

390th AIR SERVICE GROUP

MISSION

LINEAGE

390th Air Service Group

STATIONS

North Field, Tinian, May-Oct 1945

ASSIGNMENTS

COMMANDERS

LTC John W. Porter

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

EMBLEM

MOTTO

NICKNAME

OPERATIONS

The 390th Air Service Group was activated as an adjunct to the 509th, originally incorporating the 603rd Air Engineering Squadron and the 1027th Air Materiel Squadron as well as having its own

Headquarters and Base Services Squadron. The 390th and its components were initially manned mostly from units already stationed at Wendover Field when the 509th arrived. Later the 603rd and 1027th functioned as largely independent squadrons within the 509th while the Headquarters and Base Services Sqdn of the 390th continued to provide close support to 509th Headquarters.

JAMES HOLMES, 390th Air Service Group of the 509th Many responsibilities of the 390th were interwoven with those of 509th Group Headquarters. Sometimes I wondered who was doing what, but it always came out right. We were like a permanent parent at the base. We assumed the responsibilities of a family, taking care of the needs for food, shelter, medical care, and religion, as well as ground transportation, recreation, mail, communication -- all kinds of things. Many of the basic needs of the 509th were taken care of by the 390th. In other words we were the support organization for the tactical and technical units. Many of the people who were assigned to the 390th were already at Wendover and some were even in the original cadre of the base. Many of them had been there quite a while. In fact, I had lived on a bombing/gunnery range for three years before I went down to the base, so I thought Wendover was a pretty nice place!

I was the Adjutant of the 390th and the troop commander of the train going to Seattle. Going overseas we didn't lose a man to AWOL or for any other reason; I attribute that to the morale of the 509th, and also to those MPs who were around. I had the dubious honor of being the first one to be seasick. I had been down at the port helping the men to get ready and board the boat for two or three days beforehand and hadn't had much sleep, and so on, and I wasn't feeling *very* good before the boat even took off. Well, I could still see land and I was seasick. Some of the people scoffed at me. However, about two or three days later we hit some bad weather and they all got seasick and I could laugh at them. In fact it dribbled down from the fourth or fifth bunk. Losing their cookies didn't help them either.

We spent a couple of days in Hawaii getting supplies. We had to stay on the boat, but were able to see a little of the beauty of the island. A group of hula dancers came down to the dock and gave us a program. We received our first mail at that time and learned that the war in Europe was over.

We knew *we* were in a war as the boat docked at the harbor on Tinian. Several planes were coming over and we could see some of the tails were not all intact. We knew then that something was going on. Russell Wolf, who made KP assignments, wasn't particularly appreciated. But on the other hand we had, I thought, a terrific mess hall. We had a mess officer who was a chef from New York City and I think he was probably recruited because he knew how to cook Spam 101 ways. I still can't stand leg of lamb; I guess it's too close to mutton. But on the other hand, we had a lot of good supplies and the Troop Carrier Squadron was responsible for a few extra things we had to eat. I don't remember meeting too many people who were complaining about the mess.

One of our least thankful jobs was censoring mail. Nobody seemed to like that. But there was one man who really loved it. And he was the one who was called over one day and asked, "Do you

really want us to send these?" Because he had written two almost identical letters, one to his wife and the other to his girlfriend, and placed them in the wrong envelopes. I think the marriage was saved. We also had a chemical officer. I think the only time I ever saw him was when he was taking his big tank truck down to the swimming pool. Now I don't know why he went down there so often, maybe just to fill up the tank. He was also the fire chief. But he took care of that swimming pool pretty well too.

After the first couple of weeks we had excellent housing that the Seebees erected. We could go out our back doors and pick limes and bananas and the troop carriers brought a lot of extra supplies along for those limes. Somehow or other somebody made an invention for cooling all the drinks and making a little ice. One of the men in our Quonset we didn't like very much. He was caught cheating at cards and a few things like that. So one of us made a spider. He took a pipestem cleaner and dipped it in ink and fixed it up to look like a spider. He had a thread and dropped it down over the man's bed, and it was a pretty big spider too. The rest of us didn't sleep very well that night because we wanted to see what was going on. We kept our eyes open and enjoyed it. He didn't.

As I said, we lived in a Quonset. When I came back and finished my college work I lived in one almost like it. I couldn't quite get away from the past on Tinian. On the return trip one of the GIs asked me to save some gambling money because he was winning pretty big at craps. He said to me, "Now you save this, and even if I beg for it don't you give it back until we hit land." I didn't give it back and I think he had a very good furlough, because he had quite a lot of money, 400 or 500 bucks, by the time we got off the boat.

I knew that we were back in the United States when we took the troop train to Roswell and stopped at a little town along the way. A lot of the fellows got off when we knew we were going to be there for a while. They came back on board with, guess what, hamburgers and french fries. We were back in America!

On 18 December 1944 Headquarters 509th Composite Group was attached to Headquarters and Base Services Squadron, 390th Air Service Group, for administrative services, rations, and quarters. There was a close relationship between the two units due to having parallel departments: Personnel, Photo, Adjutant, Intelligence, Supply, Communications, Medics, Mess, etc. Carefully selected men of the base unit at Wendover were brought into HQ 509th CG and HQ and Base Services Sqdn 390th ASG, in accordance with manning tables that had been made up in advance. In cases where well qualified men were not available for specific assignments, personnel were requisitioned from other bases. Orders came through that put the organizations on the troop train on 25 April 1945. Two days later, the ground echelon pulled into the Seattle POE. For the next week, more processing had to be tolerated. On the afternoon of 5 May the 390th boarded the SS *Cape Victory*. The following morning, HQ 509th came aboard. On 29 May the ship pulled into the harbor at Tinian and the next day the men disembarked. HQ and Base Services Sqdn, 390th ASG, were assigned squad tents at the northern end of the island.

509th HQ was not as lucky. They had to pitch pup tents near the center of the island. The men in

that area had to live on canned rations for several weeks. The 390th was in a better position in that there was a mess hall already set up and in operation. As yet, none of the planes had arrived, but preparations had to be made in all of the departments so that when they did arrive, everything would be in readiness. Most of the Staff departments were in HQ 509th but they were largely manned by personnel from the HQ and Base Services Sqdn 390th. To get these departments in operation was the prime requisite.

Offices had to be built, the motor pool had to be set up, telephone lines between offices had to be strung. The utilities section 'was hard at work, from making tent frames to building roads to laying out offices. The Dispensary was set up and first-aid stations were made ready for any eventuality. Not to forget the Finance Office that paid the men. Squadron Supply issued materials. Operations, Intelligence, and the Photo Lab were' ready for the missions that would soon be undertaken. During this time, the Chaplain and his assistant went among the men to care for their personal as well as their spiritual needs.

603 AIR ENGINEERING SQ

1027 AIR MATERIEL SQ

Air Force Order of Battle

Created: 15 Feb 2012

Updated:

Sources

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

