

(Retyped from microfilm by Joan D. Stewart)

S E C R E T

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REVIEW OF 40TH GROUP HISTORY

1 April 41 – 31 January 46

The 40th Bombardment Group (H), cited three times as a Distinguished Unit, was activated at Borinquen Field, Puerto Rico on 1 April 1941. Operations have since taken it completely around the world. Original personnel were assigned by transfer from the 25th Bomb Group (N), the 24th Air Base Group, and the 27th Reconnaissance Squadron. The Group served in defense of the Panama Canal during the early stages of the war, flying from Howard and Albrook Fields in the Canal Zone and from advanced bases in the Galapagos Islands, 800 miles off the Central American Coast. After this tour the Group was returned to the United States for B-29 Training at Pratt Army Air Field.

At Pratt AAF the 40th became a Very Heavy Group, receiving the first B-29 delivered to any combat outfit. Training in the new sky giants followed and then a mass air movement of men and planes to an overseas base near Calcutta, India.

The base in India was still far from strategic Japanese targets and the Group was forced to operate from advanced bases in China. Problems germane to logistics were almost insurmountable during the China-India phase of B-29 operation. All gasoline, bombs, airplane parts, and large quantities of general supplies had to be ferried over the “Hump” to the advance China bases before a hand could be raised against the Jap Islands. Also, replacement parts were slow in arriving, airplanes were untried in combat and the intense heat made it all but impossible in daily maintenance activities during the day.

Overcoming these obstacles the first B-29 mission ever flown against the enemy was airborne on 5 June 1944. The Target was the Makasan Railway Workshops at Bangkok. This was a “Shake-down” and was not released to the press.

This mission gave the crews the necessary confidence and trust in their new weapon and the first publicly announced strike came on 15 June 1944 when the B-29's took off from Chengtu, China and flew 1500 miles to hit the Imperial Iron and Steel Works at Yawata, Japan.

Continuing to strike the enemy at an ever-increasing pace, the 40th Group, along with the other three groups of the 58th Wing, succeeded in “proving” the destructive power of the B-29. The “proving” process covered a period of 12 months in China & India, and included thirty-eight combat missions and forty-eight missions of other types. 40th Group suggested modifications on the airplane were incorporated into the new B-29s coming over as replacements and with new tactical units. Ultimately, the world's biggest bomber became the world's best bomber.

With missions and experience behind them, the 40th, with its men and planes, was moved to the Island of Tinian in the Mariana Group, to join the nearly 500 B-29s already operating from there. The first mission took off from Tinian on 5 May 1945, just a few days after the arrival of the last plane from India. The objective, the Hiro Naval Aircraft Factory, as 70% destroyed.

For this mission, and for two succeeding strikes, one on 10 May against the Oshima Oil Storage Facilities, and again on 14 May against the City of Nagoya, the Group received a Distinguished Unit Citation.

The Oshima target was 90% destroyed and at Nagoya the Group's incendiary bombs raised to 9.2 square miles, the total area burned out in that city.

On two other occasions the organization received the Distinguished Unit Citation; the first time for the extremely successful raid on the Imperial Iron and Steel Works at Yawata on 20 August 1944, the second time for the destruction of the Sumitomo Light Metals Works at Osaka, 24 July 1945. On the Osaka mission “????”...Aug 1945.

the four formations of the 40th Group dropped their loads of 4,000 lb bombs on the Sumitomo plant in two minutes, 85% of them striking within 1,000 feet of the briefing aiming point, completely destroying the factory. The large number of airplanes over the target area in such a short period of time saturated the anti-aircraft defenses, resulting in relatively little flak damage and no losses.

On the last day of B-29 combat operations, 14 August 1945, the 40th Group destroyed the Hikari Naval Arsenal, a successful finale to a splendid combat record.

During 19 months of actual combat operations, airplanes of this group flew an estimated 9,239,160 nautical miles. Twenty-six thousand three hundred and forty-three hours were flown under actual combat conditions, while 9,695 hours were transport flights. The remaining 7,958 hours were given over to search, prisoner-of-war supply, training, and other miscellaneous types of missions. Gunners accounted for 46 Japanese planes destroyed, 22 probably destroyed, and 64 damaged. Thirty-four B-29s were lost in aerial combat while 175 sustained damage.

Bombs on primary targets totaled 8,847 tones. Three hundred tons were dropped on other targets.

During the history of the 40th Group, which has amounted to almost five years, it has had ten commanding officers, Maj William B. Sousa became CG at the time of activation; Maj George McGregor succeeded him, Maj Ivan Ivan W. Palmer took over in November 1941 followed by Col Vernon C. Smith and then Col Henry K. Mooney. After its return to the United States from Panama, Col Lewis R. Parker commanded the group until he was shot down over Europe, where he had gone to learn the latest combat techniques before leading his unit against the enemy. He was succeeded by Col Leonard F. Harman. In August of 1944 Col William B.

Blanchard was appointed GC and later, for a brief two weeks, Col Henry E. Sullivan commanded. In February 1945, Col William K. Skaer took command and has held that position up to the present time.

The present mission of the 40th Group, now stationed at March Field, California, is to reorganize, train, equip, and to maintain at high efficiency, a long range bombardment unit capable of immediate , effective action in case of any emergency.

GROUP HISTORY

1 February through 28 February 1946

I

Coming from a war machine to a peace time organization the 40th Bomb Group under the command of Col Skaer, continued to get its feet on the ground at March Field, Riverside, California.

A program of ground training for air crew members was well underway for personnel assigned to the group. The schools program under the direction of Maj J. F. Harvey had swung into high gear and records of attendance and tests were posted daily on charts in the Training Office.

Personnel continued to arrive at March Field and to be assigned to Group Headquarters as other personnel left the organization for separation from active duty.

The greatest problem confronting the group at the present time is securing personnel to accomplish its present mission of organizing and training a long range bombardment group capable of meeting any situation.

II

In compliance with Letter Order number 26, dated 11 February 46, Col Skaer left on a cross country trip to inspect air bases suited to B-29 operations for the 4th Air Force. On 14 February 46 Lt Col Oscar Schaaf, GC of the 25th Bomb Squadron, assumed command of the group during the temporary absence of Col Skaer.

On 14 February Lt Col Schaaf called a Staff Meeting to discuss and make recommendations for a new Table of Organization as set forth by TWX from AAF Headquarters. Higher Headquarters stipulated that Bomb Groups and Service Groups shall be a self-sufficient organization comprised of three tactical squadrons of

15 aircraft per squadron with two complete crews per aircraft, and one transport squadron.

During the meeting, Lt Col Schaaf suggested a separate maintenance squadron, tactical squadrons, and service group for the set up. Maj Lamb Suggested absorption of all maintenance personnel by service group.

The consensus of opinion was that Production Line Maintenance with the Maintenance personnel in service group would be the best method.

With the results of this meeting in mind, proposed T/O's from each section were submitted to Lt Col Patus, Group Executive Officer, for compiling and forwarding to higher Headquarters.

On 16 February 46 the officers of Group Headquarters held a meeting in the officer's lounge of Building 611A at 1000 to organize a bowling league. Capt Needleman was elected President and Lt Honomichi was elected Secretary-Treasurer. Thursday night was set up as bowling night for the 40th Bomb Group Officer's League.

A duty roster of Headquarter's Captains and First Lieutenants was posted 18 February for Saturday and Sunday duty. Quarters for the duty officer were set up in BOQ #107.

Personnel section was checking officers 66-2 to bring them up to date.

Col Skaer returned from his cross-country inspection trip on 19 February 46 and held a Staff meeting on 20 February 46 at which time he revealed the itinerary of his trip. Col Skaer stated that as far as he knew at the present time the 40th Bomb Group would be stationed permanently at March Field.

The subject of emergency housing was discussed as set forth in a letter from the Base Troop Commander's Office.

Col Skaer also informed his Staff that he stopped at Roswell, NM and

that one crew from the 40th Bomb Group is in competition for dropping the “bomb” in the coming Crossroads Project.

Sixteen B-29 A/C were due to arrive at March Field, California, on or about the 24 February 46. Fourteen of these were to be stored and two assigned to the group. By the end of February none of these aircraft arrived.

The use of check lists by all flying personnel was again stressed by Col Skaer to avoid accidents when operating unfamiliar aircraft.

All group personnel were assembled in Base Theater No. 1 at 1300 on 21 February at which time Col Skaer reported on his trip and denied any basis for rumors of the 40th Group moving away from March Field, California, at the present time

During February the Base Provost Marshall confiscated flying clothes and equipment from 40th Group Personnel at the March Field Main gate. This policy was necessary due to the number of officers and enlisted men being separated from active duty. Needless to say this caused quite a bit of “feeling” and numerous discussions. The lack of sufficient locker storage space necessitated some personnel carrying flying equipment in their automobiles.

Col Skaer in his Staff Meeting of 25 February stressed the need for utilizing ‘on-the-job training’ and formal training to lift reenlistees out of a basic status. Group personnel with service group MCS will be transferred to service group and continue to work on the “line” for group Headquarters.

Sixteen enlisted men were sent to Roswell to put two B-29s in shape to fly them to March Field.

Col Skaer stated that further acceleration is desired so that we can be ready for any contingency, including the possibility of another war.

We are retaining hangars #2 and #5 on the line and relinquishing hangar 6.

The group Public Relations Officer reviewed the history of this organization

and, at their request, submitted to the 58th Wing a report covering their basic historical facts of the 40th Group. Later in the month, the Wing requested and was provided with a narrative type history to be included in the 58th Wing Command Book. A Copy of this history is attached.

Squadron Public Relations Officers have been updated as to the request and were beginning to further ???/

One hundred and twenty-five men interview forms were printed and sent to ??? to newspapers.

The plans for March include a goal of 136 news releases ???/ and a continuation of interviews. A design for personal stationary bearing the group shield has been worked out and, in the near future, detail ????? with Post Exchange for the manufacture and sale of this item.

Since this group is still a part of needed personnel, requests for transfer to units other and 444th Group or 58th Wing will not be approved.

The strength of group Headquarters as of the first and last day of February are:

<u>Officers</u>	<u>1 Feb 46</u>	<u>28 Feb 46</u>
Colonel	1	1
Lt Col	2	2
Major	7	7
Captain	15	15
1 st Lt	22	22
2 nd Lt	1	1
 <u>Enlisted Men</u>		
M/Sgt	15	15
T/Sgt	6	6
S/Sgt	6	3
Sgt	19	9
Cpl	22	11
Pfc	7	7
Pvt	2	1

Key and Staff personnel assigned and present with the group during the month of February were:

Colonel William K. Skaer	Commanding Officer
Lt Col Robert P. Tatum	Acting Deputy CO and Exec O
Maj Leslie E. Minor	Adjutant
1 st Lt Neland J. Morgan	S-1 (Act)
Capt Arthur V. Arrowsmith	S-2 (Act)
Maj Charles M. Weber, Jr	S-3 (act)
Lt James V. DeCoster	S-4 (act)
Maj John F. Harvey	Group Training Officer
Capt Donald C. Almy	Public Relations Officer
Lt Col Oscar R. Schaaf	25 th Squadron GC
Lt Col Neil W. Wemple	44 th Squadron GC
Lt Col Joseph B. White	45 th Squadron GC
Lt Col Willard S. Wilson	343 rd Squadron GC
Capt Anaclethe P. DeCesare	I & K, & Recruiting Officer
1 st Lt. Emil G. Honomichl	Group Fire Marshall
Maj George A. Simeral	Group Air Inspector
Maj Lewis R. Riley	Unit Aircraft Accident Prevention Officer
Capt Donald H. Rowlineau	Stat Control Officer
1 st Lt Eldred L. Medley	Tech Supply Officer
Maj Richard F. Hale	Group Bombardier

Capt Lawrence B. Eustis
Maj Chester R. Lamb
Maj William J. Heidt
Capt Frank J. ?ore
Capt Ray Kinslow

Group Photographer
Group Engineer
Group Tech Inspector
Group ???? Officer
Group Communications Officer