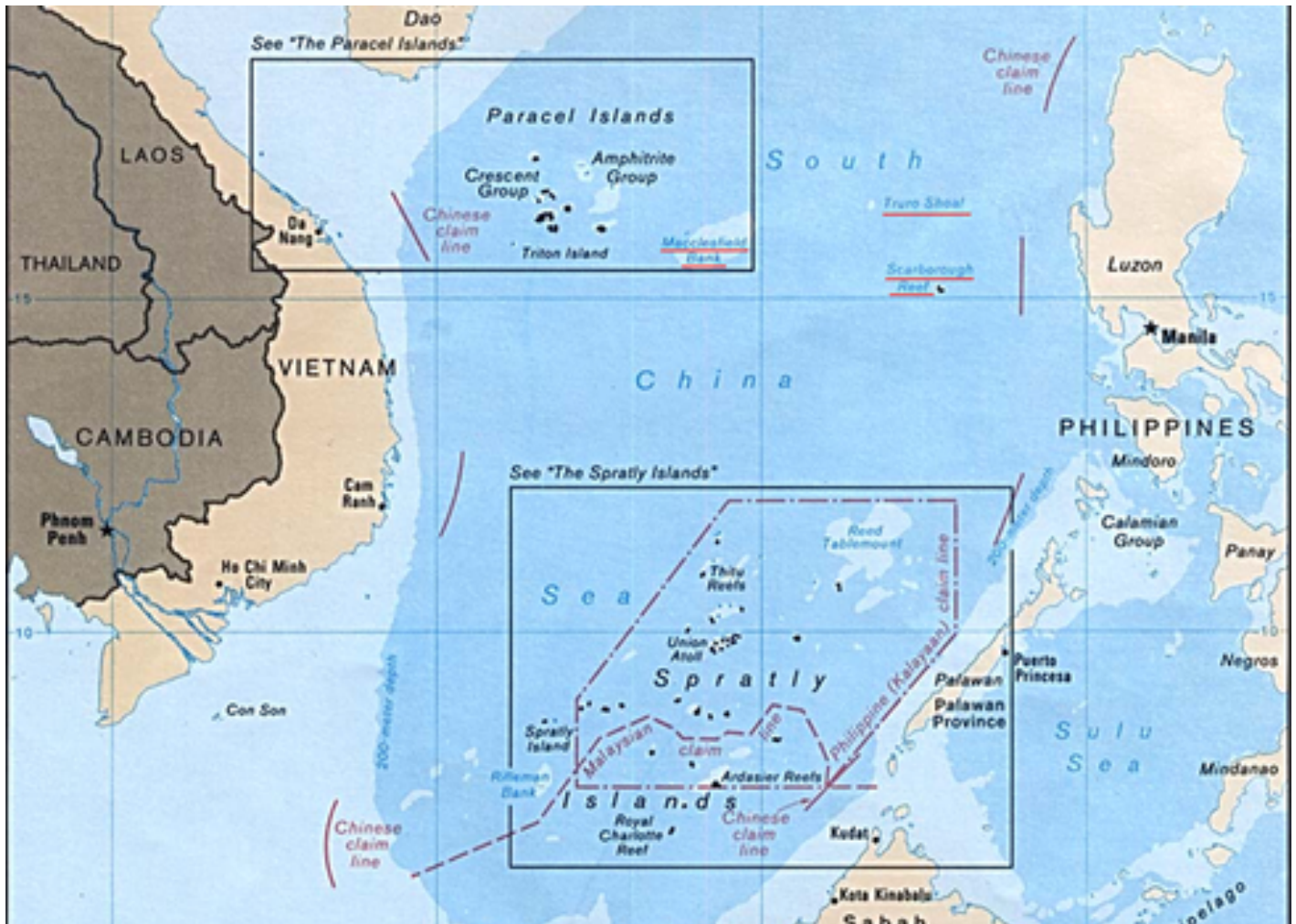


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# CFBC VETERANS

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**General MacArthur's South Pacific Command  
CFBC WW II Veterans were part of this Command**



**Prayer: Deacon Delbert Dunnigan, Army and Army National Guard**

**Welcome: Warren I. Dungee, Marines-Vietnam-Purple Heart**

**Powerpoint Display of All CFBC Veterans**

**Special Celebration of CFBC WW II Veterans Burnett, Elliott, Jr., and Pritchett**

## Thomas Burnett

Mr. Thomas Burnett went into the Army Air Corps which later began the U.S. Air Force. He was 19 years old when he went in and served as a T-5 from 1945-1947. His military specialty was first as a clerk-typist, then as a head clerk, where he was responsible for morning reports (e.g., personnel movement, TDY, etc.).

Mr. Burnett spent 13 weeks in boot camp at Shepards Field, Wichita, TX where he was restricted to the base. Afterwards, he went to military school in Tampa, FL. During that time the Army Air Corps changed into the Air Force. Whenever they went into town, the Black soldiers rode in the government issue (GI) trucks. Mr. Burnett was with soldiers from his home town of Philadelphia and Pittsburg, PA that were not used to such treatment. Once, while in Tampa, he wanted to buy one of the flags being sold for family members to place in their windows when they had a soldier serving, but the clerk in the Tampa store told him they were sold out. Then, right afterwards, a white soldier came into the store and the clerk sold the white soldier one from a full drawer of flags.



Black soldiers traveled into Tampa by GI truck to the USO. The USO was located near Central Avenue. Central Avenue was a street with movie theaters, eateries, and a carnival at the end. You could only walk up and down Central Avenue and you had to be back at the base by midnight. If you got caught in town after the last truck and were seen walking on Central Avenue, then you were locked up. No one cared if you were sick or lost if you were found off-base after midnight you were locked up. So, a lot of guys ended up sleeping in the graveyard—since no one ventured into the cemetery to arrest you.

Twice Mr. Burnett was delayed enroute transit (given time off from going from one place to another) and went home to Philadelphia to see his parents.

**MEMORABLE EXPERIENCES:** Once, while he was delayed enroute, Mr. Burnett went by military transportation going up North and got off in Memphis, TN to buy a commercial train ticket to Philadelphia. It was 1945 and he was in uniform (with all his belongings in a military canvas bag) waiting to purchase a train ticket. He didn't think much about being ignored because he naively assumed the ticket master was walking back and forth behind the counter busy with something. Then a military policeman (MP) walks up to him and asks "what are you doing, where are you going, and let me see your papers." Mr. Burnett advised he was waiting to buy a ticket to go home. The MP informed him he had to go outside to the back of the building to buy the ticket at a very small window to purchase from this same station master who had been walking back and forth. Mr. Burnett then realized it was because he was Black and he would receive no special treatment because he was in uniform.

Another experience was when he was traveling by train from Philadelphia to Tampa. The train coaches were segregated and filled up with people, so hundreds of soldiers had to stand in-between the coaches on the outside of the train. Once, when the segregated coach for Blacks was not as full, he was able to go inside to sit down. Afterwards, he went back out and told the three white sailors to come into the “Jim Crow” car to sit down but they wouldn’t do it because they thought they would get in trouble. This didn’t seem right to him that the white sailors had to stand up outside when seats were available in the “Jim Crow” car.

Mr. Burnett also remembered when he went home and was walking (in full military uniform) in the neighborhood with his mother, he was too cool to speak when his mother was talking to a neighbor. Afterwards, his mother hit him in the back of his head because he hadn’t spoken. Here he was a soldier in full military dress and his mother hit him in the back of the head.

Before he was deployed to the Philippines, Mr. Burnett stopped for a while in Utah. He remembers the 18 degrees cold temperatures, having to go outside in the cold to take a shower in another barrack – there were no showers available in the Black barracks – and since he was restricted to the base due to deployment, he never left the base.

His military specialty began as a file clerk. However, when Mr. Burnett applied for the position of clerk-typist, he was required to take a typing test. The white soldier in charge stated he didn’t believe Mr. Burnett could type. Mr. Burnett took the test with ferocity (by slamming the carriage back quickly and so forcibly that they passed him without reviewing the test). At this time he was making \$50 a month and would receive a 10% increase when he was deployed overseas.

**Stationed in the Philippines:** There were two Non-Commissioned Officer Clubs (one white the other Black). A number of Black guys had stayed in the Philippines after WWI and operated their own businesses (clubs, eating places, etc.) so the Black soldiers usually patronized those.

In his job as head clerk for his company, instances occurred when guys married quickly without authorization and then questioned Mr. Burnett about money allotments, which he had no control over.

Mr. Burnett liked the Philippines and their people. He liked the “horse and buggy” or “man and buggy” that served as taxis. He did not like the way the Japanese had treated the Philippines people and the way they were still treating them – since there were still Japanese soldiers in the mountains. He learned that after destroying a village, Japanese soldiers buried people alive and took the young girls to sexually ruin them. After assaulting the girls, the Japanese would cut a plug out of their legs to mark them as damaged goods because they had been with the Japanese.

**Returning Home from Military Service:** Mr. Burnett was glad to leave the Philippines (even though they offered him a chance to work with the WW II War Council if he remained there). He wanted to go home and participated in some serious rest and relaxing with family and old friends.

Before Mr. Burnett went into the service he worked for Westinghouse in Philadelphia. Back then, if you had worked for a year your employer would fill out a military form saying that you exhibited good conduct—and job would be waiting for you when you came home. So, when he left the service and came back home, Westinghouse allowed him 1 year off before he had to go back to work. Mr. Burnett took a chance because there was no guarantee a job would be available when he wanted to come back.

Initially, Westinghouse hired Mr. Burnett back as a materials handler (Blacks either worked in the receiving or transportation departments or as janitors or laborers). He shoveled sand out of a box car which was much better than the original job they had offered him as a janitor making 75 cents an hour.

Fortunately Mr. Burnett worked with a Jewish Receiving Clerk who trained him to do that job. So when the Receiving Clerk retired, Mr. Burnett was the most highly qualified for the job. He didn't get the job right away, but it eventually happened, and Mr. Burnett became the only Black in the receiving department who wore a shirt and tie to work. Sometimes, truck drivers would walk past him—even when they needed his okay to sign off for something.

Once, during the celebration of Dr. Martin Luther King's birthday, most people were able to take a day off with pay, but Mr. Burnett's immediate supervisor told Mr. Burnett he had to work and couldn't take off. The Westinghouse General Manager went over the immediate supervisor's head and made sure Mr. Burnett had the day off. At the time, Mr. Burnett was supervising 133 guys.

Another time, Mr. Burnett had a boss that came to his house in 1955 when Westinghouse was on strike and asked Mr. Burnett to come to work by stepping across the strike picket line. Mr. Burnett told him "no" he couldn't do that. At the time, Mr. Burnett was a union shop steward. Mr. Burnett was a dedicated union man even though at the time Blacks weren't invited to the National Conventions and were not allowed to vote. He, along with others, presented this unequal treatment case to the National Convention and eventually they gained the rights to become chief shop stewards so they could attend national conventions and vote. During that time of the union strike, they were led by a strong Black union man who always told them "when you are asked to do something you shouldn't be doing—then go the other way."

**Continuing Education:** Mr. Burnett went to school to become a court steno-recorder. He went to school in the morning and worked at Westinghouse at night. He had to catch public transportation while carrying his large steno-type machine (worth approximately \$500) around with him. Since he went straight to work after school he had to get special permission to carry the steno-type machine into Westinghouse.

**Feelings about 2014:** According to Mr. Burnett - everything is crazy now. Parents are not doing their jobs. They are the blame for what our kids are going through now. We've let our kids down, because we didn't want our kids to go through what we went through.

In Cornerstone we have scholarships available to give to high school students and the parents don't file the application forms to get the funding. So there are \$1,000 scholarship funds not getting used.

His Father always told him: (1) Get your education (2) Buy Dirt and Don't Rent and (3) If you steal you have to lie—these two go hand in hand—so don't do either one.

The only advice he has for young men in 2014 is to listen to your parents and grandparents. If you don't have concerned parents then you need to join a church and listen to your Pastor. You must respect your Elders and learn from them.

### **Carl Elliott, Jr.**

Mr. Carl Elliott, Jr volunteered at the age of 18 years to serve in the U.S. Air Force (rank T-4) from 1943 - 1945. He had volunteered in New Jersey with some other guys but those guys didn't pass the test—so Mr. Elliott ended up being the only one in his group to be accepted. He tried to back out but could not.

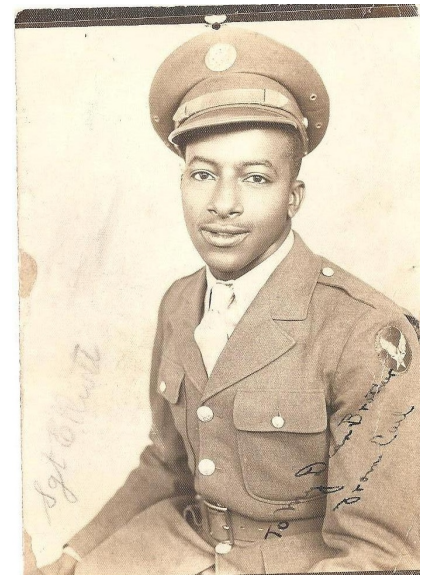
He went to military boot camp in St. Louis, MO then on to technical school in Boston, MA, for drafting and topographic survey. His military specialty was to go out with the survey teams and take notes about the land.

After school he was transferred to California to a different company that was being deployed overseas. At first he was a little upset because he didn't know anyone there but was very happy when he ran into someone from his same high school. His military outfit was a Black engineering unit with white officers.

He traveled 30 days on boat from San Francisco, CA to Australia. This was during WW II and he served in the South Pacific - mostly in the New Guinea-Biak Islands Campaign. When he arrived in the New Guinea Islands he was right in the jungle, but he didn't come in contact with any natives. The only time he saw one was when a New Guinea male with a shotgun was walking down the trail with a couple of women and the native waived the soldiers away from them.

When he went over to Manila in the Philippines - he had both good and bad experiences. In Manila he went to a bar with some other Black soldiers and the white soldiers told the bar owner to get them out of there because they didn't want Black soldiers in the bar with them. So, they found a bar "The B-29" that was owned by a Black man who had been there since the Spanish-American war. Afterwards, they always made sure they visited that bar.

**MEMORABLE EXPERIENCES:** Once, when he was in New Guinea, the Japanese dropped bombs in an area right where his group had just left. That was an experience he never forgot because they had just moved out and the Japanese came over and bombed that area up.



Another experience was when he first understood what tracer bullets were. When he was in the Biak Islands, his whole outfit would be out at night and they would see the night light up with tracer bullets when the bombing was going on.

**AFTER THE WAR:** It was very hard to find a job when he came home from the war. He went to school, under the GI Bill, for drafting at the Model Institute in NY for Drafting where he earned a certificate. He thought since he had training in drafting, then earned a certificate in it, he could get a job. However, there was too much prejudice and discrimination and he could never get a job in his field.

So, he found work in a hotel, and then later through the help of his Father, he got a job as a hotel night clerk. Later he passed the Post Office exam, obtained a job, and eventually retired from the Post Office in 1990.

**FEELINGS ABOUT 2014:** Mr. Elliott had this to say about 2014: There are more advantages now to finding work and getting a good education. His advice to young men of today is to: (1) Stay in school, (2) Stay away from whiskey and drugs (they'll just bring you down), and (3) Get an education.

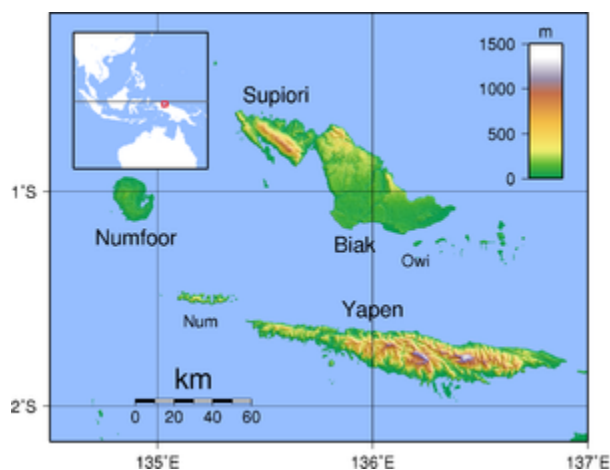
He would advise all young people today to:

- |                                                                       |                                                          |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|
| (1) Listen to your parents—what they tell you needs to stick with you | (4) Believe in God                                       |
| (2) Go to church                                                      | (5) Read the Scriptures                                  |
| (3) Watch who you hang around with—don't hang with bad people         | (6) Be Obedient to his word and God will see you through |

### Additional Information

The Battle of Biak was part of the New Guinea campaign of WW II, fought between the US and Japan from May-August 1944. Part of General MacArthur's Southwest Pacific command's offensive drive to clear New Guinea in preparation for an invasion of the Philippines, it was held by 11,000 Japanese troops vs. the U.S.'s 12,000 troops.

The Battle of Biak (present-day Indonesia)



## John N. Pritchett

Mr. John N. Pritchett, at the age of 19 years old, entered the U.S. Navy and served in World War II from 1943-1945 as a 3<sup>rd</sup> Class Steward. He went to boot camp in Bainbridge, MD. He didn't mind boot camp because it was close to where he lived in DE. He said he was used to segregation so being in boot camp didn't bother him—although he did think it would be different since he was in service. He found out it wasn't different though. The white and Black soldiers lived in separate barracks.

From boot camp, Mr. Pritchett went straight to New London, CT where he received training on the US Blenny submarine he was assigned to. He was trained to be a Stewards Mate for the US Blenny's officers. His job was to take care of the officers and serve their meals, which he did well. There were only Mr. Pritchett and one other person of color (the second Steward) on the submarine with the all white crew.

His first stop out of port was in Bermuda where all crew members were trained on the US Blenny for 5 months. They patrolled and conducted exercises up and down the U.S. Coast – very similar to the U.S. Coast Guard.

He came back to New London, CT, married his wife, Ruth, in August, and left for overseas the very next day. The US Blenny submarine went from New London, to Key West, FL, to Panama, and then Hawaii. He ended up sailing in the South China Sea. He stayed overseas until December 1945. This was the US Blenny's inaugural sailing.

When he was in the Pacific the US Blenny stayed around Hawaii for a couple of weeks conducting exercises. He was very happy they went to Pearl Harbor after it was bombed.

**MEMORABLE EXPERIENCES:** Mr. Pritchett never had a problem with segregation the whole time he was overseas. But as soon as he came back to the US and landed at the Norfolk, VA base he bumped right into it. He entered the chow hall and there was a wooden fence inside the building placed right in the middle of the chow hall separating the white sailors from the Black sailors. They had to get their food and eat apart from each other.

Another experience happened right after he left Hawaii and the US Blenny was fired on in the South China Sea. It happened the very first morning, when two Japanese destroyers attacked them, dropping depth charges on them. They had to be so quiet so the Japanese would not hear them. Eventually, the US Blenny got away.

There were many more times like this being attacked by the Japanese. The crew would cut everything off and be as quiet as possible so they would not be detected by the Japanese sonar.



Mr. Pritchett remembers every Steward that served with him on the US Blenny. There was always him and one other. When he first got on the US Blenny there was a Filipino guy who was also a Steward. Afterwards there were two different Black guys. He remembers Richard Lee Belt from West Monroe, LA, who he left on the ship.

Mr. Pritchett remembers when the atomic bomb went off—that was something he will never forget.

The US Blenny conducted war patrols in the South China Sea, staying on the sea, when there was always a possibility you could get bombed by either your own planes or the Enemy's planes. He is really glad for his alert submarine crew.

His Captain was known to say, "Negroes had excellent night vision" thus when the US Blenny had to rise out of the water every night to recharge its batteries—Mr. Pritchett was usually outside looking across the horizon to spot any approaching ships. Once he saw a flare light on ship in a distance it turned out to be a Japanese hospital ship.

The naval bases Mr. Pritchett's submarine stopped at were in Pearl Harbor, Saipan, and Subic Bay. Many times they did not have barracks to sleep in so they slept in tents. Mr. Pritchett's pay increased by 70% when he was overseas.

Mr. Pritchett was glad when they put him on a train—out of Norfolk, VA—to PA. He was finally home and out of the war. He surprised his wife when he came home—if you recall he hadn't seen her since he went in and she still looked the same.

**AFTER THE WAR:** Mr. Pritchett came back home to Felton, DE and got a job working in the steel mill as a molder in New Castle, DE. He never had in problems when he came back. He had a job and was able to raise his family. He worked at the steel mill until he was 62 years old.

**FEELINGS ABOUT 2014:** When he compares 1944/45 to 2014 Mr. Pritchett feels our country should be a little ashamed of ourselves for the way Blacks are still being treated. He feels that some of it is our fault but most of it is not. Mr. Pritchett shared "whether you like me or not it shouldn't make a difference—if I'm supposed to do a job and I'm qualified I should get that job."

After retiring from the steel mill, Mr. Pritchett put 15 years in the William Penn School system and retired from there when he was 77 years old. He had no trouble working in the school system.

**ADVICE FOR YOUNG MEN TODAY:** Mr. Pritchett would advise young men today that there is nothing wrong with going into the military service and making a career of it. It's a good job for them to do, earn money, and raise their family. The years will go by before you know it.



Photo courtesy Barry Thrtle

**Additional Information:** Many years after the war, the US Blenny (shown in picture) was sank outside of Ocean City, MD - fish breed in sunken ships.