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HEADQUARTERS
40th Bombardment Group
APO 631, c/o Postmaster, New York, N. Y.

8 July 1944

HISTORY

1 February thru 29 February 1944

The month of February saw the 40th Group begin to reimmerge as an organized combat outfit. Training in B-17's was drawing to a close; classes in ground school were dispensed with except for make-ups in Aero Medical and Intelligence lectures, and operations concentrated on scheduling all available planes for long range and high altitude missions. At the same time crew members were concluding work in combat technique.

Clothing inspections were held and every effort was made to have all men in the Group properly equipped. Service records, 201 files, clothing records and all other personnel and equipment records were checked and brought up to date. All of this in preparation for the anticipated move overseas.

On 1 February the 1st and 3rd Maintenance Squadrons departed Pratt for Camp Patrick Henry, Virginia, an overseas staging area, accordance with SO #29, AAF, Pratt, Kansas, dated 30 January 1944. On 11 February the 1st Maintenance Squadron embarked at Hampton Roads, Virginia, on the Liberty Ship SS Abraham Lincoln and on 12 February the 3rd Maintenance Squadron embarked on the U.S.A.T. Caleb Strong. Both ships joined the convoy in which they were to travel to Oran, French North Africa.

The trip across the Atlantic was a rough one and at times seasickness rivaled the storms in violence. During periods of comparatively smooth sailing a shipboard training program was put into effect. The end of February saw the two squadrons still on the high seas.

The 2nd and 4th Maintenance Squadrons left Pratt by train on 11 February and after an uneventful three day trip on the train arrived at Camp Anza, Arlington, California.

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Anza was also a staging area and the following ten days were spent on a final shake down inspection of clothing and equipment.

On 26 February the two squadrons entrained for Los Angeles P. O. E. and on arrival immediately boarded the U.S.S. Mount Vernon which sailed for Australia the following day.

Their voyage, unlike that of the 1st and 3rd, was over calm seas. At the end of February the U.S.S. Mount Vernon was in midocean enroute for Melbourne.

On 2 February an advance party of 19 officers and men, headed by Lt. Col. John W. Hope, Group Executive Officer and composed of personnel from Group Headquarters and the four Bombardment Squadrons, entrained for Salina, Kansas, to join detachments from the XX Bomber Command, 58th Bomb Wing and the other three Groups. In company with the latter, this advance party traveled to Miami, Florida, by train, and over a period of about two weeks left by ATC planes for their destination in India.

On 24 February Col. Parker left for, it was later learned, England, and Lt. Col. Coira assumed command of the Group. Although it was known only to a few, Col. Parker was sent to the U.K. for the purpose of studying tactics and techniques first hand before joining the Group in India. Why he was sent to the European Theater is still a mystery to everyone in the Group. Considering the differences in enemy equipment and tactics there seems to be no reasonable explanation.

The first of the partially modified B-29's began to arrive on 18 February. Their arrival heralded the beginning of what has been called "The Battle of Pratt", which was one of the most hectic periods personnel of the 40th Group have ever known. The "Battle" began on 27 February the date of which modification of B-29's for combat duty was to begin, and it continued for five long weeks. It was a fight against time, fatigue, confusion and the weather with little time off for sleeping and eating.

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On through the end of the month crews worked furiously day and night to get their airplanes in shape for the coming flights half way around the world.

**F.G. WOOD JR.
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