas.*



*An autographed photo of General Curtis LeMay, commander of XXI Bomber Command in the Marianas.*

## GEORGE, MY WAR HERO

The execution of the first phase of Operation Starvation was scheduled to begin on April 1, 1945. This left George and Commander Johnson only three months to get the operation ready. They started the operation from the ground up. When they arrived in the Marianas in December, they didn't have any airplanes, mines, depots or intelligence. They began by putting together a team of people to work on the initial preparation and planning of the operation. They worked around the clock, figuring out the complicated details of where to drop the mines, what type of mines to use, how many mines to use, etc.

The Navy supplied the aerial mines and established a mine assembly depot and mine modification unit in Tinian for the operation. A team of mining assembly officers, civilian scientists and enlisted men was created to assemble and stockpile the mines. The mines weighed 1000 to 2000 pounds each. Attached to each mine was a parachute that automatically released once it made contact with the water. Once the mines dropped to the bottom of the sea, they were able to detect ships passing over them using magnetic and acoustic sensing devices. Each mine could be configured differently. For example, the sensitivity of the ship detection devices could be varied. The mines could have timed arming delays and could also be programmed to detonate only after detecting a certain number of ship counts. A random mix of mines with different settings was used. This way, Japanese ships would be unable to predict how the mines behaved. This would make the mines more difficult to sweep and, therefore, more effective.

The B-29 bombers and crew-members of the 313th Bombardment Wing of XXI Bomber Command were tasked with laying the mines in the Japanese waters. The 313th Bombardment Wing was based on the island of Tinian. The wing's B-29s were equipped with the latest radar navigation and bombing set. It was decided that the mines would be laid at night and at low flying altitudes of around 5000 feet. This was a relatively new strategy as precision bombing attacks were usually performed during the day at high altitudes. However, bad weather conditions in the Pacific made the conventional method difficult to execute. The new night-time, low-altitude strategy was adopted having demonstrated success in earlier B-29 bombing missions. The mines were laid accurately at their desired target locations by using the B-29's radar equipment.

## TRUDY GROSSMAN

An aircraft established its target zone by first positioning itself over an identifiable radar point on land, then traveling a fixed distance to get to the target zone, and finally releasing the mines. Drift of the mine in the air due to wind was calculated and accounted for when it was laid.

By January 1945, preparations for the first phase of Operation Starvation were in full swing. The Wing's ordnance and armament personnel were being trained in the physical handling and loading of the mines onto the B-29s. Radar navigation specialists were teaching the crew the necessary procedures and tactics to accurately lay the mines. Experimental aerial mining runs were being conducted with the B-29s dropping 100 pound water-filled practice mines into the waters, allowing the crew to practice and perfect the technique. Intelligence was also being gathered on Japanese shipping routes, current economic status and naval defenses to guide the plotting of the minefields. These preparation and planning activities continued intensively for three months. While preferring to have more time to prepare, the team was confident they would be ready to conduct their first aerial mining mission by April 1, 1945.

## GEORGE, MY WAR HERO

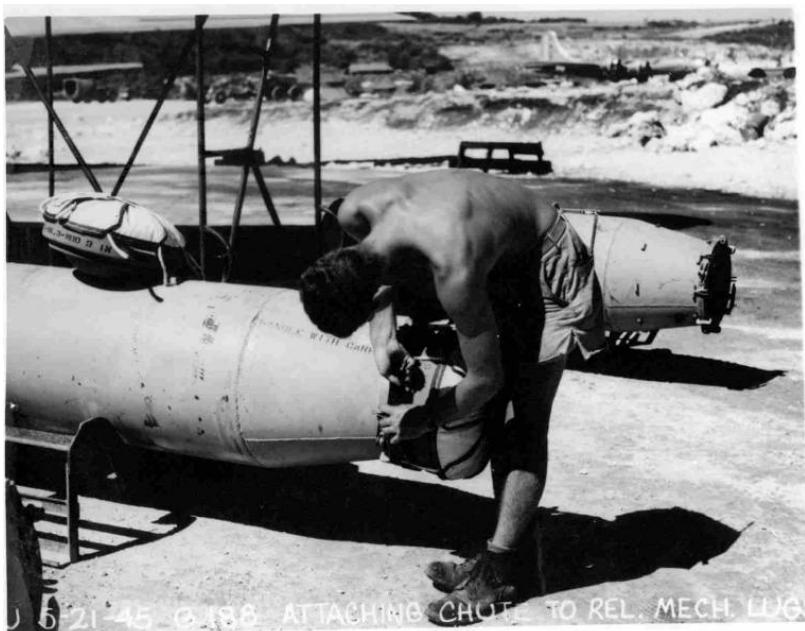


*George (center) with some of his colleagues in the Marianas.*



*The mine assembly depot where aerial mines for Operation Starvation were assembled.*

TRUDY GROSSMAN



*Parachute being attached to aerial mine.*



*Soluble washer being installed on aerial mine.*

## GEORGE, MY WAR HERO



*Aerial mine being examined.*



### *Acoustic sensing device being removed from aerial mine.*

TRUDY GROSSMAN



*Aerial mines being transported to B-29 airfield.*



*Headquarters of the 313th Bombardment Wing, the wing that carried out Operation Starvation.*

## GEORGE, MY WAR HERO



*B-29s on which aerial mines were loaded.*

TRUDY GROSSMAN



*Aerial mine being loaded on a B-29.*



*B-29 landing on base in Saipan after a mission.*

## GEORGE, MY WAR HERO

Near the base in Saipan, there was a very high cliff. When the battle for Saipan was about to be won by the United States, the Japanese commanders had spread panic among the natives of the island. They told the natives that the American soldiers would rape their women and kill everyone. They were told that even their children wouldn't be spared. In fear of this, several natives committed suicide by jumping off this cliff. Many of the women threw their babies and young children over, before jumping off themselves. The cliff became known as "Banzai Cliff".

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On February 6, 1945, while George was in the Marianas preparing for Operation Starvation, he was awarded the Legion of Merit by the US Army. The Legion of Merit is a military award given for outstanding performance and achievement. George received the Legion of Merit for his exceptional work in training Army Air Force officers in aerial mining at AAFSAT from February 1943 to November 1944. He was commended for his skills as an instructor in imparting the knowledge of aerial mine warfare to thousands of students. The Legion of Merit was awarded to George in secret as Operation Starvation was still highly classified. The Army didn't want to release any information that would jeopardize future plans of the operation.

A small formal ceremony was held at Twentieth Air Force Headquarters in Saipan where General LeMay presented George the Legion of Merit medal in front of a small group of troops. George said that during the ceremony as General LeMay pinned the Legion of Merit on him, he hadn't felt so shaky since the day he got married.

TRUDY GROSSMAN

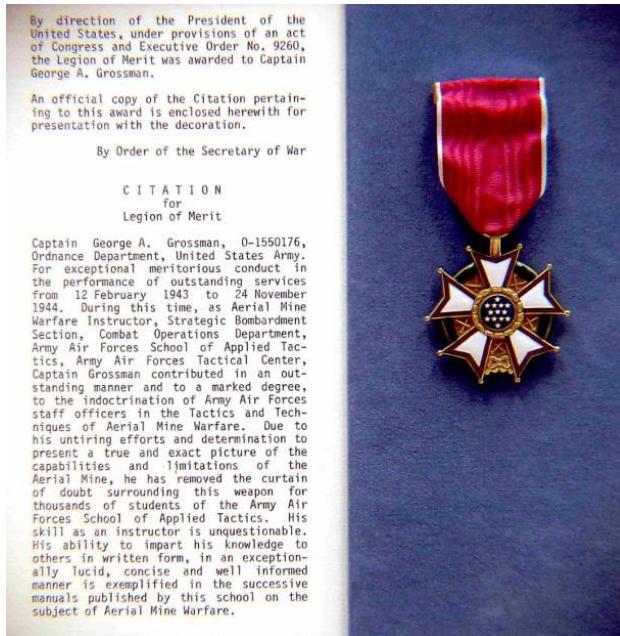


George being presented the Legion of Merit by General LeMay.



George with his Legion of Merit pinned on him.

GEORGE, MY WAR HERO



The Legion of Merit that was awarded to George.



Certificate of George's Legion of Merit.

TRUDY GROSSMAN

I was back home with my parents and baby Dick in Columbus while George was overseas. We kept in touch by writing to each other almost everyday.

I missed him dearly during the time he was away. We used to have a favorite apple tree that we sometimes sat under. At the time, there was a popular song by Glenn Miller that went, *“Don’t sit under the apple tree with anyone else but me, till I come marching home”*. Every time I heard that song on the radio, it would really get to me and I hoped for my soldier boy to come home soon.

It was good to be with my parents. They also enjoyed having me there and helping me look after Dick. In addition to taking care of Dick, George recommended I get involved in some other activity. He thought it would be good for me to get out of the house and do something else for a little bit, instead of just spending all my time at home. I agreed, so I hunted around for a job.

I was able to find a job at the Retail Merchant’s Association as an “under-cover shopping detective”, checking to see if clerks at various stores were stealing from their employers. It was a part-time job, about two to three days a week.

A typical day at the job was as follows. At the start of the day, I was given money by the Retail Merchant’s Association for shopping. Then, I went into stores, pretending to be a regular shopper, and determined if the store clerks were honest. For example, here’s one technique I used to identify a dishonest clerk. I would go to the store counter with some items to buy. The clerk would ring up the items. Then, before paying and leaving, I would say, “Oh, I want to buy this as well!” and would pick out a few more items to buy. I would then check to see if the clerk would ring up the newly added items to the bill. While the honest clerks would ring up the new items, the dishonest ones wouldn’t. Then, when I paid the bill, the dishonest clerks would only put the amount for the original set of items they rang up in the register and kept the rest of the money for themselves. Sometimes, I also worked in tandem with another under-cover shopping detective to check if a clerk was stealing. At the end of the day, I would return the items I bought back to the Retail Merchant’s Association and they would account for my shopping expenditure. I would then write a report on the

GEORGE, MY WAR HERO

clerks at the stores I visited that day. These reports would be used in court when a dishonest clerk was being prosecuted.

It was a very interesting job and it was a nice distraction from my routine at home. George also said later that it was this job that kicked off my habit of shopping.

TRUDY GROSSMAN



Dick at my parents' home in Columbus while George was overseas in the Pacific.

GEORGE, MY WAR HERO

Towards the end of March, as the team was preparing for the first phase of Operation Starvation, the US military initiated its activities in the Battle of Okinawa. The Battle of Okinawa was a major battle between Allied and Japanese forces during WWII for the outlying Japanese island of Okinawa, located southwest of the main islands of Japan and northwest of the Marianas.

With no prior notice, the US Navy requested that the XXI Bomber Command provide support in its activities. The XXI Bomber Command was asked to begin its mining operations of the Inland Sea right away so as to thwart Japanese Navy forces that would try to counter-attack the US Navy forces.

So on March 27, 1945, the XXI Bomber Command began its first mining missions of Operation Starvation ahead of schedule. As the inaugural raid got underway, George stood on a bluff overlooking the 313th Bombardment Wing airfield, watching the B-29s take off with mixed feelings. On one hand, he was proud of being part of an operation that many did not believe could be executed. On the other, he felt sick to his stomach when considering the chaos that would be inflicted on the Japanese population due to the operation. Over a period of one month, 250 B-29s laid around 2000 mines in the Shimonoseki Straits, Hiroshima Bay, and the naval bases of Kure and Sasebo.

Results of the mining operation were immediate. The movement of Japanese ships in the western part of the Inland Sea came to a near standstill. The Japanese fleet within the Inland Sea was unable to navigate through the newly laid minefields. They tried to use minesweepers to gain safe passageway, but due to the strategically random behavior of the mines, these attempts were unsuccessful. In the end, they resorted to sending small boats on suicide missions to detonate the mines but this tactic didn't fare much better either. Because of the mines, the Japanese were unable to sail out of the Inland Sea through the Shimonoseki Straits in the northwest. The only way out of the Inland Sea was through Bungo Suido in the southwest where the Americans were ready for them. A Japanese convoy consisting of the Yamato, one of the newest, largest and best-equipped ships in the Japanese Navy, along with six smaller ships sailed through Bungo Suido in an attempt to engage US forces in the Battle of Okinawa. However, the convoy was

TRUDY GROSSMAN

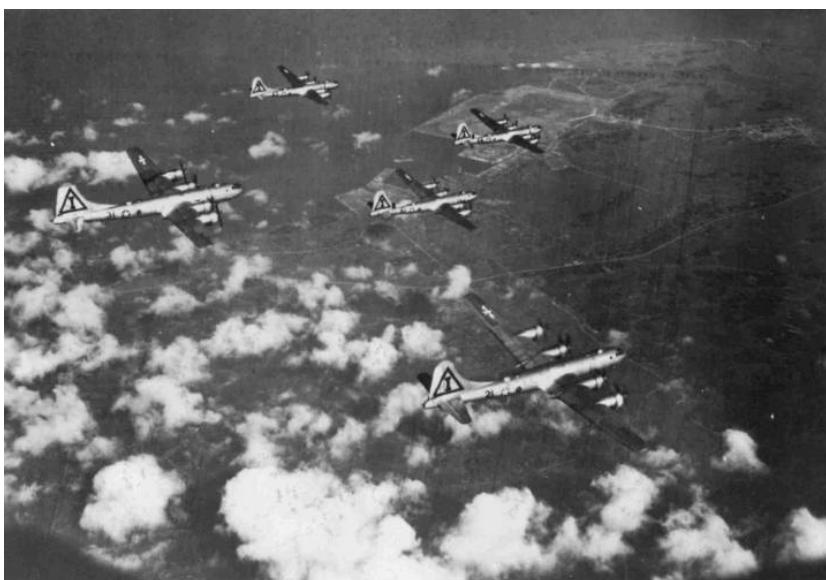
sighted by a US Army Air Force aircraft flying a routine weather mission. Aircraft and naval task forces were sent to attack the convoy and the Yamato was sunk before even reaching Okinawa.

Admiral Chester Nimitz, the head of the US Navy Pacific Fleet at the time, was delighted by the results of the first phase of Operation Starvation. On April 7 1945, which happened to be Army Day, he sent the following message to General LeMay:

"The Navy is gratified at being able, on Army Day, to congratulate the XXI Bomber Command on its outstanding achievement in completing the very effective mining operations reported yesterday. This project, like all your operations to date, has been executed with precision and determination which arouses our admiration. It is a definite contribution toward winning of the war.

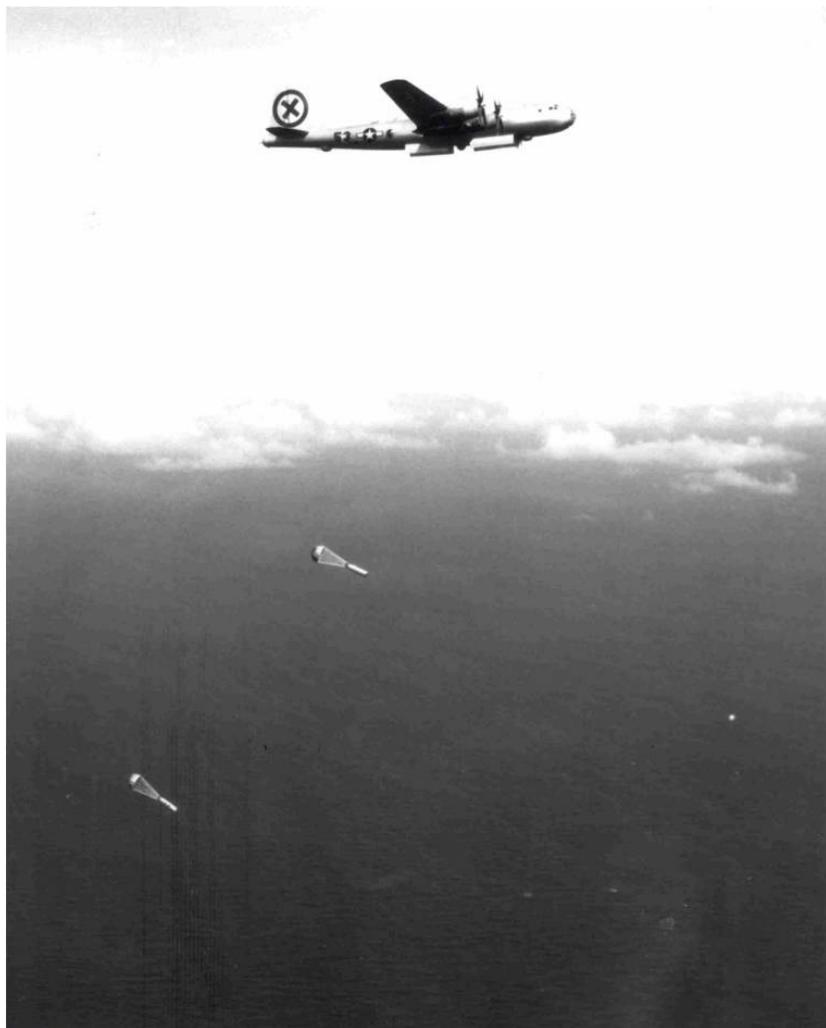
- Admiral Chester Nimitz"

GEORGE, MY WAR HERO



Formation of B-29s over the Japanese coastline.

TRUDY GROSSMAN



B-29 dropping aerial mines into Japanese waters.

GEORGE, MY WAR HERO



Aerial mines dropping into Japanese waters.

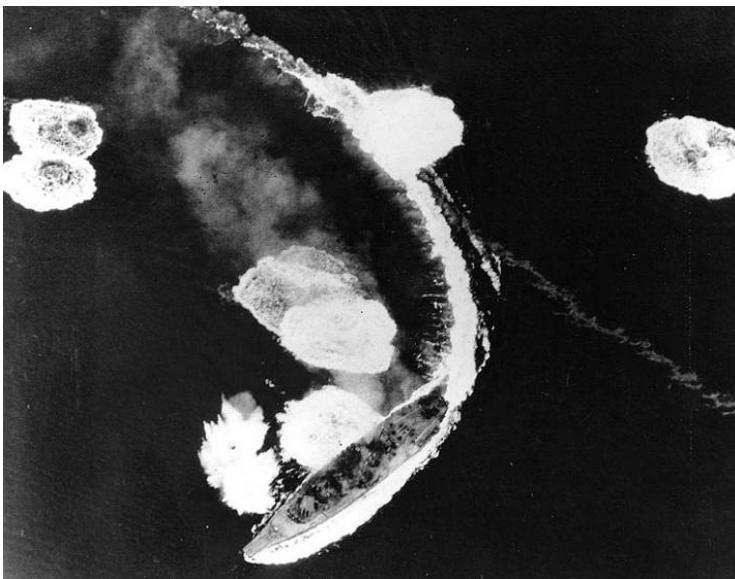


Aerial reconnaissance of a blockaded Japanese ship.

TRUDY GROSSMAN



Japanese ships using minesweeping boats to find safe passage through mined waters.



The Yamato, one of the Japanese Navy's largest and best-equipped ships during WWII, under attack from US aerial forces while en route to provide support for the Battle of Okinawa.

GEORGE, MY WAR HERO

At the base, there were no laundry facilities for the officers to use. Everyone was required to wash their own clothes by hand, even General LeMay. One time, there was an officer visiting the base who served on a ship that was beached nearby. The officer had invited George to dinner on the ship one evening, and told him to bring all his dirty clothes along as well. There were laundry facilities on the ship that were reputed to be the “Pride of the Pacific”, and George would be able to get his clothes washed and pressed. George accepted the offer and returned from the ship with a fresh set of clothes. The next time there was a meeting with General LeMay, George was smartly dressed in a clean, neatly pressed uniform. The general’s appearance, on the other hand, was not as immaculate since he was wearing sullied clothes washed by hand. George was embarrassed by this during the meeting.

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Ernie Pyle was a WWII correspondent for the major US newspapers. His articles were about the experiences of the common soldier fighting the war. He reported from the front lines, speaking directly to the soldiers on the ground and getting acquainted with them. For this reason, he was very well-liked by our boys overseas. He was also extremely popular with readers back home in the US and we all looked forward to reading his columns in the newspaper. He won the Pulitzer Prize for Correspondence in 1944 for his WWII reporting. He died in April 1945 from enemy gun fire on Iejima, one of the Okinawa Islands.

## Roving Reporter

Feb. 26, 1945

By Ernie Pyle

**IN THE MARIANAS ISLANDS**—(Delayed)—Before starting out on my long tours with the Navy, I've decided to visit the famous B-29 Superfortress boys who are bombing Japan from here.

This came about largely because I have "kinfolk" flying on the B-29s, and I'd kill two birds by visiting and writing at the same time.

So here I am, sitting on a screened porch in my underwear, comfortable as a cat, with the surf beating on the shore and a lot of bomber pilots swimming out front.

The B-29 boys, from commandant clear down to lowest enlisted men, live well out here. They are all appreciative of their good fortune, and I've not heard a dissenting voice. Of course, they would all rather be home, but who wouldn't?

The man I came to visit is Lt. Jack Bales, another farm boy from down the road near Dana, Ind. Jack is a sort of nephew of mine. He isn't exactly a nephew, but it's too complicated to explain. I used to hold him on my knee and all that sort of thing. Now he's 26, and starting to get bald like his "uncle."

### Ready for Career

Jack's folks still live just a mile down the road from our farm. But Jack left the farm and went to the University of Illinois and got educated real good, and was just ready to become a famous lawyer when the war came along and he enlisted.

He spent a year as a private and then got a commission and now he's a first lieutenant and flew over with the B-29s from Nebraska last October.

When I telephoned Jack and said I'd be out in about an hour to stay a few days, he said he would put up an extra cot in his hut for me.

I got there the cot was up, with blankets and a dress covers laid out on it. Jack had told the other boys he was having a visitor, and on the assumption it was a woman, Jack had six eager volunteers helping him put up the cot. When I showed up, skinny and bald, it was an awful let-down, but they've all been decent about it.

### Record for Missions

Jack lives in a steel Quonset hut with 10 other fliers. Most of them are pilots, but Jack is a radio man. He and another fellow in charge of all

his squadron's radio. He doesn't have to go on missions except now and then to check up.

But upon arriving I learned, both to my astonishment and pride, that he had been on more missions than anybody in his squadron. In fact, he's been on so many that his squadron commander has forbidden him to go for a while.

He doesn't go on so many because he enjoys it. Nobody but a freak likes to go on combat missions. He goes because he has things to learn, and because he can contribute things by going.

Another mission or two and he will have had his quota authorizing him to go back to rest camp for a while. But he seems to show no strain from the ordeal. He's pretty phlegmatic, and he says that sitting around camp gets so monotonous he sort of welcomes a mission just for a change.

### Little Chance to Peek

During flight Jack sits in a little compartment in the rear of the plane, and can't see out. In all his missions over Japan he's seen only one Jap fighter. Not that they didn't have plenty around, but he's so busy he seldom gets to a window for a peek. The one time he did, a Jap came slamming under the plane so close it almost took the skin off.

Like all combat crewmen, Jack spends all night and at least half of each day lying on his cot. He holds the record in his hut for "sack time," which means just lying on your cot doing nothing. He has his work so organized that it doesn't take much of his time between missions, and since there's nothing else to do, you just lie around.

### Eight Out of 10 Married

The B-29 fliers sleep on folding canvas cots, with rough white sheets. Sleeping is wonderful here, and along toward morning you usually pull a blanket over you.

Each flier has a dresser of wooden shelves he's made for himself, and several homemade tables scattered around. The walls are plastered with maps, snapshots and pin-up girls—but I noticed that real pin-up girls (wives and mothers) dominated over the movie beauties. In fact eight of the 10 men in the hut are married.

Although the food is good here, most of the boys get packages from home. One kid wrote and told his folks to show up a little, that he was snowed under with packages.

Jack has had two jars of Indiana fried chicken from my Aunt Mary. She cans it and seals it in mason jars, and it's wonderful. She sent me some in France, but I'd gone before it got there.

Jack took some of his fried chicken in his lunch over Tokyo one day. We Hoosiers sure do get around, even the chickens.

*A newspaper article by Ernie Pyle reporting from the Marianas in February 1945.*

## GEORGE, MY WAR HERO

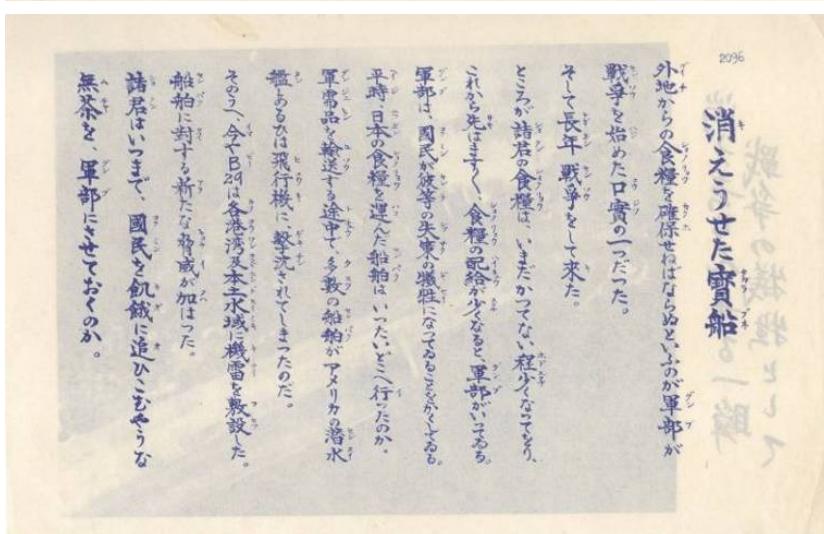
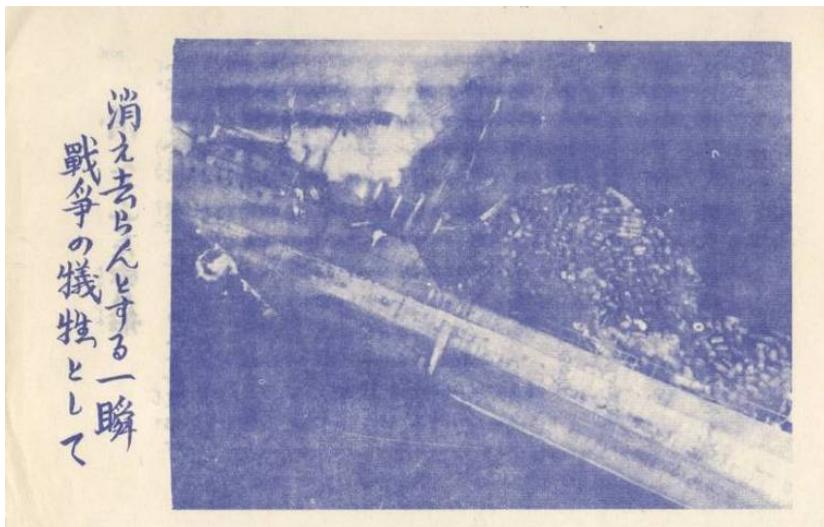
While the first phase to provide support in the Battle of Okinawa was impromptu in its planning, it fit in seamlessly with the subsequent phases of Operation Starvation. In early May, the XXI Bomber Command continued with the missions it had originally planned to conduct.

For the second phase of the operation, the focus was to destroy shipping routes between the industrial zones of Japan. This was achieved by maintaining the blockade of the Shimonoseki Straits and mining the major Japanese ports of Tokyo, Nagoya, Kobe and Osaka, as well as the main shipping lanes of the Inland Sea.

The third phase targeted shipping between Japan and other countries of the Asiatic mainland. Once again, the blockade of the Shimonoseki Straits was maintained while the major harbors of northwest Honshu and Kyushu were also mined.

The fourth phase targeted the same regions as Phase 3 but with increased intensity.

The fifth and final phase of Operation Starvation was to attain a total blockade of Japanese shipping at every possible point. All the ports of Korea were mined and the blockade of the Shimonoseki Straits, northwest Honshu and Kyushu was maintained. Additionally, the XXI Bomber Command also dropped four-and-a-half million propaganda leaflets during the final phase. The intent was to wage psychological warfare against the Japanese by discouraging its population and hastening their surrender. The final phase of Operation Starvation ended in mid-August 1945.



*The first in a series of propaganda leaflets dropped by air by the US Army Air Force onto Japan as part of Operation Starvation.*

## GEORGE, MY WAR HERO

### *English Translation:*

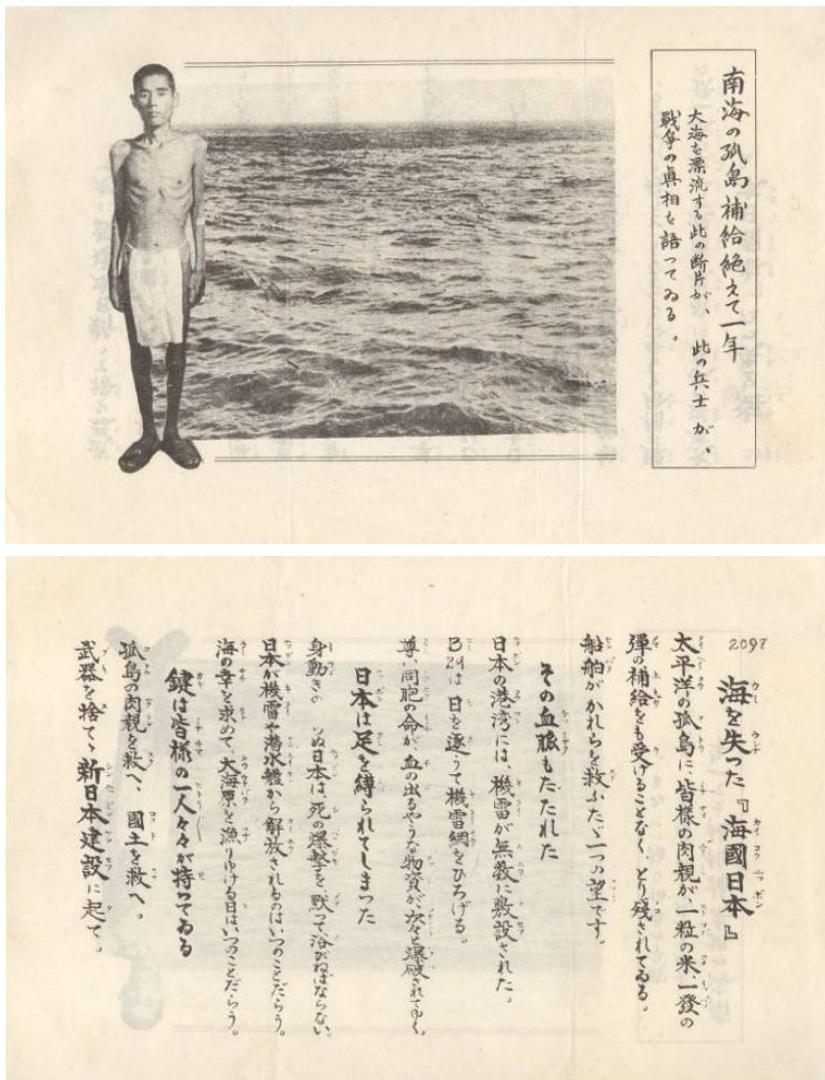
#### *MARITIME JAPAN – WITHOUT SHIPS*

*Your loved ones have been abandoned on isolated Pacific Islands where they do not receive one grain of rice or one round of ammunition. Their single hope is that ships will come to rescue them. Now, that artery, too, has been severed.*

*Numberless mines have been laid in the harbors of Japan. Day after day, the B-29s are extending the network of mines. In rapid succession, the precious lives of your countrymen and raw materials which are the nation's life blood are being blown up.*

*Japan is bound hand and foot. Unable to act, she can only suffer in silence under the present deadly bombardment. When will Japan be released from the network of mines and submarines? When will you be able to roam over the vast ocean in search of the bounty of the sea?*

*Each one of you holds the key to this problem. Save your loved ones on the by-passed islands! Save your native land! Throw down your weapons and come forward to build a new Japan.*



*The second in a series of propaganda leaflets dropped by air by the US Army Air Force onto Japan as part of Operation Starvation.*

## GEORGE, MY WAR HERO

*English Translation:*

### *VANISHING TREASURE SHIPS*

*One of the excuses the militarists gave you for beginning this war was that it was essential to ensure the supply of food from overseas. And so you have been at war for many years. Now, however, the militarists are saying that your food supplies have sunk to an unprecedented low, and that, in the future, food rations will become smaller and smaller. The militarists are, however, concealing the fact that their blunders are sacrificing the people of Japan.*

*What happened to the ships which in peacetime transported provisions to Japan? Many ships carrying war materials have been sunk by American submarines and planes. Moreover, the B-29s have laid mines in the various harbors and coastal waters. A new threat to shipping has thus been added.*

*How long will you allow the militarists wantonly to drive the people of Japan to starvation?*



*The third in a series of propaganda leaflets dropped by air by the US Army Air Force onto Japan as part of Operation Starvation.*

## GEORGE, MY WAR HERO

*English Translation:*

### MINEFIELDS OF DEATH

*Your harbors and waterways are full of mines. Trying to clear these minefields is like trying to dry up the ocean with a cup. You remove one mine and, immediately, the B-29s come to lay new ones.*

*The minefields simply cannot be cleared, and militarists best know why. Yet they have to supply their war plants with iron and coal, so they recklessly order ships through the mined areas.*

*Because of this insane policy, the vessels which are essential to the Japan of the future are being sunk by mines daily in increasing numbers. If this continues, Japan will soon have no ships left.*

*The militarists are sacrificing Japan's future. How long will you permit their reckless actions to continue?*

## TRUDY GROSSMAN

One day, there was a party at the officer's club. The party was being held in honor of some important officers that were visiting the base. George was in attendance, and as he mingled with the crowd, he saw a man across the room who looked very familiar. However, he couldn't quite put his finger on where he had seen him before. To quell his curiosity, George asked a fellow officer at the club if he knew who the man was. The officer told George that it was the famous actor, Henry Fonda. His appearance was not that of a movie star though. He had a shaved head and was wearing a Navy uniform as he was serving as a Navy officer.

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In July 1945, George received a letter of commendation from General LeMay that was presented to him by Colonel Blanchard. In it, he stated his appreciation and respect for George and the men of XXI Bomber Command working on Operation Starvation. He paid tribute to George's conscientiousness, determination and loyalty in his service. When Colonel Blanchard presented George the commendation, he mentioned that very few people on General LeMay's staff received such letters and he should be proud to be part of this select group of people.

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Overall, Operation Starvation lasted four-and-a-half months. The XXI Bomber Command laid approximately 12,000 mines over the entire operation, making it the largest aerial mining campaign in history. Around 1,500 aircraft were used, constituting just 6% of the XXI Bomber Command's fleet and of which 15 were lost in action.

The mines had their intended effect of blockading cargo shipping in the Inland Sea. Aerial photo reconnaissance showed that the Shimonoseki Straits and major Japanese ports were virtually closed off. When the mines didn't create a complete blockade, they at the very least inhibited the movement of ships. The need for mine-sweeping led to delays in the delivery of supplies. The mines also led to the sinking and damage of several Japanese ships as an inadvertent by-product of the operation. Since the mines were difficult to sweep out, they were able to sink or damage approximately 700 ships carrying a total of 1,250,000 tons in supplies. The total tonnage of supplies passing through the Shimonoseki Straits and arriving at the major Japanese ports

## GEORGE, MY WAR HERO

dropped drastically to below-critical levels during the months of the operation. Japan was being deprived of food for its population and raw materials for its industry.

Results of Operation Starvation were also evidenced by radio propaganda the Japanese government broadcast to its people. Since the shortage of food was being felt by the Japanese population, its government aired propaganda to promote measures for maintaining food supplies and to discredit the effect of US aerial mining. The US military was monitoring Japanese airwaves and caught a broadcast in July 1945 regarding the food situation with the following translated excerpts:

*"...Everyone of the people of Japan must contribute to the production of food by launching a national movement for each person's cultivating one tsubo (a Japanese unit of measure for area equal to roughly 35 square feet) each month which is a very simple proposal..."*

*"...It is about time that the true formidableness of the people of Japan should be manifested with regards to the food question. The ideas of enemy America on this point are very interesting. They are saying such things as 'Let's blockade Japan from the sea and when supplying from the outside becomes impossible for her, a food famine will result in Japan'. For this reason, it seems that they occasionally drop mines or carry out some ridiculous plans. This is truly a funny story..."*

*"...Such a thing as self-sufficiency in food within the nation can easily be brought about if we change our ways of thinking a little and working a little harder. The war situation is becoming more pressing daily. The homeland of Japan has become a battlefield..."*

*"...At this moment, a cut in distribution of staple food by 10% was announced unexpectedly. As a result, we people of the nation in general felt keenly more than ever about ensuring measures for food self-sufficiency..."*

*"...I believe that the food question has hit the bottom now. At the same time, if we change our ways of thinking a little and hold out with a more serious way of thinking, this food problem will be solved easily..."*

Towards the end of Operation Starvation, Admiral Nimitz once again recognized the importance of the aerial mining campaign. On August 2, 1945, he stated:

*"The continued effectiveness of Twentieth Air Force mining is a source of gratification. The planning, operational and technical execution of aircraft*

## TRUDY GROSSMAN

*mining on a scale never before attained has accomplished phenomenal results and is a credit to all concerned.*

*- Admiral Chester Nimitz"*

After the war, the efficacy of aerial mining was brought further to light. The Naval Analysis Division's US Strategic Bombing Survey listed Operation Starvation as *"among the most significant contributions of Army Air Force in the strategic war against merchant shipping"*. The survey went on to say that *"mine laying has been the most economical in both men and material of all types of warfare against shipping."*

Several Japanese sources also credited Operation Starvation's effectiveness.

In October 1945, Japan's former Prime Minister, Prince Fumimaro Konoye, gave equal credence to B-29 attacks on Japanese ships and B-29 mining of the Japanese seas and ports for attacks against its industry.

On behalf of all Japanese mine experts, Captain Kyugo Tamura, a Japanese mine-sweeping officer, provided the following assessment at a US Strategic Bombing Survey conference:

*"We agree that the mine warfare conducted by American planes during the greater East Asia War produced a very great strategical effect... When B-29s began to use Saipan as a base for mine warfare against our main islands, they first interrupted communications in the Inland Sea area and then by closing the Japan Sea ports, they cut our communications and our food and raw material artery to the continent. The mine warfare coupled with the bombing raids prevented our utilizing our war strength and completely nullified our plans to the extent of forcing us to abandon them... It was indeed a far-sighted policy."*

He further added:

*"The result of B-29 mining was so effective against the shipping that it eventually starved the country. I think you probably could have shortened the war by beginning earlier."*

Takashi Komatsu, who at the time was the managing director of Nippon Steel Tube Company in Tokyo, said:

*"It was not only the bombing of factories that defeated us; it was the blockade that deprived us of essential raw materials - aluminum and coal."*

## GEORGE, MY WAR HERO

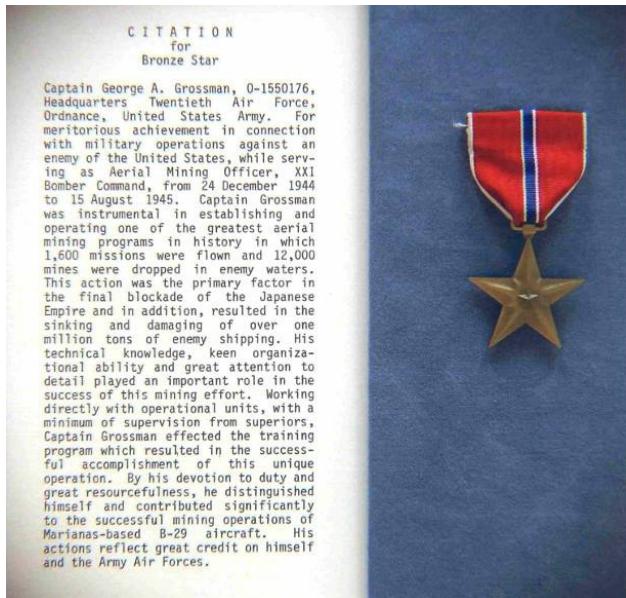
Hisanobu Terai, who at the time was the president of Japan's largest shipping company, NYK Shipping Company, also blamed food and raw material shortages for the defeat. He further added that in the war's last months, *"the proportions of shipping sunk were 1 by sub, 6 by bombs, 12 by mines."*

By all accounts, Operation Starvation was considered a success.

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George and several men at XXI Bomber Command were awarded Bronze Star Medals for their service in the Pacific. The Bronze Star medal is a military decoration awarded for bravery, acts of merit or meritorious service. George was credited for his meritorious achievement as an Aerial Mining Officer in the Marianas from December 1944 to August 1945, establishing the training program which led to the success of Operation Starvation.

TRUDY GROSSMAN



The Bronze Star awarded to George for his service at XXI Bomber Command in the Marianas as an Aerial Mining Officer for Operation Starvation during WWII.



George's Certificate for his Bronze Star.

GEORGE, MY WAR HERO

On Tinian, where the 313th Bombardment Wing that carried out Operation Starvation was based, there was a large, cordoned off space on one part of the island being used by the Army. However, almost no one knew what it was being used for. A few people high in rank like General LeMay knew, but they were tight-lipped on the subject. Since it was so secretive, everyone suspected that this base was very important and conjectured the significance of it. Only after they were dropped was it revealed that the secret base was where the first atom bombs were assembled.

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On August 24, 1945, George gave a radio interview with an Army Air Force combat reporter about Operation Starvation. He briefly outlined the details of the aerial mining campaign and the favorable results it brought:

*AAF COMBAT REPORTER: This is your AAF combat reporter, Sergeant Dave Scofield, on Guam. At our wire recording microphone is a man who was secretly awarded the Legion of Merit for outstanding service. He, together with Commander Ellis A. Johnson, United States Naval Reserve, is chiefly responsible for the successful blockade of the Japanese Empire through the use of aerial mines. He is Captain George A. Grossman of Lakewood, Ohio, Army Mining Officer for the Twentieth Air Force. Captain Grossman, how did you happen to get into mine work?*

*GEORGE: Aerial mines interested me. I had loads of faith in their possibilities and tried to sell the idea to the Army Air Forces at the Army Air Forces School of Applied Tactics in Orlando, Florida.*

*AAF COMBAT REPORTER: How did you go about it?*

*GEORGE: I taught staff officers and B-29 crew some of the theory about mines.*

*AAF COMBAT REPORTER: And how did they take it?*

TRUDY GROSSMAN

GEORGE: *Well, it was a pretty rough deal in the early days. They kidded me a lot and kept asking me when I was going to win the war with aerial mines.*

AAF COMBAT REPORTER: *Captain, how did you get the Twentieth Air Force interested in your ideas?*

GEORGE: *Many of the staff officers and all of the group cadres had learned about mines at the Air Forces School of Applied Tactics. Headquarters, Army Air Forces, then sent me to Colorado Springs for a month to indoctrinate the rest of the Twentieth Air Force staff, then the XXI Bomber Command. The commanding general was sufficiently interested to permit me to join his staff in the Marianas last December.*

AAF COMBAT REPORTER: *In December, I thought mining operations began late in March?*

GEORGE: *They did, but after all, three months to lay plans and then train the entire 313th Bombardment Wing was none to long to prepare for the largest aerial mining operation in history.*

AAF COMBAT REPORTER: *What is the general method of sowing these mines?*

GEORGE: *The mines are dropped during the night by means of radar from aircraft flying at low altitudes. A parachute eases them into the water. They sink to the bottom and are fired by the influence of a ship passing overhead. Our purpose was blockade, but as a by-product, it was estimated that the mines sank or damaged over a million tons of enemy shipping.*

AAF COMBAT REPORTER: *A million tons, so it's no wonder the Japanese skippers were getting mighty jittery. Say, I understand your work was divided into phases.*

## GEORGE, MY WAR HERO

GEORGE: Yes, the first phase was in the support of the Okinawa campaign. Our job was to neutralize the enemy fleet so it couldn't join in the action.

AAF COMBAT REPORTER: I recall too, Captain, that this phase forced the big Japanese battleship, the Yamato, out in the open, where it was cold meat for our Navy.

GEORGE: That's right. The intermediate phases were concerned with mining harbors and isolating industrial zones within Japan, and finally cutting off Japan from the mainland harbors of China and Korea. Some of the missions to Korea came within 30 miles of Russia. They were the longest flown by Marianas-based aircraft.

AAF COMBAT REPORTER: By that time, they didn't have many facilities left, did they?

GEORGE: No. It was the first time in history that air power had inflicted a complete blockade on a maritime nation.

AAF COMBAT REPORTER: I understand too that Admiral Nitimz sent a commendation to the Twentieth Air Force saying "the results were phenomenal".

GEORGE: Yes, he did.

AAF COMBAT REPORTER: Captain Grossman, you were awarded the Legion of Merit in February for your mine work, but I was told it was kept quiet. Why was that?

GEORGE: At that time, it concerned future plans.

AAF COMBAT REPORTER: For what specific service was the award given?

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*GEORGE: Well, it was merely for the work I'd done in '43 and '44 in helping to sell the project to the Army.*

*AAF COMBAT REPORTER: That's a modest way of putting it, yes, but uh, one more question, Captain. Now that the war is over and Japan's harbors and straits are covered with mines, what happens now?*

*GEORGE: All I can say is that it's going to be the biggest minesweeping job in history.*

*AAF COMBAT REPORTER: I see what you mean. Thank you Captain George A. Grossman. When your friends in Orlando kidded you about winning the war with your mines, little did they dream how close to that Utopian ideal you would some day come. This is your AAF combat reporter returning you to the United States.*

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There were also a few articles that reported about Operation Starvation in newspapers and magazines, such as the New York Times and the Washington Post, towards the end of the war.

GEORGE, MY WAR HERO



New York Times and Washington Post news articles about Operation Starvation reported in 1945.

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On August 15, 1945, Japan announced its surrender to the Allied forces. With Germany having already surrendered on May 8, 1945, this marked the end of WWII. The day was named Victory over Japan Day, or V-J Day. Germany's earlier surrender was named Victory in Europe Day, or V-E Day.

Everyone in the XXI Bomber Command was happy with the news that peace had been declared. The next day, several of George's colleagues on General LeMay's staff, about fifteen or so officers, had planned to take a flight over Japan. Many of them were pilots but they had not been allowed to fly the entire time they had been in the Pacific. As officers on General LeMay's staff, they played critical roles in ensuring the smooth, successful operation of the XXI Bomber Command. Therefore, letting them fly in hostile airspace and putting their lives in danger posed too much of a risk. However, now that the war was over, this restriction didn't apply anymore.

George was asked by his fellow staff officers if he wanted to go on the flight over Japan with them. While he would have liked to go, he was too busy finishing up paperwork related to Operation Starvation so he declined the invitation. This decision ended up saving his life. George's colleagues got on a plane and took off from the base in Saipan, heading towards Japan. However, shortly after take off, the plane crashed and tragically, all men on board were killed.

The officers that died in the plane crash were men that George worked with and befriended during his time overseas. The incident had shaken him, especially considering he could very well have been on the plane himself had he accepted their invitation. A lot of WWII veterans made several friends while fighting the war and they remained good friends with each other after returning home to the United States. However, George had only a few fellow veterans he stayed in touch with since a majority of them were lost in this fateful event.

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Now that the war and Operation Starvation were over, George was scheduled to come back home in September 1945. George had arrived in the Marianas a Captain. While the duties he was fulfilling for Operation Starvation were comparable to that of a Colonel, he

## GEORGE, MY WAR HERO

remained the rank of Captain his entire time there. General LeMay remained true to his earlier promise. He did not promote any staff members at XXI Bomber Command Headquarters because he only considered positions in combat to be deserving of promotion. This did not bother George since General LeMay's policy was being applied fairly to all members of the staff.

However, the war had now ended and General LeMay had left the Marianas to assess the bombing damage in Japan. Lieutenant General Nathan Twining was the new man in charge of XXI Bomber Command and the no-promotion policy was no longer in effect. So everyday, a new officer from Washington, D.C., with a rank of Major would arrive at the base, get promoted to Lieutenant Colonel and leave the next day. This hurt George's pride because these officers were coming in straight from Washington, not having served diligently in the Marianas as he had, and were using his deserved position of Major to get promoted.

Just before he was about to fly back home and with no promotion in hand, George summed up his courage and went to Lieutenant General Twining's office. He told the general about the new officers that were just coming in overnight and getting promotions ahead of him. With respectful vigor, George told the general that he believed this was unfair considering he had worked hard during the last nine months in the Marianas contributing to the success of Operation Starvation. George presented written evidence of his involvement in Operation Starvation to back up his claims, including his Legion of Merit, Bronze Star Medal, three battle stars and the letter of commendation from General LeMay. He also added, "What will my family and friends think of me when I return home, serving all this time here and not having a promotion to show for it?"

After a short pause, Lieutenant General Twining looked at George directly into his eyes and said to him sternly, "Grossman, go to your quarters and stay there until you hear from me." George worriedly went to his room, not knowing what was going to happen. He was afraid he might have angered Lieutenant General Twining and was going to be reprimanded as a result.

In a few hours, he was called back to the general's office. There, he was presented an order for his promotion from Captain to Major

## TRUDY GROSSMAN

and travel orders to return home on the first available flight. This brought George great joy and relief. When George told his buddies at the base about what just happened, one of them said, "George, even though you deserved the promotion, it took a helluva guts to do what you just did. In fact, you ought to be awarded a fourth battle star for it!"

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| <i>Insignia</i>                                                                     | <i>Title</i>               |                                                                                                      |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|    | O-1:<br>Second Lieutenant  | George's starting rank when he graduated from Ordnance Officer Candidate School in Maryland.         |
|    | O-2:<br>First Lieutenant   | George was promoted to First Lieutenant while he was at AAFSAT.                                      |
|    | O-3:<br>Captain            | George was promoted to Captain while he was at AAFSAT, a few months before leaving for the Marianas. |
|    | O-4:<br>Major              | George was promoted to Major in the Marianas at the end of WWII, just before returning home.         |
|    | O-5:<br>Lieutenant Colonel |                                                                                                      |
|   | O-6:<br>Colonel            |                                                                                                      |
|  | O-7:<br>Brigadier General  |                                                                                                      |
|  | O-8:<br>Major General      |                                                                                                      |
|  | O-9:<br>Lieutenant General |                                                                                                      |
|  | O-10:<br>General           |                                                                                                      |

*United States Army Officer ranks.*

TRUDY GROSSMAN

ARMY AIR FORCES

# Certificate of Appreciation

FOR WAR SERVICE



TO

GEORGE A. GROSSMAN

**G**CANNOT meet you personally to thank you for a job well done; nor can I hope to put in written words the great hope I have for your success in future life.

Together we built the striking force that swept the Luftwaffe from the skies and broke the German power to resist. The total might of that striking force was then unleashed upon the Japanese. Although you no longer play an active military part, the contribution you made to the Air Forces was essential in making us the greatest team in the world.

The ties that bound us under stress of combat must not be broken in peacetime. Together we share the responsibility for guarding our country in the air. We who stay will never forget the part you have played while in uniform. We know you will continue to play a comparable role as a civilian. As our ways part, let me wish you God speed and the best of luck on your road in life. Our gratitude and respect go with you.

COMMANDING GENERAL  
ARMY AIR FORCES



*George's Certificates of Appreciation for his service in the Army Air Force.*

## GEORGE, MY WAR HERO



GEORGE A. GROSSMAN

*To you who answered the call of your country and served in its Armed Forces to bring about the total defeat of the enemy, I extend the heartfelt thanks of a grateful Nation. As one of the Nation's finest, you undertook the most severe task one can be called upon to perform. Because you demonstrated the fortitude, resourcefulness and calm judgment necessary to carry out that task, we now look to you for leadership and example in further exalting our country in peace.*

THE WHITE HOUSE

*A thank you letter from the White House given to George after the war for his service.*

| WORLD WAR II CASUALTIES |                        |                        |                     |
|-------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|---------------------|
|                         | <i>Military Deaths</i> | <i>Civilian Deaths</i> | <i>Total Deaths</i> |
| <i>United States</i>    | 416,800                | 1,700                  | 418,500             |
| <i>Japan</i>            | 2,120,000              | 580,000                | 2,700,000           |

| UNITED STATES CASUALTIES OF WAR         |                      |                     |                     |
|-----------------------------------------|----------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
|                                         | <i>Combat Deaths</i> | <i>Other Deaths</i> | <i>Total Deaths</i> |
| <i>US Revolutionary War (1775-1783)</i> | 8,000                | 17,000              | 25,000              |
| <i>War of 1812 (1812-1815)</i>          | 2,260                | ~17,000             | ~20,000             |
| <i>Mexican-US War (1846-1848)</i>       | 1,733                | 11,550              | 13,283              |
| <i>Civil War (1861-1865)</i>            | 212,938              | -                   | ~625,000            |
| <i>World War I (1917-1918)</i>          | 53,402               | 63,114              | 116,516             |
| <i>World War II (1941-1945)</i>         | 292,131              | 124,669             | 416,800             |
| <i>Korean War (1950-1953)</i>           | 30,880               | 2,806               | 36,516              |
| <i>Vietnam War (1957-1973)</i>          | 47,424               | 10,785              | 58,209              |

*“War does not determine who is right - only who is left.”*

Bertrand Russell, British author, mathematician, & philosopher  
(1872 - 1970)

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~CHAPTER 4~

LEAVING THE ARMY

George returned to the United States in September 1945. He first went to Washington, D.C., briefly to report to Army Air Force Headquarters. He then came to Columbus and was reunited with Dick and me after ten long months.

I was so happy and relieved to have him back home with us, alive and well. George was glad to be home too. I wondered if he had changed, having just gone through the war. I was glad to discover he hadn't and he was still my ever-loving, handsome hubby. He had many stories about his experiences overseas that he shared with me and I was very interested to hear them. I was also eager for him to see his son. In the time George was abroad, Dick had grown up a lot. He was now a walking, talking little boy. George was joyous to be with his son and was happily getting acquainted with him again. We were back to being a family and I was thankful that he was home, safe and sound. I was also very proud of his accomplishments during the war, including the awards he earned and his promotion to a rank of Major.

Having just returned from the Pacific, George was on a well-earned ten-day leave which we spent in Ohio with my parents in Columbus and his parents in Lakewood. After his time off, the three of us flew back to Orlando where George had to report to AAFSAT again.

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## TRUDY GROSSMAN

On our flight to Orlando, we carried along Dick's favorite plaything, a wooden toy lawnmower that he loved to push around. I remember him walking down the aisles of the plane with his lawnmower. The toy was quite flimsy and the wheels would come off pretty easily. When this happened during the flight, he'd stop in his tracks and innocently hand it to whoever happened to be in the aisle seat closest to him. Once the kind passenger would fix the wheels back on, Dick would continue to trudge down the aisle. When the wheels came off again, he'd repeat. It was very amusing to see.

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*George and me when he had just returned from the Pacific.*



*Dick with his beloved toy lawnmower.*

## TRUDY GROSSMAN

Once we were in Orlando, George reported to AAFSAT right away. There, he spent the next couple of months writing up a phase analysis of Operation Starvation. While in the Marianas, George was responsible for preparing weekly top-secret status reports on the aerial mining missions. Therefore, he had collected and maintained all the necessary data to document the techniques and lessons learned from their experience in the Pacific. This phase analysis served as a supplement to the training manual George had already put together for AAFSAT before Operation Starvation. As a result, the new aerial mining courses were updated with the latest methods and practices. These documents remained the recommended text for aerial mine warfare training for many years after they were originally published.

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During our second, much shorter stint in Orlando, we stayed with some friends of ours in the area instead of getting a place of our own. One day, while I was in the front yard, I saw a coral colored snake wriggling across the path ahead of me. I stopped dead in my tracks as the snake kept moving along. "Is this the very poisonous coral snake?" I thought to myself. I ran to the neighbor's house. She was quite a naturalist and would probably have the answer. We both came running back to our front yard. Looking down at it, she couldn't quite tell if it was poisonous or not. She got a long stick with a V-shaped neck, slipped its end around the snake's head and turned it over. She concluded that the snake was not poisonous but she tossed it somewhere far away from the front yard for good measure. "Thank goodness!" I thought. "Dick plays in the front yard all the time. I'm glad we caught this snake before it came across my baby boy!"

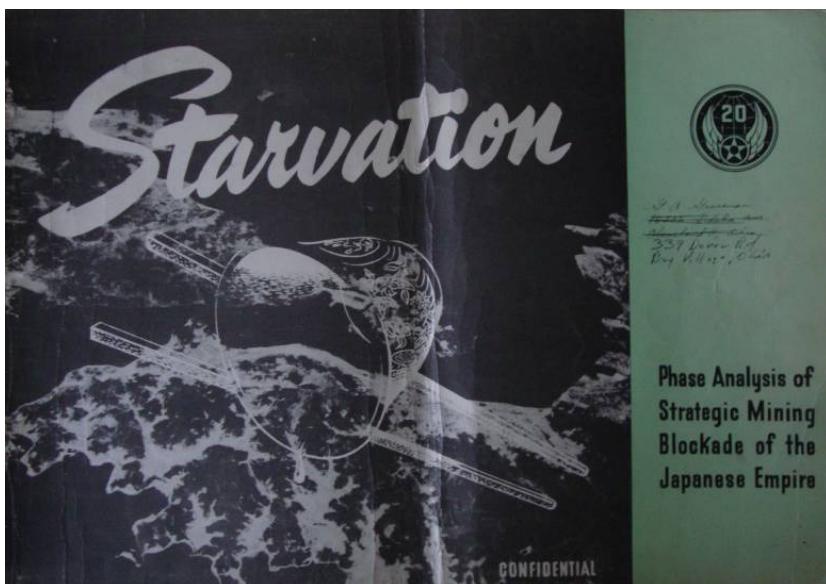
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Once George finished writing the phase analysis of Operation Starvation at AAFSAT, he decided it was now time for him to leave the Army. With the success of Operation Starvation, George was actually guaranteed a good position at the Staff and Command School at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, by General LeMay. However, while George was proud to serve his country, he did not envision himself living the rest of his life as a professional military man. Part of George's reason to leave the army was the politics associated

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with being a career officer. For example, George had to go through great difficulty to receive his deserved promotions during his military career. This experience played a role in his decision to move onto something else.

George left active service in February 1946 and we moved back to Ohio. George remained an Army Reserve officer, working a few days a month at the local office of the Ordnance Department. A few years later, he left the Army Reserves as well.



*Cover page of the Phase Analysis of Operation Starvation that George prepared for AAFSAT after the war.*

GEORGE, MY WAR HERO

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*Army of the United States*

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

*This is to certify that*

GEORGE A GROSSMAN 01 550 176 Major

Headquarters 20th Army Air Force

*honorably served in active Federal Service  
in the Army of the United States from*

17 October 1942

to

7 February 1946

*Given at* SEPARATION CENTER, Camp Atterbury, Indiana

*on the* 7th *day of* February 1946

  
ERNEST A. BIXBY  
Colonel, FA  
Commanding

*George's Certificate of Service that he received upon discharge of active  
Army duty.*

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After George left the army, the two of us continued to have many more adventures throughout our lives together. We raised our family, lived in several places around the United States and traveled to different parts of the world, always at each other's side. Reflecting back on this period of my life remains special, however, as it was during this time I will forever remember George as my war hero.

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~EPILOGUE~

After leaving the army, George and Trudy went back to Ohio and spent the next ten years or so living there. During that time, they grew their family. Dick was followed by three more sons in quick succession: Jim, Bob and Mike.

George began working as a plant manager at a local company and eventually moved into sales. Over his entire career, he worked as a marketing manager at various companies in different industries. These positions were located in Ohio, Michigan, Massachusetts and California, which meant a lot of moving around for the family. George and Trudy eventually settled in the Bay Area in California in the early 1970s and lived there ever since.

George enjoyed studying and valued the importance of education. He considered it a lifelong pursuit and didn't stop with his business degree from OSU. Throughout his life, he took courses and obtained certificates in sales, management, investment, insurance, real estate and engineering. The schools he attended included Stanford, Santa Clara University, San Jose State, University of Illinois, University of Michigan and Michigan State.

Flying was one of George's hobbies. A few years after the war, he learned how to fly a plane and earned a Commercial Pilot's License. He then bought a small airplane and in it, he and Trudy flew to several places around the United States. They also went to a few foreign countries including Cuba (both before and after the Cuban revolution) and the Bahamas. As their sons were born and grew older, they too joined in on the trips. Over time, Trudy also

TRUDY GROSSMAN

learned how to fly and became George's skilled co-pilot. Every so often, they sold their plane and upgraded to a newer, better one. After almost twenty five years of enjoyable experiences flying, George decided it was time to hang up his pilot's hat. They sold off their last plane and didn't buy a new one. However, George and Trudy maintained their love for traveling, visiting various places around the world over their lives.

Around twenty five years after George had gone to the Marianas during WWII, he returned to visit the place where he had served all those years ago. Trudy accompanied him on the trip as well. The journey was organized by the Twentieth Air Force. A group of WWII veterans of the Twentieth Air Force and their families traveled together on this trip. They visited the islands of Guam, Saipan and Tinian. Some of the places they saw in Saipan included Banzai Cliff and the caves where Japanese commanders were stationed before the US took over the island. On Tinian, they visited the US base where the atomic bombs were assembled before being dropped, among other locations. It was interesting for them to visit these sites, especially since there were Japanese tourists along with them at the same time. At those very same spots several years ago, the men of the two nations were fighting against each other in a bloody war. However, the citizens of both countries were now visiting these sites together peacefully and remembering the fallen.

After settling down in California and with her sons all grown up and out of the house, Trudy took up a position at the California Employment Development Department. She worked there for about fifteen years as a career counselor. She enjoyed it there very much as she was glad to assist others in finding jobs and got to meet many diverse, interesting people over the years.

Once they had retired from their professions and were in their seventies, George and Trudy moved into a retirement community in the Bay Area where they lived together happily.

During his latter years, George was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease, which he battled with until his passing. In 2003, George Grossman passed away at the age of 86 from coronary artery disease. In addition to his beloved wife and dear sons, he is survived

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by his grand-children, Gina, Lisa, Kevin, Tanya, Brian and Eugene, and a burgeoning number of great-grand-children.

Trudy continues to live in the same retirement community where she's in the company of many good friends and regularly makes new ones too. Her sons also live near by and visit her often, as do other family members.

Trudy enjoys attending the various events the community plans for its members, including trips, music concerts and speaking lectures, to name a few. She has also established a bit of a reputation for herself as a comedian. When George was suffering from Parkinson's disease, Trudy went through a difficult period trying to cope with her husband's illness. One day, someone told her a joke that made her smile and it lightened up her mood. That gesture inspired her to want to do the same for others, so she has built up a repertoire of jokes to deliver for everyone's amusement. Every once in while when the community holds a lunch or dinner party, she has a small stand-up act for the audience as part of the entertainment.

A few years after George's death, Trudy began experiencing partial loss of vision due to age-related eye disorders. However, this hasn't dampened her indomitable spirit any. She maintains an active, eventful life with a strong *joie de vivre*.

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