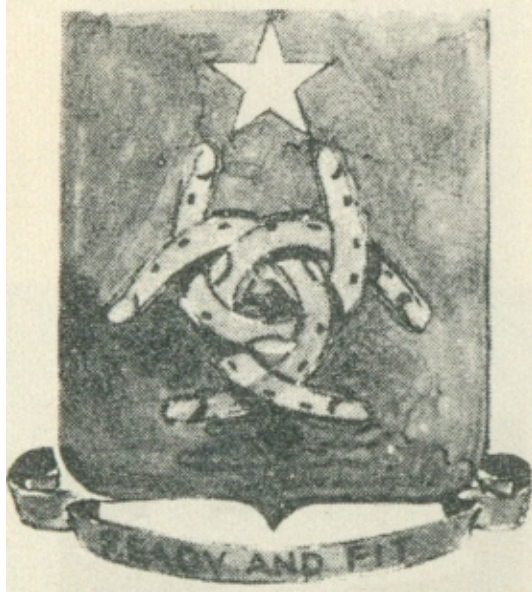


13 AIR DEPOT GROUP



MISSION

LINEAGE

13 Air Depot Group

STATIONS

Biak Island, Netherlands East Indies

ASSIGNMENTS

COMMANDERS

HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

EMBLEM

MOTTO

OPERATIONS

AROSS all our lives has been thrown a trench, the trench of War. It will always in our time be the dividing line between two ways of life: that of a World at Peace and that of a World at War. That there shall again be a World of Peace, none can doubt. We will one day return to normalcy, thus there will be no need for any reminder of this way of life. Time will erase many of our memories of the years of War, soften some and clarify others. This pictorial record will keep alive our memories and associations of the War years.

No pictures are necessary to refresh our memories of recruit days. Perhaps it is best there are none to mirror the fears and confusion of those days. The sadistic sergeants and corporals, whom we would gladly have sentenced to the tortures of the Inquisition, time has already made ridiculous. Our fears and confusion passed with the transition from Civilian to Soldier.

Our story and our Army life begin, for most, from the date of activation, January 28, 1942 at Duncan Field, Texas. Here was the crucible into which was poured the raw materials and from which was molded the Headquarters Squadron, 13th Air Depot Group; here was evolved the pattern that made the organization. The onerous details, the dry runs, the continuous alerts, all became significant as part of the pattern to make the unit ready for the task ahead.

The departure from Duncan Field for Camp Stoneman on September 28, 1942 did not occasion any regrets-a new phase in the pattern had commenced. Who will forget the journey across our land, its endless prairies, its deserts, the grandeur and majesty of its mountains? The size of our country became apparent to many for the first time. California, October 2, 1942: We became intimately acquainted with its mountains which quickly lost their grandeur as we march over one with full field pack. Let there be no picture of this-the years will add to the height of the mountains and to the length and hardships of the marches.

The Service Records say, "Departed Continental U. S. from SF POE aboard U. S. S. Pennant, November 3, 1942, arrived New Caledonia, November 22, 1942." The Service Records do not tell of our emotions on passing under the Golden Gate Bridge, of the San Francisco skyline fading in the distance, of the Danish sailors, of the narrow bunks, of being seasick, of the endless ocean.

Nor will they tell of crap games, of crossing the International Date Line on November 12, 1942, nor of King Neptune's Court. Nor will they tell of a comradeship born of a Brotherhood-in-Arms.

Memories we do have, but memories are, at times, an illusion. They exaggerate or they belittle. Thus, there is pictured in these pages the permanent record of our accomplishments, the scenes and events that became our life. Here are the scenes of our new environment, the mountains, the rivers, the native villages, the foliage of this tropical isle. Here is the record of our work and our play, here are our workshops and hangars, our basketball court and baseball diamond.

Here is the record of that which we built, here is the transition from training to doing, the transition from pup tents and pyramidal tents in an open field to an orderly community of

hutments, mess halls and buildings. Here is the evidence of our accomplishments to date, April, 1944. This is not the end, the War is not over. There must be a continuation of our endeavors of our community of purpose. As for the future: There was the door to which I found no key; There was the veil through which I might not see.

May it be as rich in accomplishments and comradeship as has been the past.

IT WAS very evident when we stumbled down the gang plank that in this land of Niaoulis and Kanakas entertainment as we knew it back home was just a fond memory-in the vernacular "fini." It was a matter of providing your own recreation or doing without.

All of the fellows became good providers and our chief source of whiling away our leisure hours was through the medium of active participation in sports. In the months to follow Headquarters Squadron demonstrated that its spirit and cooperation extended beyond the offices, work shops, hangars and laboratories into the field of athletics. Versatility was the keynote as our organization was represented in various leagues including baseball, basketball, volleyball and softball.

The baseball team completed the season with an impressive record of 15 games won and 10 games lost. This scrappy outfit won the championship of the first 13th Air Depot Baseball League. Tom Hobbs played the stellar role. As a result of their winning the title, the fellows indulged in appropriate merry-making at "Henri's." The banquet and general hilarity brought this phase of our athletics to a fitting climax.

Probably the most outstanding team to represent the Squadron was in basketball. Paced by Joe Scarpelli, this aggregation really "turned on the heat" and ran up 23 wins against one loss. Many teams from all over the island were smothered by the fast break, classy ball handling, and sharp-shooting of these boys.

After getting off to a slow start, the volleyball team began to click smoothly. The result two wins and two losses. Jack Hinds proved to be one of the outstanding performers in league competition.

Softball was very popular in Headquarters and many spirited intra-squadron games were played. The team representing our organization in the league played a fine brand of ball and at this writing the records show a record of five won and three lost. Ably managed by Frank A. Maruca and featuring a well balanced club, this outfit should go on to compile a very creditable average.

In individual sports the Squadron had one participant, Alex Brodsky, "The Brooklyn Mauler." Alex won a clean cut decision over a soldier from the Engineers in one of the feature boxing bouts at the Red Cross. Sporting a fine left hand and clever foot work, Brodsky punched his way to fame and fortune-one case of warm beer.

Athletics were truly a splendid morale builder and taking into consideration the participants, managers, and loyal rooters, a great number of the Squadron were affected by this program. Keen interest, clean fun, friendly competition and a fine spirit of cooperation and team-play have gone far to improve the general welfare of the 13th Depot Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron.

In addition to athletics many other activities occupied the leisure time of the men of the Squadron, namely: religious, library, fishing, swimming and a variety show. A great majority of the fellows were engaged in the religious activities. Whenever Church Services were being conducted you would always find Headquarters Squadron well represented in the congregation. Clyde Munn, the Chaplain's assistant, and George Behary, mainstay of the choir, brought much credit to themselves and the organization by their unceasing devotion to the church and that for which it stands. Chaplains McLeroy and Burke contributed much to make our spiritual life what it should be.

Our cultural and intellectual life did not suffer from neglect. The Depot Library was staffed by Headquarters Squadron personnel, Lt. Paterson and Clyde Munn. The best-selling novels and the most popular magazines were made available to everyone. In conjunction with this phase of endeavor we find the "Cats Meow," the weekly publication of the Depot.

"Doc" Wiggins was the editor of this newspaper and his untiring energy brought fine results. Each edition was read with great interest. Academic classes were also conducted in the Library for those who wished to supplement their knowledge.

Many enjoyable fishing parties were, held aboard the "Elmer" and the "Black Cat'." These sturdy craft darted among the small off-shore islands and glided over the coral reefs in a manner that would make the proverbial Ancient Mariner stare in amazement. Generally good luck was experienced by all. Large catches were common. Those golden brown fried fish certainly tasted like more to all the boys at the Squadron Mess.

Perhaps swimming provided the greatest pleasure for the most men in the outfit. The swimming hole in the Tontouta River left nothing to be desired (well, almost nothing). That clear, cool water was just what the doctor ordered after a busy day or during those tropical heat waves. On Sunday afternoons it was not unusual to see several vehicles jammed to overflowing with Headquarters men going to the river. The mattress-cover water-wing trick was always popular and the diving board was always in use. Here was truly an ideal spot.

During those rugged days of the first eight months we were here, our entertainment was sadly lacking so the initiative and showmanship of Headquarters came to the front. "Larry" Dysart and "Bubba" Walker produced a variety show featuring talent from our Squadron.

The show was a tremendous success, appearing at various hospitals and organizations on the island. Again Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron displayed its customary pride in a job well done.

Many of the men were hunting enthusiasts. Neither the mountains nor the wooded valleys could shield the deer from the eagle eyes of our 'Daniel Boones,' Baucum, Hobbs, Maruca, Scarpelli, all had good luck in bringing home some large deer. That deer steak and stew helped the fresh meat situation immensely.

Social activities were never lacking in Headquarters Squadron as many enjoyable parties were attended by all. A custom was inaugurated by having a little entertainment in the mess hall after our holiday meals. On Christmas, Easter, Thanksgiving and New Year's Day, the dinners were most excellent. Everyone had as fine a menu as could be found any place in the states. Then the men would join in some group singing, individual skits and general merry-making. The various athletic teams had dinner parties and small groups of fellows would have beach parties and private banquets. The entire organization gathered at Golden Grain Park to participate in the Depot Group picnic. The main bill of fare was a liquid diet, namely beer. Sandwiches were prepared by our cooks.

During the cool evenings our recreation hall was the center of Squadron activity. In one end of the room were the ping-pong fans and in the other were the poker players. The ping-pong table was never idle and in between games the men could listen to the radio nearby.

Just after pay day the poker table was always busy but that was only for a few days. Soon someone would corner all the dough and a money order would be on the way home pronto.

Mail call in any man's army is the most popular time of the daily routine and Headquarters was no exception to the rule. "Goat" Owen's popularity would rise and wane according to the volume of incoming mail. While reading a letter from home a soldier forgot his surroundings and once again was carried back to the people and places he held dear.

The value of mail to one overseas Can never be expressed in mere words, you have to experience the feeling yourself. Hell nor high water can't keep a man away from mail call.

DEPARTMENT OF THE AIR FORCE UNIT HISTORIES

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Sources

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

Unit history. *13 Air Depot Group, Headquarters Squadron*. Nd.