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The Party Animal News

A Man a Mile – The Burma Highway

Biting bugs somehow became one of my specialties over the years. One of the reasons was my connection with the urban entomologist at the Texas A&M Extension Service in Dallas. Mike Merchant was working on his PhD at Purdue when I was working on my BS. A lot of people get directed to the extension services and sometimes Mike told them I might be able to help.

Of course, Ann writes notes in the call book when a client thinks they have unusual bug bites and usually we try to tell them to go to the medical doctor first, but some people will still pay me to inspect the house for bugs. Over the years there have been mites, spiders, fleas, springtails, booklice and bedbugs causing people irritations. Some issues have also been diagnosed as chiggers after my interview discovers that they walked across a field or rolled in grass without protection from a bug repellent.

George Alvis Howard called our office in 2003 about itching around his face. I have seen some interesting cases of tropical rat mites. I have shared the story a lot over the years of a Dad who had called me on a weekend and told me his 3 year old daughter was in the emergency room and had a rash down her spine and the doctors could not figure it out. I asked him if his home had rats. He said no, but I did an inspection that found a rat nest under the house in the vicinity of the crib. The problem was solved with rat control and pest control for the mites that were going up into her room. Rat mites like tight areas like the arm pits and belt line and the girl laid on her back making the spine the perfect place for these mites.

So, I did an inspection in Mr. Howard's home southeast of downtown Dallas. He was in his 90s and lived in a frame home on a corner lot. He was retired from LTV, had a large garden and sold his crops to his neighbors. The house did have rats, but I still encouraged him to go to the doctor. We did the rat control. Tony and I visited with Mr. Howard (one perk when you're a service technician). We found out that he was stationed overseas during WWII. I was seated in his breakfast nook and he asked me if I knew about the Burma highway.

At the age of 96, Mr Howard passed away and in his obituary it stated the World War II veteran was a builder during the war. Yep, that was all it said. Now for the rest of the story. During the war he helped build the Burma Highway (Ledo Road). The insights he gave about this process were that he was older than most of the men and he had a little more experience with the machinery. He was in his 30's, so it makes sense if he was working with a bunch of 20 year olds. He remembered how they would dig trenches to throw out the food waste and garbage, and the half naked natives would jump in the pits to retrieve food. As a farm boy from Kaufman county, he had a hard time comprehending their hardships. He told of playing tricks on the officers. I cannot remember his story (I wish I had recorded it), but another soldier's story I read online was how the officers would want them to report their progress, so they gave the officer a tape measure, when all the officer really had to do was use the odometer in the jeep.

The Burma Highway's moniker is the title of this newsletter. One man died for every mile built. The total dead was 1133 men. Of those, 625 were combat related while the rest were associated with the work. (Some deaths were from diseases like malaria encountered in the jungle.) The road was completed in January 1945. It was a total of 400 miles long and took 17,000 Americans to build with 60% being black Americans. 35,000 locals also participated. It was considered one of the biggest projects during the war, but its importance was diminished when the war ended in the summer of 1945, soon after its completion.

So, here we'd sat with a war hero, sharing his war stories. We had a couple of visits, and while we did our part to eliminate the possible bugs, I still wanted him to go to the doctor. He scheduled an appointment and I learned at a follow-up that the irritation on his face turned out to be a sinus infection. He got some medicine and once it worked, said he slept like a baby. – *David*



Pictures of the completed Ledo Road from Wikipedia



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Mosquito Time

If you have not already begun your mosquito control program for 2024, it's time. Research shows beginning in March in Texas will produce the best results by having control measures in place before heavy breeding begins. The program we provide is the In2Care mosquito systems. Please contact the office if you would like more information, or to set up an appointment for David to come and discuss the process with you. You can also find information at the website In2Care.org



Aedes aegypti mosquito



In2Care bucket in yard



In2Care bucket in yard