

JACK PURDY

BORROWED TIME PILOT

By CARROLL R. ANDERSON

World War Two was well advanced into 1943 and 2nd Lts. John Purdy and C.R. Anderson were both very young and very inexperienced but nevertheless eagerly flying Bell Airacobras in training. "Jack" Purdy was based at Mills Field, south of San Francisco with the 327th Fighter Squadron and "Andy" flew the tricky fighter off of Hamilton Field with the 326th. The two pilots were thrown together later in the 475th Fighter Group, the "Satan's Angels," in the Pacific War. Anderson, who relates the following story, had war experiences tending toward the normal, but as he tells it, Jack Purdy's were not.

Lt. Purdy, after spending sixteen days in the Philippines with a guerilla band, was being interrogated by Group Intelligence, when it was brought out that he had completely washed out four airplanes and was from then on "living on borrowed time."



2nd Lt. John Purdy got to the final phase of fighter training by early 1943 and came to the familiarization course on P-39's, intended to build up hours in a fighter type. Hardly was he reasonably acclimated to the P-39 when one declined to maintain flight over the San Francisco Bay. With the oil pressure dropping disastrously, Purdy headed directly for Mills Field. At eight hundred feet, the airplane shuddered roughly as the engine ground to a halt and the cockpit filled with acrid smoke. The rate of descent of a Bell Airacobra was rapid even when a normal landing approach was made with the Allison engine ticking over at fifteen hundred RPMs, but with no power at all its glide ratio was barely short of catastrophic!

Lt. Purdy, a graduate of the Class of 43-E with a total of 254.3 hours obtained at Oxnard, Gardner Field and at Luke Field had little in his past training to assist him in this moment of travail. To know Jack Purdy is to know what happened next. He is the nemesis of Toastmaster's International. He uses the word "ah-h-h-h-h" as if it were especially designed for his personal vocabulary. He savours the word, using it as a verbal tool upon which to hang the punchline of a joke. He strews it about or programs it into a conversation at strategic moments for purposes of suspense. So it was used this day.

"Ah-h-h-h, Mills Tower. This is P-39 244. I, ah-h-h, have a power failure east and am, ah-h-h-h, heading for the field."

The tower operator acknowledged his predicament, but offered small succor since it was perfectly obvious from his vantage point that the P-39 could not glide to the field, nor could Jack bail out. The Airacobra literally opted for the waters of the bay, and when it had ceased bounding through the waves, it promptly sank, leaving Purdy uninjured and swimming for Mills Field.

This incident was not to end, as contemplated, with a leisurely swim to the adjacent airdrome. A nearby air-sea rescue Catalina, alerted to his involuntary immersion, hove upon the scene with two callow youths in the bow of the boat, frantically waving to Jack to remain in place. Always willing to co-operate and curious to see what would happen next, Purdy nonchalantly floated on his back observing the approach of the PBV.

As he told it a few years later:

"Well, ah-h-h-h, Andy, I was a couple of city blocks from the end of the field, so I figured to swim for it. I didn't have a scratch on me, and I didn't even bother to kick off my shoes.

"This thing is coming toward me, and there were two guys in the nose. The pilot didn't turn off the engines and with the props idling, it was going through the water at a pretty good pace. The guys missed me, so I grabbed a strut as it went by. This, ah-h-h-h-h, thing was going through the water and each wave is pounding me on the back, and I'm stretched out like a surfboard.

"Finally those guys move to a rear blister, and they yell to let go which I do, and they grab me and haul me into the blister, but ah-h-h-h by this time I am beat to hell. I am really beat down. And I was in perfect shape. Before that I didn't have a scratch! They damned near killed me!"

Just before Jack was assigned to the 433rd F.S., the 327th Gunnery Officer posted Purdy's air-to-air shooting score. Jack had hit the sleeve 104 times out of four hundred rounds qualifying him as a sharpshooter. It was his eye for aerial gunnery, plus his courage and determination that would eventually help the lad from Wyandotte, Michigan become an Ace.

Although we were not aware of it, the Fourth Air Force was preparing to transfer us to the 322nd Squadron, 329th

SPRING 1971



2nd Lt. John Purdy

F.G., at Orange County Airport (Calif.) for transition in the Lightning fighter. No sooner had we arrived than Captain (later General) John Landers, a former 49th Fighter Group ace, lectured us on the dire consequences of being caught dogfighting with the Marine Grummans and SBDs from nearby El Toro Field. Naturally enough Purdy went to the attack the very first time he harnessed on a P-38. (So did the rest of the pilots for that matter), and shortly thereafter as he regaled a group of us with his authoritative story of what he had done to "this here, ah-h-h-h-h, Marine Grumman" Fortunately none were caught fighting the Marines, although instructors did not really try hard.

All too soon the exciting transition was ended. Twenty four pilots were assigned to the South Pacific and South West Pacific Area by Special Order No. 39 including Jack Purdy who was assigned to the Fighting Blue Devils, 433rd F.S. It was part of the 475 Fighter Group, later to become known as Satan's Angels. He checked in at the jungle base at Dobadura, New Guinea. In a brief interval, he had flown several missions and had cracked up a P-38 while attempting a tight, formation takeoff on the wing of Lt. Don Revenaugh. This inauspicious start with the squadron was no fault of his own, for unknown to him an aborted P-38 was half-on and half-off the Marston Strip at about the point where his Lockheed would become airborne. Jack saw the stranded P-38 just in time to stall over it. Unfortunately, the right wing tip of the Lightning ticked the propeller of the grounded fighter and once again on the mat, Purdy guided his wounded P-38 into the stumps in the runoff area at the end of the mat. As he put it much later,

"When it, ah-h-h-h-h, stopped skidding and stood straight down on its nose, I, ah-h-h-h, got out - kicking off the switches with my boots as I went over the side. I ran like hell!"

Purdy always was an operator. Shortly he was calling everyone by their first names, including Captain Warren R. Lewis, CO. of the 433rd, whom he referred to as Louie. He was sporting fleece-lined, Australian flying boots - strictly non-regulation, and the first thing he yelled at me, was:

"Hey Andy! You in this outfit? Its the best damned squadron over here, and wait until you meet Louie, our CO."

Not being used to such informality, the thought of calling the CO. "Louie" was a little too much, but he was right: it was the best damned outfit in General Kenney's 5th Air Force!

When examined today, Purdy's flight log is a grim reminder that while he laughed and joked his way through a war in the skies over New Guinea and the Philippines, it was a desperate time. He flew over every major Japanese base in the South West Pacific Area with the exception of Rabaul. New Britain, which had been immobilized only shortly before he came into the theatre of operations.

Though Purdy went to Wewak, Alexishafen, Hansa Bay, Kavieng, the Admiralty Islands, Tadj and Hollandia, it was not until his 63rd mission that he scored his first victory. Flying P-38J-10 Lightnings off Hollandia airbase at the foot of Mt. Cyclops in Dutch New Guinea on 16 May 1944 Jack, as a part of sixteen P-38s escorting Liberators into the Noemfor Island area, sighted several Oscars scampering low over Geelvinck Bay.

Major Lewis led the squadron down in a diving rush at the enemy, firing at one of them head-on. It burst into flames, faltered, then exploded. Purdy, keeping his speed, closed rapidly on a fleeing Oscar. He leaned into his gunsight and touched the gun button for one short burst. Strikes flashed along the fuselage of the Oscar. Carefully he sighted once more in the brief moment before over running the enemy plane. The guns rumbled a second short burst, and the Japanese fighter spewed smoke and flames as it splattered through the water. Purdy buzzed Hollandia Drome with an exuberant aileron roll at the end of his peel off demanding that all on the ground pay homage. After five months of combat through New Guinea storms, dozens of dangerous flights over the impenetrable jungle and across the far flung seas of the South West Pacific, Jack finally was on the squadron scoreboard. He was grinning when he taxied in, holding up one finger to denote to everyone the success of his combat.

Life was difficult during the first days at Hollandia where we lived precariously on the side of a kunai grass plateau near the infantry perimeter. The infantry shot wild pigs

during the night, which was emotionally disturbing, because we had no way of knowing whether or not the enemy had broken through. On one occasion during an especially dark night, the infantry permitted an unfortunate, starving Japanese soldier through the perimeter into our group area. To the excited shouts from a thoroughly frightened fighter pilot, "Who are you? Get the hell out of here!!" we awakened to a very real feeling of terror. The soldier managed to run through the entire group to safety, but Jack slept with his .45 automatic under his pillow after that, as did all the rest of us. Had there been another alert we would have in all probability shot each other.

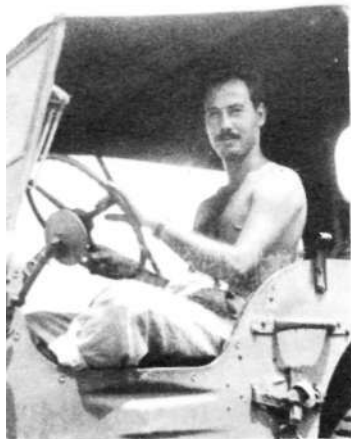
Purdy flew another 48 frustrating missions before again scoring a victory. The 475th Fighter Group had moved forward from Biak Island to Leyte into a quagmire of mud, malaria and trouble.

The three squadrons were recipients of Japanese strafing and bombing attacks day and night. Bad as it was, the living conditions were even worse. It rained day after day, and the entire area became a quagmire. Trucks mired in it. Jeeps became immobilized. The short distance to the fighter strip took an indeterminable length of time, and everyone from the lowest rank to Col. Charles MacDonald, the Group CO., swore at an impossible situation steadily growing worse. The cockpit of Purdy's P-38 received mud from his and his line crew's boots and no matter how strenuously his crewchief struggled to keep it clean, he failed. Everytime Purdy slow rolled, a line of dried dirt arranged itself on the top of the canopy.

The Marston airstrip at Dulag was short, and the runoff areas at both ends were non-existent. P-38s skidded off the mat runway onto the muddy shoulders where they cracked up. The attrition rate of aircraft in operational accidents was especially high, so much so it became necessary to send some of the "old pros" back to Finschafen to ferry new P-38s to Leyte piloted by new "yardbird" pilots fresh from the states. Purdy found himself assigned to this unenviable task. Although completely aware of the importance of the job, he chafed at his inability to fight in the Philippines. While the group was beginning to score heavily against the Japanese, Jack made two round trips to New Guinea and was out of combat for approximately two weeks. Finally, the duty was ended.

The 5th of December 1944 was overcast with the threat of more rain, but by the time afternoon rolled around and Jack led his flight of P-38s down the strip and into the air from Dulag, the skies were relatively clear. Purdy was leading a fighter sweep over the West coast of Leyte.

Maj. William R. Lewis, CO. of 433rd F.S. at Biak Island, in jeep. His P-38J-15-10, with blue spinners, two blue bands around fuselage rear and red and white rudder stripes, was photographed at Nedzab, Markham Valley, New Guinea. His score at this time showed nine on the side of his cockpit.



At 1710 Purdy picked out the dark colored forms of six Val dive-bombers for a brief moment as they were silhouetted against cloud cover near Cebu Town, Cebu Island. Within a matter of seconds belly tanks were tumbling away from the Lightnings and the battle was joined.

In Cebu City, children stopped their play in the muddy streets and looked to the sky.

There had been little aerial fighting over Cebu City. Now the long oppressed Filipinos cheered as the P-38s went after the Japanese bombers. It was the first clearcut evidence that the Americans were coming closer and that the liberation of Cebu was imminent.

Purdy's P-38 flashed lower until he was almost directly astern one of the Vals. The gunsight was glowing at just the right intensity as the pip slowly rode across the sky for the fuselage and wing root of the dive bomber. As the gap closed the pilots of the Vals finally realized that their enemy was in their midst. Wings wavered indecisively, and then they scattered, but not the one that Purdy was stalking. The tracers from his guns and .20mm shells thumped into the fuselage.

Puffs of smoke wafted back from the engine as the prop began to windmill. Suddenly the stricken Val shattered in an explosion heard and seen by the Filipinos in Cebu City. The wreckage crashed into an area three quarters of a mile from the city.

Even before it struck the ground, Purdy was hauling his big fighter around at another Val. He commenced firing from a forty five deflection angle. The Japanese pilot neatly rolled his dive bomber into a co-ordinated, training-school bank to the right, but at two hundred and fifty yards shells smashed through the cockpit into the engine. The Val righted momentarily at five hundred feet, only to roll over and dive straight into the ground one mile North of Cebu City. Lt. Clifford Ettien confirmed both victories for Purdy.

If the pilots of the 433rd swore because it seemed they were always escorting PBYS, there was cause for an end to this cursing, so as Purdy was concerned, when Mission #3-605 began in the pre-dawn of the 11th of December. With Purdy in the squadron mess hall were Lts. Edward "Fish" Miller, Wes Hulett and Carl Redding. Both Hulett and Redding were youngsters with the 433rd, but Ed Miller was an old hand with an easy wisecracking manner. The breakfast in the dim light of the mess shack wasn't good, but neither Purdy nor the others complained because they knew they were eating the best food the cooks could obtain and prepare.

At the flight strip, Jack climbed onto the wing of his plane and picked away at the mud on his shoes before easing into the cockpit. His crewchief, eyes bloodshot from lack of sleep, said nothing but he understood why Purdy's eyes were drawn. Not only did the Japanese fighters and bombers shoot back at the Lightning fighters, but as incredible as it seems so did the American gun positions along the beach head. The latter finally were halted when Thomas McGuire threatened to strafe the beach.

A Catalina had been detailed to search for Lt. Col. Meryl M. Smith, Deputy Group CO., and Lt. P.S. Dahl, both shot down the previous day. Smith had 9 victories, Dahl had 7. For the flight this day the Catalina code was "Gardenia."

Purdy's flight made rendezvous with the rescue PBY-5A at 0800 over Tacloban at two thousand feet. The five airplanes took a Northwest heading, with the Lightnings slowly weaving back and forth over the highly vulnerable Cat. Jack leaned out the engines and lighted a cigarette.

Fifteen miles North of Cebu Island, Ed Miller sighted a convoy of ships steaming Southwest. Since the Catalina continued plodding onward to the ships, Purdy, Redding, Hulett and Miller assumed, incorrectly as it turned out, that the vessels were friendly. In fact it was a Japanese convoy enroute to Leyte with troops and supplies.

Miller's eyes sighted a glint of reflected sunlight ahead and above. He immediately broke the radio silence previously guarded so zealously.

"Possum Red Leader. This is Possum Red Three. Jack there are four to six bogies at twelve o'clock high!"

"Roger Red Three. I have them in sight."

"Gardenia, this is Possum Red Leader. We have, ah-h-h, four to six bandits at twelve o'clock high! I, ah-h-h, think that convoy is Japanese. I'll stay with you until you get to cloud cover, but I'd suggest you get the hell out of here, fast!"

The urgency in Jack's voice snapped into the headset of the PBY pilot who immediately turned one hundred and eighty degrees and lumbered for a bank of low lying clouds. The old Catalina leaped ahead as the pilot pushed throttles against the firewall.

Purdy began climbing for altitude, levelling off at five thousand feet, yet he continued to watch the fleeing PBY. Finally the Catalina disappeared into the clouds and but with his responsibility to the PBY temporarily ended, he again started climbing. Again Ed Miller sighted bandits at

433rd P-38 on the fighter strip at Boroka, Biak Island. An instant after this picture the author was dusted off by Capt. Bob Tomberg in a low pass; but he failed to get the action. At right, the crew in midst of a 100 hour check at Mokmer Strip, Biad Is. Usual primitive conditions prevailed.



eleven o'clock heading Southeast. He called them in, but Jack kept climbing to twenty thousand feet. The sky was clear of the enemy.

"Possum Red Flight, drop tanks!"

Free of the heavy encumbrances, the blue-spinnered Lightnings leaped forward as throttles advanced. The flight moved to line astern as Purdy started his descent, spoiling for a fight. At twelve thousand feet, the overcast thinned and Jack was able to see the enemy ships below covered by twenty to thirty Japanese fighters, mostly Oscars.

If the Japanese pilots, flying a loose formation, had sighted Purdy's flight they gave no such indication. At seven thousand feet Purdy's Lightning hurtled after an Oscar. The Japanese pilot waited a little too long before beginning an evasive turn. His airplane shook as a fusillade of slugs passed though its fuselage and wings, smoked, straightened momentarily, then violently split-S'ed for the deck. Jack had nothing but a probable as the enemy disappeared into the clouds below.

Speeding on at two hundred and seventy miles per hour, Jack didn't pause but fired again at another Oscar from the same six o'clock position. The enemy half-rolled and split-S'ed but Purdy shoved his stick over, going into negative G, and fired a burst from eighty degrees at two hundred and fifty yards. Dirt flew about the cockpit, then settled down. Jack watched the Oscar as it plunged into the ocean near Bantayan Island.

The remaining enemy airplanes became aggressive as the four P-38s harried their outer flanks. Hulett sent an Oscar slamming into the sea twenty miles north of Bantayan Island.

Oscars began a closing attack on Miller and Hulett. Ed began yelling for help, and Purdy immediately pulled his Lightning around to the attack. The first Oscar's pilot turned away before coming into gun range but the second was gutsy and eager. He drew near Miller and Hulett and began to fire.

Purdy was in position for a shot at fifty yards from ten degrees deflection. He touched the gun button on the control yoke, and the Japanese rolled over slowly, then gathered speed rapidly in its dive to the ocean. Purdy chased him all the way down and watched him crash five miles Northwest of Bantayan Island.

Back at altitude again, Jack started a pass at another Oscar, but before he could make his score three for the day, Carl Redding sped past him with his guns blazing. The Oscar shed pieces into the sea until it too crashed into the sea six miles from Bantayan Island.

In the excitement of combat there had been small opportunity to observe fuel gauges. As a tank ran dry, a pilot simply switched tanks. Purdy belatedly discovered that his Lightning had been siphoning fuel. His fuel reserves were gone. It was questionable if he could reach home.

The weather had grown worse. Purdy broke off the fight and led the flight around the Southern tip of Leyte, but he knew he wasn't going to make it. As his engines spluttered to a halt near Cabugan Grande Island, the radio crackled once more.

"Ed, this is Purdy. Take the flight home after I ditch. Ah-h-h-h, send out a PBY, old buddy. I'll, ah-h-h-h, be waiting."

There was a sort of grim humor to the situation which with the passing of the years has been embellished by Jack Purdy. Even though there was little in the situation for laughter, those of us who knew Jack could appreciate his

problem at that moment. It was the San Francisco incident all over again.

There was almost silence in the cockpit of the Lightning as it descended towards the small island below. Offshore, a coral reef ran a considerable distance parallel to a narrow beach. Purdy headed the P-38 for this spot. He turned off the switches and gave one final wave to this three comrades who were following him down.

The reef came up fast! Jack dropped his flaps and the big fighter slowed imperceptibly. The reef was flashing past. The P-38 touched once with a grinding, tearing sound, then the cockpit nacelle belly and the bottoms of the booms began to shred. The plane bounced and skimmed, still struggling to fly, then it crunched down again and slithered through the hard coral and sea water.

"Too damned fast," thought Purdy! "I'm going into the, ah-h-h-h, damned drink!"

The Lightning ground to a halt just beyond the end of the reef. As it settled nose down, the blue-green water gently filled the cockpit to Jack's waist. The Lightning was destroyed, but Purdy was unharmed. He climbed out and sat down on the edge of the canopy.

From the nearby beach several small dugouts pushed off. While he was still wondering if they were friendly Filipinos or revenge-minded Japanese, he drew his .45 automatic and cocked it. Years later he said.

"Andy, I, ah-h-h, didn't realize how useless that forty-five was until that moment when I decided to fight. If they'd have been Japs maybe I could have outrun them without the extra weight."

The dugouts contained an ecstatic group of Filipinos who greeted him with tremendous warmth and affection. He was the first American they had seen since the start of the war, and for a few brief hours he was their hero in spite of the ignominious ending of his combat. A short time later "Gardenia" arrived on the scene and by the 12th of December Jack was back with the 433rd, flown there from the Catalina base in an L-5.

On the 17th of December Jack Purdy was leading Blue Flight on beachhead patrol over Southern Mindoro Island. Red and White Flights of the 433rd had given chase to four bandits. In the heat of that combat Captain William Grady shot down a "Jack" near Ambulong Island. At 1628 Purdy's Number Four man called in — two Navy Zeke 52s at nine thousand feet heading North East. Purdy wrote in his combat report,

"As the bandits had altitude advantage, we turned away momentarily and the bandits, after turning towards us, turned back to their original heading. We gave chase and caught them eight miles east of Tombanac at 9,000 feet. The bandits were line abreast, and I closed from six o'clock on the one on the right, I fired a short burst into the fuselage and canopy, observing 20mm explosions. As I turned away, the E/A was smoking and flames were emerging from the cockpit. The Zeke crashed into the mountains below. I immediately turned towards the remaining Zeke and fired a short burst from about ten degrees deflection. I observed hits through the engine and right wing. The enemy planes burst into flames."

Somehow, in the inferno of bullets, smoke and flame, the feisty Japanese pilot scrambled out of the cockpit. Purdy could see him swing free of the airplane, and seconds later



Jack Purdy's P-38's were all named LIZZIE, for his wife. LIZZIE II was pictured on Mokmer Strip, Biak Is. in August 1944. No. V, in which he crashed, came later in the Philippines. ("938" on nose.) At right is Justino Silan, the Filipino youth who dragged Capt. Purdy from his burning P-38 and saved his life. Later Purdy was to help Silan join the U.S. Navy, hence the uniform. (Photos • Purdy).

he was safe in his parachute while the Zeke crashed into the mountains far below.

Lt. John Purdy's victory string had ended at seven, although he was not aware of it then. He had scored three doubles in five days and these plus his earlier victory brought his score to seven. Back home in Michigan, the newspapers and radio were filled with the stories of his exploits. He was the newest Ace in the roster of General Kenney's Aces! Purdy was to fly many more missions, but as fast as aerial combat had come to him, it now disappeared. There remained one, final Purdy escapade. He would never forget it!

It began innocently enough when Captain Bill Grady and Purdy began a friendly argument over who would fly a brand new P-38L on a bridge dive-bombing mission in Luzon. When all arguments were exhausted, they did what they should have done in the first place; they flipped a coin, and Purdy won.

Purdy also won the toss of the coin between himself and the 432nd and 431st squadron leaders. He would lead the entire group! Grady really grumbled now about the plane he had to fly. It was old and weary and beat up!

Over the target, Purdy could see that his best chance for getting a hit on the peaceful looking bridge was to skip bomb his two thousand pounder directly into the lower foundations. With an eleven second delay, he could get away from the bomb blast easily. As the new Lightning screamed to the attack at 375 miles per hour, the Japanese on the ground laid down a savage, small arms barrage. As all hell broke loose, Purdy skipped his bomb into the base of the bridge, hurdled its structure and jinked upwards to evade the ground fire. He later described that zoom:

"I pulled straight up! Then I noticed the holes in the doggoned, ah-h-h, wing. One was about five inches. I still didn't think I was in any trouble. I leveled off at, ah-h-h-h, five thousand feet. My oil pressure was down on one engine, and there were holes in that side, so I feathered it and figured to tool home on the other one. Ah-h-h-h, I kept trying to trim the airplane, but every time I'd, ah-h-h-h, think I had a trim and tried to ease in power, the darned thing would turn over on me! Apparently they (Japanese) had damaged my rudder surfaces, too. I couldn't control the plane, and I kept losing altitude. I turned toward the ocean to the spot where a PBY rescue plane would be waiting, but, ahh-h-h, I couldn't make it."

Instead, Purdy banked the plane to a small, but seemingly satisfactory field for a crash landing. As the P-38 approached the boundary of the field, Jack noticed a large, imposing building about a quarter of a mile to his right. It was one of the last things he was to remember for some time, at least with any degree of clarity!

Either through a loss of flying speed or through a miscalculation, he doesn't recall which, the lightning struck a raised embankment at the very edge of the field. The P-38 ricocheted back into the air spouting smoke, dust and parts. It crashed back onto the ground still throwing debris and dirt. Finally it ground to a fiery halt.

In the moment of its final destruction, the Lightning jerked to a halt viciously snapping Purdy's head forward into the gunsight which neatly sliced open his scalp. Jack sat there numbly, the blood gushing from his head.

The destroyed P-38 was a mass of crackling fire and billowing smoke. Somehow the instinct to live guided the injured Purdy from the cockpit. Delirious from the excruciating pain, he stumbled away from the wreck and stood observing the fire and explosions. Jeez, he kept thinking, that's a bad one.

Providence was with the Lieutenant that day in the lithe form of a sixteen year old Filipino boy named Justino Silan. Justino had observed the crash, and he dashed forward to help an American friend. He didn't know Jack, but the only thing that mattered was that he was an American who needed help. He began pulling and dragging Purdy into the nearby jungle. Jack's legs seemed detached from his body.

Let Jack Purdy describe what happened next.

"Andy, I just stood there opposite the fire with my parachute like I was waiting for a jeep to come by and pick me up. I guess I was acting like a punch drunk fighter. As I had no memory of the first hour I found this out from the Filipinos and the pilots from our headquarters later. That building I had seen on my approach turned out to be The Ridge Club which had been taken over by the Japanese as a rest home for their pilots. They started out after me immediately, but the rest of the squadron came down and strafed the area while the Filipino farm boy started running me into the jungle. The first thing I remember, about an hour later, was when these Filipinos started coming from every direction to help. From that time on it was like a Hollywood movie."

In the jungle Purdy eventually was guided to guerrilla headquarters by Captain Victor Can dare, later killed in action, Lt. James France, Lt. Antonio B. Ambat, Sgt. Abundio A. Angkaya, Captain Isidro A. Buatista, Sgt. Jose B. Ambion and Mr. Rufino Ambion. With the exception of Ambion, all were members of the 2nd Moreno Battalion. Ernie Regiment, of the Filipino-American IV Army Corps, a band of fighting guerrillas of considerable note, so much so that in October of 1944 General MacArthur's command sent Major John D. Vanderpool into Cavite Province to direct their energies to the collection of intelligence.

Purdy had lost a considerable amount of blood. He was suffering from a concussion and a wrenched back, yet somehow with the help of the Filipinos he managed to stagger through the jungle to a hidden command post where he met Miss Felisa Samonte, a nurse.

He watched the woman approach him as if in slow motion. As if through a heavy haze he noted Filipinos sitting on each of his arms and legs. While he watched in an abstract sort of way, Miss Samonte expertly sutured his ripped scalp back together with a crude needle and a piece of common, Filipino hemp! There was no deadening of the pain, because there were no medicines available. If Purdy were to survive the shock, he would have to do it on his own.

After seven days in the jungle Purdy was moved out towards the coast. The trip was made in the company of Major Vanderpool and Purdy's own personal Filipino escort. The entire group stayed over night at Amadeo, then entered the outskirts of the barrio, Indang.

If Jack had ever wondered what the war was all about, he received the answer at Indang, a typically, small barrio of approximately twelve hundred people. As Major Vanderpool and Purdy entered the outskirts of the village the entire population including the Filipino veterans of Bataan and the Mayor were waiting to meet them. Both Purdy and Vanderpool were placed on white horses! The people crowded forward to touch Purdy!

With the American flag and the Filipino flag before them, a volunteer band tootled into song. The tune they were playing was questionable, but there was no denying the fervour and sincerity with which they blasted away. Down the dusty main street they went in the heat of the day, a makeshift band, a battered air force ace, and hundreds of barefoot men, women and children. The Filipinos were overjoyed with Jack's presence!

The entire city had turned out to welcome this single, injured airmen as one of their saviours. In patched trousers and torn clothing, they crowded in again and again to shake

Purdy's hand and to thank him for coming to the Philippines to help them. Whatever humor may have attached to the incongruity of the situation vanished as he looked into the starved faces of these Filipinos. Purdy realized that as hurt and battered as he was, he was the symbol of American assistance to their war effort, and for the moment he represented the beginning of their eventual liberation from the Japanese. He was their hero!

Into the village square thumped the band followed by Purdy, Vanderpool, the Filipino veterans and the townspeople. The Mayor, Vanderpool and Purdy ascended to the balcony of the Mayor's house, and the people clustered about for the speeches. Jack wondered what he could possibly say, but when his turn came he said just what they wanted to hear.

"If you fellows will take care of them (Japanese) on the ground, we of the Air Force will take care of them in the air. Between the both of us, we'll whip them!"

A cheer went up from the crowd as Purdy finished his brief remarks and waved to them. The Mayor motioned Purdy and Vanderpool into a large room where all of the dignitaries of the community were gathered for the party especially arranged for Jack. Bottles of wine and whiskey appeared, and Jack Purdy and the Allies were toasted far into the afternoon. Some of the liquor was freshly manufactured, so there would be a sufficient amount for all of the toasts. Some of the Filipinos had come from miles to see Jack, and each brought him some gift, a bottle of wine a half dozen eggs, a bit of fruit or some special tidbit of food. It should be understood that these people had less than the bare necessities, but Purdy was so important to them they were willing for him to have their most prized possessions.

All too soon, Captain John Purdy moved on to the coast where he was picked up by a PBY and returned to the 475th Fighter Group. After a leave in Australia, he returned to the squadron where he flew an additional eleven missions before being rotated home. His had been a unique tour of combat.

Captain John Purdy of the 5th Air Force, with an Honorary Captaincy in the Philippine Air Force, is entitled to wear the Air Medal with four oak leaf clusters, the Distinguished Flying Cross with two oak leaf clusters, the Purple Heart, the Unit Citation Ribbon, The Asiatic Pacific Theatre Campaign Ribbon with four bronze stars, and the Philippine Liberation Ribbon with one bronze star. Yet, for all of these awards, he treasures most of all the memories of the gallant Filipinos who saved his life and the wonderful people of Indang who made him King for a Day.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Carroll R. Anderson, seen here in the cockpit of his P-38, the VIRGINIA MARIE, on Biak Island, New Guinea in 1944, is known to AAHS Members for two previous articles, many moons back. In Volume 5 (1960) he first told the account of the 433rd Fighter Squadron's "Black Sunday" when 31 of nearly 200 airplanes of the Fifth Air Force crashed or were lost at sea as a weather front moved in and walled off the home bases during return from a mission. In Volume 10 his "Mission to Kavieng" described the 500-mile strike at the Japanese base at the Northern tip of New Ireland on 15 Feb 1944. It included a detailed report of Lt. Nathan Gordon's dumbo Mission Gardenia. (See page 35 this issue.) Reunions of the 475th F.G., the "Satan's Angels," always bring, in his words, "... a superb organization. When we get together there are more of us (in the 433rd) happily imbibing than the other two squadrons combined." (Vol. 14, No. 3, Page 207.) Andy runs the Tracy Camera Shop in Tracy, Calif.

