



With the Fifth Army Air Force: Photos from the Pacific Theater

Mr. James P. Gallagher

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In 1942, Baltimore native James P. Gallagher enlisted in the Army Air Force and a year later was on active duty in the Southwest Pacific Theater as a communications officer. Among the personal belongings he took was a Baldaxette camera. An amateur photographer, Gallagher hoped one day to put together a scrapbook of his overseas tour. The army made no objections to its airmen taking pictures as long as they avoided radar equipment and Americans killed in action. Fifty years later, Gallagher's photos have been collected in *With the Fifth Army Air Force*, an absorbing and highly personal photographic record of America's war in the Pacific.

These pictures reveal a different side of the war than do the works of either official military photographers or photojournalists. Through Gallagher's lens, we see the everyday life of the airmen stationed on a Pacific airbase, from the poor living conditions to such routine activities as watching movies on a sheet strung between two trees, playing volleyball, or decorating planes with paintings of pinups. Other photos capture the raw experience of the war: the terrible beauty of nighttime attacks and the vast destruction wreaked upon the jungle islands. After the war's end, Gallagher was stationed in occupied Japan, where he recorded the devastation suffered by the enemy. But he also found places untouched by the war and still serene; he caught fascinating shots of Japanese civilians apparently happy to see the Americans. One photograph records an extraordinary softball game between American and Japanese troops only weeks after the Japanese surrender.

With the Fifth Army Air Force traces Gallagher's -- and the American military's -- progress from New Guinea and New Britain to Leyte, Lingayen Gulf, and Okinawa. Accompanied by Gallagher's charming, often drily and darkly comical recollections of his wartime experiences, these photographs offer a refreshing new perspective on the hardships, hazards, and camaraderie of America's war in the Pacific.

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