

(Retyped from microfilm by Sparky Corradina)

SECRET

**ADVANCED HEADQUARTERS
40TH BOMBARDMENT GROUP
APO #210**

13 SEPT 1944

**DETACHMENT HISTORY
1 AUGUST THROUGH 31 AUGUST 1944**

THE FORWARD ECHELON BEGAN THE MONTH WITH THE KNOWLEDGE-BORN PRINCIPALLY OF RUMOR- THAT, IF POSSIBLE, MISSIONS WOULD BE RUN ON THE 10TH, 20TH, AND 30TH OF THE MONTH.

ACTIVITY WAS GEARED TO THIS PLAN AND SURE ENOUGH, TWO DAYS BEFORE THE 10TH COMBAT AIRCRAFT ARRIVED, THIS TIME SOMETHING ENTIRELY NEW IN THE WAY OF BOMB LOAD-INCENDIARIES.

THIS TIME, TOO, THERE WAS SOMETHING ORIGINAL ABOUT THE MISSION. THERE WERE ONLY EIGHT AIRCRAFT TO PARTICIPATE ON THE MISSION, ALL FROM THE 25TH AND 44TH SQUADRONS. SECURITY FOR THIS MEMORABLE EVENT WAS BETTER THAN AVERAGE FOR TANKER CREWS ON THE FIELD FROM THE 45TH AND 395TH KNEW NOTHING OF THIS MISSION. AND FORWARD AREA PERSONNEL WERE UNAWARE OF ANOTHER MISSION ALREADY UNDERWAY FROM THE REAR AREA- THAT STRIKE AIMED AT PALAMBANG, SUMATRA. WHEN GROUP HEADQUARTERS PERSONNEL FAILED TO ARRIVE IT BECAME APPARENT SOMETHING ELSE WAS IN THE WIND. SECTIONS, STRANGELY, TOOK ON A NEW ATTITUDE-TO CARRY THIS EFFORT OFF AS SKILLFULLY AS EVER BEFORE.

GENERAL AND SPECIAL BRIEFINGS WERE SCHEDULED AND CARRIED THROUGH IN AMPLE TIME FOR CREWS TO STUDY THEIR CHARTS AND MAKE INDIVIDUAL PLANS. TAKE-OFF WAS LATE AFTERNOON.

LT. COL. J. I. CORONET RETURNED AFTER ONLY 30 MINUTES OUT AND PROVIDED GROUND PERSONNEL WITH A THRILL. WITH ONLY A MINOR MALFUNCTION OF THE OIL PRESSURE EQUIPMENT, COL. CORONET ELECTED TO RETURN FOR REPAIRS AND TAKE OFF AGAIN. RADIOING THE TOWER THAT HE WAS COMING IN TO DROP A MESSAGE, HE BUZZED OPERATIONS. A MESSAGE SACK FLUTTERED DOWN ONLY A FEW FEET AWAY FROM OPERATIONS IN WHICH REPAIRS NEEDED WERE OUTLINED, A REQUEST FOR FUEL MADE AND PLANS FOR TAKING OFF AGAIN ANNOUNCED.

FUEL TRUCKS AND REPAIR MEN MET THE SHIP AND HAD IT IN THE AIR AGAIN IN LESS THAN AN HOUR.

A METEOROLOGICAL PHENOMENON PLAYED HAVOC WITH SHIPS RETURNING FROM THE MISSION THE FOLLOWING MORNING. A GROUND FOG TOO DENSE TO PENETRATE CLUNG TO THE FIELD JUST AT THE TIME SHIPS WERE COMING BACK. FOUR OF THE SIX AIRCRAFT THAT GOT TO THE TARGET LANDED AT OTHER FIELDS, TWO, AFTER CIRCLING, LANDED SAFELY AT "ABLE ONE."

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GROUND PERSONNEL TOOK OVER AND WORKED MIGHTILY TO GET THE PLANES SERVICED AND IN COMMISSION FOR TAKE OFF THE NEXT DAY. ALL AIRCRAFT EXCEPT #298 FLOWN BY MAJ. WOODROW SWANCUTT TOOK OFF FOR THE REAR AREA ON D PLUS ONE.

ALMOST ALL WORK IN THE FORWARD AREA, IN SENSE CAN BE DIVIDED INTO CLEANING UP AFTER ONE MISSION AND GETTING READY FOR THE NEXT. THIS TIME THE TWO JOBS ALMOST COLIDED FOR HARDLY WERE THE LAST DETAILS OF MISSION #5 WOUND UP WHEN PLANES FOR MISSION #7 ARRIVED. (MISSION #6 BEING THE SUMATRA RAID)

THIS TIME THE BLUE CHIPS WERE IN FOR IT WAS, THE BRIEFING DISCLOSED, TO BE A DAYLIGHT ATTACK ON YAWATA.

PREPARATIONS FOR A MISSION NOW ALMOST ROUTINE, NEVERTHELESS ENTAILED COUNTLESS DETAILS FROM IMPORTANT REPAIRS ON AIRCRAFT TO REPAIRING A BROKEN ELECTRIC LIGHT SWITCH IN THE BRIEFING BUILDING.

TAKE OFF THIS TIME WAS SCHEDULED FOR MID MORNING PUTTING OUR FORMATIONS OVER THE TARGET AT SUNSET. ONE AIRCRAFT FAILED TO REACH THE FORWARD AREA, THE CREW SAFELY BAILING OUT SOUTHWEST OF LILIANG. OF AIRCRAFT AIRBORNE FOR THE MISSION TWO RETURNED EARLY. THEY TOGETHER WITH ONE THAT FAILED TO TAKE OFF, WERE SCHEDULED TO MAKE A NIGHT STRIKING FORCE WITH AIRCRAFT OF THE 444TH AND 462ND GROUPS.

THESE TWO MISSIONS AND A PHOTO RECONNAISSANCE MISSION BY ONE SHIP CONSTITUTED THREE SEPARATE BRIEFINGS, INTERROGATIONS AND MISSION REPORTS- A ROUND THE CLOCK JOB FOR THREE DAYS.

NOW CAME THE JOB OF REFUELING THE AIRCRAFT AND READYING THEM FOR THEIR RETURN FLIGHT TO THE REAR AREA. FOR THE FIRST TIME THERE WAS INSUFFICIENT GASOLINE ON THE FIELD TO SERVICE EVERY PLANE. AS A RESULT AIRCRAFT NOT IN IMMEDIATE COMMISSION FOR THE RETURN FLIGHT WERE LEFT DRY SO THAT PLANES CAPABLE OF FLYING BACK COULD BE SERVICED WITH THE AMOUNT NEEDED FOR THE HUMP TRIP HOME. THIRTEEN PLANES WERE "EVACUATED" THE FIRST DAY. ON D PLUS TWO THE REMAINING AIRCRAFT EXCEPT FOR #348 WITH AN ENGINE CHANGE TOOK OFF.

ON AUGUST 22 THREE MEMBERS OF THE CREW OF #308 UNHEARD FROM SINCE TAKE OFF ON THE MISSION ARRIVED SAFELY AT A-1 WITH AN EXCITING STORY OF THEIR BAIL OUT ON THE LAST LEG OF THEIR JOURNEY HOME. TWO DAYS LATER WORD WAS RECEIVED OF THE SAFE ARRIVAL AT A 14TH AIR FORCE FORWARD BASE OF CAPT. GRUBAUGH, PILOT; LT. THONSBERRY, CO-PILOT; SGT. PATTERSON, RADIO OPERATOR; THESE, TOGETHER, WITH LTS. KUSIAN AND FAIRMAN ALREADY REPORTED SAFE BY LT. WILLIAMSON AND SGTS. BARNES AND LUNT THE THREE FIRST TO RETURN, ACCOUNTED FOR ALL BUT ONE MEMBER OF THE CREW. TWO BODIES, THOSE OF SGT. HAUSE AND ONE OTHER, UNIDENTIFIED, HAVING BEEN FOUND IN THE CRASHED AIRPALNE.

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AS THE MONTH CLOSED NO FURTHER WORD WAS HEARD FROM THE REMAINING CREW MEMBER NOR FROM ANYONE IN THE CREWS OF #829 AND #301 THAT FAILED TO RETURN FROM THE MISSION.

AIRCRAFT #288 PILOTED BY CAPT. ROBERT COPLEY TOOK OFF IN THE EARLY MORNING OF AUG 27 ON A PHOTO MISSION TO DAIREN AND ANSHAN. THIS MISSION WAS IMPORTANT TO THE FORWARD AREA BECAUSE FOR THE FIRST TIME A MISSION WAS PLANNED AND EXECUTED ENTIRELY BY GROUND PERSONNEL OF THE FORWARD AREA. AN OPERATIONS ORDER WAS WRITTEN FOR THE MISSION BY THE FORWARD ECHELON, XX BOMBER COMMAND. THE ROUTE WAS PLANNED, THE CREW BRIEFED AND INTERROGATED ENTIRELY BY FORWARD ECHELON PERSONNEL.

THREE INTERESTING ELEMENTS WERE ADDED TO THE CHINA PICTURE IN AUGUST TO MAKE IT MORE INTERESTING, BUT FIRST A BIT OF BACKGROUND. ORIGINALLY THE PLAN HAD BEEN TO ROTATE PERSONNEL IN THE FORWARD AREA SO AS TO EQUALIZE THE HARDSHIPS AMONG ALL PERSONNEL IN THE GROUP. AS TIME WENT ON, AIDED BY THE FACTS THAT EVERYTHING WAS RUNNING SMOOTHLY AS IT WAS NO ONE ESPECIALLY DESIRED A RETURN TO THE REAR AREA, THE ROTATION PLAN WAS FORGOTTEN.

DURING AUGUST, HOWEVER, DISTURBING RUMORS BEGAN COMING UP FROM THE REAR AREA ABOUT HOW COMFORTABLE IT WAS IN INDIA. FOOD HAD IMPROVED, ICE WAS AVAILABLE, CLUBS FOR BOTH OFFICERS AND ENLISTED MEN HAD OPENED, PX SUPPLIES CAME REGULARLY AND IN QUANTITY-AND MOST OF ALL BEER! CREWS MAKING THE HUMP FLIGHT OR CARGO MISSIONS WOULD DROP OUT OF THE PLANE ON THE CHINA SIDE WITH A COLD BEER IN HAND OR A ROUND OF FRUIT JUICE. TO THIRSTY MEMBERS OF THE FORWARD AREA THIS WAS SALT ON AN OPEN WOUND. THEN, TOO, JULY HAD BEEN A PARTICULARLY DISMAL MONTH FOR MOVIES IN THE FORWARD AREA. BEGINNING IN JUNE AND CONTINUING INTO JULY FIVE WEEKS PASSED WITHOUT A NEW MOVIE. AUGUST WAS A DIFFERENT STORY. EARLY IN THE MONTH A GENUINE PX RATION WAS ISSUED CONSISTING OF MANY OF THOSE THINGS DESIRED MOST OF ALL BY THE MEN-CANDY AND FRUIT JUICE. NEXT CAME WORD THAT NINE NEW FILMS WERE ON HAND AND BEFORE LONG IT WAS RUMORED 21 MORE WERE ON HAND AND SCHEDULED FOR A TOUR OF THE HOSTELS. IN ADDITION TO THESE A PLAN WAS PUT UNDER WAY TO PROVIDE MEMBERS OF THE FORWARD ECHELON WITH A PLACE FOR OVERNIGHT STAYS IN CHENGTU. ATTRACTIONS SUCH AS THESE CAUSED NEARLY EVERYONE TO COMMENT, "CHINA ISN'T SUCH A BAD PLACE AFTER ALL."

MAJ. SEELEY, DETACHMENT COMMANDER, ANNOUNCED EARLY IN THE MONTH THAT THOSE WHO DESIRED TO RETURN TO THE REAR AREA WOULD BE PERMITTED TO DO SO. A FEW TOOK ADVANTAGE OF THIS OPPORTUNITY.

STRENGTH OF THE CHINA DETACHMENT ON 31 AUGUST 1944 WAS 113 ENLISTED MEN AND 9 OFFICERS.

WILLIAM A. ROONEY,
CAPT., AIR CORPS,
DETACHEMNT HISTORIAN