

# 69<sup>th</sup> DEPOT REPAIR SQUADRON

## MISSION

## LINEAGE

69<sup>th</sup> Depot Repair Squadron

## STATIONS

Brookley AAF, Mobile, AL

## ASSIGNMENTS

## COMMANDERS

## HONORS

Service Streamers

Campaign Streamers

Armed Forces Expeditionary Streamers

Decorations

## EMBLEM

## MOTTO

## NICKNAME

## OPERATIONS

The 69th Squadron included maintenance and supply officers, sheet metal mechanics, bomb site mechanics, gun site mechanics, small engine repairmen, welders, motor pool drivers, auto mechanics, parachute specialists, oxygen technicians, orderly room and mail clerks, cooks, general maintenance mechanics, general aviation mechanics, crew chiefs and various other specialists. The key role for them was to maintain Army Air Corp fighter planes, transports and bombers. Various groups had trailers that were equipped to support the mission.

On February 16, 1945 the 69th squadron left Kelly Field headed for Camp Anza, Riverside, CA. They prepared to go overseas however the exact location was unknown. They were wearing their winter wool uniforms so travel was challenging. Later that month on the 28th they boarded the USS Admiral W.S. Benson that carried 10,000 troops. This ship set sail and arrived in Melbourne, Australia on March 14th crossing the equator twice. Then on the 16th they sailed out of the Melbourne harbor not knowing their final destination. A few days later they were told they would arrive in India hot winter wool uniforms and all!

At 11:00 AM on March 27th they arrived in Bombay, India where it was very hot and humid. Around 9:30 PM they boarded a train for Camp Kamcharapara, Calcutta. After a seven day train ride they arrived at a replacement depot. This was an adventure for sure. The guys were greeted by masses of people, leper colonies, and people sleeping in the streets and begging for food. Being caring GI's they shared their C-rations, candy, gum and whatever they could spare.

After having arrived they were divided into three convoys of approximately 75 vehicles that were 6 by 6, 2-½ ton army trucks to prepare for the journey into Kunming, China.....a drive they would not forget. On the Friday April 20th the guys found out if they were driver or a passenger. On Saturday, April 21st the first convoy left to drive "the road", the second on Sunday the 22 and the third on Monday 23rd.

The 1800 mile journey took about 30 days. Along the way there were many sights that were unfamiliar to Yankee eyes and most have not been forgotten. They saw the caste system and lepers in India, tropical jungles in Burma with all the diseases and illnesses found in that environment. Then they drove over the highest mountain range in the world. Next older Chinese peasant women wearing blue quilted clothing with short stubby feet due to their feet being bound at five years.

"At times my vehicle wheels were just three feet from a sheer 4000 foot drop off, with a raging river below. I was cautious, but was never afraid. All I had to do was to keep it steady and not panic."

They would often drive one day and rest the next, while the returning traffic went toward India. It was one way traffic much of the way. One day they drove for ten hours and covered some forty miles of actual road, traveling at four miles an hour. At the end of the day, when we stopped we could look back and see our starting point. The road was a maze of switchbacks and hairpin turns, over and over. Our meals were K and C rations with one canteen of water each day.

Most of the 69ers arrived in Kunming around the end of May. So for the next three months they focused on the mission of driving the Japanese out of China. Their efforts played a very

important part in shifting the outcome by having troops behind the lines and opening up the Burma Road for transporting of supplies.

In August the war ended. Their job then was to close down America's operation in interior China. This included flying out some aircraft and destroying everything else. It was assumed the communist would take over their part of China as quick as they pulled out so nothing of value was to be left.

The 69th DRS was disbanded at this time. Some were assigned to the 1353rd MP Company in Shanghai. Others set sail for home and still others stayed behind to dismantle the rest of the planes and close up shop.

Their efforts in China are to this day honored by the very old and the young. The Chinese people know that if it were not for the support of the men of the 14th Air Force, their country and the world might be very different today.

#### 301st Air Depot Group

Hq and Hq Sq (Calcutta, India)

69th Depot Repair Sq Calcutta, India

325th Depot Supply Sq Calcutta, India

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Air Force Order of Battle

Created: 29 Aug 2011

Updated:

#### Sources

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