

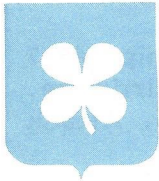


307th BOMBARDMENT GROUP (HV) ASSOCIATION

"THE LONG RANGERS"

Newsletter 94-2

September 5, 1994



QUOTES OF NOTE:



"The real leader has no need to lead -- he is content to point the way."

- Henry Miller

"He who can take advice is sometimes superior to him who can give it."

- Von Knebel



"Bein' poor is a problem, but bein' rich ain't the answer."

- C. Grand

"Don't find fault; find a remedy."

- Henry Ford



"There is a wonderful, mystical law of nature that the three things we crave most in life - happiness, freedom, and peace of mind - are always attained by giving them to someone else."

- Anonymous



"Men defend nothing more violently than the pretenses they live by."

- Alan Drury

"Time is the coin of your life. It is the only coin you have, and only you can determine how it will be spent. Be careful lest you let other people spend it for you."

- Carl Sandburg



"Let us endeavor to live that, when we come to die, even the undertaker will be sorry."

- Mark Twain

NOTES FROM THE PRESIDENT

The reunion in St. Louis was great. Each one seems to be better than the one before. Many thanks to Ellie and Bill Gerhardt and Sara and Bob Jones. If you missed it, you missed a good time. Mixed in with all the good times there was the sad remembrance of friends and cohorts who are no longer with us, especially our late President, Ken Meyers.

Those of you who would like to host the reunion in 1998, please contact Florian Lanning, chairman of the site selection committee. Send him information about the location and cost. He and his committee members will make their recommendation for the 1998 site at the 1996 meeting. Florian's address is:

Florian Lanning
6617 Hillgrove Dr.
San Diego, CA 92120-4819
(619) 698-4070

I have been contacted by the President of the 13th Air Force Association about having one big meeting of all units of the 13th in 1996. I hope to meet with him at the 13th Air Force Reunion in the latter part of September. I shall give you the details in the next Newsletter and will request your thoughts.

At the request of some, here is the piece about poor communications that I read at the Membership Meeting. I hope you get as big a laugh as I do each time I read it.

Good health to all and start planning to be in San Diego in 1996.

"A COLONEL ISSUED THE FOLLOWING
DIRECTIVE TO HIS EXECUTIVE OFFICERS:

"Tomorrow evening at approximately 2000 hours Halley's Comet will be visible in this area, an event which occurs only once every 75 years. Have the men fall out in the battalion area in fatigues, and I will explain this rare phenomenon to them. In case of rain, we will not be able to see anything, so assemble the men in the theater and I will show them films on it."

EXECUTIVE OFFICER TO COMPANY COM-
MANDER:

"By order of the Colonel, tomorrow at 2000 hours, Halley's Comet will appear over the battalion area. If it rains, fall the men out in fatigues, then march to the theater where the rare phenomenon will take place, something which occurs only once every 75 years."

COMPANY COMMANDER TO LIEUTENANT:

"By order of the Colonel in fatigues at 2000 hours tomorrow evening, the phenomenal Halley's Comet will appear in the theater. In case of rain, in the battalion area, the Colonel will give another order, something which occurs once every 75 years."

LIEUTENANT TO SERGEANT:

"Tomorrow at 2000 hours, the Colonel will appear in the theater with Halley's Comet, something which happens every 75 years if it rains, the colonel will order the comet into the batallion area."

SERGEANT TO SQUAD:

"When it rains tomorrow at 2000 hours, the phenomenal 75 year old General Halley, accompanied by the Colonel, will drive his comet through the battalion area theater in fatigues."

Sam Britt
President

* * * * *

DIARY OF LT. VERNON A. MRAK

Continued from 94-1 Newsletter

10 August 1945 - Friday - Ship 334
Called out at 1400 to make a compass swing. Steve made T.O. I made landing - Total time 230.

13 August 1945 - Monday - Ship #617
24L. Target - Ceram, Haro Airdrome.
Attack 1030 - 9/500 G.P. 2700 Gals. Attack Alt. 16,000 feet.

THE ABOVE HAS BEEN CANCELLED!

365 Homing KS, 31Q RO K.S. - Clark
Field - 475 ft. Alt., Nielson Field - #1
West Runway - #2 East Runway. (Radio
approach signals and directions.

Instead of being awakened at 5:30 to bomb down at Ceram, we were awakened at 0230 and told that we were headed for Okinawa and Japan. Peace was officially declared this morning so now we are trying to rush our occupational ground forces into Japan proper. Our job is to help ferry the ground troops from Clark Field, P.I., to Okinawa then over the rest of way. Took off at 0500. 0704 Just heard news from the States, through Manila Radio. The people back home know nothing yet of the Japanese surrender.

0840 - Over the Southwest tip of Mindanao. We are going to skirt along the Western edge of P.I. all the way to Clark Field to avoid the high mountain peak. (If I remember correctly, we were a little bit surprised at the height of the peak in North Central Mindanao. Our charts were pre-war Australian maps, and many of the peaks were in error on them.) So far weather has been good at our altitude. Below us there has been moderate activity. We have been dodging around thunderheads, some with tops to about 22-25,000 ft. (At 8:30 I took a nap) Entered by Stephen Mattick. (Signed) Total time 630. PN 30, CPN 30, P 245, CP 245.

SAME AFTERNOON - YONTANG - Near
Naha (Okinawa) Tower Drake - 75 feet,
Two runways NE - SW 7000, Maj. Thomas,
Oper, Rep. 54 Air TRA - 3 men - nose,
8 - Flight deck, 5-6 Bomb Walk (Bomb
bay catwalk) - rest on Radio Deck. Take-
-2-off time 1500. We took off with 15 fully-

equipped Airborne Infantrymen. They are to be the first troupes to land on Japan. We are to take them as far as Yontang Airdrome in Okinawa, and perhaps may take them on to Japan. (On this flight were Lt. Mattick, Lt. Mrak, Lt. Holston, Sgt. Johannes, Radio operator, and Sgt. Morgan, Engineer.) 646, 855, 334. Landed at Okinawa at 2200. Total flight time from Manila (Clark Field) 700 hours. PN 100, CPN 100, P 230, CP 230.

14 August 1945 - Tuesday Morning. It was really a job to get in here last night. When we were coming in to Okinawa, they were having their first air raid alert so we had to orbit miles from the shore guns. Then after we had been identified and were trying to find the field they had the second air raid alert and turned out all of the lights. So again we had to bat ass away from the guns. Came back in and after we were hunting for about 1/2 hour we found the field that was almost completely covered by our smoke screen. (After getting home I learned that a high-school football teammate was aboard the USS Pennsylvania that was hit by a Kamakaze plane during this air raid.)

Got permission to land from the tower, and when we were only about 300 feet above the runway on the final approach we found out that we were landing at the wrong field. Pulled up, went around and left on course to destination. (Yontang Air Drome.) When we got there then the whole damn field was still covered by a smoke screen. Went into the soup as we turned in on the base leg and were in it until the very last of final approach.

0930 - Steve and I are sitting on top of our ship trying to get the lay of the land. Due East of us about 30 miles there is a tornado cloud forming. Now it has spiraled all the way to the ground. I don't think I have ever seen so many ships in one place in my life. There must be several thousand ships at this field - including B-29, *B-32, C-54, and everything else I can name. As far as we can see in every direction there are ships. The infantry men that we brought up with us to Okinawa were very interesting, war

hardened men. They fought at Guadalcanal, New Guinea, and right on up the line. They are with the 11th Airborne Division. Their entire division of 15,000 men flew to Okinawa from Clark Field in three days. We brought the last of them.

*(This was my first good look at a B-29, and I believe it was the only time I ever saw the B-32, an over-grown B-24 with a single tail fin.)

They went in to Manila on D & I. Had very interesting stories to tell. Took off from Yontang A.D. at 1130 and are now on our way to Morotai, a 1600 mi. trip. Flying over Okinawa we saw at least a dozen or 15 airfields. Some were under construction. We were only over the Southern part of the island. There must be at least that many more fields on the other sections of the island. Took off with 3000 gases. (1 gas - 1 gal).

1515 - Radio Operator picked up broadcast from Tokyo asking for hostilities to cease. -- Surrendering --!--? We also got word from San Francisco verifying the same! I hope the hell that it is true this time. A few hours ago when I was in Okinawa I wouldn't have thought that the war was over. Last night a suicide Torpedo Plane damaged the Battleship Tennessee, at Okinawa. That to wasn't mentioned in the latest news that I heard from Honolulu. (As mentioned before, the USS PA was also damaged.)

1545 - One of the ships in our formation had to feather No. 1 engine. He began to drop behind. We cut our airspeed down to 150 MPH so that he could keep up with us. He is going to try to land at Samar.

1715 - Passing over Samar. The ship with the feathered engine is going to land at Samar Field. His radio compass is out so we are leading him in. Landed at base at 2200. Total flight time 1030. PN 130, CPN 130, P 345, CP 345.

19 August 1945 - Sunday. Ship 106. I flew first pilot and Ted flew co-pilot. Had a little contest to see who could fly a better B-1 position. Flying Group Box, our squadron was in the hole. Our flying was pretty much a tie. Total time 210, 105P, 105 CP.

22 August 1945 - Wednesday. Ship 645
Today I rode with Capt. Gentry on an
instrument check ride. My inst. card
expired in April of this year. I gave him
a good ride -- Made Inst. take-off. Total
Time 240, QD 120, CP 120.

*(COMMENTS BY W.O. HOLSTON)

"I believe that only a day or so after
the above mission I went to Clark Field
as Instructor Navigator for 13th Air Force
Headquarters. The truth is that I be-
lieve I was the only navigator, because
we flew 3-plane formations from Clark
to Okinawa ferrying troops in B-24's.
In order to carry more troops, engineers
flew as co-pilots, with the captain, an
engineer, a radio operator and me as crew
on the lead plane with only the pilot,
engineer, and radio operator on the other
two planes. We flew several missions this
way to Okinawa and Ie Shima, and each
time I would stay on Ie Shima with my
great friend, George (Wick) Wickersham,
Navigator on Cooledge's crew.

I recall only one unusual mission during
this time. We went to Ie Shima just ahead
of a pretty violent typhoon, and were
weathered in there for a day or so while
it passed. Our ship for that mission had
a faulty auto-pilot which precessed 15°
every 30 minutes. Most of the way back
was between an overcast and an under-
cast. With an occasional measurement
of drift from the waves, the best I could
do to navigate was dead reckoning with
pre-flight wind estimates. I elected to
fly a dog-leg down past the East side
of Luzon to a point East of Clark, then
turn westward on an estimated ETA. It
did not help that we had two planes on
our wings with no navigators. We were
going merrily along on our zig-zag course
when all of a sudden I spotted islands
through a hole in the clouds!

It took only a minute to determine that
the islands were those at the extreme
Northern end of Luzon -- we were about
50 miles WEST of course! From there
I did have to do a miraculous job of nav-
igating the mountain passes to Clark AFB.
When we landed the captain, a veteran
of many missions over Germany, told me

that where ever he flew from than on
I was to be his navigator! He said that
he had never seen such a piece of nav-
igation with all the handicaps we had.
On a later mission we had room to take
three nurses for a joy-ride to Okinawa
with us, then I dated one of the nurses
at a dance at Clark. She told everyone
what a fabulous navigator I was. I never
mentioned that if I had aimed at the North-
ern tip of Luzon we would have wound
up in the South China Sea! Such was
the relationship between navigators and
pilots! (I thank God every day that He
allowed me to lead such a charmed life.)

23 August 1945 - Thursday, Ship 113,
424th Sqdn. Leopard Dog 4, Collier 376,
Compton 383. Total flight time 200. We
flew Group Box composed entirely of 370th
pilots. (Our Squadron) We were graded
by the inspector who was checking on
Tactical Operation.

25 August 1945 - Saturday, Ship 334.
We made a test hop. I was flying left
seat and Capt. Washburn did all the fly-
ing from right seat. We flew up around
the island. No. 3 engine began acting
up. We feathered it and Steve landed.
It was his first left seat landing in a
couple of months. Total flight time 130
- 45-45.

29 August 1945 - Wednesday, Ship 395.
0940 - We are on our way to Manila again
today (Clark Field). This time ferrying
10 men from our squadron ground person-
nel. They are going to Clark as forward
echelon to prepare our new location for
us. We are taking Capt. Hertz, our
Squadron Operations Officer. As fate
would have it, this morning I made the
worst take-off I've ever made in a B-24.
I can imagine what the Captain thought,
and that isn't good.

We skirted the high mountain peaks in
Mindanao and went up along the West
coastline of the P.I. Total time - 600.

Same afternoon - 29 August - Wednesday.
We landed at Clark Field at 1025 and
waited around until 1425 before the ground
crew gassed us up. Coming back from
Clark we made a record run considering
the headwinds we encountered. Our
average I.A.S. was about 185 for entire

return trip. Ran into pretty bad weather one hour out of Morotai. Total time 600 with two hours of that logged as night time.

31 August 1945 - Friday, Ship 334. Test Flight again on the same ship we made the 3-engine landing in a few days ago. We flew over to Halmaheras to get a close-up view of the volcano. It was pretty well weathered in. Flight time one hour.

2 September 1945 - Sunday, Ship 293. Test hop. Bob made take-off from left seat. (Nelson?) Just as wheels were leaving runway #2 prop ran away. I tried to bring it back with toggle switch but it failed, so had to bring prop under control with feathering button. Oil pressure dropped off to 40 ps/in. Engine was operating very erratically but was not necessary to feather. Total time 1.00 hour.

3 September 1945 - Monday. Finally we are on our way to our new home. A ship (B-24) from the 5th Group came down to Morotai to pick us up. T.O. time was 0940. A few minutes after take-off we ran into weather and from the looks of things now we will be in soup all the way to Clark. This morning a ship from the 424th Sqdn. exploded on T.O. Everybody aboard was killed.

4 September 1945 - Tuesday. B-25 #349 Today Billy, Fred & I went up for two hours in a B-25. Billy checked me out as a B-25 pilot. Showed us the combat tactics of low level attacks. We were indicating as high as 350 about 20 feet off the ground. It was really fun to buzz again. He made passes at Flippo farmers, came so close they had to fall flat on their faces to keep from getting hit by props.

Bill is leaving tomorrow for Iwo Ishima (Ie Shima) Total time 200 QD. On the B-25 T.O. 44½ - 2600 150, Climb 40 - 2400 - 165. Normal 31, 200 - 30, 1700. Critical I.A.S. 150. Final 150 2100 Full Flaps. Landing Speed 110. Emergency Single Engine - Cut both throttles, then apply power smoothly.

7 September 1945 - Friday. We have had a lot of bad luck in the group in the past week. Lost 4 ships in 3 days and yesterday lost another. 3 ships were lost at Morotai and the other two at Palawan.

Of the ships lost at Morotai, one blew up on takeoff, one hit a mountain just north of field during very bad weather and 3rd one called in when he was 20 min. out from field & was never heard from again. At Palawan, one ship cracked up on takeoff and burned, the other cracked up on landing. 370th lost one of the five ships lost. None of the crew were killed, but most are critically burned. I think that they are being taken back to the States for better medical care.

(I recall that speculation was that replacement ground crews were largely responsible because most of our ground crews had been over a long time and were rotated home as soon as possible.)

8 September 1945 - Saturday, Ship 440. 3100 Gals. Search mission to Hong Kong - Playmate 36. Will orbit from 12-1330, position report every two hours. If in trouble, every 30 min. ETA 3 hrs. from base. Varmint Able 5, 365 Range H cone 8000 - 310 Homing, 5 min. 4500. (This is note concerning the radio beacon and field location in relation thereto.)

Even Alt. out. Odd alt. back - 160 indicated. Borax Tower. Actual T.O. 0350. 0600 Today we're going on a patrol mission covering the coast from Hong Kong south to a point south of Tunghoa Island. Purpose of mission is to see if Japs are trying to pull any sneak plays on us from behind. Three days ago when one of our ships was up in this area it spotted an SOS drawn out on the ground in what seemed to be a P.W. camp. When they went down to investigate they could see white men waving at them, so they dropped medical supplies and rations to the men on the ground.

When they tried to reach their bundles, Jap guards kept them away with bayonets, and began firing on the aircraft. People back home think the war is over! It isn't over as far as I'm concerned until they stop shooting at us.

1125 - Passing over Hong Kong. I went over the city four times to get pictures of P.W. camp and British warships that moved into the harbor a few days ago.

Really had a lot of fun today. Came over 300 miles up the coast and were never over 1000 ft. (Yes, I remember! In a B-24) Most of the time we were flying at indicated 500 ft., and below. Chinese coolies would come running out of their huts as we passed over. Today Byron Butler is flying as my co-pilot. I'm flying a bastard crew composed of men from four different crews.

The most picturesque town that we passed over today was Macao which is about 100 miles west of Hong Kong. I think I got some very good pictures of it. Trip back was uneventful. Total time 1130. PN 130, GPN 130, P 415, CP 415.

11 September 1945 - Tuesday, Ship 334. Mission - Morotai - T.O. Time 0515. I am going to make shuttle run to Morotai to pick up men and equipment of the rear echelon of the 370th. Second First Pilot mission without Steve.

0635 - It is getting daylight. This morn when we were awakened we were still having a mean rainstorm that started yesterday morning. Field was closed all night with C & V 0 - 0. We had to wait a while until the field was opened. Made good T.O. and so far flight is uneventful. Bill came over to see me again last night. (I was still living in a barracks and the poor devils were in the mud in a tent!) Landed 1050 - Total Time 535.

Same afternoon. Took off from Morotai at 1330. I have with me two crews of the 370th that were left behind when we went to Clark. Joe and his monkey are aboard. (Joe was co-pilot of a replacement crew that moved in and lived with us.)

1630 - Weather is closing in pretty heavy down below us. My co-pilot today is Arnaud, a first pilot from our newest crew who hasn't flown in the past four months. Total time 615 - P 305, CP 310.

17 September 1945 - Monday Ship C-47 #6107. Today we are going to Morotai via Tacloban, Leyte. I am checking out in a C-47. Made take-off and landing.

I bounced three times, each bounce seemed a little higher. (I bet this was the first rear-wheel plane he had landed in two years!) Time to Tacloban 215 QD. 1100

I took off from Joluet strip like a snake. The rest of the trip to Morotai was uneventful. Steve made landing. When we hit runway, plane swerved sharply to the left. Men sitting in a jeep by the runway got out and began running for all they were worth. Total time 400 hours QD.

18 September 1945 - Tuesday, C-47 (109) Morotai to Clark. Loaded up our ship last night with 5000 pds. of cargo plus four men and their equipment. Took off at 0820.

We were in weather for six hours today. Some of it was so violent that it felt like the ship was going to be torn to pieces. Our radio compass went out. Finally found a hole in the clouds and let down over Corregidor. We tried to come in to Clark on the deck. We were down to 150 feet and were still in the soup. After flying around for about an hour we finally found the field. I landed again in three hops. Time 300, PAI 300, CPAI 45P 45CP.

(Last entry in diary - the end)

* * * * *

FOLLOWING COMMENTS ARE THOSE OF W.O. HOLSTON, ALMOST ENTIRELY FROM MEMORY WITH ONLY A FEW DATES AVAILABLE TO CONFIRM MY COMMENTS. They are to be construed only as supplementary to Lt. Mrak's diary which I found to be scrupulously accurate in every respect.

"I arrived at Lemoore AAF Base, CA on 13 Oct. 1944. Met with Lt. Stephen Mattick, Vernon Mrak, and Robert H. Nelson on 14 Oct. 1944. We then met with Corporals John P. Morgan, Jr., Donald I. Johannes, James E. Thompson, Jr., John W. Belt, Earl McGuire, and a ball turret gunner named Tony Alotta. Jim Thompson reminded me that Alotta refused to fly after an episode whereby they were unable to retract a ball turret at Tonopah. He was replaced on our crew by Donald D. Stackhouse. Upon our going to Langley Field, VA., we dropped Stackhouse and picked up Flight Officer Harold J. Dorman as a radar bombardier-navigator.

On 27 Oct. 1944, two weeks after my arrival at Lemoore, we were sent to Tonopah, Nevada for overseas phase training. From that time until 26 Oct. 1945 there were 10 of us as one crew, and with exceptions made by Lt. Mrak and myself in various remarks, where one of us flew the other nine were sure to be there. We arrived at P.O.E. Hamilton Field, San Francisco 27 Jan. 1945. Langley Field, VA 7 Feb. 45; had 15 days delay in route 2 Apr. 45 - 17 Apr 45; arrived Salinas, CA 17 Apr. 45, our new P.O.E. We left Salinas 30 Apr. 45, and flew out of Mather Field, Sacramento, 2 May 45 - 11:00 p.m. I hope to add remarks concerning our stays at San Francisco, Tonopah, Langley, etc., but for the present I will deal with our flights to, from, and in the combat zone.

I have always contended that the flight from Sacramento to John Rogers field was my best navigation job, because I was scared to death that I would miss Oahu. It turned out that my ETA for the dog-leg Southeast of Oahu was dead perfect; then when we turned right 90° to about 290° our course was correct to zero in on Diamond Head: and I believe that we were off only about 30 seconds on our ETA for Diamond Head. I do remember that as soon as we turned to our approach to Oahu, with about 2 hours remaining on our ETA, I started scanning the sea for Diamond Head. Maybe there are navigators around who can see land 330 miles away at 10,000 feet, but I couldn't, so that was a very stressful two hours!

We arrived John Rogers NAS about 9-10 a.m. on 3 May 1945. I recall going to Hickham AFB and to Honolulu with its sea of sailors, and Dorman and I renting surfboards trying to surf on Wakiki Beach, but were unable to get enough waves to surf. The coral was only a few yards from the beautiful shore sand, and cut our feet when we got off the surf boards. That experience convince me that there are no beaches anywhere that compare to Gulf Shores, AL and Panama City, FL.

On 5 May '45 we flew from John Rogers NAS to Canton Island. We were routed to fly over Palmyra Island for a check-point, then fly a dogleg to the right to Canton. Canton was a treeless coral

rock, and ground personnel were rotated frequently from there to avoid becoming island-happy. This was our first time to cross the equator. We went swimming that afternoon on Canton Island, then took off the next morning for Tarawa. On the way from Canton to Tarawa we crossed very near the intersection of the International Date Line with the equator. That would also be near the point where Amelia Earhart was supposedly lost.

According to Lt. Mrak's Flight Log, coordinated with some notes which I had made, we flew from Tarawa to Guadalcanal, leaving Tarawa on 9 May 1945 and landing Guadalcanal 10 May 1945 because we had crossed the International Date Line. The next day we flew from Guadalcanal to Biak where we left the ship we had ferried over. His Flight Log ended there at Biak on 11 May 45. According to my notes, we were ferried from Biak back to Nadzab, New Guinea 15 May '45, then from Nadzab to Morotai 30 May '45. From there we would fly most of our missions. I went from Morotai to Clark Field, P.I. on 25 Aug. '45. Upon leaving Clark for the States 26 Oct. '45, we wrecked the plane on Guam. We flew Guam-Kwajalein 6 Nov. '45; Kwajalein-Johnson 7 Nov. '45 where we weathered in until 9 Nov. 45. We flew Johnson-Hawaii 9 Nov. '45 and Hawaii-Mather Field on 11 Nov. '45.

According to Mrak's Flight Log, he left Clark Field 2 Nov. '45, Guam 4 Nov. '45; flew directly from Kwajalein to Oahu 5 Nov. '45, and Hawaii-Mather Field on 7 Nov. '45, beating me home by four days! I note that beginning January 29, 1946 he started flying C-47's out of Ellington Field. My next flight was aboard an Eastern Airline Jet-Prop from Mobile, AL to Charlotte, N.C. about 1961-62 as a paying passenger. We had a near-collision over Atlanta, GA.

I will now cover some experiences which we had along the way which will, I hope, add something to the above accounts. Tarawa Island was the scene of utter devastation, with a small chapel literally surrounded by thousands of graves of our Marines. I remember that many of the graves were marked "Unknown". There were wrecked LSTs and LSDs in the shallow waters offshore.

The entire island had been fortified with coconut logs with pillboxes and gun positions cleverly hidden among the long beach fortifications. Ashore were two major pillboxes which had mounted shore guns atop them and portholes for firing from within. The walls were 10' thick reinforced concrete half-buried in the coral sand. I remember being told or reading that one of the pillboxes had been knocked by a single tank with a flame thrower burning it out through a hole which had been knocked out by a shell from the USS Tennessee.

We saw shoes with feet still in them, human skulls at waters edge, stumps where trees had been, and the smell was still awful after several weeks. Tarawa, Manila, and Ie Shima are three horrible sights and experiences that will never leave me.

The flights from Tarawa to Guadalcanal and to Biak along with the ferry flights back to Nadzab and on to Morotai were uneventful to me. The story was told on Biak that a major who had a passionate hatred for the Japanese had let some of them out of a POW compound so that he could practice some duck-shooting.

On a pieced-together map I have prepared, I have drawn a map of Morotai Island -- not to scale, of course. The island was shaped like an eggplant with the stem protruding from the southern--most part of the island. Our tent living area was along the Western beach area of the stem, facing Halmahara Island to our west about 20 miles. The flight strip was crossways across the small part of the island just north of the stem, with the harbor in the corner between the stem and the main land body, just southwest of the landing strip.

The perimeter was one mile north of the runway. Along the perimeter was a division of Negro Infantry which had the dual task of keeping the area free of Japs and running a sawmill making lumber from the huge mahogany trees on the island. There were 5,000 bypassed Japs on our island and 30,000 on Halmahera which was 20 miles to the west and circled around to the south of Morotai.

We had several PT boats stationed near the airstrip to patrol the bay between Morotai and Halmahera to prevent reinforcements from landing. Vernon has detailed some experiences while we were there, and I'll try to add a few from memory.

A memorable event for the two of us was the installation of a radio antenna. We felt that we could get better reception with our Hallicrafters radio if we could install an antenna high up in a mahogany tree. Vernon obtained a set of lineman's spurs and belt for climbing poles, climbed the tree and placed the antenna about 50 ft up. In climbing the tree he managed to get the belt over a huge fork in the tree, however he could not release the belt on the way down due to the fact he was leaning backwards off the tree. I was standing underneath him so that I could catch him if he fell, and he was struggling to get himself in position to unsnap the belt when Steve came to help. He obtained a rope, tossed it to Vernon, and Vernon was able to descend intact. Once again, Steve saved us from serious injury!

I remember one of the air raids we had on Morotai. We would all go out to the beach and lie down to avoid injury from falling timbers or trees, and from flying shrapnel. On this particular occasion, a young officer lying near us was frantically trying to dig a foxhole with his bare hands through the sand and coral rock. We got a big bang out of him, but today I'm not so sure I wouldn't be doing the same thing. To be on the receiving end of an air raid was a little unnerving.

The squadron of PT boats stationed at Morotai went out on patrol in the bay every night to prevent reinforcements from arriving from Halmahera to take over our island. Some of the officers in our squadron would go out with them on nights off just for the thrill of being in a duck-shoot. I don't remember any of our crew doing this, and I know that I didn't. We could see the tracers flying and hear the firing from our tent area almost every night.

Perhaps the biggest contribution which Harold "Mickey" Dorman made to our crew was to add to our comfort. Upon leaving the U.S. he purchased a case of bourbon whiskey to be used as barter. The first thing that he obtained for himself was a beautiful grey and white wool Australian Army blanket. Then he obtained for us sheets and pillow cases, also from the Australian Prison Hospital on the island. Thus, on our canvas cots we had air mattresses (G.I.), sheets, and a pillow case that would hold our flight jackets and make an excellent pillow. He next obtained enough mahogany lumber from a Captain with the Negro Infantry, along with oil drums, timbers, and nylon screen to build us a sumptuous island home out of our tent.

We took the oil drums, stood them on end for piers; took the mahogany timbers, approximately 6' x 8' and made sills for the floor; took 1' x 4' studs to make rafters and studs; screened the walls and door with nylon screen, and used our tent plus parts of a discarded tent to make a very large, screened, floored area with steps and a front door. The roof was a work of genius. The rafters were nailed together at the top in a point like a hip roof, then nailed to each corner of the walls. Over them we stretched our tent, with the flaps extending out to the top edge of the walls. From the discarded tent we pieced in the corners where the flaps did not reach, and from other pieces of material we made awnings that extended out from the walls a couple of feet. We really had a mansion until a newer crew moved in to share the tent with us. From then on things were a little crowded, but no more so than the original tent would have been. I suspect that it was Vernon's engineering design that went into that home.

It seems that Dorman's propensity for trading carried over in another area. He conceived the idea of a small commissary of his own to buy and sell items to the squadron because the little Group commissary was seldom open and did not have many things that we needed. I believe that our Group Commander soon put a stop to that competition for the Army.

I believe that Vernon and I shared another common trait; our hatred for the enemy. On one of our days off, without something better to do, all of us went down to the beach to watch the Japanese POW's pick up driftwood and trash along the beach while being guarded by their Australian guards. Perhaps the object was to give the prisoners some exercise, because they weren't too enthusiastic about doing much work. We were discussing it among ourselves when Vernon persuaded one of the Aussie guards to allow him to guard the prisoners. When he got the rifle with the bayonet on the end, he started immediately to order one of the most laggardly of the prisoners to get busy. He pointed to a huge log and told the prisoner to move it. When the prisoner refused to do so, he jabbed him slightly in the rear end. The Aussie promptly retrieved his rifle, and the incident ended. So much for that!

I almost forgot one other of Dorman's benevolences. For one fifth of bourbon he obtained from the Navy enough ice cream powder and steaks to feed the whole squadron one night. We set off a fire extinguisher to freeze the ice cream. We then poured gasoline into an oil drum which had been partially filled with sand, and cooked the steaks on the lid of the oil drum.

Our food while in the Long Rangers Bomb Group was really great when compared to some of our stateside bases. Our cooks, and particularly the baker, worked very hard at preparing tasty food. Some of the best pies I've ever eaten were baked there from dried fruits. Crews on R & R to Australia would bring back a C-47 loaded with fresh eggs, fruits and vegetables which added to the variety, and the cooks did themselves proud in preparing the meals. To address one complaint of the enlisted personnel, I must add that though the mess halls were separate, the food for all of us was prepared in the same kitchen at the same time.

I will need to review tapes of my conversations with Jim Thompson, Earl McGuire, and Ivan Johannes and add some more experiences which we covered

together in 1987, but with the following paragraphs I am ending this epilog to Vernon's diary.

For the past 35 years, mostly for religious reasons, I have been a teetotaler. Most of the members of my crew will find this hard to believe and most of my present day friends will find this account equally hard to believe. I quit drinking as a result of a New Years resolution in 1954. I quit smoking as a result of a New Years resolution in 1964. To those resolutions and the Grace of God I owe my good health today!

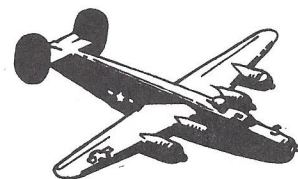
Perhaps from the combat stress or from the climate, I could not drink whiskey while I was in the South Pacific. Just a drink or two would make me very ill. That problem did not extend to beer, and the monthly issue of a case of beer per man was awaited with much anticipation. We learned to drink the beer at 90° temperature. It seemed to give us a little more kick. Too, our flight surgeon prescribed an ounce of whiskey per day to relieve stress, would save it up until he got a fifth for everyone and would issue it for one big drunk! I don't remember what I did with the whiskey, but I drank the beer, all at one setting! After the crew moved to Clark Field and I rejoined it, we were able to obtain ice from the kitchen.

On the first beer issue, Bob and I purchased Steve's case from him, obtained a GI can with ice, and put all three cases of beer on ice in the can. Bob had to go to Manila in a jeep, so he told me to save him 10-12 bottles until he returned. I saved him 12 bottles! That is another chapter in the Holston history. I have always admired Steve's perseverance in refraining from alcohol and tobacco, and I am sure today, after so much more combat, his good health is a result of his early life.

How many of you still have your short snorter?

- Bill Holston"

TAPS



THE LAST FLIGHT

A bit of the glow of the 1994 Reunion was lost with the untimely death of Ken Meyers, President of the 307th Association. Ken served as President of the 307th Bomb Group from May of 1992 until his death on May 20th 1994. Ken had been very active in the 307th Association for over ten years. He hosted the 1988 Reunion in Nashville as well as serving on a number of committees. He will be greatly missed.

Our sympathy goes out to his family.

I am very sorry I do not have a complete list of the 307th Members who have taken the "Last Flight" since our 1994-1 Newsletter. We are still unpacking boxes from our move to a new area. We will have all the names listed in the 1994-3 Newsletter.



INFORMATION REQUESTED

We have been in contact with the 13th Emergency Rescue Group, 2nd Emergency Rescue Squadron - SNAFU SNATCHERS, who flew the PBY rescue catalinas in the South West Pacific during WWII. They are trying to locate as many crews, if possible, that their planes rescued.

Please notify Jim Kendall if you were picked up by a PBY catalina.

Jim Kendall
2350 Derby
Birmingham, MI 48009

FROM YOUR HISTORIANS

Contacting "Find People Fast"

In Newsletter 93-2 Jack Sloan told how a new computer service called "Find People Fast" quickly helped him locate his navigator, ending an increasingly frustrating and costly forty year search.

Newsletter 93-3 carried letters from Harry Coggins and Jim Gibbs, both of whom reported great success in using this service to locate missing crew members and other service buddies. Harry's letter included a revised address for the "Find People Fast" service.

Apparently many of you missed that change and have continued using the original address that we printed. A recent phone call from "Find People Fast" asked that we emphasize the correct address in our Newsletter to help them better serve us.

Charges for a single name search run from \$20 to \$45 per name depending on the depth of search desired. Special rates are available for veterans looking for military friends as well as for multiple name searches.

The correct address is:

"Find People Fast"
4600 Chippewa, Suite 244
St. Louis, MO 63116

1 (800) 829-1807

* * *

Palau and B-24 No.603

Among the slides in the slide show presented during the St. Louis reunion was a strike photo taken over Koror Island, Palau, on August 28, 1944, on which 372nd C.O. Capt. William G. Dixon and his crew were shot down. The picture shows bomb hits in the target area, the still falling wreckage of the burning Dixon plane and one of the plane's wings fluttering down alone. The picture was sent to us by Dr. Patrick Scannon.

We first spoke with Pat Scannon about a year ago when he phoned seeking information on 307th attacks on Palau during WW II. A research physician with both M.D. and PhD degrees, Pat's avocation is SCUBA diving. He spends what must be a major part of his free time as a member of a diving team which searches for, explores and scientifically documents WW II shipwrecks. Palau, now called Belau, offers a large concentration of such wrecks, comparable to Truk Lagoon, Kwajalein and Rabaul's Simpson Harbor. The waters surrounding Palau have been extensively studied by this diving team.

Dan Bailey, another member of the team, has written a book, WW II WRECKS OF PALAU. Filled with pre- and post-war history of the region, wartime and present day aerial photographs, maps and detailed reports of Navy bombing missions, the book gives about all you ever wanted to know

about Palau. Though focusing mainly on U.S. Navy operations the book would be of interest to AAF people who bombed Palau.

During their diving explorations of the waters surrounding Koror Island, Pat Scannon and his wife, Susan, discovered a wing from a B-24. This discovery surprised them for they, among others, had assumed that neutralization of Palau had been accomplished by Navy efforts alone. Back home, further research on the wing and AAF involvement in the Palau campaign took Pat to sources such as the National Archives, the Nimitz Museum of the Pacific War, the Historical Research Center at Maxwell AFB and eventually to us.

Though our records are far from complete, we were able to fill Pat in on the activities of the 307th over Palau. This, plus study of official 5th, 7th and 13th Air Force records, have convinced him that "his" wing is almost certainly that of Dixon's 372nd B-24 No. 603.

On a later trip to Palau, Pat located the wreckage of the Dixon B-24 in a tidal flat just off the north shore of Koror Island. Our mission report had erred in locating the crash site, assuming the plane in our photo had already crashed when in reality it was still falling.

Feeling that the AAF part of the Palau story should also be recognized, Pat hopes to document, write and publish the story which began for him with the discovery of that 307th

bomber wing. His story would certainly highlight B-24 No 603 and its crew. He has asked for help from our membership:

1. Pat would like to hear from anyone who flew the August 28, 1944 mission to Koror and saw the Dixon plane go down. The **O'Conner Crew** of the 371st was there and is mentioned in the Mission Report as having seen someone bail out. We would like to hear from members of the 371st O'Conner Crew or from anyone else who remembers the Dixon loss. Please write **Jim Kendall, 2350 Derby, Birmingham, MI 48009**.
2. Does anyone have a photo or snapshot of aircraft No. 603?
3. Does anyone know if No. 603 had a name or nose art? If so, do you have a snapshot of it?

* * *

Arnett B-24 Loss over Palau

On September 1, 1944, a 424th B-24 flown by Jack Arnett was shot down by flak over Koror and crashed in the water between Koror and Babelthaup Islands. Pat Scannon would like to search for the Arnett plane but does not know just where to look. The mission report says that the **Lewis, Hunter and Randolph** crews circled the crash site for an hour. Pat would like to hear from any one who remembers the incident and could help pinpoint the site.

Please let us know if you have any information that could help. Write to: **Jim Kendall, 2350 Derby, Birmingham, MI 48009**.

* * *

Books

The preceding article mentions the book WW II WRECKS OF PALAU, a very interesting and well illustrated 10x14 hard cover "coffee table" book, and of interest to anyone who shared in the destruction of Japanese installations in the Palau Islands. Published by North Valley Diver Publications, P.O. Box 991413, Redding, CA 96099, the book should be available through any good bookstore. We do not know the cost because our copy was donated to the 307th Archives by Dr. Pat Scannon. It is probably not an inexpensive book. Perhaps your local library has a copy to check out.

A new book devoted to telling the story of the B-24, and probably the best one yet, was published earlier this year. A copy of LIBERATOR - AMERICA'S GLOBAL BOMBER was recently donated to our archives by the author, Alwyn T. Lloyd. Unfortunately, it arrived too late for display at the St. Louis reunion. This 9x11 book is a big one with 548 pages of Liberator history, facts, figures and photographs. Each Air Force and Group which flew the B-24, U.S. and Allied, are mentioned, most in great detail. We would like to have had the opportunity to proof the pages

covering the 307th prior to printing, for a few obvious errors have crept into the final book. Despite these shortcomings this is a truly monumental effort. Published by Pictorial Histories Publishing Company, Inc., Missoula, Montana, the book costs \$40.

Chuck Dowdy called recently to say that his book **CHARLIE**, covering his experiences with the 307th from late October of 1944 through mid-April of 1945, is still available at \$30 per copy plus postage. Chuck's address is in the roster.

MISSIONS OF SHEHASTA is **Lyman Clark's** story of his May through November, 1943, tour of duty with the 307th. Lyman reports that copies have been available from several bookstores and a reprint is being discussed. Write him (his address is in the roster) for information on how and where to purchase the book.

John Boeman's MOROTAI has been listed for some time in catalogs mailed out by Sunflower University Press. The book gives an excellent picture of the training of an AAF pilot and his combat experiences with the 307th during 1945.

UP THE SLOT by the late **Sam Walker**, original Historian for our Association, deals with 307th origins and early history, Stateside training and combat through Fall of 1943. Copies of the book may still be available from Sam's widow, Ruby, who is listed in our roster.

The best overview of the entire WW II history of the 307th is found in **Sam Britt's** book **THE LONG RANGERS - A DIARY OF THE 307TH BOMBARDMENT GROUP (H)**. A compilation of the Monthly Historical Reports sent to AAF HQ by Group and Squadron S-2, the book gives an almost day to day picture of the life of the 307th. Unfortunately, the book is out of print and there are no plans at present for a reprint.

* * *

Political Correctness

During the General Meeting at the St. Louis reunion someone brought up the story of the apologetic "politically correct" treatment planned by the Smithsonian Air and Space Museum Staff for their new "Enola Gay" B-29 exhibit. For almost fifty years the plane that dropped the A-bomb on Hiroshima was considered too hot, politically, to be put on display. As recently as last November Smithsonian plans for exhibition of the "Enola Gay" called for depiction of the Japanese as preparing for a desperate defense of their home islands against a brutal, vindictive and racially motivated enemy. Little in the proposed exhibit revealed what had made that defense necessary. Rather, it portrays the Japanese as victims without putting into proper context their aggression and atrocities. Critics charged that the proposed exhibit was, in the words of Newsweek (8/29/94), "little more than a

testament to the bombing's victims, all emotion and little historical context, full of language that read like Japanese wartime propaganda". Veteran's groups are infuriated. The Air Force Association charges that "the museum is essentially using the Enola Gay as a prop in an emotionally charged program about the atomic bomb". Because of the uproar the Smithsonian set up three separate reviews of the proposed exhibit, the results of which surely did not please them. One reviewer wrote: "The imbalance is almost palpable. If I didn't know better...I would leave the exhibit with the strong feeling that Americans are bloodthirsty, racist killers who, after beer parties and softball, go out and kill as many women and children as possible." Since the criticism began, the Smithsonian has changed the title of the exhibit and continues to revise its contents. There is now a section on Japanese aggression, including the Rape of Nanking and the Bataan Death March. Some veterans have asked that the plane be exhibited with nothing but a sign saying "This is the plane that dropped the bomb on Hiroshima". Museum Director Martin Harwit says the Smithsonian is trying to help Americans "arrive at some kind of conclusion about how we want to think about this (dropping the bomb on Hiroshima) as a nation". The vast majority of Americans are well aware of how they have felt about this and resent these efforts to change the way Americans view themselves and

the world about them to a more politically correct and multi-cultural perspective.

Judging by articles regarding the politically correct movement that abound in today's press, the present policies of the Smithsonian mark that institution as a leader of the revisionist pack. A Wall Street Journal editorial comment on a Smithsonian reinterpretation of Columbus as a despoiler, said the "once respected" Smithsonian was "in danger of becoming the Woodstock Nostalgia Society" with "an exhibit that is multi-culturally correct down to its tiniest sensitivity".

How does it feel, as members of the 307th who helped win the Pacific war against a vicious and determined enemy, to be labeled as among the worst of the bad guys by a highly respected but now "politically correct" institution? If you have not already done so, you might want to drop a personal note to your senator or representative in Washington to let them know your thoughts on the subject and the road down which we are being lead. A similar note to the Smithsonian could help.

* * *

The Rest of the Story...

We are all familiar with combat losses but seldom hear the stories of what happened to those who survived being shot down. **Dick Beard** fills us in on the fate of the Hunter crew

which was shot down on November 8, 1944, over Alicante airfield on Northern Negros Island in the Central Philippines. Two planes, Hunter (424) and Scalese (371), were shot down over or near the target. Sanderson (371), seriously damaged over the target, was forced to bail out over Mindanao on the way home. The entire crew survived. The B-24 flown by Hanson (371), seriously damaged with one killed and two seriously injured, made it back to base.

The Hunter crew, 424th squadron leader on the mission, was hit before the bomb run. Nose gunner **Merle Wilson** was killed in his turret. With engine No. 4 afire, the rest of the crew except for pilot **Bill Hunter** and co-pilot **Bob Dawkins** bailed out. Engineer **Charles Witham** opened his chute too soon and was killed by Zeros as he hung there helpless. The rest of those who parachuted landed safely in the Negros Island mountains near where the B-24 crashed. Both pilots died in the wreckage. Surviving crew members were **Willard McGee**, navigator; **Pat Mann**, bombardier; **Dave Beyer**, radio; **Gene Bosiacki**, tail; **Richard Beard**, waist; **Max Augsburg**, substitute ball gunner and **Pete Gersten**, photographer. When Beard hit the ground he heard several rifle shots and held his hands up in surrender. An old woman smoking a cigar ran out, saw he was an American and embraced and kissed him profusely. She explained they thought he was a German pilot.

Let Dick Beard tell the rest of the story:

"The Philippine guerrillas who rescued us told us that German pilots were flying that day. We had not known that Germans were in the vicinity but the guerrillas said the Japs had German instructors in the area and that every once in a while they flew combat in the Zeros. Their combat tactics were totally different from those of the Japs. They came at us four abreast in two rows and we were not accustomed to this.

"The crash site was not far from where we landed in the mountains. We who survived found the wreckage of the plane the next day and, with the help of the guerrillas, buried our four crew members. The guerrillas called their camp Talisay after a town down in the lowlands. Soon we started our trek from the mountains in the north end of the island to a location in the south where a submarine arrived periodically to deliver small arms and ammunition. Our trek was adventuresome and hard with very limited food and no medical attention. Our diet consisted mostly of bananas, dried fish, coconuts and some jerky. Once in a while we had some roasted pig. We also had quite a bit of rice. Some of us got sick but, all in all, we fared pretty good, while losing a substantial amount of weight (30 lbs. in my case). We were the first Americans the guerrillas had seen since the invasion. They were doing a good job against the Japs despite their limited firepower. Their largest weapon

was an 81 mm mortar which they carried back and forth on the island. Arriving at our destination we settled down near a little bay to await the submarine's arrival. About the second day a bomb group passed nearby. We signalled with our emergency signal mirror and received a blinker signal from the lead ship."

(Ed. Note: just for the record, that emergency signal was spotted by members of the Guild crew of the 424th and radio operator Dick Roth radioed for the rescue plane.)

"We quickly spelled out SOS on the beach sand and also with seaweed. Soon four P-38s arrived to comb the beach back and forth, investigating and holding off any Jap air attacks. Soon a Dumbo came waddling in and we boarded outriggers and met it in the bay. The Dumbo took us directly to our squadron, which by now had moved up to Morotai, where we were reunited with our friends. It was a special reunion for me and my cousin Glen Scott who was also a B-24 crewman in our squadron. The next day we were flown to Hollandia where we were interrogated, after which, on December 25, 1944, we boarded ship for home."

* * *

Enough for this time.

Jim Kendall
Harry Sterkel
John Reeves

NOTES FROM THE SECRETARY

First I would like to congratulate Bob and Sara Jones and Bill and Ellie Gerhardt on the 1994 Reunion in St. Louis. Bob had nicest memorabilia room set up the 307th has ever had. Everyone attending the reunion was very pleased with the plane display. Bill and Ellie did a great job in selecting the entertainment for the reunion. Members attending the reunion were most complementary on the activities.

Second and very IMPORTANT. We have moved from Salt Lake City to the little town of Preston, Idaho. Following is our new address:

Cena & Walt Marsh
262 East Valley View Drive
Preston, Idaho 83263
(208) 852-2260

At the present time we are living out of boxes. Little by little we will find everything -- but for now "What a Mess"!

* * * * *

PATCHES, HATS, ETC

Last Monday we received a box from John Brock filled with beautiful patches. These are embroidered patches of each Squadron, 13th Air Force, Long Rangers, and Group Logo. They are beautiful.

Quite a number of you have written asking about the patches. Time has not permitted me to get a flyer done on the patches, hats, licence plate holders, etc. but will have that all available by the December Newsletter.

The prices for each item is as follows:
The price includes postage for mailing.

Hats	\$8.50
Patches	3.50
Licence holder	5.50
Pins	2.50

Should anyone want any of the above items just send in your order and I'll get them mailed off.

Cena

1994-1996 307th OFFICERS

The following 307th Members were elected at the 1994 Reunion in St. Louis to serve on the 307th Bomb Group Association Board.

Sam Britt	President
Mark Rifkin	Vice-President
Jim Kendall	Historian
Harry Sterkel	Asst. Historian
John Reeves	Asst. Historian
Cena Marsh	Sec/Treasurer

Mark Rifkin is also the Site Chairman for the 1996 reunion to be held in San Diego.

The membership attending the reunion in St. Louis voted to move the date of the reunion to September. You will be notified of the reunion date in a future newsletter.

* * * * *

Sam Britt, President