

307 OPERATIONS GROUP



MISSION

LINEAGE

307 Bombardment Group (Heavy) constituted, 28 Jan 1942
Activated, 15 Apr 1942
Inactivated, 18 Jan 1946
Redesignated 307 Bombardment Group, Very Heavy and activated, 4 Aug 1946
Redesignated 307 Bombardment Group, Medium, May 1948
Inactivated, 16 Jun 1952
Redesignated 307 Air Refueling Group, Heavy, 14 Jun 1977
Activated, 1 Jul 1977
Inactivated, 1 Oct 1983
Redesignated 307 Operations Group, 8 Dec 2010
Activated, 1 Jan 2011

STATIONS

Geiger Field, WA, 15 Apr 1942
Ephrata, WA, 28 May 1942
Sioux City AAB, IA, 30 Sep-20 Oct 1942
Hickam Field, TH, 1 Nov 1942
Guadalcanal, Feb 1943
New Georgia, 28 Jan 1944
Los Negros, 29 Apr 1944
Wakde, 24 Aug 1944
Morotai, 18 Oct 1944

Clark Field, Luzon, Sep-Dec 1945
Camp Stoneman, CA, 16-18 Jan 1946
MacDill Field, FL, 4 Aug 1946-16 Jun 1952
Travis AFB, CA, 1 Jul 1977-1 Oct 1983
Barksdale AFB, LA, 1 Jan 2011

DEPLOYED STATIONS

Waddington and Marham RAF Stations, England, 18 Jul-3 Nov 1948, elements at RAF
Lakenheath and Marham RAF Station, England, 17 Feb-1 May 1949
Kadena AB, Okinawa, 8 Aug 1950-16 Jun 1952

ASSIGNMENTS

Second Air Force, 15 Apr 1942
VII Bomber Command, 1 Nov 1942
XIII Bomber Command, 9 Feb 1943-15 Dec 1945
San Francisco Port of Embarkation, 16-18 Jan 1946
Fifteenth Air Force, 4 Aug 1946
Strategic Air Command, 1 Apr 1947
307 Bombardment Wing, 15 Aug 1947-16 Jun 1952
14 Air Division, 1 Jul 1977-1 Oct 1983
307 Bomb Wing, 1 Jan 2011

ATTACHMENTS

3 Air Division, 16 Jul-3 Nov 1948
Far East Air Forces Bomber Command, Provisional, 8 Aug 1950-9 Feb 1951

WEAPON SYSTEMS

B-17
B-24
B-29
KC-135, 1977-1983

COMMANDERS

Capt Bill Jarvis, 1 May 1942
Col William A. Matheny, 22 May 1942
Col Oliver S. Picher, 19 Aug 1943
Col Glen R. Birchard, 27 Oct 1943
Col Robert F. Burnham, 28 Mar 1944
Col Clifford H. Rees, Nov 1944-unkn
Col Richard T. King Jr., 4 Aug 1946
Lt Col Clyde G. Gillespie, 25 Aug 1946
Lt Col Frank L. Davis, Sep 1946
Col John G. Eriksen, 13 Jan 1947
Col Clifford J. Heflin, 12 Aug 1947

Lt Col John P. Proctor, 15 Feb 1950
Col John A. Hilger, 13 Mar 1950
Col John M. Reynolds, Mar 1951
Col William H. Hanson, Aug 1951
Col John C. Jennison Jr., 14 Feb 1952
Col Raymond L. Winn, May-16 Jun 1952
Col Thomas E. Schweitz, 1 Jul 1977
Col Elmer Funderburk Jr., 15 May 1978
Col Martin F. Lapp, 14 Aug 1980
Col Mark J. Heller, 21 Jul 1982
Col Densel K. Acheson, 5 Jul-1 Oct 1983
Col Keith Schultz, Jan 2011

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

World War II
Central Pacific
Guadalcanal
New Guinea
Northern Solomons
Eastern Mandates
Bismarck Archipelago
Western Pacific
Leyte
Luzon
Southern Philippines
China Offensive

Korean War
UN Defensive
UN Offensive
CCF Intervention
1st UN Counteroffensive
CCF Spring Offensive
UN Summer-Fall Offensive
Second Korean Winter
Korea Summer-Fall, 1952

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

Distinguished Unit Citations

Truk, 29 Mar 1944
Borneo, 3 Oct 1944

Philippine Presidential Unit Citation

Republic of Korea Presidential Unit Citation
[Aug] 1950- [Jun 1952]

EMBLEM



307 Bombardment Group emblem: Azure, a four-petalled dogwood bloom slipped Or.
(Approved, 21 Dec 1942)



307 Air Refueling Group emblem: Per pale light blue and azure, a sphere with axis palewise argent, gridlined of the second within a circular border consisting of two olive branches vert, surmounted by contrail gules, arced from dexter base and terminating below the second of two ascending flight symbols bendwise of the first, overall in middle chief a dogwood flower or between in dexter chief a stylized cloud formation and in sinister chief a pattern of three mullets of five points all argent; all within a diminished bordure gold.



Azure, a four-petalled dogwood bloom slipped Or; all within a diminished bordure Or. Attached below the shield, a White scroll edged with a narrow Yellow border and inscribed "307 OPERATIONS GROUP" in Blue letters. **SIGNIFICANCE.** Ultramarine Blue and Air Force Yellow are the Air Force colors. Blue alludes to the sky, the primary theater of Air Force operations. Yellow refers to the sun and the excellence required of Air Force personnel. The four-petalled dogwood stands for the four combat squadrons of the Wing, with the stem representing the headquarters binding the four squadrons together. (Approved, 4 Mar 2022)

MOTTO

OPERATIONS

Pursuant to G.O. No. 24, Hq., AFCC, Bolling Field, D.C., dated Feb. 24, 1942, and G.O. No. 38, Hq., 2nd AAF, dated April 7, 1942, the 307 Bomb. Gp. (H), AAF, was activated April 15, 1942, at Geiger Field, Wash., and consisted of Hq. & Hq. Sq., 370th Bomb. Sq., 371st Bomb. Sq., 372nd Bomb Sq., and the 35 Recon. Sq. (atcd.). Hq. & Hq. Sq. were redesignated Hqs. 307 Bomb. Gp. The 35th Recon. Sq. was redesignated the 35th Bomb. Sq. (H) and assigned to the 307 Bomb. Gp. Sub-sequently it was again redesignated the 424th Bomb. Sq. (H) and, as such, remained a part of the Group.

Thus reads the birth certificate of the 307 Bombardment Group (Heavy), Army Air Forces. In common parlance, it simply means that a group of brass hats got together and formed another of World War II's new heavy bombardment outfits on paper. It was actually given life when a cadre of key enlisted men was taken from the 301st Bomb. Group at Geiger Field and officers and men started pouring into the base from all over the country on orders to join this new Group. When about 400 had been gathered together, Lt. Col. Wm. A. Matheny, sent from Pendleton Field, Oregon, to command the outfit, received orders to take them to a spot in the Columbia River Basin for two weeks of maneuvers.

Ephrata was dust-soft, fine dust, six inches thick and in drifts up to a foot-and-a-half; and nothing but sage and mesquite and an occasional mirage as far as the eye could see.

As our crowded troop train pulled into the whistle-stop of a town it seemed, to the saddened G.I.'s aboard, like a small oasis in the midst of an endless desert. And when we trudged up the hill, sweating in our O.D.'s, carrying barracks bags three miles to our air base, we thought: "Man, this is rugged!" All that were there were an old emergency landing strip the C.A.A. had left and, for a camp area, a flagpole and seven little wooden shacks.

We found we'd been sent there to stand an alert against a possible air attack or land invasion of the west coast of Alaska. This was to be our permanent station and new home.

Not having any planes or pilots of our own, we were furnished 16 B-17's with crews from various air bases in the 2nd Air Force. These ships, with their maintenance crews, started coming in the same day the troop train arrived. After pulling patrol missions with 500-pounders for about a month, the '17's pulled out, some to Alaska and others to the coming battle of Midway. Later a Group of "Pink Elephants," B-24s with desert camouflage, used our base as a staging area on their way to the Aleutians.

It wasn't till we acquired four B-24s of our own that training began in earnest. At first every-one was a little leery of these freaky-looking jobs. No one in the outfit had ever flown or worked on one; so we all had to start from scratch. It still amazes us how we got through this period without any operational losses, with the planes flying 20 hours out of the 24, and as many as two dozen mechanics, armorers, and specialists swarming over them all the time they were on the ground.

In time, a good P.X. was built where beer and malts and coffee and all such Stateside luxuries as were available were served by girls from Ephrata. The Chaplain had a combination church and day-room built, and several entertainments were produced outdoors by the men. Once Bob Crosby come down from Spokane with his band and the Wilde Twins; Pinky Tomlin and a Camel Caravan show were also there. Off the base there were several spots to hit besides the small towns of Ephrata and Soop Lake. Wenatchee and Spokane were within three-day-pass distance. Once in a while the different squadrons threw picnics at Soap Lake, Blue Lake, Park Lake, and Coulee Dam.

After we attained a full complement of men and material and 10 airplanes and had carried crews through three-monthly training phases in practice bombing and gunnery, formation flying, and long-range navigation, the Group received orders to move to a newly built air base at Sioux City, Iowa. The Air Echelon left on September 28 and it took four trains and four days to move the rest of the four Squadrons.

We were all expecting some improvement over Ephrata, but when we reached Sioux City we found a dream of an air base-clear out of this world! Long concrete runways, hangars, and barracks even, paved roads, a big theatre, and a well-stocked P.X. greeted the 307, the first bombardment group to occupy the field. At last the outfit was in civilization and the nearby town of Sioux City re-ceived us with open arms.

We were all settled down to enjoy life again. The orderly rooms were even getting big-hearted and passing out five-day furloughs to anyone who thought he could make it home and back in that time. But this was too good to last. Late Saturday afternoon on October 17 rush orders came through to ship us overseas in a hurry. Men were called back from their all too brief furloughs; passes were canceled; and we set to packing up to be ready to leave within two days.

Thirty-five combat airplanes were flown in in a day's time; all trains and planes were loaded and ready to leave by Tuesday morning, the planes to Hamilton Field, California, and the trains to a San Francisco wharf, where the men embarked for Angel Island in the Bay to await shipment. Three days it took us to gather rifles and field equipment, load the boat and stagger up the gang-plank burdened with barracks bags.

October 27, 1942, a day that will live in our memories and our service records, an old Norwegian banana boat steamed out of San Francisco Bay, passed under the Golden Gate, and we saw our last glimpse of the U.S.A. It was a rough and seasick voyage as we zig-zagged for seven days, dodging and out-running submarines we thought were there. Few of us knew, till we landed, that our destination was the over-publicized "Paradise of the Pacific," Oahu, T.H.

Our impression of the Hawaiian Islands was the exact opposite of that advertised in travel folders. Social life was nil for the average G. I. We will remember Honolulu as a social blackout.

Under martial law, night life was non-existent. Total blackout regulations were strictly observed. Every town, village, and hamlet were deserted after 6 p.m. The G.I. on the Soldier-Sailor-War Worker saturated island found the civilian impersonal, suspicious, and unfriendly.

Those whom the lonely serviceman did contact seemed extremely mercenary. The assembly-line step-up of luxury life was keyed to a high pitch in the cities. To buy a drink we'd have to sweat out a line, and when our turn came for the rationed number of drinks allowed, we were rushed through and pushed out on the street. Leisure in the pursuit of any fun and relaxation seemed to be absent.

It was an island of too many G. I.'s and no bright lights. Hawaii has been checked off of every 307 man's list of post-war vacation spots. Of course, there were the natural wonders to be seen: The Upside-Down Falls, the Pali, Diamond Head, and the beach at Waikiki (covered with barbed wire). But we couldn't get that tourist's enthusiasm carrying a gas mask and helmet.

As we rounded Diamond Head everyone recognized the island from the peace-time travel folders. But we weren't prepared for the downpour of liquid sunshine that had us soaked by the time we disembarked and loaded onto the trucks waiting to take us to our separate bases. Also lacking were the hordes of smiling natives paddling to meet the boat in their outriggers, throwing flowered leis to the malahinis and diving for pennies in the crystal-clear water.

We found we'd been sent to the Hawaiian Islands to relieve the 90th Bomb. Group so they could take off for the South Pacific where they were desperately needed at the time. Their Air

Echelon had already left; but the ground men were still stationed at the bases we were taking over. In return, it was found that they were to take over our boat, just as it was, with all our tools and equipment not sent by plane. All we got off the boat were our "B" bags and some of the Squadron's records.

Our airplanes arrived and we started pulling nine sector 12-hour search missions, patrolling the seas to prevent attack by heavy naval forces. In between patrol missions, combat crews got a chance to complete some of their interrupted training in bombing, night flying, dive-bombing, and other specialized functions, and occasionally staged mock raids on the islands.

First taste of the real thing came on December 21, when 27 planes rose from the four scattered airfields and rendezvoused over Oahu to fly the 1,260 miles to Midway, the Shangri-La of what was to be a record-setting whack at the Japs. At 1630, Midway time, our planes, in a heavy overcast, took off again to bomb Wake Island, which the Japs had built into a threatening air base. The raid came as a complete surprise to the little brown men on the ground, and bombs were being dropped before the first searchlight went up. They didn't have time to fire many bursts of ack-ack or get any fighters off the ground before our planes were pulling out of their diving run and had plastered the little speck in the mid-Pacific with 90 per cent. bombs on the target. The raid was very successful in showing the world that ultra-long-range heavy bombardment was the coming thing.

That night, back at their Oahu bases, each outfit threw a blowout that will long be remembered

Arriving at Midway from Oahu, the Air Echelon found it was Marine and Navy. These boys really turned out to welcome us. Jeeps, trucks, and shots of whiskey met us as we landed. Aware that there was something in the wind, as it had broken their lonely routine, they played the genial hosts. The island was ours for the duration of our stay.

The Marines had excellent living quarters ready for us, and in the evening threw a big feed, with cold beer to top off the meal. Tactically, they were just as pre-pared. Our Operations and Intelligence sections were immediately given office space, and the big mess hall was loaned for a briefing room. On the line, their re-fueling gangs swung into action to gas the planes.

At T.O. time, 1630, the whole island turned out to sweat the big babies off. Our mission had become theirs, and they were there rooting. It took the 26 B-24s 17 minutes to become airborne. The island was cloaked with a heavy overcast, and it was impossible to see from one end of the runway to the other.

At daybreak, the planes began coming in." Each crew was met by a good slug of whiskey, their first taste of combat liquor ration, and the Marines and sailors were all there to welcome them back from this history-making raid. Cameras were clicking, and the 7th Bomber Com-mand had a series of movie cameras covering the raid.

The second raid on Wake was on January 12. It was a daylight bombing strike, and the whole

island was thoroughly photographed.

In May news of a task force heading for Midway reached the 7th Bomber Command. Several of our crews were dispatched to Midway to stand alert in event of an attack on the island.

Smaller formations of our 24's went over throughout January to get pictures of the damage done on the first raid, and to add what they could to that damage. On January 23 they were met by fighters and the Group's first Zero was shot down, plus four probables. More awards, Oak Leaf Clusters to Air Medals, were passed out for the successful photo reconnaissance and bombing.

The Gilberts and Marshalls were also photographed on January 26, for the first time since enemy occupation, by three of our planes from the shuttle base of Funa Futi in the Ellice Islands. They were led by Major Birchard. This was also the first time our outfit bombed shipping. They sighted a large cargo ship in Tarawa Lagoon and attacked it with ¾-tanners, setting it afire. The aerial photos and information of enemy activity gained on this flight later proved invaluable to the Marines in their landings. On the 28th a lone plane made an armed photographic reconnaissance of Ocean Island and Nauru from Funa Futi.

The carefree days of the native luau, with feasts of barbecued pig and poi, and the dances of the hula girls, hips swaying in the moonlight to the tune of strumming ukuleles, went with the last day of peace-time Oahu. Although the tourist trade is no longer a stimulus to native exhibitions of their unique culture, the tradition of the hula is still carried on by young and old Wahinis alike. Now, the hula is presented in public in the form of U.S.O. shows which travel all over the island to entertain servicemen. They came out to our camps and performed anywhere there was a clearing, tent or auditorium large enough to hold the crowd.

But our time for the enjoyment of entertainment was short-lived. Warning orders came through on Feb. 6 moving the Group to Espiritu Santo in the New Hebrides. Later the orders were changed to Guadalcanal. The planes carrying full crews and the minimum maintenance personnel and equipment necessary to operate for 60 days took off a few days later.

When our Air Echelon left Oahu it was slated for Espiritu Santo in the New Hebrides. Except for a few planes delayed on Canton for tactical reasons, the Air Echelon proceeded to its destination. Arriving there in early February, we found that our immediate task was to stage off newly won Henderson Field, and to do search out of New Hebrides. We were to relieve the 11th Bomb. Group Air Echelon of these dual jobs. The ground men of the 11th became our housekeepers for a month, until they returned to Oahu.

Our temporary camp at Santo at first was our main camp, as we sent only the necessary number of men and combat crews to the staging area, Henderson Field. Each day one or more planes with crews and maintenance men flew back and forth between our two islands. The enemy air offensive on Guadalcanal was wicked, with all-night harassing raids, and a few daylight raids.

During this time, Espiritu Santo was not free of air raids. At first we were bombed nightly. Flights between the islands and all search missions, at this time, were armed. Russell Island had not been taken, and the Japs were very eager and active and patrolled between Guadalcanal and Espiritu Santo. Gradually the constant traffic between the islands dwindled down. By the end of March the rear base was being used very little by our Group.

To help build the future camp for the 371st and 372nd and to take care of new crews from Oahu, and all planes passing to and from.

On June 12 the "Jane Adams" unloaded its cargo of salty, boat-weary 371 st and 372nd ground men. Due to a shortage of combat crews we had to give ours to the outfit defending the Hawaiian Islands and sweat out new crews at our Rear Echelon base. Crews were reshuffled from the other squad-rons to help check off the new boys coming in and to form a cadre of flight leaders.

The camp area was built under the super-vision of Major Billy Jarvis and turned out to be one of the best. Frames and floors were built in short order from a rich supply of white pine we'd brought from Oahu on the boat, and tents were screened in.

The huge phosphate works on the circular island of Nauru was dealt a telling blow when our bombers, staging out of Funo Futi, gave it the works in mid-April of 1943. We were subjected to in-tense anti-aircraft fire. Fighter opposition was hot and seven Zeros were damaged.

Results of the mission indicated that we de-stroyed the main phosphate plant on this Central Pacific island. Bomb-bursts were observed in the housing area surrounding the phosphate works. One element of our formation dropped their bombs on the island's only runway. Several planes were destroyed on the ground.

Nauru was hit at different times by our Group. Guadalcanal-based planes hit it twice. The day following the first mission on Nauru, the Oahu based half of our Group hit Tarawa, another island of the Gilbert Group. This was the third mission over Tarawa. The first were photographic missions. These missions were staged off Funo Futi, largest of the Ellice Islands, which had been occupied by the American forces several weeks earlier. The operation was under control of the 7th Bomber Command.

At Espiritu Santo the Rear Echelon set up equipment and mock-ups for the purpose of train-ing air and ground personnel in the operation of the various complicated pieces of machinery found in the B-24 Liberator. Although all crews had gone through the various phase-training periods at base in the continental United States, there still was a great amount of polishing to be done on them before they were completely equipped and ready to take their part in the rigorous life of combat duty.

The Armament building contained Consolidated, Martin, and Sperry turrets, complete with

tracking lines and moving targets, a mock-up of the bomb release system, machine-guns, sights, bombs, and fuses. A working model of the C-1 Auto-Pilot was used to instruct pilots in the proper procedure to be used in setting up the equipment. Bombardiers were trained and checked out on the bomb trainer which was set up in the 371st area.

The Engineering building contained a mock-up of the hydraulic, fuel transfer, lubrication, and electrical systems of the B-24. A cut-away Pratt & Whitney engine showed all the moving parts of this complicated piece of machinery.

The Communications building contained a complete working set-up for all the radio, inter-phone, and radar equipment used on our planes, and provision was made for the training of new men.

This whole set-up was completed in November 1943, and just as the last piece of equipment was wheeled into place we received our moving orders.

Airplanes need a rest from combat, too, once in a while, if we expect them to last out a normal six to eight hundred hours of combat life. So, in order to conserve planes and men during the weary days when both were feeling pretty beaten up, a system of plane and crew rotation was instituted between the forward and the rear base. The war weary planes of the 370th and 424th, after nine months of continuous combat activity, carried their combat and maintenance crews down to Santo for six weeks' rest; while a corresponding number from the other two squadrons moved up for a taste of the aerial offensive.

Actually, the "rest" turned into a strenuous training period for combat crews. Ground men spent all their time shuffling planes in the four-ship bunkers and keeping them grounded for extensive overhaul.

Flying personnel and the higher-ranking non-coms got a break and flew to Auckland for 10-day rest leaves.

supervision. Living with, working on, and guarding our own planes (the island wasn't secure yet!", we raced to keep our ships in commission to keep them from becoming "tech. supply" and used as replace-ment parts on others. Sweating out all-night harassing air raids from Japs operating off Munda and Kahili gave rise to a new Group saying, "When it gets too rough for everyone else, it's just right for us." Combat and maintenance men were rotated every six to eight days to New Hebrides for a short rest, and even that spot was under air at-tack in those days.

One account of a Henderson Field air raid tells us: "On the night of March 23 the klaxon call to foxholes sounded about 2023 and Tojo appeared with two flights of three twin-engine Mitsubishi 97's. He first attacked Tulagi Harbor, 20 miles across the bay, and 'then came at us. Heavy fire from the smaller automatic anti-aircraft sounded off along with the 90mm.'s. 'Charlie's' aim was better than usual, and he laid a string near one of our airplanes, setting it

afire.

The flames spread and two more of our 24's were destroyed. After snooping around in the clouds for a while 'Charlie' and his pals came back, and this time destroyed a B-17. It exploded a 500-pound bomb, and gave us lovely fireworks but small comfort otherwise. Several of our planes were riddled by flying shrapnel and their tires blown out. Fourteen planes out of fifteen in this part of the field were damaged, four beyond repair. The skins of two B-17s were wrinkled and their frames twisted by the explosions. Never to be forgotten were the 'swish' of the bombs, the crash of the explosions, the flaming sky, and the burning Fortresses. Our boys were catching it preparatory to tossing it back with interest."

On March 18 the "Tyler" pulled into "Iron Bottom Bay" and was met by landing barges which started hauling t-yo squadrons of us ashore, commando-style, with full packs, "A" bags, rifles, gas masks, etc. After wading ashore and piling on G. I. trucks, we rode through several miles of mud to our camp area. All we found to meet our tired eyes were a few acres of trampled kunai grass, a pile of "C" rations, and dense jungle as a back-drop to it all. Nothing was unloaded but us and what we could carry on our backs. So we pitched pup tents and slept in six inches of rain-water. The squadrons were split up into work details, some to unload the boat, others to set up camp and start clearing the jungle so we could move the camp back under the natural camouflage of the trees. It was several days before any food was unloaded and we ate out of "C" ration cans for our three squares daily.

Our first real meal of powdered eggs and spam was met with hearty approval. The long inactivity of the boat trip and the sudden exposure to the tropical heat, insects, poor meals, and long hours of hard work put a lot of us on the sick book -as soon as it was located. The clear, cool Meta-pona River running back of our camp was the first spot we headed for. For many of us it was the first fresh-water bath we'd had in over a month. It soon became a most popular place for swimming, bath-ing, washing clothes, and just cooling off.

As soon as our camp of pyramidal tents was set up in the clearing and all supplies were un-loaded, we took a Sunday off and opened the P.X. The Advance Echelon of men who'd been sweating it out with the planes at Henderson came over for a reunion and joined us in consuming our first beer ration. To those who hadn't seen the Henderson pioneers for a couple of months they seemed gaunt and haggard after the strain of air raids and com-bat and their first dose of the tropics-"when it was rough."

Built during a rainy season out of steel mat-ting, Carney Field had a mud foundation and never was a suitable strip for heavy bombers-but we flew a lot of missions off it. Despite the constant efforts of the 14th Sea Bees and native laborers, the matting was always curling up under the heavy loads of the B-24s. Sections were always being replaced and soft spots filled in, but the planes often got stuck taxiing about the revetments, and the wash-board effect of the runway made for rough take-offs and landings and was hard on tires. When the flood came the runway became so soft it was declared unoperational and the planes took off for Henderson to operate off that coral strip till complete repairs could be made.

Work on the line at Carney was a job involving hard labor, ingenuity, and long trips over rough roads. We didn't junk planes so easily at Carney. Even if it took over a month to repair, planes were so scarce we had to use the man-hours to get the plane back in commission.

After learning in combat the hard way, we were convinced that the B-24 was not adequately armed if it was expected to be self-reliant. Back at Hickam Field someone was experimenting with a tail turret transplanted to the nose of the plane, and they had also worked out plans to install a retractable Sperry ball turret in the belly. The former Bendix turrets with remote control and sighting had proved impractical and were removed before we came down under. Arrangements were made to send each of our planes back to the Hawaiian Air Depot for modifications to eliminate the nose and belly blind spots and make the Liberator a more formidable foe to enemy fighters than the Flying Fortress. May 16, the first plane left for a week's stay at Hickam to be rearmed. We sent them in dribbles, so as to keep an adequate number of planes in combat and, by the end of June, they were all modified and ready for the big push.

Bomber Two in the Koli Point Area of Guadal-canal was laid out and constructed on a large, flat field of kunai grass. Original purpose was to supplement Carney and relieve that overcrowded field of some of its heavy traffic. A large dispersal area capable of parking 101 heavy bombers was built on the field by the C.B.'s in co-operation with the Air-borne Engineers. The strip was made of rolled coral hauled from the beaches, and had a steel matting surface, while the taxiways and bunkers were built up of sand, gravel, and coral mixed into a solid road-way.

We flew our planes over to the new strip on October 2, 1943. A two-mile taxiway was built running from Carney to Koli to facilitate moving of planes. The old field was taken over completely by the Navy 24's and the 42nd Group B-25's), which had moved in opposite our planes some time previously. The 5th Group also moved in to the new field.

Best deal for men of our Group was the nearness of our camp. Just beyond the latrines were located the shops, and a stone's throw away the dispersal area and first taxiway were encountered. Transportation was no longer a problem, and we didn't worry our kidneys about a long, bumpy, dusty trip to the line. Combat men were carried out in the long trailer and 6 x 6's, and ground men could just walk a few hundred yards from their tents and be at their jobs in the shops or on their airplanes. When the plane took off it was easy enough to walk back to the sack or the sports field and spend spare time profitably, and when the plane come in there was ample time to get out there to sweat it in. But the strip's proximity also caused many of us foxhole veterans to sweat it out, because we knew if "Cholly" got in and made a run on the field, he'd be sure to hit our comp area by mistake. Luckily, the air raids dwindled down just as we moved our planes to the new strip.

It was at this time that Jap trucks really flourished. Ports were picked up in junk yards on the island and assembled to make a working vehicle, in most cases better than the original product. The more talented mechanics built midget racers, motor scooters, and other forms of

"put -put" transportation. It was nothing to us to see a bullet-riddled cab with a flat wooden bed on the back and no fenders and with a r.h. drive, but it caused others to oawk. Some had been built at Carney, but at Koli the fad became widespread and some squadrons had as many as eight privately owned vehicles.

The bulk of our Guadalcanal foxhole time was put in at night. T ' bombed "by the light of the moon," as navigation was made easier, and he was sure to appear the 1 i of each month, rumor being that Hirohito's son was killed on September 13, 1942, and these raids ere made in retaliation for his death. The original "Washing Machine Charlie," so dubbed because of its "erumm" electric Maytag sound, was a Kawanishi flying-boat. Twin-engine Mitsubishi '97's are also used by the Japs for their nightly raids and were easily identified by their unsynchronized enlines.

Religious services on Guadalcanal began the first Sunday after the boat docked; on up-ended packing box was the pulpit and rows of chloride of lime barrels were the pews. The mess hall become our church when it rained. G.1. trucks carried Catholics and those of the Jewish faith to their services held at the 14th C.B. chapel. Meanwhile, the Protestant "Chapel in the Wildwood" was under construction in a natural amphitheater near the river.

Although due to the flood we were about three months behind schedule, we finally dedicated the chapel in August, 1943. The Marine Band opened the postponed dedication service. The natives who had built the thatch hut were present and their chorus song for us. About 550 soldiers, sailors, and Marines were there, most of them standing, as we could seat only about 200. The bright green of the great jungle mode a scene on each side of the outdoor auditorium that was restful to the eye. The shrubs and flowers which we had placed in the landscape, the tropical ferns on the front of the altar, and the leaves of the toll trees glistening in the early morning sun, all helped to afford a setting which was suggestive of the beauty of God.

Operating in guerilla fashion, our Group, along with other units of the scattered 13th Air Force, began its South Pacific campaign in Febru-ary. Leap-frogging from Santo to Guadalcanal, our first few months were spent wading into the face of the enemy aerial supremacy and whittling it down. Our primary purpose, at first, was to keep the enemy at boy, to harass his shipping, hit his airdromes, and destroy his supply area.

To do this, our heavies were employed for patrol, were used to scatter incendiaries and frogs on his supplies, and to disrupt his supply lanes. All early missions were of a defensive nature; long-range punches to keep him groggy. When the Japs did launch sea-borne attacks on our outposts, heavy bombardment came in, leap-frogging from rear bases, giving him a hay-maker, dodging back, weaving in again and again, knocking him about until our amphibious force could take over.

Our first taste of combat was a stiff one. Six planes, on February 13, the day after our arrival, made a daylight raid against shipping in Shortland Harbor, with eight fighters as escorts. The forma-tion was greeted by intense anti-aircraft fire and over 100 Zeros from the beehive of

airfields around Shortland. Three of our bombers and four fighters were shot down. On February 16 nine planes bombed shipping in Kahili Harbor, and we lost two more bombers. After this, tactics were channeled, and night missions were flown. We kept these up, night after night, for several months.

Not until May did we have the chance of giving the Japs a heavy blow. This time we worked in partnership with the Navy. Kahili Harbor was to be mined, in order to trap Jap ships in the harbor, and to increase the hazards of its use by enemy shipping. While the Navy's TBF's planted the mines in the harbor, we diverted the attention of the searchlights and anti-aircraft batteries by peeling off in elements and bombing the coastline. During June, our tempo of activity increased. While bombing the Japs at night, during the day we began high-altitude raids against some of his airdromes. These were carried out on targets south of Buka Passage. On June 18 a night mission was planned against Nauru. The original plan of the mission was changed, and we hit the target at day-break. All planes returned from this 1,700-mile round trip, after setting off huge fires and heavily pounding the island.

Night missions against Kahili and Ballate, with formations of as many as 20 planes, continued well into July. Also in July strikes were made against New Georgia, Vila, Tonolei Harbor, Ballole, and Buko.

August found us ready to sew up the Solomons campaign by launching our all-out effort to knock out its airfields.

Daily pasting of Jap airfields with 1,000-pounders soon developed into a routine job. From the beginning of August until the middle of December, Kahili received a pounding few fields in the Pacific ever got. Along with Kahili, and Shortland Harbor and vicinity, we took on the more northerly Bougainville targets. Kara, Buka, Banis, Ballole, Vila, became familiar targets for our crews. The two heavy groups did a great deal toward knocking out the Japs' air power through this area. We did it by destroying his airfields, shooting his planes down in air battles and destroying them on the ground. It was during these trying days that Jap air power was definitely checked. Prior to the inauguration of the Solomons campaign, the Jap had pretty well ruled the skies. The outcome of this campaign served notice on the Nip that his days of supremacy in the air were numbered.

During this phase of our work, each mission averaged about seven hours. We were not quite the long-range bombing outfit that we later became, though we still held the long-distance formation record, for our Wake raid.

On Armistice Day we took part in one of the largest aerial strikes ever pulled in the South Pacific area. Projected by ComAirSols, this strike was co-ordinated with two carrier forces of the Navy and with units of the 5th Air Force. Carrier groups from the U.S.S. "Saratoga," "Princeton," "Essex," "Bunker Hill," and "Independence" began the attack at 0800 against Japanese war and merchant shipping in Simpson Harbor at Rabaul. Four squadrons of our bombers followed at 0900, led by the "Bomber Barons" with two squadrons. Seventy-five B-25's of the 5th Air Force

were the last to hit. This mission was staged through the newly acquired airstrip on New Georgia.

We pulled a few additional missions over Rabaul from the 'Canal before we moved to Munda. During December we hit Lakunai and Vunakanau airfields, and Rabaul City several times. Until our move to Munda, we did not put on the real pressure. During this time we still hit Bougainville targets as secondaries.

Americans are a funny people-they like to live comfortably. As soon as we had hewn out living space in the jungle, we built screened-in, wooden-floored canvas homes according to specifications. Then the occupants of each tent were left to their own devices to increase their personal comfort. Good lumber was scarce and used only in necessary construction, so we used jungle wood and empty frog boxes and bomb crates for additional furniture. Some built elaborate front porches.

There being nothing more important in a G. I.'s life than a comfortable sack, elaborate contraptions sprang up, among the most ingenious being wooden frames criss-crossed by strips of rubber cut from salvaged Jap inner tubes. Real mattresses were difficult to obtain. Money was to a great extent a surplus commodity, but we could get a good mat-tress for two quarts of liquor. Many fellows at first used dried grass stuffed in their mattress covers.

fortunate as far as our camp area was concerned. We had electricity from the first. We had our own barber shop. We had carted large reefer boxes from Hawaii and these gave us ice-water at meals and ice cream on special occasions. The first six months we had running water only in the mess halls. We bathed and washed our laundry in the river back of the camp area. Laundry was a tough chore and took at least half a day, so when the laundry unit brought from Hawaii by the 371st and 372nd arrived it proved a great labor saver.

We had our trinket making and many other lucrative hobbies to help pass the time. Foxholes were rigged up as dark rooms for the amateur photographers in the outfit. Mechanics had Jap trucks for their own use, rebuilding them from wrecks scattered around the island. It didn't take us long to rig up facilities to take care of certain comforts that we were used to having in pre-jungle living.

Munda! The land of big trees and red mud and noontime cloudbursts; the place where the sun sweltered us in the daytime and where the night became cool and eerie with jungle noises and the harmony of land crabs rustling in dry leaves.

Our second stop in the Solomons, we came to Munda in January of nineteen forty-four. The two Ground Echelons of our former New Hebrides squadrons-the 371 st and 372nd--came first and were followed, two weeks later, by Group Head-quarters from Guadalcanal. The jungle-weary boys of the 370th and 424th were to remain at the 'Canal in the envied position of Rear Echelon. Our policy of flying remained the same-two Air Echelons up at the advance base and two back at the rest area.

Munda was no picnic. Compared to former bases, it was not as rugged as some. We had the help of an outfit of engineers and, by the end of January, mess halls, showers, offices, a large theatre, and a P.X. were built and operating. There were floors for the tents and coral for the streets. Falling trees made it necessary for all the amateur lumberjacks of the outfit to cut down the "weak sisters" and lower them gently between tents and buildings.

The comp at Munda was hilly and this fact necessarily restricted the favorite sport of baseball, but a team formed from 370th combat men and 372nd ground men went out and beat every team on the island. We compensated slightly in our area with numerous volley-ball, badminton and horse-shoe courts. Then there were always the tours by row-boat around the various small adjacent islands, and shell hunting and necklace making flourished.

We won't forget the blue skies and steep hills of Munda right away. It marked the beginning of the acceleration of the Pacific war, and of our transition from "Air Guerillas" to "Long Rangers. We hadn't yet become completely "Jungle Jolly" there, and, perhaps for that reason, our memories of it are vaguely pleasant. Ours was a clean, pleasant area to live in with the caroled streets giving the camp a neat, washed appearance that was totally dissimilar to the mud and dirt of Guadalcanal. The fact that the camp was built on hilly ground meant that the almost hip-deep mud that followed every rain at the 'Canal was a thing of the past. Here at Munda the rain drained off the camp area and just tended to wash the coral a little cleaner and give added sparkle to the brilliant, lush foliage that surrounded us on all sides.

A wide, glaring coral strip with equally wide, sunbaked taxiways aptly describes the airdrome on Munda Point. Bordered by the ocean on two sides, and a mountain on the other, take-offs were aimed out across Rendova Bay. On the Armistice Day shipping strike against Rabaul, our air crews had staged out of Munda. Therefore, the base was not new to them, though undeveloped at that time.

Even before this, we had a plane come in for emergency landing from a raid up the slot, which initiated the strip for bombers. The pilot renamed his plane the "Munda Belle," in honor of this first landing.

Our ground detachment of the 371st and 372nd found that the air base here was set up by the Sea Bees, and all they had to do was occupy the Quonset huts awaiting them for Engineering, Tech. Supply, and a 11 sections offices necessary for operation. The ideal building space found here was so much better than any around the camp area that the G.I.'s reconverted the huts and used them for parties and beer busts, on occasion.

The ideal line-set-up was of real value, as our planes returning from the flak and interception encountered over Rabaul and Truk were riddled and holed as never before. Plane patching had all sections active, the sheet metal men and welders getting the heaviest dose of this type of work. Mechanics waded through their increase of plane repair. Though service outfits took on the worst of the burden, they could not cope with the "sick-call" line. Minor and even major

patients fell to our ground men.

From Munda, the four squadrons operated jointly on key missions, at other times the same rotating plan instituted six months before prevailed -two Air Echelons rested at rear bases and sent combat crews to Auckland, two pulled the missions. The maintenance men of the 370th and 424th accompanied the air crews when their turn came, otherwise the 371st and 372nd shop facilities and ordnance and armament sections were used.

The line was such a short distance from the ocean that the ground men, instead of trudging back to the camp, took advantage of it and passed the time away sweating in the planes near the ocean and the line itself. C.B. Docks made good diving platforms for ocean swimming, and the trees along the beaches afforded coolness and shade away from the sun-beaten strip. Belly tanks, row-boats, and life-rafts got the personnel over to nearby islands. Native villages on these islands were not off-bounds and trading with the natives was brisk. Shells were found on the Munda beaches in abundance.

Munda had its annex bases-Torokina and Green Island-when we began our attacks against Truk. Using these two bases-Torokina for take-off, and Green Island for emergency if Torokina could not be reached-' -our crews began a campaign that subjected them to trying conditions. While at the Bougainville perimeter's airfield, which had just undergone a "black alert," and which was expecting another one, the crewmen received little sleep. Heavy gunfire was exchanged all during the night, and this, plus "red alerts," kept them going from bunks to foxholes.

Movement orders for our hop from the South to the Southwest Pacific had been a rumor a month earlier when all rest leaves had been canceled. Upon the completion of the first bomber strip at Mokerang Plantation, on April 22, these rumors became a reality. The next day six C-47's took off from Munda with our Advance Echelon. They landed on Los Negros and proceeded to lay out the camp site. Another 15 skytrains left the 'Canal on the 29th and 25 more took off from Munda on the 30th.

Early days at Mokerang were rough. Assigned a portion of the soil, the Camp-building Echelon went to work. The Sea Bees cleared the jungle with their bulldozers and helped blast latrines and foundations out of the solid coral. Even shallow holes needed blasting in many cases. Fortunately, plenty of water for drinking was available-a 21 -mile haul coming from the Sea Bee camp off the Momote strip. New brands of jungle pests were encountered. Eight-foot snakes were killed around the new camp area; near the beach coral snakes and adders were in abundance. A new type of mosquito -carrier of elephantiasis-caused everyone to wear long sleeves during the day, as a protective measure.

The four Air Echelons made the 800-mile flight from Munda to Los Negros on the 3rd and 4th of May. The naval transport "Azalea City" picked up the Ground Echelons of the 370th and 424th Squadrons at Guadalcanal and those of the 371 st and 372nd at Munda, setting sail on May 9 for our new home.

Life on board ship broke the normal routine and rested the men. Everyone relaxed-and read, sun-bathed, or tried a hand at the games of chance. The escorting destroyer added to everyone's sense of security and peace of mind.

On May 12 the big ship dropped anchor and unloaded in Seadler Harbor between Manus and Los Negros. Heavy equipment and supplies, transported in the Liberty Ships "Thomas Condon" and "Wm. C. Keith," were taken ashore also.

Tentage and cots in sufficient quantity were not immediately available, so infantry hammocks were borrowed. Everyone from the Command-ing Officer down slept on the mess hall floor, and stood in the chow line with mess kits. "C" rations were the usual delicacy with canned fruit once a day to make the meal tastier. These new areas had their available share of mud. No quartermaster laundry was available, so the salty ocean substituted. The lazier individuals did theirs by tying the clothes to an overhanging tree limb and letting the incoming waves flush out the dirt. The clothes were clean but remained damp almost continuously as the salt absorbed moisture in the air.

Quarters were not immediately wired for electricity, so the only means of illumination were candles or Coleman lanterns. All bathing was done in the salt water for the first three weeks because fresh water for showers was not available. Lack of lights and recreation brought new diversions one was making jeep keys out of plexiglass. How-ever, it wasn't long before the food improved, tents were floored and screened, fresh-water wells dug, and power installed.

Not many B-24s ever live out 100 combat missions. The plane becomes so rapidly obsolete that she can't keep up with the rest of the forma-tion, and if she is still flying by the time 800 to 1,000 hours have been logged, the old veteran is retired from combat and put on the "egg run" to Australia. It may be a matter of luck or the enemy retaliation encountered or the length and strain of the missions, but some planes never make over five missions while others chalk up anywhere from 50 to 100. Few of our losses have been operational; most have been due to enemy action, but our overall 1 losses have been comparatively small.

Mokerang airstrip witnessed more emergency landings than any other that our Group used. The Sea Bees built a double runway. One strip for the mission to take off and land on and the other to be used primarily for plane;; coming in for emergency landings. We had all varieties here-coming in with landing gear up, or nose gear not extended, or hydraulics shot out and parachutes opened out the waist windows acting as air brakes.

Mokerang airdrome was an ideal of its kind; efficient, well built, and roomy. It was long enough to permit the whole group to be dispersed along a single taxiway running parallel to the strip itself. The twin runways, one for normal and one for emergency operations, were constructed by the combined efforts of Sea Bees and Army Engineers.

Both the service squadron and Air Force supply were centrally located along the taxiway. The supply situation was as good as at any of our bases, and the service squadron was a highly

organized outfit. They had plenty of our business, for we had quite a few mishaps both on landing and take-off.

It was at Los Negros that we got our first un-painted silver planes. In the beginning these were priority targets for Jap interceptors, who were under the impression that they were being flown by general officers, since previously only a general's private plane was uncamouflaged. Later when as many as 10 and 12 silver jobs appeared in a single formation Tojo got wise to himself.

Terrific heat and the blinding glare of the coral taxiways and strips were the main drawbacks on the line. Shops, offices, and tech. supply were housed in tin-roofed huts and warehouses, and provided the only cooling off spots except under the large, shady wings of the planes.

Once there was a tiny tropical island, too small to be marked on any map, but just large enough to hold a coconut plantation. It was covered with coconut trees and lush vegetation. A white stone house for the plantation overseer and a small jetty were the only visible signs of civilization. It was just like hundreds of other sleepy little islands in the Pacific. But it happened to be in a strategic spot. The Japs took it over in their push down New Guinea toward Australia in 1942, with little resistance. They built one of their roller coaster runways and, with their burrowing instinct, honey-combed it with caves. With the leap-frog land-ings along the coast of New Guinea in '44, the infantry crossed the island like a swarm of locusts, leaving a bare rock strewn with mechanical and human wreckage and the stumps of a few trees. "This spot isn't livable," laughed the gods, and assigned it to the 307. Bob Hope summed up our feeling for our new island home when he visited us in his whirlwind tour of the theatre. With the inimitable Hope humor he brought down the house when he made a crack about how lovely the trees on the island looked-particularly those two with tops.

It was practically an all-air move for the Group. We flew an Advance Echelon in to dig the latrines and set up the beginning of the camp on the treeless south peninsula. The camp site was located on a small knoll just at the head of the peninsula, overlooking a scene of desolation such as we had never seen before. Discarded Jap equipment was scattered all over the earth, which had been scarred and torn by the ferocity of the Allied attack.

None of the lush vegetation we had known on other Pacific islands was left, and the sun beat mercilessly down on our area-completely devoid of shade. One of the disadvantages we found with the cramped quarters allotted to us was the inability to lay out the Group area in such a way as to get the corresponding squadron sections near each other. As a result, operational efficiency suffered somewhat. Living conditions definitely took a slump as we were packed in cheek by jowl with every available bit of space being utilized.

Our first question was how they were going to get all those men and planes on that tiny rock. Shuttling men and equipment in by B-24 and C-47 was a day job. A few days after the last plane landed we were set up and ready for the first mission. Water supply was a big problem to decent living. All we had was an abandoned Jap well, till new ones could be blasted out of the coral. There was no shade or relief from the oppressive heat and the glare of the coral. The

ocean was the only spot for any sporting activity.

The chow and, it naturally follows, the morale improved considerably as planes came in from Australia loaded with fresh food. And, after almost two years overseas and 19 months in the forward area, five of our ground men got their first rest leave, and the first few men went home on rotation. Like a stone dropped into a pool of water, the announcement from Operations that there will be 500-pounders for tomorrow's mission spreads ripples of activity in every direction. Each squadron's ordnance crews are on their way to the bomb dump. The armament section is rounding up its flights and flight schedules and notifying the crews that are to fly. Crews draw flak suits, Mae Wests, and helmets.

Maintenance crews give finishing touches to planes scheduled for the mission. Cameras are installed and checked. Radar checked. Radio sets okayed. Frequencies adjusted. Everything is made ready. Two hours before take-off, activity is fanned into motion again as the C.Q.'s begin waking combat crews, maintenance men, drivers, mess personnel.

This procedure has happened so often it has become routine. It started at Oahu, continued at Guadalcanal, has encircled the Pacific with us and will follow us as long as we take on the Japs, any time and any place where we are called on for a mission.

The procedure was repeated exactly 51 times at Wokde. We flew fewer missions from this base than any since Espiritu Santo. On these 51 strikes 18 different targets were hit. Many of these targets were mere names on the title page of the target folders. Some were big-time, well enough known to make Stateside newspapers. Few made the headlines.

In early September our Wokde-based bombers were spearheads for the Palau beach-head, made in the middle of that month. Our task was to neutralize the airfields in the area, and to destroy as many of the military objectives as we could. After making the two runways, Peleliu and Nessus, unserviceable, we took on the installations and supply dumps around Koror Town. We leveled the town and pasted all the supplies we could find.

With this series of operations completed, our strikes were shifted to the Moluccas Group. Here we were to pave the way for another amphibious landing which, too, was to take place in mid-September. We were assigned Loloboto, Galela, and Miti airdromes. These were to be softened up in short order. We did this in a few days, and, after the landings were made on Morotai, we assisted the ground forces indirectly by keeping enemy airfields in the immediate vicinity inoperative. Our target folders listed the Jap-held airstrips at Haroekoe, Laha, Liang and Amboino. Supply areas in the Ambon-Ceram Islands were also destroyed.

Until we moved to Noemfoor, the targets we hit from Wokde were important mainly for the support we gave the ground forces who were making the leap-frog jumps up the lanes toward the Philip-pines. We took on by-passed airstrips and kept them knocked out until the air forces could move into these newly won jungle clearings. At this time we could figure that, along with fighters, Morotai would someday be our new base. It was.

The camp at Noemfoor, like that at Wakde, being only a temporary set-up, was far from a model community. Everything that went to Noemfoor had to be taken by air, so naturally only the barest necessities were brought.

The mess halls were small and, for the most part, understaffed, resulting in long chow lines. Water was a problem, most of it having to be brought a great distance over very bad roads.

The camp site was a semi-rolling field completely devoid of trees. The Advance Echelon, with the help of bulldozers supplied by the Engineers, had cleared the area of most of the brush and set up some of the tents, the rest were set up as the need for them arose. Noemfoor was subject to heavy rainfalls and the lower parts of the camp area were flooded a great deal of the time, while the entire camp was frequently just a sea of mud.

Our only transportation consisted of a few jeeps and what other vehicles we could borrow from other outfits, and missing the line truck meant walking to the strip. All in all, it was a relief to leave the place and rejoin the rest of the outfit at our new base on Morotoi.

From what we saw of the natives on this island, we gathered that they were good gardeners, lived in stilted huts over the water, and the women wore full-length calicos which reached from armpit to ankle. They passed by our camp en route to their truck gardens where they grew all sorts of tropical vegetables.

We had to admire their social system; the women would walk by single file in a long line with immense loads in the baskets they carried on their heads; at the end of the procession would be one or two men just carrying a bolo or stick or gun. We also found the natives here to be excellent wood carvers. They exhibited model outriggers and animals carved from the local mahogany or teak. At first they did a brisk souvenir business in these, but eventually trading was forbidden by G. I. orders.

backed by a mighty chorus from the 38 heavy AA guns ringing Balikpapan, with a Jap bomber lying off our formation calling out our altitude, provided a combination that exacted a heavier price than we had ever had to pay before. The last three strikes were made in conjunction with three heavy groups from the Fifth Air Force and accompanied by fighters of both the Fifth and Thirteenth Fighter Commands.

This series of 2,500-mile round-trip missions, their pre-dawn take-offs with planes loaded to 69,000 pounds and their intense opposition over the target, forms one of the bleakest chapters in our combat history, but the assigned job was accomplished.

The first raid on September 30 was the history-maker. It set the pace for the others to follow, all of which crippled the Jap oilfields in this area. All personnel of the Group coordinated their efforts to achieve the greatest possible results for this extra-ordinary raid. Operations and Intelligence worked long hours assembling information. Engineering personnel groomed the

planes, extra bomb bay tanks were installed. Planes were loaded to the hilt with bombs and gasoline. Never before were Liberators made to exert the effort they were called on for this mission.

Tech. Orders were swept aside, as we overloaded the planes. The ammunition load was cut in half by the distance-weight restrictions, though we knew we would have no fighter support. We also meant to get 2,610 miles out of this Flying Boxcar, as it was a 17½-hour flight. This was the longest mission a formation of bombers was ever assigned to fly.

The extraordinary valor of the air crews can only be shown as we describe what happened on this mission. Prior to reaching the objective they flew over constantly patrolled enemy territory. The enemy was alerted hours before we reached the target. Approaching it, a flock of interceptors attacked the formations in the fiercest coordinated attacks ever experienced by our veteran gunners. For over 40 minutes the enemy pressed continuous and desperate attacks in an effort to break up the section formations and turn the bombers away from the vital oil refineries.

When we reached the objective, we found it covered by a solid cumulus undercast. Despite the continued fierce attacks from the enemy fighters and the tremendous anti-aircraft barrage, the flight circled and came back for another bomb run. Again on the second run an opening could not be found. Having already spent 30 minutes in the target area the crews could have turned the Liberators homeward without fear of being censured, but instead circled again and came over for their third run on the target. This time their perseverance was rewarded, for the bombardiers were able to drop their bombs on the assigned objective. The pattern was dumped through a hole in the clouds, covering the target. Smoke billowed to 20,000 feet as we left this, our roughest deal in the Pacific.

Normal life of the 1,200-horsepower engines on a B-24 is 6,540 flying hours plus a margin of 20 percent. If we think they can stand it. But, in combat, many unforeseen events happen to shorten their exciting and overtaxed lives considerably. Tangling with flak and Zeros and using evasive action when the pilot really has to pour on the coal tend to bring the average engine life in our outfit down to 300 to 400 hours.

We had our share of engine changes at Noemfoor. An engine change is sometimes welcomed by our maintenance men—it is the only time they have normal daylight working hours. We also had our share of the same old routine maintenance, as exemplified on the opposite page.

Although we had ample parking space for our airplanes, the tremendous number of aircraft of all nations and descriptions dispersed about the field put us late arrivals off in a corner. This required quite a bit of taxiing to the take-off point.

The solution of the tactical problem involved in finding the Jap Fleet may not be discussed in this book, but much of the success achieved was due to the dogged persistence of the bomber crews in their search for the target. They found the fleet, and despite the odds against them—

the fact that they were running short of gas, that they were 1,300 miles from their base, and that they were facing their roughest AA barrage-the formation swept in to attack.

As the Group poised outside the known range of the AA. batteries, to pick suitable targets and coordinate the attack, the huge battle-ships turned broadside and opened the engagement by blasting away with their heavy guns. Despite the wall of flak that greeted them, the crews pressed home their attack, dropping on excellent pattern of bombs on the two battleships.

This action is characterized by the acme of performance on the part of all members of this Group; ground crews, staff, and air crews coordinating in every detail in order to place a striking force of 27 Liberators-one crashed on take-off with its huge gasoline and bomb load-in position to deal a heavy blow against an enemy force of major proportions. Considering the enemy force engaged and the tactical problems and operational hazards involved, this action is believed unparalleled in the history of aerial warfare in this theatre.

The results of such a mission, more not attained without cost. Two of our bombers were destroyed over the target and one crashed into the sea shortly after leaving the target area.

It was from Noemfoor that our first missions to the Philippines were launched. In support of General MacArthur's landings at Leyte, we were assigned to help neutralize the airdrome bases of the Jap Philippines Air Force. Bacolod, Alicante and Dumaguete on Negros Island, and Lahug and Open airdromes surrounding Cebu City were hit.

For the first time since leaving Munda, the "Long Rangers" were flying again over land area, and, what was even more important, over area where a downed aviator could expect help from friendly Filipinos, a new experience for the crews of the 307.

Strikes at oil installations at Boelo, supplies at Manado Town and the old Namlea airdrome, plus shipping searches through the Cerom-Celebes area complete the history of our missions from Noemfoor. When the time came to move to Morotai to keep pace with the rapid Allied advance, nobody was sorry to say goodbye to Noemfoor.

Approximately 60 enlisted men and several officers with the Advance Echelon arrived on Morotai from Wokde on October 11, 1944. The first camp site was located 1,000 feet from the front lines and easily within hearing range of small-arms fire. The only barrier between this small group and the enemy was a bomb dump which only added to the chagrin of the men.

Air raids were continuous but the men worked on to prepare for the arrival of the Air Echelon. By the time 140 men arrived on October 17, a new site of comparative safety had been selected. It was located in a dense jungle which could be reached only by a one-rut trail. Bulldozers were obtained for the clearance of the new site, but, even so, much of the work had to be done by hand. Roads were built; coral was hauled; latrines were blasted inch by inch; foxholes were dug through the thickest coral, which was only one foot below ground level; all in the midst of the most trying conditions which are only paralleled by the early days of

Guadalcanal.

By the time the Air Echelon arrived on November 15, a beautiful camp was well under way, and even though the living conditions were still in a primitive stage our fliers were able to take off three days later to continue the task of supporting the Philippines campaign.

Since then continued improvements have made our camp one of our best. Our "Long Ranger Music Hall" is the largest and the most beautiful theatre we have ever had, and one of the best in the South Pacific. Group and Squadron Office buildings are centrally located, where, except for the Squadron Orderly Rooms, all business can be transacted. The Group Chapel, Post Exchange, Briefing Room, and Library, all located in or near this point, give the Company streets a "Stateside Saturday Evening" hum of activity.

Along with an out-of-this-world Officers' Club, day-rooms are reaching a peak never before attained for this Group. Every squadron seems to want to turn its day-room into a club, and efforts are being made to do so. This is a new trend for day-rooms.

"Charlie," nearly a legend from Guadalcanal days, became a grim reality again as we were subjected to nightly air raids. "Red alerts" were not all, for on Morotai we sweated out "black alerts"-the possibility of Japs invading our forward base. Morotai, centrally located among bypassed enemy islands on every side, was vulnerable to land, air, and sea activity.

We found to our chagrin that, in most places, the dirt covering of the rock was only about a foot thick. Under that was solid coral. Trying to dig a foxhole in this hard coral rock was like digging into reinforced concrete. So we had to compromise by digging down as far as we could and then building the hope up with logs or coral-filled oil drums.

Radio Tokyo blared forth one of its exaggerated news reports near the end of November that Morotai had been retaken by the Japs.

Morotai was prepared for such a possible invasion. Our part in this defensive set-up was restricted to the protection of our camp area. For the first time in our career we got our guns out, drew more live ammunition, and were instructed in perimeter defense. The scare lasted for a week, and during that time had everyone on his toes.

After 27 months' continuous work, the bulk of our veteran ground men got their first rest. Ten-day leaves were finally allotted in a little country town of 10,000 population, in Queensland, Australia, named Mackay.

We stuffed ourselves with fresh fruit and vegetables, ice cream, milk, "styke'n aygs." We cleaned the town of souvenirs, drank all available beer and liquor, legal and otherwise, and generally raised as much hell as we could.

The American Red Cross had a full week's schedule of horseback and bike rides, river picnics,

moonlight cruises, and swimming parties at the beach, plus nightly dances in their rec. hall. Young and friendly junior hostesses attended all these functions, did their best at jitterbugging, and swapped slang expressions with us.

Combat men got a better break, they went to Sydney on their rest leaves. There was the real deal! Everything under the sun in the recreation line. Ample night spots and plenty of good-looking women. Ten days' "rest" in Sydney and we went back to the jungle-tired but happier men.

Strikes flown from Morotai against installations at Borneo form one of the most varied and colorful periods in our history. The targets attacked called for the use of everything in the "Book for Bombing with the B-24," including a couple of chapters that were dictated extemporaneously, so to speak, and very much on the spot. There was the time, for instance, when a lone Liberator made an attack on a Jap ship off the northwest coast of Borneo-and missed.

One bomb had hung up and when repeated runs over the target still proved unsuccessful, a stunt was resorted to that made bombardier history. The navigator who was standing in the forward part of the bomb bays, the bombardier pried the recalcitrant bomb loose with a screwdriver and scored a direct hit, sending another Jap to the bottom to join the ever-increasing Nip undersea fleet.

The Japs, having lost one of their north-south shipping routes when the Celebes came within short range of Allied air power, moved west to the second of their three main lanes-the one passing through Macassar Straits. This rapidly developed into a happy hunting ground for B-24s of the "Long Rangers." Shipping sweeps through the Macassar Straits and along the east coast of Borneo soon made this area such a danger zone for the Nips' shipping that again they were forced to move west, this time utilizing their last remaining route-that through the China Sea.

Shipping, , wasn't the only target bombed by Liberators from the 307 in the Borneo region. A systematic destruction of the dozen Jap airfields that ringed the northeast and northwest coasts of Borneo was also undertaken and enemy strips from Miri on the west coast to Sepinggan on the east coast were "Rangerized" and finally catalogued in the unserviceable column. This served the dual purpose of not only preparing Borneo for its final conquest by Allied forces but also protected the flank of Allied shipping moving up through the Sulu Sea en route to the landings at Mindoro and Luzon.

Oil installations also come in for their share of attention during this period of our history. In addition to the Borneo oilfields at Balikpapan, the Japs were also working fields at Miri, Tarakan, and Sanga Sanga. Although very secondary in comparison to the production of Balikpapan, still they contributed a vital ingredient for the total Jap economy and thus fell heir to the hammer blows that Allied air power was delivering to all targets it could reach. Mass raids were directed against Miri and Tarakan, and individual strikes were flown against those two targets as well as Sanga Sanga.

These individual missions and lone shipping prowls formed the background for some of the most spectacular efforts in the history of the Group. Toke, for example, the lone B-24 that dropped its string of bombs through the oil tanks at Lutong Refinery at Miri, and then made repeated low-level strafing passes despite accurate, intense M fire that sieved the plane and wounded two of the crew members. When this destruction-bent pilot and his equally rapacious crew finally left the scene of action they had destroyed, single-handed, a goodly part of the Nips' oil installations in the area and left blazing fires with columns of smoke visible for many miles. This one attack practically wiped Lutong off the list of worth-while targets.

The airfields of Northern Borneo and at Palawan Island became a threat, and the 307 was called upon to neutralize them. Miri, Labuan, Jesselton, Kudat, Sandakan, Tawao, Lahud Datu, Tarakan, Manggar and Sepinggan were names added to the continuously growing list of "Rangerized" Jap air bases. Puerto Princessa on Palawan Island was also hit, setting the stage for one of the most atrocious instances of Jap cruelty when they used an air-raid excuse for herding over 100 Allied prisoners of war into an air-raid shelter and there burning them alive.

Prior to the Allied landing at Lingayan Gulf, the "Long Rangers" were again called back to the Philippines arena; this time to make the long haul to Luzon, carrying our messages of good cheer to the Japs on Nielson, Nichols, Grace Park, Batangas, and other airdromes in the Manila area. How efficiently those messages were delivered was attested to by the almost complete demoralization and collapse of the vaunted Philippines Air Forces of the Japanese.

With General MacArthur safely ashore at Lingayan and rapidly driving on Manila, we shifted our efforts to the Canacao Peninsula, Cavite and, finally, Corregidor; names that had a bitter taste in the mouths of American historians were purged by a hail of our bombs. We were the first bombers over Corregidor and our complete destruction of Cavite will be one of the brilliant records achieved by our outfit. We completed the neutralization of these two targets in record time.

Fresh from the wars at Luzon, we have settled down into a daily routine of plastering whatever targets of momentary importance are within our range. Now that the Nips have ceased their nightly visitations which were a completely unappreciated feature of the first two months at Morotai; now that we have a theatre that would make Roxy's eyes green and a P.X. that would do credit to Woolworth's; in fact, now that we are almost living like human beings again, we will undoubtedly move. , the next moves hold promises of leaving behind the nightmare of coral atolls complete with jungle, mud, and loneliness that we have called "home" these last two years.

The worst part about Pitoe strip is the riding distance between it and the camp area. The ride is no "milk run." After building Morotai's "Route 5," the Sea Bees took off and left it to nature and the Air Force. Since then it seems to have developed into a proving ground for vehicles. Nature erodes the highway, and the Air Force doesn't give a damn. The trip must be covered many times daily, and is indeed a six-mile jaunt of bouncing hell.

Pace set by our Operations from Morotai flows into a steady stream of activity. The tempo is terrific statistically, otherwise it seems to be under a sort of mature control. The excitement, the interest formerly taken in the missions, is lacking. There is no ballyhoo. From here we have launched a series of strikes that in the early days of our career would have run every man ragged. It is a steady, stream-lined flow of hard work. We have developed a technique of efficient operation and have done so without "jazzing" it up. Our record for number of missions and combat hours is as good, if not better, than ever before. With added experience our maintenance has become more and more efficient.

Here, on the line, is the very heart of the Group. All activities necessary to each mission are spaced along a single taxiway; each squadron has its buildings and shops placed near the hard standings for individual planes, and the service squadron is centrally located in relation to our area. Our refueling units are filled by gravity feed from a pipe-line that comes from the tank about half a mile from the field.

Time wears on, and the days add up to the weeks and months that comprise 1945. As the MSS. of this "We'll Say Goodbye" was handed over to the publishers, the 307 Bomb. Group had just completed three years of active service. The first "hitch." Since that time, as we have continually been dishing out punishment to the enemy, we have assimilated material for the beginning of another book.

We are well on our way to our 600th mission, and have made the headlines of many papers back in the States since this has gone to press, We are nearer the Japanese Inner Empire, and our heavies are still doing the same steady, thorough job.

Until the end of the war in the Pacific, we will continue adding pages and chapters to our history-the brilliant record of the "Long Rangers."

The history of the "Long Rangers" is a saga of the B-24. The men of this Group have nursed every ounce of energy out of her. We have taken her on the longest formation flights of the war. We have taken her through thick ack-ack, and with her we have thumbed our noses at the Nip Air Force and have rid the air of a goodly number of Jap planes. With her, we have taken on the Jap Navy, and slugged the hell out of it. With her, we have pock-marked acre after acre of Japanese real estate, and destroyed village after village, town after town, and have driven the Jap away from his cities. The B-24 has been our weapon-our "rifle" -our fighting tool.

She Liberator has, without seeming to, ruled our lives for three years. Indirectly, we have been the slaves of the Flying Boxcar. She had been the taskmaster, determining when we go to work, and when we quit. She can get you up in the middle of the night, or early in the morning, keep you working away, or she can let you hit your sack. Loving her, cursing her, berating her, and again praying for her, you become her duty-bound slave.

Human-like, the B-24 is rugged and yet sensitive, crude looking and yet beautiful, clumsy, and

yet clean-lined. She is at all times temperamental. No two B-24s are alike. For weeks she can be gay and healthy, the engines sing and zoom, then, without warning, she can become unruly, her instruments register wrong, her controls become sluggish, her engines spit oil.

One plane can hungrily lap up gas, another sips it lady-like, another can tear away and fly faster than her sisters, while still another can only snail along. One plane is wing weighted, another is tail heavy. A B-24 has her moods. She needs attention; at times the attention of a squawking baby, at others she gaily bounces along, cat-purring with contentment.

On the pages of this book, neither by pictures nor by writing can we reproduce the trials, the ruggedness, nor the gnawing loneliness of our three years in a forward area of tropical islands.

For this we apologize. Nor can we describe for the record the routine, boring monotony of it all. Clerical work, dull, wearing, clerical work: Type all day, Form 5, Form 32, Form 127, forms without number and without end, 104th in duplicate, Morning Report in quadruplicate, Weekly Status and Operational Report in octuplicate. Your back aches, your eyes smart, your brain reels. Type, Type, Type, day after day, till you never want to see a typewriter again.

On the line: Change an engine here, a tire there, sweat out take-off, wait for the mission's end. Rearm the guns, load the bombs, patch the flak holes, refuel the planes. Daily inspection, 25-hour, 50-hour, 100-hour inspection for engineering, communications, instruments, radar. Change the plugs, replace the antenna, clean the carburetor, check the interphone system, adjust the super-charger. Metal scorched by the sun burns our flesh, we sweat and we swear, but we do the job.

Nature, too, wades in and gives everyone hell. The spattering rain, the "inconveniences of the sudden showers, and their damning frequency, soon become a part of jungle living. Mud, jellied mud, ankle-deep, shoe-sticking mud. The searing sun dries it into ruts and the ruts become dust that clings powder-like to your face and to your sweat soaked clothes. Then there are the insects: Bugs, ants, lizards-everywhere.

They crawl over your sack, they're in your food, you shake them out of your clothes. Mosquitoes are rampant, and their buzz and bite are both pesky and irritating. Centipedes haunt bunks, foxholes, and other necessary places. These six-inch tropical worms are painful, as each of their hundred legs ejects a poison where they adhere to the flesh. Snakes are prevalent, especially in newly built camp areas. Rasping noises that crash through the stillness of the tropical night are the swamp-marsh frogs and the gaudy colored parrots. The jungle, too, in all her luxuriant growth, is but another contributing factor to harder work for camp-builders. Continuous efforts must be made to keep her from reclaiming the area as her own. We fight nature day.

The only relief from the pounding of the sun's rays is to have the rain beat down, cool and free-flowing. No wonder the Jap, as an enemy, becomes an impersonal son-of-a-bitch. Here in the jungles we fight a more personal sort of war with the elements, against nature, against the lack

of civilization and comfort and luxury.

Warring against the Jap is going out and hunting him, but against nature and the jungle we are on the ropes most of the time, as they pound systematic, jarring and rhythmic blows. It gets to be torture, physical and mental, nerve-racking torture. These are a few of the factors contributed by the elements to make the "Long Ranger" feel that he is really a member of the Jungle Air Force.

In Aug 1946 it was equipped with B-29s and trained and developed antisubmarine tactics for SAC units.

Following the outbreak of conflict in Korea, the group moved to Okinawa and attacked strategic objectives in North Korea, Aug-Sep 1950. After that it flew combat missions against interdiction targets, including communications and supply centers, and supported UN ground forces by attacking gun emplacements and troop concentrations through Feb 1951.

Since operational control of the combat squadrons passed to the wing and the group existed mostly as a paper organization, wing commanders were also named group commanders as additional duty.

In Jul 1977, the group was equipped with KC-135 aircraft and redesignated as a refueling group. It conducted air refueling on a global scale, Jul 1977-Oct 1983.

DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE UNIT HISTORIES

Created: 1 Jan 2023

Updated:

Sources

Air Force Historical Research Agency. U.S. Air Force. Maxwell AFB, AL.

The Institute of Heraldry. U.S. Army. Fort Belvoir, VA.

Air Force News. Air Force Public Affairs Agency.

A History of Travis Air Force Base, 1943-1996. Gary Leiser. Travis Air Force Base Historical Society. Sacramento, CA. 1996.

Unit history. *We'll Say Goodbye, Story of the "Lone Rangers" 307 Bombardment Group, Heavy.* F. H. Johnston Publishing Company. Sydney, Australia. 1945.