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Muroc

new camp

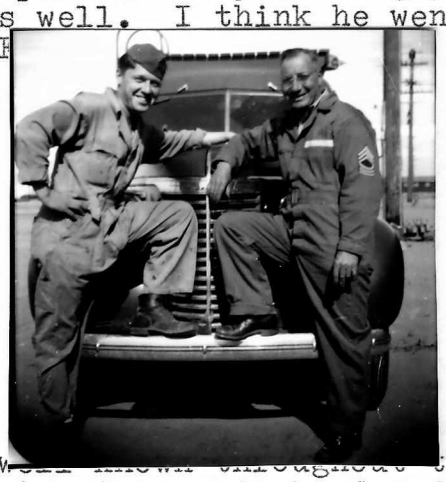
July 1941

Pvt Earl Bishop, Idaho. Bish was a construction man and former miner. He was good with his hands, a good man to have around in any type of work. Yet we always had him on provost duty. The guy knew aircooled engines and variable props as well. I think he went to flight line as AM when transf to Hammer F

15

Muroc

~~Feb~~ May 1942



Ballance and M/Sgt Robert Roth. Bobby was well known throughout the old Air Corps, having carved the Air Corps winged-prop in hardwoods and in varying sizes exhibited inside and outside of innumerable HQs, main gates, EM clubs, NCO clubs and officers clubs, messhalls, what have you, throughout the Air Corps--at least 90% of them--and hav'g spent almost all of his life to date with the air arm of the U.S. Army. Roth was the younger son of a well-known and well-to-do furniture-mfg family in Allentown, PA. They sent him to the Beaux Arts Académie in Paris to learn furniture design when he was a youth. He came back and ran away and joined the Army, returned when his hitch was up, worked in the family business as designer for some time or until the war started in Europe. He promptly reenlisted and was sent to England before we entered the war to gain experience in upkeep, maintenance and repair with the Royal ~~RAF~~ Flying Corps.

In France he was with the 1st Aviation Service Company and was a fabric and dope man as well as a spruce bender. He also worked on engines, armament, etc., and at this time met many pioneer flyers who later became general officers. Severely injured or wounded in France, Bobby returned to the family business after WWI, spent about six wks in Allentown, then headed straight for Mitchell Field, L.I., and the Army, never to return. He had been with the 19th Bomb Gp since it was activated at Rockwell but was deemed either too old or disqualified physically (his old injury plagued him) when the 19th left for the Philippines in October 1941 and left behind at Kirtland Field, N. Mex., sent to pool at March, then joined us in December 1941 after the war commenced. M. Gen Jacob Fickel, GOC, 4th AF, spied M/Sgt Roth at Muroc on a visit, and yelled, "Bobby!" Roth rushed forward, shouting, "General! How are you, my boy?" A benign but very colorful character. It was truly a pleasure...

(BOBBY WEAR'G TECH COVERALLS (from AC 8 UP ACT))

(4)

Muroc
April/May 1942

The pony engine used for shunting on our spurs. I cannot make out the operator, but the man on the cowcatcher is Pvt Ohmar B. Muncey.

(5)

September 1941

1st/Sgt Charles S. Knott. Excellent man. Charlie came to us in June 1941 from, I believe, Hq and Hq Sq, 4th Air Base Group. The 4th AB moved to Kirtland Field, Albuquerque, N.Mex at that time, leaving cadres at March and the new Davis-Monthan Field, Tucson. The 19th Bombardment Gp (Heavy) also moved to Kirtland and left a cadre at Davis-Monthan. The cadres at Davis-Monthan served as nucleus for new air base and bombardment groups, while that left at March became the 32d Air Base GP. Our personnel were simply transferred from 2d Materiél Sq, 4th ABGp, to 44th Materiél Sq, 32d ABGp. I think this might pull up well. Charlie standing outside canteen. Perhaps the pull-up can be cropped into some semblance of compositn.

6

Muroc (new base)
October 1941

L to R, Pvt Sheldon Van Duzer (transf fr Inf), Sgt Herman Lilley (Tex), Pvt George Hillery (Tex), S/Sgt Jimmie E. Brewer (Okla).

Van Duzer is wearing regulation Army denims, with denim cap. These fatigues were made at such places as Leavenworth, Atlanta, McNeill's Island, etc., and while made of superb cloth were utterly formless. No one ever wore this cap unless serving time in the guard house. The favorite head-covering worn with fatigues was the campaign hat, although some wore either khaki or OD flight cap. The campaign hat was the mark of a soldier and while in guard house you were not permitted to wear it, smoke tailor-mades, etc. Everyone had the blue fatigues tailored (what the youngsters would give today for a set of these) into a short fitted jacket and formed trousers with flared bottoms and slashed pockets. Great stuff. Already, however, the Army was phasing these fatigues out and ~~were~~ issuing green herrigbone coveralls, complete with a peaked cap shaped somewhat like the pillbox kepi of the French Foreign Legion. One resembled a Kansas bean-farmer in the latter getup but it was comfortable as hell. Shortly the Army would adopt and issue the alternative two-piece green fatigues, with the saddle pockets, etc. The latter was more adaptable for ground troops in the field and combat.

The Air Corps also had its own Tech Supply where one drew those xlnt flying glasses with the yellow calobar lenses (I think both Brewer and Lilley are wearing them), super Elgin and Waltham watches, flying sheepskins, A2 jackets (leather) and jump suits. They also issued their own fatigues, coveralls in a brownish herringbone and a peaked baseball cap or regular Gatsby cap made of the same material. On the back of the coveralls was stencilled the Air Corps winged prop and the words, "U.S. Air Corps."

Note the variety of getups in the picture. Real GI.

Sheldon Van Duzer, promtd to cpl 1942, beyond that ?
Herman Lilley, promtd to S/Sgt 1941, T/Sgt 1942, apptd Aviation Student 1943, promtd M/Sgt-Pilot 1943, commissioned FO 1943, flew the Hump in CBI for 18 mos. Was captain when last seen by this writer in early 1945.
George Hillery, football player, March Field Flyers, promoted sgt 1942, beyond that ?
Jimmie (christened thusly) E. Brewer, promtd T/Sgt 1942, beyond ?

7

April 1941

(*)

JUST FOUND IT!

This thing is utterly useless--no neg--because Pvt Warren Gardipe, a QMC driver who took the picture moved the camera. I send it along because it indicates what we wore when working in the sun and the degree of latitude allowed in those days. No one around anyway. 1940 census figs. were 275 for Mojave and about 550 for Lancaster. Those sun helmets are Hawley Troppers. We had been laying telephone cable that day by simply tossing off rolls of wire and crossties between Mojave and Muroc. The poles had already been laid out along the right of way and Sgt. Joe Massingill and some of the amateur lineman he had been training in approved U.S. Signal Corps manner. would soon be stringing the line.

L to R, Ballance, unidentified (a corporal who would soon leave with cadre which opened Hammer Field at Fresno), Sgt Charles Atkins (Ala), a very fine fellow who had served in the Coast Arty at Ft. Buchanan, Puerto Rico; Sgt Deke Parsons, Pvt Tommy O'Connell (San Jose, CA) and Joe Gamache, another QMC driver.

8

March 1941

A B-23 and a B-18A on the new ramp at the new base. They were among the first to come in after we occupied new base. I apologize for neg.

(*) After pic taken we went to base for lunch, stopping first at Canteen for a beer. I had a buzz on after the second (dehydrated) and we were all somewhat groggy at mess. Everyone pretended not to notice.

9

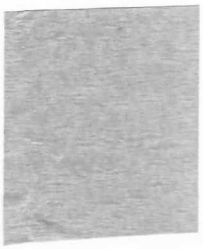
Muroc

Feb c. 1941

Sgt Dutch McKinney, Bakersfield, CA, taken outside the Mojave P.O. Dutch was another old regular who was under thirty. He took a liking to me and sort of mentored me in those days. I think I went on my first boozing foray w/Dutch. When I wanted to go to Randsburg or Red Mountain to see the girls, Dutch drew the line, stating that I should wait until I was eighteen or some such stuff. He was a feisty guy and after he went off to Paine Field I missed him until Sgt Herm Lilley advised me that Dutch had appointed him my new step-father...

I had a nice sportscoat that I was outgrowing and Dutch coveted it. I gave it to him when he got his orders for Paine but he gave me a fiver anyway (I made 21. per mo and Dutch about 45.) and took it to Lancaster to have Herman Gold tailor it for him. Herman brought it out and Dutch modeled it for all at the dayroom. Herman charged him seven bucks to cut it to fit. But it did look good--at least no one would have suspected a total outlay of 12.00 could look so good.

10



L to R, Red Woodruff, mechanic, and Michael J. Martin, driver (both QMC). Enclosed to illustrate the degree of slope from motor pool up to camp proper. The messhall is in center, with garbage rack to right. Extreme left, visible between water-tank supports, is the orderly room. To right is supply room. Red Woodruff good auto mechanic, happy-go-lucky, never promoted at time I left. Mike Martin a special friend. Arbogast had him transferred to AC, made him cpl and sgt, and reluctantly gave him his blessing when Mike went off to gunnery school. Martin more a son to the old man than chauffeur. Mike and I continued to corresponed when he was flying with 13th Air Force in Italy. He hated the B-24s. All did that had to fly in them. I have a friend in SF who crewed in 24s in Italy, a guy named Wes Perasso with whom I worked at Bechtel. At relaxtn time after work at the favorite co. bar, I would often innocently remark anent WWII,

over

the old AF or something, contriving somehow to insert the detested word "monocoque," and Wes would be off and running with a snarl, holding forth for at least an hour, to the delight and edification of our younger engineers and support people. But he got on to me, and I'd egg on a salesman that often called at Bechtel, a guy whom I originally knew as a slim little gung-ho second Lt of a pilot, who now resembles a large medicine-ball of a retired reserve colonel, to innocently do the same thing. Finally Wes caught on to him too. But he still falls. For example, all one has to do is innocently sit next to Wes at the bar, order a drink, and lay down your attache folder newspaper, etc., making sure to place an issue of Flying or some such atop the pile. In time he'll notice it. Shortly we're all hangar-flying again...

As to Mike Martin, a letter of mine was returned in late 1943--no explanation.

11

Muroc
(new base)
c. Oct 1941

Sgt. Herman "Deacon" or "Deke" Parsons, Texahoma, Okla. I encl this to show the special Air Corps chevrons we usually wore when obtainable, although unauthorized. The Air Corps branch device of the winged prop was embroidered just below the chevron on the navy blue background. The wings were olive, the prop white. Deke was perhaps thirty-one yrs of age but had about ten yrs in service at this time. He married a nice little girl from Mojave in Summer 1941 and usually drove home to Mojave in evenings until we could fix up a house for them on reservation.

12

Sgt Keith "Reno" James, Tooele, Utah. I encl to illustrate the distinctive insignia of the 4th AB Gp worn on cap and the old GHQ-Air Force, Army Air Corps, patch (orange disc of the sun w/whirling 3-bladed prop in ultramarine superimposed) worn on L sleeve of the jacket. Jacket was Model-1937 finally issued in 1941 as Model-1941 but called simply "M-1," perhaps the most useful and popular item of clothing issued by U.S.A. to that date. Superseded by M-42 jacket, a heavier and longer model with waist drawstring, in 1943. Latter unpopular and M-1 contd to be worn and issued. The M-2 usually traded off in ETO to Tommies for British reg. battlejacket. Most popular jacket was the tanker jacket worn by U.S. Armored troops. I think some surreptitiously mfd in Engl for sale to U.S. and British troops. The shoulder patch pictured superseded at this time with the new USAAF (the four air forces havg been created) patch, an ultramarine disc with orange winged white star superimposed. The star had red dot in center. Wings often gold or yellow because of poor quality contr at the time. Soon the various air forces created their own version of basic patch--8th AF's most famous--but the original predominant. Air Corps chevrons unobtainable at this time but air crews in England had device embroidered privately. Also wore gold embroidered (on velvet) shoulder patches. Latter cost about twelve bucks U.S.

Reno James good friend. More to come. I have a cropped pullup print and it comes up surprisingly good. James shortly S/Sgt, T/Sgt.

(James WEARING AC-issue flying glasses)

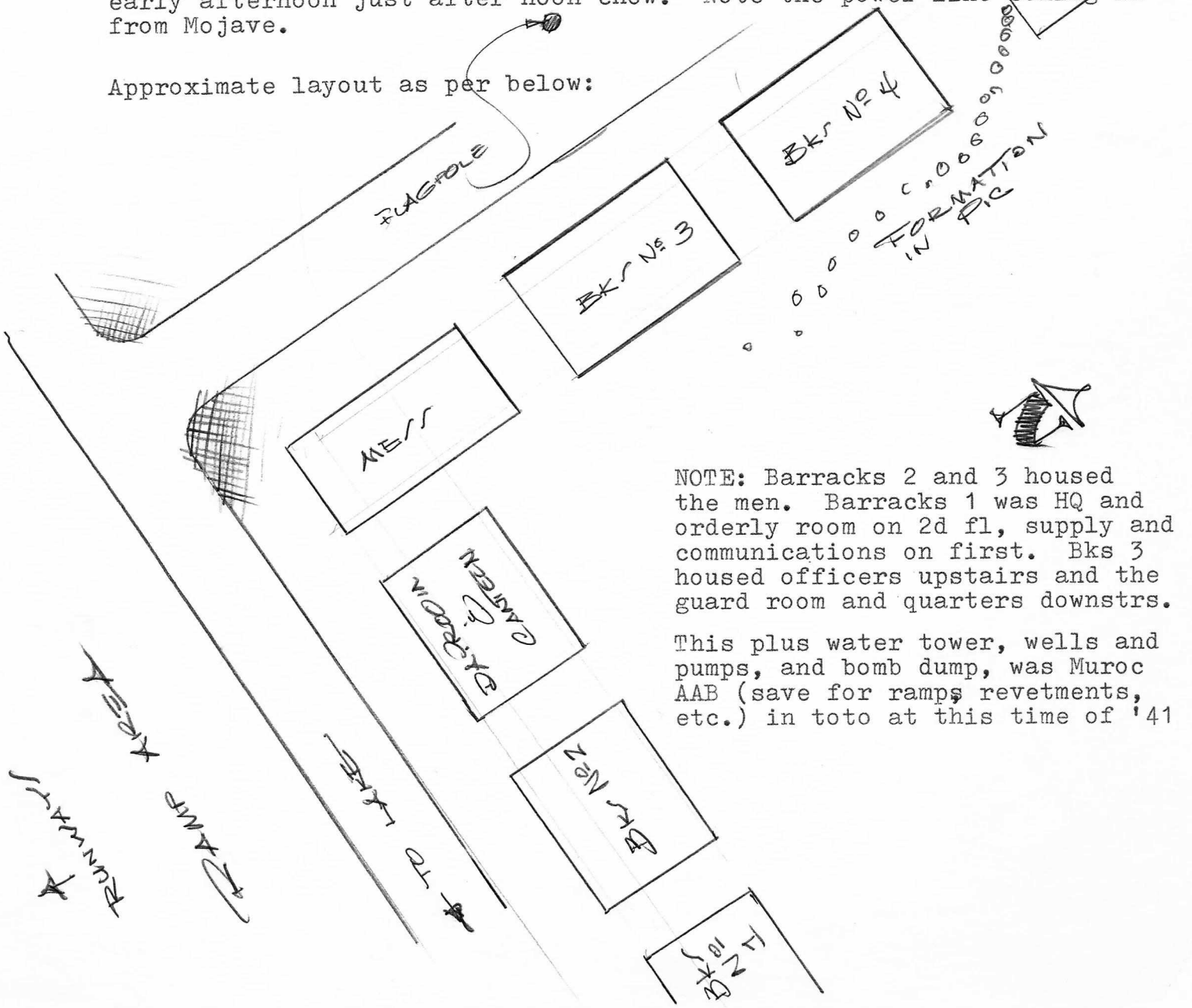
13

Muroc
(new base)

July 1941

Heading for the dispensary in precise milt formation to receive new shots and a series of boosters. The two barracks at left are the west leg of an L, the foot or other leg being south. The west leg, which lay apprx parallel to today's Lancaster Blvd, incl the dispensary, the two visible in pic, and the messhall, the latter simply continuing the west row. The event above took place in the early afternoon just after noon chow. Note the power line coming in from Mojave.

Approximate layout as per below:



NOTE: Barracks 2 and 3 housed the men. Barracks 1 was HQ and orderly room on 2d fl, supply and communications on first. Bks 3 housed officers upstairs and the guard room and quarters downstrs.

This plus water tower, wells and pumps, and bomb dump, was Muroc AAB (save for ramps revetments, etc.) in toto at this time of '41