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The
Long Rangers
A Diary of
The 307th Bombardment Group(H)

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base. The run was too short, and the squadron he had joined drifted to the right. Two 371st navigators complained that the Group leader changed course much too often and unnecessarily on the way to the target.³⁷⁰

Navy Task Force 58, which was supporting the Saipan operation, was threatened by a Japanese naval task force that was operating north of Yap. A call was received by the 307th and 5th Groups requesting that they attack any Japanese warships that might seek refuge in Yap harbor. In carrying out the mission, the two groups made the first daylight strike on Yap on June 22nd. In the absence of any shipping they bombed the airdrome and town. They caught the Japanese completely by surprise, resulting in the loss of nineteen planes on the ground and a badly damaged runway. Missions to Yap, in addition to the ones against Woleai, prevented the Japanese from ferrying fighters from the Philippines and the Dutch East Indies to Saipan.

The 370th led the June 22nd mission to Yap. The bombing was done individually, rather than in formation, and the runway was the main target. The photo interpretation showed fifty-two individual hits visible on the runway with an additional fifty bombs on the taxiways. Of the forty-eight planes visible on the runway and in the revetments adjacent to the runway, nineteen were definitely destroyed and many others damaged. The surprise to the Japanese was so complete that interceptor planes were just taking off as the formation reached the target. One enemy fighter was seen to attempt a take off and swerve from a near miss and, as the pilot straightened the plane out, it received a direct hit. Another fighter received a near miss just as he was taking off which caused the plane to loop and crash at the end of the runway. The A/A fire was heavy, medium and fairly accurate. Ten aircraft were left burning on the ground and another twenty-five or thirty were damaged. Lt. Camp's(370th) plane was hit by a 20mm shell that blew out the nose wheel tire, knocked out the automatic pilot, and the trim tab cables, and damaged the hydraulic system. With the hydraulic system inoperative the landing gear and flaps were cranked down for landing; after landing parachutes were opened from each waist window to serve as brakes.

Admiral Nimitz wanted Yap so that he would have naval and air bases in the western Carolines to assure the neutralization of Truk and to cooperate with Gen. MacArthur in gaining control of the eastern approaches to the Luzon-Formosa-China coast region. Allied occupation of Yap would deny the Japanese air and submarine bases there. As late as July 7, 1944 Yap was scheduled for invasion on October 5th.³⁷¹

On June 23rd the 307th was back over Yap. This time there were a few Zeros, A/A and phosphorous bombs. The target was the runway, and it was blanketed with bombs as was the apron. Two direct hits were scored on planes on the ground, one of which was a "dummy" parked in a revetment on the southwest end of the runway. Five or six enemy fighters were seen over the target area but only one closed and S/Sgt. Marcoux and T/Sgt. McDonald, gunners on Lt. Hobstetter's(370th) crew damaged it.³⁷²

Lt. Gage(370th) had the right wing of his plane filled with .50 caliber shells fired by a new tail gunner in the plane ahead of him.³⁷³

On the June 24th mission to Yap, the 371st lead plane, Lt. Rice pilot, became separated from the others and by the time he found the formation he was unable to catch up. The plane flown by Lt. Cooke(371st) was using an excessive amount of fuel, so he bombed the radio station at Sorol Island and headed for home. Lt. Nichol's(371st) plane was tail heavy. He dropped one bomb on the Sorol Island radio station and proceeded to the primary target and bombed with the 31st Squadron. Lt. Kates(371st) and Capt. Goldsbury(371st) tacked on to the 23rd Squadron when it became apparent that the 371st was hopelessly split up.³⁷⁴

On June 25th, the primary targets were the runway and the revetments on Yap. Lt. Kimmerle(370th) hit Sorol Island, the secondary target, because of a gas leak. Twenty-five to thirty Japanese fighters jumped the formation about two minutes before bombs away, and the attack continued for about thirty minutes. There was one Tojo or Raiden with the attackers which resembled an American P-47. The enemy pilots were eager. They were the first team, however, their tactics showed a marked difference from those encountered over Truk. There was an almost complete absence of vertical dives and high diving frontal attacks that had been encountered over Truk. These enemy pilots may have been from Palau having been alerted by their radio station on Sorol Island. They appeared to be experienced, aggressive and markedly superior to the average pilot encountered over Truk. They did not expose the underside of their plane on the breakaway; a tactic used by the Truk-based pilots. The A/A was fairly heavy and accurate; twenty to twenty-five phosphorous bombs were dropped with no damage, but six came uncomfortably close. S/Sgt. Robert Taylor, ball turret gunner on Lt. Thayne's(370th) crew shared a kill with S/Sgt. Wiatrowski, right waist gunner on Lt. Dufur's(370th) crew. Lt. Dufur's plane received about twenty holes from A/A fire and fighters. Lt. Carl F. Martin's(372nd) plane was hit by 20mm fire in the wing outboard of #4 engine and in the right main landing gear tire, Lt. Frank Rogers'(372nd) plane was hit eight times in the tail section by 7.7mm fire. T/Sgt. Charles H. McMullen(372nd) and S/Sgt. Donald T. Jepsen(372nd) shared a kill and S/Sgt. Melvin B. Miller(372nd) got one. In addition, one enemy aircraft was destroyed on the ground by a bomb.

Lt. Gerald D. Coleman's(372nd) plane received direct hits in #2 and #3 engines from 20mm fire. The cockpit and bombardier's compartment caught fire and flames could be seen coming out of the windows. The plane performed a perfect loop, fell off to the right in a spin and crashed in the water. It was strafed all the way down by the enemy pilots. No parachutes were seen. The enemy pilots zigzagged back and forth over the wreckage and life rafts until nothing remained except a bloody, foaming spot in the water.³⁷⁵

On the June 26th mission to Yap, the 371st Squadron encountered an unusual number of phosphorous bombs. They were thrown with great

accuracy and close enough to the formation to be audible. Several burst within the formation; four planes had to fly through streamers. S/Sgt. Ransbottom(371st) reported that the phosphorous bombs were released by an explosive charge. There was general agreement among the crews that the Japanese pilots at Yap were markedly superior to those encountered at Truk.

S/Sgts. Erickson and McFarlane shared a fighter as did S/Sgts. Young and Johnson. All four were members of Lt. Theisen's(371st) crew. S/Sgt. Libudziewski, tail gunner on Lt. Clary's(371st) crew had a sure kill and T/Sgt. Parrish and S/Sgt. Bloom on Lt. Lowe's(371st) crew shared one. One of the 371st pilots scheduled for the mission became ill and Lt. Paul W. Nichol(371st) was called to substitute. The late take-off prevented him catching the formation, and he hit Sorol Island.³⁷⁶

It was back to Yap on June 27th to hit the runways. The Japanese were masters at patching up bombed runways. Just prior to bombs away, eighteen to twenty fighters intercepted the formation, and the battle continued for twenty-five to thirty minutes. On Lt. Habben's(370th) crew Sgts. Carl Tychsen and Richard King each shot down a fighter as did S/Sgts. James Hitchcock and Clarence Dickerson on Lt. Saylor's(370th) crew. Pvts. Jesse Anderson, Raymond Altieri and George Krum on Lt. Gage's(370th) crew each got one and Sgt. Melvin Ruckriegel and nose gunner Brubaker on the same crew each damaged one. Lt. Gage's(370th) plane was damaged and left behind by the formation, and once more they had to fight their way back home.

Capt. Donald Dixon(372nd), a newly-assigned pilot to the squadron, led the 372nd to Yap. He was the only member of the squadron to hit the target; the others bombed Sorol Island. Dixon's plane received slight damage from 7.7mm fire.³⁷⁷

On June 28th, Yap was hit again. After the bomb run, the town was covered by smoke. The fighters struck as the bombs were dropped, with the initial attack consisting of dropping phosphorous bombs which were accurate as to altitude but slightly leading. This tactic necessitated some evasive action. The fighter tactics differed from those encountered on previous Yap raids. This time the fighter pilots made predominantly high frontal attacks which were pressed closely. One fighter pilot was reported to have flown through the entire formation without firing a shot. S/Sgt. Conlon and Sgt. Thomas D. Fann and S/Sgt. Eugene Illingsworth on Lt. Dufur's(370th) crew shared an enemy fighter.

Early in the fight Lt. Dufur's(370th) plane was hit in the left wing. The shell punctured the connection between the fuel cell and the #1 engine. Gasoline began to run out near the #2 engine over the supercharger and, to prevent a fire or explosion, it was necessary to cut the engine off and transfer the gasoline from the damaged tank. Shortly after this, the #1 engine cut off due to the fuel leak. Altitude could not be maintained with two engines, and, when it appeared that the fuel leak had been stopped, the #2 engine was restarted, but the plane continued to lose altitude. When reaching an altitude of 1000

feet, the crew began throwing out everything they could to lighten the load. The pilot and copilot, Lt. Musgrave, were then able to bring the plane in for a safe landing on three engines. Lt. Dufur set a 13th Air Force record for one of the longest over water flights on three engines.³⁷⁸

Lt. Anthony(371st) flying plane #323, "Frenisi", which was on its ninety-ninth mission, was hit in the leading edge of the wing between #2 engine and the fuselage. The propeller blades were peppered with shrapnel. A 20mm shell fired from a fighter went through the leading edge of the left wing blowing the left landing gear tire in the process. Minor damage was caused by 7.7mm fire. In spite of the flat tire, Lt. Anthony "greased in" "Frenisi". Lt. Kates(371st) flying lead had the hydraulic system on his plane knocked out by a 20mm shell which resulted in a large hole in the fuselage. A 20mm shell also wrecked the bombardier's kit and there were a number of holes scattered throughout the fuselage. T/Sgt. Ginter, engineer on Lt. Kates' crew did a fine job in repairing the hydraulic system. Due to his expert repair job, the plane landed with full flaps and brakes. This was his second time to make similar repairs.

Airplane #857(371st) had an eight inch hole in the left horizontal stabilizer and additional holes in the tail section from hits by 20mm shells. A 20mm shell also knocked out the copilot's window and holed the wing between #3 engine and the fuselage.³⁷⁹

On the June 30th mission to Noemfoor Island only ten to fifteen fighters hit the formation. S/Sgt. Conlon and Sgt. Wilson on Lt. Kaestner's(424th) crew received credit for one enemy fighter each. The plane flown by Lt. Donald L. Balovich(424th) was hit in the right wing and #4 engine but made the one thousand-mile trip back on three engines.³⁸⁰ Bombing was not too good due to the weather, and the results could not be observed. Finding the island completely closed in, the formation passed the island and circled back hoping for a break in the clouds but without any luck. An ETA run was made on the area south of Kamiri Airdrome which was open. Lt. Nichols(371st) and crew had a scare. The AFCE dynamometer located under the navigator's table began smoking at the start of the bomb run creating the impression that the plane was on fire. The bombs were salvoed over Cape Kerets Bari.³⁸¹

The strikes in July were against Yap, Noemfoor, Woleai and also included some search missions. A total of 407.7 tons of bombs was dropped on enemy installations, and the practice of flying a mission every other day rather than every day was reinstated.

Yap was considered to be the primary target for the month. In spite of the beating that the island had taken from the 307th the previous month, it remained a major communications center and staging area. The continued bombing of Yap constituted an effort to prevent the use of the facilities and supplies by the Japanese air and naval forces as well as to deny its use as a staging area for the Marianas.³⁸²

Living conditions were poor when the Group reached Los Negros. By July

conditions had improved to a point where just existing was no longer a problem. Better arrangements for obtaining food and material with which to make the camp healthier and more comfortable contributed greatly to the comfort and health of the organization. Periods of inactivity were unwelcomed. In the month of July the 424th had from time to time three and four days between missions. Crew members found the time dull and hard to fill. Coral on the beach and snakes made swimming difficult, and the athletic program was insufficient to meet the needs of the personnel. Some of the free time was devoted to training.

Some items remained in short supply and if they could have been obtained would have added greatly to the comfort of the men. Some of the men in the 424th had a problem with some very old and torn mosquito netting. Late one night the CO, John Vanderpoel, removed his rank insignia and took a friend on a "midnight requisiting" party. They visited the Bomber Command tennis courts which were completely surrounded by three bands of beautiful nylon mosquito netting. A short reconnaissance told them that all was safe for a raid. They carefully pried loose three bands of netting and tied them to the back of the jeep and made a quick circuit of the tennis courts before heading back to the 424th area. The net was hidden under John's tent floor for a couple of weeks and then distributed to the needy. It provided much needed relief for the suffering troops.

Morale was an all important factor in any combat unit. The morale value of visiting USO shows was questionable, especially when there were hundreds of men in the 307th who had been in a forward area for twenty-two months and longer without a single day of rest leave. The maintenance crews deserved the Congressional Medal of Honor for their yeoman performance in maintaining the planes in top mechanical shape. They could not look forward to rotation home after a specified time. Their morale received a boost during July with the announcement by Headquarters Far East Air Forces that men with eighteen months overseas service were eligible for rotation and furlough to the Continental United States. The majority of the ground personnel qualified.

A swing band was organized composed of personnel from all the squadrons with Pvt. Isaac Mayo(372nd) as the featured vocalist. Sports continued to be popular, and the movies remained good except for the repeated showing of the movie starring Adolphe Menjou.³⁸³

Noemfoor Island was hit on July 1st. The target area contained defense positions, personnel and supply areas near Kamiri Airdrome. The 307th was joined by crews from the 5th Group and the 90th Bomb Group of the 5th Air Force. The mission was in preparation for the landing of American troops scheduled for the following day.³⁸⁴

July 3rd marked the beginning of a series of attacks on the Carolines that aided in the preparation for the return of the Americans to Guam, and the invasion of Tinian in the Marianas. These missions marked the last visits by

the 307th to Yap. As usual the Japanese got in some good licks. The bomb load consisted of 1000 pounders. The target was covered by clouds, and the results could not be observed. About sixteen fighters attacked the formation and continued the fight for forty-five to fifty minutes after the breakaway. In addition they dropped the usual phosphorous bombs and as usual caused no damage.

Lt. Adair(371st) and crew had the honor of flying plane #323, "Frenisi", on its one hundredth mission. To celebrate the occasion S/Sgt. Marshall, the ball turret gunner, shot down an enemy fighter. T/Sgt. Gerald D. Billings and S/Sgt. Charles J. Wolfe on Lt. Clement B. Baldwin's(372nd) crew shared a Zeke and S/Sgt. Raymond A. Kaser on Lt. Dorries'(372nd) crew got a Zeke as did S/Sgt. Vito P. Malvagno on Lt. Dryer's(372nd) crew.

The plane flown by Lt. Garland Dorries(372nd) was hit by A/A fire as was the plane flown by Lt. Leon Steffy(372nd) Lt. Charles Dryer's(372nd) plane was hit near the fuel cells between #1 and #2 engines and on the right side of the tail turret. Lt. Baldwin's plane, leading the 372nd, was hit in the left side of the fuselage by a 20mm shell. It cut the hydraulic lines and caved in the right bomb bay door. Lt. William D. Bowles'(372nd) plane was hit by A/A fire directly underneath, holing the fuselage in the wing roots above the forward bomb bay, in the #1 and #2 engines, in the flaps between #1 and #2 engines and in the left horizontal stabilizer. The right landing gear tire was also cut. The flak that hit the #1 engine cut the oil line and after leaving the target the engine was cut off and the prop feathered. Upon landing the right landing gear tire blew. This plus one engine being feathered added to the difficulty of landing. In spite of the damage he made a good one.³⁸⁵

In an attempt to catch the Japanese interceptors on the ground, the Group attacked Yap Airdrome in two waves on July 5th. This required a night take off for the 424th and 371st who made up the first wave. Only eight of the twelve planes reached the rendezvous at Sorol Island. The 371st leader was among the ones that did not make it, and Lt. Edward J. Rice assumed the lead. The hoped for surprise was not achieved and twenty-eight fighters attacked the eight planes. Only two fighters rose to attack the second wave. On the first pass, every crew member in the second wave fired and someone got one of the fighters. The remaining Zeke dropped two phosphorous bombs with no results. Lt. William Rouzie(372nd) did not make it to the target because of the loss of the static instruments shortly after take off. Lt. Edward J. Rice's(371st) plane received heavy damage. He instructed the other pilots to reduce air speed and keep together. He maintained the formation until the interceptors departed. He then announced, over the radio, in a bored and disgusted tone "I'm going to ditch the son of a bitch." He had waited too long because the plane was falling out of control. The plane slid steeply on the left wing and burned fiercely, hit the water and exploded. Five men were seen to bail out and later all five were observed swimming in the water. There were three rafts in the water, but the nearest one to a survivor was three hundred yards. A

335. Roll A0589, pp. 0552-53; Roll A0610, p. 0604; Roll B0220, p. 1569. Other crew members were: Lts. Robert J. Holme, Robert J. Eberlein. R. W. Christianson, S/Sgts. C. W. Bennett, Jr., Paul Brunetto, W. B. Monaghan, John L. Parent, E. Toporovich and Cpl. W. L. Williams; Public Relations Office, 13th AAF, General Release, 16 April 1944.
336. Roll A0591, p. 1885; Diary, George W. Krum, 4-27-44. Other crew members were: Lts. James W. Muldoon, Alexander W. Shoutis, Jed R. Moffett, T/Sgts. Harold B. Clarkston, Lloyd Coburn, S/Sgts. Francis T. Alishauskas, Leon W. Fredericks, George W. Morrison and Robert E. Stultz. Roll A0591, p. 1885.
337. Roll B0220, p. 1575; *History, Thirteenth Air Force*, Chapt. II, pp. 8 & 9.
338. Roll A0590, p. 1487; Roll B0220, p. 1596.
339. Roll A0590, p. 1487; Roll A0589, pp. 1570-71; Roll A0610, p. 0629.
340. Roll B0220, pp. 1595-96; Roll A0589, p. 0570; N.A., *The Bomber Command at Work January 1943-July 1944*, N.P.N. 905th Engineers Air Force Headquarters Co.
341. Roll B0220, p. 1596.
342. Roll A0590, p. 1487; Historical Data, *Early Stages of the Thirteenth Air Force*, p. 18.
343. Roll A0589, pp. 0620 and 0570; Roll A0590, p. 1481; N.A., *The Bomber Command at Work January 1943-July 1944*, N.P.N. 905th Engineers Air Force Headquarters Co.
344. Roll B0220, p. 1595; Roll A0592, p. 0007.
345. Roll A0590, p. 1481
346. Roll A0589, p. 0569.
347. Wesley Frank Craven and James L. Cate, eds., *The Army Air Forces in World War II*, Vol. IV, p. 623.
348. Roll A0590, p. 1481.
349. Roll A0592, p. 008; Roll A0590, p. 1481.
350. Roll A0590, p. 1483.
351. Roll A0590, p. 1482; Roll A0589, p. 0564; Diary, George W. Krum, 5-10-44; Roll A0592, p. 009; Roll B0220, pp. 1624-28; letter from Lewis P. Bowers, 3-2-87; The missing crew members were: Lts. David B. Willock, Herbert Mazer, Seymour R. Shikowitz, S/Sgts. Wayne M. Olson, Quentin Ihde, Henry N. Strait and Ernest S. St. Peter. Roll A0589, p. 0569.
352. Wesley Frank Craven and James L. Cate, eds., *The Army Air Forces in World War II*, Vol. IV, pp. 631 and 634-35; *The Role of the Thirteenth Air Force, The Biak Campaign*, p. 14; *History, Thirteenth Air Force*, April-June 1944, pp. 16-18.
353. *Ibid*, p. 1483.
354. Roll A0592, pp. 012-13; Roll A0590, p. 1485; Roll B0220, p. 1671; *History, Thirteenth Air Force, April-June 1944*, pp. 16-18.

355. Roll A0590, p. 1485. Other crew members were: Lts. Paul D. Burson, Roland E. Rising, Paul D. Flanagan, S/Sgts. Joseph Kryak, James E. Bailey, Sgts. Stanley Bagdon, Robert E. Bolton, Stafford F. Narvaez, Otto M. Smith and Richard Z. Roberts. Roll A0592, p. 013.
356. Roll B0220, p. 1703; N.A., *The Bomber Command at Work January 1943-July 1944*, N.P.N. 905th Engineers Air Force Headquarters Co.
357. Roll B0220, p. 1703.
358. Roll B0220, p. 1704; Roll A0591, p. 0007; *Roll of the Thirteenth Air Force*, pp. 1-3
359. Roll B0220, p. 1704.
360. Roll A0591, p. 0017.
361. Roll A0592, p. 069; Roll A0610, p. 0638; Roll B0220, pp. 1714-15; Roll A0589, p. 0575; N.A., *The Bomber Command at Work January 1943-July 1944*, N.P.N. 905th Engineers Air Force Headquarters Co.
362. Roll A0589, p. 0578; Roll A0591, p. 0066; Diary, George W. Krum, 6-13-44.
363. Roll A0610, p. 0639.
364. Roll A0591, p. 0065.
365. Roll A0592, p. 0074.
366. Roll A0589, p. 0578; Roll A0591, p. 0066; diary George W. Krum, 6-13-44.
367. Roll B0220, p. 1755; Roll A0591, pp. 0008 and 0052-53; Roll A0589, p. 0579.
368. Roll A0591, p. 0045.
369. *Ibid*, p. 0040.
370. Roll A0589, p. 0581; Roll A0610, p. 0640; Roll A0591, p. 0008; Roll A0592, p. 074; Roll B0220, p. 1797.
371. Diary, George W. Krum, 6-23-44; Roll A0589, pp. 0581-82; Robert Ross Smith, *The War in the Pacific, The Approach to the Philippines*, pp. 452-53; *The Role of the Thirteenth Air Force*, p. 12; *Historical Data, Early Stages of the Thirteenth Air Force*, p. 19.
372. Roll A0589, pp. 0581-82.
373. *Ibid*, pp. 0581-82.
374. Roll A0591, p. 0030.
- 375. Roll A0589, p. 0585; Public Relations Office, 13th AAF, General Release. Other crew members were Lts. Musgrave, Biddle, Arnold, Nowak, S/Sgts. Wiatrowski, Illingworth, Sgt. Fann, Cpls. Andreport, Cox, Moore, and Williams.
376. Roll B0220, pp. 1797 and 1801-02; Roll A0589, p. 0582; Roll A0592, pp. 074-75; Diary, George W. Krum, 6-23-44.
377. Roll A0589, pp. 0583-84; Roll A0592, p. 075; Diary, George W. Krum, 6-27-44.
378. Roll A0591, pp. 0022-23.