

COPY

Ltr. Hq 307th Bomb Group (Hv), APO #719, 1 Jan 1945. Subj: "History of the 307th Bombardment Group (Hv)".

CHAPTER I - ACTIVATION

And so it came to be! The 307th Bombardment Group (Hv) was born on 15 April 1942, by authority of GO #24, Air Force Combat Command, Bolling Field, D. C., and GO #38, Hq Second Air Force, Spokane, Washington. The place was Geiger Field, Washington. Its parent was the 301st Bombardment Group (Hv). This made the 307th one of the first of the newly activated war time bombardment groups. We cannot lay claim to as illustrious and as long a history as the old time army bombardment groups, but we can lay claim to a longer and as illustrious history as any of the war time groups. I think that right at this point credit for much of our record must be given to Brigadier General William A. Matheny, commanding officer of the Group for most of its life.

From each of the 301st Group squadrons the following enlisted men were transferred to this group, the first to be assigned to the Group, and the first to start the ball rolling for the 5 squadrons of the 307th:

Hq & Hq Squadron - M/Sgt Wallace A. McKeller
370th Bomb Squadron - S/Sgt Robert W. Martin
371st Bomb Squadron - Sgt John B. Shaffer
372nd Bomb Squadron - Pvt Frank H. Spence
35th Reconnaissance Squadron - M/Sgt Gabriel Weisfeld

Of the five original enlisted men assigned to the 307th, two of them are still members of this organization.

Shortly after the activation of the Group, the Army Air Forces banned all reconnaissance squadrons in bombardment groups and the 35th Reconnaissance Squadron became the 424th Bombardment Squadron (Hv) by authority of GO #53, Hq Second Air Force, 27 April 1942.

CAPTAIN BILLY JARVIS was assigned to the Group on 1 May 1942, and, being the first and only Air Corps officer assigned to the Group, automatically assumed command, and during the next three weeks had his hands more than full in an attempt to set up Group and Squadron Headquarters. He has continued doing just that ever since, setting up camps and headquarters whenever the Group has moved. On this same date, the 307th was relieved from attachment to the 352nd Bomb Squadron, and really struck out for itself on its own still wobbly legs.

On 3 May 1942, the actual cadres furnished by the 301st Bomb Group, consisting of approximately 32 men per squadron, were transferred to the 307th and administrative and training functions commenced. The men furnished a basis for each section, orderly room, operations, mess, transportation, Tech and QM supply, communications, and engineering.

COPY

COPY

Ltr. Hq 307th Bomb Group (Hv), APO #719, 1 Jan 1945. Subj: "History of the
307th Bombardment Group (Hv)". Contd.

By this time the necessary headquarters had been set up. M/Sgt McKeller, in the past two weeks, had been securing office supplies, regulations, etc., and Group SO #1 rolled off the press, assigning approximately 400 additional men to the various squadrons. One officer and over 500 enlisted men now comprised the Group. These men arrived from the 18th Replacement Wing and Sheppard Field, Texas. Captain Jarvis' problem was becoming greater each day and he was continually hoping for more officers to be assigned. In the meantime, ground schools had been set up for plane maintenance and operations, and classes started. Emphasis was placed on the B-17 Flying Fortress. All of this work was purely theoretical as the Group still had neither the planes nor the crews to fly them.

Orders were finally received assigning the following officers from the 301st Bomb Group:

Lt Colonel Frank P. Hunter
Captain Edwin S. Green
Captain Frederick J. Knorre
Captain Marden M. Munn
Captain Glen R. Birchard

Although their assistance was greatly needed by Captain Jarvis, the effective date of assignment was not until 25 May 1942. Further orders were received, assigning to the Group 1ST LT LERTIN R. ELLETT as Chaplain and 1ST LT SHELDON G. GRUBB as Dental Officer. Captain Green was the only officer or enlisted man of the entire Group who had seen actual combat service, having served in the old 19th Group in Java and the Philippines. He remained so until the organization went on its first mission over enemy territory. During the training period, his experience proved invaluable to the various units in their training for their future duty.

The important orders, awaited by all, were slow in arriving, but the big news finally arrived and Lt Colonel William A. Matheny, Executive Officer, 34th Bomb Group at Pendleton, Oregon was assigned as Group Commander. Even the Colonel seemed hesitant in reporting to his new command. Later it was learned he was on an extensive tour for the Air Corps, recruiting Aviation Cadets.

Colonel Matheny arrived on 22 May 1942 and the 307th Bomb Group took up its stride. The potential squadron commanders, having reported for duty, were further ordered to Muroc Dry Lake for maneuvers. Therefore, this postponed their appointment. The Colonel's first few days were spent in conferences at the Second Air Force with the Commanding General, ROBERT OLDS, and his

COPY

Ltr. Hq 307th Bomb Group (Hv), APO #719, 1 Jan 1945. Subj: "History of the 307th Bombardment Group (Hv)". Contd.

staff. In between these conferences, the Colonel found time to make the following assignments: Lt Colonel Hunter, Deputy Group Commander, Captain Jarvis, Group S-2, Captain Squires, Group Adjutant, Captain Munn, CO of the 371st Bomb Squadron, Captain Birchard, Group Operations. Other arrangements were made for the reconstruction of Group Headquarters building. This latter improvement was never to take place, as on 26 May 1942, after the Colonel had conferred with the Commanding General of the Second Air Force, he called a meeting of all officers for that evening in Group Headquarters. Every officer knew something was in the offing, but the fatal news was even worse than was expected. By 28 May 1942, 400 officers and enlisted men, with full equipment for a thirty day maneuver, must be moved to Ephrata, Washington, approximately 130 miles west of Geiger Field. Until that time 99% of the Group did not realize that such a place existed, but it took the 307th to really put the small community of 800 population on the map.

CHAPTER II - EPHRATA IN THE DESERT

First and Second Phase of Training

The purpose of this move was apparently two fold. First it was a training maneuver, and secondly, the powers that be were concentrating as much heavy bombardment as possible in the Northwest because of an expected attack on Alaska by Japan. It was necessary to have as many equipped bases as possible ready for the movement of planes and combat crews.

After two days of furiously drawing supplies and equipment and getting the trains loaded, bright and early on the morning of May 28th, the train pulled out on schedule for Ephrata. This was the first of many hurried movements this organization was to experience.

Upon arrival at Ephrata, it was found that in reality the Group had rushed out there to stand on alert against a possible air attack or land invasion of the west coast or Alaska. The Group, not having any planes or pilots, was furnished 16 combat crews and planes from various air bases of the Second Air Force, eight B-17s from Tucson Air Base, four from Wendover Air Base, and four from Salt Lake Air Base. These ships with their maintenance personnel began pouring into Ephrata the same day as the Group arrived. As soon as the troops were unloaded from the train, all personnel were placed on a tent pitching detail, and before night had fallen, approximately 600 officers and enlisted men were conveniently, if not comfortably, bedded down. At that time, Ephrata Air Base consisted of an air strip and seven shacks stuck in the middle of a God-forsaken waste of mesquite and alkali dust.

COPY

Ltr. Hq 307th Bomb Group (Hv), APO #719, 1 Jan 1945. Subj: "History of the 307th Bombardment Group (Hv)". Contd.

For the next few days every effort was made to turn this veritable dust bowl into an air base. Dust was in your beds, your food, your clothes, your hair, and worst of all in the planes. It was putting most of them out of commission. Now we are used to sudden moves to God-forsaken places, and they are taken in stride, but in those days we thought our troubles were insurmountable. As a result of the dust all planes had to be flown to Geiger Field to have plates placed over their air intakes. A water truck was donated by the town of Ephrata. It worked continually day in and day out, watering roadways and parking mats. Finally oil was secured, and parking mats and taxiways for the planes were well sprayed thus eliminating an operational hazard.

This began our first phase training. Its problems were threefold: one - the acquisition of a full complement of men, two - the acquisition of materiel, three - the training of personnel in their combat functions. Ephrata was ideal as a training center, because it trained the men to work and live under the most adverse conditions. This Group was well trained to work under the conditions we have since been subjected to. Except for the short 20 days at Sioux City, the men have never known what it is to live in anything but tents, no wooden barracks for us. Never have the maintenance men known what it was like to work in a hangar.

The camp area at Ephrata was ever expanding. It seemed that new troops would never cease coming in. Every new arrival meant more tents, and more tents meant moving those already set up. We were just learning then. It was at this time that Captain Billy Jarvis became so famous and the first Group saying originated, quote: "Here comes Captain Jarvis. Start moving the tents."

On June 6th, the Commanding General of the Second Air Force called Colonel Matheny to a meeting at Fort George Wright. Everybody again knew something was in the air, but it took the Colonel's return to really bring the shock home. Yes, Ephrata was the permanent station and new home of the 307th Bomb Group. It is quite certain that there was not one individual overjoyed at the thought, but each and everyone pitched in to make it home and as habitable as possible. Again the tents were moved and five definite squadron areas were set up. The remaining troops, left behind at Geiger Field, were loaded on the train on June 8th and arrived in Ephrata early in the afternoon. At last the five squadrons were together and we could call ourselves a Group. The squadron commanders were appointed as follows: Hq & Hq Squadron - CAPTAIN C. J. LAMOTHE, 370th Squadron - CAPTAIN E. S. GREEN, 371st Squadron - CAPTAIN M. M. MUNN, 372nd Squadron - CAPTAIN J. E. COXWELL, 424th Squadron - CAPTAIN F. J. KNORRE. LTS JURKENS, SMITH, JONES, LUNDBY, WOOD, BROWN (all young pilots but later to prove their worth,) and LTS BENES and REED (a navigator and a bombardier), were assigned. Along with the squadron commanders, Lt Colonel Matheny, Lt Colonel Hunter, and Captain Birchard, these men comprised the flying personnel of the Group.

COPY

COPY

Ltr. Hq 307th Bomb Group (Hv), APO #719, 1 Jan 1945. Subj: "History of the
307th Bombardment Group (Hv)". Contd. -----

On 15 June 1942, the War Department recognized the energetic, constructive ability of Lt Colonel Matheny and authorized "eagles" on his shoulders as he became a full Colonel AUS (AC).

Our Group personnel came from the 4 corners of the country and men and officers came from Army Schools far and wide. They came from Camp Roberts, California and from Observation Base, San Bernadino. Radio men came from Scott Field, Illinois. Clerks came from Fort Logan, Colorado. Mechanics came from the schools at Chanute Field, Illinois and Sheppard Field, Texas. 158 Privates came from Keesler Field, Mississippi. Pilots came from Davis-Monthan Field, Arizona. Bombardiers came from Victorville Flying School, California. Gunners came from Harlingen Gunnery School, Texas. Men pouring in continually. They arrived from the 18th Replacement Wing, Salt Lake City. Many came from other Groups and from college ROTC units. Some of these came straight from mothers arms and to them Ephrata was frontier rough. Slowly but surely the 307th was being welded into a combat team.

A mammoth job was underway and it was a job to be accomplished by Colonel Matheny. Construction was started on mess halls, operational buildings, latrines, officers barracks, and a Group Headquarters building. Sand and gravel was hauled by the truck loads to further overcome the dust hazard, and a Marsden Mat was laid at one end of the runway for warm up purposes only. Skeet, rifle, and machine gun ranges were installed. Chaplain Ellett, one of the hardest working men in the Group and always looking out for the welfare of each and every individual, cleared a space and put up his chapel tent. Always attempting something new, the Chaplain turned his tent not only into a house of worship, but also a day room for the enlisted men and a movie theater at night.

Finally was launched what was probably the most thorough and extensive training course ever pursued by a heavy bomb group. The acquisition of men and materiel continued, but the inception of the training courses was the real start towards our final goal. Because of the lack of the necessary pilots, navigators, and bombardiers, it was impossible to set up definite combat crews and have them function as a team. However, the enlisted men were available, and a most thorough course in combat operation was started. This meant that the few pilots we had, were forced to fly day and night. As the new pilots arrived from schools, they had to be checked out on the B-24.

Schools were conducted in every phase of knowledge that later would be required. LT MAYHEW, Group communications officer, and LT SEALE, 371st Squadron communications officer, set up a radio school. CAPTAIN MOORE and LT TIPP conducted courses in combat intelligence, photo interpretation, and airplane identification. LT TAYLOR set up a skeet and rifle range and conducted practice in skeet, rifle, and machine gun firing.

COPY

COPY

Ltr. Hq 307th Bomb Group (Hv), APO #719, 1 Jan 1945. Subj: "History of the
307th Bombardment Group (Hv)". Contd. -----

In the meantime one B-24D airplane had been assigned to each squadron. The old B-17s with which the Group had been born were replaced by the newer, faster, and more capable B-24s. At that time production on these airplanes was limited so that during all our training period we were handicapped by a lack of planes. It is safe to say that we were the first bombardment Group to be equipped with these new bombers. Our few pilots were busily engaged in checking each other out on the new planes.

The last week in June brought about a big change in the heavy bomb units. A new table of organization was issued effective 1 July 1942. This new T/O did away with Hq & Hq Squadron and left only a Hq detachment of 18 officers and 38 enlisted men. The last few days of the month were spent in equally dividing Hq and Hq officers and enlisted men between the four numbered squadrons, placing them where they were needed most.

The first officers promotions submitted by the Group were received July 7th. 1ST LTS JONES, JURKENS, SMITH, and BENES were promoted to Captain. Two days later 2ND LTS NICHOLS, WOOD, and LUNDBY received their orders promoting them to 1st Lts.

11 July 1942 saw two changes in the Group. Captain Knorre and Captain Munn were taken away from the Group and reassigned to Tucson and Alamogordo respectively. The loss of two squadron commanders was keenly felt and meant another reshuffling of senior pilots. Major Green was transferred to the 424th Squadron, Captain Jurkens assumed command of the 370th Squadron, and Captain Lamothe took over the controls of the 371st. The second change was good. Twenty-one (21) pilots fresh from cadet training and newly commissioned were assigned and reported for duty. At last we had a pilot basis for combat crews. The remainder of the month was spent in checking them out and selecting 1st pilots. They went through an intensive training of transition, ground schooling, and intelligence lectures. These men were to be the nucleus of our 35 combat crews. Although the T/O authorized 48 crews and airplanes for the Group, it had been cut down to 35, because of the lack of planes, by a War Department order.

The new operational buildings were finally constructed on the line and all squadron operations and Group Headquarters moved into the new buildings. Although they were temporary structures, they were comparatively spacious and gave each section sufficient room to operate.

COPY

Ltr. Hq 307th Bomb Group (Hv), APO #719, 1 Jan 1945. Subj: "History of the
307th Bombardment Group (Hv)". Contd.

At last Ephrata Air Base was becoming a livable place after all. The town made available all its facilities to help the Air Base. USO dances were given weekly for all the enlisted men, and the only theater in town, previously operated only on Saturdays, was open daily. The nearby town of Wenatchee, Washington, also welcomed the men with open arms, and afforded all men the opportunity to blow off a little steam after being cooped up on the Air Base for so long.

It was Wenatchee that furnished the Group three men, civilians, to whom each and every combat crew member will forever be thankful. Ben Hays, Jay Adams, and Mr. Harley, three of the best skeet shooters in the Northwest, drove between Wenatchee and Ephrata, a distance of 50 miles, at their own expense and in face of gas and tire rationing, to give instructions in shooting to combat crew men. It was their way of showing their appreciation to the men who were carrying on, and each one regretted as much as the Group, that they could not accompany or be a member of our forces.

On 1 August 1942 the Group entered upon the first of three monthly training phases. The previous month had been spent in checking out crew members, making up the individual combat teams, and securing the necessary supplies with which to operate a combat Group. Now the Group was ready to start the intensive combat training. More and more emphasis was placed on schooling the combat crews. Pilots spent hours in the air and hours on the ground operating the Link Trainers. Ground maintenance personnel were sent to special schools at the Honeywell school at Minneapolis and the Consolidated factory. The more experienced pilots were sent to a blind flying school at Ogden, Utah. The schools conducted by the Group were expanded. Typewriting classes for administrative personnel were started. The town of Ephrata donated its typewriters and other facilities from the public schools for this purpose. The intelligence section procured all available War Department Training Films and attendance at this showing was compulsory for all personnel.

On 12 August 1942, 76 more pilots were assigned to the Group. With those previously assigned, there were now sufficient pilots and co-pilots for 9 crews per squadron. Their training was necessarily slow, as it was impossible to give any great amount of transition to so many pilots with only ten planes in the Group. The navigators and bombardiers, 32 of each category, were assigned on 21 August 1942. Ensuing weeks were spent in the final formation of the combat crews, practice bombing, aerial gunnery, and navigational trips.

COPY

Ltr. Hq 307th Bomb Group (Hv), APO #719, 1 Jan 1945. Subj: "History of the
307th Bombardment Group (Hv)". Contd. -----

As the second monthly phase of the training program drew near, it was learned that the Group would stay at Ephrata. Some were greatly relieved at this point, but most of the men were disappointed to think more time had to be spent at Ephrata. It did mean that some very valuable time would not be waste d in moving the Group.

LT JOHN V. TAFFEE, assigned to the Group on 17 August 1942 as Special Service Officer, immediately set to work, and at Colonel Matheny's suggestion constructed a rest camp at Leavenworth in the Cascade Mountains for all Group personnel who desired to go. Athletics, fishing, hiking, and just plain rest were available. At first this idea was not received with much enthusiasm but after a few members had been there and passed the good news on, the camp was filled to capacity every day. During this period, both Lt Taffee and the Chaplain were busy arranging concerts and parties for the entertainment of the men.

17 August 1942 was also the day on which 12 officers (4 engine pilots) were assigned as flight commanders. They were: CAPTAINS KREBS, BENSON, ALEXANDER, LUDWING, BILLINGS, LIPPINCOTT, AND 1ST LTS SANNY, CARPENTER, NEWMAN, MILLEDGE, LUND, and BILGER. Many of these men were later to become squadron commanders and operations officers.

The remainder of August and September was spent in further intensive training, long range navigation trips, formation flying, and practice bombing. Short-ages in ground officers and enlisted men were emphasized and replacements arrived almost daily.

Colonel Matheny along with Major Birchard, Captain Murray and a crew took off on 13 September 1942 to look over the new Sioux City Air Base - our new home. Orders requiring the Group to be moved there by 1 October 1942 were already out. For once we had approximately a two weeks notice to pack and be on our way. CAPTAIN BENVENUTO, Assistant Group Operations Officer, took an advanced echelon of officers and enlisted men to Sioux City to make arrangements for the arrival of the Group. With his usual ability, "Ben", as he was called by all who knew him, had the areas well laid out and the Squadrons and Headquarters had only to move into their areas and begin operations when they arrived. It was practically the first and last time that this Group ever moved into a camp that we did not have to build ourselves.

Colonel Matheny departed on 28 September 1942 with the air echelon and by the 29th all had arrived safely at their destination. The squadrons methodically packed up and waited for trains to transport them to the new station. It took four trains and four days to move the four squadrons, due to the limited railroad siding facilities. As one train was loaded and pulled out another train was sided

COPY

Ltr. Hq 307th Bomb Group (Hv), APO #719, 1 Jan 1945. Subj: "History of the
307th Bombardment Group (Hv)". Contd.

and loaded. By 1 October 1942 the last of the trains had arrived safely at their destination. Enroute a car coupling broke on the 371st Squadron train while it was underway. Lts Seale and Vaccaro, who were standing in the vestibule, were hurled on to the track and miraculously escaped injury.

CHAPTER III - THE REST CURE - SIOUX CITY

Sioux City Air Base! What a haven for the refugees from Ephrata! There was no doubt in anybody's mind that it would be an improvement over the last station, but a paradise was not expected. Barracks for all men and officers, sufficient office space for all departments, and even grass around all the buildings, were luxuries that we did not expect. All roads were paved and at last we had left the dust behind. Group Headquarters offices were set up in a mansion and it was not uncommon for many to get lost in the corridors when passing from one section to another.

At last the Group was in civilization and the nearby town of Sioux City afforded the men the night life they had been deprived of for so long. However, it seemed that all were having too good a time and the plane hours flown and maintenance standards dropped considerably. To overcome this, a contest was started between the squadron. Each squadron had to have half of their planes in flying commission each day in order to get passes for that night. A thermometer was placed in front of Group Headquarters - one for each squadron - to show the daily status. As each squadron went over the top, it was announced by a placard that they were authorized passes for the night. Maintenance really picked up and all squadrons had four or five nights off each week.

5 October 1942 was a memorable and sad day for the Group, especially the 424th Bomb Squadron. Lt Sanny and his crew took off on a regular training flight. When about fifty miles from the base, motor trouble developed. Lt Sanny immediately gave orders for all to bail out. The four officers and one enlisted man who remained with the ship made a safe belly landing in a plowed field. The belly of the ship caved in and LT JAMES B. SLEIGH, navigator and LT HOWARD C. AUSTIN, bombardier, were killed by the impact. Lts Sleigh and Austin not only were popular with the other officers and enlisted men but were also two of the most promising young officers of the 424th Bomb Squadron and their loss was keenly felt and mourned by all. Lt Sanny and the remainder of his crew were shaken up somewhat, but after a few days rest and recuperation in the hospital they were again able to carry on. This was our first casualty. It made everyone realize for the first time the dangers of our assigned mission.

COPY

Ltr. Hq 307th Bomb Group (Hv), APO #719, 1 Jan 1945. Subj: "History of the
307th Bombardment Group (Hv)". Contd.

The 371st Squadron on 10 October 1942 received, what was to them, very bad news. Captain Lamothe, their commanding officer, developed a stomach ailment that required hospitalization. The loss of Captain Lamothe was keenly felt in the squadron. To show their appreciation and admiration of an officer liked and honored by all, the 371st enlisted men presented Captain Lamothe with a handsome platinum watch. Captain Billings, a flight leader of the 372nd Bomb Squadron, was assigned to the 371st and assumed command. Captain Billings has remained CO of the 371st to this day.

By the middle of October there were very few shortages existing in the Group since replacements were still coming in day by day. Thirty-five (35) combat crews had been organized and were functioning as teams. Their training was progressing rapidly. There was still a lot to be done before they would be ready for combat. However, this was never to be accomplished in the States.

Then the news came. Late Saturday afternoon, 17 October 1942, Colonel Matheny received a long distance phone call. The Group was on its way overseas. This time there was no two weeks notice. By Tuesday morning, 20 October 1942, all ground and air echelon personnel had to be speeding to a West Coast port of embarkation. The rush and confusion of packing in the ensuing two days had never been equalled before and by Tuesday morning all baggage and equipment were loaded aboard the trains and planes. Combat planes, thirty-five (35) of them, were rounded up in a day's time and were waiting to be flown to their destination. The railroad companies did not fare so well and had to bring pullman cars from as far west as Cheyenne. They were late in arriving, but about noon the first train pulled out with Headquarters and the 372nd Squadron ground personnel aboard. By early morning the next day all four trains and thirty-five airplanes were speeding to the coast - the trains to Fort McDowell and the planes to Hamilton Field, with all personnel expecting to embark immediately for overseas. It was the old army game over again. "Hurry up and wait". Because when the coast was reached, it was learned we had three days to prepare for the future. In those three days we had to get all personnel fully equipped, have physical examinations, prepare rosters, and take care of many more details involving time and men. All organizational equipment and records were loaded aboard the boat when some good hearted individual casually informed the Group that all packing boxes and equipment of the Group would not be unloaded at our destination, but would go on with another organization. This meant every effort had to be made to get all Group and Squadron records off the boat and loaded so they could be secured at the other end. All available men were sent to the dock to rearrange the loading procedure so as to assure certain boxes and equipment would come off at the correct time.

COPY

COPY

Ltr. Hq 307th Bomb Group (Hv), APO #719, 1 Jan 1945. Subj: "History of the
- - - 307th Bombardment Group (Hv)" - Contd. - - - - -

In the meantime at Hamilton Field, the air echelon was going through the same procedure with a little excitement thrown in on the side. It seemed a few of the officers figured firearms were only toys and in playing with them, one lad accidentally shot himself through the hand. Another was not so fortunate and received a .45 slug through the stomach, again accidentally discharged by a fellow officer. The wound was not fatal, but it meant the hospital for Lt Rowsell, and he did not join the Group again until early January. The same rush to get personnel and plane equipment together and loaded on the plane was going on there.

By midnight of the 26th, all ground personnel were aboard the boat and ready to sail. It was not until noon of the 27th of October that the boat left. We were given a rousing send off by women of the A.R.C. who distributed cigarettes and candy. Amid the echoes of "God Bless America" conducted by our morale builder, Chaplain Ellett, the boat sailed into San Francisco Harbor and under the Bridge to the open sea to join the convoy. What convoy, everybody echoed, as it turned out that we were on our own. The skipper was a "lone wolf" and figured with his fast ship, the Torrens, he could outrun any submarine. Everybody prayed he was right.

The air echelon departed on the nights of the 26th, 27th, and 28th of October. For where? The Colonel had taken a few of his staff into his confidence and informed them very joyously that the Group would winter in the paradise of the Pacific, the Hawaiian Islands. It was a long arduous flight of 2200 miles. On two planes the AFCE decided not to work, and the pilots had to fly the planes the whole 13 hours of the flight. On the night of the 28th both the boat and the planes encountered very heavy weather. It was probably while passing through the storm that Lt Guskey and his crew disappeared completely - never to be heard from again. Lt Guskey and his crew were one of the favorites of the 370th Squadron and their loss was a shock to all of their friends.

The rough weather the ship encountered the first night out broke a forward bulkhead and poured footlockers and baggage forth, breaking about forty bunks. Very fortunately no one was injured. It was the same storm that put Chaplain Ellett flat on his back and kept him there for the remainder of the trip. It was also this boat trip that firmly convinced the Chaplain and many other officers and enlisted men that each one of them should be a member of the air echelon. With the exception of seasickness, the boat trip was very uneventful. The ship of course had many inconveniences, such as washing in salt water, not too good grub and ninety odd officers griping and complaining about the ever famous "stateroom 6" located in the aft of the ship and directly above the propellers. These poor officers suffered more pitching and tossing around and more seasickness than the remainder of the 1800 troops aboard.

Ltr. Hq 307th Bomb Group (Hv), APO #719, 1 Jan 1945. Subj: "History of the
307th Bombardment Group (Hv)". Contd.

In the early afternoon of 2 November 1942 the ship docked in the harbor at Honolulu. Twelve hundred odd men and officers were glad once again to get their feet on good old mother earth. Colonel Matheny and Major Green met the boat. It was not one of those Hawaiian welcomes everyone has read about, as this was war. However, we were not to see actual warfare for some time to come. It was rather an anti-climax for most of the men in the Group. It can be imagined what went through the minds of most of the men as the ship pulled away from the dock at San Francisco, and now here we were in the Paradise of the Pacific. After greetings had been exchanged, the Colonel's first statement was, "Boys, we aren't at war yet".

All troops were immediately dispersed to their various bases. Group Headquarters and the 372nd Squadron went to Hickam Field, the 370th Squadron to Kipapa, the 371st Squadron to Wheeler Field, and the 424th Squadron to Kahuka. The boat was not to be unloaded until the next day. When unloading started it was a shock to find that only personal baggage and equipment could be found. All office supplies and records that had been supposedly loaded on top so as to be easily removed, were evidently hidden away in some secluded and dark hold. So, it was like starting anew. We had no records of any kind to go on. Shortly after our arrival, it was decided by higher authorities to move the 372nd squadron to Kahuka, and the 424th Squadron to Mokaleia. And finally the Group, although it was spread and dispersed over 50 square miles, settled down to its functions once more.

CHAPTER IV - HAWAII - RECONNAISSANCE PHASE

As was previously mentioned, our history is divided into three phases: training, reconnaissance, and bombardment. Our arrival in Hawaii marked the end of the training phase and the beginning of the reconnaissance phase. Actually during this period training was more intense than ever. However, our main mission in Hawaii was sea search and incidentally protect the islands from an attack by heavy naval forces. One squadron a day flew a nine sector sea search. In between patrol missions the crews were forever practicing bombing, gunnery, formation flying, and occasionally staging mock raids on various areas.

The Group finally settled down to everyday routine once again. It was a relief after the hurrying and scurrying experienced in the past month. Chaplain Ellett really had a job trying to visit four different squadrons at four different bases. He solved the problem by procuring a truck, loading his organ, song books, portable altar, and his personal equipment including his bunk and started visiting all squadrons. Thereafter he was known as the traveling troubadour spreading his good will and cheerfulness from camp to camp with song fests, worship, and by learning to know almost every man by name.

COPY

Ltr. Hq 307th Bomb Group (Hv), APO #719, 1 Jan 1945. Subj: "History of the
307th Bombardment Group (Hv)". Contd.

As must come to all Air Corps flying units, the 307th experienced its operational losses during the ensuing two months. On 30 November 1942, LT BARTHOLEMEW and his crew took off on a search mission in very heavy weather. The take off was successful but due to some fault, mechanical or otherwise, the pilot lost his direction and flew directly into a mountain near Wheeler Field, killing all crew members. Those whose memory is carried on by all who knew them are:

Pilot - 1ST LT RICHARD K. BARTHOLEMEW
Co-Pilot - 2ND LT THOMAS A. TEMPLETON
Bombardier - 2ND LT ROBERT O. CHAFFIN
Navigator - 1ST LT HERSCH A. KATZ
S/Sgt James E. Graham
Sgt Edmond B. Rotillini
Sgt Hervest F. Siebe
Cpl Stephen W. Conger
Cpl Wilbur N. Kimbel

17 December 1942 brought bad news for the 371st Squadron when one of their planes blew up in the air. LT McCLENDON had just taken off when his plane became enveloped in flames. Four combat crew members escaped to safety. LT MAIN was blown through the side of the ship grasping a parachute in one hand. The plane crashed not far from its base and the following officers and enlisted men were carried to their death:

Pilot - 1ST LT JAMES H. McCLENDON
Co-Pilot - 2ND LT CHARLES H. MILLER
Navigator - 2ND LT WILLIAM J. STICKLE
S/Sgt Harold D. Dillon
S/Sgt Charles C. Hatton

Along toward the middle of December it suddenly occurred to various personnel, who had no knowledge of the facts, that something was in the wind. Colonel Matheny, Major Green, and Major Birchard were continually holding conferences with the squadron commanders, operations officers, S-2 officers, and engineering officers. All meetings were held behind locked doors. Events finally reached a peak, and on 21 December 1942 twenty-seven (27) B-24s took off for Midway. On 24 December 1942, 26 out of the 27 again took off for a surprise raid on Wake Island. At this time the raid of the 307th was considered the longest mass formation raid of the war - 2,070 nautical miles for the round trip.

COPY

COPY

Ltr. Hq 307th Bomb Group (Hv), APO #719, 1 Jan 1945. Subj: "History of the
307th Bombardment Group (Hv)". Contd. -----

The runways on Wake were plastered with bombs. All 26 of the planes returned safely to Midway, landing in a pea soup fog without a mishap. It proved that the combat crews had learned their lessons well. On their first mass formation flight all planes landed without a scratch in the worst kind of flying weather. On Christmas Eve, Hawaiian time, the 27 planes returned to their home bases with all personnel aboard. The celebrations on that Christmas Eve were numerous and exceedingly vociferous.

And so ended the year of 1942. It had its ups and downs but the Group had come a long way, and had profited by its many and varied happenings. Our operational losses had been low - two full crews and parts of other ones. We had gained invaluable experience flying searches out of Hawaii. Our navigators had more than their share of over water flying. It is felt in the Group that our three months stay in Hawaii was literally a life saver. Our combat losses in the days to come were kept to a minimum by the experience gained there.

The new year started out with a bang. On New Year's Day, Admiral Nimitz, Commander in Chief of the Pacific area, awarded medals to all who took part in the Wake Island raid. A formal parade was held in front of the operations building at Hickam Field in honor of those receiving awards. Colonel Matheny, Major Jurkens, Captain Billings, Major Coxwell, Major Smith, and Captain Krieg were all awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for leading the flight. The remainder of the personnel received the Air Medal. The rest of the month weather held flying to a minimum.

On 8 February 1943 fate struck again and MAJOR JONATHON E. COXWELL, 372nd squadron commander, while taking off to lead a mock attack on Pearl Harbor, plummeted to his death off shore of Barking Sands Air Base on the Island of Kaoui. The entire crew was lost. With Major Coxwell were the following officers and enlisted men:

Pilot - 1ST LT GEORGE F. MOZNETH, JR
Co-Pilot - 2ND LT MALCOLM D. FRANKEL, JR
Navigator - 2ND LT CHARLES L. SEYMOUR
Bombardier - 2ND LT JAMES R. COMINGER, JR
Sq Intel 0 - CAPTAIN JOHN D. N. HOYT
S/Sgt Don Harp
Sgt Dalton D. Newman
Sgt William H. Johnston
Pvt Frank M. Favid

COPY

Ltr. Hq 307th Bomb Group (Hv), APO #719, 1 Jan 1945. Subj: "History of the 307th Bombardment Group (Hv)". Contd.

CHAPTER V - GUADALCANAL - BOMBARDMENT

First at the desert base of Ephrata, first at the midwestern base at Sioux City, Iowa, the pioneering Clover Leaf Group also bears the distinction of being the first heavy bombardment Group permanently based on that former hot spot of the South Pacific - Guadalcanal in the Solomon Islands. Shortly after successful photo reconnaissance missions over Wake, the Marshalls, and the Gilberts, warning orders came through on 6 February 1943 ordering the Group to Espiritu Santo in the New Hebrides group. Incidentally the photos taken of the Marshalls paved the way for the later invasion of those islands.

Prepared for immediate action, the first planes from the 370th Squadron led by Major Jurkens, and from the 424th Squadron led by Major Smith, took off for the south with Lt Colonel Green, Group Executive Officer, in command. In the meantime, Colonel Matheny and Major Squires hurriedly shifted personnel to the 370th and 424th Squadrons to be able to get first line strength on the front lines. This was because we were leaving the 371st and 372nd Squadrons behind in Hawaii to continue flying searches. Since there were no other heavy Groups to replace the 307th and the Hawaiian Department felt that it was necessary to have some heavy bombardment protections, it was decided to hold these two squadrons until replacements could be procured. The very next day an air transport left Hickam Field far behind. This transport carried the necessary officers and enlisted men as personnel for the advanced echelon. This was followed on 14 February 1943 by a second transport carrying Group Headquarters personnel under the command of Major Squires. Then on 18 February 1943 the third transport brought the remaining Group Headquarters personnel to Espiritu Santo. In the meantime Colonel Matheny had flown a combat plane, well loaded with personnel, to the war theater. This wound up the Hawaiian episode, and with it for a long time to come, the last of the ice cold cokes, malted milks, fresh steaks, foaming beer, and those choice inventions of mankind - Scotch and Bourbon. The President Tyler bringing the heavy equipment and the ground echelons of the 370th and 424th Squadrons sailed from Honolulu on 22 February 1943.

Shortly after the first warning orders were issued, new orders came through directing the Group to Guadalcanal. Lt Colonel Green brought the combat crews that were with him at Espiritu Santo up to Henderson Field, Guadalcanal. Then began our part in the battle of the Solomons. It also marked the roughest period of our existence then or since. Organization and liaison between the various units of the armed forces were apparently non-existent. There was practically no channel of supply either for the airplanes or personnel. It's a wonder that we kept the planes flying at all. The camp areas were a sea of mud, and maintenance was non-existent. The men lived and worked in mud. It is said that Guadalcanal at this period was the only place in the world where one could stand knee deep in mud and still have dust blowing in your face. "It was really rough".

COPY

Ltr. Hq 307th Bomb Group (Hv), APO #719, 1 Jan 1945. Subj: "History of the
307th Bombardment Group (Hv)". Contd. -----

13 February 1943 deserves special mention because it marked our first combat in the Solomons and one in which we gained a Pyrrhic victory. It was under leadership other than our own. We sustained our greatest loss in the history of the Group up to that time. Detailed reports of all combat missions are a part of the permanent S-2 and A-2 records, but there were some special features about this one that should be mentioned here. The commanding officer of the 11th Bombardment Group, which had been operating from Espiritu Santo using Guadalcanal as a staging base, took command of 6 of our B-24s for a daylight bombing attack on the shipping in the harbor of Buin, between the islands of Bougainville, Shortland, and Fauro. As Command Pilot he flew in the lead ship with Captain Sanny. LTS JONES and McNEESE were on his right and left wing. CAPTAIN MILLEDGE led the second element with LTS ROWE and TRAGER on his wings. The planned fighter escort of 12 planes shrunk to 6 before the target was reached, due to operational difficulties.

Nine (9) Navy PB4Ys escorted by 15 fighters had alerted the target area only 45 minutes before our planes came over. It was assumed that anti-aircraft fire would be light. Never underestimate your enemy is one of the axioms of war. AA opened up immediately when our planes reached the target area. The leader had selected a large cargo ship as the specific target. Our planes were led over this fortified area straight and level at 13,500 feet for over 5 minutes. There were Zeroes to the right and to the left of them, flying out of range of our gunners and giving the ground batteries our speed and altitude. The inevitable happened. Lt Trager's plane received a direct hit and burst into flames, with pieces scattering to the four winds. Lt Rowe's plane was hit just after he reached the target, burst into flames on a long glide toward the water and crashed from about 500 feet. Crippled, with one engine feathered, Lt McNeese's plane was beset by 10 to 12 Zeroes. He dived down to just over the water, but before clearing the harbor 4 members of his crew bailed out and were followed down and strafed by some of the Zeroes. He flew on over Choiseul Island, shook the Zeroes, turned back and made a water landing a couple of miles off shore. The story of the twenty day trip in a rubber boat of LTS McNEESE, VANDERSLICE, DECLERQUE, and CARROLL, and S/Sgt Adams through enemy patrolled territory with no food save what they could find in the jungle, is one that speaks well of the courage, hardiness, and resourcefulness of the men of the 42th Squadron. The following officers and men were listed as missing in action in this engagement:

1ST LT RUSSELL W. ROWE
2ND LT DANIEL D. DEUCHARE
2ND LT CHARLES R. WADE
2ND LT GEORGE G. RADFORD

1ST LT GEORGE K. TRAGER
2ND LT PAUL C. CRANE
2ND LT THEODORE BARTON
2ND LT HIRAM E. BATTERSBY

COPY

Ltr. Hq 307th Bomb Group (Hv), APO #719, 1 Jan 1945. Subj: "History of the
307th Bombardment Group (Hv)". Contd.

T/Sgt Hiram Meigs
S/Sgt Elmer J. Beaupre
S/Sgt John Stimadorakis
Sgt Elbert Boyer
S/Sgt Leo Eilts
S/Sgt Kenneth McCarthy
Sgt Herman Selvig

S/Sgt William Sterns
S/Sgt Robert Smith
Sgt James F. Magri
Sgt Lawrence Averitt
S/Sgt Roy Lund
S/Sgt Jack Collins
Sgt Elton Hartt

One of the two P-38's in escort made a heroic attempt to protect Lt McNeese's plane by diving into a dozen Zeroes that were following him down. He was shot down. Two of the four P-40s were also shot down in the running fight of one hour and a half in which our planes were engaged. It was estimated that 30 to 40 Zeroes carried on this attack. Some of them were the new square wing type and about 12 were float type. The attack did not let up until the formation had reached the southern end of New Georgia and it constituted one of the longest running fights of the war in the Pacific. Eight (8) Zeroes were shot down. Three of them fell to our guns, the rest to the fighters. One direct hit with a 1,000 lb bomb was made on the cargo ship attacked. It was left sinking. We lost 2-1/2 crews and three airplanes with their equipment. This mission was reported in some detail because it happened to be our first definite contact with a strong enemy and unfortunately our first and largest combat loss.

When the Colonel arrived, "there were some changes made". The morale went up like the thermometer at noon on Cactus when the stories circulated through the mess hall as to how the Colonel had gone down the line for his men. Our own command was soon set up and started functioning. Major Birchard was in charge of operations. CAPTAIN MOORE, intelligence officer, cooperated closely in the planning of the missions, briefing of crews, preparation of pilot operation folders, and other essential information.

CHAPTER VI - HENDERSON FIELD - IN THE COCOANUT GROVE BY THE SEA

When our men arrived at Espiritu Santo and found tents with no floors, outdoor movies, poor PXs, and no cokes or beer, they thought life in the rough had indeed begun. Little did they know.

All personnel were soon moved to Guadalcanal. They were camped with the 31st Squadron in a cocoanut grove by the sea, right off the end of Henderson strip. Espiritu was a haven in comparison with this camp. The fellow who compared the company streets to a hog wallow of Louisiana was a master of understatement. The 'Canal' will long be remembered as one of the few places in the world where a man could thresh around up to his knees in jungle stink mud and at the same time choke and cough from the heavy dust blowing off the runway.

COPY

Ltr. Hq 307th Bomb Group (Hv), APO #719, 1 Jan 1945. Subj: "History of the
307th Bombardment Group (Hv)". Contd. -----

However, in a few days Major Squires got one or two streets gravelled, put up some more showers, improved the water situation, and went to work on the mess where, for the first time since boy scout, CMTC, or ROTC days, the officers were eating with the men and washing their own mess gear. The mess hall was one small 16x 32 shack including the kitchen. This served both squadrons.

Major Weidekamp got his engineering crews lined up, but found that a channel of supply was non-existent. The depot did not know what a B-24 looked like; nor did they know what supplies they had on hand. As a matter of fact there did not seem to be any channel of higher command as far as the Air Force was concerned. CAPTAIN GLASSCOCK opened his fresh air dispensary on "Main Street".

Major Birchard carefully "screened" operations from the public. Captain Moore located S-2 within easy earshot of the 4 hole library and rumor factory that incorporated none of the Chic Sales' modern refinements. Life on Guadalcanal began in earnest.

The camp was located within easy walking distance of the beach. The ocean was a source of daily pleasure. If you were tired from the combat mission of the previous night, dirty and sweaty from work on the planes, in the mess hall, playing baseball, or from just sitting around, why off to the beach you went for a swim in the South Pacific swells and some South Pacific tan. It was invigorating and relaxing - also good fun and sport. In fact it was our only form of relaxation except baseball. Adjoining the grove was a baseball field.

In no time at all, CAPTAIN RUMBLE, LT MORRISSEY, LT MURPHEY ("Murph" of the rubber arm), LT McDONALD and many others had a team organized. The 31st Squadron went down to defeat before our "Murderers Row". The colorful "Jigaboos" also bit the dust. Rivalry between the enlisted men and the officers was in true American tradition. An occasional movie under the trees, preceded by the Chaplain's sing fest and hip-hip-hoorays, were other features.

The other February missions were without incident. On 19 February 1943, LTS FLOOD, MONTAGNE, GREGORY, MILLER, and BOURGEOIS harrassed and bombed Munda airport and installations with 6 (500 lb) and 10 (100 lb) bombs. They encountered little opposition. Vila was attacked the next night and Tojo spent another sleepless evening. As a birthday token to the man, who was "First in War---", Munda and Vila were again smacked on 22 February 1943 by 3 of our planes. On 25 February 1943, 6 of our planes bombed and harrassed Kahili and Ballale airdromes at night. The little yellow 'b-----' were beginning to realize that the men who had paid an American debt to the Marines by the longest bombing raid of the war against Wake Island, also meant business in the Solomons.

COPY

COPY

Ltr. Hq 307th Bomb Group (Hv), APO #719, 1 Jan 1945. Subj: "History of the
307th Bombardment Group (Hv)". Contd. -----

While we were operating from Henderson Field, MAJOR JARVIS, MAJOR MURRAY, LT BURRIER, LT TAFFEE, LT TAYLOR, LT ULMER, and others were sweating in the jungles surrounding the Metapone river at Koli Point, east of Henderson Field. This was to be the first permanent camp site of the 307th Bomb Group. We were to be the first heavy bomb Group to use the new field. Carney Field was being constructed by the Seabees. The jungle had to be cleared in preparation for the arrival of the ground echelon on the President Tyler. By 18 March 1943 the President Tyler arrived and anchored off shore. Then began the terrific rush to unload the ship and transport the supplies to Koli Point. Guards had to be posted everywhere - on the ship, on the dock, one on each truck and landing craft, and even at Koli Point. The other units on the island were so starved for both operating and personnel equipment that we dared take no chances. It was a sad commentary on the supply system that one well equipped outfit had to protect its materiel with armed guards from other army and navy units.

The 370th and 424th ground echelons were disembarked, and LTS RICKARD and REINOEHL immediately set up headquarters. The task of clearing the jungle and concealing and camouflaging a modern camp began. In the next few days the refrigeration cooler plants were set up in the grassy plain adjoining the jungle and ice water on Guadalcanal was no longer a parching portion of a feverish dream. Colonel Matheny was busier than a one armed paper hanger, supervising and planning combat missions, and watching over the construction of our new camp where the Group was to be closer together than it had been since the lush and never forgotten days at Sioux City. Lt Burrier and his helpers constructed a fenced in bull pen and unloaded and placed under armed guards the treasured beer, cokes, candy and other PX supplies. He set up an improvised PX under a wall tent at the edge of the bull pen - making the 307th Group the first outfit on Guadalcanal to have a PX. Men flocked from all over the rock to make purchases at our PX.

In the meantime five of our Liberators opened the month of March by a night harassing and flare raid on the Shortland Harbor area. One large and one small fire were started on the Southeast end of the Ballale runway which could be seen a hundred miles at sea. The third of March brought another raid of 7 of our planes and LT JONES and his crew set two large fires in the supply area at the Southwest end of Kahili airport. AA from the Japs was heavy and intense but all our planes returned safely. On 7 March 1943, CAPTAIN ANDREWS, LT NICHOLS, and LT JONES again spent the hours of midnight harassing Munda, Vila, Rekata Bay, Kahili, and Ballale. There were other missions as follows: 9 March - 3 planes, 12 March - 2 planes, 13 March - 4 planes, 16 March - 3 planes, and 18 March - 2 planes.

COPY

COPY

Ltr. Hq 307th Bomb Group (Hv), APO #719, 1 Jan 1945. Subj: "History of the
307th Bombardment Group (Hv)". Contd.

The "big show" came after the Ides of March. On 20 March 1943 Colonel met the combat crews in the open air movie under the cocconut trees and outlined a diversionary and harassing attack on the south shore of Bougainville Island, Kahili Airdrome, Pupukana, and East Points. This attack was to be in conjunction with the Flying Forts of the 5th Group while the Navy and the Marines came in low over the harbor. For the first time the S-2 section gave out Australian shillings to the combat crews to be used as native pay in case of forced landings on or near the islands.

The planes took off at 1715 with the Colonel in the lead and Captain Krieg navigating the way to the rendezvous point at Treasury Island just out of Shortland Harbor. Each plane carried 20 clusters of frags and although there was some rack release trouble, most of the "daisy cutters" raised merry hell and kept the Nips frisking for the fox-holes while the Navy and Marine TBF's did their work of sewing the harbor with magnetic mines. Searchlights wildly stabbed the sky and were easily evaded by our planes. Although the Japs threw up the "kitchen stove", no one was hit except for a few tiny fragments. With 9 of our B-24s, 9 B-17s, and 42 TBFs in the air over the same target, the show went off on schedule and was well conceived, organized, and executed. Again on 21 March 1943 Lt Colonel Green led the planes over the same target for a repeat performance in cooperation with the B-17s and TBFs. Even though the Japs were somewhat wiser as to the mine laying on the second trip, our men never gave them a dull moment and started one large fire off Kahili that burned for over 30 minutes.

Speed up Ma's electric washer, throw in some G.I. pants to give her pull, and when it goes "erumm, erumm, erumm", you will have a fair approximation of the sound of the unsynchronized engines of the Mitsubishi 97 bomber and the Kawanishi flying boat with which Tojo disturbed our sleep. Sneaking around in the dark and operating strictly on our rear, Tojo paid us a call on 19 Feb 1943 when the advanced echelons were at Espiritu Santo and with a lucky shot blew the tail off one of our planes.

However, it was after our "big show" of the 20th and 21st of March from Guadalcanal when the Japs retaliated with devastating effect. The claxon call to foxholes sounded about 8:30 PM on March 23rd as the Japs came over with an estimated force of two flights of three Mitsubishi 97's. Passing us by on the first run they attacked Tulagi Island, forty miles across the bay. Our batteries over there threw up a heavy AA fire that could be seen from our camp. Back came the Japs for their second run. The army AA batteries sounded off with everything they had as we dived for our foxholes. The searchlights flicked their lights in the eyes of the Japs, but their aim was good. They laid one on the remnants of Lt Hoeflers "Flying Gator" and set it afire. The flames spread and 2 more of our planes burned to a seared crisp spot on the ground.

COPY

COPY

Ltr. Hq 307th Bomb Group (Hv), APO #719, 1 Jan 1945. Subj: "History of the
307th Bombardment Group (Hv)". Contd. -----

After flying around in the clouds a bit Charlie and his pals came back, and this time knocked out a B-17 which burned with its bombs exploding and spraying the rest of the planes with shrapnel. Several of our planes were riddled. Fourteen (14) out of the fifteen (15) were damaged. Two (2) so badly that they were considered lost. Two (2) more of the B-17s were badly damaged with wrinkled skin and twisted frames. Never to be forgotten was the "swish" of the bombs, the explosions, the flaming sky, and the loss of our Liberators. The next day while Major Weidekamp and his section toiled and sweated to repair the damage, the Marine command directed the dispersal of the B-24s and B-17s which had been concentrated at one end of Henderson Field and along the mat. But it was too late. "The horse was gone". With a minimum of medium bombardment planes on two short runs and dropping at the most about 6 bombs, Tojo had seriously crippled the bombardment squadrons on Guadalcanal. One shudders to think what a few more bombers and a few more runs would have done. It became apparent that the men who knew planes and enemy capabilities with other planes should control the dispersal of aircraft on the ground as well as control their activities in the air.

The next night at 4 o'clock in the morning Tojo came back and again the heavy AA went up from Tulagi. This time he seemed satisfied with the kill of the previous evening and left Guadalcanal alone. Luckily we lost no men from these raids and the American spirit flared back in fighting style. However, it was not without a sense of humor. The boys joshed each other about "second base slides" into foxholes when the big explosions came. They set up temporary committees to organize another war bond drive to replace the 3 or 4 million dollars worth of equipment lost. They also spent a lot of time deepening and widening their foxholes, freely admitting that they had been thoroughly "Christianized."

McNEESE COMES BACK

4 March 1943 will long be remembered as the day that McNeese came back. It will be remembered that after Lt McNeese and his crew had shaken off the attacking Zeroes in the raid of 13 February 1943, he limped back to Choiseul and made a water landing. This episode deserved a place in this history because Lt McNeese and the remains of his crew were the first men to return after having been shot down. They also went through the worst hardships and took the longest time in getting back. The rescue facilities were not as well developed as they are now, and it was the effort and perseverance of the men themselves that got them back to safety. With Lt McNeese when he landed were co-pilot Lt Vander-slice, navigator Lt Carroll, bombardier Lt DeClerque, and assistant engineer S/Sgt Adams. The rest had parachuted when the plane seemed ready to go down in flames over Shortland Harbor.

COPY

C O P Y

Ltr. Hq 307th Bomb Group (Hv), APO #719, 1 Jan 1945. Subj: "History of the
307th Bombardment Group (Hv)". Contd. -----

McNeese and Vanderslice released a life raft and got it clear of the sinking plane with only a pocket knife as a tool. This plus a flotation kit, emergency medical kit, Very Pistol, 23 chocolate bars, a gallon of water, and 8 K rations comprised the equipment of the five men. They were sick from the salt water and the shock of landing. Some had cuts and bruises. On reaching Choiseul the crew hid the raft and explored the thick and stinking jungles for fresh water and some sign of native habitation. They decided to hide and sleep by day and travel down the coast by night. Big lizards - 18 to 30 inches long, crocodiles - 5 to 6 feet long, land crabs, flies, and mosquitoes were encountered by day. Sharks were encountered in the water at night. They had improvised a sail to lighten the paddling, but at times adverse currents made excessive paddling necessary. Each days search produced no natives. With their rations gone they lived on cocoanuts and wild fruits of unknown variety. Three or four nights were spent in crossing the rough Manning Straits to Santa Isabel. Finally on the 19th day out, while sleeping in an abandoned native village, "Henry" - a native, his uncle and two children, discovered them. They fed and carried the crew by war canoe to Edwardo Baker, Chief of all Santa Isabel, who conversed with them through Rufu Snufu, his half-brother, who spoke pidgin English. The Chief sent a runner to the coast watcher to summon help, while the men visited at his camp. A few hours later a PBV, covered by 20 P-38s, P-39s, and P-40s, picked them up and returned them to Guadalcanal. Before leaving they wrote a testimonial to Chief Baker and presented his men with gifts of wings, rings, silver coins, and other items. By their pluck and determination throughout this experience, these men well deserved the rest given them in far away Auckland.

CHAPTER VII - CARNEY FIELD AND KOLI CAMP

In the meanwhile many of the men of the ground echelons of the 370th and 424th Squadrons had gone out to the camp site on the Metapone river to clear the jungle for the new camp. It was a slow and arduous task clearing along the river bank. Fortunately they had the river to swim in, for a bath or just to cool off. Then on the night of March 26, Tojo paid another visit to Henderson. This time he hit the camp and not the planes. He made one run right through the 31st Squadron camp area. Three small bombs landed in the camp area. One hit a palm tree and exploded. It flattened our one lone mess hall and sprayed the tents with shrapnel. Fortunately the 307th suffered but one casualty. LT McCHESNEY received a bad chest wound just above the heart. With the exception of several men killed in the 371st and 372nd Squadrons at Funafuti while under the Seventh Air Force, Lt McChesney was the only casualty by enemy bombs in the history of the Group to date.

C O P Y

Ltr. Hq 307th Bomb Group (Hv), APO #719, 1 Jan 1945. Subj: "History of the
307th Bombardment Group (Hv)". Contd.

The two raids, one destroying the planes, the other hitting our living quarters, hastened the decision to move. Consequently on 1 April 1943 the camp was moved to Koli Point and the planes were moved to Carney Field, 2-1/2 miles away. Construction on the camp and clearing the jungle proceeded at a rapid pace from then on. Everyone rolled up their sleeves, grabbed a machete or an axe and waded into the jungle - officers and men alike. The combat crews pitched in with a will on their off days.

Under the direction of Major Jarvis the jungle was cleared in record time. Tent floors and frames were built. Logs were cut into stumps and the tent floors raised up. Company streets were gravelled. Large airy mess halls were built and screened in. By the end of April the 307th could claim the cleanest, coolest, and the most elaborate camp Guadalcanal had ever seen. A large easily accessible PX had been built in the middle of the camp area. This was the first well stocked Post Exchange on the island of Guadalcanal. \$80,000 dollars worth of merchandise stocked its shelves.

Our satisfaction was short lived. On Mother's Day, 9 May 1943, the Metapone swollen by heavy rains in the mountains overflowed its banks and flooded the camp. Within an hour a number of tents were under eight feet of water. The camp was a mad house with men trying to save equipment and personal belongings. Damage to equipment was slight due to the sacrifice of the men as far as their personal equipment was concerned. The little "Chapel in the Wildwood" on which Chaplain Ellett had devoted so many hours was to have been dedicated that day. It was swept away by the flood. A new camp was soon built with many of the tents moved to higher ground wherever possible and the Group settled down again.

The month of April had not been confined to camp building. The air echelon had continued to function as a combat team. On 7 April 1943, and also on the 8th and 9th, sea searches for enemy shipping were conducted with no contacts made. On 11 April 1943 four (4) B-24s took off to bomb Kahili Airdrome. All bombs landed in the target area and damage was probably heavy. 26 missions in all were flown, involving 117 individual sorties. Most of these missions were against Kahili and shipping in Shortland Harbor. Ten missions were sea searches for enemy vessels. Ballale, Munda, and Numa Numa came in for their share of bombs. On 19 April 1943 CAPTAIN ANDREWS crashed on take off. The plane crashed to the ground just off the end of Carney Field and exploded. Mechanical trouble was blamed. Again on 29 April 1943 tragedy struck again. LT ROBERT F. MILLER crashed in the water off Koli Point on another take off. Again the accident was blamed on mechanical troubles. On that same mission two (2) other airplanes returned because of mechanical troubles. These cases are emphasized to show the engineering difficulties encountered in those early days. After these two accidents all planes were grounded and careful inspections were made. We did not again bomb the enemy until May 6th.

COPY

Ltr. Hq 307th Bomb Group (Hv), APO #719, 1 Jan 1945. Subj: "History of the
307th Bombardment Group (Hv)". Contd.

The two raids, one destroying the planes, the other hitting our living quarters, hastened the decision to move. Consequently on 1 April 1943 the camp was moved to Koli Point and the planes were moved to Carney Field, 2-1/2 miles away. Construction on the camp and clearing the jungle proceeded at a rapid pace from then on. Everyone rolled up their sleeves, grabbed a machete or an axe and waded into the jungle - officers and men alike. The combat crews pitched in with a will on their off days.

Under the direction of Major Jarvis the jungle was cleared in record time. Tent floors and frames were built. Logs were cut into stumps and the tent floors raised up. Company streets were gravelled. Large airy mess halls were built and screened in. By the end of April the 307th could claim the cleanest, coolest, and the most elaborate camp Guadalcanal had ever seen. A large easily accessible PX had been built in the middle of the camp area. This was the first well stocked Post Exchange on the island of Guadalcanal. \$80,000 dollars worth of merchandise stocked its shelves.

Our satisfaction was short lived. On Mother's Day, 9 May 1943, the Metapone swollen by heavy rains in the mountains overflowed its banks and flooded the camp. Within an hour a number of tents were under eight feet of water. The camp was a mad house with men trying to save equipment and personal belongings. Damage to equipment was slight due to the sacrifice of the men as far as their personal equipment was concerned. The little "Chapel in the Wildwood" on which Chaplain Ellett had devoted so many hours was to have been dedicated that day. It was swept away by the flood. A new camp was soon built with many of the tents moved to higher ground wherever possible and the Group settled down again.

The month of April had not been confined to camp building. The air echelon had continued to function as a combat team. On 7 April 1943, and also on the 8th and 9th, sea searches for enemy shipping were conducted with no contacts made. On 11 April 1943 four (4) B-24s took off to bomb Kahili Airdrome. All bombs landed in the target area and damage was probably heavy. 26 missions in all were flown, involving 117 individual sorties. Most of these missions were against Kahili and shipping in Shortland Harbor. Ten missions were sea searches for enemy vessels. Ballale, Munda, and Numa Numa came in for their share of bombs. On 19 April 1943 CAPTAIN ANDREWS crashed on take off. The plane crashed to the ground just off the end of Carney Field and exploded. Mechanical trouble was blamed. Again on 29 April 1943 tragedy struck again. LT ROBERT F. MILLER crashed in the water off Koli Point on another take off. Again the accident was blamed on mechanical troubles. On that same mission two (2) other airplanes returned because of mechanical troubles. These cases are emphasized to show the engineering difficulties encountered in those early days. After these two accidents all planes were grounded and careful inspections were made. We did not again bomb the enemy until May 6th.

COPY

COPY

Ltr. Hq 307th Bomb Group (Hv), APO #719, 1 Jan 1945. Subj: "History of the
307th Bombardment Group (Hv)". Contd.

The flood that had impaired the camp area on 9 May 1943 had also made Carney Field unoperational. Consequently the air echelon and the planes were moved back to Henderson Field on 12 May 1943. The air echelon occupied quarters in the Marine Hotel De Gink and again resumed their pounding of the Japanese. It was an unwieldy system at best, but the 307th kept in there fighting.

There were 12 missions in all flown in the month of May. These involved 37 individual sorties. Broken down they show a total of - 7 missions against Kahili, 3 against Ballale, 1 each against Buin, Shortland, and Numa Numa, 2 against shipping. On 22 May 1943 an attempt to reduce damage to planes by AA was made by increasing the altitude to 15,000 feet. This increase of altitude from approximately 7,000 feet to 15,000 feet was found to decrease the number of flak hits by 50%. These missions were the first of a long series of high altitude missions. At the same time the higher altitude made daylight missions feasible and May marked the beginning of the daylight missions. However, night missions were still carried out because of their element of surprise.

During the latter part of May extensive reconstruction and new construction was carried out in the area in an effort to improve our living conditions. Paths of gravel were rebuilt. Roads in the camp area were fixed up and crowned. Showers were set up throughout the area. New latrines were built. By the 1st of June the camp area was well built up and life was about as comfortable as human ingenuity could make it. It always amazes this writer what ingenious substitutes the men can devise to increase their comfort - sinks made from the tin boxes of frag boxes, chairs built from tail fin crates, bakery ovens out of sheet metal, shower heads made of galvanized tin. One of the most ingenious devices I have seen is the revolving adjustable barber chair built by some of the mechanics on the line out of odd parts of old airplanes. We Americans have taken for granted so many of the gadgets that make life easier that when we get out into the jungle we still want those comforts, and Yankee ingenuity finds the substitutes.

For some time it had been felt that the B-24 was not heavily enough armed. The nose guns did not cover a wide enough area and the belly was very inadequately protected. It was decided that a nose and belly turret should be installed. Accordingly arrangements were made to send all planes back to the Hawaiian Air Depot to have these turrets installed. The problem was to keep as many planes as possible in combat and yet have all planes equipped by the middle of June. It was decided to send a plane a day to Hawaii for a week and then wait until those planes were back before sending more. As each plane returned from Hawaii another would be sent. On 16 May 1943 the first plane started on its way to Hawaii.

COPY

Ltr. Hq 307th Bomb Group (Hv), APO #719, 1 Jan 1945. Subj: "History of the 307th Bombardment Group (Hv)". Contd. -----

With the arrival of several new planes from Tontouta, Thirteenth Air Depot, we found that more than one plane could be sent to Hawaii. The result was we sent 10 planes to the Hawaiian Air Depot in the first week. By the middle of June all planes had been modified. This modification consisted of moving the tail turret to the nose and replacing it with flexible .50's in the tail. A retractable belly turret was also added. This arrangement made the B-24 as heavily armed as the B-17 and a truly formidable ship as far as fire power was concerned. There was but one real blind spot on the whole plane.

In the meantime Colonel Matheny decided that it was necessary to have a full Group of four squadrons to operate efficiently and so he decided to return to Hawaii on one of the planes to see what could be done about getting the 371st and 372nd Squadrons down here to help fight the war. He left on 7 May 1943 and spent the next 12 days convincing the Hawaiian Department that we needed those two squadrons. He succeeded only partially. They were willing to release the ground echelons but insisted on keeping the air echelons for the reorganized 11th Bomb Group. Fortunately the Thirteenth Air Force could furnish the necessary combat crews. These ground echelons sailed from Hawaii on 22 May 1943 on the Liberty ship, Jane Adams.

This meant that a camp area had to be decided upon for the two squadrons. It was the policy of the Thirteenth Air Force to have but two squadrons per Group in the forward area. Consequently the 371st and 372nd Squadrons would have to be based at Espiritu Santos. The area occupied by the rear echelon on that island was chosen as the site of the new camp. Work was immediately started as the squadrons were expected to arrive in about ten days. Again Major Billy Jarvis assumed his role as camp builder. Taking several key men with him, he left for Espiritu Santos on May 22nd. However, the 371st and 372nd Squadrons did not arrive until 12 June 1943.

It was at this time that a regular schedule of rest leaves for combat crews was inaugurated. Previously only those crews who had made a water landing or had been in some type of accident were sent on rest leave. The crews were sent to Auckland, New Zealand for their rest.

There were 24 missions scheduled for the month of June. Ten of these were shipping prowls with only two Jap freighters sunk as a result. Seven more missions were directed against Kahili airdrome with varying degrees of success. The remaining seven missions were divided as follows - 1 against Numa Numa, 1 against Vila, 1 against Naura, 3 sea searches, and 1 against Ballale. There were 127 planes scheduled for these missions. The score for the month was one of our planes lost as against 1 Betty shot down. This month showed another increase in daylight missions, although night missions still were in the majority with 13 against 11.

COPY

Ltr. Hq 307th Bomb Group (Hv), APO #719, 1 Jan 1945. Subj: "History of the
307th Bombardment Group (Hv)". Contd. -----

An interesting highlight on these missions was the running fight on June 12th between two B-24s and two Bettys. Four bombers battled it out in the skies off the coast of Bougainville. CAPTAIN FOSTER and LT RATTI were out on a shipping prowl between Buka and Rabaul. At 1116 two (2) Bettys were sighted attempting interception from the rear. When they were 1000 yards away Captain Foster made a sharp left turn into them. At 600 yards they both opened fire. Our top turret as well as the belly and nose turrets and left waist gunner poured a withering fire into the Jap. His left engine started smoking and he was seen to slip to the left and descend to about 50 feet. In the meantime Lt Ratti's top turret, right waist gunner, and tail gunner opened fire on the other Betty, shooting the cowl off his left engine. This Betty then swung towards his crippled partner apparently attempting to protect him. Captain Foster called Lt Ratti and informed him that his nose turret was out. Lt Ratti replied that he was still loaded for bear, so both planes dove on the crippled plane and shot hell out of it until it crashed. The other Betty turned tail and ran for home. After chasing the Jap for several minutes it was decided that the meeting would take place to close to the Betty's beehive, so the chase was broken off. The two Liberators returned to view their kill and found a man in a raft with two others swimming toward it. These survivors were strafed.

During this period the promised new crews were arriving at Santo. Many of them were immediately dispatched to Guadalcanal to receive their preliminary training before being assigned to the 371st and 372nd Squadrons. It was decided that a certain number of experienced crews would be taken from the 370th and 424th Squadrons to act as flight leaders in the new air echelons of the 371st and 372nd Squadrons. These crews would be replaced by some of the new crews.

The ground echelons of the 371st and 372nd Squadrons arrived at Espiritu Santo on 12 June 1943 and immediately set about building a camp according to the plans laid down by Major Jarvis. They had brought enough supplies with them on the Jane Adams to build a really deluxe camp. Within three weeks every man had a screened tent with a wooden floor. All offices, supply sheds, and the engineering, communications, and specialist shacks on the line had been built. Coral roads and paths had been constructed. A movie theater had been built. It is interesting to note that many outfits that had been on Espiritu Santo for 6 or 7 months still had their men sleeping on the ground. The provisional crews attached to these two squadrons started flying search out of Santo on 26 June 1943. These missions were the first flown in this area by the new squadrons.

COPY

Ltr. Hq 307th Bomb Group (Hv), APO #719, 1 Jan 1945. Subj: "History of the
307th Bombardment Group (Hv)". Contd.

Finally between 1 July and 15 July 1945, a final assignment of crews was made for all four squadrons. SO #56, 307th Bomb Group (Hv), 14 July 1943, assigned old crews from the 370th and 424th Squadrons to the 371st and 372nd Squadrons. These crews became the nucleus of the air echelons of these two squadrons. Then began a period of intense training to weld the crews into an efficient combat team. At last the 307th Bomb Group (Hv) had a full complement of four squadrons with active air echelons for the first time in five and a half months. It looked for a time as though the 307th would be a two squadron Group more or less permanently. However, through the unceasing efforts of our commanding officer, we were a full Group again. The morale of the personnel of the old squadrons immediately took a turn for the better. Now we would be able to show the powers that be how a bomb Group should operate.

CHAPTER VIII - LARGE SCALE OPERATIONS

The title of this chapter is rather misleading. On a comparative basis with other theaters our operations are pretty small. However, July was the beginning of much larger scale operations for the heavy bombers of the Thirteenth Air Force. In the past our missions consisted of four to eleven plane attacks - most of them closer to four planes than seven. In July we really started to operate as a complete combat team. Two squadrons were usually scheduled for each mission.

A system of rotation of squadrons was evolved. Each squadron served a six week tour at Guadalcanal then retired to Espiritu Santo for a six week rest and a training period. This kept two full squadrons of fresh crews at Guadalcanal all the time. The crews at Santo were sent to Auckland on rest leaves in relays during their six week period there. The remaining crews were put through an intensive training period. Since many of the new crews in the 371st and 372nd Squadrons needed additional training, the rotation policy was not put into effect until 8 August 1943. The 370th and 424th Squadrons continued operations at Guadalcanal for the month of July.

To illustrate our large scale operations - there were 16 missions with 220 planes scheduled for the month of July. In addition there was 1 rescue mission and 7 searches for missing planes and crews. 8 of the 16 missions were against Kahili, 2 against Ballale, 2 against a Jap task force, 1 against Buka, 1 against shipping at Buin, 1 against Munda, and 1 against Tarawa. We dropped 2,400 bombs for a total weight of 408.8 tons during these 16 missions. Our losses were terrific for the month. We lost 8 planes and 68 men. This was the highest monthly loss we've ever had, before or since. In exchange we shot down two (2) enemy aircraft and damaged three (3) more - not a very good rate of exchange. However, results must be measured in damage done by bombs.

COPY

Ltr. Hq 307th Bomb Group (Hv), APO #719, 1 Jan 1945. Subj: "History of the
307th Bombardment Group (Hv)". Contd.

Special mention should be made of the mission against Munda on 25 July 1943. This was our first attempt at direct support of ground troops. It was very successful. The infantry had been stopped cold at the approaches of Munda Airfield. They put in a hurried call for air support. We immediately dispatched 22 heavy bombers which proceeded to open a path a couple of hundred yards wide to the airfield. The infantry were then able to move on in and take the airfield.

During the month of July the recreational facilities were developed. The men had been using a cleared section out on the plain in front of the camp as a baseball diamond. It was a pretty crude affair without a backstop and with rough bumpy ground. The men led by Captain Morrissey of the 370th decided that this field should be improved. Consequently they set to work to build a deluxe ball park. The ground was leveled and a regular diamond laid out. A backstop was built and dugouts were constructed. Along side of the baseball field, a boxing arena, two badminton courts, and several horse shoe pits were built. The field was named Morrissey Field in recognition of Captain Morrissey's work in developing it. Several intra Group teams for both soft ball and hard ball were set up and competition was keen. From these teams a Group team was picked to uphold the honor of the 307th against various other clubs on the island. Informal boxing bouts were held once a week.

It should be mentioned that we were not the only ones that were bombing targets. Charlie had been coming over quite regularly. Fortunately he had done no damage to the 307th, although other outfits on the island had suffered. On 17 July 1943 Charlie and his friends came over just as we were getting a night mission off against him. That balled our schedule up plenty. However, we finally got the planes off about midnight.

Two other innovations took place in July. One was the opening of the Group laundry and the other was the opening of a separate mess hall in the Group officers area.

In August we flew 16 missions again for a total of 221 sorties. It is interesting to note that 10 out of the 16 missions were daylight raids. One was a dusk mission against Ballale. We dropped 119.7 tons of bombs on the primary targets and 59.7 tons on secondary targets for a total of 179.4 tons. The excessive difference in bombs dropped from the last month, although there were the same number of sorties, was due to the fact that there were only 3 missions in which the planes carried more than 100 lb bombs. The main target was still Kahili with 4 times at bat. Rekata Bay, Vila Airdrome, Bairoko Harbor, and Ballale Airdrome all came in for their share of our bombs. There was 1 search mission for a lost crew. We shot down 29 sure enemy aircraft and 2 probables during the month. In addition we damaged 5 others. Against this, our losses were 1 plane and crew lost, 1 man killed, and 3 others wounded.

COPY

Ltr. Hq 307th Bomb Group (Hv), APO #719, 1 Jan 1945. Subj: "History of the
307th Bombardment Group (Hv)". Contd.

The mission against Kahili on 1 August 1943 was one of the best we had conducted. 14 of our B-24s plus 8 from the 5th Bomb Group attached Kahili at 1457 dropping 360 (100 lb) bombs on the runway from 22,000 feet. At least 6 fires were started on the runway and the taxiing apron was well covered with bombs. At least seven planes were destroyed on the ground. The mission of 12 August 1943 against Kahili was an even better one. 26 B-24s with a fighter cover of 48 planes attacked Kahili at high noon and really plastered the south-west side of the runway with 320 (100 lb) bombs. The lower end of the runway was completely covered by fires and at least 22 planes were destroyed. 10 others were probably damaged. On the night mission of 13 August 1943 considerable confusion was caused our planes by the attacking night fighters. It is practically impossible to see opposing planes in the dark. Two (2) of our planes had been attacked so the whole Group was jittery. When they landed several ships had fifty calibre holes in them. Fortunately no serious damage was done nor was anyone hurt. The Japs used new tactics on the daylight mission against Kahili on 26 August 1943 - aerial phosphorous bombs. This was our first experience with bombs dropped on the formation. The plan was apparently to throw the bomb by a steep dive and a sharp pull out. They have had very little success with this method of attack. One or two of our planes have been hit, but not seriously. As far as can be ascertained only one B-24 and one P-38 have ever been destroyed by this method.

10 August 1943 was a sad day for the 307th Group. Colonel Matheny, our commanding officer since activation, was relieved of command and assigned command of the XIII Bomber Command. We were all sorry to see him go, but pleased at his promotion. COLONEL OLIVER S. PICHER was assigned as Group Commander on 17 August 1943. However, he did not join until 19 August 1943. In the interim, Colonel Glen R. Birchard, Deputy Group Commander, took over the controls. Colonel Matheny took several of our old timers with him to Bomber Command, leaving bad gaps in our staff. They were: LT COLONEL EDWIN S. GREEN, our former Deputy Group Commander, MAJOR JOHN W. MOORE, S-2, MAJOR HENRY E. JONES, assistant S-3, CAPTAIN DONALD D. MANCHESTER, Group Bombardier, and CAPTAIN CHARLES J. RINKER. We would miss these men. All of them had been important factors in the growth of this group. The resultant shuffle in the Group to fill these gaps was as follows: Lt Colonel Birchard took Colonel Green's place as Deputy Group Commander, Major Edward A. Jurkens, Commanding Officer of the 370th Squadron was brought in as Group Operations Officer, CAPTAIN KARL A. WEILBACHER came in from the 424th Squadron as Group Bombardier, CAPTAIN DAVID B. SHARP took Major Moore's place as Group S-2 Officer, and CAPTAIN ULMER J. NEWMAN assumed command of the 370th Squadron.

COPY

C O P Y

Ltr. Hq 307th Bomb Group (Hv), APO #719, 1 Jan 1945. Subj: "History of the
307th Bombardment Group (Hv)". Contd.

On 20 August 1943 we sent back to the United States our first cadre since we departed for overseas duty 27 October 1942. This was a gala day for the combat crews, because it showed that some sort of relief was in sight. This cadre was made up of the following men - CAPTAIN HENRY L. MILLEDGE, CAPTAIN BUFORD E. FLAHAVEN, 1ST LT WILLIAM S. FLOOD, 1ST LT ROBERT S. LAMONTAGNE, 1ST LT WILLIAM H. JONES, 1ST LT MOSES PAYTON, and 1ST LT MICHAEL HRICZKO. These men were sent back to Colorado Springs to give the Second Air Force crews the benefit of their combat experience.

The rotation of air echelons between Guadalcanal and Espiritu Santo finally became a fact when the 370th and 372nd Squadrons changed places on 8 August 1943. The 370th went to Espiritu Santo for a well earned rest. Then again on 25 August 1943 the 424th and 371st Squadrons changed places. That meant that we had two brand new squadrons flying the missions. This was their opportunity to show what they could do in combat.

As usual Tojo paid us several visits in retaliation for the plastering we were giving him. His dusk raid of 13 August 1943 netted him one transport in Tulagi Harbor and kept us in our foxholes most of the evening. We had a darn good movie scheduled for that night and we were damned if he would stop us from seeing it. After he had left about 2300, we proceeded to show the movie. We finally hit the sack about 0100, and he didn't come back that evening. However, the following evening he paid us the longest visit since the 307th had been on the rock. He started dropping his calling cards about 2100 and kept it up at intervals until 0200. On 13 August 1943 we had spent exactly 6 months at this sort of thing, but then we had given the Jap a lot more than he had ever given us. Considering the amount that his small raids had bothered us, it is hard to understand how he stood our continued 6, 12 and 18 plane raids day after day.

Our operations for September went into the large scale class with a bang. We flew 18 missions with 268 individual planes involved. Only two (2) of these 18 missions were unsuccessful - due to weather. We dropped a total of 268.7 tons of bombs, with 241.7 tons on the primary targets and 27 tons on secondary targets. Kahili was the main target with 10 strikes against it. Vila come next with 4 missions. The following targets had 1 each - Shipping, Ballale, Nauru, and Buka. Weather prevented the planes from reaching Vila on 8 September 1943 and again on 29 September 1943. As a whole the missions were the most successful we've had. The two (2) outstanding missions were against Kahili on 3 September 1943 and 27 September 1943. On 3 September 1943 eighteen (18) planes attacked Kahili and completely covered the whole area around the runway and the runway itself with 32,000 lbs of bombs. A few planes hit Vila with 10,000 lbs of bombs. Again on 27 September 1943 we plastered Kahili with 37,800 lbs of bombs. The runway was covered with a good pattern and put out of commission. In addition we shot down 5 sure Zeroes and 4 probables. A total of 10 sure enemy aircraft,

C O P Y

C O P Y

Ltr. Hq 307th Bomb Group (Hv), APO #719, 1 Jan 1945. Subj: "History of the
307th Bombardment Group (Hv)". Contd.

13 probables, and 2 damaged enemy planes were accounted for by the Group during the month. Our losses were very low: 4 wounded and 2 men killed. One of the men killed deserves special mention. On 15 September 1943 during an 18 plane raid against Kahili, S/Sgt C. R. Holmes was carried to his death when an AA burst tore the ball turret clean off its mount. Sgt Holmes, if he was conscious, had no opportunity whatever to extricate himself from the turret. Let us hope that he was killed at the time of the explosion.

The best news of the month was the announcement on 2 September 1943 of the rotation policy for returning combat crews to the United States. This policy was a point system based on months in the area, months in foreign service, total combat hours, combat hours in this area, total combat missions, and combat missions in this area. Six points made a man eligible to go home, but the old crews had so many missions and hours that it was close to ten points before a man was put on a list to go home.

The Group had one of its infrequent formations on 3 September 1943. General NATHAN H. TWINING presented LT HOMER W. FAWCETT with a Silver Star and the rest of his crew with Distinguished Flying Crosses. Lt Fawcett and his crew sent to the aid of LT H. L. McDONALD's stricken plane in the face of heavy enemy interception and dropped a life raft to the men in the water. In the running fight Lt Fawcett's crew shot down 7 enemy fighters. After the presentation General Twining congratulated the entire Group on its work in the theatre.

Tojo's visits to us were becoming less and less frequent - just enough to remind the ground echelon that it was still in the battle area. On 15 September 1943 he hit Henderson Field and destroyed a plane. Then the next night he picked the new runway, just 100 yards from the camp, but made no hits. On the night of 21 September 1943 Tojo got a real reception from the Air Force. A P-38 pilot got 2 Betty's within a minute of each other. The whole island stood outside it's foxholes and watched the fireworks. It was quite a display. When the first Betty exploded in midair, one could hear the cheer go up and down the line of camps.

On 22 September 1943 we sent our second cadre, headed by Captain Ulmer Newman, home to the States. Six (6) additional crews were picked under the rotation policy to go home at the same time. This cleaned out many of the original flying men of the Group. There were but a few of the old timers from Ephrata days left in the air echelon. These men were being replaced by a more or less continuous flow of new crews fresh from the States.

C O P Y

C O P Y

Ltr. Hq 307th Bomb Group (Hv), APO #719, 1 Jan 1945. Subj: "History of the
307th Bombardment Group (Hv)". Contd.

A regular schedule of missions on the basis of one every other day was set up for the month of October. The result was that 17 missions were scheduled. 16 of these missions were satisfactorily completed. The mission of 7 October 1943 was the unsuccessful one. On this mission 18 planes attempted to bomb Buka, but found it completely closed in. 276 aircraft were scheduled for the month. 183 of these bombed the primary targets, 42 bombed secondary targets, and 9 bombed other targets. The rest turned back. 595 tons of bombs were dropped for the month. Kahili was still the main target with 7 missions against it. Kara came in for its share of 4 missions. The five other targets were Vila, Ballale, Poro-poro, Ebery's Lease, and Buka. During the month we destroyed 13 sure enemy aircraft, 8 probables, 3 damaged in the air, and 5 destroyed on the ground. We lost 1 plane and had 2 damaged. There were 3 men killed, 9 men wounded, and 10 men missing in action. Special mention should be made of LT GREAR's crash, because it is the only case of structural failure causing a loss in this Group. On the mission of 25 October 1943 it was necessary for the formation to go through a solid front. The penetration was undertaken and the various squadron formations were broken up. Lt Grear apparently found himself on a collision course with another B-24 when he came through the front. Under the strain of a violent turn the wings collapsed and the plane crashed in the sea. One officer was rescued. This is the first and only case we have had of this type of accident.

The mission of 10 October 1943 against Kahili was one of the most successful strikes of the month. We dropped 38,000 lbs of bombs - 96% of which were in the target area. Four (4) large fires were started and several buildings received near misses. On this mission we destroyed 11 Zekes and probably got 3 more. Another very successful mission took place on 18 October 1943 against Ballale. We dropped 141,000 lbs of bombs - 89% of which landed in the target area. There was an excellent pattern of 37 hits down the length of the runway, plus some 47 more along revetment areas. The mission against Ballale marked the first time our planes had carried 8 (1000 lb) bombs per plane. The most successful mission of the month was on 31 October 1943 when 19 B-24s dumped 152,000 lbs of bombs on Kara. Only 8 of the 160 (1000 lb) bombs carried by our planes missed the target. The runway was completely torn up from one end to the other. This is a strike that is said to have broken the heart and back of the Jap equivalent of the SeaBees. Kara had been built in record time and clever camouflage had artfully concealed it until it was nearly ready for use. It was a supposedly well forged link in the strong chain of defenses built around Kahili. Then came our attack. Never before in the history of the South Pacific conflict had so many 1/2 ton bombs been concentrated with such devastating effect on a Jap airdrome. Kara joined Kahili and Ballale in the limbo of non-operational Jap bases.

C O P Y

C O P Y

Ltr. Hq 307th Bomb Group (Hv), APO #719, 1 Jan 1945. Subj: "History of the 307th Bombardment Group (Hv)". Contd.

At last the 307th Group had an ideal set up. On 2 October 1943 we moved the planes from Carney Field to Koli Point. This made the third airdrome we had used on Guadalcanal. The beauty of Koli was that it was right in our own backyard. The runway was only 500 yards from the camp and the nearest taxiway only 100 yards away. This gave us a much better maintenance set up. Engineering buildings were halfway between the taxiway and the camp area. It made this area convenient to both airplanes and living quarters. It eliminated the long tiring ride from the camp to the line. The men had only to walk from their tents to the line which was a matter of only a few minutes. However, everyone was just a little worried with an operational runway so close to our camp. Surely Tojo would try to do something about it. The result was a general strengthening of foxholes throughout the area and when the siren went off we never dallied in getting into them. It remained to be seen how much we would have to take.

On 6 October 1943 we had one of the few and unquestionably the best USO show we had seen in the South Pacific area. Ray Bolger and Little Jack Little gave us a full evening of songs, dances, and wisecracks. The entertainers had probably planned on a much shorter performance, but their audience just would not let them go.

This month saw 23 officers and 37 enlisted men sent home on the combat crew rotation policy. The number of old timers was getting less and less. Very soon there would be none of the crews that originally left the States with the Group. We hated to see them go, but we were glad that they were having the chance to see the old country.

We didn't have long to wait for Tojo to discover our new field. He paid us a visit on both the 11th and 12th. In the first raid he apparently sneaked in under the radar, because the siren did not awaken us until he had gotten his bombs away. Fortunately his bombs landed miles away from the strip. The next night he came closer but did no damage.

After seven months in the same area, construction was still going on. It is said that a Group can never remain static, but must either progress or slip backwards. The 307th lived up to that axiom. Every month, large and small improvements were made on the camp area, each contributing to the comfort and efficiency of the outfit. This month saw the construction of deluxe bath houses by both squadrons. They were of wooden construction with cement floors. They contained both showerheads and wash basins. The Chaplain had also constructed a library and reading room in the center of the camp. Each squadron had previously had small libraries of their own which now were incorporated into one large Group library, thus making many more books available to all concerned. When one thought about it, the camp on Guadalcanal

C O P Y

C O P Y

Ltr. Hq 307th Bomb Group (Hv), APO #719, 1 Jan 1945. Subj: "History of the
307th Bombardment Group (Hv)". Contd. -----

was actually much better than our original camp at Ephrata, Washington. Every enlisted man had a floor under him, convenient showers, a good movie, a library, and a good PX. At Ephrata the tents were pitched on the alkali dust. There was no Post Theatre and the PX was a poor one. There was just one thing lacking - feminine companionship.

On 27 October 1943 we had another change of commanding officers. Colonel Oliver S. Picher who had only been with us since August was transferred to XIII Bomber Command and Lt Colonel Glen R. Birchard took over the job. Colonel Birchard had grown up with the Group, so everyone was pleased with his appointment. He had joined the Group as a squadron commander shortly after the activation of the Group at Geiger Field. A month later he had been appointed Group Operations Officer. He remained Group Operations Officer until 10 August 1943 when he became Deputy Group Commander. He had directed operations all through the phases, through the training and search period in Hawaii, and the first seven months of combat at Guadalcanal.

Shifting our attacks to Buka and Bonis in November we soon had them nonoperational. We continued to bomb and harass Jap airdromes throughout the Bougainville area. On 1 November 1943 American forces made a beach-head at Torokina, Empress Augusta Bay, Bougainville, and we again shifted our attacks to hit supply depots, bivouac areas, troop concentrations, and ground installations. Targets were scattered far and wide. There were 16 missions scheduled including 2 searches. 12 of these missions were successful. There were 287 planes scheduled with 213 planes hitting the primary target, 11 hitting other targets, and 47 planes turning back due to weather. These 224 planes dropped a total of 595.4 tons of bombs on various targets with 86% of the bombs hitting accurately. We destroyed 2 enemy aircraft in the air and 2 on the ground. In comparison, we lost 1 plane to enemy fighters and 1 plane as an operational loss. There were 5 planes damaged by AA and fighters. Our casualties were comparatively heavy - 2 men killed, 10 men missing in action, and 9 men wounded. 23 out of 24 B-24s hit Buka with 92 tons of bombs on 4 November 1943 and accomplished their mission of knocking out the runway. Again on 14 November 1943 we knocked out the runway on Bonis by laying 24 tons of bombs right down the runway. Bonis was hit again on 27 November 1943 to make sure that the runway stayed out.

At this time more combat men were returned to the States on the rotation policy. There were 12 officers and 33 enlisted men in all. The number of original flying men was getting smaller and smaller. By the first of the year the only combat men left would be the staff officers.

C O P Y

C O P Y

Ltr. Hq. 307th Bomb Group (Hv), APO #719, 1 Jan 1945. Subj: "History of the 307th Bombardment Group (Hv)". Contd.

The old rumor factory was going strong at this point. The main one of course was that we were going to move to Munda on New Georgia. The rumor had a good basis in that the distance from our base to our targets was getting longer and longer. In fact the raid on Rabaul on 11 November 1943 was staged from Munda. It was obvious that most of our missions in the future would be against Rabaul and northern targets.

On 24 November 1943 the 371st Squadron again relieved the 424th Squadron. With this change a new policy of rotating key ground personnel along with their air echelon was inaugurated. Aircraft mechanics, specialist, S-2 and S-3 personnel, and armorers were given a much needed rest at Espiritu Santo.

Our second Thanksgiving overseas was celebrated with appropriate ceremony. Each squadron prepared extra special dinners. Due to a mission on the 25th, all squadrons served a traditional dinner with all the fixings, including turkey, cranberry sauce, mince pie, and even wine and beer, in the evening rather than at noon.

Bonis, Porton Plantation, Sohanna AA positions, Wong Tu, Poporang and other pinpoint areas of supply and personnel were hit on Bougainville during the first of December. Then we flew several raids on Rabaul area targets. Heavy weather greatly interfered with the success of these attacks. The purpose of these raids was twofold. First it was necessary to keep the Japs on Bougainville subdued by destroying his supplies and hampering his attacks on our perimeter by hitting at his personnel and bivouac areas. Secondly, we had to protect the perimeter from air attacks by keeping the enemy strips knocked out. This necessitated working the Rabaul area over, as well as knocking out the fields on northern Bougainville.

There were 16 missions scheduled for December. 11 of these missions were satisfactorily completed. 2 were cancelled because of weather. 3 failed to reach the targets. In all, 274 planes were scheduled. 112 planes hit the primary targets. 108 hit secondary targets. 54 planes turned back. This 54 includes 40 turnbacks on account of weather. The 220 planes which reached the targets dropped 4,877 bombs or 492 tons of bombs. Our bag of zeroes was very small this month - 3 sure kills. However, we lost no planes and had no casualties. The various targets we hit were as follows - Kahili 5 times, Poporang five times, Bonis supply four times, Sohanna four times, Buka three

C O P Y

C O P Y

Ltr. Hq 307th Bomb Group (Hv), APO #719, 1 Jan 1945. Subj: "History of the
307th Bombardment Group (Hv)". Contd. -----

times, Noriva two times, Kieta two times, and Wong Tu two times. Vunakanau, Rabaul, Porton, Kara, and Buka Plantation were hit once each. Most of these attacks were small numbers of planes hitting targets of opportunity, since the weather was so consistently bad for the whole month. The outstanding mission and the one really successful one, was the mission against Vunakanau on 24 December 1943. 18 airplanes dropped 54 tons of bombs in the vicinity of the runway. There were 29 hits on the southwest end of the runway, making 1,400 feet of it unserviceable. On the mission of 19 December 1943 weather again broke up the formation and as a result 6 planes hit Rabaul, 3 hit Poporang, 3 hit Kahili, 1 hit Bonis, 1 hit Kara, 1 hit Ratson, 1 hit Buka. This is a good example of what happened throughout the month. However, 6 planes did get one steamship and one smaller craft in Rabaul Harbor. This is one of the few cases of our formations hitting ships.

The Christmas Eve mission was the best of the month, making a very fitting reason for a Christmas Eve celebration. From all reports it was a very wet and joyous evening. Christmas was celebrated with the traditional dinner of turkey with all the fixings. This was our second Christmas overseas, and most of us hoped it was the last. After a vicious year of combating jungle and the tropics, as well as the Japs, the morale of the outfit was very high that Christmas day. Only two missions were flown for the rest of the month - one on the 28th and one on the 31st. Both were comparatively unsuccessful because of the bad weather.

Thus ended the year 1943 and almost two years of successful accomplishment for the 307th Bomb Group. We had come a long way since that fateful 15 April 1942. On the whole we could look back at our work with satisfaction. We had carried out the longest over water mission by army bombers in the history of the war. We had pioneered in the jungles of the Solomons, giving the Jap a lot more than he had given us. In one notable case - at Munda - we had given strong support to our infantry. We had destroyed Jap airfields and

C O P Y

C O P Y

Ltr. Hq 307th Bomb Group (Hv), APO #719, 1 Jan 1945. Subj: "History of the
307th Bombardment Group (Hv)". Contd. -----

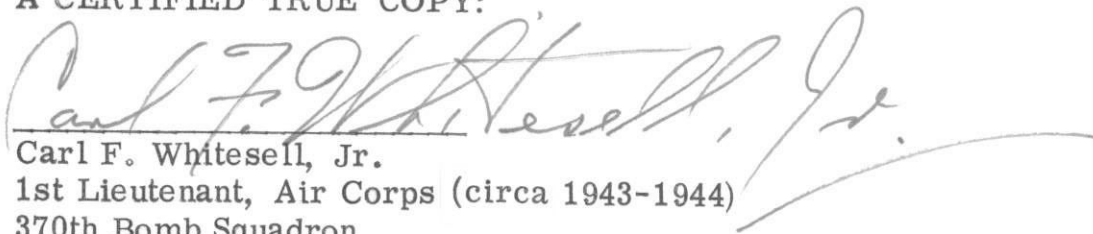
innumerable tons of his supplies and equipment. We had taken our own setbacks and recovered with a snap. Much credit should be given the ground crews for their yeoman work in the early days at Henderson Field. The speed with which they got the planes back in commission after the terrific bombings in March was nothing short of miraculous. Most of those same men are still chalking up a remarkable maintenance record. All in all, the men of the 307th Bomb Group can be justly proud of its record and of their part in it.

For the Commanding Officer:

(Signed)
SAUL C. WEISLOW,
Major, Air Corps,
Adjutant

(Signed)
WILLIAM P. DAVIS
Captain, Air Corps,
Historical Officer

A CERTIFIED TRUE COPY:



Carl F. Whitesell, Jr.
1st Lieutenant, Air Corps (circa 1943-1944)
370th Bomb Squadron
307th Bomb Group

Salt Lake City, Utah
5 December 1972

C O P Y