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FORTY FOURTH BOMBARDMENT SQUADRON (J)  
Office of the Squadron Commander

JIG/the/A

A. B. Pratt, Kansas  
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SQUADRON HISTORY

The 44<sup>th</sup> Bombardment Squadron was formed at Borinquen Field, Puerto Rico, April 1, 1941, due to the great expansion program of the growing Air Force of the United States. The 44<sup>th</sup> Bombardment Squadron is one of the four Squadrons of the 40<sup>th</sup> Bombardment Group.

At the time of its origination, the 44<sup>th</sup> Squadron was located in what was termed as "Tent City", which was as the name implies, a number of tents south-east of the old runway. Despite all those handicaps, and also the fact that it was a newly formed unit, the 44<sup>th</sup> Squadron took on full titles as a part of Group.

Commanding Officer of this newly formed 44<sup>th</sup> Squadron was Captain Jasper N. Bell, formerly of the 35<sup>th</sup> Squadron of the 25<sup>th</sup> Bombardment Group.

During the first three months of the Squadrons existence, it had no air-planes of its own but was attached to the 10<sup>th</sup> Squadron for flying. After that time it had one plane and sometimes two B-18A's. However, during all this period the training of this growing Squadron was carried on in a remarkable manner and preparations were made for the time when it would have its own planes and equipment.

The strength of the organization at this time was approximately one hundred and eighty Officers and men, with monthly replacements gradually increasing the strength.

During the month of August, 1941, the 44<sup>th</sup> Squadron left "Tent City" and moved into the new barracks across the runway. The elimination of mosquitoes, dust and dirt, rain and mud, made things more pleasant for all members of the Squadron and all personnel started out anew with a determination to make the 44<sup>th</sup> Squadron the leading Squadron of the Group.

Early in December, 1941, Captain Bell was appointed Major and was transferred to the 25<sup>th</sup> Bombardment Group and First Lieutenant David A. Tate of the 29<sup>th</sup> Bombardment Squadron took over the duties of Commanding Officer.

During the early months of 1942, a large number of the Squadron left for the United States to attend Enlisted Pilot School and Officers Candidate School.

On February 27, 1942, Lieutenant Tate was relieved and Commanding Officer and First Lieutenant William A. Jenks took over the Squadron as Commanding Officer.

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During the early weeks of April, 1942, replacements from the Casual Detachment were transferred to the 44<sup>th</sup> Squadron bringing the strength to approximately three hundred Officers and men.

During the next few months, with equipment slowly being assigned to them, the 44<sup>th</sup> Squadron put forth its best efforts in training combat crews and flying patrols as directed.

On June 5, 1942, the 44<sup>th</sup> Squadron received Secret Orders to proceed to Balboa, Panama Canal Zone, enroute to a permanent change of station.

At 12:00 noon, June 7, 1942, the 44<sup>th</sup> Squadron took its last look at Borinquen Field, and departed for San Juan, Puerto Rico, arriving there at 4:30 P.M., and boarding the U.S.A.T. #62 at 7:30 P.M. They remained in the harbor that night and the following morning set sail from the Island of Puerto Rico destined for Balboa, Panama, Canal Zone.

Two stops were made enroute, the first being made at Port of Spain, Trinidad, on June 10, 1942, and the second at Aruba, on June 14, 1942. Leaving Aruba the afternoon of June 14, 1942, they arrived at Cristobal, Canal Zone, at 11:45 A.M., June 16, 1942. At 2:00 P.M., they entered the Canal Zone and at 3:20 arrived at Balboa. The Squadron then left for Howard Field by truck convoy, arriving there at 11:00 P.M. The 44<sup>th</sup> Squadron was then quartered in temporary barracks at that field to await further orders.

July 2, 1942, the 44<sup>th</sup> Bombardment Squadron reassigned from a medium Bombardment Squadron to a Heavy Bombardment Squadron.

On June 23, 1942, the air echelon of the 44<sup>th</sup> Squadron departed Howard Field for Guatemala, Central America, to be stationed at Guatemala City Air Base. On July 3, 1942, the remainder of the 44<sup>th</sup> Squadron left Howard Field for Balboa to board the S.S. Columbia, enroute to San Jose, Guatemala, arriving there at 2:00 P.M. July 6, 1942. From San Jose they left by train for Guatemala City Air Base, arriving there at 11:15 P.M. that night, this to be their permanent station.

The Squadron after arriving at Guatemala City Air Base, were put through an extensive training period on B-17E type airplanes. A short time later they entered the important role of patrol work Guatemala City Air Base and the Galapagos Islands, the third longest patrol ever assigned any unit of the Air Corps. Although the B-17E type aircraft was new to the Squadron, they came through on top, proving their worth by keeping their airplanes in the air and flying patrols at all times. Many difficulties were experience by the 44<sup>th</sup> Squadron the first months they were stationed at this base due to the fact that the Guatemala City Air Base was a new field under construction and tools and equipment were long overdue in reaching the field.

On September 8, 1942, Captain Eilson A. Baake was relieved as Commanding Officer of the 44<sup>th</sup> Bombardment Squadron, and in his place came Captain James I. Cornett, formerly Commanding Officer of the 29<sup>th</sup> Bombardment Squadron. On November 28, 1942, Captain Cornett was appointed Major.

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Officers and men under the command of Captain George T. Weschler, left Guatemala City by train at 8:40 A.M. for San Jose, Guatemala, arriving there at 1:00 P.M., and boarding the U.S.A.T. Madigan for Panama at 5:00 P.M. One stop was made at Punta Arenas, Costa Rica, where the men and Officers enjoyed a two hour shore leave. Leaving Costa Rica the following day, they arrived at Balboa, Panama Canal Zone at 11:30 A.M. May 24, 1943. Arriving at Howard Field by truck convoy at 1:00 P.M. they were assigned temporary barracks awaiting further orders.

On May 30, 1943, the second echelon under command of Major Cornett, left Guatemala City at 1:30 P.M. by train and arrived in San Jose at 5:00 P.M., boarding the U.S.A.T. Johnson at 6:00 P.M. At 8:30 P.M. June 1, 1943, they sailed from San Jose arriving at Balboa, Panama Canal Zone, at 9:00 A.M. June 4, 1943. Leaving Balboa by truck convoy, they arrived at Howard Field, joining the first echelon of the Squadron.

While stationed at Howard Field awaiting further orders, the 44<sup>th</sup> Squadron was attached to the 10<sup>th</sup> Tactical Control Unit for Administration, quarters and rations.

The Squadron received training in Infantry Drill and were further equipped in preparation for their return to the United States.

A review and presentation of Air Module was held on June 7, 1943, in accordance with Sixth Air Force General Order #41. Citations were awarded by Colonel D. M. Mooney, Commanding Officer of the 12<sup>th</sup> Bombardment Group (H).

On the 15<sup>th</sup> of June, 1943, at 5:00 P.M., the 44<sup>th</sup> Squadron left Howard Field by motor convoy, arriving at Balboa at 6:45 P.M., and landed on the U.S.A.T. George Washington bound for San Francisco, California. Usual duties were continued aboard ship, with all Officers and men enjoying a pleasant nine day voyage.

At 6:30 A.M. on the 25<sup>th</sup> of June, 1943, the 44<sup>th</sup> Squadron disembarked from the U.S.A.T. George Washington and boarded the ferry "Army Queen" arriving at Fort Hallowell on Angel Island in San Francisco Bay at 9:45 A.M.

Usual duties continued at Fort Hallowell until June 27, 1943, when the good news was published that the 44<sup>th</sup> Bombardment Squadron would leave Fort Hallowell the following morning for Oakland, California, thence to our permanent station "somewhere" in the United States.

On June 28, 1943, at 8:30 A.M. the ferry "Army Queen" was again boarded disembarking at Oakland, California, to board the train leaving at 10:00 A.M.

The long trip east was begun by troop train and three days later, July 1, 1943, the 44<sup>th</sup> Squadron arrived at Pratt, Kansas, being convoyed by truck to Pratt Army Base, three miles north of town, this to be their permanent station.

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On July 3, 1943, personnel were notified that they would be granted 12-day furloughs, plus travel time, to visit home or anywhere within the United States. After an all night siege, furloughs were completed, and on July 4, 1943, men and Offices were leaving Pratt for their respective destinations with a great share of the personnel beginning their first furlough in the United States after serving three to four years in foreign service.

Normal duties continued at the base with a voluntary detail left behind to handle administration under the command of First Lieutenant Murry J. Bousen (?) pending the return of Major Cornett from leave.

During the latter part of July, personnel were returning from leaves and furloughs and the 44<sup>th</sup> Squadron was assigned seven B-26's, while waiting for the B-29's to arrive. Classes of instruction were started on the B-29 type aircraft with all personnel concerned eagerly attending all classes.

On the 17<sup>th</sup> of August, 1943, one B-29 type aircraft was assigned this Squadron. 44<sup>th</sup> combat crews already assigned. More YB-29's are on their way to this Squadron, where crews will receive their training for Combat Duty.

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