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JULY 4 4

395TH BOMBARDMENT SQUADRON
HQ: 30 BARBERS POINT
APO 631, c/o Postmaster
New York, N.Y.

6 August 1944

Squadron History

1 July 1944 thru 31 July 1944

This has been quite a full month. To start with a bang—our Commanding Officer and his crew went over the ramp on 6 July to run a mission from there. At night on July 7, they bombed Omuza and took pictures of Santa, both on the islands of Japan.

On the 5 July at 0120 an unidentified ship flew over the field and dropped flares. The anti aircraft batteries opened fire while the entire field blacked out. From the ground it looked as though the blackout was complete. The truck driver started down the line just as the blackout began (evidently he hadn't heard) with his lights on and was almost murdered before he got past the second ship—he turned his lights out, but fast!!

All the maintenance personnel in the new area were busted from bed and tucked away in trenches—some with parts, some with papers, and some just without.

Cutlandish stories immediately began their tour that it was a Jap reconnaissance ship taking photographs, which it could easily have been, but the truth shattered all fantasies next morning when we found out that it was a B-29 from another base dropping practice flares—he was, however, a little lost and off his intended range.

On 6 July a native came walking up to our barracks looking for Lt. Briggs. He turned out to be the chief who had rescued the stranded members of Major Zamry's crew. With him he brought several articles that the boys had left at his home—a silk flag and a note that Lt. Briggs had written.

The boys carried him to the show that night then put him up in their barracks. The next morning they carried him on a tour of the post and introduced him to Colonel Harmon. For his aid and kindness the Colonel gave him a certificate of merit and wrote a commendation to the magistrate of his District.

It is very interesting to know that he spent a months time in getting here from his home—went to two wrong bases and incurred expense to himself in order that he might see the boys and return their belongings—he would not have been able to do this but for the kindness of the boys. The boys had a very good time with him in the post. He was very friendly and helpful.

(S: 11, 137-1-1, 1, 1, 1)

Our flight started with missions over Operation Route Second and is fast closing in on West Java. For the past 24 hours, since 25 to July 21, our Squadron has loaded 11% of its assigned quota—now over 30% above the other three Squadrons. And, we have been three planes short. One tanker, 210, until it had an engine change at 4-J, July 17, and the wing record for engines and total fuel delivered.

While the Colonel was over the base for the mission on 17 in the afternoon, the new base was almost the same. The plane was a little rough with the runway letting loose. The air was in an awful mess with rubbish all over the place, and the ground was most uneven. Finally, however, it is really starting to look like a livable area since we have completed leveling off the ground and are working on the surroundings.

On July 15 all members of the crew which ditched in the Bay of Bengal during the Bangkok raid sent to a rest camp at the east-southwest coast of India for a few days rest.

There was a meeting of 21 pilots in the war room on July 17 with the group Operations Officer. He explained the new route we were going to take over the jump and gave us a little "dope" on the coming mission. The Group Operations Officer explained to us the new system which shall be used to salvo the bombs and forward bombs but work on the off if it becomes necessary. And the Group Operations Officer showed us some pictures which were taken on the recent bombings of Form.

Then, there were similar meetings in the war room for Engineers, Co-pilots, Navigators, Bombardiers, and Radar Operators.

A new guard system has been instituted whereby only one entire crew stands guard for the night with the airplane commander acting as duty officer. From 1800 until 0600 a crew is assigned guard duty with half of the men guarding from 1800 until 2:00 then being relieved by the other half until 0600 when the crew assigned to the plane takes over the responsibility of guard.

The Squadron has received three new planes this month: 424466, 425363, and 426125, which were immediately assigned crews.

Scarcely a plane in our Squadron has escaped an engine change at some time during this month—only three still have their engines intact.

The Japs have really been giving Colonel Lucas, our Commanding Officer, hell this month—first they shoot him down during the raid over Yawata (which he didn't go on) then they capture him, and on the 16 July we heard a Jap broadcast saying that he had just been executed. Except for a little arabic, his secretary he looks pretty good to have gone thru so much misery.

All combat planes were called off of flying status 20 July so that ground checks and maintenance could be accomplished before the coming raid. Both mechanics and crew are really buzzing around the base day and night getting things ready to go. Can you blame us though? We are the ones who are going to have to have a good time.

(S) (U) (C) (M) (D)

All in active participation except final weather briefing and last minute "prep" was limited to the above-mentioned. Our mission was to test our plane against the line-squadron performance.

Planes from the 36th and 41st Squadrons took off on the 26th of July, right in the middle of very inclement weather--low ceiling, poor visibility and slow winds, but they all made it with no difficulty.

On the 27th of July eight of our planes as well as the 45th planes and stragglers from the other two squadrons took off for the forward base.

One ship got about 25 minutes out from the field when they noticed oil seeping from the bottom of the nacelle of the #1 engine. The oil got so low that it became necessary to feather the engine and return to the field. They landed on three engines with 127,000 lbs. but experienced no great difficulty. Upon investigation, it was found that someone failed to safety the oil sump plug, so they corrected the discrepancy, refilled the tank, and taxied out to take off again. #3 cut out on one magneto, so they had to return to the line again for maintenance.

Another ship had gotten as far as Imphal when #1 engine caught on fire. He immediately feathered it, dropped his bombs and returned to the base. The hose clamp on the C-4 strainer had not been tight enough. It slipped off causing gas to go on the hot engine which caught fire and burned holes in the top cowling.

Capt. Alvin E. Hills, Jr. and his crew in B-29, #426291, took off, and were forced to crash land somewhere in the vicinity of Kharagpur after approximately 30 minutes of flight. Following is a list of the crew and their status together with a statement of the accident by Capt. Hills:

Hills, Alvin E., Jr.	Capt.	F.	Minor injuries.
Houston, William G.	1 Lt.	CF.	Fatal--Died in Hospital 1945, 26 July.
Norton, Wilbur J.	2 Lt.	K.	Fatal.
DiLollo, Roger G.	2 Lt.	B.	Fatal--Died in Hospital 0830, 1 August.
Gaver, Irvin E.	F/O.	FE.	Fatal.
Pierce, Jess R.	Sgt.	R.	Fatal.
Dignan, James J.	S/Sgt.	SG.	Fatal.
Smith, Theodore R.	Sgt.	RG.	Fatal.
Birkinsha, George W.	T/Sgt.	LG.	Fatal.
Teter, Roy L.	Sgt.	TG.	Minor injuries.
Harmon, James W.	Sgt.	V.	Minor injuries.
Polonsky, Samuel (NMI)	Sgt.	V.	Minor injuries.
Cole, Lawrence M.	T/Sgt.	CC.	Fatal.

STATEMENT OF CAPT. ALVIN E. HILLS, JR., AIRPLANE COMMANDER #426291.

As told to Major R. M. McMillan, Accident Investigator.

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...what-so-ever. I started a slow turn to the left and after 10 or 15 degrees of turn was accomplished, the engine started to cut out, dropping from 2000 to 2000 back to 1500 and then 1500 to 1000. I advised the bombardier to salvo the bombs and then to hold bay talk. (The bombardier had a little trouble operating the salvo mechanism.)

The co-pilot advised crew members, over the interphone, to prepare for an emergency landing. I did not try to feather #2 engine. (I believe the co-pilot in the confusion tried to unfeather #2 as there was a landing drag on that side.) Moments later #1 and #3 engines began cutting out. I could not maintain level flight, dropped the nose to pick up air speed and broke through the clouds at approximately 1000 feet and found a clear area. I made a normal approach for a normal belly landing. Just before contact, I notified the flight engineer to cut the switches. Normal contact was made with the ground at about the radar section, and an explosion occurred on the right side. We slid along the ground for quite a distance and then came to a sudden stop. By this time, the entire cabin of the plane was filled with flames. I proceeded through the pilot's window to safety. I then helped Lt. Houston, the co-pilot, out to the bank of a creek, away from the flames. Lt. DiIollo was dazed and was walking around in front and to the left of the front.

IAS at level flight was 195 MPH.

IAS after losing both engines was 130 to 145 MPH.

IAS through clouds to about contact with the ground was 140 MPH.

Landing time was approximately 0755 EST.

(End of Statement)

From the time each plane landed at A-1 until the date of the mission, all crews made final preparations on their planes--some planes had minor maintenance to be done while others had none.

All crew members met at the briefing room at 1830, on the 28th of July, for a final briefing on weather, the target, take-off, and formation procedure.

The morning of the mission, the 29th of July, we were awakened at 0300, had breakfast at 0330, and were transported to the planes immediately afterwards. While the navigators went for the flight kits and charts, the rest of the crew prepared the plane for Q445 stations.

At 0505 the first plane started his engines and took off at 0525. All other planes followed in succession taking off at intervals of approximately 60 seconds.

Once in the air, we formed into four plane elements as prearranged and climbed to clear the mountains.

The weather was almost as briefed and we had to accomplish a formation about half way to the target. We climbed out of the clouds to turn on the way to the IP and climb to our target altitude.

The target was...
of the target...

(S. 101, 102, 103, 104)

The first few planes over the target left it in smoke and by the time the last plane passed over, smoke was rising as high as 20,000 feet, and the target area was completely obscured.

Some enemy fighter opposition was experienced by a number of the planes after leaving the target and one plane is assumed to have been shot down over the targets by enemy fighters.

The bomb racks failed to work on 306 and it could not drop its bombs over the target. It was attacked by one enemy fighter which made a single pass, shooting the right outside tire, number one propeller tip and some holes in the wing.

After leaving the target 306 was attacked by a single fighter which the left gunner shot down before it had a chance to fire.

All but one of the 24 planes that took off on the raid safely landed back at A-1 between 1700 and 1800--one plane came back on three engines shortly after take off and cracked up near the field.

There is nothing more invigorating after a long flight than the shot of Jungle Ration we get after each mission which, this time, was supplemented by coffee and doughnuts. Everyone was so full of excitement and talk that it was hard to break us away for an interrogation. Finally we got to the Hostel for supper then to the barracks and bed.

The following morning all planes which could take off came back to Chabulia--the crews were aroused at 0330.

No planes were permitted to take off on July 31 due to cyclonic storms in India. On this date 240 was reported missing. It took off in the morning and the last position report would indicate that it went down somewhere between Likiang and Hsichang. No further news or information as to the fate of the crew or the plane is available. The loading list on plane 240 was as follows:

Glass, Edwin R.	Major	Pilot
Madeline, John J.	2d Lieutenant	Co-Pilot
Morgan, Henry	1st Lieutenant	Navigator
Kriatkowski, Leonard	2d Lieutenant	Bombardier
Smerke, Fred J.	1st Lieutenant	Flight Engineer
Stillfield, Elmer E.	Technical Sergeant	Radar
Clauson, Charles A.	Technical Sergeant	Tail Gunner
Howell, C.R.	Captain (IX Bomber Command)	Passenger

The remaining planes returned to Chokila on August 1 and all our attempts at searching for 240 were in vain for the "hump" was almost completely covered by an overcast.