

## An Air Forces photographer acts as infantryman, medic and aerial gunner in getting his pictures of the fighting in the Pacific.

By Sgt. LARRY McMANUS  
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**A** CENTRAL PACIFIC BASE—Sgt. Henry B. Krush is a photographer assigned to the Seventh Air Force, and all he wants to do is take pictures. Somehow, though, fate—in the form of Japs—always interferes with the shutter-snapping part of his job and he generally has to shoot his way out with something a little more effective than a camera.

During the Saipan operations, Krush was driven out to Nafutan Point and dropped off near a cave he wanted to photograph. He told the jeep driver to come back in a little while to pick him up and then settled down to take his pictures. The point had been "secured" several days before and Krush was leisurely looking at his exposure meter when three shots came from the cave.

Two of them whistled past but the third scraped along Krush's left arm, went through his breast pocket and tore the lens off the camera hanging on his chest. Krush dropped down and "played dead." He heard the sniper working closer for another try.

Krush took three quick shots at the Jap with his .45, missed completely and then took a little more care and knocked him off with three more shots. Then Krush went back to taking pictures, using another camera.

His 23d birthday came last Jan. 19, and Krush spent it in a rubber raft, tossing around in the Pacific not far from Mille Atoll, southernmost of the Marshalls' eastern chain. The Marshalls at that time were enemy bases and D Day at Kwajalein was still 11 days away.

The *Battling Bitch*, a B-25 whose six-man crew had taken Krush along for the raid on Mille, was at the bottom of the ocean. Five members of the crew were in two rafts. The navigator had gone down with the plane.

"This was a new squadron," Krush recalls, "and the strike on Mille was its first combat. Before the strike, the men were sort of nervous and asked me what raids were like. I told them Mille was a soft touch; the Seventh had been blasting it so much the place was all but knocked out. 'A push-over,' I told them."

It had started off fine, but a Jap patrol plane had sighted the Mitchells many miles from Mille and alerted the atoll.

"The ack-ack over the atoll looked like a wire fence," says Krush. The *Bitch* was hit, but nobody noticed it, and the bombs were dropped okay. Krush knelt by a waist window, thinking happily of the damaged installations and burning planes he had just photographed. Then he saw a stream of oil pour out of the port engine and grow in the slipstream until it was a cone of spray the size of the propeller. The *Bitch* started to climb on one engine and Krush started to think about the parachute he didn't have.

When he had climbed into the *Bitch* at the start of the mission, someone had remembered that no extra chutes were aboard. "Don't worry," he had laughed. "We'll never get enough altitude to use one anyhow."

He was right, at that. The plane leveled off at about 30 feet. They threw overboard everything that was loose—flak vests, ammunition, guns. Someone grabbed for his camera but he held on.

The *Battling Bitch* hit a wave and the whole bottom peeled off. "We were tossed around inside like popcorn," he said. "If we hadn't been wearing helmets, it would have been too bad."

"Next thing I was under water. I kicked and threw my arms around but couldn't find the floor, ceiling or anything solid. Then I felt a guy's fanny in front of me and groping around him caught hold of the edges of a waist window."

As the man ahead of him crawled through the window, the broken fuselage gained buoyancy, and Krush found a narrow space between the surface of the water and the top of the cabin in which to gasp for breath. He and a gunner outside the window pushed and pulled a life raft and an airtight food container out of the plane and Krush followed.



The pilot was the only member of the crew badly hurt. Krush, who had once been a medic, crawled into the pilot's raft to tend his wounds.

They were all seasick. Krush had to brace himself against the wild pitching of the raft as he tried to stanch the flow of blood from the pilot's head. The bandages from the raft's first-aid kit were soaked with salt water. Krush had to stop frequently and vomit—sometimes over the side but occasionally, when the heavy sea threw him off balance, on the injured flyer's legs. The pilot kept asking for the navigator; nobody told him the navigator had gone down.

Even after several hours the men were still seasick and retched repeatedly, dryly and painfully. The tropical sun roasted them. They expected the Japs would show up at any moment. The co-pilot took out a rosary and began to pray. "Every time his fingers moved along the beads," Krush says, "I would say a 'Hail Mary' or an 'Our Father.'"

Six hours later a PBY Catalina flew into sight with an escort of P-39s. "It was wonderful," says Krush. "We laughed, hollered and threw kisses at the planes." The men were brought back to an advanced base and taken immediately to a hospital. Everybody but Krush was kept there by the medical officers. He got out of it by promising to rest for several days in his own tent.

**O**NCE before he had felt ill but avoided sick call because he was afraid of missing a chance to fly. That time he went along on a dusk raid over Maloelap, a strongly defended atoll in the Marshalls.

Krush's plane, as usual, was shot up. It was hit by bullets from Zeros as well as ack-ack. Krush's pilot, an extremely eager beaver, broke formation to strafe the Jap airstrip. He was left behind the flight and Krush had to man a waist gun until the bomber caught up with the formation and the Zeros pulled away. Despite a punc-

tured oil line, the plane managed to hold formation and make a safe landing.

Krush stepped out of the plane with pictures of the sinking of a Jap destroyer and a freighter. He also had a temperature of 102.4 and dengue fever, for which he was hospitalized.

**K**RUSH, whose home is in Jamaica, on Long Island, N. Y., has been on active duty since October 1939. He was a member of a National Guard Field Artillery regiment, then a medic for a while and then an artilleryman again. He reached Hawaii in March 1942 and talked someone into giving him a transfer to the Seventh AAF as a photographer in public relations. He'd fooled around a bit with cameras at home.

For a year he studied with Lt. Hulburt Boroughs of Los Angeles, Calif., and M/Sgt. Clyde A. Henderson of Wichita Falls, Tex. His instructors were assigned to a section later named the Documentary and Combat Photography Unit. It was as a member of this group that Krush made his first trip south in November 1943, while the task forces that were to take the Gilbert Islands were steaming toward their objectives.

His first action, the model for most of those that followed, was, as he says, "screwed from start to finish." It was a B-24 attack on Nauru, a Jap stronghold located about 2,500 miles southwest of Honolulu.

"Our bomb-bay doors stuck and our radio broke down on the way into the target," he said later. "I was with the flight leader, and he circled left to pull out of AA range and to get the doors open. There was no AA yet although we were at 10,000 and it was midafternoon. And on the second run the Japs in the control tower gave us the green light—the signal to land."

The doors wouldn't open and because the radio was out the pilot couldn't tell the other planes in the flight what he was up to. "They kept following us around," says Krush, "probably chuckling and thinking the skipper had doped out some tricky maneuver to baffle the Japs. It did baffle them—for a while."

By the time the bomb-bay doors opened and the lead plane came in for the pay run, the Japs had brushed up on their aircraft recognition and had the bomber's altitude figured out right down to the foot. The flak was thick. One piece hit Krush's range finder and he had to guess on the rest of his photographs. All the Liberators were holed by ack-ack, but they all returned.

Krush's next raid was unique—for him. Nothing happened to him or his plane, and the mission was accomplished effectively and according to plan. The next one, however, made up for it in excitement. His Liberator had hit the target and was heading for home when Krush left his place at a waist window to see what was going on amidship. He found the bomb-bay doors still open and the bombardier standing on the narrow catwalk, struggling with three 100-pound bombs jammed in their racks. The arming fins were spinning wildly in the rush of wind coming through the plane's open belly.

Characteristically, Krush's first thought was to take pictures of the bombardier silhouetted against the ocean 12,000 feet below. When he felt he had enough pictures he crawled down on the catwalk to help. Krush and the bombardier together bent the fins of the bombs so they would stop spinning, then loosened the jam and eased the bombs overboard.

"There must have been Somebody taking care of us that time," says Krush.

Krush is firm in his belief in that Somebody. The men at the B-25 base were assembled for mass one Sunday when the Catholic chaplain told a story of one man in the outfit who, he said, believed he owed his safe return from combat missions to the rabbit's foot he carried.

Everyone in the congregation turned to look at Krush. He fingered the religious medal he wears on a chain around his neck. After mass he stopped to talk to the chaplain.

"I wish you'd tell the fellows," he said, "that you weren't talking about me. It wasn't any rabbit's foot that brought me back. It was God."

Krush was completely serious, for religion to him is a vital, living thing—as much a part of his life as the C and K rations he eats. "Funny thing," he says. "Just before that last flight I got a letter from my mother. She wrote she had a feeling I'd be protected and that she knew that after the war I'd return home safe and sound. She said: 'Miracles do happen.'"

Krush looked deadly serious. "I guess," he said with awe, "they do."



# Waiting War in Panama



**GIs at the Big Ditch have been sweating out enemy attack since Pearl Harbor. They don't expect one now, but they're ready.**

By Sgt. JOHN HAY  
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**P**ANAMA—The war is getting closer to the Japanese mainland and farther away from Panama, but the GIs here still man the guns on the hilltops, pull guard near the locks and turn the searchlights on approaching planes at night.

The Pearl Harbor tension has long since disappeared. Instead of constant alerts, feverish work and nervous waiting, the Yanks in Panama go about the business of keeping their positions in shape, cleaning their guns, getting instruction in camouflage and aircraft recognition, taking orientation courses and going out on jungle problems.

When the men in Panama get a pass to town they can ride in a *chiva*, the local version of the Toonerville Trolley; go to the movies, or drink *cerveza*, the national brew.

The transition from Pearl Harbor days, when Panama expected an attack at any time, to the present period of static defense, has been a tough one to make.

Right after Dec. 7, 1941, Air Forces men streaked to their planes when alerts sounded, infantrymen carried out problems in the jungles at night and ack-ack gunners slept by their guns with their clothes on. During the first two or three days after Pearl Harbor the men in the outposts got no sleep. They were getting ready for the worst that could hit them.

S/Sgt. Leonard Byczynski of Buffalo, N. Y., was a radar maintenance man in those days.

"We used to have alerts any time of the day or night," he says. "The boys were trigger happy, ready to shoot at shadows and full of all kinds of rumors. Enemy carriers and planes were supposed to be headed our way. Once we heard about an enemy sub in a place where it turned out later to be only three feet deep. We were all keyed up. If we were lucky enough to have a movie come to our position, we went with helmets on and clips loaded. We slept and ate outdoors at our posts in all kinds of weather.

"For months after Pearl Harbor we waited and waited for those Japs. We wanted them to come, but we got a let-down instead."

Fighting has not come to Panama. It's still mud, sweat, rain and a good deal of monotony and will continue to be as long as the Canal and its approaches are to be defended.

The Big Ditch remains one of America's most vital targets. It saves 8,000 miles on the

New York-to-San Francisco route around the tip of South America. But the Canal is more than a quick way to shuttle ships and supplies between two oceans. It is a powerful supply and repair base, situated near the U. S. and a focal point of world shipping lanes.

Here's how the defense set-up works. For miles at sea off both coasts, from Central America down to South America, planes are constantly on patrol, looking for subs and watching approaching ships. Around the Canal itself, the hills are covered with antiaircraft positions, searchlight batteries and observation posts.

If an enemy should attack, say with a carrier task force, Panama's defense plans would go into operation while the enemy was still many miles off the coast. Patrol bombers would strike first in an attempt to destroy the enemy vessels. If the enemy carriers launched any planes, they would be met by our interceptors. If enemy forces made a landing, the men manning the Coast Artillery guns and the infantrymen of Panama's Mobile Force would be waiting.

**T**HE GIs in this area began the tremendous work of building up the defenses a year and a half before Pearl Harbor. Plans were drawn, positions were marked for ack-ack and searchlight batteries and observation posts. Then soldiers had to hack their way with bolos through the thick, wet jungle, up mountains and across swamps and rivers. That was only the beginning. After the pioneer work was done, they had to get guns, generators, searchlights, lumber and cement up to the new clearings. Sometimes they could get close with trucks; often they had to haul the stuff in with mules, by boat and on foot.

S/Sgt. Lincoln Marett, an infantryman in the Panama Mobile Force, was in the Engineers in 1940, servicing outposts with supplies and ammunition. "Brother," he says, "in those days the GIs were really sweating, working night and day, getting drenched in the rainy season and baked in the dry. After cutting a swath up through the virgin jungle, some units had a bulldozer to pave the way for the big equipment, but many had to do the whole thing without any help. They hauled their guns and searchlights up those hills any way they could—like getting ropes and tackle and pulling them up. I got around a lot then, and it seemed like the whole Isthmus was just swarming with men working on the defense."

The men were working against time. They had to take in their stride such obstacles as the red, sticky mud, the insects and the malaria, the heat and rain. Very often equipment was unobtainable. They "borrowed" lumber, cement and gravel wherever they could find it. Every position was built entirely by soldier labor. After the guns and searchlights were installed and roads were built, the men set up barracks and mess halls to replace tents and hutments.

When the emplacements and buildings were established, the GIs hauled up the equipment to make them livable. They hiked over the trails with lumber, stoves and kerosene refrigerators. Before they laid pipes and set up their water tanks, they had to carry up their water, too.

Later they cleared the jungle around their outposts and planted patches of corn and potatoes, or bananas and pineapples. Some of the GIs had a few chickens and ducks, and many had dogs, monkeys and *coati-mondis*.

The men of the Mobile Force, who are Panama's infantrymen, are kept busy. Jungle platoons are trained in reconnaissance. They are called upon to go into the interior to check on rumors of enemy activity and they act as "mercy troopers" in rescuing fallen airmen. They have learned how to hack their way through thick jungle growth and how to get through swamps and over mountains where even pack mules give up. Some have been in country where the natives had never seen a white man.

Since Pearl Harbor, they have gone through intensive jungle-combat training. They have applied the lessons of fighting in the Pacific, attacking replicas of Jap pillboxes and crossing streams under fire with full equipment.

Soldiers of the Mobile Force have also been used as guinea pigs for testing equipment. They have marched for days just to see how long it takes to wear the shoes off their feet. Clothing and equipment of all kinds have been given a rough going-over in Panama before being adopted as standard for the combat areas.

The men of the Sixth Air Force have to contend with the unpredictable weather of the Caribbean area. Troop-carrier planes fly to South and Central America day after day, over mountains that throw up treacherous air currents and above impenetrable jungles. Patrol bombers go out on long, boring flights over the ocean. Fighter squadrons practice constantly to take care of an enemy who has never appeared.

The ground crews—mechanics, parachute packers, radio operators, weather control men—are doing their job, too. The air defense of the Canal and the Caribbean is in good order.

**N**o amount of talk about the importance of the Canal will quite cancel the feeling of the defenders of Panama that they are out of the war. They are ready to repel an attack and they are waiting for it, even if it never comes. But the war is not as tangible to them as it is to the men in Europe or the Pacific.

The GIs in Panama may be sweating out the end of the war, but—whether they fully realize it or not—they have helped and are helping to make that end possible. Maybe when the war in Europe is over and more men, ships and guns pour into the Pacific against Japan, the importance of their job will be easier for the GIs in Panama to see.