

# February 2026 Newsletter



Dear Thirsty 13<sup>th</sup> Relatives and Friends,

After the newsletter April 19, 2025, other activities took most of my time the rest of the year, but the history still advanced through items shared and occasional research.

The sons of Bromberg and Cole and the grandson of Benedetto shared items.

I hope this finds you well.

With best wishes,  
Seth P. Washburne, Squadron Historian  
February 1, 2026

## Contents

1. Additional History .....	2
a. 1942: The Origin of Our C-47 Name <i>Comanche Belle</i> .....	2
b. 1943: Locations of the 8 <sup>th</sup> and 29 <sup>th</sup> General Hospitals in Dumbéa, New Caledonia ...	3
c. 1945: Winston N. Howell, Mechanic, 6/45-9/45, Practiced for Shangri-La Rescue....	4
d. 1945: Photos of Milton Bromberg, Mechanic, 12/44-9/45 .....	4
2. History-Related Activities .....	5
a. C-47 Wind Vane in Whitehorse, Yukon; C-46 in Fairbanks.....	5
b. C-47 <i>Snafu</i> pictured in Austin, Texas, in 1944.....	6
c. The Ol' Boulder and Artist Norman Baxter .....	6
d. Military Aircraft Historian Joe Baugher.....	6
3. Relatives and Others.....	7
a. Activities.....	7
4. Conclusions and Thanks .....	7

This is the newsletter for the U.S. Army Air Corps 13<sup>th</sup> Troop Carrier Squadron, 1940-1946, nicknamed “The Thirsty 13<sup>th</sup>.” This is prepared by Seth P. Washburne, the son of John C. Washburne, navigator 11/42-7/43. Please direct any comments to him at (212) 289-1506, sethpw1@gmail.com, or 5200 Meadowcreek Drive, Apt. 2060, Dallas, TX 75248.

Page numbers referred to are in the book “The Thirsty 13<sup>th</sup>” unless otherwise stated.

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Please click the hand symbol to make it easier to scroll down.



**1. Additional History**

**a. 1942: The Origin of Our C-47 Name *Comanche Belle***

The book *The Thirsty 13<sup>th</sup>* on page 105 lists the 43 C-47s flown by the 13<sup>th</sup> TCS. The 10<sup>th</sup> was named *Comanche Belle*. The nose art is shown on page 111 and above. On the book's page 111, I wrote: "It is not clear how this name was chosen. This was not a song or movie but was the name of a limited edition book in 1938 [actually 1963] that one of the pilots may have read."

On August 9, 2025, I was in Denver for my Uncle Ted's funeral. My cousin set up tables with Uncle Ted's book collection, and suggested we take one. I chose *Empire of the Summer Moon*, with subtitle *Quanah Parker and the Rise and Fall of the Comanches*. This book noted how in 1836 Cynthia Ann Parker, 9, was living 95 miles south of Dallas at Fort Parker. A band of 100 to 600 Comanches attacked, killed many, and took her and five others captive. Four were ransomed back over several years. Cynthia was adopted by a Comanche couple who raised her as their daughter. She became Comanche, married a chief, and had two boys and a girl.

In 1860, after years of searching for her at the request of her father, Texas Rangers and scouts discovered a band of Comanches rumored to hold American captives about 200 miles NW of Dallas. They attacked, and the Chief on one horse, and Cynthia holding her baby daughter on another, tried to ride away. She shouted, "Americano, Americano" and was surrounded and stopped. Her husband, the Chief, was shot, and first lived, but then the Rangers' cook shot and killed him. Her two sons escaped. One, died later from wounds from battles with the Apache.

Parker was returned to her uncle's home near Fort Worth. In 1862, her brother took her about 70 miles east of Dallas. In 1864, her daughter died of pneumonia. She missed her sons and the Comanche way of life. She began to refuse food and water and died in March 1871 at 43. Her other son, Quanah, rose to be head of the Comanche, and led raids, finally surrendering in 1875. Her story "captivated the country" at the time.

On August 11, 2025, I Googled "Cynthia Ann Parker Comanche Belle" and the result, at right, said "She became known as "Comanche Belle."

Cynthia Ann Parker was a white woman who, at the age of nine, was captured by Comanche warriors and assimilated into their culture. She became known as "Comanche Belle" due to her integration into the tribe and her marriage to War Chief



On Newspapers.com, this name first appears in an 1873 London Society story, *A Prairie Apparition*, below left, two years after Parker's death, so it likely originated with her. This name next appears in the Kansas City Times 2/18/1877 in a book review, below center, and a Louisville article 5/9/1884, below right.

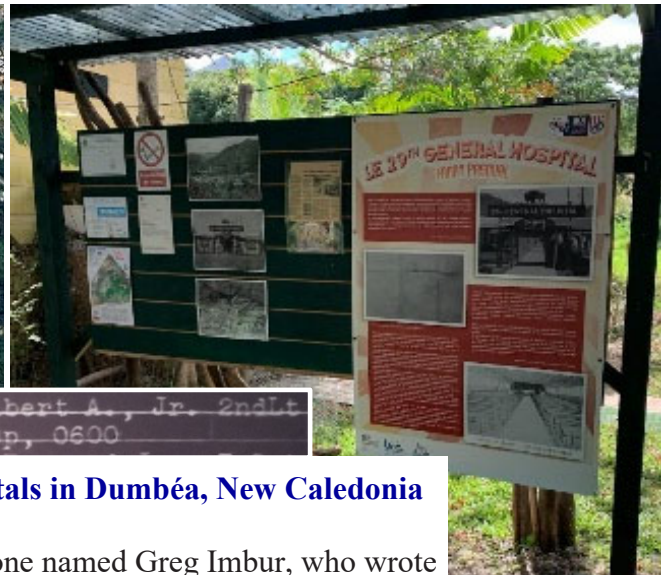
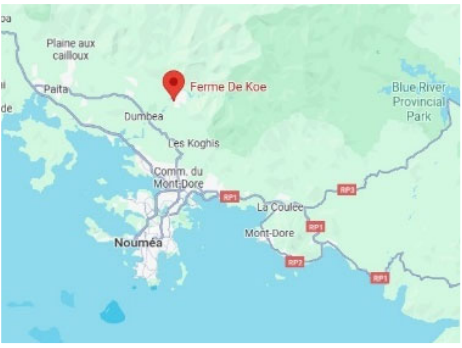
Pilot Bob Bruce, from Detroit, completed Elementary Flight Training in Oklahoma City, 100 miles NE of Cache, Okla., where Quanah died and where Cynthia is buried, and likely heard of her.

**Our C-47 name was likely inspired by Cynthia Ann Parker and Native American women.**

...cured of his love for a Comanche belle.

bracelets on the arms and ankles; in short, the costume was of a Comanche belle. And yet she was evidently not an Indian. Half-blood she might be, by her complexion.

The Comanche belle is not a votary of fashion. She does not spend nights of anxiety worrying about the best way to make up her new spring dress.



O-740449 Judd, Albert A., Jr. 2nd Lt  
Dy to Sk in Hosp, 0600

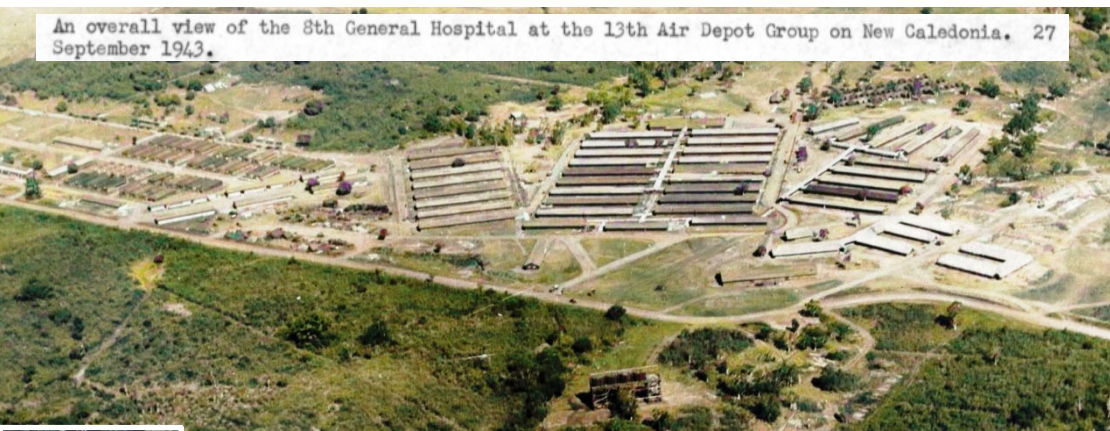
**b. 1943: Locations of the 8<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> General Hospitals in Dumbéa, New Caledonia**

On December 10, 2025, I received an email from someone named Greg Imbur, who wrote that his mother’s father had been a surgeon and neurosurgeon assigned to the 8<sup>th</sup> General Hospital in New Caledonia, and wondered if I had any information. On January 26 and 29, I reviewed photos and determined the locations. Our Morning Reports in 1943 mention men moved from “Duty” to “Sk [sick] in Hospital,” above, so Thirsty 13<sup>th</sup> members may have been at one or both of these.

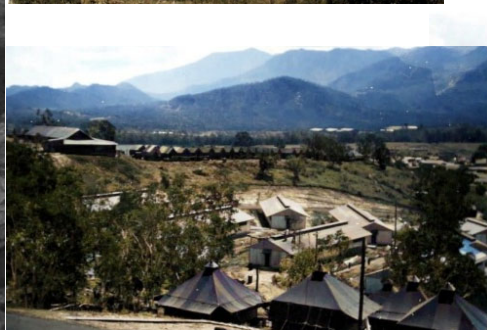
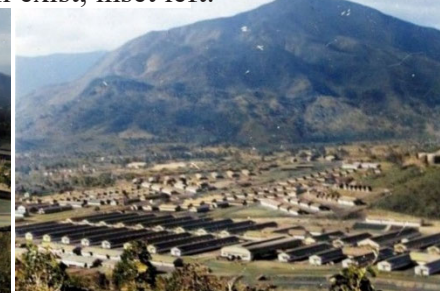
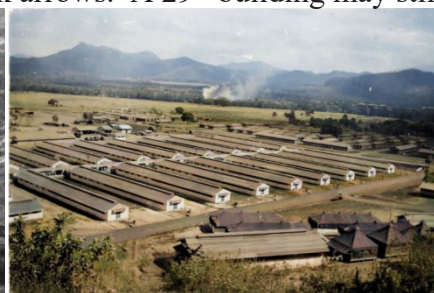
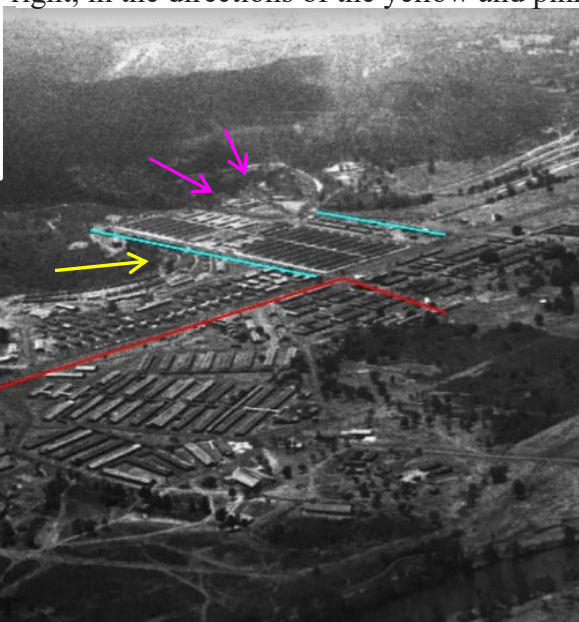
In the maps above, one drives north from Nouméa to Dumbéa, and turns NE on Rte de Koé. Then drive 4 km to Ferme de Koé (Koe Farm). The 8<sup>th</sup> GH is outlined in red, the 29<sup>th</sup> in blue. A bus stop near La Case de Koé has a sign, above right, for “Le 29<sup>th</sup> General Hospital.”

The 8<sup>th</sup> GH is below in 1943, and, below right is the area in 2026, with foundation areas outlined. Our colleague in New Caledonia, Marcel Claude, said chicken houses were built over the concrete slabs.

An overall view of the 8th General Hospital at the 13th Air Depot Group on New Caledonia. 27 September 1943.



Below left is the view south outlining parts of the 8<sup>th</sup> (red) and 29<sup>th</sup> (blue). The 29<sup>th</sup> GH is below right, in the directions of the yellow and pink arrows. A 29<sup>th</sup> building may still exist, inset left.



**c. 1945: Winston N. Howell, Mechanic, 6/45-9/45, Practiced for Shangri-La Rescue**

The book *The Thirsty 13<sup>th</sup>* on page 678 mentions the Balim Valley in New Guinea, which our crews would sometimes fly over on the way from Biak to Australia. On page 683, I note that a Fifth Air Force C-47 crashed there. The story of the woman and two men who survived was in US newspapers.

On June 28, 1945, a glider was dropped for the three survivors to board, and then a C-47 would fly low and a hooked line behind it would catch a raised rope connected to the glider to rescue them. The Fifth AF's 375<sup>th</sup> Troop Carrier Group did this.

In 2010 while researching the book, mechanic Harp said we were involved in this, but I never found a connection. On 2/8/25, when searching for relatives of mechanic Winston Howell (1917-2007), I found the article at right, from the Baldwin Times, in Bay Minette, Ala., 9/13/45.

Howell was a Master Sergeant with the 63<sup>rd</sup> TCS, and was assigned to the 13<sup>th</sup> TCS on June 1, 1945, and first slept in our camp on June 2. The article states he received a commendation because "in the early part of June, 1945, you were the winch operator on the plane which made the practice pick-ups of gliders at Wakde Island." It further notes "During the course of these practice pick-ups, you were injured when the steel cable towing the glider broke, damaging the winch and striking both you and the radio operator. Much of the success of the rescue mission must be attributed to your technical experience and expert abilities." The glider with the three survivors was flown out on June 28.

The Morning Reports do not mention Howell being gone overnight on Wakde, meaning he returned to our camp at Biak each night. Wakde is 145 miles Biak, 1 hour by air.

**d. 1945: Photos of Milton Bromberg, Mechanic, 12/44-9/45**

On 7/27/25, Bromberg's son, Paul, shared 14 of his dad's photos. Most were from the US. Below right is at Biak. I colorized it, but the flag's center was, of course, red. Thank you, Paul.

**Decorated Again Aided Victims Of Shangri-La Crash**

**Baldwin Sergeant Receives Commendation**

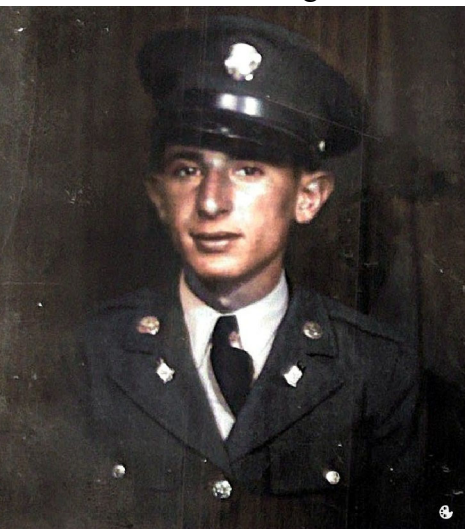
For his heroic efforts in connection with the Hidden Valley rescue, M/Sgt. Winslon Howell of Bay Minette has received a letter of commendation from Maj. Gen. Clements McMullen. Sgt. Howell played an important part in the rescue of the Shangri-la plane crash survivors.

The commendation reads in part as follows:

"It is appropriate that I express to you my personal appreciation and pride for the invaluable services you rendered in connection with the Hidden Valley rescue. I have been advised that in the early part of June, 1945, you were the winch operator on the plane which made the practice pick-ups of gliders at Wakde Island. During the course of these practice pick-ups you were injured when the steel cable towing the glider broke, damaging the winch and striking both you and the radio operator. Much of the success of the rescue mission must be attributed to your technical experience and expert abilities. I commend you for your part in the rescue and for your ability and devotion to duty. I am happy that your injuries were not serious or permanent. Your actions reflect the highest credit upon you and upon the Army of the United States."

Sgt. Howell, who is the son of Mr. and Mrs. Newton Howell, Bay Minette, is stationed with the Army Air Forces in Hollandia, New Guinea. He has been overseas since February of this year.

**WINSTON HOWELL**





## 2. History-Related Activities

### a. C-47 Wind Vane in Whitehorse, Yukon; C-46 in Fairbanks

On June 25, 2025, on a drive from Dallas to Prudhoe Bay, I stopped in Whitehorse, Yukon, at the Yukon Transportation Museum, at the airport, and saw their C-47 / DC-3 on a pole. This pivots as a wind vane. I learned about this in 2012, and it was fun to see it.



In WWII, as a C-47, this plane flew in China and India. In 1946, it converted to a DC-3 and flew for Canadian Pacific Airlines, based in Whitehorse, until 1960. From 1960-66 it was in Dawson City, and in 1966-1970 it was back in Whitehorse. Its last flight was in 1970.

In 1977, it was purchased for \$1 by the Yukon Flying Club to be restored and made into a static display. Local businessman and master welder Ed Jacobs had the idea to have it pivot on its pedestal, to work with the wind, not against it. In 1981, it was mounted on its pedestal. From 1998-2001, it was removed, restored, and remounted. It was moved to this location in July 2009.

On June 29, 2025, I was in Fairbanks, Alaska. I knew about a C-46 there and found it and photographed it, below, N1837M. It is owned by Everts Air Fuel. Their name is in red on the side. Inside are fuel tanks, at right. Everts delivers bulk fuel for heating and other uses to remote villages. In WWII, this was #44-78565. We had 44-78484, just 81 serial numbers less, so this is very similar to the C-46 our Thirsty 13<sup>th</sup> members flew on.



10001  
Bergstrom Field  
Austin, Texas  
June 20, 1944



Who is the "Ol' Boulder" ???  
The Ol' Boulder, legendary "Gold Brick" fashioned by Lt. Norman C. Baxter, 13<sup>th</sup> pilot (24 months overseas), has casually strolled through the pages of our life overseas a "Sack Rat," "Hot Pilot" and "Indefatigable Beer Hound." The "Ol' Boulder," somehow does his job well. We are the "Ol' Boulder"!

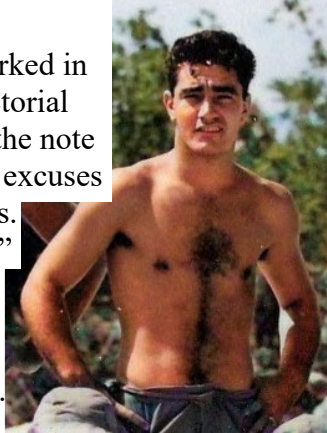
**b. C-47 Snafu pictured in Austin, Texas, in 1944**

In October, Cole's son, Russ, shared with me his dad's photo above of one of our original C-47, *Snafu*. The back has "Bergstrom Field, Austin, Texas, June 20, 1944." Years ago, Cole shared the photo at right of *Snafu*'s right side this same day. The engines, wings and vertical tail are removed. It may be a parts plane.



**c. The Ol' Boulder and Artist Norman Baxter**

On 1/27/26, the grandson, Eddie, of George P. Benedetto, at right in 1945, who worked in Supply, 8/44-9/45, emailed me photos of the four pages at left, some which I had, a pictorial from around 3/45, the beginnings of the squadron yearbook, *Two Years*. One page had the note above right. This states the Old Boulder was a "Gold Brick." To goldbrick is to make excuses to avoid work. This term was popular during WWII to describe soldiers dodging duties. He is also described as a "Sack Rat," a "Hot Pilot," and an "Indefatigable Beer Hound."



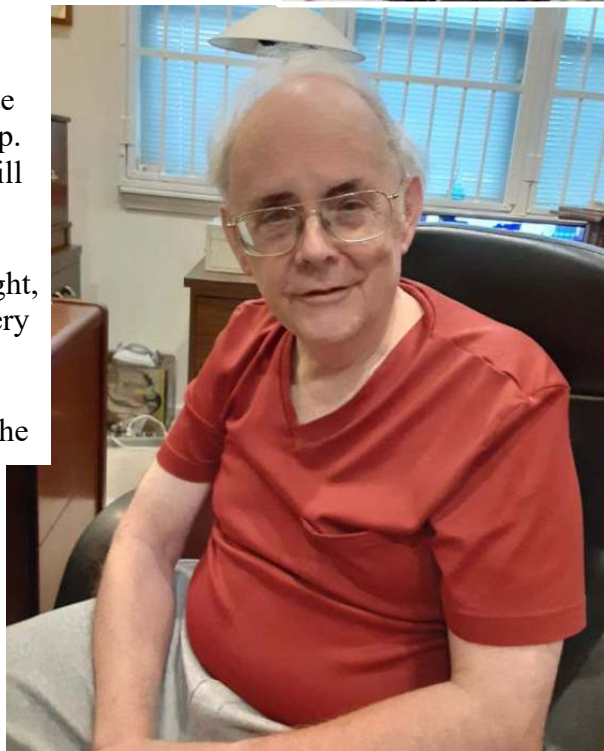
This also notes that Baxter, who drew the cartoon images of the Ol' Boulder, had been overseas for 24 months, since around May 1943. He enlisted 8/28/41, and joined us 11/8/43. The morning reports state he joined from the 68<sup>th</sup> Fighter Squadron on Fiji.

**d. Military Aircraft Historian Joe Baugher**

In July 2009 when researching the squadron, I found a website which listed our C-47s by serial number, and where they ended up. This was phenomenal. It let me know that our C-47 *Billie* was still flying in Puerto Rico, and what happened to many of the others.

This serial number website was created by Joe Baugher, at right, who lived in Hyde Park, Chicago. His database sought to list every US military aircraft ever made. Researchers loved his website.

On January 24, 2026, when looking up the C-46 pictured on the prior page, I learned his website had moved. Then I found his obituary. Joe passed away November 11, 2023, at 82. I thanked him many times by email, but, again, thank you, Joe Baugher.



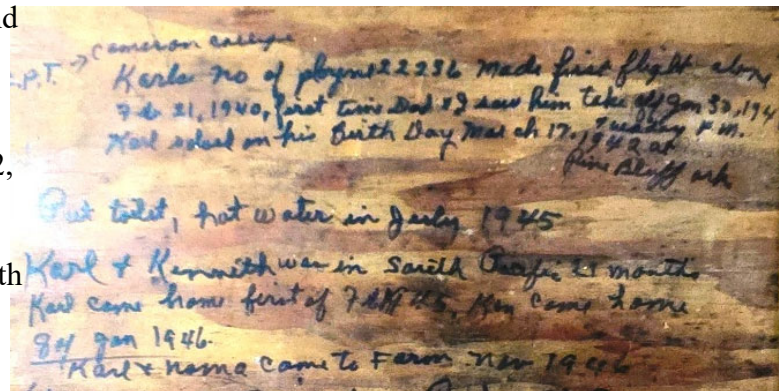
### 3. Relatives and Others

#### a. Activities

Activities subsequent to the last newsletter 4/19/25 were as follows:

- **4/19: Biedenbach's daughter, Karen,** emailed me that mechanic Homer Bowen had lived about a mile from their home in Downey, Calif., near Buena Park, and Bowen came over to her house many times in the 1960s for a beer with her dad, who joined the 13<sup>th</sup> TCS the same day as Bowen did. Karen wrote "I remember him being such a nice guy."
- **4/21: I received Michael Doyle's book *Nightmare in the Pacific*** about Artie Shaw, for which I provided quotes from our mechanic LaLonde. Doyle praised me for my help.
- **4/22: The wife, Mimi, of 64<sup>th</sup> TCS mechanic Arch Develin, emailed me.** Arch shared a lot and I visited him in NJ. He passed away 11/27/24 at 100 years old plus 10 months.
- **5/11: I shared with Michael Stowe of accident-report.com the WWII AF officer serial number database that was Steve Burris's life-work.** Steve's brother entrusted me with this after Steve passed away in July 2022 and gave me permission to share it.

- **8/7: I again visited 1943-45 pilot Peters' son Brent,** left, in Faxon, Okla. Brent found notes about his dad's flying on the drawer bottom at right: "Karl's no. of plane 22236. made first flight alone Feb 21, 1940, first time Dad & I saw him take off [was] Jun 22, 1940. Karl soloed [in the military] on his Birth Day, March 17, 1942, at Pine Bluff, Ark. Karl + [brother] Kenneth were in South Pacific 23 months. Karl came home first of Feb '45. Ken came home 8 of Jan 1946. Karl + Norma came to farm Nov 1946."



- **8/14: Blakeney's son replied to my 2016 message.** Great to connect with him finally.
- **10/18: The son, Roger, of Roger Leo St. Pierre,** Engineering, 1942-1945, the longest serving enlisted man for whom I had not contacted a relative, replied to my Ancestry message to him 1/15/25. He said Roger's two sons were stepsons, and he is the only blood relative, proven, but he never met his birth father. I tried for years to find the two stepsons. It was great to finally mark Roger St. Pierre's relatives as contacted.
- **11/15: Ewan Stevenson emailed me the Sealark Exploration Brief Field Report 25-01SOL** about finds and dives on an SBD Dauntless, a Corsair, and others in the Solomons.
- **12/7: I visited Cole's son Russ in New Jersey** and saw his dad's WWI-era mess kit, below.

#### 4. Conclusions and Thanks

It was good to learn about the Comanche Belle nose art name, New Caledonia hospitals, our role in the Shangri-La rescue, *Snafu's* return stateside, and Norm Baxter, and to contact relatives of more members. Thank you Paul Bromberg, Russ Cole, Eddie Benedetto, and others.

With best wishes,  
Seth

