

I'M IN THE ARMY NOW

By
Col. Whitt N. Schultz

Ace Fighter Pilot

Special to the Highland Park Press

CHANUTE FIELD, ILL.—

"I'm not a hero. I'm just a guy who did my job. And I want to get back and finish it."

Speaking is Maj. Fred J. Christensen, Jr., of Watertown, Mass., eighth ranking ace fighter pilot of the Allied Air Forces.

I had the pleasure of interviewing him this week.

Maj. Christensen was a member of the famous 56th Fighter Group, one of the top fighter outfits to come out of this war. The team has over 800 enemy planes to its credit.

FLIES 107 MISSIONS . . .

Although he doesn't wear them, the 23-year-old officer has been awarded the Silver Star, DFC with six clusters, Air Medal and three clusters, Distinguished unit citation and cluster, European ribbon, and Middle East ribbon with four battle stars. More medals are forthcoming.

Maj. Christensen has 22 planes to his credit and five others that he shot to pieces on the ground. He was overseas 17 and one half months and piled up 107 missions and 302 combat hours.

BLASTS FROM THE SKIES . . .

"Combat is not glamorous. Get that straight. It's rugged and mean. And it's no fun. But I like a good scrap. And you can get into plenty of them with the Jerries," he told me.

His first victory came when his blazing bullets blew up a Nazi ME-110.

"I didn't have a chance to use my gun sight. I just dived right at him and gave him a burst and down he went."

The young ace's second victory can be put in the jackpot class for he knocked down and destroyed a Nazi flight commander who had bagged nine Allied pilots.

His biggest air thrill came, how-

ever, when he blasted six Nazi troop transports out of the skies in two minutes!

PRaise FOR GROUND CREW . . .

"I flew 107 missions and never had mechanical trouble. My ground crew men were tops and I can't praise them enough. We used to work on the plane (a P-47) together. We learned about the speedy ship from each other.

"One day my crew chief said he could get more speed if we waxed the ship. So we waxed it and by doing so jumped the fighter's speed 15 miles an hour.

"Our group was a big, happy family. The pilots used to give parties for the enlisted men in an effort to reward them for their excellent work. We raised them in rank as quickly as we could. My chief was a sergeant when he started to work on my ship. He was a master sergeant when I left.

NEAR FATALITY . . .

"Those fellows used to work 14, 16, 18, and sometimes 20 hours a day getting our ships ready. And they never slept until we came back from a mission. The other pilots and myself used to boast about our crewmen, each believing we had the best," the youthful pilot said with deep sincerity.

He recalled one narrow escape from death . . .

"I saw a German staff car and went after it. But I couldn't get the range because the driver kept turning corners just as I was ready to shoot. Finally it disappeared and I saw a lone Nazi soldier aiming at me with a rifle.

"I smiled and said to myself, 'Look at that guy trying to shoot me down with that thing.' Just about then there was a flash and a bullet whistled by my head. I was almost a goner that time," he concluded.

The "Saps" At Apamama

The conquest of Apamama, that "cluster of lovely islets coiled around a pale green lagoon" about 65 miles south of Tarawa, has been called a model operation in miniature, but only this month was the whole story told in The Leatherneck magazine. A colorful word picture of the spot is given us by Marine Sgt. Frank W. Tolbert, who describes it as "covered by a thick growth of coconut palms, except for the glaring white bands of the airstrips." Then, delightfully: "The green of the fringing coral reefs mingles with the blue and white of the surf, as if a careless artist had thrown color splashes from the beaches."

Philip D. Stokes, Jr., son of the P. D. Stokes, 226 Cary avenue, was commissioned an ensign in the navy and awarded the E.S. in mechanical engineering degree at a convocation at Northwestern university Thursday, Feb. 22.

One hundred sixty degrees and 120 commissions in the navy and marine corps were awarded at this time.

Lt. Edward J. Moroney, pilot of a P-51 Mustang fighter, stationed in England, has been awarded the second and third oak leaf clusters to the air medal. His fighter group has already passed the 600 mark in victories.

The lieutenant's wife and baby daughter, born last month, live with his parents, the Edward J. Moroneys, at 573 Glenview.

Serviceman's Widow Gets Purple Heart

The Purple Heart, posthumously awarded to the late Cpl. Sergio Canarini, lost in Germany last October, was received recently by his widow, Mrs. Lucille Canarini, 130 Prairie, Highwood.

Letters also received from commanding officers, chaplains and comrades of her husband, tell of his cheerfulness, courage and popularity among the men. They also state that his death was quick and merciful, and that his resting place, in a military cemetery in Belgium, is well cared for.

ines were puzzled by the constant rumors drifting in, to the effect that there were no "Saps" left to exterminate. The mystery was finally explained by native observers who had witnessed a mass suicide.

The "Sap" leader, waving his pistol, had howled: "We shall kill all the American Devils!" when his remarks were punctuated by the accidental explosion of his own pistol, inflicting a fatal wound in his abdomen.

What followed in the hysterical "Sap" mind can be only surmised. But on the fourth day after our Marines had landed, all the "Saps" were liquidated, having obligingly dug their own graves and lain down in them before joining their ancestors. Oddly enough, sufficient ammunition remained to have taken heavy toll of the Americans.

Then from the coconut groves came swarming the handsome, indolent young natives to perform a willing part in cleaning up what one Highland Park boy who participated in the campaign refers to, with appropriate adjectives, as a "messy detail." Graceful, golden-

EDW. LENARI APPOINTED CADET SGT. AT ILLINOIS

Pvt. Edward J. Linari of 801 N. Sheridan, has been appointed an acting cadet sergeant in the army specialized training unit at University of Illinois, by Col. Leonard C. Sparks, commanding officer of the 3652nd service unit, Army Service Forces.

The ASTP on the university campus now has 437 men, most of them in the enlisted reserve, and the others advanced men being trained in sanitary engineering. The reserves are youths under 18 who are called away to active service as they reach draft age.

Attention Voters

TOWNSHIP ELECTION — APRIL 3, 1945

You MUST be registered to vote

If you have not registered, do so now at the office of W. W. Steele, 394 Central Avenue, Highland Park

Last Day to register — March 5, 1945

IN THE NATION'S SERVICE

Seven local men were inducted last week by the Selective Service board. For the army there are Arthur Grant and Donald Ronzani of Highland Park; Earl Malizia of Highwood. Navy: Maurice De Bona, Jr., Highland Park, Robert J. Moley, Highwood; William E. Hertel and Paul R. Paggett, Jr., of Deerfield. All are unmarried.

Miss Katherine Weber, Seaman 1/c, (Ma-M), is stationed with the fleet post office in New York City. She received her advanced training in the mail school at Hunters college, Bronx, N. Y.

Miss Weber is a 1941 alumna of the local high school, and prior to joining the WAVES, on Oct. 5, was employed as a bank clerk in Chicago. Her parents are Mr. and Mrs. F. J. Weber, 619 McDaniels.

Wm. L. Winters, Jr., S, 2/c, USN, will shortly complete his training as medical corpsman in the U. S. Naval Hospital corps school at San Diego, Calif. A graduate of the June, 1944, high school graduating class, he is 19, and the son of Dr. and Mrs. Wm. Winters, 188 Laurel.

Mrs. Winters has two brothers, also, in the navy. Lt. Richard R. Parkin is on board ship in the Pacific area, and Lt. Henry Parkin is stationed at Silver Springs, Md., where he has charge of the naval ordnance laboratory, which has been in operation for about a year. They are the sons of Mrs. Harry and the late Judge Harry Parkin, 168 Central.

Pvt. Frank H. Warren, son of Mr. and Mrs. Harry C. Warren Sr., 1547 S. St. Johns, will long remember Nov. 24, 1944—the day after Thanksgiving—for on that day he was aboard a boat that was torpedoed en route to the Philippines from New Guinea. Deciding to trust to his swimming, rather than to the overcrowded lifeboats, he spent a long half-hour in the water before being picked up by a navy boat. All his possessions, including a much-prized Bible, the gift of his father, were lost.

Mrs. Warren, the former Elsie Schadowitz, and their 17-month-old son, Jimmie, whose father left for overseas when he was two months old, live at 631 Vine.

Pvt. Warren has been hospitalized three months of his time in the Pacific area.

Pfc. James J. Kirk, USMC, is now on sea duty in the Pacific area. He is known to have taken

part in the Luzon invasion. His parents are Mr. and Mrs. James J. Kirk, Sr., 360 Orchard lane.

Former Flight Officer John F. Lidicker, son of Mr. and Mrs. John J. Lidicker, 1844 Deerfield road, is now a second lieutenant, serving as co-pilot of a B-26 Maurauder bomber in France.

Lt. Lidicker completed his basic training at Columbia, Miss., in June, 1944, which was followed by transitional training at Lake Charles, La. In the service two years, he is now 21 years of age.

Pfc. Robert F. Walker, with the army signal corps in France, has been transferred from the 7th army to the 3rd army, which is in charge of Gen. Patton. Pfc. Walker joined the service in July, 1943, and was transferred overseas a year ago last December. He is 25, a graduate of Lake Forest academy and Washington and Lee university, and is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Robert F. Walker, Sr., 234 Cary avenue.

The Alfred Bensons, 1412 Pleasant, Ravinia, have two sons who have distinguished themselves in the service. Lt. John, B-26 bomber pilot, overseas for one year, and based in England, has completed 65 missions, and is the possessor of the air medal. He is anticipating an early furlough.

S/Sgt. Robert, with a ground crew in Italy, also overseas for one year, is a member of a squadron which has been awarded three Presidential unit citations for meritorious achievement.

Sgt. Robert Roeber, who entered the service in July, 1943, is spending a 10-day furlough with his wife, Mrs. Sally Roeber, 369 Central. At the end of his furlough he will return to Ft. Meade, Md., where he is serving in a replacement depot.

Sgt. Lyle L. Larson, 22, now two years in the service and overseas since last May, is stationed with a chemical unit in Germany. Twice wounded, he is with an outfit twice cited for meritorious service.

Capt. Alvin, 28, for 18 months with the army medical corps, is serving with the army air corps in Charleston, S. C., as doctor. They are the sons of Mr. and Mrs. Axel R. Larson, 514 Glencoe.

Pvt. Richard Neelly Metzler, son of Maj. and Mrs. T. T. Metzler, 99 Sycamore, has reported to Keeler Field, Biloxi, Miss., to take the

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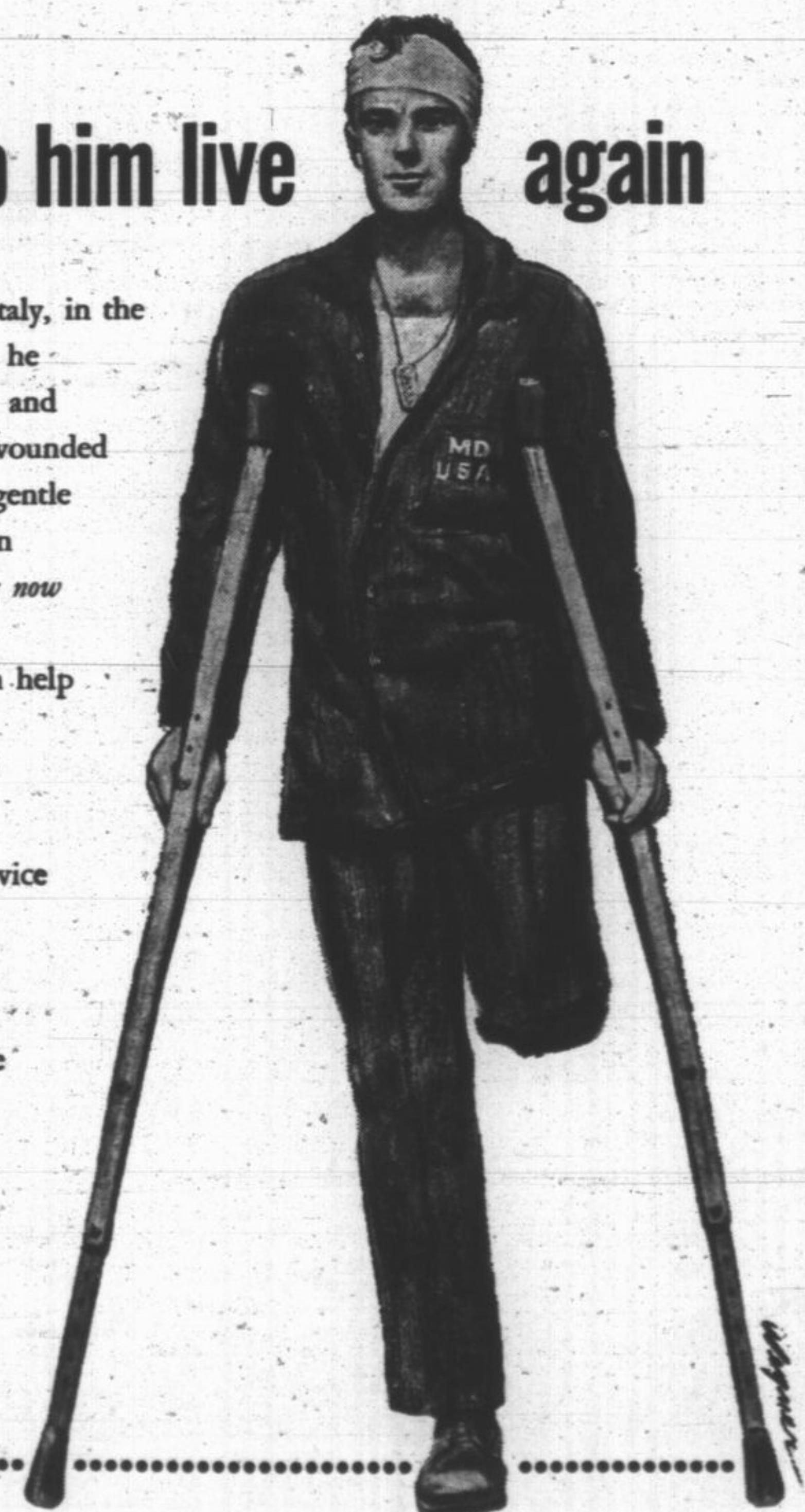
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