

375th Bombardment Group
with Bombardment Group
AFSC 331, c/o Postmaster
New York, N.Y.

6 October 1944

375th Bombardment Group
1 September 1944 thru 30 September 1944

With the coming of Major General LeMay, as Commanding General, XX Bomber Command, we have experienced the fulfillment of a new Regime.

Our training, both ground school and air work has been resumed along with our combat missions. All crew members are taking subjects appropriate to their crew position, revising old instructions and procedures while learning new methods wrought thru experience.

From each Squadron a formation lead crew was selected—in our Squadron the most experienced and ranking Major—to take training in formation leading. These crews were sent to Dudukundi on Detached Service where the training school had been set up.

General LeMay conceived and laid the plans for a twelve ship formation whereby our fire power would be increased, and our vulnerability decreased, and our bomb pattern improved.

On the 14th of September the Group Commanding Officer called a meeting of all Pilots and Co-Pilots to explain the order of this 12 ship formation and to present a take-off procedure which would assemble the formation in the least possible time.

Since our lead crews have returned, the formation take-off, assembly, and bombing technique has been practiced four times. Each trial improved our technique but we still need a lot of practice to perfect the entire procedure.

After each practice mission we are called together for a critique. The fallacies noted in formation and bombing procedure are brought out and thru these suggestions we try to correct the faults.

We have participated in two combat missions this month, both of which were directed against the Showa Iron and Steel Works, Anshan, Manchuria.

On the 5th, 6th, and 7th of September the planes in our Squadron went over the hump to our advanced base in China, A-1, preparatory to the first of the two raids on Anshan. Many of the crew members were off flying due to fever and there was hardly a ship which did not have substitute crew members.

The usual briefing of crews on target information was given in the Mess Room at A-1 in the evening of September 7th. Major General LeMay was present at the general briefing, and the specialized briefing for Pilots and Co-Pilots.

SECRET

SECRET

(S. HARR, 29518 J. S. S., Cont'd)

Once again the basic four plane element was used and the formation bombed in daylight under perfect contact conditions. The results were observed and reported as excellent. Light to moderate flak and fighter interception was encountered over the target.

Two of our planes failed to get off the ground at 1-1 and another had engine trouble after low altitude. The bomber the target of last resort under contact conditions and reported direct hits on the rail junction at Hsinan.

Plane No. 20th pilot, Captain George Lowry had an engine knocked out over the target by flak. He flew back on three engines landing at the fighter strip at Hanchung, approximately 150 miles from enemy occupied territory.

The story of the Anshan raid and of Captain Lowry's experience is fully described in the following narrative which he gave the Historical Officer upon his return.

UNITED STATES AIR FORCE
7th Bombardment Group
September 1944
By Captain Lowry and Crew

The first plane was off about 0520, just at daylight on the 6th of September. We were the seventeenth plane to leave the ground and number five in Major Kingsbury's formation.

We joined our formation without difficulty and flew loose for about an hour. Quite suddenly we ran into a stretch of bad weather which lasted almost three fourths of an hour. The formation was so loose that we did not even spread out in a penetration formation. When we broke out we could see only one lone plane close around but spotted two other formations; one, to the left in front of us, the other, to the right and behind—we joined the latter which turned out to be Colonel Schaal's formation from the 45th. We made the fifth plane in this element.

In approximately an hour the No. 2 man in the formation apparently had engine trouble for he pulled away and turned back. We took the No. 2 position.

While still an hour from the target we saw our first opposition—a Japanese pursuit. The gunners fired one burst which was effective and we never saw him again.

We went on in over the target at 24,000 feet true, dropped our bombs, turned slightly to the right to avoid the flak which was moderate.

About one minute from the time we dropped the bombs, No. 2 engine suddenly began backfiring and lost manifold pressure. We feathered it just before finishing our run out of the flak area. Upon feathering No. 2 we immediately lost cabin pressure and had to go on oxygen—one engine would not maintain the cabin pressure.

As we started lagging behind a pursuit suddenly came up about 7 o'clock to make an attack but never got closer than 1,000 yards. The gunners fired

SECRET

(The following is a summary of the incident)

a burst at his end he kept his distance, finally leaving us. That was the last attack made on our line.

After we had gotten well away from the target area we took over lead of the formation. Captain Schaal stayed close-in on my right wing while Colonel Schaal and another plane dropped below us and to our left. We flew in this manner for nearly five hours. We were getting low on gas and didn't have enough gas to get back to 2-1 so I headed for Kanchung, one of the emergency fighter strips we were briefed on.

While Captain Schaal and Colonel Schaal circled overhead we made a 3-engine landing. The runway was of a hard sod composition about 1800 feet long. We experienced no difficulty at all in landing.

We had contacted the ground station thru our liaison jet before landing and were met at the plane by the Intelligence Officer of the fighter squadron, a Chinese civilian (who was in charge of the Chinese soldiers and planned the camouflage for our ship) and later, joined by the Squadron Commanding Officer.

The civilian showed us where he wanted the ship parked so we started two engines and taxied over.

The Intelligence Officer was very hospitable as was everyone else with whom we came in contact. He carried us into the town and assigned us rooms at the hostel--an old Chinese hotel. The food was excellent. For supper we had liver and onions, French fried potatoes and rice pudding. After supper we were fully ready for bed.

At the field the Chinese camouflaged the ship as quickly as possible. First they took several F-40 nets, tied them together and stretched over the entire ship. Then they stood dry corn stalks against the net all around the ground and even placed them on the horizontal stabilizer against the vertical fin. On the net, over the wings, nacelles, fuselage and tail surface they placed green grass and cotton plants. From the air everything would appear green and blend in with the surrounding vegetation.

About 22.30 we had the first air raid warning. We got out of bed, dressed and went down in front of the hotel to wait for a truck which was to pick us up. The truck did not come so the boys began dispersing about over the town. Some of us went into a wine cellar which had so much water in it that we finally compromised by sitting on the steps where we could look into the sky.

In about 20 minutes after the warning a Lily came over. Two F-40's from the field went up to find the bomber.

The Lily made 3 or 4 passes over the field evidently trying to locate our plane, and finally made a run over the runway dropping the bombs across it. They did no material damage and the last one, which was a dud, hit about 15 feet from the communications building.

After the attack the first ship was started and taxied over the ground. The Intelligence Officer was very helpful in showing us the ground and the surrounding area. We were then taken to the town and assigned rooms at the hostel. The food was excellent and we were fully ready for bed.

lighter sh. an. it looked as though the Lily were chasing the P-51's about half
the time.

Finally the Lily located our plane and made a nose run on the right side,
from tail to nose, at an angle of about 45° to the fuselage. Eleven bombs were
dropped but they all fell short, the last one about 51 yards from the tail. It
knocked six small holes in the tail—none of them large enough to affect the
ship structurally.

During the course of the night we had three more alerts—Jap ships were
returning to their bases after bombing our bases in the Chungtu area. We didn't
get very much sleep with the alerts and the bombing.

Early the next morning we took a look at the plane and found that all
it needed was a push rod. A piece of Flak had cut it half-in two.

The ground station tried to get Chungtu on the radio and have them send
a push rod down but couldn't get the message through because of a code change
or something.

In the morning four P-51's had come over from another base to help fly
air cover for our ships protection.

Around 1000 a C-47 was fixed in and our hopes mounted for we thought maybe
they had decoded our message after all.

Just as the C-47 was on the approach we had a three ball alert. That gave
him about 10 minutes to land, unload, and take-off again. The ship was a
Chinese transport and had cargo for the fighter outfit. He unloaded, cranked
his engines and took-off all within the 10 minute lee-way.

Meanwhile, the pursuits had taken off to look for the ship and found it
to be our observation B-29 returning from Anshan. As soon as they identified
it they radioed back and called off the alert.

The Chinese warning net sent down a message that the Japanese bombers
had stayed all night at their advanced base and were getting ready for another
raid that night. We decided that we had to get out some way if at all possible.

Lt. Bailey thought that he could take the intake push rod and put it in
the exhaust position then plug up the intake push rod hole. He and two of the
gunners worked on it while the rest of us went in after our clothes and took
the camouflage off the plane.

When we started the engines, No. 2 was a little rough but smoothed out
and got full power on the engine run-up.

It was 1900 when I lined up on the runway—already dark, and there were
no lights on the field. I still don't know whether I took off on the runway
or out across the field but we didn't have any trouble.

I climbed in the valley while climbing to 10,000 feet where I leveled
out and headed for a base for A-1. All engines were running smoothly at
10,000 feet and we indicated about 125 mph.

At A-1 I let down thru an overcast and landed. We were greeted by Colonel Sullivan, Colonel Lucas, and Colonel McGinity.

The following day we replaced the push rod, which we borrowed from another ship. On account of gas shortage we were forced to delay our takeoff for Chankilla until the next morning.

(End of Captain Lowry's Story)

Our field at A-1 was bombed on the night of our return from the mission. The following excerpt from AID, XI Bomber Command, No. 10 gives complete details concerning the bombing:

REPORT OF A-1
(Excerpt from XI Bomber Command AID No. 10)

The first string of bombs fell at 0030 A.M. on 9 September 1944. The enemy aircraft, believed to be twin engined, seemed to approach down the river to the west of the landing strip and continued around coming in from the south end of the runway and then attacking to the northwest. The first string of bombs is believed to have been composed of a cluster of fragmentation bombs and 250 lbs H.E. bombs. The fragmentation bombs (approximately 2 lbs in weight) exploded first about 25 yards from B-29 A/C 254, parked in the revetment directly behind the operations building, and damaging the aircraft. The first of the H.E. bombs fell about 75 yards from No. 254, landing on the taxiway and making a crater about three feet deep and eight feet in diameter. The second in the string fell some fifty feet from a gasoline storage tank located on the west side of the runway, hitting on the edge of a machine gun emplacement and injuring two soldiers occupying the position. The remainder of the H.E. bombs, four in number, fell with about 200 yards spacing.

No serious damage was inflicted by these bombs. All bombs landed on open ground, the last in the string exploding about 100 yards from hostel No. 2, occupied by combat crews of the 40th Bomb Group. All persons occupying the hostel took cover in drainage ditches nearby.

Three more runs were made by aircraft that sounded like twin engined planes. Bombs were dropped on all except the last run.

The third run was also made from south to north down the runway. Three bombs were dropped hitting on the east taxi-strip and on the west edge of the runway. Craters were about six to eight feet in diameter and about three feet deep.

The fourth run came from the direction of previous attacks, but no bombs were dropped.

Conclusions:

A. It appears that the enemy had a definite plan of attack. The plan seemed to be followed by all aircraft in approach from the south to the north and indicates that the river must have been used as an approach. It is possible that the enemy might have been attempting to land on the runway. The enemy might have been attempting to land on the runway. The enemy might have been attempting to land on the runway.

SECRET

Headquarters.

B. The weather was a factor deserving of some consideration in the bombing. From different points of cover, all persons on the field could see the enemy aircraft as they made their runs against the base. The ceiling was approximately 2,500 feet with broken cloud conditions existing. Although the low ceiling must have made approach to the field hazardous for the enemy, at the same time it afforded cover after bomb release. As it was, no interception was attempted and the enemy was able to bomb at leisure.

C. The presence of subversive activity was strongly indicated by reports of a fire in the rice paddy to the north of the field, and the observation of a possible flare from the ground at the south end of the field. These two aids together could have easily directed the enemy in making the bomb runs and at the same time located the runway for him.

(End of Excerpt--Bombing of A-1)

The alarm wasn't given until just before the bombers arrived so everyone was in bed when the first bomb hit. They say that it didn't take long for the barracks to clear out after that!

While one of our planes was returning from China over the sea, it ran into a very severe thunderstorm. The turbulence was so violent that it caused the plane to execute a loop or a slow roll.

The above episode as told by Captain Turner, the pilot, is included here to give all details:

CAPTAIN TURNER'S STORY
Excerpt from AID No. 16

The flight was uneventful until we reached the vicinity of Hanoi where a line of storms was encountered which could not be avoided.

We started our descent from 18,000 feet at about 0900Z and broke into the clear at about 14,000 feet. Ahead there seemed to be a front with a stratus layer above and below the altitude of the plane. We entered a stratus layer on instruments and hit a curious thunderhead at 10,600 feet. Moderate turbulence increased abruptly to severe turbulence with strong up and down drafts. Both myself and the Co-Pilot were on the controls.

We went through four very severe ascents and descents; on the fourth ascent the plane started an uncontrollable climb. We couldn't read any of the instruments as the dials were all spinning crazily, but I could see that the static pressure dropped to 0-5 lbs. trying to govern the RPM. At the start of this climb the engines were running at 1800 RPM and were pulling 28 inches.

The plane climbed vertically, was flipped over on its back, and then slid off on the left wing. After flipping over on the left wing the plane went into a climb. My head was leaning against the control panel due to the static pressure and just before I got back on the floor got into my eyes. Being wrapped in that material, I lost control of the plane as it rolled out of the storm. The plane rolled out of the storm at an altitude of 3000 feet. The first indicator which changed from 1800 RPM to 1200 RPM was the RPM indicator. The RPM indicator was 1200 RPM and the static pressure was 0-5 lbs.

(Cont'd)

(2. 1. 1945, 3-5:00 to 3:30, Cont'd)

The plane was brought down slowly to 100 feet to avoid turbulence and as came on in to a normal landing with a gross weight of 10,378 lbs.

No apparent structural damage was found on immediate inspection though we felt that strains imposed might have resulted in damage not visible to superficial examination.

(End of Captain Turner's Story)

On the 14th of September all nine of our ships took off for A-1 to get in position for our third raid on Anshan (the second this month).

Our lead crew was leader for a 12-plane formation which flew as far as Kurmitola then split up and flew the remainder of the route individually.

One of our planes lost an engine while over the hump, had to feather it and return to Chaucalis.

The planes took-off in the early morning of September 20th to fly in 12-ship formation and bomb Anshan. Low stratus clouds caused some confusion in assembly after take-off, then several ships had difficulty in catching the formation.

At the I.P. we had a very good formation but shortly after turning on to the bomb run heading the formation very suddenly ran into thick "scuffy" clouds—no time to disperse. It was dangerous and very tedious flying and everyone had their share of the jitters.

The target had to be bombed by Radar because it was completely obscured by clouds. The first run was not satisfactory so the leader made a second pass and dropped his bombs.

FIAC and fighter opposition was reported as very weak.

Out of our seven combat planes in the forward area six were on the mission—five dropping bombs on the primary target and one bombing a target of opportunity.

The returning planes had hardly gotten on the ground when an alert was sounded. Again the Japs sent two-engine bombers over our field. A Jap fighter buzzed the runway numerous times while the bombers were overhead.

This time they did quite a bit of damage with their bombs. Our tanker was severely damaged with numerous holes, the tires were blown out and an oil tank punctured. It shall take some time to repair this damage. Another of our ships was punctured by a quantity of small shrapnel but was not structurally affected.

Security has become quite the thing at A-1 now for there are armed guards all around the hestals. No Chinese enter the road to the Mess Hall without written permission which they show to the Chinese Officer guarding the entrance.

On the 15th of September we were exposed to a shrapnel factory fire. British (joined). His presentation was very effective. He cited as well as any language of sabotage and espionage, which is a very serious matter. He stated that at Kelakant is a very serious matter.

SECRET

(3. WISE, 395TH BOMB S., Cont'd)

ing us away, one by one, to a new routine. Already, this month, we have sent three crews to the C-109 outfit.

Looking back over the past month we find that we have become almost an entirely renovated organization with new "governing personnel", and a new flight procedure--but it looks as though we are profiting by it. More power to us all.

WILLIAM R. ROSS
Captain, Air Corps
Squadron Historian