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371ST BOMBARDMENT SQUADRON (HV)
307TH BOMBARDMENT GROUP (HV)59-13018-371
15 APRIL 1942APO # 719,
15 March 1945.

SUBJECT: History of Organization.

TO : Commanding General, Thirteenth Air Force, APO # 719.
(Attention: Historical Section, A-2).

1. In compliance with Thirteenth Air Force Regulation No. 80-7, the following historical data is furnished for this organization for the period from activation, 15 April 1942 to 31 December 1943, inclusive:

- a. (1) This unit was activated as the 371st Bombardment Squadron (HV).
- (2) Its mission is long range aerial bombardment of enemy installations, materiel and personnel.
- (3) This squadron was activated 15 April 1942 at Geiger Field, Washington (General Order #24, Air Force Combat Command, Bolling Field, Washington, D.C., 24 February 1942 and General Order #38, Second Air Force, 7 April 1942).
- (4) The original cadre consisted of one enlisted man, followed two weeks later by 39 others from the 353rd Bombardment Squadron (H), 301st Bombardment Group (H). Fillers were furnished by the 18th Replacement Wing, Salt Lake City, Utah, and Sheppard Field, Texas.
- (5) Upon activation Sgt. John B. Shaffer (now S/Sgt.) was assigned to this squadron. After a slow start, organization of this squadron proceeded at a rapid pace until it had nearly reached full strength by 1 September 1942. The official designation has remained as at activation. At various times changes in the Table of Organization have authorized an increase in strength and grades.
- (6) Commanding Officers:
 1st Lt David O'Dea from 26 May 1942 to 10 June 1942.
 Major Marden M. Munn from 10 June 1942 to 1 July 1942.
 Capt. Charles J. Lamothe from 1 July 1942 to 25 October 1942.
 Capt. Dana B. Billings from 25 October 1942 through 31 December 1943.

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- b. (1) The next higher headquarters has been Headquarters 307th Bombardment Group (HV), except for the period 6 February 1943 to 22 May 1943, during which this squadron was attached to the Seventh Air Force, although still assigned to the 307th Group.
- (2) No units have been under direct command of this organization.

c. Resume of movements:

Geiger Field, Washington	Original Station
Activated 15 April 1942	Departed 28 May 1942

Ephrata Army Air Base, Washington	
Arrived 28 May 1942	Departed 30 September 1942

Sioux City Army Air Base, Iowa	
Arrived 30 September 1942	Departed 20 October 1942
Departed from Port of Embarkation 27 October 1942	

Wheeler Field, Oahu, T.H.	
Arrived 2 November 1942	Departed 22 May 1943

Espiritu Santo, New Hebrides
 Arrived 13 June 1943 and remained through 31 December 1943.
 The Air Echelon operated from advanced bases as follows:

Midway Island

21 December 1942 to 24 December 1942.
 20 January 1943 to 25 January 1943.
 9 May 1943 to 17 May 1943.

Canton Island

6 February 1943 to 12 February 1943.

Funafuti Island of the Ellice Group

18 April 1943 to 23 April 1943.
 27 July 1943 to 1 August 1943.

Guadalcanal in the Solomon Islands

25 August 1943 to 14 October 1943

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24 November 1943 through 31 December 1943.

d. The following campaigns have been participated in during this period:

Central Pacific Campaign.

23 December 1942 to 28 July 1943.

Guadalcanal Campaign.

13 February 1943 to 21 February 1943.

Northern Solomons Campaign.

22 February 1943 through 31 December 1943.

Bismark Archipelago Campaign.

19 December 1943 through 31 December 1943.

e. Chief Military Missions:

- (1) Wake Island Raid of 23 December 1942 lead by Col. W.A. Matheny and Capt. D. B. Billings.
- (2) Second Wake Island mission on 25 January 1943 also lead by Col. Matheny and Capt. Billings.
- (3) Bombing of Nauru Island by the 371st Squadron under the leadership of Capt. Billings on 20 April 1943.
- (4) The attack on Tarawa on 23 April 1943.
- (5) The third Wake Island strike of 15 May 1943.
- (6) Tarawa mission on 28 July 1943 lead by Lt. Col. Green and 1st Lt. Simmons.
- (7) Series of neutralizing attacks on Kahili Airdrome and satellite Airdromes in the Bougainville area from 28 August 1943 to 28 December 1943.
- (8) The mission of 24 December 1943 against Vunakanau Airdrome, Rabaul, New Britain, which was lead by Captain Warren L. Johnson.

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f. The first casualties to the 371st Squadron were sustained on 17 December 1942 when Lt. McClendon's plane caught on fire shortly after take-off and exploded. The following men were killed:

1st Lt. James H. McClendon	Pilot
2nd Lt. Charles H. Miller	Co-Pilot
2nd Lt. William J. Stickle	Navigator
S/Sgt. Harold D. Dillon	Ass't. Engineer
S/Sgt. Charles C. Hatton	Radio Operator

Lt. Main, Observing Pilot, was severely burned before jumping. S/Sgt. Vaughn and Lt. Steele, Bombardier, parachuted to safety.

Again on 27 February 1943 we suffered an operational loss. 1st Lt. Stevens crashed near Wheeler Field, killing instantly the entire crew:

1st Lt. Eugene Stevens	Pilot
2nd Lt. Roger S. Stodgill	Co-Pilot
2nd Lt. William L. Morrisette	Navigator
2nd Lt. Murray J. Ritter	Bombardier
S/Sgt. R. E. Alsop	Engineer
T/Sgt. Isidore R. Le Beau	Ass't. Engineer
S/Sgt. Lloyd W. Hansen	Radio Operator
S/Sgt. Charles C. Foster	Tail Gunner

On 13 March 1943 Lt. Schreiber's plane lost an engine shortly after take-off and slipped in as the pilot attempted an emergency landing. The following were killed instantly:

1st Lt. Stanley E. Schreiber	Pilot
2nd Lt. Donald H. Hewitt	Co-Pilot
1st Lt. Ervin L. Beasley	Bombardier
S/Sgt. Roy E. Jameson	Ass't. Engineer
S/Sgt. Virgil E. Brown	Radar Mechanic

2nd Lt. Coppack, Navigator, died a few hours later from injuries. Cpl. Frank Covertine escaped with only slight injuries.

Our first battle casualties, and only ones sustained on the ground due to enemy action, were suffered on 22 April at Funafuti. The Japs bombed this tiny island for three hours in the early morning, killing the following men:

T/Sgt. Delbert B. Erickson
S/Sgt. Eli W. Williamson
S/Sgt. Owen T. Wilson
S/Sgt. Raymond W. Drew
S/Sgt. Gerald C. Johnson

Sgts. Bahr, Harmon, and Lodge were seriously wounded.

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On return from the third Wake Island mission on 15 May 1943 one of our planes was forced to make a water-landing because of fuel shortage 140 miles from Midway. 2nd Lt. Richard Patton died at sea, but the remainder of the crew was rescued.

On 13 July 1943 the following crew failed to return from a search mission:

1st Lt. Melvin Feigen
2nd Lt. Richard L. Jacobs
2nd Lt. Olynn R. Walker
2nd Lt. William D. Mulberry
T/Sgt. Malvin J. Standridge
T/Sgt. Raymond T. Nolan
S/Sgt. Frank Andalora
S/Sgt. Lester L. Amstutz
S/Sgt. Robert J. Pribish
S/Sgt. Colonel A. Brooks

On 15 September 1943 S/Sgt. Carl R. Holmes was killed over Kahili Airdrome when an AA burst tore his ball-turret off its mount. Sgts. Heal, Falter, Miller and Peugh were wounded by same burst.

S/Sgt. M. L. England, nose turret gunner, was killed by enemy interceptor fire on 21 September 1943 over Buka Airdrome.

Major Roland O. Lundby, Captain George E. Hoefler and S/Sgt. Bronislaw Turlo were slightly wounded on 4 October 1943 over Kahili Airdrome.

Lt. Galyon's plane was badly shot up during the mission over Kahili Airdrome on 10 October 1943. They were able to make it back as far as Ondonga Airdrome where they made a crash landing. The following casualties resulted:

Killed:

1st Lt. Walter T. Galyon	Pilot
1st Lt. Ira C. Ide	Co-Pilot
T/Sgt. William H. Purdin	Engineer

Wounded:

1st Lt. Sol H. Genatt	Navigator
1st Lt. Howard L. Holmes	Bombardier
T/Sgt. Harry P. Hall	Radio Operator
S/Sgt. William M. Delaney	Ass't. Radio Operator
S/Sgt. Anthony D. Frisina	Ass't. Engineer
S/Sgt. George W. Tompkins	Gunner
S/Sgt. Saint E. Pipp	Armorer Gunner

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G. Awards:

On 1 January 1943 those that participated in the First Wake Island Raid were presented awards by Lieut. Gen. Emmons, Commanding General of the Hawaiian Department, and Admiral Chester W. Nimitz, Commander in-Chief of the Armed Forces in the Pacific in a ceremony at Hickam Field. The awards were as follows:

Distinguished Flying Cross

Captain Billings, Dana B.

Air Medals

Captain Lippencott, Elwood P.
 Captain Benes, Charles G.
 1st Lt. Beasley, Irving Lee
 1st Lt. Irby, James R.
 1st Lt. Hoefler, George B.
 1st Lt. Lundby, Roland O.
 1st Lt. Wood, Allen H.
 1st Lt. McGreevy, Wallace F.
 1st Lt. Andrews, James A.
 1st Lt. Holland, Robert W.
 1st Lt. McCloskey, James R.
 2nd Lt. Schreiber, Stanley E.
 2nd Lt. Esmond, Thomas M.
 2nd Lt. Smith, Max E.
 2nd Lt. Priester, Robert I.
 2nd Lt. Guiberson, Nathaniel G.
 2nd Lt. Sheaffer, Abram B.
 2nd Lt. Severson, Orlando W.
 2nd Lt. White, George T.
 2nd Lt. Teykl, Irwin F.
 2nd Lt. Lieb, John J.
 2nd Lt. Bocker, Norbert T.
 2nd Lt. VanDyke, John L.
 2nd Lt. Dykes, Leo N.
 2nd Lt. Sellars, Fred J.
 S/Sgt. Atkinson, Clifford J.
 S/Sgt. Bailey, Buster
 S/Sgt. Bishop, James F.
 S/Sgt. Bouchard, Real
 S/Sgt. Burrows, James H., Jr.
 S/Sgt. Carpenter, Donald
 S/Sgt. Copeland, Robert D.
 S/Sgt. Daugherty, Charles H.
 S/Sgt. Dextater, Kenneth P.
 S/Sgt. Drew, Raymond W.
 S/Sgt. Dumas, Halsay W.
 S/Sgt. Duster, Leonard L.

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S/Sgt. Elrod, Carlisle C.
 S/Sgt. Erickson, Edward W.
 S/Sgt. Gabor, Harold G.
 S/Sgt. Hatfield, John A.
 S/Sgt. Hilgart, Patrick J.
 S/Sgt. Homeyer, Marvin F.
 S/Sgt. Hopper, Troy A.
 S/Sgt. Howell, Donald J.
 S/Sgt. Iverson, Orville K.
 S/Sgt. Jackson, Emil I.
 S/Sgt. Jamison, Roy R.
 S/Sgt. Lewis, Grant R.
 S/Sgt. Pope, Jack G.
 S/Sgt. Ramsey, Frederick L.
 S/Sgt. Sellers, Willard E.
 S/Sgt. Spitaels, Peter A.
 S/Sgt. Turlo, Whadislav

The following awards were presented for those taking part in the Wake Island mission of 25 January 1945:

Oak Leaf Cluster (Air Medal)

1st Lt. Andrews, James A.
 1st Lt. Irby, James R.
 1st Lt. Lundby, Roland O.
 1st Lt. McCloskey, James R.
 2nd Lt. Priester, Robert I.
 2nd Lt. Sellars, Fred J.
 2nd Lt. Teykl, Irvin F.
 S/Sgt. Atkinson, Clifford J.
 S/Sgt. Bishop, James F.
 S/Sgt. Bouchard, Real
 S/Sgt. Burrows, James H.
 S/Sgt. Carpenter, Donald
 S/Sgt. Copeland, Robert D.
 S/Sgt. Doxtater, Kenneth P.
 S/Sgt. Drew, Raymond W.
 S/Sgt. Dumas, Halsay W.
 S/Sgt. Duster, Leonard F.
 S/Sgt. Elrod, Carlisle C.
 S/Sgt. Erickson, Edward W.
 S/Sgt. Gabor, Harold G.
 S/Sgt. Hatfield, John A.
 S/Sgt. Hilgart, Patrick J.
 S/Sgt. Hopper, Troy A.
 S/Sgt. Howell, Donald J.
 S/Sgt. Lewis, Grant R.
 S/Sgt. Pope, Jack G.
 S/Sgt. Sellers, Willard E.
 S/Sgt. Spitaels, Peter A.

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Oak Leaf Cluster (Air Medal) Cont.

1st Lt. Holland, Robert W.
 2nd Lt. Esmond, Thomas M.
 2nd Lt. Schreiber, Stanley E.
 2nd Lt. White, George T.

Air Medal

Captain Billings, Dana B.
 Captain Benson, Noel S.
 2nd Lt. Amory, Charles M.
 2nd Lt. Bisbee, Richard A.
 2nd Lt. Moeller, William P.
 2nd Lt. Sharkey, Willard C.
 2nd Lt. Smith, Max E.
 2nd Lt. Smithson, ^{Honorable} Forrest G.
 2nd Lt. Stratton, Robert L.
 2nd Lt. Thorn, Harold A.
 M/Sgt. Spratley, Richard S.
 S/Sgt. Apple, Douglas P.
 S/Sgt. Buchanan, James I.
 S/Sgt. Cassady, Edward V.
 S/Sgt. Fale, Richard A.
 S/Sgt. Hoffman, James E.
 S/Sgt. Howell, Dean J.
 S/Sgt. Scott, Nelson C.
 S/Sgt. Walker, Samuel I.
 S/Sgt. Wook, James A.
 Sgt. Stewart, William D., Jr.

For participation in strikes of 20 April against Nauru and 23 April 1943 on Tarawa the following awards were presented:

Captain Martin F. Hanson was awarded the Silver Star for his outstanding bravery during the Japanese raid on Funafuti in the Ellice Islands on 22 April 1943.

Second Oak Leaf Cluster (Air Medal)

1st Lt. McCloskey, Alton O.
 T/Sgt. Erickson, Edward W.
 T/Sgt. Howell, Donald J.
 S/Sgt. Atkinson, Clifford J.
 S/Sgt. Burrows, James H., Jr.
 S/Sgt. Carpenter, Donald
 S/Sgt. Copeland, Robert D.
 S/Sgt. Doxtater, Kenneth P.
 S/Sgt. Duster, Leonard G.
 S/Sgt. Elrod, Carlyle C.
 S/Sgt. Lewis, Grant R.

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Posthumous Award of Second Oak Leaf Cluster
(Air Medal)

S/Sgt. Drew, Raymond W.

First Oak Leaf Cluster (Air Medal)

Capt. Wood, Allen H.
2nd Lt. Sharkey, Willard C.
S/Sgt. Homeyer, Marvin F.
S/Sgt. Jackson, Emil I.
S/Sgt. Fale, Richard A.

Air Medal

1st Lt. Hopkins, Charles B.
1st Lt. Houchins, James
1st Lt. Kurz, Herbert C.
1st Lt. Tinker, Frank A.
2nd Lt. Cartwright, Louis E.
2nd Lt. Becker, Leon J.
2nd Lt. Clutter, Kinsel E.
2nd Lt. Davenport, William R.
2nd Lt. Soxara, William R.
2nd Lt. Dwyer, Richard E.
2nd Lt. Fain, Charles J.
2nd Lt. Givens, Donald R.
2nd Lt. Guenther, Walter E.
2nd Lt. Hindersinn, Raymond R.
2nd Lt. Lewis, Myron P.
2nd Lt. Main, James G.
2nd Lt. Morse, Roger W.
2nd Lt. Scheole, Marvin B.
2nd Lt. Wallingford, Elmer K.
2nd Lt. Washburn, Frank J.
2nd Lt. Webb, James G.
2nd Lt. Lippmann, Arnold B.
2nd Lt. Rubel, William E.
2nd Lt. Pursel, Jack J.
T/Sgt. Andrychowski, Bernard J.
T/Sgt. Bahr, Jesse L.
T/Sgt. Cakin, Eugene G.
T/Sgt. Cianfrani, Salvatore E.
T/Sgt. Gurzenda, Eugene J.
T/Sgt. Johnston, George F.
T/Sgt. Jones, Hunter E.
T/Sgt. Leggett, Robert J.
T/Sgt. Lodge, Dennis E.
T/Sgt. Molnar, Michael

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Air Medal (Cont.)

T/Sgt. Pedone, John G.
 T/Sgt. Quick, Charles E.
 S/Sgt. Alexander, Louis R.
 S/Sgt. Allen, John H.
 S/Sgt. Armstrong, Winfred C.
 S/Sgt. Bellfiore, Sam A.
 S/Sgt. Biffar, Daniel
 S/Sgt. Eden, Ralph E.
 S/Sgt. Gardina, Berne
 S/Sgt. Gawron, Kasimir A.
 S/Sgt. Harmon, John E.
 S/Sgt. Hibbert, Allan
 S/Sgt. Johnson, Gerald C.
 S/Sgt. Lawson, John D.
 S/Sgt. Leffew, Herman R.
 S/Sgt. MacFarlane, Max G.
 S/Sgt. Marquette, Dan L.
 S/Sgt. Mason, J. L.
 S/Sgt. Middlebrooks, Jaudon D.
 S/Sgt. Mrocskiewicz, Andrew M.
 S/Sgt. Monday, Floyd
 S/Sgt. Pash, William J.
 S/Sgt. Playford, Zeb S.
 S/Sgt. Prestiano, John
 S/Sgt. Richards, William E.
 S/Sgt. Snell, Arthur N.
 S/Sgt. Beaty, Walter C.
 Sgt. Estes, Orvel E.
 Sgt. Llewellyn, Lorian A.
 Cpl. Stiner, Harry R.
 Pvt. McIntyre, William O.

Posthumous Award of Air Medal

T/Sgt. Erickson, Delbert V.
 S/Sgt. Williamson, Eli W.
 S/Sgt. Wilson, Owen T.

2. The 371st Bombardment Squadron (Hv) was activated 15 April 1942 as part of the 307th Bombardment Group (Hv) at Geiger Field, Washington. Its parent organization was the 353rd Bombardment Squadron, 301st Bombardment Group (Hv). The initial cadre consisted of only one man, Sgt. John B. Shaffer (now S/Sgt. and still with the squadron), to whom goes the honor of being the original member of the outfit. For over two weeks he was the entire squadron. On 3 May 1942 the rest of

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the cadre was transferred to the squadron laying the formation on which to build. 1st Lt. O'Dea was the Commanding Officer while at Geiger Field. On 28 May the squadron men some 100 strong moved to Ephrata Army Air Base for the announced purpose of a 30 day maneuver. Actually we were transferred to this new base to maintain aircraft rushed to the West Coast in anticipation of an attack upon Alaska or even the Pacific states. Our services were not required, however, as the major Jap task force was defeated in the Battle of Midway and the other was content with the seizure of Kiska.

Major Mardon M. Munn took over the duties of squadron commander and set about organizing the squadron into an efficient unit. Nine combat crews were formed and maintenance personnel sufficient to handle nine planes were trained, although only one B-24 D airplane was available. This number was increased to three in July. The first two phases of the Second Air Force phase training were completed here. Pilots, navigators and bombardiers fresh from school received their first operational experience. Bombing and gunnery missions helped coordinate the combat crews into a single team. All the while, the ground crews were learning more and more about the airplane and their jobs under the most trying maintenance and living conditions, good preparation for what was to follow. Ephrata was a veritable dust bowl and the fine alkali dust managed to get into every thing, including the airplanes, necessitating modification. At Ephrata we had to begin from scratch in constructing a camp area. On arrival the airbase consisted of an air strip and seven shacks in the middle of the desert. Tent pitching seemed to be a perpetual process as the squadron grew. Eventually some temporary buildings were completed for offices, latrines, barracks and a mess hall. Schools were conducted in radio and combat intelligence. An extensive training program was undertaken and pursued with vigor.

One 24 hour pass a week was available for all hands. That's when Spokane, Wenatchee and Ephrata took their beatings. The Davenport and Coeur D' Elaine Hotels in Spokane along with the Green Mill became training grounds of another variety. The Cascadean Hotel in Wenatchee also presented its opportunities to influence the squadron. Little can be said about the thriving metropolis of Ephrata other than that they were driving flivvers when we moved in and Cadalacs when we moved out, and that was a good place to get on the train.

It was at this time that Capt. C. J. Lamothe took the reins of what soon became known to all its members as the "Victory Squadron". "Charlie" or "C.J." as he was known to all the officers had seen a year's duty flying 17's in the first bombardment group to do coastal patrol duty in South and Central America during 1940 and 1941. He joined the Group soon after it was formed and became C.O. of Head-

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quarters & Headquarters Squadron until that Squadron was eliminated from Heavy Bombardment Groups.

The squadron was then on a 24 hour training schedule. The old crates flew all hours of day and night. Bailing wire and tape were a necessary part of maintenance equipment. Perhaps the classic one of them all was Old No. 778 who perpetually had her innards spread all over the parking strip. Ground crews would just about get her back on flying status when some other part would have to be striped from her to complete another ship. As a result 778 was continually grounded and acted in the capacity of a tech supply for the other ships of the squadron. Link trainers were scheduled at three and four in the morning, night navigation or "around the horn missions" were a regular part of our schedule. In the midst of all this we moved out of tents and into wooden barracks.

A consolidated mess was set up for officers at the nominal sum of \$40 per month. It was lousy. The base officers club opened on money conscripted from 307th personnel. About the only thing we did not mind was feeding our money into the slot machines. No one else was to blame for this but ourselves.

At this time the Staff of Officers consisted of 1st Lt. Allen H. Wood, Operations Officer, (later to become C.O. of the 98th Bombardment Squadron (Hv) of the 11th Bomb Group), 1st Lt. Roland O. Lundby, later Operations Officer of this Squadron. To him along with a handfull of other pilots must go the credit for training and "checking out" of practically all of the original first pilots in the Group; Lt. P. P. Turner, Jr. Intelligence Officer; 1st Lt. Robert Holland Ass't Operations Officer; Lt. R. S. Boydston Ass't. Operations Officer; Lt. Gene R. Swant Arm. Officer; Lt. Ben Lubin Mess Officer; 1st Lt. Byles, Adjutant; Lt. Gordon D. Muehlhausen, Transportation and Supply Officer (shortly to become Adjutant when Lt. Byles received orders to report back to Geiger Field).

The first pilots of the nine original crews were as follows:

- Captain Elwood T. Lippincott
- Captain Noel S. Benson
- 1st Lt. Roland O. Lundby
- 2nd Lt. James R. Irby
- 2nd Lt. James R. McCloskey
- 2nd Lt. George E. Hoefler
- 2nd Lt. James H. McClendon
- 2nd Lt. Wallace F. McGreevy
- 2nd Lt. James A. Andrews

Shortly after this first Group the following officers join-

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ed the already growing strength of the squadron: Lt. C.B. Wiggin, Jr., (Belmont, Mass.); Captain Martin F. Hanson, (Havana, Illinois), Flight Surgeon (replaced 1st Lt. Huse); Lt. Joseph Vaccaro, (South Philadelphia, Pa.), Asst. Engineering Officer; Lt. Ray Seale, Communications Officer; Lt. Fred James, Ordnance Officer; Captain Von E. Luscher, Intelligence Officer; Lt. Ralph Hinkson, (replaced Lt. Ben Lubin who left for Cadets), as Mess Officer - Lt. Hinkson after the squadron arrived at Wheeler Field, Oahu, T.H. transferred to Sub-Depot, Wheeler Field, Oahu as Adjutant; Lt. Charles J. Rinker, (Philadelphia, Pa.), Statistical and Asst. Operations Officer; Lt. Harry L. Nunn, Transportation & Supply Officer. The key enlisted men at this time were: 1st Sergeant V.M. Smith relieved on September 9, 1942 by 1st Sgt. John A. Hinkle (originally 1st Sgt. in 301st, youngest first sergeant in the Army at that time); Line Chief Kenneth Mayers; Tech Supply-Sgt. Ralph Wise shortly replaced by Sgt. Ray Robelan; Armament Chief Richard Sprately, (Salt Lake City, Utah); Communications Chief Wm. R. Hines; Medical Sgt. John Hammer; Operations, Harry Tremblay; Ordnance Chief, Sgt. Manford Steinwart; Transportation, Sgt. Joseph Grossi. Along with three hundred trained specialists the squadron was now well on its way towards a complete and efficient bombardment squadron raring for action. And to prove their efficiency the enlisted men won the Base Softball Championship.

On Sept. 25, 1942, the squadron moved to Sioux City Air Base, Sioux City, Iowa, for its third and final phase of training. This was our first movement by train as a squadron, and well do we remember the four days of sitting on sidings or alternately backing up and going forward in order to get into one. The mess on the box-car was damn good, thanks to Lt. Hinkson, otherwise the trip was poker, poker, and more poker. The training at Sioux City Air Base consisted of formation flying, cross country hops, formation bombing, and a greater intergration of the ground crew within each section and final polishing of technical training before over-seas duty. Sioux City Air Base was so new at this time that some of the paint on the buildings was still wet. It was quite a change for the group to train at an air base that was complete in every detail. To move in, unpack, and start operating at such a place was really a welcomed novelty to the officers and men who built up Ephrata AAB from an airline emergency landing strip in the middle of Washington's desert and dust to a semi-permanent camp sufficient to permit a bombardment group at near full strength to train. Well remembered is the 19 out of 24 hours operating ultimatum of Sioux City and the thermometer chart adorning the front of Group Headquarters that told us how we were doing. This worked out to a minimum of 8 hours sleep-which was a laugh when we got to combat. Also well remembered and probably in far less danger of ever being forgotten is the social opportunities afforded by the West Hotel Bar & Grill (She lost it at the West Hotel). Vieing with the West

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Hotel in fond remembrances is the Rathskeller, Beer Cellar, Charlie's Steak House and Louise's, of course. While at Sioux City the squadron had little change in personnel. Lt. Michael Copass, (Seattle, Wash.), Asst. Intelligence Officer joined at this time - a very important and popular guy - lost to Group. Our CO, Captain C.J. Lamothe was forced to relinquish his command because of illness. Captain Dana B. Billings, a Flight Leader in the 372nd, was placed in command.

The third phase of training no sooner got started, it seemed, when it was rudely interrupted by unexpected orders (that is, unexpected by latrine intelligence) to pack for over-seas duty. Furloughs were cancelled. Wives, sweethearts and parents were frantically wired to discontinue plans for trips to Sioux City, and the squadron was thrown into a mad rush of packing to meet the dead-line. With the help of the squadron's patron saint, order came out of chaos in time to enable the squadron to leave Sioux City AAB on the morning of October 20, 1942 for the port of embarkation which happened to be San Francisco, California. The march to the train with everybody dragging "A" bags and various service equipment resembled Napoleon's retreat from Moscow.

The squadron was proud of its clean slate of no serious accidents during its entire training period in the states. Of course there were many times pilots brought them in on three engines or got stuck in the mud taxiing at forced landings at Chicago Air Port (N.B. McGreevy), but other than that the operation and maintenance was flawless.

Nine planes left Hamilton Field, California, for the Hawaiian Islands while ground personnel left San Francisco by a Norwegian freighter, the Torrens, on October 27, 1942; the boat was a small but speedy freighter and not very well adapted to troop transport. Stateroom 6 or the officers quarters turned out to be the stern hold and managed to squeeze in 135 officers laid end to end in tiers of six. Rough weather on the first night out caused quite a bit of seasickness, especially in Stateroom "6". Otherwise, the trip was very uneventful. Early afternoon 2 November 1942 our ship docked at Honolulu and our squadron was assigned to Wheeler Field, Oahu, T.H. to replace the 321st Squadron of the 90th Group. The squadron soon settled down to the everyday routine of flying sea searches and training flights.

The first taste of real McCoy came on December 21st, when thirty-two officers and forty enlisted men took off for Midway Island, 1260 miles from Honolulu, the Shanri-La of what was to be a record setting whack at the Japs.

Six of our ships led by Captain Billings along with 19 B-24's from the sister squadrons of the Group took off from Midway

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at 1900 (Honolulu time) for Wake Island. The raid was very successful and showed the world that ultra-long range bombing was possible. Approximately 60,000 pounds of demolition and incendiary bombs were dropped on "The Speck in the middle of the Pacific" with excellent results. S/Sgt. Copeland of Lt. Lundby's crew shot at searchlights and scored. All planes returned to Midway about 0600 the 23rd of December after having traveled 2240 miles, the longest mass raid of the war to that time. The following were in the raid:

CAPTAIN LIPPENCOTT
 Lt. Lundby
 Lt. Hoefler
 Lt. Irby

CAPTAIN BILLINGS
 Lt. Andrews
 Lt. McGreevy

The men who had groomed the planes for several days and nights before the very successful mission, and who were "sweating out" their buddies and planes safe arrival back to Wheeler Field were given one of their best Christmas presents of their lives when, in the growing dusk of December 24th, Christmas Eve, six Liberators landed safe and sound on Wheeler Field.

There was plenty to celebrate about that glorious Christmas Eve. For the officers the celebrating took place at 209 Sperry Loop. The Christmas Spirit flowed freely, and scenery was enhanced by a well decorated, and lighted Christmas tree in the corner of the front hall. Needless to say the Christmas tree was not the only illuminated spectacle at 209 that night. It was here the "Gooney Bird Shuffle" sprang full bloom upon a startled world (see Irby, McCloskey and Hoefler for lessons). The party ended shortly after Lt. Bisbee, and Lt. Stratton (Mine genial hosts) attempted a ring-a-rosy in the middle of the front hall, shouting "The party is a success", and promptly fell on their collective faces.

The elaborate Christmas party planned by Lt. Hinkson before we received orders for the Wake raid could not be postponed until the return of the combat crews and ground personnel from Midway, due to contract. However the remaining squadron personnel enjoyed a very elaborate entertainment program and beer. The Hawaiian troupe was very good, but the entrance and performance of an honest-to-God "Queenie" both surprised and pleased all personnel no end.

On January 1st the story of the raid was given to the public. In a ceremony held on the ramp at Hickam Field with three B-24's forming a "V" in the background, the participants were decorated by General Emmons, C.G. of Hawaiian Dept., and Admiral Nimitz, Commander-in-Chief of Armed Forces in the Pacific.

Not content with one look at Wake and the Japs, our squadron was sent out to get pictures of the damage done on the first

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raid on Wake, and possibly do a little more damage. So, on January 20th, one month later, six ships led by Captain Billings took off for Midway at 0500. On the 22nd, two days later, these same ships took off from Midway but returned without accomplishing their mission because of bad weather. Finally at 1650 three days after that with the weather clear, the planes took off on the mission and accomplished the photo reconnaissance desired. 6,000 pounds of bombs were dropped on Wake during this mission. Zeros again intercepted the planes, but the gunners battled them away suffering only slight damage to two B-24's. Colonel Matheny's plane had one engine shot out; Lt. Andrews had a 20 mm hole in the fuselage. T/Sgt Eriekson and S/Sgt Copeland on Lt Lundby's crew were credited with one Zero. Lt. Andrew's crew was credited with the plane.

Near the first of February we were notified to pack. Working diligently night and day packing, filling shortages, and trying to acquire-by hook or crook-those necessary but unauthorized items which would make life more comfortable "Down Under". Then came the word to unpack-that the 372nd and 371st were to remain in the Islands, and only the Group Headquarters, 370th and 424th Squadrons were to leave. So, thinking it would only be a matter of days until we would rejoin our Group, the squadron operated more or less out of boxes and crates. When the days turned into weeks and it began to look as though we were permanent party guys, we decided to dig in, and prepare for a long stay.

Along came February 5th, 1943 with orders from Headquarters implying that the Island of Canton needed protection from enemy attack. To be sure, this mission was fulfilled to the letter. The three crews picked were Captain Benson's, Lt. McCloskey's, Lt. Hoefler's. Captain Benson was in command. Lt. C. J. Rinker, Operations Officer, and Lt. Swant, Armament Officer, accompanied these crews to the Island.

The complete detachment was made up of six crews: three from 371st, two from 372nd, and one from 424th. They all arrived at Canton Island on February 6, 1943, at about 1900, and immediately went to work. All planes were loaded with four 1000's, and both Bomb Bay tanks filled for sea search and alert. When the Japs heard that our detachment, commanded by Captain Benson was there, they left the area. While stationed there these men had a fine set-up, living at the now well known Waldorf Hotel. The officers enjoyed the Officers Club every night-needless to say. However, it was not all play there. They were on alert in the planes with engines running at 0445 every morning. During their stay there twenty or more search missions were conducted. Suddenly on the 10th of February, orders came for five of our crews to proceed to Espiritu Santo. They left the following day but Lt. McCloskey had engine trouble and could not leave until two days

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later. On arrival at New Hebrides crews were attached to the 42nd Bomb Squadron. The living conditions were rough. The area was back in the jungle and also occupied by land crabs, lizards, ants as big as mice, rats as big as cats, and a fine variety of insects and bugs. The area was discovered to have been condemned months before their arrival. Consequently within a period of two weeks after their arrival the majority of the men (28 out of 30) were laid up with dengue fever and were moved into another area then occupied by the 26th Bomb Squadron. This was the move that helped the old morale, and they were soon ready to fight the war again. Over a period of several weeks, one crew after another was moved out to join our squadrons at Guadalcanal, Captain Benson to 424th, Lt. Mc Closkey to 424th, Lt. Hoefler to 370th, Lt. Rinker and Lt. Swant joined the 424th after Captain Benson was given command of that squadron succeeding Major Smith. Lt. Mc Closkey and Lt. Severson were evacuated to Roses sick with dengue fever. By April 13th our original detachment again together and at the Canal. They helped build the camp in the jungle, and a fine set-up it was until May 9th when the flood came. In three hours, what took them weeks to complete, was just a total loss. It was sure rough going-salvaging what they could and rebuilding their camp with second-hand nails and split and broken lumber. However, Operations continued as usual without interruption, and they all survived without ill effects. The experiences at Guadalcanal included visits by "Washing Machine Charlie" and several nights spent in fox-holes.

Meanwhile life at Wheeler Field proceeded as usual. Sea searches and practice flights were flown. Tragedy struck again on 27 February when Lt. Stevens and crew were killed in a crash near Wheeler Field.

For the next four months that the squadron was to remain in the Islands it was without three A-1 crews and several key ground officers and enlisted men. To add to the loss of personnel, Lt. Copass, was attached and later transferred to Group, Lt. Seale, Comm., Lt. Munn, Trans. & Supply, and Lt. Ladd, Photo, were transferred to the 424th with several key enlisted men: T/Sgt Graham, T/Sgt Pilis, T/Sgt Wise, S/Sgt Hathaway, S/Sgt. Higginbotham, Sgt Watson, Sgt Ziniel, Cpl Cablk, Cpl Hoffman transferred to 370th Bomb Sq (H) at Guadalcanal.

During February 1943 five new crews joined the Squadron: Lt.'s Cornwell, Stevens, Burke, Bialka, Grace and crews.

Under orders from VII Bomb Command, Lucky Lundby won a trip to the States, destination Minneapolis Honeywell Factory at Minneapolis, for instructions in the latest modification of AFCE. Lt. D. D.

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Manchester of Squadron fame and ^{later} ~~now~~ Group Bombing and Gunnery Officer, Lt. A. B. Sheaffer, Sqdn. Navigator, and the inimitable Lt. Sharkey, Co-pilot, accompanied said fortunate fellow, S/Sgt. Copeland and Erickson completed the crew, what a break!

Lt. Freddie Sellar was transferred to the 5th Bomb Group Feb. 21st. The squadron regretted losing an excellent Navigator and a grand fellow.

Nine Bombardiers were assigned from the States the first of March, and several cadet navigators were later assigned to the squadron from Hickam Navigation School for instruction and training at this time.

Lt. "Bus" Hinkson chose to accept position as Adjutant for Wheeler Field Hawaiian Air Depot's Sub-Depot. Lt. H. F. Brown arrived amidst fan flare of trumpets to accept recently depleted job of Mess Officer. Herewith begins the now famous Brown's Bar-B-Q and Beanery. "You never ate better in your life", at least that's what he said.

On February 28th, Lt. Hopkins and Lt. Houchins were assigned.

On March 10th, Lt. Bialka and Lt. Grace and crews were transferred "Down Under".

On March 13th, Lt. Schreiber and crew took off for a routine practice mission about 1330. The plane developed engine trouble as he left the ground. He radioed the Tower that he was coming in for an emergency landing, circled the field, feathered the prop on the down wind leg, losing what altitude he had managed to gain all the while. In the attempt to line up with the runway the plane fell out from under him, and the right wing struck a small building about a thousand yards from the end of the strip. Only one man survived the crash, Cpl. Covertine who escaped with slight injuries. Lt. Schreiber, Pilot; Lt. Beasley, Bombardier; Lt. Hewitt, Co-Pilot; S/Sgts. Jamison and Brown died instantaneous and Lt. Coppock, Navigator, died several hours later of severe burns in Schofield Hospital.

On March 15th Lt. Burkes crew transferred "Down Under" per SO.

On March 22nd Lts. Muncy, Kethley, Bucks and crews were assigned.

On March 24th Lt. Buell was assigned and took over vacancy in Trans. & Supply. Also five Radar Officers and four

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Navigators were assigned (Bunn, Clark, Powell, Welsh, Arnold, Galloway, Whitmore, and Ptacek), Lt. Ptacek became Comm. and Radar Officer for the squadron.

On March 22nd Lt. Lundby returned from the States wearing a pair of "Railroad Tracks" and very happy to discover his bosson pal, Lt. Wood, was also brandishing the same.

On April 10th Lt. Bergholt was attached and assigned the job of Ass't-Intelligence Officer.

No further missions were performed by our squadron until 17 April 1943 when 10 planes and crews took off for Funafuti in the Ellice Islands to stage raids against Nauru and Tarawa. One night was spent at Canton and they arrived there 18 April. Nauru was bombed by nine of our planes lead by Captain Billings in conjunction with the 372nd Squadron on 20 April. This was a daylight attack and the first time that Nauru had been bombed. The full account of this mission with pictures taken over the burning target appeared in the 5 July 1943 copy of Life Magazine. The Japanese Air Force struck back at our advanced base during the early morning hours of 22 April. They sent two waves of an estimated six planes per wave over the small island. During this concentrated attack our squadron suffered our first battle casualties and only ones received on the ground. T/Sgt Delbert B. Erickson, S/Sgt Eli W. Williamson, S/Sgt Owen T. Wilson and S/Sgt Raymond W. Drew were killed and Sergeants Bahr, Harmon and Lodge and Johnson were seriously wounded and evacuated to Samoa. Sgt Johnson's wounds proved fatal. Captain Hanson distinguished himself by treating the Army, Navy, Marine and Native wounded in the only bomb-proof shelter, the arsenal, during the raid. In reprisal the 371st bombed Tarawa with six planes in the early hours of 22 April. On completion of this successful mission our planes returned to Funafuti, thence to Canton and arrived back in Oahu on 24 April.

With the congratulations of the squadron, Captain Billings received his Majority on 5 May. On 26 April Lts. Taflinger, Becker and Warren's crews were assigned, bringing the squadron strength up to 23 crews, 11 over the T/O strength.

With 23 planes to maintain, the line was pressed to its utmost to keep them "In the Pink". Instead of five men on Engineering crews, two or three men had to do the job. It was the same with all sections. The squadron tackled the job with spirit and overcame the seemingly impossible. Beside the added duties during the day, it was necessary that these same men also guard the extra planes during the night. The morale of the squadron held strong and all personnel are to be commended for their excellent cooperation during this most

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trying period.

A Jap task force was reported headed toward Midway, so the 371st took off with nine planes for that island at 2400 8 May 1943 to counter that threat. Sea searches were conducted for three days. It was then decided to abandon the search and attack Wake Island again. On the morning of 15 May, nine of our planes took off from Midway along with an equal number of 372nd planes. Because of bad weather only seven of our planes succeeded in locating and bombing the target. No casualties were incurred due to enemy opposition, but Lt. Richard Patten died at sea as a result of injuries received when the plane he was in had to make a water landing 140 miles from Midway.

Finally on the 8 May the squadron received orders to pack and rejoin the 307th Group "Down Under". As it developed this was not to be actually a reunion. The 371st in company with the 372nd were to be stationed at Espiritu Santo in the New Hebrides Group and not with the rest of the Group at Gaudalcanal. The next two weeks were hectic ones as the personnel of the squadron received its most drastic and wholesale "shake-up" since its activation. The absence of Major Billings, several combat crews and several Staff Officers, who were still at Midway, added to the confusion. When the smoke cleared there were only 14 Officers and 300 enlisted men left from a count of 115 officers and 585 enlisted men just a few days prior to the "shake-up". Of the 14 officers and 300 enlisted men who were to make up what really amounted to a cadre of a new 371st squadron, 7 officers and 125 enlisted men had been with the squadron since Ephrata days nearly a year before. All combat crews were transferred to the 11th Group. 125 enlisted men consisting of well trained Armament, Radio, Engineering, Communications, Radar, etc., were transferred to the 11th Group. 15 Enlisted men, most of whom were key men: M/Sgt. Spratley, Arm. Chief; T/Sgt. Hendrix, Pow. Tur. Chief.; S/Sgt. Robbins, B.S.M. and others; were left behind to return to the states for OCS and Aviation Cadet Training. In their stead we received 76 enlisted men to fill out shortages. These men were not familiar with B-24's. All were recently graduates of AAF technical schools and had previous experience with other types of planes and equipment.

Finally on May 22nd, 7 Officers and 300 enlisted men boarded the U. S. S. Jane Adams and shoved off for Espiritu Santos. Seven days later, Major Billings, Captain Hanson, Captain Lundby, Lt. Sheaffer, Lt. Teykl, Lt. Vaccaro, Lt. Wiggins, S/Sgt. Hume, S/Sgt. Paver, and Sgt. Aubuchon took off by B-24 for the same destination. They stopped at Christmas, Nadi, Pago Pago before arriving at their destination.

The boat trip was uneventful as far as enemy action was concerned but packed full of discomfort and fun and humor for the officers and men.

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There were the usual ceremonies crossing the equator. We were serenaded nightly by Infantry Officers and one of our enlisted men on the mandolin and guitar. There was a newspaper published on board. Star classes were the main feature at night. G. I.'s by Brown's Beanery Inc., was one of the more unpleasant happenings. Friendships were established with QM and CWS officers and men. There was poker, chess, cribbage, bridge, red dog, bingo, jig saw puzzles, etc. A three day stop at Samoa relieved the tension of confinement on board. We found that Major Billings, et al, took off from there the morning that the ship arrived in harbor. Sorry to miss a reunion at Pago Pago.

We arrived at Espiritu Santos June 12th and disembarked June 13th. Lt. Rinker and Lt. Swant, lost to 424th squadron in February were there to meet us-having been reassigned to the squadron. Then followed four hectic days and nights of unloading the boat. The two squadrons built a well planned and attractive camp with materials we had brought with us on the boat. Within three weeks, every man was quartered in screened-in tent with a floor under him, and all offices, supply sheds, engineering, communications and specialist shops had been built. Coral roads and paths were laid out and, an excellent movie theatre constructed. It is interesting to note that some outfits that had been at Santos for six or seven months still had their men sleeping on the ground.

On 26 June we started flying search missions. Crews newly assigned to the group were checked out by experienced pilots and navigators. These flights were generally quite routine but weather was a definite hazard and good navigation was necessary because of the lack of check-points. Lt. Feigen and crew failed to return from a search mission on 13 July 1943. Nothing was heard from them after takeoff as they were under radio silence. All searches for them were negative.

We staged another raid on Tarawa from Funafuti on 28 July 1943. Bad weather impaired the success of this mission and the chief hazard was difficult navigations and shortage of fuel. One plane had three engines out on the final approach for lack of gasoline, but the pilot managed to slip it in safely. Fortunately, there were no casualties, but some of the planes were damaged.

On 25 August the air echelon moved up to Guadalcanal to relieve our sister squadrons. The very next day we bombed Kahili Airdrome in the first of a series of neutralizing raids. During nearly all of these missions aggressive interception by 30 to 60 enemy fighters took place and the anti-aircraft fire was generally heavy and intense. As an indication of the stiff enemy aerial opposition, our gunners shot down 18 enemy aircraft during the 15 missions flown against this important airdrome. Despite the strong

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defense, our losses were relatively light. S/Sgt. Holmes was killed on 15 September mission over Kahili when an AA burst carried away his ball-turret. S/Sgt. England, nose gunner, was killed by aerial fire on 21 September mission over Buka Airdrome. The only other serious casualties occurred on 10 October 1943, when Lt. Galyon was forced to make a crash landing at Ondonga airdrome due to enemy action. Lts. Galyon, Ide and Sgt. Purdin were killed and the other members of the crew were injured in this crash-landing. In addition to our main effort against Kahili, attacks were made on Buka A/D, Villa on Kolumbangara, and on Ballale A/D. Our last mission during this combat tour was against Kahili on 11 October. After being relieved we returned to Santos on the 14th and from there the flying personnel went on to Auckland, N. Z., for a well deserved rest leave.

Meanwhile the ground echelon at Santos performed the normal squadron functions and helped maintain the 370th and 424th aircraft. There was little excitement except for the time when Charlie paid us a visit, killing the famous cow. It was a happy reunion when the air echelon returned after their combat tour up north. Sea searches were resumed and new crews were checked out.

After a much needed rest at Espiritu Santos, the 371st air echelon relieved the 424th air echelon at Guadalcanal on 24 November. Our second Thanksgiving overseas was celebrated with a traditional dinner with all of the trimmings after the mission on the 25th. Bougainville targets kept us busy. Buka and Bonis anti-aircraft positions, supply and personnel areas received most of our attention, being attacked on 27 November and 3, 14, 16, 18, 22 and 28 December. The ack-ack lads on Shortland and Faisi Islands were bombed 1 and 12 December. Kieta on Bougainville was hit twice. The assault against the enemy bastion of Rabaul was begun on 19 December 1943. The Christmas Eve raid against Vunakanau, one of the principal airdromes in the Rabaul area, was one of the most successful of the month. The runway was so plastered that it took the Japs three days to make it serviceable. About 25 enemy fighters intercepted of which one was shot down and two were damaged. Naturally, this was an occasion for celebration. From all reports it was very joyous.

Christmas was celebrated in the jungles of Guadalcanal with the usual festive feast. It was a far cry from a White Christmas, but the spirit was there.

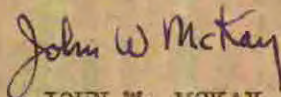
Weather interfered with operations for the remainder of the month. It was with pride that we looked back on the accomplishments of our first year of combat in the tropics --- and with both apprehension and hope that we sought to see what the next year would bring. Fortunately, we were not able to pronostigate the future.

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A. C. THOMAS,
Major, Air Corps,
Commanding.


JOHN W. MCKAY,
1st Lt., Air Corps,
Historical Officer.

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