

In another draft, in which only certain sailors were selected, Seal/c Cabral received orders to report to Port Hueneme Naval Base, south of Oxnard, California. Port Hueneme was a large Seabee Naval Construction Battalion base and training facility for Navy and Marine combat units. It was also one of the main embarkation ports on the West Coast for troops and cargo going overseas.

It was here at Port Hueneme that Warren received orders to report for duty to the Navy's first portable Argus Radar Unit, Argus Unit One. *"We had never heard of an Argus Unit and I don't know why I was selected, or what the criteria was for selection, but they were selecting only certain men to go. I was very surprised to be selected."* Also selected to be in the first Argus Unit was Sea2/c Bob Carberry. Warren and Bob would meet while undergoing advanced radar training and would become life-long friends. The two would also be virtually inseparable for the rest of their military careers. Others selected were: Johnny Castle, Johnny Frank, Herb Cofojohn, Allen Beaman, Marvin Bolt, Bob Burke, Bob Butler, Jim Coulter, Sam Ceasario, Stan Chives, Hugh Syms, John Funk, Ed Fazio and Louie DiThomas.

At Port Hueneme the secret Argus Units were being formed to provide radar coverage for the Marines who were to secure the future Pacific islands bases. *"They were designing radar units to land with the marines and immediately set up the portable hand cranked radar to warn the marines of any incoming enemy planes. Because radar was so new, we were not allowed to say the word, "Radar". It was that brand spanking new. We had to say we were going to "Radio School" if anyone asked. We learned the plotting board, how to read radarscopes, and how to plot targets. We were THE FIRST Argus Unit!"*

In addition to their radar instruction, the navy men were issued Marine equipment and put through the rigors of Marine Corp style training. Overseeing their training was recently returned "Guadalcanal Marines." These were veterans that had been rotated back to the States for the purpose of instructing new recruits. The training, in the Southern California sun, was long, hard, and rigorous. The navy men had to run the obstacle course, fight in hand-to-hand combat, practice throwing grenades, drill with the bayonet, and participate in live fire exercises. They also learned how to strip, clean and shoot the 9 lb. "03" Springfield rifle.

*"While practicing in one of the bayonet drills, one guy running behind me was so scared because the Marines were hollering at him, that he lunged at the straw filled dummy so hard that the bayonet went clear through the dummy and stuck into the post that was supporting it. The man panicked, and started to run with the bayonet still sticking into the post, bending the bayonet into a 90-degree angle. When the drill was over and we were sitting around in a circle resting, the Marines called the man over and really gave him a good chewing out."*

It was now early 1943, and the Allies were on the move in the south and southwest Pacific. With their training at Port Hueneme now complete, Argus Unit One was ready to be deployed. Sailing aboard the SS Kit Carson, their first stop would be to Oakland. After a short stay they then departed within a small convoy, screened by Canadian Corvettes, bound for the island of New Caledonia in the south Pacific. *"When we were going back out to sea, we went through the Oakland Estuary. As we passed the docks, all the workers stopped what they were doing and waved goodbye to us. My brother Jim was working there somewhere at the time and I looked to see if I could see him."*

The Kit Carson, a "Liberty Ship," was fitted out as a troop and cargo-carrying vessel. The holds of the ship not being used for Argus Unit One's equipment and other cargo were transformed into hammock-slung troop quarters. *"The ship was a converted Liberty ship and it was converted to take a lot of troops. I remember sleeping in a hammock at night and the hammocks would sway and creek as the ship rolled."*

*"Our ship had a plane on board that was radar equipped, it was lashed to the top of one of the cargo holds, and we were to take turns guarding it. We had a chair under a wing that we would sit in while on guard duty. One night it was my turn to guard the plane and I was sitting in the chair when a petty officer by the name of Powell came by. He didn't like me and I didn't like him. He told me to get off the chair and walk my post in a military fashion. I promptly flipped him off and told him where he could walk in his military fashion. I was put on report and lost one grade in rank. They gave it back a short time later."*

The tedium of the convoy was only broken by the Navy's traditional observance of the crossing of the Equator. In Latitude 00000 and in the "Domain of Neptunus Rex Ruler of the Raging Main", all the landlubbers went through the age-old ritual of being initiated into the "Solemn Mysteries of the Ancient Order of the Deep." It was at this point that all the men who had never crossed the Equator before went from being lowly Pollywogs to becoming Trusty Shellbacks, and gathered into the fold of the duly initiated. The Royal Jailer took Warren, along with the other Pollywogs, before King Neptune. While in his presence, he sentenced them to a series of punishments suitable for the uninitiated. As part of the initiation the men had to run a

gauntlet of people swinging clubs made from socks stuffed with rags and smeared with thick grease. They also had one of the fire hoses turned on them. *"One guy had his ear-drum burst when they turned the water on him and it hit him in the side of the head."* Another part of the ritual was the cutting off of the men's heads of hair. In the hot tropical sun, *"I got such a bad sunburn after they cut off my hair, that it never grew back the same."*

The initiations when crossing the equator were performed on all US naval vessels in the same basic form and were part of a long tradition. Although the SS Kit Carson was not a warship, Navy tradition was still upheld but to a lesser extent. All Pollywogs were given a signed certificate showing when they had been initiated as a Shellback and on what vessel the crossing had been made. All, both Pollywogs and Shellbacks usually had a good time. These groups were made up of both officers and enlisted men, one of the few times in the Navy when everyone was on an equal footing.

After 33 days of sailing, the convoy finally arrived in Noumea, New Caledonia. A large portion of men who had never been to sea before had become seasick because of the rolling of the ship. In a letter written to Norma, long after the unit had left New Caledonia, Warren wrote: *"I must admit the rolling didn't do me any good, but then it didn't do me any harm either. I guess I just about broke even... At first it felt like I had been on a big bender...Some of the boys got pretty sick but seriously it didn't bother me at all...I must be dumb not to get sick or shot. I know it can't be that I'm too smart."*

New Caledonia had become a strategic staging area for Allied troops heading to the forward areas. While Argus Unit One was on the island, the men were warned to not fraternize with the island inhabitants. Technically the island was a free French colony and allied with the United States, but some of its peoples loyalties were still with the French Vichy government. *"We were told not to talk to the people in Noumea because there was a lot of Vichy French there."*

Argus Unit One was then attached to the Advance Air Base Unit, Acorn 5. Acorn 5 was the nucleus for all the units needed to construct, operate, maintain and defend an advance air base. The men of Argus were "hidden" among all these units near the Magenta airstrip. For their first night's sleep on the island, the men put up their hammocks along with its protective mosquito netting. Mosquitos were ubiquitous and disease ridden and posed a great health problem on New Caledonia. *"We had just landed and that first night they warned us to sleep in our mosquito netting. We had hammocks that had a mosquito net over it. But Carberry refused, he said 'Arrgh, there's no mosquito's here', and just put up his hammock. He went to sleep. He was*

*a sound sleeper, and the next morning, he had been bitten by a 1000 mosquito's, and his face was so swollen he had to go to the Base Hospital to get medicated."*

While on the island the men were treated to New Zealand butter. *"We used to get this butter from New Zealand, it came in cans. It was the worst tasting stuff, didn't taste anything like butter! Well I was talking to this guy I had met from New Zealand and I told him your butter tastes terrible. He told me, 'Well we don't like your chili con commie either!'"* The other malady that the men faced was dysentery. Dysentery ran rampant through the closely packed troops on the base. Although Warren never got sick himself, others he new were wracked by its devastating effects. *"You could get dysentery anywhere in the south west Pacific. On New Caledonia, in the morning, along a pathway leading up to the latrine, you would see a line of shorts and pants where guys couldn't make it. They would take them off and just throw them away. I never got sick overseas, I don't know why. The other guys used to get mad at me and say one day I would get it and then they would be laughing, but I never did"*

After a short two-week stay on New Caledonia, Argus Unit One received orders to proceed to Townsville, Australia. *"We were loaded aboard an LST for the trip to Australia. Once on the ship we were assigned our bunks. The bunks were stacked and my bunk was the farthest up, right under the claxon. Every morning while I was asleep they would ring "General Quarters" and I would jump a foot. We were in a big convoy, but because of the dangerous area we were in they would go to General Quarters every day! Another thing that happened was that we were almost rammed by another LST. It was early in the morning, before sunrise and still pretty dark, when General Quarters sounded. We ran up on deck and saw this LST right along side us. You could have jumped on to their deck, they were that close! It wouldn't have hit us bow on, more like side to side. The people on both bridges must have been asleep at that hour of the morning. Something about ships a sea, they always want to come together!"*

Townsville was becoming a major staging area for U.S. troops going to the New Guinea and Solomon areas. Once in Australia, they were attached to the 12<sup>th</sup> Marine Defense Battalion. The Navy men were issued marine fatigues, rifles, and field equipment and once again trained with the Marines. *"We trained in Australia for quite a while. We were issued marine fatigues, rifles and everything. I had to practice throwing a hand grenade and here we were, Navy, and we were taking marine training."* In appearance it seemed that Argus Unit One had become more Marine than Navy.

Most of the time in Australia, the men were confined to the camp where playing poker was the principal past time. While there, the men were paid in Australian money and it took some time for the men to catch on to the currency they used. *"I can't catch on to the money they*

*have here... sometimes I win and still lose... In Australia they were paying us in pounds so that meant we had to play with pounds, shillings, florins, and pennies so big as half-dollars, so you see we got a little mixed sometimes. That's what I meant when I said you could win and still lose." On occasion though, they were issued passes to go into town. "Carberry and I went into town, we used to go to Townsville. There wasn't much to do in Townsville, we would go into town, maybe to eat and get a drink and then we would go back to the camp. One time Carberry and I were coming home and this Italian kid from our unit was on guard duty at the main gate. He had the runs so bad he had to lean on his rifle to walk his post. He was hunched over with his rifle dragging on the ground between his legs, he could barely walk, and as I came up to him, I told him to walk your post in a military manner! Here he is trying not to c \_ \_ p his pants and here I am telling him to walk his post in a military manner."*

It was while Warren was in Australia that he started corresponding with his future wife, Norma Caldera. The two of them had casually known each other since junior high school and from teen club functions. Norma was also a good friend of Warren's sister Annette and would often go to see Annette at her parents' home. While visiting with Annette and her mother Lottie, Norma was asked if she would be so kind as to write Warren. Up until that time the only mail he had received was mostly from his aunts, and he had plenty of them. *"Coming back from mail call today I was looking through the different letters I had received when I came across yours. Knowing the handwriting of everyone who writes me, your letter stopped me cold. Naturally, I opened it first. After reading the first paragraph my willpower got the best of me and I looked to see who had written it. Well, when I say I was surprised that's putting it mild. You could have knocked me over with a sledge hammer."*

At Townsville the months of training and honing the tactics of amphibious warfare were finally over. Operation Chronicle, the first amphibious landing in the Allies' overall Operation Cartwheel, had finally arrived. This would be the first of many landings in Cartwheel and served as the blueprint for all future landings in the Pacific War. This was also the only time in the Pacific war that engineers were put ashore weeks *ahead* of the main landing! Their job was to see if there were any Japanese forces on the island and if not they were to mark trails inland from the beach, select sites for supply depots and camps, mark for roads, open channels in the coral reefs for the LSTs and most importantly select the location for the airstrip.

The ships began to fill with men and equipment for their four-day voyage to *Woodlark*. The men of Argus Unit One were assigned to the USS LST 447. *"We were on LST 447, I will never forget that ship and number!"* Departing Townsville around midnight the convoy was formed up, and onboard the ships final preparations for the landing were being carried out. The

island, although small and seemingly inconsequential, was vital as an advanced fighter and naval base for the reduction of Rabaul. *"Carberry was angry when he learned the name 'Woodlark'. He wanted the name of the island to be something more exotic like Bora Bora. He said to me: 'Rock, the name Woodlark sounds like any ordinary name for an island off the coast of California'."*

The short time on board ship was spent in preparing for the D-day landing. Everything that could be done had been done in preparation for the mission. Equipment was checked and double checked and then checked again. Each individual unit went over their specific duties for when they hit the beach. Nothing, they hoped, had been left to chance or overlooked. The landing would be done at night, under the cover of darkness, so as not to alert any Japanese who may be on the island. If all went well the ships would be off loaded of all men and material and depart before daybreak so as not to be targets for reprisal air raids.

Arriving at Woodlark, the marines were the first to go ashore. The 12<sup>th</sup> Marine Defense Battalion was off loaded from their LSTs and raced off into the jungle. *"We were in the second wave off of the LSTs. I remember seeing an LST coming in with the bow doors open and the bow ramp was partially down. It was still offshore and had not stopped yet. All of a sudden a marine that was sitting in a jeep gunning the motor gave it the gas and he flew out the front of the ship, sinking the jeep."*

*"The marines landed and went right into the jungle looking to wipe out what few little pockets of Japanese that was there. We landed on the beach and set up the radar, but we were missing some parts because we didn't get it working right away. For that first night on the island we were told to dig foxholes. We dug the foxholes right on the beach and were told not to move around."*

The 60<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Seabees, landing among the initial units, quickly offloaded their equipment filled trucks, graders and bulldozers and made their way inland to start the surveying for the airstrip. The fighter strip was to be located in the former Guasopa coconut plantation. Construction began almost immediately and did not stop until the airstrip was complete. A record was set by the construction battalion for constructing an airstrip in the shortest amount of time. *"The Seabees landed with us. The Seabees on Woodlark Island got a Presidential Unit Citation. They cleared out dense jungle and the first plane landed in 12 days."* Units of the 112<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Regiment, 134<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery Battalion, 404<sup>th</sup> Combat Engineers, and other units totaling 2600 troops also arrived later that night.

While the Seabees were building the airstrip, Argus Unit One spent their time setting up their camp. Much work also had to be done in preparation for the installation of the portable

radar vans that in time were to be delivered. Sites had to be selected and roads had to be cut through the dense jungle. Days of backbreaking work had to be done in the rain and heat. The suntans the sailors had acquired from their previous days at sea and while training in Australia, had turned to a yellow color due to the anti-malarial tablets they were required to take. *"You asked me if I still had a suntan, well to tell you the truth my skin, and the rest of the boys for that matter, is as yellow as the Japs, if not more so. The reason for that is we have to take Atabrine tablets to keep down malaria and it makes your skin real yellow because it was first used as a dye, but later found out to be a prevention... if you do get it, these little yellow pills enables you to keep going and stay on your feet. Anyway right now we are all yellow as pumpkin's."*

It didn't take long for the Japanese to lash out against *Woodlark*. Bombers came down from Rabaul to bomb the island and its new inhabitants. *"We were told to dig foxholes, but we never dug one. The first air raid we had, they really blew the hell out of everything. I was on duty at the plotting board, doing plotting and that kind of stuff. Once the raid was over I went off duty and back to our tent. The other three guys from our tent, Carberry was one of them, were digging like crazy. They ended up digging a hell of a foxhole, 4 to 5 feet deep with sacks around it. Carberry was mad at me because I wouldn't help them dig, and he said, 'Rock they're coming back, and we ain't letting you in here,' and I said, 'Carberry, if they are coming back, I'm getting in there!'"*

During an air raid, the men of Argus Unit One, who were not on duty, were assigned to .50 cal. heavy machine guns emplaced around their camp. *"If we were raided, and I wasn't on duty, my job was to go to a .50 caliber machine gun nest that we had. It had sandbags all around it and 4 or 5 of us would have to go there. These guns were used if we were low-level raided. We never got to shoot the gun because the bombers were always too high and out of range."*

During one of the night raids, a fire loomed up in a clearing next to the Argus camp. *"Our camp was located in the midst of the jungle, but next to it was a clearing. There were no trees in the clearing just some low growth. Our camp was hidden from the air by the jungle and by camouflage netting. A road passed our machine gun nest, which was up on a hill, and then ran down past the camp. While we were under attack, a fire broke out in the middle of the clearing. It just came up, and grew to about 4 to 5 feet high. I said to the others, 'I will put it out, or I'll check it out, you guys cover me!' I said that because that is what they said in the movies. I didn't know what they were going to cover me with? Anyway, I ran to the edge of the jungle and then crept along the foliage. Then I ran out to the fire. I didn't know what had started the fire, but when I got to it I used my hands and helmet and shoveled a bunch of dirt on to it until the fire went out. The Japanese probably lit it as a signal that our camp was there. Our camp*

*was covered over by heavy growth, so they probably did light it. After the fire was out, I ran back into the jungle, and then crept back along the tree line to our machine gun. Anyway, one of the chiefs there said 'I'm going to put you up for a medal,' I told him, 'No, no medals. I didn't do anything to deserve a medal. All I did was put out the fire'.*"

The Japanese became very predictable in their bombing tactics. *"The Japanese would come down from Rabaul and we would be tracking them. They would come down towards the north end of the island. The crazy pilots that we had, they were not night fighters, they had Bell Airacobras. They would take off and try to disrupt them just north of the island. The Japanese then would swerve out and down towards the lower end of the island. They would turn around and then they would make their run and they would bomb us going back. They would do the same thing all the time. Every time they did it, they would do it the same way."*

On another occasion, Warren again found himself in harms way. *"The plotting room tent was manned by Navy Argus officers and enlisted men. There were also Marine and Air Force officers on duty there, which would relay radar information to their respective commands. During one raid, I was on duty in the plotting room. I was a "talker." I had the phones around my neck and I was in communication with other naval personnel. As the bombs started falling, all the men in the tent started to head for the safety of the slit trenches except for one. There was an Air Force officer, a pilot, a gutsy guy, he stayed there in the plotting room and continued to relay information to the Air Force. I looked at him and said to myself, 'If he's not going to get out of here, I'm not going either.' So there we stayed, through the entire air raid."*

The Argus men also had to pull duty at the remote radar sites that they had set up on the Okiduse mountain range. *"The truck mounted radar vans came in a couple of days to a week after the initial landing. They were driven up to some sites they had picked out on the mountaintops. That is where the trucks stayed. They were set up permanently. When we left Woodlark, we left them up there. They were up there so long that the tires rotted and that stuff."*

Some unusual diversions were thought of by the men to make the time pass more quickly at these stations. *"I was shipped up to one of these stations on the mountain for awhile. We had a lot of idle time there, so we would pick out a tree and we would all shoot at one spot till the tree fell over. We did it so much that we got orders from the base commander to stop because we were knocking down the camouflage netting that was to hide us and the Marine antiaircraft batteries."* Another pastime was the taking and developing of photos for keepsakes. A camera, paper, trays and chemicals were scrounged from the Air Force and a makeshift darkroom was set up in one of the Argus slit trenches. At night a wire was strung to the trench and a light bulb was attached to it. A red sock was placed over the light and the darkroom was in business.



Unfortunately one night the sock was left on the light bulb too long and it caught fire. That ended the darkroom activities.

The food on *Woodlark* was considered barely palatable. Most of the ingredients in the hot meals were of the canned or powdered variety. *"We have been eating nothing but rations, and I was surprised to find out they have dehydrated potatoes... I heard all about mom's potatoes, I sure hope she doesn't send me any as we get all them things we can use and then we get some more. I don't know where they are getting all those potatoes... They get about a sack of potatoes in one little can, and we get plenty of cans."* The men also tried to supplement their diet any way they could, sometimes with coconuts they picked up or with fish they caught. Occasionally they traded with the natives for fresh fruit. *"We were always hungry; the food was terrible on Woodlark! One time somebody said that there were peaches over there at the mess tent, so at night we snuck over, it was dark as hell. Gee it's dark in the jungle at night, anyway, we lifted up the tent flap and there they were. We grabbed two cans, "#10 tins" and took off back to our tent. When we opened them up, we found they were carrots!"*

The sanitary conditions on the island were very primitive. The latrine pit periodically was covered with lime to kill the bacteria and to keep down the odors and flies. *"We had a latrine, it was a four holer, and it was right next to the road. It was a lean-to shack on top of a pit; it kinda looked like a bus stop. Well one day I was using it when someone came by and dumped a load of lime into the pit. The chemical reaction to the lime causes a lot of bubbling and smoke. Well here I am, sitting there with smoke coming up all around me"*

The men in the unit had become friends with the local chief and his family. *"The other day I gave a little native kid a ride on a bicycle that we have around here. Boy did he think that was great. These little native kids are sure cute and they are pretty smart... When we first got here you could get almost anything for a few cigarettes, but it didn't take them a long time to find out the Yanks were a soft touch. They won't trade for cigarettes any more, now they want rain coats, flash lights and things like that."*

The letters from home were always a treat for the men, although their delivery time was somewhat unpredictable. Each letter when received was hungrily read, bringing a slice of home just a little bit closer. Many letters were received long after they were sent or after the unit had already shipped out. *"I received your letter today and I was surprised to hear from you so soon. This mail runs kind of funny. You can't figure it out. Sometimes it comes real fast and other times it takes a year to get here... The boys in my tent are starting to kid me about having a girl write me. They all knew I had no girl that was writing me and now I got them all fooled... I guess Sis has told you we were in New Caledonia and Australia... We are in the New Guinea area, just*

where I'm not at liberty to say. This place is nothing but jungle, rain and mud but you get used to it after a while. The next time you see Dorothy Lamour in some south sea island picture just remember it's just jungle and mud. Oh yes, there's one good thing about it, the women natives wear nothing but grass skirts, but they don't look like Dorothy Lamour."

After awhile as the Japanese raids became fewer and fewer, life on Woodlark became a series of endless dull routines. "There was a time, when we were on Woodlark Island, that 'time' weighted heavy on you. We were there about six or eight months when a notice came out that they were looking for V-6 candidates. V-6 was a flight program where you could take flight training. We thought, "Holly Mackerel" this is a chance to get off of this island. Let's go take the test! You had to go to the main headquarters, which we did, and we took the test. By that time peace was on the island, there was no bombing, and they had pretty good facilities. Carberry was the only one to pass, well he wasn't the only one to pass, there were a couple of other guys from our outfit that passed. About three or four days after they passed the test, those three got orders to go back to the states, but Carberry wouldn't go. He wanted to stay with his friends and shipmates! So the two of them left and one of the guys went on to flight school with the actor Jackie Cooper!"

Woodlark had grown into a major island base. The number of personnel had swelled to around 16,000 men. The base was now serving as a transition and staging point for all types of military units heading to more front-line areas. But for the original forces that had landed some months before, it was the same old island. Their moral had been ebbing away and any movies that they were able to get were already more than a few years old. "We had a movie the other night and guess what was playing; this will kill ya, "Tug Boat Annie Rides Again." Boy can Uncle Sam spare it? I guess the next thing they will dig up is "The Great Train Robbery." Maybe I'll get a chance to see Rudolf Valentino after all... The other day I was talking to a kid in the Army and he said, 'Say they got a new singing star in the states by the name of Sinatra and they say he's pretty good too.' I asked him if he hadn't heard of Frank Sinatra before this, to which he said 'Rocky I've been overseas for two years and when I left the states people were talking about Russ Colombo.'

In late summer of 1943, Argus Unit One received their first wartime rate raises. With a few exceptions, everyone was advanced one grade. Warren now became a Third Class Petty Officer (RdM3/c), while Bob Carberry became a Seaman First Class (Sea1/c). "The raises came blanket; they had no tests to take for Radar Operator. They thought if you were in the service for so long, you automatically deserved a raise. So all of a sudden a notice came along that said all Seamen First Class are now Third Class (RdM3/c) and you went up a rate. So I went up a rate

*and they went up another rate, but I was always a rate ahead of them. I ended up a Second Class Petty Officer when the war ended because no more raises came through."*

By November of 1943, Warren still had his tent mates wondering about his correspondence with Norma. *"You probably don't know it, but I sure have the boys I live with wondering about you. Naturally the biggest part of the conversation over here is about girls, girl friends, wives and I think food runs a close second. Anyway, I have tried to tell these guys a thousand times that I haven't got a girl but all I can get out of them is 'We know, we know'. Then they say, 'When was the last time you heard from Norma'. At first I tried to argue with them but now I find it's more fun to lead them on a little... The boys in my tent still don't know who you are and I sure get a kick out of them. They still think I'm holding something back on them and they would give anything to find out just who you are... You couldn't find a better bunch of guys to live with if you looked for years. Listen to this for names --- Herb Cofojohn alias Chigger, Allen Beaman alias Dr. Bug Eye, Bob Carberry alias Robin, John Castle alias School Boy, Marvin Bolt alias Tex, Bob Burke alias Lucky, and Bob Butler alias Dead Eye, that's some crew isn't it?"*

To the amazement of the men on Woodlark, a USO show was scheduled to stop at the island base. By late 1943, officials at the USO felt secure enough to send a troop of entertainers to Woodlark for a Thanksgiving show. *"One of the entertainers was Una Merkel. She was a comedic actress, a second line star. I don't remember who else was in the show. We got there early and had front row seats."* As it turned out the actor Gary Cooper, actress Phyllis Brooks and accordionist Andy Arcari were also members of the show. Cooper opened the show with some Benny and Hope gags and then he would introduce the girls. The actresses then danced and sang songs like 'I Cain't Say No' from Oklahoma. Cooper then returned and told some mildly sexy jokes then got together with Merkel and Brooks and did some comedy skits. Following them, Andy Arcari played some selected accordion tunes. After Arcari, Cooper gave, by popular demand, the Lou Gehrig farewell speech. For the finale the whole troupe gave the audience a rousing rendition of 'Pistol Packin' Mama.'

There was one social club on the island that Warren was not going to join; it was called the L.A. Lodge. *"Wait till I tell you about the Lodge the gang has over here. This will kill you. It's called the L.A.L. or in full, "Loved and Lost Lodge... In order to be eligible for membership you must lose an O.A.O. (One and Only) while in the service or overseas. There is also a probable class and a sweating class. So far we have sixteen regular members, eight probables and two sweating...In order to qualify for regular membership your O.A.O. must have tossed you over, gotten engaged or married. If this happens to a member twice he gets a silver star and*

*three times a gold star. We have one gold star member... To qualify as a probable member your letters from the O.A.O. must be cooling off... The next class is the sweating class. This is the last class before becoming a regular member. This is how it goes. Up until this time you have been a probable member in good standing, but your romance has reached the climax and you have sent the O.A.O. that fatal letter asking her if she still loves you. If the answer comes back something like 'Oh Herbert, of course I still love you. Why, I have only been out with two different parties since you left and they were "Republicans and Democrats."' Brother you have just joined the L.A.L. Lodge."*

For the people back in the United States it was holiday season, Christmas and New Years were coming and there was a festive air about the country. For the men on *Woodlark* though, the holiday time had lost some of its meaning. It was just another couple of months on the island away from home and family. *"I sure hate to think of the holidays coming up and I have to be 10 thousand miles from nowhere, but there's a war on I guess and someone has to be over here. On second thought, why does it have to be me? It hardly seems like Christmas over here as the boys very seldom talk about it and except when a package comes in marked "Merry Christmas" we would never know the holidays were coming up. We all hope this thing is over this time next year, but from this side it still looks like a long up hill battle... I received your Christmas gift yesterday... It's something I wanted (shaving kit), it's something I can use and yet that is all secondary to the idea that being the thoughtful person that you are, you remembered me at a time like this... I not only appreciated the gift, but the thoughtfulness of the person that sent it."*

In early 1944, the men of Argus Unit One had been overseas for approximately 10 months. Time and the elements had taken a toll on the men and their equipment. The unit had been on *Woodlark* so long that many of the men had "gone native." Much of the equipment they had landed with had become so corroded that it was useless. Advances in radar technology had also rendered their primitive units obsolete. *"If it is not one thing it's another. The latest, tent 47 is wiped out by fire, that is my tent by the way. The gang and myself are just a bunch of homeless sailors at present... I was on watch at the time when Johnny Castle called me up and told me our tent was burning down. At first I thought he was just kidding me so I said, 'let it burn,' 'OK' he said, 'We can't put the damn thing out anyway' and hung up. About that time another kid called me and told me our tent was burning, so I thought I had better get down there. Sure enough the thing was burning and the guys were still trying to get things out of it. Bug Eye went in and was trying to get his bunk out when some ammunition we had in there started to go off. Boy you should have seen him come flying out yelling, 'Hay what's going on around here.' It wasn't funny to him, but everyone else got a big kick out of it... We lost quite a bit of stuff, but most was*

*GI equipment that can be replaced... Some letters that I had just received burned a little around the edges... I had already read them and they were not completely destroyed. It's a lucky thing I had taken your picture out of the letter or it would have been a little burned around the edges."*

By March 10, 1944, Argus Unit One had been overseas for close to one year. *"Well, in twenty one more days we will have been over seas for one solid year, not bad huh, or is it? It seems much longer than that to me, in fact it's getting so I can't remember what I did before I joined the Navy... I often wonder how long we will be over on this side of the world, but I do know this thing can't last forever."* Also, the torrential rains that the men had known when they first arrived had come again to Woodlark Island. *"I guess the rainy season has set in as it rains almost every day now... I used to like to be in bed and listen to the rain, but not anymore. It rains so much and so hard over here that these tents we have can't seem to hold it out. That means that we have to put raincoats over our mosquito nets in order to keep our bunks dry... The lightning here lights up the whole sky as bright as day and the thunder is not like the rolling kind such as I'm used too, but the kind that cracks like a cannon right behind you."*

When not on duty, but confined to their tents because of the rain, they did get some enjoyment from the radio broadcasts from Tokyo. *"We just got through listening to radio Tokyo and it was sure good. They have the best swing records that we get to hear and their news is better than the Jack Benny program. To hear them tell it, they have sunk our fleet about ten times and completely destroyed our air force... The best program they have is called "Madame Tojo" as she plays a lot of swing records... Every once in a while she plays something like "Old Black Joe" to try to get us home sick, but we really get a kick out of it."*

All the men, who had landed on *Woodlark* back in June of 1943, were due for some R&R (Rest and Relocation). *"A few months ago I thought we were going to move but quick. Now I know we are going to move but... I've stopped trying to figure out how the Navy does things and I guess the Japs have too."* Around May 1944, the unit finally received the welcomed news that they were to be flown to New Guinea. They were finally going to leave the island that had been their home for the past 12 months. *"We were flown from Woodlark to New Guinea. We may have gone to a rest camp there, I don't quite recall, I do remember wherever it was, we had to eat standing up. We were finally sent to Port Moresby though. When we were passing through there, I remember going to eat in a mess hall they had there. We shared part of the hall with some GI prisoners. They would march these guys in and line them up at a table, the prisoners could not talk, and they were all standing at attention. The guards were all armed and they would set up a .30 caliber machine gun on the end of the table. When one of the guards ordered SIT, they all sat down, but they still had to stay at attention. The guard would then order, EAT! They*

would then pick up their knife and fork and start to eat. After awhile the guard ordered STOP, down went the utensils, no matter if they were finished or not. He then ordered them to stand at attention and finally they would all march out. These were American soldiers who were battle-weary, or out of their heads. These guys had done or seen terrible things and it made them crazy. It was depressing having to eat there."

At Port Moresby the men were kept busy with one detail after another. "While we were at Port Moresby we were put on work details to keep us busy. Carberry and I, along with some other guys, were on one of these details unloading a ship that was in the harbor. I'll never forget it, we were unloading frozen lambs. They were stiff as a board. We were loading them on to trucks when all of a sudden our unit comes by in some trucks. They are all yelling at us that we're going home, to come on and hurry up. We didn't want to be left behind, so we dropped the lambs and ran back to our barracks where we loaded up our things and then ran back to the trucks."

"While we were in Port Moresby, one of our guys, Louie DiThomas, had burned himself while doing his laundry. He was burned rather severely attempting to fuel a washing machine that the Seabee's had rigged up at their camp. Louie was going to wash his clothes in preparation for going home. The machine was a real "Joe Magee" type thing, and ran on a gas mixture. While mixing the fuel, he accidentally spilled it on himself and it somehow caught fire. One of the other guys saw him burning and ran over to him and put out the flames. He was so badly burned on his arms and legs that he had to go to the hospital. It was while he was in the hospital that he missed going home with us. If our unit hadn't come by when it did, Carberry and I would have missed going home too."

"We were flown from Port Moresby back to Australia where we were to board a Norwegian ship that was sailing back to the States. The ship was taking troops and a lot of wounded back to the states; its name could have been the Torrens. There were a lot of wounded aboard and we could hear them moaning on the way back home." It would take another 30 days before they would debark in San Pedro, California. In early June, the ship finally docked in the U.S.A.

Argus Unit One had been overseas for a total of 14 months. Some of the Argus men were formed up with the remaining men of Argus Unit Two. Together they would form the basis for Argus Unit Three. For Warren and Bob Carberry though, new adventures awaited them and thus ended the Woodlark odyssey of Argus Unit One and Warren Cabral.