

of the fury into a dull mist that cloaked the east coast of our destination.

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New Caledonia

WE had hoped to put down at Noumea, the capital on the southern end of this French possession, and from there catch a plane going directly to New Zealand. Flying over land topographically similar to our last port of call we crossed to the west coast and, to get a bearing, followed a river through the hills. We next circled out over the sea and came back, then settled on a landing strip barely discernible from above that had been hacked out of the jungle on the island's northern extremity—just a short flight from Guadalcanal where a life-and-death struggle was under way.

We spent that night in a long corrugated iron hut with about 40 air force officers. Some of them operated between this point, the New Hebrides and Guadalcanal, others were from another Liberator that had apparently followed us from Fiji.

Since Honolulu no food had been served on the plane and the meals became less and less appetizing as we progressed further south. At New Caledonia however conditions were the worst yet experienced. During supper time a down-pour struck which turned the brick-red soil into a gooey rust that walked into our hut in big chunks with every visitor. We slept on the conventional canvas cots under a netting which was indispensable; the mosquitoes there do not carry malaria but they possess all the other undesirable traits of their species.

Before retiring I again met and talked with men eager for tidings of their own country, men who knew little about activities in the U.S.A. or the tremendous strides that had been made in the production of war materiel. A few of them seemed to think that they had been dumped there and more or less been forgotten. This situation has of course since been remedied and news items are

now sent regularly to this lonely spot.

Next morning the landing strip was still heavy with red mud and we had a soggy take-off. As we raced to gain momentum the plane's wheels made sucking noises of disapproval and kept kicking off big chunks of gumbo, like a ruffled eagle impatient to quit distasteful environs. We were approaching journey's end. Ahead lay Brisbane and from there we would catch a plane for New Zealand.

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Australia

FOUR hours later we traced the east coast of Australia toward Brisbane about 200 miles south. The terrain resembled that of Fiji and New Caledonia, the semi-tropical growths looking like a lake of solid jade with a choppy wind-tossed surface. Off shore were the familiar coral barriers, self-appointed protectors of the domain behind them. Soon came stretches of country where red-tiled roofs stood out like poppies against the green background.

At noon on January 29, just 46 hours flying time and more than 7,500 miles from San Francisco we landed at a spacious airfield 40 miles out of Brisbane. As we waited for our papers to be examined I treated myself to a Coca-Cola from a vending machine in charge of an American soldier. Shades of home, and my initiation in the American invasion of Australia!

Atherton and I parted company with our travelling companions and after a drive into the city said good-bye to the five men who had been our crew since leaving the United States. My accommodations that night were at the Oxford House in a cubicle about seven feet long and four feet wide whose walls didn't reach the ceiling. It was one of several in a room that looked as though it had been a laundry. Brisbane, too, had its housing problem. Upon retiring I felt as if scores of mosquitoes had assembled to welcome me, but in the morning found my clothes, bags and bed covered