

WWII Through the Photos and Portraits of Milford Zornes

When Milford Zornes passed away in 2009 at age 100 he left behind a wonderful collection of material from his WWII experience in China, Burma and India (CBI). He left innumerable photos and 40 to 50 portraits of his fellow soldiers and even a few locals he met where he was stationed or visited while on assignment. Researching these photos and portraits would weave a story of where Milford was in CBI, some of the things he did and the people he interacted with. One of the purposes of having an artist during the war was to record events in paintings and drawings. The portraits are a lasting record of individual soldiers and in some cases the part they played during the war.

Milford, my father-in-law was a national known artist prior to his being drafted into the Army/Air Corp in late 1942. He had been associated with the California Scene Painters, was active in a Federally funded program (WPA) to support the arts during the Depression and had several paintings selected for placement in the White House by Eleanor Roosevelt. He had also been an Art Professor at Otis Art Institute in Pasadena, California and had worked at Disney for a short period of time before being drafted. After the war he went on to a distinguished career as a painter and teacher. He was selected to the National Academy of Design by his peers, an honor that Milford held in high regard because it was bestowed upon him by his fellow artists.

When Milford and Pat passed away his paintings and papers were transported to our home in Sacramento, California. These included a significant collection of WWII paintings and drawings, military orders, letters from him to his parents and Pat known as V-Mails. There is also a journal he kept while traveling to India and other journal entries he kept. He did not keep a regular journal at any time but the drawings, portraits, and photos are a journal in themselves. Seeing the portraits was the first time Maria (Milford's daughter and my wife) realized how many portraits he had done and how good they were. It wasn't until 2013 that any real effort was begun to figure out what to do with the portraits. Finding the soldiers or their families would be a tall order after almost 70 years, nonetheless that is what I decided to do. That is not where I started however.

I am not sure why I decided to deal with the photos first, maybe I just did. I know there was a lot more information available on them so it looked easier. Prior to his departure for CBI Milford was given money by the Army/Air Corp to buy camera equipment. In addition, his mother sent him a camera after he got to CBI for his personal use. The photos that Milford had in his papers when he died were photos he had taken plus photos that military photographers had taken. (Milford often traveled with the war correspondents and photographer assigned to take photos of important events.) Milford's personal photos did not contain any information about where they were taken or who the people were. The military photos did have information on most of them either

written on the back or on a small piece of tissue paper, attached to the bottom of the photo, with information about the who, what, when and where, typed on it. It also sometimes included the photographer. There was often enough information for me to use to find out about these soldiers and I learned to find their families. I began to build a skill set to find people. The name of a photographer on one of the military photos was how I got to know Syd Greenberg, a supervising photographer. (During his time in CBI he developed an incredible collection of photos of the war in CBI. Which I got to see when interviewed Syd in Connecticut and he gave me a great deal of background information that I used to help find the families of people in the photographs that Milford had. He had taken a photo of Milford painting in the jungle of Burma. He said he walked into a clearing and there was a man sitting on the ground painting. Syd said he was really surprised to see anyone let alone an artist working in the jungle. We have the two photos that Syd took and Milford had a photo of Syd but they never saw each other again after meeting in the jungle. Although the painting is not signed Syd's photo authenticates that Milford did paint it.

In time I found Carl Weidenburner's China, Burma and India (CBI) website. He built the website to honor his father who served in CBI. The website had a search function that allowed me to put in a soldier's name and see if Carl had anything about the person on his website. This made it much easier to quickly access information. Sometimes there were enough clues for me to find the family of a soldier or make a more educated guess about where they might have come from in the U.S. It amazed me how often a soldier returned to where he lived prior to going into the military and then never left. If they did leave there were relatives still living in the area. It took a great deal of work and also some luck. I had never done this type of research before so experience was my best teacher.

Two of my favorite photos were two men who were Vet Techs in the Army. They worked with the mules used to transport equipment especially on the Ledo/Burma Road. I had photos of them pitching horseshoes in Burma. I knew they were both from Texas. I placed an ad in a small-town newspaper and a lady called me to say she knew the families of the soldiers and a relative of one of the men who worked in a nearby funeral home. (This would not be the last time I asked a funeral home for help although it was difficult because of privacy concerns.) She put me in touch with the family and I sent them the photos. It was interesting to note that both these soldiers were well known in their community for their horseshoe pitching expertise Burma. Several months later I got a phone call from a lady living in California, who was related to the family, wanting to know if the family had ever thanked me for the photos. They had not so she did. I also found the widow of a soldier who I had a photo of from Burma, somewhere along the Burma/Ledo Road. In the photo you can see his Captain's bars and eventually I learned his was a member of General Stilwell's staff. His wife said he retired from the Army as a Colonel. She was really pleased to get the photo and said she was going to have it framed and hung in a hallway in her home where she had other photos of her

husband's military career. Based on my conversation with her she was reminded of some very good memories because of the photo.

I did not keep any records of where I sent the photos or the families I sent them to. I do remember finding a photo of a soldier on the Ledo/Burma Road (also known as the Stilwell Road after the Commanding General Joseph (Vinegar Joe) Stilwell.) This soldier turned out to be a Captain in the Army who was assigned to General Stilwell's staff. I found his widow living in New Mexico and I sent the photo to her. She told me her husband had retired from the military as Colonel. She said she would have the photo framed and put in a collection of other similar photos in her home.

I did have one situation where I found a family member and that person did not want the photo. He was not unfriendly but also very clear that he and his brother had had a parting of the way. All the rest of the families were glad to have the photos.

Finding the families of people in the photos was like putting a puzzle together. Find a piece that fits and move forward to the next one.

Milford also had aerial photos marked SECRET on the back with numbers on the front of them. Carl was able to tell me these were longitude and latitude markers. Aerial drops were made to military units from these markers in particular drops to Merrill's Marauders in Burma. I sent a number of these type of photos to Carl for inclusion on his website. At least they would be useful to future Historians wanting to know about the war in CBI.

Even when I had gone through all the photos and decided what to do with them, I found that Milford had kept rolls of undeveloped film and because they had been kept in small metal canisters they had never been exposed to the light. These rolls of film had never been developed. I could not help but be intrigued by what might be on the film. I had no idea what was on the film or even if the film could be developed. Then I had to find a photo store that could develop film that was 70 years old. Getting them processed was like looking back 70 years. The photos were a visual story, as I had suspected, that Milford was very socially active with local populations especially in India. Now let's back up in time and talk about portraits.

Because of my work with the photos, I developed some research skills in finding families. They were a little easier because of the information on them but I could still use the skills I had learned when I turned to working on the portraits.

Where to begin. My college degree is in History. I left that behind to work with delinquent kids for 30 years. I was a manager so I learned to organize projects, work with small groups of people and developed an interest in detail. This project gave me an opportunity to use my interest in history after a lot of years. A combination of things I learned over the years helped me to find a final resting place for the portraits.

In January 1943 Milford was at March Field near Riverside, California for basic training. He would turn 35 that month. Almost immediately he began to do portraits. It is possible

that Lyle Lane was the first portrait he did at March Field. In his personal papers were three sketch books of portraits and drawings he did at March Field. One of the sketch books had a specially designed cover that Milford designed. This sketchbook is fully intact with only some minor defects after seventy plus years.

The first portrait I worked on had a nickname and last name and the name of the city and state he was from. This portrait had been in a show just after Milford passed away. I found this man's family in 2010 then did not do any further searches until 2013.

In the research I did I used the internet a great deal. Sometimes just typing in a name followed by WWII and CBI led me to a website, an obituary or some other information. One piece of information led to another. There were dead ends so I would take a different direction. It often took a lot of detective work and a great deal of luck. If I found out where a person lived before the war, I used Whitepages to try and trace them. Figuring out how to use the information on Whitepages was a learning experience. Sons of soldiers often had their dad's first name (they were Junior's) or a middle initial that matched their dad's first name. I used pieces of information until it no longer fit. There were times my intuition told me I had the right family. Not very scientific but I learned that whatever worked was good.

The portraits tell us about where the soldiers were and sometimes what they did but they also tell the story of some of the places that Milford traveled with the War Correspondents who were recording the war for the news. He did portraits of three men who belonged to one of the most famous units in Burma, He did portraits of a number of African American soldiers working to complete the Ledo/Burma Road from India into China. He did portraits of at least three military nurses. Many of the others seem to be just randomly done which fits in with Milford's frequent travel all over CBI. In addition to the portraits of soldiers he also did portraits of local people. Most of these do not have names on them. The two that did I have made no effort to find them. He did a well-documented portrait of a Chinese War Lord which we have a photo of. There was military brass standing behind Milford while he did it. Milford said "With enough pressure you can often get a good result." The military felt that they got a good result and apparently the War Lord was happy because he gave Milford his choice of a scroll from his Chinese scrolls.

The soldiers in the portraits would more likely be deceased after 70 years. I would be looking for families of the soldier. I needed background information so I again turned to Carl Weidenburner's website and I got in contact with him a number of times to have him make suggestions on where to look for things. He was always helpful. I read as much information on his extensive website as I could and also used his search engine to see if my portrait soldier would show up. I read a lot of books about the war in CBI It helped me to understand what soldiers were doing, what units they belonged to and where they might have been. I again used the internet to see if I could find someone. That meant typing a name and seeing what came up. Sometimes nothing but sometimes I just got lucky. I went to Whitgepages, put in a name and last known

location. That led to phone calls and writing letters, lots of letters. (It reminded me of making “cold Calls” when I was in the insurance business.) I often had to eliminate people who did not seem to fit the profile I was looking for. I learned to look for similar names or even middle initials matching the first name of the soldier. Sometime I just flew by the seat of my pants but it worked. I was successful enough to learn to trust my inner judgement/intuition. Once I got the least bit of information, I followed it until it led to another piece of information or it came to a dead end. I was successful enough to keep myself inspired and moving forward. I wrote letters to local newspapers, called libraries, (Librarians were especially helpful) VFW posts and anybody else I thought might be helpful. Never pass up a lead.

Eventually I asked Jennifer, a long-time friend, to help me with genealogy, which was a particular interest of hers. I gave her names and whatever information I had developed and she gave me back leads. Over several years we found about 10 families and sent them the portrait of their soldier. It was slow going and time consuming and I began to feel the need to move more quickly as the children of these WWII veterans would now be in their 70's and they might disappear from history before I found them.

Just by chance I found Patrick, a Civilian Historian with the Department of Defense. I gave him names and whatever else I had. He gave me military records, newspaper articles and obituaries. Sometime he gave me a few options which I would follow up on. He was a major addition to our search group (now 3). We went from finding 10 families to 20 fairly quickly.

I was working on another project with a high school classmate trying to find our classmates and she was also very interested in genealogy. I call Jennifer and Lynnette ‘my ladies who can find anybody’. Working with the right people is really important in doing any large-scale project and I was lucky enough to have the right and best people. Even several of my cousins helped me locate people in their local area.

When I would finally contact a family, I found a reluctance from families to talk to me. I think there are so many scams out there that people are just either suspicious or skeptical. I am sure it is hard to believe that someone would call you of the blue and want to talk about a portrait of a relative from 70 years ago. I even had people ask me how much I wanted for the portrait. For the record no one was ever charged anything. Maria and I even paid for the cost of shipping.

One of the things I was very careful about in my search for families was to be sure, or as sure as I could be, that I had the “right” family. I knew where the portraits had been done so when I approached a family, I did not reveal that information. Once a family told me their soldier was in CBI it certainly narrowed my search down. I would ask where their soldier was stationed or what he did in the military. I sometimes had a unit that the soldier served in but after 70 years some of that information was unknown by the family. From information I had researched I could fairly accurately determine if this was the right family.

Once I was sure I had the right family, I tried to fill them in with what I knew about where Milford met them and what they might have done during the war. The responses from families were varied. Sometimes it was terribly underwhelming. I asked families to let me know when they got the portrait and in a number of cases I had to follow up to be sure they got it. Other families were overjoyed to have a portrait of their loved one. One person told me how important it would be for his father's future generation to be able to see the portrait and understand about his service to his country. I told families I hoped that they would have the portrait framed and hung in a special place of honor in their home. (The framing would also help preserve the paper the portrait is done on.) I asked them to send me a photo of the framed portrait for my records. The few I got are wonderful.

In searching for families, I was amazed at how much information I developed about families. I found the businesses they owned, how many kids they had, the divorces they endured and the number of places they lived in after the war. One of the things that disturbed me was the possibility that many of these veterans came home emotionally injured from their war experience. During the war it was known as combat fatigue. Today we would call it PTSD. This phenomenon is well documented from books written after the war. I spent quite a bit of time reading about Merrill's Marauders in Burma. The living conditions were terrible. It was mountainous, incredibly humid or cold (sometimes in the same day) and the area was thickly covered with dense trees and foliage, poisonous snakes and even tigers and then combat was added in. Men also fell ill from the terrible diseases known to jungle environments. That these conditions changed men's lives after the war is predictable. I wondered if the reception I received from some families could be conditioned by those events.

I have my favorite finds of course. Some involved the actual search and the unique things I found. Each portrait contains its own mystery and the fun of uncovering something new, hoping to find a family who would value and honor these portraits of our WWII veterans. It has been difficult to have a name on a portrait and be unable to find their family but there were a few of those. Probably the most important thing to me was the feedback I got from families. Some families were truly surprised and excited to be able to "see" their soldier again and these carry a special memory for me.

Milford sometimes put a date on a portrait and those with a date from January to September, 1943 were done at March Field.

We know it took Milford several months at sea to travel from San Pedro, California to India. Although the portraits done on the ship usually gave some idea that they were done at sea (the ship as a background or the sea as a background to the portrait) the dates also place them as being done on the SS Stephen Long the ship that carried Milford to India.

Many of Milford's paintings in CBI record where they were done and the date. A number of the paintings done on the Burma/Ledo Road also known as the Stilwell Road after

the Supreme Commander of the U. S. Forces in CBI, Joe "Vinegar Joe" Stilwell. These portraits give a roadmap of where Milford was and the dates he was there. Sometime just the date on a portrait would match a date on a painting which helped me locate where he was. Sometime he put a military unit number on a drawing which also helped me figure out what a soldier might have been doing during the war. There were a number of such units on the Ledo/Burma Road.

Merrill's Marauders was a famous combat unit in Burma. Milford did a portrait of a highly decorated soldier as well as two other portraits of soldiers assigned to the Marauders as photographers. An educated guess leads me to believe that Milford did not do these portraits in the field but met these soldiers somewhere else, possibly at a presentation when one of the soldiers received his Legion of Merit award.

Milford did portraits of five female Americans, either military nurses or a part of the American Red Cross. All the female soldiers were nurses, several being flight nurses. The American Red Cross volunteers were assigned to an entertainment group. On one of these portraits is the name "Grace" only. We know she was an officer and a nurse. With the help of Carl's website I was able to narrow my search down to 4 or 5 soldiers but I was never able to find her family.

There were two portraits that had no identifying information on them that I was able to identify anyway. I often looked through the photos on Carl's website to see if I could find a soldier that matched a portrait. The rest of the soldiers that had no information on their portrait have not been found.

I believe the majority of the portraits were done in India and Burma. Except for the female soldiers most of the soldiers appear to be enlisted men.

The length of time to find a family ran from one day to well over a year. In several cases I continued to come to dead ends and put the portrait aside to work on another one. I would then return to it and try all over again. I kept a folder on each search although I wish I had kept even more notes than I did.

There are still a few portraits left. A few even have names on them but we have been unable to locate them. The others have no identifying information on them at all. The National WWII Museum where these portraits will eventually go will put them on their website and it is possible that someone will identify a portrait from a photo. I have resisted this approach because I was as careful as I could be to find the right family. Now it is time for the museum to try a different approach.

In doing research there were times when I could not find a good phone number or one that was disconnected. I took to writing letters, lots of letters. For some of the letters I never received any response. After awhile I put my phone number and e-mail address on the letter to make it easier for people to respond. In at least one case I wrote a letter to a family who was the right family but they did not respond anyway. I eventually found another relative who did respond.

When making calls, the sales world would call them “cold calls” I would tell people my name and why I was calling. Often people would interrupt me after I spoke about the portraits and ask me “Who did you say you were?” There was a lot of skepticism. I got so I could almost anticipate that. I never could figure out a way to avoid this.

In a letter to the family that I sent out along with the portrait, I asked them to frame the portrait and hang it in a place of honor. (framing the portrait would also help to preserve the paper.) I also asked them to let me know that it arrived. I often had to do a follow up to be sure they received it. I also asked them to send me a photo of the framed portrait for my records. I have a few such photos.

Because of this project I developed an interest in a part of WWII that got very little attention. Carl’s website calls it “The Forgotten War”. I read about places that Milford put on his drawings and paintings. Reading introduced me to Merrill’s Marauders and the incredible conditions they served under. It just gave me a huge appreciation for what these men went through. It made the portraits come alive. I hoped the families would find this as well.

While doing this project I also found another person doing a search for WWII European Theater soldiers that Elizabeth Black did portraits of. She apparently had about 100 of them in her possession when she passed away. Elizabeth and Milford did similar artist projects in different parts of the world during WWII.

Although I found over 30 families there are a few portraits that seem to be stuck in my mind. Each of them has its own unique place in this project.

Lyle Lane – Lyle Lane is probably the first person that Milford did at March Field. He arrived at March Field on about January 16 and his portrait is dated January 29th. Milford had also just arrived at March Field for basic training. Eventually I discovered that Milford had written in an address, in pencil, on the front of the portrait then erased it and put it on the back. The address was in California so searching for his family would start at this address. I had no idea where Lyle went after March Field but later learned he may have gone to Europe. I did not find him in Milford’s journal that he kept on the way to India so assumed he did not go there. I spent more time looking for Lyle’s family than any other portrait. It took me well over a year. When I came to a dead end on finding his family, I would put his portrait aside and work on another one. Part of the difficulty was that Lyle was married several times and when he had children with a new wife, he repeated the names of his children from a previous marriage. At one time I was pretty sure I felt pretty sure I had found one of his sons but it proved to be a dead end. I mailed more letters to potential family members on this portrait than any other one. Clarise Soper, who was working on a special project with the National WWII Museum in New Orleans, found information that confirmed what I already had but her information inspired me to try again to find the right family. Finally, I found his daughter Edie. After

such a lengthy time and a lot of effort finding this family was a success story for Edie and the people who helped me find her.

Edie was reluctant to have me send her the portrait in the mail but I had done this a number of times without any problems. I am sure she did not want to lose it in the mail and it was not lost. After a lot of years, she was really pleased to have the portrait and when she had it framed, she took a photo of it and sent it to me. A few months after we found her Maria and I were visiting relatives near where she lived and we had the opportunity to take her to lunch.

Dr. Gordon Seagrave – Dr Seagrave came from a family of missionaries living in Burma. During WWII he was a military surgeon in Burma. Most of the photos of him have him working in his very primitive field hospital in Burma. In looking through Carl Weidenburner's website I had seen photos of him but I had never connected any of the photos to the portraits. One day while on a bike ride, a photo I had recently seen reminded me of one of the portraits. (I do my best work while cycling.) The first name that came to mind was "Seacrest" and finally Seagrave. Why it stuck in my mind I don't know, it just did. (Remember dumb luck.) I got the portrait out and compared it with one of the photos on Carl's website. I felt like it was a pretty good match, right down to his mustache. I reminded myself that a perfect match was not necessary or expected.

I did find Dr. Seagrave's grandson and his family was not certain of the match. On the other hand, his granddaughter was 90% sure. Lynette, my genealogist, was able to look at the portrait from several angles and felt that it was Dr. Seagrave. I send the portrait to Dr. Seagrave's granddaughter and she had it nicely framed and hung on a wall in her home. I have tried to be as careful about finding the right family as I can be. 90% will have to suffice in this case.

When I think about his portrait, I am still astounded that it is possible to find a family of a portrait from 70 years ago with no name on it.

Buck Buchanan – His portrait had Buck Buchanan, Ad Man, Baltimore on it. Prior to his military service he was working for a newspaper in Baltimore. Through Carl's website I discovered "Buck Sheet" a small newspaper for servicemen to keep up on the news along the Ledo/Burma Road. in Burma. Eventually I found his grandson in New York City. He was coming to California on a business trip and asked if he could stop by and pick up the portrait in person. Of course he could. He was going to give the portrait to his father as a surprise birthday gift. According to Han it was a real surprise. The portrait was then framed and hung in his father's home.

My "this is a small world" story is that as I was again doing a google search for Buck for this article, I ran across a blog about another CBI artist. After the war he visited "the Buchanan's" and I knew right away who he was talking about. The interesting things that have happened to me as I have researched Burma continue to happen.

William Fuchs - On this portrait Milford put his name, outfit (330th Engineers) and company. From this I knew that William was working on the Ledo/ Burma Road. He soon was able to confirm that his father worked on the Ledo/ Burma Road and his son had photos of him working there, assuring that I had the right family. Frank said his father had shot two tigers while he was in Burma and had kept the jaw bones as a souvenir. Frank and his brother had taken them to school for "show and tell". Luckily William's wife was still alive living in Florida and I quickly sent her the photo. This only happened three times in the whole project and I was really pleased I could get the family the portrait while the soldier's wife was still alive.

Roy Matsumoto – The first thing I found was a photo of Roy receiving his Legion of Merit medal. He was assigned to Merrill's Marauders. He knew how to speak Japanese and had saved his group by sneaking up on the Japanese soldiers preparing to attack, overheard their plans and relayed them to his fellow Marauders, among other heroic things he did. I suspect that Milford was at the presentation of the medal. The photo had a lot of information on it. Shortly I also found a photo of the portrait Milford did of Roy pretty much confirming that Milford met Roy at the medal presentation. I probably learned more about Roy than any of the other portrait soldiers because there is so much information about him and his military exploits. He is mentioned in books and since he is a member of the Army Ranger Hall of Fame and the Military Intelligence Corps Hall of Fame he is a well known CBI military figure. For such a small (in stature) person he was huge in heroism and courage. I found a Roy Matsumoto living in Berkeley, California so after no answer to phone calls I sent him a letter. Several months later I received a phone call from Juneau, Alaska just before Thanksgiving. I didn't know anybody there. One of Roy's daughters had stopped at the Berkeley house to pick up mail and got my letter and took it with her to Juneau. They were there for a Thanksgiving family gathering. Roy was the only person I found that was still alive. That included his wife as well. Eventually Maria and I met Roy, his wife, and his daughters Fumi and Karen in Berkeley for brunch. What a treat. Roy remembered and wanted to talk about his experience in CBI.

Several years later Karen completed a documentary about her father and it was shown in Sacramento and we went to see it. Roy remembered us and we talked briefly. I will always remember Roy as this friendly, talkative hero.

David Weich – The portrait of Lt. Weich incorporates a lot of the issues and search techniques I learned and used over the years. On the portrait was Lt. Weich and Canton, Ohio. That should make it easy. We did not know his first name but Weich is not a common name so tracing it should not be hard. (I had a John Smith and there were several hundred of those to choose from.) I started in Canton. No Weich's there or even nearby. I tried the VFW Post and a local air museum. No luck at all. Jennifer finally found a gravesite for an Edward Weich in Canton. This was a possibility. We found the name of the lady who paid for the gravesite marker for Edward but we were unable to locate her. (She was Edward's wife but remarried after he died.) Jennifer also found

information on a Dale Weich who had moved to Florida. Whigtpages actually showed Dale's mother under their relative section with an age of 122. I also found a connection to a famous politician from Nevada but he was kind enough to let me know he was not related to our Weich. I also found a college professor but he was not related either.

We finally realized the portrait was of Dale and not Edward. (Edward, Dale's brother, died in Europe at the very end of WWII.) Whitepages showed a David E. Weich living in North Carolina. I wondered if the E. stood for Edward. It did. I could not find a phone number for him so I wrote him a letter. Within a few days he called me and gave me enough information for me to know that we had the right family. His father had been a photographer assigned to Merrill's Marauders. (I found another photographer assigned to the Marauders that Milford did a portrait of as well. This soldier's wife was still alive as well and we personally delivered the portrait to the family in Southern California.) This made three soldiers that Milford did portraits of that were assigned to Merrill's Marauders.

David was so enthusiastic about receiving the portrait that he asked a local TV new channel to do a small piece about it and he sent me a copy of it. He had the portrait framed along with a military patch and had a small plaque put on it saying it was his dad and done by Milford. David told me several times how proud he was of his Dad's service to his country.

In addition to all the interesting pieces of this portrait David and his wife Julia have become good friends.

Probably the most satisfying search I did was finding SMO. This portrait was of a female nurse and the only thing on it was SMO. My first reaction was that the unit she belonged to had the initials SMO. Even if I could find the unit, I still would not know who she was. If I could find a photo of her unit, I might be able to identify her. I e-mailed Carl and he suggested I look through his list of military nurses. I started at the very beginning of a long list looking for units with the right initials. What I eventually found was the last name of a nurse whose first three letters of her last name were SMO. As soon as I saw her name, I knew she was the lady I was looking for. Remember intuition. It was really exciting to be able to find her once I looked in the right place even though I was looking for the wrong thing. Remember luck. (We never did find the original portrait of Roy even though we spent time trying to locate it.)

Smo had traveled to India on a ship and along the way she met her future husband. They were married in a Catholic church in India. Her husband's nickname was SMO as well.

Her last name was one I could find fairly easily. Well not so easy as it turned out. I found what I thought was her daughter but I was never able to track her down. She moved a lot, leaving disconnected phones and no recent address to mail a letter to. I soon found another person I thought might be her son. After three phone calls he finally answered. He told me he never answered the phone unless he knew who the caller was. I told him

I thought answering this call would be a good decision on his part. He told me his parents talked about their experience in CBI and he had mementoes in his attic of their time there.

SMO's portrait was one I have talked a lot about over time. I still get that feeling of excitement and satisfaction in finding her family. I started with what I felt was a zero chance of finding her. I have shared her story with a number of people because of how unique the circumstances were in finding her.

(I have not used actual names or places for SMO. In all the cases I mentioned in this article I have received permission to use names and relevant material. I tried to contact SMO's son to get that but his phone is now disconnected and he has moved. I did write a letter but got no response.)

Milford did portraits of two well known artists in CBI. Bill Anderson, an artist and a friend of Milford's said he was pretty sure that one of the portraits that Milford had was of Millard Sheets. The portrait did not have a name on it so we were not sure. Milford had said that he did not do a portrait of Millard, but he did. Maria was a high school classmate of Tony Sheets, Millard's son. We sent Tony a photo of the portrait and in return he sent us a photo of his dad from WWII. It was a match and we sent the portrait to Tony. Millard and Milford had been in CBI together. Milford was an enlisted man and although Millard was a civilian working for Life Magazine, he wore the uniform of an officer. The two of them went on painting trips and may have traveled together on assignment. The second artist was Milford himself. I never paid much attention to it until one day I took a good look at it and the date on it. He had done while he was in the military. A self-portrait. Our family will keep it and pass it on to our children and their children. I hope the other families that I found will do the same and continue to honor these men who served in terrible conditions in CBI.