ARMY FLASH: TODD 8

by BUD GARNER

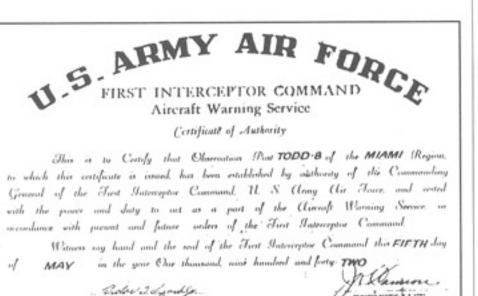
The years of war were rapidly approaching this country in 1940 and 1941. Already the tranquility of our small town of Pompano shattered rather abruptly in the early morning hours of December 4, 1939, when windows rattled and the ground shook with the offshore sound of warship cannon fire jarring people awake.

The British cruiser Orion had happened upon the German freighter Arauca as it steamed along the coast. In trying to intercept, Orion had fired a warning shot across the bow of the German ship which had turned toward the coast to get inside the protective three mile limit of the United States and escape the British manowar. Britain was already in a declared war with Germany.

The Arauca made it into Port Everglades, and the Orion steamed back and forth just outside the three mile limit hoping it would be deprived of sanctuary and be forced to leave. This never happened. The German freighter was allowed to remain in port, with the crew restricted to the ship, guarded by sheriff's deputies. When the United States declared war on Germany after the attack on Pearl Harbor by the Japanese, the crew of the Arauca was interned in a POW camp, and the ship was towed to Mobile, Alabama, where it was overhauled and placed in service in the U.S. Merchant Marine. The townspeople had other evidence of war. Huge amounts of debris washed up on the beaches of Pompano, and German submarines torpedoed ships all along the coast of Florida. My buddies and I actually found bodies and

With German submarines attacking Allied shipping off Florida's Atlantic coast, and the armed forces establishing major training bases throughout the region, World War II made a direct impact on virtually every resident of Broward County. Here, Bud Garner recounts his experiences as a young volunteer observer on Pompano's lonely and sometimes frightening beach during the war. As he points out, his contributions to the war effort in this regard exemplify the dedication of countless citizens thoughout Broward County and the nation who did their part to win the war.

E. L. "Bud" Garner moved to Pompano in 1927, when he was nine months old, and graduated from Pompano High School. He served in the Navy in the Atlantic, Pacific, and Mediterranean during World War II, farmed, and was employed by the W. R. Grace Company for thirty years. Now retired, he is the recording secretary of the Pompano Beach Historical Society, and a member of the Naval Air Station Fort Lauderdale Historical Association.



Todd-8 observation post certificate (courtesy of Bud Garner).

body parts at times, and the dense black smoke to the east in the ocean and the dull red glow after dark was testimony to the fact that ships were burning and sinking offshore.

When the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, events in the peaceful community of Pompano escalated almost overnight. Gone were the carefree days we were used to. Immediately, U.S. soldiers appeared at the bridge across the East Coast Canal (Intracoastal Waterway) on Ocean Drive (now Atlantic Boulevard). To this day I don't know where they came from. I had never before seen a soldier in Pompano.

From then on, everyone had to have a pass to cross the bridge to get to the beach. At night you could not cross unless you had proof that you lived there or had official business. Because of blackouts, the headlights of cars were painted black, except for a half-inch strip to drive by, and we also observed blackout rules in our homes at night. If the blackout warden saw lights from your windows, he would knock on your door to give you a warning. The call went out for volunteers for a multitude of committees, boards, and groups being formed by the military to assist in civil defense. The one I joined at age fourteen provided help for coastal defense

and was under the direct control of the U.S. Army and the Fighter Command. It was named the AWS (Aircraft Warning Service) and became a network of lookout posts along the entire Florida coast.

Mr. A. L. Brown of Pompano was appointed "Chief Observer" of the Ground Observer Corps, Aircraft Warning Service, First Fighter Command, U.S. Army Air Corps, in a volunteer capacity in TODD 8. This authority was vested on May 5, 1942, by Brigadier General J. K. Cameron, U.S. Army. Mr. Brown would be assisted in this job by Bob Pool and Spooney Williams. The lookout posts would be manned by volunteers twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, terminating with the end of the war, whenever that would be.

I was a volunteer for this operation along with dozens of other citizens in Pompano, some of them standing two four-hour shifts to fill in gaps when needed. We attended a training session that would prepare us for this job. An arm band and an I.D. card with the AWS logo was issued to all the "spotters."

There was a telephone in the lookout towers built on the beach just a little above the high tide mark. The phone linked us with the U.S. fighter command in Miami, and when we spotted an airplane or anything of an

unusual nature, we were to fill out a form that described the incident or plane in detail. We reported the number of planes, type, altitude, where they were seen or heard, observation post code name, directions of planes from post, distance of planes, and headed in what direction. The procedure was then to pick up the phone, say, "ARMY FLASH, Pompano 2345" (post phone number), give our spotting post code name, TODD 8. They would answer, "Army Central, go ahead," and then read off the information we had gathered on the incident or object.

Many, many interesting things happened on these watches both day and night. Unfortunately, the logs we kept cannot be found, despite exhausting searches by myself, Leroy Brown (son of A. L. Brown), newspaper reporter Eliot Kleinberg of the Palm Beach Post, and others.

My watch was from 2:00 a.m. until 6:00 a.m. every Saturday morning. Duane Howell and I stood this watch together, just two scared fourteen year olds on that cold, dark, spooky beach alone with one flashlight between us (which we were not allowed to use). The Coast Guard mounted patrol was stationed at the Silver Thatch Inn a few hundred feet north of our lookout post, and the men that rode their horses on the beach would pass our place about once an hour, except when it was foggy and visibility was almost zero. On those nights, they would ride on the beach road, which was close to a hundred feet behind us. This made us the "front line" of defense between Pompano and Germany, and those nights were a thousand years long.

We made many reports in those early morning hours. Many times Duane and I would hear the diesel engines off in the darkness of the ocean. They were from submarines running on the surface and recharging their batteries. Our "ARMY FLASH" on some of those sounds resulted in surface or air actions by either the Army, Navy, or Coast Guard. Several times we saw flares from ships and depth charges dropped.

Duane and I still remember what happened long ago on one dark, foggy night when clopping horse's



A. L. Brown's commission as chief observer (courtesy of Bud Garner).

hooves on the paved road reminded us just how alone we were on that dark beach. First, we heard scratching and bumping at the base of the tower. Something or someone was trying to get the door open to the stairs that led up to our post! We dared not shine our light, and it was too dark and foggy to make out anything but a large, black shape about twenty feet below us. We knew it was not the Coast Guard; he had already gone past on the road some time earlier. It just so happened that Duane had brought his dad's German Luger pistol with him this night, and we were feeling a little better knowing at least we weren't defenseless. Duane and I whispered our fears to each other and discussed what our course of action would be. Who knows, this might be a life or death situation-what did we know? Duane chambered a round, and the gun was ready to shoot if the occasion arose. We continued to watch the object, and it seemed to be getting more aggressive and trying hard to get inside. Duane said, "I am going to shoot if they get inside." I told him to go ahead. He aimed the gun down towards the object and kept the weapon pointed a long time as we

tried to make the intruder out. I told Duane that maybe I had better shine the light on it and take our chances on getting reported rather than maybe shooting someone. He agreed, and I took the light and told him that I would point it down towards the object and just flash it on and off quickly. Then we could see what it was that was about to get shot.

The light from the flashlight on that dark night was so bright it nearly blinded us, but before I snapped it off, the object of our fearful concern leaped back and away from the tower. Only then could we see a very large black dog. He took off running down the beach, leaving us shaking and quaking.

On another night, the sky was suddenly lit-up close to our post by brilliant flashes of light and sparks which lasted for a minute or so. We never did discover the source of that light. We did get a return call from "Army Central" later that morning, quizzing us about the lights.

After I left for the service in May of 1943, I was replaced by Wesley (Junior) Harper to stand watch with Duane Howell. Duane tells of an incident that happened just before dawn one night that year. The sound of diesel engines was heard offshore and the call to Army Central made. The Army fighter command then called the Coast Guard base at the Silver Thatch, and a Guardsman was dispatched to the look-out post on horseback. By this time it was beginning to get a little light, and Duane, Junior, and the Guardsman could faintly make out the outline of a submarine. Then a Navy patrol blimp arrived. Duane heard gunfire, then saw flashes of light. He said that the blimp appeared to be hit by gunfire and dropped down towards the ocean.

About this time, a surface patrol craft appeared and joined in the firing at the submarine. Duane said it looked as if the sub was in some desperate trouble, and the patrol craft put men on the deck of the sub. Eventually, a tow line was secured, and the patrol boat started towing the sub to the south. All of this was observed by the men in the tower plus the Guardsman, who was relating

the action over the phone to Army Central. The whereabouts of the blimp was lost, and it wasn't seen again. By this time, the watch changed, and Junior and Duane had to leave the post. During the next several days they tried to find out details of this incident but were unsuccessful.

Rumors circulated around that on the submarine fresh loaves of Merita bread baked in Fort Pierce were found. Duane says this was an actual happening and was duly reported and is part of the official record as they recorded it in the log of "TODD 8."

Hilda Davis and Frances Allison (maiden names) were manning their post on the afternoon of December 5, 1945, and their log entry showed they spotted and reported five TBM torpedo bombers eastbound south of "TODD 8." They believed this was U.S. Navy Flight 19 from Fort Lauderdale, the "Lost Patrol" that vanished in the "Devil's Triangle" with fourteen men aboard who were never seen again.

The people of Pompano, whose efforts in the civil defense and other related aspects of the war effort were multiplied by thousands of other communities, helped bring an end to the war just over fifty years ago. The seven young men from Pompano who gave their lives to help win this war will always be remembered, and to them Pompano is eternally grateful. They are:

- MARION FUGATE USN
- JAMES "SOCKS" HARDIN USMC
 - DEVAN KNIGHT US ARMY
- STERLING McCLELLAN ARMY AIR CORPS
 - HARVIN MULKEY ARMY AIR CORPS
 - JAMES MULKEY ARMY AIR CORPS
 - H. C. ROWLETT US ARMY

