

**1942 Diary of DR. Aaron A. Sprong, MD - Flight Surgeon – 11 TH BG  
H Army Air Corps. Age 34 years**

Reported in Fort Mason Jan 18 - left Frisco Feb 8. Landed Honolulu Feb 15. Stayed 3 weeks at Hickam. Reported for duty March 7 at Bellows Field for duty with 72nd Bomb squad. Left Midway June 13 - returned June 18. Spent one day at Kulsoa (sp?) prior to departure at Midway. Spent a week at Kulsoa after returning from Midway. Returned to 72nd Bomb - spent 8 days at Hilo and returned to Hickam preparing to go down under.

**Have not left on Thurs. July 16, 1942. (Came over on US What not - 12 or 15000 ton displacement - from Frisco to Pearl Harbor).**

**July 21**

Left on Pres. Tyler - 35000 ton ship - 1:00 PM for New Caledonia. Told us of our destination when we were 6 hrs out. Have whole 11th group ground troops on board. Very few sea sick. Hold daily sick call. 1000 troops approx.

**Left Honolulu harbor on Pres. Tyler.** Weather is clear, Pacific is blue, blue. 6 ships are in convoy - we have two destroyers and one cruiser to escort us. First stop is at Fiji Islands. Assigned to 42nd Bomb Squadron.

**Midway trip** - flew at 8 or 10,000 feet all way out - took 6 hrs 35 min. Return trip flew at 20,000 ft all way using oxygen. Took 6 hrs 8 min. Midway is 1180 nautical miles from Honolulu. Two islands - Eastern Island and Sand Island.. Hospital burned, power plant, post exchange blown up by Japs. Runways run full length of eastern island. Birds - Gooney, Boatswain, Mooning. Army 73rd ? came in just as I left.

**July 23** Warm, damp, rainy weather - two general alerts aboard ship

yesterday - two planes took off of cruiser for 3 hour search yesterday - up to 7:00 PM - landed safely and taken aboard. Life is uneventful.

July 24 Uneventful, long day.

July 25 Cool this am

July 26 Initiation into mystic order of Deep Sea - with full fledged "Shell Back"

July 27 Uneventful

July 29 Went to bed Wednesday evening and got up Friday morning - got up and saw land for 1st time of this voyage. Several islands - gained a day due to crossing of International date line. Expect to be in port Sat. noon.

July 31 Saw land - sea is very smooth - see several islands - had an alarm due to submarines at 9:30 last night. Lovely day.

August 1 Docked at Suva, Fiji Islands at 5 PM - no one allowed off boat that evening; unloaded supplies all night.

August 2 Went up town Suva - bought string of beads and got some Fiji money. Drank some lemonade, citrate water. Saw air raid practice alarm and drill of picking up and carrying away wounded etc. Fiji policeman - blue blouse with Fiji policeman insignia on each shoulder. Red Belt 6" in width about waist. White shirt extend to just below knees. Big bushy head of hair ...men are large and well developed, expert in jui jutsui (sp?). Town has modern buildings, red tile roofing, yellow walls. Harbor is well protected by coral reef - 431 squad field is 165 miles from Suva. Islands are very mountainous - jagged, sharp points - volcanic origin. Heavy vegetation - grow bananas, coconuts. Big exportive product is copra.

August 3 SS Pres Tyler left 7 AM - got out of harbor and receive signal (to) return to port - still setting in harbor awaiting orders. Left harbor at Suva at 12:00 PM - uneventful PM - moderately rough.

August 4 Slept last night. Ship rolled and tossed considerably last night. Will make it down to Ifacti in 2 days - there tomorrow.

August 5 Sighted Ifacti about 11:00 am - thick haze, mist as we started into harbor, destroyer discovered a sub and dropped 8 cans (depth charges) - think they got it but don't know.

August 6 Went ashore, saw airfield - 26th Bomb squad - have a lot of malaria here. 98th Squad and 42nd transfer to a freighter. 98th Squad goes to Buttons - 42nd goes to New Caledonia. Everything is disorganized. Expect to visit hospitals tomorrow. Have to get a place fixed up to bivouac for men. Vegetation is dense, heavy - large coconut plantations - grow oranges & bananas too. Beware of fresh food because of dysentery. B17's are bombing Solomon Islands daily. Big push is to start in a few days - bombing has been a softening up process prior to push. I have not seen pain for this month of July.

Marines pursuit, army pursuit, P39's and B17's are here. Received some mail - took 6 weeks to get. Last letter mailed July 3 from farm at Atchison, KS. Hq Squad and 26th to be stationed at Roses (Wiler?) on island of Ifacti. French possession which has been taken over by the British. Fiji is a British possession. Capt. W is at Buttons (Santos - 180 miles north by air). Started to unload ship this PM - SS Pres. Tyler. Maj. M is at New Caledonia.

August 7 Official - got sub..3 bodies washed ashore and picked up. Visited French hospital this am - run by marines Docs. They have had troubles getting equipment and quinine for malaria - getting low on quinine. Take 10 grains of quinine daily for prophylaxis.

Treatment for malaria: 15 grains of quinine t.i.d. for 4 days; 10 grains of quinine t.i.d. for 7 days; 10 grains daily for prophylaxis; if they develop brain malaria use quinine dihydrochloride

intramuscularly or intravenously. Chief diseases are malaria (all 3 types - tertian predominates), fungus diseases, black water fever. No yellow fever is present on island of Ifacti. Surgical cases - take care of emergency surgical cases only - strangulated hernia, appendix etc.

Use Atabrine grain III as a prophylaxis against malaria.

August 8 Went over to Flattery - loaded aboard at 8 PM, all of 42nd Squad.

August 9 Flattery sailed for New Caledonia from Ifacti at 10 AM - average speed of Flattery is 16 knots - speed of SS Pres. Tyler 12 or 13 knots. Accommodations of Flattery are nice - good beds, showers, good dining room, modern. Ship is a liberty boat 6 or 8 months old.

August 10 Uneventful day - roast turkey, cranberry sauce, dressing, potatoes for dinner - nicer accommodations on Cape Flattery than on S.. Pres. Tyler.

August 11 Slept unusually good last night, sighted land about 7 AM - waiting for pilot guide ship into harbor since 8:00 AM - dangerous to get into harbor because of unusual number of coral reefs - and narrow channel. Make a good target for sub when we're setting like this waiting for pilot to guide ship into harbor.

August 12 Pulled into harbor of Noumea at 11:30. Pilot got on board ship 54 miles outside of harbor - started in thru reefs at 7:10 AM. Saw one freighter in reefs which had been blown in two by mine which it had struck. One tanker was blown up other day when it did not wait for pilot to guide it into harbor - a very dangerous approach into harbor due to mines and rough coral reefs. Got into harbor at noon - set there until 5 PM when pulled into dock and started into unload.

August 13 Ship unloaded that night. Started out to camp at 9 AM - 160 miles out to camp - got in about 3 PM to camp. A very long mountainous drive - dangerous with hairpin curves and horseshoe curves etc. At camp - nights are cool, use mosquito net sleep under,

two blankets and just have bedroll under you. No blackouts in camp, sit around campfire and eat coconut. No malaria in New Caledonia.

Maj M left for Roses (Ifacti) with 16 men - will be there for 2 weeks.

August 14 Took laundry down to Javanese - 50 cents for a bundle regardless of size, do not iron - 24 hour service. visited 69th Bomb Squad. Maj M is going down to see Gen. H to get some medicine.

Went down to 109 General Hospital to stay last night.

August 15 Short arm Inspection and inspection of sulfanilamide packets. Have to go up and get some atabrine from 69th to keep men on atabrine who have been up to Roses & Buttons.

August 16 Maj M Group Surgeon visited camp. Malaria treatment: 30 grains of quinine for 3 consecutive nights; 10 grains of quinine daily for 6 weeks. Malaria prophylaxis: Atabrine grain III Sunday & Wednesday; when leave infected area intensive treatment - atabrine grain 1 1/2 t.i.d. for 5 days; ababrine grain III twice a week for 6 weeks. An uneventful Sunday - so warm at night - had venison for dinner last night - went to a dance at 109 General Hospital Saturday - approximately 40 ? - Few nurses, who are broad, but many men.

August 21 Took a flight this AM - up 3 hours 50 mins. - went to an altitude os 22,500 ft O always tired when I get off a flight - get a good view of coastline of New Caledonia - very irregular - many reefs with atolls. Many lagoons with inlets etc. Inland country is very mountainous. Mts. are 4 or 5,000 ft in height. Expect to go to Roses in AM O a fighter squadron of P39's are going up escorted by B17's.

August 22 Took off from Plains des Gaiacs (where 42nd is located) went to Roses (Fila Colreta sp?) Took 2 hrs 45 min flying time.

August 23 Did not get plane back to Poppy (New Caledonia) Plains des Gaiacs. Went down to Noumea and went aboard Long Island Aircraft carrier. Got some "Country Doctor" smoking tobacco. Aircraft carrier had just returned from Solomons taking two marine

outfits over there. Capt. L shot down Jap seaplane ?. Few skirmishes still going on up in Solomons.

August 24 No available plane to Poppy - two planes - B17 - came down from Santos prop repair - one came in with 3 motors. Washed all of my clothes today, everything, shorts, shirts, undershirt, pants and socks. No reaction from atabrine which I took yesterday. Getting a copy of circular #56 on Tropical Diseases made. Plans are being made for 42nd to move to Roses. Hope we don't.

August 25 Uneventful day - went down to French Hosp. - admitted patient with diarrhea. Fighting continues in Solomons - ?. Force of Japs present, bombed by 4 of our B17 - hit a cruiser. Camp is situated here among coconut palms, pick up coconuts any time to eat. If they hit you on the head, knock you out. Cocoa trees grow here, coffee is produced here too.

August 26 Took 2 tablets of Atabrine this AM - got a 1000 from Capt F - no plances for P.O.G. (?). Raining here this AM - rainy season starts Nov 1 which is beginning of malarial season. One of our planes cracked up at Buttons (Santos). 5 killed and 3 seriously injured.

Anxious to get back to New Caledonia. All of available planes of 11th group are at Buttons. Crews complain of poor food and long mess lines at Buttons. Docs are having some trouble with diarrhea. Box of medical supplies sent to Buttons from Poppy yesterday. Yokohama Express went to Buttons yesterday. Sure gets monotonous waiting - no one has received any mail up here.

August 27 Flew from Roses to Poppy - 2 hrs & 50 min. Took off at 12:20 - time is not included in July and August pay. Took off at Roses, landed Tuntoa and took off and landed at Poppy.

August 28 Went to Noumea. Jeep broke down at Bouraille - watched a primary school - French - take up pupils - marched in to classroom. Teachers very pretty. Got to Noumea. Saw Col. M - a real gentleman - gave one a feeling of confidence.

August 29 Sent a cablegram from Noumea to Elene - Cynthia's birthday. Visit France ? AM. office - made an allotment class a 112.50 (\$150) of bonds monthly. Ate dinner on Argonne - flagship & repair ship. Had a steak, very good, tender. Paymaster Buckner, a native of Kansas was the host - very congenial & pleasant. French officers gave a dance - very swell affair - in formal clothes - many brass hats.

August 30 Saw a French destroyer in harbor. Left Noumea 10:30; visited field hospital of 101 at Med. Regiment. Hitched bike ride on home to Plains des Gaiacs - got home about 6:30. Stopped at 109 Station Hosp., saw Maj. M and gave report from Col. M.

August 31 Very tired - haven't recovered from trip to Noumea yet - want to go back - get some stamps, collection of French money and look at stores. Have also got to get paid for July & Aug.

Sept. 1 Working on monthly reports - went down to 109 Station Hosp, visited all of 42nd squad patients in hosp. Brought "Custer" a U.P. correspondent, United Press out to P.D.G. (?) to catch a LB30 to go to Oahu and states - has a piece of shrapnel behind left eye.

Sept 8 Visited 109 Station Hosp. Staff complains of time hanging heavy on their hands - not very busy - have good meals etc. good equipment and fair staff.

Sept 9 Group Surgeon (Maj M) waiting for orders to be replaced - has arthritis but he really wants to go back to the states. Wish I could go back to states, too.

Sept 10 Flying time this AM 1 hr & 25 mins. Capt S pilot, a dull monotonous day, wrote a letter home. Plane took off for Roses & Buttons. War correspondent Mainland (British) went up to Roses - one who wrote article about one first convoy to Australia. Story spilled in Honolulu, states, he covered Churchill's first visit with Roosevelt. Writes for London News Chronicle.

September 13 2 planes went into water - refused to light runways.  
One B17 went into water at 109 Stations Hospital.

September 14 2 hrs 35 minutes - Kinney, pilot flew down to northern most tip of New Caledonia. Saw 9 men - tip of wing of plane shows about 800 yds off shore. Star on wing is visible.

September 15 Tooth pulled - R6 upper. Had been hurting some with large cavity - done at 109 Station Hospital.

September 17 Have not recovered from all night ride by horse to where men came ashore. Was on a horse right at 18 hours. Was very tired and stiff, sore after return trip. Very mountainous country - forded many streams in which water cam up to the horses belly - saw deer. Frenchmen were very nice - served rum & tea, fried a dozen eggs - ate dinner at his house next day - served fried venison, fried 8 eggs - bread served in French style - coffee has chicory though they served tea at this meal.

September 18 - October 8 - uneventful period.

October 9 Went to Noumea - got pay - bought \$275 of bonds with September pay. Transfer to Buttons - went by car to Tontona. Tontona is the 1) Ferry command base 2) 3rd echelon maintenance repair 3) Have about 25 P39's here models 4) New P38's are coming. Expect to get up to Buttons tomorrow. Have received no answer from Saunders radio. Fighting is still going on in Guadalcanal. Jap task force is still threatening. Heavy 155-105 ? 75 artillery installed on island. Transport service installed from Cactus (Guadalcanal). Buttons via Roses to Poppy. Planes are transport DC53. Reports are that 11th group will go to New Zealand for rest period - when?

October 12 Transferred from P.D.G. to Buttons Esperanto de Santos. Flew from Tentona to Buttons. Flying time 3 hrs 4 mins.

October 14 Shelling for 6 hrs of Guadalcanal - bombing etc. - worst nite yet up at Guadalcanal. 2 17's knocked out on the ground. No planes shot down, one navigator killed. Infantry landing, some killed.

October 23 1 Jap flying boat shot down by Loberg. 1st Lt injured. Jap subs shelled Buttons last night - 2nd time within two weeks. No damage was done by the shelling - awfully warm in day time but it is fairly cool at night. 18 B17's took off at 3 AM to encounter Jap fleet on its way to Guadalcanal. Expect to move up on hill - have been living right down next to shore line of the bay since moving up to Buttons.

October 24 Flew with Capt. H. Time 1 hr & 45 min. Flew with 3 engines part of the time. Counted 20 ships, 1 cruiser and 2 or 3 destroyers - rest are freighters. Coastline is rugged, many islands in surrounding territory.

October 31 Pres. Coolidge sank in harbor Oct 26 at Esperitu de Santos. Few lives were lost. 6 or 7000 troops - ship hit two mines which had broken loose - went by road just as troops by the 100's were coming into road - troops wet with oil - all were marine troops - ship had tremendous cargo - sank in 300 feet of water - beached but ship slipped off of ledge.

November 7 Flew to Guadalcanal with Capt. P - time 4 hr 55 min. Landed at 4:30 PM, escorted 12 P39 up to Cactus from Buttons. 7 SPD (escorted by Loberg up to Cactus) Navy torpedo bombers - 12 zero fighters knocked down - 1 cruiser and 4 destroyers hits by dive bombers, 3 subs sunk up at Guadalcanal. On arrival there at 4:30 out destroyer was shelling beach where Japs were below landing field. Could hear heavy artillery mot of night . 155 mm guns firing. A Jap sub put a torpedo in our freighter this AM - sub was sunk.

November 8 Met Commander D.S. K. division surgeon of Naval Hospital - a Yale man - know J. M. of K.C. Flew back to Buttons. Flying time 4 hrs 5 min. Uneventful trip going and coming.

Malarial statistics on Guadalcanal to date - Nov 9 over 1700 cases in hospital, over a 1000 treated at front lines. Atabrine is not an effective prophylaxis except it keeps you from getting malaria for 4 or 5 weeks. Quinine is only effective medicine.

November 13 Big battle of Solomons is on. Lt K. ship scored direct hit on transports and got two zeros. Capt. J got two Messerschmidts and one zero - his elevators ? on plane were shot off. Striking force of 20 planes took off yesterday, another large striking force took off today. 10 or 12 P38 went up to Guadalcanal yesterday - 18 B26 has gone up to Guadalcanal yesterday and today. Lt. P. saw 40 Amer. survivors ? a cargo vessel. Did not lose any planes yesterday.

November 18 A raid in Shortland harbor this AM - by B26 & B17. Ran into a lot of zeros - Maj. G and copilot killed. Col. S. was in plane and took over - one engine caught on fire & Col made a water landing about 30 miles from Shortland harbor near a very small island. Picked the Col. up yesterday at 1 PM with PBY ? escorted by fighters - make a perfect water landing. Everyone knocked down 2 or 3 zeros. P38's were in the melee. A transport and tanker were hit by 1000 lb bombs.

November 20 Clear day - cool nights - one has to have a blanket over him at night. General shake up in the squadron - some demotions & promotions. Squadron needs a house cleaning - CO is a weak sister & needs a continual prop. Went over to Ice Island this noon. A battery of field artillery is located over there - is a look out post for the harbor adjacent to bomber strip #1. Went over to see patient with Capt. P. - patient has epilepsy. Flies are very bad. Island is one large coconut plantation run by a Frenchman. Return trip was uneventful except barge ran out of fuel and we pulled up along side a freighter and waited for 3 1/2 hours before we could get to shore. Got a sunburn of the face. Rumors continue to float around that 11th group is going back in a couple of weeks. Hope this is true.

November 22 Went down to Cub Hosp. to see Sgt F - x-ray of right ankle - fair alignment. Rumor has that Cub #1 is moving to Tulagi. Best and newest rumor - Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce has reserved seats for every member of 11th Bomb group for the Rose Bowl game on New Year's day. Going to show this evening - title Broadway.

November 27 Flew to Cactus - flying time 4 hrs 10 minutes. 8 ships of 42nd are up at Cactus. Bombed Buin - hit airfield and big gas dump ? - started fires which could be seen 90 miles away.

November 29 "Washing Machine Charley" came over Guadalcanal at about 3:30 AM & dropped 8 bombs - made a hurried exit - ? made a few shots at him. 5 ships took off yesterday and bombed two transports - got 3 direct hits on one transport. Saw about a dozen zeros and knocked down 3 or 4. Our planes got a few holes and no one was injured.

December 1 Guadalcanal - 2 air raid alarms - no enemy airplanes were sighted by anyone on ground. Very hot.

December 2 Took off at 11:00 AM for Buttons - flying time 4 hrs 10 min. Very tired & dirty. Glad to get back to base. 5 letters present on my return - nice to get mail. Flew back with Capt. B. 5 B17 flew back to Buttons in formation. Weather clear. Flew at 8 or 10,000 ft. Few scattered clouds in sky - 22 ships lying in harbor at Buttons.

December 16 Flew with Capt. H. P. Hinsley. 6 - B17 took off (from) Buttons, went to Minga Point and bombed each ship. Dropped 20 - 100 lb fragmentation bombs, encountered many Zero fighters. Our crew shot down 3 - I manned twin 50's in radio operators gun - used up both cases of ammunition - think possible hit a Zero - at least he didn't come in and peeled off in other direction.

Capt Hyalind plane was shot down, made a good water landing - I saw it. All men got out onto life rafts. No. 1 and 2 engines were shot up

bad, gasoline pouring out. PBX picked up all men on life rafts about 30 miles from Minga Point and were down at Guadalcanal by 7 PM. None injured seriously - just minor contusions and lacerations.

Flying time 6 hours. Have been bombing Minga Pt. twice daily - very hot and mosquitoes are bad at Guadalcanal. Sgt. S. ? wound right shoulder - of Capt. Hall's crew. Hyalind plane broke in 5 pieces at junction of fuselage and radio operators room, at ball turret and in bombay. 5 bullet holes were put in Capt Hensley's plane - no one injured - one engine on our plane ? run away prop and was feathered. Zeroes do not show up when our bombers have fighter escort. 9 SPD (Navy torpedo bombers) went to get two destroyers at Minga Point nite of Dec. 16 - results unknown.

December 19 Returned from Cactus to Buttons. Time 4 1/2 hours. Very hot & tired. There are many mosquitoes up at Cactus now.

December 20 Bothered with severe occipital headache - intermittent roaring of ears with dizziness. Has been affecting me at times past 2 or 3 weeks - attacks of sever neuralgia of right side of face - over temporal and frontal areas - neuralgia come on at night. Keeps me awake an hour or so at times during the night.

## 1943

January 1 A New Year - hoping I am home within 2 or 3 months.

January 6 Buttons to Tontuto ? - 2 hr 45 minutes Eaten up with mosquitoes here - a terrible place to stay - poor food too.

January 11 Tentuto to Auckland - 6 hrs 30 min. Pleasant stay in Auckland.

January 21 6 hrs 45 min. Auckland to Tentuoia

January 23 2 hrs 30 min. Tentuoia to Buttons. Went to Noumea while in New Caledonia. 11 letters waiting for me here.

**February** A month of waiting - sweating out orders for combat crews and return to states - orders finally came thru Feb. 22. 42 & 98th Squad selected to return to Oahu first. Radiogram from Gen. H. ordering 2 squadrons to move immediately.

**February 26** Took sick with dengue - sever backache & pains in lower extremities - ran a temperature of 100 to 102. Had mild conjunctivitis, eyes sensitive to light - say streaks in front of eyes. Broke out with rash March 1. Rash consisted of mild blush (red), continued to have severe backache and muscular aches & pains. Appetite was very poor. Began to improve on March 6. Very weak.

**March 15** Continue to sweat out orders - continue to be very weak & tired. Have not been able to take care of sick call for over 2 weeks - since Feb. 25. Sure is tiresome waiting. Hope orders come thru.

**March 24** Received orders dated March 17 - return to mainland.

**March 28** 11 group loading on boat - returning to P.H. Got on PBM - flew to Suva - time 6 hrs. Went to Nandi - over 150 min - rough road. Waited 2 days at Nandi. Took off Wed. AM. & took 8 hrs. Landed at Canton - stay 4 hrs - took off 7 PM - landed at Hickam next AM - took 10 hrs from Canton to Hickam. Took off at Hickam Sat PM at landed Ham ? Field 11:30 AM Total time 35 1/2 hrs flying.

**Home**