



**307th  
BOMBARDMENT GROUP (HV) ASSOCIATION  
"THE LONG RANGERS"**

**NEWSLETTER NO. 90-2**

September 1, 1990

QUOTES OF NOTE

"Watch your thoughts, they become your words, Watch your words, they become your actions. Watch your actions, they become your habits. Watch your habits, they become your character."

- Herb True

"Character is like a tree and reputation is like its shadow. The shadow is what we think of it; the tree is the real thing."

- Abraham Lincoln

"A gentleman is someone who, when his wife drops something near him, will kick it to where she can pick it up more easily."

- Bob Hope

"Politics is not the art of the possible, as it is taught in high school civics, or even the art of compromise, as we learn in Pol Sci 101. It is a much more serious art -- the art of seeing who gets how much from whom."

- Julian Bond

"Young men want to be faithful and are not; Old men want to be faithless and cannot."

- Oscar Wilde

NOTES FROM THE PRESIDENT

I've heard from several members since the Las Vegas Reunion and am pleased to report that all were positive about our get-together. Their praise of the Reunion Committee and their wives for putting on a good show has been unanimous. I surely hope we can do as well or maybe even better for our 50th Anniversary of the Activation of the 307th Bombardment Group at our Memorial Plaque Dedication in 1992 in Dayton.

On behalf of the entire 307th Association I wish to thank Dan and Wanda Cauffiel and John and Dorothy Wood, our Reunion Coordinating Committee, for the superb job they did in planning and carrying out those plans required to make this one of our most successful reunions since I became a member in 1982.

I also want to thank Cena and Walt Marsh for their continuous tireless efforts which must accompany all other endeavors that make up any successful reunion enterprise. I found out this year that sitting at the registration desk is now picnic for three or four days. While I got to see and speak with almost every-



one who came, I really didn't have time to have an uninterrupted conversation with any of my good friends and I regret that very much.

I want to thank Arlene Nelson for her tireless efforts in selling raffle tickets for our fund raisers. Her efforts have produced great results.

Thanks to Guy Bensinger are in order for his donation of the large framed B-24 picture which was raffled off and brought in a handsome sum.

We are also indebted to Bill Adams for his hand carved plaques which he always sends by mail or by Mike Michlo or Marty Sporn (who visit him while in England on vacation) and which are raffled off to add to our treasury.

I want to thank our nominating committee members Jack Hoerner and Charlie Eckels for their efforts in providing a slate of candidates. I know what a job it is to try to get people to serve on non-profit organization staffs. To tell the truth it took me about 35 or 40 telephone calls and a few letters in order to find these two people willing to serve on the nominating committee.

On behalf of the entire 307th Association I want to thank Jim Kendall and Harry Sterkel for their time and efforts in getting the 1988 Reunion Book out. Due to circumstances over which they had no control, unfortunately, the books were not available before the reunion. They are taking steps to insure that this never again happens. We trust that everyone now has his Reunion 1988 book; if not, please let Cena know since the extra books have been sent to her in Salt Lake City.

On behalf of the Association I also want to thank Anita Sporn for serving as our Parliamentarian. Having never previously conducted large meetings and since I felt a need for some guidance in parliamentary procedures, I asked Anita to serve in that capacity. For

an organization of this size it is difficult to maintain control and afford all members an opportunity to be heard and at the same time protect everyone else's rights to have their ideas and suggestions considered. I apologize if I offended anyone at the general meeting by trying to limit discussion on the wording on the plaque. In a meeting of 300 individuals it is difficult to arrive at a consensus of how to express an idea in one paragraph with 250/300 people wanting to edit your copy. I'd like to see our By-Laws amended to include the position of Parliamentarian as a permanent Staff Officer. This would help to keep order at the meeting so that the Associations' business could be carried out fairly and in accordance with established procedures.

Dave Owens  
President

\* \* \* \* \*

#### NOTES FROM THE HISTORIANS

Another great reunion is history and again your Historians returned home with a suitcase full of material for the files or to be copied for the files. We couldn't talk with each and every one of you, for as usual there was not time enough to go around. However, as we had hoped, scheduling specific times for you to bring your pictures and documents allowed us to meet our Historian's responsibilities and still have time for our own personal reunion activities. Apologies to those members who asked that we visit their room or nearby condo to view their memorabilia; for the most part we were unable to make such visits. We hope we'll have other chances to meet and see your collections.

#### Las Vegas Reunion Snapshots Needed:

Our thanks to those of you who have already sent prints of the photos taken at the Las Vegas Reunion for us to use in the next Reunion Book. We can never have too many snapshots from which to pick, so keep them coming.

### Members "Then" Picture for Reunion Book:

Would you like a "then" picture printed in the next Reunion Book along with the portrait taken in Las Vegas. If so, unless you know we already have such a print on hand, send us a good wartime picture of yourself. If you so request, we'll copy the print and send the original back to you unharmed.

### Historian's Mailing Address

Photos, documentary material or questions meant for your Historians should, unless otherwise directed, be sent directly to Jim Kendall, Harry Sterkel or John Reeves at the following address: 2350 Derby, Birmingham, Michigan 48009.

Note: John Reeves was appointed at Las Vegas as the third member of the 307th Ass'n. Historical Department and will join Jim Kendall and Harry Sterkel in their efforts as Historians. Welcome, John, we can use the extra hands.

### Search for Pilot Jack Brown

A recent letter from Mr. Edmund J. Winn requests help in locating a pilot he thinks might have been in the 307th. His letter:

"I am interested in learning any details on the whereabouts or activities, now or in the past, of a pilot who flew bombers in the Pacific during World War II. His name is John Anthony (Jack) Brown, and he probably flew B-17's. He crashed in the Philippines -- the crew was lost, but he survived with injuries and burns requiring hospitalization. I would appreciate any information you might have on this person, or names of other sources where such information might be obtained."

Sincerely,  
Edmund Winn"

The B-17 aspect of the request seems to eliminate the possibility that this particular "Brown" might have been a "Long

Ranger". Only the 19th Bomb Group regularly flew the B-17 in combat in the Philippines and then during only the early months of the war. After the return to the Philippines we believe B-17s were used only for rescue work. However, our records are far from complete. If you can help please let us know so that we may answer Mr. Winn quickly.

### History/Nostalgia Department

Elsewhere in this Newsletter are two items from our Historical Files which we believe will be of universal interest.

First: from our Xerox copy of THE STORY OF THE XIII BOMBER COMMAND AT WORK, JANUARY, 1943 -- JULY, 1944, we are reprinting three pages which present a concise history of the 307th through their service with the 7th AAF when the last of its four squadrons (but not all of their personnel) became part of the newly formed 13th AAF. The book was prepared entirely in the combat area by the Statistical Section of the XIII Bomber Command and contains a wealth of interesting information. We'll print more material from the book in future newsletters and Reunion books.

Second: While flying missions to Truk we heard a story about a crew, shot down over that target, which sailed two five-man life rafts two-thirds of the way back to their base (Los Negros in the Admiralties) before being sighted and picked up. Here is newspaper coverage of that exploit. We can't find any reference to the crew or the event in our records and think they may have been from the 5th Bomb Group. However, it is a great story so we're running it here. Can anyone add more information than the correspondent was able to get by the wartime censor?

Jim Kendall  
Harry Sterkel  
John Reeves

\* \* \* \* \*





## 307th BOMBARDMENT GROUP (H)

### Early Days

The two year old 307th Bombardment Group has had an active life since it was activated at Geiger Field, Washington, on 15th April 1942. The headquarters and four squadrons -- 370th, 371st, 372nd, and 424th -- were placed under the command of Lt. Colonel Wm. A. Matheny. A month later the Group moved to Ephrata on the desert where personnel arrived from Jefferson Barracks, Geiger Field, and Sheppard Field. Starting from scratch with an emergency concrete strip for airliners, 200 feet by 5000 feet, two or three New Zealand type huts, and a few tents, the men built their own camp. After a short period training B-17 crews, the unit started first phase transition with one B-24 for each squadron. As a result of terrific dust conditions which quickly ruined engines, maintenance crews set a record of 24 engine changes in 21 days. When camouflaged "Pink Elephant" Liberators destined for Kiska as the nucleus of the Aleutian Air Force arrived, the group trained those crews and worked on the ships for two weeks. During July and August, 21 hours in the air out of 24 hours was the goal for all operational B-24's.

### Final Training

In the latter part of September the whole Group moved to Sioux City, Iowa, for second phase training. Airplanes were "really beat up". Long range navigation was stressed -- round trip flights to Brownsville, Texas, to Florida, and to the bombing range, 320 miles away. At Sioux City the Group had its first accident when ice forming on Pilot Sanny's plane caused him to make a belly landing in a field. Five men rode the plane down and two were killed when the top turret caved in -- a warning of future cave-ins of top turrets.

### The 307th Moves

Third phase training, to take place in New Orleans, was cancelled when orders for overseas shipment were received. The squadrons received new B-24's on October 20th and flew to Hamilton Field while the ground echelons moved to Fort McDowell on Angel Island. Here equipment was transferred from the train directly to the S.S. Torrens, a Norwegian banana boat. Within a week after the Group had left Sioux City, the planes were at Hickam Field, T.H., and the ground echelons were on the high seas. At Oahu, the Group replaced the 90th Bombardment Group. The 370th Squadron moved to Kipapa Field, the 371st went to Wheeler Field, the 372nd was assigned to Kahuhu Air Base, and the 424th set up at Mokeleia. Strenuous training programs were followed to prepare the combat crews for their first clash with the enemy.



### Wake Island Raid

On December 21, 1942, 26 B-24 airplanes of the Group, lead by Colonel Matheny, took off for Midway, from where they were to bomb Wake Island. The planes left Midway at 4:30 in the afternoon of the 23rd and headed for the target 1050 miles away. Each plane carried six 500-pound demolition and incendiary bombs and two bomb bay tanks. The weather was so overcast that it was impossible to see from one end of the runway to the other, but all 26 planes scheduled took off in 17 minutes and assembled enroute to the target. Arriving at the target one minute after midnight, the formation broke up into flights of three, came in at 8,000 feet, and came down to 4,000 feet to bomb. The attack came as a complete surprise to the Japs, and the first few pilots received no anti-aircraft fire.

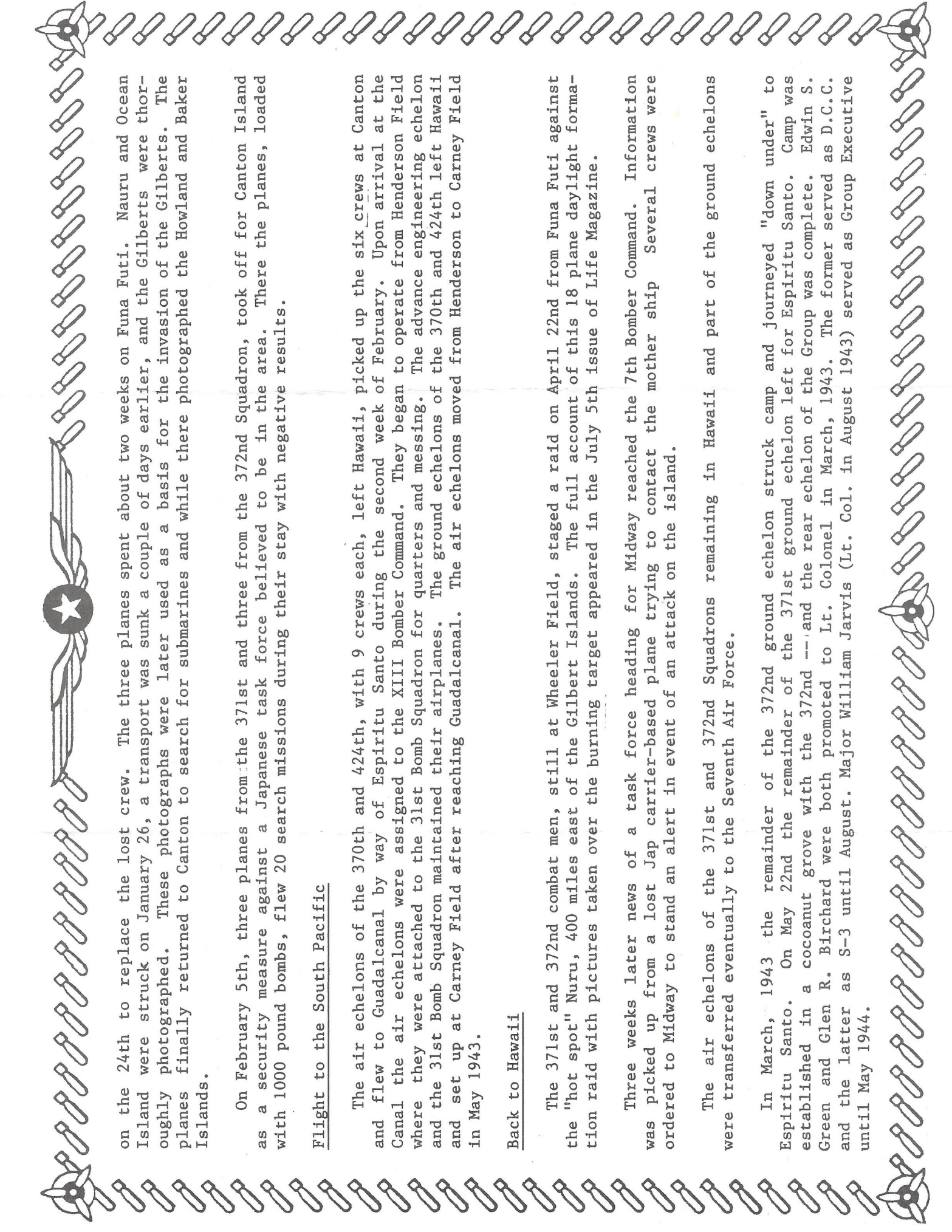
The targets were oil and gasoline dumps, and supply and personnel areas. A mixed bomb load is not conducive to precision pattern bombing, but it has terrific destructive potential. In this case the pattern was perfect, and the exploding demolition and fire bombs wrought such great damage that the first planes over the target destroyed their own targets and those of the following planes. Rear ships had to look for other suitable objectives. One of the many bombs to hit the runway landed almost directly on a Jap fighter which was taking off. Our fliers left the target blazing furiously and the Japs surprised and bewildered. Only one of the planes was hit by anti-aircraft fire. On the return to Midway, the island was entirely closed in with clouds and could be located only by radar. Again skillful planning counted and the formation landed without a single accident.

Thus the Japs received an Anniversary present on December 23, 1942. It was on that day a year before, that the last word had been received from the valiant defenders of Wake. This 2100 mile longest overwater formation flight in history was concluded successfully -- a tribute to the leaders who planned the raid, and the superior ability of the men who participated in it. The Group left Midway at twilight on the 23rd, bombed Wake on Christmas Day, and arrived back in Oahu on Christmas Eve. Figure it out for yourself -- with the aid of the international date line! Admiral Nimitz and Lt. General Emmons personally presented Silver Stars, Distinguished Flying Crosses, or Air Medals to the participants of this mission.

This second mission against Wake Island on January twelfth was a daylight bombing strike lead by Colonel Matheny. On this strike the island was thoroughly photographed.

A week later, three planes lead by Colonel Glen R. Birchard took off for Canton and Funa Futi on an armed reconnaissance patrol. The formation ran into bad weather and only Colonel Birchard got through, arriving at Funa Futi on January 20. Major Smith arrived a couple of days later but Lt. Hitchcock's plane was lost. The crew was rescued a week later by a Navy YP boat carrying provisions. Captain Andrews and crew came down





on the 24th to replace the lost crew. The three planes spent about two weeks on Funa Futi. Nauru and Ocean Island were struck on January 26, a transport was sunk a couple of days earlier, and the Gilberts were thoroughly photographed. These photographs were later used as a basis for the invasion of the Gilberts. The planes finally returned to Canton to search for submarines and while there photographed the Howland and Baker Islands.

On February 5th, three planes from the 371st and three from the 372nd Squadron, took off for Canton Island as a security measure against a Japanese task force believed to be in the area. There the planes, loaded with 1000 pound bombs, flew 20 search missions during their stay with negative results.

#### Flight to the South Pacific

The air echelons of the 370th and 424th, with 9 crews each, left Hawaii, picked up the six crews at Canton and flew to Guadalcanal by way of Espiritu Santo during the second week of February. Upon arrival at the Canal the air echelons were assigned to the XIII Bomber Command. They began to operate from Henderson Field where they were attached to the 31st Bomb Squadron for quarters and messing. The advance engineering echelon and the 31st Bomb Squadron maintained their airplanes. The ground echelons of the 370th and 424th left Hawaii and set up at Carney Field after reaching Guadalcanal. The air echelons moved from Henderson to Carney Field in May 1943.

#### Back to Hawaii

The 371st and 372nd combat men, still at Wheeler Field, staged a raid on April 22nd from Funa Futi against the "hot spot" Nuru, 400 miles east of the Gilbert Islands. The full account of this 18 plane daylight formation raid with pictures taken over the burning target appeared in the July 5th issue of Life Magazine.

Three weeks later news of a task force heading for Midway reached the 7th Bomber Command. Information was picked up from a lost Jap carrier-based plane trying to contact the mother ship. Several crews were ordered to Midway to stand an alert in event of an attack on the island.

The air echelons of the 371st and 372nd Squadrons remaining in Hawaii and part of the ground echelons were transferred eventually to the Seventh Air Force.

In March, 1943 the remainder of the 372nd ground echelon struck camp and journeyed "down under" to Espiritu Santo. On May 22nd the remainder of the 371st ground echelon left for Espiritu Santo. Camp was established in a cocoanut grove with the 372nd --- and the rear echelon of the Group was complete. Edwin S. Green and Glen R. Birchard were both promoted to Lt. Colonel in March, 1943. The former served as D.C.C. and the latter as S-3 until August. Major William Jarvis (Lt. Col. in August 1943) served as Group Executive until May 1944.



# 8 Airmen Shot Down at Truk Sail Raft for 18 Hungry Days

BY ARTHUR VEYSEY.

[Chicago Tribune Press Service.]

WITH THE 13TH AIR FORCE.

July 1 - Eight airmen from the crew of a Liberator shot down June 12 at the entrance to Truk harbor today were found sailing toward New Guinea, still confident they would reach home safely after 18 almost foodless days in two rafts. Two men apparently were thrown from the plane and drowned when the pilot, Lt. Jack Wagner, Los Angeles, Cal., set the blasted ship down on the water.

All eight, picked up by a navy Catalina flying boat, were in excellent condition except for losing up to eight inches of waistline. Besides the pilot they are Lt. Thomas Bonney, St. Albans, N.Y., navigator, Lt. Charles Goerke, Indianapolis, Ind., bombardier, Sgt. Harold Dotterer, Emlenton, Pa., Sgt. Jerry Rokos, Baltimore, Md., Sgt. Merle Musey, Hagerstown, Md., Sgt. Charles Whitmore Jr., San Diego, Cal., and Sgt. Leonard Davis, Hot Springs, S.D.

"We dropped our bombs on Dublon town and I had just told the co-pilot that it looked as if we were going to get away O.K. - it was our first night mission - when we got caught in the lights and the Japs began throwing everything at us," said Wagner.

## Shoulder Dislocated

"The flak was bursting all around the ship and chopping big holes. Then our left motor went out. We still thought we could make it and were cutting past Eten Island when more flak shot out our right inboard engine."

"There was nothing to do but set her down. We skipped four times and then the nose went under. Water poured into the flight deck. I tried to undo the strap I had fastened around my chest but found my right shoulder was dislocated. The whole cabin was flooded and I thought the jig was up, but tried once more to undo the strap with my left hand and it slipped free. I reached for the co-pilot but he was gone, so I bobbed to the surface."

"Dotterer came up along side and we pulled the life raft doors, but they were stuck, so we had to dive under and break them open."

## Tie Rafts Together.

"All but Sgt. Dotterer and I had gone into the rear of the ship and lay down, clasping one another. They crawled out thru the waist ports. Davis and Whitmore could not get their life vests inflated, but found an oxygen bottle and hung over it until the rafts were ready."

"I stood on the wing of the sinking ship and called roll. Everybody answered but the co-pilot and the assistant engineer. Nobody ever saw them, so we figured they must have been thrown out in the crash."

"We tied the two rafts together, four men in each, and hoisted the sails. We wanted to get there while the going was good, since we were in full sight of Truk."

"When morning came we were over the horizon, but at 9 a.m. a Jap bomber came directly overhead at 200 feet. We tried to hide our rafts under the sails - one side is blue and the Jap didn't see us. For days they came over but never did see us. Of course everyday we saw our own planes going over too, but they were way high and didn't see us."

## Live on Candy.

"We took stock of our supplies. There were 15 packages of candy, eight sticks of gum, four small cans of water, four boxes of K rations - one box is supposed to be one meal for one man - and a first aid kit. We decided to save the food, and started out with each having two pieces of candy and a sip of water for each meal."

"About the fourth day we were a mess. We had all been badly bruised, and some had been cut. Musey had a broken wrist--it's all healed now. That was our worst day."

"By the fifth day we were all feeling better and our sores were healing, but then the storms began. For three days we tossed on waves that must have been 30 feet high. But nobody got sick. By that time we didn't have anything in our stomachs to get sick on."

"At the end of the first week we began eating the K rations. Each box had an inch high tin of cheese,

four crackers, and a fig bar. Our ration was one piece of candy per man for one day, half a cracker covered with cheese the next day and fast the third day, before beginning the menu all over again. We tried to catch fish but didn't have any luck, even tho the sharks which were with us always kept schools of small fish nearby."

## Rescue Passes Them Up

"It rained a lot and we always had enough water. We cut our Mae Wests open and used them as reservoirs."

"On the 14th day we saw a Catalina fly past. We Waved and shouted and just about climbed up to her, but she went on past. Again on the 15th day and on the 16th day. On the 16th day we ate our last food. But that night a school of six inch fish came right up to the raft, and we scooped them in. A foot long tuna jumped right into the boat."

"We put a fishhead on a hook and got a two foot shark. So for breakfast we ate the tuna - all of it - and cut up the small fish and shark to dry. We had enough for days then and felt pretty good."

## Catalina Spots Them.

"On the 18th day we saw another Catalina and just sat and watched it, holding our breaths. Would this one go by too? But just overhead it dipped its wing, and we knew they had seen us."

"They circled and landed and came up to us. 'How does she look, guys?' I asked and one of the guys said 'I'm gladder to see that Cat than I'd be to see Alice Faye walking across the water.'"

"As the Cat drew near, a crew member climbed onto the wing. 'They're Japs,' he shouted, and the gunner swung the waist gun into position. Wagner loosed a volley of expletives which he modestly says would curl paint, and the sailor on the wing amended, 'No, they're ours, all right.'"

## Sailed 500 Miles.

Lt. (j.g.) Karl Roses, Parsons, Kas., and Ensign Richard Bugbee, Carlton, Minn., made cocoa for the hungry airmen.

"They told us we had sailed 500 miles," said Wagner, "which isn't bad for a raft."

Maj. Gen. St. Clair Streett, commander of the 13th Air Force, was at the dock to welcome the men. "I guess there were nine in your rafts," he told Wagner.

"No, Sir, only eight. We lost two," Wagner said.

"I was thinking of the Man from Galilee."

"Oh, yes, sir amended Wagner, He was there too."



## LETTERS FROM THE MEMBERSHIP

Periodically a member of the 307th sends me a story I am able to use in the newsletter. These stories and the letters from you men are greatly appreciated. Were it not for you, putting together a newsletter would be much more difficult. My thanks to each of you for your contributions.

Cena

\* \* \* \* \*

Letter from Albert L. Gill (Oct. 1989)

### AN UNUSUAL MISSION

"The date was Dec. 10, 1944, location Island of Morotai in the South Pacific and the base of the 13th Air Force. Our B-24 crew, Garfield Crawford, Pilot; Robert Rowland, Co-Pilot; Bob Edger, Bombardier; Albert Gill, Navigator, and Sgts Edward Pencek, Jesse Sellers, Claude White, Lee Kittridge, Robert Schimmel and Carson Lucas of the 307th BG, 424th Sq. were to fly with another crew on a two ship strike to Miri Town on the west coast of Borneo, in the Sarawak region of Malaysia and near the Sultanate of Brunei. The other crew consisted of a Colonel and a Major from another squadron. The flight was 1700 miles over water and enemy territory and was 13 hours in duration.

We also had an eleventh man, a photographer. The ground personnel did not rotate as the flying crews, so this individual decided to check out as a photographer so he could fly missions and secure points towards going home. This mission with us was his first combat mission.

This, as the case of all our missions, was individual planes to assembly point, form up and onto the target. We took off early a.m., before dawn, with the Colonel and Major first. The take off from Morotai was to the southwest. There is a bay 30 miles across and the islands of the Halmahera Group are on the other side. This Group was held by the Japanese

and are mountainous. The first plane flew from take off straight across the bay and hit a mountain. We followed their take off and turned northwest over the bay to avoid the Halmahera Islands mountains and continued on to the assembly point, located on the east coast of Borneo, not knowing the other plane had crashed. We arrived at the assembly point and circled waiting on the other plane to arrive. After waiting as long as we could we left for the target.

The mission called for the attack to be at 200 feet, with delayed action bombs. We made a bombing run on an oil storage tank and warehouse, exploding the tank and firing the building. A straf-

the tank and firing the building. A strafing pass was then made on a second fuel storage tank, which blew up in a geyser of flames and smoke, the aircraft was badly damaged by this blast and was holed in approximately forty places by flying metal fragments. We made another pass on a third oil storage tank and destroyed it.

The photographer was asked if he had gotten any pictures and he said no, said his camera would not work at this low altitude, so the pilot pulled up another 500 feet and made an attack on a coastal vessel at a small pier, using our last bombs. Hits were scored on the pier and portside of the vessel, timber and wood splinters rising to the altitude of the aircraft.

With a big hole showing in the right wing and not knowing if we were losing gas the pilot headed for home. When we arrived at Morotai we discovered the photographer had never taken off the lens cap to his camera, so no pictures were taken. He also turned in his camera and decided to finish the war on the ground. We found a piece of metal lodged in the nacelle of one engine, about the size of 8" x 10" with the name Shell stamped on it.



Our crew received a commendation for the mission, the pilot the DFC and the rest of the crew the Air Medal."

Albert L. Gill

\*\*\*\*\*

The following are excerpts from a number of letters we have received from the membership over the last year. Just a bit of trivia as Rock Daigle says.

"In February the wife and I drove to Florida to visit. My bombardier, Gene Geyer lives in Knox, IN, and has relatives in Florida. We met in Kissimmee, where we went through the restored B-24. It was really nostalgic. It even had bombs in the bomb-bay (where else would they be). It had all the guns (not operable) and all the regular equipment for combat. It was quite a sight. My wife's comment was: "You, Rock, could have described this plane to me the rest of your life and I would never have visualized it as this." she did not realize there was so little space available and that the interior walls were not finished like an airliner would be.

For those who went through Davis Monthan in Tuscon, AZ, a little trivia: My bombardier, Gene Geyer is married to the daughter of the commanding general at that base. They met when we started our B-24 training. She was a girl of 16 and he was in his mid 20's. We all kidded him about robbing the cradle. No special event occurred at that time, but they were married when Geyer returned from overseas. Her father became a Major General in the 20th flying B-29's.

After reading the 307th news I was reminded of the New Years eve of 1943 on Guadalcanal. It was much more dangerous than combat. All the looneys with their pistols and carbines shooting the New Year in. It got pretty hairy for a while and a lot of tents leaked after that!"

Rock

\*\*\*\*\*

\*\*\*\*\*

Letter to Dave Owens from Ralph Lawrence that is rich in lore of that young American in training for his WWII job that he did so well and the family support they enjoyed.

"I think Vidmar is coming to the reunion. Vaughn, Foti and I have all been in contact with him. Hopefully he will bring his wife, Jean, whom none of us have ever seen. All the crew met my wife, Doris, before we left for overseas. I was the only one married at that time.

My wife, Billotti's wife, Angie, and Billotti's co-pilot's wife, Amy all jumped on freight trains, boxcars and cabooses, etc., to follow us around in phase training in Tuscon, Topeka, Pueblo, etc. As you remember, all the troop movements were secret then but somehow the women would find out (from the clerks at the grocery store I think) where we were going and they'd hop a freight train or whatever and get there a day or two after we did. They would rent a room somewhere and live on candy bars and soda pop!!!

I can't remember Billotti's co-pilots last name. His wife called him "OOCH" for a nickname. They were both short people and came from somewhere in Idaho.

As you know Billotti went on to a different squadron and was shot down on a Borneo or Halmahera mission, I believe Balikpapan - the disastrous one. -- and so the story goes."

Ralph,

\*\*\*\*\*

This is one of those special letters I receive when "out of the blue" we get a new 307th member.

"Dear Mrs. Marsh,

There is no way to explain how excited I was this morning when I got the mail and saw this big bulky envelope with the 307th B.G. return address on it.



I have been waiting for 45 years for some information about the 307th and hoping that we had some organization like other groups. Thank God for you and the other caring people who started this. Tonight I'm going to call Fred Goff and thank him for signing me up as a member!

About 4 years ago I had an operation on my leg and I couldn't get around too well for a couple of weeks. I went to our local library and found a book "General Kenney Reports." This was the General Kenney, Commanding General of the Far Eastern Air Forces, 5th, 7th, and 13th. The book was written in 1949, published by Deull, Sloan and Pearce and is no longer in print. This is by far one of the best books I've read about the air war in the Pacific, especially if you were in the 5th or 13th Air Force. I did manage to get a copy of this.

I was only with the 307th B.G., 372nd Sq from Jan. 1945 to Aug. 45. Flew 38 missions from Morotai mostly. Also the Philippines, Borneo and the Celebes. I remember we covered the re-invasion of Corregidor, the 13:30 mission to Tabanio, Borneo, and the Manado Town Bridge that our bombardier, Al Yelland got both spans.

I still hear from Fred Goff, our tail gunner and Al Yelland, bombardier. I know two are deceased, Andy Walker, engineer, and Manfield Pressy, armour gunner. I have a picture of our crew and will have a copy made and sent to you. I have a copy of my log (missions, date, hours, and targets), plus some combat photos of the missions our crew flew. One is especially good, taken off the coast of Balikpapan, Borneo. This picture was in either Time or Newsweek Magazine and I have a copy of that also.

Our crew was: Pilot, George Booker; co-pilot, Steven Fortunato; navigator, William Springer; bombardier, Al Yelland; engineer, Andy Walker; radio operator, Ed Sheldon; armour gunner, Manfield Pressy; top gunner, Bill Ward; tail gunner, Fred Goff; and nose gunner, Jack Sloan. After 17 missions (I think) Steven

Fortunato became our pilot and I don't believe we had a regular co-pilot. Booker became Operations Officer.

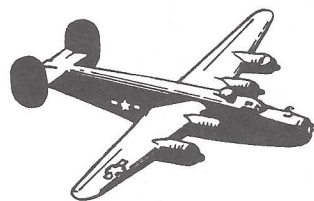
I totally agree that the ground crews deserve all the credit in the world for making is possible for getting the planes ready and off the ground and safely back to base. They are unsung heroes.

I will advise Al Yelland about the 307th and try to contact other members of our crew.

Thank you so very much, Cena.

Jack Sloan"

\*\*\*\*\*



#### TAPS - THE LAST FLIGHT

The years seem to be taking their toll in the deaths of 307th Members. Each newsletter finds another addition to the list.

Christopher Green - Feb. 9, 1990  
D. Ivan Johannes - April 21, 1990  
Harry P. John - May 19, 1990  
Walter Knuchi - Sept. 28, 1989

The Membership of the 307th wish to extend their sincere sympathy to the members of the above families.

\*\*\*\*\*

We were very saddened when Pat Rickard called several weeks ago to tell us he had lost Pauline in May. Heartfelt and sincere sympathy goes out to Pat from all the 307th as well as from Walt and I.

\*\*\*\*\*





## LAS VEGAS SITE CHAIRMEN REPORT

We want to thank the many Men of the 307th who have written and expressed their thanks for the great time they had in Las Vegas. These letters have been greatly appreciated by your site chairmen.

The raffle and the sale of jackets, hats, pins, belt buckles, etc. added a nice sum to our Memorial Fund. The over 400 attending the reunion contributed greatly to its success.

Dan Cauffiel  
John Woods

\* \* \* \* \*

## 1990-1992 307th BOARD MEMBERS

At the General Meeting of the Membership the following individuals were installed as your Officers.

Dave Owens - President  
Sid Kahn - Vice-President  
Cena Marsh - Secretary/Treasurer  
Jim Kendall - Historian  
Harry Sterkel - Historian  
John Reeves - Historian

\* \* \* \* \*

## 1992 -1994 REUNION SITES

The 1992 50th Anniversary and Memorial Reunion is to be held in Dayton, Ohio. The Memorial to the 307th Bomb Group will be installed and dedicated at the Air Force Museum at that time.

The 1994 Reunion will be held in St. Louis, MO. The original plan of holding the 1994 reunion in Boston was cancelled after reviewing the excessive costs of holding a reunion there.

\* \* \* \* \*

...

Two newspaper editors had been feuding for years and one of them died. The other saw an opportunity for final revenge. He printed the obituary under "Public Improvements."

...

## MEMBERSHIP DUES

At the General Meeting a motion was made to increase the Membership Dues to \$20.00 per year to cover the increased costs of printing and mailing the newsletters and reunion book. This increase was approved by the membership at the General Meeting and the change will go in effect on January 1, 1990.

\* \* \* \* \*

## Trivia for the Military

### WHY I WANT TO BE A PILOT WHEN I GROW UP

By Tommy Tyler, 5th Grade,  
Jefferson School, Beaufort, S.C.

When I grow up I want to be a pilot because it's a fun job and easy to do. That's why there are so many pilots flying around these days. Pilots don't need much school; they just have to learn to read numbers so they can read their instruments. I guess they should be able to read road maps too, so they can find their way if they get lost.

Pilots should be brave so they won't get scared if it's foggy and they can't see, or if a wing or motor falls off they should stay calm so they'll know what to do. Pilots have to have good eyes to see through the clouds, and they can't be afraid of thunder or lightning because they are so much closer to them than we are.

The salary of pilots is another thing I like. They make more money than they know what to do with.

I hope I don't get air-sick because I get car-sick and if I get air-sick I couldn't be a pilot and then I would have to go to work.

Submitted by Lt. Col Jim Hoagland

\* \* \* \* \*



## 370th BOMB SQDN. REUNION NOTICE

The 370th Bomb Squadron is holding their 9th reunion October 25 through October 28th at Norfolk, Virginia.

Any member of the 370th wanting more information on this reunion please contact Ira Anderson, 1800 Sybil Lane, Tyler, Texas 75703 (214) 561-2832.

\*\*\*\*\*

Harry Coggins sent me the following article thinking it might be of interest to some of our members. As he stated in his letter, "Many of the 307th trained, picked up crews, etc. at this airfield in 1943-45."

## 'Jinxed' air base draws survivors Tonopah facility yields artifacts

TONOPAH, Nev. — World War II bomber crews who survived the Tonopah Army Air Field said it was jinxed.

They mourned the deaths of their comrades who died in crashes on the bleak desert in weather that was either searing hot or freezing cold.

They cursed the remoteness of Tonopah, the treeless hills, the miles and leagues of nothing but dry alkali flats interspersed with barren gravel and sparse sagebrush.

They even sang a song that declared, in part, "It's cold and bare, it's a god-forsaken land. / Just why it's there I will never understand."

Now Allen Metscher, after four years of intense study on the subject, feels the tens of thousands of airmen who passed through Tonopah on their way to combat might have had a point.

"There sure were a lot of them died here, and the more you get into the stories of the men, the more you get to see the tragedy in some of these stories," said Metscher the other day.

Metscher, 43, a dark, intense Tonopah native who works for the state highway department and devotes his

free time to furthering the estate of the town's Central Nevada Museum, has in recent years concentrated most of his historical interest on the World War II facility.

He has pored through newspapers and official records to find the names of 110 known dead and to pinpoint the sites of 26 known fatal crashes involving the air field. He has marked 12 sites with steel monuments he made himself and has five more ready to be placed.

And from the crash sites he and fellow museum volunteers have retrieved an almost unbelievable array of artifacts, many of which are on display at the museum.

There is everything from dog tags of crash victims to engines, bombs, machine guns, gauges, navigation equipment, wheels, propellers, radios and scraps of clothing.

"We even found a lot of body parts," he said. "We just reburied them along with most of the airplanes when we were through with the excavations. What was amazing to us was that the stuff was still there after all these years."

Metscher said he and fellow local history buffs had been relatively uninterested in the base and its history until 1986, when Bob Sweet came to town.

Sweet, now an Air Force colonel, was born at Tonopah's Nye County Hospital July 29, 1944. Exactly three weeks later, his father, a decorated combat pilot who was stationed at the base as an instructor, was killed in a crash. Sweet wanted to see the crash site.



"That started it," said Metscher. "We found out that there were two fatal crashes on the day his father was killed, and we did find one of the sites. But his father's plane crashed where the test site is now — restricted area where they fly the Stealth — so we couldn't get to it."

Adding credence to the jinx stories, he said, are freak occurrences, other than crashes, such as the two gunners who were found dead of suffocation in their turrets after their plane returned from a high-altitude training flight. Their oxygen had somehow been shut off.

Another time, a 50-caliber machine gun ran away inside a plane on the ground, killing three. "The accident report said there was blood flowing in streams from the plane, it was so bad," Metscher said.

Construction of the base was begun in 1940 as World War II loomed. With its bombing and gunnery ranges, it sprawled across 5,000 square miles — more than 3 million acres.

In July 1942 it opened as a base to train pilots in the Bell P-39 Aircobra fighter. From the beginning it was plagued with crashes, and when officials decided to replace the fighters with B-24 Liberator bombers, things did not improve.

Nevertheless, training continued full tilt until on Aug. 6 and 9, 1945, Army fliers dropped atomic bombs on Japan, bringing World War II to a close. Two weeks later, Tonopah Army Air Field was made inactive. Today, part of it is Tonopah's civilian airport, but little else remains except for what has been saved by Metscher and his fellow museum workers.

But come Memorial Day weekend, the people of Tonopah will mark the base's 50th anniversary with festivities at which veterans of the base will be honored. Anyone ever stationed at Tonopah is invited, Metscher said.

As he spoke, a strangely whirling jet aircraft could be heard.

"Look! The Stealth!" said Metscher, pointing to something that looked like a black arrowhead moving quickly out of sight.

"You know, that Stealth is something, but if it was parked out here and one of these B-24s was next to it, I'd walk right past the Stealth to see the Liberator."

"These planes, the guys that flew them, this is stuff I'll never get tired of."

Dave Owens - President  
Sid Kahn - Vice President  
Cena Marsh - Secretary/Treasurer  
Jim Kendall - Historian  
Harry Sterkel - Historian  
John Reeves - Historian